WHY ZIONISM IS RACISM

...AND WHY THE GREENS ARE RIGHT TO SAY SO
>>PAGES 6&7 AND 20

Socialist Worker

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Hitting back at austerity and racism in France

STRIKE BLOCKADE REVOLT!

Exclusive eyewitness reports, interviews and photographs from Paris **>>Pages 2&3 and 4&5**

STRIKES

Traffic wardens block the road to outsourcing

CAMDEN, IN north London, with its famous clubs and vibrant music scene, is a playground for tourists.

However, for striking traffic wardens, this is a world completely beyond their reach due to low pay and long hours.

These predominantly black and migrant workers patrol our streets whether it's lashing it down or scorching hot.

But the Unison union members are fighting back. They spoke to Socialist Worker from their picket lines.

>>Pages 10&11

SOCIAL CARE

Care workers question Labour's promises

THE PRIME minister's promise of a "National Care Service", running on similar principles to the NHS, was the centrepiece of Labour's conference last month.

Britain's broken social care system means that millions fear old age—and worry about their relatives.

But, Burnham's proposals have turned out to be somewhat less than what was promised.

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WORKERS NOW FOLLOW STUDENTS INTO BATTLE

Students blockaded the roads around schools saying, 'We will block everything'

Thousands are on the streets, barricades burn in defiance of vicious cops. Mass, militant protests are upending the whole French political order. **Camilla Royle** reports from Paris. Photos by **Guy Smallman**

HUNDREDS of thousands of people were preparing to march through Paris and across France, as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday.

Five trade union federations had called on their members to strike in solidarity with the movement of school students.

Students have been blockading their secondary schools for over a week (see pages 4&5). "We are defending ourselves against the police," one student told Socialist Worker. "They are racist and they kill young people."

"We will blockade every day. We are demanding our rights in education," another student told Socialist Worker.

"We want to change the situation. Petitions don't change anything. We set things on fire, we shoot fireworks and we throw bottles at the CRS riot police."

Students confronted the police outside the Sorbonne university

On Tuesday morning in Paris, students and workers blocked roads outside Hélène Boucher secondary school.

The students chatted and fooled around as paramilitary gendarmerie lined up alongside them. They were joined by striking workers and parents.

Jacob from the parents' union told Socialist Worker that even a lot of professionals are angry. "If the fight unites, we will win," he said.

Demands

Vincent, a secondary school teacher, told Socialist Worker, "We share the students' demands. We have been demonstrating for the same things for decades and getting nowhere.

"When the teachers strike it doesn't change anything, but if the students strike, maybe they have a chance to win."

A group of workers from the IGN geographical institute, who are members of the CGT union, walked out on strike and joined the students.

Clementine told Socialist Worker, "We also work in the public sector and have budget problems.

"Some of us also have children and are concerned about police brutality."

Birce from IGN added, "It's a shame the police use violence against students. Some of them have been very badly injured.

"We have to calm it down—not to calm down the students, I mean to calm down the police.

Hope

"We are also all very afraid of fascism of course. But, on the other hand, there is a big hope with Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the LFI party. It's very on the edge."

As the students gathered on Tuesday, fascist Rassemblement National (RN) leader Marine Le Pen was on the news denouncing the students. She said, "Violence has entered the high schools."

Birce thinks the violence comes from the police. He said, "Le Pen supports the police and that might wake people up a bit to the reality of it. People will see that, with Le Pen, the police will be even worse.

"A lot of parents might be right wing, but they have children in secondary school. People will see that the police shoot young people. We need to at least have hope that the parents' ideas change."

The day before, police invaded the Sorbonne Nouvelle University campus in Paris and violently attacked the students.

Some 500 students met at noon for a mass assembly in solidarity with the secondary school blockade movement.

But the university bosses called police, who arrived in large numbers with shields and batons. They entered the buildings and assaulted the students.

The last few students were still kettled—sat outside the university surrounded by CRS riot police—until nearly 8pm when the cops left.

University students told Socialist Worker, "We support the secondary school students in their demands and have some demands of our own."

Struggle is rising with key flashpoints coming this month.

Total Energy workers are set to strike Thursday—and there is a day of action on 17 October.

Anti-fascists are planning to demonstrate against the far right RN party's conference on 24 October.

If the movement of school students and strikes deepens, it has the power to hit back at the state's violence and the system it protects.

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PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

‘It’s overwhelmingly young’—Spain’s revolt over housing crisis grows

SPAIN’S SOCIAL democratic prime minister Pedro Sánchez has called a snap election amid a wave of revolt over the housing crisis.

His coalition government, led by the Labour-type PSOE, introduced several measures to try to appease protesters on Tuesday.

They included a ban on evictions of vulnerable tenants until 2030 and a ban on investment companies buying up properties until 2028.

These measures were defeated at the hands of the right in congress.

Sánchez hopes to win a majority from the mass movement, with hundreds of thousands on the streets.

But protesters remain determined to fight for more.

Two trade union federations have been pushed to call a one-day general strike in October.

They haven’t announced the date, but it would happen before the snap election on 29 November.

Protests erupted across the Spanish state last week when police forcibly evicted an 87-year-old disabled woman, María del Carmen “Maricarmen” Abascal, from her home.

In Madrid, protesters camped out after their march on Saturday and have remained in the Puerto del Sol square.

AT LEAST 50,000 protesters took to the street in Madrid on Monday

Colin, a socialist in Madrid, told Socialist Worker, “It’s an incredible atmosphere.

“The whole central square is completely filled with hundreds of tents. It’s like a celebration. It goes on all day and well into the night. It’s fantastic to see.

“The tenants’ unions are there as well as lots of left groups. There are lots of calls for a general strike.”

The movement over housing has merged with strikes, as at least 10,000 school workers and their supporters marched through Madrid on Sunday.

They finished their march at the Puerta del Sol, where they converged with the housing encampment.

Madrid teachers are set to begin an indefinite strike on 14 October. “Teachers are striking over working conditions,” Colin explained.

“There are too many children for them and not enough resources—it’s not safe.”

Firefighters have also taken part. They are used in evictions, but they now say they don’t want to be complicit in throwing people out of their homes

Last week, Maricarmen’s lawyers agreed with the investment company that owns her apartment that she can move back. The company rowed back on its attempts to significantly raise her rent.

Colin said, “Maricarmen has been given her flat back, but it hasn’t stopped the movement. It’s spreading now. It’s overwhelmingly young, angry people.”

‘Our strike was led by rank and file, not union officials’

FRENCH TEENAGERS fighting for decent education have been attacked by police firing tear gas and rubber bullets.

More than 2,000 young people have been arrested this week.

In Argenteuil, a student was hit in the eye by a rubber bullet.

This brutality has sparked further anger. In Aubervilliers, hundreds of students faced down brutal police repression and tear gas to put up a barricade.

Politicians have condemned students as violent extremists.

But workers are standing with the students. Trade unionists in Bordeaux formed a human chain to protect students from the police.

The level of violence and the students’ resistance is causing splits in the French establishment.

Even the magistrates’ union has come out in support of the students.

But government ministers remain determined to crush the students.

Education Minister Édouard Geffray claims “the student movement is being held hostage by ultra-violent fringe groups.”

Far right racists and fascists have seized on the chance to spread their racist filth. They accuse the students of being “invaders”.

But most ordinary people know the police are a racist, violent institution.

French police have a violent history

Three weeks ago, a police officer and member of the fascist RN was filmed calling black people “monkeys”.

In 2023, Nahel Merzook, a 17-year-old of north African descent, was shot dead by police in Nanterre, a suburb of Paris.

In 2020, Cedric Chouviat died after being held in a choke hold by police officers.

Theodre Luhaka was disabled for life after being anally raped by a police baton during a stop and search in 2017 in Aulnay-sous-Bois.

The real violence is coming from the racist thugs in police uniforms. And it is the government that sent them to brutalise students who want to be treated with respect.

★Fight the far right
★Strike to win
join the SWP

‘We will need revolutionary organisation to win’

The struggle in France has transformed the political atmosphere ahead of the presidential election in seven months’ time. Polls show Marine Le Pen in first place and left winger Jean Luc Melenchon, of the LFI party, in second.

Socialist Worker spoke to socialist and anti-racist organiser for Marche des Solidarités (MDS) Denis about the political atmosphere in France.

How has LFI reacted to the movement?
There’s a real chance of the fascist RN winning the presidential election.

But, for the first time in years, people are coming out against it.

Typically, left reformists look to moderate in elections. But we feel that Jean-Luc Mélenchon is being radicalised.

Now, people think we can have a different policy that goes a different way and I think that Mélenchon understands that he can connect with that.

For a majority of the movement, LFI is their organisation, even if they are not members.

Do you think LFI might hold the movement back?
Sometimes elections paralyse struggle. But this time, the prospect of Mélenchon doing well in the presidential elections is feeding hope and that’s feeding the struggle.

LFI have local “action groups”—they’re weak and have had no organic connection to the movement until now. I think they are trying to build because the demonstrations have potential supporters for LFI.

This is also a weakness for the movement. You can have big numbers on a demonstration, but you need revolutionary organisation to win.

Jean-Luc Melenchon

Meet the pupils' blockade... 'We are young, determined and revolutionary'

by **CAMILLA ROYLE** in Paris

DOZENS OF teenagers are already blockading their school in central Paris at 7.30am on Monday morning.

The high school students, many of them dressed all in black, drag green plastic wheelie bins to block the front and back doors.

Some of them join in the chants of "We are young, determined and revolutionary". Others sit on the bins and listen to hip hop.

The students' cardboard signs read, "Profs, écoutez vos élèves, rejoignez la grève"—"Teachers, listen to your students, join the strikes" and "Soutien aux lycées de banlieues"—"Support the students in the poor suburbs".

Someone unfurls an Algerian flag, another waves the flag of Palestine.

Some people say the teenagers are too young and they don't understand anything. But they understand the lot they have been given very well.

Conditions

"We need more teachers and better conditions," student Maël told Socialist Worker. "It's too hot in the summer and cold in the winter. They had to move the exams from June to September because it was 42 degrees Celsius in the classrooms.

"And it's for solidarity. Lots of high schools have conditions ten times worse than they have here."

Maël added, "They celebrate the events of May 1968. We do learn about that in school. But when we try to do that they say 'no'."

The school blockade movement began in banlieues, the poor suburbs, such as Saint-Denis in the north of the city, where the walls are crumbling, there are rats and the toilets are flooded. Another student on the barricades, Joachim, said, "The conditions in the high schools in the banlieues are catastrophic.

"Here it is better but it is very far from perfect. I didn't get English lessons for the whole of the first year."

He explained that students are also angry about the Parcoursup application system that helps determine students' options for further education after high school.

"It's an algorithm that chooses for us. It's not run by a human and they don't look at your whole grades. It's a huge problem," he said.

Cops on the prowl at the blockade

Grenade

Many of the students mentioned harassment by the police. They explained that drones are flying above the school to monitor them.

And all of them talked about solidarity with young people on the outskirts of the city whose protests have been met with police violence.

On the same day, reports arrived of a 15 year old student in Lens in the north of France having his hand blown off after picking up a police stun grenade.

"They get a lot of repression," said Maël. "The police are doing illegal things. They tried to drown someone last week."

Another student, Hélia, said the police try to push students to be violent—"they escalate".

Hélia said the budget for the military has doubled while the budget for public schools has stayed the same.

And he is worried about the rise of the far right in France and across Europe. "We see what is happening in Italy with Giorgia Meloni, they crack down on LGBT+ rights and on immigration. That will affect us directly, we are really scared for our lives.

"The far right has been normalised and even young people are voting for them. Neo-Nazis are becoming more able to attack us in daylight. So it's not safe outside any more."

