

For social ownership of the banks and industry

SOLIDARITY

& WORKERS' LIBERTY



For secular republic and workers' power in Iran

Back the peace and labour movements in US and Israel

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Photomontage based on anti-Polaris poster by Peter Kennard

NO TO WAR

- » **For workers' solidarity**
- » **Down with Trump, Netanyahu, Khamenei**
- » **Israel out of Lebanon**

Oppose US-Israeli bombing

Israel out of Lebanon • For a secular republic and workers' power in Iran

The current war is a reactionary conflict between anti-worker, anti-human regimes.

For workers war brings only greater suffering, poverty, displacement, and destruction. When steel industries, refineries, and key factories are destroyed, it means mass unemployment, the killing of workers, the economic collapse of working-class families, and the destruction of livelihoods.

Workers demand an immediate end to the war, the prosecution of those responsible for killing civilians, children, and protesters, the overthrow of the Islamic Republic

— The Haft Tappeh workers' union, Iran, 5 April

As *Solidarity* goes to press (14 April), the Iran war is largely paused, but precariously. US-Iran talks in Islamabad, Pakistan, have broken down, with the US delegation declaring that the talks have failed — although this may, in fact, be part of a negotiating strategy, presumably to be followed soon by more US military action.

After US President Donald Trump's increasingly shrill and ugly threats against Iran, on 8 April the Pakistani Prime Minister and mediator Shehbaz Sharif announced a ceasefire and US-Iran talks.

Pakistan, which has a defence pact with Saudi Arabia and a 15-20% Shia minority, or 40-50mn people, was only able to engage with the Iranian clerical dictatorship after it denounced the Israeli-American bombing which began on 28 February.

Following an attempt to storm the US consulate in Karachi on 1 March, during which ten protesters were killed, the Pakistani military summoned the country's leading Shia clerics and threatened them against further violence.

As Trump's frustration had grown alongside his inability to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, he had threatened to

obliterate Iranian infrastructure and, finally, to destroy Iranian civilisation. By doing so Trump was explicitly saying he would commit war crimes in Iran.

Trump claimed that a ten-point plan by Iran was a "workable basis on which to negotiate". The main known details of the plan (Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz; lifting of sanctions against Iran and release of frozen assets; US military withdrawal from the region; a permanent end to attacks on Iran and its regional proxies) are, however, unacceptable to Trump.

The Farsi version of the Iranian plan also included "acceptance [by the US] of [nuclear] enrichment".

Nevertheless, the ceasefire was to apply immediately, according to Sharif, and to include all allies, explicitly "including Lebanon". The vague agreement to pause fighting on fudged and contested terms appeared to suit both Iran and the US.

Israel's far-right government, however, continued to bomb Lebanon using 1,000lb bombs on built-up areas of Beirut, killing 300 people on Thursday 9 April, in an apparent attempt to derail the truce. Trump's envoy, the wretched Steve Witkoff, then insisted Israel "calm down" strikes on Lebanon and open peace talks with the Lebanese government, which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was obliged to accept.

Relationship

This reveals the actual relationship between the US and Israel, rather than the antisemitic caricature — that exists on both the left and the political right — of Israel controlling the US. Israel does not control the US, and it is equally not just a catspaw of the US. It has its own interests and drives, but is a much smaller power than the US.

Israel-Lebanon talks are due to open in the US after 10 April. The Israelis want the Iran ally and militarised Shia party, Hezbollah, which regularly attacks Israel with rockets, to be disarmed. Lebanon wants Israeli troops out of the south of the country and to end the Israeli bombing campaign.

The Lebanese government is not strong enough to disarm Hezbollah, which is a formidable force. Although Israeli bombing has diminished Hezbollah's strength, it has also weakened the Lebanese state. Israel continues military action in Lebanon and has announced its intention to occupy the land south of the Litani river.

By 6 April the US claimed to have hit 13,000 targets in Iran, and damaged or sunk 155 Iranian ships. The US appears

to have spent about \$25bn in the first month of the war, including \$3.5mn on each of the 850 cruise missiles it has used against Iran.

The US now has over 50,000 troops in the region.

Opinion polls show that the Iran war is backed by only 37% of US voters (with 61% opposing the war). Last month US inflation jumped from 2.4% to 3.3% and petrol prices rose by 21.2% in March.

Trump's approval rating is now minus 19%. His Republican party is set to lose control of the House of Representatives in the November mid-term elections — unless Trump is able to radically rig the vote, something which the US labour movement must prepare for and resist.

Support for Israel in the US has also plummeted. 60% of Americans now have an "unfavourable view of Israel", which is a very big shift in traditional support.

Nationalist

Israel says it has killed over 250 Iranian military and political leaders. Despite those losses the regime remains intact. The Iranian state has used the war to rally internal support on a nationalist basis. Support for Trump and Israel inside Iran also appears to have lessened as Trump's failed promises to liberate the Iranian people and his recent threats to bomb Iran into the "Stone Age" have made clear his contempt for the Iranian people.

3,600 Iranians have been killed, including 1,700 civilians of which 254 were children (HRANA), and 27,000 have been injured. Iran claims 3% of its 90mn population is now internally displaced.

Iran launched 4,800 drones and 1,850 missiles during the war, although the big majority seem to have been shot down (4,500 and 1,460 respectively, according to the *Economist*). The Wall Street Journal writes that Iran retains over 1,000 medium-range ballistic missiles.

As the war went on, Israel and the US broadened their targets to include defence and civilian infrastructure. In the final days before the ceasefire Israel bombed Iran's petrochemical industries at their two main hubs in Mahshahr and Assaluyeh. Eight complexes were hit in Mahshahr on Saturday 4 April and two days later Assaluyeh, connected to the South Pars gas field, was bombed. Mahshahr accounts for 28% and Assaluyeh 48% of Iran's petrochemical production. Production in both regions has stopped.

Steel plants in Isfahan and Khuzestan have also been attacked. Schools, university buildings and medical facilities



have been damaged or destroyed.

Inside Iran there has been a wave of repression during which at least 1,700 people have been detained. In the first few days of April at least four political prisoners arrested during the massacres of pro-democracy protesters over 8-10 January were executed. Amnesty International believes at least two dozen Iranian political prisoners are in immediate danger of being hung. At least 160 prisoners were executed in Iran in the first three months of 2026.

The clerical-fascist regime is still maintaining an internet shutdown, now lasting more than 1,000 hours, to prevent its own people organising against it.

In Iraq, 177 have died, mainly members of pro-Iran Shia militias. In Israel 23 are dead and Israeli hospitals have treated 7,450 for war-related injuries. During the Iran war Israeli attacks in Gaza killed at least 107 people and injured 342.

In Lebanon 1,800 people have been killed, 5,900 injured and 1.2mn, or one-in-five of the Lebanese population have been displaced since Israel began attacking Hezbollah-Lebanon on 2 March.

We oppose the insanity of this war and the brutal rulers that kill with indifference and stupidity.

We demand an end to the war and respect for the national rights of the Kurds, Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, and a free Palestinian state alongside Israel.

We back the peace and labour movements in Israel and the US, and the workers of Iran.

For workers' unity and international socialism. □



This is not our war!

From the Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane workers in south-west Iran

It has been said that “war is the continuation of politics by other means.” In other words, war is the continuation of diplomacy, and diplomacy is the continuation of war. In a world where relentless competition over resources, energy, markets, and the exploitation of labour is ongoing in every corner, war is a constant reality. War is a form of conflict among capitalist states and ruling classes over their interests. In this sense, capitalism is incompatible with “lasting peace” or “peaceful coexistence.” Periods referred to as “peace” are either temporary or, in practice, forms of “armed peace” that carry the potential for the outbreak of new wars.

Workers are not opposed to all wars per se. For example, revolutionary uprisings aimed at fundamental transformation, class struggle against the existing order, wars to defeat fascism, struggles for women's liberation, and wars for emancipation from colonialism are considered “just wars” and possess legitimacy.

Workers oppose reactionary wars — wars fought in the interests of states and reactionary classes that bring no benefit to ordinary people or the working class. The current war is of this kind: a reactionary conflict between reactionary, anti-worker, and anti-human regimes. Each government involved pursues objectives whose realization is detrimental to the working class and to the broader struggle for individual and social freedoms.

Camps

In wars between states, two main camps typically emerge: those who support one side of the conflict—either aligned with the United States and Israel, or with the Islamic Republic.

In the present conflict, forces such as monarchists, large sections of Kurdish nationalists and federalists, “export-oriented” reformists, newly converted monarchists, and opportunistic elements sensing advantage have become fervent supporters of the U.S. military and Israel, along with their so-called “smart bombs,” which are cynically portrayed as causing no harm to civilians and only targeting regime elements. This toxic atmosphere is re-emerging. The collapse of media-driven monarchist projects on one hand, and the devastation of hospitals, pharmaceutical infrastructure, essential services, and the mass killing of defenceless people on the other, have left no moral ground for defending such disgrace. The rhetoric shifts rapidly—especially when their

Meeting of workers at Haft Tappeh Sugar Company in 2017



“patrons,” from Lindsey Graham to Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, openly speak of the “total destruction of Iran,” returning it to the “Stone Age,” and reducing its people to beggars for food and water.

Slogans

On the opposing side, supporters of the Islamic Republic and pro-war elements have mobilized in its defence. They justify defending the killers of the people's children under slogans such as “defending the nation,” “resisting foreign aggression,” and similar narratives. This camp erases the distinction between “state and people” and between “Iran and the Islamic Republic,” presenting itself as part of a reactionary, nationalist “axis of resistance.” In doing so, they often become more zealous than the regime itself, labelling any form of negotiation as “betrayal of the fighters.” In practice, this faction aligns with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

For workers and the toiling masses, war brings only greater suffering, poverty, displacement, and destruction. When steel industries, refineries, and key factories are destroyed, it means mass unemployment, the killing of workers, the economic collapse of working-class families, and the destruction of livelihoods. When facilities providing medicine, clean water, and food are targeted, the attack is not against military objectives but against the health, survival, and lives of the people.

Such actions do not weaken the Islamic Republic; rather, they are policies aimed at pushing impoverished people into deeper misery and desperation in

order to force submission under any conditions.

Workers oppose reactionary wars. They do not participate in wars that do not represent their class interests or movement, nor in wars that do not prioritise immediate human needs. A genuine working-class policy speaks clearly against the wars of capitalist states, opposes nationalist and chauvinistic war propaganda, and consistently emphasizes this is not our war. It critically examines the nature and objectives of reactionary wars and exposes their contradiction with the interests of the general population and the working class. It does not rally under the banner

of nationalism or “defence of one's own state,” but instead expresses solidarity with workers and freedom-seeking people across all countries involved, in opposition to their respective governments.

We, the workers, have witnessed both the wars and the so-called peace of these states, and each time we have paid the price with our lives and livelihoods. Supporting warmongers, child-killers, and anti-worker figures such as Trump and Netanyahu is support for collective crimes and participation in destruction and atrocity.

Supporting the Islamic Republic in this war means supporting its war aims; it means endorsing the killing of civilians; it implies support for past massacres and decades of repression; it amounts to defending the regime itself.

We stand on neither side of this reactionary war — we are the key to resolving it. Workers demand an immediate end to the war, the prosecution of those responsible for killing civilians, children, and protesters, the overthrow of the Islamic Republic, and the rejection of militarism by reactionary states.

No to reactionary war

No to warmongers

No to the Islamic Republic. □

More online

War, ceasefire, war

By Kazem Nik-Khah
bit.ly/war-c-w

Activist Agenda

Meetings

Thu 16 Apr: Why We Need to Expropriate the Banks. Bristol AWL. 7:30, Watershed Café, 1 Canon's Rd, BS1 5TX

Sun 19 Apr: Reading group on Socialism, Utopian and Scientific. North London AWL. 11:00, Community room, Menard Court, EC1V 3SW

Thu 23 Apr: Grenfell was social murder. Lewisham AWL. 7:00, Deptford Lounge, 9 Giffin Street, SE8 4RJ

At work or on campus

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

ersliberty.org/work-unions, Insta @ [workerslibertystudents](https://www.instagram.com/workerslibertystudents), and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.

Template motions

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

Socialist-feminist book clubs

bit.ly/bc-sf

19 Apr: Of Woman Born. London. 2pm, Effra Social, 89 Effra Road SW2 1DF

Campaigns

See workersliberty.org/agenda. □



Scan the QR code to see our events & meetings page.



Talking with the far-right in Sheffield

By Kayden Jones and Ralph Higgins

Raise the Colours Sheffield, a far-right campaign putting up England and Union flags on lampposts, held a protest outside Sheffield railway station on Saturday 4 April, alongside streamer "Ryan Rampage".

Stand Up To Racism did their regular static counter-demonstration. Most chants were a-political, including "There are many more of us than you" and "Whose streets? Our streets!", while police penned in both protests.

A few simple questions

"Raise the Colours" framed their demonstration as not just against immigrants, but also about the cost of living. In their advertisements they asked three questions:

- Why can't a working man get a house, yet "asylum seekers" get put up in four-star hotels?
- Why are our elderly neighbours being stripped of their winter fuel payments, while an "asylum seeker" from war torn France gets taxpayer-funded mobile phones and trips to the circus?
- Why are our single mothers resorting to food banks, while an "asylum seeker" from war torn France eats like a king, being given banquet style meals three times a day?

This led other anti-fascist groups to adopt a different approach, focusing on engaging passers-by and speaking directly with protesters on the "Raise the Colours" demonstration. Both the Sheffield Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee and SCARF (an autonomous anti-fascist group) produced and



distributed useful leaflets countering far-right narratives and putting forward working-class politics.

South Sheffield Anti-Fascists set up a cake stall near the far-right protest. This proved effective as it confused the police and created a welcoming and non-threatening space that made it easier to speak with members of the public.

Somebody had put up green flags reading "Blame the Billionaires" on lampposts near the train station, which was useful in making the far-right appear more isolated.

Talking to the far-right

Conversations with those attending the far-right protest revealed recurring themes. One person asked if our anti-racism also applied to the Caucasian race and went on to quote a statistic about 20,000 young women and girls who had been raped. This was regularly brought up in our conversations to people on the demo as a throwaway statistic. We have not been able to verify where they got the 20,000 number from.

The people who brought the statistic up seemed to feel that nothing was being done about sexual assault and rape. They felt that the left didn't care about it, or anyone else apart from them. They also thought that the main perpetrators were migrants. They seemed to think that a group of migrants were systematically carrying out mass-rapes and sexual assaults. It was good to be able to point to our demands on sexual violence and rape. It was difficult to make headway on that issue.

We had quite a long conversation with a young man who seemed to believe in the "great replacement theory", though he never used those words explicitly. He was afraid that specifically Muslim migration would allow a Muslim majority

to establish a state like Iran in the UK.

Most people agreed with us on economic issues, like nationalisation, welfare and pay rises. One man said he was leaving his trade union, saying it was not protecting him, but we didn't get any details out of him about what had happened.

The main sticking point in our conversations was immigration, and we didn't manage to push anyone much on that. They all think migrants are the cause of the country's problems. Attempts by us to talk about cuts to services usually caused them to pivot the conversation to something else.

Lefty alert!

Despite the challenges, the conversations were well worth having for several reasons. People were angry, some

people just wanted to rant at us. Others were rude and standoffish, some anti-racists reported having far-right demonstrators shouting "Lefty alert! Lefty alert!" shouted at them, but no one tried to act violently towards us.

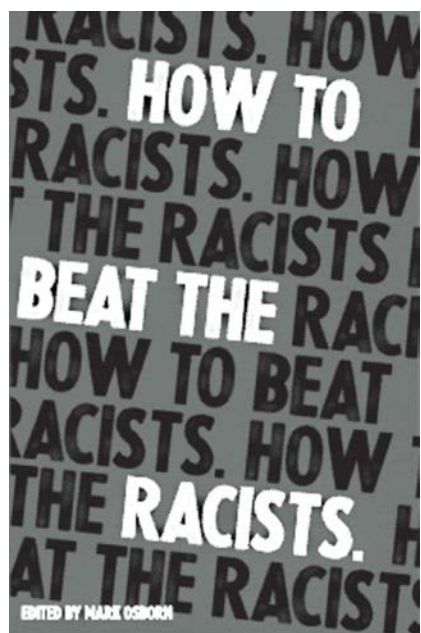
None of the people we spoke to were hardened fascist cadre. They appeared to have been radicalised by a combination of different conspiracy theories.

However, organised fascist elements were certainly present. Neo-nazi activist Ryan Ferguson was seen holding a British Union of Fascists pendant and making an "Aryan Fist" salute (a nazi salute but with the fist closed).

If we use this tactic again, and it's worth doing, then we need to develop approaches on how to engage protesters. This was partly a listening exercise, and the way you try to get through to someone who has had their mind rotted by conspiracy theories is not the same as having a rational political argument.

There are other contexts where this tactic could be useful, such as anti-migrant protests outside hotels in former pit villages and towns with strong labour movement traditions, where far-right groups are gaining a receptive audience. □

New Publication



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Neo-nazi activist Ryan Ferguson with raised fist

Why Netanyahu wants more war

By Ira Berkovic

Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli government has made clear that it does not deem the ceasefire brokered between the USA and Iran to extend to its war in Lebanon. Israel partially reduced its attacks under US pressure, but only after a major assault on the day after the US-Iran deal was agreed, in which more than 300 people were killed and over 1,000 wounded.

Negotiations between Israel and the Lebanese government are due to take place. The Lebanese government says it wants a ceasefire in place before talks begin in earnest. Israel has said its aim in the current war is to "destroy Hezbollah", and has also said it wants the Lebanese government to disarm them. Many forces within the Lebanese government are also deeply hostile to Hezbollah, seeing them as a threat to the stability of the Lebanese state. But destructive Israeli bombing and the displacement crises it causes make any efforts to marginalise Hezbollah much harder.

