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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.

No honeymoon for Burnham

Andy Burnham's big themes, announced since his appointment as prime minister, include a promise to deliver the 'biggest changes in 40 years', claiming Margaret Thatcher's legacy of neoliberalism had led to a retreat of the state from areas of social provision. He also admitted that Labour had failed to reverse this, delivering a not so veiled criticism of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Correctly enough, he stated, 'Four decades of the neoliberalism that began in the 1980s have not been kind to the places that built our party, nor to the communities across the UK in rural and coastal areas.'

Policies

He has talked of reintroducing the state in areas like social care and devolving greater planning and spending powers to mayors and local authorities. Other measures are aimed at the cost-of-living crisis, like the 5% cut in VAT on household electricity bills, a cap on single bus fares, and a pledge to end rough sleeping by Christmas.

But details on how he is going to pay for his '10-year plan for the future' must await the new chancellor John Healey's budget on 28 October. Back in May, Burnham committed himself to Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves' fiscal rules, constraining spending and taxation. Healey has emphasised that this will be 'built on fiscal discipline' and 'meet our fiscal rules'.

Burnham has pledged a major overhaul of social care, aiming for a national care service, first pledged back in Jeremy Corbyn's 2017 and 2019 manifestos. A Commission led by Baroness Casey, established in 2025, has been tasked to report by summer 2027. We need to fight to ensure that, like the NHS, it is free at the point of use.

The government has also said it was looking at reforms to bring the social care workforce up to NHS standards in terms of pay and promotion grades. The government has announced a £343m plan to open up to 159 new NHS mental health facilities in England.

But as well as welfare there are pledges for warfare. Indeed, putting Healey, who resigned as Defence Secretary in protest at Starmer's failure to boost military spending, in charge of the treasury is a vote for warfare not welfare.

New Defence Secretary Wes Streeting said that £8.4bn had been committed to the next phase of the UK's nuclear arsenal, which currently supports 47,000 jobs, forecast to rise to 65,000 by 2030. Healey as Chancellor is not only a pledge not to tax the rich or big business, but also a signal to the chiefs of staff that they will not have to tighten their belts.

Back in June 2025, Burnham supported the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty — a proposal to phase out coal, oil and gas — saying, 'there should be no turning away from net-zero'. Now

he claims he will take a pragmatic approach and that Britain must still use oil and gas, raising the possibility that he might approve the Rosebank oil and Jackdaw gas fields.

Demands

Burnham is playing with Old Labour themes and issues popular with the party rank and file and some leaders of the affiliated unions. Socialists need to respond not just by warning that they are deceptive (they are) but by demanding Labour makes good on the issues: end homelessness and rough sleeping; establish a publicly owned and funded social care system; fund councils for effective devolution.

As for the cost of living crisis, we need to demand that Burnham intervenes to grant pay increases to public sector workers, nurses, doctors, firefighters, teachers, civil servants. And make the rich pay to cover the shortfall, at least at the level they used to pay before Thatcher's counterrevolution.

Just as important will be the fight to stop Burnham echoing Starmer, Badenoch and Farage on the immigration witch-hunt. He has kept the vicious Shabana Mahmood as Home Secretary, signalling a continuation of her 'stop the boats' crackdown on refugees.

And on Palestine we will need to force him to go beyond Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband's limited sanctions. We must fight to get Britain to break all its ties, economic and military, with Israel. We need to demand the release of all those imprisoned for actions or indeed only words in support of Palestine Action, and an end of the use of terrorist legislation to crush free speech.

Though the Employment Rights Act has removed some restrictions on unions, like electronic balloting for strike action, the abolition of the 50% minimum turnout requirement has still not been implemented. It needs to go now! Even then, Labour hasn't implemented all the changes the unions asked for. Indeed the unions must demand the total repeal of all the anti-union laws, dating back to Thatcher's first term in office, and the passing of a trade union rights act.

At this year's Labour Conference, we need a mass demonstration to mobilise the union rank and file, Labour Party members, and the social and democratic movements to pressure Burnham to fulfil all his positive pledges, and to oppose his defence of the anti-working class measures of previous Tory and Labour governments.

In this way, if or rather when Burnham betrays his promises, a powerful force of the working class and the socially oppressed will have been organised that can replace Labour with a fighting working class party — a party fighting not just for reforms, but for power: the power to abolish capitalism and introduce socialism.



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Burnham's promises: what do they add up to?

Jeremy Dewar

New Labour prime minister Andy Burnham has signalled that he wants his government to deliver on its promises to working class constituents in 'every postcode'. Some of his most eye-catching proposals include announcements on housing, Palestine and youth unemployment. We measure what his administration is offering against what is needed.

Housing for all?

In June, Andy Burnham promised 'the biggest council house building programme since the post-war period'. The previous month, while campaigning in Makerfield, he was more direct:

'There's £39bn allocated [by Keir Starmer to build 300,000 new homes outside of London] over a 10-year period ... I'm saying that should be dedicated to council homes... because control matters.'

Indeed! But Burnham is not proposing to increase that amount. In August his re-appointed housing minister Angela Rayner announced the allocation of £10bn of that money to build 70,000 homes over 10 years, with just 60% of it going towards social housing, and only 3 of the 33 developers receiving the cash being local councils.

So where has the 'control' gone? Out of the government's hands. Housing Associations are not accountable. Nominally 'not for profit', they routinely pay their top executives six-figure salaries.

Housing Associations can and do swiftly renege on promises to allocate units to social rented properties, citing costs. Some on their estates sell to asset-strippers or hedge funds, who raise rents astronomically thereby forcing tenants out, and convert family homes into houses in multiple occupancy (HMOs).

Rayner's excuse is that councils are not ready, telling them to 'get your plans in order' and 'scale up now'. Councils were lumbered with a £29bn housing debt by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition in 2012. It's still there, weighing them down. The least Rayner could do is to cancel that debt and provide the funds for local authorities to 'scale up' their direct labour forces.

Then there are the numbers, which simply don't add up. The Local Government Association and Shelter put the need for new social rent homes at 100,000 a year. So 300,000 over 10 years is less than a third of the actual need, meaning the crisis would still grow under Labour's plan. Most of the 4 million people currently on social housing waiting lists would still be waiting in 2036.

Meanwhile there is no indication of rent controls being introduced, despite private landlords raising rents by 40% since the covid pandemic. There is no stipulation that new homes should be fitted with net-zero compliant features like heat pumps, insulation, and solar

panels. And the goal of abolishing rough sleeping by Christmas ignores the plight of 400,000 people, including 175,000 children living in temporary accommodation, costing councils £2.8bn a year.

Decent, affordable housing is a human right. Labour's plans don't add up. Labour and trade union members should demand:

- Cancel council debts and grant funding to build homes with council labour.
- Build 100,000 new council homes per year minimum
- Nationalise housing associations and construction companies and train young people to build homes for the future.

Tackling youth unemployment?

One million young people under 24 years old are unemployed. The bosses, commentators and politicians often refer to these as 'NEETs' – not in employment, education or training – but this euphemism cannot hide the fact that capitalism is once again failing to provide jobs for the young workers.

According to Alan Milburn's interim report into the subject, 30% of these have 'good GCSEs' and 15% a university degree. Yet four in ten cite mental health issues as the main impairment to getting a job. Milburn predicts the numbers will only rise on the present course.

This is a national scandal and Andy Burnham is right to highlight it. But will his proposals turn the tide?

Let's look at three of Labour's proposals: Milburn's Young People and Work Review, due to publish its 'solutions' report in September; new technical and educational pathways for 14-18 year-olds; and the Youth Guarantee scheme.

While Milburn's final report is not out as we go to press, his interim report, published in May, gives an indication of its contents. The former Blairite minister and Tory-Lib Dem advisor constantly reiterates that 'for every £1 that DWP spent on employment support for young people, around £25 was spent on benefits'. He claims this provides a 'perverse' incentive to stay on benefits.

But his own findings contradict this by pointing out that 84% of young people on health benefits desperately want to find a job. The danger with this review is that, while oozing empathy, it will end up cutting the health element of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) for young people. This

coercion ignores real need and threatens to punish young people, driving them into low paid dead end posts, rather than find them decent jobs on a living wage.

Burnham's revival of technical education routes also sounds promising. Socialists agree that young people in their school and college years should be introduced to the world of work, to modern technologically developing occupations – not through super-exploitation and low pay. But the scheme presents serious problems.

His proposals envisage young people engaging in non-academic pathways from the age of 14, and revive the Conservative concept of university technical colleges (UTCs) from the age of 11. This division, where middle class children take academic courses leading to positions in high-tech and management, while working class kids train for lower paid manual jobs, would just reproduce the old secondary-grammar divide of the 1950s.

Also as Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the NEU teaching union, said: 'Where will the teachers, lecturers and physical infrastructure to support these new routes come from without proper funding?' There is no extra money for schools or further education colleges. In fact, funding is set to fall. Without this, the programme will fail, like all its predecessors.

The headline-grabbing 110,000 new jobs created by Sainsbury's, Boots and other retailers, on the other hand, are sheer illusion. Although the Youth and Jobs Guarantee scheme promised a six-month, fully paid (and fully subsidised by the government) job, the first batch offers only 2-4 weeks of unpaid work experience.

Rather than a break from 40 years of Thatcherism, this is a revival of her Youth Training Scheme and Youth Opportunities Programme. Both were reviled in their time as super-exploitative, leading to no guaranteed job at the end. Like the housing programme, it has started with a whimper.

Corporations run along profit lines, not for the benefit of the nation's youth. By relying on the private sector to employ more youth, the taxpayer ends up paying the bosses to take on young workers, then discard them.

We say:

- Guarantee every school leaver a permanent job, apprenticeship on full pay or a college placement.
- Fully fund schools and colleges to expand technical training.
- No return to 'secondary moderns' – for the right of young people to choose their own educational pathway and to change pathways.

Call out Israel for genocide

On 8 September Foreign Secretary Ed

Miliband announced a series of new sanctions on Israel, as part of Labour's 'reset' of relations between the two countries. Andy Burnham has added, 'The suffering of the Palestinian people is a scar on the conscience of the world,' adding that 'Britain must be willing to lead.' The tranche of measures is welcome after years of Starmer's endorsement of Israel's siege of Gaza and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. It has led predictably to rage and countersanctions from Israel.

All imports from the illegal West Bank settlements will be banned and sanctions imposed on construction companies building and financing them. Advertising land sales for property in the settlements will be banned, and violent settlers will be sanctioned. Export licences for weapons used in the occupied territories will, he said without specifying them, be withdrawn.

Along with 11 other European countries, the UK government also called on Israel to cease all illegal settlement building.

Yes this is a step forward, but what he did not say is also important. He failed to call out Israel for the ongoing genocide, nor for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli Defence Forces from Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon. Indeed, he doubled down on sanctioning Hezbollah and Hamas.

To underline his continued opposition to the global Palestine solidarity movement, Miliband said, 'I wholeheartedly oppose the boycott divestment sanctions, or BDS, campaign.' In other words, this was a purely diplomatic gesture, designed to pressure Israel before the October elections, not a move to support Palestinian national rights.

But activists can use these new measures, however inadequate, and Israel's hysterical reaction to them, as a recognition that we have been right all along, while emphasising that Israel, with the help of the US, will simply shrug this off and carry on with the genocide. We should demand Miliband and Labour go much, much further:

- Call what Israel is doing in Gaza by its right name — genocide!
- End all trade and investment in Israel — bring its economy to its knees
- Close down all enterprises producing or selling arms to the Zionist regime
- Recognise a single state, 'from the river to the sea', with the right of return for all Palestinian refugees

The small steps away from Starmer's Tory policies are welcome, but activists in the unions, the campaigns, and the Labour party must go on the attack for real substantive changes and be ready to meet the counterattack from the billionaires and bond markets. Otherwise Burnham's promises will end in disappointment and disillusion once again.

Stop the fascist advance!

Jeremy Dewar

Just before 7am on Saturday 5 September a few hundred fascists marched from Dover Priory rail station to the port, shouting ‘Stop the Boats!’ Clad head to toe in black, wearing balaclavas and masks, the paramilitary-styled force blocked roads to the ferry terminal for four and a half hours. No arrests were made.

This was a planned provocation by the recently formed Patriot Platform, led by Danny Thomas. He boasted beforehand on social media that ‘men [sic] from every part of the country will be there,’ but warned that this one would be strictly non-violent, ‘What do you think would happen if we were violent? We’d all get nicked.’

Indeed violence did soon break out, not in Dover but in Portsmouth. The following day, late in the evening, migrants from a boat that had unusually set sail from Cherbourg in Normandy, arrived at Hayling Island, Portsmouth, which happened to be where Thomas was from and claims to still live.

With a significant number of organised supporters locally, and feeling confident after the Dover outing, Thomas called everyone to block the road out of town that would take the migrant workers, by this time exhausted and scared, to Dover for processing. According to police 200 turned up, many masked up, hurling abuse towards migrants and police, injuring two officers and damaging several of their vehicles. The blockade lasted until about 4am.

Growing threat

Fascism emerges in different periods in different ways, but anyone who cannot see a new fascist menace coming into existence in Britain today is deluding themselves. Of course we should not exaggerate the threat; there were only about 200 at each incident on 6-7 September. But we have to look at the direction and tempo of developments.

Since 2019 Thomas has been a close associate of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson, who brought 150,000 racists onto the streets of London in September 2025, and again with about half that number in May this year.

They share violent histories and an extreme hatred of Muslims, which they now hide under the slogan ‘Christ is King’. The adoption of Christian nationalism links them in a chain with the US far right and money, in the shape of Elon Musk and co.

On the same night as the Portsmouth outrage, Alternative for Germany (AfD) was celebrating gaining 44% in a German provincial election, a few seats short of an outright majority for the first time. Thomas and Robinson, along with other fascist outfits, also see electoralism as a useful tool in the construction of a fascist movement. Nigel Farage, along with almost every other politician, condemned the actions as ‘deplorable’ – except for Restore leader Rupert Lowe.

