Back to the streets!

French youth battle the state... again **>>Pages 3, 8&9 and 10&11**

Socialist Worker

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WEST RAMPS UP HORRORS IN YEMEN, PALESTINE, UKRAINE AND IRAN

STOP THEIR WAR DRIVE

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PALESTINE

Attacks in West Bank villages

ISRAELI SETTLERS attacked villages in the West Bank last week as they try to steal more Palestinian land.

"Settlers keep attacking our community. They attacked the house in the early hours of the morning," Eid, a resident of the village of Umm al-Khair, told Socialist Worker.

"The Israeli military just stood there, doing nothing to stop them."

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INDIA

Cockroaches are back

PRESSURE IS mounting on India's far right government as demonstrators clash with police.

Protesters are furious at the government for removing people from the electoral roll, effectively rigging national and state elections.

Leading Cockroach and All-India Student Association activist Aameen Amitoj told Socialist Worker that the movement has "enormous potential".

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COST OF LIVING

Families now £3,000 worse off

THE COST of living crisis has left families £3,000 worse off a year.

Jenny, a single mother, told Socialist Worker that she simply cannot keep up with the increasing cost of living.

"My immediate reaction is to feel concerned for how much less I'll have for things like food," she said.

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THE THINGS THEY SAY

‘We want to get back to being a normal country, a country that detains and deports people’
Leader of far right Reform UK **Nigel Farage**

‘In 2020, the Climate Change Committee estimated that its route to net zero would cost £957 billion’
The main document produced for the Tory party conference and cited by **Kemi Badenoch**

£478 billion
The actual figure in the report—around half what the Tories claim

‘We don’t recognise this number. The committee has offered to meet with Ms Badenoch and talk her through our advice. That offer is, of course, still open’
A spokesperson for the Climate Change Committee

Sheffield anti-racists organise after Patriot Platform march

by **REBECCA LONG**

OVER 300 anti-racists joined an emergency meeting in Darnall, Sheffield, on Monday after Patriot Platform showed up in town the day before.

A gang of masked men, dressed all in black, gathered outside Linburg Coach yard in the Sheffield suburb.

The fascists claim that this coach company has been involved in transporting asylum seekers.

They threatened that it was a “warning to other coach companies assisting in the facilitation of this illegal invasion”.

Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) organised the packed out meeting of 300 people in Darnall on Monday.

THE EMERGENCY meeting in Sheffield

Angry

Maxine from SUTR spoke to Socialist Worker about the emergency meeting.

“It was a big, angry meeting with standing room only,” she said.

“We talked about Islamophobia. It’s not just about refugees—it’s about demonising all Muslims and saying they are a danger.”

Maxine said she spoke about the parallels with the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, when anti-fascists stopped the Blackshirts marching through a mainly Jewish area in east London. “They marched through the centre of the Muslim community this week,” she said.

“We need to say now that they shall not pass. They won’t be coming back to Darnall again.

“If the police won’t defend us, we have to defend ourselves. Our unity is incredibly important.”

Daniel “Tommo” Thomas launched Patriot Platform in Dover in an attempt to build a new fascist street movement.

SUTR activists in Sheffield are organising a unity march on 24 October.

■TEENAGERS CHASED the far right out of Brighton last Saturday. Grifter Montgomery Toms of Freedom Watch GB goes from town to town to “debate” people on the street with his travelling gazebo.

Tore

When he tried to set up in Churchill Square in the centre of Brighton, school students surrounded him and tore down his gazebo.

The gazebo was decorated with the challenge “Prove me wrong”—and this is precisely what teenagers in Brighton did.

■Over 500 people joined a unity demonstration in Leeds last Saturday.

Despite lashing rain and a small far right counter-protest, the SUTR march was loud and lively.

It was led by Women Against The Far Right, and was full of trade unions, a Green Party bloc and Palestine activists.

Before setting off, anti-racists heard performances from Love Music Hate Racism.

■AROUND 120 anti-racists in Yeovil, Somerset, came out last Saturday to challenge the far right in their south west town. The far right only managed a small rally of 50 people.

Asylum ban builds on system’s brutality

REFORM UK wants to tear up the asylum system and deport thousands of refugees.

Nigel Farage announced plans this week to suspend asylum claims for five years if Reform UK wins the next general election.

Speaking in Kent on Monday, the far right party said it would immediately deport 90,000 asylum seekers with outstanding claims.

Farage said that all legal resettlement routes would also be abolished, except for those set up for Ukrainians.

“People will accept their bad guys back,” he said.

“If it means introducing flight bans, we will do so. And, in extremes, we’d even look at tariffs.”

The party’s home affairs spokesman, Zia Yusuf, added the immigration crackdown would mean the deportation of “north of one million people”.

He added that the party would ban British visas for countries if they refused to allow deportation flights to land in their country.

Reform UK is on the back foot as it no longer rises in the polls.

But that doesn’t mean the far right party is not a dangerous threat.

In fact, these proposals show that it is pulling even further rightwards.

This is because it faces competition on its right from Restore Britain, which openly embraces the fascists of Patriot Platform and other groups.

Jude Mckechnie

Far right theatre—Nigel Farage stands in front of a small boat

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ISLAMOPHOBIA

Reform UK attempts to ban burqa in Scotland

ANTI-RACISTS have slammed far right Reform UK for proposing a “burqa ban” at the Scottish parliament last week.

Members of the Scottish parliament (MSPs) debated a motion put forward by Reform UK MSP Thomas Kerr on Thursday, as anti-racists protested outside.

Kerr said, “We want a full ban—no exemptions, no double standards, just pure common sense.”

Mariam Ahmed is the CEO of Amina—the Muslim Women’s Resource Centre. She told Socialist Worker, “Kerr is hijacking violence against women and weaponising it so he can push this narrative, his anti-migrant, anti-Muslim agenda.

“First, women who do wear the niqab or the burqa are a very small minority. But that’s their personal choice.

“If we are a country that is meant to support women’s rights, then we have to give them the freedom to wear what they want.

Empowered

“I would like to live in a society where women are empowered to make their own decisions about how they want to dress and live.”

Around 60 people from across Scotland protested outside the Scottish parliament in Edinburgh last week as the debate on the motion began.

The protest was called by Amina, Women Against the Far Right (WAFR) Scotland, Stand Up To Racism Scotland and Sisters Against Cuts.

Talat Yaqoob is co-convenor of WAFR Scotland and founder of Pass the Mic, an organisation for women of colour in media.

“We often see the burqa ban come up as a debate when there is another attempt to divide communities,” she told Socialist Worker.

She described it as an attempt “to paint Muslim communities, migrant communities, communities of colour, as other”.

“There is an attempt to try and use the burqa and clothing of Muslim women as a dividing line,” she said.

“It’s no surprise that a party like Reform UK has put forward this debate, because they have consistently tried to pursue division and endorsed disinformation.

“It’s not a surprise that they’ve done it. But it is completely unacceptable.”

‘I hope for revolution,’ say raging French protesters

by CAMILLA ROYLE

THE MOVEMENT of blockades that started in secondary schools in the poorer suburbs of Paris has spread across the country, pulling in university students and workers.

It has faced fierce repression from the police and some people have been horrifically injured, including a 15 year old who had their hand blown off. There have been over 6,000 arrests since the movement began last month, mostly of under 18 year olds.

Student Marie told Socialist Worker, “The violence from them is getting worse as these protests get bigger. They are misusing their powers to confiscate anything we have to protect ourselves from their weapons.

“It is even worse in the poorer suburbs. The police are really violent, always starting trouble. They are so racist.”

On Thursday last week, the state pledged to send 3,000 more teachers to fill staffing gaps.

But these measures mean little when prime minister Sébastien Lecornu is trying to push a budget through that promises £46 billion worth of cuts.

School blockades continued on Tuesday as Socialist Worker went to press. And crowds were starting to gather for mass marches across the country after unions called for protests in solidarity with young people.

“We hope for the resignation of Emmanuel Macron and his government,” one school student told Socialist Worker.

STUDENTS AND workers assembling for protests on Tuesday

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Guillotine

“If I am optimistic, I hope for a revolution, and if we are dreaming, Macron to the guillotine.”

Basile, another secondary school student, told Socialist Worker, “Some people are saying that the unions shouldn’t join us because they’re afraid the unions will co-opt it.

“But, to have the strength to continue, it would be good if teachers went on strike and we weren’t alone.”

CGT general secretary Sophie Binet has raged against the state repression of students whose futures are being stolen.

She said, “Rarely have the living and studying conditions of young people been so degraded.”

Olivier Clément from the CFDT union federation in Paris told Socialist Worker, “It’s important for trade unions to be in solidarity with the high school students’ demands.”

The movement has shown how action by young people can be a lightning rod for anger at the system.

Last Thursday, huge crowds gathered at the Bastille in Paris where they faced police baton charges.

University students blockaded their campuses and held mass assemblies. And some 10,000 people gathered for a rally led by left wing presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the city of Clermont-Ferrand on Sunday.

Exploded

This Saturday there are calls for protests over the cost of living. These are drawing comparisons with the Yellow Vest movement that exploded across France in 2018, where tens of thousands of people blockaded roads.