1,700 people have been killed in Lebanon during the latest round of conflict. In Israel, the death toll has risen to 33, after four people were killed in Haifa by an Iranian missile on Sunday 5 April.

Israel's war in Lebanon can be seen as expressing three distinct, but overlapping, motivations, from different factions within the state. Hawkish elements in the military and security establishment may see the atmosphere of regional chaos as a good opportunity to crush a major enemy, and see an expanded Israeli military presence in Lebanese territory in these terms. The government has declared an intention

to establish a permanent, Israeli-controlled "buffer zone" 10km deep into Lebanon.

For the messianic religious far right, seizing and holding land is part of a theologically-motivated project of territorial expansion. Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, leaders of this current, do not directly determine military strategy. Nevertheless, their role as power-brokers in a fragile government coalition means their influence can act as an accelerant.

Control

A group of 18 members of the Knesset (Israeli parliament) from Ben Gvir's party Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power), Smotrich's Religious Zionism party, and Netanyahu's Likud published an open letter to the security cabinet on 5 April, calling for "occupation and full control" of the territory between Israel's current northern border with Lebanon, and the Litani river. The open letter poses its call in military-security terms, but for Ben Gvir and Smotrich, the motivation is undoubtedly also theological.

One settler organisation, Uri Tzafon (Awake, O North), has argued: "The idea of settlement in Lebanon sounds as detached from reality to the Israeli ear as settlement on the planet Venus, but it is not. [...] What is 'south Lebanon' actually? It is simply the Northern Galilee. The clear natural border between Israel and the Lebanon Mountains runs along the Litani River, Lebanon's greatest river, an area about which Moses said: 'A land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills.'"

Uri Tzafon is a fringe organisation, but the recent history of Israeli politics, where the Kahanist current represented

by Itamar Ben Gvir has gone from being widely regarded as criminal to being at the heart of government, shows that fringe ideas can become mainstream.

A third motivation is electoral. Israel is due for a general election in the autumn. Almost all polls show the current governing coalition would lose. The two most recent polls conducted by the *Maariv* newspaper, politically centrist and the country's fourth-largest daily newspaper, show coalition parties winning 49 seats, with opposition parties winning 61. Netanyahu will surely calculate that his chances of retaining power will be significantly increased if he can prolong, or resume, wars with Iran and Hezbollah as close to the elections as possible.

Thousands of people in Lebanon and Iran, and some dozens in Israel (and in Palestine: four people in the West Bank have also been killed by Iranian missiles), are paying with their lives for the messianic ambitions of the settler movement, and the megalomania of a would-be authoritarian dictator.

Condemnation

With global condemnation of settler terror growing, including from many mainstream-Zionist, Jewish-diaspora organisations and individuals, a meeting of the Israeli security cabinet on 25 March reportedly approved a directive against "nationalist crimes" in the West Bank, with plans for additional resources to clamp down on settler attacks. However, the same meeting also approved 34 new settlements, suggesting moves against settler terror are likely to be superficial. Settler violence is undertaken to intimidate, displace, and in some cases murder Palestini-



ans, in order to claim property and land for settlers. In a context in which the government is expanding settlements in order to "bury" prospects for a Palestinian state, armed settlers can legitimately claim to be the shock troops of state policy.

Anti-war protests in Israel have continued. On 4 April, Alon-Lee Green, the national co-director of the left-wing binational (Palestinian-Jewish) social movement Standing Together, was arrested at a protest in Tel Aviv, along with fellow activist Nadav Oren. More than 20 people have been arrested during recent anti-war protests, including 13 people at one demonstration in Tel Aviv on 28 March. □

End the forever war!

By Standing Together

For nearly six weeks, our government has dragged all of us into a futile war, pushing escalation further every single day. Millions of people have sought shelter from missiles, many without proper protection, families have fled their homes, and brought their lives to a halt, while thousands of people across the region were killed, homes destroyed, lives shattered, entire families wiped out.

And for what?

And it's not even over, while the war with Iran is put on pause, the escalation continues in Lebanon. This war, like everything our government has dragged us into over the years, was driven by the same logic, the same policies, the same empty promises

of "total victory," and a path that has nothing to do with our safety.

People in Iran who have been living under a communications blackout this entire time are now waking up to some semblance of safety from bombs, but still facing the terrifying reality of a regime that is emboldened and continuing to use extreme violence and repression against their own people.

A war waged by an oppressive regime was never going to be able to free anyone.

Enough with the forever war. Enough with the lies. Enough with this government of death. Real security cannot be achieved through endless, pointless, military force.

The inevitable end to all of this is diplomacy and agreements – and that's what we must demand now. □



Standing Together protest in Haifa, Israel, April 11

Pic: Standing Together/X



The local vote mystery

By Jim Denham

What advice will the *Morning Star* be giving socialists when it comes to voting on 7 May?

A recent statement from the Communist Party of Britain (the organisation that controls the MS) advocates tactical voting against Reform, adding: "As well as continuing to back left Labour candidates, Britain's Communists will consider supporting non-Labour candidates who advocate progressive taxation, public ownership of the utilities, wealth redistribution, radical curbs on carbon emissions, and the unconditional abolition of Britain's nuclear weapons". Precisely which candidates the CPB has in mind, meeting those criteria and also best placed to beat Reform, remains unclear.

But on one matter the CPB is emphatic: "Labour candidates who have backed Starmer's most reactionary policies, notably cuts in welfare benefits, the expanded nuclear weapons programme and support for Israeli genocide, can expect no support from the Communist Party." The political criteria are all not council-level, but national: no local council, however right-wing, is developing its own nuclear weapons, and candidates' manifestos are unlikely to cover the issue. And what happens if such an unsatisfactory Labour offering turns out to be the candidate best

placed to beat Reform? That fairly obvious question is not answered.

MS/CPB confusion is only rendered more profound by the emergence of Plaid Cymru as the front-runner in Wales.

In general the CPB "line" (reflected in the MS), has been to oppose the breakup of the (UK) union, and it has been notably hostile towards the SNP. Strangely, it has been less critical of Welsh nationalism and Plaid Cymru (perhaps because former CPB general secretary Robert Griffiths received his early political education from a leftist grouping within Plaid, the Welsh Socialist Republican movement).

Uncritical

Anyway, the MS carried an uncritical interview with Plaid's leader Rhun Iwan Iorwerth (27 February) in which he failed to mention trade unions and referred to "the people of Wales", rather than the working class. Nevertheless, the MS now describes Plaid (and also the Welsh Greens) as "progressive", its only reservation being that Plaid, like the Greens, has "illusions" in the EU.

A case can be made that the Greens are to the left of Labour on many issues. But Plaid is pretty similar on social issues to Welsh Labour, and there are socialists in the ranks of both, though neither can be called even remotely socialist.



Nevertheless, the MS editorial (28 February) following the Green victory in Gorton and Denton declared "From Caerphilly [where Plaid won a by-election in February] to Gorton and Denton, the safe seats are toppling: those who care about social justice, anti-racism and peace are discovering they have other options."

When it comes to Scotland, the MS displays much less enthusiasm for nationalism and regularly berates the SNP government. The paper's only recent comprehensive coverage of Scottish politics has been a piece [24 Feb] by Lynn Henderson, a national officer of the PCS union, which concludes: "The mainstream social democratic blandness of the SNP's outlook remains masked by a romanticised culture vision of an independent Scotland [while] the vanilla Scottish Labour timidity to navigate a class analysis and the silly student politics of the Greens and faction fighting amongst the progressive left, lead [sic] me bereft of how to exer-

cise my vote ... I know I am not alone."

It should be noted that Ms Henderson is not a member of the CPB, so her despair and incoherence may not be the official CPB/MS line – but neither the party nor the paper has published anything more positive regarding the May elections in Scotland.

Mysteries

Other mysteries remain: does the recent publication of articles by Chris Williamson mean that the paper will be supporting Galloway's so-called Workers Party, despite its record of antisemitism and hostility to immigration and the pro-Trump comments by its leader? And what about the various "independent" or "community" candidates backed by Corbyn's Your Party? It seems likely that many of them are socially conservative and not come anywhere near meeting the criteria the CPB has set out for candidates it "will consider supporting." On the other hand, Jeremy is an old friend of the paper and they'll be loath to go against his wishes.

And then there are the "independents" that were Corbyn-aligned but have now lost official YP support (see page 7).

So at the moment the precise details of what votes the MS will advocate in May remain shrouded in mystery, but all the signs are it will be an unsavoury mélange of opportunism, sectarianism and political incoherence. □

Housing

Where just 421 people own 40% of rural land

By Robert Bau

Land ownership in the UK is among the most unequal in the industrialised world, yet this is seldom reported. Even more rarely, in England at least, is it made a matter for political debate.

Scotland stands out from other parts of the UK in that land ownership is even more concentrated (around 40% of its rural land held by just 421 landowners). There, landownership has been a major public issue in Scotland for generations, tied to cultural identity, rural survival, and debates about power and democracy.

Wales and Northern Ireland lack the kind of detailed land data seen in Scotland, but available evidence suggests that concentrated ownership

remains common there too. This is further complicated by the fact that a large share of land in England and Wales is still unregistered, making the true picture even harder to see.

In Scotland, the SNP has made land reform a central part of its political identity. Over the years the Scottish Government has introduced several laws designed to increase fairness and transparency, the most recent being the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025, which gives ministers the power to apply public-interest tests when large estates are sold, to require big landholdings to be broken up before sale, and to insist that owners publish Land Management Plans explaining how they use and manage land. Supporters see

these changes as an important shift in how land is treated, one that gives communities more influence over decisions that affect them.

Limits

However, there are real limits to the SNP's approach. While the party often speaks about tackling inequality, many of the most powerful tools in the 2025 Act still depend on further regulations that could take years to put in place, or may never materialise. Much of the legislation is focused on processes such as consultation and planning duties, rather than directly changing who owns land. Communities are still asked to navigate complex legal systems to buy or manage land, rather than the state taking stronger action on their

behalf. There is also a risk that new markets, such as carbon offsetting, could allow large estates to consolidate their influence in different ways.

Scottish Labour, meanwhile, has its own mixed record. The party introduced the first modern land-reform laws after devolution, helping to dismantle feudal tenure and establish early community rights to buy. Today, Labour often argues that the SNP has not gone far enough and some of its MSPs have proposed bolder measures, such as placing a cap on the size of landholdings. But Labour's current position is inconsistent. The most radical proposals often come from individual politicians, not the party as a whole, and Labour has not always shown the

same commitment when it has held power. As a result, Labour is reactive, criticising the SNP while not offering a fully developed alternative vision of its own.

Land concentration remains one of the most important issues in Scotland's public life. Both SNP and Labour recognise the problem, but neither has yet delivered the level of structural change required to break up the big estates. That said, landownership is at least debated, there have been some moves to challenge the concentration of landownership and tools have been put in place that could, if used, make a significant difference. Therefore in the next article I will write further regarding Scotland. □

Party declares it's not "yours" for organised socialists

By Matt Cooper

The 12 April Central Executive Committee (CEC) of Your Party adopted a blanket ban on members belonging to other socialist organisations. This directly contradicts the November 2025 YP conference, where 69% voted against a general ban in favour of a more limited approach, the only option the leadership allowed for voting.

Membership of any organisation with its own programme, ideology, or discipline has been declared incompatible with membership of Your Party. In other words, organised socialism is to be excluded altogether.

The list of targeted groups is inconsistent and incomplete. Workers' Liberty and other organisations are named, others omitted. But the intention of driving out organised groups in the party is clear.

So, after eight months of assemblies, internal documents, a founding conference, online votes and a CEC election, Your Party is finally taking shape.

Not as the pluralist, democratic socialist vehicle many hoped for. As something far narrower: an umbrella for loosely aligned local electoral groups, underpinned by a passive membership loyal to Jeremy Corbyn and his clique.

Meanwhile, on 10 April, the leadership published the list of candidates it will support in the May local elections, for which nominations closed 9 April. An earlier list included several other groups previously supported by Corbyn which

are now deleted.

Those deleted include: Pendle Community Independents, in a ruling coalition with the Lib Dems; the Oldham Group, led by an ex-Conservative councillor and slum landlord, one of whose properties collapsed last month; and the Walsall Independents, including some former Conservative councillors.

Surviving the "due diligence" is at least one ex-Tory, Obaydul Kabir in Birmingham.

Candidates

Your Party's own members have not been treated so generously. Two Grassroots Left CEC members have had their local candidacies endorsed, but many candidates selected by proto-branches have not, notably in Southwark and Waltham Forest.

In Corbyn's backyard of Islington, the YP office is backing none of the Islington Community Independents slate.

ICI was formed, before YP, around two councillors who quit Labour in sympathy with Corbyn. They have had a joint council group with the Greens, but their leading non-councillor activist went over to the Greens, and the Greens refused a no-contest deal with ICI for 7 May. The ICI slate (for nine out of the 51 council seats) includes Palestine Action activist and former hunger striker Amu Gib, who has been held on remand since July 2025. One ICI-YP candidate was reportedly asked to apologise for standing in the CEC election on the Grassroots Left slate. So none of the slate gets backing.

Your Party is, however, backing non-members, notably the Aspire ruling group on Tower Hamlets council. This is a council which boasts of "savings" of £250 million since 2010 and another £42 million planned. Cuts have been re-allocated to other parts of the council budget, but this is hardly the kind of no-cuts budgets endorsed by the YP conference and online vote in November.

The Corbyn clique's aim is evidently not to build a democratic socialist party with debate, organisation, and accountability. Rather, a controlled electoral machine: localised, ideologically thin, and centrally managed, backed up by a passive Corbyn-loyal membership corralled into stage-managed online votes.

There now seems little chance of the existing proto-branches being given the

ISEC update Your Party Scotland

Interim Scottish Executive Committee in mass resignation

The Your Party Scotland interim executive has resigned en masse, complaining among other things that the YP office has blocked them from contesting the Holyrood election

chance to become the basis of recognised branches. They are likely to be replaced by larger, looser structures, possibly through assemblies open to non-members, designed to dilute internal opposition and reinforce central authority.

Alongside this will be a network of local electoral groups, politically little better in any way than Labour council groups, socially rooted in narrow community bases, without a working-class base or meaningful programme for fighting cuts.

Grassroots Left

The Grassroots Left is opposing the blanket ban on organised socialists, but it faces an uphill battle, since there is no official decision-making group in YP beyond the CEC (the "proto-branches" have no official status), and no new YP conference scheduled any time soon.

And meanwhile, however, Zarah Sultana (loosely associated with the Grassroots Left) has continued her habit of unthought-through pronouncements that play to the worst prejudices around the left.

The UK government has banned US rapper Kanye West (now Ye) from the UK after his adoption of a pro-Nazi stance, including releasing "Heil Hitler" and selling a swastika T-shirt. Sultana: "Glad Keir Starmer's Labour government is prioritising stopping musicians from performing. Wouldn't want them

distracted from their complicity in Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people and an illegal war on Iran."

There are a number of issues here. First, Sultana's opposition to bans is selective. While she appears relaxed about pro-Nazi rappers, she is less so about Israeli football supporters, in October last year calling for Maccabi Tel Aviv fans to be barred from entering the UK. Her non-censorious attitude to artistic freedom also does not extend to Israeli musicians, whom she wants banned from the Eurovision Song Contest.

Second, and more importantly, her political instinct here is appalling. Faced with a rapper being banned for siding with the most murderous antisemite of the twentieth century, what is her first instinct? She could have said that the state should not censor artists on the basis of even the most vile views. Instead, she dismisses the antisemitism as less important

than condemning Israel, the creation of which is, of course, the direct consequence of that antisemitism.

This matters. There is an increasing antisemitism problem on the British left. A *Solidarity* reader has reported that a "Your Party" Facebook group (not an official group) included straightforwardly antisemitic posts about the arson attacks on Jewish community ambulances in Golders Green.

When he objected, his post was deleted and he was expelled. The group still contains claims that the arson was a Mossad operation and: "They [that is Jewish people] have their own police, have their own courts, have their own age of consent (3yr 1 month), their own laws and, fuck me, their own ambulances."

That is not even the worst unofficial YP-related Facebook group; for the real dirt, see "REAL Your Party supporters ONLY". Of course, this is social media. There is no evidence that people in Your Party have stepped over into such crude antisemitism in real life. Equally, there is no official pushback from YP against antisemitism swirling around it.

Sultana is neither defending artistic freedom nor opposing the Israeli government's actions in Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon and Iran. Her posturing instead encourages the worst elements of the social media "left". □



This booklet offers an attempt to analyse the setbacks, learn lessons, and sketch a way to renewed efforts following Corbyn's time as Labour leader. £4 (inc. post) □

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A radical-feminist take on motherhood

By Ruth Cashman

In *Of Woman Born*, originally published in 1976, and being discussed by the London Socialist Feminist Book Club on 19 April, influential poet and feminist Adrienne Rich examines motherhood as an institution.

She looks at her and other's experience of mothering, both determined by and distinct from the institution of motherhood as it is imposed on all women everywhere. The book argues the political institution of motherhood is bound up with devaluation of women in other spheres and the pressures of women to validate themselves in maternity. Whether you are a mother or not, as a woman you are socially defined by motherhood.

In the early seventies little feminist writing centred on motherhood. Rich is credited with introducing a new approach, a blend of memoir, academic writing and political manifesto, now common in popular feminist writing.

Rich's writing is skilled and flows well, making the long book an enjoyable read.

Rich, who died in 2012, was a radical feminist (as distinct from "socialist feminist" or "liberal feminist"), arguing that motherhood, like the rest of the society, is shaped by patriarchy. Patriarchy, she explains, "is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men, by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male."