Across the street a crowd of parents watch the teenagers. Some have trade union tabards or badges and had plans to join strikes that had been called by the main union federations the following day over austerity and to support the students.

Student Romain said, "Some of our parents support us. Others disagree. The teachers are really with us."

A member of the CGT trade union federation told Socialist Worker, "I'm here because my son is in there".

"This movement can win. We know that it can win because they are sending the cops. We can win here and in Spain and everywhere."

"If the workers' movement joins it will be a game changer," he added.

He said that the union bureaucracy has been too slow to move.

But they have called for strikes and protests on Tuesday. "They were forced to because of the power of the movement," he explained.

Danielle Simonnet, a member of the French parliament in the left wing party L'Après, joined the students.

She told Socialist Worker the government had tried to shut the schools and move learning online to try to stifle the movement.

"Every time they strike I am here", she told Socialist Worker. "Tomorrow I will come with a white helmet and a white armband." This is a symbol of solidarity with the youth.

Imane works in a school in the suburbs. "The conditions are really bad," she told Socialist Worker. "I don't want that for future generations.

"We can't accept these conditions any more. If the students and workers join together we can change things—we are the only ones who can."

BACK STORY

A wave of student struggle, and outbursts of police brutality, have led to a political crisis for the government

- Mon 21 Sept, First school protests over teacher shortage
- Tue 22 Sept, Blockades spread across schools in Paris suburbs
- Mon 28 Sept, Major escalation as 180 schools now out
- Wed 30 Sept, Huge escalation as 356 schools blockaded
- Thu 1 Oct, Biggest day yet with 1,027 schools affected

'SOME OF our parents support us and our teachers are really with us'

It's dawn in Paris and the students are blockading their school

"The far right has been normalised here and even young people vote for them

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

Universities are out too

THELMA, A student in Paris, spoke to Socialist Worker about the student perspective from the ground. She was at a blockade of the Sorbonne, one of the largest university campuses in France.

"It's not just the university students out. Anyone watching television can see policemen hitting kids.

"Today we saw a lot of students walking to a blockade in Paris—the one we are at—we numbered about 100. Then policemen appeared, they took out their batons. They started gassing students in the face.

"Everyone ran, it was quite scary. Later, they were searching our bags and taking our identities.

"We are all very angry because our college is planning to raise the prices for college for all students that are not from the European Union—literally racist rules."

"Racism is one of our biggest motivations. Everywhere in our protests you can see Palestinian flags, flags from everywhere actually. Policemen are attacking more black students than white.

"Society is built in such a racist way that it seems impossible to deconstruct, but antiracism is absolutely one of our biggest concerns."

From the outside, the demands of the movement seem broader and broader by the day.

But Thelma said, "We don't all want different things. The source of the problem is that we all think our public services need more money. We want our schools and firefighters to have more money. We want our workers to have more possibilities, more opportunities to live."

"We want to go further than elections. We want a transformation of our education system in high schools and in college. We want meritocracy to have true meaning.

Repressed

"The only black cloud we might see is the holidays. But it's only a one week break, the workers will re-mobilise and talk to the students. Every time there is a blockade, we talk together and we come to the same conclusions."

"What's different is we see lots of people we don't see all the time joining the blockades. Now it's young people being violently repressed, it's like they're waking up. It's sad that it's because the repression is too violent.

"If this movement can be a revolution, we will try for it. If we just get a new form of teaching, it'll still be amazing."

Islamophobia

Fascists lead the centre into attack

REACTION TO the school students' uprising has added to the flow of racist filth stemming from French politicians, from the centre to the far right.

Jordan Bardella, of the fascist National Rally party (RN), could barely conceal his "told you so" glee as he tweeted last week. He said the riots show "what France has become after decades of laxity and mass immigration."

"How long are we going to tolerate this barbarity? How long are we going to let our country sink without reacting?"

For the RN, the riots are proof that its twin themes of opposition to migration and Muslims are correct.

Its calls for radical action include removing French citizenship from any dual national found guilty of violence, and removing basic rights and entitlements from immigrants.

But fanning the flames of Islamophobia and racism is hardly restricted to the far right.

All mainstream parties, except the radical left La France Insoumise, accept the idea of a racialised working class, with migrants separated and stigmatised as "the other."

That's why, when there is an explosion of anger in France's poor suburbs, known as the banlieues, protests are written off as a Muslim or ethnic problem, rather than an expression of class rage.

Community anger, argue the politicians, reflects immigrants' failure to integrate and their self-segregation.

Knowing this, last month the Republican presidential candidate Bruno Retailleau deliberately confronted Muslim students.

Demand

In the name of "integration" and "secularism," the leader of the mainstream right demanded a ban on hijabs at universities, on school trips and in sport.

But, he insisted that in his vision of secularism, the "Judeo-Christian tradition of France" must be recognised in the country's constitution.

The far right uses the term "Judeo-Christian" as a way of distinguishing religious traditions it sees as compatible with the West from those such as Islam, which it argues are not.

Back in May, the former government minister said, "Islamism is not a religion. It is an ideology that must be fought as such."

The French centre parties are on a similar page to the right, and are seemingly obsessed with the invented issue of "separatism."

President Emmanuel Macron last year backed a state-commissioned report that accused the Muslim Brotherhood of waging a covert campaign to subvert secular values.

The report called for action to stop the slow-burning spread of "political Islam."

A day before the Muslim Brotherhood report was published, Gabriel Attal—head of Macron's Renaissance party and a former prime minister—demanded that under-15s be banned from wearing the hijab.

He insisted that the state show even more "firmness" on the issue.

Macron's policing of "separatism" has involved banning groups which merely acknowledge the existence of Islamophobia, and which record instances of it.

The state has similarly used its powers to restrict and sanction associations, while officials have attacked unions and others for talking of "state racism."

The state set up some 101 special departmental units dedicated to combating "Islamism and community withdrawal".

The Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) was one of the organisations banned by the state in 2020. It became important during the state of emergency following the 2015 terror attacks.

CCIF provided legal defence for Muslims who faced discrimination because of their religion. It also kept a database of Islamophobic acts.

The group also played a central role in organising one of the largest protests against Islamophobia in France, in November 2019. This mobilised significant sections of the political left, unions and human rights groups, alongside Muslims.

Women protest at the French embassy in Vienna after hijab ban

> **Has not the French ruling class already borrowed fascist language**

Denounce

The centre parties denounced the march as "Islamo-leftism."

The increased willingness of the state to use Islamophobia as part of a broader crackdown reflects a general trend towards authoritarianism in neoliberalism.

Since the 2007-08 financial crisis, capitalism has moved from one calamity to another with no end in sight. This in turn has driven the ruling class to demand workers make ever greater sacrifices.

Growing anger at the system has required increased repression and laws that make it more difficult to mount effective resistance.

As if to match their vicious austerity, so too the racist language of the ruling class has also toughened, argues Ugo Palheta in his recent book, Why is Fascism on the Rise—from Macron to Le Pen.

"Has not the French ruling class, led by Macron and his ministers, already borrowed heavily from neofascist language, when it speaks of 'growing savagery,' 'de-civilisation,' the 'great replacement,' or of a France 'drowning in migration'?" he writes.

However, the right turn has only bolstered the fascists, giving them the respectability they crave, and the ability to claim that the mainstream copies tomorrow what they say today.

The resistance seen across France this week provides us with a vision of how the working class can overcome the racist divisions imposed on it.

The scenes of working people blocking streets to protect their children is a brilliant antidote to the politicians' racist poison.

But to really land a blow on the enemy, the working class must now prove to its most oppressed sections that solidarity is both dependable and permanent.

‘The idea of a two-state solution is dead,’ says Gazan

Palestinian journalist Alaa speaks out on life in Gaza City, still under Israeli bombardment, and the collapse of the West’s promises

THERE IS no one thing that is hard about living in Gaza—everything is hard.

More than 90 percent of Gaza residents are living in makeshift tents which are fragile.

To live the whole year under one tent and to keep fixing it means it will eventually not be usable. And many of them cannot resist the winter.

People cannot find places to live. Many return to their destroyed homes and build tents on them. The buildings that are partially destroyed have become a refuge for many families.

But buildings collapse and many people have died because of that.

We are not safe. We are becoming more afraid because you hear about the Israeli’s targeting people where civilians are living.

For me and others, we are afraid to go out of our homes because you may be walking down a street, and a drone can shoot you. People here feel that they cannot live this way.

For the children, it is very bad. They don’t have a playground, they don’t have safe spaces. They become burdened with life’s tasks.

They’re not coping, but they are forced to live in this way. You feel that children grow up much more than their age. Children’s needs are absent and there is no choice but for them to continue to live this way.

Western governments have to stick to their responsibilities towards Gaza. They have to hold those responsible accountable. They need to impose restrictions against Israeli settlements, dealings and partnerships. They should offer support, we don’t need just sympathy, we need action and pressure.

> **We don’t just need sympathy, we need action**

Alaa writes from Gaza City

This would make the Israelis always live in fear of losing their false face. We have to combat and fight their false propaganda.

Political

Universities must demand that governments, politicians and other sectors cut ties with Israel. People need to keep talking about Palestine and say that this is not just a humanitarian issue—it’s political.

When politicians talk about a “two-state solution”, I say look at the maps, look at the reality. What does it tell you?

I think politicians should talk from a real perspective, not from a dream or wishful thinking.

The idea of a two-state solution is dead. Looking at the reality, we have to have other ways out other than repeating the same thing since the Oslo “peace deal”, because it has failed.

Israel does not want a two-state solution. It is a lie that Palestinians are living inside.

It’s not something that we can rely on anymore, we have to find other ways to bring Palestinians their fundamental rights.

90 PERCENT of people in Gaza live in tents as some 82 percent of buildings have been destroyed

‘The world must watch Palestine’

MAHMOUD LIVES in the West Bank village of Umm al-Khair The last three years have seen rapidly increasing violence from Israeli settlers.

THE PALESTINIAN people feel we are alone against the Israeli system.

Life is very difficult. It is getting closer to the Israeli election. The right wing extremist Israeli politicians are trying to put more pressure on the Palestinian reality.

The settlers every day implement attacks across the whole of the West Bank.

It is olive harvest time and they are preventing Palestinians from harvesting.

Destroy

Israel is using military orders to confiscate more land. It is a decision from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) that allows the settlers to confiscate the trees and harvest the olives. This decision is a means to destroy olive season.

There are attacks by settlers and the IDF and the economic situation is very bad. We can’t ensure education and healthcare. One litre of diesel now costs three dollars. The price of food increases every month.

Living in fear in the West Bank

The workers who were working in Israel now have no salaries and everything is becoming expensive. Life here is miserable.

In the past month, they have destroyed three villages in Masafer Yatta, the collection of communities that includes Umm al-Khair. We expect in the next two weeks to see more demolition operations targeting all the villages.

In Umm al-Khair village, Israeli settlers removed the fence between our playground and a new settler outpost. They attack the village any time they want.

A child of one of the settlers hit my nephew. Any time the settler children come and attack us, the IDF and police cannot stop them. We cannot protect our children now. The IDF and settlers control everything in the village.

They have produced a new map of Umm al-Khair. More of what was privately owned land by Palestinians is confiscated. It is now classed as “disputed land”.

Conflict

My mother’s house, my brother’s house and the village centre have all been put in the conflicted land. We cannot protect it from the settlers.

They are going to a further stage of their plan, they want to remove Palestinians from Area C, where the village is located.

We heard about what the Labour government did with the restrictions on trade with the West Bank. But we believe the punishment is not enough.

Britain and the European Union could do more to punish Israel, stop the genocide in Gaza and stop the settlements here.

