

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

On the streets 5 and 12 September

BACK THE HEALTH WORKERS

» **15% pay rise**

» **Bring all work in-house**

» **Full isolation pay for all**

With the people against Lukashenko!

Eric Lee on the "left" arguments used against backing Belarus workers.

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HSCA 2012, 8 years on

By Alison Brown

The scrapping of Public Health England (PHE) and a new government health task force point to the Tories using the background of the pandemic to make radical changes to the NHS.

The abolition of PHE is seen as an early attempt to cast blame for the devastating Covid-19 response away from Boris Johnson. It may also be the first step to bringing the NHS into increased central and political control.

Last time the Tories led an NHS reorganisation was the Health and Social Care Act (HSCA) of 2012. This made fundamental changes, removing central responsibility for healthcare from the Secretary of State, creating clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) at local level, and enforcing competition.

Previous Tory and Labour governments introduced the NHS market and promoted the private sector. The HSCA took this a giant step further and, importantly, put responsibility for increased privatisation with local "clinicians" rather than government. Its effect was immediate. In the year that followed 45% of contracts awarded went to non-NHS providers.

Privatisation

The HSCA embedded privatisation. Over a quarter of NHS spending now goes into the private sector. There have been many high-profile failures. Notoriously, at the first NHS hospital to be run by a private firm, Hinchingsbrook in Cambridgeshire, Circle abandoned the contract after financial problems and criticisms of poor care. Another failed contracting out process in Cambridgeshire cost commissioners £6million.

In the light of such disasters and under pressure from campaigners, some CCGs backed away from large privatisations. As austerity squeezed budgets, CCGs favoured community-based care, emphasising the need for integration, especially with social care. The HSCA reorganisation, estimated to have cost £4 billion, came to be seen as a distraction by many in management.

Better service co-ordination makes sense for patients, but this version has been firmly rooted in cuts and privatisation. Under the direction of NHS England, new bodies, Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs), Accountable Care Organisations (ACOs), and then Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) were established covering

regional areas. Their structures mirror ACOs in the US health system, where overarching contracts control service provision for insurance schemes.

Though the justification in the NHS was joined-up care, their primary function has been to implement spending controls. They have gone on to restrict treatments available in their areas. Grommets for glue ear or injections from back pain have been withdrawn. While the HSCA deflected the responsibility for privatisation away from government, these rapidly changing structures sowed confusion and put a veil around government cuts.

Following the US model, NHS England promoted corporate involvement in the running of ICSs. Instead of confining privatisation to individual service contracts, participation in these structures allows companies into the heart of commissioning, controlling not only the budget but strategic decisions over services.

Post-pandemic

ICSs were not included in the HSCA and so have limited legal status. Post pandemic, one of the anticipated changes is the legal establishment and roll out of ICSs. The timing alongside a trade deal, giving improved market access for US healthcare corporations, brings danger.

Decentralisation and the guise of reduced responsibility has brought less actual political control. Bodies like NHS England, PHE, and the CCGs have developed some level of independence from government.

Boris Johnson and his clique understand the political importance of the NHS, as we saw in their cynical promises during the Brexit campaign. They want their people in control of the NHS. The appointment of Dido Harding to lead the new National Institute for Health Protection, which replaces the PHE, after her abject failure on the track and trace programme, is one example.

Rapid central control has been implemented during the pandemic and this has been used to escalate privatisation. Contracts for the national track and trace system, laboratories, test sights and provision of PPE were awarded to major corporations behind closed doors. Private hospitals have been bailed out through a deal to clear the backlog in surgery.

The increased role of tech in healthcare, expanded through the pandemic, is another lucrative area for the private sector.

The prime agenda of the Tories remains a relentless drive to turn the NHS into a profit-making machine. They are ideologically opposed to a collective system which, even after all their attacks, spends billions to deliver to working-class people on the basis of need.

The Labour Party must retain its commitment to overturning the HSCA and fighting for a renationalised, publicly owned, publicly-run NHS, and work with NHS campaigners to highlight the corporate deals and expose the hidden privatisation. The trade unions need a co-ordinated drive to insource jobs. □

Tabloid 9 September

From the next issue, no.562, 9 September, we will return to tabloid format from this reduced format which we've had to use in lockdown because lack of street activity and meetings made it difficult to circulate the paper. Next [Ideas for Freedom](#): 10-11 July 2021. Next Workers' Liberty conference: 17-18 April 2021. □

Back health workers! 15% pay rise!

6699 Editorial

On 12 September, and in Glasgow on 5 September, health workers will be on the streets again (bit.ly/pay-n) demanding a pay rise.

The movement started with a London demonstration on 29 July, spread through protests across the country on 8 August and workplace rallies on 26 August, and is continuing through “wear a badge days” every Wednesday.

The driving force here is nurses. They have suffered danger and stress in the pandemic, and before that years of NHS cuts and pay freezes. Even before the pandemic, for years campaigners have warned that hospitals routinely run at 95% capacity in the winter, and just a worse-than-usual flu season could overwhelm them.

Nurses are [not the lowest-paid health workers](#), but their pay is low for their qualifications and conditions.

The French government has awarded pay rises, inadequate but rises, to all hospital workers following the lockdown. Winning on pay can unlock other issues: isolation pay for all workers in the NHS (including casual and contracted-out), in-housing of jobs, better nurse-to-patient ratios.

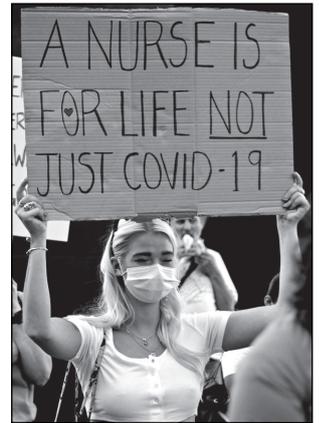
The protest leaders have explained that they need to budge the health workers’ unions. Unite and GMB officials have given some support, but largely passive; and Unite and GMB have relatively little weight here, especially among nurses. The RCN has demanded a 12.5% rise, but it is a conservative “professional” union which struck for the first time in its history as recently as December 2019 (in Northern Ireland). Unison is the biggest union in the

Stop slide to “no deal”!

The Tories are tobogganing towards a “no-deal” Brexit. Maybe they hope to scare the EU into last-minute concessions, but, on the scale of such things, four months is very short for that. The Tories may think that with everyone distracted by the pandemic and other issues, they can get away with “no deal”, and use the resulting turmoil to push through “disaster capitalism” shock policies.

The social and economic effects of the resulting higher barriers between Britain and Europe, disrupting 50 years of economic knitting-together, and of the shock policies, will hit workers hardest.

Yet Labour and the trade unions are saying almost nothing. Another Europe is Possible has an [“Alternative Mandate” campaign](#), but it’s running cool. Demand Labour and the unions speak out! □



sector, but has submitted a pay claim ([on 28 August](#)) for only £2000 (more like 5% than 15% for an experienced nurse), and is not campaigning.

The current general secretary election in Unison (nominations close 25 Sep, voting 28 Oct to 27 Nov) gives leverage to shift that. The left-wing candidates, Paul Holmes and Hugo Pierre, currently do not mention NHS pay in their platforms, instead stressing local government issues, but they are known to back the protests. If they make a storm on NHS pay, they can apply pressure to the other candidates and so to the Unison official top ranks in which those candidates are already inserted.

The Labour Party, and in the first place left Labour MPs, should also make a storm about NHS pay.