Patriarchy

However Rich's concept of patriarchy is historically rooted in relationship to other social relations. The new economic relations established with each mode of production exert pressure on other social relations, making some obsolete, remoulding others. The

book notes the birth of capitalism changed the experience of motherhood — work was moved from the home to industrial settings, isolating mothers or forcing them to endure motherhood in conditions unsuited to it (in factories etc).

Motherhood changed through capitalism. Rich described how household commodities, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and the like, had (in the USA, at least) reduced the physical burden of domestic labour, but came with a change toward a more private culture of household work which made mothers more lonely. She contrasts the collective mothering of factory towns to the segregated existence of the suburban mums of 1950s America.

I read the 1986 reprint of the book, and in the introduction there she states she would no longer end the book as in

1976: "the repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the seizing of the means of production by workers". In the intervening decades her politics had come to see the fight for women's personhood was "hand in hand" with fight against class exploitation.

The book's criticism of medicine is striking and unbalanced. The history of medical childbirth is harrowing, but she dismisses the potential for medicine to reduce pain and risk in labour. The bad side-effects of the contraceptive pill are amplified, and its potential to improve women's lives underplayed.

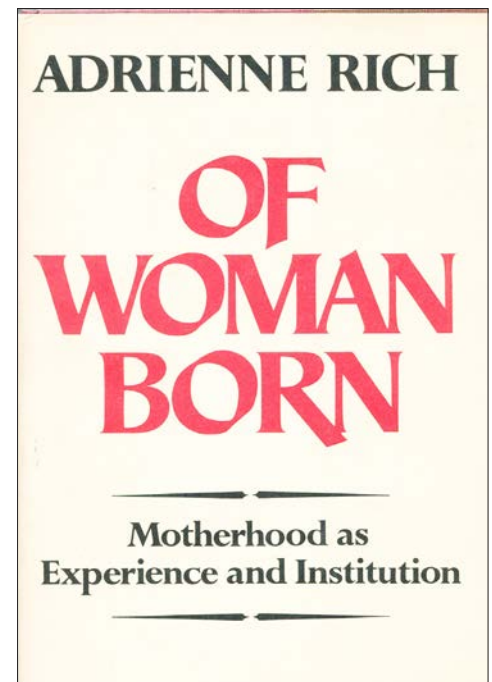
Rich's reputation has been damaged because she edited Janice Raymond's 1979 book *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, which is widely recognized as a foundational trans-misogynistic text. We cannot know whether Rich regretted this. She certainly made no public repudiation, though she ended on opposite sides to Raymond in the "sex wars".

There is only one quote from Rich in Raymond's book: "men who have given up the supposed ultimate possession of manhood in a patriarchal society by self-castration". This is supposed by many to mean trans women, though in her writing Rich uses castration not so much in the medical sense but as giving up or removal of male patriarchal power and privilege. She uses it to describe a potential political and social project of throwing off or deconstructing patriarchy.

Men

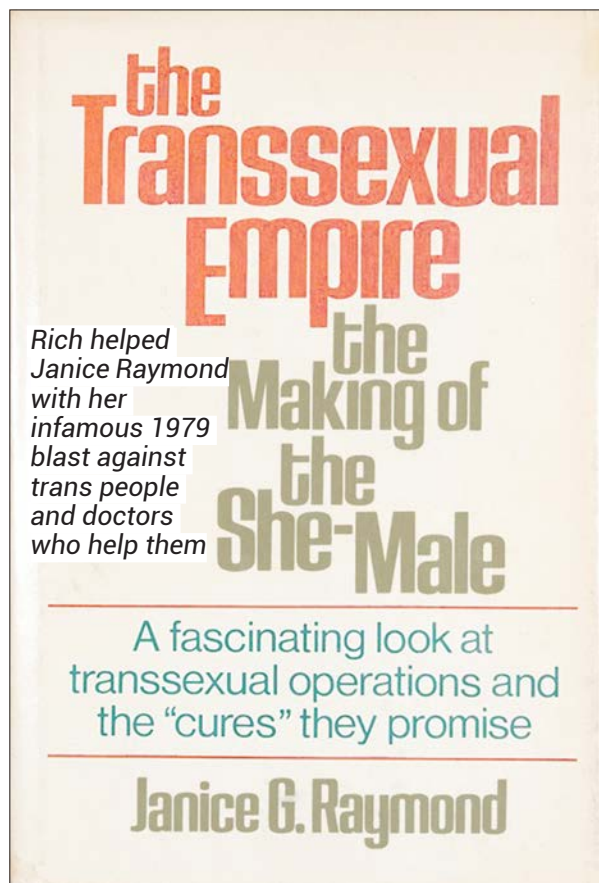
Unlike many rad fems of the era, she saw a place for men and talked warmly about her hopes and fears for her own boy children. But involving men in feminism, she stated, must also involve stopping praising them for choosing to share in the work of childcare.

Rich spoke of a constant process "re-vision" of her life, ideas and work. She defined the concept, in a 1971 speech, as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entertaining an old text from a new critical direction."



She had an extraordinary life, good and bad. Her father was controlling and abusive, her husband killed himself after she left him, her life was shaped by ill-health and disability. She transformed from Jewish child prodigy, to fifties housewife and renowned poet, to loving angry mother and groundbreaking feminist.

In many ways her experience of motherhood was exceptional. In "the embodiment of rage, of tragedy, of the overcharged energy of love, of inventive desperation" she was shockingly normal. □



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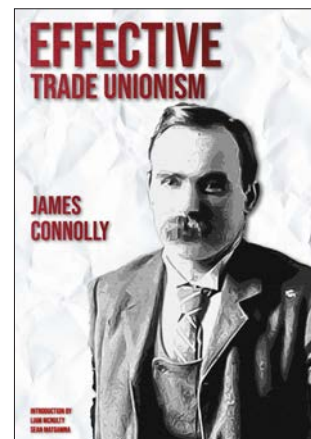
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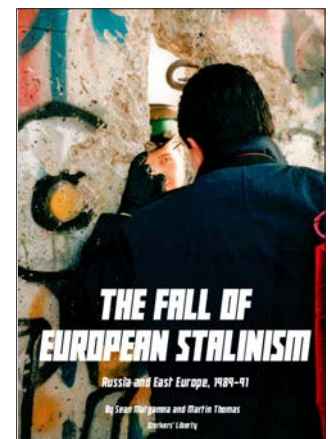
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The left after the fall of Orbán

By Ferenc Fejes

Viktor Orbán, authoritarian right-wing prime minister of Hungary since 2010, suffered a humiliating defeat in the 12 April election.

While about two percent of the votes still need to be counted, the results are clear: Tisza, the party headed by Péter Magyar, won with a two-thirds majority. The current estimates have Tisza at 136 seats in parliament, leaving Fidesz with 56, and the far-right Our Homeland Movement with six.

A shaken Orbán conceded at around 21:30, with about half of the votes still uncounted. Budapest streets broke out in celebration, which lasted all night. Honking cars, cries of joy, shouts of "Tisza is flooding" and "Mocskos (scumbag) Fidesz".

Supermajority

The jubilation intensified as it became clear that Tisza reached a supermajority, allowing them to modify, or even rewrite the constitution introduced by Fidesz when it won with a supermajority in 2010.

People were tearing off campaign signs — mainly Fidesz, though not exclusively — to take them home as if they

were trophies. Some stomped on them on the ground. The relief of getting rid of the odious far-right atmosphere that was suffocating Hungarians was palpable.

Signs

The signs of Orbán's defeat were written on the wall for quite a while now: protests against multiple pedophile scandals surrounding Fidesz, against graft at the tax authorities, the mass defiance of the Pride march ban, the visit by J D Vance in an attempt to prop Orbán up.

"Public" media under Orbán's control became increasingly unhinged as the elections approached. They warned of Ukrainian snipers and drone pilots killing people in an effort to install Tisza in case of a Fidesz victory. Aleksandar Vučić, Serbian president and Orbán ally, told him they found explosives planted by Ukrainian agents by a pipeline delivering gas to Hungary.

Their propaganda reached levels of hysteria comparable to that of Putin's media machinery. And that's no accident, since it's been discovered that Russian "advisors" were helping him to claim victory. In contrast to the old Cold War slogan of "Third Camp" socialists, "Neither Washington nor Moscow",

Orbán seemed to follow "Both Washington and Moscow", and still, it did him no good. The reasons for this result are many-fold.

Apart from the above mentioned unconscionable scandals, public services have degraded to a point unacceptable for most people. The same can be said of corruption. Old opposition figures, and parties, thoroughly discredited through scandals of their own, disappeared by the time this election rolled along.

Disillusioned

Péter Magyar is a right-winger — describing himself as a "liberal-conservative" — which makes him an acceptable candidate for disillusioned Fidesz voters, not just for long-time liberal or left oppositionists, who were mostly willing to vote for just about anybody to kick Orbán out of parliament.

For the time being, it looks like Hungarians can expect less police intimidation, less weaponisation of the secret service against us, and increased freedom of assembly and association. But Magyar is still a right-winger.

At his first international press conference as prime minister elect, he had nothing but kind words toward Giorgia

Meloni, refused to name the far-right as the political allies to Orbán, and talked about people's "legitimate fears" about illegal immigration. He said the far-right CPAC conference is still welcome in Hungary, provided they pay for the event themselves, as opposed to it being paid by state funds and by Orbán affiliated businessmen.

He said he saw no problem with maps and pictures of Greater Hungary, since they are historical, and it reminds people of a Hungarian golden age — a statement calculated to avoid outright irredentism, peppered with assurances that he seeks good relationships with all surrounding countries. (In 1920, after World War One, Hungary was reduced to one-third its previous size. There are still large Hungarian populations in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine).

No institutional representation exists today of the left in Hungary. Right wing hegemony reigns, even if it's in a more liberal form than what Orbán championed.

The left must take advantage of the expected new opportunities to strengthen itself, and fight for the interests of the workers, and all those who suffer under oppression and exploitation. □

Inflation and crisis

Organise a union fightback

By Martin Thomas

Up to the Iran-US-Israel-Lebanon war, you could expect 2026 to be dim but not terrible for working-class household finances. No longer.

Because of Universal Credit rises and the scrapping of the two-child benefit cap, poorer households could expect a 2.8% real-income rise this year, according to the [Resolution Foundation](#). Middling households, not so much, but still an average real-income rise.

Now the *Financial Times* reports: "A rise in the price of petrol at the pump is just the beginning. A shortage of jet fuel... A lack of helium — much of which is produced in Qatar — could stop the production of semiconductors. Food production will be damaged by fertiliser shortages..."

All that is already hitting, and will hit, poorer countries much more than Britain. But wide price rises are likely in Britain, too.

And maybe worse. Capitalist crises start when a critical mass of capitalists can no longer make payments due on past purchases or borrowing, and financiers cut credit because they become unconfident of repayment. The economic shock of the war may set off that spiral.

Extended chains of speculation and finance around AI, cryptocurrencies, and non-bank credit are already precarious. Trump's tariff wars make the system less shock-absorbent.

Unions are likely to need a response like 2022-3 (Russia-Ukraine war price shock) plus one like 2008-9 (closures, job cuts). But it will have to be better than then.

In November 2021 *Solidarity's* front-page headline was "A Good Time For Strikes". Capitalists were anxious to restart expansion after lockdowns; the government was able and willing to run up large debt.

We were right. But then un-

ions used the favourable conditions to limit themselves to feeble campaigns and be able (mostly) still to win bits and pieces. It wasn't wasted effort. But it didn't convince workers that, when we vote for action, our union leaders have serious plans.

- All the campaigns were dribs and drabs, one-day or few-day strikes, each time followed by "wait and see, and we'll propose more in due course"

- No coordination of strikes to multiply impact. Rather, the opposite: deliberate fragmentation

- A "solidarity movement", Enough is Enough, was launched with big, enthusiastic rallies, and then nixed from the top.

To rally strong action, unions need to convince members of plans which scale up to the challenge of less favourable times, probable in 2026.

- Democratic control, with local and national strike com-

mittees, elected and accountable

- Campaigns of determined escalation until we win, not "wait and see"

- Coordination of strikes. Use Trades Councils or ad hoc local union coordinations to create a real solidarity movement, with mass pickets and street demonstrations.

- Unifying, adequate, and precise demands.

Escalator

Many unions have already submitted their claims, but where they haven't, or reopening is possible, unions should consider adding "escalator clauses", by which, on top of annual settlements, pay is automatically increased each month to keep up with a price index. No-one knows what price rises will be by late 2026, and few one-off annual pay-rise claims now are likely to cover them.

Italy had an "escalator clause" like that, by law, from

1945 to 1992. Belgium still has one, though shot full of holes. Even the UK had a half-arsed version in 1973-4 ("threshold agreements").

The standard Consumer Price Index tends to underestimate inflation for the worse-off. But even a CPI-based escalator clause would be valuable.

The Minimum Income Standard calculated by the Rowntree Foundation gives a more realistic figure for price rises for the worse-off. It is calculated only yearly, and as figures for "income standards" for different sorts of households rather than as an average percentage. But unions could easily build on that to calculate a "working-class price index".

Strong campaigns on pay can lay the basis for the audacious and coordinated action (workplace occupations and more) which will be needed if capitalist economic troubles escalate into full-scale crisis. □



Making antisemitism virtuous

By Dale Street

Why did so much of the global left immediately, the very next day, celebrate the crimes against humanity committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023? Why do such people consistently back clerical-fascist and genocidal Hamas? And why do they see Israel and Zionism as the embodiment of all evil in the world?

These are the questions addressed by the Moroccan-born Israeli-French academic Eva Illouz in "8 October: Genealogy of a Virtuous Hatred".

Illouz answers her questions by tracing the evolution — the genealogy referred to in the booklet's title — of French Theory, Critical Theory and "decolonialism". Successive sideswipes at Judith Butler make her work entertaining as well as enlightening.

Illouz is no fan of identity politics, the hallmark and end point of this genealogy.

Prior to 7 October: "The misdemeanours of identity politics consisted of nothing worse than abandoning universalism, economy and class in favour of relativism, 'race' and culture, plus invoking the mantra of intersectionality and transforming white into a guilt-laden colour."

As of 8 October: "These politics turned out to be more dangerous. They now resemble a quasi-religious worldview

which imbues its adepts with an eschatological mission of redemption, and identifies radical evil with Israel."

The genealogy begins with French Theory. Like its forerunners — de Sade, Nietzsche, Heidegger (Nazi philosopher) and Schmitt (Nazi jurist) — French Theory exhibited "an irrational rejection of reason, universalist morality, liberalism, technology and the western world."

As French Theory evolved into Critical Theory, it came to be defined by four characteristics.

Pantextualism: In contrast to the Marxist understanding of society as "machines, labour contracts and hours, property and wages, classes and relations of production", society was viewed as "a massive network of signs, texts, discourses and discursive formations."

Powerism ("pouvoirisme"): Power was not something located in real-world class-based rule. It was "the ultimate signifier to be extracted from texts, an abstract and devoid-of-agency power, which embraces the totality of textual practices and social spheres."

Super-critique: Not to be confused with Marx' advocacy of "ruthless criticism of everything existing", Critical Theory "no longer distinguished between science and myth, deconstruction freed itself from any epistemological anchoring; ... tracking down oppressions also had to be surpassed

by ever more virulent denunciations."

Wandering structures: Illouz's savaging of this characteristic borders on cruelty: "An ahistorical theory-centrism, a theoretical imperialism which has changed into such a closed system that it can ignore any interaction with the real world, a static devoid-of-agency concept of pure abstraction; lacking an empirical existence, it can be transferred from one context to another."

Decolonialism

Decolonialism is a specific manifestation of Critical Theory: "It emphasises the projection of abstract and invisible concepts onto reality, powerism, and the dichotomy between repressive structure and resistance Colonialism is thus transformed into a wandering structure. Colonialism is no longer a historical event but a [timeless] social structure."

Illouz goes on to explain how Critical Theory's characteristics, located in its anti-Enlightenment and anti-Western Manicheanism, and given a final twist by decolonialism, result in a conceptualism of Israel (and Zionism) as the ultimate evil.

Israel is "added to the axis of evil to which whiteness, privilege, colonialism, capitalism, masculinity and climate change belong." Israel, it is claimed, is guilty of all these crimes.

This coexists with a "transcendental antizionism" which has "nothing to do with the concrete deeds of the state of Israel or the policies of its government but which ascribes an immeasurable power to Israel and extends to all Jews throughout the world."

Opposition to Israel and Zionism is elevated to the level of a moral obligation. But, in reality, it is "a new form of antisemitism which presents itself as virtuous ideology", one in which "hatred of Israelis embodies virtue itself".

The mass murder, sexual violence, sadistic mutilations, abductions and snuff videos of 7 October are therefore hailed as heroic antizionist "resistance" — a key concept of decolonialism — and effortlessly justified by "contemporary progressives (who) consider it their calling to free the world from the state of Israel."

As Illouz puts it: "When the Enlightenment and its virtues have been meticulously deconstructed and rejected, antizionism becomes the sole virtue capable of rallying those who have deconstructed everything."

Illouz's book is only 90 pages, but impossible to do justice to in a short review. Ruthlessly incisive, it provides a highly readable explanation of the ongoing and escalating explosion of post-7-October "virtuous antisemitism". □

Debate

Antisemitism picture is more complex

By Daniel Randall

Dale Street's article in *Solidarity* 764 reviews the latest report from the Community Security Trust (CST's), a Jewish community organisation.

Incidents which CST categorised as "Extreme Violence" doubled from two in 2024 to four in 2025. But "Assaults" decreased by 16%, and "Threats" decreased by 22%. Incidents in other categories rose. The trend is not a simple one of straightforwardly escalating antisemitic violence, but something more diffuse.

The Heaton Park synagogue attack in Manchester, and the arson attack on the ambulances of a Jewish charity in London, show antisemitism still drives deadly violence. But such incidents remain exceptional. This is no cause for complacency, but it has implications for how we confront

a bigotry expressed predominantly ideologically, rather than "physically" or structurally.