We hope people in Britain and elsewhere continue their protests and be clear and loud.

Now, the world has stopped watching what is happening in Palestine, we need the voices of them to knock on the door of the world and tell them to watch what is happening.

‘We forced Labour to shift—but we must push for more’

by REBECCA LONG

THERE IS a widespread feeling in the Palestine movement that Labour’s shift is a victory—and wholly inadequate.

Foreign secretary Ed Miliband has been forced to admit the Palestine movement was right.

He acknowledged Israel is ethnically cleansing Palestinians and announced limited sanctions on settlements in the West Bank.

Miliband does not want to sever the British state’s links with Israel—and makes clear Britain’s aim is to rehabilitate the sham “two state solution” (see pages 6 and 20).

But he has opened the floodgates. If the movement is right, surely, Labour should implement its demands?

And if Israel is carrying out ethnic cleansing, why does the “democratic” West continue to support such a state?

Let’s keep fighting to stop all arms sales and trade with Israel.

Peter Leary
Palestine Solidarity Campaign deputy director

THE MOST important thing that Ed Miliband’s recent statements show is that mass pressure works and has to be maintained.

Three years ago, the entire British political establishment stood full square behind Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

Since then, millions of us have taken to the streets and got involved in protest actions of every kind and campaigns in support of the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.

We have faced down attempts to silence, to demonise, even to criminalise those speaking out against Israel’s genocide and apartheid.

Through mass, grassroots pressure, our movement has begun to break through that rotten political consensus.

While these measures are correct and overdue, even if they are effectively implemented—something that remains to be seen—they fall far short of meeting Britain’s international legal obligations to end all support for Israel’s crimes.

We must continue to mobilise in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their struggle for freedom and justice.

JOIN THE global day of action for Palestine on Saturday 10 October

Robina
Bradford Friends of Palestine

THE CHANGE is welcome, but it’s like they’re dangling a carrot in front of us. It’s not really anything tangible.

Sanctions on the illegal settlements—okay, but will it achieve anything?

Ed Miliband says he will scrutinise all arms sales, but they are supposed to do that anyway. We need more, much more. We need to keep up the pressure—that’s why I’ll be in London on Saturday.

Kate
Palestine Youth Movement

WE NEED to use everything as a pressure point. Our university says it follows the government position, so we have to use this to push it to divest any holdings connected to settlements in the West Bank.

The government changes by civil resistance.

Over the last few years public opinion has changed. Now the majority of people are supporting Palestine and support for Israel is going down.

Jenny
Arrested for opposing Palestine Action ban

ACTION FORCED movement from Labour. It shows mass protest works.

But Labour is changing the optics, not the substance. It’s resurrecting the fiction of a viable two-state solution to cloak their failure to break with Israel.

Peaceful protesters against genocide were still being arrested outside the Labour conference where Miliband said the movement was right.

Jim
Palestine activist in Dundee

EVERY SATURDAY for the last three years we’ve had a Free Palestine protest in Dundee.

At the protests, no one trusts what the government says. They think it’s a good start, but we need to do a hell of a lot more.

Stop arms sales, stop manufacturing bombs. No one is convinced the Labour government will do enough.

‘Get Palantir out of the NHS,’ say activists

HUNDREDS OF people took part in a day of action last week against Israel-supporting tech giant Palantir.

The day of action was called by Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Keep Our NHS Public, Amnesty International and others.

Palantir wants to sink its claws into the NHS.

Campaigners say the £330 million contract would put their data at risk.

They are urging the NHS to activate a break clause before December—otherwise Palantir’s software is attached to the health service until at least 2029.

Merril, secretary of Hammersmith and Fulham Save Our NHS in west London, told Socialist Worker, “The risk to patient and staff data is horrifying.

“It is also involved in Ice—tracking down immigrants, tracking families of immigrants—and that in itself is outrageous.”

In Manchester, mental health nurse Karen Reissman was met with cheers.

“It’s because we’ve protested, all these years and months, that they’ve managed to admit that”, she said on Labour’s shift in tone (see above).

“But if they were wrong, they should change their policies, not just say they’re wrong. And that means they need to get Palantir out of the NHS.”

June Budd

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

EUROPE IN REVOLT SHOWS THE WAY

THE REVOLTS in France and the Spanish state show the power of struggle outside official politics.

In France, the breakdown of mainstream politics had produced what socialist Leon Trotsky called “a kaleidoscope of barren political combination”.

Sections of the ruling class were seriously considering the fascist RN as a force that could discipline the working class. If Marine Le Pen won the presidency, they hoped it could provide a way out of the impasse.

That danger still remains. But the struggle on the streets has shown there is a another way to hit back at the neoliberal centre as well as the fascists.

If it deepens, it could bring down president Emmanuel Macron and open up new possibilities for change.

Struggle is how ordinary people begin to feel their power, identify their common interests—and their common enemies.

France and Spain show how the fights against exploitation and oppression can come together. Our enemies aren’t just imposing austerity—they are pushing racism, authoritarianism, war and genocide.

It is no accident that women are at the forefront of the images coming out of France and the Spanish state.

And it is also no accident that school students raise the flags of Palestine, Algeria, Sudan and Congo on the streets of Paris.

Similarly, it is no accident that this time last year the Spanish state saw tens of thousands of people on the streets for Palestine.

School students were striking in solidarity with the Gaza Flotilla. At the same time, there were general strikes for Palestine in Italy and Greece. These waves of radicalisation and struggle feed one another.

In France Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the left wing LFI reflect that and have joined the movement. And many on the streets rightly look to him. He has slammed the police violence, saying, “Hands off our youth. Elected officials and LFI activists, step in wherever you can.”

But LFI’s focus on working through the French state to win changes means it bends to the logic of electoralism. As the election approaches, there will be a pressure for it to moderate its approach.

The question is not whether the movement can increase LFI’s vote—but whether LFI can boost the movement.

In the Spanish state, too, the key question is not whether prime minister Pedro Sánchez, who has called a snap general election, is re-elected.

It is whether the movement grows. And all this raises the need for revolutionary organisation with a strategy based on struggle from below.

FLIGHTY BOMBERS SCARED BACK HOME

US BOMBERS retreated from RAF Fairford on Sunday, after news of an alleged Iranian drone attack.

This follows a previous incident at the base where six men were arrested for terror offences, then released with no immediate charges. The US and Labour insisted that this incident involved Iran.

RAF Fairford has been the home of the US Air Force in Europe since the start of its war on Iran in March. For the last three years it has also been used by the US for drone surveillance of Gaza.

It is unclear whether the rumoured drone attack and bomb plot are being treated as separate incidents.

Iran has denied any involvement.

The 12 bombers removed from Fairford are B-1 bombers, some of the deadliest aircraft invented by the US. They were first used to bomb Iraq in 1998 and the former Yugoslavia in 1999, and most recently to level civilian areas of Iran.

While the B-1s are gone from Fairford, there is still a US military presence there, and in a further eleven military bases in Britain. Planes used to bomb schools in Iran should never have been allowed to fly from UK soil.

We must demand the US military pulls out of Britain—and out of everywhere it wreaks destruction and death.

ANALYSIS
ALEX CALLINICOS

Burnham's promises don't mean change

ANDY BURNHAM'S speech at the Labour Party conference confirmed what should have been clear from his surgical removal of Keir Starmer. Behind all the schmaltz, he is a bold and intelligent politician.

Nevertheless, what he's seeking has nothing to do with genuine socialist politics.

Burnham showed he understands what happened at the last general election in July 2024. The huge parliamentary majority Starmer won then was a mirage, nowhere comparable the genuine Labour landslides Clement Attlee won in 1945, Harold Wilson in 1966 and Tony Blair in 1997.

The huge shift in parliamentary seats in 2024 is the kind of result the first-past-the-post election system delivers when party support fragments.

A five-party system emerged—Labour, Tories, Reform, Lib Dems and Greens. Indeed, it's a seven-party system when you take into account the SNP and Plaid Cymru, but they aren't competing for office at Westminster. So, how do you win in this set-up? Starmer's mean and inept government showed, instead, how to lose.

But then the Gorton and Denton by-election in February added another ingredient to the mix. The Greens' victory demonstrated it wasn't inevitable that the far right would be the main beneficiary from Starmer's collapse. A progressive alternative is possible. Burnham is trying to ensure that a rebranded Labour plays this role.

In his speech, he repeated his critique of the neoliberal reconstruction of British society under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. This helps to polarise against a Tory party that, under Kemi Badenoch, is moving sharply in a Thatcherite direction.

Burnham, however, went beyond rhetoric and made three concrete proposals. First, to create a National Care Service comparable to the NHS. Second, to set up a national commission on electoral reform. And, third, to address "Britain's long-term relationship" with the European Union (EU)—including, possibly, Burnham later clarified, rejoining.

Strategy

This platform implies, as Robert Shrimsley of the Financial Times newspaper noted, "a shrewd political strategy, calculated to rebuild the electoral coalition on the left and then drive through voting reform in the explicit belief it will keep the right out".

Opinion polls show that Reform UK is no longer the front-runner and that large numbers of left-of-centre voters are willing to vote tactically to keep Nigel Farage out of 10 Downing Street. The logic of Burnham's package is a coalition with the Lib Dems, enthusiasts for both electoral reform and rejoining the EU.

Shrimsley also says "New Andy is unapologetically Old Labour" and wants "to wind back the clock", presumably to the Britain of the 1950s and 1960s. This is nonsense.

Burnham proposes to help finance social care reform by amending the triple lock meant to protect state pensions. After April 2030, these will still rise by the higher of inflation or 2.5 percent, but will no longer be linked tightly to earnings.

As the Green economist James Meadway points out, "this is a cut in expected pensions to pay for social care. That is likely to be somewhat regressive—the winners are those who no longer have to sell a house to pay for care, but those losing out on the pension will include people who do not own their home or never need care."

It is still a clever move. Breaking the Triple Lock means pain for poorer pensioners, but years away. It is also what big business and its echo chambers in the BBC and Institute of Fiscal Studies have been stridently demanding. Burnham is signalling to them that he can be "tough" when it comes to welfare spending.

In many ways the kind of policy shift he is making was pioneered by his foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, when he announced a ban on trade with illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine. It generated a huge amount of noise, largely thanks to the furious reaction from Israel. This gave Miliband kudos from many in the Palestine movement. But it changed very little in Britain's economic and security relationship with Israel.

This is the Burnham formula—a dramatic change in tone, but minimal change in reality. This makes a real left alternative ever more urgent.

LETTERS

Email letters@socialistworker.co.uk **Post** Socialist Worker, PO Box 74955, London E16 9EJ

Students and striking uni workers must unite to win

UCU UNION members working at the University of Edinburgh began five weeks of strikes on 28 September.

The Socialist Worker Student Society has been on picket lines every day. We've been arguing with other students about why supporting trade unionists is vital.

Edinburgh university is threatening 1,800 job losses and to cut 93 programmes, while not being anywhere close to running a deficit.

These cuts will affect the day-to-day realities of our education and we will have fewer course choices.

It'll also mean less contact time with lecturers and tutors and staff who are too overwhelmed to support us effectively.

Conditions

Our teachers' working conditions are our learning conditions.

Our lecturers are fighting for our future jobs in academia, they are setting a precedent for working conditions in the field. And, as workers who are willing to fight against a corrupt management, they are setting an example for us.

In regards to actually winning the strike, the only way we can do this is with mass student and worker solidarity.

Students, by talking with lecturers and observing strikes by not going to lectures, can push workers who aren't striking to come to their senses and fight for their jobs.

We are pushing students to join upcoming national mobilisations in Dundee and Glasgow and to support each other's picket lines.

