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STOP THE FAR RIGHT

**FIGHT RACISM AND RIOTS
WITH SOCIALIST POLICIES**

FAR RIGHT

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WE TAKE THE WORKERS' STANDPOINT

MARXISM

Workers Power is a paper on the side of workers and the oppressed. It uses a Marxist method to explain capitalism, crisis, war and oppression, and to argue for the strategy needed to change society.

CLASS STRUGGLE

Workers Power argues that socialism is the self-emancipation of the working class. It supports rank-and-file organisation, democratic control from below, and every effort by workers to organise and lead their own struggles.

REVOLUTION

Workers Power is about more than highlighting the injustices of the system or backing individual struggles. It argues that capitalism must be overthrown and replaced by workers' power, common ownership and democratic planning. This paper exists to help win people to that politics.



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This summer stop the fascists in their tracks

EDITORIAL

For two years running, the far right has tried to intimidate migrants, Muslims, Black and Asian communities and the left. In 2024, false claims about the Southport murders were seized on to mobilise anti-migrant riots: mosques attacked, asylum hotels targeted, copycat violence across the country. Last year brought repeated sieges outside asylum hotels, and the 'Raise the Colours' campaign wrapped the same intimidation in the Union Jack and the St George's flag.

This is not yet a mass fascist movement. The far right remains fragmented and often dependent on online agitation. But it has gained confidence, drawing strength from a wider reactionary climate: Reform's anti-migrant demagoguery, the Tory right's culture war, the tabloid press and Labour's own concessions over refugees, borders and 'British values'.

The racists can mobilise hundreds, sometimes more. But they can be outnumbered by workers, students, migrants, trade unionists and local communities. The problem is not numbers. It is the absence of coordination, democratic preparation, disciplined stewarding and a clear strategy.

Two-tier policing: the myth

The right's answer to everything is the same: 'two-tier policing'. White Britons, they claim, are persecuted by forces captured by 'woke' anti-racism while minorities are protected.

The murder of Henry Nowak in Southampton has been seized on for this purpose. Henry Nowak was murdered, his family deserves justice, and the police conduct in the case demands investigation. But Farage, Robinson and the far right are not interested in the truth. They want to turn a murder into racial propaganda. Farage called for 'cold rage'—the same Farage who, after Sarah Everard was murdered by a serving police officer, said men and the police should not be 'blamed'. His supporters claim the case proves white people are the victims of anti-racist policing. That is a lie. The police did not act with too much anti-racism; they acted with the arrogance and disregard for working-class life they show in countless other cases.

Since 1990, nearly 2,000 people have died during or following police contact in England and Wales, and criminal accountability for those deaths is almost non-existent. A 2026 study for the Mayor of London found Black Londoners 3.4 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white Londoners, and in some wards up to 48 times more likely. That is the real two-tier system: protection for property and reactionary mobilisation; suspicion, surveillance and violence for workers, minorities and migrants.

Two-tier policing: the truth

The police are not neutral between fascists and anti-fascists. Their job is to maintain public order for the state, which in practice means let-

ting racists march while kettling or dispersing those who oppose them. Anti-fascists who rely on the police, or accept police-imposed arrangements without argument, end up penned far from the racists while the far right is escorted through the streets.

Static counter-demonstrations, approved routes and symbolic rallies can mobilise numbers, but they leave the initiative with the police. The result is a moral protest, not an effective confrontation. Brighton in June showed the alternative: around 4,000 joined the Carnival Against Fascism, dwarfing a much smaller anti-migrant mobilisation and denying the far right any appearance of popular support. But numbers alone are not enough. Where police try to separate the sides, anti-fascists need stewards, communications, legal support, first aid, local knowledge and a plan. With that, the far right can be isolated and stopped from intimidating the communities it targets.

Strategy

Stand Up To Racism, led by the SWP, is the main—often the only—national anti-racist campaign. Its real problem is its politics: a broad-left approach designed to secure trade union backing and respectability. Too often it subordinates the counter-mobilisation to police restrictions, static rallies and symbolic protest, assembling anti-fascists in large numbers but holding them away from the fascists they came to oppose. The Together Alliance is no better: broad appeals to unity against hatred leave the initiative with others. Nor can we rely on Labour politicians who have legitimised anti-migrant politics by competing with the right over borders and deportations.

The alternative is organised working-class anti-fascism. That means local defence committees wherever the far right threatens to mobilise, involving union branches, trades councils, tenants' groups, migrant organisations and student and community campaigns. These cannot be paper fronts. They must map far-right targets, organise transport, stewarding, first aid and legal observers, know the terrain, and mobilise quickly and democratically against arrangements that leave racists free to intimidate.

Trade unions are central. Every branch should back counter-mobilisations under its own banner and defend members targeted by racists, and no worker should have to share a workplace with organised racists who threaten their colleagues. But anti-fascism also means politics. The far right grows in the soil of social crisis: falling wages, insecure housing, collapsing services and resentment. The answer is a working-class programme—jobs, homes, services, public ownership, trade union and migrant rights—that shows the enemy is not the migrant worker but the bosses, landlords and politicians who have driven living standards down.

Starmer falls and Burnham prepares Labour's reboot

KD Tait

After Starmer's resignation, Andy Burnham promises a Labour reboot from 'No. 10 North'—all while committing to the fiscal straitjacket imposed by Starmer and Reeves.

Keir Starmer has gone. In announcing his departure, he claimed his greatest legacy was a Labour Party in parliament without a left wing.

He set out to erase Corbynism, reassure the City, the state, the generals and Washington, and prove that Labour could run Britain without threatening property, profits or imperial alliances. On those terms, he largely succeeded. What failed was the parliamentary party's confidence that Starmer's lifeless son-of-a-toolmaker-turned-technocrat schtick could win another election.

Labour won office with a huge majority of seats, though with nearly a million fewer votes than under Corbyn, then governed as if the country could be repaired without confronting the forces that led us here. Wage rises did not meet the cost of living, services were starved, councils bankrupted, housing made unaffordable. Migrants were scapegoated. Gaza exposed Labour's loyalty to imperialism. Reform fed off anger that Starmer could neither answer nor organise against.

The government tried to drive through deep cuts to disability benefits and retreated only under a major backbench revolt. It proscribed Palestine Action under terrorism legislation, criminalising expressions of support, with police arresting thousands and charging hundreds, before the ban was upheld by the Court of Appeal. It moved to restrict jury trials for offences expected to attract sentences of three years or less.

Burnham's reboot

Andy Burnham has a political style Starmer lacked: regional roots, a mayoral record and an instinct for the language of place, pride, buses, towns, high streets, housing and public control. He can speak to grievances Starmer barely recognised.

But his pitch is not a return to Corbynism. It is another way of preserving the post-Corbyn settlement: the same Labour government with a regional accent, softer edges and a social-democratic wrapper.

His Manchester speech on 29 June was written for that purpose. Burnham promised a "No. 10 North", the "nerve centre" of a "rewired Britain". He denounced the broken Westminster model, promised "good growth in every postcode" and set out a 10-year mission to rebalance power and living standards.

There would be more public control over water, energy, transport and housing; a major council housebuilding programme; education, youth employment and technical training; business rates reform; procurement in favour of British firms; and reindustrialisation in steel, energy, food and defence.

Its appeal is obvious. Britain is disfigured by centralised rule, regional inequality, collapsing transport, dead high streets, insecure work, unaffordable housing and social abandonment. But Burnham's claim that Labour must mainly win back voters drifting to Reform rests on dubious assumptions. Reform is a real threat, but YouGov's local election voter-flow data found Labour's 2024 voters broke more heavily to the Greens and Liberal Democrats than to Reform. "Winning back Reform voters" can quickly become the rationale for tacking right on migration, policing and national identity—the very ground on which Starmer was beaten.

Manchesterism

Burnham's radical language runs into the same wall elsewhere. He promises the "biggest change in our lifetimes" while recommitting to Labour's 2024 manifesto and the fiscal rules: a new direction inside the framework that trapped Starmer.

He wants to redistribute power, but not class power. He wants public control, but will not say expropriation. He wants council housing, but not the fight with the Treasury that building it would require. Reindustrialisation, yes—but within the confines of national competitiveness and capitalist growth, which spell job losses and pay restraint.

There is plenty of public relations in Manchesterism. Its slogans—good growth, "No. 10 North", rewiring Britain, hope in every heart—are elastic where they are not vacuous. Business hears regional growth and public-private partnership. The soft left hears public control and council housing. The unions hear influence. Labour MPs hear a route out of Starmer's collapse without reopening the Corbyn question.

But "Manchesterism" is not empty posturing. It is a political form: mayoral managerialism, devolution, local growth coalitions, selective state intervention, civic boosterism and a more empathetic language of leadership. It shifts power geographically, not socially. It attacks Whitehall central-

ism, not capitalist ownership. It talks about place as a substitute for class. It offers public control without workers' control.

That is why Burnham is more dangerous for the left than Starmer. Where Starmer had to rely on discipline, Burnham will rely on incorporation. He can appear to be "not Starmer" while remaining acceptable to the Labour right, the state, business, the union bureaucracy and much of the liberal left.

Personnel punctures the rhetoric. Burnham's intended chief of staff, James Purnell, is a Blair-era minister who introduced welfare-to-work schemes, and former chief executive of Flint Global, a corporate advisory firm whose clients have included BP, Uber and Amazon. Burnham talks about public control over water and energy; but the monopolies will read Purnell's appointment as insurance against nationalisation.

The liberal left is already trying to find a theory in "Burnhamism": the New Statesman sees a productive-state politics, Tribune hopes for a "transformative programme", while The Mill questions whether there is any doctrine behind the performance. None answers the decisive question: which class will control the programme?

The union test

The row over the Treasury is already testing Burnham's coalition. Unison has backed Ed Miliband for chancellor, seeing him as more likely to support investment, public control and a break with Reeves-style orthodoxy. Unite and GMB oppose him over net zero and North Sea licences, fearing for jobs in oil, gas and related industries.

Unite and GMB are right to reject a transition paid for with workers' jobs. But that cannot mean defending the investment plans of Shell, BP or Equinor. Unison is right to look for a break with Reeves-style Treasury rule. But a green transition managed through markets, subsidies and private energy firms will not deliver justice either.

Union and Labour Party members should say: no job losses, no new private fossil-fuel bonanza, no market-led transition that sacrifices workers or climate to the balance sheets of the energy giants. The whole energy system—oil, gas, electricity, grids, renewables and water, generation and supply—should be taken into public ownership under workers' control, without compensation.

Workers in affected industries need guaranteed jobs, wages, retraining and union control over transition plans before their jobs are destroyed. A democratic plan should direct investment

into insulation, public transport, grid upgrades, renewable manufacturing and socially useful production.

This is what it means to decommodify energy: not price caps, regulation or begging private firms to invest, but taking the assets and profits, placing them under democratic control, and planning our way out of the market.

No blank cheque

Burnham's favourite phrase, "public control", raises the same issue. Does it mean nationalisation, municipal ownership, regulation, state shareholding, public-private partnership or workers' control?

Nor is devolution the same as democracy. Moving power from Whitehall to mayors and combined authorities can empower local business coalitions as easily as workers and tenants. The example of Manchester shows Burnham means the former. Any real rebalancing must be based on elected delegates from workplaces, unions, tenants' organisations, climate campaigns, migrant communities and working-class neighbourhoods.