Some figures on the left have condemned student violence. But university students and workers overwhelmingly recognise that the violence comes from the police and want to show their solidarity with the school students.

There are questions about where the movement goes next. Can the blockade movement sustain itself?

Will workers join in numbers that could shut down industry and force the government to roll back its budget?

And can the movement stop the threat of the fascist Rassemblement National? Students are chanting against the fascists, but will they disrupt their conference on 24 October and stop them from building a base?

★Fight Farage ★Resist racism

join the SWP

Belgium joins wave of revolt

PROTESTS AND strikes of school students and organised workers have spread to Belgium.

On Friday of last week some 50,000 trade unionists joined protests in Brussels, according to the ABVV union federation.

There was a second day of strikes on Monday that partially shut down rail, public transport, broadcasting and schools.

School students also joined the revolt in opposition to overcrowded classrooms and scarce resources—some of the same issues faced by young people in France.

“When we saw nothing was changing without protests, we decided we would start,” said Amelia Di Salve, adding that students were influenced “a little” by events in France.

The young people faced a huge police operation with tear gas and water cannons and some 200 people were arrested in the city of Liege.

Right wing prime minister Bart De Wever heads a coalition government that has been unable to agree on a budget. He is threatening to inflict more pain on Belgians as the state faces a debt crisis.

Spanish movement fights on

“THIS WAS not a death—this was a murder,” chanted thousands of protesters who took to the streets of Madrid last Wednesday.

They were brought out by the news that María del Carmen Abascal, known as Maricarmen, had died.

Maricarmen was evicted from her home and became a symbol for millions who are struggling to pay their rent.

A shrine was set up in Madrid’s Puerta del Sol square, where around 1,000 people are involved in an encampment protesting against housing costs.

Two major union federations, the UGT and CCOO, have called for a general strike over low wages and high housing costs to take place on 11 November.

Spanish socialist Jesús told Socialist Worker, “Maricarmen was an 87 year old woman who was forcibly evicted and became the symbol of the protests.

“Working class people know that she was killed by speculators who play with our lives. We want life at the centre of society, not the capitalist system.

Murder

“The movement after Maricarmen’s eviction and murder is a political earthquake—there’s a general strike on 11 November and the general election on 29 November.

“Maricarmen will be with us as we fight.”

Prime minister Pedro Sánchez was forced to call the general election after half a million people joined protests across the Spanish state. These came after the right in Congress defeated his proposals.

He wants to corral the movement on the streets into an election campaign that returns him to power.

But the mood among many campaigners is to demand more fundamental change. They want an end to evictions and rent freezes. And they want an end to vulture capitalists profiting.

“Her death shocked us, but I believe it will give us more energy and conviction to keep protesting and demanding our rights,” 28 year old María Holgado said outside her tent at the Puerta del Sol.

“The blame falls on the property owners and vulture funds that are taking advantage of a basic right and making loads of money from it.”

Judy Cox

Settlers step up attacks on West Bank villages

by JUNE BUDD

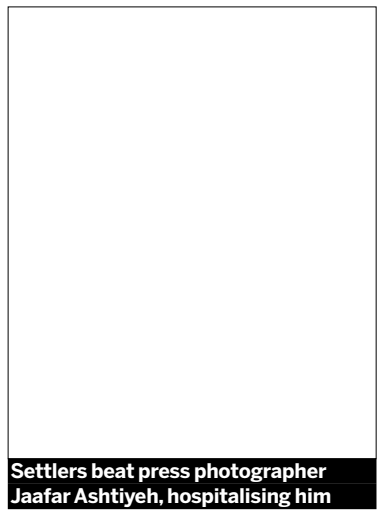
ISRAELI SETTLERS attacked the village of Umm al-Khair in the West Bank once again last week as they try to steal more Palestinian land.

"Settlers keep attacking our community. They attacked the house in the early hours of the morning," Eid, a resident of the village, told Socialist Worker.

Mobs have attacked the Bedouin village near Hebron many times before. They have shut the gates to Masafer Yatta, the collection of villages it is a part of.

Settlers have destroyed three villages in Masafer Yatta in the past month.

The thugs are backed by Israeli forces and the Israeli government.



Settlers beat press photographer Jaafar Ashtiyeh, hospitalising him

Military

"In the early morning on Thursday, the Israeli military detained one lady for five hours in a military base," Eid told Socialist Worker.

Videos show a significant military presence standing guard over settlers breaking international law in front of them.

"Settlers attacked another lady and beat her and pushed her to the ground. They also sprayed two guys with pepper spray in their eyes. They tried to steal our sheep and put barbed wire around them.

"The Israeli military just stood there, doing nothing to stop them. Mainly they helped them and stood to the side."

Mahmoud, another resident, told Socialist Worker, "The settlers are armed with modern automatic weapons and tear gas. They often operate under the direct protection and backing of the Israeli military."

Settlers attacked again on Friday. This time, no one was hurt. But the Israeli forces confiscated Palestinians' cameras in order to examine the footage they had of the settlers.

Around 750,000 settlers live across the 500 illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Andy Burnham's Labour government has recently banned trade in goods with these settlements due to the immense pressure of the Palestine movement.

The Israeli government threatened to close the British consulate in East Jerusalem in response. But Britain and Israel have brokered a compromise that allows a diplomatic mission to continue.

Palestine activists in Britain are keeping up the pressure for the Labour government to go further. Labour now acknowledges that settlers are carrying out ethnic cleansing. But they are backed by the whole state.

Embargo

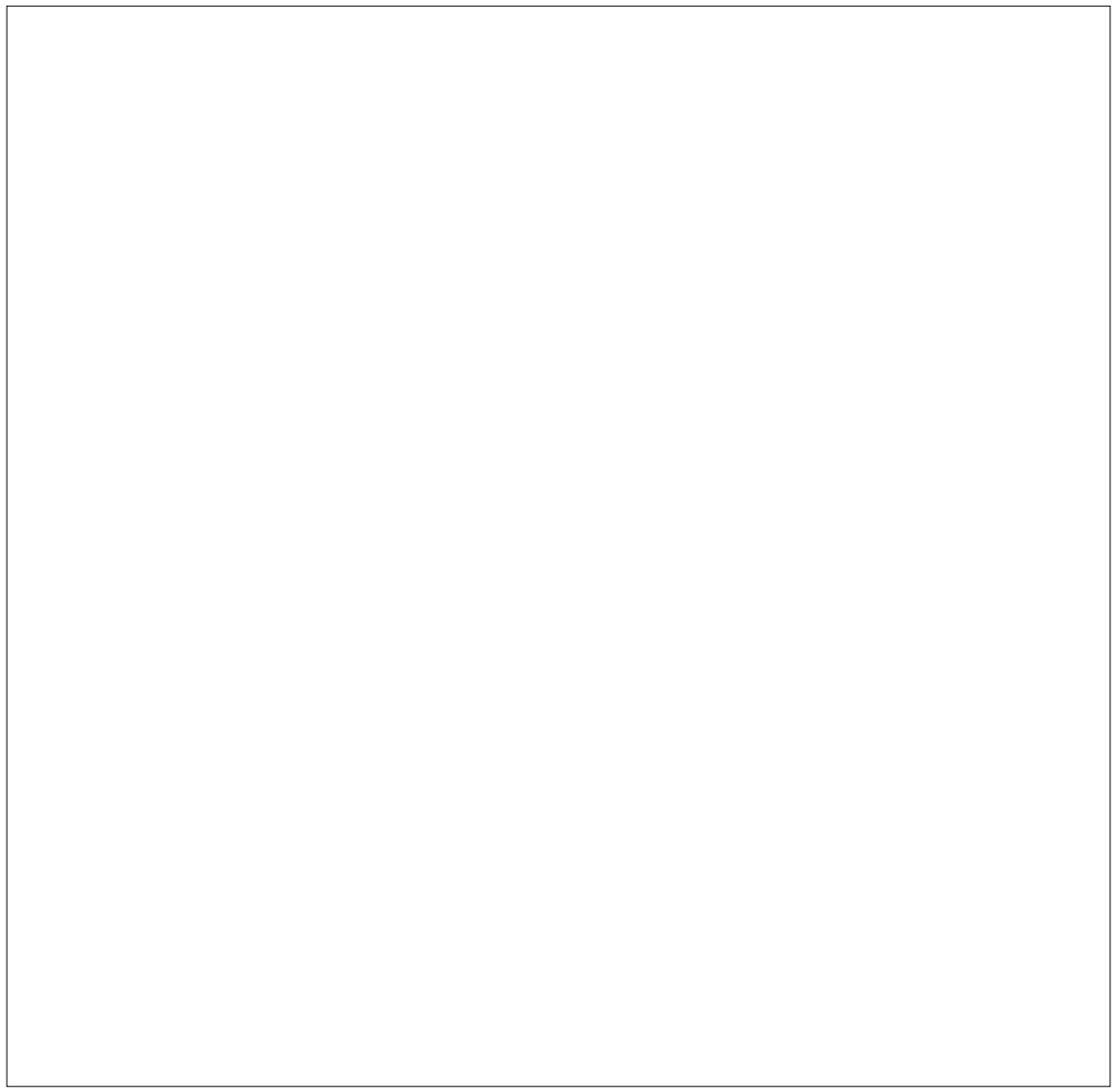
Pushing for an arms and trade embargo is vital to mount pressure on the British government.

