

# Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

## BACK NHS WORKERS TO WIN

# 15%



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Pic: Norwich, 8 August 2020.  
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# Back NHS workers to win 15%

6699 Editorial

Nursing Times reports that the NHS Pay Review Body's recommendation on NHS workers, is due "sometime this month" (June), despite delay.

The PRB was originally supposed to report in May. The Tory government has already said in its evidence to the PRB that 1% is all that is "affordable" – it uses the word 16 times in its submission – and it is the government that makes the final decision.

The system of supposedly independent pay review bodies in the public sector – replacing actual collective bargaining between unions and employers – is a farce, designed to shift power further from workers to employers. The labour movement must rally round the Fire Brigades Union's fight to block the imposition of a pay review body in the fire service.

Holly Turner of NHS Workers Say No tells *Solidarity* that it will take "sustained [strike] action" to significantly shift the government. The fight to get that action steps up with the NHS workers' protests across the country on 3 July.

Unison's output remains vague on what it is actually demanding; on paper it is calling for £2,000 for every worker, but it endorsed a lower offer, 4%, in



Scotland. On 23 June it is hosting a public event whose keynote speaker is Shadow Health Secretary Jon Ashworth, who is advocating only a 2.1% rise.

The traditionally very conservative and strike-averse RCN is publicly arguing for its demand of 12.5%, won its members to reject the Scottish offer, and has set up a £350 million strike fund.

We must strengthen and support

health workers' efforts, like NHS Workers Say No and Nurses United, to organise across unions and independently of all the union leaderships.

What health workers have done and suffered during the pandemic dramatises their need for a substantial pay rise. But the issues are longer-running.

## Pay cuts

Most NHS workers have suffered deep real-terms pay cuts over the last decade, in many cases 20% or more. The demand of 15% or £3,000, whichever is higher, would simply begin to restore some of this loss. NHS Workers Say No is also rightly calling for outsourced workers not on mainstream NHS terms and conditions to be brought onto them.

A pay rise of this order is needed for the morale of health workers and their ability to provide decent services; for retention and recruitment of staff in an NHS with an exhausted and demoralised workforce, and up to 100,000 vacancies; for making a better-paid workforce less appealing to grasping private contractors; and for workers' organised strength to defend and bolster the health service in battles to come.

In fact all workers, not just NHS workers, "deserve" a big pay rise – particular at a time when the wealth of the super-rich has spiralled.

15% or £3,000 for everyone working

in the NHS would cost about £5bn a year. During the pandemic UK billionaires have increased their wealth by over £100bn, not including what is in their personal bank accounts (to say nothing of the more numerous lesser super-rich).

We should draw inspiration and lessons from health workers and campaigners in other countries. In France, after large strikes and protests by health workers last year, the right-wing Macron government conceded €8bn (£7.2bn) for pay increases, alongside many billions in wider health spending.

We must organise and mobilise in support of the NHS workers' fight, on the streets, in our workplaces, in our trade unions and in the Labour Party. Demonstrate on 3 July! □

## Action on 3 July

Protests about the NHS have been called all across the country for 3 July. Check out action in your area at [bit.ly/nhs-3j](https://bit.ly/nhs-3j). In London protests include 10am at the Department of Health, 39 Victoria St, SW1H 0EU; 11am at St Thomas's Hospital (Westminster Bridge), 2pm at Lewisham Hospital, and 1pm at St Pancras Gardens. □

# Regroup the left to revive Labour

6699 Editorial

Labour did very badly in the 17 June Chesham and Amersham by-election – down from 12.9% to 1.6%, 622 votes, about the same as the number of Labour members in the constituency.

There is precedent. The 2016 by-election in Richmond Park, South West London was also won by the Lib Dems on a huge swing from the Tories, and Labour's share fell from 12.3% to 3.6%.

The difference is that in 2016-7 there was a sizeable and mobilised Labour left, which is now much more demobilised. Labour did badly in the polls (up to 20% behind) right up until the Tories called the election in mid-2017, and the Lib-Dems polled relatively well in the same period. Then

Labour pulled together with a relatively hard-hitting tax the rich, reverse-the-cuts manifesto, got a sizeable number of campaigners onto the doorsteps, and surged. In the 2017 general election, the Labour vote in Richmond Park recovered from the by-election, though not to its 2015 level. Across the country the Labour vote increased substantially from 2015 and the Tories lost their majority.

## Triangulating

The Labour vote can surge again, but only through an active effort to convince voters, not by endless triangulating.

By pandering to socially regressive, nationalistic views while saying little of substance about living standards, workers' rights and social provision – the Hartlepool campaign with its obsessive English-flag-waving was a startling example of this approach

– Keir Starmer's leadership is dissipating the left-wing core of Labour's 2019 support, and especially putting off younger voters. That is interacting with wider and longer-term trends which erode and fragment Labour's past "coalition" of supporters.

Starmer's leadership continues to sap Labour's campaigning capacity by attacking party democracy, including by having the machine intervene in local Labour Parties to orchestrate coups *against the left* and suspending members on often unclear charges with little process.

On 17 June the leadership attempted yet another relaunch, with a "policy review" under the title "Stronger Together: A Better Future for Britain". Subtitle: "Labour launches roadmap to bring Britain together with policies for the post-Covid age". The tilt is still "pro-business". On 21 June,

again, shadow Business Secretary Ed Miliband denounced the Tories, not over pay, cuts, jobs, but on the grounds that its £140 billion pandemic support for business has not been enough. "Businesses have done right by our country during this crisis and the government must do right by them".

## Roadmap

On [LabourList](https://labourlist.org) party chair Anneliese Dodds tried to reassure members that the "roadmap [will work] with existing party structures and democratic processes". The structure she cites is the stitched-up, policy-diluting National Policy Forum.

Labour already has a raft of policies debated and voted for at its conferences. The next Labour conference is in only three months away (25-29 September, Brighton). The left and labour movement should insist conference decides the policies – and more gener-

ally use the conference to call Starmer to heel.

The Labour left group Momentum has launched a "re-founding", too filtered and top-down in our view ([bit.ly/re-mom](https://bit.ly/re-mom)). But Momentum members have voted for eight left-wing motions to promote for submission to the conference. Many Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) will decide motions in July, and we would highlight a motion pushed by Momentum Internationalists, "[Build back fairer: attack poverty and inequality](https://bit.ly/build-back-fairer)", a wide-ranging program of demands for restoring and expanding social provision by taking wealth from the rich.

We should counterpose that program to the pallid stuff likely to emerge from Anneliese Dodds' policy review and build support for it throughout the labour movement and society. □

# Why Labour may lose Batley and Spen

By Luke Hardy

On 1 July we will see a crucial by-election for Labour in Batley and Spen, coming soon after Labour lost the Hartlepool by-election and did poorly in the May council elections.

The by-election is happening because the sitting Labour MP, Tracy Brabin, won the West Yorkshire mayoral election.

At the last election Labour won with 42% of the vote, and a narrow-ish majority of 3,000-odd the Tories. But right-wing pro-Brexit parties – the Tories, the Brexit Party and the Heavy Wollen District Independents – won over 50% of the vote between them.

The Heavy Woollen District independents grew out of the local UKIP mixing localism with right-wing hot-button issues about veterans and against immigration. In 2019 their candidate Paul Halloran got 12% of the vote.

There is an anti-Asian tinge to some of the HWDI's campaigning, with specifically anti-Muslim dog-whistles, for example on halal meat in school. Neither the Brexit Party nor HWDI are standing this time.

The "Red Wall" stereotype of northern seats tends to flatten real differences. Batley and Spen is different from Hartlepool in at least two important ways.

It is a much more multi-racial constituency than Hartlepool. Batley East Ward has a 54% Asian population, Batley West 33%. Heckmondwike also has an Asian community. Much of the rest



Anne Marie Waters and "Tommy Robinson" launching "For Britain"

of the Spen valley is overwhelmingly white.

In the period running up to 2010 the BNP won two council seats in Heckmondwike and did well in some other areas of the constituency. There was a big mobilisation by the Labour movement behind campaigns against the BNP in which Jo Cox and her sister Kim Leadbeater, Labour's candidate this time round, were active. The BNP were defeated, but then in 2016 Jo Cox, by then MP for Batley and Spen was murdered by a far right terrorist.

## School protests

Tensions in the local area have been heightened recently around [Batley Grammar School](#). Protests started in March after cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed were shown during a discussion on blasphemy. Elements of the Islamist right seized on the situation, and the teacher received death threats. The teacher was suspended but has since been reinstated.

The majority of local people from a Muslim background opposed the death threats, and there have been attempts made locally to calm the ten-

sions. But there are five candidates standing who could be described as far right and are seeking to exploit the tensions.

Tommy Robinson, former leader of the English Defence League (EDL), is coming on 26 June to campaign for Anne Marie Waters' "For Britain" movement. It's unlikely "For Britain" will win many votes from the Tories.

Labour's candidate Kim Leadbeater is popular locally.

Labour's campaign has been focused around very local issues and has noticeably not centred Keir Starmer or the party's national profile. Labour's vote appears to be holding up in many areas of the constituency, but that will not be enough if the Tories manage to Hoover up the votes that would have gone to the HWDI and the Brexit Party.

## Galloway

Labour's troubles have been made worse by George Galloway entering the election race. Galloway is standing for the Workers' Party, a lash-up between his personal following and the ultra-Stalinist and nationalist Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist). Both of them supported the Brexit Party in the last European Election and out of that came this marriage of convenience.

Galloway has spent much of the last few years cultivating a "Red-Brown" front and links with elements of the hard right. Such as a relationship with Nigel Farage and Steve Bannon. This time he is standing as a self-proclaimed champion of the Muslim community

and opportunistically attacking Labour sometimes from the left. Galloway won in 2012 in neighbouring Bradford East.

Keir Starmer has not taken on anti-Muslim racism inside the Labour Party or been vigorous in attacking the Tories' Islamophobia. He shifted Labour's position on Kashmir to a more pro-Indian slant just as Modi's troops put Indian occupied Kashmir under martial law and overthrew the limited self-government that did exist.

Galloway has misrepresented Labour, and Kim Leadbeater has felt forced to put out a letter to constituents making clear her support for Palestinian rights and statehood.

There are reports of Galloway supporters pushing antisemitic and homophobic rumours and conspiracy theories about Kim Leadbeater, Keir Starmer, and Labour in general. It is wrong to suggest these opinions characterise anything but a fringe of the Muslim voters alienated from Labour.

Most of the alienation is based on the party's failure to stand up for its working-class Muslim voters at a time when they are the target of a culture war by the Government and right-wing press.

Even with all the valid criticisms of Starmer, it's important for socialists and trade unionists to campaign for a Labour vote, against the nationalist-authoritarian Tories with their attacks on basic democratic freedoms, the far right seeking to sow racial division in the area, and George Galloway's narcissistic Red-Brown nationalist politics.

If Labour does lose the election, much of the blame should be put squarely on Keir Starmer and the right-wing direction he has taken the party in. □

## How can there be "surplus" vaccines?



By Zack Muddle

In mid-June, state officials in Michigan warned of over half a million doses of Covid-19 vaccines that were set to expire between then and early August. Around the same time, an Ohio governor warned of 200,000 vaccines due to expire on 23 June. This problem likely faces every state, with over ten million doses of J&J delivered but not administered across the country. An extension to J&J's shelf-life by the USA's FDA only provides temporary respite.

At a time when fewer than 1% of people in low income

countries have received at least one dose, these figures in themselves provide a sharp indictment of vaccine nationalism. And of more.

That states have more vaccines than they can manage to roll out shows not only a greedy hoarding. Nor just the toxic influence of irrationalist vaccine-scepticism. It also underscores the downsides to a disintegrated, disorganised, and privatised healthcare system in the USA's vaccine roll out.