The unions should give Burnham no blank cheque. Whether Miliband, Streeting or anyone else sits in No. 11, the fiscal rules, the manifesto and capitalist ownership remain unless the labour movement forces a break.

Instead of choosing between ministers, the unions should convene a labour movement conference around a workers' emergency programme: repeal the anti-union laws, restore pay and services, defend migrants, stop arms shipments to Israel, oppose Nato rearmament, end repression of the Palestine movement, scrap Shabana Mahmood's anti-immigrant measures, and immediately take energy, water, rail, mail and the banks into democratic public ownership under workers' control.

Burnham's rise is a warning, not a solution. Labour is trying to renew itself before the working class renews its own organisations. Socialists should neither sneer from the sidelines nor climb aboard the Burnham bandwagon. Every promise has to be turned into a demand, every contradiction into a campaign, every union argument into a fight for independent working class policy.

Starmer too arrived as the change. Within a year his national renewal had become cuts, repression and retreat. Burnham now sells hope, place and a Northern reboot from inside the same fiscal rules, the same ownership of wealth and the same imperialist alliances. Unless the labour movement forces a break with all three, the new direction will lead back to the old disappointment.

Who are Restore Britain?

Oscar J

In the 2024 general election, Reform UK managed to win five parliamentary seats on 14.3% of the national vote. The far right were, on the whole, less than pleased with that seat distribution. Reform's arc of thought was then represented by their five MPs—Farage, Tice, Lowe, Anderson, and McMurdock—who had converged at various points along the UKIP-Brexit-Reform route.

This caused quite some chafing; each one was well-placed to expand their control over the party's image by positioning themselves further to the right than their peers. And the appetite among the anti-immigrant racist right was—and is—strong, as can be seen in the annual pogroms, surrounding of asylum hotels, and flag-hoisting.

In January 2025, Elon Musk called on Nigel Farage to resign as leader of Reform and endorsed Rupert Lowe for leader in a spat apparently stemming from Musk's support for fascist rabble rouser Yaxley-Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson. Farage tactically disagreed with Musk's manic support for Robinson, leading to the collapse of talks about large donations to the party.

Although Lowe affirmed his loyalty to the boss, this apparently was enough of a threat to Farage's position that Lowe was suspended in March 2025. This was officially due to allegations of physical threats from Lowe towards party chair Zia Yusuf, and workplace bullying towards two female employees in his offices.

So, what now was Lowe to do? His job had just become tenuous, sitting as an independent MP. But by steering further right, he could survive the next election and influence Reform's politics. Lowe's answer then was Restore Britain: first as a pressure group, then becoming a

formal party in time for the recent local elections.

And pressure them it has! Any position Reform takes, Restore takes its shadow; a darker image of the same general shape. On immigration, Reform campaigns on the mass deportation of illegal migrants, scrapping indefinite leave to remain, and building a 'fully integrated border command'. Restore says much the same, but with the additional 'Great Replacement' dog whistle: 'Mass immigration has been a disaster for Britain... By 2030 native British births will account for fewer than 50% of total births in Britain. By 2070, native Brits will be an absolute minority.'

While Reform is happy to keep its complaints about 'family voting' (a thinly veiled and unsubstantiated complaint about Muslims' voting patterns) during the Gorton and Denton by-election to simple rhetoric and complaints in the news, Restore puts out a policy proposal: 'End Political Islam and Other Forms of Ethnoreligious Bloc Voting.'

To the racists the meaning is clear, and the unspoken call to action even clearer. No statement is made to say that 'native' births falling below than 50% of total births would be a bad thing; it is merely a statistical 'fact'.

But every racist who reads it understands what is said, yet unsaid: your race is under attack; the decline you have seen is not because of capitalism, but the impoverished migrant who steals your jobs, your taxes, your women! Where Reform flirts with racism and conspiracy, Restore warmly and openly embraces it.

At the Makerfield by-election, which saw Restore come third behind Labour's Andy Burnham and Reform's Robert Kenyon, a group of self-admitted Restore supporters chased the Reform election bus in a van with 'Muslims for Reform'



painted on the side. While this was disavowed on twitter by Lowe, it makes clear the composition of Restore's support. It comes from the furthest of far right, eating into the support of niche hard-right street groupings—those who might think that Reform is compromised for its inclusion of Muslim members.

Restore has also attracted support from several fascist leaders. According to Hope not Hate, officials from the British Democratic Party, BNP, For Britain, and the leadership of Patriotic Alternative have all supported the new Restore movement. Whether or not this endorsement is accepted by Lowe, the fact remains: further right than Reform is after all his core of support.

The fascist right will organise behind

Lowe and Restore, and Lowe will keep getting juicy donations, so long as he keeps momentum rightward. Lowe is happy to do so. And so, a street movement grows from this absorbed fascist tradition. They will not become tame parliamentary voters; they will be the brick-throwers and building-burners who inflict violence upon non-white people they see in the street.

Restore moves wherever it can outflank from the right; it gives parliamentary legitimacy to the roving bands of racist terror-mongers on the street. It brings together the worst of the global online right's political thought, from Trump, Musk, and Vance to Karl Benjamin and Tommy Robinson, and wraps them in an electoral sheen.

WHAT WE SAY

Workers Power

Restore Britain is not yet a fascist party. It is a far-right electoral vehicle led by Rupert Lowe, drawing on the space opened by Reform's crisis and the wider rightward shift over migration, 'Britishness' and law and order. Its significance is that it gives political expression to forces to the right of Reform and offers fascist and ethnonationalist currents a way in.

Its programme shows the direction. Restore calls for 'reverse mass immigration', warns that 'native Brits' will become a minority, demands mass deportations, would abolish the asylum system, and treats Muslim political participation as a problem under the heading 'End Political Islam and Other Forms of Ethnoreligious Bloc Voting'. This is racialised demographic politics, built on the language of 'remigration' and national decline.

That is why the organised far right has taken an interest. Hope not Hate and *The Times* have reported support for Restore from figures linked to the BNP, British

Democratic Party, Patriotic Alternative and other neo-fascist circles. Whether Lowe welcomes every endorsement is beside the point: Restore's politics make it a natural point of attraction for these forces.

Tommy Robinson fits the same pattern. He learned long ago that an overtly Nazi or BNP-style party was too narrow a vehicle, and built instead a broad anti-Muslim, 'counter-jihad' street movement dressed up as patriotic and anti-establishment—drawing in football-firm elements, online racists, hard-right populists and fragments of the old fascist milieu. He has not left the far right behind; he has modernised its presentation, pushing the Nazi imagery aside and moving anti-Muslim racism and replacement conspiracies to the centre.

Farage knows the risk of embracing Robinson too openly. He echoes many of Robinson's themes but wants Reform to stay electorally respectable. Lowe's reported comment that Robinson would

be 'welcome' in Restore signals a different boundary: it tells the hardest right that Restore is a possible shelter for those who find Farage too restrained.

Makerfield showed the limits too. Restore won 6.8%—a notable result for a new party, but far behind Labour and Reform, and no breakthrough. The comparison with the BNP's 7.4% there in 2010 is useful only with care: the BNP was then a more disciplined fascist organisation, whereas Restore operates where racial nationalism is less organised but more widely normalised through social media, Reform and the press.

The lesson from the National Front, BNP and EDL is clear. Such forces grow when left to organise unopposed as ordinary patriots; they are pushed back when they are exposed, isolated and confronted by organised working-class and anti-racist mobilisation. Restore is not yet a fascist party, but it is helping create the space in which fascists regroup. That is reason enough to organise against it now.

Unison at a crossroads: left must turn to the rank and file

Jeremy Dewar

Andrea Egan's election as general secretary marks a shift left in Britain's biggest union. But a right wing NEC majority, and a strategy that leaves disputes in officials' hands, mean the real fight is to build the rank and file.

Britain's biggest union, Unison, held its annual conference in June, the first with Andrea Egan as general secretary. However, the National Executive (NEC), which elects the president and controls conference, retains a slim right wing majority. This parallel-ogram of forces led to a fiercely fought contest in Brighton.

There was a 50-strong walkout when Angela Rayner was invited to speak. Rayner was the architect of the deeply disappointing Employment Rights Act, and last year was expelled from Unite for her disgraceful criminalisation of pickets during the long-running Birmingham bin strike. Her backing for the reversal of trans rights, and for Shabana Mahmood's anti-migrant legislation, was too much for many delegates to bear.

Then delegates from Lambeth Unison were expelled from conference for the 'offence' of distributing, outside conference, a motion that the Standing Orders Committee had ruled out on the habitual excuse of 'legal jeopardy'. The motion called for defiance of the ruling that transgender people had to use facilities corresponding to their 'biological' sex, condemning thousands to the humiliation of being outed by managers and reactionaries acting as genital police.

Gains

Union membership was up for the fourth year in a row, although the rate of growth was slowing. There have also been some material successes, especially in the health sector. Dorset NHS workers voted by 94% for strike action against subcontractors undercutting pay rates and imposing atrocious conditions.

On the back of this, the Labour government conceded and ruled out the use of these cowboy outfits unless they had 'union approval'. More generally, Unison boasted that it had won over £300 million in back pay in its Pay Fair for Patient Care campaign since January 2025.

The left put both the recruitment and the NHS gains down to its Organising to Win model. But while the number of strike ballots has increased dramatically, it's still not impressive: 274 ballots over the past year, but over 200 of these in higher education alone, meaning the giant health, schools and local council sectors have barely seen an increase in action.

OTW is modelled on Jane McAlevey's left bureaucratic procedures; it is slow, deliberately targets small units rather than whole workforces, demands

'super-majorities' and leaves control of disputes in full-time officers' hands.

The big test will come with the national pay ballot. Unison is demanding 10% or £3,000, whichever is the greater, while the employers have offered a mere 3.3% flat increase—in real terms a pay freeze. The new ERA promises to remove the unfair 50% turnout threshold and to allow electronic voting, but neither has been implemented yet, not to mention the raft of anti-union laws still on the statute book. The ballot opens on 9 July and it will take a massive effort by activists to deliver a Yes vote.

Labour Party

One subject not on the agenda was the union's relationship to Labour. Andrea Egan, a party member herself, told a fringe meeting that she had 'stood up for migrants and trans rights' when she met Keir Starmer. But the decision on the union's affiliation to Labour is in the hands of the 13.7% of members who are in the Labour Link (itself a notoriously undemocratic organisation).

This means that, unlike Unite, which will debate the issue at its rules conference in 2027, Unison's support for Labour is likely to continue. But Egan must be forced to demand that Andy Burnham—or whoever else is elected—reverse the attacks on migrants and trans people, stop funding and arming Israel, and introduce new, stronger employment rights legislation, on pain of withholding funding from the party and withdrawing sponsorship of MPs.

In tandem with this, activists must demand that the union's broad left organisation, Time for Real Change, really changes. Egan's election manifesto was cobbled together by a few SWP members and Labour lefts because TFRC does not have a meaningful membership structure and has never held a conference of its own. It is solely oriented to winning elections, not organising in the workplace.

However, there is an appetite—and a clear need—for a change of direction. When London TFRC held an in-person meeting to discuss how to win strikes, run ballots and escalate disputes, comrades found it sharp and practical. We need more meetings like it, and a democratic structure to place TFRC at the service of its rank and file members.

Only by taking these steps to organise a rank and file movement at the base of the union can electoral successes become a platform for transforming Unison into a fighting, democratic union.