Eid told Socialist Worker, "Later on, they declared our village is a closed military zone.

"We are feeling alone, we can't stand against armed settlers and the Israeli military. They're trying to expel us from our lands using brutal methods," Mahmoud told Socialist Worker.

"We keep steadfast until we are free. But the situation on the ground is difficult. The people here face risk every moment."

International day of action in support of dock and port workers against war and for Palestine. Friday 30 October. See stopthewar.org.uk for more information



MOURNERS CARRY the body of Palestinian man Ali al Bazzari at Rafidia hospital in the West Bank city of Nablus, after he was killed in an Israeli settler attack that was followed by army intervention

State ramps up repression after Miliband's apology to Palestine

THE STATE has again ramped up repression of Palestine protesters.

Peter Hallward, a leading supporter of campaign group Defend Our Juries (DOJ), was arrested under section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000 on the London march for Palestine.

The philosophy professor was displaying a banner which read, "In the UK it's a crime to say I support Palestine Action".

Foreign secretary Ed Miliband said recently that the government had not intended to criminalise thousands for holding up signs mentioning Palestine Action.

But Labour continues the absurd charade of arresting them as terrorists.

The further clampdown comes after Leicestershire police ran riot at a peaceful vigil at Elbit's UAV Tactical Systems weapons factory last Thursday. This is one of the sites where weapons are manufactured to slaughter Palestinians in Gaza.

At least 30 people were arrested under the Terrorism Act. Only 16 of those arrested were holding signs that read, "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action". The others were observers, including journalists.

Filton 25 members and supporters outside Woolwich Crown Court, in south London last week

Cops arrested them under section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000. Such "crimes" can be punishable with 14 years' imprisonment.

A spokesperson for DOJ said, "Leicestershire Police should be ashamed of this sickening assault on free speech.

"Why does the government allow Elbit Systems to profit from genocide while punishing those shining a light on its crimes?"

The following day, trade unionists gathered at Woolwich Crown Court, in south London, to support members of the Filton 25 who are on trial. The defendants in the third batch to reach court have been on trial since September for their alleged role in action to destroy drones made by Elbit Systems two years ago.

They are Qesser Zuhrah, Heba Muraisi, Zahra Farooque, Kamran Ahmed, Moiz Ibrahim and Liam Mullany. All of the group were imprisoned on remand, in some cases for up to 458 days.

UCU union London region chair, Mandy Brown, said, "We cannot sit by and let the state pick off, isolate, punish, imprison beyond the legal limit without trial and then brand as terrorists, people who are standing up against genocide and our government's complicity."

The rally also heard from RMT union general secretary Eddie Dempsey and there were solidarity messages from Jo Grady, the general secretary of the UCU and Ian Hodson, the president of the Bfawu union.

It is the TUC trade union federation's policy to oppose the state ban on Palestine Action. Trade unionists should discuss state repression of activists at work and invite Filton defendants to their union meetings.

Palestine march shows movement's radicalism

THE PALESTINE movement burst back onto the streets of London last Saturday as 250,000 people joined the 37th national demonstration in three years.

Thousands more marched in Edinburgh. Marches took place across the world as part of the international day of action.

Kaniz from east London told Socialist Worker she had "lost count" of how many Palestine demonstrations she had been on. "We won't stop—there is a change of mood," she said. "The politicians are saying we were right all along.

"Maybe they are listening to us, maybe they just want our votes. But we can't take the risk—we have to keep turning up."

The national demonstration in London came in the wake of two flashpoints that show the impact of the movement.

The right is spearheading a witch-hunt against Zack Polanski and the Green Party after its conference passed the "Zionism is racism" motion.

It's a victory for the Palestine movement that a mainstream party has adopted this position.

Mara, who was on a lively Green Party bloc, supports the Zionism is racism motion. "We have to call it what it is," she told Socialist Worker. "We have asked nicely for a long time and have achieved nothing.

"Apartheid South Africa didn't fall because people asked nicely.

"Political parties are starting to realise that they have to read the room. Apartheid took a long time to fall, but eventually it got to the point where it was inevitable.

"When you get to that tipping point, it's really a matter of time before politicians catch up."

Opponents of the motion say Zionism isn't racism because it has many definitions and means different things to different people. This includes Green Party MPs and the former party leader Caroline Lucas, who is leading the charge.

Zionism

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

But the reality of the Zionist settler colonial project in Palestine was racist—even before Israel was founded in 1948.

As Peter, the son of a Holocaust survivor, told Socialist Worker, "People are trying to frame Zionism in this abstract way by talking about a Jewish homeland.

"But you have to see Zionism as what the Israeli state is carrying out. You have to say Zionism is racism, because the Israeli state is committing a genocide."

The Palestine movement has reached deep into society—and includes many people who support a "two-state solution". We want all those to be involved in the movement and to persuade them.

But we should not underestimate the radicalisation and shift leftwards for vast numbers of people. "From the river to the sea" has become the common sense for many activists beyond the minority that argued for it.

The immense pressure of the Palestine movement has forced Labour to dramatically shift its tone on Palestine.

Foreign secretary Ed Miliband has admitted the Palestine movement was right. He announced sanctions on trade with settlements in the occupied territory. And he acknowledged "ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in areas of the West Bank perpetrated by settler terrorists".

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

SOME 250,000 people marched in central London (top) **It was the 37th national demo in three years** (middle) **Thousands joined the student bloc** (left)

There is a widespread feeling that Labour's shift is a victory—but also that it is wholly inadequate and hypocritical.

Tam McFarlane from the FBU firefighters' union said, "While we welcome the statement by the Westminster government over sanctions, it must go much further.

"There is a genocide in Gaza, we need to take measures to stop it from happening again."

The last week should raise all of our horizons as Palestine continues to motivate and mobilise people.

Labour 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".

But its shift has opened the door to push for much more. If the movement is right, surely, Labour should implement its demands?

If the movement is right, Labour should drop the charges and lift the ban on Palestine Action.

Our task is to keep up the pressure.

Support the international day of action by dock and port workers on 30 October.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

A FORCE CAPABLE OF DEFEATING IMPERIALISM

WORLD LEADERS marched us closer to war this week.

But if you follow the mainstream media, it presents what's taking place in Yemen, Ukraine, Iran and Palestine as isolated snapshots.

At best, we're told that "authoritarian" forces are trying to undermine "us"—whether it's the Houthis, Vladimir Putin or the Islamic Republic in Iran.

In reality, the snapshots are all part of a much deeper crisis of imperialism and the system.

First, imperialist competition is increasing at all levels of the global system. At the international level, we see the return of "great power competition", which reflects the long-term decline of the US and the rise of China.

But we've also seen the rise of regional imperialist powers outside the historic core of capitalism. Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran and Turkey are all vying for regional dominance in the Middle East.

The flashpoint over Saudi Arabia and Yemen is a reminder of how US decline has opened up space for such powers.

Second, the liberal capitalist order built by US imperialism after 1945 is disintegrating. And neoliberalism, the dominant way of managing global capitalism for over 40 years, is breaking down.

Ruling classes are looking to forms of "state capitalism" to help them compete internationally.

This sees the state take on a much more active role in directing investment and organising production as it faces a world of intensified competition.

Third, these two shifts are intertwined with how the rise of China as a manufacturing powerhouse has reshaped global capitalism.

All these changes are increasing competition across the world.

What's the way out? The Marxist theory of imperialism understands that the drive to war is rooted in the profit system.

But it does not simply see the world as a chess board where "great powers" play out their rivalries and the rest are passive victims.

Our understanding of imperialism reasserts the agency of the overwhelming majority of people.

If the drive to war is rooted in the profit system, what's the social force that has the power to disrupt that system? Here, we point to the potential power of workers when they strike.

Today, social struggles are raging on the streets of France and the Spanish state, and the Palestine movement has fed into them.

In Britain, such struggles haven't broken out—yet. But we can try to bring together the radicalism of "Generation Palestine", social struggles and our generational battle against the far right.

And, in every battle, we have to find ways to infuse it with the social power of workers to disrupt the system.

Such a force can stop the drive to war and defeat the horrors of imperialism.

WAR DRIVE COMES AT A COST TO US ALL

ANDY BURNHAM'S first budget day approaches on 28 October. The consistent line from the government is that it can't afford big spending commitments this autumn.

But, the drive to war continues. Spending on "defence" is set to rise £73.5 billion by 2028-29.

The money for war will be siphoned directly from the pot for healthcare, education and other public services.

While working class families are crying out across the country (see page 16), pension security is being undermined and energy bills are rising.

Workers are being squeezed more and more. Any pay rises they win come straight from another pot.

The national care service that Burnham has promised will be funded by scrapping the pension triple lock—meaning poorer elderly people will end up funding this care anyway.

It is not just older people who require social care, but there has been no mention of social care for adults or young people.

If the government has money for warmongering and slaughter abroad, it has money to save the public services that it has left to crumble. People should not be left freezing, hungry or waiting months for healthcare to fund more death and destruction.

