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MAKE UNIONS FIGHT THE FAR RIGHT

Make unions fight the far right!

Socialists and trade unionists should see the breakthrough results for Reform in the 7 May elections as an urgent political warning.

While Reform is in control in just 26 out of the 369 councils in England and has just 13% of all councillors (2,368), they could have won more on 7 May if more seats had been contested. Reform also had the highest projected share of the vote – 26% compared to Labour's 17%. Winning more than a third of the seats in the Welsh Senedd was another worrying sign.

These results will boost Tommy Robinson's Unite the Kingdom march called for 16 May. Hundreds of thousands of people will march behind a message of nationalism and hostility to migrants.

There have been previous poor outcomes in local elections for Labour when in government. They lost 1,150 councillors under Tony Blair in 1999 and dropped to a 23% share of the vote in 2009 under Gordon Brown – with votes and council seats going to the Tories in those years. Votes going to both Reform and the Green Party this time did indicate, from different perspectives, anger about Labour's failure to deliver. But 7 May was more than "normal" dissatisfaction with an incumbent government.

The rise of Reform, and the Greens in a different way, show longer-term political shifts. Reform has grabbed support from Tory voters but also built on the right-wing populism embedded in British politics since the mid-2010s in the run up to Brexit and after. In many of the constituencies which voted for Reform there were high votes for Brexit. Whatever "Leave" voters now think of the dire results of Brexit, the political sentiments bound up in the divisive and reactionary Leave campaign have carried on.

From the deprived urban areas of Sunderland, Barnsley and Wakefield, to de-industrialised Thurrock to the "coastal periphery" of the Isle of Wight, people who voted Leave are turning to Reform and its policies.

How should the labour movement respond? While we can and should blame



the surge in support for Reform on Labour's poor performance in government, we have to face up to the popularity of Farage and Reform.

Distrust

Through all the iterations of a far right populist party – UKIP, the Brexit Party and Reform – Farage has preached distrust in the "Establishment". This is one reason for his popularity. At the time he called the victory for the Leave campaign:

"A victory for ordinary people, a victory for decent people. We have fought against the multinationals; we've fought against the big merchant banks; we've fought against big politics; we've fought against lies, corruption and deceit."

He's still projecting himself as anti-Establishment even as he takes money from billionaires and preaches a radical politics of big business – cuts in public services, anti-union, privatisation of the health service, opposition to tenant rights, and a laissez-faire attitude to the destruction of the planet.

The stance is of course ridiculous. But our side – socialists, labour-movement people – have not done enough to convince working-class people, potential Reform voters, that Farage represents the interests of the bosses.

The other defining characteristic of Farage's politics also came to the fore in the run up to the EU referendum. Against a backdrop of thousands of migrants fleeing war and dying or going missing in the Mediterranean sea, Farage and others responded with vicious hostility and racism. Remember the "Breaking Point" poster showing a queue of migrants with the slogan "The EU has failed us all"?

This kind of inhumane response to the misery and suffering of others (it was compared to Nazi propaganda at the time) now fails to shock; anti-migrant sentiment has, in general politics, in the

media, become normalised. In this way many thousands of people have become indifferent to the suffering of others or actively believe in anti-migrant propaganda.

Our side has not done enough to preach working-class unity and solidarity, to convince working-class people that their enemy is not migrants, but the bosses.

The trade union movement has to stop taking the line of least resistance: financing Stand Up to Racism (SUTR) instead of organising its own confrontation with the far right on the streets; producing sometimes useful but underused anti-Reform material, instead of organising to take arguments against Reform into the workplace; making perfunctory objections to the policies of the Labour government instead of organising militant protests and making solidarity with people at the sharp end of attacks.

TUFF

On 16 May the unions will not have an independent mobilisation against Tommy Robinson's Unite the Kingdom march. It has been left to the Trade Unions Fighting the Far Right (TUFF) network to call a symbolic counter demonstration to put forward clear alternative labour movement politics – to stop the cuts, rebuild public services, and defend migrants. This is the right thing to do, but it should have been done by the leaders of the trade union movement.

The Together Alliance (a SUTR initiative) will host what it calls "summits" in October 2026, to "plan action within local communities". We would hope the model here could be the same as that now established in many local groups – open democratic organisations, not dominated by self-appointed leaders. Anti-far right activists should attend and argue for democratic organisation, but we do not hold our breath to see that

happen.

We know, and the local election results confirm this, that support for Reform and the far-right is growing among union members – including reps and other elected officials. This has led and will lead to passivity in the face of attacks on workers. It will lead to the suppression of discussion on political issues, especially so called "woke" issues – which are in fact of vital concern to members of marginalised groups. Many members have been left to deal with these problems with little or no support from their unions. That has to stop. Local government unions need to urgently plan how to organise and fight back in Reform-led councils.

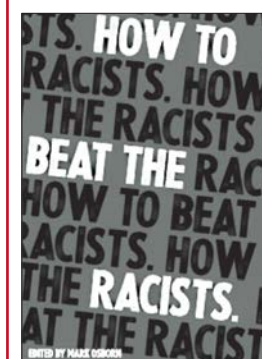
In fact we need a renewed culture of organising across the board – from fighting on pay and conditions to including equalities issues in collective bargaining, to recruiting to the union, including migrant workers.

The labour movement also needs a coherent political response based on working-class solidarity – for unity with migrant workers, for a reversal of cuts, for public services, housing, jobs, for a working-class offensive to take wealth and power from the rich.

Trade union affiliates of Labour should fight for such policies.

Trade union members inside the Green Party should demand their party adheres to the same policies and that members are encouraged to join a union and take part in union campaigns against the far right.

It is going to be an uphill struggle to beat back the far right and labour movement activists will have to fight on many fronts. In the first place by getting involved with or helping to set up a labour movement-community anti-far right campaign where they live. Help renew your local Labour Party and push members to get involved. Prepare to defend migrants and other minority communities. Organise against any renewed "fly the flag" operations. Leaflet local workplaces and talk to groups of workers about why Reform is spreading false hope and how we need to fight for our own class interests. □



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US-Israel bomb, Iran's clerics clamp down

By Dan Katz

Part of the socialist case against the US-Israeli bombing campaign against Iran was the likely terrible impact on workers, women and the poor. The external intervention has left the Iranian working class in a desperate position, while the fascist, Islamist dictatorship remains in place and has been able to ramp up repression against regime opponents.

At least two million workers are now unemployed in Iran following the 40-day US-Israeli bombing campaign, as a wave of lay-offs has rolled across the country. Worker-activists believe that 1.1mn building workers have lost their jobs, and Mikail Sedighi of the Construction Workers' Guild claims that 80-90% of sites have stopped all work.

The bombing of two major steel plants means that rebar prices have doubled, putting future construction projects in doubt.

Factory closures are reported country-wide: 700 textile workers in Borujerd; 900 in Neyriz; in Rasht 2,000 have lost their jobs in two months; up to 100,000 are now unemployed in industrial Khuzestan.

Many workers who are still formally employed have either received no wages or have had their pay cut.

Destruction of industrial plant and infrastructure, and the disruption of supply chains and unavailability of raw materials is leading to a second wave of lay-offs. A shortage of industrial paint means that 100,000 have lost their jobs in the car industry because there is no paint to complete car production.

The Iranian regime has shutdown internet access to prevent workers and

young people sharing information and so understanding their situation, and to stop regime opponents organising. Connectivity is still down at 1-4% of normal levels. The Minister of Information has previously stated that 10mn people rely on internet access to make a living and many of those — disproportionately women — have now lost their main or only source of income.

Vulnerable

One of the most vulnerable groups of workers in Iran is Afghan migrants. There are over 4mn Afghans in Iran, of whom 1.4mn are undocumented. The informal jobs that many depend on have dried up and many are now destitute.

Basic foods, goods and services have surged in price by up to 200% over the course of the 40-day US-Israeli war. In March the Supreme Labour Council set the cost of a "subsistence basket" for a family of 3-4 people at 45mn toman (a toman is ten rials), following the bombing that cost has jumped to 71mn toman.

The US dollar-Iranian rial exchange rate now stands at a new low: \$1 to 1.9mn rials.

Last year the minimum wage for a family of three was worth \$170 per month, today, with depreciation that minimum wage is worth only \$120.

Prices for agricultural production have also multiplied. The price of a 50kg sack of potassium fertiliser has increased ten-fold, to the equivalent of \$40. Iranian rice farmers typically need six sacks per hectare. Urea prices have also rapidly increased in price.

Increased fertiliser prices are directly linked to the Israeli bombing of the two major petrochemical centres in Iran at



Photo from the Iran bloc at London May Day

the start of April. Both sites were taken off-line following the air strikes.

According to the Iranian dictatorship 60,500 units of housing were damaged by war, including 46,000 in the capital, Tehran. By the end of the war 3.2mn were displaced.

The workers and Iran's poor have suffered terribly from the US-Israeli bombing and the terror, damage and unemployment which it caused. Consequently the working class is now weaker than before the war. The clerical-fascist regime has retained power and has been brutally stamping on all manifestations of opposition.

The Iranian Islamist dictators executed 21 political prisoners over the course of the war. Nine were convicted in rigged courts of participating in the

mass, anti-regime protests in January. Over the three days, 8-10 January, perhaps 20,000 people were shot down or hacked to death by regime militias and security forces, and at least 53,000 were arrested.

The Iranian state knows that the majority of Iranians want the regime's overthrow and they have put their militias on the streets to arrest and intimidate. The regime is willing to let the population suffer so it can pursue its reactionary goals.

The Iranian working class remains central. It is the only social force which can rid Iran of the current dictatorship and replace it with something much better.

The Iranian workers need our solidarity. They don't need US bombing. □

A "ceasefire" without peace

Negotiations continue between the US and Iran, with Israel sidelined.

Trump has blundered his stupid way throughout the conflict, expecting regime overthrow and then claiming the regime had, in fact, fallen. Trump has demanded Iran hands over 400kg of enriched uranium, but seems prepared to settle for less.

On 4 May Trump promised Project Freedom would force open the Strait of Hormuz using US military power. He forgot to mention his plans to the Saudi government who refused him permission to use Saudi bases for his adventure. So Trump backtracked, again, to petition Iran for a "deal" that would open the Strait to shipping and get him out of the political hole he found himself in. The Iranian leadership is now openly laughing at Trump.

The US's main issue now is Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, something the Trump administration apparently failed to anticipate, and which is causing significant economic and political stresses across the world.

In the US Trump remains unpopular and the Republicans will lose the House of Representatives in November's mid-term elections unless Trump manages to radically rig the vote. US inflation and petrol prices have risen dramatically.

European states are now enormously concerned about this open-ended crisis and its implications for their own econo-

mies. A sign of what might hit Europe and the Americas already exists in Asia where poorer states such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines have restrictions on air-con use, driving, working hours and school openings.

On the other side of the conflict Iran also has reasons to settle the dispute: it wants the return of \$100bn of assets frozen under US-led sanctions, and an end to the sanctions regime itself; it is now demanding control over the Strait of Hormuz and the right to charge tariffs for transit through that bottleneck.

Trump, by now, seems to have realised that a new bombing campaign is unlikely to open the Strait, and might well make his position worse.

Perhaps a deal can be done.

However, the Iranians hate and distrust the US and Israel and are ideologically motivated to resist Trump. And Trump is irrational, superficial and a bully with little to directly restrain him. So a resumption of the war is very possible.

The international working class has no army. But we do have solidarity. The Iranian working class is potentially very powerful. Support them.

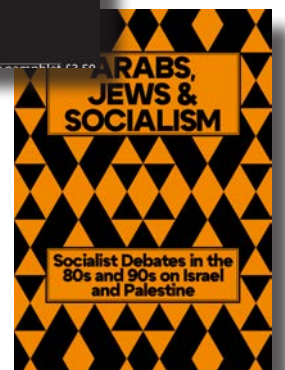
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Answering Reform on immigration

By Harold Storey

Q Reform did well in the 7 May elections. Doesn't this show that people are upset at soaring immigration and want something done about it?

A. Reform did well at capturing the "fed up" vote. But more so in areas with fewer migrants, where migrants can be portrayed as a remote but powerful danger, a scapegoat for all ills, than in areas where migrants are real people, neighbours and workmates. Immigration does not pose a threat to British workers. London, with lots of immigrants, is not a worse place to live than Clacton, with hardly any! On the contrary. Reform's platform is one that spreads lies and hatred about migrants, using them as scapegoats to evade the real issues.

Q. But housing is a real issue. Immigrants take too much of it away from British people who need it. Reform plans to prioritise British citizens for social housing.

A. 90% of social-renters were born in the UK or Ireland. Immigrants make up a small number of those in social housing across the UK. Anyway, everybody deserves housing regardless of where they were born, and we have the capability to provide it for British-born people and immigrants. In the 1950s, with worse technology, fewer resources, and Tory governments, Britain built an average of 147,000 new council homes a year.

The issue with housing in the UK is not that migrants are taking too much of it, it's that housing is treated as an asset for the creation of profits instead of a right for all people. In the early 1980s the Thatcher government forced councils to sell off their stock cheap ("right to buy"), and effectively stopped them borrowing to build more. "Right to buy" is still in operation (the Labour government has drafted plans to curb it sharply, but not implemented them), and in quarter 4 of 2025 only 1.7% of new house-building in England was council homes.

The solution isn't to get rid of migrants. It's an increase in council home building, banning the selling-off of council houses, nationalising the building industry, and introducing rent controls.

Q. Regardless of where they're living, immigrants take jobs and wages here that should go to British people first.

A. There isn't a fixed total of jobs and wages. Immigration generates more jobs and wages, just as more local-born children becoming working-age adults does. Countries of high immigration generally have higher rates of prosperity than more shut-off economies.

Many essential services and industries — the NHS, social care, construction — depend heavily on migrant workers, often highly-skilled. Without the contribution of those migrant workers, large areas of economic and social life would



shrivel, and there would be fewer jobs and less wages for all.

The idea that British workers should despair at the idea of immigrants making up a significant part of the UK's workforce serves only the bosses. Workers, local-born or migrant, can prosper only by uniting to fight the bosses, not by competing with each other for a supposedly fixed amount of spillover from the bosses' banqueting-tables.

Wages are driven down, jobs are scrapped, and conditions are made worse all the more easily when there is no organised and united working-class action. Only by recognising the common ground we share as workers and by organising with one another, instead of allowing ourselves to be divided by where we were born, or what colour our skins are, can we make our jobs and workplaces better.

Q. But Reform backs British workers. Didn't Farage pose with that union placard at a steel mill last year?

A. A lie on Farage's part. He certainly held a union-branded placard while claiming Reform would support UK workers, but their entire program exists to strengthen the position of bosses and landlords, and weaken everyone else.

Reform will repeal the Employment Rights Act 2025, and so increase zero-hour contracts, make fire-and-rehire easier, make union organisation and action harder, and scrap parental leave and statutory sick pay as day one rights for workers. They would also abolish the Renters' Rights Act 2025, leading to the reintroduction of Section 21, which empowers landlords to evict tenants with-

out providing a reason.

Q. But it's not just jobs, is it? Migrants also take money from benefits that could go to British people!

A. Make your mind up! Is your complaint against migrants that they take all the jobs, or that they remain unemployed and take benefits?

85% of Universal Credit recipients are British born, not migrants (about the same as the British-born percentage in the population). Asylum-seekers are barred from taking jobs, but also from benefits. Something like four million migrant workers have, by law, "No Recourse to Public Funds", usually as a condition of their visas.

Far from Britain being flooded with foreign-born pensioners, around 247,000 British citizens aged 65 and over live in other EU countries (excluding Ireland), and only 85,000 people aged 65 and over from those countries live in the UK.

Reform UK pledge only to cut welfare while cutting taxes, policies that benefit the rich and punish the poor, the unemployed, the homeless. Regardless of nationality, all people deserve the support of a generous welfare system to protect against poverty. The currently poor system is not the fault of migrants who "take too much", but of years of austerity measures, and our solution should be to tax the rich.

Q. But our services are also under immense strain from migrants. The NHS can't handle this many people.

A. The problems in the NHS aren't caused by migrants, they're caused by underfunding and by successive govern-

ments that are too afraid, or unwilling, to challenge the rich and their profits. Migrants use the NHS no more, or less, than British-born people. Maybe 1.5 million of them have to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (£1,035 a year) to use the NHS, yet migrants are around 21% of NHS staff.

The idea that migrants are a strain on the NHS, instead of vital to it, is a bare-faced lie. The NHS needs more staff, more equipment, more beds. Taxing the rich to fund public services is the answer, not deportations or bans on entry.

Reform's plans for the NHS would lead to its destruction and a shift to private healthcare, like in the US.

Q. Reform is the only party with any realistic plan to limit immigration.

A. Reform's plan to limit immigration revolves around setting up a British copy of the USA's ICE and opening swathes of detention centres across the UK to hold, manage and deport migrants, at least 600,000 by their own plans. Reform has said it would place these detention centres in Green-controlled local authorities, avoiding areas where Reform is in power. It's a British version of Trump's anti-immigrant policies. Is that a model to be copied?

Q. Well, maybe that's what the Greens get for wanting to open our borders!

A. The Green Party wants to liberalise the immigration system, but it doesn't have an "open borders" policy. You would still see deportations and asylum refusals under a Green government.

But we do want open borders. It's not a far-fetched idea. Countries like the USA and Argentina had almost-open borders until after World War One, and prospered accordingly.

Immigration curbs allow for employers to exploit migrants more and whip up division between workers, local-born and migrant. Unity amongst all workers is how we take on the bosses and tackle the real issues. □

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Israel-Palestine: for two states and equal rights!

By Ira Berkovic

Two peoples, Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews, inhabit the territory of Israel-Palestine. Both see it as their homeland. One has a state with a powerful military, a developed economy, and relative democracy. The other is subjugated, occupied, dispossessed.

A just peace requires draining the poison of national oppression. This means an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, alongside and with the same rights as Israel. Workers' Liberty summarises this perspective in the slogan "Two States, Equal Rights."