Other workers should consider our own pay claims, and whether we can time industrial action on wages to coincide with NHS pay strikes or protests, thus giving effective solidarity to health workers who may have difficulty staging strikes if hospitals become stretched in a virus-resurgence. □

Tories concede a fraction on isolation pay

The New Zealand government pays for workers self-isolating because of the pandemic to get [\\$586 \(£291\) a week](#). Even the Australian government has conceded some paid “pandemic leave”, for care-home workers and those in the state of Victoria.

Now the Tories have followed with a sort of quarter or one-eighth concession: £13 a day for some low-paid workers in a few trial areas if they have positive virus tests or are contacts.

Stephen Reicher, a member of the government’s official SAGE committee, [commented](#): “Woefully inadequate... Why only £13 a day? Why only in high infection areas? Why only for those on universal credit/working tax credit?”

Safe and Equal <http://safeandequal.org> is campaigning for full isolation pay for all, which should be continued post-pandemic as legally-binding full sick pay for all.

An academic study (bit.ly/shall-c) has found that larger, fuller, lower-staffed care homes have had much higher death rates. Care homes are much less full now, but there are 120,000 job vacancies in the care sector.

The care homes should be taken into the public sector, kept less full, and staffed on regular public-sector pay and conditions. □

Whipping it up for “The Storm”

By Levente Zékány

By now, you have probably already heard about the American conspiracy theory known as QAnon.

What exactly do QAnon followers believe? The answer is complicated. By this point, QAnon has snowballed into an all-encompassing super-conspiracy. Believers frequently disagree with each other on details, but there's room for you in the movement whether you believe that the Earth is hollow or that it is flat.

QAnon centres around a supposed military intelligence officer, “Q”, who is exposing a corrupt cabal in the US government by posting cryptic messages on anonymous imageboards. The first “Q drop” – referring to Q’s arcane messages – appeared on 4chan’s neo-nazi /pol/ board on 28 October 2017. The drops later migrated to 8chan, a site infamous for its popularity among mass shooters and paedophiles.

Other foundational beliefs are: There is a deep state run by Satan-worshipping paedophilic Democrats, who drink the blood of children to satisfy their adrenochrome addiction. (In real life, adrenochrome is the product of the oxidation of adrenaline, and has no addictive properties.)

Donald Trump is actually on a secret mission to take down these depraved elites with the aid of the military and supporters inside various intelligence agencies. The Democrats are working together with the Communist Party of China to regain power. Soros is, of course, also involved.

It also heavily incorporates the Pizzagate conspiracy theory, which alleges that a popular Washington pizza restaurant was a centre of human trafficking as well as hub for satanic ritual abuse.

This fight against the deep state will culminate in an event believers refer to as “The Storm” – this means that thousands of politicians, celebrities, and deep state operatives being arrested, with some of their executions being broadcast live. Indeed, many followers believe that thousands of high profile people have already been arrested or executed, and replaced by clones as to not to disturb the public.

Once all the bad people are killed, Trump will usher in a Utopia, and release secret technology and cures for various diseases, which have been suppressed by the deep state.

Around this deranged core attach all manner of auxiliary conspiracy theories.

There's the NESARA internet cult/scam, time travel, reptilians, and naturally, all sorts of unhinged beliefs about Covid-19, Bill Gates, and 5G.

If you expect QAnon supporters to be exclusively old, white, conservative men, you are mistaken. Looking through QAnon associated hashtags on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, you'll find teenagers posting videos covering Pizzagate, women, and a lot of crystal-healing adjacent hippies, all united in their opposition against a supposed all powerful satanic cabal.

In the real world, it's no different – a “Save the Children” protest in Hollywood also drew people of all ages, races, and genders. However, there are a lot of far-right nuts and antisemites within the core of the Q movement.

“Save the Children” seems to be QAnon’s way to reach a much broader audience than it would normally, and these soft QAnon rallies have been popping up frequently. 22 August saw them happen in around 200 cities in the US. There was one in London on the same day, with around 500 attendees, mostly young women, according to journalist Shayan Sardarizadeh. Further rallies were held in Manchester, Huddersfield, Nottingham, and Liverpool.

The disingenuousness of the Save the Children slogan is underscored by QAnon supporters’ conspicuous silence on ICE detention centres, where over 4500 complaints of sexual abuse of immigrant children have accumulated from October 2014 to July 2018. For some reason, they also don't like to talk about allegations made against Trump, or his association with Jeffrey Epstein.

According to an internal Facebook investigation, the top 10 QAnon groups have around 1 million members, although it is unclear how large the membership overlap is between different groups. How this nonsense found such a large audience demands an explanation.

Of course, one reason for QAnon’s popularity is Facebook itself. For 3 years, Facebook’s algorithms pushed thinly veiled blood libel in people’s recommendations. But that, in and of itself, does not explain why people were receptive to the gospel of Q.

People are thoroughly dissatisfied with the political establishment. They feel powerless, and on some level they know that the ruling class – although they wouldn't use the term – doesn't care about them. The years pass, they keep voting, and things don't seem to get any better. Inequality is growing, and has been growing for years.

This diagnosis is broadly true across the globe, and that's why QAnon has managed to gain international popularity. Lacking a clear analysis, they see a conspiracy of malice as opposed to a “conspiracy” of class interests. QAnon offers an explanation for why people’s lives are not improving, no matter who is in office – it's the cabal's fault. In other words, QAnon is a socialism of fools. □

What we demand in the crisis

1. Requisition key sectors
2. Fight for workers’ control
3. Make the labour movement an essential service, fighting on the issues listed here
4. Defend workers’ rights. Work or full pay! Cancel rent, mortgage, and utility payments.
5. Take care of the worst-off
6. Defend civil liberties
7. International solidarity □

- See full text at bit.ly/what-d
- Animated video of full demands: bit.ly/demand-video

Five times the risk in pregnancy



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

Healthcare in pregnancy, or lack of it, is one of the starkest examples of racial health inequalities in the United Kingdom and in the United States.

Work in the UK by University of Oxford researchers has found that between 2014 and 2016 the rate of death in pregnancy was 8 in 100,000 white people, compared with 15 in 100,000 Asian people and 40 in 100,000 black people.

It's a similar picture in the US, where African-American, Native American, and Alaska native pregnancies are three times more likely to result in death, according to a May 2019 report by the Centers for Disease Control.

The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (RCOG) has launched a race task force to look at disparities in care which will also examine racial disparities within gynaecology services, including the late diagnosis of gynaecological cancers and lower uptake of cervical screening amongst black women.

Conspiracy-theorist threat

By Zack Muddle

Over two hundred Covid-conspiracy theorists, including some genuinely wearing tin foil hats, held a rally and march in Bristol; thousands in London; and tens of thousands in Berlin, on the weekend of 29-30 August.

Participants and speakers opposed masks, vaccines, lockdown, 5G, and the "New World Order". They pushed wild, incoherent, and often contradictory conspiracy theories, from 9/11 classics or a global shadowy elite of (satanic) paedophiles (QAnon), to Covid-19 being a hoax or 5G being an infrastructure designed to control individuals through microchips implanted under the guise of vaccines, to masks reducing immunity and increasing infections or hydroxychloroquine curing Covid-19.

Crowds seem, anecdotally, to have been mostly white and middle-aged.