Street initially states that "antizionism" is a "dominant strand" of antisemitism, but concludes by stating that it is "the [my emphasis — DR] dominant form of contemporary Jew-hatred".

Antisemitism on the left is often (although not always) expressed in anti-Zionist terms, influenced by an "anti-imperialism of fools" derived from Stalinism. As Street notes, an additional strand is forms of "decolonial" politics which can ascribe an innate moral essence to entire peoples.

Are these "the dominant form" of contemporary antisemitism more widely? Antisemitism is an ideology, based on the identification of a socially-manipulative power explicitly named or coded as

Jewish. People can assimilate elements of it in ways that are not easily statistically measured by the reporting of "incidents" to monitoring groups. But if we take CST data on its own terms, over half of all incidents (52%) did not have "explicitly anti-Zionist motivation", and 47% had no explicit link to Israel or Palestine at all.

Limitations

There are undoubtedly many expressions of antisemitism that the CST's report does not capture. When instances of antisemitism on the left are acknowledged at all, they are, rightly, generally contested via argument, not reported to the CST. This is one reason why a reporting-based, statistical approach like the CST's has limitations.

The fact that 47% of recorded antisemitic incidents have no explicit link to Israel at all chal-

lenges a common assumption on the left, that antisemitism is "created by" Israeli policy. This was expressed by Tariq Ali at a rally in 2021: "Every time they bomb Gaza [...] that is what creates antisemitism. Stop the occupation, stop the bombing and casual antisemitism will soon disappear." Events in the Middle East may be triggers, but they do not generate antisemitism out of nothing.

Those who acknowledge antisemitism on the left should not assume its common forms in our own political milieu are necessarily the dominant forms in wider society.

Street's article also reproduces another of the CST's flaws, using the term "Jew-hate" as interchangeable with "antisemitism". If antisemitism is reduced to "hatred", it becomes a question of individual psychology rather than

ideology. Undoubtedly, many antisemites do "hate Jews". But people can also reproduce antisemitic ideas without conscious animus.

Reducing antisemitism to a historically-transcendent "Jew hate", which may change form but ultimately expresses something singular and continuous, is harmful to efforts to confront it. Given the history of persecution, it is understandable why many Jews see antisemitism as inescapable. But this approach tends towards a fatalism which treats bigotries as eternal.

For socialists, that is a dead end. Even whilst acknowledging ideology's relative autonomy from historical conditions, we must retain a perspective that sees reactionary ideas as historically contingent, and therefore capable of being overcome. □

Reform UK is a lie-factory

By Harold Storey

Among your co-workers, neighbours or family, you probably know people who may vote for Reform UK. How to answer them? This article lays out some of Reform UK's policies and what we as socialists advocate instead.

Workers' Rights

Richard Tice has proposed a "Great Repeal Bill" to scrap the Employment Rights Act 2025 and many other social protections.

While the Employment Rights Act falls short in many ways, calling for its repeal roves an anti-worker agenda. Its repeal would increase zero-hour contracts, make fire-and-rehire practices easier, and scrap parental leave and statutory sick pay as day one rights for workers. It would retain all the old Tory strike-balloot impositions.

Trade-union access to workplaces would be cut back, and union recognition would become more difficult via reintroduction of a requirement to show that a majority of an entire bargaining unit support recognition.

We campaign instead for day one rights across the board for all workers, for the total abolition of zero-hour contracts, and for an expansion of trade union rights. Trade unions should agitate publicly to speed the removal of the 50% turnout rule for strike ballots (legislated but not yet implemented). It should be easier for workers to organise, to fight for our rights and to win more security and comfort in our work. The photo-op with Farage and a union branded leaflet is a typical Reform opportunistic lie.

Housing

Reform's housing spokesperson Simon Dudley's thought on the Grenfell disaster, that "everyone dies in the end", was not an isolated fault in Reform, remedied now by Farage sacking him. Dudley, a former executive at the government agency Homes England with a career history in banking, was not a random appointment, but, unusually for

Reform, a seemingly serious figure.

Reform plans to abolish the Renters' Rights Act 2025. This would lead to the reintroduction of Section 21 and no-fault evictions. Landlords would again be able to evict tenants without providing a reason. Tenants would also be given a much harder time challenging above-market rent increases.

Reform's racism also shows through their housing policy, with plans to make sure that migrants are always pushed to the back of social housing queues. In fact 90% of social-renters were born in the UK or Ireland. The reason why both local-born and immigrants can't get social housing is that there is not enough of it.

We want a major increase in council-house building. Ban the selling-off of council houses, which has led to two million of them becoming private property (and 40% of these now private rentals) since discount-sales were introduced by Thatcher. Nationalise the building industry. Introduce rent controls.

Health/NHS

Reform would at best cause massive damage to the NHS, and at worst destroy it.

As recently as 2015 Farage said that an insurance-based NHS, similar to the US system, was a "debate that we're all going to have to return to". Likely due to the unpopularity of such a policy, in more recent years the line has become that Reform will "re-examine the whole funding model (of the NHS) and find a way that's more efficient."

The problem with NHS funding is not that it is "inefficient", but that there is not enough of it. All we know about Reform's "re-examination" is that it would include a 20% tax relief on private healthcare insurance and services to ensure "independent healthcare capacity will grow rapidly".

We want the rich taxed heavily to restore and expand the NHS and pay staff fairly. The NHS cannot be fixed by boosting the extraction of profits from healthcare

Higher Education

For higher education, Reform's plans include a restriction of undergraduate numbers to "well below current levels", increasing the student loan repayment period from 30 to 45 years, and abolishing

tuition fees for STEM degrees. International students would no longer be allowed at all to bring family to the UK.

We say: abolish tuition fees across the board, reinstate maintenance grants at a livable level, and tax the rich to provide universities with the funding and the staff they need. Education should not be treated as solely existing to train us for work, but as something which enriches society.

Environment

Reform aims to scrap net-zero targets, fast-track new domestic oil and gas licences, and support fracking in the UK, all in supposed efforts to save and restore "British jobs". Reform's platform reeks of climate change denial and a total disregard for the safety or health of the planet or of human beings. Andrea Jenkyns, Reform's mayor for Greater Lincolnshire, has said: "Do I believe that climate change exists? No."

Net-zero targets are not causing job losses. In any case, the scrapping of initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions would be disastrous for ecology. The entire energy industry should be nationalised and organised democratically by its workers and the community, with a just transition to sustainable technologies.

Fracking is a bad idea for other reasons, too. In the US, where fracking is used heavily, fracking workers are seven times more likely to die on the job than

the average American worker, and people living near and working on fracking sites are more likely to have a high-risk pregnancy or a baby with a low infant health index.

Migrants

Reform aim to scrap Indefinite Leave to Remain for migrants, replacing it with a new visa that would need renewing every five years and would depend on income of £60,000. Massive resources would be put into creating a UK version of America's ICE, with the goal of mass deportations (600,000 over five years), and all asylum seekers would be "processed" overseas (as with Italy's moves to dump its asylum-seekers in Albania for "processing").

This is modelled on a system and a force in the USA that murders random people in public. Do we want that recreated here?

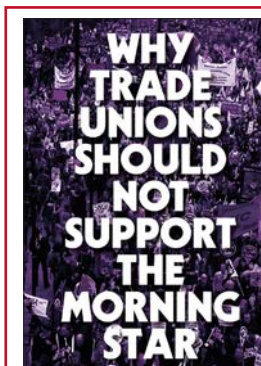
Migrants and asylum-seekers are not the enemies of British workers. Migrants do not pre-empt social housing in the UK. They do not make life more unsafe for British people. Adjusted for age and

sex, the percentage of non-citizens doing things that get them in prison is lower than of British citizens. Services like the NHS and social care depend heavily on migrant workers.

We want safe, accessible routes to the UK for those looking to come here. We want workers, local-born and migrant, to unite against our common enemy, the capitalist class, who actually are a danger and actually pre-empt resources.

A comprehensive account of Reform's platform and socialist answers would have to be much longer than this article permits. Reform UK's plans centre on stripping back workers' and tenants' rights, weakening the NHS, weakening education, and dividing workers by racist lies. No, we don't want a British Trump or Orban! □

• Weblinks with data sources in the online version, bit.ly/trump-f



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A crisis of unruly schools?

By David Axon

This is the first of a series on schools. This part looks at trade union disputes about student behaviour. Later parts will look at positive ideas for school culture.

The 2026 conference of the National Education Union debated a motion titled "Tackling the violence and behaviour crisis in schools, a union-led campaign".

It was a composite of two motions, one submitted by South East Hampshire and one by Portsmouth. It started by noting "the escalating behaviour crisis in schools across England and Wales". It referred to the 2025 report by another school worker union, Nasuwt, *Behaviour in Schools: Key Messages*, which "reveals 85 per cent of teachers have experienced verbal abuse and 40 per cent have faced physical abuse in the last 12 months".

Many delegates felt somewhat uncomfortable with declaring there to be a "violence and behaviour crisis", but noted also that this motion was the fourth most highly prioritised one for conference, behind only SEND, Ofsted, and the far right.

But whilst recognising that "behaviour must be understood within the wider context of trauma, unmet needs, and exclusion" this motion called for the union's executive to – among other things – "launch a national campaign to reduce violence in schools". It declared the union's current behaviour policy guidance to be "outdated", and advocated a shift of approach closer to that of the Nasuwt. A later amendment declared that "the culture of violence in schools permeates through every layer of the education system".

The first amendment to the motion sought to replace the call for a national campaign on violence with the more established NEU measures of guidance on trauma-informed practices, campaigns for funding for early intervention, pastoral care, mental health support and behaviour intervention teams, and training and resources for members on pupil behaviour.

The Educator's Fightback blog and conference bulletin recommended supporting this amendment, but honestly noted this as a change of mind from first thoughts. That reflects the dilemma of many delegates who wanted to adopt a strategy that would support and protect members, but without targeting vulnerable pupils or giving credence to policies advocated by some Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) (and the government's "behaviour tsar" Tom Bennett) for "zero tolerance" and "managing behaviour" by making children unhappy.

Many felt that none of the options be-

fore the conference was quite right. The conference was almost evenly split, but ultimately voted down this first amendment, even though by a fairly small margin. The NEU Executive has now been mandated to run a national campaign on violence in schools.

The Nasuwt report launched last year certainly makes stark reading. 5,808 Nasuwt members took part in the survey, with 4,000 of them also providing comments. The union reports that 40% of respondents had "experienced physical abuse or violence from pupils" in the previous 12 months: "With regard to physical violence, 20% of teachers were hit or punched, 16% were kicked and 38% were shoved or barged. A further 9% were spat at, while 4% had been headbutted".

Context

Of course without context it cannot be determined to what extent that 38% of "shoving" or "barging" was deliberate, and to what extent the result of rowdy movement in overcrowded corridors. But it is inescapable that these Nasuwt members – over 2,000 of them – had experienced it as something that affected them at work, with over 1,000 actually "hit or punched". There are individual stories of school staff injured, and the union quotes respondents on the wider impact:

"I was concerned for my safety whilst pregnant."

"I don't want to go into work and my mood changes on my way to work."

"I feel I'm not doing my job properly as I barely teach due to dealing with behavioural issues, thus having an enormous impact on other children and on my performance as a teacher. I am looking constantly for other jobs outside of teaching."

Fairly widespread dissatisfaction with school management is reported. "Just 18% said appropriate action was always taken, and the individual felt supported by their school or college; 8% said no action was taken by their school or college, while an additional 10% were not informed of the outcome of the incident(s) after reporting".

Of course what constitutes "appropriate action" for the responding members in each case is not known, and may be contentious. The second part of this article will consider the Nasuwt's recommendations in that report and wider views about "behaviour", but one in nine respondents said that in their perception their school's behaviour policy was "rarely" or "never" used, and 6% that they never receive feedback from management about incidents they have reported.

The report commits the Nasuwt to reassuring members "that we stand with

them against unacceptable working conditions, including violent and abusive behaviour. It says the union will "use our communications channels to keep this issue in the public domain, with a view to securing widespread support for our actions".

The Nasuwt has launched a number of disputes on children's behaviour since then, with a vigorous media strategy alongside.

Teachers at Lily Lane Primary School in Manchester and Ravensfield Primary School in Tameside (both in the same trust) struck on Tuesday 6 January. The union's publicity says "assaults on staff and pupils are an almost daily occurrence but leaders are failing to consistently employ an effective behaviour policy", and that "pupils bite, kick, hit and spit at staff, as well as throwing furniture and bringing knives to school". Members at Haydon Bridge High School in Hexham voted for 12 days of strike action over "continuing failure of school management to put in place an effective pupil behaviour management system". And at St Cuthbert's High School in Rochdale members have only just suspended nine days of action, saying "at present truancy is endemic within the school, with pupils roaming the site unsupervised, barging into classrooms and attacking and verbally abusing other pupils and staff."

Approaches

Solidarity has already reported on the dispute at St Cuthbert's, and commented on the root of the problem being the multi-academy trust to which control of the school was handed by the Diocese – something being taken up by NEU action currently the subject of a ballot. The Educator's Fightback bulletin at conference commented on the two slightly different approaches: "Recent industrial action at St Cuthbert's High School in Rochdale offers an object lesson in these divergent approaches. While Nasuwt members' action was focused on individual instances of children's "behaviour", the NEU made it clear that they were challenging the MAT's [Multi-Academy Trust's] decision to cut provision that supported pastoral care for pupils. Who we take our action against is important: can you strike "against" young people and their behaviour? Would it not be better to target those responsible for shaping the environment in which these things occur?"

What actual demands of the Nasuwt action might be on the school and MAT managements and is not reported in most cases, and at St Cuthbert's at least was not shared with workmates in other unions. What they appear to be in press reporting – fed by the union's focus on individual tales of outrageous

behaviour, red meat for local tabloids and social media – is a call for harsher treatment, perhaps exclusion of the students concerned.

I have no independent evidence of the accuracy or otherwise of Roch Valley Radio's 10 March report on St Cuthbert's "Schools can't fix bad parenting" says striking teacher", but appearance has impact, and, alongside the lurid tales in the Nasuwt press release, it creates very great difficulty indeed in making common cause with parents or students.

The approach taken by the NEU certainly is different, with a focus on the MAT's effective asset-stripping of the school, and far greater openness to building community support. The call by local councillors Philip Massey and Daniel Meredith for an explanation from the MAT's CEO of its huge budget "topslice" shows that there is at least some basis for that.

One thing is certain. With the continued underfunding of SEND, unhappiness of many children, and increased pressures on them, there will continue to be incidents of "poor behaviour", including to those that have real impact on staff and fellow students.

In many schools in MATs, the focus on centrally planned lessons, rather than teacher creativity, is making school an increasingly boring experience and a less pleasant place to be.

And the Nasuwt is rightly determined to protect its members, believing that the approach outlined is correct. There will be more strikes on behaviour.

Is the approach correct? What exactly is the risk in the Nasuwt approach, and in the NEU conference decision to shift closer to it? And is there an alternative?

A thought-experiment might be helpful, to consider an example of a strike about discipline that might actually be considered a reactionary one.

Example

The 1985 strike at Poundswick High school in Manchester provides exactly such an example. The Poundswick story also raises questions about the dynamics of such a dispute once in place, and how it might end. And with this strike being before the 1988 Education Act, it also provides an interesting example of how things worked before "local management of schools", something outside the experience of almost all current NEU activists.

The initial report in *Socialist Organiser* at the time is worth quoting at length. (*Socialist Organiser* was a forerunner of *Solidarity*.)

Five fifth form boys at Poundswick High School in Wythenshawe are alleged to have daubed obscene and apparently sexist and racist remarks

Risinghill school in Islington (now reopened as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson school) was shut down in 1965 by the local authority because head teacher Michael Duane (centre) and his staff refused to use corporal punishment there



concerning teachers on the walls of the school.

They were suspended last June by the head teacher and a subsequent meeting of the school governors recommended that they be expelled. As is normal procedure, the matter then went to sub-committee of the City Council's Education Committee. After six hours of discussion, the sub-committee decided that because of conflicting evidence over who wrote what, and indeed over whether some of the pupils had written anything, the boys should be returned to the school.

Although this isn't the first time that the sub-committee has turned down school governors' request to expel a pupil, on this occasion the reaction of the staff at Poundswick was explosive. They not only demanded that the sub-committee, which has delegated powers, reverse its own decision, but refused to teach the pupils.

So when the five returned to school they were singled out and made to sit on their own at desks in the main hall. After three days of this the head sent the boys home again, only to take them back at the instructions of the Chief Education Officer. And as successive teachers refused to teach them, they were sent home as being in breach of contract.

Most of the rest of the staff walked out and the dispute really took off. The affair has now reached hysterical proportions with a collection of Tories, motley, right-wing Labour councillors, head teachers' unions, the hang 'em and flog 'em brigade and the Socialist Workers Party all joining together to attack the Council under the slogan "Save Our Standards". Those who took the original decision have been deluged with hate mail, including at least one from a teacher, and have been threatened with physical violence. The local secretary of the Nasuwt has stated: "We shall not be looking for a settlement but for outright victory."

So what are the real issues behind

this dispute?

Some, including the SWP, argue that it is a simple industrial dispute around the sending home of the teachers. The decision to send teachers home is not one socialists would take with any enthusiasm, though given the state of affairs in the school it is difficult to see what other action could be taken. But to maintain that that is what the action is about is dishonest nonsense.

In reality the dispute is a wholly reactionary one which should not be supported. At the root of it is the decision three years ago to do away with the strap, which was a permitted form of corporal punishment in Manchester. Since then the headteachers have reacted with a wave of suspensions, 154 in the last two years, of four weeks and over. At Poundswick itself there has been a suspension on average every two weeks, plus official complaints regarding unfair punishment.