Retaining a class perspective is also crucial. Israeli workers do not share the interests of tech billionaires or property developers in the settler movement. Palestinian workers do not share interests with the wealthy leaders of Hamas or corrupt officials.

The situation on the ground has worsened. The current Israeli government declared at its inauguration that it would uphold the "exclusive and inviolable" right to Jewish sovereignty over the entire territory. West Bank settlements aim to "bury" prospects for a Palestinian state. The genocidal war on Gaza resulted in mass destruction and death. Wars on Lebanon and Iran aim to project Israeli power throughout the region.

Much about Israel-Palestine is simple. A powerful, well-armed state oppresses another national group, denying their right to self-determination. In this basic sense, anti-colonial and internationalist

principles require us to side with the Palestinians.

Beyond this, there are complexities. The Israeli Jews are not a minority caste, ruling by exploiting the labour of an indigenous majority, like the whites in South Africa under apartheid. Nor are they a colonial bureaucracy like the British in India. Nor are they a settler layer linked to an imperial metropole like the French in Algeria. They are a nation, with classes, and deep roots in the territory. Jewish settlers in the West Bank can return to the metropole of pre-1967 Israel. The Israeli Jewish national group as a whole has nowhere to "go back" to.

Founded

Israel was founded through a process of settlement and displacement which Palestinians call the "Nakba". The structural inequalities it established persist today. Acknowledgment and redress for these injustices will be key to any peace agreement. But the Israeli Jews are not the first to found a nation-state in part via the displacement of another people. Many contemporary states have their origins in similar processes.

Every nation has the right to self-determination. No nation has the right to deny self-determination to another. Consistent democracy requires a framework in which both peoples, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, can self-determine on an equal basis.

Workers' Liberty draws on the body of theory about nationhood developed by Marxists throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. We agree with Lenin and others who argued for the importance of self-determination as a democratic demand. They also stressed the importance of avoiding becoming apologists for nationalism, even the nationalism of oppressed peoples.

We have also learnt from the work of the small groups of Arab and Jewish anti-Stalinist revolutionaries in pre-1948 Palestine. They condemned the chauvinism of many Zionists. But they also saw the 1948 invasion of Israel by Arab armies, some led by British colonial

officers, as a "racial war on the Jews of Palestine."

In our view, much far-left thinking on Israel-Palestine has degenerated. This is partially a consequence of despair at a materially worsening situation. Lack of hope has caused a retreat into increasingly absolute positions. But it is also substantially a product of ideological concessions, principally to Stalinism.

Stalinism's imperialist calculations led it to arm the Zionist forces in the 1947-9 wars. However, it undertook a sharp anti-Zionist turn soon after. Its "anti-Zionism" bore little in common with the rational anti-Zionism of previous generations of Marxists. Stalinist anti-Zionism elevated Zionism, and Israel, to the status of a world-shaping, absolute evil. These perspectives sat within a wider framework, which some have called "campism". Campism divides the world into two distinct camps, one progressive, the other reactionary. Any force opposed to the latter camp is seen as supportable.

It is these political coordinates, far more than the earlier bodies of Marxist theory, that shape the thinking of much of today's far left. This includes much of even the non- and anti-Stalinist left. The Socialist Workers Party, the largest revolutionary group in the UK, responded to the Hamas massacres of 7 October 2023 with a headline telling readers to "Rejoice".

Bleak

Today, the situation is bleak. Settlements expand. Gaza is devastated. Reaction grows. This has led some to conclude a two-state framework is impossible. But the same trends which make this currently unlikely also make any more democratic outcome, such as a unitary binational confederation, even more remote.

Joint struggle against occupation, sometimes called "co-resistance", between Israeli Jews and Palestinians is vital. International pressure on Israel, in the form of sanctions and arms embargoes, has a role. This is especially so

when enacted directly by workers such as dockers. But social change cannot be imposed from without.

The Palestinian minority within Israel has an outsized role to play. It comprises around 20% of the population. It faces racism and discrimination. However, it has relatively greater freedom to politically self-assert than the occupied and besieged populations of the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian workers also play an important role in some sectors of the Israeli economy, such as healthcare and construction. We therefore look especially to movements such as Standing Together, which mobilises Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel in joint struggles for peace and equality, as well as around basic class issues such as wages and housing.

We say: End the occupation — Israel out of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and Lebanon. Two states, equal rights. For Jewish-Arab workers' unity. □

UK Friends of Standing Together

Standing Together, Israel's fastest-growing grassroots movement over recent years, unites Jews and Palestinians within Israel to fight for an equal and just society, for peace, and against the occupation.

UKFoST promotes their work in the UK: for peace, justice, and equality for Israelis and Palestinians — Jews and Arabs — including an equal right to self-determination, and for the full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

UKFoST promotes the benefits of joint struggle by Jews and Palestinians to this end. □ • ukfost.co.uk

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Defence on "Jerusalem Day"

By Ira Berkovic

The binational (Palestinian-Jewish) left-wing social movement Standing Together is preparing to confront racist mobs on "Jerusalem Day" (14 May this year), an annual far-right provocation against Palestinians. The movement writes: "Next week, tens of thousands of extremist Israeli settlers will flood the Old City of Jerusalem for a nationalistic march held every year on Jerusalem Day, and as usual, they'll

target Palestinian residents, attacking, beating, and spitting on them during a rampage through the city. But this year we've organised hundreds of Solidarity Guard activists to help protect Palestinians from getting assaulted, having their merchandise and property destroyed, or being hit with racist slurs."

Israel's government is currently withholding around \$200 million in tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, the semi-state body which has limited autonomy

over some areas of the occupied West Bank. The collection and transfer of the revenue is under the control of Israel's finance ministry, headed by far-right minister Bezalel Smotrich. Smotrich has routinely withheld the funds, alleging the PA "supports terrorism".

In Gaza, Israeli bombing has continued, despite the nominal ceasefire. A Hamas negotiator was recently killed in an air strike. Reports suggest negotiations, which are focused on the issue of Hamas disarmament,

have stalled, with some commentators predicting a resumption of all-out war by Israel. Around 60% of Gaza is already under the control of the Israeli military.

Israel has also struck Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, with Hezbollah firing at Israeli troops. A nominal ceasefire is in place there too, with US-brokered talks between the Israeli and Lebanese governments aiming at a permanent agreement.

On 30 April, thousands of

people gathered in Tel Aviv for a third annual Peace Summit, organised by a coalition of dozens of Israeli, Palestinians, and binational peace organisations. Speakers included Palestinian politicians Ahmad Tibi and Ayman Odeh, as well as leaders from Standing Together. The ongoing structural inequalities were highlighted by the fact that many Palestinians from the occupied West Bank who were due to participate were prevented from travelling to the summit. □

The Morning Star, the Greens... and Lib-Dems

By Jim Denham

Earlier this year the Communist Party of Britain issued a statement calling for tactical voting against Reform. This, they explained, could involve a Labour vote but only where the candidate is "left". The criteria by which the CPB would bestow the title "left" upon a Labour hopeful was not specified.

The statement was clear, however, that Labour candidates "who have backed Starmer's most reactionary policies can expect no support from the Communist Party" — effectively ruling out a Labour vote in many situations.

Support for non-Labour candidates would be "considered" where they advocate "progressive taxation, public ownership of the utilities, wealth redistribution, radical curbs on carbon emissions and the unconditional abolition of Britain's nuclear weapons", which reads very much like a set of criteria designed to allow support for the Greens and, in Wales, Plaid Cymru.

And, indeed, the CPB-controlled *Morning Star* hailed both Plaid's victory in the Caerphilly by election and the Greens' success in Gorton and Denton.

So it was no surprise that on 7 May, the MS editorial declared: "Where elections are cast as a choice between voting Reform UK or a credible alternative, voters are showing an acute sense of responsibility" [i.e. vote tactically to keep Reform out].

Perhaps more surprising was the

practical conclusion the MS drew, with apparent approval:

"... this means variously a vote for the Greens, for Plaid Cymru or the Scottish Nationalists, and occasionally for Labour or Lib Dem..."

Voting for the radical petty-bourgeois Green Party may be just about understandable for socialists frustrated by Starmer's right wing agenda. But the bourgeois nationalists of Plaid and the SNP (especially as the CPB and MS have always opposed nationalism in Wales and Scotland)? And the Lib Dems? The incoherence and opportunism of the *Morning Star* and its political masters the CPB at election time continues unabated.

The Greens and antisemitism

Perhaps surprisingly, the *Morning Star* took a thinly-veiled swipe at Zack Polanski's (literally) unbalanced response to the antisemitic stabbings in Golders Green in its editorial (1st May): "Swift police action to apprehend and overpower the attacker was clearly necessary. An online row over whether this involved excessive use of force has, at times, exposed a worrying indifference to the fact that the suspect had just seriously injured two people and was still armed, with the worrying implication that the attempted killing of two Jewish men was not after all that serious."

In another sign that the MS is now taking antisemitism seriously (in contrast to its record in the past), it has not — so

far — given any coverage to Paul Holden's Double Down News broadcast *Zack Polanski & The Weaponisation of Antisemitism: Same Tactics, Different Target*.

Holden's book *The Fraud* was given extensive and very positive coverage in the MS earlier this year. It was in some ways a useful book, exposing the machinations of Morgan McSweeney and the Labour Together clique in undermining Jeremy Corbyn and replacing him with Keir Starmer on a false prospectus. But the book's central weakness was its dismissal of the extensive evidence of antisemitism in Labour under Corbyn as simply a plot by Labour Together and pro-Israel groups like the Jewish Labour Movement against Corbyn and to prevent criticism of Israel. *The Fraud* contains very little real evidence for this claim.

Now Holden has gone further in his Double Down News broadcast and claimed that allegations of antisemitism in the Greens under Polanski are simply the same "contentious" (he never quite says "false") allegations that Labour Together and pro-Israel forces "hatched" (he never quite says "fabricated") against Corbyn.

Holden, once again, fails to discuss

or even describe, the actual contents of the alleged antisemitism. He ignores, for instance, several widely-reported posts from Green candidates, including these (which have earned some of them official disavowal by the Green Party):

Sabine Mairey (Lambeth): "ramming a synagogue isn't antisemitism, it's revenge";

Saiqa Ali (Streatham): over a picture of a Hamas attacker presumably on 7 October 2023: "Resistance is freedom";

Feda Shatin (Bournemouth): Jeffrey Epstein's island "is a symbol of the headquarters of the Zionists who are trying to control the world";

Tina Ion (Blakelaw & Cowgate): called for "the killing of every Zionist". □



Housing

The "unfinished revolution": land and the Crown

By Robert Bau

The English Revolution of the 17th century is often described by Marxists as "incomplete". Unlike other historical revolutions that dismantled old hierarchies, the English settlement ended in a compromise. Power shifted toward rising capitalists, but it left the mon-



Oliver Cromwell

archy and the landed nobility in place.

Today, this legacy is visible in the fact we have a King, a House of Lords (which until recently had hereditary peers) and in the English landscape, where about 30% of England is still owned by the traditional aristocracy. Furthermore, the legal framework of land ownership remains tied to the King, who continues to hold an extensive portfolio of land and other holdings across the United Kingdom.

Parts

The King's holdings are divided into three parts:

- The Crown Estate (~615,000 acres): This functions like a national trust. It includes Regent Street in London, and the seabed around England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. While the King

is the legal owner, he does not manage it or keep the profits directly.

- The Duchy of Lancaster (~45,550 acres): This is a private estate held in trust specifically to provide the Sovereign with a personal income.

- Private Estates (~70,000 acres): Properties like Sandringham and Balmoral are owned by the King in the same way a private citizen owns a home.

The most significant asset of the Crown Estate is the seabed extending 12 nautical miles from the shore. As the UK transitions to green energy, this has become a major revenue stream with every offshore wind farm in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland paying "rent" to the Crown Estate.

The financial flow follows

a specific cycle: the Estate's board transfers 100% of its net profits — which reached a record £1.1 billion in 2024/25 — to the UK Treasury. In return, the government provides the King with the Sovereign Grant to fund official duties i.e. he effectively gets a cut of the profits. Given the wind farm bonanza, the grant was reduced from 25% to 12% of these profits to prevent an excessive windfall. But as we move to 100% green electricity, the King is still being enriched.

Scotland

In Scotland, things are different. Since 2017, Crown Estate Scotland has operated as a devolved corporation. It manages 90,000 acres and the Scottish seabed, with 100% of its profits going directly to the Scottish

Government.

The current system cries out for democratic reform. If Scotland manages its own seabed then the devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland should have the same right.

The Crown Estate should be reformed as well. This means explicitly transferring ownership of these lands and the seabed to the state and ending the system where the Monarch receives effectively a percentage of public profits.

Whilst these reforms won't complete the bourgeois revolution, they are step towards it. Of course the real change would be to abolish the Monarchy.

In our next article, I will take a closer look at the Duchy of Lancaster and the King's other private holdings. □

Disaffiliation leads away from, not towards, new politics

By Matt Cooper

For many years now, anyone who has picked up *The Socialist*, newspaper of the Socialist Party (SP), will have seen demands such as for “a new mass workers’ party, based on the trade unions on a socialist programme.”

In real life the SP may have enough leverage to help disaffiliate Unite from Labour. It is not credible that it could then create a new workers’ party in its place.

The problem is evident in a recent issue of *The Socialist* (#1366, 8 May). Its preview of CWU conference begins with the industrial crisis facing Royal Mail and BT workers, but quickly shifts from industrial strategy to the CWU’s relationship with Labour. It argues that Starmer’s Labour has created a “political vacuum” now being filled by Reform, and says the CWU should stop being “limited to supporting” Labour candidates and instead back candidates supporting CWU policy, ultimately through the SP’s “new party”. (In fact CWU conference voted to stay affiliated).

This is confused. On 7 May lots of fed-up Labour people didn’t vote, or voted Green, or in some areas voted Reform. That is not a “vacuum” of people waiting for Sharon Graham or CWU

leader Dave Ward to declare a new party so they can vote for it.

Reform’s growth can be answered not by disaffiliation from Labour, but by building a combative rank-and-file response to restructuring in the post and telecom. That is what can pull union members attracted to Reform back towards working-class solidarity and pose a class-struggle alternative to reactionary politics more generally.

Defending

The Socialist also does not explain why building a rank-and-file fight could not also be used to push Labour Party towards defending working class interests. It notes that the CWU won Labour conference support in 2022 for renationalising Royal Mail but implies that the government’s failure to act proves the effort was futile.

The better conclusion is that the fight must be renewed, both inside Labour and inside the union. The union has done almost nothing in recent years to promote renationalisation. The answer is not disaffiliation, but for unions to use the power they still have: at Labour conference, on the NEC, and in local parties.

The SP’s demand is in fact a reiteration of a failed strategy. Since 2011 it has treated its electoral initiative, TUSC,

as a proof of concept for a new workers’ party, “raising the banner for what kind of stand is needed.” (Before that it had the “Campaign for a New Workers’ Party”).

TUSC

Few have flocked to this banner. TUSC stood around 300 candidates in May’s local elections, but trade-union support remained largely confined to SP union activists. Candidates mostly did even more poorly than in the past, often with around 50 votes. Some candidates did better. In Southampton Bevois, TUSC’s strongest result reflected years of community campaigning by a well-known local candidate. Dave Nellist’s reasonable vote in Coventry still draws on his profile as a former Labour MP. TUSC does not reveal a constituency of trade unionists straining to fill a “vacuum” created by Starmer. On 7 May people “fed up” with Labour “from the left” overwhelmingly voted Green, or didn’t vote, rather than voting for TUSC.

So the SP may succeed in weakening the union link with Labour, but without building anything in its place. Unite remains one of Labour’s largest affiliates. In April, a slate supporting the general secretary, Sharon Graham, won a decisive majority on Unite’s Executive Council. The SP was strong in that slate. Graham is close to the SP, which also has members in pivotal positions in Unite’s staff. The SP the largest organised group in the pro-Graham bloc. They

may be able to use their influence to disaffiliate Unite from Labour, but such a triumph would draw most of its support from Unite members who favour apolitical trade unionism, or even like Reform. It will lead away from a new workers’ party, not towards it.

The potential pitfalls are illustrated by *The Socialist* itself. In March (#1359), it reported a Lancashire SP member winning support at a GMB reps’ meeting for a motion backing disaffiliation from Labour. But the article gives no indication that the meeting was equally committed to the second half of the SP’s formula, building a new trade-union-based socialist party. The SP may win support for the negative demand to break from Labour among members frustrated, apathetic, or even drifting towards Reform, and in doing so lead them away from rather than towards a positive socialist alternative.

Strategy

Disengagement is not a political strategy. A union strategy should aim to force Labour to represent workers more clearly, not abandon the field to MPs, councillors and officials even less answerable to organised labour.

Moreover, the SP never explains why a new union-backed party would not reproduce Labour’s existing problem: domination by trade-union bureaucracy rather than rank-and-file control. Without deeper democratisation of the unions themselves, why assume the outcome would be different? If the unions were politically mobilised enough to create a new socialist party, wouldn’t they already, long before, have been mobilised enough to make a fight inside Labour?

Disaffiliation may sound militant. In practice, it risks leaving organised labour with even less leverage than it already has. The task is to build rank-and-file power, force unions to fight politically, and make Labour answerable to workers, not walk away from the field. □

Activist Agenda

Meetings

Thu 21 May: Poisoned by Stalinism – The Chernobyl Disaster. Lewisham AWL. 7pm, Deptford Lounge, 9 Giffin Street, SE8 4RJ

Sun 31 May: Reading group: *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* by V I Lenin. North London AWL. 11am, 20e Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, SE1 3DG

Sun 7 June: Unequal ecological exchange. AWL eco reading group, 8pm, Zoomlink bit.ly/eco-rq

At work or on campus

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

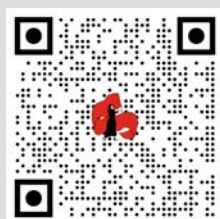
Sun 17 May: The Manosphere. London. 2pm, Effra Social, 89 Effra Road, SW2 1DF

Sun 31 May: Fortunes of Feminism. Liverpool. 1.30pm, The Egg Vegetarian Cafe, 16-18 Newington, L1 4ED, Top Floor

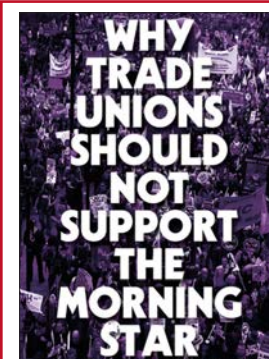
Mon 1 June: Mother State, a political history. Sheffield. 6pm, University Arms, 197 Brook Hill, S3 7HG

Campaigns

See workersliberty.org/agenda. □



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Chernobyl: a bureaucratic disaster

By Neil Roberts

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. At 01:23:45 on 26 April 1986, Reactor Number 4 at the Nuclear Power Plant near Pripyat in the Ukrainian SSR, then part of the Soviet Union, exploded. It remains the worst accident in the history of the industry.