We want students to raise awareness to the Scottish government that the cuts universities are making are unacceptable, regardless of where they are taking place.

Students have a responsibility to stand up and fight for the people who make our education possible.

We need to be visible in our solidarity on the picket lines.

Sophie Lancaster
Edinburgh

Ed's ironic hypocrisy

THE SLAUGHTER in Gaza and the West Bank has seen liberal democracy on trial for complicity. And a guilty verdict is the only one that can be reached.

Alongside this complicity, we've seen the obscene attempt to portray protesting against genocide as terrorism and a systematic attempt to criminalise our right to protest.

Will it be different under Andy Burnham?

The proscription of Palestine Action should be lifted, cases against Palestine activists should be dropped. The government should support boycott, divestment and sanctions and halt arms sales to Israel.

Ed Miliband has begun to "express some regret" for Labour's position over the past few years.

It is a bitter irony that a 94 year old Jewish ex-barrister arrested in Liverpool recently for peacefully protesting genocide was a friend of Miliband's mother. And it's clear that if his mother were alive today, she would be sitting holding a sign, doing the exact same thing as thousands of activists have done over the past year.

I'm sure his father would have been with us too.

Simon O'Hara
Coventry

ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Trade unions must support the RNLI

PORTSMOUTH TRADES Union Council (TUC) has launched a campaign of solidarity with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). Delegates have been very concerned about recent attacks on the RNLI.

It is deplorable to accuse volunteers who risk their lives of being "traitors" and to threaten them. The RNLI's commitment to try to save all lives, regardless of where people come from, is an essential principle. You cannot ask to see the passport of someone drowning before saving them.

Portsmouth TUC agreed to match a £500 donation by a Unite union branch to the RNLI. Portsmouth City Unison branch will also donate and we hope other branches will too.

Trade unionists along the south coast are particularly invited to join the solidarity campaign.

Arranging delegations of workers to local RNLI stations would allow the trade union movement to thank and support the volunteers.

We can never allow the politics of division to compromise safety at sea.

Jon Woods
Chair of Portsmouth TUC

Reject racist division

I AM a student at a school that Restore Britain's Rupert Lowe recently posted about on X. He said it was "unacceptable" that our school is not overwhelmingly white and British.

My classmates—black, brown, white, Jewish, Muslim and atheist—reject his divisive image of our school. The real division within education is class.

Lowe's racist comment shows that he will target anybody, even children, to spread division. We all must build Stand Up To Racism and fight Restore Britain.

Joshua
Coventry

‘We will take on far right and racism’ say marchers

Hundreds of people joined unity marches and chased Restore Britain off the streets last weekend

AROUND 2,000 people took to the streets of Birmingham against the far right

AROUND 2,000 anti-racists came out in Birmingham last Sunday for the West Midlands unity demonstration.

It was one of several called by Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) this autumn to build opposition to the far right and racism.

The march involved over 70 organisations—from trade unions to climate campaigns and Palestine activists—and was led by Women Against the Far Right.

Gina, a leading activist in Women Against The Far Right, reports, “Coming 90 years to the day after Cable Street, that spirit of unity and resistance ran throughout the march.

“The confidence on the streets was tangible. People were asking afterwards, ‘What are we doing next?’

“The task now is turning that energy into organisation and continuing to build a mass movement capable of pushing the far right back.”

Music

The day before, around 800 people joined the unity march through Bradford, West Yorkshire.

It was full of music, banners, flags and placards. Many families marched with homemade placards. The Palestine movement was present in big numbers.

A contingent of Bradford’s independent councillors was on the march. One of them, Ishtiaq Ahmed, told Socialist Worker, “It’s more important than ever that we show unity against division and hatred. “We have a Reform UK-run council. People are waking up to the threat now. We have to keep mobilising against them.”

“It’s not too late to do something about the far right threat

Steve is on the branch committee of Bradford’s UCU university and college union. He told Socialist Worker, “We are here with the banner today to show solidarity and to challenge the far right narrative that they are the majority.”

Meanwhile, around 150 anti-racists marched in Croydon, south London, last Saturday.

Marchers came from the NEU and UCU unions, the Croydon and Purley mosques, Palestine movement and Amnesty International.

Organiser Michael addressed the crowd, saying the march was “about solidarity and unity”.

On the same day, around 100 people joined a unity demonstration in Bournemouth.

Meanwhile, anti-racists outnumbered a small group of Restore Britain supporters and assorted far right YouTube streamers in central London.

Tyler Johnson is running for the far right party in the by-election this week in Keir Starmer’s former Holborn and St Pancras constituency.

With no sense of irony, the Restore Britain supporters complained that they were there to defend democracy.

After a brief stand-off, they were sent packing by anti-racists. It is the third week in a row their activities have been disrupted.

Fascist threat grows in south coast towns

Hundreds of fascists and racists mobilised in Dover and Southampton last Saturday and Gosport, near Portsmouth, last Sunday.

Around 150 racists took to the streets of Gosport in the evening after news came of the RNLI coast guard bringing refugees ashore.

The previous day around 130 anti-racists in marched in defiance of around 150 masked fascists in Southampton.

The weekend shows the need to keep organising, to kick them off the street.

Rebecca Long, Judy Cox and Camilla Royle

ORGANISING AT WORK

Bristol health workers against far right

DOZENS OF Bristol health and care workers came together last week in opposition to the rising tide of racism and the growth of the far right.

Bristol Health Workers Against The Far Right launched with a 30-strong meeting. It united people working in the health sectors with those working in social care.

Organiser Dave, a Unison union rep, told Socialist Worker that the meeting was “a real breakthrough”.

“We knew it was going to be an important meeting,” he said. “We were tapping into new networks of people, especially among migrant workers.

“For example, union officials put us in touch with migrant organisers who work with Unison in the Fair Visas Campaign. That led us to lots of workers we’d never met before.”

‘Health Workers Against The Far Right’ in Bristol

Violence

Dave says that some of the workers had horrible stories of racism on the job.

A recent staff survey reveals the extent of the problem in A&E alone. It showed that 63 percent of those sampled said they had experienced racism, sexism or homophobia—and many reported violence.

At the meeting there was a “real buzz” and a willingness to talk about future action. “When we asked who in the room was up for joining the steering committee for the new campaign, loads of hands went up,” says Dave.

Dave explained how a small group of committed activists anywhere can follow the example of Bristol.

“The first thing is to get a good leaflet and a venue,” he said. “The leaflet should talk to the issues facing migrant workers, black and Asian workers and the growing problem of the far right.”

Activists ensured that the main hospitals had mass leafleting outside at the busiest times. And they did ward rounds, getting “face-to-face” time with health and care workers.

Dave said another activity was crucial. “We made a point of getting to the new nursing and medical students at the universities,” he said.

“They were really interested and we made some excellent contacts.

“And we reached out to the networks of migrant workers. That combination was vital.”

Bristol Health Workers Against The Far Right is now established with a significant base. “This meeting had a different feel to any other I’ve been involved in,” said Dave. “And, if we can do it here, I’m sure you can too.”

Yuri Prasad

THESE TRAFFIC WARDENS ARE BLOCKING THE ROAD TO OUTSOURCING

Working in all weathers, facing abuse every day and risking their health, traffic wardens keep Camden running. Now, they're going on strike. **Jude Mckechnie** spoke to the workers in north London leading the fightback against outsourcing

CAMDEN, IN north London, with its famous clubs and vibrant music scene, is a playground for tourists.

However, for striking traffic wardens, this labyrinth of crowded restaurants and dive bars is a world completely beyond their reach due to low pay and long hours.

These predominantly black and migrant workers, who patrol our streets whether it's lashing it down or scorching hot, are in the midst of what is shaping up to be a defining fightback against outsourcing.

Jane, one of dozens of traffic wardens embarking on eight weeks of strikes across the borough, told Socialist Worker that she works 42.5 hours a week. "It's almost a full day more each week than council workers," she said. She currently receive just 20 days of annual leave—the statutory minimum.

Camden alone experiences footfall of over 30 million people every year. Without the traffic wardens, the city would be gridlocked.

The Unison union members are employed by private contractor NSL, part of Marston Holdings, rather than Camden Council itself. They are demanding a £2 an hour pay rise, seven extra days of annual leave and sick pay from day one.

"We are met with hostility on a daily basis as part of our job," Jane told Socialist Worker.

"There have been cases when we've been physically attacked, and verbal abuse is the norm. That's our reality."

"We only report when it happens about ten percent of the time because it happens so often.

"Otherwise, we'd be forever in the office writing reports and we'd never be working. And they know that, because we've told them about the abuse.

"The company do nothing about it. They send us out all by ourselves. The police go out in twos, but we go out by ourselves."

Gruelling

The traffic wardens are completely excluded from their own local life by low pay and little respite from a gruelling schedule.

Jane told Socialist Worker that the most recent pay offer from NSL was simply not good enough. Unison members overwhelmingly rejected it at a mass meeting last week.

"The pay rise they've been offered is linked to RPI, but it's a real terms wage cut for us because we live in London", she said. "It's covering nothing."

> **Bills have gone through the roof and our wage has not kept up. Everyone's skint. We shouldn't be**

The traffic wardens struck for better wages in 2023 and won an 18.1 percent pay increase after moving to an indefinite strike. After 59 days, NSL was forced to improve on its initial pay offer of just 57p an hour.

It was a significant victory won through workers' determination. However, Jane explained that pay has since been eroded by soaring inflation.

"Rent alone has just killed everything. So, the equivalent we're on now is less than when we went on strike before."

"Bills have just gone through the roof. And our wage is just not keeping up. Everyone's skint. We shouldn't be skint, not with these hours.

Disgusting

"We're the ones out there earning the money. It's disgusting and we've had enough."

NSL's parent company Marston Holdings has a contract with Camden Council worth around £100 million.

"Marston Holdings is a massive company. They are loaded because, quite frankly, they're nasty. The company makes its money sending bailiffs to collect unpaid debts for people.

"They've added an extra day to our week, they've taken seven days of our holiday. They've taken three days of our sick pay," she said. "We need sick pay from day one.

"We work outside in all weathers and we're exposed to everybody so of course we are prone to getting sick.

"We worked through Covid-19 and all of us came down with it multiple times because we were working with the public. But then we were being penalised for being ill. It's not fair. It's never been fair."

The Unison union strikers protested at NSL outsourcing firm headquarters last Friday (above) **There have been picket lines throughout the borough for the past week** (right)

Stealing

She added, "Time is the most important asset anyone's got. And they're absolutely stealing it from us."

The dispute exposes a wider problem with the way local councils run public services.

Jane explained that the Labour-run Camden council had the opportunity in January to take

The strikers are determined their voices will be heard

this contract in house. But it didn't. Instead, the council extended the contract until 2030.

Traffic wardens will have to fight a separate employer for conditions that other council employees already enjoy.

"If we'd been in-sourced we'd have the holiday, we'd have the sick pay, we'd have the pension. And our hours would only be about 36 hours a week for the same sort of money," said Jane.

Labour promised to deliver "the biggest wave of in-sourcing of public services in a generation". But outsourcing remains widespread in its own constituencies.

Spending on private contractors for key public services has doubled since Labour took office under Keir Starmer, who was then MP for Camden's Holborn and St Pancras constituency. The RMT and Unison unions found that outsourcing costs across essential sectors reached £6.2 billion in 2025, compared with £3.5 billion in 2024.

"Insource Now" is a new joint campaign between the two unions.

It aims to put pressure on Burnham's government to end decades of outsourcing with disastrous consequences for workers.

"As far as I'm concerned, Labour are a bunch of hypocrites," said Jane.

"The MP for Camden was prime minister when they signed the new contract with NSL for four years. Now, we're stuck with them.