Migrant workers: the new indentured labour

Hundreds of migrant care workers rallied in Parliament Square on 17 June to demand fair visas now. The Unison-organised campaign aims to win MPs to call for an end to the appalling conditions faced by migrant care workers. Every union must support this campaign—and spread it.

Migrants came to Britain on the promise that they could apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) after five years. This prospect has been ripped from them by Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood. Now they have to wait at least 15 years, during which time their right to live and work in the UK is determined by the employer who holds their certificate of sponsorship (COS).

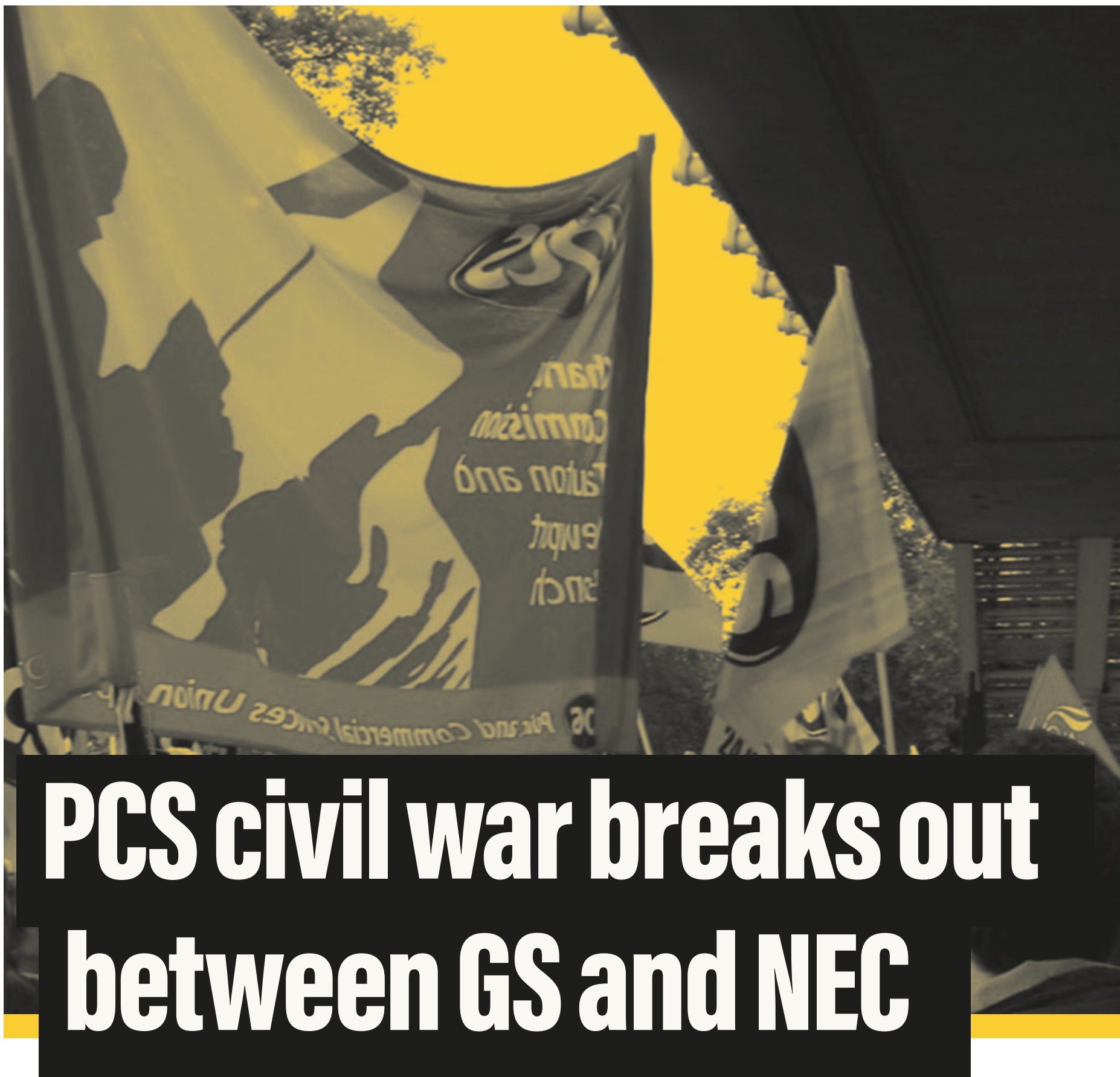
If they take a day off sick, go on strike, or simply fall foul of the boss's whim, their COS can be ripped up—leaving them 60 days to find a new job, which is far from easy, before deportation orders are issued. Employers regularly charge migrants up to £20,000 for a COS that costs the boss just £1,500. Some 'companies' are

mere shells: migrants arrive to find no job at all, and just two months to find another—or face removal.

This is modern-day slavery by another name. In the 17th century, indentured servants were typically granted their freedom after seven years. The Labour government in the 21st century has more than doubled that.

Even if they obtain ILR status, it can be stripped at any time, while migrants are forbidden from bringing their spouses to the UK, denying them any family life. If their job is scrubbed from the Temporary Shortage List, they too can be deported. Despite paying tax and National Insurance, they have no recourse to public funds. Sacked migrants cannot use unfair dismissal law or the Equality Act to protect themselves.

All trade unions and Labour MPs must campaign loudly for fair visas, an end to the sponsorship racket, and full rights for every worker regardless of status. An injury to one is an injury to all—and the labour movement cannot leave migrant workers to fight alone.



PCS civil war breaks out between GS and NEC

PCS Activists

The PCS union is paralysed by General Secretary Fran Heathcote's refusal to accept the authority of the NEC majority members elected only weeks ago.

This is a battle over who runs the union—the membership through their elected representatives, or a bureaucratic caste that has presided over years of defeats. And over what the union does: whether it accepts the government's 3.5% pay offer, or mobilises to win more.

Heathcote appears to have instructed union employees to refuse the President and NEC access to union resources, including comms, and to refuse to facilitate meetings of the NEC and National Disputes Committee (NDC). The NDC's

paralysis means no decisions on industrial disputes. A sacked union rep is waiting for help with rent and bills. FCDO staff are waiting for the green light on strike action.

PCS members need a fighting, democratic union where members decide and officials provide.

Manufactured crisis

The 2026 NEC elections produced a clear result: the Coalition for Change (CfC) won a 21–14 majority and the presidency. Turnout was low, reflecting years of demoralisation and disengagement after repeated defeats under LU's stewardship. But among those who did vote, the majority voted for change.

Yet LU and the General Secretary (GS) quickly moved to block the new

majority from exercising its mandate by insisting that the NEC must operate under the previous year's Standing Orders which, for example, prevent NEC members from reporting back to union members about NEC discussions and decisions.

These Standing Orders also say that a president's ruling on standing orders can only be overturned by a two-thirds majority, i.e. 24 votes. This is the mechanism LU used in 2024–25 to allow then-President Martin Cavanagh to rule by decree, ignoring the NEC majority and blocking attempts to implement conference decisions. The new Standing Orders proposed by CfC would allow the President to be overruled by a simple majority (18 votes).

As the Broad Left Network noted in

their statement, 'The same powers that Martin Cavanagh used to rule by decree in 2024–25 are now being defended by the General Secretary to prevent the newly elected majority from carrying out its mandate.'

The new president, Bev Laidlaw, could simply repeat Cavanagh's behaviour. But CfC has taken a principled position: the NEC majority must be able to overturn presidential rulings, and the president must not wield monarchical powers.

LU defended presidential absolutism when it suited them. CfC is rejecting it even though it would benefit them. That contrast is the crisis in miniature: LU is defending their own power, not 'the rules'.

The Independent Left's (part of the CfC)

account of the NEC meeting explains that a new NEC is not required to inherit standing orders from the previous year as though they were part of the union's constitution. Standing orders are procedural rules adopted by the NEC for the conduct of its own business; they are not the PCS rulebook itself.

If the outgoing leadership wanted last year's standing orders to have binding force over the new NEC, then those rules should have been openly shared with members, debated transparently, justified politically and voted on at an Annual Delegate Conference like all other rule changes. Instead, they are being used as an internal device to discipline the newly elected majority. On that basis, the new NEC had every right to consider and adopt its own standing orders consistent with the union's rules and the democratic mandate given to it by members.

The proposed standing orders described by the CfC were modest democratic safeguards, not a coup. They would allow the NEC to:

- create additional subcommittees, including on pensions
- make progress on conference decisions a standing item at subcommittee meetings
- hold more frequent NEC meetings; circulate minutes and records of decisions to branches
- allow motions to be debated and voted on so the NEC can respond to emerging issues
- remove the gagging clause preventing NEC members from reporting discussions to reps and members, and
- allow the president to be overruled by a simple majority.

The disputed proposals amount to making the NEC more transparent and accountable to the membership. A big concern is that compromising with the GS on what standing orders she will allow the NEC to pass will not just impact the transparency of the NEC, but will also mean that anytime she doesn't agree with the NEC she can simply use sabotage to get her way.

Power grab

The conflict is not only about standing orders. It is also about who controls the union's machinery. General Secretary Fran Heathcote has asserted that she alone controls staffing and communications. This allowed her to email PCS members setting out her faction's narrative, while the NEC majority is forced to rely on personal social media accounts.

Heathcote's article on the PCS website makes her intentions clear. She accuses the NEC of trying to 'direct the work of union employees and interfere in the responsibilities of the General Secretary.' The Independent Left's article responds to this, saying that the GS 'has put herself in sole control of our union, in place of the NEC you elected.'

The NEC is the governing body of the union. It is entirely appropriate for it to direct the work of officers. The NEC consists entirely of lay members, i.e. those who hold civil service jobs, and is elected every year, as compared to the General Secretary, who is a paid full time officer (total pay package £103,000) elected only every five years. Though not perfect — it is not recallable, and not elected at workplace meetings — the NEC is clearly closer to the rank and file's current political and industrial feelings.

Heathcote claims, in a video message on the official PCS social media accounts, that she has taken steps to 'make sure [members'] interests are protected.' She frames this as defending democracy. It is bureaucratic autonomy from democratic oversight.

The government's 3.5% pay remit (3.5% of the total pay bill, the distribution of which between staff would then be negotiated with the union in each department) is likely a real-terms pay cut. Inflation is rising again, with the Bank of England forecasting a return to 4%. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research warns that it could go higher if energy prices spike. Civil servants therefore face another year of falling living standards.

PCS needs a national campaign, coordinated industrial action, and a strategy to win a higher pay rise. However, the GS and her faction, who negotiated the 3.5% and opposed the plan for strike action voted for at May's Annual Delegate Conference, are using their coup to force the 3.5% on union members by inaction.

The situation bears similarities to the degeneration of the University and College Union (UCU) under General Secretary Jo Grady, where the concentration of power in the GS's office hollowed out democratic structures and left the union incapable of waging a serious fight. UCU's experience shows what happens when a GS becomes unaccountable. Strike strategy collapses. Members become demoralised. Turnout falls. Employers push through real-terms pay cuts.

PCS is heading down the same road unless the rank and file intervene.

Coalition for Change flaws

The Coalition for Change won the Presidency and NEC majority because members wanted a democratic union capable of fighting on pay and conditions. Their platform emphasised restoring member-led democracy, ensuring NEC control over union strategy, launching a coordinated national pay campaign, ending the presidential veto, and making the union transparent and accountable.