When the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) was introduced in 1990, Chernobyl was the only incident to be rated 7. The only subsequent event to do so was the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan. Fukushima, triggered by an earthquake and tsunami, was much better controlled than Chernobyl (although the evacuation orders around Fukushima were probably overdone, causing many more deaths to frail or elderly people in transit than came from the accident itself). Chernobyl is a story of extreme bureaucratic mismanagement at all levels: design of the plant, management of the plant, and response once the disaster was underway.

The accident occurred during a scheduled test of the emergency backup systems.

The reactor type, the RBMK class, still in operation across Russia, is unlike any used outside the USSR. It was optimised for rapid construction and minimised requirement for off-site precision parts. It was in effect a scaled up version of the first generation of USSR reactors, whose principal purpose was to generate plutonium for use in weapons.

The design uses graphite rather than water as moderator to allow lower-grade uranium to be used as fuel. These graphite cores were built to enormous sizes to achieve maximum economies of scale.

In the contemporary debate around nuclear power it is not uncommon for more anarchism-influenced comrades to be hostile to nuclear power on the basis that the scale and concentration of the technology lends itself to concentration of political power. This is not a criticism we would share. Many technical and ecological questions require co-ordination at a vast scale. Then they also need a commensurate breadth of democratic participation and accountability: socialist planning. It was a total lack of such workers' power, or even of minimal bourgeois-democratic or trade-union controls, that determined the way the disaster unfolded.

This size of the graphite cores increases their power in absolute terms. But it makes it harder to detect any defects as they develop. Moreover even relatively it makes the system more volatile: it becomes harder to monitor reactivity, particularly as it varied within the core. Size also partially explains the failure to construct a distinct containment structure, due to additional cost.



Chernobyl nuclear power plant

The reactor had been built in 1983. The safety test should have been carried out before it came online, but the breakneck pace required to reach targets for the plant's construction had led to it being postponed on several occasions. Reactor 4 was signed off and began supplying power to the Kyiv region with the proviso that the test be carried out at the earliest opportunity.

Catastrophe

When it was finally carried out, a combination of factors conspired to precipitate a catastrophic failure.

The aim of the test had been to determine the readiness of the emergency diesel-powered back-up pumps to keep water flowing through the reactor in the event of a loss of power. It required disabling the emergency cooling system, a temporary reduction in output, then briefly, a full shutdown.

The fact that Chernobyl 4 was already connected to the grid meant such an interruption was difficult to manage, particularly in the context of the growing economic crisis in the USSR in the mid 1980s. The test had been scheduled for the day shift on 25 April, but was postponed again at the behest of the local grid controller, as another local power station went offline and factories were under pressure to meet quotas for the end of the month.

This last minute delay meant the test was handed over to the night shift, a less experienced team who were given no prior notice or additional support.

By the time the test was finally given the go ahead the reactor had been held at reduced power for a much longer period than stipulated by protocol, with the emergency cooling system disconnected. The low-power state had led to the buildup of inert xenon gas that acted

to slow the nuclear reaction. The control room responded by removing the boron control rods to try and maintain reactivity. Again they went beyond stated limits. They began to lose control of the reactor.

The design allowed for a "positive void coefficient" whereby if bubbles of steam form in coolant water, reactivity increases, which in turn generates heat, generating more steam, creating a runaway positive feedback loop. As reactivity bounced back, this is exactly what began to happen.

As power began to surge the operatives pushed the emergency "scram" button, a function common to all nuclear reactor designs to shut them down in the event of such a loss of control. In an RBMK this was called the AZ-5 button and actuated the simultaneous insertion of all the boron rods into the reactor.

The fatal flaw in those control rods was that while their main body was boron, they were graphite tipped. Graphite increases reactivity and, as the tips entered the reactor, it spiked again. The rods jammed and there was no longer any means to constrain further reactivity increase.

Explosions

There were two explosions in quick succession. The first was a steam explosion. There is some debate about the nature of the second. Their effect was to blow the top off the reactor and expose the uranium-fuelled core to the open air, ejecting material from inside the reactor which was dispersed as both chunks of burning debris to immediate surroundings and lighter particles into the atmosphere. A fire within what was left of the core then began to further propel radioactive dust into the air. The vertical emission of radioactivity from the core was enough to make the air directly

above glow blue as it was ionised.

This was an accident completely outside of what was considered possible. Initial radiation readings maxed out the available measuring equipment, which was assumed to be faulty. Plant operatives were sent out without protective gear to manually open valves to run coolant through a reactor that no longer existed. Many of these were the first victims of lethal radiation exposure.

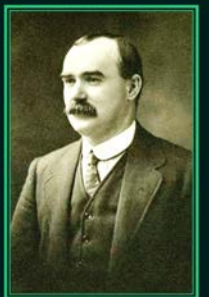
The most apparent immediate emergency was the fire which spread to the roof, which, to save money, had been laid with flammable bitumen, against design specifications.

The first responders to the incident were the local fire brigade. Firefighters were not trained or equipped to deal with a radioactive incident of this kind. Many of these would also quickly be exposed to fatal radiation doses and would die in the next few weeks. Accounts from these firefighters vary as to how much they even understood about the dangers posed.

Much of the preoccupation of the Soviet authorities in their immediate response was to control the flow of information and retain a semblance of normality. Phone lines were cut and the adjacent reactors were kept operating. As the morning came, children started playing outside, people swam in the river, and a wedding went ahead. □

• To be continued in the next issue.

Liam McNulty



James Connolly
Socialist
Nationalist &
Internationalist

This book discusses Connolly not just as an Irish hero, but traces how he was shaped by and responded to the international socialist and labour movement of his time.

It traces his influences and influence through a transnational network of working-class activists, socialist agitators, and revolutionary nationalists. 412 pages £25 □

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An alternative to multi-systems theories

By Dominika Szarek

Nancy Holmstrom opens her new book, *From a Marxist-Feminist Point of View*, with a brief autobiographical introduction, describing herself as "instinctively" Marxist even before reading Marx and recalling her early involvement in CORE (the Congress of Racial Equality). Although she identifies as instinctively Marxist, she offers little detail about her political formation, mentioning only briefly her time in the Young People's Socialist League, an organisation rooted in a socialism-from-below tradition. The introduction feels somewhat self-focused, though I had been warned that Holmstrom often frames her theoretical work through her own political trajectory. Fortunately, these autobiographical elements remain minimal in the rest of the book.

The introduction nevertheless sets the tone for what follows. As Holmstrom writes, "this book integrates my intellectual work with the values I have been committed to all my life: freedom, justice and equality." With its value-first epistemology, the book grounds socialist feminism in the lived realities of women and presents socialism as the only ideology capable of real liberation. This review focuses primarily on the first section, *Mode of Production*, especially the essay "Marxist/Socialist Feminist Theory and Practice in the USA Today," with refer-

ence to "Women's Work, the Family and Capitalism," as the two chapters closely intersect.

Holmstrom begins with the mode of production because, following Marx, she sees it as the central analytical category for understanding social development. She treats the mode of production not as a narrow economic mechanism but as a framework model: foundational, yet not sufficient on its own to explain the full complexity of social life. Exploitation, therefore, is not a purely economic relation divided strictly along class lines.

Production

In "Marxist/Socialist Feminist Theory and Practice in the USA Today," Holmstrom revisits the debate over whether Marx adequately accounts for women's oppression. She notes that some feminist theorists accuse Marx of reducing "productive labour" to wage labour and thereby marginalising domestic and reproductive labour, despite the fact that such labour is essential to sustaining the very conditions of capitalist production. Holmstrom rejects this interpretation, arguing that Marx's focus on wage labour was a methodological choice rather than a theoretical failure — a point she develops more fully in "Women's Work, the Family and Capitalism." (Marx's argument was that *for capital*, productive labour is labour directly producing surplus value for capital, not at all that he,

Marx, saw such profit-yielding labour as more worthy or beneficial than e.g. work in free-to-user public services).

This second chapter parallels Susan Himmelweit's [critique](#) of the "domestic labour debate" of the 1970s. Holmstrom highlights the flaws in Wally Secombe's argument that housewives stand in a specific relation to capital obscured only by the absence of a wage, and in John Harrison's claim that domestic labour constitutes a distinct mode of production, which would imply that housewives form a distinct class. As Holmstrom notes, capitalists are indifferent to whether labour-power is reproduced through elaborate domestic labour or through ready-made meals; what matters is simply that labour-power is reproduced sufficiently to generate surplus value. Reducing reproduction to an economic transaction — as if women were "selling" their children to capital — bears little resemblance to social reality. Likewise, Harrison's implication that domestic labour constitutes a separate mode of production is historically inaccurate and analytically incoherent. The existence of different labour relations does not automatically imply the existence of new classes. If that was the case, as Holmstrom indicates, would self employed and freelancers be a different social class, because their work relation does not reflect the typical wage

labourer model?

Holmstrom's first chapter is persuasive in arguing that proliferating multiple "systems" — race, gender, class — leads to explanatory pluralism. Her framework model, in which capitalism contains structural features that shape how other forms of domination operate, is more coherent than dual-systems or triple-systems approaches. Yet this does not mean that everything can be reduced to economic determinism. A fuller account must address the ideological, political, and historical forces that shape race and gender — an area Holmstrom postpones to later essays.

Similarly, while the chapter on domestic labour acknowledges that women have always been both housewives and workers — a reality reflected today in women's overrepresentation in the working class — it offers little that is conceptually new. Much of the discussion echoes Himmelweit's earlier analysis. More importantly, the chapter does not sufficiently address the need for the socialisation of domestic and care work. Holmstrom rightly rejects the idea that domestic labour should be waged, since this would entrench women further within gendered roles rather than transform them, yet she stops short of developing a fuller vision of collective, socialised care as a necessary condition for women's liberation. □

Pakistan-Afghanistan

A war between thieves

By Paul Abbot

Fighting between Pakistan and Afghanistan has continued despite peace talks mediated by China. There have been various border skirmishes for months, but these became much more violent in February after Pakistan carried out airstrikes. These came after a suicide bombing at a Shia mosque in Pakistan's capital Islamabad, which Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed credit for.

In mid-March Pakistan hit a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, killing hundreds according to the UN. Afghanistan does not have an airforce, but has seen some success with small drone attacks.

These strikes on Afghanistan have nominally targeted ISKP and Pakistani Taliban (TTP) sites, although they have struck

government targets as well. The Pakistani government has accused the Afghan Taliban government of providing sanctuary, weapons, and funding to the TTP: at a minimum, the first of these is certainly true.

The TTP is an Islamist paramilitary group which is based out of northwest Pakistan which neighbours Afghanistan, and many of their bases are across the border. They have carried out countless attacks and suicide bombings in Pakistan, but are probably most famous globally for the attempted assassination of woman's education activist Malala Yousafzai in 2012.

ISKP was founded in January 2015 by Afghan and Pakistani Islamists who had organised to send volunteers to fight alongside Al-Qaeda in the Syrian Civil War: this particularly included members of the TTP who would

end up forming ISKP, such as its first leader Hafiz Saeed Khan. They criticised the Taliban as "nationalists" who made too many concessions to local customs (relative to global Islamic norms), and for their closeness to the ISI (the Pakistani security services).

Complicated

The Taliban government and ISKP are openly hostile to one another, but their relationship with the TTP is more complicated. They (reportedly) cooperated during the 2021 offensive that brought the Taliban to power, and the government fears cracking down too heavily on the TTP as it would push them closer to ISKP.

The fighting has killed hundreds of civilians (largely but not exclusively in Afghanistan). In early March the UN said that over 115,000 Afghan civilians

had been displaced, and this number has surely risen by now. Many Afghans have tried and failed to cross into Pakistan, and there is a long-running government crackdown against Afghan refugees. Over 146,000 have been deported in 2026, and over a million were deported in 2025 — this has included people who were born (and some whose parents were born) in Afghanistan.

Escalation

This escalation has happened alongside and despite the prestige the Pakistani government has earned in being the central mediator of the US-Iran war. The decades-long relatively friendly relations between the Pakistani state and the Taliban have frayed since 2021, and they now see the Taliban government as an Indian proxy. Within Pakistan the matter is

further complicated by the fact that Imran Khan's Pakistan Movement for Justice (PTI) is in power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the province bordering Afghanistan where the TTP and other groups are strong.

The Pakistani state is no reliable or principled enemy of the violent religious bigots it is now bombing, whether the Taliban government or TTP and ISKP. It long supported the Taliban as part of its "strategic depth" policy of seeking an Islamist government in Afghanistan to prevent encirclement between India and an (initially) Soviet-backed Afghanistan.

Equally, the Taliban government in Afghanistan is the implacable enemy of the country's working class, women, religious and ethnic minorities, and democrats, who are caught between their own government and the Pakistani bombardment. □

Anas Sarwar should resign, too

By Dale Street

In some ways, Labour's abysmal performance in the Scottish Holyrood election was even worse than its performance in the Welsh Senedd election and the English local authority elections.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) had been in power for 19 years. During that time it has presided over a collapse in educational standards, an NHS long since unfit for purpose, rocketing homelessness, job cuts in universities throughout Scotland, record levels of drug deaths, and real-term cuts in the funding of local authorities.

As a party, the SNP has suffered a succession of scandals, internal conflicts over personalities and politics, and membership resignations. The most vitriolic attacks on the SNP during the election campaign came not from its party-political competitors but from former members.

The fall in membership, the decline in morale, and Swinney's lacklustre leadership were reflected in the SNP's often low-key campaigning at street level.

An added gift for Labour during the election campaign was the decision of the *Daily Record* to effectively call for a Labour vote (by prominently running anti-SNP articles) and the explicit call by the Sun newspaper to vote for anyone but the SNP.

A more tangible gift was the "substantial six-figure donation" which Scottish Labour received from two Scottish billionaires. Scottish Labour's election campaign was better funded than any other previous campaign, and better funded than that of any other party.

And yet the SNP easily won a fifth term in office, winning 58 out of Holyrood's 129 seats. Labour (down four seats from the 2021 election) and Reform tied second with 17 seats each (and Reform fell

just 264 votes short of winning a further seat). The Greens and the Liberal-Democrats both won an additional six seats (giving the former 15 seats and the latter ten), despite the Greens' discredit from their 2021-4 coalition with the SNP.

The Tories, who had been the opposition in the last parliamentary session, achieved their worst vote ever in Holyrood elections, slumping from 19 seats to twelve.

Easy Win

Despite its easy win, the SNP won six seats less than in 2021. Its share of the constituency vote was 38%, its lowest since the 2007 election. With only two exceptions, its share of the vote fell in every constituency. The SNP recorded its lowest vote, lowest vote share, and lowest tally of seats since 2007.

The lack of enthusiasm for the SNP – and its opponents – was also reflected in the overall turnout for the election: down to 53%, the lowest of the last three Holyrood elections, and ten points lower than in 2021. In some Glasgow seats – those with the highest levels of poverty – the turnout was even lower, at around 43%.

Scottish Labour did not lose anywhere near as many seats or votes as Welsh Labour. And its loss of four MSPs was nowhere losses in English local authorities. What made Scottish Labour's performance so bad was that it could and should have won the election.

Instead, it maintained its Holyrood tradition of winning less seats and a lower share of the votes (even if, this time, only marginally) than in the preceding election.

First and foremost because of the Keir Starmer factor.

In the 2024 Westminster election Scottish Labour won 37 seats, compared with just one in 2019. Its share of the

vote increased from 19% to 35%. That upsurge in support was destroyed by Starmer's subsequent record in power. Anyone who did any door-knocking for Labour during the election campaign can confirm that.

Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar tried to neutralise the impact of the Starmer factor by advocating that he resign. But a one-off speech to a press conference was never going to be enough to rescue Scottish Labour from the deadweight of Starmer.

Secondly, because Scottish Labour ran an utterly inadequate campaign.

Scottish Labour's "strategy" after the 2024 general election effectively amounted to doing little or nothing (other than making speeches in Holyrood criticising the SNP), based on the assumption that the SNP bubble had finally burst and that SNP voters would return to their supposedly "natural" home in supporting Scottish Labour.

Scottish Labour vaguely promised change – it would change bad things into good things – but that was not sufficient to motivate voters to switch back Labour, especially after the negative experience of Starmer's equally insipid promise of change.

Thirdly, because of the weakness of Scottish Labour as an organisation.

Unlike in England, there was no "Corbyn influx" into Scottish Labour. In that sense, there has been no mass desertion of members following Corbyn's replacement by Starmer. But there has been, and continues to be, a long-term decline in the membership size and level of activity of Scottish Labour.

There are no longer any Labour Party branches in Scotland, only all-member Constituency Labour Party meetings – far less well-attended than when they were delegate bodies, sometimes strug-



gling for a quorum, and often with a turnout in which councillors (and family and friends) constitute a majority of attendees.

The SNP election campaign was certainly weak on the ground. But the same applies to the Scottish Labour campaign as well.

Like members in England and Wales, Scottish Labour members received Starmer's post-election e-mail in which he failed to acknowledge his responsibility for last Thursday's debacle.

But Scottish Labour members also had the misfortune to receive an e-mail from Anas Sarwar informing them, as if they did not know already, that "today's results are not what we wanted or worked for."