Undoubtedly there are problems in schools, and not just in Manchester. Successive cutbacks have meant that schools are ill-equipped to deal with the situation they find themselves in, where a growing number of people are reacting to their lack of any future under capitalism in a rebellious and sometimes anti-social manner.

Manchester has a better support system for classroom teachers than most authorities but even this is not really enough. As the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s have turned into the slump of the 1970s and 80s, so the liberal views of many teachers have disappeared. The disaffection of working class youth is seen as a threat by them, something to be beaten down at all costs. So the education system is once more becoming one of the means to whip the working class back into line.

(SO 248, October 1985.)

Critical Reaction

There was some critical reaction to this report on the newspaper's letters column the following week, responded to

in part in a follow-up report. Some excerpts from that:

In a move which underlines the reactionary aspects of the dispute, the right-wing Freedom Association has offered to give £1,000 to Poundswick Parents Action Group, a virtual Tory front organisation. At a press conference arranged by the Tory Group on the City Council, they announced their offer to launch a fund for the parents to take the education authority to court for "failing to provide education for Poundswick pupils". The fund has also attracted support from big business in the city.

That the right wing find themselves enthusiastically supporting what is supposed to be an industrial dispute is not all surprising. The Tories and Liberals have had an abysmal record in local government elections Manchester over the past few years and are likely to do just as badly in 1986. They clearly hope that the Poundswick issue, directed as the left-wing council, will bring them in a few extra votes. And those votes won't be got on the basis of fighting to improve teachers' conditions, still less through fighting racism and sexism.

The right wing recognise clearly, even if others don't, that the dispute now has little or nothing to do with those issues. The fact that the education authority has consistently supported the teachers' pay while the Tories and Liberals have opposed it, is an irony lost on those now backing strike action. Neither have they supported efforts improve conditions, such as employing extra teachers this year to protect the curriculum at schools with falling rolls...

Even the release of new information about the five pupils involved doesn't bother those whose motto is "never let the facts get in the way of a good story". It now seems that the head teacher at Poundswick named the five as being responsible for the graffiti and urged their expulsion the day before three of them had even been questioned about it. He also suppressed for six weeks evidence of 13 other young people being involved

in the writing. One girl was recently suspended for her involvement and then quietly reinstated.

Much is being made of the "confessions" made by the five boys. The head has claimed that "the five boys under consideration admitted being there and taking part. They also confirmed that the list of five boys was complete and other pupils were involved".

This simply isn't true. Despite an interrogation process which in some cases lasted all day, and according to some of the pupils involved consisted of bullying tactics... there is no evidence connecting them to any of the obscene or racist graffiti...

Over the past two weeks there have been several meetings with the unions involved to try and resolve the issue. Although there is now an agreement to go through a conciliation process, progress has been painfully slow. This is partly due to the number of unions involved, so it takes a long time just to get them all in one room, never mind agree anything. But it is also due to the different stand on the issue taken by the different unions. In a reversal of the usual position on the pay negotiations, it is the Nasuwt who are taking the tough line on this one.

While the NUT [main forerunner of NEU] and AMMA [forerunner of ATL, now also merged into NEU] would probably compromise, the NAS, supported by the reactionary Head Teachers, are holding out for outright victory. By this they mean the overturning of the sub-committee's decision. This stand is making difficult for the other unions to agree a settlement for fear of losing face, and probably members as well. But settlement there needs to be. The longer the dispute goes on, the more the right wing influences come to the fore and the more the unions will lose control of it. The education authority is well aware of the legitimate concerns teachers have, in attempting to do their job in the current economic climate. Things are unlikely to get better in the coming years so it is vital that teachers are paid the rate for the job but also get the back-up to enable them to do it.

In choosing to make their stand around the Poundswick pupils, they have chosen the wrong issue and increasingly the standards that they are being asked to save won't be theirs, but those of the Tories and their allies. The LEA has offered to begin talks with the unions on a wide range of issues from future procedures on disciplinary issues to providing support facilities for schools under pressure. It has also agreed that in the circumstances, the teachers named in the graffiti need not teach the five boys and that all teachers at Poundswick would be reinstated with no mention of the affair on their records...

(SO 251, November 1985.)

I'll discuss some lessons in the next instalment. □



Don't demonise working-class youth

By Bas Hardy

Few things get the right wing media into a lather more than outbreaks of social disorder involving working class teenagers. It's an added "bonus" for the *Mail*, *Express*, etc when some "offending" youths are also non-white. Tabloid moral outrage over the past couple of weeks has focused on groups of teenagers converging on shopping areas in Clapham and Milton Keynes, some of whom engaged in antisocial behaviour.

Nowadays we also have Faragist propaganda outlets joining traditionally Tory papers in the outcry against "feral youth", particularly when it presents an opportunity to have another go at Sadiq Khan as well as reinforcing the racial prejudices of Reform supporters.

This is clearly evident on the GB News online platform where extremist views are allowed to escape the scrutiny of OfCom. "They don't see themselves as part of the nation" and "they all look like feral blicks (sic!)" are just some of the comments, together with calls to bring back the birch and saying Trump's right about "lawless London".

Posts also alleged the police are "going soft" on teenagers because of their ethnicity, unlike the way anti-asylum-seeker rioters were treated. Evidently those thinking that way can't distinguish the difference between shoplifting Easter eggs and burning down hotels with people in them. Nevertheless, attacks on retail staff, many of whom are young people themselves, cannot be acceptable and the shop workers' unions will hopefully advance measures needed to protect shop workers from intimidation.

The social phenomenon of teenagers maybe misbehaving badly at Easter time isn't new.

Prior to World War Two working-class youths were drilled into being "mini me's" of their parents. Leaving school at 14, they went straight into work and adulthood. The economic boom of the 1950s created youth subcultures, or male youth subcultures at least, perceived as a threat to the establishment.

First it was "teddy boys", then, in the sixties, two rival subcultures. Mods rode around on scooters, wore Ben Sherman shirts, and liked soul music. Rockers were into motorbikes, leathers, and rock and roll.

Both sets of youths were perceived by sections of the media as unruly and violent. During Bank Holidays in the first half of 1964 the British media went overboard playing up confrontations between Mods and Rockers who'd congregated in seaside resorts such as Margate, Brighton and Clacton. Could some of those "looking for trouble" back then have morphed into Farage voters sixty years later?



The demonised working-class youth culture of the 1960s was predominantly male-centred, but there were female "mods"

Punch-ups and arrests did occur, but the media predictably exaggerated it all. A popular myth had it that the *Daily Mirror* paid some teens to run amok along the beach so the journos could spice up a "Battle of Brighton" story.

Moral panic

Sociologist Stanley Cohen developed the concepts of "folk devils", "moral panic" and "deviancy amplification" from the Mods and Rockers episodes. He pointed to plenty of outbreaks of violence at weekends when the pubs closed or at football matches which the media never made a fuss about.

Moral panics over youth subcultures continued with respect to skinheads, hippies, punks, etc., all of whom supposedly threatened society by resorting to violence and/or drug use. A particularly insidious vilification of black youth in the 1970s was the media obsession with "mugging", a crime that doesn't exist in English law. They promoted fear it was unsafe to walk the streets of London at night in much the same way as the far right does today (amidst much lower crime rates).

The male offspring of the upper classes behaved badly, too, but their antics tended to go underreported, or to be dismissed as "youthful high spirits". The notorious Bullingdon Club — past members including Boris Johnson and Dave "hug a hoodie" Cameron — immediately springs to mind. Their frequent sprees of vandalism were shrugged off because they had the money to pay for the damage their jolly japes causes in the pubs and restaurants they wrecked.

Young men in the privileged classes, whose parents dominate most of the in-

stitutions in capitalist society, are never at a loss when it comes to having things to do. They go to private educational institutions offering a wide range of sport and leisure facilities. There's never a question of selling off playing fields in those schools! They also have a pretty comfortable home life and the money to enjoy social activities.

But working-class youth often find themselves having f**k all to do and nowhere to go that they can afford. Boring though the Bank Holidays might have been in the 1960s, the lack of provision for young people may even be worse.

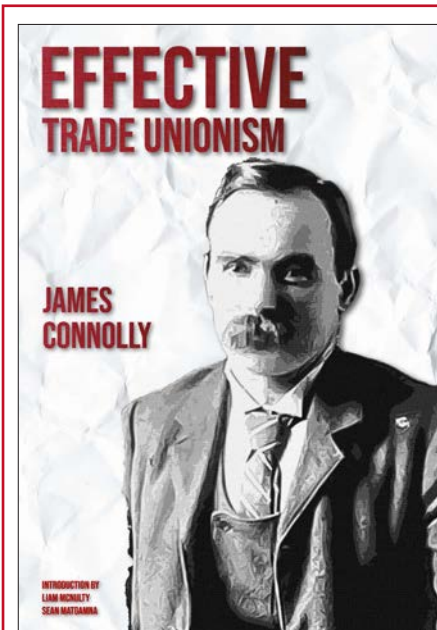
Austerity

Tory austerity policies have cut youth services to the bone. According to the YMCA, local authority funding for youth services in England has fallen by 76% in the last 14 years. The physical spaces where young people can hang out — youth clubs, community centres, affordable public venues — have largely disappeared. The main meeting place now appears to be online.

The Labour government is legislating to bring down the voting age to sixteen. Reform is opposed to this, believing that teenagers who bother to vote won't be putting a cross against their candidate. That can't be guaranteed though. Farage has the biggest following by far of any politician on TikTok, and the AfD in Germany have used social media skilfully to gain support amongst the young.

The left must make an effort to engage with teenagers, particularly those not still in education. When the Healyites ran the Young Socialists in the early 1960s, they were particularly adept at

recruiting youth by organising discos, although also likely to maim them politically if drawn into intensive activity. Even the Militant controlled Labour Party Young Socialists of the 1970s, though much duller, had a respectable membership. A socialist youth movement is needed again, only with honest politics! □



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

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How cuts are structured into Stormont

By Micheál MacEoin

In the last column, we considered the crisis-ridden nature of the power-sharing institutions, their inbuilt sectarianism and their tendency towards regular collapse.

In 2017, the institutions were collapsed when the DUP first Minister Arlene Foster refused to resign following the Renewable Heating Incentive (RHI) scandal, which exposed incompetence and corruption at the heart of government. Then Sinn Féin deputy first Minister Martin McGuinness resigned to force the collapse of their joint office, leading to a three-year hiatus.

As part of the "New Decade, New Approach" agreement in January 2020, the institutions were restored with a funding package and promised reforms in an ambitious range of areas, from governance to public services to the language and identity issues. Few were ultimately delivered and the institutions collapsed yet again in February 2022, owing to Unionist opposition to the post-Brexit Northern Ireland Protocol.

One consequence of the 2020 agreement, however, was the establishment of the Northern Ireland (NI) Fiscal Council, to "bring greater transparency and independent scrutiny to the Executive's finances." It is chaired by Robert Chote, who previously chaired the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR), UK's official economic and fiscal forecaster established by the 2010-2016 Coalition government.

Both the NI Fiscal Council and the OBR are neoliberal quangos designed

to essentially remove aspects of fiscal policy scrutiny from democratic oversight and embed certain economic orthodoxies in public discourse.

Revealing

Nevertheless, the NI Fiscal Council's analysis of the latest draft Northern Ireland Executive budget is revealing of some of the structural issues facing the North.

The analysis finds that Northern Ireland departments are on course to overspend their budgets again this year by almost £460 million.

£400 million of this will be covered by a loan from the HM Treasury Reserves, to be repaid over three years. As the accompanying NI Fiscal Council press release stated: "This reduces, but does not remove, the cliff edge reduction in real funding for public services in 2026-27."

The NI Fiscal Council is cross that the "Treasury loan acts as a de facto bailout" and that by "offering substantial assistance without any significant conditionality, the Treasury risks signaling [sic] that similar interventions are likely to be available in future years."

It worries that this loan could "dull the Executive's incentive to take difficult fiscal decisions on revenue, the size of the public sector workforce and the sustainability of pay parity with Great Britain", in other words delay making further cuts to jobs and workers' pay.

Given the relative strength and combativity of public sector unions in the North, it is silent on the consequences of embarking on such a course.

The NI Fiscal Council does, however, put its finger on a structural issue with the way that funding is allocated within the devolution settlement. It states that: "Public sector pay remains the dominant structural pressure, as NI's comparatively large public sector workforce means that when the UK Government increases spending to deliver a particular percentage pay deal in England the Block Grant does not rise sufficiently to finance the same deal in NI."

Answer

The answer, however, is not further cuts and attacks on pay: it is adequately funded public services to meet the historically-rooted needs of people in the North, as well as delivering pay parity for public sector workers.

The Report itself is quite clear. "The structural drivers – especially the gap between pay parity costs and Barnett-based funding growth – cannot be resolved through short-term fixes." Without either "meaningful service transformation", "greater local fiscal effort", or "a material change in the funding settlement, the proposed Budget balance is unlikely to be sustainable over the period, regardless of whether it can be made to 'add up' in the Budget document."

The NI Fiscal Council is sober that though "the draft figures balance on paper, the Budget is unlikely to unfold as presented." This is because the other political parties in the Executive have rejected the Finance Minister's proposal, "but it is not clear that there is an alternative configuration of the avail-

able resources that would command widespread support."

In other words, there is "a significant risk that no Budget is agreed before the new financial year."

At the time of writing, no Budget has been agreed.

The priority for the labour movement must be, in the short-term, ensuring that the crisis is not resolved through cuts to pay or services or "revenue-raising" measures which squeeze ordinary workers but through greater funding.

In the longer-term, the labour movement needs to develop the argument that the very Stormont system, of distributing crumbs from a far-removed Westminster system, is broken. □

THE EASTER RISING AND IRISH HISTORY



An attempt at a Marxist account. £4 (inc. post) □

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Orgreave

Something, but too little, too late

By John Cunningham

The Policing Minister, Sarah Jones, announced in Parliament on 26 March the long-awaited launch of the inquiry into the events at the Orgreave coking depot just outside Sheffield during the 1984-5 miners' strike.



The Miners' Strike 1984-5, the account with many eye witness stories, and lessons to be drawn from it. £9 bit.ly/shop-wl

strike.

The inquiry panel will be headed by Peter Wilcox, Bishop of Sheffield, and includes former General Secretary of the NEU, Mary Bousted. Their work will be supported by four independent experts. The "submission window" closes on 22 May 2026, and the inquiry is due to report by spring 2028.

The start is, of course, to be welcomed, but but spring 2028 will be nearly 44 years after the confrontation between striking miners and the police. A number of the participants are now dead, and in 2004 Northumbria Police de-

stroyed two boxes of files relating to the Orgreave events, causing concern that other important files may also have been shredded.

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign issued a statement on the day of Sarah Jones' announcement. The opening paragraph reads:

"We are pleased that the government is finally launching the start of the Orgreave inquiry after their inquiry announcement last July 2025. While we are disappointed that it has taken so long for the Home Office to come to this stage, we are relieved that work will begin to establish the truth about the Tory government's involve-

ment and police conduct on 18 June during the 1984-5 miners' strike." □

• Campaign website: otjc.org.uk



Why is a leading union faction

By a PCS member

This article is taken, with thanks, from the PCS Independent Left. George Galloway, the leader of the Workers Party, claims to be living in "forced exile". He is currently, or at least was in February 2026, living in China, which evidently he finds democratic enough to suit him. Weblinks for citations are in the [online version](#). Voting in this year's PCS union executive elections runs from 16 April to 8 May.

During last year's National Executive (NEC) elections, all candidates for the ruling PCS Left Unity group were mandated by their faction's leadership to use 10% of their election addresses to include the following formulation:

"Alliance for Change, headed by BLN/IL, is a front for both the Socialist Party and Alliance for Workers' Liberty. Using PCS as a platform for rancour amongst activists, for them, it is Party first, PCS members second."

The claim is demonstrably false. In the case of the Independent Left, we are open that supporters of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty are involved (as are members of other groups and none), but the overwhelming number of members and supporters are not, including our candidate for National President.

We would argue that candidates for the leadership of the union should use their election address to talk about the issues facing members. We will see if this is repeated this year.

We believe in political plurality in the trade union movement. We believe that reps and members should be able to openly and honestly debate their political differences and reach a decision democratically. It's what differentiates the independent trade unions from the labour fronts of places like 1930s fascist Europe, China, Russia and the old Eastern Bloc.

However, this notion relies on reps, particularly those running for senior office being open about their politics and ensuring they conduct themselves in a way which advocates for the rights of PCS members in-line with PCS policy.

In that vein, we wish to draw members attention to PCS Left Unity's decision to stand a council candidate for George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain



(WPB), Mohammed Shafiq, as their candidate for PCS Vice President.

Of course, any member has the right to stand for the leadership of the union. But we also have the right to question the politics of this organisation and specifically their incompatibility with PCS equality policy.

We present the Workers Party of Britain, their leaders and candidates, in their own words.

LGBTQ+ rights

Almost every year PCS reps are forced to overturn the union leadership's latest socially conservative perspectives on the rights of trans members.

It's no surprise to us that some Left Unity members have continuously pushed for the most conservative interpretation of last year's Supreme Court decision. This was evidenced in last year's conference where the National President continually refused to even publish motions in support of trans members, using the cover of legal advice to do so.

In the same year, George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain published an article and policy declaration stating that, "Transgenderism is now influencing many spheres of social life, most notably questions of free speech and rights to assembly due to the intellectual cowardice and intolerance of some of its main advocates. Transgenderism at its extremes advocate the mutilation of children and the imposition of men in women's spaces".

Galloway has used phrases like "transmania" to criticise trans right activists. As the Workers Party candidate in Rochdale, on Novara Media in May 2024, Galloway stated, "Children shouldn't be taught that gay relationships are "normal". "I don't want my children to be taught that these things are equal because I don't believe them

to be equal."