While a first response might be to laugh at them, they could generate a serious threat. Far-right and fascist groups had a serious presence in the London and Berlin demos. Conspiratorial beliefs around Covid-19, some gaining wider traction, undermine efforts to curb the virus. Reasserting and building rational, critical, class-based politics is more crucial now than ever. □

Previously much of the discussion of racial discrepancies in health care has focussed on physiological differences which may make pregnancy in black and Asian people more difficult or dangerous. This is clearly very dodgy territory. Our races are social constructs. There are not black, white and Asian bodies which can be medically differentiated. There is a huge diversity in our bodies and health, shaped by a variety of genetic, social, and environmental factors. Rather than building health services around a statistical average of a "white woman" we should have obstetrics and gynaecology fit for human variation.

Ultimately, rather than seeing race as a risk factor that predicts disease, we should see race as a proxy for bias and societal disadvantage. You are more likely to be poor, with all that comes with that (worse diet, worse housing, etc., and effects on your health), if you are black in the UK than if you are white.

But even outside these risks, experiences and outcomes differ across different socioeconomic statuses. This points to racism within healthcare as a major factor in death during and immediately after pregnancy. □

Support the Tower Hamlets workers!

After nine days of strike action in July and August, Tower Hamlets council workers are discussing next steps in the fight to stop the "Tower Rewards" scheme slashing their terms and conditions. Please support their struggle:

- Updates at towerhamlets.unison.site/news
- For donations and solidarity bit.ly/THsolidarity
- Statement of support bit.ly/THstatement □

Young Labour elections

By a Momentum Internationalists supporter

Young Labour Internationalists is a platform being put forward in the Young Labour elections (nominations close 27 Sep, voting 19 Oct to 12 Nov. Momentum "primary" voting closing 2 Sep). We are supporting:

- Benj Eckford for Northern rep
- Robbie Scott for International Officer
- Sacha Marten for Student Rep

Our slate is likely to expand, with more candidates signing up to support our political platform. We hope to run debates via Zoom with Young Labour groups across the UK and organise forums of our own to discuss how to build a class-struggle oriented internationalist youth movement. Our platform is available at momentuminternationalists.org □

XR returns to activity



Environment

By Zack Muddle

Extinction Rebellion (XR) Bristol held protests and blockades from 29-31 August, and XR nationally began a fortnight of disruption from 1 September in London, Cardiff and Manchester.

They aim to get the "Climate and Ecological Emergency" (CEE) bill adopted as a "private members' bill" and then passed as Parliament returns from 1 September. In Bristol, a protest at the airport reportedly saw almost 400 people, multiple bridges were blockaded, and XR organised many other actions, talks, and educational activities.

Organisers have been taking Covid-safety seriously, while working hard to remobilise after lockdown. I was impressed with the turnout given the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and lockdown, on the back of what I'd worried was a loss of impetus.

The youth climate strikes movement (and UKSCN) have fallen dormant, and the Labour Party and trade unions are currently largely silent on climate change. XR's rebellion is an opportunity to rejuvenate a climate movement.

XR's political strategy remains [severely limited](#). "The climate and ecological crisis is the greatest problem of our times – the CEE Bill is the solution", announces [XR Bristol](#). "our economic and political systems aren't fit to save us from the climate and #EcologicalEmergency. Big problems need big solutions. Enter the [#CEEbill](#)."

But, aside from the difficulties of getting onto the floor of Parliament via the "private members" channel, the [CEE bill](#), a draft backed by Caroline Lucas MP, falls far far short of the solution we need. Primarily it reads as a series of legal corrections to the current framework; through which, for example, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) currently operates and brings out reports. Additionally, CEE bill mandates the creation of a "Citizens' Assembly".

The bill would enshrine legal commitment to international "Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities", reflecting the need for richer, more polluting and more industrialised nations to take greater steps to tackle climate crises. It mandates that overseas emissions and ecological impacts in the supply chains of imported goods be taken into account. Carbon sequestration, removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, should only be factored in insofar as it relies on currently possible methods. That is, planting forests and rewilding rather than speculated future technologies.

Changing the legal framework, and thus future CCC models, can impact wider discussions and potentially policy around climate change. Legal commitments were used as *one* useful weapon in the [decades long battle against Heathrow expansion](#).

However, tightening up the existing regime by creating

various new duties is inadequate. While a step forward in many ways from [previous vagueness in XR's demands](#), it still amounts to demanding of the government, with useful additional constraints, that "[something must be done!](#)"

We must organise to fight for and win, not changes to the rules, but a concrete plan, [socialist environmental demands](#). We must win public ownership under workers' control of the energy, transport, food, and other major industries, for the fastest possible transition to green energy, efficient electric affordable transport, and more, funded through expropriating the banks and the wealthy.

We do [need greater democracy](#) in designing, fighting for, and implementing the necessary major environmental changes. But not in the form of a citizens' assembly, "citizens" randomly selected and so unaccountable, steered by experts and "[professional facilitators](#)", so strongly influenced by the more longstanding elements of the state. Assemblies, that is, which "will empower MPs to take bold decisions and allow people to have a real say [*sic*]", relying on the existing parliament, government, and state apparatus to implement the decisions.

The democracy we need for environmental transition is of workers fighting in their workplaces and industries for the needed changes, of democratic movements debating, deciding upon, fighting for and implementing the necessary economic, social, and political changes. □



Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty meetings are open to all, held online over zoom. **Until the end of September:**

Sunday 6 September, 6.30-8pm: [Remembering the Bosnian war, with Sarah Correia](#)

Monday 7 September, 7:30-9pm: [After Slavery and Mass Migrations](#)

Sunday 13 September, 12-2pm: Socialist Feminist Reading Group: [Hood Feminism by Mikki Kendall](#)

Sunday 13 September, 6.30-8pm: [What is left antisemitism, how can it be confronted?](#)

Sunday 20 September, 6.30-8pm: [Covid-19: what do we know so far?](#) With George Davey Smith (Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at Bristol University)

Monday 21 September, 7:30-9pm: [Racism Today and How to Fight it](#)

More: workersliberty.org/meetings

Online calendars

Visit workersliberty.org/meetings for our calendars of events: public AWL events, wider labour and social movement events, and more. Subscribe to them on your phone or computer, through Google Calendar, Apple Calendar, Outlook, or Thunderbird, to keep your schedule up to date! □

School reopenings: ballot on safety

By a London teacher

The National Education Union (NEU) favours the reopening of English and Welsh schools in September, without qualification. That is positive.

But the union is not advocating action to stop unsafe or careless practice by school managements. It is not even publicising to members Section 44 of the 1996 Employment Rights Act, which allows workers to quit work areas where they see a "serious or imminent danger".

The NEU leaders proceed as if they are writing a comment piece in the *Guardian*, or a blog, rather than running a campaigning union. There are plenty of issues we need action to fix, immediately: the lack of testing kits available in schools; the need to increase school funding for virus precautions; the need to bring contracted-out services in-house; the need to ensure all staff can be paid their normal wages and afford to self-isolate.

The union could usefully organise a national ballot on safety in schools (on testing and cleaning), disaggregated so local groups can act on local issues if necessary.

The NEU guidance (as of 31 August) states: "Government needs a Plan B in the event that its guidance does not work or if cases are higher by the time we get to September," without saying what Plan B. Some of the NEU's 10-point "recovery plan" is just out of date, and it includes vapid stuff like: "GCSE and A levels must be changed to

provide a fair assessment of young people's attainment".

Leaders of the bosses' federation CBI have called for [GCSEs to be abolished](#). The NEU should be at least as bold.

Abolish Ofsted

Performance tables and Ofsted should be abolished, not suspended, as the NEU suggests.

The Labour Party has now called for the A Level and GCSE exams set for May-June 2021 to be moved back a month. But the Tories already mooted that weeks ago.