Contrast Wales' job successes. The Welsh first minister cited their success relative to the rest of the UK to the small "supply buffer", and the more centralised NHS. Vaccines aren't an ideal cargo, they need a willing but not yet fully

vaccinated human's arm, providing some barriers to aspirations of a just-in-time supply chain. Nonetheless, the aspiration is worthy – Covid vaccines should go into people, not sit in fridges – but requires co-ordination and integration.

Vaccine nationalism itself also cuts against smooth distribution, stoking fears that supplies may be less reliable than promised, so encouraging inflated supply buffers.

The total vaccines available globally are not a fixed quantity: Big Pharma and their intellectual property should be requisitioned to ramp up production. But vaccines should be distributed where they are needed, not stockpiled and left to perish. □

## Upcoming meetings

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

**Sunday 27 June, 12pm:** Socialist Feminist Reading Group –

*Transgender Marxism*, by Jules J. Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke

**Sunday 27 June, from 2pm:** Free our Unions/Earthstrike online rally, from 2pm

**Tuesday 29 June, 6.30pm:** FOU and FBU public meeting – 1871 and the fight to free our unions today

**Wednesday 30 June, 6.30-8pm:** How to get justice for the NHS?

**Monday 5 July, 7.30-9pm:** What kind of unions do we need?

**Thursday 8 July, 6.30-9.30pm:** Film Showing of *Dear Comrades!*

**Friday 9 July, 6-8pm:** Battersea vs the British Empire walking tour

**Weekend of 10-11 July:** Ideas for Freedom 2021 festival of socialist ideas. Online or in person – buy tickets now!

**Saturday 24 July, 12-1:30pm:** Socialist environmental study group – Should we advocate "degrowth"?

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

# Skwawkbox, Beckett, and Waterloo



**Antidoto**

By Dale Street

One of the many benefits of the 18 June decision by Howard Beckett to withdraw from the Unite General Secretary contest was that it exposed – yet again – the abyss which separates the “investigative journalism” of the [Skwawkbox](#) website from mundane reality.

Prior to being appointed Head of Unite’s Legal Department in 2012, Beckett had no record of trade union or Labour Party activism. Beckett’s main feat since 2012 has been to squander millions of pounds of members’ dues on no-hope legal cases.

Not so the Skwawkbox Beckett.

The latter had “taken on the Establishment fearlessly.” He combines “a lawyer’s skills and a fighter’s mindset.” He was the only candidate with “courage, real vision and fire,” and “the only one in the contest who wants to challenge the status quo.”

His “take no sh\*t and no prisoners’ approach is exactly what Unite and the whole labour movement needs.”

When Beckett competed with Steve Turner last summer for the endorsement of the United Left (a Broad Left grouping in Unite) as its candidate, Skwawkbox predicted victory for Beck-

ett. In the event, Beckett lost (albeit narrowly).

Beckett announced a month later that he would be standing for election for General Secretary anyway.

## Split left?

Skwawkbox welcomed his decision and dismissed the possibility that three left candidates – Sharon Graham had also announced her intention to stand – would provide the right-wing Gerard Coyne with a chance of winning:

“Unite members are not likely to face a ‘split left vote’ scenario. Coyne is extremely unlikely to be able to meet the new qualification threshold. If Coyne wants to run again, he must obtain nominations from 5% of branches – 150 branches.”

The website’s faithful followers were outraged when Skwawkbox reported that Turner was being backed by Jon Lansman, although their ire was directed more at Lansman than at Turner:

“Why do you think the Labour right is backing Turner, including that Zionist snake Lansman? ... What can you expect from a kapo?” (Kapos were prisoners who helped run Nazi concentration camps.)

Nominations closed in early June. Contrary to the assurances of Skwawkbox, Coyne was on the ballot paper. Contrary to the Skwawkbox narrative that Beckett’s “storming campaign” was crushing all opposition, Beckett secured 328 nominations – compared

with 349 for Graham and 525 for Turner.

Skwawkbox now ramped up its pro-Beckett campaign to a new level. While Graham scarcely received a passing mention, the website directed its fire at Turner and contrasted his right-wing credentials with Beckett’s super-militancy, super-charisma and super-integrity.

Comments posted by Skwawkbox followers amplified this line of attack:

“Turner Coyne Graham will crush the welfare of *all* workers if they get their grubby hands on the Unite leadership. Graham Coyne Turner will collaborate with the entryist parasites Mandelson, Blair, Starmer, Evans to destroy true Labour.”

## Waterloo anniversary

And then came Friday 18 June 2021.

Not just another anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo.

More of a veritable Waterloo for the labour movement itself.

Not just the collapse of another Skwawkbox prediction.

More of a complete disintegration of Skwawkbox “investigative journalism” itself.

Beckett announced that he was withdrawing from the General Secretary contest. And not only that. He was calling on his supporters to vote for Steve Turner, the Lansman-backed, Dromey-backed, Akehurst-backed, Owen-Jones-backed tool of “Starmer, the Zionist racist” and of the forces of evil

in general. Skwawkbox briefly reported Beckett’s withdrawal. Unfortunately, the “investigative journalism” of Skwawkbox was not investigative enough to uncover the deal demanded by their man of principle for withdrawing: Overall responsibility for the Scottish, Welsh and Irish regions of Unite. Graham said “no”. Turner said “yes”.

Some contributors to the comments sections of Skwawkbox articles have been unkind enough to argue that the website’s enthusiasm for Beckett was not a case of radical journalism gone wrong but simply one of mercenary calculation:

“Skwawkbox has a (cronyist) excuse for being an uncritical PR megaphone for Beckett. He bailed out Steve (Walker) (who runs the website) over that libel case (involving ex-MP Anna Turley).”

“Beckett helped out Steve by organising Unite funding of huge libel case costs incurred by Skwawkbox. In return, Skwawkbox has been an uncritical megaphone for Beckett – passing on sundry smears against Turner, and constantly bigging up Beckett’s support. It’s pathetic ‘left’ journalism. Just another example of that old ‘favours given for favours done’ tradition of politics.”

Scope here perhaps for a real piece of investigative journalism? □

• Abridged. More: [bit.ly/sbox-b](https://bit.ly/sbox-b)

# Materialism and neuroscience reductionism



**Letter**

John Cunningham’s review of *The Idea of the Brain in Solidarity* 597 asks “Is there a Marxist analysis of the Brain?” Although John answers “probably not”, we need to be much clearer.

Marxism is not a-theory-of-everything but a rigorous (scientific, if you like) understanding of human society, its history and progress, conjoined with the value-driven (non-scientific) wish for a complete human existence in an imminent fair and free society. As such Marxism has something to say about scientific method. Certainly, Marxists have much to say on the impact of class society, gender and racial inequality on the practice of science, but in the

end they are arguing not for a different kind of science, just good science.

John’s main concern is for science to be “materialist” and that our understanding of the brain must proceed from the bottom up, from the atomistic level of neurobiology. He states “Everything in the head is material”, appearing to mean human behaviour has to be understood in terms of neurobiology. This is in contrast to those who study behaviour, ideas, motivations and so on (Freud, Pavlov) who, John implies, are not materialists.

This is a crude materialism, where anything other than deterministic and mechanical relations is ruled out of court. The psychodynamic approach of Freud is rejected along with the (quite separate) behavioural school (of which Pavlov was an early exponent). All psychology that starts with the

study of observable behaviour (or worse, the ideas, feelings or mental structures on which it is based) is rejected.

## Shackles

One (and only one) problem with this is that it shackles the study of human behaviour. The human brain is the most complex entity human science has studied. We do not, and may never, understand how the physical operation of the brain becomes behaviour, let alone complex social interactions. More importantly, John attempts to reduce the social-psychological to only a biological level, which even in theory is wrong.

This is not to say we should be uncritical of current psychology. Freud has been rightly criticised for reflecting the gender and sexual mores of the society in which he worked. And while his work

was based on observation, there is a strong case that the abstractions he made were non-scientific, subjective and untestable.

Much modern psychology tends towards the behavioural school, entirely the opposite of the psychodynamic. It contains no speculation about the inner workings of the mind, which is sometimes conceptualised as an unknowable black box. Its starting (and often end) point is the relationship between inputs (stimuli) and outputs (behaviours) without any theorising about the brain’s internal

workings (feelings, ideas, motivations). The problem with such an approach is that it reduces the science of the mind to statistical correlations between stimuli and behaviours in an attempt to be science, too positivist an approach. Broader theorising tends to be squeezed out.

The answer to this is for psychology to be integrated into the broader more inclusive study of society, not the reductionism based on neurobiology that John expounds. □

Matt Cooper,  
London

## Second hand books!

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



# Barbarossa and the Left after 80 years



**Eric Lee**

By Eric Lee

This week marks the eightieth anniversary of the Nazi German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. It was one of the most successful military operations of modern times. German forces advanced deep into Soviet territory and accepted the surrender of literally millions of Soviet troops.

The responsibility for this defeat rests squarely on Stalin's shoulders.

Not only did Stalin kill off practically the entire leadership of the Red Army in the run-up to the war, but his policies – particularly in Ukraine – guaranteed that many Soviet citizens would welcome the Nazis as liberators.

This anniversary will be marked no doubt in Moscow by the Putin government. Prominent historians everywhere are putting the finishing touches on articles for the popular press. But it is also an event that socialists should use to think about our own history, our movement, and about what defines us politically and morally.

The Second World War in Europe broke out just days after Hitler and Stalin reached agreement on a "non-aggression" pact which was anything but. The two dictators agreed not only to launch an aggressive war against Poland, which was to be divided between the German Reich and the USSR, but also on a whole range of aggressive ac-

tions that both countries began within days.

By some counts, Stalin's troops seized territory from seven different countries, including full scale assaults on Finland, the three Baltic republics and Poland.

The Nazi regime's decision to invade the Soviet Union – codenamed Operation Barbarossa – should have surprised no one, as Hitler had been shouting loudly about Germany's need for "living space" to its east, and his desire to crush Bolshevism.

In fact, it seems like the only person who denied that such an invasion was coming was Josef Stalin – this despite having received warnings from the extensive Soviet foreign intelligence networks.

The Communist Parties all over the world were forced to pivot overnight from "opposition to the imperialist war" with its violently anti-British rhetoric, to uncritical support for "anti-fascist forces". Just as the Communists across occupied Europe took shameful positions and in some cases even collaborated with the Nazis prior to June 1941, they took equally shameful positions after that as well. The American Communist Party, for example, supported the internment of Japanese Americans. They opposed trade union leaders who sometimes called for strike action because all social classes were supposed to come together to support the war against fascism.

Trotsky had been murdered by one of Stalin's agents exactly ten months before the Germans invaded the USSR.

Many of his supporters presumed that had he lived, he would have continued with his call for the defence of the Soviet Union, as he considered it to be a "degenerated workers' state".

That position was a difficult one for some of Trotsky's supporters to accept, especially at a time when Stalin, in alliance with Hitler, was busy invading countries that had the misfortune of sharing a border with the USSR.

To Putin, Barbarossa and what followed was the defining moment of modern Russian history, leading to the tremendous victory in 1945 at the end of the "Great Patriotic War," as it came to be called. He and his regime use and misuse tropes from that period to brand all their opponents in the Baltic states, Ukraine and Belarus as "fascists". To many Russians, regardless of what Stalin did before or after the war, he did lead his people to victory, for which they should be thankful.

Socialists should look at Barbarossa more critically, understanding that while of course a Soviet victory was preferable to a Nazi one, the Stalin regime was as ruthless and murderous as the Hitler one.

That is the real tragedy of what happened eighty years ago this week. Unlike Putin and his nationalist supporters, it is the responsibility of socialists to speak the truth, painful though it is. □

• Eric Lee is the founding editor of LabourStart, writing here in a personal opinion column



## Activist Agenda

Free Our Unions is supporting Earth Strike UK, a group of anti-capitalist activists in the climate movement, in a new initiative, "Empower the Unions".