Absent from the e-mail is any suggestion that Starmer should now resign – as advocated by Sarwar himself during the election campaign.

This underlines the fact that Sarwar's call for Starmer's resignation was no more than an electoral gimmick. It also highlights his refusal to draw the necessary consequences from the election defeat: That he and Jackie Baillie should resign as leader and deputy leader of Scottish Labour, along with Starmer. □

A working-class "Covid inquiry"

By Stuart Jordan

The Covid 19 pandemic was a crisis of workplace safety. Around 15,000 workers lost their lives and many hundreds of thousands still suffer life altering post-covid conditions. These workers were not just unfortunate victims of living in dangerous times, but were put in harm's way by employers prioritising profit over human life.

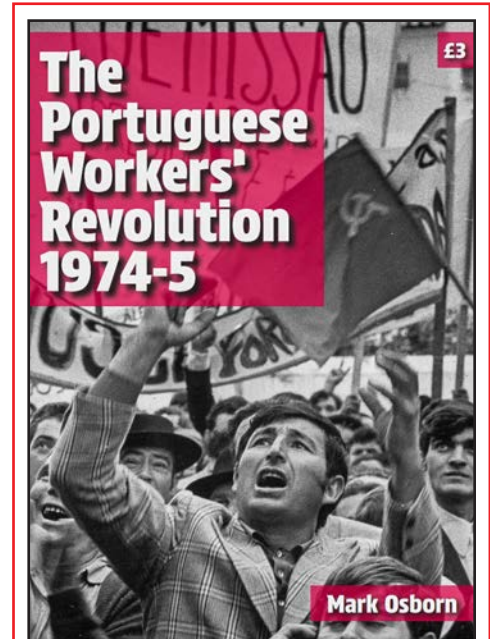
At a time when almost all household to household social mixing took place in workplaces, our own and other people's (the supermarket, public transport, hospitals and care-homes etc), official public health advice ignored the specific risks of workplace transmission. Government rushed to protect the incomes of property owners, whilst key workers were denied basic protections like sick pay and well ventilated workplaces. The Health and Safety Executive essentially shut up shop, issuing 94% fewer notices in 2020 than in the previous year.

Black and minority ethnic, women, disabled, low paid and insecurely employed workers did the most of the work to keep essential services running and suffered the heaviest burden of harm.

Workers were not passive victims, but active agents shaping the pandemic response.

Many thousands of union safety reps and many hundreds of thousands of trade union members mobilised to win safer workplaces. In many cases they won. Through collective action and dogged determination, workers shaped the pandemic response and in many cases built or renewed trade union power in the workplace. Post-pandemic these campaigns and organising efforts have continued and remain important not only so our workplaces are better prepared for the next pandemic, but also because people are still life-altering and life-ending infectious disease remain workplace risks. Rates of "long Covid" continue to rise.

Workers' Liberty is seeking to collate a record of the lived experience and reflections of the many working-class activists and trade unionists who worked and organised through the pandemic. We are asking for written submissions and seeking interviews with workplace reps, health and safety campaigners and trade union officials at all levels of the movement. Email awl@workersliberty.org □



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Labour after Starmer

By David Axon

Following the local election results, and as *Solidarity* goes to press, more than 80 Labour MPs have called on Keir Starmer to resign or set a timetable to resign.

The unions affiliated to Labour, including the previously Starmer-loyal GMB and Usdaw, have also called for a change of direction. And many of the MPs are people who want a significant change of direction, for a Labour government that implements Labour conference policies such as reversing Tory cuts (not just pausing them), wealth tax, defence of Leave to Remain, and expanding collective rights for workers.

All of these were policies passed at Labour's Annual Conference 2025, not that you would know it from Labour's website or any pronouncements or actions of the government. Unions and CLPs also want more council housing built, and the NHS properly restored.

Others however are Labour right-wingers, who want to pre-empt debate or a leader election opening up Labour more to voices from the ranks and the unions, in the increasingly vain hope of saving their seats and political careers by a "palace coup" which installs a more deft front-person for unchanged policies.

The background of former minister Catherine West is soft-left, but on the weekend she de facto made herself the voice of the "palace coup" option. Before backing down on Monday 11 May, she said she would start to collect names for a challenge to Starmer if no-one from the cabinet makes that move, but stressed that "orderly transition" to her meant the cabinet organising a reshuffle in which Starmer had a different role, and someone from within the same inner circle became party leader.

In the middle are the soft left Tribune Group of MPs. Debbie Abrahams of that group is giving Starmer a few months: "I supported Keir for leader, I believe he's doing a good job building new international alliances and strengthening others where he can, but if by the end of the year people at home are still not feeling the benefits of this Labour Government's domestic agenda, Keir must do the right thing, put the country first and announce an orderly transition to a new leader." The subtext here is that Andy Burnham might be back in parliament by that time.

We want Starmer out, but not just to change presentation. As John McDonnell put it, "Nobody should be launching a coup, we need to give party chance to have a thorough discussion about what has happened, why and what's needed now".

Former Welsh Labour leader Eluned Morgan is clear: "We need to go back to being the party of the working class. We need the Labour government nationally

Chesterfield Labour Party at Chesterfield May Day



to change course."

Socialists — in the Labour Party and trade unions, both affiliated and unaffiliated — need to spell out that changed course. The 11 affiliated unions have already put out a joint statement:

"Labour's affiliated unions are deeply concerned by the Party's catastrophic election results. They show a stark disconnect between this Labour Government and the working people and communities that it was elected to represent.

"Voters right across the country have sent a clear message: that this Government are not delivering on the promised change they so desperately want to see.

Unions

"This cannot continue. Voters want to see a radical new direction from Labour, that stems the tide of division and unites workers and communities in every part of the country. TULO unions are united in calling for a fundamental change of direction on economic policy and political strategy, so that Labour do what it was elected to do: *govern in the interests of workers*. Labour must also deliver the rebalancing of power in the workplace promised in the New Deal for Working People, in full, without any carve-outs or loopholes.

"The stakes are too high to continue on this path. Labour's unions have a responsibility to the Party that we created, and as a result TULO have demanded a meeting with the Prime Minister and Party Leadership to discuss the urgent change in direction that we all know is needed".

It is a start, and it is significant that this statement has been agreed even by the more right-wing union leaderships, including those unions that voted with Starmer to block Burnham being a candidate in Gorton and Denton. But it is a

discussion needed in every Constituency Labour Party (CLP) and union at every level. Those demands are already being placed for example on Unite's National Labour Liaison Committee.

John McDonnell has said that there must be "no blocks on candidates" in the leadership election when it happens. One thing this means is unions and CLPs demanding that the election is carried out according to the Labour Party's own published rules, and that these are not manipulated as they were in last year's Deputy Leader election. Restrictive as the rules are, requiring nomination from 20% of Labour MPs, even these rules were broken by Labour's National Executive (NEC) for the Deputy Leadership.

Copying the model in the Tory party, the NEC decided that the MP nominations would go first, as a preliminary stage, restricting who trade unions and CLPs could nominate. There is no more justification in the rules for this than for taking trade unions and CLPs as a first stage, with MPs allowed only to nominate those reaching the threshold of affiliate or CLP nominations.

The discussion on policy and on democratising the Labour Party go hand in hand.

Conferences

Across those parts of the country that had local elections last week, activists in local parties are also taking stock of their own campaigns and their changed positions locally. In the context of loss of control in many former Labour councils, activists should be demanding local labour movement conferences to take stock of the new position and plan for how to fight Reform-led or coalition councils. It is time for those parties to go "back to the basics" of building Labour Party membership and active branches that will take part in supporting local

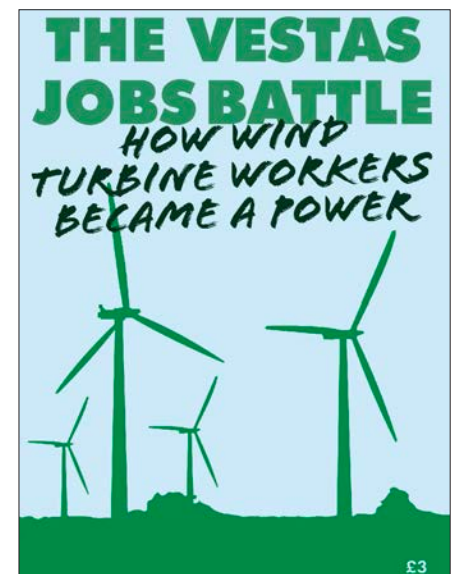
workers' struggles such as strikes, campaigning in their communities, and fighting for change within the national party.

But this is not just an issue for local parties learning how to be in opposition. Labour still controls more councils than any other party, and the anger at Labour expressed in the election results was not just anger at the national government; many of these local councils have equally failed, implementing anti-working-class cuts to jobs and services.

Socialists in the Labour Party need to take up the lack of democracy in Labour's local government arrangements. At the online organising forum of the soft-left group Mainstream, in the run-up to the elections, there were multiple reports of regional offices interfering in local campaigns, for example delaying the release of election material. In some areas the council Labour Groups used this regional office interference to control local campaigns literature themselves, to the detriment of its quality and relevance.

As Labour Left Internationalists' draft democracy charter (bit.ly/c-lab-d) puts it, "At one time, District Labour Parties were an important part of Labour's campaigning and political life, but the current 'Local Government Committee' structure is unworkable in many areas. Worse, the 2024 rule changes removed the LGC responsibility for the local manifesto, and the 2025 rule changes removed CLP observers to Labour Groups. In some areas of the country LGCs are currently not functioning at all, leaving everything to Labour Groups or employed staff".

That charter calls for "a local electoral college for choosing leaders of Labour Groups", and for "LGCs and branches to have control of campaigns for local elections". That too, would be a start. □



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When “left” and far-right join

By Farah Mokhtareizadeh

• Abridged with thanks from bit.ly/fm-camp

In January 2026, as protests swept Iran and the Islamic Republic responded with mass killings, the international left faced a choice about whose voices to amplify and whose to render invisible. The choice it made is the subject of this essay.

On April 10, 2026, a Holocaust denier, a white nationalist theorist, the founder of the World Social Forum, and a former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights all put their names on the same document. So did Vijay Prashad.

The document was “Six Non-Negotiable Terms from International Scholars and Former Officials from 30 Countries to End the US War on Iran,” published by [CounterPunch](https://www.counterpunch.org/) [a historically-leftish website] with over 170 signatures. Richard Falk, Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton and former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Occupied Palestine, signed it. So did Denis Halliday, former UN Assistant Secretary-General who resigned in protest over the Iraq sanctions regime. So did Boaventura de Sousa Santos, one of the most cited sociologists in the world and founder of the World Social Forum. So did Jodie Evans, co-founder of Co-dePink.

So did James H. Fetzer, who wrote the book claiming Sandy Hook never happened and that the murdered children were fictions, and was ordered by a Wisconsin court to pay \$450,000 to Leonard Pozner, the father of six-year-old Noah Pozner, for defaming him.

So did Kevin B. MacDonald, whose trilogy *Culture of Critique* provided the theoretical foundation for contemporary white nationalism and was cited by



Photos from the Iranian bloc at London May Day

the Christchurch mosque shooter in his manifesto — work the shooter himself praised as the product of a “serious political thinker.” So did Alain de Benoist, the intellectual architect of the European New Right, whose life's work has been making racial separatism sound like a philosophy... [British signatories include David Miller, Chris Williamson, but also Avi Shlaim].

The document presents all of them as a unified conscience of humanity, describes former Ayatollah Khamenei as “recognised globally as a voice against arrogance and terrorism,” calls for the “prosecution and extradition of operatives in anti-Iranian media”, meaning the exiled journalists through whom Iranian workers, feminists, and political prisoners communicate with the outside world.

The letter actually proposes handing those journalists back to a government that, according to Amnesty International and Iran Human Rights, executed at least 1,639 people in 2025 and killed more per capita than any country for which reliable data exists. They end by declaring that “if Iran falls, the hope of a better, enlightened future for the world dies with it”...

Campism

Campism is the position that political solidarity should be determined by which geopolitical bloc a state belongs to rather than by the class character of that state or the interests of the people living within it.

In Syria, the genuine popular uprising against Assad was reframed as an imperial project. In Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed's government conducted a war in Tigray that killed hundreds of thousands and was documented by the UN as involving mass atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war. The Tricontinental, the institute [Vijay] Prashad [a leading signatory, who describes himself as Marxist] directs, maintained a notable silence. In each case, the political conclusion, that the state opposing or inconveniencing US power deserves solidarity, precedes rather than follows from analysis. On

Prashad's own Leninist terms, this is precisely the error Lenin identified as national-chauvinism: subordinating class analysis to geopolitical alignment while presenting that substitution as principle...

As Paria Rahimi argued (2026), campism is not only a Western analytical failure projected onto Iran from outside, it is also one of the IRI's own core ideological operations. Through state media such as Press TV, through figures like Mohammad Marandi, who advises Iran's nuclear negotiations team while presenting himself to Western outlets as an independent scholar, through advocacy organizations such as the National Iranian American Council, which has consistently argued positions serving IRI diplomatic objectives, and through Western commentators like Caitlin Johnstone and Richard Medhurst, who apply rigorous scepticism to US and Israeli government claims while reproducing IRI framing on Iranian protests and dissident movements without equivalent scrutiny. Through all of these, the regime presents itself as sovereign and morally legitimate primarily through comparison with US and Israeli power. When the Western left adopts and reproduces this framing, it reinforces the very narrative through which the state secures its legitimacy internationally...

The bazaar-mosque nexus that captured the 1979 revolution... redirected a genuine mass uprising toward the consolidation of its own class interests, deploying anti-imperialist rhetoric to suppress internal dissent while protecting private property under Islamic legal cover. State enterprises were privatized into IRGC-connected conglomerates. Iran's minimum wage in 2025 stood at roughly 10.4 million tomans per month against a cost of living estimated at over 35 million. Over 2,000 workers died in unsafe conditions in 2025...

The feminist uprising of Women, Life, Freedom (WLF) in September 2022... emerging from the killing of Zhina Mahsa Amini by the IRI's morality police, it rapidly expanded into a coordinated

challenge to the IRI's entire structure of power. The movement draws significantly from Kurdish political traditions that are explicitly anti-capitalist, feminist, and committed to forms of democratic autonomy, often theorized through jineology: a Kurdish feminist framework that locates gender domination at the centre of how social life is organized and controlled, and rejects the separation of women's issues from political economy and state power. From this position, WLF refused the reduction of feminist struggle to the hijab and rejected any framework that isolates gender from class or national oppression. The movement's force lay in naming these as a single structure...

Val Moghadam, writing in *New Left Review* (1987), identified the error the Iranian left made in 1979 with precision: “an inordinate emphasis on the anti-imperialist struggle and an almost mechanical application of the dependency paradigm left little scope for considering the highly uneven development of class and production relations, the power of the pre-capitalist classes, or the political-cultural project of the clerics”...

Distinction

What the campist framework does is collapse the distinction between the state and the people, such that independent working-class organization appears either irrelevant or suspect. That is not Leninism. That is precisely the subordination of class analysis to geopolitical alignment that Lenin warned against...

CounterPunch's declaration praises Iran's “ancient organisational genius fused with 21st-century scientific sovereignty” an (alarming) civilisationist formulation that could appear in an official IRI address without modification, and that functions to identify the Iranian state with Iranian civilization such that dissent from the former becomes betrayal of the latter...

The campist framework presents itself as protecting the Iranian people from imperial instrumentalisation. In practice it produces the opposite. The COOCWP [contract oil workers' group] do not get covered on Fox News. The oil workers do not get invited to testify before the US Congress. By treating these movements as either nonexistent or imperial pawns, campism ensures that the only Iranian voices with international amplification are the ones that serve the imperial agenda most directly, Reza Pahlavi and the monarchist infrastructure that US and Israeli governments are actively cultivating.

The Iranian diaspora leftists, whose politics are precisely the dual refusal of opposing the US war on Iran and the IRI simultaneously, look to the international left for solidarity and find a framework that has no place for them. For people who have watched the IRI execute their



to delete workers and women



comrades, imprison their family members, and destroy the organizations their parents built, the campist binary is not a political disagreement. Rather it feels like a demand for self-erasure as the price of admission to the left, and drives many directly into the arms of the imperial forces campism claims to oppose.

When people ask how Iranian diaspora leftists could possibly end up supporting a monarchist restoration, they are asking the wrong question. The question assumes a free political market in which people choose from available options. What campism produces is a managed scarcity of options. The international left, which should be the natural political home of Iranian leftists in diaspora, has made itself uninhabitable by demanding that opposition to US imperialism and opposition to the IRI be treated as incompatible positions. The monarchists make no such demand. Reza Pahlavi does not ask Iranian leftists to defend the Islamic Republic as the price of his solidarity. The campist left does. And then it expresses bewilderment when people, faced with that choice, walk out the door.

The epistemological double standard this framework produces is also visible in the international Palestine solidarity movement, and naming it honestly is not a betrayal of that movement, but a condition of the movement's integrity.

The international Palestinian solidarity movement has spent years fighting a

deliberate effort to conflate opposition to Israeli apartheid with antisemitism. The movement is against loading a specific and serious form of discrimination with enough definitional weight that it can be used to criminalise legitimate political speech, punish campus organizing, and expose activists to legal and professional jeopardy.

Palestinians and their allies have worked carefully and persistently to hold that distinction: opposing a state's policies is not hatred of a people; solidarity with the oppressed is not bigotry against anyone. When prominent figures on the international left sign documents alongside Holocaust deniers, white nationalists, and convicted antisemites while claiming to speak in the name of that same solidarity, they collapse precisely the distinction the movement has been fighting to maintain.

Cost

The people who bear the cost of that collapse are not Vijay Prashad, not Jodie Evans, not any of the credentialed figures whose institutional positions insulate them from consequence. The people who bear the cost are Palestinian students facing disciplinary hearings, Palestinian organizers facing criminal charges, Palestinian academics losing their positions. The elite left gets to perform solidarity from safety. Palestinians pay for the performance with their exposure.