However, the GS's actions expose the

weakness of the broad left strategy in the unions: winning office through an electoral bloc, but without having first built a powerful rank and file movement in the workplaces and branches. Broad Lefts concentrate on winning positions inside the union machine while leaving the bureaucratic structure largely intact.

That means that, once the left wins office, it can find itself facing entrenched full-time officials, who control communications, staff structures and procedural devices, without the organised leverage from below needed to force the bureaucracy to obey the members' mandate.

That's not an argument for standing aside from the fight inside the NEC. The elected NEC majority must be defended. It is an argument against imagining that elections alone can democratise PCS.

A rank and file movement would seek to win elections, but its centre of gravity must be in the workplaces: organising branches, reps and members to act with officials where possible and independently of them where necessary. Without that, even a left NEC can be isolated by the machinery it has formally been elected to control.

Rank and file campaign

The immediate question isn't which constitutional mechanism can break the deadlock. It's how members can be mobilised to force the issue. CfC has already taken an important first step by launching a campaign, producing a workplace leaflet to inform members what is happening, and circulating a model motion for branches to pass and send to the General Secretary and President protesting the GS's actions.

The campaign needs to spread. Every branch should urgently discuss the crisis, circulate the leaflet, pass motions defending the NEC, and demand that the GS withdraw her obstruction.

But this cannot be left as a campaign by CfC alone. Branches and activists do not need to agree with the programmes of the CfC factions to stand up for the democracy of their union. The 'PCS Says No' campaign to reject the sell-out of our pay strikes in 2023 went far wider than existing factions. By reaching out to all union-conscious members, we can revive engagement and build grassroots strength.

The next step should be the creation of a broad rank and file campaign, a united front around a simple democratic demand: stop the GS's coup and defend PCS democracy.

Such a campaign should try to draw in every branch, every rep and every activist who agrees that the NEC and NDC must be allowed to function, regardless of their factional affiliation

or wider political differences. It should organise branch meetings, workplace meetings, members' bulletins and open organising calls. It should coordinate motions and statements, publicise which branches have backed democracy, and give members a way to act collectively rather than simply watch the battle unfold at the top of the union.

A Special Delegate Conference may prove necessary. But it should not be presented as a panacea; maybe other mechanisms can force the bureaucracy to retreat. Members should debate what rule changes are needed to prevent any future GS or President from overriding the elected leadership and the membership. The point is to put that decision in the hands of an organised movement of branches and activists, not just in the hands of the factions.

A campaign built in this way would be far more likely to win. If only the factions mobilise, the bureaucracy can present the crisis as an internal power struggle. If branches and workplaces mobilise around the defence of democracy, the issue becomes what it really is: whether PCS is run by its members or by officials who claim autonomy from democratic control.

Such a campaign could also begin to solve the deeper problem exposed by the crisis. It could create a genuine rank and file organisation inside PCS: a base of power in the branches and workplaces able to defend the NEC when it acts on its mandate, hold it accountable when it retreats, and push the union towards a fighting strategy on pay, jobs and conditions.

That rank and file organisation should fight for democratic control of disputes by the members concerned, the right of branches and reps to know what elected committees are deciding, the recallability of officials who defy the membership, and an end to the material privileges that separate full-time officers from the members they represent.

PCS is at a turning point. It can become a member-led, democratic, fighting union, or it can continue as a bureaucratic machine. The rank and file must defend their democracy because without it there can be no future for the PCS as a militant union.



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Energy bills rise again: make the profiteers pay

KD Tait

Millions of households will see higher gas and electricity bills from July, as the government regulator Ofgem hikes its energy price cap by 13% until the 30 September, after which it could be hiked again. For a typical household the annual bill rises from £1,641 to £1,862—around £221 more a year, or about £18 a month.

That is a significant sum for cash-strapped working class families hit by years of inflation. For us, energy is not a lifestyle choice. It means heating, cooking, washing, lighting, refrigeration and keeping children, elderly people and disabled people safe. Summer used to allow a reprieve for bills, with longer days and warmer weather, but now record heatwaves mean there is no let-up.

The misnamed 'price cap' only caps the unit rates for gas and electricity, as well as standing charges paid each day to remain connected. The total amount a household can be charged depends on how much it uses.

The July rise hikes gas prices more than electricity, exposing a weakness of Britain's energy system: millions of homes are still heated by gas, and market electricity prices are set by 'marginal cost pricing' where gas prices affect the overall price of all electricity including that generated by renewables. The policy is designed to protect profits, not cheap energy as a public good.

Meanwhile the latest figures from the Office of National Statistics show that annualised growth of real wages (adjusted for inflation) in June was 0.1%. However private sector wage rises were below the average, and that means the lowest paid and those on benefits face falling incomes, before winter's bills have even hit.

The problem is not individual consumption but a privatised energy system still heavily reliant on fossil fuels, causing global warming in the first place and leaving us exposed to global energy shocks and corporate profiteering.

Gas markets, war and speculation

Ofgem blames the oil and gas price hikes on international instability and war in the Middle East, while it is silent about the City speculators driving up energy prices further. When gas prices rise, markets panic, and energy traders bet on scarcity, it's workers who pay. But when the system stabilises, prices do not return to anything like the levels working class households can afford. Britain's dependence on privatised energy markets means every international shock is passed onto household bills.

But British governments are not blameless for the political crises either. The British state continues to support and arm Israel, despite its Gaza genocide and regional wars, while allowing the energy companies to pass on the resulting price hikes to the public. Slow government progress towards Net Zero concedes to Big Oil (whose monopolies also dominate natural gas) while protecting the rich from the tax hikes needed to pay for a just transition.

Profiteering drives the whole privatised chain: oil and gas producers, electricity generators, traders, network operators, suppliers, financiers and shareholders. The End Fuel Poverty Coalition estimates that 30 firms heavily involved in Britain's energy system made £23.1 billion in reported profits from UK operations in 2025—equivalent to almost £800 for every household in the country.

Consumer groups and centre-left

think tanks have proposed various reforms. Common Wealth argues that stopping gas from dictating wholesale electricity prices could save households around £200 a year, The New Economics Foundation proposes giving all households a set amount of energy.

These proposals attempt to address real failures in the present system. But their proposals are inadequate and will not be adopted by any government on offer without the pressure of mass struggles. Starmer's cuts to its climate funding promises prove that much.

The Tories and Reform share a bankrupt strategy that will cost workers dearly: hike oil production and deregulate markets, cut benefits and abandon net zero. That would leave workers even more exposed to global gas shocks, while sabotaging the transition we need.

But Labour pays lip service to the climate transition while its token proposals – for instance breaking the link between gas and electricity prices – will only slow not stop the creeping cost of living crisis. Labour's approach remains trapped inside the market and offers minor and temporary bill relief for the masses, rather than direct public control.

Sharon Graham of Unite has pushed for more North Sea oil production, a retrograde step. However, Unite has also condemned the price cap rise, instead demanding a steep cut, and a plan to renationalise energy. That line should be taken up across the trade union movement.

But press statements are not enough. Union leaders should organise a national campaign linking bills, public ownership and climate jobs, as well as strikes to defend pay. That is the only way to force concessions out of Labour and ensure we don't pay the costs of the Iran War.

Make the profiteers pay

Workers Power says the price cap rise must be reversed. We need a real cap on household bills, funded by taxing energy profits and wealth. Household energy debt should be cancelled. Forced prepayment meters, disconnections and debt collection for energy arrears should be banned.

Wages, benefits and pensions must rise automatically with the real cost of living. The books of the energy companies, network operators and suppliers should be opened to public inspection to reveal the scale of profiteering and corruption.

But immediate relief is not enough. As long as energy is in private hands, a commodity produced for profit or speculative asset, social needs including the climate transition will come a distant second. Energy must be decommodified: that means nationalising the sector without compensation, under workers' and consumers' control.

A democratic plan for energy would mean a wide-ranging positive programme for building renewables, expanding free public transport and home insulation. Public ownership and coordinated planning are the only way to quickly achieve cheap energy and net zero, and build in skilled jobs as well as international climate justice: funding adaptation, restitution and support for those displaced by a climate breakdown caused above all by the imperialist powers and fossil fuel corporations.

Trade unions, tenants' groups, community campaigns and the left should not wait but organise local cost-of-living assemblies to build for coordinated action, to ensure we don't pay for this crisis and open the road to an energy revolution.

Heatwave Britain: workers need to protect ourselves

KD Tait

Britain and Europe have been hit by the most severe June heat on record. The Met Office reported 37.7C at Lingwood, Norfolk, beating the 1976 record by more than two degrees. The record tumbled on three consecutive days, under the first red extreme-heat warning ever issued.

Across Europe the World Health Organisation has linked more than 1,300 excess deaths to the heat since 21 June, with Germany reaching 41.7C and France recording its hottest day since measurements began. Europe is heating at almost twice the global rate.

This is the backdrop to the rise in the energy price cap. Households that cannot keep a flat below 30C, that cannot run a fan all night, or that ration cooling the way they already ration heating, are the same households about to pay more for the electricity to do it.

A new climate

Heatwaves are not new, but heat like this is. The World Weather Attribution group found this June would have been around 3.5C cooler in 1976 and 2C cooler in 2003, with the hottest days now warming at three times the rate of the planet as a whole.

The cause is not a mystery, and it is not 'humanity' that is to blame. It is our mode of production: two centuries of development built on coal, oil and gas, run by companies that have understood the consequences for decades and burned the fuel anyway because there was profit in it. The carbon in the atmosphere is the waste product of that profit.

Capital generates the heat and imposes the vulnerability to it. It leaves workers in unsafe jobs, tenants in heat-trapping homes, children in classrooms built for another century and patients in hospitals whose systems fail in heatwaves.

It is a tabloid complaint that the country seizes up the moment the weather turns too hot or too cold. The real scandal lies elsewhere. The firms keep the profit and pass on the cost: heat deaths, cancelled operations, spoiled food and lost wages land on workers and the public. Privatised utilities, water firms and outsourced contractors treat services as something to extract rent from, built and run on the cheap with no plan for climate change.

The same divide decides who is exposed and who is shielded. Those with money

work from home, cool their houses or leave the city. Everyone else keeps the country running in the heat, driving buses, stacking shelves, nursing patients and holding classrooms together.

Five years ago, these were praised as 'key workers' who kept the country going during Covid— but nevertheless sent into a deadly hazards without proper protection, dying at higher rates than the workforce as a whole. Nothing has been learned. The pandemic showed that capital treats 'essential' workers as expendable precisely when their labour matters most, and the heatwave is showing it again. The hazard has changed; the exposure and the official silence around it has not.

Too hot to work

Britain has no legal maximum working temperature. The Health and Safety Executive calls heat a hazard and tells employers to manage the risk but sets no point at which work must stop. It is unlawful to transport cattle, sheep or pigs when the outside temperature passes 30C, yet a warehouse picker, a delivery driver or a bus driver can be sent out in far higher temperatures.

Some hospitals quite literally failed. As the heat peaked, the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals declared a critical incident with no working MRI scanners after their cooling systems gave out, cancelling more than 360 appointments. In Portsmouth, Queen Alexandra Hospital lost the chiller units serving operating theatres and cardiac labs. At least six trusts declared critical incidents, and a report last year found nine in 10 NHS buildings unfit for sustained extreme heat.

The unions have the answers - on paper. The TUC wants employers to act above 24C and to let workers stop at 30C, or 27C for strenuous jobs. Unite, Unison and GMB back stronger protection. Even the government's own Climate Change Committee recommends a statutory maximum workplace temperature. But what protects workers is workplace organisation.