But the far right have long abandoned Farage’s Reform UK. Many have entered

Restore Britain and there are reports of ructions between them and the leadership. However, Lowe went out of his way to praise the Patriot Platform action.

He said his party ‘proudly stands with those peacefully protesting’ in Dover and called the Portsmouth street fighters ‘patriots’. Lowe may think he can ‘ride the fascist tiger’ but he will find out it is a dangerous sport!

The final piece of the jigsaw is the police. In Dover they made no arrests, claimed quite ridiculously that the protest was ‘spontaneous’ and that no law had been broken – despite the Crime and Policing Act 2026 banning masks on demos, making it unlawful since 29 June. This is an example of the real ‘two-tier policing’ that the right falsely claims is aimed at them. In fact, since 2025 over 3,000 protesters have been arrested and 1,200 charged under the Terrorism Act for holding a placard saying ‘I support Palestine Action’. Those with face coverings are routinely arrested.

In Portsmouth there has been one arrest and there may be more. There the

mob pelted police with bricks and stones, and shouted, ‘Shame on you!’ at them when they retaliated. Fascists would like to win over sections of the police, many of whom are already racist, homophobic and misogynist to the core. This – not fighting the ‘establishment’ – is their aim.

Workers’ united front

This must act as a wake-up call to the left and the labour movement. Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood, backed by prime minister Andy Burnham, may have condemned ‘intimidating and thuggish behaviour’ in Parliament, but her answer is to steal the racist right’s clothes and impose even more restrictions on migrants desperate to come to the UK.

We must continue to demand that all migrants are welcome here. We need to explain that the terrible conditions, wars and economic hardship are in large measure due to the imperialist powers’ exploitation and military interventions in their countries of origin. We need to

build new houses, restore public services, raise the standard of social care, mitigate and stop climate change and immigrants can help with this as they already do. Who should pay for it? Well, Britain’s 150 billionaires, who own 22% of the country’s wealth, should be taxed to pay for this! The same billionaires that give a nod and a wink to the fascists.

This is the message we should take into workplaces, schools and communities, while mobilising equally disciplined defence guards, who can stand their ground if Patriot Platform or another far right group try to spread their message or intimidate people of colour.

Stand Up To Racism, controlled by the Socialist Workers Party and backed by most of the unions, rejects this approach and in many cases is a barrier to constructing a real anti-fascist workers’ united front. Celebrities and faith leaders in the Together Alliance will not stop the fascists. Workers and oppressed minorities can. It is not too late to build a real, democratic and fighting united front – we appeal to all anti-fascists to do so.



Universities in crisis: Organise students and workers to fight cuts

KD Tait

Freshers are arriving on campuses hit by job cuts, course closures and a funding crisis. Students and workers need to organise together — not only to stop the cuts, but to fight for public funding and democratic control of education.

If you are starting university this autumn, you are arriving in the middle of a funding crisis. Across Britain, universities are cutting jobs, closing courses and reducing student support. A Universities UK survey published in May found that 79 per cent of the institutions responding had pursued voluntary redundancies during the previous three years and 44 per cent had closed courses. Bursaries, hardship funds and research are being cut as well.

These cuts are not abstract. Fewer staff means larger classes, less contact time, longer waits for support and more work piled onto those who remain. When a course or department closes, students may have no realistic alternative. Working-class students, commuters, disabled students and those with jobs or caring responsibilities are hit hardest.

For students, this comes on top of the basic problem of affording university at all. Fees are only part of it. Rent, food, travel and study costs force many students to work long hours alongside their courses. Cuts to hardship funds, libraries, disability support or contact time therefore fall hardest on those with least money and least time. A campaign against university cuts has to fight for students' living conditions as well: proper non-repayable maintenance grants, affordable housing and fully funded support services.

At Goldsmiths in London, staff have faced repeated rounds of cuts. This year UCU members began a marking and assessment boycott against plans for around £20 million in staffing cuts. Management responded with deductions of 100 per cent of pay, including from staff who continued teaching and carrying out other duties. The branch then moved to indefinite strike action.

Similar disputes are developing across the sector. The basic question is the same everywhere: who is going to pay for the crisis — workers and students, or the government and the wealthy?

How did we get here?

University managements often present cuts as if they were unfortunate but unavoidable accounting decisions. They are not. For decades governments have pushed universities away from stable public funding and towards competition for fee income. Labour introduced tuition fees in 1998. The Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition raised the English fee cap to £9,000 from 2012 while cutting most direct teaching funding.

Universities were encouraged to expand, borrow money, build new facilities and compete for students. International

students became especially important because universities could charge them much higher fees. When recruitment falls, inflation raises costs or debt repayments bite, managements balance the books by cutting staff and courses.

That model turns education into a market. A course can be socially useful, academically important and popular with the people who take it, but still be closed because management decides it does not bring in enough income.

Labour is now raising fees again. That shifts more of the cost onto students without fixing the underlying problem.

Funding systems differ in Scotland and Wales, and free tuition for eligible Scottish students is a real gain. But universities across Britain are still pushed to compete for students, grants and commercial income. The answer is not a better-managed market. It is to replace the market with public funding and democratic planning.

Another education is possible

Every campaign should start from a simple demand: no redundancies, no course closures and no cuts to student provision.

Managements will say there is no alternative. Workers and students should demand to see the accounts, borrowing agreements, contracts and financial plans. They should know what has been spent on consultants, buildings and senior management, and what conditions lenders have imposed.

But exposing bad management is not enough. Even the best-run university cannot solve a national funding crisis on its own. The government has to provide the money needed to protect jobs and education. That means emergency public funding now, followed by a permanent replacement of tuition-fee dependence with stable public grants covering the real costs of teaching and research. And if public money is going in, management should not keep the power to decide what gets cut.

Workers Power argues that university budgets, staffing, courses and major partnerships should be controlled by elected, recallable bodies of workers and students.

That is very different from giving students or trade unions a few advisory seats on management committees. If management still has the final say, it still has the power to close a department, sack staff or sign a commercial deal.

Democratic worker–student control means the power to reject cuts, inspect the accounts, remove failed managers and decide how resources are used.

It also means deciding what universi-

ties are for.

The Home Office already makes universities police international students' immigration status. International students pay enormous fees and can face threats to their right to remain if sponsorship is withdrawn. Universities are also being drawn more closely into military research and training. In July the Ministry of Defence launched a Defence Universities Alliance involving 35 universities, explicitly linking higher education to the needs of the arms industry and the military.

Students have shown that these questions can be challenged. The Palestine solidarity encampments forced university investments and partnerships into public debate. Workers and students should demand full disclosure of investments, research contracts and military links, defend the right to protest and organise, and end universities' role in policing immigration.

Build locally, organise nationally

The first weeks of term matter. Freshers' fairs, introductory lectures, halls and society meetings bring thousands of students together. They are an opportunity to organise. Where cuts are threatened, call an open meeting of students and workers. Invite the campus unions, student societies and affected departments. Agree demands. Elect a committee that reports back to regular meetings and can be replaced if it stops carrying out their decisions. Take the campaign into lectures, libraries, halls and workplaces. Do not limit it to the people already involved in student politics. Students should support workers taking industrial action. Join picket lines, raise strike funds and oppose punitive pay deductions. Workers in turn should support student demands over fees, rents, grants and democratic rights. Petitions and public meetings can help build support, but they are not enough if management refuses to move. Campaigns need to prepare action that can disrupt business as usual: walkouts, occupations, rent strikes and coordinated support for staff strikes.

These actions work best when people understand what they are trying to achieve and have democratic control over them.

Local campaigns can win, but universities should not be left to fight one by one. In August, activists from around two dozen universities met in Sheffield and founded a national anti-cuts campaign to begin coordinating resistance. Every campus campaign should join it, send elected delegates and push for common days of action.

The campus trade unions—UCU, Unison, Unite and others—should organise a national campaign against redundancies and closures, prepare coordinated industrial action and demand

government funding for the whole sector.

If national union leaders refuse to act, members should organise to change those decisions rather than accept another round of isolated disputes.

The student movement also needs serious organisation. Student unions have money, offices, mailing lists and elected officers. Use them. Pass motions, contest elections and demand resources for campaigns. But organisation cannot stop when an officer refuses to act or graduates.

We need a fighting national student organisation rooted in democratic campus bodies, with elected leaders, accountable delegates and the ability to organise sustained action.

That is one of the lessons of the 2010 student revolt. Tens of thousands marched, walked out and occupied against the tripling of fees and the abolition of Education Maintenance Allowance in England. The movement showed enormous militancy, including among school and college students. But it lacked a democratic national organisation able to decide strategy and sustain the fight. We should not repeat that weakness.

What are we fighting for?

Defending individual courses is necessary, but the movement needs an alternative for education as a whole.

Workers Power fights for free education, living grants and the cancellation of student debt. We want secure jobs, decent pay and manageable workloads for education workers, with casualisation and outsourcing ended.

We want a state-funded national education service under worker–student control. Education should be free throughout life, from school and college to university and adult education. Provision should be planned according to social need, not what can make money in a competitive market.

That means education for useful work, science and technology, but also for history, literature, languages, art and culture. People should have the time and resources to learn throughout their lives.

A society organised around profit cannot fully deliver that. The fight over universities therefore raises a wider question: who controls society's wealth and resources?

Workers Power argues for taking the banks and major industries into public ownership under workers' control and planning the economy to meet social needs rather than private profit.

You do not have to agree with all of that before joining a campaign against cuts. Everyone who wants to fight should be able to organise together. Socialists should argue openly for their programme and win support through what they say and do.

But the fight needs to start now.

ICR strike: cancer researchers enter week 12 of action

About 50 strikers at the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) marked 55 days of indefinite action by holding a rally, a march and a mass picket on 28 August in Kensington, London. The defiant stance of the Unite members is a beacon for all workers, an example of how resistance and unity can shift even the most hard-nosed of managers.

The ICR is a world-renowned part of the scientific community, doing valuable work saving lives, but their mistreatment of staff is intolerable. As the strikers chanted, 'We fight cancer every day – we can't do it on low pay!'

Management's attacks started in 2019, when they unilaterally removed annual pay increments, claiming they were 'inflationary' – despite 100 top managers taking home £68 million a year between them, the CEO Kristian Helin on his own

'earning' over £400,000. They then proceeded to take away the workers' canteen, free parking facilities and threaten their pensions. Subsequent pay erosion has led to a 16% drop in wages.

The union was too weak to stop this at the time, but a vigorous unionisation drive, helped no doubt by managers' everyday rudeness, built up a 400-strong Unite branch, from which a 30-member strike committee has been formed. When management refused to negotiate on any of the issues, Unite called in ACAS. Obligated to attend the meeting, however, management turned on their heels and walked out!

The leadership of the strike has been strong throughout the campaign. Not only has the strike committee been able to maintain large pickets and hold a successful solidarity gig (over £1,600 raised), but they even forced management to accept rank and file members attending

negotiating meetings to hear what they had to say. This last tactic proved so successful that ICR eventually refused to talk in front of the very staff whose pay and conditions they were cutting.

Next steps

The truth is that ICR has enough money (£30 million in liquid cash reserves, another £35 million in assets) to pay for full pay restoration (costing £16 million) immediately. Having conceded on other issues, like the canteen, they have shifted from a 3.75% offer to 5%. But the union is quite rightly holding out for more for the lowest pay.

Low pay, especially for post-doctorate researchers, is a big issue. Many are on as low as £14.80 an hour, the London Living Wage, which in posh Kensington & Chelsea is not enough to survive. A meeting with management, followed by a mass members' meeting, was due to be

held in the afternoon of the rally.

But the strike is hampered by Unite's industrial strategy, which is commendable insofar as it supports all-out indefinite action, but terrible when it comes to spreading disputes. Although there are other disputes in the health (Maudsley hospital, St Thomas') and higher education (London Southbank, Goldsmith's) sectors, it has been the rank and file who have made the links, not Unite's leadership.

If the dispute is not settled on 27 August, strikers need to broaden their campaign, link up with other strikers and turn the heat up. The so-called charity sector has for too long squeezed its workforces, using moral blackmail. University graduates have for too long been forced to live on low wages. The time for a united fightback is now.

Defy EHRC: trans rights at work

Rebecca Anderson

Since 5 August, when the EHRC's Code of Practice on single-sex spaces came into force, Human Resources departments across the country have been drafting 'compliant' policies. Somewhere right now a manager is working out how to challenge a trans colleague's use of the toilet or drawing up a procedure for 'verifying' someone's sex before they can access a support group or a changing room. The Code hands employers a blueprint for discrimination dressed up as neutral legal guidance.

But this isn't a legal dispute to be fought out in the courts while the rest of us wait for a verdict. It's a workplace issue, right now, in every staffroom and shopfloor where a trans worker can be asked to prove their sex.

The trade union movement must decide whether its response is thousands of separate workplaces improvising on their own, or something organised, coordinated and backed by real industrial weight. The Code is also only the workplace end of a much wider wave of reaction (see back page).

What the Code actually does

The Code follows the Supreme Court's ruling in *For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers*, which found that 'sex' in the Equality Act means sex assigned at birth. A Gender Recognition Certificate no longer changes a person's legal sex for any purpose under the Act.

Employers are told they may need to run single-sex facilities on that basis, and the Code all but invites them to demand 'evidence' of someone's sex where doubt is raised – evidence that, as

it admits, no official record in the UK can supply. In practice trans people must either pass in stealth or out themselves on demand.

The Good Law Project's challenge won a partial clarification on services, so trans-inclusive facilities aren't banned outright. Workplaces fare worse. Employers may be required to segregate facilities on a trans-exclusionary basis unless every toilet and changing room is a lockable individual room, with the door reaching floor to ceiling. For most workplaces that isn't possible. Nor is it desirable, for example in cases of emergency. It amounts to a demand to segregate.