Empower the Unions aims to unite environmental activists and trade unionists to resist legislation that restricts our rights to organise and strike and empower unions to take the action necessary to safeguard our future.

The initiative will launch with an online rally from 2pm on Sunday 27 June.

Free Our Unions is also getting together with the Fire Brigades Union for a meeting on Tuesday 29 June, 6:30pm, marking the 150th anniversary of the 1871 Trade Union Act. Speakers include Simon Hannah, Lambeth Unison branch secretary, author, and Free Our Unions activist.

### ND Labour

As well as celebrating Osime Brown winning his right to stay in the UK, Neurodivergent Labour is amplifying the voices of neurodivergent members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities. You can watch a discussion between ND Labour's Manifesto and Policy Officer Hann Sutcliffe and its Vice Treasurer Nikki Hughes, an autistic Romani activist, on the ND Labour YouTube channel or the NDL website.

ND Labour is backing the Drive-2Survive campaign against the Police Bill's criminalisation of trespass, which will launch a Summer of Discontent in Parliament Square on 7 July at 1pm. □

• Links and info for these campaigns and wording for labour movement motions on many issues at [workersliberty.org/agenda](http://workersliberty.org/agenda)

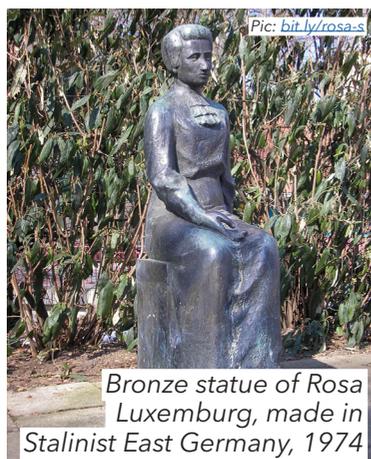
# By revolution, not statues



## Letter

Eric Lee in his recent opinion column for *Solidarity* took issue with Gary Younge's piece in the *Guardian* in which Younge advocates removing all statues, regardless of whether they are slave traders or revolutionaries.

Eric says how "Socialists should not agree. There are statues that need to come down because they honour



people or causes that should not be honoured, full stop...

But there are also statues that should go up, in remembrance of people – and causes – which we should honour."

### Cult of personality

He goes on to name revolutionaries such as Andreu Nin, Rosa Luxemburg and others who should have statues "honouring" them. This to me seems to be an advocacy for cult of personality, which in essence is Stalinist.

As far as I'm aware, nowhere in socialist theory is cult of personality advocated. Also we

may never know, but I highly doubt the likes of Rosa Luxemburg would want statues built of them, rather they would want us to build a socialist future.

Eric concludes by saying: "Socialists look forward instead to living in the kind of country that chooses to honour people like Nin, Luxemburg, Zhordania, and the others. And yes, Trotsky too. In the centre of St. Petersburg." Well yes, I'm sure most of us want to live in a country which honours these

historical figures, but in terms of erecting statues? I hope not. Further it seems rather idealistic and utopian to then name the places they should be built in.

I believe the best way to honour these people is not to erect statues, but to actually implement their teachings into our lives and to bring about a socialist revolution, and thereby creating a better world for all. □

Mo Starke Hannon,  
London

# Workers' plans for adaptation



## Environment

By Todd Hamer

Climate scientists are beginning to panic. According to a new report from the government-commissioned Climate Change Committee the UK is even worse prepared for climate change than we were five years ago. The latest and third CCC report was released with some provocative statements "designed to elicit a response" from government. So far no response has been forthcoming.

For decades now scientists have been raising the alarm about the threats of climate change.

For the almost entire time that humans have been on Earth, the planet's climate has been extremely erratic, with repeated ice ages and warming periods and dramatic changes in sea level. Every time our hunter-gatherer forebears attempted to settle, the climate switched and they were forced to move on. The only period of stability is within the past ten thousand years, a period that geologists call the Holocene. It is only in this stable climate that humanity have been able to develop settled agriculture and the start of civilisation.

We are now leaving the Holocene and entering a new climatic environment. Far from slowing our exit from the Holocene or preparing for the new climate, we are accelerating our exit.

It is in this context that the scientists must be looking for better allies than the bourgeois politicians that have ignored them for so many decades. The TUC or a coalition of unions should approach the CCC and begin talks about developing a workers' plan for the climate crisis.

Alongside the 142 page CCC report is a 1500 page technical report outlining 61 risks and opportunities that need to be addressed on a short time scale. The trade union movement should study these reports and seek to develop plans working out exactly where we want these new industries, what training is necessary, how the work should be organised and how much it will cost. We should then fight for resources to do enact these plans.

For instance, the report states that buildings need to be adapted and built to higher specification so that they are better insulated and can be kept cool during heat waves. 300,000 new homes are built each year, but most are poorly designed for the new climate and will become death traps in a heatwave. The unions that organise construction workers should develop plans for how

we will build high quality climate resilient housing and workplaces following the recommendations in the technical report. We should agitate for the resources to enact our plans and make it central to any future Labour Party manifesto.

### Regulations

Most of the proposals involve extensive regulations to force capitalist firms and landlords to meet new climate resilient standards. The workers movement should campaign for these regulations whilst also agitating for workers taking a DIY approach. We should popularise the example of the Australian Green Bans movement, where Builders Labourers refused to work on socially and ecologically destructive construction projects. Following that example, unions could advocate mass refusal to work on building projects and similar that fail to meet standards of climate resilience.

Trade unionists in the education sector could develop training programs for the new green jobs sector and again campaign for this education and training to be properly resourced. We should be contesting what is built and how it is built, contrasting the direction of travel of capitalist business to the urgent need for action proposed by the government's own scientists.

Workers' plans should consider organisational questions: the pandemic has shown that capitalist control of crisis response is a disaster. Un-unionised and poorly organised workplaces have been extremely dangerous. Fragmentation of public services following decades of outsourcing has made it very difficult for big institutions to adapt and for the voices of frontline workers to influence those making the decisions. This work of climate adaptation needs to be organised under workers' democratic control.

The trade union movement is not in a place at the moment to force the government to act on the CCC report. But we have got the resources to develop workers' plans for the climate crisis in collaboration with climate scientists and building on the work that has already been done.

Initially such plans will be seen as pie-in-the-sky by the bourgeois mainstream, and it may even be difficult to get scientists to collaborate with us. But as the crisis develops, and the wanton inaction of bourgeois states becomes more obvious, such plans could begin to appear as a credible way for human civilisation to hit the emergency brake and engage the reverse gear to take us back to the Holocene-like safety of climate stability. □

# Care workers and vaccinations



## Covid-19

Ali Treacher from Care and Support Workers Organise! (CaSWO!) talked to Solidarity

There is a real sense of danger among care and support workers following the government's announcement to force compulsory vaccinations on the workforce. It has been a bitter pill to swallow. We have spent the past 18 months risking our lives in unsafe workplaces, following ever changing government guidelines and trying to stay on top of the science to keep those we support safe.

At Care and Support Workers Organise! (CaSWO!) we encourage every care worker to have the vaccination. However, we agree with the British Medical Association (BMA), who have [warned](#) compulsion

is "a blunt instrument that carries its own risks".

We stand with Unite and Unison who have come out strongly against forced vaccinations. This announce could trigger another mass exodus from already understaffed workplaces in a sector with over 110,000 vacancies.

If the government wants to

appeal to our "professionalism", maybe they shouldn't have deemed our work "unskilled", and pay us poverty wages.

There is an understanding from care workers that this is a cynical move by the government, diverting the systematic failures of the past 18 months on to individual actions of care

workers. There was a needless PPE crisis, insufficient sick pay, and discharging of people back into care homes too early, allowing the virus to spread like wildfire.

It is important to recognise the consequences of this announcement is gendered, affecting mainly working-class women. The government tar-

geted care workers as they recognise there will be little resistance.

We remain largely unorganised following years of outsourcing and working and atomised workplaces. It comes as no surprise they did not start this policy with NHS workers. □

# Truck kills picket in Italy

By Mohan Sen

Adil Belakhdim, coordinator of the SICobas union in Novara, Lombardy, Italy, and a member of the union's national coordinating body, has been killed. He was hit by a truck driven into a picket line during the national logistics strike on 18 June.

SI Cobas [says](#): "It was not an accident – Adil was killed in the name of profit."

It says that the "murder is in fact the culmination of an escalation of organized violence against SI Cobas, which has been ongoing for months and is now without limits".

It cites many other incidents in recent months, arguing that they are "part of a single design under which the bosses and organised crime (which has a huge business in logistics) act in a united and concentric way to crush with force and vi-

olence the strikes of the workers against super-exploitation and in defense of the achievements won over the years by militant unions".

Last week we [reported](#) the beating into a coma of FedEx trade union activist Abdelhamid Elazab by bosses' thugs in Northern Italy. Elazab is a member of SI Cobas.

The labour movement here should make solidarity. □

# Pushing back for trans rights



**Women's Fightback**

By Angela Driver

Trans Pride in London is on 26 June (2pm from Wellington Arch, Hyde Park Corner). The organisers are emphasising that it is a protest. There is a lot to protest about.

Formally the Equality Act legislates against most forms of discrimination that trans people might face. The Gender Recognition Act (GRA) allows birth certificates to be issued in the acquired gender. The NHS provides hormone treatment, and surgery to help with "gender reassignment".

But in reality trans people face a huge level of persecution even today, even on the streets of London. Public humiliation, harassment, and violence are commonplace. Reported hate crime and incidents are on the rise over the last couple of years, apparently as a result of a backlash against moves to re-form the Gender Recognition Act.

Trans people are a small minority, and the level of persecution may not be apparent to many people. My partner is trans. At least once a month she tells me about some incident. Last week it

was a minicab driver that refused to have her in his car. Another time someone shouted at her that she was a "fake woman". Last year, in the affluent London suburb of Richmond, a mob of 20 people beat her repeatedly.

These experiences are so common that many trans people feel unable to use public transport. Some are afraid to even leave their homes, let alone get a job.

Despite an increase in trans-friendly workplace policies, one in three employers admitted in a study that they would be less likely to employ someone who is trans. The rate of unemployment among the trans population is twice that of the general population, likely due to a combination of discrimination and mental health difficulties.

Although services are available on the NHS, the waiting lists for Gender Identity Clinics are up to five years long for an initial appointment. The "Keira Bell" court case resulted in a ruling that makes it much harder for under-18s to obtain treatment. The ruling calls into question the ability of under-18s to consent at all, which is of concern to anyone who believes that teenagers should be able to access the morning-after pill.

Politically the Tories are so hostile that three of their LGBT advisers re-

cently resigned. The Labour Party does not appear willing to stand up for trans rights. Some Labour MPs seem able to be openly transphobic on social media without significant consequence.

As with any oppression, the labour movement and the left should be the main force to show solidarity and make progress. But too often transphobic fake feminists derail efforts. They claim that trans rights have a negative impact on women's rights. So called radical feminists often argue that women need to be protected, and emphasise reproductive features when defining what makes a woman.

Their arguments, possibly unwittingly, give succour to the idea that women should stay "safe" at home, and have their primary role as a mother.

In fact a world in which trans people are unable to freely express themselves in their correct gender is less likely to be a safe place for women. Prejudice and discrimination around gender expression oppresses women and gay people as well as trans people.

The vast majority of trans people are part of the working class. The level of prejudice makes it harder for trans people to become rich. A few do manage to reach "celebrity" status, and as often, access to money means that they can avoid much of the prejudice others

face. There is no need to rely on NHS services. They do not have to use public transport, or face abuse on the streets.

Despite the weakness of the left, and the unions, it remains the duty of the labour movement to overcome the lack of understanding, and fight for trans rights. The workplace policies need to be implemented.