The people bearing the actual cost of this political moment are not asking the left to defend the Islamic Republic. Mahmoud Khalil, Leqaa Kordia, and the hundreds of students, organizers, and community members facing deportation, detention, and criminal charges under the Trump administration's targeting of Palestinian solidarity activism did not end up in that position because they signed documents with Holocaust deniers. They ended up there because they organized against a genocide. The left that should be their most reliable defence has spent its credibility elsewhere.

Palestinian organizers facing federal charges are not asking for campism. They are asking for solidarity, and those are not the same thing.

The Palestine solidarity movement and the Iranian workers' movement are not the same movement. The diaspora politics are different, the organizational forms are different, and the relationship to the relevant states is different. Palestinian diaspora communities in the US have built decades of solidarity infrastructure, legal organizations, academic networks, cultural institutions, direct action formations, genuinely independent of state power.

Fractured

The Iranian diaspora is more fractured, with a significant monarchist component that US and Israeli governments are actively trying to amplify, and an independent left that is being systematically silenced precisely because campism has decided that all criticism of the IRI serves imperial interests. The Islamic Republic has spent decades positioning itself as Palestine's defender precisely because that positioning purchases the international solidarity its domestic record cannot. When the Western left adopts that fusion as analysis, it does not arrive at it independently but is an ideological operation the IRI has been running for 47 years. These are not the same terrain. They require different analytical tools...

What it cannot say, what the friend-enemy binary structurally prevents, is what the international left's actual position should be: not Hamas over Israel, not Israel over Hamas, but solidarity with Palestinian workers, Lebanese workers, Iranian workers against the states and the capital that exploit and kill them all. That is internationalism rather than mirror-image patriotism. That is also the only position from which you can build the coalitions — with American labour, with the broader antiwar movement, with communities directly affected by military spending — that could actually stop the weapons.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union has refused to load weapons shipments before. During the apartheid era, ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco refused to handle South African cargo. That precedent exists in the US labour movement. The argument that Palestinian liberation, Iranian workers' rights, and American labour conditions are connected and that the weapons going to Israel are manufactured by workers in American factories, loaded by workers in American ports, funded by a military budget that competes directly with the healthcare, housing, and wages those same workers are fighting for, is not a difficult argument to make. The tools to act on this exist. What is missing is the political will to treat inter-

national solidarity not as a fringe concern imported from somewhere else but as a direct expression of working-class interest. Political will is precisely what campism systematically prevents from developing, because campism has already decided which states deserve defending and which people deserve to be seen...

The position advanced here is not moral symmetry but a dual refusal grounded in the actual practice of Iranian workers, feminists, and left organizations: opposition to imperial war and sanctions alongside opposition to the domestic structures of exploitation and repression that shape their lives. The dual refusal is a political tradition with a long history in Iran itself. The strategic implication is straightforward: international solidarity should align with these social forces directly: opposing external intervention while amplifying and supporting the independent organizations through which they articulate their demands. Anything else substitutes states for the people in whose name politics is conducted...

This is what is happening with Iran. The words arrive already loaded: resistance, sovereignty, anti-imperialism, and they land in a frame built somewhere else, for a different political landscape entirely. The categories click into place before anyone has read the terrain. Nobody interrupts them. So what gets heard is not what is actually being said, and the people saying it — the oil workers, the feminists, the queer activists, the communists who paid with their lives for the last time someone made this mistake — become unintelligible inside a framework that was never built to read them.

Zan. Zendegi. Azadi. Woman, Life, Freedom. □

CRITICAL NOTES ON POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

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From debunking religion to class struggle

By Rhodri Evans

From this edition of *Solidarity*, we will be running an article each issue on an item, or items, from a [list](#) of basic Marxist texts, with the aim of encouraging and providing helpful material for discussions and classes on those texts in Workers' Liberty local groups.

Current political questions cannot be solved by mining old texts for quotations. Equally, they cannot even be systematically debated without theoretical "reference points". For all the gaps in our Marxist heritage of theory, it remains the only systematic body of thought which not only shows capitalism is bad, but also shows us how (in Marx's words) "the bad side produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle", and how to go beyond "see[ing] in poverty nothing but poverty" to "seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overthrow the old society". As it is impossible to make progress in physics without learning the basic ideas developed by Newton and Einstein, so also it is impossible to map new working-class politics without the reference points from Marx, Trotsky, and others.

We start with Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Study notes for these are on the Workers' Liberty website at bit.ly/th-fe (Feuerbach) and bit.ly/po-ph (Poverty).

The French revolution of 1789-94, or strands within it, set running, for the first time in history, continuous streams of

democratic, radical, and socialist politics which flow to this day.

The innovation of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels was to connect socialism with democratic and class struggles, and with an understanding of history as being shaped by economic development and class struggles.

Revolutionary

Karl Marx had been a philosophy student and a democratic journalist. Moving to Paris from late 1843 to early 1845, he met organised socialist workers for the first time. Revolution was brewing across Europe, and would explode in 1848.

The workers won Marx over. He became a communist, which then mostly meant revolutionary socialist, in contrast to those who hoped for socialism from the good will of the ruling class. He became enthusiastic for the philosophy of [Ludwig Feuerbach](#), a former star student of Hegel who had turned atheist and communist. In August 1844 Marx established a working relationship with Engels, who had moved to communism faster than Marx.

The French government expelled Marx from Paris in February 1845. He went to Brussels. There, Marx and Engels wrote further efforts at self-clarification, and moved towards more political activity. In June 1847 they would join the Communist League, a London-based group mostly of German political exiles, for which they would write the Communist Manifesto.

In November 1844 Marx and Engels had written a Feuerbachian communist critique of "soft-left" German philosophers, *The Holy Family*. In it, they defended Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the best-known figure then in French socialism, with whom Marx had discussed in Paris. In Brussels they moved beyond both Feuerbach and Proudhon.

Engels did "contact work" with Feuerbach, trying to draw him into the Communist League. Feuerbach, however, withdrew to rural seclusion, and joined the German Social Democratic Party only after reading Marx's *Capital* volume one, published in 1867.

Feuerbach's politics came from a radical critique of religion (his *Essence of Christianity*, 1841, was translated to English by Mary Ann Evans [George Eliot]). He saw communism as a matter of replacing love of an imaginary projection, God, by real human love of each other.

Marx and Engels became critical of the semi-religious character of Feuerbach's concept of what was to replace religion, his "cult of abstract humanity". They came to see him as converting the term "communist", which "in the real world means the follower of a definite revolutionary party", into a moralising category.

According to Marx himself, writing later, "the salient points of our [his and Engels' new positive] conception were first outlined in a scientific, although polemical, form in my *Poverty of Philosophy*," written in winter 1846-7.

There, Marx settled accounts with the whole school of thought following Hegel and positively outlined his working-class and democratic version of communism.

It makes things more difficult for modern readers, but was unsurprising at the time, that Marx did this via a criticism of Proudhon.

Proudhon did write in 1848 that "the proletariat must emancipate itself without the help of the government".

But Proudhon did not mean emancipation through class struggle. He meant that the workers should organise themselves into small workshop groups and trade between the groups. He claimed that by doing that "they would soon have wrested alienated capital back again... become the masters of it all... without the proprietors being despoiled..."

Proudhon's view seemed daft to Engels in September 1846, when, from Paris, he wrote to Marx in Brussels: "the workers here, they who can't keep six sous in their pockets to visit a marchand de vin on the evenings of their meetings, propose to buy up toute la belle France with their savings..."

But in its time, a time where in France in particular industry was dominated by tiny workshops, it had wide influence among radical-minded workers.

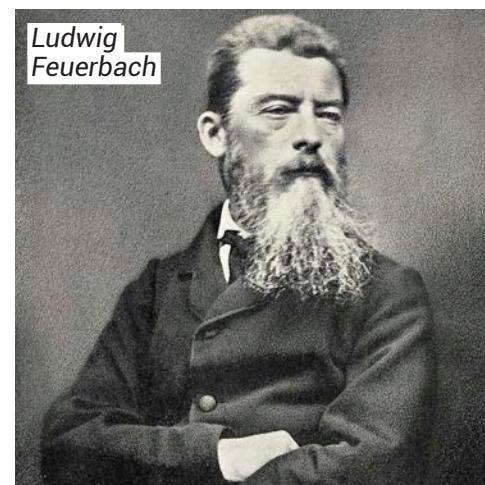
Rambling

The Philosophy of Poverty, the book by Proudhon to which *The Poverty of Philosophy* was a retort, is a vast, rambling, eccentric scrawl. It starts, for example, not with poverty but with a long and cryptic disquisition about God.

A letter by Marx to Pavel Annenkov, written as he started writing *The Poverty of Philosophy*, and published with it in all modern editions, crisply sums up the gist of Marx's argument.

Marx felt obliged to start *Poverty of Philosophy* with a critical analysis of "constituted value", Proudhon's idea about how to set prices so that the workshop groups in the future society would trade with each other fairly and without exploitation. That first chapter is obscure to modern readers, and not very important to study, since Marx came back to the idea (in the guise of "labour money") more crisply in later writings, including in *Capital*.

Marx went on to demolish speculative "philosophy of history": "The struggle between these two antagonistic elements comprised in the antithesis constitutes the dialectical movement... The fusion of these two contradictory thoughts constitutes a new thought, which is the synthesis of them. This thought splits up once again into two



contradictory thoughts... Mr Proudhon considers economic relations as so many social phases, engendering one another, resulting one from the other like the antithesis from the thesis..."

Marx proposed instead attention to "the real, profane history of men [meaning, women and men] in every century and to present these men as both the authors and actors of their own drama". "Mr Proudhon provides a phantasmagoria which he has the presumption to present as a dialectical phantasmagoria. He no longer feels any need to speak of the seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, for his history takes place in the nebulous realm of the imagination and soars high above time and place. In a word, it is Hegelian trash, it is not history".

And in real history, he wrote: "It is the bad side that produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle". The investigation of current (capitalist) society must be about more than denouncing its "bad sides". Communists must go beyond "see[ing] in poverty nothing but poverty" to "seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overthrow the old society".

Marx criticised teleological thinking, what he called "providential history", the idea of history as determined by a purpose.

His section on strikes and combinations of workers was epoch-making in the history of socialist thought. In the first place, he upheld wage battles against socialists who scorned them as ineffectual trifling. In the second place, he argued that they could help develop a conscious, self-aware, organised workers' movement combatting not only low wages but also capitalist class rule.

"In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle".

Thus, working-class struggle had an inbuilt potential to develop from elementary resistance to the bosses into "the creation of a new society... the abolition of every class". □

Capital Residential



KARL MARX

CAPITAL
VOLUME I

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Unruly schools, part three

Third of a series of articles by David Axon

Two previous articles looked at the policy passed at the National Education Union (NEU) conference, taking that union closer to the approach of the Nasuwt, a union that has recently organised a number of strikes focusing on student behaviour. It looked back at the experience of the 1985 Poundswick dispute, warning that striking against "student behaviour" can very easily develop in reactionary directions.

The word "behaviour" covers a lot of things – from students at Bacup sent to isolation for wearing stickers supporting striking teachers, to year elevens at the Michaela School in detention for not attending additional Saturday revision classes, to acts of violence or bullying by students against each other or against staff.

We want schools to be positive and welcoming places to learn. Though we do not want all of what is called "good behaviour" by students, in general we want "good behaviour" by both students and staff (politeness, quietness, attentiveness, etc.). It is true that schools prepare working-class youth to accept the "discipline of employed work", but it does not follow that every push-back in school is something to be celebrated.

Children and young people spend a big part of their waking lives in school and we should demand that schools are decent places to be. One of the matters of concern in the NEU debate was misogynistic behaviour by boys affecting girls and non-binary students, for example.

Some reasons for "poor behaviour" are obvious, not least the very nature of schooling. Putting a few hundred people (or a couple of thousand in many secondaries) into an institution in which they have no say, even over rules or the curriculum is bound to go wrong now and then.

Summerhill

There have been experiments in "democratic" schools. The most famous in this country has been the private school Summerhill, where lessons are optional, and rules are decided collectively. Its founder, A S Neill, wrote in his memoirs that, "Summerhill today (1971) is in essentials what it was when founded in 1921. Self-government for the pupils and staff, freedom to go to lessons or stay away, freedom to play for days or weeks or years if necessary, freedom from any indoctrination whether religious or moral or political, freedom from character moulding."

Neill himself was an anti-Stalinist left-winger, a former associate of Wilhelm Reich, and proud of having been denied a visa to both the USA and the USSR. His writings should, in my view, be required reading for anyone entering any role in a



Summerhill School, 1993

school. His memoirs describe a school where decisions are made on the basis of one vote per member of the community, adult or child, with a new meeting chair chosen weekly, and a democratically elected "tribunal" to handle complaints. Of course, a small private boarding school in the Suffolk countryside – it is about the size of an average primary – is a very different context to any of the schools I have worked in, but it provides a challenge to much of the received wisdom about how schools have to function – and about how "behaviour" has to be managed. It is very relevant too, in my view, to the possibilities for education under socialism.

Emulate

There have been few attempts to emulate the Summerhill approach within the state sector, and Summerhill battled government attempts, in the 1990s in particular, to shut it down even as a private school. When lessons were optional in schools in early revolutionary Russia, this was because of difficulties getting fuel to heat schools, not as a democratic experiment. The focus for children in those schools was on literacy and health – including getting enough to eat – and is a topic worth examination in itself.

The short-lived Risinghill School in Islington incorporated elements of student democracy, but was shut down in 1965 by the Inner London Education Authority following the refusal of its head, Michael Duane, to use corporal punishment. There are two state schools on democratic models still in existence in France: the Lycée expérimental de Saint-Nazaire and the Lycée autogéré de Paris.

Neill again: "Summerhill has shown the world that a school can abolish fear of teachers and, deeper down, fear of

life. Staff at Summerhill do not stand on their dignity, nor do they expect any deference because they are adults. Socially, the only privilege the teachers have is their freedom from bedtime laws. Their food is that of the school community. They are addressed by their first names and are seldom given nicknames; and if they are, these are tokens of friendliness and equality...

"There is no necessity for a gulf separating pupils from teachers, a gulf made by adults, not children. Teachers want to be little gods protected by dignity. They fear that if they act human, their authority will vanish and their classrooms will become bedlams. They fear to abolish fear. Innumerable children are afraid of their teachers."

Control

From the 1970s, some elements developed that gave students a little more control over their experience of school, or at least an involvement or voice in decision-making.

Education writers Mick Waters and Tim Brighouse comment on this trend, and its reversal:

"Twenty years ago, the concept of 'pupil voice' was beginning to grow as young people's participation, contribution and influence was welcomed in certain school contexts. Various studies confirmed the benefits of pupil voice: increased pupil engagement, improved relationships between pupils and teachers, better communication between pupils and school, and providing the right conditions for the school community to become a learning community. For a while, many schools were becoming genuinely collaborative places.

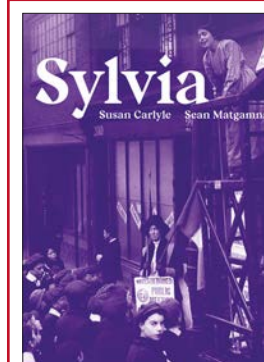
"The basis for pupil voice is found in Article 12 of the United Nations Con-

vention on the Rights of the Child, which sets out the right of children to express an opinion and to be included in decisions that involve and affect them. Some schools have successfully addressed this issue of what is essentially a lived curriculum. At that time, pupil voice began to appear in the inspection framework and was seen to be informing judgements; it seemed to be gathering momentum. However, when Michael Gove became minister he put an end to SEAL [Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning], diminished personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship, and moved the inspection framework towards valuing a type of pedagogy which saw the teacher's role as the dominant conditioner of learning. The general move towards pupil voice quickly fell away.

"Over the last 15 years, we have witnessed what we both regard as an alarming trend that started in secondary schools and has also spread to some primary schools: zero tolerance. The influence came from outside but the phrase has become increasingly common in all sorts of managerial contexts. It soon expanded to inform what became known as 'assertive discipline' policies; although the term is not used as much now, the procedures persist. Classroom and school practice began to include 'red' and 'golden' areas/zones, lists of pupils who have misbehaved (and deserve punishment) or been good (and deserve reward), names on the whiteboard with consequences for every sort of action – which was soon followed by isolation rooms, complete with solitary confinement booths – and informal exclusions of one sort or another.

"We struggle to see how sitting a pupil in a solitary confinement cubicle, facing three plywood walls, will help them to build stronger relationships with others. Of course, allowing a distressed child time out in pleasant surroundings where their distressed and distressing behaviour can be the topic of appropriate discussion or an opportunity for in-depth, well-calibrated conversation with a skilled member of staff, or even where they can learn online, does need to be part of our provision." □

• To be continued



The story of Sylvia Pankhurst including her working-class organising in the East End of London. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

Can we get rid of crap jobs?

By Bas Hardy

It must have been some time in 1970 when I went to the Labour Exchange on Brunel Road in Rotherhithe. The building was massive and probably existed to find employment for South London casual dock workers.

The day I went the place was completely empty. This was still the age of "full employment". You could leave one job in the afternoon and walk into another the next day. The member of staff wishing to point me in the direction of future employment seemed pleased to have someone to talk to. After a friendly chat she sent me to a job at a local factory.

The upper floor of the factory manufactured lard, wrapped up in half pound (250g) blocks and put into cardboard boxes for distribution. The blocks had various labels like "Spry", or supermarket brands like Tesco, but they were all the same stuff. My job was to load the cartons onto pallets for lorries to take away.

A persistent problem arose when too many cartons came down the chute at once, clogging up the assembly line. Several cartons split and the ever wise foreman's solution was to have them pushed off the line. Eventually this caused a large mountain of lard to form — a kind of iceberg of white, with dirty black greasy specks. When asked how he'd handle this problem should a factory inspector come calling, he said "cover it up with a tarpaulin".

Health and safety issues weren't much evident in the staff canteen either. The cook there was stirring a large pan of stew with a cigarette in her mouth, the ash end of which was growing to an increasingly worrying length. Gravity took its natural course (plop!) and from then on I brought sandwiches to work.