COMMENT

ANALYSIS
ALEX CALLINICOS

Polanski must hold not fold on Zionism

ZACK POLANSKI should take it as a compliment that he and the Green Party are getting the Jeremy Corbyn treatment. It means that the British establishment sees them as a threat. He needs not to buckle in the face of this pressure.

The assault takes the same form as the campaign mounted against Corbyn during his leadership of the Labour Party between 2015 and 2020—on the one hand, a frenzied media assault, on the other, attacks from within by the right wing of the party, all centring on the libel that their target is an antisemite.

The moral quality of the media campaign has been beneath contempt. Tony Blair, butcher of Iraq and pensioner of billionaire Donald Trump crony Larry Ellison, is leading the charge. He declaims the Greens "have crossed a line" by having the effrontery to declare that Zionism is racist. The Telegraph newspaper has managed to hit a new low by publishing a revolting anti-Green cartoon insulting both Jews and Muslims.

Meanwhile, Green ex-leaders, headed by Caroline Lucas—never a reliable friend of the Palestinian cause—have taken advantage of Polanski's failure to win the Holborn and St Pancras by-election. Uncomfortable with how he has been turning the Greens into a dynamic, mass "eco-populist" party, they want to push him out of the leadership.

It is of course nonsense to deny that, however the Zionist movement started in the 19th century, it now exists to sustain and defend a genocidal racist apartheid state. The fact that the Green Party conference passed a motion to this effect is a result of the gigantic learning process that has hammered this truth home to hundreds of millions of people globally in the three years since 7 October 2023.

Polanski's achievements are closely bound up with this process. He spotted that the emergence of the huge Palestine solidarity movement and the failure of the Labour government under Keir Starmer to begin to address the cost-of-living crisis offered an opening for the Greens.

Thumping

Hannah Spencer's thumping victory for the Greens in the Gorton and Denton by-election in February and their advances in the local elections in May were successes for this strategy. Undoubtedly, they helped to precipitate Starmer's removal by Andy Burnham, who has tried with a degree of success to rebrand Labour as a more conventional social-democratic party.

The resulting "Burnham bounce" is the main reason why Polanski lost in Holborn and St Pancras. The Zionism is racism vote was too close to the by-election to have had much effect. But the media campaign that has been running for months to brand Polanski—himself a Jew—as antisemitic probably did.

What he has to do now is keep his nerve and hold firm.

One factor in Corbyn's demise was the tendency of his leadership team to respond to the attacks with concessions and manoeuvres. These left Corbyn on the defensive and demoralised his supporters.

Polanski must understand that time is on his side. Burnham is very unlikely to deliver on his promises of substantial social change. Moreover, the Palestine movement represents something that didn't exist when Corbyn led Labour—a vast, sustained and increasingly radicalised effort at solidarity that reaches deep into British society.

That's a source of strength. Polanski's biggest weakness is his own party—historically a niche, predominantly middle class electoral project. The Greens' record in local councils isn't much better than that of the mainstream parties. And in the rest of Europe, a degree of electoral success has helped to transform Green parties into rotten pro-imperialist parties—witness their denunciation of the Zionism is racism vote.

So far, Polanski has ducked, dived and hedged over what he calls in Monday's Guardian newspaper "this imperfect motion". But he hasn't capitulated, writing that "its substance chimes with my understanding of Zionism as the ideology that underpins the displacement and genocide of Palestinians".

Nevertheless, he will have to fight to change the Greens so that the party becomes a genuine reflection of the movement that has made their successes possible. And that movement also needs a strong and independent revolutionary left that can fight for the real transformation of society.

LETTERS

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

What British students can learn from the French

I WAS part of the Socialist Workers Student Society (SWSS) delegation to France last week.

After learning from the students leading the blockades, I have never been more sure that I will never stop fighting against the capitalist system.

I was reminded that struggle comes from below. It came from students in the poor suburbs of Paris, creating networks of solidarity and organisation.

I was so impressed with their organisation, seeing the students pass around water and use anything they could get their hands on to blockade their schools.

We must develop these networks in Britain.

Seeing students and workers stand together, united, was extremely powerful. The brutality of the repression is proof that when young, diverse, working class people stand together against the ruling class, it scares the fuck out of the state.

It also illustrates the importance of solidarity in the face of repression.

Two young students heard us speaking and asked where we had come from. When we explained that we were a part of a SWSS delegation from Britain, they were overwhelmed with gratitude. They thanked us repeatedly for simply standing with them, a testament to the power of solidarity that will stick with me for a long time.

Workers and students around the world should follow the example set in Paris, rise up and smash the ruling class.

The final and most vital lesson is that militant anti-fascism is the most important movement of our time.

The fascist National Rally still tops the polls and the fascist street movement in Britain is getting more organised.

If we don't start taking this threat seriously, countering fascists in every way possible, then we might not get a chance to rebel like the French.

Get organised. And let's build a revolution.

Fergus
Bristol

Anti-racism in Gosport

I WELCOME Camilla Royle's piece on "Gosport—Is Fascism taking hold on England's South Coast?" (Socialist Worker 7 October).

There is no doubt the south coast is under relentless pressure at the moment.

But it needs to be pointed out that there is organised, defiant opposition to far right and fascists both in Gosport and the nearby Portsmouth.

Gosport Together has been at the centre of anti-far right counter-demonstrations, substantially out numbering local organised fascists.

Gosport and Portsmouth anti-fascists stood firm against a 500-strong mobilisation of south coast fascists.

More recently, we have stood in opposition to a Reform UK motion attacking the emergency lifeboat services. We passed a motion in an emergency meeting of Portsmouth City Council, and Women Against The Far Right organised a very successful counter demo within 24 hours, which attracted 70 noisy protesters.

It helps enormously that we have many comrades active in this endeavour.

Alan Burgess
Portsmouth

ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Driving far right Young Bob out of York

LAST WEEK far right "auditor" Young Bob—real name Gregory Moffitt—came to York to hold debates titled "All abortion should be banned" and "We need to deport millions".

York Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) called a protest to oppose him.

People had chalked messages on the pavement where he was, writing things such as "Women's bodies are not up for debate" and "York against bigotry".

I drowned him out by chanting "Nazi scum off our streets" and "Refugees are welcome here".

Moffitt hated this—he wanted to provoke us into a debate.

The police took me aside to try and make me stop chanting, but I refused and the rest of the protesters started chanting with me.

Moffitt ended up packing up as the police created a cordon around him. We chased him out of the city.

We knew it was important to confront him on the ground rather than engage in things that are not up for "debate".

Julie Forgan
York

Pensioners in poverty

ANDY BURNHAM has announced he will scrap the state pension triple lock in 2030 to fund a new National Care Service.

Nearly 2 million older people in Britain already live in relative poverty. And without the triple lock, it would be drastically higher.

Burnham doesn't have to scrap the triple lock on pensions to fund his National Care Service.

A 2 percent tax on individual wealth over £10 million—affecting 0.04 percent of the population—would raise up to £24 billion.

Sasha Simic
East London

Cockroach movement says bigger protests still to come

Protests erupt in India in defiance at mass vote theft, writes **Yuri Prasad**

PRESSURE IS mounting on India's far right prime minister Narendra Modi as pro-democracy demonstrations repeatedly clash with police.

Protesters are furious at the government for removing people from the electoral roll, effectively rigging national and state elections.

Over the weekend and into this week, student protesters from the Cockroach movement fought to make their voices heard amid massive state repression.

They are demanding the resignation of India's chief election commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, who oversaw the deeply flawed election list exercise.

The mass movement this summer brought down the country's education minister, following scandals in university entrance exams.

In weeks of struggle the movement did more damage to Modi's government than the official parliamentary opposition has done in years.

The state is determined to prevent that happening again.

New Delhi was put under lockdown from Saturday, with demonstrations banned and police barricades blocking routes to both parliament and the Supreme Court.

News organisations said police arrested over 2,000 people pre-emptively. Activists say the real number runs into the tens of thousands.

Protesters' anger centres on the so-called Special Intensive Review—known as the Sir—which has so far removed over 130 million names from the Indian electoral roll.

Research suggests Muslims are overwhelmingly among those being struck off the list.

The Indian Express newspaper says that two of the three election commissioners raised formal objections to the process with chief commissioner Kumar.

Leading Cockroach and All-India Student Association activist Aameen Amitoj told the Socialist Worker that the revived movement has "enormous potential."

"What's happening right now is a phenomenon where issues around the Sir have become issues of mass struggle," he said.

"We saw a similar process in the farmers' movement in 2020-21. It started out with farmers, who sustained it, but it did not remain exclusive to them.

"Instead, it became a mass issue.

Scrutiny

"For a long time, the Sir process was put under scrutiny by intellectuals and commentators but that has changed since the newspaper revelations."

The protests are now drawing in lots of new forces.

By Monday, even the establishment leaders of India's opposition were on the streets, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Together with tens of thousands of supporters—and many Cockroaches—they marched towards the Supreme Court. But when they encountered giant iron police barriers, the leaders beat a retreat.

They settled for handing in a petition and a meeting with the BJP minister, the chief justice Surya Kant.

Nevertheless, many in the crowd defied the cops and pushed through beatings and other obstacles.