Stonewall and Mind have both faced public criticism for standing up for trans rights. These organisations are charities. Trade unions should be stepping up too. □

• More: *Workers' Liberty* 3/61, *Gender: the right to choose*. [bit.ly/g-ch](https://bit.ly/g-ch) plus, "Support trans people's rights!", Workers' Liberty conference 2018: [bit.ly/trans-s](https://bit.ly/trans-s)

## Protests 26-27 June

The People's Assembly, with the backing of many unions, has a "demand a new normal" protest, noon on 26 June from Portland Place, London W1. The Trans Pride event is the same day, 2pm from Wellington Arch, Hyde Park Corner, London. Extinction Rebellion and others are gathering from noon on 27 June at Parliament Square. □

# Northern Ireland: why Poots fell

By Patrick Murphy

On 17 June, after less than three weeks in the role, Edwin Poots stepped down as leader of the main Unionist Party in Northern Ireland (NI), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and requested a new leadership election.

The immediate cause of Poots' downfall was his apparent agreement to have an Irish language act applied to NI by the Westminster government. Achieving formal recognition for the Irish language has been a long-term aim of the main nationalist party Sinn Fein.

With very little leverage to play with, the DUP knows that their consent is required before the NI government can agree a First and Deputy First Minister. They had hoped to use a threat to block Irish language reform to gain some concessions on other issues. That Poots seemed to concede on that without a whimper sealed his fate.

In reality, legal recognition of the Irish language is a threat to no-one and would have no impact on the Unionist community. Its re-emergence as an issue is part of a general retreat into "no surrender" communal politics by the DUP. That, in turn, is a response to (and an attempt to distract attention from) the party's inept handling of Brexit.

A strategy of working with hardline Brexiteers, including Johnson, and rejecting all compromises to deal with the Irish border problem led, in the end, to a new divide between NI and Britain. The NI Protocol agreed by Johnson, despite repeated promises to the contrary, creates a customs border down the Irish Sea to avoid a hard border with the Republic. It's a humiliating outcome, and all the more embarrassing as the machinations of the DUP helped make it happen. The main demand of recent street disturbances in Loyalist areas was for the removal of the pro-

protocol. But the DUP are powerless to achieve this goal.

The status of the Irish language really is a settled issue. That's clear from the proposal of the UK government that they implement it if the Assembly won't. The Protocol is in place by international treaty for at least four years. As of now it's hard to see an option which doesn't make the DUP's problems worse.

There is a much deeper and broader leadership crisis in Unionism as a whole. Developments north and south of the Irish border point almost uniformly in the direction of an eventual reunited Ireland. None of that makes a united Ireland inevitable soon, nor guarantees that it will happen peacefully and without a lapse back into communal civil war. It does pose an existential challenge for Unionist politics, however, and the DUP are the least well-equipped to deal with it.

We who support a united

Ireland need to start thinking more about what that will look like and how it will take account of the concerns of the Northern Unionist minority. And Unionism needs political

leadership that is prepared to reach a political settlement with the Irish (and soon Northern Irish) majority. □

• Abridged. More: [bit.ly/poots-f](https://bit.ly/poots-f)

## Killed for 2011-2 protest

By Zack Muddle

The Saudi Arabian kingdom executed, on Tuesday 15 June, Mustafa bin Hashim bin Isa al-Darwish, who (allegedly) participated in a protests in the Arab spring of 2011-2. The official charge sheet did not specify the dates of the numerous accusations: forming an anti-police terrorist cell, armed rebellion against the ruler, provoking chaos, etc.

Al-Darwish was under 18 when the protests for jobs and opportunities and about discrimination against Shia Muslims took place. He has

been imprisoned by the Sunni regime since he was 20. The beheading of al-Darwish is probably breaches even the kingdom's own claimed standards (that it won't execute for crimes committed as a minor).

The overwhelming majority of people executed in Saudi Arabia (at least 222 in 2019-21) are Shia.

Solidarity with the working class, women, and minorities in Saudi Arabia – and with those fighting for democracy against the horrific and bloody tyranny! □

# The Kurds and the Tur

By Pete Boggs

Part of a series of articles on the Kurds in Turkey, [bit.ly/kurd-t](http://bit.ly/kurd-t)

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the “founding father” of the Turkish Republic, who had crushed Kurdish uprisings in the southeast and tried to forcibly assimilate Kurds into the Turkish nation, died in 1938. However, Turkey remained a one-party state until 1946 under İsmet İnönü, when landlords formed the Democrat Party (DP) after becoming disillusioned with the ruling Republican People’s Party’s (CHP) land reforms. The Democrat Party won the election in 1950, and began to liberalise Turkey economically and socially.

This liberalisation was far from comprehensive, but it made some important changes to the position of Kurds in Turkey. Much of the heavily Kurdish southeast had been put under martial law during Atatürk’s rule, establishing Inspectorates-General to pacify and “Turkify” these regions. The DP had campaigned on relaxing these restrictions, and a number of Kurds from prominent families who had been exiled were elected as Democrat Party parliamentary deputies. One of these deputies was Remzi Bucak, representing Diyarbakır, who likened the treatment of the southeast to British colonial rule in India. The DP government abolished the Inspectorates-General in 1952.

The economic policies of the DP helped to develop a stronger and more independent bourgeoisie in Turkey which included Kurdish capitalists. Those Kurdish capitalists prioritised investment in already developed western Turkey, and the disparity between the west and the Kurdish southeast grew. That contributed to the growing popularity of left-wing politics among Kurds. Under the Democrat Party Kurds had more freedoms, particularly regarding expression; but the reforms only went so far, and Kurds were still prosecuted for sedition under this government.

The military coup led by Alparslan Türkeş (who later founded the far right Nationalist Action Party, MHP, and its associated paramilitary, the Grey Wolves) in 1960 brought down the Democrat government and immediately stepped up the repression of Kurds. However, the generals returned Turkey to “parliamentary democracy” the following year, albeit with an central political role for the military.

The 1961 constitution drawn up under the supervision of the coup-makers set out more freedoms than had previously been enjoyed in the Turkish Republic: the right to strike, to form associations, to publish political literature. The generation that grew up in this liberal atmosphere was much more open to radical and independent politics than previous generations had been. This generation included many young Kurds who were more educated and cosmopolitan than their parents, and had no memory themselves of the brutal violence carried out against Kurdish uprisings which had dissuaded most older Kurds from involvement in oppositional politics.

## Two strands

In the 1960s, there were two strands among nationalist-minded Kurds. The less popular option was involvement in the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (TKDP), founded in 1965. This organisation was modelled on (and presumably named after) the Iraqi Kurds’ KDP, led by Mustafa Barzani (the father of the current president of the autonomous Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq, Masoud Barzani), who was at the time leading the “Aylul Revolution” (the first Iraqi-Kurdish War) in Iraq.

The TDKP, like its Iraqi counterpart, was fairly traditionalist and influenced by the interests of Kurdish landlords, and it called for a Kurdish federation within Turkey’s existing boundaries. Their attempt to reach out to Barzani was snubbed, and their general secretary Faik Bucak was murdered in 1966.



The party survived, however, and exists today as the Kurdistan Democratic Party/North (southeastern Turkey, where many Kurds come from, is the northwestern limit of a proposed Kurdistan).

## Kurds and the TİP

More Kurds were attracted to the broader Turkish left, particularly to the Turkish Workers’ Party (TİP), and were actually the third most represented demographic in the upper echelons of the organisation after trade unionists and intellectuals.

The TİP refined its approach to the “Kurdish question” throughout the 1960s, becoming more understanding of the specific and national oppression of the Kurds. Initially their approach to the “Eastern” problem (as the issue of the Kurds was often euphemistically referred to in Turkey) emphasised economic underdevelopment in the rural southeast.

By 1968 they acknowledged that identity played a role alongside economics in the treatment of the East, and from their first congress onwards they condemned the discrimination against “those citizens who speak Kurdish and Arabic”, whilst still saying that “paralleling the economic backwardness of the region, citizens here are backward in social and cultural terms”. The fourth congress in 1970 (the last one before the TİP’s ban following the 1971 military coup) went much further than the party had previously on the Kurds:

“That Kurdish people inhabit the East of Turkey; that the dominant classes and fascist governments have, from the very beginning, implemented policies of oppression, terror, and assimilation towards Kurds ... that, therefore, any consideration of the Eastern Question as a question of regional development is no more than an appendage of the chauvinist-nationalist perceptions and attitudes of dominant class govern-

ments; and that supporting the Kurdish people’s struggle for their full constitutional rights of citizenship ... is an ordinary and obligatory task of our party...”

## Self-determination

The TİP didn’t mince words on the state violence against Kurds in Turkey, but it crucially did not call for (nor make acknowledgement of) national self-determination. Despite having evolved beyond dismissing Kurdish national oppression as merely down to underdevelopment, they still thought that the problem could be solved as a side-effect of a socialist transformation of Turkey because a future worker-ruled Turkey which would no longer oppress the Kurds.

Kurdish secession was not necessarily then, and is not necessarily now, the only possible solution that socialists should countenance. There is a genuine discussion to be had here, and it is not a settled question even within the Kurdish movement in Turkey. The bottom line is that socialists should acknowledge the right of the Kurdish people to their own self-determination, whether they choose a separate state or genuine democratic rights within Turkey (and Syria, Iraq, and Iran). The nuances of this position escaped the Supreme Court, who banned the TİP in July 1971, citing the party’s supposed support for Kurdish separatism.

**“Kurdish secession is not necessarily the only possible solution”**

Many Kurds inclined towards the left were unhappy with the TİP’s refusal to support an independent Kurdish state. Kemal Burkay, who began his political life in the TİP like many others, said of his time in the party that “at that time we didn’t think of having a separate organisation. The goal of making changes in Turkey, of winning democracy, of winning Kurdish rights was tied to the struggle of the two peoples working together. In time, we understood that the Turkish left did not have a real Kurdish program.”

An important context for this period of the Turkish left is the rift opening up between supporters of “socialist revolution”, and supporters of a “National Democratic Revolution” (NDR).

Supporters of the NDR such as Mihri Belli looked to “completing” Turkey’s bourgeois and anti-imperialist revolution through a “national front” of the army, youth, intellectuals, and national bourgeoisie. Supporters of the “socialist revolution” perspective such as Behice Boran looked to the working class

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# Turkish left in the 1960s



Behice Boran  
Pic: *Gazete Manifesto*

for the situation of Kurds, but others such as Doğu Perinçek were wholly unsympathetic, and fundamentally NDR was a nationalist project. Conversely, “socialist revolution” supporters such as Boran were important in developing the TİP’s com-

paratively sensitive policy.

Kurdish leftists generally saw this debate as not really relevant to them. In 1969, Kurdish students at universities in western Turkish cities formed the Revolutionary Cultural Eastern Hearths (DDKO), using the standard euphemism of “Eastern” to denote Kurdishness and bypass the state censor. Abdullah Öcalan, the later founder of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), was tangentially involved with the DDKO, and complained of their refusal to come to concrete political conclusions alongside the failure of the Turkish left to acknowledge the national question

(alongside the rural poor) bringing socialist revolution without a distinct prior “national front” stage. (For a critical and in-depth discussion of this debate, see [Marxism and the Ideological Traditions of the Turkish Left](#) published by the revolutionary socialist group Marksist Tutum).

The question of the Kurds was not central to this debate, but the NDR supporters’ sympathy for Atatürk’s legacy and Kemalism (the state ideology of Turkey during the one party period, named for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) made them less inclined to support the Kurdish movement. Some proponents of NDR had a level of understanding

of the Kurds. The DDKO was banned in 1971 alongside the TİP.