Socialist Worker's front page headline states, "Stop Johnson's return to unsafe... schools", and the text states: "Their demand for a return to work and school has nothing to do with our mental health and well-being. It has only to do with profits."

In fact even Johnson knows new Covid spikes will hit profits. Whether Johnson is willing to spend extra money on schools, or laptops for poorer kids, or internet access for all families, or adequate test and trace, is another matter.

At the same time, no SWP member in any school is attempting to stop schools opening. Perhaps the SWP has been too busy carrying General Secretary Kevin Courtney's bags, or shining his shoes, which is their role in the union. □

Rebuilding Momentum groups

By Roxana Fraser

Roxana Fraser, an activist in the Southampton Momentum group, talked with Cathy Nugent from Solidarity.

Our group has been and remains well functioning – we've been meeting online regularly during lockdown. We have been in touch with other local groups. It is important right now for groups to invite others to meetings and so on.

In my experience there was very little support for local groups after the early days of Momentum. All the focus was on helping Labour to win elections and fighting the internal battles in Labour. But local groups should be doing a lot more. We've organised a lot of political education, but that has been done entirely by ourselves.

And Momentum groups shouldn't simply mirror the Labour Party, with all the officers that you have in local Labour Party groups. There should be working groups for specific campaigns, for women and other groups, so that more people can be included, and feel able to be involved.

And local groups should be the organising base for Momentum. The National Co-ordinating Groups should be answerable to the local groups and members. At the mo-

ment this is not at all the relationship between the NCG and Momentum. The relationships are all wrong. We need an activist movement, not a situation where the NCG substitutes itself for the activists.

There needs to be a lot of thinking and discussion about what kind of socialist organisation we want, what we want Momentum to be.

Conference

We need a conference which discusses this. We need a website where it is clear to any outsider about what Momentum is, where there is a lot of information, campaign materials and links to other groups.

The NCG is seen as a "leadership", but there is a problem with this term in my view. They should be more like communicators – people who are there to implement and communicate to the world what members are saying. The current style of leadership is very "corporate" and top-down.

I do feel positive that things can change but above all we need a conference where the NCG is under scrutiny, which is properly representative, and where we can decide what kind of socialist organisation we want Momentum to be. □

“Pathetic clowns, lousy Trotskyists”: The Left responds to a solidarity campaign with Belarus

By Eric Lee

In late August, at the request of independent trade unions in Belarus and supported by global union federations, LabourStart launched a campaign demanding an end to state repression in that country. The campaign title was “Stop the violence – defend democracy and human rights”.

In a mass mailing to trade union activists, we summarised what had happened in Belarus, noting that “a wave of spontaneous work stoppages swept across the country. Workers started to form strike committees to prepare for a nationwide general strike in support of democratic change.”

Our message quoted from some of the strikers’ demands, which included: recognise the results of the presidential elections as invalid, release all political prisoners and demonstrators, prevent the persecution of the strike participants and cancel the system of short term contracts.

Not very controversial stuff, I thought. I mean – who in our movement, the labour movement, is against democracy and human rights?

It turns out that we’re not all on the same page when it comes to the Lukashenko dictatorship in Belarus.

Here are some of the responses I received in a number of different languages from trade unionists around the world.

An English-speaking correspondent wrote “You better try to stop the criminal interference of the West in the internal affairs of Belarus and the attempts for a regime change, which has been used for many years to promote the interests of Western imperialism. Don’t support that dirty game.”

Another wrote to me in French, saying that they “do not agree with you to support this new western interference. The orange revolutions – we have seen what this leads to...”

A correspondent in Italy was somewhat more concise: “Fuck it. Stop writing to me. Long live Lukashenko !!”

A couple of writers in Germany showed that the spirit of the GDR (East Germany) is not completely extinguished.

“Who are the people who want to destroy a state, in this case Belarus, which still has a functioning socialist system?” asked one. And continued: “At the end of the GDR, similar people shouted ‘We are the people!’ Socialism in the GDR, which no longer exists, is now a thing of the past. Many people are unemployed, in poverty, homeless, in misery.”

Another German added: “I do not want any further communications or information in the future. I cannot and would not like to share the obvious interference in internal affairs in Belarus. The ‘insurgents’ march under the flags of the fascist collaborators.” (Actually, they don’t.) “Who benefits from the confrontation if not the West and its NATO! They want to close the tongs on Russia!”

We even got this response in Esperanto: “Does Labour-

Start want to repeat what happened to Allende in 1973 in Chile or later to Gaddafi in Libya? Don’t you see the undermining activity of foreign forces from Poland and other forces of Western capitalism? *Hands Off Belarus!*”

And finally, this was my personal favourite and was written in Polish: “Please don’t send me this crap. You are pathetic clowns, servants of capital. Get out of here, you lousy Trotskyists.”

Overwhelmingly positive

It’s important to emphasise that the response to our mailing was overwhelmingly positive. Over 5,000 people have already signed up to support the campaign. Only about a dozen sent in angry messages like the ones cited above.

Sometimes we attribute this kind of stupidity to, for example, the *Morning Star* here in the UK, but that doesn’t explain these responses from across Europe. The writers of these messages are probably getting their “facts” from a wide range of sources, including state-sponsored Russian media outlets like *RT* and *Sputnik*. But the problem runs deeper than that.

We have to acknowledge that there is a deep-seated hostility to what one part of the Left calls “imperialism” – and by that they don’t mean Russian or Chinese imperialism, but only the US, the EU, and Israel.

Anyone whom the US, EU or Israel might support is by definition pro-imperialist and even fascist (such as the workers on strike in Belarus – even if they are receiving little or no support from those countries).

Anyone who the US, EU or Israel might oppose – Syria’s Assad, the Islamo-fascist regime in Iran, Venezuela’s Maduro, even North Korea’s Kim – is therefore progressive and worthy of support

I think that the core problem is not that these people don’t know enough about Belarus. One might argue that all we need to do is explain that Belarus is not socialist, that Lukashenko is not a democrat, that the people there have had enough, and so on.

But it’s not about that – and that’s not how we will win this argument and thoroughly defeat the toxic “anti-imperialist” Left.

I fear it’s going to be a harder and longer fight than that. □

• Eric Lee is the founding editor of LabourStart. He writes this column in his personal capacity. Support the Belarus campaign here: bit.ly/br-ls

“What we stand for

The Alliance for Workers’ Liberty fights for socialist revolution, for the labour movement to militantly assert working-class interests.

See workersliberty.org/about – if you agree, join us! □

Trumpism in vigilante mode

By **Barrie Hardy**

It was only a matter of time before a white supremacist vigilante murdered opponents of Donald Trump. The surprise was that it hadn't happened sooner. There will be more of this in the run-up to the Presidential election.

This fresh outrage in the Wisconsin town of Kenosha followed days of protest after local police shot unarmed black man Jacob Blake seven times in the back. 17 year old Kyle Rittenhouse, a keen attendee of Trump rallies, answered the call of a vigilante website and his mother drove him and his illegally owned AR-15 rifle twenty miles across the state line to shoot two protesters dead and blow the arm off another.

A paralysed Blake was taken to hospital only to be chained to his bed. In contrast, the vigilante presence in Kenosha was welcomed by the police, who thanked them for being there. A clearly armed Rittenhouse was allowed through police lines and to go home to bed – an unimaginable outcome if he'd been black.

Rittenhouse turned himself in the next day and was charged with murder, but that hasn't stopped Trumpers making out he's some kind of hero.

Tucker Carlson, a rabid far right demagogue on Rupert Murdoch's Fox News channel, effectively justified the shootings as Rittenhouse "maintaining law and order".