Lawfare in our unions

Across civil society, legal threats keep forcing retreats. Amnesty International UK has withdrawn two reports, while Girlguiding and the Women's Institute have ended trans membership after decades of inclusion.

The same pressure has reached inside our own movement. At PCS conference the Standing Orders Committee has repeatedly ruled trans solidarity motions out of order on 'legal advice' from the union's solicitors. In 2025, the leadership also instructed conference delegates to use the facilities matching their gender assigned at birth, or the disabled toilets, claiming the law required it.

At Unison's 2026 conference delegates did pass motions defending trans workers, but an emergency motion campaigning against the EHRC's guidance was ruled out on 'legal jeopardy' grounds. When Lambeth delegates handed out printed copies anyway, two

were expelled from the hall and later from the conference itself.

This is lawfare within the trade union movement: leaderships and standing orders committees deciding, again and again, that the safest position is no position, with legal risk as the permanent excuse.

Guidance that entrenches discrimination is an attack which must be defied and made unworkable in practice, whatever the courts eventually rule. Union branches should organise to breach the Code wherever it demands discrimination, and standing orders committees should be told plainly that legal risk is not a licence to silence trans members. We should break the guidance in the workplace and demand, loudly and without apology, that the government changes the law behind it.

Generalise the pledges

Something else has been building behind the scenes. In workplaces across the country individual pledges have been circulating: statements by workers that they will not police the gender of colleagues or the public, and will not act as an enforcement arm for the Code. They represent a practical refusal to do the discriminatory work the Code tries to offload onto ordinary staff.

But an individual pledge is also an individual risk. A worker who refuses a manager's instruction on conscience alone can be disciplined unless they are backed up. If a branch adopts the pledge as policy, backing a refusal to police a colleague's gender the way it would back a refusal of an unsafe work instruction, the risk shifts to the collective, where it

belongs.

Where employers push back, the pledge has to be supported by real industrial action: grievances raised collectively; branch motions committing to support anyone facing detriment or victimisation; and where necessary a commitment to ballot for strike action. A policy backed by that threat is a workplace where the Code cannot be imposed.

What unions must do

Adopt clear demands. Back a common set of demands – reversing the Supreme Court ruling and the EHRC Code, winning self-ID, free trans healthcare on demand – as branch and national policy.

Back the pledges collectively. Turn individual refusals to police gender into union policy, so members who refuse are protected, not exposed.

Build the national link-up. Get behind the initiatives already building national coordination, push them to talk to each other, and call for a national assembly of the movement.

Train reps now. Every rep should know what the Code does and doesn't require, so employers cannot invoke it to justify more than the law demands.

Refuse to let legal risk silence members. Don't let standing orders committees use 'legal jeopardy' to block trans solidarity motions without full disclosure and a democratic vote.

Commit to defending members. Agree in advance to raise grievances and ballot for action where members face victimisation or detriment for refusing to discriminate.

PCS widens strike ballot

A PCS member

PCS is to ballot civil service members for strike action and action short of strike. Following a national executive committee (NEC) meeting on 19 August, and a statement on 1 September confirming the union has written to the government rejecting its 3.5% pay offer and demanding talks on 'fair pay'. The union says that 'a major campaign of industrial action is now needed' to shift ministers.

The NEC's statement argues the 3.5% average uplift will not keep pace with rising living costs and that inflation could 'wipe out any pay rise entirely' by the end of the year. Conference policy commits the union to seek 10% for all members, a minimum wage of £18 an hour and a £5,000 increase to London weighting.

In May Fran Heathcote said the remit simply 'builds on the progress made in the previous years'. She has now climbed down and agrees that the union 'will be proceeding with our planned ballot'.

The ballot is a welcome development, and the mandate being sought is wider than any national campaign PCS has run in recent years. It also arrives at the very end of the window conference set for it, for reasons that have nothing to do with the government.

Wider ballot

The ballot covers pay, job security, pensions, hybrid working, and other terms and conditions. Members in MHCLG are in an ongoing dispute over office attendance requirements and closures, alongside job cuts. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) members have already struck over redundancies. At the MoD, members are disputing the delay in implementing the pay award.

By naming those issues in a national ballot, the union is no longer asking members in dispute to take action and make demands in isolation. They are linked to the national ballot.

That breadth of issues cuts both ways. A national dispute that names office attendance and job security lets branches already fighting see their own dispute in it. This could help turnout getting above the 50% threshold. But a ballot that covers everything can end up bargaining over nothing. Members are entitled to know what a win looks like on each issue, not just on the headline pay figure.

Ballot delayed by the suspension of the NEC

Conference had already passed policy: motion A375, against Left Unity opposition, instructing the incoming NEC to launch a national pay, jobs and conditions campaign, with a strike ballot of civil service members by the end of September if talks made insufficient progress.

When the Cabinet Office published its 3.5% paybill remit for 2026-27 on the conference's final day, Heathcote bypassed the newly elected NEC to rush out her

own members' email, presenting it as proof that talks were working.

The decision to ballot could not be taken until 19 August because the body charged with taking it had been out of action for most of the summer. The immediate fight in June was over standing orders. Left Unity and the general secretary insisted the new NEC operate under the previous year's rules, including a gagging clause stopping NEC members reporting discussions back to members, and a requirement that any presidential ruling could only be overturned by a two-thirds majority, the same mechanism ex-president Martin Cavanagh used to rule by decree in 2024-25.

The Coalition for Change (CfC), which had won the presidency and a 21-14 NEC majority on a platform of member-led democracy and a serious pay fight, proposed report-back rights, more frequent meetings, extra subcommittees and a simple-majority override of the president.

Then Heathcote walked out of the 11 June NEC meeting and closed down the online call rather than let the issue be debated. Officers were subsequently instructed to stop the National Disputes Committee (NDC) clearing any business at all.

That paralysis had a direct cost for members. FCDO members fighting job cuts of up to a quarter of UK-based staff had a strike mandate sitting with the NDC while it sat idle. On 7 July, under pressure to release it, the NEC majority voted, under protest, to revert to Left Unity's old standing orders in full. Only then did the NDC clear the FCDO action, which finally went ahead on 16 July with further strikes on 12 and 26 August.

FCDO members were right not to wait any longer. But to get one dispute moving, CfC members on the NEC felt it had to give up the democratic reforms it had just been elected to deliver. The general secretary got what she wanted in June by holding a strike hostage until July. The national ballot that conference ordered by the end of September was only agreed once the NEC had surrendered. A ballot delivered on those terms shows what has to be given up to make the machinery move at all.

Nor is the argument inside the union settled by the announcement. The general secretary has made the case that pay is already being 'restored', pointing to cumulative average civil service increases of 8.89% against cumulative CPI inflation of 5.99% over the two pay rounds since Labour took office in 2024.

However, civil service pay has fallen in real terms by roughly 12% at the most junior grades and by up to a quarter at the most senior end of the pay scales since 2010. PCS's own research found wages would need to rise by 18-62%, depending on grade, just to restore 2010 levels.

Being 'proud' of this year's 3.5% offer only makes sense if the fight for more has already been abandoned. Members will notice if the ballot is run as a for-



malty by people who spent May defending the remit.

Trans rights guidance

The EHRC's post-Supreme Court guidance and the new Equality Act Code of Practice, in force since 5 August, are already being used by civil service employers as cover for measures that have little to do with single-sex spaces. Civil Service HR has moved to scrap up to thirteen weeks of paid special leave that trans staff could take for gender-affirming treatment and recovery, provision so narrowly used that the administrative cost of dismantling it will rival any savings.

Staff networks, however, warn this is only the opening move. Facilities access is being rewritten so it is no longer up to the individual but 'discussed with a line manager', which in practice means managers policing who uses which toilet, outing trans and non-binary staff in the process, and drawing in cisgender colleagues who don't fit a stereotype.

The NDC has, at last, issued bargaining guidance instructing branches to resist exclusionary changes. That's necessary, but it's a document, not a plan. What we actually need is organised support for reps who will be first in the room when a manager tries to enforce a new facilities policy.

This failure is unsurprising. This is the same Left Unity that used the National Standing Orders Committee to keep trans-rights motions off the agenda at conference in both 2025 and 2026, ten of them ruled out this year alone, and that tried in 2025 to instruct delegates to use toilets matching their sex assigned at birth or the disabled facilities. A faction that fights this hard to stop its own

members showing solidarity with trans colleagues was never going to organise the fight to defend them.

What now?

Announcing the ballot is the easy part. It has to clear a turnout threshold across a fragmented civil service bargaining unit, on a list of issues that only holds together if members in each department can see their own dispute in it: office attendance, job cuts, pensions, the lot. That work is done in branches and workplaces, not in committee. The last issue called for a rank-and-file campaign rooted there rather than in any one faction, something wider than CfC, built the way 'PCS Says No' was in 2023. There is still little sign that anything on that scale has taken shape.

And the route to this announcement should not be forgotten once ballot papers are out. A left NEC cannot out-administer a bureaucracy that controls the machinery between elections: the decision conference ordered by September was delayed until late August by the suspension of the NEC itself, and released only in exchange for the standing orders. It can only be backed by members and reps organised enough to act with officials where possible, and independently of them where necessary: building the pay and conditions campaign from the branches rather than waiting for briefings that may not come, organising trans workers and allies to defend facilities access before a manager tries to enforce a policy. Democracy in PCS won't be won by more committee votes. It will be won, if at all, by a membership organised enough to act whether or not the general secretary's office consents.

Malvinas dispute flares up again

Dave Stockton and KD Tait

Argentina's right wing populist president Javier Milei has announced that 'the winds of change' are blowing over Argentina's historic claim to Las Malvinas, which Britain insists is part of its territory despite the fact that the Falklands, as it calls them, are 8,000 miles from its shores and only some 300 miles from the South American mainland.

Referring to British and Israeli companies' plans to drill in the Sea Lion oilfield near the islands, Milei has threatened that 'Argentina will not stand idly by' and that 'any further advance on the Malvinas Islands will be considered a violation of our national security'.

He has also threatened sanctions against companies involved in the drilling project and announced new funding for a naval base in Tierra del Fuego, his country's southernmost province, to strengthen Argentina's military presence near the islands. Milei added:

'Our role and relevance as a country in the world has changed dramatically. The Malvinas are our future – we need to recover these islands, which are nationally relevant. There is no other path forward.'

One obvious purpose of Milei's turn to the Malvinas is to rally nationalist sentiment at a time when his government faces growing opposition to its attacks on jobs, wages, public services and democratic rights. In that respect there is an analogy with the Argentine military junta headed by General Galtieri, which seized the islands in 1982 while confronting a mounting domestic political crisis.

But it would be wrong simply to reduce Argentina's claim to a diversion manufactured by whichever government happens to be in office. The claim itself is a longstanding national grievance against British colonial rule.

The 'wind of change' filling Milei's sails also emanates from the White House. Milei, whom Donald Trump has called his 'favourite president', has appeared alongside him repeatedly in the United States. Trump backed a \$20 billion financial package for Argentina and openly linked continued US support to Milei's political fortunes. More recently he has called into question Washington's traditional support for Britain's position over the Malvinas.

This does not make Milei an anti-imperialist. Quite the reverse. He is closely aligned with Trump and Israel and has courted some of the most reactionary sections of US and international capital. In April he received Peter Thiel, together with representatives of Thiel Capital and Founders Fund, at the Casa Rosada.

His programme is one of privatisation, deregulation and opening Argentina still further to international capital. The contradiction is clear, but, nevertheless, a government deeply integrated with imperialist capital is still able to take up a legitimate national claim against an imperialist power.

Britain's claim

Britain's claim to the Falklands, which it occupied in 1833 after expelling the Argentine garrison and establishing permanent British administration there, rests today on the argument that in a 2013 referendum 1,513 of 1,517 voters backed remaining a British overseas territory.

Labour Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband has accordingly declared that the islands 'are British and will remain so' and that the islanders' right of self-determination is 'paramount'. Defence Secretary Wes Streeting has said Britain's commitment to the islands is 'absolute and unshakeable'.

But contrary to the brazen misrepresentation by successive British governments, the sovereignty question has never been settled in Britain's favour. The United Nations continues to list the Malvinas as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. UN General Assembly Resolution 2065 recognises the existence of a sovereignty dispute between Britain and Argentina and calls on the two governments to negotiate a peaceful settlement.

The 2013 vote certainly shows that the present island population overwhelmingly wishes to remain British. But this does not amount to a national right of self-determination which can indefinitely perpetuate British colonial sovereignty.

The islanders have democratic rights which must be protected in any settlement. Their right to remain, their civil and cultural rights, and extensive democratic local self-government should be guaranteed. We oppose any expulsion, discrimination or forced assimilation. But the wishes of a population established under British colonial rule cannot simply confer an eternal title on Britain to territory whose sovereignty remains disputed.

The present oil dispute also exposes the material interests behind all the rhetoric about national rights. The islands provide Britain with a strategic foothold in the South Atlantic, a base from which to project military and political influence in the region, and control over valuable natural resources. The democratic language of 'self-determination' is mobilised as a cynical cover for these imperial interests.

The Sea Lion project makes this unusually clear. The UK government explicitly claims that the islanders' 'self-determination' includes the right to exploit offshore resources. The project is operated by Israel's Navitas Petroleum and Britain's Rockhopper Exploration under licences issued by the island government, with production expected to begin in 2028.

Britain has no right to exploit the resources of a disputed colonial territory. These assets should be transferred from British and Israeli companies to Argentina, while demanding alongside Argentinian socialists that they are brought into public ownership under

workers' control.

The 1982 war

Casting a baleful shadow over all this is the 1982 war. Under Margaret Thatcher, Britain sent a naval and military task force to retake the territory after its occupation by the Galtieri junta. The Falklands War resulted in 649 Argentine and 255 British servicemen being killed, along with three civilian islanders.

Labour, then just as today, rallied round the flag whenever imperialist Britain's interests were at stake. Its supposedly left wing leader and 'lifelong peacemaker' Michael Foot gave enthusiastic support to the dispatch of the 'task force', as Britain's Royal Navy fleet of warships was called.