Charanjit Singh Channi told Al Jazeera that people have come out to protest against the "vote theft."

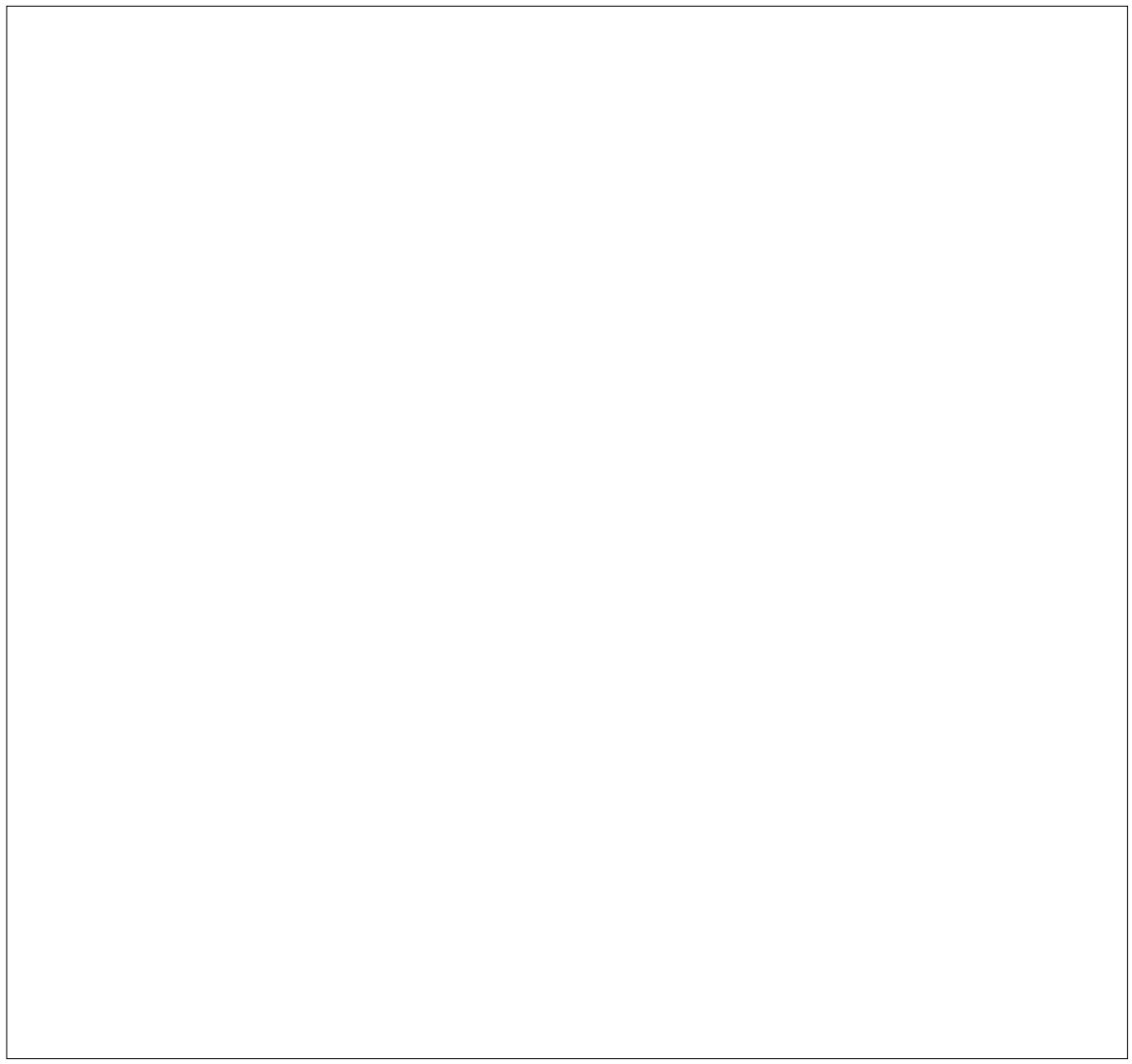
"They have rigged the voter list and looted the elections in Haryana, Assam and Bihar in this manner," he said. "Now, they are preparing to do the same in Punjab."

"That is why people have taken to the streets, to ensure that our votes are not deleted."

As Socialist Worker goes to press on Tuesday, Cockroach leaders are determined that bigger protests are still to come.

Now is the time for India to learn a lesson from France. If the cops return to beat and arrest students, workers must rise to protect them.

"The revived movement has enormous potential"



PROTESTERS ARE demanding the resignation of India's chief election commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, after 130 million names were removed from the Indian electoral roll

Victory for people on Garvaghy Road

by **REBECCA LONG**

THOUSANDS OF people in the north of Ireland have stood up to the state and sectarianism.

The Orange Order has been denied its march down the Garvaghy Road, in the Drumcree area of Portadown, following two weeks of protests.

The British secretary of state for Northern Ireland Chris Bryant banned the march last Friday, saying there was no way to safely facilitate it.

But the ban was not simply handed out by the secretary.

It was fought for by the thousands of people who stood in solidarity with residents against sectarianism and intimidation.

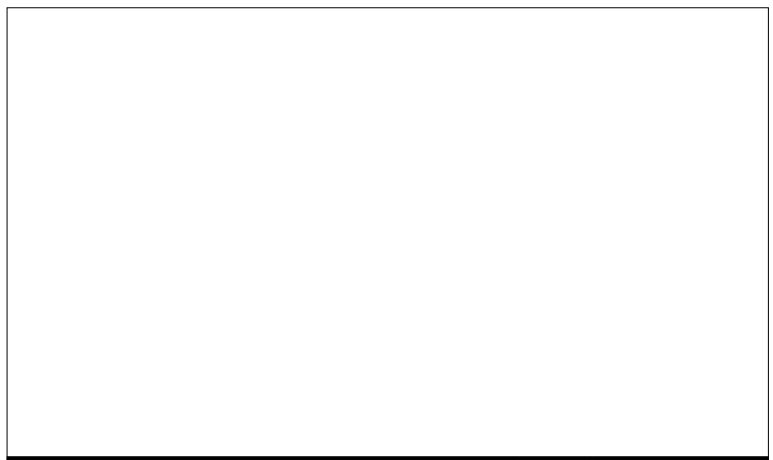
The Orange Order is a loyalist organisation associated with paramilitary violence.

It uses parades to intimidate the Catholic population and maintain Unionist dominance in the north of Ireland.

On the night of Saturday 26 September, the parades commission—the body which regulates "sensitive" marches in the north of Ireland—ruled that the Orange Order was allowed to march down the Garvaghy Road.

The last time the Orange Order marched along this route was in 1998.

Residents of the Catholic majority area were terrorised by loyalist riots. Twenty one Catholics were killed, including three young brothers.



Thousands of residents blocked the road to prevent Orange Order parade

As soon as permission for the parade was granted, residents from the area began to gather on the Garvaghy Road to blockade the route of the march.

Tens of thousands gathered on the road in a massive rally of solidarity on 4 October after a two week standoff.

Despite the attempts of unionist politicians to paint the dispute as sectarian, many Protestants who do not want to see a return to the violence of the Troubles joined the blockade.

This re-ignition of the Drumcree dispute from the 1990s has proved that sectarianism can be overcome when people take a stand against the dregs of the Orange Order.

They repeatedly tried to muster loyalist supporters to the Garvaghy Road, but failed to materialise anyone.

The stand-off has deepened the crisis of the Northern Irish state-let.

First minister, Michelle O'Neill, of Republican party Sinn Fein, is to face a vote of no confidence.

Unionist politicians are fearful since Sinn Féin is now the largest party for the first time.

But working class people have the power to challenge these rotten institutions across the sectarian divide.

AFTER TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE TAKE TO THE STREETS...

HOW CAN FRENCH REVOLT WIN?

Students, striking working and activists who participated in the protests rocking the French state spoke to Socialist Worker about where the movement should go next. Photographs by **Guy Smallman**

After weeks of blockades and protests, French workers and students are gearing tup for more action

Léa
Secondary school student

WE'LL KEEP blockading until the demands of the high school students in the poor suburbs are heard.

We're lucky where we are, it's good, even if there are obviously things to improve. And the Parcoursup higher education admissions system is tough for everyone.

But we're here to show solidarity with others and we'll try to continue as long as we can.

The unions have decided to strike next Tuesday, so I think that will be the next big demonstration.

Actually, I don't know what will happen next because we're organising ourselves day by day.

Like, in the morning we ask ourselves what we'll do in the afternoon, we blockade the school until classes are cancelled, and then we decide. So it's difficult to answer.

It depends on what actions are called and what others will do.

Palestinian flags featured heavily on the protests

Mathieu
Member of revolutionary socialist organisation Autonomie de Classe

PEOPLE DON'T care about the token concessions the French government has made to the protesters.

They're just a slap on the face.

The movement's next step was calling Tuesday's demonstrations and strikes which will be huge.

After the previous Tuesday's strikes, union leaders called for the next day of action to be on 5 November. They were trying to get to the head of the movement and impose the next date.

But they had to change their minds and call for a strike on Tuesday. The movement was so strong that they had to change their minds.