**“The bottom line is the right to their own self-determination, whether a separate state or genuine democratic rights within Turkey”**

From this point onwards, the Kurdish movement largely started to organise separately from the Turkish left. There have been important exceptions to this: the pro-Kurdish People’s Labour Party (HEP) went into a brief alliance with Erdal İnönü’s “centre-left” Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) in government before E. İnönü (the son of İsmet İnönü, Atatürk’s successor) forbade them from attending a Kurdish nationalist meeting in Paris in 1992. That prompted them to break away from the SHP.

A more promising exception has been the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) which brings together parts of

the Kurdish movement and the Turkish left, and is currently facing serious anti-democratic repression from the Erdoğan government. □

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# The 1920s “Red Kurdistan”

By Pete Boggs

Since the 19th century, there have been Kurdish people living in the Caucasus. Many had been living in parts of the Ottoman Caucasus when it was annexed by the Russian Empire, but others migrated there, particularly at the time of the Kurdish deportations in 1916. In 1926, there were over fifty four thousand Kurds living in the Soviet Union, the vast majority of them in the Caucasus.

After the Russian Revolution, Soviet policy towards the non-Russian nationalities was confused and disjointed, trying to balance the right to self-determination with the survival of the new workers’ state. The Bolsheviks had in-

herited the Tsarist Empire, dubbed “the prison-house of nations” by Lenin, and they sought to build a state not governed by Great Russian chauvinism. Local languages were promoted over Russian, and Russian communists who had been placed in positions of authority were replaced by native officials.

This policy of “indigenisation” (korenizatsiia) began in earnest in 1923, and the Kurdistan Uyezd (uyezd roughly corresponding to an English county) was established as part of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. Commonly known as “Red Kurdistan”, this territory had all Kurdish self-governance suppressed by Stalin after 1930, and even

at best was hampered by Azeri chauvinism in the leadership of the Azerbaijan SSR. Kurds in Soviet Armenia enjoyed more opportunities to develop their national identity, and much more Kurdish scholarship and language education took place there.

The logic of Stalin’s Great Terror in the late 1930s designated certain ethnicities as “unreliable” elements who might have proved to be a threat to the Soviet Union, particularly in the event of a war. This was particularly applied to groups with more of their population over the border, as with the Kurds in Turkey and Iran. In 1937 3,101 Kurds were deported to Kazakhstan, and in 1944 8,694 Kurds were deported to Central Asia, along with many Hemshins (Muslim Armenians) and the entire Meskhetian Turkish population of Georgia. The Stalin government believed that these people might identify more with Turkey than the USSR, and that the Kurds had been “Tur-



kicised” under the Ottoman Empire. The tragic irony is that many of the Soviet Union’s Kurds and their families had fled to the Caucasus in 1916 to avoid the Ottoman ethnic cleansing, which was driven by a desire to Turkify them and by

fear that they might be disloyal and side with the Russian Army. The Kurdish people have lived at the intersection of multiple empires and would-be imperialist states, and have been shamefully mistreated by all of them. □

## 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](http://workersliberty.org/anti-racist-resources) □

# Tulsa: the legacy of

Third of a series of articles: [bit.ly/tulsa-1](https://bit.ly/tulsa-1)

By Sacha Ismail

Particularly given who the last US President was, it's not insignificant that Joe Biden has spoken out very publicly about 1921, when racists destroyed the black business district of Tulsa, Oklahoma, by burning and bombing from the air, and killed hundreds. We told the story in [Solidarity 595](#) and [596](#).

"This was not a riot", Biden told a crowd of survivors and their families in Tulsa on 1 June, the anniversary of the bloodshed's climax. "This was a massacre." He condemned the effective cover up of the slaughter for many years, the veiling of what had happened in "silence" and "darkness". He highlighted his government's policies for addressing racial inequality, both economic (e.g. increased public spending) and political (e.g. voting rights).

Biden's politics represent a relief both from the Trump regime and to some extent his own past. Yet he is far from presenting an adequate explanation of what happened in Tulsa in 1921 or fighting for changes which can provide substantial justice for its victims and their descendants.

## After the massacre

In the Tulsa massacre probably several hundred were killed, a thousand injured. Much of the city's Greenwood district destroyed. Its flourishing commercial centre ("Black Wall Street") and other areas were burned to the ground. Two hundred businesses, a school, several churches and Greenwood's only hospital, as well as over a thousand homes, were burned down.

Two days afterwards, on 3 June 1921, white business and local government leaders in Tulsa met to discuss "rebuilding"; but over the winter of 1921-22, thousands of black families continued to live in tents. The authorities acted slowly and in ways that hindered help.

The *Tulsa Tribune*, which had essentially incited the massacre, summed up the view of many of Tulsa's white leaders with an editorial headlined "It must not be again", arguing that "such a district as the old 'N-----town' must never be allowed in Tulsa again".

One of Tulsa's most prominent real-estate capitalists argued for using industrial development in the area to "draw more distinctive lines between [the different sections of Tulsa] and thereby eliminate the intermingling of the lower elements of the two races... the root of all evil which should not exist".

A group of white industrialists and property developers got the city to

agree new fire rules that, by making building prohibitively expensive, would prevent many black people from rebuilding homes and businesses in Greenwood. That was blocked through the courts, but the goal of using chunks of Greenwood land for white-run industrial purposes was achieved through other means.

There were arguments in the black community about how to respond. Some black businessmen and community leaders cooperated actively with the white resource-grabbers. Many Greenwood people resisted, organising around the slogan "I'm going to hold what I have until I get what I've lost". As in the massacre itself, they were fighting heroically against the odds.

Some who had participated in the attack occupied prominent positions in the city's government, courts and other arenas of authority. Every single one of the claims filed with the city for compensation, totally \$1.8m (over \$25m today), was turned down – except one by a white pawnshop-owner. Many insurance companies also refused to pay out.

Greenwood was rebuilt, but with tightened limits on the partially independent black wealth and power that had been the invaders' target. Research published by Harvard University last year concluded that the massacre was directly responsible for reducing black incomes in Tulsa by 7.3% by 1940, along with declines in occupational status, home ownership and educational attainment; and that it had an impact on black people in the rest of Oklahoma too.

## The cover up

No white people were charged for the killing, violence and destruction. In the first period after the massacre some white Tulsans boasted about it, with celebratory postcards featuring scenes from the destruction of Greenwood sold on the street.

A few days afterwards, President Warren Harding gave a speech attacking the massacre – but doing anything was another matter. (The next year he supported a federal anti-lynching bill but then helped engineer its withdrawal in the Senate.) Many newspapers covered the destruction at the time, in Tulsa and more widely,

including the *New York Times* and the *Times* here. In 1922 a black journalist who survived the massacre, Mary E Jones Parrish, published a book with accounts, photographs and a roster of deaths and property losses. The Red Cross and the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People published reports.

Historian of the massacre Scott Ellsworth comments that what happened in June 1921 was initially "a big story", but: "The businessmen, the political types and whatnot all realise[d] fairly quickly that they had a huge PR problem with the massacre". The result was a soon-established norm of refusing to even mention it had happened. It was not just historical silence in some general sense, as Biden suggests, but a cover up by the local (white) capitalist establishment. They had aided the destruction, refused to punish the killers, and benefited from the massacre, with complicity from the wider ruling class.

In the 1970s, after the growth of civil rights and Black Power struggles, Oklahoma activists and historians made fresh attempts to bring 1921 to light, but faced stiff resistance and pressure to shut up – not just from outspoken racists, but from the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, for instance.

As late as 2017, a report on the history of the Tulsa Fire Department from 1897 made no mention of the 1921 conflagration! Since 2020 the massacre has been an official part of the

Oklahoma school curriculum; but this year the state passed a law limiting discussion of systemic racism in American society and history, so-called "critical race theory".

## Medals or justice?

After decades of campaigning, in 1996 the Oklahoma legislature authorised a Commission to Investigate the Tulsa Race Riot (sic: the name was finally changed to the Tulsa Race Massacre Commission in 2018). The Commission's report in 2001 recommended as its top priorities direct reparations payments to survivors of the massacre and their descendants. It also advocated a scholarship fund for students affected, establishment of an economic development zone in historic Greenwood, and a memorial for reburial of the victims.

The 118 known survivors still alive in March 2001 were given medals and official events were held. Three months later the Tulsa Race Riot Reconciliation Act (sic) included a public memorial for those killed, measures for economic development in Greenwood and three hundred college scholarships for the descendants of residents. It ignored the Commission report and refused to include reparations.

In 2003 five survivors sued the city of Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma to demand reparations. The courts dismissed the case on the grounds that in Oklahoma civil rights cases must be filed within two years of the event!

In the run up to the centenary, there have been renewed agitation and campaigning, in Tulsa and beyond. Last year Human Rights Watch [released](#) *The Case for Reparations in Tulsa, Oklahoma: A Human Rights Argument*. Their case is based not just on the massacre itself, and the oppression the survivors faced afterwards, but the decades-long chain of events and policies that have determined how "poverty, race and geography correlate" in Tulsa. 33.5 percent of North Tulsans live in poverty, compared to 13.4 percent in South Tulsa. Unemployment among black people in the city in the city is 2.4 times higher than among whites. Yet investment and development measures are concentrated in the South of the city.

While Tulsa's public services remain desperately under-

## If We Must Die

By Claude McKay

*If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.  
If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honour us though dead!  
O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!  
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!  
What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!*

Claude McKay was a Jamaican-born writer, poet and activist whose sonnet *If We Must Die*, published in US socialist magazine *The Liberator*, became a sort of anthem for black self-defence during the "Red Summer" of racist violence in 1919. A supporter of the African Blood Brotherhood, McKay went on to work as a socialist journalist in the UK, supported the Communist International and travelled to Bolshevik Russia, and became a central figure in the 1920-30s Harlem Renaissance. □

# the 1921 massacre

funded, the city expanded funding the police in 2020 and has indicated it plans further increases.

When the oldest living survivor of the massacre, 107-year-old Viola Davis, spoke to Congress in May, she described the hard life she has had since her family fled Tulsa in 1921 and said: "All the while the city of Tulsa has unjustly used the names and stories of victims like me to enrich itself and its white allies through the \$30m raised by the Tulsa Centennial Commission, while I continue to live in poverty."

Biden's Tulsa speech was criticised even by moderate racial justice campaigners for failing to advocate reparations, or make proposals for tackling student loan debt and its heavily disproportionate impact on black Americans.

More broadly, an economic program that can seriously impact the issues faced by North Tulsa and many other communities – particularly after the pandemic – requires a mobilisation of resources and redistribution of wealth way beyond the Biden Democrats' public spending plans.

## Class warfare

To win such measures will take militant working-class struggle. The other side of this story liberal narratives largely do not touch, and certainly Biden's didn't, is how the period's anti-black violence was paralleled and intertwined with violence against organised labour.

1919 in particular saw widespread vigilante, paramilitary and state violence against both black communities and working-class struggles (in some cases they were the same thing). One trigger for violence was determined racist efforts to drive white and black workers apart.

Oklahoma had had a powerful socialist left, perhaps the strongest in the US, until a few years before. The suppression of this movement from 1917 destroyed the main space in which white and black (and Native American) Oklahomans organised together politically. It was carried out by the same forces, grassroots far-right activists and their allies in the Tulsa establishment, whose cooperation ramped up the June 1921 events into a massive white-supremacist military action.

The dizzying bloodshed and destruction in Tulsa reflected the violently counter-revolutionary climate of the post-war US – and no doubt reinforced it too. The massacre was the first time a US city was bombed from the air. Three months later, at the start of September 1921, the largest armed workers' uprising in US history, by ten thousand West

Virginia miners – white, black and immigrant, fighting for unionisation – was suppressed at Blair Mountain by thousands of police, soldiers and private security. Over a million rounds were fired and the miners were bombed from the air.

(Miners in the region often wore red bandanas: hence the name "rednecks". In 2018 teachers taking part in the successful mass strikes which swept West Virginia wore red bandanas in tribute.)