Rock stars like Neil Young and The Rolling Stones have sued the Trump campaign for using their songs without permission. The most appropriate one though is Meghan Trainor's *It's All About The Bass*. Trump's strategy in the light of his disastrous handling of the coronavirus pandemic is to fire up his base so that they go out and vote, whilst at the same time suppressing the votes of the opposition.

At last week's Republican National Convention viewers were treated to lashings of what has been dubbed "fear porn," and asked to believe in the terrifying prospect of "anarchy in the streets" should Joe Biden get elected. The Trumpists hope that fresh protests against police brutality will stampede waverers to their camp.

White supremacist infiltration

The FBI have been consistently pointing to infiltration of the police in recent years by white supremacist groups. It's not beyond the bounds of possibility that some rogue cops will go about deliberately shooting other black people in order to spark more riots and benefit Trump.

Is Trumpism American fascism? Does it tick all of the textbook definitions? The devil comes in many guises. The closing rally of the RNC in the White House grounds would have done the late Joseph Goebbels proud. Trump spouted out as many lies as there were American flags on display.

The idea of Trump as "the law and order candidate" is obviously a sick joke, given the countless laws and constitutional conventions he's broken. Trump knows that fail-

ure to win will result in him and his crooked family doing prison time, so he'll pull out every dirty trick in the book to prevent it.

The next two months are going to get more violent, probably reaching a crescendo in the first week of November as Trump contests the result and tries to disallow postal votes.

His victory will worsen the condition of the American working class as he attacks their healthcare and social security benefits. It will further embolden white supremacist vigilantes and racist cops. Democratic rights and media freedom will come under further attack. The judiciary will be further stacked with Trump appointees.

A third term for Trump? Yes, that is against the constitution, but it is not impossible to change that constitution, or else get one of his offspring to stand in 2024 to perpetuate the dynasty. Such prospects, far fetched not so long ago, aren't so now.

Trumpism may or may not represent a distinct strain of fascism, but a Trump victory will certainly set the USA a lot further down the road to the establishment of a far-right authoritarian regime. The left must do all in its power to prevent that. □

More online

NHS mobilisation can break low-pay trend

Stuart Jordan explores the potential of the NHS pay protests
bit.ly/nhs-m

Antidoto: China and the Uyghurs

Jim Denham examines how the *Morning Star* deflects criticisms of the Chinese government
bit.ly/ch-uyg

Party-building, cooperation, and debate

Neil Faulkner and Martin Thomas pursue a polemic
bit.ly/nf-mt

Further debate on "workers' action to impose lockdowns"

Stuart Jordan and Martin Thomas write responses
bit.ly/sj--2, bit.ly/mt--2

Join Rosa on the march!

Martin Thomas reviews Dana Mills' new biography of Rosa Luxemburg
bit.ly/dm-lux

In defence of algorithms

Martin Thomas on the virtues of explicitly-defined rules and procedures
bit.ly/d-alg

“Battersea versus the

By Sacha Ismail

In 1921, aged 47, after 16 years in the UK, Shapurji Saklatvala was selected as Labour’s Parliamentary candidate for Battersea North. This came shortly after his very public decision to leave the Independent Labour Party and join the (then revolutionary, pre-Stalinist) Communist Party of Great Britain. He would become both Labour’s first “BAME” MP and one of Britain’s first avowedly revolutionary socialist MPs.

How did these things fit together? Saklatvala had become active in the London Labour Party in 1918, through the ILP (which was affiliated to the Labour Party) and the National Union of Clerks. He was a delegate to several London Labour conferences. In 1919, he successfully moved an amendment to commit the party to public house-building.

Labour was more open then than now, but, until 1918, did not even claim to be socialist. “Even before the war”, noted the Communist International in 1922, Labour “had become quite distinctly a class organisation of the proletariat which was dominated by that section of the middle class whose profession it was to organise trade unions... entirely divorced from the socialist or revolutionary idea”.

Under the impact of the Russian revolution of 1917 and upheavals in Europe, Labour gained many more members, and in 1918 adopted a formally “socialist” aim, in its famous Clause 4 call for “common ownership”. But that never represented a serious intention on the part of most Labour leaders.

Many CP members saw Labour as too conservative to be worth getting involved with, but the CP’s 1920 founding conference voted 100-85 to accept Lenin’s advice to seek formal affiliation to the party.

The British Socialist Party, the largest of the organisations which formed the CP, had been affiliated since 1916. The CP could simply have informed the Labour Party that the BSP had changed its name. Instead, concerned to raise a clear, visible banner for communism, the CP leaders emphasised their party’s separateness and applied for affiliation performatively.

They wrote the National Executive Committee a letter about the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and their right to control future Communist MPs. Communist leader J T Murphy made a speech about taking Labour “by the hand the better to take them by the throat tomorrow”.

So the Labour leaders were able to get away with refusing affiliation, and every Labour conference from 1921 to 1925 rejected CP affiliation by a large majority. At the 1923 conference Saklatvala – an MP for seven months – spoke in favour of affiliation as a delegate from St Pancras Labour Party and Trades Council, but to no avail.

Yet at that conference 38 delegates were individually CP members. In many Labour Parties and Trades Councils, Communists were a significant factor. Many Communists had been members of the BSP or ILP, both affiliated, before 1920.

Communists became elected Labour representatives. In Poplar, two of the thirty council members jailed during the 1921 rates struggle, Minnie and Edgar Lansbury, were CPers, as was A A Watts, who remained free. So was Joe Vaughan, mayor of neighbouring Bethnal Green.

For the 1922 election, four CP members were selected as parliamentary candidates by their local Labour Parties: Joe Vaughan in Bethnal Green SW, Walter Windsor in Bethnal Green NE, Alec Geddes in Greenock, and Saklatvala. John Walton Newbold stood as a Communist in Motherwell with the support of the local Labour and Trades Council. Saklatvala and Newbold were elected.

Later, from about 1925, frustrated by his experience of Labour in Parliament and the party machine’s determination to drive out his comrades, Saklatvala would become an early advocate of the CP turning away from Labour. In 1921-2 he strongly supported a Labour orientation.

When Saklatvala was selected for Battersea North in June 1921, the CP had some active members in Battersea, with influence in the labour movement, but its two branches had collapsed. In March 1921 *The Communist* advertised: “wanted, Communists to form branches in Lewisham, Lambeth and Battersea”. A Battersea branch was re-established at the end of 1921.

Battersea

But the broad Battersea labour movement contained strong elements of revolutionary radicalism, internationalism and anti-imperialism.

In 1892, when Keir Hardie was elected as Independent Labour MP for West Ham South, the other “Labour” candidate elected, John Burns, a leader in the 1889 London docks strike, was in Battersea.

Back then, the Battersea labour movement had a Lib-Lab (or more accurately Lab-Lib) character. The Trades and Labour Council included the Battersea Liberal and Radical Association. It took control of the “vestry” (forerunner of the borough council) the same year it formed, 1894, but via a “Progressive” alliance including both Labour and Liberal representatives, continuing until 1915.

After 1892 Burns quickly moved over to the Liberals. He became the first working-class cabinet minister, but in a Liberal government. In 1906, Battersea Labour was expelled by the Labour Representation Committee for too blatant support for Liberal candidates, but it was moving left, and by 1924 it would be expelled from the party for refusing to expel Communists.

The Progressive administration carried out reforms which put today’s Labour councils to shame, including London’s first health visiting service, free school milk and extensive directly employed council labour for construction projects. Moreover, it developed a policy of mobilising the electorate in meetings, demonstrations and protests, helping to develop widespread political awareness and left-wing sentiment.