In 2008, the boyfriend of Iranian asylum seeker Mehdi Kazemi was hung in Tehran by the Iranian regime for being gay. George Galloway publicly and falsely claimed on national television that he was executed "not for being gay, but for committing sex crimes".

He went on to claim, "All the papers seem to imply that you get executed in Iran for being gay. That's not true". A fact clearly lost on the regime itself who openly defend their policy of executing gay people.

PCS policy

Despite the National President refusing trans rights motions at last year's ADC, PCS policy on trans rights is still enshrined in motions such as A317 passed at ADC 2024.

This policy confirms that PCS believes: "Biological reductionism is harmful to everyone, but especially women, girls, and the Trans community", and instructs the union to: "actively oppose any organisations or individuals who dehumanise others in words, deeds, or terminology, thereby potentially bringing hate or harm to our minority members, and to oppose any form of biological reductionism or dehumanisation and its manifestations that can centre on race, disability, gender identity or any other personal characteristic."

PCS Independent Left wholeheartedly supports this policy and has been amongst the most consistent for trans-rights in the union. We have been widely quoted in the gutter press for our stance and have regularly written on the subject.

Migrant rights

The Workers Party of Britain obfuscate on migrant rights. Their manifesto claims that "The flow of poor

people into our country represses wage rates". It should go without saying, especially for a "workers' party", that workers or poor people don't repress wages, those in charge of setting wages – the bosses – do.

It is exactly this untruth which forms the basis of much anti-migrant sentiment.

Once you have accepted this narrative, your policy will invariably follow. The Workers Party manifesto follows through on policy. It states that they would "invest in border security, including heightened sea-going and coastal patrols" and "discourage economic migrants". These policies would not be out of place in a Reform UK manifesto.

The manifesto continues: "We offer a policy that reflects the anxiety felt among the working class about an influx of migrants which appears to be out of control". An anxiety which is perpetrated by political parties repeating false narratives, as challenging them would presumably be more difficult (and more principled).

This opportunist populism filters down to the behaviour of their local candidates. One of Mohammed Shafiq's main criticisms of his opponent, as he publicly stated on 20 January, is that he "can barely speak English".

Choosing to attack someone's language rather than issues with their political positions (which we are sure there are many) is deeply problematic, but we are not convinced through the many responses that the criticism is even valid. And even if it was, a supposed left or workers' candidate, let alone a trade unionist, should understand that attacking someone for "barely speaking English" is an almighty dog whistle to the most base and racist sentiments which exist in society.

If this behaviour happened in the workplace, any rep worth their salt would raise a concern. Yet, this is coming from someone seeking to become a senior elected representative of the union, representing a party with a very problematic equalities agenda.

Russia and Ukraine

George Galloway has been very clear on his position regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Far from laying the blame at Putin's door, he primarily blames Western countries and Ukraine themselves for the invasion and calls the war "a NATO war against the Russian Federation". He claimed in 2024 that the well documented massacre of Ukrainian civilians by Russia in Bucha was a false flag operation.

He was for years a paid presenter for Russian state media outlet Russia Today, and stated as recently as last month that he "likes a great deal of what Vladimir Putin says".



For socialists to understand and confront left antisemitism from primitive or Stalinist roots to the "anti-imperialism of fools". 265 pages, £9.99 bit.ly/shop-wl

promoting Galloway's party?

The Workers Party of Britain's X account is replete with false claims and attacks on Ukraine-supporting MPs, such as long-time PCS supporter and Chair of the PCS Parliamentary Group, John McDonnell. It falsely claims that the Ukrainian government "murders trade unionists".

PCS policy, passed unanimously in 2022 and re-asserted since, rightly calls out the war for what it is, an attack by Russia on a sovereign nation. PCS has made links with our brother and sister trade unionists in Ukraine who are clearly not "NATO stooges" (and haven't been murdered by their government) but are ordinary workers who want to live in a country free from imperialist aggression.

Putin joins Saddam Hussein and Bashar al-Assad in the line-up of unquestionable thugs and criminals admired and supported by Galloway at various points over the decades. Thankfully these despots are no longer with us, but Galloway's search for authoritarian heroes continues.

How can a world-view so geared towards the sanitation of such authoritarian regimes and imperialist oppression be considered a viable position for a left trade unionist to hold?

Uyghurs

It is widely accepted among most human rights groups that the Chinese state is committing human rights abuses against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

The position of the Workers Party of Britain, articulated by George Galloway, is that any claims that there are concentration camps in China are "lies and disinformation".

Speaking to Russia Today in 2020 he claimed that the only people being detained were "Al-Qaeda/ISIS fanatics" being "re-educated".

The Workers Party sees the authori-

tarian, hyper-capitalist Chinese state as a model to copy, stating "We want an economy like China. Industrious, modern, powerful."

Their 10-point programme states that they "defend the achievements of the USSR, China etc".

These "achievements" not only include well documented abuses against the Muslim minority. China also outlaws independent trade unions such as PCS, and collective action is also illegal. To put it bluntly, if PCS existed in China, its leaders and activists would be arrested and imprisoned.

Are these the sort of "achievements" would-be PCS leaders should wish to see replicated here?

Abortion rights

George Galloway has continually stated that he believes life begins at conception and has supported reducing the legal abortion limit.

Following the vote in the Lords to approve the Commons vote to decriminalise abortion, Chris Williamson, Deputy Leader of the Workers Party of Britain, gave unrestricted airtime on his podcast to suspended NHS doctor and anti-choice activist Rahmeh Aladwan to spread anti-choice propaganda.

She condemned the vote on the basis that abortion after six months was "murder" and "against the sanctity of life". She subsequently went on to praise the pro-life campaign "Right to Life".

PCS is proudly pro-choice. The union is an affiliate to Abortion Rights UK and when it has been debated in the past, ADC has overwhelmingly defeated any attempts to roll-back this position.

At the NEC in 2023 an IL-produced motion was passed almost unanimously, stating: "Nobody should face prison for a decision about their own body and health care. Abortion should be considered as a healthcare proce-

dures, and medical and legal frameworks should trust women to make responsible decisions. Abortion should be available on demand as early as possible and as late as necessary."

Should someone who represents a party more hostile than the Tories on women's rights be elected as a senior officer of the union?

Antisemitism

On the same podcast (from 00:15:00), a contributor, Shaun Naughton, insulting both women and the Palestinians, compared the Israeli genocide in Gaza with a woman's right to choose. He then went on, unchallenged, maintaining: "The Jewish position [on abortion] is ridiculous", "The Jews played a big part in the legalisation of abortion" and "The fact is, abortion is a weapon and the legalisation was pursued by Jews. If you want to destroy western civilisation, you promote pornography and the sexual revolution."

Not only was there no challenge from Williamson, the Deputy Leader of the Workers Party, to this bigoted nonsense, but he nodded on throughout.

Ironically, seeing as Williamson's X timeline is awash with claims that antisemitism is a scam.

The day this article was written, he re-tweeted known Nazi and convicted anti-Muslim racist Jayda Fransen favourably, attacking the organisation who ran the Jewish ambulances torched in North London this week.

Many WPB candidates have openly engaged in antisemitic and anti-Muslim bigotry. Here's some examples:

Julie Lowe, their candidate in Chesterfield, claimed that Jews "ask for child sacrifice", that the Titanic was "bombed to kill the men on board who opposed the Rothschilds" and responded to a photo of Bill Gates (a non-Jew) meeting some Hasidic Jews with "Gates the Jew with the child traffickers".

Raymond Mennie, the WPB candidate in Dundee, claimed "9/11 was a false flag initiative" and that the Rothschilds own all news, media, oil and governments.

Kamran Khan, their candidate in Poplar and Limehouse, reposted memes referring to Google as "Jewgle" and one showing a man looking up why Jews were persecuted and in the next frame wearing an SS uniform.

Harry Boota, one time UKIP candidate, was the WPB candidate in Bradford South, who claimed he was standing against "The synagogue of Satan".

This is only a fraction of the evidence. None of these people were publicly reprimanded.

Remember, none of these posts claim to be anti-Zionist or even pro-Palestinian. They all use the term "Jew", and do so purposefully.

Is this acceptable?

Equality Policy

The positions of the Workers Party of Britain and the behaviour of their leaders and candidates are incompatible with PCS equality policy and are a demonstrable danger to the welfare of our members. For a summation of these direct from the horse's mouth, we need look no further to a post from 1 August last year, which in 180 characters illustrated their transphobic, pro-imperialist, climate denying and anti-migrant platform:

"A man can't become a woman. Russia will prevail over Ukraine. Combustion engine isn't over. Football over falafel. No free movement of labour"

In the words of Maya Angelou: "When someone shows you who they are, believe them".

We acknowledge that many PCS members will hold socially conservative views. Many will vote for Reform despite, or in some cases because, of their anti-migrant views. Views that Left Unity rightly repudiate. Presumably they would balk at having a Reform activist on their slate.

We also accept that members of political parties may vary with the party on various issues.

What we don't accept is that such a variation could exist on the question of hostility to people based on their personal characteristics. And we don't accept that we can endanger our unions commitment to equality for the sake of indulging the socially conservative views of some in PCS Left Unity.

We therefore think it's only right to raise some serious questions:

Why do PCS Left Unity think it's right that a candidate for this party should be the Deputy President of our union?

Were branches that nominated the Left Unity slate aware of this situation? If not, will they continue to advocate their members vote for them?

We think minimally this is a serious lack of judgment on behalf of PCS Left Unity, but at worse represents a tolerance of these views and does nothing to quell the movement-wide concern that the PCS leadership does not care about trans rights.

If you want a leadership that is consistent and open about its commitment to women, migrant and LGBT rights and opposition to imperialism and racism, please vote for and campaign for the Left slate in the upcoming NEC elections. If you are a feminist/pro-choice, support LGBT rights, oppose imperialism and are pro-migrant, you may want to consider this year, not voting for Left Unity, and ensuring your branch does not put out a recommendation for their candidates. □



“Post-literacy”: the b

By Martin Thomas

I agree entirely with Daniel Randall's conclusion (*Solidarity* 764): “Today's revolutionary left, in the spirit of Eleanor Marx, the Plebs League, and *L'Ordine Nuovo*, must strive, again, to establish cultures of deep literacy within the labour movement”.

I want to add some other dimensions. The activist left, I think, is partly a victim of “post-literate” trends in the wider society. But, as the King James Bible has it, “the mote that is in thy brother's eye” should not divert attention from “the beam that is in thine own eye”. We, the activist left, contain some of the worse examples of “post-literacy”, and we must heal ourselves in order to heal others. I address this article, of course, to those sufficiently into reading to read it, but also with the hope that it will help us all talk with those around us who are only “into” skim-reading.

“Post-literate” is, as Daniel says, a misnomer. I don't know how to find statistics for this, but I'd guess there is more reading today, in sheer bulk, than before neoliberalism (i.e. before 1979-80), before the mass use of the internet (mid-1990s), or before the smartphone-social-media era (around 2008).

More people do office work and read (reports, manuals, forms, etc.) or even write for work. Both at work and outside, we deal with more emails (widespread since the late 1990s) or other written messages (WhatsApp took off in the mid-2010s) than ever we read letters, “business” or personal.

E-writing has partly replaced handwriting or typewriting or printing, but also, partly, conversation. In that respect we are more “literary”.

More people stay in formal education

until early or even mid-20s. By contrast, as late as 1971 in England, 42% of teenagers left school at 15. And secondary modern schools then did not foster deep-reading skills or love of literature.

It is possible today, as it wasn't in days gone by, to get a degree, even a postgraduate degree, in a “discursive”, “literary” subject, without ever reading an entire book. More on that later. But even at the most credential-factory-ised end of the spectrum, you have to read *something*.

As Daniel says, the decline is in “deep” reading — focused study of entire books. Skim-reading, quick scans of texts or of excerpts to get the “take-aways”, or reading to get a smattering, has blighted both “deep” reading and serious word-of-mouth debate.

Supplement

The general culture around us is not as overwhelmingly negative as Marriott makes it out to be. Accurate, retentive, skim-reading is not a vice, but an important skill, a necessary supplement to “deep reading”. With “deep” reading, the picture has some counter-currents. The March 2026 National Literacy Trust report is more nuanced than the one (presumably 2025) which Marriott quoted. Book clubs are booming. Universities employ vastly more leftist academics (Marxist, feminist, whatever) than they used to, and those academics write books, often aimed at general readership. More leftists have jobs in NGOs or think-tanks or such which give them freedom to write books. The radical publisher Verso, founded in 1970 and then putting out a handful of books, now publishes a hundred a year. As print technology has advanced, even small left groups can publish books on our own account, as we couldn't back then.

Some of the new books may be publish-or-perish dross, but many are valuable.

The average household in the UK today is estimated to have more than 100 books. I grew up in the 1950s in an “educated” middle-class household (father a doctor, mother a dentist), but, beyond my dad's (now-unread) medical textbooks, we had few books before I “got into” reading at age 8 or 9. (How? My parents had one friend who did read widely, a school teacher. And there was the public library. No bookshop in our town of 50,000).

Today my flatmate (not an active leftist) has herself written or contributed to enough books to fill one of our bookcases with her titles. Few books in her bottom-of-the-heap working-class childhood home.

Today we have many more books “to hand”, or available instantly in e-format. There is a culture of reading. The problem is, too often a “smattering”, pick-and-mix culture. Even some “deep reading” falls into that culture.

A few years ago I was startled to find that two keen young Workers' Liberty members, after a couple of years of activity, and both with higher education on “humanities” courses, had not even read the Communist Manifesto.

Their equivalents at any time since the 1860s and before the 1980s (at latest), plus a lot of young workers then who faced more difficulties in the way of systematic reading, plus probably most people then who were even “around” the left, would surely have read that and even much more.

Why did we study the Communist Manifesto? Or *Capital*, or *Revolution Betrayed*? Because we heard people refer to them in intense debates and conversation, and we wanted to know about it. Partly I think the “post-literate” trend is, paradoxically, to do with the culture becoming more “literate”, not less, as electronic skim-reading replaces in-person debate as the basic form of interaction.

Answers

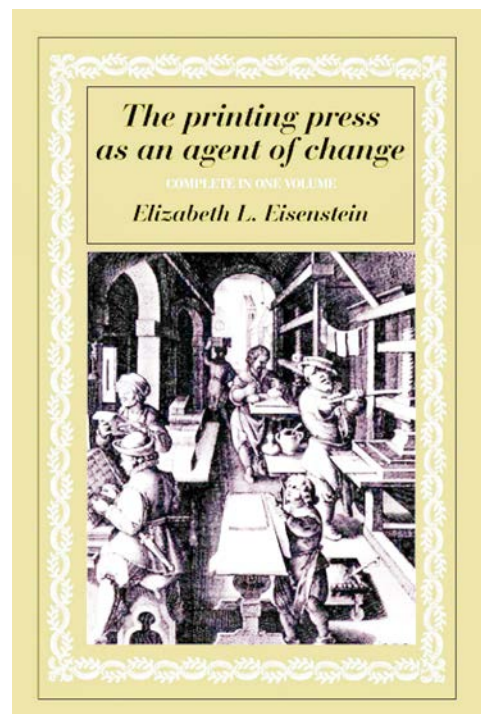
More fundamentally, because we wanted to know about the world and history, how they changed, who could change them. We knew that bodies of theory referring to Marx's writings offered (uniquely, both then and now) wide-ranging sketch answers to those questions.

It was of a different order from the reading that young left-wing people will “spontaneously” do these days. The “basic reading” to which, say, a young Green leftist today might refer, is, by contrast, more or less journalistic or pop-academic coverage on how the world is bad. It is a series of guides to becoming “woke” or to guiding short-term NGO or electoral politics. And of course, a “smattering” will do. Systematic study isn't necessary, if the aim is to fill in a picture of how the world is bad.

Some of the titles are very useful, in their limits. They are not an alternative frame.

Marxists denounce capitalism as bad too, of course. But Marx argued that the “bad side” was not just bad. “It is the bad side that produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle”.

Exploitation is bad. But in Marx's theory of wage-labour, exploitation was not just bad. It also amassed the working class into large concentrations, led to struggle over wages and control of work



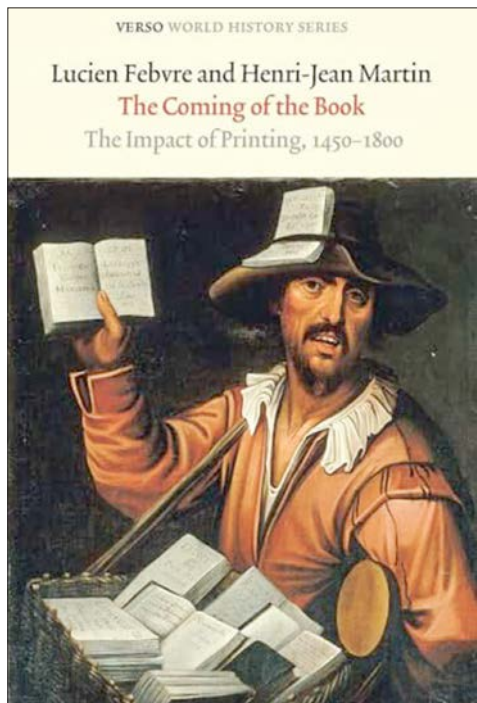
conditions, generated working-class consciousness and organisation, and led to a capitalist socialisation of productive forces on which a socialist socialisation could be built.

The theory was not just about the world being bad, but about who could change it and how. That is why Marx was so furious with people who flattened the theory of exploitation into an “iron law of wages” (wages always forced down to subsistence) or to plausible-but-false mottos like “Labour is the source of all wealth”. They were deleting the subversive side of the theory and reducing it to a moral condemnation. The Stalinists would do the same with the Marxist theories of imperialism developed by Kautsky, Hilferding, Lenin, and others.