Thatcher's victory transformed her government's political fortunes and contributed substantially to the Conservative landslide in the 1983 general election. It would be too simple to say that the Falklands victory alone enabled her subsequently to inflict historic defeats on the industrial working class — headed by the miners, but including the dockers, print workers and others.

Economic developments, divisions within Labour and the betrayals of the Labour and trade union leaderships also played their part. But the war strengthened Thatcher and the ruling class, fed a wave of chauvinism and helped create the political conditions for the neoliberal offensive whose effects remain with us today.

In 1982 Workers Power responded to the war hysteria in Britain by making it clear that this country, despite its bourgeois democracy at home, was an imperialist power still clinging to outposts of empire, whereas Argentina was a country dominated and exploited by imperialism — by then principally US and international finance, though Britain had historically played a major role there. In Marxist terms, Argentina was a semi-colony.

That did not mean political support for Galtieri's murderous dictatorship. Workers Power argued that Argentine workers should take advantage of the crisis to strengthen their own organisations and fight to nationalise imperialist holdings under workers' control. The struggle against British imperialism and the struggle against the junta were not counterposed alternatives.

Lesson for today

Clearly, the benefit of hindsight enables us to recognise that not every judgement we made during a rapidly developing war was or could have been correct. Workers Power no. 32 argued that an Argentine military defeat would be more likely to demoralise the working class than rapidly bring down Galtieri.

In fact the defeat precipitated a deep crisis of the dictatorship and hastened its collapse. That prognosis was wrong. But this did not retrospectively make Thatcher's victory progressive or remove the distinction between an imperialist

country and a country oppressed by imperialism.

That distinction remains as important today as it was then. It is highly unlikely that Milei will invade the islands, or that Britain would respond in the same way as Thatcher. Britain no longer has the same naval forces with which Thatcher assembled her task force, although it does now maintain a permanent military presence on the islands, including the Mount Pleasant base.

The relationship with Washington has also changed. Reagan ultimately rallied to Thatcher and provided Britain with decisive US support. Trump's present attitude is plainly less reliable from London's point of view.

But Workers Power maintains, categorically, that Argentina has a legitimate claim to the Malvinas and that Britain should negotiate their transfer to Argentine sovereignty.

Workers Power therefore reaffirms the position we took in 1982, consistent with more than four decades of support for anti-colonial struggles and international working class solidarity. Today that solidarity also has an organisational expression in the International Socialist League, alongside our comrades in Argentina's MST, who fight Milei and the Peronists while making the recovery of Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas part of their programme.

The islanders, whether of British or Argentine origin, must have their democratic rights, their right to remain and substantial local self-government guaranteed. But Britain cannot invoke them as a permanent veto against decolonisation. We oppose British countermeasures, sanctions, military threats or increased military expenditure intended to maintain the colonial possession.

If Britain were again to use military force to maintain its control, communists in this country would oppose that war and work for the defeat of British imperialism while maintaining complete political independence from the Argentine government.

At the same time, Argentine workers should place no confidence in Milei or the Peronist opposition. A president who courts Trump, Netanyahu, Peter Thiel and international finance cannot offer a consistent struggle for genuine national sovereignty. Argentine workers must fight his attempts to dismantle their social gains, their jobs and their democratic rights while opposing British colonial rule.

The British labour movement should break from its servile patriotism towards its own capitalist class and develop links of internationalist working class solidarity with its Argentine sisters and brothers. The Malvinas should be returned to Argentina, the democratic rights of the islanders should be guaranteed, and their resources should serve working people rather than British, Israeli or Argentine capital.



CAPITALIST INFERNO

Alex Rutherford

The summer of 2026 will be long remembered as the season when the unfolding ecological catastrophe first truly made itself felt to the people of Britain and Western Europe. While the politicians jetted off on their holidays and the capitalists retreated to their air-conditioned estates with on-site swimming pools, the working class sweated, choked, and watched the world burn.

The scientists are scrambling to update their models. The meteorologists are running out of superlatives. While our so-called 'leaders' maintain their stubborn silence about the scale of the challenge faced by humanity and their policies continue to drive us towards the cliff-edge, the message is clear for those of us on the ground: this is what climate breakdown looks like, and it is only the beginning.

The numbers are staggering. The heatwaves came wave after wave, relentless and lasting for days on end; the 18-28 June one was the longest on record. An unprecedented total of five heatwaves hit Britain this year, all of which have been widespread, reaching even northern Scotland. We have seen temperatures that would have been unthinkable a generation ago, with 40 separate days recording over 30C somewhere in Britain.

Hospitals were overwhelmed with cases of heatstroke and respiratory failure. The elderly died in their homes, forgotten by a state that has stripped social care to the bone. The 'excess death' toll

in June alone reached 2,174, though the government will bury the figures in the autumn. They do not want a body count. They want us to go back to work and pretend the 'new normal' is acceptable.

But there is no going back. The drought has cracked the earth, leaving reservoirs at record lows. Some parts of Britain recorded 62 days without rain: another unenviable record. Although the impacts of the climate catastrophe have been predicted for years, the British state has done very little to prepare society.

As a result of water privatisation, there haven't even been any new reservoirs built in the UK since 1992. Chronic underinvestment in infrastructure has led to repeated scandals about river and ocean pollution caused by industrial production, and wasted water due to leaking pipes. According to government statistics, 71% of England was in drought for most of August.

While a third of our water supply is estimated to be used by businesses rather than household consumers, only 1% of companies are responsible for nearly half of that consumption. No wonder that many are angry that they have been placed under a restrictive hosepipe ban, while rapid consumption continues for the sake of profit, and water company executives continue to pocket £1 million-plus pay packets as a reward for their criminal mismanagement.

Wildfires, once a distant news story from California or Australia, have arrived on our doorsteps. Two wildfires in Stourbridge, West Midlands reduced

19 homes to ash, causing families to flee with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

This was not a forest fire in a remote wilderness; this was a working-class community in the heart of England, ravaged by flames fed by tinder-dry conditions. The firefighters, already demoralised by years of cuts and pay freezes, fought valiantly, but they were fighting against a force that no amount of heroism can defeat.

Mainland Europe has fared even worse. From the Greek islands to the French countryside and down to southern Spain, the continent was set ablaze. The Mediterranean became a furnace, and the summer of 2026 has shown that the climate crisis does not respect borders. And as the recent devastating floods in Nepal and Tibet, the result of avalanches caused by the sudden melting of glaciers, have demonstrated, the impacts of global heating become increasingly widespread and unpredictable.

This is a global crisis which cannot be solved within the narrow confines of individual nation states, it demands a coordinated global response. Instead, the response of our 'leaders' has been nationalism, division and the barbarism of Fortress Europe.

'Super El Niño'

The media has been abuzz with talk of a 'super El Niño.' While the term is not a formal scientific classification, the underlying reality is undeniable. Sea surface temperatures in the Pacific are

running at over 2 degrees above the long-term average, with forecasts suggesting they could exceed 3 degrees. The Met Office has warned that this could be the strongest El Niño event in living memory, and that 2027 is likely to be even hotter than 2026.

This year's heatwaves were driven by the background warming caused by human activity, including the burning of fossil fuels, the destruction of ecosystems and the relentless pursuit of profit. But the El Niño event will amplify the chaos, acting as a multiplier. It will disrupt weather patterns across the globe, raising temperatures and bringing floods to some regions and drought to others. But as the super El Niño increases global heating, global heating will react back on the El Niño, strengthening it.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation has issued a stark warning: this El Niño could threaten tens of millions of people with crisis-level acute food insecurity. This is a death sentence for the poor of the Global South, and a harbinger of what is coming for us all.

Empty breadbasket

Nowhere is the crisis more acute than in our food system. The heat and drought have devastated agriculture. Harvests have failed. Yields have collapsed. Farmers are staring at fields of withered crops, their livelihoods destroyed.

The impact of the extreme weather on food production systems has been exacerbated by US imperialism's war of aggression against Iran, which has

caused shortages of fuel and fertilisers, driving up prices. The supermarkets are beginning to ration produce. The bosses' Food and Drink Federation predicts food inflation to rise to 6.4% by next summer. The era of cheap, abundant food is over.

It is clear who will pay the price. Small farmers are being driven to the wall, squeezed by the supermarkets, who demand ever-lower prices, and by the banks, who demand their mortgage payments, while big agribusiness conglomerates consolidate their power. Small farmers are becoming an endangered species, and with them goes the knowledge the knowledge and resilience of local food production.

And what of the farm workers? They are the invisible army of the food system, many of them migrants from climes already suffering climate catastrophe, toiling in the fields for poverty wages in appalling conditions. They are the ones who harvest our food, and they are the ones who suffer first when the harvests fail. They are denied the basic rights of decent housing, fair pay, and job security. The climate crisis is a class issue, and the farm workers are on the front line.

The government's response has been to double down on the very system that is causing the crisis. Despite the obvious scale of the emerging disaster and Labour's manifesto promises, Burnham is expected to back the new Jackdaw and Rosebank gas and oil licences which will accelerate the ecological catastrophe while increasing the already exorbitant profits of the fossil fuel industry.

The government is also licensing at least 100 data centres, which consume vast amounts of energy and water, at a rapid pace. They are acting as though the resources of the planet are infinite, while remaining deaf to the concerns of local residents, environmental scientists, and the public at large.

A recent study has shown that the two data centres which have so far received planning approval under a fast-track system intended for 'infrastructure vital to national security', will generate greater carbon dioxide emissions than the entirety of Exxon's UK operations.

Socialist solution

We cannot rely on the market to solve the climate crisis. The market is the cause of the crisis. The drive for profit, the endless accumulation of capital, is fundamentally incompatible with a liveable planet. Production is determined by the profit motive, rather than by a democratic plan based on the needs of humanity and ensuring the survival of civilisation.

Additionally, competition between nation states over resources and markets is preventing the transition from fossil fuels, as energy capacity is a strategic resource, regardless of the pollution it generates.

We cannot rely on the politicians who put the interests of the fossil fuel

industry first. Last year, when mayor of Manchester, Andy Burnham said there can be 'no turning away from net zero' and there should be a 'just transition' from fossil fuel consumption, protecting workers' jobs and pay. In 2025 he endorsed the fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty.

But over the summer, he barely uttered the words 'climate change' despite the ample opportunity afforded by the heat and drought. Asked about Rosebank and Jackdaw in a New Statesman interview, he said, 'I've got something of an open mind, you know. I don't have a sort of fixed position.'

We have to tell Burnham that chugging along with Labour's existing, woefully inadequate, capitalist-driven Green New Deal, absorbing some inevitable cuts in Chancellor John Healey's autumn budget, will not do. Burnham says he will attend the COP31 summit in Turkey this year. We have to mobilise the unions and environmental movement to make the following demands on him:

Nationalise the big six energy companies, the North Sea oil fields, and the gas infrastructure, without compensation to the exploiters and profiteers. They must all be placed under the democratic control of workers and consumers. We need a planned transition to renewable energy, massive investment in wind, solar, tidal and geothermal power, and a just transition for workers in the fossil fuel industry, with guaranteed jobs, wages, and retraining.

Reconfigure food production. We need to nationalise the land and take over the agribusiness and fertiliser monopolies. We need to support small farmers and farm workers, with guaranteed fair prices, secure land tenure, and decent pay and conditions. We need to build a food system based on sustainable farming and climate mitigation measures, like new reservoirs, cleaned up rivers and fireguards to contain wildfires.

Build a global movement against climate breakdown. The climate crisis is a global crisis, and it requires a global response. We must build solidarity with the workers and peasants of the Global South, who are suffering the worst impacts of a crisis they did not create, and demand reparations for the damage caused by climate change. We fight for a global planned economy to replace the polluting anarchy of the market.

The summer of 2026 is a warning. It is a glimpse of the future that awaits us if we do not act. But it is also a call to arms. The working class has the power to shut down polluting factories and power plants. Direct action has its place, but only if it targets the real enemy, big business, and leads to public ownership and workers' control of energy and food production.

The earth is burning. The system is failing. The time to act is now.



Burning fields: Farm workers and the crisis

While the media focuses on the impact of the heat-wave on holiday-makers and garden lawns, the real disaster is unfolding in our fields and farms. The drought has devastated the harvest. Yields of wheat, barley, and potatoes have collapsed. Fruit and vegetable growers are watching their crops wither on the vine. The result is a food crisis that is already hitting the poorest hardest.

But behind the headlines about food prices lies a hidden story: the story of the farm workers. These are the men and women who plant, tend, and harvest our food. They work long hours in brutal conditions, often for the minimum wage or less. Many are migrant workers, brought in on seasonal visas, living in overcrowded caravans and tents, denied the basic rights of decent wages, housing and healthcare.

The climate crisis is making their lives even harder. The extreme heat makes work in the fields dangerous. The drought means longer hours, as farmers struggle to save what they can. The wildfires threaten their homes and their livelihoods. And yet,

they are the ones who are blamed when food prices rise, scapegoated by the right-wing media as 'greedy foreigners' who are 'taking our jobs.'

The truth is the opposite. The farm workers are the backbone of our food system, and they are being exploited and abandoned by a system that values profit over people. The small farmers are being squeezed too, driven to the wall by the supermarkets and the banks. They are told to 'innovate' and 'diversify' but the reality is that the market is stacked against them.

The solution is not to blame the victims, but to organise them. Farm workers need unions to fight for the right to collective bargaining, to fair wages, to safe working conditions. Small farmers need to be freed from the tyranny of the supermarkets and the banks. They need access to land, to fair prices, and to the resources to transition to sustainable farming.

The climate crisis is a class crisis. The farm workers and small farmers are on the front line. They are not the problem; they are the solution. We must stand with them, and fight for a food system that works for people and the planet, not for profit.

Rosebank, Jackdaw and the fight for a workers' transition

KD Tait

Unions are right to reject a jobless transition. But defending workers shouldn't mean tying their future to another round of private fossil-fuel investment. The answer is public ownership, workers' control and a democratic plan to cut emissions while protecting jobs and living standards.