The era of "full employment" which is said to have lasted from 1945 to 1973 didn't mean people had marvellous jobs.



Working in a lard factory certainly wasn't one of them, but then I only did it for a month.

I had plenty of other shit jobs after that before I ended up teaching in a Further Education (FE) college. In the first few years in that job I actually looked forward to going back to work after the summer break! Unfortunately the job would progressively turn to crap when FE was taken out of local authority control by the Tory government in the early 1990s.

Colleges became market-driven entities run on the lines of management techniques copied from Japanese car factories. Micro-management, increasing demands to tick bureaucratic boxes to justify the jobs of the ever burgeoning non-teaching hierarchy, and the remorseless Ofsted inspection regime, sucked out most of the satisfaction and enjoyment the job once held. It felt in the end a bit like the one I had in the lard factory, only more stressful.

Education

Many of us in the 1960s working class saw education as a way of escaping from the physically demanding and monotonous working lives our parents endured. At the start of the 1970s the proportion of the UK population getting higher education was 8%, rising to 14% at the end of the decade.

With Blair we got to 50% of young adults entering HE by 2020. Getting a university degree didn't mean getting a socially useful or personally fulfilling job though. Flipping burgers wasn't what a PhD student had in mind. Taking a law degree in the hope of becoming a bar-rister only to end up as a barista ditto.

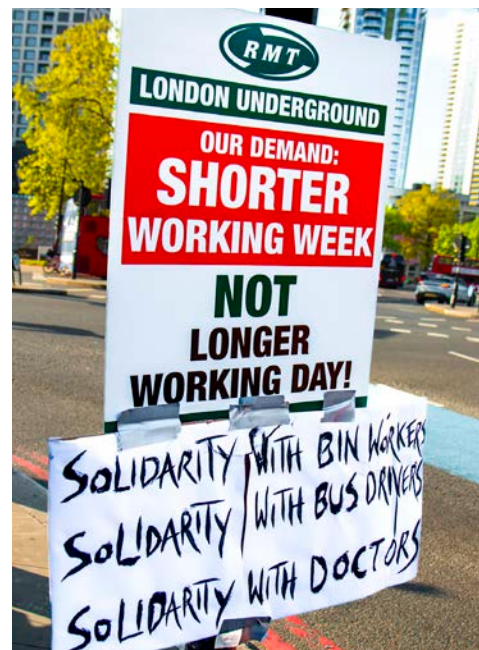
That's not meant to denigrate anyone who does those jobs. They should be respected and certainly paid a darn sight more than they are now.

But many working-class parents and grandparents nowadays fear that young people won't get "decent jobs".

The goal must be to make people's jobs rewarding for themselves and society at large. The United Nations International Labour Organisation doesn't hold out much hope for that at the moment though, with its warning that there is a dire shortage of decent jobs and a stagnation in efforts to improve global job quality.

Artificial Intelligence and automation may worsen the problems young people have getting jobs which are looked on as highly skilled. "Poor quality jobs" mainly in hospitality, retail and care, are driving a rise in young people off sick according to research done for the TUC.

There are plenty of dirty, unpleasant or dangerous jobs most people wouldn't like to do, but in our capitalist society



workers who have little choice but to do them often end up with the worst pay and conditions. In the first instance it's the task of the labour movement to get these workers into trade unions so that their pay and conditions can be less crap.

Recent TUC research found that 40% of people working in accommodation and food services had insecure working arrangements, including zero hours contracts, agency working or low paid self-employment. Additionally young people were more likely to leave their jobs for health reasons and become economically inactive if they worked in insecure low paid sectors.

Socialism

Can crap jobs though be eliminated in a socialist society? The Rotherhithe lard factory and the warehouses in that part of London are long gone, mostly given over to housing. Hardly anyone cooks using lard these days, and if there are still lard factories in the UK, then I'm sure the job I did has been automated.

In the days when TV channels treated their viewers to intelligent discussion programmes at teatime, they occasionally featured thoughtful left-leaning trade-unionists such as Clive Jenkins and Mike Cooley talking about the future of work and leisure.

Jenkins and union colleague Barrie Sherman wrote *The Collapse of Work* (1979) in which they argued new technologies would result in millions of people becoming permanently unemployed. Under a profit-driven economy fewer people would be working harder, whilst many others did nothing and "depending on the prevailing reward system one group or the other, or perhaps both, will feel very aggrieved."

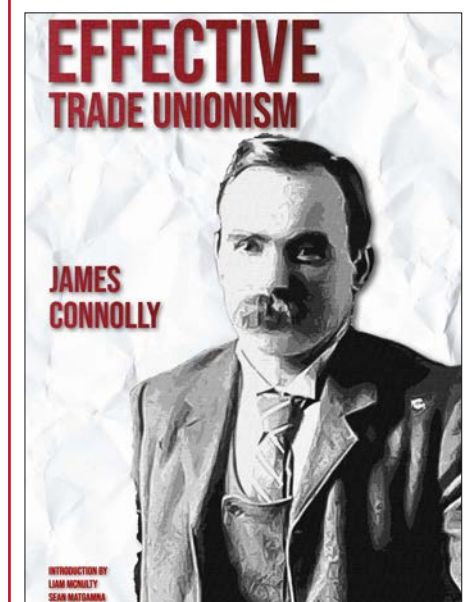
Job-sharing and the breaking down of barriers between work and leisure would help counteract that, but would require

a complete alteration of the way human society is controlled and run. Marx's famous desire to "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner...without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic" is an apt one to bear in mind, although some of the examples can do with updating.

Mike Cooley was talking about Artificial Intelligence forty years ago and became in 1987 founding chair of AI & Society, an international forum for socially responsible technology. Cooley was one of the activists behind the Lucas Plan which sought to prevent layoffs at Lucas Aerospace by converting production from armaments to making socially useful goods such as solar heating and artificial kidneys. The plan was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Unsurprisingly Lucas management rejected the plan and Cooley was sacked for allegedly spending too much time on union business.

As long as automation, AI, and other technologies are employed by corporate capitalist enterprises, the outcomes will be redundancies for some and "de-skilling" for many of the rest. Only a planned socialist society based on democratic principles can make these technologies socially useful, take most of the drudgery out of work and make working lives meaningful. We can then look forward to crap jobs becoming a thing of the past! □



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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On the doorstep with Lambeth Greens

On 7 May, *Solidarity's* general approach was for a Labour vote, in line with our general orientation to the labour movement and the lack of strong working-class socialist alternatives. In Lambeth, south London, some of our people who had already been excluded from the Labour Party worked in the Green campaign. We called for a Green vote. The Greens in Lambeth are unusually left-wing, Labour in Lambeth council exceptionally right-wing. One of those Green canvassers reports.

La leaseholder in a council block, tells me that she's definitely voting Green, but with some discomfort. She's always voted Labour, says it's "a structure I understand", but she's been appalled at Lambeth Labour's record, particularly on housing and homelessness. Still, she says, "there's no perfect party".

I agree, and we talk a bit about the need to do more than just send the right people into power to do the job from above. I mention Lambeth Greens' pledge for the council to help unionise workers and renters across the borough, and how — by organising from below — we can hold the feet to the fire of whomever we elect. L is a union member and says she'll look into getting more active.

In the same building, C grills me hard while offering little indication of his own views. I explain that the key reason I'm canvassing for the Greens is our pledge to use elected office as a platform, to organise a real fight to reverse local government cuts. (This is my focus throughout the campaign. Whenever I get a chance, I encourage people to get active in their unions etc, not just to leave it to the councillors.)

C looks sceptical — I think he's about to say that's pointless, but instead he replies: "How does that make you different? I'm sure every party would press for more money?" It's a reminder of just how absurd it is that Labour, Green and independent councils alike have abdicated this fight over the past 16 years. I say as much. C listens but stays tight-

lipped about his own leanings. He says he'll read our manifesto.

We're canvassing this block the same day that two Green candidates in other wards were arrested over reported antisemitic internet posts. Apparently, Labour has written to all residents here, warning the Green Party is racist. The local candidate I'm campaigning with agrees that the reported posts are appalling.

Left-Antisemitism

I'm steeled for some tough conversations about tackling left-antisemitism, but to my surprise it doesn't come up. In fact, through the whole campaign, I have just one conversation about it with a voter. Passing a team in the street, she stops us to enquire because she's been told the Green Party has taken no action against the relevant candidates. When she hears they've been suspended pending investigation, she's satisfied and moves on.

Other campaigners do report more conversations about the issue — or condemnations followed by slammed doors — but not many. One activist says that the worrying question, from an anti-racist perspective, is how many voters might be unbothered by the reports. We can't know if people are instead not raising it because they've already concluded the Greens are unpardonable, or have just missed the news.

Among the relatively small number of activists and candidates with whom I discuss, there is more agreement about confronting left-antisemitism than I remember from the Corbyn-era Labour left. Nevertheless, the local party's public response should have been sharper — more on this in due course.

On the eve of polling day, I have my most intense interaction of the campaign. A man answers his door and is visibly angry when he sees the colour of my leaflets. He tells me I should be ashamed. Perhaps unwisely, I ask what concerns him, expecting a serious conversation. What I get is a tirade about Zack Polanski historically misdescrib-



ing himself as a spokesperson for the British Red Cross after emceeing fundraisers. He is not impressed by my minimal knowledge of this crucial news. The conversation ends when he declaims, "You're Jeremy Corbyn in a dress!" (I'm a bloke wearing jeans) and my poker face breaks, further enraging him. I wish him a pleasant evening and make an overdue retreat.

Enthusiasm

Inevitably, this article is skewed and anecdotal. It's interactions like that which stick more in the memory — and I canvassed specifically in three wards around Brixton. Overall, I had more pro- than anti-Green conversations, including plenty of enthusiasm: eager "yesses" on the doors, people shouting support when we passed on the street. The main issue people raised was housing and homelessness — sharply felt and visible issues here. Frustration with both Lambeth Labour and Starmer were strong. On polling day, I spoke to a Labour member who's been in the party since Wilson, and hasn't quit, but would vote Green this time because Starmer is "totally useless".

The results bore all this out. Labour's

vote dropped to 35% (from 54% in 2022) and the Greens leapt from 22% to 37%. The ultra-Blairite stronghold fell to no overall control. Now, activists need to press and organise to make a reality of the campaigning pledged in the manifesto to reverse austerity.

Finally on polling day, I knock on T's door. She is unconvinced there's any point voting, utterly disillusioned as a lifelong Labour voter and retired social worker and Unison rep (I show my union tote and tell her I'm a rep too). She can't possibly back Labour, and would vote Green if anything, but is extremely sceptical that any party will change things. Both Labour and union leaders have let her down before. She's concerned about support for older people, and about street violence, which she links to cuts in youth services. I explain that we are talking about a fightback to reverse austerity. T says "you're doing what I was 40 years ago", but she finds it hard to believe we can get anywhere — "it's not the 70s". I tell her yes, if we fight we might lose, but if we don't then we'll definitely lose — so give us a chance to fight. She tells me she'll consider it. Her ward elected all Greens by a strong margin. I hope T decided it's worth fighting. □

"Your Party" slumps on 7 May

By Colin Foster

Some local groups roughly on the "Gaza Independent" wavelength and backed by Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party scored fairly well on 7 May.

Lutfur Rahman's Aspire strengthened its hold on Tower Hamlets Council. The Newham Independents won 24 seats in Newham. The YP website made its main call for activists to help the Redbridge Independents, and they won nine seats.

But there is no sign that YP is doing more than the shadowy Collective group did in 2024, when it backed various "Gaza Independent" candidates for parliament, each with their own local "base", and some won.

The Redbridge Independents' slogans were "Honest, Inclusive, Transformative". Any "radical" tinge they had came from wearing keffiyehs and waving Palestine flags.

More specifically "Corby-

nite" candidates did poorly. In Corbyn's own Islington, there were four ex-Labour Corbynite "Community Independent" councillors before 7 May, and now there are none. Two of those councillors stood again, and lost heavily.

Corbyn's team focused on two candidates in the three-seat ward where his office sits, who stood as "Championing Fairness, Securing Safety, Inspiring Opportunity". They

lost heavily to the Greens (two seats) and Labour (one seat), both of whom offered more leftism.

Local Your Party people campaigned in that ward for the Palestine Action prisoner Amu Gib. They did respectably, but evidently failed to get the third vote for many who voted for the "championing fairness" two.

Zarah Sultana campaigned for an ex-Labour councillor in Coventry, who (after boundary

changes) was easily outvoted by both Greens and Labour, and Reform took the ward. Other YP candidates did poorly, too.

"Gaza Independent" politics are not finished, but it looks bleak for YP.

TUSC, run as an "anti-cuts" electoral front by the Socialist Party (who held quite a few council seats in the early Blair times on positive socialistic policies), also did poorly on 7 May. □

The forms of anti-Jewish hate

Daniel Randall's article *Antisemitism picture is more complex* (*Solidarity* 765), written in response to "Antisemitic incidents and attacks have doubled" (764), is problematic in a number of respects.

The first part of the original article simply stated empirical facts: instances of anti-Jewish hate in the UK are running at record levels, and this is an international phenomenon. (More diaspora Jews were murdered in 2025 than in any year since 1994, when Hezbollah carried out a suicide bombing of a Jewish community centre in Argentina.)

The situation has got even worse since publication of the original article. In a matter of weeks we have seen (attempted) arson attacks on two synagogues and the (former) premises of a Jewish charity, plus the daylight stabbing of two Jews in Golders Green.

Daniel's response suggests that things are not that bad after all. Some statistics indicate a decline in certain categories of Jew-hate incidents. Thus: "The trend is not a simple one of straightforwardly escalating antisemitic violence but something more diffuse."

Something "more diffuse" may well be going on. In fact, the original article included a lengthy paragraph listing "more diffuse" types of anti-Jewish hate incidents which did not involve physical violence against individuals.

But rather than make the "antisemi-

tism picture more complex" they merely complement the spike in violent incidents. And that spike in violence is real, not merely perceived.

Inconsistency

Daniel moves on to criticise an inconsistency in the original article. At one point, he writes, the article states that "today a dominant strand (of Jew hatred) is antizionism", but subsequently it states that antizionism is "the dominant form" of antisemitism.

Daniel is right to spot that inconsistency. But he should address his complaint to the editor. The original version of the former quote reads: "Today it (Jew hatred) takes the form of antizionism." If the article is wrong — although it is not — at least it is consistently wrong.

The remainder of the original article goes on to argue that the dominant form of Jew hatred has changed over time and today expresses itself in antizionism.

There is nothing new in that argument. As long ago as 2005 it was contained in a review of Taguieff's book *Preachers of Hatred*: "Taguieff summarises the history of Jew-hatred — judeophobia."

More recently (2024), [another review](#) argued that antizionism was the latest iteration of Jew hatred: "[Antizionism is] a totalising ideology that promotes Israel to the role of a demonic historical actor. ... [Antizionism] ceases to be a political view. It becomes an instrument for encrypting hostility to Jews by embedding reference to them in an ideological proxy term."

Over many years *Solidarity* has carried articles referring to "political antisemitism" and to "absolute anti-Zionism". All that the original article did was take that argument one stage further. And not before time.

One could go even further and argue that as each form of Jew hatred gives way to another, the new version distances itself from its predecessor.

Today's antizionism stresses that it is not antisemitic, in the sense of late nineteenth century/early twentieth century antisemitism: It merely opposes Zionism and Israel, not Jews as a race. In fact, the real antisemites, we are told, are the Zionists.

In the same way, in Wilhelm Marr's *The Victory of Judenthum Over Germanenthum*, the seminal text of racist Jew hatred, the author stressed that he had nothing against Jews because of their religion (i.e. the earlier medieval form of Jew hatred).

His book, he writes, is "free of any and all [religious-]confessional prejudices." It is hostile to any "hatred because of [religious belief]". Marr rejects blaming Jews for killing Christ as "stupid" (because Christ was killed by the Roman authorities). He dismisses medieval claims about supposed Jewish blood rituals.

Indeed, Jews as a religious community have no better friend than Wilhelm Marr: "I hereby unconditionally take the Jews under my protection against any 'religious' persecution. I believe that in this respect it is hardly possible to express oneself more clearly than I have here."

Forms

To register the fact that Jew hatred has a long history and has taken different forms in different historical epochs is not, as Daniel claims, to necessarily conclude, nor cede ground to the argument, that Jew hatred is "inescapable" and "tends towards a fatalism which treats bigotries as eternal".

Just like acknowledging the contemporary levels of anti-Jewish violence — free of the whatabouteries of "complexities" and "diffuseness" — it is simply acknowledging basic facts.

Finally, Daniel writes: "One should not assume that the common forms of antisemitism in our own political milieu are necessarily the dominant forms in wider society."

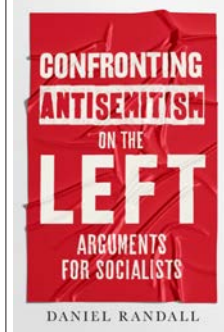


True enough. But if antizionism — in which Israel is transformed into the collective Jew of times past, and which functions as an "encrypting of hostility to Jews" — is not the dominant contemporary form of Jew hatred, then what is?

As Eva Illouz's recent work — reviewed in *Solidarity* 765 — puts it, antizionism allows Jew hatred (or antisemitism, or whatever you want to call it) to present itself as a "virtuous hatred". And Illouz is certainly not thereby treating Jew hatred as "a question of individual psychology rather than ideology". □

Dale Street,
Glasgow





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

Focus on text is misplaced

The "post literate age", as described by Daniel Randall (and James Marriott) (*Solidarity* 764), seems to me highly overblown. This not to suggest that nothing is amiss but to question the premise that reading, or even reasoning, amongst the population is reduced and for some no longer takes place. Of course there is a crisis and it is largely due to the rise of social

media but to invent a term and to try and pin the blame to it is to miss the point.

There is a long history to literacy going back not just centuries but millennia and just because it started with simple drawings in caves should not lead us to denigrate the expressions of early ancestors. Bringing this point up to date, we should not underestimate

the kinds of symbolism that social media gives rise to (moving image, podcast etc.) that does not involve text. None of this is mentioned by Daniel Randall, who might lead us to believe (to misquote a famous philosopher) "there is nothing beyond the text".