## Resistance

Black Americans did not passively submit to the wave of attacks on them after the World War. Across the US they formed ad hoc self-defence organisations to resist white violence. Thousands of young black veterans of the war, trained in combat and particularly alert to the hypocrisy of white supremacist President Woodrow Wilson's cant about "democracy" and "self-determination", were central to these struggles.

As after the Civil War, black men who had fought for the US came home with a determination to see meaningful change – and strong awareness of the contradiction between their role in the war and their communities' treatment afterwards. Black activists and political theorists hammered home the contrasts. "This is the country to which we Soldiers of Democracy return. This is the fatherland for which we fought!", wrote W E B Du Bois in *The Crisis*, just



Protestors demand reparations for the massacre

after the start of 1919's "Red Summer" of racist attacks.

Black veterans in uniform became a particular source of outrage and target for violence from white racists, as did blacks working in big industry and black economic success in the form of businesses and housing. Black men in sexual relationships or contact with white women, real or imagined, were also targets.

At the start of the "Red Summer", black veterans formed armed groups in Washington and Chicago to defend homes and neighbourhoods when the police and government refused to. A group of veterans in Chicago broke into an armoury and took weapons they used to beat back a white mob. These actions inspired similar organising around the country, including in many parts of the South.

In Tulsa two years later young black veterans were central to the groups that mobilised to defend Dick Rowland from lynching and tried to defend Greenwood against the white invaders.

An organisation which was short-lived but is important in socialist and working-class history played a noteworthy role in these struggles.

The African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption (usually just African Blood Brotherhood, ABB) was a US black nationalist and pan-Africanist organisation most of whose activists, attracted by the anti-racist and anti-colonialist struggles of the Russian Revolution, evolved politically to revolutionary socialism. They joined the US Communist Party, with the organisation eventually dissolving into it.

The ABB was founded in September 1919 by black-nationalist-going-socialist paper *The Crusader*. It was pitched as an organisation to help African Americans defend themselves against

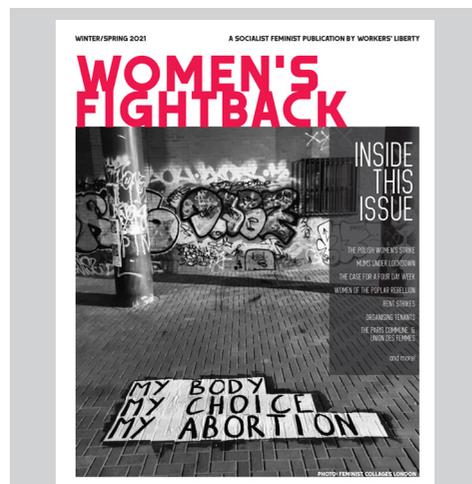
the kind of racist killings and attacks they had faced during the "Red Summer". The paper meanwhile focused increasingly on the parallels between the post-war assaults on black people and those on white radicals and labour activists.

For a while the ABB organised a class-struggle socialist opposition in the conferences and rallies of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, advocating black-white working-class

unity and attacking Garvey's autocratic methods and contact with the Ku Klux Klan.

Though at its height the ABB only had a few thousand members, its calls for armed self-defence against the pogromists helped it recruit significant numbers of black veterans. By 1921 it had a branch in Tulsa and seems to have been centrally involved in the black self-defence there.

Certainly afterwards it was widely claimed that the ABB had been central – and the organisation campaigned extensively around what had happened. *The Crusader* and ABB agitators cited Tulsa as evidence of why African Americans needed to defend themselves by any means necessary. The ABB organised public meetings in its New York stronghold of Harlem which collected money for the survivors of Tulsa and gave them a platform to tell their stories. □



Women's Fightback is a socialist feminist publication by Workers' Liberty. Order issue 25, Spring 2021, for £1 – or cheaper in bulk! □

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# Unison: challenges after stilted conference

By Ruth Cashman

The new National Executive Committee (NEC) of the public service union Unison, with a left majority for the first time in the union's history, will face an uncooperative staff who will not want to relinquish control of the union just because their lay allies have been defeated. Within the union structures the NEC must prioritise democratising, including rewriting the industrial action handbook so it is no longer a block to lay control of disputes.

At a virtual NEC meeting after the Uni-

son conference held online 15-17 June, left-winger Paul Holmes was elected president, with left-wingers also as senior and junior vice presidents (Andrea Egan and Kath Owen). Currently, Unison staff will not allow Paul Holmes to take up the post of president.

We had the most in depth discussion of climate change and how to stop it we've had at conference, and it's good to see that is increasingly on the union's agenda.

But, for reasons beyond the union's control, and although last year Unison had no conference, this conference was more stilted than usual. All "standing orders" interventions were suspended except "that the question be put", and all speakers had to register in advance. I missed the energy of face-to-face conference.

Unison's conference is notorious for a lack of contentious motions. Many, many options are ruled out of order and those that make it to the agenda are filibustered. This year's conference was probably worse than ever in that respect.



Paul Holmes

At a time when nurses are running grassroots campaigns for better pay, the rank and file are increasingly accusing the union of not fighting, and the NEC has gone to the left, it seems concerning that little of that found voice at our sovereign conference.

Some amendments on industrial action made it through. The one controversy at conference itself was the

branch funding review. The outgoing NEC were successful in passing their motion which slightly increased branch funding but failed to look at staffing resources, despite that being the instruction given to them by a previous conference decision.

It was always going to be difficult to stop such a decision at a virtual conference. □

## More online

### Unite GS: Beckett pulls out

Dale Street reports on the field for the ballot opening 5 July  
[bit.ly/gs-unite](http://bit.ly/gs-unite)

### More on the lab-leak theory

Zack Muddle writes again against the "lab leak" theory on Covid  
[bit.ly/more-lab](http://bit.ly/more-lab) □

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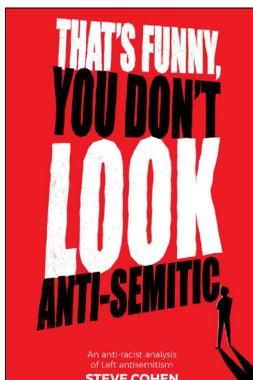
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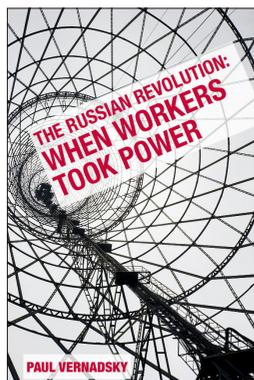
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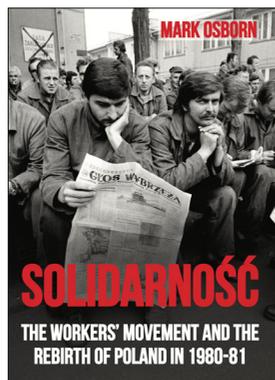
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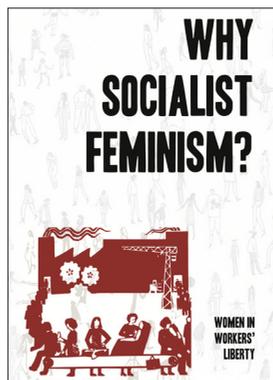
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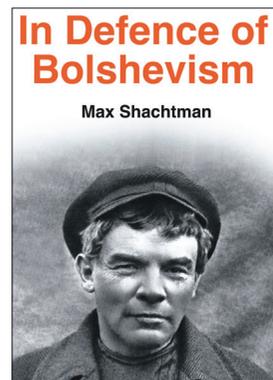
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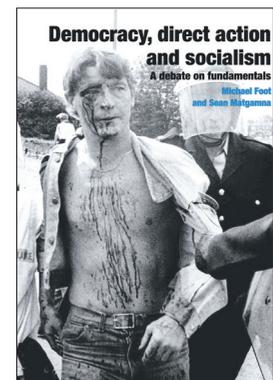
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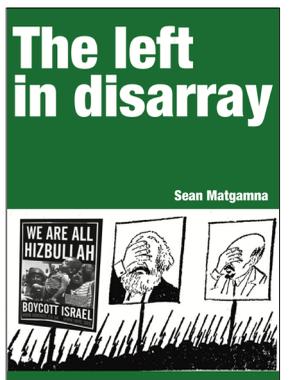
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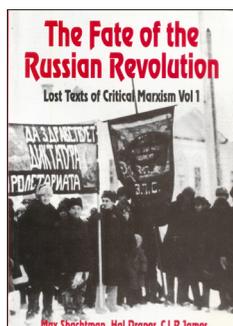
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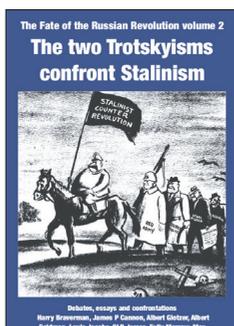
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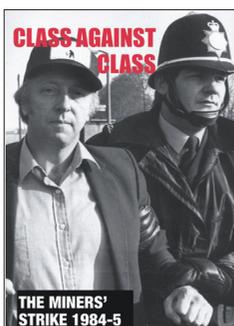
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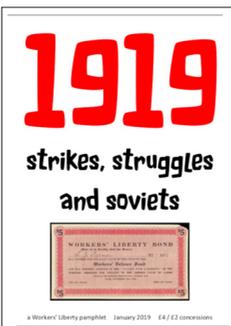
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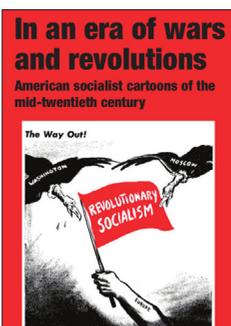
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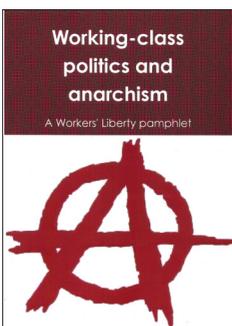
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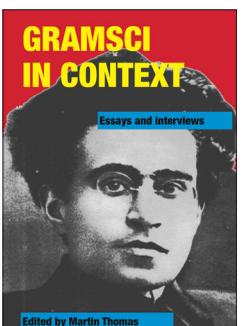
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# Strong left minority at PCS

By a PCS member

The Future of the Union section at the National Conference of the civil service workers' union PCS (online, 13-14 June) had a number of motions from opposition groups which demanded the election of senior Full-time Officers (FTOs).

We believe that the majority of union FTOs should be elected. If you are negotiating on behalf of or organising members, you should be directly accountable to them. The two motions were very moderate in as much as they only demanded the election of certain roles, senior industrial officers and regional secretaries.

Shamefully, this was opposed by the leadership and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), an organisation which includes the election of union officers as one of their main trade union principles.

The Standing Orders Committee decided that they would fall if the National Executive Committee (NEC) motion in

that section was passed.

The NEC motion passed by a much closer margin than expected, 61k to 54k. A similar ratio continued throughout conference, representing the combined strength of left opposition on the virtual conference floor.

Independent Left comrades wrote and proposed a motion which would have instilled the principle that union full-timers should be on wages closer to those of our members

The motion was opposed by the leadership, including the SWP, using arguments which included the claim that if we limited Mark Serwotka's salary that he would resign (!), and that the GMB – which represents union full-timers – had stated that if the motion was passed, that they would be in dispute. In a similar way the leadership had passed a motion condemning John Moloney, upon his election as assistant general secretary, for only taking a worker's wage, claiming that it devalued their work.

Being a union full-timer is a vocation.

We don't believe that employees of the union should be on greatly inflated salaries, more than double, sometimes quadruple, those of the members.

The full-timers and their GMB branch should not be in control of the union. The members should.

Previous motions to conference on the question have received minimal support. However, this one got 39,314 votes for, with 75,818 against and 6,826 abstentions.