The government is considering the future of Rosebank and Jackdaw, two major North Sea oil and gas developments. Their previous environmental approvals were ruled unlawful because they failed to assess the emissions produced when the oil and gas was eventually burned. Fresh decisions are now required.

Unite wants both projects approved. Its general secretary Sharon Graham argues that North Sea workers are losing their jobs before replacement industries exist. The union's slogan, 'No ban without a plan', makes the point that workers cannot be expected to accept unemployment, the destruction of their communities and vague promises that green jobs may appear sometime in the future.

But Unite draws the wrong conclusion when it turns this into support for another round of private oil and gas investment. Instead of fighting to take the transition out of the hands of the energy companies, it demands that those companies be allowed to continue deciding what is produced and where investment goes.

Britain will continue to use some oil and gas during any serious transition away from fossil fuels. Gas is still used for heating, electricity generation and industry. Oil remains embedded in transport, chemicals and manufacturing. Even a socialist government could not replace all of this overnight. It would have to decide what fossil-fuel production was still necessary, where it should come from and how quickly it could be reduced as alternatives were built.

That is why the transition has to be planned.

Under capitalism, oil and gas companies invest where they expect to make a profit. Energy is bought and sold on international markets. Infrastructure is built according to expected returns, while workers and communities live with the consequences.

Approving a new North Sea field is therefore not the same thing as giving working people control over their energy supply. The government itself admits that Britain is a 'price-taker, not a price-maker' for oil and gas. Domestic production enters an international market. More North Sea production may reduce reliance on particular imports,

but it does not give workers control over prices or guarantee cheaper energy.

Energy security is important. Dependence on imported fuels can expose a country to wars, supply disruption and sudden price rises. But at the same time there is no meaningful energy security while the system remains privately owned and organised through the market.

A tanker carrying imported liquefied natural gas and a pipeline carrying North Sea gas are different sources of supply, but both remain governed by prices, contracts and company decisions made by the owners. We need enough secure energy to keep homes warm, hospitals running and industry operating while fossil-fuel use is reduced. That requires control over reserves, generation, storage, the grid and investment.

The transition cannot therefore be reduced to a timetable for shutting individual fields. It has to be a plan for the whole energy system and the industries which depend on it.

The same problem runs through Labour's energy policy. Ministers talk about clean power and energy security, but leave investment, production and much of the transition itself dependent on markets and private capital. Profitable activities continue while socially necessary but less profitable investment is delayed or avoided. Workers are told to move, retrain or wait.

Grangemouth

Scotland's last oil refinery stopped refining in April 2025. Its workforce was cut from around 475 to 75, with about 400 refinery jobs lost. Unite estimated that almost 3,000 jobs depended on the refinery's operations more widely.

The union argued that replacement industries had to be established before production ended, and identified projects which could have retained industrial production and skilled jobs at Grangemouth. On this it was right. Governments should have intervened before closure, maintained the workforce and begun converting the site under public ownership.

Instead, the refinery closed first. Workers were made redundant and offered retraining while future projects were still being discussed. A "just transition" which is experienced as closures

and layoffs will not enjoy the confidence of workers—and indeed fuels the reactionary backlash against it.

The experience of Grangemouth should lead to a fight for ownership and control, not political support for whatever new fossil-fuel investment the energy companies propose.

A trade union has to defend its members. North Sea workers have every right to resist redundancies, falling pay and the destruction of skilled jobs. But the working class is bigger than any one group of workers.

Workers also pay energy bills. They live in homes threatened by floods and extreme heat. They depend on transport, food production and public services which will be damaged by an accelerating climate crisis. Millions of workers need new housing, expanded public transport, insulated homes, renewable energy, a rebuilt grid and huge investment in industry.

The answer cannot be for each section of workers to defend its immediate position inside the existing market and hope the wider problem sorts itself out. Taken far enough, sectional trade-union politics puts workers in the position of defending the profitability of "their" employer or industry against other workers and against the needs of society as a whole.

For North Sea workers, that risks turning the unions into a pressure group for fossil-fuel capital. The oil companies are not allies of oil and gas workers. They employ them when it is profitable and sack them when it isn't. They will close a refinery, abandon a field or move investment elsewhere if the figures tell them to. That's why workers need an independent programme.

Take energy into public ownership

The major energy companies should be taken into public ownership without compensation to the big shareholders. Oil and gas production, electricity generation, renewables and the grid should be brought together under workers' control.

Workers in the industry should help decide how production is reorganised, while communities affected by the transition should have a say in investment. Decisions about energy should be made according to social need, not shareholder returns.

A workers' plan would guarantee jobs, pay and conditions during the transition. Nobody should be thrown out of work because a refinery closes or an oil field winds down. Workers should be transferred onto equivalent unionised jobs with no loss of pay, with paid retraining where necessary.

That requires enormous public investment: renewable generation; an expanded and modernised grid; millions of insulated homes; replacement

of gas heating where practical; cheap electrified public transport; and the industrial capacity needed to manufacture turbines, cables, trains, heat pumps and other equipment.

At the same time, the oil and gas production which is actually required would be maintained while alternatives were built, then reduced according to a democratically agreed plan.

This is different from both Labour and Unite's current policies. Labour wants the market to deliver the transition. Unite increasingly responds by demanding that the market continue to provide fossil-fuel jobs. Neither challenges the power which determines the outcome.

Capitalism has no overall plan. Each company follows prices and profits; each state competes for investment, markets and energy supplies. If producing more oil is profitable, capital will try to produce more oil. If shutting a plant raises returns, capital will shut it.

That is capitalism's rapacious algorithm: not a conspiracy by individual capitalists, but the ordinary operation of competition and profit producing a result that threatens society as a whole.

Breaking that logic requires more than a better government policy or a greener set of investors. It requires working people to take control of production, and that means building a movement inside the industries which have to change.

Climate politics which treats oil and gas workers as an obstacle will fail. Those workers possess skills, organisation and industrial power that any serious transformation of the energy system will need. But organising workers does not mean telling them that their future depends on another project for the oil majors.

Socialists and militants in the unions should fight for no compulsory redundancies, guaranteed alternative employment, public ownership and workers' control. They should link North Sea workers with workers in renewables, manufacturing, transport and the wider labour movement.

The demand should not be "save our industry whatever the cost". It should be: take the industry out of the hands of capital and use its resources, infrastructure and workforce to carry through the transition ourselves.

The fight over Rosebank and Jackdaw poses the issue clearly. We reject a transition which makes workers pay, but we also reject the idea that protecting workers means defending the investment plans of the oil companies.

Jobs and the climate are only made enemies by a system in which both are subordinated to profit. The working class needs its own alternative: public ownership, workers' control and a democratic plan for energy and industry.

Why we are participating in the Ukraine convoy

Rubén Tzanoff, International Socialist League

The International Socialist League (ISL) will participate in the Solidarity Convoy that will depart from various locations across Europe for Kyiv during the second half of November. Although we have not signed the initial declaration — due to differences regarding the omission of certain points we consider important — we share the need to build solidarity through unity. On 24 August, Ukraine's Independence Day, we reaffirm our commitment to its working people with a view toward a strategic solution.

Global public attention is focused on Zionist and imperialist attacks in the Middle East. Putin is taking advantage of this to launch waves of ballistic missiles at defenceless civilian populations, without this provoking a political or media response commensurate with the crimes.

Added to this is another element that terrifies Ukrainians and arrives at an important time: the onset of winter. The systematic destruction of the energy, water, and transport infrastructure could prove fatal soon.

Furthermore, the resistance waged by the working people, both on the front lines and behind the lines, has now lasted more than four years already. These developments underscore the need for humanitarian and political aid to ensure the success of the Ukrainian resistance.

A deeply asymmetrical war

Regardless of what media and propaganda say, this war remains one-sided. The Ukrainian resistance has managed to halt the Russian advance and, through huge efforts, strike military targets on enemy territory, particularly through the use of drones. But that does not qualitatively alter the balance of power.

Ukraine is fighting for its very existence, and in light of this, it is worth citing some historical views on the matter. In *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1914), Lenin wrote: 'Without engaging in idle speculation, we firmly uphold something that is beyond all doubt: Ukraine's right to become such a state.'

And in an article titled "The Ukraine" (1917), Lenin stated: 'No democrat, let alone a socialist, will dare to deny the complete legitimacy of Ukraine's demands. And no democrat can deny Ukraine the right to freely secede from Russia.'

Our position is clear. We stand with the Ukrainian resistance, in support of the expulsion of Russian troops and the right of the Ukrainian people to reclaim their territories and freely determine their own destiny.

In this context, we particularly value the internationalist and grassroots nature of the Solidarity Convoy. It is not a government-led initiative, but rather a movement that started as an initiative from trade unions, social movements, community organisations, and solidarity groups.

The Convoy calls on unions, feminist, environmental, LGBTQIA+ and anti-fascist groups and individuals to join—not only from a humanitarian perspective, but also from a political one, to support Ukraine's self-determination, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Why not sign the statement

The ISL is participating in the Convoy—a broad and diverse coalition—without having signed its call to action. We support the defence of Ukraine, but we believe this is a one-sided approach, because this war cannot be analysed solely as Russian aggression, even though that is an essential starting point.

This conflict has a dual nature: in addition to the Russian imperialist invasion, there is an inter-imperialist dispute over Eastern Europe and global realignment. The United States, the European powers, NATO and Russia are all involved, each defending its own economic, strategic and geopolitical interests. Failing to mention this leaves out a fundamental part of reality, one that not only affects Ukraine today but will also shape its future.

Trump and the United States are providing weapons to help Ukraine resist, but not to defeat Putin. At the same time, Trump seeks to gain economic and strategic advantages from the war and Ukraine's reconstruction. The dispute over Ukraine's natural resources, including so-called rare earth elements, is a manifestation of this.

Nor do the European powers act out of solidarity with the people, but rather their actions are aligned with their own economic and geopolitical interests. They use NATO as their instrument, which is not a neutral organisation but a military alliance serving the Western imperialist powers.

For us, it is impossible to approach our

tasks and policies in stages—'first defeat Putin, then the rest'—because reality places both processes side by side and in mutual interaction today, not only in the future. Just as they did with the Belarusian people and others, they will not hesitate to abandon the Ukrainian people if Trump reaches an agreement with Putin.

So, we are part of a common mission without expecting all the organisations and people involved to share the same political vision. However, we do not give up our own positions.

Political independence

Standing with Ukraine does not mean supporting Zelensky, as campists and others falsely state.

Zelensky's administration has intensified neoliberal policies and measures that undermine workers' rights. In the name of the war effort, there have been restrictions on workers' rights, attacks on trade unions, curtailments of democratic freedoms, and measures that favour economic concentration and the interests of business sectors.

Resistance to the invasion does not eliminate class differences. In Ukraine, there is also a social and political struggle that is gradually regaining momentum. There are workers, unions, popular movements and sectors of the left that have their own interests and demands.

Their rights cannot be suspended indefinitely in the name of war while oligarchs, government officials, and those close to power enjoy privileges. We defend a position that is independent of both the government and oligarchic, reactionary nationalist, and far-right forces.

With a principled platform

The Ukrainian resistance is heroic, sustained by the enormous efforts of the workers and the people, both on the front lines and behind the lines; that is why we must support and strengthen it from the grassroots up.

This means democratic unions, strong rank and file organisations, and worker participation in defending their rights and in decisions about the country's future. We stand for peace, but for a just peace—not one negotiated behind the backs of the Ukrainian working people, and without impositions or territorial concessions.

Our solidarity is simultaneously

anti-imperialist, internationalist and class-based. We do not choose between Putin and Zelensky. We do not choose between the Ukrainian oligarchies and Western imperialism. We stand with the Ukrainian working people, calling on Russian workers to confront Putin, boycott the war, and join forces with Ukrainian workers to defeat the capitalists in both countries together, and pave the way for workers' governments.

The expulsion of the invaders must pave the way for a democratic process of self-determination for all the peoples living in Ukraine, with a view toward a socialist society, entirely free from the destructive bureaucracy of Stalinism.

We stand for the defeat of the Russian invasion and the expulsion of Putin's troops. But we do not want the end of Russian domination to lead to Ukraine's new subordination to Washington, Brussels, or any other power. We want a Ukraine free from all imperialist domination.

Join and support the convoy

We have immediate tasks that unite us with our comrades in the Convoy: strengthening ties with Ukrainian and international trade unions and grassroots organisations, learning firsthand about their needs, and working together to organise the Convoy to address those needs.

Solidarity must translate into concrete aid: generators and energy equipment, supplies, medicines, and resources for the communities—everything that working class and social organisations identify as a priority and that the Convoy can provide.

And through outreach, with cultural events, festivals and public meetings, we aim to broaden the base of solidarity. This is what the Ukrainian Socialist League (LSU) and the Social Movement (MS) did with a joint event in Kyiv. Our German-speaking comrades also made their voices heard at the Revolution camp held in Brandenburg, and there were joint actions in Barcelona on 24 August.

Once the vehicles get underway in November, the next step will be to carry out the activities that are already being planned in each city. Help us organise, build and strengthen the Convoy through financial contributions, outreach, support activities and other solidarity initiatives.

Ukraine: Free the Zaporizhzhia 15

Jeremy Dewar

The Ukraine Solidarity Campaign hosted an excellent and important meeting in August with two Ukrainian trade unionists at Unison's London HQ.

Khrystyna Levchenko, a youth workplace rep of the Atomprofspilka union at Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP), and Ivanna Khrapko, official in the State Employees' Union of Ukraine and Youth President in the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, spoke movingly of the terrible conditions faced by workers and their families in the war-torn country.

Ivanna Khrapko reminded us that in July alone Russian drones and ballistic missiles killed 437 civilians. Nowadays the reassuring sound of interceptor missiles is silent, giving people typically 30-40 seconds warning of incoming attacks.