A start has been made in the schools. Nine education unions have produced a joint heatwave protocol that commits head teachers to plan with union safety reps in advance to curtail heat-generating activity. A red warning triggers an 'immediate risk assessment' which could force closure of unsafe rooms or

the whole school.

When this June's red warning hit, more than a thousand schools shut, many because reps and members forced the issue rather than waiting for permission. The NEU's position is to impose a 26C upper legal limit.

Every workplace needs a heat plan, negotiated by safety reps and agreed in workplace meetings: risk assessments drawn up by members, cooling and ventilation, drinking water, shade, reduced workloads, altered hours on full pay, and a stated temperature at which work stops.

Above all it needs the collective right to refuse unsafe work without loss of pay or victimisation. Often referred to as 'Section 44' (of the 1996 Employment Act), workers can and should collectively refuse to work in unsafe sites, citing 'serious and imminent danger'. Legally workers are immune from disciplinary action or loss of pay for taking Section 44 action.

Buses turned into greenhouses in the heatwave. Sadiq Khan told London's private operators that drivers' conditions were 'unacceptable' and said anyone in a cab too hot to drive safely could stop without penalty. Welcome words. But how much is a mayor's say-so worth at the depot?

There is no legal maximum for a bus cab and the rule that cabs should have cooling does not require cooling systems to work. Drivers have reported cabs above 40C, one at 48C, while being ordered by operators to stay in service. Unite has fought, bus by bus, but should instruct its members to refuse to work in dangerous conditions.

People's homes are not much better. The Climate Change Committee warns that the country is built for a climate that no longer exists; on current trends 92 per cent of existing homes could be at risk of overheating by 2050, and heat-related deaths could reach 10,000 a year without action.

Tenants have the least control and the least money to install shading or cooling. These are the households the rising price cap hits hardest. Keeping cool is becoming, like keeping warm, something the market rations by income.

We need a publicly owned programme to retrofit homes, schools, hospitals and workplaces with insulation that works against heat as well as cold, alongside ventilation, shading, green space, public

cooling centres and a transport system upgraded for hotter summers. The work should be done by directly employed, unionised labour, not contractors chasing a margin.

For a workers' transition

The heat has coincided with a fight inside Labour and the unions over Ed Miliband, net zero and North Sea oil and gas. Unite and GMB attack his climate policy as a threat to jobs. Unison and a group of economists defend it as a source of jobs.

Both are wrong. Labour's clean-energy plan is trapped inside the market: private developers securing lucrative public guarantees for investor confidence. That is green capitalism, not a workers' transition. But new oil and gas will not cut bills, because it sells into world markets. It will not secure jobs, because the basin is already declining and companies sack workers the moment profit demands it. And it deepens the climate crisis caused by burning fossil fuels.

Workers in oil, gas, refineries, ports and energy supply chains must not be abandoned. Their skills are needed. We fight for no compulsory redundancies, full pay, and retraining and redeployment into publicly owned climate jobs. Open the books. Nationalise energy, the grid, ports and refineries without compensation, and run them under workers and consumers' control.

This is where the heat and the price cap meet again. An energy system run for profit overcharges households in winter and leaves them sweltering in summer. Offshore wind, solar, grid upgrades, home retrofit and public transport belong in a single democratic plan, decided by elected committees of workers, union reps, community delegates and consumers. Energy, water, housing, land and transport have to be taken out of the market and planned for human need and ecological survival, with climate justice for all.

The heat is not a forecast anymore. It is in our cabs, wards, classrooms and homes. Asking capital to invest its way out will not work, and a transition run by the bosses will be paid for by the workers. What is left is class struggle climate politics: safe work enforced by the unions now, public investment in adaptation, and the essentials of life taken into common ownership and democratic control.



Ireland: racist pogroms shake Belfast

Bernie McAdam

This is the third summer in a row where the north of Ireland has seen racist pogroms directed against black and migrant communities. On June 9 in east and north Belfast hundreds of masked men kicked down doors and burnt out homes of ethnic minorities in a planned coordinated attack. There were other clashes with police and damage to public transport throughout mainly Loyalist/Unionist areas of Belfast and in other parts of the north. This followed on from last Saturday's arson attack on an Asian shopkeeper's property in the Shankill Road.

The latest pogrom was triggered by the excuse of a vicious stabbing by a Sudanese migrant on a man from north Belfast. Of course everyone deplores such an attack but the loyalists and far right want to put out the narrative that this is all down to the invasion of our shores by immigrants. Their selective use of crime stands in marked contrast to their silence over the disproportionately high number of femicides in the north. It is also ironic that these paramilitary thugs will stand quite brazenly in celebrating the tradition of loyalist terror against nationalist areas including their very own sadistic killer gang of the 1970's, the 'Shankill Butchers'.

This racist upsurge of the last few years is very much linked to the global rise of the far right and the inflammatory language of far right politicians. However the specific nature and origins of the sectarian state in the north has facilitated a seamless shift from anti Irish/Catholic bigotry to anti migrant

hatred. Although nationalist areas have their own racist bigots, such areas do have many Community, Republican and Socialist activists on the ground reaching out to the ethnic minorities. The lack of active opposition in loyalist areas to racist pogroms is a symptom of this sectarian history. It is a huge problem for those brave enough to fight the deadening hand of the loyalist paramilitaries in their areas.

The role of social media is playing a huge part in mobilising the far right, including guidelines on how rioters can disguise themselves from the police. The threats received by press commentators on the night were chilling. Accounts on X were calling for action the morning after the stabbing with cries of 'civil war is coming'. Lists were shared extensively of road closures and 'all businesses to close by 5.30pm'. Tommy Robinson promoted the protest locations with 8.5 million viewers also showing an AI image of a firefighter gloating in front of a burning home as a black man pleads. Musk added 'only by protesting repeatedly and loudly will there be any change'.

As the DUP and TUV rush to hypocritically distance themselves from 'violence', they will seek to capitalise from this episode to push for tougher immigration controls. Leader of the DUP, Gavin Robinson, has called 'on the open porous border' between the Republic and the North to be closed. This has been backed by the TUV and the Daily Telegraph with Badenoch pleading with Starmer to 'secure our borders'. Anna Turley, Labour's Chair, reassures us all that the Common Travel Area between Ireland

and Britain will not be used as 'a back route for exploiting the asylum system'. All this is an affront to the Irish people as a whole and their age old demand to scrap any British border on their island. Maybe Brexit really did mean a 'hard border'!

Once again we see the far right move and the spectrum of parties from the DUP to Labour meekly follow. None are prepared to argue that immigration is not the main problem facing the working class. The migrant worker is not the enemy. The boss class, that presides over a crumbling Health Service, a cost of living and housing crisis, is the enemy. It is time for a united working class to fight for a world without borders and without profit as the main priority.

Fight back now

The prospect of further pogroms looms large over the north as the marching season gets underway. The northern state with its own sectarian background and its continued failure to protect migrant communities will not be up to the task of adequate defence. Quite simply it means that working class organisations have to take a lead in countering sectarianism and racism. This means building self defence organisations be they community or workplace based and standing in solidarity with fellow migrant workers. This is not ultra left posturing, it is a burning necessity, the absence of which will ensure further pogroms and attacks!

Trade unions must be at the centre of such a campaign not just in defence of working class people under racist attack but they should also be prosecuting a

militant class struggle in defence of public services, safeguarding workers' cost of living and for more investment in house building. That is the best way to develop working class unity and to counteract the arguments of the anti immigration lobby and their divisive antics.

UNISON has reported on a whole range of attacks on their members including being stopped by vigilantes questioning their ethnicity. They are seeking protections of workers from employers at work and coming to and from work. UNITE successfully pushed for temporary suspension of public transport to protect drivers. NIPSA have called for 'working class unity against the racists' and if the racist violence persists work stoppages will be organised. All this is a step forward but the need for defence organisations is paramount right now.

People before Profit in Belfast have quite rightly called on urgent action from the trade union movement to stage 'demonstrations, community actions and work stoppages' in a letter to the Northern Ireland Committee - Irish Congress Trade Unions. It is right to call on our leaders for action and where they fall short we have to organise at rank and file level if need be without them and build solidarity and defence now in the fight against the far right. NIC - ICTU support for the Unite Against Racism demonstrations this Saturday in Belfast and Derry must be turned into a mass wave of working class revulsion against the racists.



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Generals demand Labour funds billions more in war preparation

Starmer's parting act before handing to Andy Burnham is to lock in the biggest rise in military spending since the Cold War. Behind the delays and the resignations stands a ruling class determined to fund warfare by gutting welfare—and a general staff that is bending Labour to its will.

Peter Main



The highest priority for Keir Starmer before grudgingly handing over to Andy Burnham—expected around 20 July, should Burnham be elected unopposed—was to publish the Defence Investment Plan (DIP) ahead of the NATO summit in Ankara on 7–8 July. This was the issue over which John Healey resigned on 11 June, to be replaced by Dan Jarvis.

Immediately after Labour's victory in July 2024, Starmer commissioned the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) to lay out spending priorities for his anticipated two terms in office. The haste reflected pressure from the heads of the armed forces over what they saw as repeated failures by a succession of Tory prime ministers to respond to shifts in the global balance of power.

The SDR set a path to 2.5% of GDP by 2027—2.6% once the intelligence agencies were reclassified as defence spending—rising to 3% in the next parliament and 3.5% by 2035. Although the DIP was supposed to be published in December, Starmer delayed it when it became clear that, with Rachel Reeves insisting on her 'fiscal rules', there would be a £28bn shortfall in the defence budget. A revised

plan was to be adopted in March; by then, much had changed. At the Munich Security Conference in February, the possibility of joint European funding of some armaments programmes had been raised as a way of cutting costs and standardising equipment. The EU had also opened the prospect of financing 'defence' outside its fiscal rules. Above all, on top of demanding higher European spending, Trump and Netanyahu had launched their war on Iran without consultation. Clearly, every state would have to take account of all this.

A further delay allowed closer collaboration with European allies over a possible 'European Defence Mechanism'—some kind of centralised body to oversee and coordinate procurement and financing. Not only did Starmer and Reeves see this as a way forward; reportedly it also had the backing of Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank. All of which makes clear that the talk of the government's priority being to 'defend our shores' and protect 'these islands' is strictly for Daily Mail readers. As the first capitalist imperial power, Britain's ruling class knows its wealth is drawn from across the globe—and that is what it means to defend.

Far from 'these shores', its military has most recently fought the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, and its overseas bases have been used to facilitate genocide in Gaza and to launch unprovoked attacks on Iran. The last time the army was turned on people in these islands, it was to suppress the civil rights and nationalist movements in Ireland.

Contradictions at home

Despite the overriding common interest in safeguarding their global exploitation, there are inevitably divergent interests within the ruling class. At one level this simply reflects the character of that class—each capital committed to maximising its own profit, if necessary at the expense of others. Given the secrecy surrounding weapons development and the limited number of firms involved, 'defence' spending is also wide open to abuse. A recent National Audit Office report found an overall loss to the state of some £14.5 billion on a scheme in which military housing was sold to the property company Annington in 1996, then leased back at £230 million a year by 2024 and, eventually, bought back for £6 billion in December 2024.