The focus upon text is misplaced but even more so is the apparent emphasis upon

text on paper, as opposed to on screen. There are issues of availability tied to each — persistence on paper, accessibility on screen — but surely text is text. Save for technical details, a text — whether newspaper article or book — can be read on screen as well as on paper, to be absorbed and reasoned upon in just the same way.

Whilst the general population

is bombarded day and night by established press with conspiracy and misinformation, both on paper and on screen, it is time the political left moves beyond traditional media methods and engages. Perhaps this is what Daniel Randall is trying to say, but with shortcomings in his overall analysis. □

Sericus (a former teacher and edtech specialist)

Social media and regulation

I agree with Matt Cooper's article on social media (*Solidarity* 766) in overall argument and most nuances. A couple of further details are worth considering.

Yes, imperfect and bypassable regulation can still be valuable. But where does it push people? Australia's ban initially excluded messaging services, and didn't apply to gaming platforms or AI chatbots. That's now been partially tightened.

The harms of using or over-using pseudo-human sycophantic and "hallucinating" AI chatbots, particularly among young people, is well documented. Gaming platforms such as Roblox have a social media element — very popular among young children now — in which both far right grooming and bullying are well documented and often less noticed or moderated than in conventional social media. Certain games, for some, can also contribute to excessive and addictive "screen time", with consequent depression and anxiety, loneliness, and issues with concentration.

Messaging services being excluded

isn't just a gap. As many become more like conventional social media platforms — think WhatsApp's incremental introductions of reactions, statuses for individuals then groups, channels, and more — this incentivises and accelerates such a shift. And as with gaming platforms, with generally less safeguards and moderation.

Regulation

Regulation could potentially shape what social media is like for good. An earlier draft of Australian regulation included an "exemption framework". If social media platforms avoided features deemed particularly harmful — algorithmic recommendations, engagement prompts like push notifications, AI chatbots, for example — they could be exempt from an age-verification requirement. This may have pushed social media platforms in a better direction. And for adults too.

But social media's harms don't stop when you come of age. Social media remain, in many ways, incredibly harmful

individually and socially — atomising, isolating, anxiety-inducing, and more. Serious regulation could help shift that. Social media platforms — indeed all means of communication — have tendencies towards "natural monopoly", via "network effects". A social media platform can be bad, and getting worse, but people will stay if friends and others are on it and not on the competition — however good that may be. Anyone who used Facebook over several years as it was progressively made worse, let alone Twitter when Musk turned it to X, will attest to this. Even when, meaning to connect with friends, you are repeatedly sidetracked by intentionally distracting and addictive brainrot, AI slop, advertising, rage bait, and similar — it scarcely gets easier to step away.

Censorship

Regulation to limit the worst elements of dominant social media platforms *for all*, or to make them opt-in or similar, need not be censorship or paternalistic. It could be an assertion of the rights of

users and individuals against the profit-obsessed platform owners. Beyond curbing the worst harms pushed by big tech, public ownership and workers' control of the commanding heights of the sector could allow it to be organised and reimagined with human flourishing and social wellbeing, rather than profit via attention-stealing for data-selling and adverts, to shape it. It would surely seek to support real-world connections, to log-off and put down the screen — and would limit the most electricity-guzzling features.

Perhaps social media, probably chatbots — and even as some suggest smartphones — would still be so harmful for children and young people even with the worst elements removed that they should be banned anyway. Certainly those are considerably more harmful for the emotional and social development of under-18s than access to porn, which, like social media, has positive sides even as it currently exists, but which the UK government *has* banned. □

Zack Muddle, Bristol

"One solution, revolution?"

Stuart Jordan's article *A drastic tipping point may be close* (*Solidarity* 766) is a much needed wake-up call that climate change is not linear and there are tipping points that can lead to much more catastrophic and rapid climate change. In this case, the collapse of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC).

However I find the response that Stuart outlines to this is not the call for action our movement needs and has a danger of breeding paralysing fear.

Stuart writes "we can have no hope of avoiding these tipping points so long as the earth's natural resources and all our heavy machinery is owned as private property and exploited for profit. Social control of the means of production is the only way to avoid catastrophe and the only way to minimise the suffering of the catastrophes that are already locked in".

On a whole number of questions including climate change Workers' Liberty has always rejected an approach of "one solution revolution", instead taking our lead from Lenin, Trotsky and Gramsci that an active intervention (and victories) in political struggles are vital in

transforming working class consciousness into a 'class for itself' in full knowledge of its own power and historical role.

Overthrow

Yet the above paragraph doesn't just suggest the only solution in the long term is the overthrow of the capital and the institution of a co-operative commonwealth on a global scale. It also suggests that only the global proletarian revolution against the rule of profit can address the specifics of climate tipping points, and even the amelioration of suffering caused by this climate change.

Is this true in terms of the immediate tipping points, or ameliorating suffering? Probably not. If tomorrow the EU, other developed countries like the UK, Canada, Australia, and the ruling oligarchy of China, decided on a crash course of decarbonisation of their economies they could succeed. The technology and the political levers for this to a large part exist already under capitalism. Such a move would have an effect on man-made climate change and reduce the risk, and delay the hitting of some key climate tipping points.

Capitalist governments under massive pressure from below could ameliorate much of the suffering caused by rising sea levels and climate heating, even if they do it in a partial and unjust way. No doubt they would find a way to make this profitable to the capitalist class and use this to find new frontiers for exploitation.

Obviously none of this would resolve the fundamental contradiction between the rapacious and anarchic accumulation for private profit demanded by capitalism and the rhythms of natural reproduction and ecological renewal.

Demands

However it does show that socialists should be organising the labour movement around demands on governments to take action. Obviously our labour movement internationally or in the UK is not in a fit state to do this or take the fight to the government. But all the more reason to fight for renewal and for a fighting class-struggle socialist leadership. Without such leadership the vacuum will only be filled by neoliberal or far right "solutions" once the water starts lapping at enough

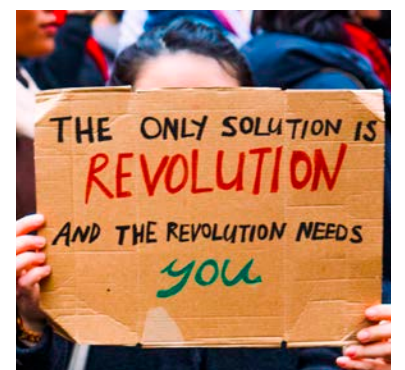
people's ankles that it cannot be ignored.

Stuart goes on to correctly say "through organisation and solidarity the international working class has the strength and interest to put an end to this madness [the madness of capitalist ecological destruction]". He then goes on to point out the importance of social control of the means of production.

Stuart ends the article by saying "The first step to winning social control is to orient the workers' movement to this alarming new reality and win the argument for the ecological necessity of socialism".

In the general sense this is true, but class consciousness does not develop in linear fashion. The workplace is a privileged zone of struggle because that is where workers can feel and see their exploitation most directly. It's also where we can see and apply our potential strength most directly. Winning "social control" of the means of production will most likely come about through workers winning power in their own workplaces.

To win the argument over the necessity of socialism you



don't just need to persuade our fellow workers of the intellectual need for socialism but that they have the social, political and economic power in their hands, as in the lyrics of *Solidarity Forever* "without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn".

We should tell people if they want to take action on climate change, it's not enough to be convinced of the necessity of overthrowing capitalism. We must also convince them to get active and organising in their unions and workplaces to build working-class power and in a revolutionary socialist organisation trying to build a class struggle climate movement. □

Luke Hardy,
Leeds

The new communalism and racism

By Micheál MacEoin

Nothing new in Ireland. What is novel, and worrying, however, is the rise of generalised anti-migrant sentiment and activity in recent years.

Localised and scattered protests against the housing of refugees in temporary shelters took place in several localities in Ireland in late 2022. According to the Irish police, there were over 300 such protests in several counties throughout that year.

Since then, the protests have developed into a more organised and connected movement, with a substantial cross-border and transnational dynamic.

There were further protests in the summer 2024, such as riots in Coolock in Dublin when opposition to converting an industrial site into asylum accommodation escalated into arson, barricades and violent clashes with police.

At the same time as the far-right mobilisation in Britain following the Southport stabbing attack, there was rioting and attacks on migrant-owned shops in Belfast. Last summer, 2025, saw several nights of anti-migrant riots in Ballymena, driving many families out of the town.

Some of the overall backdrop to these events is economic. The Irish government's failure to process asylum claims in a fair and timely manner has led to the use of temporary accommodation, such as hotels, old office blocks and sports halls. In the context of a severe housing crises, far-right agitators have been able to stir up discontent about shortages in housing, services and provision towards migrants.

There are more organised forces at work, however, and evidence of cross-border co-operation between the Irish far right and Ulster loyalist groups.

The earliest visible sign of this was

when representatives from the anti-immigration group "Coolock Says No" travelled to Belfast for the protests in August 2024.

There has been further such collaboration, with Ulster flags appearing at events in Limerick and the presence of agitators from the 26-Counties in Ballymena in 2025.

Wider Ties

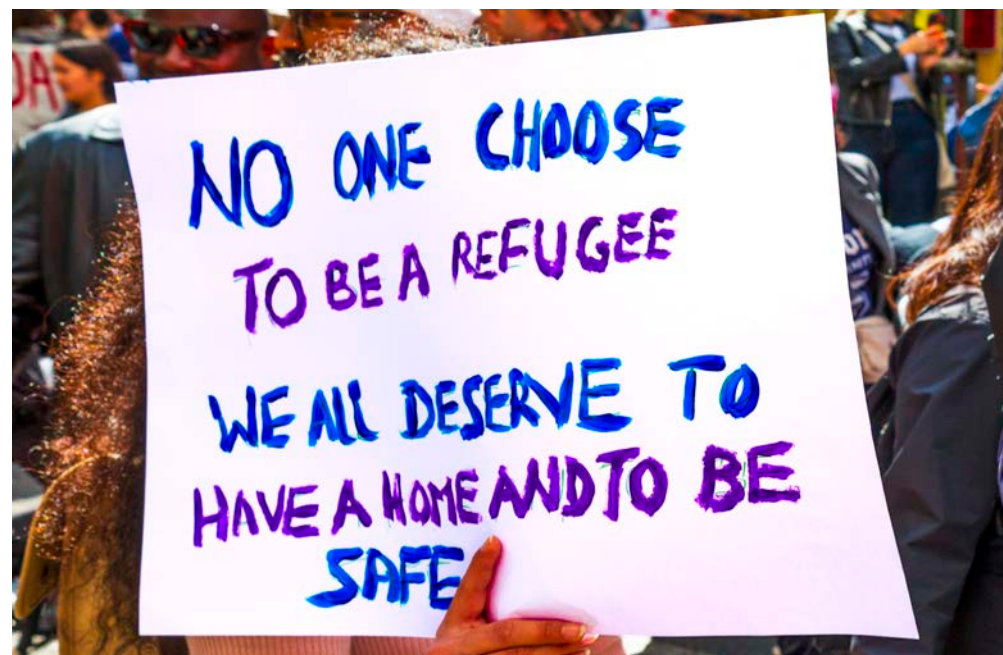
Beyond this, there are wider ties to the British far-right. Former loyalist paramilitary killer Glen Kane, who was involved in the Belfast protests, was charged under public order legislation for possessing British National Party (BNP) and Britain First materials.

Some Irish far-right influences have also forged connections with former Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) members, as well as wider UK far-right figures including Jim Dowson, Nick Griffin, "Tommy Robinson" and Mark Collett.

At the same time, events in Ireland are increasingly amplified by global far-right networks, particularly in Britain, Europe and North America. While there may be limited personal connections to these wider movements, Irish activity can become a wider transnational talking point, reinforcing far-right talking points which frame immigration as a demographic threat to "Western civilisation", White or Christian identities, or "women and children".

Grossly, some of these forces take Ireland's anti-colonial history and reference points and repurpose them to their own racist purposes.

Official Ireland has long prided itself, rather smugly, on the relative lack of an organised far right in the country. Looking to the commitments of the three major political parties on immigration, however, Fine Gael, in the 2024 election campaign, promised "stronger border security" while Fianna Fail talked about



managing "migration pressures", including establishing a new Border Management Agency to enable security at ports of entry. Sinn Féin, meanwhile, called for "audits" of services in communities where international protection seeker accommodation centres are set up.

Referendum

Indeed, the same political establishment called a referendum in 2004 which removed automatic entitlement to birth-right citizenship, in place since the foundation of the Irish state. The then Irish Government argued that the children of migrant parents did not have "sufficient connections" to live in Ireland as Irish citizens born in Ireland. This pandered to moral panics about migration, including "opportunistic" migrants using maternity services, which were widespread since at least the mid-1990s.

That all said, the uptick in violent anti-migrant activity on both sides of the border is a relatively new and concerning phenomenon. It is all the more dangerous for its connections to a wider far-

right ecosystem internationally.

In April, trade unions mobilised against an anti-migrant protest in Coleraine, Co. Derry.

NIPSA Northern Ireland Deputy General Secretary, Patrick Mulholland (a member of Militant Left, the Irish section of the Committee for a Workers' International), was involved in organising a counter-demonstration.

He said that while his union regularly attends demonstrations calling for more social housing and to defend public services that women and children rely on, "the people who are at this demonstration today, the far right demonstration, are never on the demonstrations which take place to advance those issues. They are always on the side of division. They are never there to put forward a positive message."

The Coleraine counter-demonstration shows that the labour movement should take the lead in confronting the anti-migrant right, with clear answers to the social problems on which the racists feed. □

Pro-dictator left group tries to disrupt May Day

By a Nottingham trade unionist

There was some disruption of trade union May Day events this year, but by left factions favourable to the Iranian and other anti-US regimes rather than by the far right.

In Nottingham in particular, the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) had already attempted to disrupt events like a Stop Trump protest on 18 April over Minneapolis. When a statement was read out there from local left wing Labour MP Nadia Whittome, the RCG orchestrated persistent heckles.

At the May Day march (2 May), the RCG turned up on the demo preceding the rally with their ambiguous and provocative slogans — "the British state is a racist state", "the Labour Party is a racist party", which led to some bad reactions from some bystanders who saw such slogans as an attack on them.

When Nadia Whittome began speaking at the rally, RCG members pushed their way to the front. They unfurled a large banner in front of the platform and with a high capacity megaphone accused Nadia of

enabling genocide and being responsible for the deportation of tens of thousands of migrants — by being a member of the Labour Party!

After about three minutes of their disruption the RCG were jostled away from the front by stewards and other trade unionists. It is possible that a few of the ten or so people the RCG had mobilised to disrupt the event didn't know of Nadia Whittome's record of opposing the government's policies on deportations and on Palestinian rights. RCG organisers, in

conversations afterwards, admitted that they knew that record, but it was of no concern to them.

The RCG claim they were just asking Nadia a question, not trying to break up a trade union event. Anyway, they were unsuccessful and Nadia was able to give the speech the RCG didn't want to be heard, opposing the far right and the Tory Party — the theme of the Trades Council demo — and reaffirming her opposition to the policies of the government. □



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PCS meets after exec overturn

By a PCS member

The National Conference of the PCS civil service union will meet in Brighton on 19-21 May in very uncertain domestic and international political times, to put things mildly. There is no sense that the Left Unity (LU) "leadership" of PCS grasps the range and scale of risks.

The agenda seems to have been designed by the LU Standing Orders Committee to lose some very good pay and jobs motions. Hopefully, this can be turned around with an emergency motion being agreed by the Independent Left and other pro-Change groups. But in any event Conference should support motions that set out meaningful plans to end the retreat on our pay for the just-elected incoming National Executive (NEC), which has a Change majority and the PCS Independent Left's Bev Laidlaw as president.

The outgoing LU NEC's anti-racist and anti-fascist motion, A110, recognises

that "Racism and fascism pose a direct and escalating threat to PCS members, to our communities and to the wider trade union movement", but its proposed actions do not measure up to that description.

For example, the motion would instruct the NEC to "strengthen workplace organising on anti racism" by "promoting employer compliance with civil service and equality standards" but this wholly employer-focused provision cannot be a major part of any answer to the growing support for Reform (which is not mentioned in the motion!) and fails to note that Reform has promised to tear up these equality standards.

The motion would instruct the NEC to "prioritise member safety by promoting PCS guidance on events, demonstrations and online security" but draws no lesson from last September, when a few thousand anti-fascists, including PCS members, were marched into Trafalgar Square by Stand Up to Racism (SUTR)

and were saved by the police from a battering by the massively larger number of far right supporters on Tommy Robinson's "Unite the Kingdom" demo.

Indeed the motion plainly envisages more of the same contracting out of the union's responsibility to fight racism and fascism to SUTR and now the Together Alliance.

Strong

Motion A111 is better and contains strong elements of policy that we have long argued for, essentially that the trade unions play the leading role in building a united movement against the far-right, that they take the lead in organising well stewarded local counter-protests, that PCS call on the TUC/unions to both build a national organisation of union reps to steward protests against the far-right, and any threat from far-right groups and to organise behind the demand, "Worker's unity not division — jobs and homes not racism."

With inflation mounting PCS members on course to see their living standards once again eroded when the threat to jobs under Labour is rising (Reform want to slash the civil service by "at least" 154,000-165,000 jobs). Yet the NEC has submitted a "Political Strategy, National Campaign & Pay" motion, A4, that does not say one word about how PCS might deal with these critical issues; does not propose a "political strategy" or report any "national campaign" activity over the last year; and does not say one word about what our pay issues are and what our pay demands should be.

For the NEC to submit a weak anti-racist and anti-fascist motion and an even weaker "national campaign" motion — just make people feel even more abandoned appears to the slogan LU's slogan for fighting the far right — is a sign of brainrot. No doubt A4 will be replaced by a supposedly emergency motion from the LU controlled NEC, but it will still be useless. □

Don't let commissioners block bins deal

By Satya Pine

In a surprising turn on 20 March, former Birmingham City Council leader John Cotton called for negotiations to resume in the Birmingham bins strike after a year of intransigence. But after 7 May the council is in No Overall Control.