Going to work, ending shifts and attending school are all daily nightmares. Ballistic missiles hit Kyiv daily, in Kherson it is impossible to move around the city freely, and 'unbreakable' Kharkiv is completely without air defences. 'Double strikes', pioneered by Israel, routinely target health workers and firefighters coming to assist the injured.

Zaporizhzhia

Khrystyna gave us a gripping account of the Russian takeover of the largest nuclear power plant in Europe in March 2022. Khrystyna worked as an engineer at ZNPP for over 10 years, the last 18 months under occupation. Four days after Russia's full-scale invasion, on 28 February 2022, residents of the nearby town Enerhodar erected barricades, and formed a 10,000-strong human shield around the plant to prevent Russia's military advancing.

The National Guard only had light weapons though, no contest for the Russian artillery, which opened fire on the peaceful protesters on 3 March. By the following day, the training centre, gatehouse and administrative building were destroyed; ZNPP was under Russian control.

Before the war around 11,000 workers were employed at ZNPP, of whom 5,000 were on site at any one time.

At the time of the attack, only 2,200 were at work, and most of them were sent home by management. But 14 lab assistants, all women, bravely volunteered to work a 24-hour shift (their usual shift is eight hours), to keep the plant running. If a nuclear plant stops running, an uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction could have devastating consequences.

The workers were forbidden to use their mobiles, even to phone their children, or to talk, which was in itself a highly dangerous condition. Eventually all workers were forced to take Russian passports and sign contracts with Russian conglomerate Rosatom to continue their essential labour. Meanwhile, Russian troops broke all safety regulations as they encamped in the plant, washing their laundry, erecting sleeping quarters, installing electric heaters and cooking food – all highly dangerous.

Khrystyna recalled the first blackout three months later in June, when the electricity supply to her unit, number five, fell from 500MW to zero in seconds; a quick phone call revealed that neighbouring Unit 6 had witnessed the same sudden drop. The workers, without help from the Russian military or Rosatom, managed to stabilise the situation at around 120MW, but further electricity supply failures have followed.

As have disappearances of key workers. At least 45 workers have been kidnapped. Twenty have been sentenced, four await 'trial', and 13 are being held incommunicado. Charges include espionage, terrorism (!), and treason (to the Russian Federation). Sentences range from 11 to 25 years.

Atomprofspilka is campaigning for the immediate release of 15 workers, the Zaporizhzhia 15, the most prominent of whom is Serhii Potynh, who has suffered torture and is serving a 20-year sentence for terrorism and 'subversive activities'. The Russians even detained and mistreated Serhii's wife for a week.

Khrystyna also revealed some of the details of her escape, traversing countless checkpoints, encountering dead ends, and finally getting into Russia, Latvia and Poland. She made a point of

mentioning the help she received from ordinary Russian workers, including a taxi driver, along her way. Although even the smallest display of solidarity with Ukraine and disapproval of the war is harshly punished, anti-war sentiment in Russia is growing.

Trade Union rights in Ukraine

Nevertheless, the Ukrainian government is accused of a series of attacks on trade union rights and free speech for socialists. In 2022, the government, as part of the imposition of martial law, passed draconian labour laws that invalidated collective bargaining, legalised zero hours contracts, increased the maximum working day to 12 hours, and allowed employers to fire workers without giving justification.

On the 5 June 2025, trade union headquarters of FPU, the country's largest union federation which before the war had over 4.8 million members, was seized by the police and the union staff were expelled. This came after the arrest of Grigoriy Osovyi, President of the FPU and member of the ETUC Executive Committee.

Yarema Zhuhaievych, chairman of the Trade Union of Aircraft and Machine Building Workers of Ukraine (TUAMBWU), affiliated to the FPU, has been in pre-trial detention since 1 May this year.

On 10 August, a Ukrainian court sentenced the 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk to 15 years in prison for 'high treason'... under martial law. He had been under arrest since 25 April 2024 for opposing the war in Ukraine. He is now appealing the verdict.

Answering a question about President Zelensky's anti-strike laws, Ivanna could only say that the union has negotiated that once martial law is lifted the right to strike would be restored and indeed extended to council workers and civil servants. Their right to strike did not exist before the war.

As for the ban on demonstrations, she observed that these can be breached if 'the cause is a popular one', like the anti-corruption demos last summer and the recent ones support-

ing sacked defence minister Mykhailo Fedorov.

But trade unions continue to operate, albeit under difficult conditions. Ivanna told us that they regularly bring workers together and train up workplace reps and negotiators. Firefighters, railway drivers and paramedics are among the most dangerous professions, suffering many deaths and injuries. The Federation has managed to negotiate a three-hour period of grace for those workers unable to reach their workplace due to missiles and drone attacks.

Ivanna made a special point about the unions' work establishing women's councils in the unions, where women face an increased 'double burden' while their husbands and sons are on the frontline. In contrast to the situation before the war, 60% of union members are now women. The union has won more state benefits for women.

The union is also working closely with disability rights campaigns to establish safe and appropriate conditions for the increasing number of disabled workers due to war casualties. Close ties to the social movements, more necessary than ever due to the war, have been strengthened.

Solidarity convoy

These heartrending reports give some indication of the conditions that the Ukraine Solidarity Convoy will encounter this autumn. The convoy, carrying medical supplies to Ukraine, has three legs, from the Spanish state, the UK and Norway. Trade unionists and socialists will speak to labour movement activists in cities along the way, before converging in Poland and entering Ukraine.

The convoy has already departed from Barcelona and will leave London in November. We encourage all our readers to call for the return of the disappeared Zaporizhzhia workers, support Ukraine Solidarity Campaign initiatives and donate to the International Solidarity convoy to Ukraine (<https://solidarityconvoyukraine.com>).



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End Britain's complicity with Israeli genocide

Dave Stockton

As the anniversary of the 20-point Gaza Peace Plan, announced on 29 September 2025, approaches, Trump's billionaire son-in-law Jared Kushner's trip to Israel proved that it is moribund if not dead. Israel has used it to press ahead with its takeover of Gaza and step up ethnic cleansing on the West Bank.

Six months after the deal was announced Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu launched their war on Iran. This and their ill-fated attempts to find an off-ramp for it, has driven the Gaza peace plan out of the headlines. But this is also because there is no peace process and there is no ceasefire as far as Israel is concerned.

But the killing goes on. Since the 'plan' came into effect on 10 October last year, the total Palestinian deaths since 2023, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, increased from 66,288 to 74,582.

The blockade of humanitarian supplies has not ended. Instead of the 600-800 daily truckloads of humanitarian aid promised by Trump's peace plan, UN sources say only some 100 are crossing. In short the Israelis are still inflicting malnutrition and they are still targeting health workers.

According to a report published on 13 August by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), the world's biggest famine-monitoring body: 'In the absence of humanitarian food-security assistance, 1.9 million people, 90 percent of Gaza's population, are facing high levels of acute food insecurity between July and December 2026.'

As for the Trump peace plan this is openly derided by Netanyahu. Israeli forces were supposed to withdraw totally from Gaza in return for Hamas and other resistance fighters disarming. Instead, what has happened is the IDF's yellow lines have been pushed westward towards the sea, continuously shrinking the area allowed to the Palestinian population. Originally the area occupied by the IDF was 50%. It now occupies 70% of the Strip and is bulldozing what remains of its buildings.

According to Haaretz, at least five

Palestinian militias operate in Gaza, killing civilians, under the control of the IDF and Shin Bet, while the Israeli Air Force provides cover. Hamas disarmament under these conditions is unthinkable, as Israel knows. 'Make no mistake,' the editorial continues, 'The militia project is another wrench that Israel is throwing in the works.' (28.08.26)

The fascist minister of the interior Itamar Ben-Gvir has made clear the state's genocidal objective: 'I think targeted assassinations should be carried out in Gaza, taking down 30 to 40 every night. Not just those who pose an immediate threat. There are people there who are not worthy of life. They shouldn't live. They're not even people.'

In another statement he added: 'I see all of Gaza as ours. Settlements not just in Gush Katif (a block of 17-21 Israeli settlements in the southern Gaza Strip removed in 2005) but throughout Gaza, encouraging as much emigration as possible, sending them to their (sic) countries.'

The West Bank

Though the suffering is greatest in Gaza, conditions in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem have become much worse. Since October 2023, Israel's occupation forces have killed 1,111 Palestinians—243 of them children—and tens of thousands have been forcibly displaced from their homes, part of Israel's deliberate policy of displacement of the entire Palestinian people, by Israeli settlers.

After IDF forces and armed settlers killed four Palestinians in the village Til near Nablus in July, during which one IDF soldier was killed with his own weapon by youths defending their homes, the Israeli military imposed a total lockdown and launched large-scale raids on the cities of Nablus and Jenin.

Israel's fascist finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, who also heads the West Bank Civil Administration, stated that, 'the villages of Til, Beit Furik, and Irak Burin, must become like the refugee camps of Jenin and Tulkarem', where the IDF in February 2025 expelled more than 40,000 Palestinians from their

homes.

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

BDS was launched in July 2005 with the endorsement of over 170 Palestinian bodies including women's organisations, trade unions, NGOs, writers and other cultural associations, the anti-Apartheid Wall campaign, academics and student organisations. Basing itself on the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement, its objectives are summed up in its name.

Over the last two decades Israel stepped up its destruction of any possibility of a West Bank Palestinian state, and thus a 'two state' solution. It did so by fragmentation of the 1967 territory by means of armed settlements, military roads, and IDF checkpoints.

The increase in the influence of the settler element in the Likud-led coalitions over the past decade made it clear that there is no sizable force in the Israeli population or in Israeli politics, which is sympathetic to a two state solution, despite its inclusion in the Trump peace Plan.

Not just Netanyahu and Ben Gvir or Smotrich, but a wide spectrum of left, centre Zionist parties now oppose a Palestinian state. In July the Knesset passed a resolution that rejected the establishment of any form of this, by 68 votes to 9.

Ed Miliband's statement to the Commons on 8 September that Britain would sanction violent settlers, ban imports of goods and some services from the occupied territories, and impose sanctions on firms assisting the occupation was significant.

It should be used as evidence that the BDS movement has been right all along. Miliband may have used the euphemism 'ethnic cleansing' but this in fact falls within the definition of genocide, and it should be called out as such. But Labour's U-turn does not go far enough. We have to press home our advantage and demand more.

However, the BDS movement has performed well as a focus for exposing the nature of the Zionist crimes against the Palestinian people, its racist apart-

heid-like relegation of Israel's Arab population to second class citizens, the blockading and fragmentation of the West Bank and the blockade and bombardment of Gaza.

Three years of regular anti-genocide demonstrations, hundreds of thousands strong, have added to the popular revulsion for Israel's actions in both the Americas and Europe. These have been particularly strong in the states that give uncritical political, economic and military aid to the Zionist state. But, with the partial exception of Spain, we have not cracked our governments' support for Israel.

Therefore we must renew our efforts to disrupt all the government institutions and corporations aiding Israel's genocide. We must call for walkouts, like those of the Greek and Italian dockers, boycotts and sit-ins in workplaces carrying out orders for Israel.

Shut down Israeli arms firms, like Elbit Systems, Rafael Advanced Defence Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). We need to pose these objectives in the unions and combat the argument that defending jobs takes priority over working class solidarity with the oppressed. There must be no business as usual under genocide. We should demand firms, universities, councils, or cultural institutions, cut all ties with Israel, and withdraw all investments of pension funds from Israeli companies and institutions.

Andy Burnham's acknowledgment that Labour (under Starmer) made mistakes over Gaza is just a shame-faced cover-up. Press the Burnham Government to end all collusion with the IDF, close down all Israeli defence contractors in the UK and impose a comprehensive military embargo. End all so-called defensive support by British bases or intelligence services.

- End the Persecution of Palestine Action, release all those detained and end the use of anti-terror laws.
- IDF out of Gaza and Lebanon now!
- Dismantle all the illegal settlements!
- For a single, secular, socialist state of Palestine, with equal rights for all!

Two victories for anti-zionists

Jon F

Anti-zionist activists have won two important victories recently, though both were a long time coming and the result of determined struggle.

On 1 October 2021 Bristol University sacked Professor David Miller, claiming he ‘did not meet the standards of behaviour we expect from our staff’. In fact his sacking resulted from a long campaign by Zionists, including President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews Marie van der Zyl, and the right wing press.

In 2019 the Community Security Trust (CST) along with Bristol University Jewish Society complained to the university about Miller. CST is a British charity which claims to provide safety, security and advice to the Jewish community. But it has a track record of conflating anti-Zionism with antisemitism.

The complaint related to Miller’s teaching about ‘Harms of the Powerful’ which included a slide demonstrating the existence of a Zionist network in Britain. However, even the right wing Daily Telegraph said that ‘there is no suggestion of antisemitism’ and initially Bristol University rejected the complaint.

But a subsequent campaign targeted Miller’s comments on social media and his articles. Bristol University crumbled in the face of this, despite two legal investigations finding he had done nothing unlawful. Miller launched a public defence campaign, gaining 40,000 signatures in support and funds to fight his unfair sacking.

In 2024 Miller won a claim for unfair dismissal at a tribunal. His solicitors stated that ‘This judgment establishes for the first time ever that anti-Zionist beliefs are protected in the workplace.’ Bristol University appealed, but in August 2026 an appeals tribunal upheld the previous judgment.

This is a significant victory for workers facing the sack or disciplinary action for supporting Palestine. Hopefully other cases will follow. For example, Dr Tamara Ali is currently suing NHS Education for Scotland and her GP practice after they disciplined her for displaying a small Palestine flag in her office.

Tony Greenstein

In 2023, longtime Jewish socialist and anti-Zionist Tony Greenstein tweeted about the ‘Gaza ghetto uprising’, followed by an article on his blog. In December counter-terror police raided his home and charged him with inviting support for a terrorist organisation— Hamas. This charge can result in a 14-year prison sentence.