A focus on reading Marx, Trotsky, etc. will just make us narrow dogmatists? True, “quotes” from Marx or Trotsky could be used to buttress impoverished dogmatism.

But really studying Marx, Trotsky, etc., and learning from their methods of investigation, cuts against dogmatism, not for it. Dogmatism is more likely to come from a “skim-reading” approach to Marx.

And there can be worse things than dogmatism, like more superficial and eclectic “smattering” cultures. We long deplored the habit on the activist left of using chopped-up quotes from Marx, or Trotsky, or whomever, as debate-stoppers (“I have a better quote than you”). That did at least have the virtue of driving people to investigate the quote, study the context, see what its original meaning was, consider whether it was still valid (or, even, valid at the time, now we can see with hindsight). Now we have an opposite problem.



beam in our own eyes

Scarcely anyone on the left other than AWL ever bothers to try to correlate our current positions with Marxist "classics", or with our particular strand of "tradition" (i.e. of continuous intellectual development, each step forward based on the past) deriving from the "classics". The RCP (Socialist Appeal) used to pride itself on the supposed "unbroken thread" of Marxist writing by way of Ted Grant's output. Now it trashes, without comment, basic Marxist ideas as in Trotsky's *The Third Period of the Comintern's Errors* as if there were no thread at all, as if there were no socialist thought before the scribbler for its paper, *The Communist*, sat down to write the latest off-the-wall article about revolution tomorrow.

In times of greater left activism, those who studied knew there were different latter-day interpretations and renderings of Marx. We knew new issues had arisen and continued to arise. We knew arguments that Marx had been wrong, or had become outdated. We investigated.

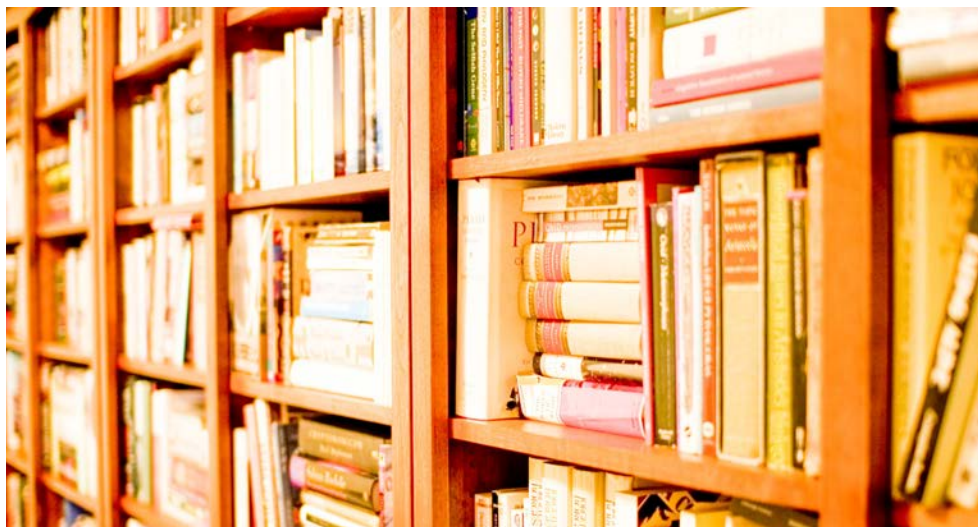
Recently I've read more on the history of the "Lambertists", a strand of French Trotskyism which from the 1970s became notorious for hectoring, formulaic, indeed dogmatic, slogans and methods. Even they were different in the 1950s and '60s. One of their major figures, Claude Bernard, was completely unconvinced that the USSR was a "degenerated workers' state", and constantly raising questions. Another, Boris Fraenkel, for many years their major recruiter of new members, was a pioneer in translating Marcuse and Reich into French. Michel Lequenne records that so many Trotskyists were interested in surrealism that a sympathiser asked, in all seriousness: "Do you have to be a surrealist to be a Trotskyist?"

Dogmatism

Even the most impoverished "Orthodox Trotskyists" had an intellectual hinterland. It took years of political attrition to narrow that down into dogmatism, a smattering-ised version of Marxist culture.

Dead white men? Well, Gauss and Weierstrass are dead white men, and Noether, a dead white woman. But to have a frame of reference for learning about the many new branches of mathematics, you have to know about complex numbers and calculus and abstract algebra. That those ideas were developed by white Europeans (in fact, Germans) is now a fact. We cannot go back and change it. Smatterings from here and there today cannot substitute for a frame of reference.

We read Weber too; we read Keynes;



we read the "post-Marxists" of the day, like the Frankfurt School, or the Dependency Theorists, or the Eurocommunists. But we also studied the Marxist frame. We set our trig points. Modify that frame? Even reject it? Maybe. But first learn it.

The social pressures to get a wide smattering, or to take our cue from social media, weigh here. But they are weighty also because of the weakness of our resistance.

Stronger

Of course, labour movements were stronger before 1979-80, and the false confidence they gained from what seemed to be dynamic if horribly misshapen anti-capitalism worldwide helped make young activists then more intense and more hungry to know. We wanted to know how to make a revolution, rather than just how the world was bad, or what might make a good campaign for an NGO. Understanding [The Fall of European Stalinism](#) is essential to getting ourselves out of the rut and seeing that we can do more than accumulate smatterings in order to make us more "woke".

Now, for example, "abolish the police" can become a widespread slogan among left Democrats in the USA, NGO types in Britain, and even some who reckon themselves Marxists (rs21 in Britain, Tempest in USA), with no effort to study the idea in relation to the Marxist critiques of what Engels ruefully called "German philosophical phrases". At one Labour Party conference in the Corbyn era, a smug seminar on "abolish the police" took place on the Corbynite fringe ("The World Transformed") at the same time as Corbynites inside the conference pushed pro-police policies ("against Tory police cuts") with little left pushback. "Radical thought" on the literary fringe and "radical thought" inside activist politics were disconnected.

In the whole Corbyn era, as we documented in our book [Corbynism: what](#)

[went wrong?](#), there was little real debate within the left, beyond exchanges of social-media jeers. When James Schneider, the very-recent Lib-Dem who quickly became a keystone in Momentum and later in Corbyn's Leader's Office, eventually wrote a book, [Our Bloc](#), he had obviously read some Marx, but relied exclusively on Eurocommunist variants. The culture has become such that he felt no need to take account of Marxist critiques of those.

We have no reason to expect neo-liberal or post-neoliberal capitalism to make a better general mass culture for us, except under pressure from inside universities and from the left. It is down to us to start the pushback, and to do that we first have to study.

Incidental

Universities are more and more "credential factories" — pay £9,000-odd a year for three years, and you get a certificate that you can produce assignments to length and on time and display a skim-acquaintance with literature referred to. If you get and retain some of the subject studied, that's an incidental bonus.

This is not quite as it is often described, education becoming more job-oriented. The UK now has 590,000 university students in "business and management"; but also one million students in social science and humanities subjects, most with little "vocational" focus.

Rather, it is a matter of education becoming more a business of getting skim-reading and report-writing skills, with a smattering of raw material for that (exactly what, matters little). Universities may even positively discourage deep reading (by "filling students up" with skim reading), in the same way that secondary schools in England make students worse at mental arithmetic than when they start, because calculator use "fills them up" instead.

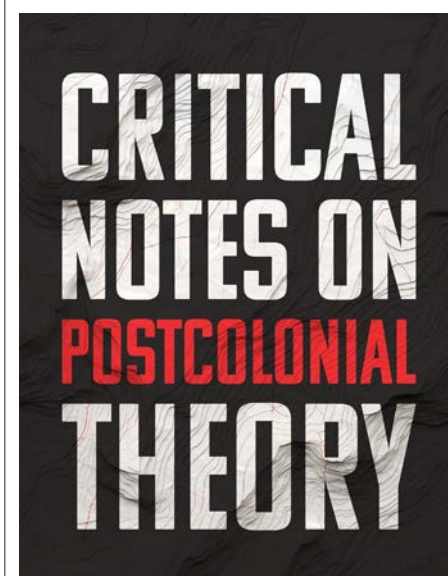
Some years ago, I was [struck](#) when

attending a lecture at LSE by the famous critical Marxist Moishe Postone that no-one in the audience except me wanted to challenge or debate Postone. Evidently everyone just wanted to come away with a smattering, a possible reference for their next assignment.

In 2014 economics students in Manchester made collective criticism of their courses. But the enterprise faded quickly; and as far as I could see, none of the activist left (not even AWL) was interested. There has been little like that since. Universities can be "turned round" to some degree, even under capitalism, by critical student activity, but it needs initiative from the left.

There are still intense, critical-minded students. But, as far as I can see, "Marxists" on campus tend to divide these days into the "Marxist Ph D thesis" types, disconnected from active politics, devoted to producing a new book to add to the general "capitalism-is-bad" welter, and the activists, disconnected from the deep-reading culture. That is something we, the activist left, have allowed to happen. It is not just something imposed on us by outside society. We can change the culture among ourselves, and thus make ourselves a lever for changing the culture around us rather than a victim of it.

Study, propagandise, organise was the slogan of the pioneer German working-class Marxists. It means not only being more "literate", in the sense of developing a common theoretical frame based on central texts from the past, but also more "word of mouth", in the sense of sustained in-person debates and conversations instead of quickfire social-media exchanges. □



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Q&A: The Greens, Labour, and us

By Martin Thomas

Q. I understand that some Workers' Liberty people, excluded from the Labour Party, have joined the Greens and are working with the Greens for the 7 May local elections. Why?

A. Lots of people have been excluded from the Labour Party, in successive waves since 2015, and there's still a trickle of new exclusions. Or they have dropped out because they find their local Labour Party lifeless and the Labour Party conference control-freaked. Zack Polanski has been speaking out for similar politics to the broad Labour left of 2015-20, and better on a few issues, notably the EU. Lots of young people see that as a new opening. Why wouldn't we want to work and discuss with them, especially in Lambeth, where the local Greens are unusually left-wing?

Q. Oh, it's just a cynical "raid"?

A. No, our comrades in the Greens are diligent in activity. They also use the structures available to them to argue for socialist ideas. Why shouldn't they?

Q. Why not, then, give up on the Labour Party, and go whole hog into the Greens? The Greens will make huge gains on 7 May.

A. Yes, the Greens will do well on 7 May, and Labour badly. But the Labour Party is still despite everything the party of the labour movement, linked to the trade unions.

Q. Well, maybe, vestigially. But Zack Polanski would do much better in government than Keir Starmer.

A. Zack Polanski's output is about as left wing as Keir Starmer's when he stood for Labour leader in 2020. Polanski comes across better on social media, but there is no more reason to trust Polanski in office than to trust Starmer. Less, in fact, because he has

less of an organised movement on his back.

Q. Nonsense! Zack Polanski has taken the Greens way to the left!

A. As Carla Denyer recently pointed out, basically everything Polanski says is in the Greens' 2024 manifesto. Polanski says "on a personal level" he "agrees with the majority (?) of socialist principles", but wants to avoid annoying "all the people who are anti-socialist who might have voted Green" and wouldn't if the Greens "said we were socialists". He prefers the label "eco-populist". Sian Berry said back in 2025: "A lot of Greens – not me, though, and not [former party leader] Caroline Lucas – were definitely nervous to say we were socialists before Natalie [Bennett]'s leadership" [in 2012]. But not since.

Q. Now the Greens could get into government in 2029.

A. Look at other Green Parties, and not even far away: Scotland and Ireland. The Greens have got into government in many countries, and everywhere they have bowed the knee to capitalism. Even in England, the Greens are already part of governing 52 councils, mostly in coalitions. Not in left-wing ways.

Q. Well, no worse than Labour.

A. I doubt even that's true. The labour movement has been able to extract some gains even from this miserable Labour government (Employment Relations Act, Renters' Reform Act, rail renationalisation, repeal of two-child benefit cap...) The Greens' greatest political triumph world-wide has been forcing a move away from nuclear power in Germany, resulting in reversion to fossil fuels and worse carbon emissions. Labour councils (including some really right-wing ones) have built more new council homes than Green councils. The leader of the jewel in the Green council crown, Mid-Suffolk, says the Greens won there on a promise to stop new house-building.

Q. You're really resting your case on a few wretched Labour mini-reforms?

A. Not at all. We are not in the Labour Party in the hope that a sop here and a sop there will overwhelm capitalism! We are there to transform the whole labour movement, politically and organisationally, through a fight for pro-working-class measures and democracy.

Q. Not much to show for it!

A. We've had defeats. People are fed up, and consequently going Reform or Green. That is a shift, but not a general shift of opinion to the left. And the fight is not over inside Labour. Even now there are stirrings, like the Restore Labour Democracy initiative.

Q. Feeble!



A. Maybe demoralisation after the 7 May elections and after the looming economic crisis, which is likely to drive the Labour government further to the right, will stop it and set back the left even further. We don't know. But there's a fight to be fought. Experiences of Labour doing badly in government have often led to sizeable, if all-too-delayed, kickbacks. Remember 2010 to 2015. Remember 1979-82. Nothing like that has ever happened in a Green party after government shame.

Q. Ah, that's all finished. Nothing like that will ever happen again.

A. Sociologically, it's true, the domination of the Labour Party heights by a layer of third-sector manager types has progressed horribly for a long while now. It's not just a matter of a pendulum swinging from left to right to left. The Irish Labour Party, founded by James Connolly, ended by scrapping its whole union-affiliate structure in 2017 and languishes at 4% in the polls. Similar could happen here. But then the Irish Labour Party has been thin since the 1920s. Only 6% in the 1933 election. The British Labour Party has thicker roots. It is too early to concede defeat.

Q. You clutch at straws while there is fresh wheat in the Greens! The Greens have lots of young members who will drive them left.

A. Look at the Greens' Spring Conference on 28 March. It debated only two bland motions because all the rest of the time was taken up with Standing Orders challenges. And the Green left had almost nothing on the agenda to radicalise the party socially. The big "left" push at the conference was for an actually right-wing proposition, to brand all "Zionists" (i.e. all Jews who show reflex empathy with Israeli Jews, however critical they are of Netanyahu) as "racists".

Q. Ah, but local Green parties have autonomy.

A. Lambeth Green Party has now accepted that motions can be debated

and voted on at its meetings. Good! But that sort of democracy, long ingrained even in right-wing trade unions and Labour Parties, is not a norm in local Green Parties. Greens Organise, the new Green left faction, has been going for 17 months, so we might expect more by now, no? As Marxists, we have always criticised the Labour Party as "electoralist". But there is still in the Labour Party some sense of the party being part of the labour movement, with the trade unions, and thus of workplace and social action being essential to progress. The Green Party is thinner and more electoralist. And now many of its chief leftists will be councillors after 7 May. We know from Labour experience that being a local administrator is not good for your leftist health. The German and Australian and French Greens were more street-action-y (against nuclear power, mostly) in their early days, but those days are gone.

Q. The Greens will replace Labour as the left choice in elections.

A. We'll see. And will it be any real advance if they do? The Liberal-SDP Alliance replaced Labour as the main "left choice" in 1982, and the Lib-Dems for a while in 2010. The SNP probably has to be reckoned as replacing Labour as the main "left choice" in Scotland, since 2015. Plaid Cymru may now replace Labour as the main "left choice" in Wales. The Greens have long been the default "left choice" in Bavaria. In Italy, Five Star was the biggest single party in the 2013 and 2018 elections. Its initial surge was surely a more "left" way of "being fed up" than the surge of the Lega. In Spain, Podemos ditto. It was ahead or close to the PSOE in the run-up to and at the 2015 election. Not now. Is the Greens' current poll success as the "fed-up" choice much more than those thin, often ephemeral, "left advances"? Our comrades in the Greens will do their best to widen leftism there, but we are far from the Greens having built a wide enough channel that class-struggle leftism can flow through it from now on. □

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Pushback at NEU conference

By David Axon

The annual conference of the National Education Union (NEU), 30 March to 2 April in Brighton, came in the midst of online indicative ballots over education funding.

Teachers and school support staff are being asked if we are "prepared to take industrial action to win sufficient funding to secure an above-inflation pay increase". The indicative ballot closes this Friday 17 April. If it gets a good enough turnout, the union leaders will move to a legal ballot.

The conference unanimously (or near-unanimously) voted to:

- Reiterate its call for the abolition of Ofsted, in the light of

just over a term's experience of the most recent (and most complicated) version of Ofsted's inspection framework.

- Oppose the introduction of further national testing in the form of a year eight reading assessment

- Defend the right of protest in the UK

The conference also passed unanimously an emergency motion condemning the actions of the Lowry High School in Salford in victimising the school librarian and censoring over 130 titles.

At least as significant were decisions made by the conference, against the opposition of the union leadership and the "NEU Left" group organised

around it, to:

- Reject a number of rule changes which would have given the Executive greater power over the process used to elect them.

- Reject an attempt to limit and control the way members in our sector and equality sections organise their own conferences.

- Reject an attempt to prevent the union from including criticism of the Iranian regime's repression and solidarity with its victims in an international motion.

Following the victory of conference over this group last year, committing the NEU to solidarity with Ukraine, these victories show that rank and

file organising can increasingly have impact in the union.

One NEU Left member has commented that "NEU Left itself has become a hotch-potch, with different factions running different bits of the operation, and is beginning to resemble the BL in many ways". "BL" was the previous leadership faction, "Broad Left".