The deal now on the table still leaves the possibility of role deletion/downgrading, but now with two years grace period rather than six months. However, there are major wins.

Agency workers in post for a year or more will be given a path to permanent employment, and legal and disciplinary proceedings will be ceased (except one case of gross misconduct, which will be reviewed). Of course we can wonder if guarantees exist to prevent victimisation of reps, or what assurances there will be that agency workers will actually get those permanent contracts.

The "ballpark deal" is quite similar to the

Acas deal months ago, which was quashed by government-appointed commissioners, despite interim approval by the union and the council leadership. Now the council and Unite have put out interim statements of intent to try to forestall further blocking by the commissioners.

But why are the commissioners even a factor? The council has made a balanced budget for 2026-7, and by some estimations always could have done.

Reform

After making overtures to the bin workers, Reform announced at the eleventh hour that they wouldn't back the deal, and unsurprisingly the Tories were never on board. Reform is the biggest group on the council now, but has said it sees "no viable route" to winning the council leader post.

Of course, the deal is also subject to ap-

proval by the workers themselves — which they might not do, pushing for a better deal, although avenues to escalate further are unclear, and the union is likely to see this deal as a victory.

Pressure needs to mount on the commissioners to stop blocking the deal, and the government to remove the commissioners. GMB is also making noises about strikes against the council, but that's probably a way off. With better union cooperation, if the bin dispute is dragged on, local government workers entering disputes would join up with the bin strike and take mass joint action with the ultimate goal to throw out the commissioners.

But immediately Birmingham needs a broad, inclusive anti-cuts campaign capable of pressuring the commissioners to allow the deal, and the government to restore funding. □

Staff-student unity emerging

By David Axon

The Nasuwt and NEU are now striking together at St Cuthberts High School in Rochdale. Both unions are striking Tuesday to Thursday every week, both before and after the coming half term.

The dispute is about a restructure imposed on the school by the St Teresa of Calcutta Multi-Academy Trust (STOC). Whilst "official measures" of school performance don't always measure the right things, the school was improving on all such measures prior to being taken over by STOC (suspensions down, attendance up, inspection outcomes improving, and GCSE results rising). All of those have worsened since STOC took over the management of the school and started a reduction in permanent staffing levels. Vacant posts have been left unfilled, and staff pushed out through threat of redundancy.

It is to stop those redundancies that the strikes are now taking place. The Nasuwt had previously has a focus on student behav-

iour, and unfortunately in their publicity on the current strike put that as issue one, even though it was not on the ballot paper for action this time. The NEU has been more successful in focusing its demands as ones that can be supported by the wider community, including the students — one year eleven told strikers last Thursday: "We all understand where you are coming from".

Local Labour councillors and the local Labour MP have been supportive of the strike. (Unfortunately one of the two councillors who had been supportive lost his seat to a Reform candidate in last week's local elections).

A St Cuthbert's Parents Action Group is being established in support of the demands of the strikes.

Support is welcome on the picket line every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, between 7:30 and 9am. Messages of support can be sent via nick.wigmore@neu.org.uk, and updates are on the Rochdale NEU [Facebook page](#). □

More online

Workers' Liberty held our conference on 25 and 26 April. You can find all the motions passed online. A sentence from the "World" document sums up where we find ourselves: "The question for us is whether we can mobilise ourselves sufficiently to build an organisation coherent enough, educated enough, lucid enough to be a lever in the unpredictable but sure-to-come workers' battles". The conference elected our new national committee and heard speeches and messages of solidarity from Uri Weltmann of Standing Together, Israel, GB from the NPA-R France, and Dashty Jamal from the WCPK.

Conference documents

bit.ly/wlagm26

Graham faction sweeps Unite election

bit.ly/unitexec

The reality of living and working conditions for the working class in Kurdistan and the negative effects of war

bit.ly/k-neg

Update on the Employment Relations Act

bit.ly/e-rights

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

Don't fall ill on the Tube

By P Ennar

Working in a Tube station makes it abundantly clear how threadbare emergency services in Britain are after decades of unsustainable cuts.

The basic rule: if they aren't facing imminent death, you won't be getting an ambulance. Customers with severe fractures, injuries, potential severe and urgent illnesses have all been denied

emergency care in my station in recent months, in cases that would have got them urgent attention a decade ago.

There's a clear interconnection between decades of austerity and emergencies on the underground. Staff having to look after vulnerable or mentally unwell people – or worse, preventing suicide attempts – happens more when local mental health support has been cut to shreds. Stations filling up as crowds

surround someone with a broken bone could be avoided if each ambulance wasn't needed in ten places at once.

When we talk about cuts to services, we often focus on number of tube staff, working conditions, safety for passengers and staff. But public services are entwined, and as the entire system is starved of cash it desperately needs, cracks appear in ever more places... □

Victory at mining museum

By Ken Worthington

The public services union Unison announced that the eight-month-long strike at the National Coal Mining Museum near Wakefield has been brought to an end after workers voted to accept a significantly improved pay offer.

This closes a continuous strike by more than 40 workers, which began on 20 August 2025. It has been the longest strike within the museum sector in UK history.

The settlement delivers a 10.5% pay rise, including a £1.35 per hour increase for

mine guides, taking pay from £12.86 to £14.21. This is an above-inflation pay rise, a clear victory for the striking workers that was won through determination, solidarity, and collective action.

This dispute was never just about pay – it was about dignity, respect, and the right of working people to be treated fairly. For over eight months, striking workers stood firm against an employer that chose confrontation over negotiation, issuing regular attacks on its own workforce, making baseless allegations against striking workers, and refusing for months to en-

gage in meaningful talks. At one stage, management even threatened disciplinary action (including potential dismissals) against workers simply for taking part in industrial action.

Sam Greenwood, branch secretary of Wakefield District Unison, told *Solidarity*: "This is a clear victory for our members who have taken sustained strike action in the face of repeated attacks from the employer. The pay settlement is way above current inflation levels and ensures that all workers will receive a minimum pay rise of £1.35 an hour, and the outrageous

threat of disciplinary action has been removed. This pay agreement is not the end of the fight. It is important that we keep organising and building as there is still a long way to go to ensure the scourge of low pay is eradicated at the museum."

Despite the sustained pressure and hostility, the workers did not break. They stood together, and proved that when workers are organised, they can win. Crucially, they return to work with no disciplinary action hanging over them – a clear defeat for attempts to intimidate the strikers. □

Feynman and the Challenger disaster

By John Cunningham

Forty years ago the Challenger Space Shuttle exploded shortly after lift-off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, killing the crew on board. The tragic loss of life also brought a major setback for the NASA space programme.

In *The Challenger Disaster*, a film made for TV by BBC Films, Science Channel and the Open University in 2013, William Hurt plays Richard Feynman, who is brought onto the Rogers Commission established to investigate the cause of the disaster. A brilliant physicist and populariser of science, Feynman worked on the atomic bomb project at Los Alamos during the Second World War (something he later came to regret). He was awarded the

1965 Nobel Prize for Physics for his work in quantum electrodynamics.

The investigation is difficult, partly because NASA officials are uncooperative. Feynman, demonstrating his ability to think through complex problems and thwart the bureaucratic obstacles put in his way, eventually makes the connection that everyone else had missed: cold weather on the day of the launch affected the performance of a component in one of the booster rockets, causing a fuel leakage resulting in the devastating explosion.

While conducting his investigation Feynman also has to come to terms with the news that he has cancer. He died two years later. □



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Lambeth dementia care workers strike

By Ruth Cashman

Adult social care workers at the Aspire Dementia Day Centre in Lambeth, south London, will be on the picket lines to defend the service from closure. After a 100% Yes vote for strike action, the first strike day has been announced for Thursday 14 May 2026.

Lambeth council has proposed the closure of the day centre and the elimination of ten posts. They want to move the remaining service to a room in the Aspire building which is inadequate for helping people with dementia who often have complex needs.

Simon Hannah, joint branch secretary of Lambeth Unison, said: "Lambeth council have run down this service to

save money which is a crying shame for the people of Lambeth.

"It is the only dedicated day centre for people with dementia where their carers can also get some respite from 24/7 care. Staff are dedicated to helping local residents and want to save jobs and ensure a quality service.

"The decision to close the specialist day centre and offer a much reduced service is driven by savings of only £350,000 and the results of a 'pilot scheme' that saw most people referred to other services, effectively running down the service on Central Hill Estate.

"This has meant some people with dementia and their carers not getting the level of care that they would have other-

wise received."

The Labour Party lost control of Lambeth in the local elections, which returned 29 Green Party councillors, 26 Labour and eight Liberal Democrat. Green councillors visited the Centre following the win and the local Green Party has called on members to attend picket lines. It is expected that an incoming Green leadership will halt the closure if they form the new administration.

The Full Council meeting which will elect the Leader is on Wednesday 27 May. Unison members are expected to have a deputation to this meeting and to announce all-out action from the following week. □



MHCLG in action from 1 May

By a PCS member

Following a successful ballot, the PCS union has advised the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that members are taking action short of strike (ASOS) from 1 May on an ongoing basis, which means, under the Employment Rights Act 2025, that it could last for 12 months without a new ballot.

PCS advised:

- Members that, from the same date, they should not be complying with management's

office attendance policy but should instead only attend the office for as much or as little as suits them.

- Members who are line managers to refuse to enforce office attendance requirements for their direct reports, explaining that staff undertaking ASOS should not be deemed to be acting unreasonably.

Management require 50% of contracted hours workplace attendance in most officers and 40% in the remaining offices, reflecting a lack of desk capacity. The longer term intention

of management appears to be a 60% attendance requirement.

The key issue for PCS members is the control they should have on how often, for how long, and when they attend their offices. Office attendance suits some members far more than others. This can reflect differences in home accommodation, ease of journey to work, dependant care, health, disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010, neurodivergency, caring responsibilities, as well as preference.

The aim is to prevent man-

agement from enforcing its attendance policy, to demonstrate that flexibility works for staff and the Ministry, and to provide a basis – if management respond reasonably – for an agreed attendance policy which prioritises staff wellbeing and choice.

But PCS also continues to be concerned with the employer:

- Limiting lateral and promotion career prospects for staff who do not live near favoured offices deemed to be "core".
- Having closed, or planning to close, some regional offices,

and yet failing to provide a concrete and meaningful offer of "drop-in spaces" in those areas for the affected staff, thus requiring them to choose between 100% homeworking with little career prospects or long commutes.

Branch representatives are actively considering further action in dialogue with members. Strike action may well be needed to secure movement, especially on the issues other than the office attendance mandate. □

Students at Goldsmiths lead the way

By Sam Myerson

Across the sector, students are discussing how best to be organised on campus to fight the cuts, and to take up the fight against fees and the mountain of student debt. At Workers' Liberty conference in April we reaffirmed that student anti cuts groups need to link up, something that we have been saying in Solidarity for some time now.

Those links are tentatively being built. It is vital that continues over the summer term, when usually activity on campus, and when, so we've seen over the last five years, university bosses find it best to announce new or further cuts.



In a recently updated report by Times Higher Education, staff who have gone through bouts of redundancies express their dismay and even despair. Some 74% of staff in Higher Education have either been placed at risk or seen colleagues put at risk of redundancy. Yet there have been almost no cuts to Senior Management posts or pay, and very few Vice Chancellors have faced any real pressure to go.

After occupying the university library against cuts proposed to teaching and courses, Goldsmiths students have held on, spread the action to more students, and [taken up battle](#) against cuts to professional services staff which were announced during the first phase of the occupation.

The university has demanded that the students vacate the library, but the building is effectively in open occupation with students and staff able to come and go. This has made the action successful but also, of course, limited disruption.

The occupation has acted as an organising centre, and a display to the rest of the campus and community around New Cross.

Comrades at Sheffield University and Sheffield Hallam are working to build the burgeoning anti-cuts movement. Along with students from Goldsmiths, Leicester, Birkbeck, and Northumbria, they are organising a national call (bit.ly/sheff-anti-cuts2) to bring the campaigns together: Thursday 14 May 5:30 – 6:30. □

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Chicago Teachers Union on May 1st

Workers come out against Trump

By Harold Storey

On Friday 1 May, over 4,000 demonstrations were held across America for a national day of “no work, no school, no shopping” against Trump. It was mainly organised by the coalition May Day Strong, but many unions and the AFL-CIO confederation backed the demonstrations.

Left-wing groups including Socialist Alternative USA, Solidarity, and the DSA were also present and organised across these demos, in their own capacities and as part of union blocs.

Educators were particularly well organised. In North Carolina, where teachers are banned by law from striking, enough nonetheless walked out to cause class cancellations in over 22 school districts while they marched on the state legislature to demand higher corporation taxes for more school funding.

The Chicago Teachers' Union ended up doing a

deal with city schools bosses to declare 1 May a “day of civic engagement”, and took thousands of students and teachers out to rallies and protests as “field trips”.

There had been a series of workers' assemblies in Minneapolis, organised by unions and left groups, which sought to build for May Day and especially for an educators' contingent in Minneapolis. We don't know how well that worked, or whether more assemblies are planned.

May Day in the US was a mixed bag, with effective walkouts in some places, and poor union organising elsewhere. Across the board however, trade unions and left groups made themselves visible on a day of celebration for the workers' movement and protest against the Trump government.

The left should learn lessons, organise more workers' assemblies, work to expand and transform the US workers' movement into a force that can defeat Trump. □

Defend the right to protest

By Will Roberts

Four of the “Filton Six”, Palestine Action activists who broke into an Elbit Systems facility in Filton in 2024, have been found guilty at retrial of property damage, and sentenced to prison. One of them has also been found guilty of GBH on a police officer, after hitting them with a sledgehammer.

All of these are lesser sentences than the initial charges. At the first trial a jury found all six activists innocent of aggravated burglary, and came to no conclusion on charges of GBH against Corner and property damage against all defendants. This seemed to have been at least part due to the activists convincing the jury about their political motivation. The Filton Six have gone from life, or at least decades in prison, to a few years each, pos-

sibly already served on remand.

Meanwhile, Shabana Mahmood's appeal against the High Court ruling that the proscription of PA was unlawful is now underway. If that appeal succeeds, then the Met Police will be vindicated for overturning their initial decision not to enforce the ban. Over 500 were arrested at a Defend Our Juries action in April, two months after the ban had been deemed unenforceable.

We are entering a worrying period for the right to protest in this country, and court rulings against Palestine Action — as well as recent moves by the government to prevent protest after a spike in antisemitic attacks — are the tip of a dangerous wedge. Labour movement activists must do everything we can to uphold and exercise the right to protest. □

Take the antisemitic threat seriously

By Martin Thomas

On 29 April a man stabbed two Jews in Golders Green, after first attacking a (Muslim) friend in south London.

That came scarcely a month after an arson attack on Jewish ambulances in Golders Green. Antisemitic incidents at all levels, from verbal abuse upwards, are rising in many countries.

A pro-Iranian group, HAYI, has claimed the two Golders Green attacks. Some say HAYI is an “astroturf” operation of the Iranian regime, set up mainly to claim “credit” for attacks done by isolated individuals, either manipulated by HAYI or operating on their own. We don't know.

But the decades-long “Death to Israel” sloganeering of the Iranian regime, and its allies like Hezbollah and the Houthis, cannot but be a factor in incubating such attacks. It is an evasion to insist, as *Socialist Worker* does (25 March), that antisemitism is only “a far right ideology... driven by forces such as the Trump movement in the United States”, and thus to suggest that the Iranian regime, etc., are not “far right”.

Socialist Worker cites as a model its response to the 11 September 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York. SW called it horrific, but refused to condemn it. It was “the bitter fruit of US policy”, an inevitable reflex. So, as long as you opposed US leaders (Bush, Trump, etc.) and the white-nationalist far right, you were doing all that should be done against antisemitism and political Islamism of the type of Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Khamenei.

Similarly with Golders Green. For SW, the thing



to worry about is not so much the actual attacks on Jews, as the possibility that “the Labour government sniffs an opportunity” for more bans on protest.

And Iran? Well, SW says it has no “illusions in the Iranian regime as a principled or consistent anti-imperialist force”. Just an inconsistent one, then. Moreover, “wanting the destruction of the Israeli settler colony” — eight million people, mostly there because they were born there, or because they came there as refugees — “is not antisemitism”.

Antisemitism remains real when dressed up as targeting “Zionists”, i.e., in practice, with those Jewish people (still the majority) who feel some empathy, however critical, with family or friends in Israel. We will beat the far right in all its variants only if our opposition to racism and revanchist prejudice is consistent across the board. □

• See also page 18 and centre pages

A barrel full of rotten apples

By Sam Myerson

In Kent, of the 57 Reform councillors elected in May 2025, ten have resigned or declared themselves “independents”. In Shropshire the council has had three leaders in a year.

In the few days since 7 May 2026 Reform has lost at least six of its newly elected councillors.

Glenn Gibbins in Sunderland has been suspended for racist posts on social media.

David Baker, also in Sunderland, is not suspended, but he has a conviction for domestic violence.

David Laing, in Sunderland again, stood as a BNP candidate twice, but is not suspended.

Jay Cooper in Sefton has resigned from Reform, after pro-Nazi social media posts were revealed.

Stuart Prior in Rayleigh West has called for the

mass murder of Muslims and for segregation. He has feigned ignorance of those social media posts.

Ben Rowe, Plymouth, has been suspended. On social media he has called on racist rioters to attack a mosque and accused Jewish people of controlling the world through migration.

A few candidates from other parties, including the Greens and Labour, have been found to have made antisemitic or offensive posts, but most if not all were suspended before 7 May.

You could say that Nigel Farage should do better on vetting. But this is the Nigel Farage whose former teachers and schoolmates have described his antisemitism and bigotry.

In large parts of the country Farage's racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and anti-union gang now have power in local authorities. Local labour movements must organise to push them back. □

For a workers' government

SOLIDARITY **& WORKERS' LIBERTY**



LABOUR AFTER STARMER?