The section also included the only motion where the leadership's position was overturned. Motion A14, seconded by Independent Left supporters, condemned the inadequate legal support provided to reps and members and demanded assurances and minimum guarantees for when and how cases are dealt with, including publishing transparency data on cases taken-up.

Despite leadership opposition, the motion passed by a small margin of around 61k votes to 54k votes, largely on the strength of branches' own experiences and arguments on the day

convincing the minority of branches who had a "listen and decide" mandate from members.

The Campaigning and Bargaining section was headed by an NEC motion on the pay campaign.

This motion asked the conference to instruct the NEC to "maintain and build a powerful PCS national pay campaign". In fact there is no such campaign to maintain. The leadership has presided over pay inertia and has done little to campaign for an industrial response amongst members.

The NEC proposer lauded to conference the numerical increase in membership, choosing to omit the fact that membership density is haemorrhaging in our largest employer groups and, for the first time in living memory, density across the civil service is now below 50%.

The NEC motion was supported, but again the margin was closer than expected, 62k to 54k. □

• Abridged. More: [bit.ly/pcs-1314](https://bit.ly/pcs-1314)

# UCU congress votes for Uyghur and HK rights

By Josh Lovell, Cambridge UCU Congress delegate

Despite calls at the University and College Union (UCU) congress, 29 May to 2 June, for a motion on China and Uyghur and HK rights to be remitted (based partly on Uyghur genocide denial by members of the union's IBL faction, comprising the right wing and a smattering of "tankies"), remission was rejected by a slim margin (115-

91), and the full motion passed overwhelmingly (165-23).

The union now has a clear stance against the authoritarianism of the Chinese state, and for building links with pro-democracy currents within China, Hong Kong and East Turkestan.

The call to support the Myanmar Civil Disobedience Movement passed resoundingly and means the UCU will also strengthen ties with the movement resisting the

Burmese military coup. I also spoke in the debate on Israel/Palestine against boycotts of Israeli academic institutions, and the need to build links with pro-peace activist groups within Israel.

## IHRA

Delegates were critical of the government's move to force universities to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism into their statutes as potentially limiting rights to organise on cam-

pus and raising the disciplinary powers of our employers. However little was said about the educative value that the IHRA definition can provide in combating antisemitism. The outcome was that instead of campaigning against the need for enhancing statute rules, UCU branches will likely campaign for a different definition to be adopted, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. That definition does not come without its own problems, and

the fundamental problem of tackling left antisemitism, in my view, remained unaddressed by the union.

The Higher Education sector session was largely filled with discussion on how to respond to the latest [USS pension proposals](https://www.workersliberty.org/publications/uss-pension-proposals), with the Conference ultimately backing calls to build towards industrial action, with a live strike ballot by next term (Sep/Oct). □

• Abridged. More: [bit.ly/ucu-c](https://bit.ly/ucu-c)

# Sleeper battle continues with ban

The 11-day strike by RMT rail union members on the Caledonian Sleeper service finishes on 26 June. One of the strikers on the picket line in Glasgow spoke to Solidarity.

Support for the strike in Glasgow and the rest of Scotland is excellent. It is a dispute which we did not seek. All we want is a level of fairness from the employer, Serco, which runs the sleeper service.

Serco's Chief Executive had his pay increased to £4.9 million last year. Serco has paid out £17 million to its shareholders. But then Serco turns

round to us and tell us we're not getting a penny.

This shows contempt for a workforce which has given 100% and more.

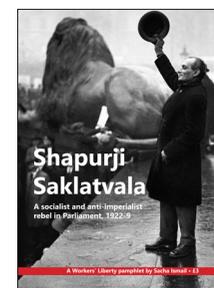
Serco is claiming that their hands are tied and that it is the Scottish Government which makes the decisions. But Serco was able to decide to pay millions to its Chief Executive and shareholders. So why can't they decide to pay us?

Throughout the pandemic we were the ones who were out at work, while management stayed at home. And now it will cost Serco more in train cancellations than what it would cost them

to give us a pay rise.

Our members come to the picket lines (which have been held every evening during the strike) when they can. We keep in touch by e-mail – we have around 40 members in the sleeper service, spread between Inverness, Fort William, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and London.

There has been no movement by management during the strike. They are not interested in talking to us. The strike will be followed by a ban on overtime and rest-day working, but at this stage we don't know what impact it will have. □



## A socialist and anti-imperialist

Shapurji Saklatvala was Labour's first BAME MP, and a revolutionary socialist and anti-imperialist. Learn about his life and struggles in this pamphlet, replete with lessons for today. £3. □

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

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

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

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

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

# Poring over the permit



## Diary of an engineer

By Emma Rickman

After a month of 360 decision-making and discussions with friends and colleagues, I've taken the job offered me as Compliance Technician. I'm now working in an open-plan office with two of the senior engineers.

There are technicians, managers and contractors coming in and out all day for chats, updates, complaining or getting permits signed.

P – the young Slovakian bloke doing maternity cover for the plant accountant/receptionist – is friendly and good fun. Somehow rumours have sprung up that he has a prosthetic leg (he doesn't, and walks normally, I don't get it.) We are both new starters and wrestling with the company IT department to get all our software installed. I often feel like I'm in sitcom.

Me: "Can I have Excel, please?" IT respond: No. Can I please have Excel? No. I need Excel to do my job, can you please install it? No – but here's an online version which we'll but shutting down soon...

P: "Wait until you get a Chromebook, then accessing the online version is a nightmare – it's Google Sheets or nothing."

I've been poring over the plant's permit – the legally-binding written document from the Environment Agency (EA) that explains exactly what the Plant is allowed to do and to what extent

we're allowed to do it. The rules extend to the milligrams of gases and particulate we're allowed to emit into the air; the pH of waste water we can send to the sewer; the types of waste we're allowed to burn; how long we can stay on-line in "abnormal" operation; what happens if we have to send furnace gases around the fabric filters and so on.

When the plant makes an emissions breach – almost never, I hope – part of my job is to make sure the EA is notified as soon as possible, with the time date, senior operator's details, extent and nature of the emission, wind speed and direction, outside temperature, measures taken to mitigate, and many other emergency measures to help the agency assess the extent of the damage.

I assume as the plant is on the edge of Sheffield that environmental breaches are considered more serious than those of a plant in the middle of nowhere.

The permit also explains how often the plant must report to the EA with details of everything arriving on and leaving site, including waste, heat energy, electrical power, chemical residues, test gases, maintenance stock, pints of milk, sewer waste, bad smells, noise, dust; the list is exhaustive. It's a document written by civil servants who are concerned with giving potential polluters as little wriggle-room as possible.

How we measure every substance arriving on and leaving site is also strictly controlled. After cross-referencing the codes for each regulation I have a long

list of British Standards, ISOs and European Directives to fine-tooth-comb. Each document specifies the method by which a chemical is measured, and how that machine or process is maintained and calibrated; this is the engineering I'll need to learn much more about.

My work with the electricians on the plant has been to take readings from instruments and do basic fault-finding, but we have never been permitted to fix a faulty analyser as our employers have a vested interest in rigging its readings. □

• Emma Rickman is an engineer at a Combined Heat and Power Plant.

## Pamphlets on the way

Within the next weeks, barring hitches, we will have two new publications in circulation from Workers' Liberty, plus another one which we'll promote, from the Momentum Internationalists Labour left network. They should all be available at Ideas for Freedom on 10-11 July.

**Corbynism: what went wrong?**, a 60-page Workers' Liberty booklet by Martin Thomas, recounts the story of the Corbyn era in Labour, 2015 to late 2019. Things "went right" for the left unexpectedly, and then "went wrong" again. Why? What lessons can we learn as we regroup?

The booklet is £4 (three copies for £10).

**The occupation of the Cammell Lairds shipyard in Birkenhead, 1984** (28 pages, £3) rescues a major story of working-class struggle from forgetfulness and puts it on permanent record. The occupation was set in the context of, but has been overshadowed in memory by, the year-long miners' strike of 1984-5, also over jobs. The story has been written up by John Cunningham, using materials contributed by Lol Duffy, a leader of the occupation and then an activist with *Socialist Organiser*, a forerunner of *Solidarity*.

**Build Back Socialist** (which will probably come out at similar length to the Lairds pamphlet) is under preparation in the Momentum Internationalists network. It indicts the management of the pandemic by the Tories, and other capitalist governments; shows that, under bland talk, their plans for reconstruction are regressive; and offers ideas on how the labour movement can regroup itself and work on reconstructing society. □

## Medical pioneers on film

By John Cunningham

Here's a film about the man whose name is forever associated with vaccination – the Frenchman Louis Pasteur. *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (director William Dieterle, 1936) concerns his struggle to convince a conservative medical establishment that diseases are caused by bacteria.

He is opposed by Emperor Napoleon III's personal physician Dr. Charbonnet. The Republican government which ousts Napoleon encourages Pasteur (actor Paul Munni) to continue his research which, in his experiments with anthrax, ultimately demonstrates the validity of his approach. One American review quipped: "If this story didn't have a happy ending you might not be alive to see it!"

There is no feature film of Edward Jenner but his development of a smallpox vaccine is shown on the 2012 BBC series *True Stories*. In a similar vein, *Semmelweis* (directed by Hungarian



Paul Munni as Louis Pasteur

Frigyes Bán, 1961) is about Ignác Semmelweis, a Hungarian doctor working in Vienna. He pioneered the use of antiseptics and saved the lives of thousands of pregnant women, but was persecuted by the medical establishment, not least because of his Jewish origins. Vaccination was first developed in Constantinople and China but I know of no film that depicts that. □



## DVLA out again 5 July



**John Moloney**

Our campaign at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) complex in Swansea increasingly looks like becoming a long and bitter dispute. The union is in it for the long haul and it's certainly necessary here. The next selective action strikes will be on Monday 5 July, Wednesday 7 July and Friday 9 July

We still don't know who pulled the plug on the deal that was on the table a few weeks ago and which could have settled the dispute. All the signs suggest it was Grant Shapps, the transport minister. MPs have asked questions in Parliament about who withdrew the deal, and he's simply refused to answer.

In the workplace, we're seeing a targeted campaign of denunciation, slander, and rumour-mongering spread about key branch activists. A petition has been launched demanding an end to the strikes, this is being promoted via an anonymous twitter account. It's all part of a coordinated campaign by management to undermine the dispute.

### Hurting the employer

The strikes have been hurting the employer, so much so that DVLA is shipping out work to private contractors to help clear the backlog created by the strikes. We're looking at what potential action we might be able to take around that. We are discussing possible forms of escalation, including longer strikes and ways to spread the dispute.

In Royal Parks, the notice for starting the ballot will go out this week. In collaboration with the United Voices of the World, who initially organised the workers, we've already talked about a

programme of action should the ballot be successful, which will involve escalating strikes taking place over several weeks.

On 21 June, there was a meeting of security guards employed by Mitie on the Cabinet Office contract. Mitie is threatening to use "fire and rehire" tactics across its civil service contracts. The Cabinet Office security guards are absolutely up for fighting that; we'll support and empower them and look to spread that combativeness across other Mitie contracts.

We will step up our recruitment and organisation amongst Mitie workers, and are looking to coordinate across contracts in a way we hadn't done before. We've written to the Scottish and Welsh governments demanding that they don't extend or renew contracts with Mitie, and we'll look to do the same with the Greater London Authority. We will make the same demand of the Westminster government, but in the other three cases the administrations are either Labour or, by their own lights, pro-trade union, so we have more leverage there. We want a prohibition on the use of "fire and rehire" tactics written into procurement policies, so no civil service contracts will go to any company that doesn't commit not to using such tactics. Ultimately of course we want all work brought in-house, and workers employed directly on civil service terms and conditions.