In fact, Greenstein has written many

blogs critical of Hamas and was merely supporting the Palestinians’ right to resist occupation. Greenstein stood firm stoically and immediately mounted a public campaign, as Miller had done.

During his trial he refused to be intimidated by Judge Sarah Plaschkes, who interrupted frequently and tried to stop him explaining his beliefs. In particularly absurd examples, she said that it was irrelevant that Greenstein didn’t support Hamas (he does not) and that the jury did not need to know the history of the Middle East.

On the last day of the trial Greenstein opted to make his closing statement himself rather than his barrister. He did this because of his observation that in previous trials of anti-Zionist activists barristers were threatened and cowed by judges. In one recent example Rajiv Menon KC was charged with contempt for his closing speech by the judge.

This decision allowed Greenstein to make an exemplary speech which covered all the history and politics that the judge had sought to keep from the jury. He was also able to cite ‘jury equity’ which is a legal principle allowing juries to convict or acquit according to their conscience.

As a result of this and a public gallery full of supporters, the jury acquitted Greenstein, with the foreman of the jury raising his fist.

These cases demonstrate the determination of the British state to persecute anti-Zionists, suppress free speech and stifle resistance in support of Palestine. They also show that the way to fight back is to mobilise and organise mass support instead of relying solely on legalistic methods.

Indeed, this is the reason why David Lammy is so keen to get rid of juries for most trials. It is unclear where Burnham stands on this, so we need to demand his government withdraws the relevant clauses in the Courts and Tribunals Bill. If his ‘reset’ on Israel and Palestine and commitment to the law are to be meaningful, the attack on the right to trial by jury must end.

These lessons must also be taken up by the wider labour movement, as the courts still intervene in disputes such as the Birmingham bin strike, where Unite was fined £260,000 for ‘slow walking’ in front of scab refuse wagons.

Socialists in the unions and the Palestine solidarity movement must drive home the lesson that the bosses’ state opposes all working class organisation. Activists cannot rely on it or its ‘justice’ but rely on their own strength. No justice, no peace!



Excerpt from speech by Tony Greenstein

What I wrote was “the Gaza Ghetto Uprising.” And I chose the word ghetto deliberately, but not for the reason the prosecution imply.

Let me explain, for those of you who do not know the history. In the second world war, the Nazis walled the Jews of Warsaw, half a million of them into a ghetto — a sealed district, starved and diseased, from which the trains left for the Treblinka death camp. And in 1943 the young Jews who remained did something nobody expected. With a handful of smuggled pistols, against tanks and the SS, they rose. They knew they could not win. They rose because it was better to die resisting than to be led away quietly. It is one of the proudest moments in Jewish history.

The last surviving commander of that uprising was a man named Marek Edelman. And in his old age, Edelman wrote to the Palestinian resistance and addressed them as fellow fighters — much to Israel’s annoyance. When he died, Poland gave him a state funeral, a fifteen-gun salute, the President gave the oration. Israel did not send the lowliest clerk at

the Israeli Embassy. Edelman wasn’t a Zionist.

Edelman, who led the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising against the Nazis, described Gaza as a ghetto. I have used his comparison for years before October 2023. Two million people, most of them refugees or the children of refugees, sealed into a strip of land under blockade for 16 years, where the majority are children who have never once been allowed out. When I wrote “ghetto,” I meant a ghetto. My blog supported the Uprising just as I would have supported the slave uprisings of the 19th century. That is a political opinion. It was a political opinion on 7 October 2023, and it is a political opinion now.

And here is the crazy thing. Read section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and ask what it would have made of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters. If this Act had existed in 1944, they could have been classified as terrorists. So could the French Resistance. That is how widely this law is drawn—and it is worth remembering when you consider who it is now being pointed at. The definition of terrorism in the Terrorism Act 2000 is no definition at all.



Fighting Fascism: Cable Street at 90

Dave Stockton

As the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street approaches on 4 October, events in Dover and Portsmouth remind us why the lessons of 1936 remain timely. On that day, poor Jewish immigrants, Irish dockers and some 300,000 London workers halted Britain's largest and most menacing fascist party, the Blackshirts.

Britain's would-be Mussolini or Hitler was Oswald Ernald Mosley, 6th Baronet, a rich Staffordshire landowner and socially a very different figure from his Italian and German models. No wonder Leon Trotsky called him 'an aristocratic coxcomb'.

But this meant he had many upper-class friends, including Winston Churchill, and was married to the daughter of Lord Curzon, variously Viceroy of India and Foreign Secretary. He entered parliament as a Tory in 1918 but defected to Labour in 1924, winning a seat in the Black Country constituency of Smethwick.

A year after the 1929 Stock Exchange Crash, unemployment had reached 2.5 million. While the Labour Chancellor followed financial orthodoxy and cut the dole, Mosley proposed a radical plan, influenced by John Maynard Keynes, that used state spending to stimulate recovery.

He was supported by left wing figures like Aneurin Bevan and miners' leader AJ Cook. But the Labour conference

narrowly rejected it and he split from Labour to form the New Party in March 1931, together with a group of party leftwingers.

But the New Party failed to win a single seat in that year's general election. So by October 1932, after a visit to Italy and a meeting with Il Duce, he had decided that parliamentary democracy was a hopeless failure and rebranded the party as the British Union of Fascists (BUF). Because he had a considerable personal fortune, he was able to employ 150 full-time staff and rent a disused Chelsea barracks where he could drill his uniformed followers. At its high point the BUF had some 40,000 members.

His personal charisma, and extensive ties with the business and political establishment stood him in good stead. His most prominent backer was press mogul Lord Rothermere, whose *Daily Mail*, in January 1934, carried his own signed editorial under the headline 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts'.

Other industrialists supporting him included Lord Armstrong of arms manufacturer Vickers-Armstrong, the car maker Sir William Morris, and AV Roe founder of Avro Aircraft. Another sympathiser was Lord Londonderry, who owned a large part of the Northumberland and Durham coalfield.

A section of the capitalist class was therefore attracted to Mosley, although the majority supported the grand coalition known as the National Government.

It had won a landslide victory in the 1931 election after Labour prime minister Ramsay MacDonald dissolved Parliament. The so-called National Government then set about unloading the costs of the depression onto the backs of the working class.

What is fascism?

In the most economically powerful (imperialist) states, parliamentary democracy is the easiest way of keeping the class struggle within limits tolerable to capitalism, so long as revolutionary forces within the working class can be kept under control by normal legal methods.

But if or when the class struggle rises to heights that threaten capitalism's very existence, including the rise of political forces that threaten revolution, then these 'peaceful' means become insufficient and the most powerful elements within the ruling classes look for an alternative. Such a situation often occurs during a prolonged economic crisis when the employers need to raise the rate of exploitation of their workers to meet the challenge of foreign competitors.

If there is a danger that the army might become unreliable, and the police and security services insufficient to contain the workers' movement, capitalists begin to look for a mass force among the lower middle class, unemployed ex-serVICemen, unorganised and poorly paid

workers, even the criminal elements. Fascist movements rally these angry and desperate groups by fomenting hatred against immigrants or other ethnically distinct minorities and combining racism with pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric.

If these forces can take control of the streets (with either the assistance of the police or their benevolent neutrality) then ever more decisive sections of the ruling class may decide the time has come to crush and atomise the political parties of the working class and the trade unions, enabling them to raise their profit rates at home and prepare for war with their rivals abroad.

However, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, which saw one in five workers on the dole, the crisis did not mature into a really revolutionary one. Why? Because, apart from the militancy of Wal Hannington and Harry McShane's Unemployed Workers Movement, no mass revolutionary movement, political or trade union, appeared.

But looking at events in Europe and the USA, a minority of the bosses saw the need for a movement willing to use strongarm tactics and act as an auxiliary to the police in the event of a strike wave, such as the massive factory occupations in France in June 1936 and in the USA later that year. They feared that mass workers' action could force a bourgeois democratic government to grant concessions that would reduce profits and, in their view, threaten some

businesses with bankruptcy.

The Blackshirts on the March

Nevertheless, in early 1934, the international situation looked threatening. In Austria a semi-fascist regime crushed an uprising by Vienna's workers and it looked as though fascist leagues in France, whose riots brought down a government, might even come to power. Indeed had it not been for a general one day general strike and a mass demonstration by Parisian workers, this might have taken place.

Mosley, encouraged by Hitler's success in smashing the most powerful workers' movement in Europe, launched a series of marches through working class areas to show that he too could establish supremacy on the streets. Typically the Labour Party and trade union leaders placed their hopes on the bourgeois state and urged workers to ignore these marches and rely on the police and the courts.

Fortunately at the grassroots level things were different. Socialists in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and Communist Party (CP) recognised the threat. Mark Krantz in a book published this year, *Bye Black Shirt!* – the fight against antisemitism and the British Union of Fascists 1934-36, gives a vivid account of the mushrooming, in a whole series of cities and towns, of united front committees and defence squads against the fascists.

In Manchester and Leeds, Edinburgh and Glasgow, activists came together from the ILP, the CP, the Young Communist League (YCL), plus Jewish youth organisations, both socialist and Zionist, and the Unemployed Workers Movement.

Antifascist servicemen's groups proved a useful core for stewards needed to defend labour movement activities against the Blackshirt thugs. They trained defence groups to protect Jewish areas against pogroms and mobilised thousands against Mosley's 1934 speaking tour.

Nigel Todd's *In Excited Times* (1995) records that the BUF attacked an ILP rally outside a dole office, leading to the creation of the Newcastle Anti-Fascist League on 10 May, with a defence force of 200 stewards, half of them unemployed. Street battles with the BUF in Newcastle and Gateshead settled it, with workers turning out in thousands to besiege the Blackshirts in their own headquarters.

A high point came with Mosley's Olympia rally on 7 June 1934. The Guardian reported that 10,000 people, including far-right Tories, packed the huge venue for a spectacle of patriotic songs, drummers and brilliant spotlights. Mosley entered to salutes and acclaim from 2,000 uniformed Blackshirts.

The CP and ILP had already mobilised thousands in a counterdemonstration outside the hall. Inside, protesters repeatedly heckled and interrupted Mosley's ranting speech, and squads of his stewards mercilessly beat them. Newsreel cameras captured the violence, and the resulting film was shown in cinemas regularly attended by working-class audiences, alerting many people who had never encountered the BUF to the brutality of fascism.

The Battle for London's East End

Undeterred by some of his Tory supporters deserting him, Mosley doubled down on his violent street politics, this time concentrating his forces against the Jewish population in East London. The high point was his plan to march through the centre of the working class Jewish community in London's East End, in Stepney, Whitechapel and Bethnal Green.

Between August and October 1936, the BUF, which had serious support in some of these areas, posterred and daubed the streets with virulently antisemitic slogans. They firebombed Jewish shops or smashed their windows, beating up individuals. The highpoint was to be a march on Sunday 4 October, involving four open air meetings and ending in a mass rally in Victoria Park.

But the militant forces of the working class and the Jewish community were ready for them. The Independent Labour Party (the ILP) played a prominent part in this. It had quit the Labour party in 1931 with tens of thousands of members and in the process turned to the left, becoming what Trotsky characterised as a centrist party, oscillating between left reformism and revolutionary rhetoric.

A small number of British Trotskyists had entered the ILP on Trotsky's advice. The party had a policy of physically confronting Blackshirt marches and called for action to stop Mosley's large mobilisation as soon as it was announced.

An ILP meeting at Hackney Town Hall called for 'an overwhelming demonstration against the Fascist march' and called on East End workers to mass at Aldgate in such numbers that the march would be impossible. It issued a militant leaflet to this effect (see box) but no printer would take on the job, so as one militant records, 'for hours at the Head Office members duplicated copies... and soon were being distributed in thousands throughout East London.' The *London Evening Star* ran a front-page headline: 'ILP Call to the Workers', printing the ILP's statement underneath.

The CP has always claimed the major credit for Cable Street and certainly its militants in the East End deserved much of this on the day. However, in the days beforehand the CP was in considerable political confusion. Why was

this? Under Joseph Stalin's leadership of the Communist International, the British party's line had been that of the Third period (1928-33), totally opposed to united fronts with the Social Democrats. In Britain they dubbed the Labour Party and the ILP 'social fascists'.

This disastrous line contributed in Germany to the victory of Hitler in 1933 by preventing the mass workers parties from combining to smash Hitler. Under the impact of this disaster, including the complete destruction of the communist and socialist parties and the trade unions, the Communist International belatedly turned to joining united fronts with the other working class parties.

But in 1935 another Stalinist turn took place towards allying with so-called progressive bourgeois parties, including the Liberals and Conservatives. This 'popular front' policy meant playing down physical confrontation on the streets with the fascists, as a concession to the capitalist parties they were trying to attract.

The ILP's actions were even more important in the light of the serious error the CP leadership was making. The CP had planned a rally in Trafalgar Square on 4 October in support of the Spanish Republic's resistance to Franco. Fair enough but they took the line that this took precedence over stopping Mosley. A CP leaflet and the *Daily Worker* were still calling for workers to assemble on the Embankment and march to Trafalgar Square.

Joe Jacobs, born to Russian-Jewish immigrants in 1913, was a member of the YCL and the CP in Stepney. In his memoir *Out of the Ghetto* he recalled what happened.

'The London District CP leadership decision was that, despite Mosley's march the party should tell people to go to Trafalgar Square and come back in the evening to protest after Mosley had marched.'

He cites the circular sent to Stepney activists:

'Keep order: no excuse for Government to say we, like BUF are hooligans. If Mosley decides to march let him. Don't attempt disorder (Time too short to get a 'They shall not pass' policy across. It would only be a harmful stunt). Best see there is a good, strong meeting at each end of the march. Our biggest trouble tonight will be to keep order and discipline.'

Jacobs' response? 'I was furious. I could hardly believe my eyes. How could they be so blind to what was happening in Stepney? The slogan "They shall not pass" was already on everyone's lips and being whitewashed on walls and pavements, The pressure from the people of Stepney, who went ahead with their own efforts to oppose Mosley, left no doubt in our minds that the CP would be finished in Stepney if this was allowed

to go through.'