Educators' Fightback held a fringe meeting on solidarity with workers in Iran, helped organise one for the Ukraine Solidarity Network, contributed to the meeting of the Socialist Educational Association, and put out daily bulletins: see bit.ly/educ-f □

- NEU teachers and support staff at St Cuthbert's in

Rochdale are to start strike action on 21 April, following the redundancies reported on in previous issue of *Solidarity*. Members at the school hope that the second week of their action will be joined by the NASUWT, who have suspended their action over "behaviour". Simultaneous action by both unions would be an important step forward, and increased the pressure on the increasingly dysfunctional St Theresa MAT that is the root of many of the school's problems. Two local Labour councillors are demanding that the trust hold an open meeting with parents at their school to answer for their management of the school. □

The NEU Left after conference

By an NEU member

In the first NEU Left bulletin since annual conference, you might hope to find some reflection about how they lost conference votes, whether they misread the mood, and how they might develop more convincing arguments in future. Instead we have a churlish cry for help.

"There is a fight for the soul of the Union", they claim. Clearly, they see themselves as on the right side of this battle, but it's not at all clear what the issues at the heart of it are or how they relate to any decisions made at conference. Indeed, none of the defeats they suffered are mentioned in the article, making it impossible to know which, if any, threaten "the soul" of the NEU.

To the extent that any sense can be made of their argument, there are suggestions that the majority of conference

delegates are more concerned at looking inwards and criticising the Union's leadership than organising to fight the real enemy.

Characterisation

This characterisation is not supported by anything that happened at Conference — and indeed the NEU Left bulletin makes no attempt to explain why they think it is. The central problem of NEU Left is that it has a controlling influence on the Union's National Executive, meaning that it carries responsibility for decisions and proposals made by HQ. Anything other than an entirely compliant conference will appear to them to be a threat. The majority of Conference delegates rejected their policies on a number of issues (see above).

None of those defeats detracts in any way from "mobilising in unity to meet

our enemies". On the contrary, they help us to maximise unity by involving all sectors (support staff, post-16 and independent) and equality groups in a democratic and inclusive way. Members who feel ownership of the Union's agenda will be more motivated to organise and fight for it. The international decision puts us in a place of consistent international solidarity — principled champions of the oppressed rather than an organisation that behaves as if our enemies' enemy is our friend.

Defeats

Moreover, NEU Left's major defeats on "internal issues" were responses by conference to actions that the leadership had taken or were trying to take — in other words, it was NEU Left who started it! It was NEU Left that was "looking inwards". Conference responded and told them not to.

There is an unintentional irony about the NEU Left's criticism of conference delegates. They demand unity rather than division, but it's unity on their terms. Where they lost at conference, they failed to persuade the majority of elected delegates. They were in the minority. So their pious appeal to unity is in fact a call for the majority to learn to do as we're told by the minority. Why would we do this? Because they are wiser, more important, more knowledgeable? We're not told.

Finally, there is the hypocrisy and double standard. The leading political force in the increasingly fragmented NEU Left is the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). This is an organisation that sees



itself as revolutionary socialist, Marxist, no respecters of convention and trade union bureaucracy.

In other unions, where they don't have a controlling influence, they are only too happy to criticise the leadership, reject top-down control and argue for alternative strategies. Not so in the NEU. Here, they react to democratic setbacks and corrections no differently (and in some ways worse) than any right-wing trade union bureaucracy.

Bemused and offended that the big majority of conference delegates could be so ungrateful as to disagree with a few of their decisions and policies. Set on heresy-hunting rather than reflection or re-evaluation. That is the road to further defeats and mistakes. □

- Abridged from bit.ly/educ-f

Hope after eight months

By Ken Worthington

Pay talks are due to take place this week between the bosses at the National Coal Mining Museum for England (in Wakefield) and the museum's striking workers. This is the second round of talks. Previous talks took place on 25 March and a joint statement from the NCMME and UNISON was released saying that the talks were positive and they were hopeful of reaching a resolution at further talks.

Workers on the picket line have told

Workers' Liberty members that they too are hopeful that the talks will see a resolution to the long running dispute and will be able to return to work with a deserved pay rise after eight months on strike.

The striking workers have called for a mega-picket the day before the pay talks, on Thursday 16 April. They have asked other workers and trade unionists to attend their picket to show solidarity and support. □



What we stand for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

Diary of a Tubeworker

"If you break your arm, come into work"

By P Ennar

Shifts on the gateline last a lot longer when every breath fogs up your glasses. But it would be irresponsible to breathe cold germs onto thousands of customers, not to mention my colleagues. The last thing we'd need is something nasty to go round

and have the station close from everyone booking off sick later in the week.

Coworkers and supervisors are sympathetic, but none of them ask the question that might seem obvious: why not just take the day off? They all know why. I'm on probation, and that means no sick days.

Sick days do exist in the-

ory. But if you take one, it's a surefire way to get your probation extended. Attendance and punctuality are non-negotiables for staying in the job, even if that means getting your coworkers, and potentially thousands of customers, sick. As I was told in training, "if you're on probation and you break your

arm, best come into work with a broken arm then get sent home."

Sometimes, you can't help but feel that the need to instil order in new staff goes against the ethos of keeping customers safe and journeys on time. But what would I know? I just got here. □

Kino Eye

April is National Poetry Month

By John Cunningham

As befits the occasion: a film about a poet. *Benediction* (2021), directed by Terence Davies, who died in 2023 (see *Solidarity* 687), depicts the life of Siegfried Sassoon, best known for his poems about the First World war.

Played by Jack Lowden, Sassoon, a British army officer, witnesses the full horror of war on the Western front. Deeply shocked, he writes a letter to his commanding officer condemning the war. It is picked up by the press and read out in Parliament.

Sassoon was declared unfit for service and packed off to Craiglockhart Hospital near Edinburgh. He was officially diagnosed as suffering from "neurasthenia"; in his own words, speaking to the Head Nurse as he registers: "I've had some

sort of nervous breakdown."

He continues to write poetry and in hospital he meets another "war poet" Wilfred Owen. The military authorities eventually send him back to the front. Sassoon, although wounded, survives the war but continues to struggle with what he has experienced and with his homosexuality.

His predicament is aptly summed up in the IMDb precis of the film, "... a troubled man in a fractured world searching for peace and acceptance."

In peacetime he supported the election campaign of the pacifist Labour candidate Phillip Snowden. He wrote a vast amount of poetry and novels. One of his best known collections is *Counter Attack and Other Poems*, published in 1918.

A "benediction" is a short blessing which concludes a religious service. □



Tube cleaners win sick pay

From Tubeworker

Cleaners across Transport for London (TfL) now have a sick pay scheme for the first time, after new contractor Mitie announced up to four weeks' full sick pay would be paid directly by TfL itself.

Lack of sick pay has been a huge issue for cleaners. As the article by the RMT union announcing the win put it: "Until now, the lack of a sick pay scheme has meant cleaners literally could not afford to be ill, facing a choice between using annual leave, struggling by on Stat-

utory Sick Pay, or coming to work whilst unwell, worsening their own condition and putting workmates and passengers at risk if their illness was contagious.

"During the pandemic, TfL recognised how dangerous this situation was, and subsidised a sick pay scheme. But rather than making this a contractual entitlement, it was subsequently withdrawn. Now, after renewed RMT campaigning around the transfer of the contract from ABM to Mitie, the employers have finally budged."

As with the provision of travel passes, TfL and City

Hall may present this as something they are doing out of the kindness of the hearts. But had a campaign of union pressure not maintained the profile of the issue, it would have been far easier for them to continue to ignore.

As the article also notes, the fact TfL is subsidising the sick pay scheme directly further erodes the logic of outsourcing: "TfL will now be providing staff travel passes for outsourced workers, and paying cleaners' sick pay. Why not simply employ them directly?"

When Mitie was awarded the contract, TfL said they

would run a "pilot" to look at the viability of employing cleaners directly. Co-running such a pilot with the outsourced contractor itself is a nonsense, as Mitie clearly has a vested interest in ensuring cleaning is not brought in-house. It falls to us, as Tube workers and union activists, to use the sick pay victory as a springboard for further campaigning – to demand more immediate improvements to terms and conditions and, ultimately, that cleaners, and all currently outsourced workers, are employed directly. □

Join Workers' Liberty!

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

Challenges in where-to-work dispute

By a PCS member

The six weeks industrial action ballot of PCS members in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) will close on 15 April.

The PCS MHCLG National Branch Executive Committee (BEC) decided on the ballot after six weeks of talks at the end of last year, following extensive industrial action, which **failed** to produce significant and unqualified movement from management on the issues at stake. These included opposition to management's arbitrary insistence on a fixed amount of hours to be spent in the workplace rather than working from home.

Activists are confident of a clear "Yes" majority for action but the Branch must secure that vote with a

(still legally required) 50% ballot turnout. Assuming that is delivered, the BEC will face three challenges. First, to impose serious costs on MHCLG through a hard hitting programme of action short of strike, strike action, and other measures. Secondly, to consult members throughout the dispute. Thirdly, to continue with action during any PCS-management talks that might follow – not to release the pressure – and to keep the timetable for talks tight.

Withdrawn

Encouragement should be taken from the long running PCS dispute in the Office for National Statistics (ONS), where management has withdrawn its instruction to staff to attend the offices for at least 40% of their time

and replaced it with an organisational 40% target. Staff are now expected to "attend the office when there is a clear purpose, whether at an organisational or individual level..."

There is still the risk of disciplinary action where there is "persistent and deliberate failure to attend in response to reasonable requests". However, that risk is now much lower than it would have been with the 40% instruction. 77% of PCS members voted to accept the management offer on a 71% turnout.

The background to the ONS dispute does not parallel that in MHCLG, but it does show that significant gains can be made in the fight for workers' choice and control over how and where they do their work. □

Uni strikes over pay

By Vicki Morris

The Unite and Unison branches at Glasgow University struck together on Friday 10 April and will strike again on 24 April in pursuit of an improvement to the insulting 1.4% 2025/26 pay offer. Unions also rallied (picture on right) outside the pay talks at Glasgow University on 9 April.

A handful of Unite and Unison branches throughout the UK achieved a strike mandate in disaggregated ballots and reballots. Unison branches at MMU, SOAS, King's, and Bristol have already struck, and further strikes are due there and in other universities during April and May.

Pay negotiations for 2026/27 have started, with the employers offering 2%

to those on the lowest spine point and 1.8% to everyone above. All the HE unions have rejected this. The final date in the negotiations will be 13 May in London.

All the unions should prepare to ballot for action against this latest insulting offer. A tussle is likely in the University and College Union (UCU) over whether to ballot, with the new, more right-wing exec resistant.

Universities are using the wider crisis in higher education (HE) to refuse higher pay, including in universities that can afford substantial pay rises. HE unions need to put in considerably more resources and training to ensure there are strong strike mandates. Active members and reps can link up with



union activists in places where they got strike mandates and have won pay rises and stopped job cuts.

Workers' Liberty advocates ambitious and specific pay claims that unions actively fight for rather than just

using as a "guide" in negotiations. Workers' Liberty members in HE have successfully won strike mandates in their branches. Get in touch if you would like to work with us. □

Longer work day: move to action!

From Tubeworker

Talks between the RMT rail union and London Underground [LU] senior management over LU's longer-working-day plan do not appear to be going anywhere.

Strikes in March were suspended following a reps' meeting. A majority supported the position put forward by the Trains Functional Council Reps and Regional Organiser that the "non-negotiable" deal now allegedly becoming negotiable was enough of a shift to warrant a suspension. A minority of reps, including Tubeworker supporters, warned that we had been here before in November, when management's stalling led us to take no action.

Over the last three weeks, those talks have not amounted to much. Tubeworker supporters warned that the risk of the talks failing was not that we

would strengthen our position, but that we risked losing momentum following a clear ballot result that showed we are up for the fight to defeat the longer-working-day/compressed working-week proposal.

Our next set of strikes is on 21 and 23 April; reps and activists need to start preparing our pickets.

Escalate

Our original programme of action was three sets of 48-hr strikes, which remain in place, with the suspended March dates now in June. Tubeworker argues that for our strikes to be most effective, we need to escalate. While more than one set of dates is good, if we want management to move, we have to prepare to hit them harder and longer.

There is a mood among some activists to know what we are asking the

company for in these meetings. We have had regular report-backs from recent meetings, but why not expand this and give us entirely transparent negotiations? But for some, it is a nervousness about being seen as intransigent. They now worry that we must establish so-called "red lines" and concede on other points. We have yet to show the impact of our strikes. The first real negotiation will happen once we have started our action, and with the threat of more to come!

The "red lines" should remain the complete scrapping of the deal, and our starting point for what we want is the 32-hour reduced working week, the same demand we have made across all grades and included most recently in our pay claim.

See you on the pickets! □

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Doctors still demand restoration



Resident doctors picket outside St Thomas' Hospital, London

By Wade Ferguson

Resident doctors have completed our six-day walkout, 7 to 13 April – the fifteenth strike in our current dispute over pay and jobs.

The government deal rejected by the resident doctor committee included, over three years, an average basic pay uplift of 4.9%, up to 4,500 new specialist training posts and the reimbursement for mandatory exams, which doctors often pay thousands of pounds to complete.

The BMA argued that the pay element of the deal was reduced and stretched from two to three years, which is disputed by the Department of Health and Social Care. The union is continuing to call for full pay restoration to 2008 levels, or 26% over multiple years.

In response, the government announced that it has cancelled the 1,000 new doctor training posts it was planning to create this year, despite the UK requiring some 40,000 additional doctors to meet the EU/OECD average.

Figures from other unions have anonymously briefed the press, expressing frustration that the BMA rejected a deal higher than the 3.3% pay increase proposed for over a million other NHS workers under Agenda for Change (AfC). They accuse the BMA's lay negotiators of unrealistic goals, but expose themselves as unassertive in their advocacy for their own members' interests.

The resident doctors' mandate continues until August. Senior hospital doctors – consultants

and senior associate specialists – are balloting over pay from 11 May to 6 July.

Meanwhile the BMA has been accused of hypocrisy after its staff, represented by GMB, organised a two-day walkout. They had been offered a pay increase of 2.75%, lower than the proposal that the BMA rejected for its members. □

Give the unpaid carers a break!

By Colin Foster

On 13 April the government stated that it has started a review of over 200,000 Carer's Allowance cases, and indicated that around 25,000 carers may get refunds or cancellation or reduction of debts.

However, existing policies to extract penalties for claimed overpayments of the allowance will continue in the meantime.

A series of articles in *The Guardian* found that officials and Conservative ministers had for years ignored warnings that carers had been unfairly pushed into debt and ill health, and in some cases convicted of fraud, as a result of failings in the complex allowance system.

In the five years after the Tories presented a new system as a solution, more than 262,000 overpayments totalling in excess of £325m were clawed back from carers, and 600 carers were prosecuted and received criminal records.

The allowance is supposed to be available if you are an unpaid carer for someone at least 35 hours a week and they get certain benefits. Even if you are not harassed about overpayment, it is meagre. From April 2026 it is £86.45 a week, or £2.47 an hour. □

Solidarity 766 is 22 April

Our usual fortnightly schedule is modified around the Workers' Liberty annual conference on 25-26 April. #766 will be out on 22 April, #767 on 6 May. □



May Day, Trump, and Avignon

By Rhodri Evans

Around half of voters in the USA, and a sizeable minority of Republicans, now tell pollsters that they think Donald Trump is no longer mentally competent.

And that was before Trump's social media post of himself as a god-like figure healing the sick; his denunciation of the Pope; and the reported Trumpite threat to the Pope's envoy in the USA that they should remember Avignon, where the French monarchy sponsored an "alternative Pope" to Rome's in the 14th century.

With previous infirm leaders, people could think that other top officials would screen out follies. In fact they often did that with Trump 1.0. There is no such moderation now.

On all accounts, Trump's sending his hapless vice-president J D Vance to Hungary to campaign for Orban speeded the Hungarian Trumpite's defeat.

On Friday 1 May, the "May Day Strong" coalition is calling for "No Work, No School, No Shopping".

The Chicago Teachers' Union is petitioning the city's mayor, Brandon Johnson, to declare it a "day

of civic action". "Across the country, local communities are declaring May 1st to be a day to defend public schools and services, call to tax the rich, and say no war, no ICE".

The US Socialist Alternative group says:

"This call, originally made by the May Day Strong Coalition, has also been taken up by locals across the country including the Washington Educators Association... The North Carolina Association of Educators is calling for a 'mass mobilisation' to the North Carolina state capital on May 1st during working hours..."

"All of this shows the real impact the day of 'No Work, No School, No Shopping' in Minneapolis on January 23 has had on the broader anti-Trump movement and unions across the country..."

"On paper, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) president Randi Weingarten has supported the May Day call; but publicly, she is deliberately vague about what that means for union locals..."

May Day won't be a full one-day general strike, but activists are pushing to get it as near as they can, and as big a step to the concerted working-class action needed to take advantage of the Republican splits opening up around Trump. □

PA ban arrests now total 3,300

By Colin Foster

Five hundred and twenty-three more people were arrested in London on 10 April for holding signs saying "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine action".

The Palestine Action group has been banned by the government as "terrorist" after members spray-painted warplanes. On 13 February a court found the ban unlawful. A government appeal will be heard on 28-29 April.

There have now been over 3,300 arrests, often of elderly and very respectable people, on quiet, peaceful protests for holding such signs. Prosecutions have been postponed. On 11 April, Devon

and Cornwall police, in pointed contrast to London, arrested no-one on a protest in Truro with similar signs.

On 1 April, Ben Jamal of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Chris Nineham of Stop The War and Counterfire were found guilty in court under the Public Order Act for a stunt on 18 January 2025, when they made a gesture of trying to lead a deputation to the BBC from a Gaza protest in Trafalgar Square. They were given conditional discharges but are appealing.

Whatever the tactical merits and demerits of the stunt, and whatever the detail politics of Palestine Action, we support the right to protest and demand that the PA ban be scrapped. □

For a workers' government

SOLIDARITY

& WORKERS' LIBERTY



Inflation • Crisis

See page 9



ORGANISE A UNION FIGHTBACK