We have another potential dispute against "fire and rehire" at Homes England, a stand-alone body under the ambit of MHCLG, where we're waiting for management responses to our demands that they drop a "fire and rehire" threat. □

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

## Resist rail job cuts and pay freeze!



**Off The Rails**

**From Off The Rails**

The *Guardian* would have us believe that the "Rail Industry Recovery Group" (RIRG) talks are a prelude to cuts, saying an "agreement" has been signed by the four main rail unions (RMT, Aslef, TSSA, and Unite), according to which "voluntary redundancies will be sought throughout the railway to close the funding gap from an 80% decline in passenger revenue since the start of the pandemic."

RMT's own press release clarifies matters somewhat. The union says that, although it feels it has to participate in the RIRG, it will be doing so on the basis of promoting the following demands:

- Job Security Agreement to cover the whole rail industry that defends jobs and maintains pay, conditions and agreements. We reiterate our policy of No Compulsory Redundancies.
- Reward our members for their work and commitment now and in the future, we oppose pay cuts and do not accept a pay freeze.
- Defending and improving members' pensions.
- Ending casualisation, outsourcing, bogus self-employment and zero hours contracts. Bring in-house vital activities such as security, cleaning, rail catering, fleet engineering and infrastructure renewals.
- An industry-wide collective agreement that places all rail workers under a common contract and undertaking with restoration of full travel facilities and entitlement to enter and remain in the Railways Pension Scheme for all staff.
- Pursuing our policy agenda, including an integrated publicly owned railway as a solution.



Unless a union was in a position to ballot for national action immediately, boycotting the talks would most likely have been a futile gesture. But they must not be allowed to become a quagmire in which unions get bogged down by arguments – from bosses or conservative bureaucrats inside unions – that we can't possibly begin ballots for action whilst RIRG talks are still ongoing.

We can boost our chances of defending our jobs and wages by beginning preparations for ballots in every rail industry company affected by proposed job cuts and the pay freeze. And our most effective starting position is not opposition merely to compulsory redundancies, but opposition to all job cuts, by any means.

An informed and empowered rank and file can keep our unions' feet to the fire and maximise our chances of success. A good start to this would be for all the unions involved in the RIRG to report to members what was discussed immediately after every meeting of that body. □

• Abridged. More: [bit.ly/otr-rg](http://bit.ly/otr-rg). Also: Tyne and Wear Metro strike [bit.ly/tw-me](http://bit.ly/tw-me); East Midlands Railway guards strike [bit.ly/emr-g](http://bit.ly/emr-g)

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

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**10-11 July 2021 | Ideas for Freedom**

**Camden School For Girls, London, NW5 2DB**

# **SOCIALISM in an AGE of COVID**

**Saturday**

**11:30am-1:10pm**

» Is socialist revolution possible? Is it desirable? Ruth Cashman, Workers' Liberty, debates Professor John Strawson

» QAnon and the rise of a new far right, with Joe Mulhall, Hope Not Hate, and Cathy Nugent, Workers' Liberty

» Alan Turing and us

» Organising the unorganised. John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, PCS union (pc), and Kelly Rogers, former Picturehouse striker

» What should socialists say about the police and criminal justice system?, with Ellie Clarke, Workers' Liberty

**2:20pm-4pm**

» Should socialists support a "Progressive Alliance"? Neal Lawson (Compass) debates Elaine Jones

» Capitalism and mental health, with speakers including Susan Jones and Todd Hamer, Workers' Liberty

» The next wave of climate activism, with speakers including Simon Pirani, author of *Burning Up: A Global History of Fossil Fuel Consumption*, former MP Alan Simpson, and Vicki Morris, Workers' Liberty

» Covid: what we know and what we don't know, with Prof. George Davey Smith

» Class-struggle anti-racism, with Jocelyn Cruy-wagen, Vice Chair, Lambeth Unison, and Kas Witana

**4:20pm-6pm**

» The experience of "Corbynism" and the future of the left in Labour, with speakers including Alan Simpson, former Labour MP

» Winning freedom of speech, with Shiva Mah-bobi (CFPPI) and Cath Fletcher, Workers' Liberty

» China, Hong Kong, East Turkestan: workers' and democratic struggles, with Dilnaz Kerim (UK Uyghur community activist), plus speakers from the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign, Labour Movement Solidarity with Hong Kong, and more.

» Confronting antisemitism on the left, with Keith Kahn-Harris and Vicki Morris, Workers' Liberty

» Resisting Bolsonaro in Brazil, with Brazilian socialist Luisa Xavier

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**Sunday**

**10:00am-11:40am**

» What's happening in Myanmar? with speakers from the Myanmar labour movement

» The backlash against trans rights, with Christie Neary, Workers' Liberty

» Why you should read Lenin's 'What Is To Be Done?', with Paul Hampton

» The struggle against occupation and racism in Israel/Palestine: with Omar Raii, Workers' Liberty, plus an on-the-ground report from Dana Naomi Mills, Peace Now Israel

**12:30pm-14:10pm**

» Trade unionism in and after lockdowns, with speakers including Prof. Gregor Gall and Janine Booth, RMT activist and Workers' Liberty

» Left perspectives on Lebanon's protest movement, with Lebanese socialist Joey Ayoub

» Understanding the Renaissance, with Prof. Cath Fletcher, author, *The Beauty and the Terror*

» USA: where next for workers, unions, and the left? with speakers including Traven Leyshon, Vermont AFL-CIO and Democratic Socialists of America

» What is socialist feminism? With women activists in Workers' Liberty

**2:30pm-4:10pm**

» From #MeToo to the future: confronting violence against women, with Mithu Sanyal, author of *Rape: From Lucretia to #Me Too*, and Jill Mountford (Workers' Liberty)

» Resisting the Tories' immigration policy: the fight for free movement, with Ana Oppenheim, Labour Campaign for Free Movement, and Josh Lovell

» The historical roots of antisemitism on the left

» Erdogan: Turkish imperialist?

» Geoengineering, carbon drawdown: thinking through climate futures, with Holly Jean Buck, author, *After Geoengineering*, and Zack Muddle

**Plus...**

» **Thursday 8th:** film screening and discussion *Dear Comrades!*

» **Friday 9th:** walking tour "Battersea vs the British Empire" □



# **Osime Brown: how we stopped a deportation**

**From Neurodivergent Labour**

On 15 June, the Home Office decided that it would not proceed with their barbaric intention to deport autistic, learning-disabled man Osime Brown to a place he has no knowledge of.

The victory comes after more than a year of campaigning by a coalition of activists and organisations, under the instrumental guidance of Osime's mum, Joan. When ND Labour came into the campaign about a year ago, awareness about the case was limited to a layer of autistic and neurodivergent activists and migrants' rights groups. It was a campaign typical of the classic style: a petition and social media, drawing supporters to spread the message online, raise the petition numbers, and get media coverage.

Strong efforts had gone into laying the foundations – Autistic Inclusive Meets (AIM) in particular done important work amongst others. But we knew we had to raise the bar. We knew that the campaign had huge potential to rapidly grow because of the breadth and the significance of the issues that it highlighted – autism, migrants' rights, and all at a time when Black Lives Matter protests were sweeping the country.

The role of Neurodivergent Labour in the campaign was to draw together the dimensions of the struggle – autism, migrants' rights, racism, and the failures of educational and social care systems. This was something that happened organically, but it needed a more explicit voice. Even though our organisation is focussed on neurodivergence, we knew that it was no good just emphasising Osime's autism, because, as cases like this show, you can't just fight for autistic rights, while migrant rights are under attack; and you can't fight for either of those things without recognising the history and daily reality of racial injustice. It was our job to tie these issues

together, and to bring them into Labour and the trade unions in order to mobilise the power and the universality of the workers' movement behind them. As a result, different, and hitherto disparate political activists and organisations became more understanding and sympathetic to struggles beyond their immediate horizons.

Along with many individual CLPs and trade union branches, two national unions supported the campaign. An Early Day Motion was tabled in Parliament led by Nadia Whittome and John McDonnell and we brought the experience of the Labour Campaign for Free Movement on board. We spoke at meetings, and pushed the issue into the movement from top to bottom.

Most importantly of all, we needed to move this issue from social media, onto the streets.

We were constantly stymied by lockdown regulations to hold a mass demonstration, although some smallish, weekday protests had happened prior.

By the time Kill the Bill Protests were happening across the country, Osime's name was on placards and being talked about in speeches, and after some delay the campaign agreed to hold a march from the Home Office to Parliament Square before a final decision about whether to continue with the deportation was made. About 200 people turned up at short notice, and it was beautiful to see the flowering of a campaign that truly intersected across so many lines and campaigns.

We are proud of having played our role in this campaign. The best victories happen when grassroots labour movement initiatives are willing to act as the adhesive that binds together the different elements of our class in all of its diversity.

Osime still has an unjust conviction against his name. The campaign to clear him continues. Sign the new petition: [bit.ly/clear-ob](http://bit.ly/clear-ob) □



# Solidarity

For a workers' government

## COVID WON'T END. IT CAN BE CURBED, WITH DIFFERENT POLICIES



**Covid-19**

By Martin Thomas

Sixty-four per cent of applications for the official £500 Covid-isolation payment have been rejected since the scheme was expanded early this year. The councils who administer it complain of restrictive government rules and limited funds.

Even after many gains on isolation pay won by campaigning in the last year and a half, 51 per cent in insecure jobs get zero sick pay, and 31 per cent receive just Statutory Sick Pay (SSP, £95.85 a week).

30% of all low-paid workers get just SSP, and 19% get no sick pay. All those figures are from a [TUC survey](#).

Back in early 2020, civil service bosses saw a way that the furlough scheme could be used to cover isolation pay, but [chose](#) not to publicise it.

Poor isolation pay isn't the only reason for low rates of Covid-isolation, but it is one. With infections rising again since 7 May with the Delta variant, the issue has new urgency.

Vaccinations will *probably* curb the impact of Delta in Britain in the next weeks. Our Ideas for Freedom summer school on

10-11 July, with precautions, will have Covid-safety of similar order to a visit to a supermarket. But curbed is not zero. Months to come will demand vigilance, with possible new variants, tourism expanding, life less outdoors, and, maybe, vaccine protection fading.

Outside Britain, Delta is already spreading fast in Europe, though from a small base as yet except in Portugal. It will probably spread fast in the USA.

### Vaccines

The USA and Europe may keep the impact low by vaccinations; but maybe not. Most European countries have lower vaccination rates and looser covid-distancing than the UK.

In richer countries vaccinations have been at around 0.8 doses per 100 people per day. The world average rate has risen over 0.4, thanks to a sharp acceleration in China. But over the last month the rate in Africa has been 0.04, in India 0.18, in Bangladesh almost zero.

And, as Delta spreads, worldwide, already in Africa the case-count is three times its mid-May level, and in Bangladesh four times.

So far Africa has counted less than 7% the average Covid death rate of Europe. (And Bangladesh, less than 6%). We

don't know how much that is due to undercounting, how much to the population being younger, and how much to such as, [maybe](#), some immunity derived from previous disease burden. We don't know enough to exclude the possibility of Delta taking a huge new toll in Africa, and in already-hard-hit South America too. (Cases are rising yet again in Brazil).

Covid waves will probably never end, only fade. The successes of vaccination, however, show that they can be curbed. So do the relatively low tolls in some European countries like Norway, Finland, Denmark. They have not been able to lock down their borders like New Zealand. They have prevailed mostly, it seems, through previously-acquired better sick pay, housing, elderly care, work conditions, health-system capacity, etc.; and limited lockdowns too, of course.

To open out civil rights, to keep schools operating, to restore meeting and socialising, is important. The labour movement can be effective on that front and against the virus only if we fight for full isolation pay for all, for workers' control of workplace safety, and to requisition Big Pharma to vaccinate the whole world at emergency speed. □