A much more fundamental contradiction lies behind the constant demands for increased spending on 'defence' at the expense of 'welfare'. For decades, the dominant policy has been the rolling back of the concessions the capitalist class was forced to make in the aftermath of the second world war. The long-term effect of privatisation, budget cuts, restrictions on local government, the outsourcing of services and, centrally, the outlawing of effective trade union action has so reduced working-class incomes that they often no longer cover the costs of reproducing the class. That is what lies behind increased spending on, for example, housing benefit, pension credit, universal credit or personal independence payments. This long-term trend was reinforced after Labour spent billions bailing out the banks following the 2008 financial crash, and then by a succession of Tory governments obsessed with cutting 'government spending'.

Enraged that this now applied to the armed forces too, and appalled at the political disintegration of their historically preferred party, the leading figures of the general staff and their allies turned to the inevitable alternative: Labour. Well aware of the party's background and the likely obstacles to diverting funds from welfare to warfare, they first convinced Keir Starmer—a fairly reliable former Director of Public Prosecutions—of the need for the Strategic Defence Review.

The name alone implied a major change of direction.

At the same time, presumably coincidentally, Colonel Alistair Scott Carns of the Special Boat Service resigned his commission and, although a former Conservative voter, joined the Labour Party and put himself forward as a parliamentary candidate in Birmingham Selly Oak. His candidacy was immediately approved by the appropriate party committee, headed up by Josh Simons, a director of Labour Together and Labour's candidate—soon MP—for Makerfield. The military top brass were right to think Labour would face opposition in prioritising 'defence' over other public spending, but probably thought it would come from the party's membership, not from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves.

Her refusal to meet John Healey's demand for extra spending was not aimed at appeasing Labour's membership, however, but at reassuring the 'markets' that nothing would be allowed to infringe her 'fiscal rules'. Those rules forbid any borrowing to finance current government spending—the main targets being education, health and welfare.

Applying that to the arms budget too was more than Healey would accept, so he resigned, along with a certain Al Carns, who on election in Selly Oak had been handed a defence ministry post and, from September 2025, the job of Minister for the Armed Forces. His place was taken by Dan Jarvis, previously Major Dan Jarvis of the 3rd Battalion the Parachute Regiment, who seemed to fit in quite well. Given the circumstances, he will be well placed to insist on some increase in arms spending—possibly by categorising it as investment rather than current spending.

As this issue went to press, the government had published its long-delayed Defence Investment Plan on 30 June—an extra £15 billion over four years, bringing planned spending to £298 billion and lifting defence to 2.7% of GDP by 2027. But the underlying conflict—warfare funded at the expense of welfare—is nowhere near resolved, and it is Andy Burnham who will inherit it. He will be keen to prove his reliability both to the markets—people so wealthy they can not only lend to government but dictate the interest paid—and to the service chiefs demanding big spending increases.

The task for socialists is to mobilise and organise against further cuts to social services. Not a penny for 'defence'—restore past cuts, wage rises to match inflation, repeal the anti-union laws!



Trump's defeat in Iran

George Banks

Trump began the war demanding unconditional surrender, calling on Iranian citizens to free themselves and take back their country. Three months on, with Trump desperate to protect his falling approval rating, the US and Iran have jointly announced a 14-point 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU). The document which Trump signed at the Palace of Versailles (no irony intended) contains key concessions from the US, with the most contentious areas deferred for 60 days.

Art of the deal

The MOU, which both parties have agreed to convert into a binding treaty within 60 days (with the option for this period to be extended by agreement) opens with a declaration of immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities on all fronts, including by US and Iranian allies, meaning Israel and Hezbollah. This explicitly covers Lebanon, with both governments committing to guaranteeing Lebanese territorial integrity and sovereignty, and each pledging not to initiate any future military action against the other.

On access through the Strait of Hormuz, the US commits to lifting its naval blockade within 30 days, with commercial traffic progressively restored. Iran will arrange safe passage for commercial vessels, complete de-mining within the same window, and open discussions with Oman and other Gulf states on the long-term administration of the Strait.

The financial benefits to Iran are significant. US Treasury waivers for Iranian oil exports and all associated services are to take immediate effect. Frozen Iranian assets are to be unlocked, and all American sanctions lifted including unilateral US measures and UN Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) sanctions. The US further commits to assembling a reconstruction and development fund for Iran worth at least \$300 billion.

On the nuclear question, Iran reaffirms that it will not acquire or develop nuclear weapons, and both sides agree to resolve the status of Iran's enriched material stockpile, with blending down under IAEA supervision. The longer-term shape of Iran's enrichment capacity is deferred to the full treaty negotiations, with both parties committed to holding the current status quo in the interim.

The terms represent a strategic defeat for the US and Israel. The reopening of the

Strait was the only concrete gain the US secured, and it was open before the war started. The return of IAEA inspectors, hailed as a victory by JD Vance, is only restoring the position as it was before the 12 day war last year. The reaffirmation of the Iranian commitment never to possess a nuclear weapon was contained in the Obama deal which Trump ripped up in 2016. In return, Washington has handed over total sanctions relief and surrendered its leverage over Tehran.

Strategic defeat

At his G7 speech on 17 June, Trump made his most significant concession, acknowledging that Iran has a right to enrich uranium. He also let slip the real driver of his desperation for a deal: the US has only around four weeks of strategic petroleum reserve remaining. Citing the need to avert a 'worldwide depression', he said, 'the one president I did not want to be was the late, great Herbert Hoover. I didn't want to see economic catastrophe. If you kept this going, that could have happened.' The irony of the situation appears to be lost on him.

Red line after red line has been crossed. Days after the war started, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth stated the US objective was to 'destroy the missile threat' posed by Iran. At the G7, Trump said, 'missiles aren't the problem' admitting Iran had to have some. On enrichment, the administration had previously demanded the complete elimination of Iran's nuclear programme. As recently as May, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Iran needed to 'walk away from enrichment'. At the G7, with Rubio standing directly behind him, Trump argued it was unreasonable to deny Iran enrichment when other countries had it: 'You have to use a little common sense.'

On frozen assets, held since the Iranian revolution in 1979, Trump made another major concession, stating 'it's not our money, it's their money. I guess we're going to have to give it back.' With all sanctions lifted and a \$300 billion investment fund promised, the Iranian regime emerges from the war significantly strengthened, having secured desperately needed cash and a clear political victory against US imperialism on its core red lines, while the US-Israel relationship is more fractured than at any point in recent memory.

That is not to say that Iran has not paid a heavy economic price. The rial has lost 60% of its value, food inflation reached

105% by February with bread and cereals up 140%, and the IMF forecasts a 6.1% GDP contraction in 2026 with inflation running at nearly 69%.

The deal has brought immediate market relief, with Brent crude falling to around its pre-war level, but economists warn against optimism. Approximately 80 mines remain in the central channel of the strait and clearing them will take time and resources. Oil production will take long to recover from widespread damage to facilities across the region, and prices are therefore likely to remain high.

That is of course assuming that the ceasefire holds. Considerable tensions remain, particularly over Iran's plan to charge fees for transit through the Strait after the 60 day toll free period concludes, which is strongly opposed by the US, and over the extent of any curbs on Iran's domestic enrichment programme.

The food situation may worsen before it improves. Gulf states supply approximately 45% of global sulphur and around a third of urea exports, both critical to fertiliser production, and these have been stranded by the conflict. The shortage operates on a six to nine month lag, meaning its full impact on food prices will not be felt until after this planting season.

Ceasefire in name only

The most significant potential spoiler is Israel and its territorial ambitions in Lebanon. Following the signing of the MOU, the IDF continued to advance in Southern Lebanon, prompting a Hezbollah attack on an Israeli tank which killed four soldiers. Israel murdered 83 Lebanese and wounded 141 in retaliation.

A ceasefire was announced on the evening of Friday 19 June, but Saturday brought further Israeli strikes, killing 16 and wounding 12, including a strike on a three-storey residential building in the southern town of Barish that killed an entire family. There have been more than 100 Israeli strikes in Lebanon since the ceasefire was announced.

After Hezbollah's retaliation Israeli foreign minister Itamar Ben-Gvir took to X and launched a genocidal tirade: 'For every tear of an Israeli mother, a thousand Lebanese mothers must weep. All of Lebanon must burn! [...] the blood of our sons and the security of our citizens are not forfeit... this commitment takes precedence over every other

consideration'.

Iran's response has been to close the Strait. This action has been described as the 'first step' and if Israel continues 'further steps will be planned and taken to force the enemy to comply with its obligations'. As a result of these attacks further US/Iran negotiations due to take place in Switzerland were abruptly postponed. Talks have now resumed and the Strait has been reopened, although the situation remains unstable.

Iran has consistently made Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon a precondition of peace talks, while the war remains popular with the Israeli public, who largely view the MOU as a betrayal. The rifts between Trump and Netanyahu have widened sharply since they launched the war 'shoulder to shoulder'. Trump reportedly called Netanyahu 'fucking crazy', become increasingly public in his frustration with Israeli conduct in Lebanon. Facing corruption charges and an October election, Netanyahu's position looks precarious.

No peace

The MOU is no peace settlement for working people. This deal was stitched together between imperialist powers and regional elites over the heads of those who bore the real cost. Iranian workers have watched their wages disintegrate as the currency collapsed. Lebanese families have been killed in their homes. Billions more will feel the fertiliser shock in their food bills well into next year. The financial windfall from sanctions relief and reconstruction funding will flow to the Iranian state and its associated elites. Workers will see none of it.

Across the world, governments will reach for austerity to repair the damage of a war fought over oil and imperialist dominance. Working people had no hand in starting it and will gain nothing from MOU concessions. Our job is to resist every attempt to pass the costs on to us, and to build the international solidarity that can challenge the system that produced this war in the first place.

The struggles against war and the food crisis are openings that socialists must seize. Building a new revolutionary workers' International, capable of coordinating resistance across the globe, is the only way to confront a capitalist system that produces war, poverty and hunger as surely as it produces profit. We will not end these things by reforming that system. We will have to overthrow it.

Building a revolutionary workers party in Argentina

Since the election of far right president Javier Milei, Argentina has been embroiled in a heightened state of class struggle. Comrades in our sister organisation MST have stepped up their campaign for a united revolutionary party to meet this challenge.

Sergio Garcia, Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores



Argentina's political landscape is being reshaped by the crisis of Javier Milei's government, the fragmentation of the Peronist movement, which has failed to live up to its supporters' expectations, and the emergence of the far left as a rising political force. Several months after a significant part of the population began shifting to the left, it is no longer surprising that Myriam Bregman, the presidential candidate of the Workers' Left Front – Unity (FIT-U) is scoring over 10% in every opinion poll.

The FIT-U is an electoral coalition that brings together the four main parties of the Argentine revolutionary left: the Socialist Workers' Party (PTS) of which Myriam is a member; the Socialist Workers' Movement (MST), the Workers' Party (PO) and the Socialist Left (IS). Myriam's public approval ratings are higher than those of any of the other figures in Argentina's political establishment, suggesting that the left's rise has far from peaked.

In order to be even more effective the left needs to grasp the full scale of the change that is taking place. If they do this, then the current surge could be just the beginning of a qualitative leap forward, providing the revolutionary left with the greatest challenge it has faced in decades.

This means bringing together the development of our organisations with a sharp rise in the class struggle, even one where a struggle for political power is posed. This is why what the MST is talking about is not merely an advance in the electoral sphere, positive as this would be, nor just a rise in militancy and political influence.