I've never seen them do that before. Usually they name the date and we all have to wait for them.

And everyone is talking about Saturday 17 October. We have no idea what will happen on that date, just that people are ready to protest.

It's coming from below as well. Many young people relate to the Gilets Jaunes, the Yellow Vest movement, that began in 2018 over the cost of living. They want to do the Yellow Vests again. The situation is incredible.

Thousands of people came out in the Place de la République on Thursday and then tens of thousands went to the Bastille and then marched off again to another square.

The police couldn't do shit. People are more angry than they are afraid of the police. At the blockade where I was no-one was running away from them when they were using tear gas.

People are chanting everywhere "La jeunesse emmerde le Front National"—"The youth tell the Front National to fuck off". It has become the anthem of the movement. It shows the potential.

But if we don't use that energy directly against the fascists and block them from leafleting and meeting in town squares it won't harm them. It won't stop them leading in the polls.

The lesson of the past decade is that you have to confront them. Chanting that you are against them is not enough.

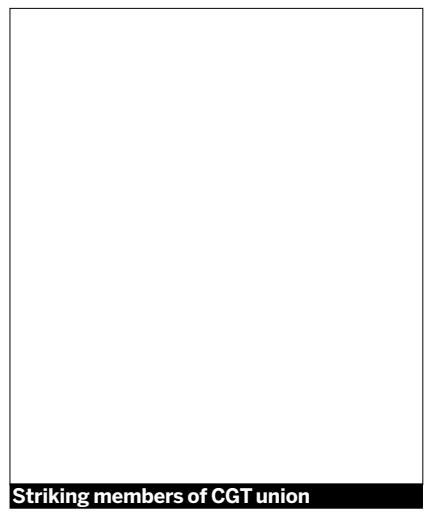
As revolutionary socialists we don't think that elections change things fundamentally. But they do matter. The fascist Rassemblement National (RN)—as the Front National has renamed itself—might really win.

Left wing presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the LFI party have a strategy. People are chanting about Mélenchon on the blockades. The LFI mayor of Saint-Denis, Bally Bagayoko—who got teargassed protecting protesters from the police, has become a kind of hero.

They are not softening their stance. They are for Palestine, against racism and against the system.

Of course they are reformist. And because they want to take over running the state they are patriotic.

But people support them because they want to see a fight. And we are with those people. Calling for a vote for him is a way to say "we are with you". But at the same time it's not enough just to vote.



Striking members of CGT union

Anouk
CGT education union member

I THINK there are two main problems we have to face. The first is union leadership. They initially decided on

another strike day for 5 November—which is very late.

Sometimes the workers are not sure that the movement is bigger than them. Now we are starting to feel we have the strength.

Nationally, the CGT union federation decided to push for another day of mobilisation, but for now it's just for the education system. It's good, but it's not enough.

There needs to be more strikes in more sectors of work. We need to do the work in our unions to push them to meet with other sectors of workers.

Secondly, the movement also has to understand the danger of the fascist RN, which is also using the movement to draw support. It is saying the students are violent, and are it is making racist attacks. We have to counter that.

Also, the directors of our school decided to propose yesterday night to engage in discussions with representatives of the students.

It's bullshit, but it gives the impression that the state is listening—that it is possible to achieve their demands without fighting, just with talk.

Some teachers are still against the movement. But I think that, because of the repression and violence, the majority of teachers are starting to ask questions. What happened? Why the violence? Why can't we grant the demands?

'If we lose the secondary school students, we lose the movement'

Holly
University student

ALL SECONDARY schools are closed by the administration, so the blockades don't mean anything right now. There's a lot of secondary school students who want to go further.

I think the next step for us is the occupation of high schools and campuses for days and days. It is clear that the mobilisation is going in the direction of occupation, even though blockades are still happening. Now that we've blocked the school system, it would be great if we could re-appropriate it for ourselves.

The only way Mélenchon can beat Le Pen is with a huge movement

In other cities, students have already started occupying their campus—we all know it's time to move to something bigger.

Directors of secondary schools have been trying to discuss solutions with the school unions to encourage reformism. Because student unions were organising the general assemblies and blockades, we gave them the place of leaders, but now we are putting this place in question.

If we lose the roots of the mobilisation—the secondary schools—as they start discussing with school boards, we lose the whole movement.

But at the same time, the whole country has come to the realisation that their conditions of work aren't good enough.

Jad
Trade unionist and member of revolutionary socialist group Autonomie de Classe

ONE OF our main focuses has been anti-fascism, preparing to protest at the RN conference in Orléans on 24 October. We are organising to get people to go there in buses.

The CGT union federation is backing it and has put it on its calendar of activities. The union leadership calling for it doesn't mean that they are building it. But it is pressure from below that is forcing them.

The school blockade movement started in the secondary schools in working class areas,where students are not expected to go to university.

The fear and hatred of the RN and the police is nothing new to those students. So when it erupted in those schools it was immediately political.

The media would call them "racaille" meaning something like "scum". And the police would be extremely violent. This has allowed it to spread beyond those particular high schools.

Sometimes the calls to protect the students are a bit paternalistic. They are high school students, they are not young children. But it's good that they are there.

I think the left has got better at addressing Islamophobia. There used to be figures on the left who opposed the hijab and who said they had the right to be Islamophobic for example.

Mélenchon has changed quite a bit. He has said clearly that he was wrong on this before.

If you compare now and 2023, when there were last riots over the killing of a 17-year-old, the reaction of a lot of the left was to call for calm and try to contain things.

But after three years of a very difficult economic situation, this time the overwhelming call is for solidarity.

We are in a race now with the RN. From the point of view of the ruling class, the question of whether they need to turn towards the RN to calm things down is not a theoretical question.

Sections of the ruling class will try to get the RN in the saddle to calm down the movement.

The only situation in which Mélenchon can beat the RN candidate Marine Le Pen is with a huge movement to oppose the RN. Because right now he is not beating her.

Many protesters mask up fearing identification by the state or the fascist RN

MACRON IS silencing our children says this placard, echoing the style of 1968

FRANCE IN FLAMES—IS THIS OUR 1968?

The student uprising has unmistakable echoes of 1968. But the revolt could be even more militant this time, argues **Frankie Murden**

Eyewitness reports said, "Armed police had attacked the previous demonstrations, using batons and tear gas and making many arrests.

"Students had begun to fight back by throwing cobble stones at the police and building improvised barriers out of traffic signals and metal grilles."

This could be describing the resistance that has spread across France in recent weeks—but is actually Paris in 1968.

This month's uprisings in France have echoed May 1968—students take to the streets to demand more from their education, inspire workers to join them and begin to make political demands.

The student uprising in 1968 turned into the biggest general strike in French history. Ten million workers brought the country to a halt for two weeks, forcing the president to flee.

It set the standard for revolutionary upheaval for a generation. And created new openings for the French left.

But there are key differences between then and now.

The earlier rising came during the economic boom that followed the Second World War—hailed by France's rulers as the Thirty Glorious Years. Capitalism rebuilt itself, employment rose and the working class could reap the benefits of an expanding welfare state.

Between 1950 and 1975, French workers' wages rose by 170 percent. But for most people, this period was not "glorious".

FRANCE, LIKE Britain, was in a period of relative decline in the 1960s. The government tried to stay profitable by banning unions inside factories and introducing emergency legislation and brutal policing to break strikes.

The minimum wage was held down for young workers.

Women were not allowed to open bank accounts without male approval until 1966. The right to abortion on request was not won until 1975.

Abroad, the French state committed atrocities in its colonial wars in Vietnam and Algeria.

May 1968 was a major setback for France's rulers, but over the last few decades, neo-liberalism has enabled the ruling class across the world to reassert its power. We have endured Thirty Tragic Years.

We have suffered decades of economic insecurity, unemployment and the increasing threat of war. Neoliberalism has organised capitalism around privatisation and the free market. Living standards have been squeezed .

The drives of accumulation and competition can seen in the wars that tear apart the Middle East, as global actors seek to control key resources and influence.

Another illustration is the 2008-09 crash. In France, this was met with protests, with some three million people out in March 2009 protesting against the impact.

Since the crash brought the world economy to its knees, repeated shockwaves—whether from Covid-19 or the Russian-Ukraine war—have left the global economy unstable. An uncontrollable market has to be reined in. Crisis management has become permanent policy. This has forced states to move away from neoliberalism.

Emmanuel Macron—president for now

"Anti-racism and anti-fascism are at the heart of the new student movement

But biting austerity remains. The protests in France take place against the background of proposed cuts of £46 billion.

Anger, disillusion and alienation are features of society.

In France, this has taken the expression of near annual protests. In 2006, efforts to force young people into employment by stripping them of their rights sparked fightback and was defeated within two months.

The financial crash brought three million workers onto the streets in early 2009.

The militant Yellow Vest protests forced the government to retreat numerous times since 2018 despite immense repression from the police and state.

2023 saw massive protests at the institutional racism and brutality of the French police after the fatal shooting of 17-year-old Nahel Merzouk.

The same year, the decision to push the pension age from 62 to 64 led to huge push back with millions out on strike.

The masses have shaken the state again and again. Last year, French prime minister Sebastein Lecornu resigned after only 27 days in office.