Battersea was also an early stronghold of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation. By the war, several socialist

British Empire”

groups were operating in the borough.

A major strand in all that was internationalism, including specifically anti-imperialism. Battersea was a centre of opposition to the Boer War (1899-1902). Many local organisations campaigned against the war, as did the council. George Lansbury addressed a demonstration of five thousand people in Battersea Park. (John Burns opposed the war, but on a basis bound up with virulent antisemitism.)

In 1902 Battersea was the only council which refused to celebrate Edward VII’s coronation, reported by one newspaper with the headline “Battersea versus the British Empire”. In 1907 it refused to fly the Union Jack on Empire Day or give school children time off to celebrate. During the First World War, both the council and most of the labour movement settled on a stance of neither support nor active opposition, but they did defend anti-war activists against repression.

The council passed a resolution protesting the massacre of Russian workers during the 1905 revolution. After 1917 it supported the campaign to block British military intervention in Russia.

A large section of Battersea’s working class was Irish. In 1912 a Liberal councillor who was a prominent Irish nationalist, Thomas Brogan, was elected mayor (council leader). In 1918, when the Liberals held on to the seat, the Battersea North Labour candidate was Charlotte Despard, a pioneering socialist feminist, later a republican activist in Ireland.

In 1913 a Labour councillor of Barbadian and Irish descent, John Archer, succeeded Brogan. Archer was a supporter of the Pan-African Congress, a high-profile campaigner against colonialism. In his victory speech, he told the council: “You have made history tonight... a man of colour has been elected as a mayor of an English borough. That will go forward to the coloured nations of the world and they will look to Battersea...”

Although Saklatvala lived in North London, he was friendly or connected with a number of labour movement and left activists in Battersea through years of activity in the ILP and other organisations. Several people he worked with in the Workers’ Welfare League of India lived in Battersea, including the treasurer of the Labour and Trades Council.

Battersea vs the British Empire: radical walking tour

Meet [2pm, Saturday 19 September](#), outside Clapham Junction station (St John’s Hill), South West London. Come and learn about the history of one of the labour movement’s first London bastions, through the remarkable story of three anti-racist, anti-imperialist, socialist figures: John Archer, Charlotte Despard and Shapurji Saklatvala. □

In April 1921, he had addressed a huge meeting at the town hall in support of the miners. On news of his selection, South Wales miners sent a resolution congratulating the Battersea labour movement on its choice.

Charlotte Despard was a strong supporter of Saklatvala, and the consensus is that John Archer was the prime mover in the campaign to select him. Archer helped broker national Labour support for Saklatvala’s candidacy in 1922 and 1923, and de facto support in 1924 when he was elected as a Communist. He was the election agent all three times.

In July 1921, shortly after Saklatvala’s selection, Archer introduced him to speak on colonial liberation at the Pan-African Congress conference organised in London by W E B DuBois.

Saklatvala’s 1922 election address discussed possible prejudice against him as an Indian (calling Labour “the Party of International Brotherhood”), but in fact that was not a significant factor.

The capitalist parties and the press attempted to drive a wedge with anti-communism, but, at that stage, without success. Saklatvala had been selected by a large majority and Battersea Labour enthusiastically united around him.

CPers were prominent in his election, but emphasised unity with the broad labour movement. The CP’s 1922 manifesto was titled “A United Front Against the Capitalist Enemy”. Saklatvala’s leaflet used the headline “Labour’s United Front”, above statements from a spectrum of labour movement and other figures, including Arthur MacManus on behalf of the CP but also J R Clynes, chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party. It also quoted a resolution from the first All-India Trade Union Congress, held in November 1920.

Saklatvala’s campaign emphasised left-wing elements of Labour’s program: nationalisation, a wealth tax, public housing and welfare, freedom for India, Ireland, and Egypt. He demanded equal suffrage and range of measures to guarantee “equal opportunity” for women. In the 1923 election he would explain that he supported Labour’s manifesto, “with the only criticism that this is the least that one can demand under the present conditions of life all over the world”.

In 1918 the Liberal candidate won Battersea North with 66.6%. In 1922, there were two rival Liberal candidates; but bourgeois forces united around the “National Liberal”, Henry Hogbin, who in 1923 would win the seat back from Saklatvala for one year. The Tories also mobilised in support of Hogbin.

Although the Tories won the election, Labour’s vote share rose from 20.8% to 29.7%, and Battersea North’s militant, mass-mobilising campaign elected Saklatvala with 50.5%. That night thousands thronged Battersea’s streets to celebrate the election of their first independent Labour MP for thirty years. □

• More on Saklatvala’s story in [last week’s Solidarity](#) and in coming issues.

Unison: break from “plan to lose”!

By a Unison member

Local government members in the big public-services Union Unison have voted two to one (66%) in favour of the 2020-21 pay award, in a ballot closing 11 August. The union's national joint council committee accepted the offer from employers of 2.75%, though, it said, “it fell far short of the 10% claim and did not properly reward key workers for their exceptional contributions throughout the pandemic”.

The pay award fell even further short of the 22% our union had explained we have lost over the last ten years.

We are one of the unions representing care workers, school support staff, early years workers, street cleaners, library staff, and more many who have worked during the crisis in difficult circumstances to make sure the vulnerable, older people, and younger people, don't suffer.

Surely now is an opportunity to strike a blow against this government. At least to test the anger of the public over the tragedy of poverty pay in care, and cuts in public health and care services and other local services.

But the union campaign was a poorly worded offer, no recommendation to reject. Outgoing general secretary Dave Prentis, and all the other senior staff, the assistant general secretaries leading on local government or health or education who get wheeled out to make angry speeches against the government each year at Unison conference, will say “it's not us”. It's the NEC [National Executive Committee], the elected representatives. And the NEC will say: “Oh no, it's the Service Group committees”.

Let's be clear. If Prentis or his assistant general secretaries had wanted a fight on pay, job cuts or conditions any time over the last 20 years, they could have made it happen. The committees have been mainly and solidly loyal to the union hierarchy. In fact loyalty is how you get nominated and elected in the overwhelmingly uncontested elections.

The rules on getting nominations and on branch cooperation on campaigning have undermined opposition or even scrutiny. To get on those committees or to work on them you need time, resources, and the backing of Unison staff regionally and nationally. To be honest, it's hard and rare for a rank and file activist who isn't on full release from their regular work to union duties (as a branch secretary or chair) to get on those committees.

There are glimmers of hope both on local government pay and on care-worker organising. The North West region is bucking the trend. It looks likely that the region that has won most rights for care workers will also have

delivered the biggest reject vote for the pay offer.

And there is a growing, exciting pay campaign in the NHS. The campaign is demanding 15% for all NHS workers. This is being built from grassroots organisation across unions in hospitals, and it is critical of the unions' handling of pay campaigns.

We need an industrial strategy for sectors buckling under cuts. General Secretary candidates must present a charter for union democracy that allows us to rebuild branches and connect activists.

To build a movement capable of winning for our members we need serious, well-organised rank-and-file networks that can build support for militant action and organise independently of union officialdom

We need the right for workers to ballot for action unimpeded by their region or industrial action committee (the anti-union laws make it hard enough without our own union making it harder).

We want regions reorganised so they support rather than control branches.

We want the right of branches to campaign independently of regional and national structures and to link up to build cross-branch campaigns and networks

Branches should control their Labour Link budgets and delegates, and decide which candidates Unison supports.