"I've been a Labour supporter all my life because I'm a working person. But from how they've chosen to run the council, I feel that they've sold us out," she said.

Rallying

The traffic wardens brought their fight directly to Camden council, with workers from all three picket lines rallying at the council headquarters on Thursday.

Strikers told Socialist Worker that the council must answer for why workers delivering a public service are employed by a private company that treats them worse than the council's own workforce.

"Camden council has given the running of this service to NSL so that they can cut their costs," said striker Joel from outside the council headquarters.

"We're here to make noise to make sure that Camden residents know that the council has knowingly put us in this position by choosing to contract us out to this private company which rips up our terms and conditions.

"We want Camden council to know that we mean business."

He added, "This service is one of the only profitable services in the council. But none of that is being reinvested back into the workers or the running of the council services.

"That's money that could be put into libraries, schools and wage rises for other workers. It's all going to the private company. That has to end."

Joel emphasised that the upcoming Holborn and St Pancras by-election taking place this Thursday is a chance for strikers to force candidates to commit to being on the side of working people, not big business.

"Whoever is elected in the by-election, we want them to consider the welfare of the workers," he said.

"The council cannot wash its hands and pretend that this dispute has nothing to do with it. And neither can the politicians.

"Workers are very important to society and therefore we need a good wage for ourselves.

> **The council cannot wash its hands and pretend this dispute has nothing to do with it**

"We all have families and children to look after."

The Camden council leader, Sagal Abdi-Wali, is running for Labour in the by-election.

She was leader when the council renewed the contract with NSL, choosing to side with private companies that care more about profits than people.

Yanis, another striker who attended the action outside the council building, told Socialist Worker that, by making that decision, Labour chose to maintain a "two-tier workforce".

"All we want is for NSL to match what Camden offers to its own staff. Those it hires directly have much more than we do.

"We work a 42.5 hour week and people still have to take on overtime just to pay for the basic bills. The company pushes us down that road," he said.

For too long, public services have been outsourced to private companies who make their money by driving down pay and conditions for workers and providing poor quality services to the public.

"We need enough annual leave to recover, sick pay that allows us to stay home when we're ill and wages that allow us to keep up with the cost of living," said Yanis.

Win

"We're not going to stop until we win, for however long it takes."

Camden traffic wardens are proving that no outsourced worker needs to accept this. Public sector workers have an interest in fighting for the insourcing of services so that money can be reinvested into the workforce and services as a whole.

Next week, traffic wardens will unite with other council workers who are also at the sharp end of the financial crisis facing Britain's local authorities.

They will be joined by teaching assistants in two Camden schools who are fighting their own battle with Camden council over pay, as well as striking teachers in the NEU union.

Liz Wheatley, branch secretary of Camden Unison, told Socialist Worker, "Strikers from Camden across Unison and the NEU are keen to highlight their disputes and keep the pressure on the council to resolve them.

"But also, to receive and give solidarity to those who are fighting back—be it in their workplaces against the bosses, or on the streets against the far right.

"This will be an opportunity to bring people together to map out how people can fight and how we can win."

Workers' names have been changed

AND TRUMP lifted up his eyes unto heaven, saying, 'Blessed are the tech bros, for they shall inherit the earth'

MEET THE BILLIONAIRES PRAYING FOR A FASCIST APOCALYPSE

Judy Cox reviews End Times Fascism by Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor and finds much to fear. But, she says, the authors' strategy for resistance is far too meagre

WHAT do you see when you look at the ruins of Gaza? A catastrophe? A mass grave? Donald Trump and his cronies see Gaza as a real estate agent's fantasy, resurrected as a gated paradise for the rich.

Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor's new book, End Times Fascism, explores the networks of far right politicians and bosses who want to profit from disaster and climate catastrophe.

"The most powerful people in the world are preparing for the end of the world, an end they themselves are frenetically accelerating," they write. It is not just that they are not building arks—they are doing their best to cause a flood.

End times fascism is made up of distinct but overlapping currents.

There are messianic leaders who celebrate every disaster as a sign of the second coming of Christ. And there are tech giants whose data centres intensify climate catastrophe as they plan their escape to bunkers or to space.

Those preparing for the end of days, the "preppers," want to turn nation states into purified bunkers by locking up then kicking out those deemed unlikely to survive the coming apocalypse.

Evolving

The major theme of the book is the evolving nature of fascism. We are not, the authors argue, witnessing a return of the fascism of the 1930s, but a sequel.

Klein and Taylor argue that the fascism of the 1930s is usually portrayed as a rupture with society so uniquely appalling that any historical comparison insults the dead.

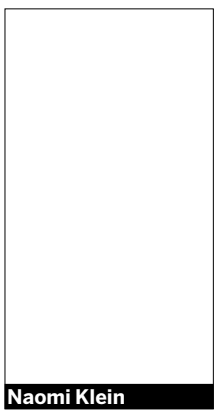
And they acknowledge the way that interpretation has been challenged by those who see continuity between the Holocaust and colonial genocides and mass lynchings across the US South.

They describe fascism as a recurring tendency which comes to the fore when elites feel threatened. "Fascism", they write, "is capitalism with bared teeth."

Donald Trump, Netanyahu and Putin are not "worse" than Mussolini, Hitler and Franco—but the world is more dangerous now and their weapons are deadlier.

THERE ARE several dangers with this analysis of fascism. We must never forget the multiple horrors associated with capitalism and imperialism.

But the fascism of the 1930s did represent a break with "normal" capitalism. The Holocaust—the racialised and industrialised murder of millions of people—was a unique event.



Naomi Klein

Far right regimes are today perpetrating appalling abuses on society, and the tech bosses are unleashing climate catastrophe. But fascism is more than hideous, right wing governments.

Fascism involves a mobilisation of a mass movement capable of physically intimidating all opposition, driving them from the streets.

And it entails the destruction of all democratic institutions and non-fascist organisations. In the US, Ice agents are murderers and racists—and many are actual fascists. But Ice is a government agency, not a fascist militia outside of state control.

> **Disasters are no longer a signal to change course but a welcome sign of the 'end of days'**

Despite this confused understanding of fascism, End Times Fascism is a deeply disturbing and forensic expose of the ideas and networks which sustain the far right.

Religious fanatics see each new disaster as a welcome sign we are entering "the end of days." They find common ground with secular demagogues who promise a glorious, prosperous future on the ruins of our present.

Horror, mass death, the battle of Armageddon and the raising of a new Jerusalem for the chosen few are marginal elements in all major religions.

But when the story of Armageddon is implanted into the brain of a Donald Trump, who has a trembling finger on the nuclear button, it takes on different proportions.

After all, Trump casually threatened Iran, saying, "a whole civilisation will die tonight."

BIG CORPORATIONS and politicians of the far right are cashing in on this new world of perpetual upheaval. Alex Karp, boss of Palantir, says that his company was "built for the bad times, and bad times mean strong finances."

Politicians such as Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, whatever their beliefs or lack of them, want to channel the power of messianic religion for their own ends.

The messianic grifters are not simply trying to put pressure on governments—they have become the government.

Exemplifying this fusion of apocalyptic religion and state power is the rise of Ben G'vir and his journey from fanatical fringe to Israel's National Security Ministry.

G'vir says that religious preachers should not be the firefighters of the world, but the arsonists.

US forces raining down bombs on Iran were told by their commanders that it was part of god's plan and the return of Jesus Christ was imminent.

Evangelical

Disasters are no longer a signal to change course, but a welcome sign that end times are coming. Among those yearning for Armageddon are several of the most important tech barons.

The proteges of the evangelical boss of Palantir, Peter Thiel, are now in the Trump administration. Most prominent amongst them is vice-president JD Vance.

The "tech bros" abandoned the Democrats for Trump's Maga project only in 2024. They did not embrace Trump for purely individual reasons, Klein and Taylor argue, but because of the nature of AI technology that pushed them.

AI needs massive supplies of electricity, wealth and personal data—and to get that, they need government support. Trump has bet his presidency on the US winning an AI race with China, despite the unpopularity of the technological infrastructure.

Boxtown, a black community in Memphis, is the site of historic battles led by Martin Luther King. It is now the site of Colossus 1, Elon Musk's

supercomputer. But local communities are organising against Musk's plans.

And it is not just the residents of towns like Boxtown that are resisting data centres. Trump has failed to convince his base that they have a stake in the end of the world.

THEN THERE are the politicians preparing for the end of the world. Among the "billionaire preppers" are Musk with his SpaceX, and Mark Zuckerberg, who is building a $300 million compound with an underground shelter.

This "prepping" feeds the aggressive global scramble for natural resources, the "supersized prepping at the level of the nation-state".

And, of course, a climate of hostility to migration. The Great Replacement Theory is now the centrepiece of White House foreign policy.

And the push to strengthen borders overlaps with policing of women's bodies. Musk posts about the birth rate apocalypse and the destruction of Western society.

End times fascists are powerful, but they are a minority even on the far right, the authors reassure us. They can be defeated, but not if we wait to confront them directly.

Inspirational

But the weakest element of the book is when Klein and Taylor discuss what that confrontation might look like. They draw inspiration from the successes of New York mayor Zohran Mamdani.

His election was inspirational. And if his victory sparked an avalanche of Democratic Socialist victories, it would certainly express popular hostility to the far right.

But, as the book has already shown, far right politicians and the billionaires have the levers of economic, political and military power firmly in their grasp.

Socialist politicians will need mass mobilisations in the colleges, in the streets and in workplaces to stand a chance against them.

Klein and Taylor also look to the anti-Ice mobilisations in Minneapolis earlier this year as an example of a new politics "rooted in an expansive, open-armed sense of neighbourliness". Certainly, the uprising in Minneapolis was about community spirit, but it was also about harnessing that spirit to militant confrontation with murderous, state-sponsored thugs.

Their analysis also avoids any sense of the class dynamics which create a social force capable of challenging the end times fascists.

The potential power of the organised working class does not feature in the book.

Klein and Taylor do reference a more radical tradition of anti-fascist, anti-capitalist activism which Marxist theorist Walter Benjamin described as "The tradition of the oppressed".

That tradition is an uprising of masses of people against subjugation and to change the world.

That is what we need today to defeat the end times fascists.

Protesting at new data centres in Boxtown (top) **An artist's impression of Zuckerberg's new bunker bears a startling resemblance to the Thunderbirds' Tracey Island** (above)

READ MORE

● **End Times Fascism—And the Fight for the Living World**
by Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor
Published by Allen Lane, £25

Available at Bookmarks bookshop.co.uk

TEACH YOURSELF MARXISM
with Judy Cox

Why we need revolutionary hope in an age of despair

HOPE IS the Labour Party's new buzzword. Every speaker at the party conference told us that "hope is back". Andy Burnham wants "hope in every heart".

Many are desperate to believe things will get better. But in a society as productive as ours, we should be hoping for more than a few quid off our bills or a few hours more care for the elderly.

Even this very limited hope cannot be sustained by good vibes alone. Hope built on a politician's promises can quickly turn into dangerous despair.

Real hope is very important to all those who want to change the world.

The Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch wrote The Principle of Hope in the late 1930s, when socialists were facing the rise of fascism in Europe. At such times, establishing the basis for socialists to remain hopeful was a radical response to isolation and persecution.

Bloch explained how religious and political leaders use platitudes about hope to pacify the people and keep them submissive.

"Every deception, if it is to be effective, must work with flatteringly and corruptly aroused hope," Bloch wrote.

Change

Bloch's "architecture of hope" depended on a sense that things changed in the past and will change in the future. History is not predetermined and society can be shaped by human action.

"Only thinking directed towards changing the world and informing the desire to change it, does not confront the future as an embarrassment and the past as a spell," Bloch wrote.