He was the third prime minister to resign since president Emmanuel Macron called a snap election in the summer of 2024. Lecornu has been reinstated as prime minister, but only because Macron's government has no one left to fill the position.

Macron's government is deeply divided and the state cannot make a concession big enough to quell the anger.

This is why the brutality of the police has been so extreme—the government has nothing but brute force left.

But tens of thousands have been spurred on to support the students because of the viciousness of the police.

Parents, teachers and workers cannot stand by as teenagers lose teeth, eyes and hands to government-backed violence.

In 1968, the trade union federations were forced by pressure from below to come out in support of the students. This transformed the protesters' aims.

Students' demands turned to workers' demands and vice versa. Women's liberation, anti-war and workers' rights were all a part of it. Today, too, tens of thousands of people are generalising from education to wider political issues and making the links to the capitalist system.

A key difference today is the class basis of the students leading the protests.

In 1968, the student protests centred on the Sorbonne, a prestigious university full of the children of professionals and the elite.

This month, black teenagers and students from migrant backgrounds, living in the poorer districts of Paris burst onto the streets.

They've been joined by hundreds of better off students. They told Socialist Worker last week, they are protesting "for solidarity. Lots of high schools have conditions ten times worse than they have here."

This centres questions of class that are now at the heart of the uprising.

A huge part of the success of 1968 was the way unions were able to call out millions of workers. Trains, buses and the postal service all stopped running, banks were closed, hospitals, museums and television companies all ground to halt and there was an acute petrol shortage.

Workers identified with the Communist Party and the Social Democrats. The sellout of the strike movement exposed the weaknesses of socialist parties that rely solely on elections, rather than on revolutionary organisation.

Another difference today is the threat of fascism.

In 1968, many workers could remember the liberation from the Nazis. Racism stained society, but opposition to racism was not central to the students' or workers' struggle.

Last week, Mathieu, a socialist in Paris, told Socialist Worker the protests are "against budget cuts and Emmanuel Macron, against Marine Le Pen and fascism—and for Palestine."

There is a real threat the fascist RN win the presidential elections set for April 2027.

The far right party scapegoats Muslims and migrants. It threaten to strip basic human rights from migrants, and deny them welfare and housing.

This is buoyed by a street movement, with thousands of fascists marching and attacking left wing politicians and migrants.

TODAY, anti-racism and anti-fascism are at the heart of protests. When the protests were sparked by black teenagers in poor Parisian districts, the far right seized on this to characterise the protests as led by "invaders".

But soon, thousands of anti-racists came out in support of them. Cries of "We are all anti-fascist" filled the streets.

A generation has been transformed by anti-imperialism and genocide in Gaza.

Another threat that cannot be avoided now is ecological disaster. In the summer, more than 120,000 hectares in France burned. The country's first "firestorm thundercloud" spread toxic smoke that left the city of Limoges, 125 miles away, covered in dust and smog.

In September, more than 260 protests were held simultaneously to demand a national plan of climate action.

The protests represent a break with mainstream politics and the idea that voting is the only mechanism for political change.

Huge numbers of people are being drawn to Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the left wing LFI. This represents a break with the mainstream. For years, Mélenchon has been ostracised by left, right and centre alike.

Now, it is important that a left wing presidential candidate is seen to be standing with the protestors and defending them from accusations of violence.

The danger is that the logic of the system will try and channel the anger on the streets into electoral politics only.

This radicalism and the potential for activism are the most striking similarities between now and 1968.

As in 1968, tens of thousands of people are recognising that the power to change the system lies in the streets and is in their own hands. The movement has the potential to be even more militant than it was in 1968. People are no longer willing to put up with politics as usual—and they know they're the only ones who can change it.

Trade unionists joined the students in the streets in 1968. French students on the march today (above)

READ MORE

- **The fire last time: 1968 and after** by Chris Harman, £12.99
- **1968: On the edge of world revolution** by Martin Klimke, £23.00
- **May made me: An oral history of the 1968 uprising in France** by Mitchell Abidor, £22.99
- **From impasse to fascists in office? France's crisis** by Charlie Kimber, International Socialism 189, £6.00

Available at bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

TEACH YOURSELF MARXISM
with Judy Cox

What drives political polarisation?

POLITICS ARE increasingly polarised. Support for the political centre is ebbing away and flowing towards the parties of the far right and, sometimes, the far left.

This is a tendency. Voters can also be won back by mainstream parties.

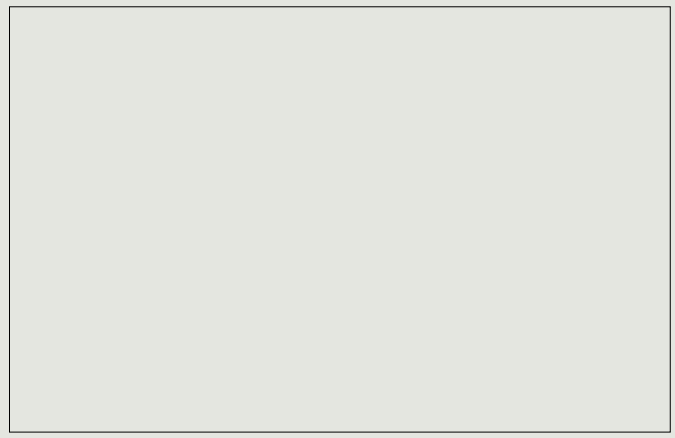
And those fearful of the rise of the far right, and growing social antagonism, can feel nostalgic for the old two-party system.

But political polarisation is not conjured up by devious politicians—it is rooted in the development of capitalism itself.

Political scientists have identified various kinds of political polarisation. The most damaging is "pernicious polarisation". This occurs when society is divided and a "them and us" hostility develops around an issue.

Pernicious polarisation involves the demonisation of the "other" and the exploitation of people's anger. In particular, it creates the potential for violence to erupt against a religious, national or ethnic group.

Some argue that polarisation is occurring because mainstream parties have been captured by political extremists.



HAS POLITICS been taken over by extremists?

Extremists

But in Polarised—Making Sense of a Divided America, James E Campbell argues that such extremists have always contested for power and influence at moments of conflict and social crisis.

Manipulative political elites do exploit and intensify divisive ideas and demonising rhetoric—but such figures always hover on the margins. We have to explain why politics is becoming more polarised now.

The European political centre established dominance over the electoral process after the Second World War.

The economy was expanding. The welfare state was established. Trade unions fought for, and sometimes won, higher wages.

This economic boom created some political stability. It led to a growth in technical, managerial and civil service jobs. More young people were allowed to access higher education.

The growth of the managerial classes appeared to be a refutation of Marxism.

In the Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had argued that capitalism would progressively simplify social relations into a conflict between two antagonistic classes—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

But capitalist societies generated more complex social structures. The middle classes grew and the managerial social layer expanded.

Many working class people hoped and expected their children would get an education and aspire to a better standard of living.

Marx was also criticised for suggesting the working class would become increasingly immiserated and impoverished. But the growth of public services like health and education, and of pensions and unemployment benefits created a safety net that protected people from destitution.

"The post-war economic boom created some political stability"

The post-war boom and the relative political stability that rested on it are the exceptions in the history of capitalism.

Unearthing

Marx's analysis provides the only approach capable of unearthing the economic roots of political polarisation.

Marx argues that competition propels companies to drive others out of business. Power and wealth become concentrated in fewer hands.

Today, large multinational corporations dominate global markets. Wealth inequality has increased in advanced economies.

Those children of working class families who went to university and got professional jobs as university lecturers or health workers, face "proletarianisation". They have insecure contracts, low pay and managerial scrutiny. They are often at the sharp edge of trade union struggle.

The safety net of the welfare state has been eroded.

Political polarisation is not caused by demagogic politicians.

It is rooted in the rise of inequality, the erosion of the security and well-being of many who saw themselves as middle class and the destruction of the welfare state.

So, don't mourn for the old order. Polarisation is inevitable—but the victory of the right is not.

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.