This situation is fuelling a whole series of debates sweeping the left—

ones in which leading figures, intellectuals, activists, and thousands of left-wing supporters are involved, showing their eagerness to participate and share their views.

Various MST leaders have been touring the country and organising events. They have observed a growing desire among sectors of the working class and young people to join a political organisation. These events are witnessing a high level of participation by people who hitherto remained independent or were just supporters of the groups that created the FIT-U, demonstrating the appeal that left wing ideas are generating these days.

Faced with this new and developing situation, we cannot simply carry on as before or cling to past achievements or organisational forms. The Left Front (FIT-U) is a united front we in the MST value and defend, though we have long argued that its limitation to electoral contests is an obstacle to addressing other political needs—and this is even more so today. Hence, we believe that the FIT-U can be a starting point to strive for much more. In this regard, we do not share the assessments of the PO and IS, which focus on the FIT-U as it currently stands – i.e. limited to a purely electoral agreement.

The shift to the left that we are witnessing—and are actively engaged in—requires much broader political agreements that combine electoral participation with unity in all aspects of the class struggle. And the political organisation that needs to be built must take on the challenge of responding collectively to all these real-world issues.

In this regard, we consider it very useful and appropriate for the FIT-U to organise a series of forums on various topics and to open them up for

debate, because this helps, in part, to focus attention on issues of greater significance.

Strategy and the party

For these reasons we believe it is vital to move forward to build a large, militant, and revolutionary political organisation of the working class and the youth. In fact, this is the most strategic debate of all, since history shows that if revolutionary processes are to advance, they obviously require the objective existence of very high levels of class struggle, the creations of organs of dual power, of working class self-organisation, and a revolutionary leadership that, from within its party, advances a strategic line.

There is no example in contemporary history that has shown that progress toward socialism and revolution has been possible without a revolutionary party. That is why we are not debating something minor or tactical, but rather a key and decisive strategy.

In this regard, our comrades in the PTS have proposed building committees for a new workers party. We in the MST are in favour of promoting these committees jointly with them, and developing together a strategic debate toward the formation of a large party with thousands of members.

To achieve these goals, it would be ideal if our comrades in the PTS would soon make it possible for us to come together in joint committees—something that thousands of comrades are hoping for and that is clearly a necessity at this moment.

As for the possibility of moving toward a unified party, there are naturally debates about the best way to go about it. The first step, in our opinion, is to agree on what we want to build. In this regard, we believe and propose taking steps toward the formation of a new and large revolutionary party that brings together—for political, social and industrial struggles—thousands of new activists and the membership of those parties willing to take this step together.

We are not talking about a tactical front, nor a broad-based party, nor an electoral organisation. We are talking about building a revolutionary party, with a revolutionary socialist programme, with the strategy of the working class seizing power and establishing its own government, and with democratic centralism as its method of operation.

Indeed, to achieve that goal, there

must be transitional arrangements that can be enshrined in the party's constitution for as long as necessary, given that we come from different backgrounds and have different political experiences. Hence our proposal that this party must allow for internal tendencies to reflect and accommodate that reality and facilitate full inclusion and the resolution of any debates or differences that may exist.

This approach does not run counter to democratic centralism, since the existence of factions does not preclude the party from operating through voting and the implementation of the majority line adopted on each issue and at each moment.

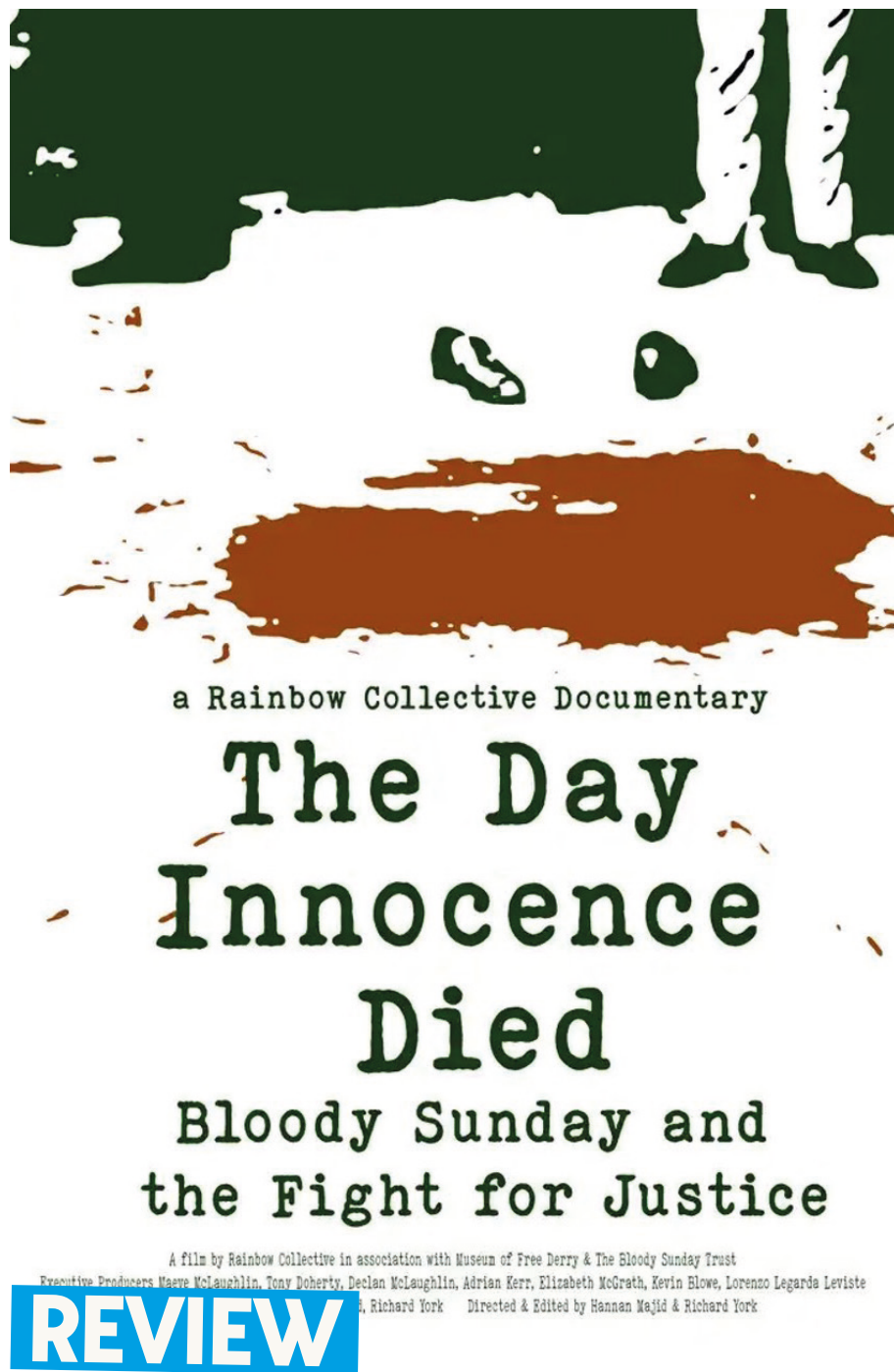
Something similar—which takes into account background and prior experience—can be addressed in the context of international affairs. In this arena, neither political lines nor organisational structures can be imposed overnight. Everything can be debated, and positions can be adopted by majority and minority votes.

Likewise, we should democratically allow these positions to be expressed and ensure that everyone has the freedom to join international organisations. This should continue until time allows us to see if there are broader agreements to be developed in the realm of internationalist and revolutionary organising.

In short, we are discussing these and other issues with our comrades in the PTS, and we want to do so with everyone who supports moving forward together to build a new party of thousands of members. This is the most strategic and decisive task. It requires a seriously in-depth debate, as well as a great deal of patience and understanding of what it means to work together among those of us who come from diverse political backgrounds within the revolutionary left.

For this process to succeed, it must begin with listening to one another, working loyally, and truly believing that a single force cannot solve problems that require the contribution and strength of diverse leaderships and organisations. A process that brings together organisations, leaders, and cadres, combined with the incorporation of thousands of new members, to create a far superior political tool for the enormous challenges ahead.

Is such a complex goal possible? Of course it is. It depends, first and foremost, on the revolutionary will to truly try to achieve it. As for us, that's exactly



Helen Guthrie

what we're doing.

This feature-length documentary (106 mins) is the latest film by the Rainbow Collective directors Hannan Majid and Richard York. Their previous film *To Kill a War Machine*, about Palestine Action supporters and their campaign to stop arms supplies destined for Israel and the ongoing slaughter of tens of thousands of Palestinians, was banned by the UK government when Palestine Action was designated as a 'terrorist organisation'. As co-director Richard York explained during the introduction to the first public screening of the Bloody Sunday film in London recently, there was no discussion or advice about the film from the government, it was just banned from being seen. Richard explained that the government position was that the feelings of the audience on seeing the film about Palestine Action activists might result in "criminal" actions in the future. This is obviously blatant censorship, and yet another instance of the UK government's support for genocide in Palestine.

Indeed one of the strengths of the film is the way in which testimonies from the family whose friends and relatives were murdered by British paratroopers in the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry are linked to other examples of atrocities carried out by the British army in Aden, Kenya and Palestine. Strategies such as stop and search, arbitrary detention,

injuries and even deaths caused in custody are not only seen in colonial occupations but also present in the treatment of many Black people in the UK.

The massacre of fourteen unarmed civil rights demonstrators in Derry in the north of Ireland in 1972, was one of a number of other such killings, Ballymurphy in August 1971 where paratroopers killed ten people, Springhill massacre in July 1972 (six people murdered) and New Lodge shootings in February 1973 where five people were killed. An inquest into the Ballymurphy massacre took place only in 2021!

Bloody Sunday was perhaps the most disgraceful of these killings, though every death was avoidable and all the killers should have been brought to justice. But the British supported the privileges of the unionist majority of protestants in the North of Ireland, and the repression of the catholic minority in the partitioned island of Ireland. As the film shows, catholic communities in the north suffered from poverty and discrimination, kept out of better-paid jobs and if not property-owners or lease-holders, were denied the right to vote. Civil rights campaigns mobilised thousands and these demonstrations were met with force.

On Bloody Sunday demonstrators were shot down by the paras, who were then defended by the British establishment and photographs were released of one of the dead men with allegedly nail-bombs

stuffed into his jeans. One of the people interviewed in the film stresses how unlikely it would be to go on a demonstration with nail bombs stuck into the pockets of jeans, and convincingly argues that this 'evidence' of intent to kill was planted by the actual British murderers. This is the same strategy the police and most of the media used against the Liverpool football fans killed at Hillsborough. Smear the victims... if they died they had it coming. The film draws this parallel and the Bloody Sunday families' and the Hillsborough families' campaigns for justice were the result of tireless campaigning to get justice.

The documentary is based on oral and visual evidence from those affected by Bloody Sunday, and many of the bereaved also died before any sort of justice was achieved. Historical footage and still images are assembled to construct a powerful sense of anger against the British state and its armed bodies of (mostly) men. There is the case of one of the seriously wounded being taken away from the scene of the killings in a car to a hospital only for those accompanying him to be taken away by soldiers and his being left to bleed to death in the back of the vehicle. One woman never recovered from the killing of her husband and ended up in an asylum. The shocking scenes of the killings and the dead bodies are backed up by the close-ups of the faces of the interviewees. It is as if we can see the traces of their experiences in every line on their skin.