We can learn from the successes and failures of movements in the past. And, because of that engagement with history, we can envisage a socialist future.

How we deal with defeat really matters—after all, we experience plenty of them. Each defeat must be analysed and understood. But the defeat of a campaign, strike or uprising cannot be allowed to undermine the fight for change. As Martin Luther King wrote, "We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope".

Socialists can find many sources of hope in the continual acts of resistance capitalism generates.

Writer Rebecca Solnit sees hope in the way people come together to help each other after terrible disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina and the Grenfell Tower fire.

"A disaster is a lot like a revolution when it comes to disruption and improvisation, to new roles and an unnerving or exhilarating sense that everything is now possible," she writes.

Hope is only a beginning. It cannot be a substitute for action, but it can be the basis for that action. For socialists, hope is rooted in a sense that collective change is possible.

Paulo Freire, Brazilian Marxist and philosopher of education, wrote the Pedagogy of Hope in 1992.

He rightly insisted that, "Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But, without the struggle, hope dissipates, loses its bearings and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can turn into tragic despair."

PROTESTERS IN Bangladesh in 2024 gave us all hope

"Hope cannot replace action, but it can be the basis for action

Fraudulent

Despair is not just a personal tragedy—it is a political threat. Fraudulent hope, Bloch warned, is "one of the greatest malefactors of humanity. But genuine hope is one of its "most dedicated benefactors".

This is because false hope can quickly lead to bitterness. When politicians rouse hopes for change that they refuse to fulfil, people can turn to far right demagogues.

As the Russian revolutionary and anti-fascist Leon Trotsky wrote, if socialist parties stand for "revolutionary hope, then fascism is the party of counter-revolutionary despair."

Bloch's "concretely, genuine hope," is hope based in real possibilities, not vague promises or naivety.

Anger can stir people to action. But hope can point beyond the specific cause of fury towards a different possible future.

We have to be hopeful that our lives can get better and our children's lives will be better than ours.

And we remain hopeful that we can build a society free of violence, drudgery, alienation and inequality. But hope alone is not enough—we must also fight for the change we want.

WHAT'S ON

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence.

We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, go to socialistworker.co.uk/join-swp

Come to a socialist meeting near you

THE Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has branches all over Britain. We meet most weeks, usually on a Wednesday or Thursday, to discuss politics and to plan activities.

The branch meeting normally has a speaker who opens a discussion in which all are free to join in.

Afterwards, we plan the party's involvement in local and national movements.

Our meetings are open to the public and we encourage participation.

For a local branch, look at the list and scan the QR code.

Scotland
- Aberdeen
- Dundee
- Edinburgh
- Glasgow North
- Glasgow South

North
- Lancaster and Morecambe
- Manchester
- Newcastle
- Liverpool
- Wigan

Yorkshire and Humberside
- Bradford
- Huddersfield
- Hull
- Leeds
- Sheffield and South Yorkshire
- York and Scarborough
- Wakefield

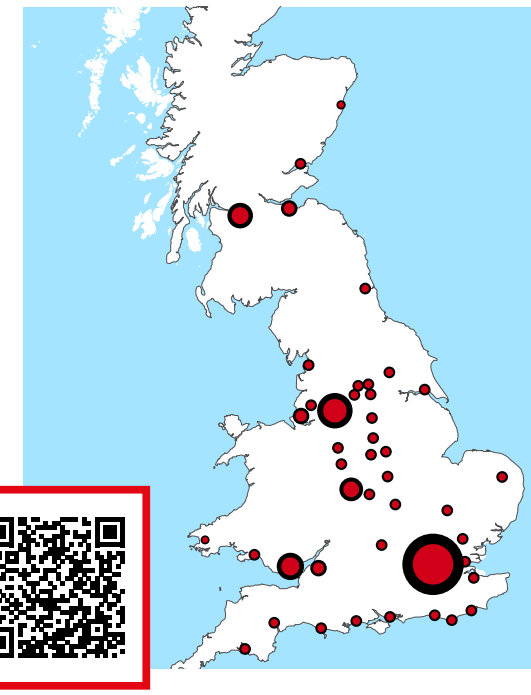
Midlands
- Birmingham
- Black Country
- Coventry
- Crewe and Stoke
- Chesterfield
- Derby
- Leicester
- Nottingham

London
- Hackney
- Haringey
- Islington
- Newham
- South London
- South East London
- Tower Hamlets
- Waltham Forest
- West and North West London

South west
- Bristol
- Devon and Exeter
- Dorset
- Plymouth and Cornwall
- Portsmouth

East and south east
- Brighton and Hove
- Bournemouth
- Cambridge
- Colchester
- Eastbourne
- Harlow
- Hastings
- Kent
- Northampton
- Norwich and East Anglia
- Oxford
- Southend

Wales
- Cardiff
- Swansea
- West Wales

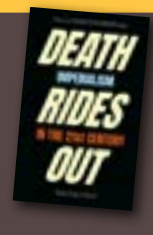


RALLIES, EVENTS AND MAJOR MEETINGS

Revolt on the streets of France—how the protests are changing French politics

SWP branches meet across Britain on Wednesdays and Thursdays

BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



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- Support Palestine and oppose imperialism? ☐
- Want to smash Nigel Farage and Tommy Robinson? ☐
- Oppose sexism and the assault on trans+ people? ☐
- Want a socialist alternative to the Labour Party? ☐

YES? Then you want to be in the Socialist Workers Party

socialistworker.co.uk/join-swp

Or scan this QR code to join

The EU's true colours don't shine in blue and gold—they bleed red

by FRANKIE MURDEN

HEADLINES FLASHED last week as Andy Burnham said he could "go all the way" to rejoin the European Union (EU).

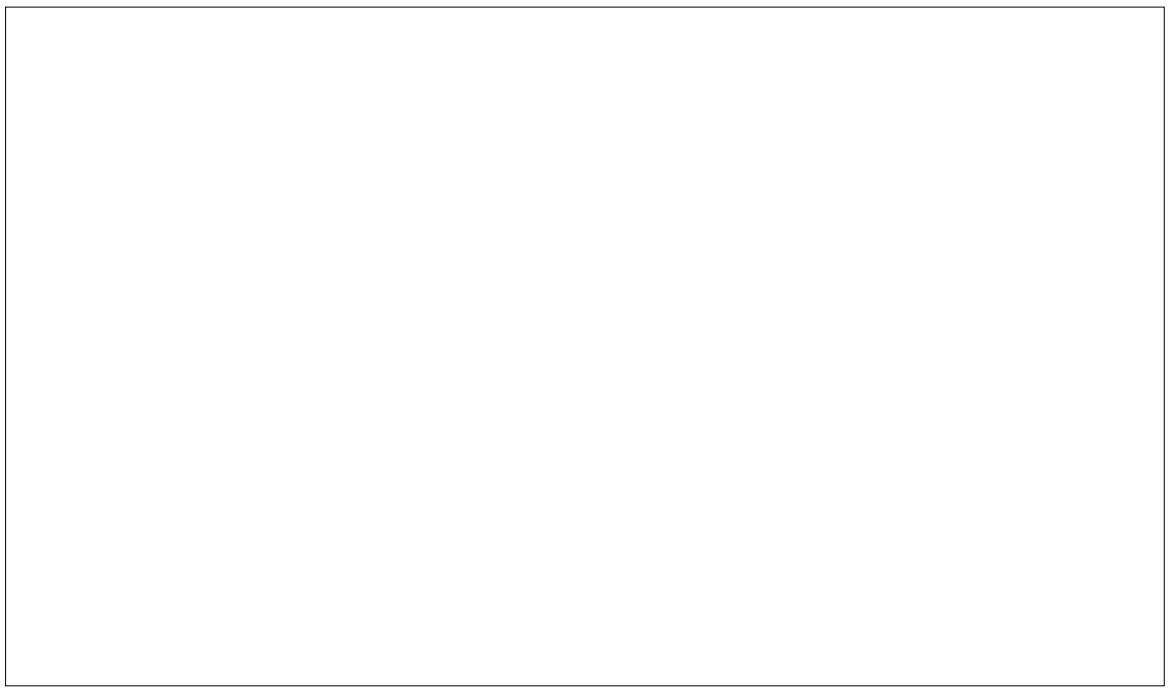
In a quieter announcement, five EU countries—Greece, Germany, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands—set out plans to open an offshore detention centre in Africa.

This second headline shows the EU's true colours.

Burnham floating the idea of rejoining is an attempt to win back some lost Labour voters.

The vile racism that was fostered in the Leave campaign and the aftermath of the 2016 referendum has made the Remain camp much more appealing. If Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage hate something, it must be good—right?

But the EU is a capitalist project built on exclusion and unaccountability to protect national interests and boost big business.



NEOLIBERALISM AND racism are hardwired into the EU

Dominate

After the Second World War, the US wanted to reconstruct European capitalism so it would have a large single market that its firms could dominate.

Economic integration was always interwoven with US military dominance through the Nato warmongers' alliance.

Bosses across the continent needed bigger markets and to expand on a regional level. So, the European Coal and Steel Community was established in 1953 and in 1957, the European Economic Community was formed between Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany.

The organisation has expanded in scope and numbers over time, until the EU was established in its current form in 1993.

Since then, it has enabled European states to compete as part of a bigger regional bloc.

It protects its member states and businesses and aims to spread their influence across its weaker neighbours in eastern Europe, the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa.

Neoliberalism is hardwired into the project. So is racism.

The reality of the EU is thousands of migrants losing their lives drowning, border guards shooting them dead and their detention at the hands of European militaries.

Over 72,000 migrants have been recorded as having died trying to get to the safe haven of the EU since 1993. We can be sure the real number is much higher.

The leaders of the "free world" in Brussels have reinforced racist policies to uphold the historical myth that Europe is a white, Christian territory.

Detention

In 2008, the EU established the Return Directive. This required governments to close their borders, open detention centres and lock up migrants for 18 months.

In 2016, the then German chancellor Angela Merkel, who was frequently praised for so graciously taking in so many Syrian refugees, attempted to change "the definition of a worker" to cut out migrants.

The EU praises itself for fostering "unprecedented peace, economic integration and stability across the continent".

But it pushes austerity in its member countries and helps to spread wars outside its borders. And this war drive has never been bigger—EU members states currently spend some €418 billion on defence.

Every member of the union implements sweeping cuts to all spending but defence—and public services and working class people suffer the most.

And, it's difficult to see the claimed political stability the EU is supposed to guarantee. Germany, European power, is facing its third government in as many years.

There, as well as in France, Italy, Hungary and others, the far right is growing out of the failures of EU centrists.

Principled

Those leading the charge to rejoin the EU are not doing so because they reject the racist right. Burnham's proposals rest on the idea that "Brexit has changed the nature of immigration to this country".

He says, "What we had was a more revolving door form of migration", but "Now, immigration is more likely to be a permanent settlement".

This feeds the far right's talks of a "migrant invasion" out to steal your job, house and daughter.

Since 2016, Socialist Worker has campaigned on a break with the EU on a left wing, internationalist and anti-racist basis.

We want to break up the apparatuses of power, weaken the ruling classes and take things into democratic control.

Socialists should use renewed debates around Brexit to stand against racist scapegoating—from the right, far right and centre—and to argue for a vision of international cooperation led by workers, for workers.

TELEVISION

New drama on British-Asian family will push your credulity to its limits

by AMEEN HADI

USUALLY I would be a sucker for a drama set in Manchester with the different twist of it being based on an Asian family.

I can only imagine how hard it is for Asian and black actors to get decent parts in the television industry, let alone Asian screenwriters.

However, I struggled to stomach even one episode of "The Split Up" and I won't be watching any more.

The premise is an Asian family working in a "family law firm".