We want support for the struggles of those union members who face specific oppressions, including women, black people, LGBT people, and disabled people. □



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- [The Black Jacobins: the Haitian revolution against slavery](#), with Dan Davison
- [Workers against slavery](#): the US Civil War, the First International and the British working class
- [Solidarity 558](#), [part 1](#) and [part 2](#)

See workersliberty.org/audio for links to the audio version. All recent episodes can be found through most podcast providers: search “Workers' Liberty” or “Solidarity & More”. More information on subscribing and using podcasts at [the URL above](#). □

“Anti-racist resources

We have compiled various anti-racist resources to learn about anti-racist movements, and arm yourself with ideas to beat back racism: readings and pamphlets, video and audio.

See workersliberty.org/anti-racist-resources □

“Revolution Betrayed” Zoom study group

Trotsky's book is the classic starting point for discussing: what went wrong after the Russian revolution? What explains Stalinism? A Zoom study group, Thursdays 8pm, starting 10 September. Register: bit.ly/sg-rb – Zoomlink: bit.ly/z-rb □

Putin's poisoners strike again

By **Barrie Hardy**

The great revolutionary Leon Trotsky was assassinated on 21 August 1940 by an agent of the Stalinist regime. Almost to the day, 80 years later came an attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny, a leading anti corruption activist and critic of Putin.

The intended method of dispatch these days is not an ice pick or a gun, but some form of poison. The intention of the exercise remains the same though – elimination of all opposition to a corrupt police-state regime.

Although property relations have undergone change since the fall of the USSR thirty years ago and the country purports to be some form of "authoritarian democracy", it is largely run by Stalin's heirs. Leading positions in the state and industry are occupied by former KGB men who steal from the national economy to enrich themselves. This is often done in conjunction with members of organised crime groups, the symbiosis effectively creating a "mafia state".

Attempts to turn Russia into some kind of western parliamentary democracy began to unravel when Putin became president in 1999. Independent media outlets have been effectively eliminated. Anti-government demonstrations are severely repressed by the police. Opposition candidates are barred from standing in elections, harassed and jailed.

And political opponents are murdered. Boris Nemstov, a former deputy prime minister and subsequently leader of massive street rallies against corrupt elections, was gunned down in 2015 as he crossed a bridge in full view of the Kremlin. Lawyer Sergei Magnitsky uncovered a massive tax fraud involving high ups in the police and was murdered in prison by their underlings.

London proved no safe haven for Alexander Litvinenko, whose attacks on so called security services for involvement in apartment bombings that were used to justify war in Chechnya made him a target, poisoned in his case with polonium.

The poisoning of Navalny, not the first attempt on his life, happened while he'd been campaigning in Siberia where dissatisfaction with Putin's rule has resulted significant protests in the city of Khararovsk calling for Putin to resign, "Down with the Tsar!" being one of the protesters' slogans.

Hit list

Though Navalny has been on the hit list for a long time, he may have been targeted now because of the unrest in neighbouring Belarus. The Kremlin dread the colour revolutions in neighbouring former Soviet republics – orange in Ukraine and rose in Georgia – in case their example is followed in Russia itself, with a popular revolution overthrowing its own corrupt regime. Belarus is even closer to home, which is why the Kremlin is encouraging the dictator there, Alexander Lukashenko, to tough out the mass protests against his rigged election.

Putin of course conducted his own travesty of democracy last July with his referendum to change the constitution which effectively made him president for life. Many voters who turned up at polling stations were surprised to learn that they'd already voted.

The Putin regime relies for its survival nowadays exclusively on repression and fear. On the surface it appears secure, but the fact that so many of its members have squirrelled their black money abroad would indicate they don't have much faith in the future of the country whose assets they've pillaged.

The left must to support the struggle for democratic rights and free elections in Russia and build a movement to overthrow its kleptocratic ruling class. □

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Slavery was abolished in the USA in 1865 after a four year Civil War. Workers in Britain had organised mass protests against slavery and against ruling-class military support of slave-owners. This struggle revived the labour movement and its fight for votes, and aided the birth of Marx's "First International".

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If you want to buy *Solidarity* on the streets, or at a protest, via contactless payment, for virus-precaution reasons, or just because you rarely carry cash, now we can help. Workers' Liberty activists are getting iZettle card-readers to take payments. They cost £29 upfront at bit.ly/i-ze, but greatly increase sales. □



“A thank you for all your hard work”



Diary of an engineer

By Emma Rickman

For this entry, I'm going to quote the letter I received this week – I hope you find it as entertaining as I did. A caveat: compared to millions of people my working conditions and pay during the pandemic have been extremely good. I consider myself very lucky not to be self-employed, unemployed, shielding, or forced to work while sick, among many other abuses and insults that have been inflicted on our class. This corporate letter is absurd, but it is at least a pretence at courtesy and recognition.

“Dear...

“In recent months the teamwork and commitment you have shown towards Veolia's mission of resourcing the world has made me incredibly proud... Now, we want to say thank you.

Extra Half Day Leave

“The Executive Committee and I would like to provide you with an extra half day's leave to use by the end of December this year. Depending on the government guidance where you live, you may want to spend this time with family and friends, or doing those jobs around the house you've put off [*ha!*] You may even fancy a well-deserved trip out – it's entirely up to you! [*Well, thank you so much...*]

“To keep things simple, we're not adding this half day to your annual leave quota. All you need to do is agree a suitable half day with your line manager that works best for you in your business area. [*We have to take the leave when our line manager tells us to, and there is no record of it in the HR system.*]

Flu Jab

“The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted everyone's awareness of staying healthy [????!!!!] Although it doesn't yet fight coronavirus, an annual flu jab can help maintain your immune system. So, if you want the flu jab, and you

Using the window

A modest increase to £7,104 this week means we are still on track to hit our fund-appeal target of £10,000 by 21-22 November. With some extra fundraising, and using the limited time we have before the nights draw in and a possible Covid resurgence, we can even beat it. Workers' Liberty local organisers met online 30 August to discuss how best to use the current window for activity to promote socialist ideas. Why not take out a [subscription](#) and join us on the streets and at work in promoting “Third Camp” socialist politics? workersliberty.org/donate □

are not eligible for it through the NHS, you can reclaim your annual cost (up to £15)... It is important to note that the flu jab might not be appropriate for everyone...

Veolia Share Scheme

“In addition, any employee who joined us on or before August 2020 will be eligible to buy Veolia shares this September [*i.e.: please give us back as much of your wages as you can afford*].

“We've been through a lot over the past few months, but I am confident that with your commitment, we will continue to be successful in the UK, Ireland and globally too.

Yours Sincerely,

Executive Vice-President, Veolia UK and Ireland” □

- Emma Rickman is an engineering apprentice at a Combined Heat and Power Plant.

Deliveroo: more action

By Michael Elms

On Wednesday 26 August, Deliveroo couriers continued their organising drive in Sheffield by organising a boycott of the Mr Miyagi sushi restaurant. Mr Miyagi had become a byword for disrespect among drivers in Sheffield. They would use the Deliveroo app to oblige drivers to turn up at the restaurant long before the food was prepared. Drivers had to wait a long time for food orders – time for which they were not paid – and run the risk of getting parking tickets, or be subject to complaints from impatient customers.

Mr Miyagi's owner received a letter from the union outlining these concerns, but failed to respond – until activists from Workers' Liberty and our friends in the local Labour Party turned up to leaflet and support drivers outside his restaurant on the morning of the boycott. Then, he came out and behaved aggressively, getting in people's faces and asking one socialist if he wanted “a fucking smack”.