He and many other rank-and-file YCL and party members bombarded the CP's headquarters in King Street with protests. Their pressure worked: at the last minute, the leadership changed its line and instructed all branches to rally at Aldgate instead of Trafalgar Square.

Cable Street

Assembling in Royal Mint Street, near the Tower of London, 5,000 BUF supporters were intent on marching through the East End to a triumphal rally in Victoria Park, chanting, 'The Yids, the Yids, we gotta get rid of the Yids'. The police had pledged to Mosley that they would ensure his right to march through Aldgate and the heart of working class and Jewish community.

But huge numbers of antifascists had already gathered at Gardiner's Corner, Aldgate. The police deployed 6,000 officers, both mounted and on foot, to clear a way for them into Whitechapel. The police charged the crowds repeatedly, but four tram drivers abandoned their vehicles, strategically blocking the road. Unable to clear the way the police then directed Mosley to divert his forces down the parallel but narrower Cable Street, hoping to bypass the main blockades.

But in Cable Street too the crowds were ready. They had armed themselves with billiard cues, bricks and bags of marbles to bring down police horses. Workers overturned a lorry to use as a barricade, levered up paving slabs, and showers of missiles sent the Met's finest pell-mell into retreat.

By mid-afternoon Police Commissioner Sir Philip Game had had enough and ordered Mosley to abandon the march. The demoralised Blackshirts trooped through the empty streets of the City of London and dispersed. Meanwhile celebrations broke all over the East End.

Though this victory was a tipping point in the rise of Mosley's forces it did not crush them. It was, however, a warning to those in the ruling class who toyed with fascism, that it would not go unopposed. However pacifist the Labour and trade union leaders were, there were those that could mobilise the working class and immigrants, from below.

The victory was possible only because of sustained local organisation: united fronts that brought together trade unions, workers' parties and immigrant groups, backed by forces prepared to mobilise whenever fascists took to the streets.

Today with the activities of racist populists like Nigel Farage's Reform and Rupert Lowe's Restore Britain and the street mobilisations of fascists like Tommy Robinson and Danny Thomas, it is time to build such united fronts once again.



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Landslide for far-right AfD party in German regional parliament



In the election results in the German federal state (Land) of Saxony-Anhalt, the racist populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) won 43.8 per cent of the vote, and 39 seats, only three seats short of an outright majority in the state's parliament (Landtag). Moreover it did this on a high turnout of 77.8 per cent. This was the highest vote share for a far-right party in Germany since 1945.

Among the German left there is consternation, although the result was predicted. The AfD drew a particularly high proportion of the votes from manual workers (59%) and also from white-collar workers (46%). Among people suffering financial difficulties, this was even higher at 65%. It cannot be denied that the AfD secured an absolute majority of working class voters. According to polls, the AfD's success owes much to the mobilisation of 170,000 previous non-voters.

The big loser was the Christian Democrats (CDU-CSU), the party of Chancellor Friedrich Merz, which suffered a nearly 20% swing against it with its seats down from 40 to 15 and its percentage of the vote from 37 per cent to 17.2 per cent.

At the same time the parties traditionally associated with the workers movement, the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Left (Die Linke) suffered serious reverses. Die Linke is also a major loser, dropping by 2.4 percentage points to 8.6% and giving it 12 seats in the Landtag.

Though Saxony-Anhalt is a small province with only 2.14 million inhabitants, the 2026 election is a serious wake-up call to the German left and labour movement.

What would the AfD do in power?

With this election, the first AfD government in a federal province has become a real possibility. Although the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW, five seats) has ruled out a coalition with AfD, it has already made clear it could support a minority government on at least some issues. The AfD rejects this but will be hoping for defectors from the CDU or

the BSW, or even to persuade the BSW to enter a coalition after all.

Whether an AfD government comes to power or there is a snap election, which the AfD would be well placed to win, remains to be seen. In any case, the German bourgeoisie (and the CDU) will regard Saxony-Anhalt as a test case to see whether the AfD proves to be a reliable champion of capital, and whether the AfD's leader Ulrich Siegmund transforms as Italy's Giorgia Meloni has done.

Racism is the leitmotif which runs through practically all sections of their programme. The party calls for a 'deportation and remigration offensive' and a '180-degree turnaround in migration policy.' Deportation and detention places are to be massively expanded, and police powers strengthened. In the area of justice, the protection of 'Germanness' is also to be embodied in criminal law.

This policy is not just limited to new arrivals. Legal labour migration is also considered according to ethnic criteria. Two chapter titles are: 'Do without skilled workers from outside the culture!' and 'Mechanisation, digitalisation and AI instead of skilled workers from outside the culture'.

A big minority of workers in the health sector and many other parts of the economy come from abroad and there is already a shortage of skilled workers. This measure will hit everyone, as consumers or users of services.

When you consider too that Germany's post war economic miracle was fuelled by the large numbers of 'guest workers' from southern Europe, Turkey etc., it is clear that racist division will make everyone poorer and less secure. It discriminates against workers from migrant backgrounds, while staff shortages and the workload for the remaining employees increase.

Particularly dangerous plans for education are a centrepiece of the AfD's state election programme. They would remove measures for integration and equal opportunities from the school's control; the inclusion of pupils with disabilities would be heavily restricted. The

freedom of expression by teaching staff would be another casualty of an AfD government, with stronger state-level control over teaching content, especially on historical issues.

AfD education spokesperson Hans-Thomas Tillschneider summed this up as revision of the 'culture of remembrance' under the formula: 'More Bismarck, less Hitler.' This means more stress on the 'success' of unification under the German Empire, 1870–1918 (the Second Reich) and less on the crimes of the Third Reich. Funding for school trips to Nazi concentration camps for example would be cut.

In family policy, the AfD focuses on the promotion of the 'traditional German family'—instead of the expansion of state facilities and child benefits. Abortions are to be further restricted and traditional gender and family images strengthened.

Effect on other parties

The reformist left cannot continue pretending that the far right can be stopped by appeals to the 'firewall', i.e. the promise by the 'constitutional' parties not to enter a coalition with the AfD or tolerate an AfD minority government. Even less can they be stopped by calling on the Constitutional Court to ban them. This merely confirms the AfD's propaganda that 'the system' is rigged against them.

On the contrary, all such tactics divorce the struggle against the AfD from the struggle against governments making social cuts while driving up unemployment. As the plan to 'lose' 100,000 jobs in the major German car maker Volkswagen shows, supporting parties that are driving such policies and replacing social services with rearmament will not stop the rise of the AfD. Rather, it will make it stronger.

The fact that the CDU-led federal government is attacking refugees and migrants, and that its support for Ukraine is provided solely in Germany's economic and geostrategic interests does nothing to change this. The election result deepens the political crisis within the CDU. Although Chancellor Friedrich Merz will not resign, his government, already on the back foot, emerges from the elections significantly weakened.

This does not mean that it will change course. It will continue its all-out attack on wage earners, as well as its massive rearmament and militarisation. It will attempt to take the wind out of the AfD's sails through further racist attacks, tougher security laws and a 'law and order' policy. In reality, this will drive more supporters towards the far right, who would rather vote for the racist original than its pale imitation.

The economic crisis, militarisation and fears for the future will continue to drive voters towards the AfD, especially as it is not only the SPD and the Greens

that are complicit with government policy. The trade unions, too, support the government through their policy of constant retreat in the name of social partnership and their co-management of mass redundancies, as in the case of Volkswagen which is demanding 100,000 workers go. Indeed they are one of its most reliable social pillars.

Their policy of class collaboration paralyses the working class, preventing it from emerging as a force of resistance. At the same time it deepens existing divisions and reinforces social chauvinism, nationalism and racism within the working class. If the aim is to defend German companies on the global market, then it follows logically that jobs should be reserved for Germans first.

What is to be done?

Die Linke (Left Party) won a mere 112,541 votes, its worst-ever result in Saxony-Anhalt. No doubt there was tactical voting for the SPD and the Greens, and some voters probably went over to the BSW. But the entire election campaign was practically an invitation not to vote for Die Linke. It courted the CDU, practically imploring it to enter into talks about cooperation after the elections.

Anyone who presents themselves merely as a 'more reasonable' party of coalition and the status quo will perish in the process. The working class does not need yet another party that props up the CDU. It needs a revolutionary class-based party – and Die Linke is a long way from that.

It is not even a particularly militant party that stands up to German capital and government attacks. That is why an organised left opposition is needed within Die Linke, within which revolutionaries must fight for their programme.

Revolutionary socialists – who are members of the left within Die Linke—must therefore ask: why should disillusioned voters from the other parties turn to it if, ultimately, it intends to govern alongside those parties anyway – and on their terms? And how do we win over the millions of non-voters, workers and young people who have long since lost faith in this political system?

The answer must mean not backing down when it comes to Palestine, anti-racism, women's rights or LGBT+ rights, but linking these struggles to a socialist perspective. By standing up for their demands and goals, by waging struggles to win them we must demonstrate a path towards breaking with the capitalist system itself.

In short a bold socialist response is needed to tackle cuts, rising prices, the housing crisis and the deterioration of public infrastructure. We must patiently explain that blaming those below us and fighting each other over ever-fewer crumbs only serves to protect those who profit from this system.

workers power

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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.

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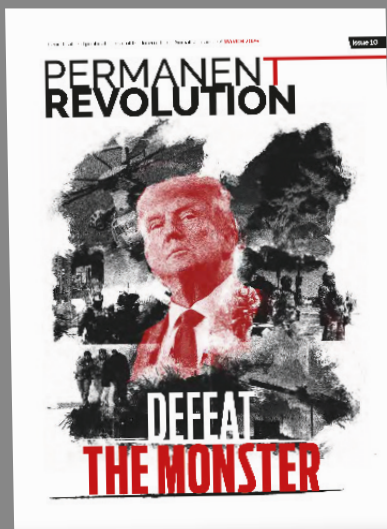
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DEFEND TRANS RIGHTS DEFY THE EHRC CODE BUILD THE FIGHTBACK

Rebecca A and Oliver C

The Supreme Court's ruling on sex and gender and the Code of Practice that flows from it are one front in a far wider wave of reaction: a moral panic worked up in the press, in Parliament and now in the health service, which treats trans people's existence as a problem to be managed and their access to treatment as a scandal to be exposed.

Recent events in Wales show how fast that panic turns into material harm. On 20 August, Nation.Cymru, a news site funded by the Welsh Government, ran a piece by its associate editor Martin Shipton attacking the Welsh Gender Service for delivering gender-affirming surgeries three to four times more often than the UK average, built on a freedom of information request by the anti-trans blogger Nick Wallis and amplified by Tory MS Natasha Asghar, who has been demanding a review for months.

The complaint was not that the service was failing patients but that it was treating them too well. Within days every gender-affirming surgery on the Welsh NHS had been cancelled, including operations where the theatre was already being prepared, with each case to be medically reviewed. People who had waited years and taken medical leave were left with no date and no explanation.

That is what this offensive actually

delivers: not a debate about definitions, but people denied healthcare and asked to prove their sex at the toilet door. Defeating it requires more than a legal challenge and more than anger. It takes a movement that knows what it is fighting for.

How to fight

The anger this has produced is real. As soon as the Code's 40-day parliamentary scrutiny period lapsed on 9 July without a vote, despite 166 MPs, including over 90 Labour rebels, backing a motion against it, protests broke out in Manchester, Brighton, London and Leeds, called by the Bodily Autonomy and Dignity (BAD) coalition among others.

These weren't small turnouts. But what was missing was a common direction and coordination, and more than one initiative has tried to supply it.

BAD has proposed three demands for local groups to unite around: reverse the Supreme Court judgment and the EHRC guidance that flows from it; win self-ID now so people can live in the body and gender of their choice; and free trans healthcare on demand for all. The Trans Liberation Group has also organised nationally coordinated demonstrations against the guidance and has a detailed set of proposals.

There's room to debate the detail of the various proposals. What matters

is that both are attempts at the same thing: turning scattered anger into an organisation that can decide what it's fighting for and how to achieve it.

That's what got lost in Leeds recently. When local activists proposed adopting the BAD coalition's three points as the basis for coordinated action, the SWP argued against it on the grounds that it was too early to define our aims and that fixing on specific points would put off people who didn't agree with every one of them.

We appreciate, of course, that socialists shouldn't demand that a trans rights campaign call for a revolution, but to argue that it shouldn't set any goals like overturning the EHRC Code or winning gender self-ID is absurd.

Trans rights activists don't need to pick a favourite among the initiatives trying to fill this gap. What matters is the function, not the brand. Whether it's BAD, the Trans Liberation Group, or both working alongside unions, we need a body that can settle what we're fighting for and give every activist and union rep something more than their own initiative to draw on.

Without that, some workplaces will win strong protections while others get nothing, and it will come down to luck rather than organisation. The working class movement should get behind whichever of these efforts can deliver or, better, help build the links between them.

Right to caucus

Trans and non-binary people are a small proportion of society. Winning a struggle against their oppression means mobilising far larger numbers than the oppressed group can supply on its own, which in practice means the working class as a whole. Whatever form this movement takes, whether through the unions or through coalitions like BAD or organisations like the Trans Liberation Group, most of the people in it will be cisgender.

That's how the fight gets won. It also means the movement has a responsibility to uphold the right of trans and non-binary people to caucus: to meet separately, work out their own positions and, where they choose, speak to everyone else with one voice.

This is a basic safeguard for any oppressed group organising inside a movement. Without it, a well-meaning majority can unwittingly end up overriding the very people whose oppression is in question. Union branches and coordinating bodies should build this in as standard practice, not raise it only once a dispute forces the issue.

None of this waits on a courtroom. The forces of reaction are moving through hospitals, newsrooms and union standing orders committees, and will keep moving until they collide with an organised movement with clear demands and the labour movement's collective power behind it.