Episode one starts with them dealing with a high profile potential divorce—hence the series' title.

The opening scene shows the lead character walking through the newest—most glitzy to some, fake to others—part of Manchester. They then enter the plushest law firm offices I have ever seen.

Nearly everyone working in the apparently large firm is Asian, with a couple of token white people thrown in. And all are entwined in personal relationships with each other, whether family or lovers.

Unrealistic

The unrealistic setting—law firms under-employ black and Asian solicitors who are likely to be in junior positions and unable to climb the very greasy ladder—is merely a backdrop to explore the personal relationships of the family. The dynasty's father and three adult children are trying to come to terms with the loss of their wife and mother.

However, by this point, I was already struggling to care what happens to any of the characters, despite the speed of events.

A ridiculous scene, showing two teams of solicitors representing the high profile couple exploring divorce turned into a marriage guidance and counselling session, stretched my credulity to the limit.

I finally snapped at the lead character's engagement party.

Here, her sexist father announced the blocking of her path to leading the family business, she disclosed to her sister that she had witnessed her husband having an affair, and she came to the realisation that she is in love with someone other than her fiancée.

Maybe I am out of touch. Maybe fast paced unrealistic, salacious drama is what the public want.

However, when you consider what dramas live long in your memory, it is those that ring true. It's those that explore the reality of living in a world dominated by crisis, that explore relationships and feelings of trying to cope with this turbulence.

For these reasons, I won't have any problem of leaving "The Split up" to others.

The Split Up is available on the BBC iPlayer

Social care workers are questioning Burnham's promises

by JUDE MCKECHNIE

PRIME MINISTER Andy Burnham's promise of a "National Care Service", running on similar principles to the NHS, was the centrepiece of Labour's conference last month.

Britain's broken social care system means that millions of people fear old age—and worry about their relatives.

But on closer examination, Burnham's proposals have turned out to be somewhat less than what was promised.

Not only is the touted "free care" not really free, but the only care mentioned is for the elderly, with nothing said about younger adults needing care too.

Sandra, a residential carer in London, told Socialist Worker, that, while she welcomed his proposal, the details of how it would be funded and how far it would extend are vital.

"The report on how they plan to do this isn't even due until 2027," she said. "It is also far too limited. Burnham's proposals are focused on personal care. But social care is much more than that.

"And, there are issues that I can see with it already.

"The key one is the plan to partly fund it through the removal of the 'triple lock' on pensions. This is very much in line with Burnham's refusal to break with the self-imposed fiscal rules."

Ending the triple lock guarantee risks the state pension gradually losing pace with earnings and causing pensioners' income to fall in value compared to workers.

Poverty

According to the charity Age UK, around 1.7 million people already live in pension poverty. Without the triple lock, that figure could rise quickly.

"A national care service should be funded through a redistribution of the wealth in society, not through money that could be going to people's pensions," says Sandra.

"It should be funded through a wealth tax, by taxing the corporations and the super-rich rather than going after pensioners. Many of whom are struggling to heat and eat as it is."

Burnham—hard sell

Sandra explained that Labour's promise of a national care service is only worthwhile if it starts to tackle the private sector's profiteering.

Around 83 percent of residential care services are privatised in Britain and 85 percent of all adult care homes in England are run for profit.

Reinvested

"A lot of that money goes to private equity companies with bases in tax havens overseas," said Sandra. "That is money that should be reinvested in care."

"There is also still the question of whether people will have to pay for their accommodation costs, which often means people have to sell their homes to cover the cost of residential care at the end of their lives."

Burnham rightly says the social care crisis is so huge that it impacts all other aspects of healthcare. But that means there must be massive investment in both the NHS and care services—investment that he is yet to promise.

"There are currently medically fit patients remaining in hospital beds because the social care services do not have the capacity to take them on," says Sandra.

"Social care has often been seen as the poor sister to healthcare, but actually we need an integrated system where the NHS and care work more in step with each other.

"The strain on social care and the NHS means that staffing levels are so low across health because people are leaving the sector due to overwork and poor wages.

"And when people do fight back for better pay or improved terms and conditions, goodwill is often weaponised against us."

MIOCARE STRIKERS in Greater Manchester want answers about proposed National Care Service

Care strikers say, 'We need cash now'

IN HIS big speech, Andy Burnham also promised "proper recognition" for the people doing care work.

But carers in Greater Manchester are refusing to wait until 2030 to be paid their dues.

Unison union members employed by Oldham council-owned company, MioCare, struck for wages and sick pay for 48 hours last week.

The strikers provide extra support to people in their homes to allow them to continue to live independently.

"We aren't paid the same as care workers in other parts of the MioCare firm. We all wear the same uniform, but we are earning £2.10 less," one told Socialist Worker.

"We're only asking for equal pay for the same work. We don't want anything more. We're only asking for what we need to live and what's fair.

"We do everything for the people we support—we clean, cook, wash people and give people their medication. But when we get sick, there's nothing there to support us."

Another striker echoed this, saying, "Sick pay is the main thing. People are taking themselves into work who are not well because they don't get paid when they're sick.

Millions of people need care

"That puts vulnerable people at risk because workers can't afford to stay at home.

> **Burnham talked about free personal care—but I didn't hear about a pay rise for those providing it**

"There's one poor lady who got so deep in her overdraft that she tried to take her own life."

Another striker interjected, saying, "Someone got paid £45 for a whole month from MioCare because she got an injury at work and couldn't come in."

Strikers said they also felt Burnham's promise of a National Care Service lacked "meat on the bones" given the urgency of the crisis.

"This National Care Service isn't going to be happening until 2030," said one. "He talked about free personal care for those who need it. But I didn't hear anything about a pay rise for those providing it."

The striker pointed out that carers are often praised by governments only for them to try to hold down costs by worsening conditions of the people providing it.

"We're needing fair pay now," she said. "People can't afford to do this job, that's why employers can't get the staff. They say it's going to cost billions. Well, why don't the richest people give us the money?

"Why don't the politicians take a pay cut?"

TRANSPORT

Tram strikes are good for the goose and the gander

TRAM WORKERS in Nottingham staged another solid two days of strikes last Friday and Saturday.

Not a tram moved as the GMB union members' action hit the last two days of the city's Goose Fair, which is attended by tens of thousands.

Senior Trams rep Anthony Brown reported that management have backed down after calling off negotiations before the strikes began last week.

They had agreed to meet this coming week.

Management will be presented with a threat of 18 more strike days over weekends leading up to and over Christmas.

That will take place if no move is made on the present 3.3 percent pay offer. GMB is demanding 4.1 percent.

Richard Buckwell

PUBLISHING

Strikers press home advantage with more action

OVER 30 Unite union members at Oxford University Press (OUP) finance department began their second week of strikes on Monday.

They previously struck for two weeks last month in their fight against job cuts.

"This is my job now," said a striking worker on the Unite picket line outside OUP on Thursday, holding a placard exposing the publisher's motive: "Oxford University Press—Stop the greed".

OUP plans to offshore almost the entire finance department to India.

Their partner in villainy is EXL Service, a multinational corporation based in the US with AI data centres around the world.

EXL Service boasts about innovations for "streamlining back-office operations" and "50 percent cost savings".

That's boss-talk for exploiting workers on lower pay scales abroad and for replacing human workers with AI.

Published finances show that OUP is rolling in dosh.

It has cash reserves of almost a third of a billion pounds, profits of almost £50 million last year and a CEO pocketing well over £1 million annually.

The OUP strikers hung a large "Shame on Oxford University Press" banner on the railings in front of the building until management ordered security to stop it.

Since then, the banner has draped across the Unite official's car, parked in front of those same railings, just as visible to passersby.

Oxford and Thames Valley SWP

LEGAL INDUSTRY

The Legal 500 picket lines went from strength to strength

Strikers at Legal 500 celebrate pay victory

by **REBECCA LONG**

LEGAL 500 workers on Fleet Street in London have won their pay demands after two and a half weeks of strikes.

Workers who research, produce and edit the Legal 500—a directory of law firms known as the "industry bible"—began a two week strike on 14 September.

The Unite union members voted to extend the strike twice, to a total of four weeks.

In each vote, the majority in favour of action increased.

Workers have won a £2,000 a year increase, an increase in sick leave from five to eight days and a decrease in the number of days in the office to two a week.

Union rep Emilia spoke to Socialist Worker about their victory. "I'm so proud we've been able to mobilise corporate London office workers," she said. "It's rare you see office workers striking and advocating for themselves.

"The fact we managed to do that and achieve a full win, is really inspiring and it brought a lot of people together," she added.

"Hopefully now we can inspire other workers to organise and stand up for themselves."

Confident

A member of the strike committee told Socialist Worker, "We were not just confident we would win—we knew we would win.

"The question was whether it would take three weeks, six weeks, or six months."

They were striking over low pay while Legalease publishing bosses took in £40 million in revenue over the last year.

Strikers rejected an initial 3.4 percent pay increase. "Almost everyone understood that an offer that matched inflation did not make up for years of poor pay," one striker told Socialist Worker.

They demanded a flat £2,000 for everyone to ensure that the lowest-paid workers got a meaningful boost.

Halfway through their third week, bosses conceded and agreed to the pay increase.

Union reps announced to the strikers on the picket line this week.

Some workers were initially hesitant to strike but the determination of their co-workers changed people's minds.

The win at Legal 500 follows a recent victory at the Institute of Cancer Research, where Unite members were on indefinite strike.

They show that hard hitting action gets results.

HEALTH

Manchester NHS workers strike again for overtime

by **YURI PRASAD**

HEALTH WORKERS at four hospitals in Greater Manchester returned to picket lines this week as part of their long-running fight to win back proper overtime payments.

The Unison union members are theatre nurses and recovery staff for the Northern Care Alliance (NCA).

They work at Salford Royal, Royal Oldham, Fairfield General and Rochdale Infirmary hospitals.

Strikers are furious that NCA bosses have broken the national Agenda For Change contract by forcing worse overtime pay on them.

Under that contract, all workers get their normal pay plus 50 percent for overtime shifts. But bosses now use the internal agency NHS Professionals, which is paying below their normal daily rate.

One striker on the picket line last week told Socialist Worker, "They just take us for granted and think we will put up with anything. But we won't."

Inspired

Many on the picket were inspired by the recent victory at the Institute for Cancer Research. They think Unison should now escalate its strikes too.

Strikers are also frustrated with increased workloads and being forced to work after their shifts have finished.

Many of the workers are migrants and fear nighttime travel at a time of increased racism. They also spoke of bosses' restrictive holiday rules.

These force workers to take just two weeks' holiday at a time, making journeys to visit family abroad much more difficult.

A striking theatre nurse said, "So far, we have struck for between two and three days in a week.

"But I think it would send a strong message to the new chief executive if we struck for a whole week.

"That would hit them hard and they would know that we mean business."

A SIMILAR dispute has now erupted in Reading, in the south east of England.

Around 100 hospital porters at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, in Reading, struck last week in a fight centred on overtime rates.

Bosses there are also pushing workers off Agenda For Change rates onto the lower NHS Professionals rate.

The GMB union members say they are "being pushed towards poverty" and rejected a recent management offer to bridge their loss of earnings until next March.

Union rep Sergio Dias, who has been a porter at the hospital for 14 years, said bosses are not addressing workers' long-running concerns.

He says the pay changes mean that workers are losing about £7 an hour compared with what they were earning before.

That's depriving porters of "hundreds of pounds a month," said Sergio.

On the picket line, passers-by cheered and honked their car horns in support of the strikers.

Thanks to Karen Reissmann for reporting from Manchester

OBITUARY

Jay Williams
1962-2026

"I COME from a long line of scabs, sweetie," Jay would often joke to me, recalling a great grandfather who'd been a pit deputy during the General Strike of 1926.