But the man's arrogance was not rewarded. The boycott was solid.

Several drivers joined the union on the spot, and reports tell us that service at Mr Miyagi has improved. Watch this space for more developments. □

Contact us

 [020 7394 8923](tel:02073948923)

 solidarity@workersliberty.org

 Write to: 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

 Production team: Cathy Nugent, Martin Thomas (editor), Sacha Ismail, Simon Nelson, Zack Muddle

Action on jobs and re-opening



John Moloney

Strikes to resist job cuts by our members at Tate galleries are continuing. I attended picket lines on 28 and 29 August. Tate bosses have now identified the workers whose jobs they intend to cut, cruelly doing so by sending out emails late at night on Friday 28th.

Meanwhile, Tate is advertising for new jobs and is still recruiting staff! We're therefore demanding that the workers facing redundancy be reallocated to the positions for which Tate is now recruiting.

We'll begin a ballot of our members at London's Southbank Centre, also over job cuts, on 1 September. Bosses there have extended the consultation period on job cuts by a week. The Hayward Gallery at the Southbank has recently reopened, so we're pushing for safety measures to be put in place to allow the rest of the Southbank Centre to safely reopen as well.

We're also struggling over the terms of reopening at the British Museum, where we're not satisfied that management have adequate safety measures be put in place. In particular, cleaners will have to clean in very cramped areas without adequate ventilation.

In the Department for Work and Pensions, we're working to get the maximum turnout in our consultative ballot [17 Aug to 7 Sep] for industrial action on extended opening hours. That's highly likely to develop into a formal dispute and official ballot.

The union recently condemned the Home Office's release of an anti-migrant video trumpeting its plans to increase deportations. PCS's policy is for free movement; as a union organising workers in various aspects of the immigration system, we need to think about how we can use our position to fight for that policy. □

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

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Tube: an alternative to cuts

From *Tubeworker*

As well as a loud "no" to cuts proposed by the ongoing KPMG-led audit of Transport for London's finances, Tube workers and our unions also need to spell out our "yes". We're unlikely to get that kind of vision from the "independent review" [London Mayor] Sadiq Khan has commissioned to run in parallel.

RMT has produced its own submission to the TfL review, making the case for public funding, public ownership, increased staffing levels, and the in-housing of all services. It's a useful contribution to discussion, but needs to be connected to an active campaign with roots in workplaces. It also sets its sights far too low in proposing that TfL be funded by "government borrowing", rather than advocating increased taxes on the rich.

Public transport is a necessary service, that should be socially provided. Prior to the pandemic, 72% of TfL's income came from fare revenue, compared to just 38% for the New York Subway and Paris Metro. Part of the Paris Metro's funding comes from a ring-fenced payroll tax on businesses and corporations that benefit from its operation. There's no reason why similar models couldn't work here.

It will take sustained political and industrial campaigning to force these concessions from government, which we can't conjure up at will. But we must turn our "defensive" battle against whatever cuts the KPMG-led audit recommends into an "offensive" fight for our own vision.

Step one is to stake out a clear position: fight every single cut, resist any sell-off. Drivers' union Aslef has been quickest out of the traps, balloting its members from 26 August to 17 September. Their dispute is around the [mild] demand that LU abides by existing agreements and the "machinery of negotiation". But the approach of preparing for industrial action pre-emptively, rather than waiting for the bosses' assault and trying to it them off is the right one. RMT, TSSA, and Unite should launch their own ballots.

Some argue that it'd be more effective to wait until the KPMG audit presents its final report in October. But delaying just gives the employer, and the accountants conducting the review, time to get their ducks in a row. Getting out in front of whatever they propose will give us the best possible chance of resisting it.

There are significant challenges to building for, and taking, industrial action in the current context of the ongoing pandemic and profound economic uncertainty.

The campaign to get the vote out in industrial action ballots needs to be led from the workplace. And the discussion about what action to take, and when, also needs to be bottom-up, based on democratic decisions taken by union branches.

We've kept London moving during a global pandemic. We must not accept that our reward for that is job cuts and attacks on our terms and conditions. Let's fight back. □

• RMT report: bit.ly/future-pubtrans

Solidarity



For a workers' government

Free to move, free to stay, free to live!

By Daniel Randall

A new start towards redoubling work by the pro-free-movement left was made at a protest at the Home Office on Wednesday 19 August, bringing together a wide range of socialist groups and migrants' rights campaigns, including Labour Campaign for Free Movement, Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants, Southall Black Sisters, Mutiny, Socialist Resistance, Red Flag, RS21, Momentum Internationalists, Workers' Liberty, and others.

A follow-up meeting called by the initiators of that protest on 29 August discussed future plans, including, should the pandemic conditions permit it, a national action for migrants' solidarity, raising explicitly pro-free-movement demands. *Solidarity* will carry further reports on that initiative as it develops.

Mercy Baguma, a Ugandan asylum seeker who was found dead in her home in Glasgow on 25 August, was murdered by Britain's savagely inhumane immigration laws.

After Mercy's limited leave to remain expired, she was prevented from working, forcing her to rely on donations from charities. Her one-year-old son, who was found next to her, was suffering from malnourishment.

Asylum seekers have no right to work in Britain. Certain immigration statuses also have "No Recourse to Public Funds" conditions attached to them, meaning migrants are eligible for almost no state support.

Mercy's death, and her son's malnourishment, are the human consequences of a policy consensus that has dominated modern British politics, which sees migrants and immigration as problems to be solved, something to be constrained.

Two days after Mercy's death, the Home Office released a video trumpeting its anti-migrant perspective. It showed a graphic of planes leaving Britain for the continent, with the subtitle "we are working to remove migrants with no right to remain in the UK." The video said "current regulations are rigid and open to abuse", because they "allow activist lawyers to delay and disrupt returns".

"Returns" here means deportation flights, like the one that was due to remove 23 migrants who'd entered Britain by crossing the Channel to Spain on 28 August. Fortunately, "activist lawyers" were able to intervene, and the flight was stopped.

A statement from the PCS union, which organises Home Office staff, called the video, which has since been withdrawn, "morally repugnant", and drew com-

parisons between the graphics and the famous Dad's Army title sequences, which featured Union Jack arrows spearing out of Britain to push back "invading" arrows emblazoned with the Nazi swastika.

The policy of the state gives legitimacy to, and emboldens, "street level" intimidation of, and violence towards, immigrants. On 28 August, a video circulated on social media showing supporters of the far-right Britain First group marching through a hotel in Bromsgrove, near Birmingham, which is currently accommodating some asylum seekers, knocking on hotel room doors and interrogating the occupants. What will the Tories say against these fascists – what can they say? – when they take the logical next step of bundling asylum seekers and migrants into vans and carrying out some "activist deportations" to shortcut around the "rigid" system that gives "activist lawyers" too many opportunities to obstruct?

This atmosphere makes it all the more urgent that the left and the labour movement reinvigorates and redoubles anti-fascist, anti-racist, and migrants' rights campaigning. This must take the form both of practical solidarity with migrants attempting to navigate Britain's harsh border regime, and direct action to assert bold, radical demands: free movement for all migrants and asylum seekers, the abolition of "No Recourse to Public Funds" laws, an end to all deportations, and the closure of all detention centres. Migrants must be free to move, free to stay, free to work, and free to live.

This fight must be taken up inside the labour movement, including the Labour Party, too much of which is still in the grip of protectionist, nationalist ideas that sees migrant workers as a threat. □

- Labour Campaign for Free Movement: labourfreemovement.org

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