The film allows the people to speak for themselves and was made by the directors following a request by The Museum of Free Derry and The Bloody Sunday Trust. The film-makers speak through their creative editing process, not voice-overs telling us what to make of all we hear and see. They do not seek for funding from any official bodies as they want to be free of constraints on their work. They rely on donations from the public and community organisations.

The second part of the film deals with the fight for justice and accountability. In 1972 Lord Widgery conducted a tribunal which concluded the soldiers were

fired on and were basically just doing their job. i.e. trying to stop protests by killing people. The Bloody Sunday justice campaigners, as this film shows, discovered some surviving documents in the National Archives showing the tribunal was a stitch -up. Many of the original documents were destroyed and Widgery did not call any people injured on the day to testify. More campaigning by the families resulted in the Saville inquiry begun in 1998, which basically concluded Widgery had covered up a massacre by soldiers representing the British government. In 2010 the Saville inquiry concluded that all those murdered had been totally innocent and that there was 'no doubt' Soldier F (granted anonymity like the other paras) had shot Michael Kelly, Patrick Doherty and Barney McGuigan (in the back of the head as he went to help Doherty) and that they were all unarmed. At the Inquiry, Soldier F admitted that he shot the three victims, but claimed they were petrol bombers or had a weapon. However, evidence from the Inquiry was inadmissible for the murder trial of soldier F in 2025, as he had earlier been granted immunity from prosecution in exchange for testifying. However due to persistence against the odds and faced by the lies and cover-ups by the British State, the Bloody Sunday campaigners for justice had secured the admission that all those murdered were innocent and the then Prime Minister David Cameron issued and apology.

However as many who testify in this film remark, British imperialism still plays its part in suppressing those who fight for national liberation and the right to a free and equal life for them and their children. The current support for Zionist genocide is just one example. The next film project by Rainbow Collective is entitled *Defend our Juries*. In the current climate of rigged trials for activists, corrupt judges, and moves to restrict the right to a trial by jury by David Lammy, a Black M.P. who ironically prides himself on campaigning against discrimination against young Black men in the justice system (see *The Lammy Review 2017*), this is an important documentary project.

REVIEW: KNEECAP

Twenty-five thousand (mostly London Irish) music-lovers descended on Crystal Palace Park on 27 June to hear Kneecap and friends. And to dance. And to drink. And most of all to celebrate.

No review of the event could do it justice without starting with the crowd. No London park could have seen more green since the Putney Debates—and the atmosphere was just as radical as it must have been then.

Not only was there a clear understanding of British imperialism's long record of crimes (still ongoing) on the island of Ireland, but Palestine, trans rights and socialism ('I'm Irish and I'm socialist'—Mary Wallopers) were also causes close to the revellers' hearts.

It reminded me of the 1980s when I first came into politics and the cause of Ireland filled the same space as that of Palestine today. The only difference today is that the concert was allowed to happen—it would have been banned in the '80s!

Biig Piig's lead singer stopped the music once to pay tribute to 'all the women of the world, including our trans sisters' to great cheers. But the real party started with the Mary Wallopers. I had only heard that they were 'like The Pogues' but they are much more than that.

One favourite was 'The Rich Man and the Poor Man' dedicated to Elon Musk: 'The poor man died and he went up to heavenium. Glory

hallelujah hi rogerru,' sang Charles Hendry in his 'Inglan is a Bitch' t-shirt, 'The rich man died and he didn't do so wellium.' And the crowd joined in.

But everyone had come for Kneecap and they didn't disappoint. Coming onto the stage with 'Fuck Keir Starmer' and 'I love West Belfast' banners, Mo Chara quipped, 'Who'd have thought we'd outlast Starmer? Three times they tried to convict us: 3-0, though we're not asking for more!@ referring to the court cases the British state has mounted (unsuccessfully) against them.

'Get your Brits out' got the mosh pits (they seemed to spring up everywhere) going, as did 'Your sniffer dogs are shite'. The band also stopped the show twice, once to remind everyone of the real reason behind their persecution, the ongoing, British-armed genocide in Gaza, and another time to pay tribute to Fontaine DC's late manager and pro-Palestine activist Trevor Dietz, who sadly died recently.

The beautiful day ended with a few spots of rain, which only seemed to bring relief and yet more cheers from the crowd. With bands like these – and others like Bob Vylan – music is not only alive and kicking today, there is a symbiotic relationship between the performers and the audience, each radicalising the other. Long may this new wave of music reign!

Jeremy Dewar

workers power

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Workers Power is a revolutionary socialist organisation that fights to end exploitation and oppression through working-class power and socialism.

Capitalism cannot be reformed in the interests of working people. Whoever governs, it is a system organised around profit, exploitation and crisis. We fight not for a fairer management of capitalism, but for its overthrow and replacement by common ownership and democratic planning.

We stand for the independent organisation of the working class. Labour governments administer capitalism; they do not break with it. The trade union bureaucracy keeps struggle within safe limits. We fight for rank-and-file control: elected and recallable representatives, democratic strike committees.

We fight on every immediate issue — pay, housing, healthcare, jobs and cuts — but we do not separate today's struggles from the fight for power. Reforms matter, but under capitalism they are always partial and always reversible. Lasting change means workers taking power through councils and self-organised bodies they control, not through parliament or the capitalist state.

We oppose racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and anti-migrant chauvinism. The oppression of women, LGBT+ people, migrants and racialised groups is built into how this system rules and reproduces itself — it is not a secondary issue, but part of what we fight to end.

The climate crisis shows the bankruptcy of production for profit. Only democratic planning under workers' control can reorganise the economy at the speed the crisis demands.

We are internationalists. Workers have no interest in defending British imperialism or its ruling class. Imperialism is a world system of great power rivalry, exploitation and war. Against it, we defend the right of nations to self-determination and fight for the unity of workers and oppressed peoples across all borders.

Capitalism will not give way peacefully. The ruling class will use its control of the state and wealth to defend its power. The fight for socialism must therefore become a social revolution: a mass struggle in which the working class breaks capitalist resistance and takes power into its own hands.

That is why the working class needs its own international party — not an electoral machine, but a fighting party rooted in workplaces and communities and dedicated to organising the struggle to overthrow the exploiters. Workers Power fights to help build that party by bringing together militant workers around a revolutionary programme, democratic organisation and a strategy for working-class power. If you agree, join us.

FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED

For more information, visit workerspower.uk to find out about our current activities, events and history.

ORGANISE YOUR PARTY

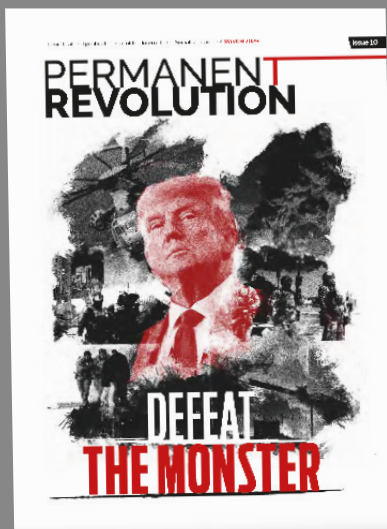
We are helping to build a new working class party in Britain. Join at yourparty.uk and contact us to work together.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE

We organise internationally as part of the International Socialist League. Find out more at lis-isl.org



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workers power

DIRECT ACTION IS NOT TERRORISM!

FREE PALESTINE ACTIVISTS

KD Tait

Four Palestine activists have been jailed as if they were terrorists. On 12 June, at Woolwich Crown Court, Charlotte Head, Leona Kamio, Fatema Zainab Rajwani and Samuel Corner were sentenced after convictions for criminal damage at Elbit Systems UK's Filton site near Bristol. Corner was also convicted of inflicting grievous bodily harm without intent.

The judge's sentencing remarks confirmed they were 'not charged with, prosecuted for, or convicted of, any terrorist offence'. Yet Mr Justice Johnson found that the criminal damage had a 'terrorist connection', making it an aggravating factor under section 69 of the Sentencing Act 2020.

Head and Kamio received special custodial sentences of six years less 45 days, including a one-year additional licence period. Rajwani received five years and eight months less 45 days; Corner eight years and eight months. All four face terrorist notification requirements, lasting for 15 years.

This followed a retrial. In the first trial, the defendants were acquitted of aggravated burglary and the jury could not agree on criminal damage. At the retrial, Head, Kamio, Rajwani and Corner were convicted, Zoe Rogers and Jordan Devlin acquitted. When the state could not get terrorism convictions from a jury, it was reintroduced at sentencing.

Three days later the Court of Appeal upheld the proscription of Palestine Action, overturning an earlier High Court ruling that the ban was unlawful. It accepted that the Home Secretary could give decisive weight to 'national security', future risk and the 'operational benefits' of proscription.

The practical result is clear. Since the ban came into force last July, more than 3,300 people have been arrested—over 2,000 of them simply for holding placards reading 'I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action'.

Supporting Palestine, ministers insist, remains legal; supporting a proscribed group does not. But this is a distinction designed to frighten the movement into silence. A placard, a T-shirt, a social media post, a chant or a public meeting contribution can now be treated as evidence for a terrorism conviction.

This is why Amnesty and Liberty are right to warn of a chilling effect. But the issue goes beyond liberal civil liberties. The British state is stretching terrorism law to protect its strategic alliance with Israel, the arms industry and British imperialist interests.

Elbit is not an ordinary private company caught up in an abstract dispute over protest tactics. It is part of the weapons chain that supplies and services Israel's war machine—and direct action has forced the closure or sale of several of Elbit's British sites. The

courts refused to put Elbit on trial—placing its opponents in the dock instead.

The contempt proceedings against defence barrister Rajiv Menon KC show the same authoritarian logic. Menon reminded the jury in the first Filton trial of its right to acquit according to conscience. In May the Court of Appeal struck down the first attempt to have him prosecuted, so... he was simply tried again in June. But as we go to press no court has found Menon in contempt of anything.

Juries have historically acted as a democratic check on political prosecutions. Where juries refuse to convict protesters, the state wants to close the gap. It wants harsher sentencing, broader terrorism law, restricted defences, tame lawyers and juries intimidated—or abolished altogether.

We defend the Filton prisoners unconditionally against state repression. We demand: free the prisoners; quash the terrorist-connection sentencing; lift the proscription of Palestine Action; drop all charges against placard holders and Palestine solidarity protesters; defend the right of juries to acquit; repeal the anti-protest and anti-terror laws used against the movement; and end all arms sales, military cooperation and intelligence cooperation with Israel.

The lesson of Filton is not that the activists went too far, it's that they

were left to take action and face the inevitable consequences alone. The people with the power to halt the arms flow at a stroke—dockers, railworkers, factory operatives and logistics workers that move the components—have not been called into action. For most of the genocide the leaders of the labour movement ignored the direct appeal of the Palestinian trade unions to cut off the supply of weapons.

Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham instructed officials not to back campaigns against arms factories, publicly attacked Palestine Action and suspended the union's affiliation to Stop the War over protests at BAE Systems. When Unite's 2025 conference finally voted to back members who refuse to handle weapons bound for Israel, it was forced on the leadership from below and remains a paper policy.

The answer is collective working class action: union branches refusing cooperation with the arms trade; workers at ports, factories and universities exposing and blocking links with Israel's war machine; student walkouts and workplace meetings; and delegate-based committees linking Palestine campaigns, trade unions and student unions.

The trade union leaders should be forced to act. Where they refuse, rank and file members must organise without waiting for permission.