Yet he was anything but. Jay Williams, who died this month, was a revolutionary socialist through and through, as well as a fearless dancer, demon driver and one of the warmest people I knew.

Fighting fascism and racism motivated Jay to get active in politics. He tried to set up an Anti Nazi League group when he was 15 years old, and went on to join the Socialist Worker Party when he was still a teenager. He was active for many years in Sheffield and South Yorkshire, as well as London, Birmingham and nationally.

Jay said that, what made him a revolutionary socialist, was the argument that you couldn't get rid of the fascists and racism for good without getting rid of capitalism.

He always spoke about the importance of the idea "black and white unite and fight".

No armchair officer, he always led from the front, particularly against the police and far right on anti-fascist mobilisations.

This included the anti-fascist demonstrations in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, when the Nazis repeatedly targeted the town. Jay played a pivotal

role in the Rotherham 12 Defence Campaign in support of 12 Asian men charged with violent disorder following a Nazi march in September 2015.

I first met Jay when I was sent to report on the indefinite bin strike in Sheffield, when he was the district organiser, in 2014.

He knew all the key GMB union members on strike, in a testament to how he won their respect.

We became friends after Jay moved to London to work in the SWP national office in 2017 and best of friends after living together.

We bonded over The Clash's album Sandinista (the best one), Restoration era theatre and poetry and a distaste for the left giving "communist colouration" to Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice.

After 2019, Jay went on to be the district organiser in Birmingham and play a key role in Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) in the wake of the pandemic.

Last month, he was so chuffed that the nurses had heard of SUTR and set about trying to get stickers for the hospital.

I was lucky enough to see Jay over the August bank holiday weekend. When I told him I had a ticket for a music festival, he jumped at the chance without hesitation.

His dancing to Egyptian funk was, as ever, the best of the whole dance floor.

Jay threw his heart and soul into fighting for a world that wasn't plagued by the racism that he knew so well—and for a beautiful one of freedom.

All our love goes to the whole family.

Tomáš Tengely-Evans

●Full version on tinyurl.com/SWJayW

●A celebration of Jay's life will take place at 2pm, Saturday 14 November in Sheffield, at Sadacca

EDUCATION

Student solidarity boosts strikers at Dundee and Edinburgh universities

by **CAMILLA ROYLE**

WORKERS AT Dundee University began their third week of action on Monday with a mass picket.

The numbers boosted the UCU union members who are fighting a jobs massacre at the Scottish university.

Delegations of students came from six universities across Scotland.

Students Against Cuts said, "Though Dundee has been at the forefront of the crisis in higher education, it is not unique to our city.

"Almost every university in Scotland has faced cuts in the past two years.

"We must show that the whole of Scotland supports the striking workers, but we must also build student-worker solidarity across the country."

Workers at the University of Edinburgh launched five weeks of strikes last week over cuts that they say are "cruel and unnecessary".

Assemblies

Students have joined picket lines of UCU members and gathered in mass student-staff assemblies to share information and discuss what they can do.

"There is no deficit," said one striking worker on the picket line.

"The university is in profit. But it's a question of how much profit and whether that meets management's targets."

Close to 1,000 workers have left the institution already and still that is not enough for management.

"This is not about money. This is about education," she added.

"They are closing courses that are at the centre of cultural life, things like Scottish literature and Celtic studies."

STUDENTS IN Dundee (above) **and Edinburgh** (left) **organise to support the strikes**

Two weeks earlier, bosses at the Scottish university produced a list of 90 programmes facing the axe as they seek to make £140 million worth of cuts to the annual budget.

UCU member Eddie held a funeral on the picket line for the programme he taught, which was slashed in June.

He told Socialist Worker, "The programme was closed at short notice, despite being successful and generating a surplus.

"The staff who worked on it are all uncertain about the future. The threat of redundancy is real.

"The head of the college has told people, 'It's okay, 90 percent of you will keep your job.' That's unacceptable.

"We don't know how the cuts will fall. All we know is it will seriously cut what the university can do and give students a poorer experience."

Striker Rupert said, "I'm flummoxed by the university's decision to make cuts.

"Does it not realise it's an educational institution and a charity? It's not a business."

Another UCU striker, Mohan, told Socialist Worker that bosses haven't met with the workers and the union hasn't been given an opportunity to propose an alternative plan.

The university claims that its costs are going up. But UCU members used freedom of information requests to ask why running costs are rising.

Extraordinarily, they were told that the university does not hold that information.

Mohan said he hoped seeing workers on strike would focus managements' minds, especially given the "considerable" support from students.

A group of language students gathered on the picket line said they felt like their courses were being "phased out".

"Students have been emailing the principal, Peter Mathieson," a student told Socialist Worker. "The power is with management to address the UCU's demands."

Another student added, "When you see the amount of money Mathieson gets and the money he puts into departments, it's easy to see why people are striking."

After the morning picketing on Wednesday of last week, hundreds of students and workers joined a student-staff assembly.

As they gathered, screens around the room showed a video of Mathieson answering questions at Scottish parliament last year.

The university boss told politicians he doesn't know how much he is being paid. He admitted, "I am certainly very well paid."

Students have been shocked by the dismissive response from Mathieson to messages about the strike. He replied to one student's email suggesting they should learn how to spell.

At the assembly, there were gasps and heckles of "shameful".

Both students and workers are demanding a real change in the university's priorities.

They are demanding it disinvests in companies that profit from apartheid and genocide in Palestine.

Genocide

"Our university is complicit in the machinery of occupation and genocide," said the UCU branch after a report last year highlighted Edinburgh's £75 million investment in these companies.

Student Alex told Socialist Worker, "I don't support the investments into Alphabet, Amazon and Microsoft that create artificial intelligence that targets Palestinians."

Dundee and Edinburgh are just two of several universities where there are strikes.

Workers at the University of Nottingham began 67 days of action last week. And there are strikes at Glasgow Caledonian University and Goldsmiths in London.

The onslaught of cuts affects not just the poorer universities, but also wealthy institutions such as Edinburgh.

There is an urgent need for a united response from the UCU union to address a crisis that is tearing apart the whole of higher education.

VICTIMISATION

Educators vote for strikes in defence of their union rep Bill Stockwell

BILL STOCKWELL, an NEU education union branch secretary in the London borough of Redbridge, faces a serious threat of victimisation by the school he works for.

The school union group had been raising issues about workload. And the NEU region had been supporting Bill with complaints about the refusal of time off for training and the denial of facility time after he was elected branch secretary.

On Monday, the result of a formal ballot was announced. It was a strong majority in favour of strike action over union victimisation and workload. Dates will be announced.

A union meeting pledges support for Bill Stockwell

Ben Morris, a local NEU activist told Socialist Worker, "It is a very serious attack on the union, as well as having potentially serious consequences for Bill."

"The regional office has taken up the case and Daniel Kebede, NEU general secretary, has sent a message of support."

This is the same school that experienced a long strike over the sacking of a union rep five years ago.

Over 80 reps across the borough have signed a letter to the Labour-led council calling for their intervention, but it has taken no action in response.

A petition has begun among members of the branch and to date has 750 signatures.

●Send messages of support redbridgebranch@neu.org.uk

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GREENS DECLARE ZIONISM IS RACISM

By JUNE BUDD

THE RIGHT is spearheading a ferocious backlash after the Green Party conference last weekend voted to support a simple truth—Zionism is racism.

Delegates passed the "Zionism is racism" motion by 55 percent—1,022 votes to 813—last Sunday.

It calls for "the establishment of a single, democratic Palestinian state in all of historic Palestine" with "Jerusalem as its capital" and "equal rights for all".

And "Palestinians and their descendants" must have "the right of return" to the home they were ethnically cleansed from, it says.

The motion affirmed the "right of the Palestinian people to resistance". This included the Greens "acknowledging that the struggle to achieve that liberation by all available means under international law is legitimate".

Lubna Speitan is a British-Palestinian activist who co-wrote the motion. "This is the only position to take if you oppose oppression, occupation, genocide, apartheid and, indeed, racism," she said.

The policy reasserts the Greens' commitment to "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) and a full arms embargo against Israel".

Smears

The Israeli state and its supporters have wheeled out the usual lies that smear supporters of Palestinian liberation as "antisemites".

The chief rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, described the motion as "poisonous antisemitism" and a "threat to British Jews and to Britain".

Vivien Lichtenstein, leader of the Jewish Greens, said it was "quite possible" she would leave the party over the decision.

In a parody of liberal politics, Lichtenstein said she defines herself as "both Zionist and anti-Zionist" depending on the definition.

There are many definitions of Zionism, which emerged as one response to antisemitism in Europe in the 19th century.

But the reality of the Zionist settler colonial project in Palestine is racism—even before Israel's founding in 1948.

The Nakba of 1948 saw Zionist militia that became the "Israeli Defence Forces" murder and expel over 800,000 Palestinians.

Israel's prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, made clear that their vision rested on "a state with at least 80 percent Jews".

GREEN PARTY leader Zack Polanski after delivering his speech during the conference in Brighton

"The thrust of the motion is correct—it is a victory for the movement that a mainstream party has adopted it

Vivien Lichtenstein is the leader of the Jewish Greens

And, the only way to achieve that and deal with the "Palestinian problem" has been apartheid or genocide.

The motion says, "The real, material manifestation of Zionism has been the historic and ongoing dehumanisation, displacement, dispossession, disenfranchisement and destruction of Palestinians.

"This is based upon European settler-colonial systems of domination and oppression."

Some in the Palestine movement focus on Zionism as an ideology, influencing politics in the US, Britain and elsewhere.

This gets the relationship between the West and Israel the wrong way around. Western imperialism backs Israel because it's a watchdog state in the Middle East, not because of some Zionist lobby.

There will be Green supporters who take the mistaken view.

But the thrust of the motion is correct—and it's a victory for the Palestine movement that a mainstream party has adopted it.

This achievement has only come due to the bottom-up pressure placed on Labour and the Greens by protestors and campaigners.

And, it reflects the radicalisation of vast numbers in the Palestine movement, where "from the river to the sea" is the common sense.

The "two-state solution" was a sham that came out of the "peace process" of the 1990s. The Oslo Accords allowed the West to say it supported the rule of law and justice for the Palestinians, while in practice backing its watchdog state.

It hamstrung the Palestinian resistance—and blocked Palestinians from reclaiming the land stolen from them before, during and after the Nakba.

Green members on a Palestine march

But the Israeli leadership kept stealing land in the West Bank—and now openly proclaims that it has no interest in a "two-state solution".

Highlighted

The backlash over the motion has highlighted the large rift between the new Green Party base and the old guard.

Four out of the five Green MPs—Sian Berry, Adrian Ramsay, Carla Denyer and Ellie Chowns—denounced the motion's passing.

The newest MP, Hannah Spencer, said, "I'm proud to be part of a party committed to Jewish rights and Palestinian rights".

Green Party leader Zack Polanski and the five MPs put out an evasive statement.

"We know there is no conflict between supporting the rights of Palestinians and the rights of Jewish people," it said.

The backlash comes ahead of the hotly contested by-election in Holborn and St Pancras, in London, which Polanski is running in. Labour is currently set to keep the seat.

Figures within the Greens argue that this policy will cost them votes.

But that is the same logic that saw the Labour left under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership make concession after concession.

If only we adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, the argument went, the witch-hunt will go away and there will be a Labour government.

In the end, there was no Corbyn government—and the concessions demobilised and demoralised the movement.

Our strength lies in mass numbers taking action, not manoeuvres inside the Greens. The focus should remain on building the movement to sever the British state's links with Israel—and for a Palestine that is free from the river to the sea.

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