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- Edinburgh
- Glasgow North
- Glasgow South

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- Lancaster and Morecambe
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Midlands
- Birmingham
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- Chesterfield
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- Leicester
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- Hackney
- Haringey
- Islington
- Newham
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- South east London
- Tower Hamlets
- Waltham Forest
- West and north west London

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

East and south east
- Brighton and Hove
- Bournemouth
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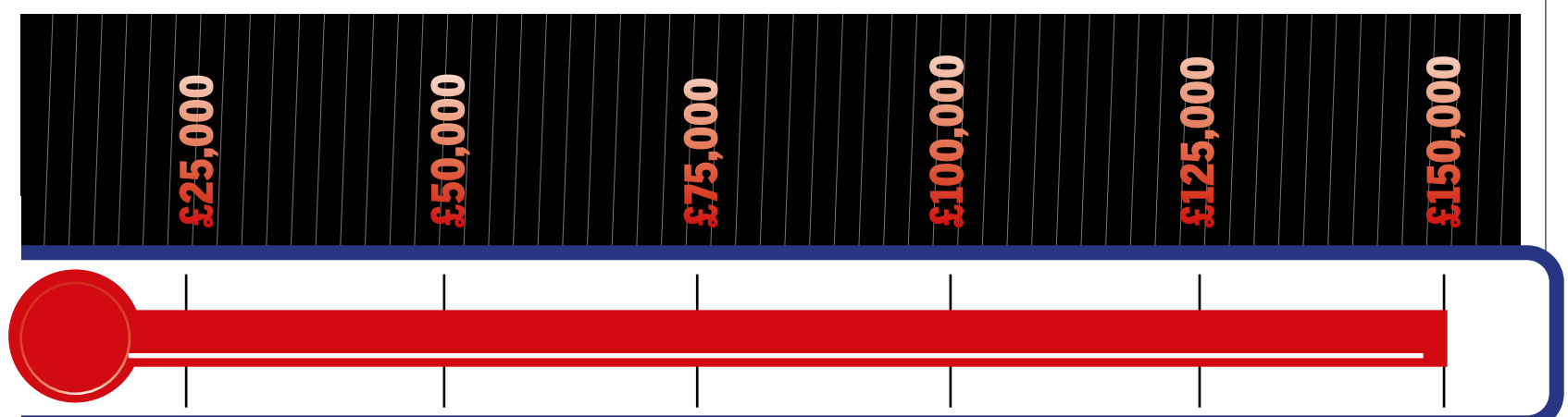

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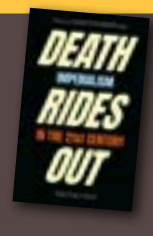

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This tale of two sisters still speaks to us today

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY
Directed by Georgia Oakley
In cinemas now

THIS ADAPTATION of Jane Austen's much-loved novel Sense and Sensibility draws out the cleverness of the writer's work. It makes a 200 year old novel relatable to today's viewers.

Oakley gives us an onscreen rendering of two sisters whose hearts are entrapped by the boundaries of society, portraying them with a complexity often denied them by critics.

In many tellings, the two Dashwood sisters are simplified as direct depictions of the book's title.

Elinor Dashwood, the eldest sister—played by Daisy Edgar-Jones—is said to reflect sense and logic. Marianne Dashwood, the younger sister, portrayed by Esmé Creed-Miles, represents wild sensibility.

DAISY EDGAR-JONES and Esme Creed-Miles as Elinor and Marianne Dashwood

There is an element of this in the new adaptation, but here the two sisters better demonstrate the true complexity of Austen's writing.

The contrast between the sisters' romances is clear.

Marianne's passionate and obsessive romance with the charming Mr Willoughby ends in disillusionment when his facade is shattered.

This contrasts with the loving romance of Elinor and Edward Ferrars, played by George MacKay, which has to navigate the bounds of honour and status.

Too often Austen's novels are dismissed as simple romances where women fall for hard-to-love men who just so happen to be extremely wealthy. One reviewer famously said Austen's work is "just a bunch of people going to each other's houses".

But Oakley demonstrates to a modern audience that Austen's work is so much more than the romance often at its core.

Depicted

The portrayal of London society, where you're never quite alone, is perfectly depicted in the intimate conversation between Elinor and Edward amongst crowds of strangers in the National Gallery.

And, the contrast is there again when the freedom of the countryside is depicted. Here, love runs free from the refinement and order that constrains London society.

When it comes to the women, the film shows how they must rely on men and their families for stability and status.

Even the coldness of Fanny, the Dashwoods' sister-in-law, is presented as a reflection of women's societal insecurity.

Fanny convinces her husband to limit how much of his fortune he shares with his grieving, and now effectively homeless, family.

And so, whilst Austen doesn't necessarily tear down the barriers of society that restrain her characters, she does hold a mirror up to society and force it to look at itself.

The film observes how society's rigid rules come up against human desire and passion and create explosions of emotion—even in the most "sensible" of people.

And, despite the period costumes and the language of a story set over 200 years ago, the battle between heart and mind in the context of societal expectations very much echoes the feelings of many today.

We're told that if we play by the rules, get a "proper" degree and rise up the career ladder, eventually we will reap the benefits.

And yet these rules have never worked in our favour. In fact, they work against us today, just as they did in Jane Austen's time.

And so, despite the omission of some key favourite scenes from the novel, Oakley beautifully captures the complexities, the wonder and the exhilaration of an Austen novel while making it feel relevant today.

Imogen Evans

TELEVISION

Brilliant on the problem, poor on the cause

CHANNEL 4'S new documentary, Britain's Gaza Secrets Exposed, is a damning investigation into the British government's response to Israel's war on Gaza.

Drawing on internal Foreign Office documents, the documentary shows how successive governments supplied arms to Israel despite mounting evidence of violations of international law.

However, while it reveals British complicity, it does less to explain the political interests underpinning it.

One of the documentary's most striking revelations concerns former Tory prime minister David Cameron.

Despite receiving two separate assessments indicating that Israel was breaking international law, he claimed he could not remember them.

The government's internal assessments repeatedly failed to find sufficient evidence of war crimes, despite reviewing cases involving the bombing of a school and the killing of five-year-old Hind Rajab.

The programme only hints at the reasons for this.

British support for Israel is not merely the product of individual politicians evading responsibility or bureaucratic processes being manipulated.

It reflects a wider relationship between the British state and an ally whose strategic importance has repeatedly taken precedence over Palestinian lives.

Without examining these interests, the documentary risks presenting complicity as a scandal of governmental misconduct rather than a feature of British foreign policy.

Rimaz Ahmed

COMMENT
SOPHIA BEACH

Why Cable St is more than a history lesson

I WAS one of the anti-fascists who confronted the far right Restore Britain party in Camden, north London, during the recent Holborn and St Pancras by-election campaign.

We chased off the fascists at the heart of Restore Britain's operation for three Saturdays in a row.

As we did so, we were inspired by the militant anti-fascist tradition and the Battle of Cable Street, which took place in east London 90 years ago.

The tactic of physically confronting fascists in the streets was what stopped Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists (BUF) in London and elsewhere.

It was crucial to defend the mostly Jewish area that Mosley was targeting.

But not everyone accepted this tactic. It was a position that had to be fought for.

The Labour Party, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and several newspapers all urged people to stay away or stay at home. They argued that it should be left to the police and local authorities to "maintain law and order".

Even the Communist Party (CP) had planned a youth rally in solidarity with the anti-fascist struggle in Spain at Trafalgar Square miles away instead. Until the Friday before the battle, it was still calling on anti-fascists to go to central London.

But, Communists in Stepney mobilised against the BUF, calling on people to mobilise in the East End, not Trafalgar Square.

Victory

On the day, huge numbers of people prevented the police from clearing a path through the area for Mosley and the BUF to march through.

Blockades and barricades were set up with trams and lorries, and large numbers of people filling the streets.

The organisers were able to stop the fascists and, a week later, held a mass victory parade through the same streets.

Nevertheless, the CP recognised that some working class people in Stepney were being drawn in by Mosley's scapegoating of Jewish people.

They faced terrible living conditions and rising unemployment. The fascists exploited the disillusionment people felt, making empty promises but delivering nothing.

The CP saw the necessity of "exposing the fascists to their own supporters" and putting down "roots in the people" of Stepney if it wanted to build a permanent force.

The party involved itself in working class struggles, such as rent strikes and the fight against evictions.

In his memoir, Our Flag Stays Red, Phil Piratin describes how the CP stopped landlords evicting a family in 1937. Communists organised huge numbers of people to stop the eviction using barricades and flour bombs.

Collapsing

After successfully seeing off the bailiffs, whole families of BUF supporters tore up their membership cards because the Communists had proved that they were the real force defending working class interests.

Today, we must look for similar opportunities to embed the anti-racist struggle in the working class.

The conditions we face—soaring rents, collapsing health services and rising unemployment—are eerily similar. The far right builds on disillusionment with mainstream politics but offers nothing to ordinary people.

The only way we can stop the fascists and win gains for our side is through organised working-class activity.

Today, there are many on the left who argue that the left should just focus on "community organising" around social issues. But ignoring the cancer of racism in our class does not lessen its devastating effects—it makes our task harder.

That is why anti-fascism and anti-racism are one side of the coin, and class struggle is the other.

We need militant anti-

Phil Piratin

HOUSING

EEH strikers needs your support

EAST END Homes (EEH) workers in Tower Hamlets, east London, are at a critical juncture in their fight to stop bosses axing their pensions.

Management has now made the disgraceful decision to move ahead with their plans to fire and rehire the Unison union members, who work as administrators, caretakers and housing officers.

The strikers received the "dismissal and reengagement" letter last week and were told they had until Wednesday to appeal.

They have until 22 October to tell EEH bosses whether they will sign up to the new contracts.

Dismissal

Strikers on the picket line on Thursday told Socialist Worker that bosses had set the dismissal date for the 31 December.

"That's one day before new restrictions on fire and rehire come in on 1 January. Happy new year to us," said one striker.

EEH bosses first announced plans to move workers onto an inferior pension scheme in February.

This would see impacted workers lose between £3,000 and £9,000 a year in retirement income, depending on their age.

An EEH union rep said, "We have a very strong group of workers who are definitely determined to see this through.

"We believe that, as long as we stand together, we can get concessions for this situation."

The EHH workers need the solidarity of the whole trade union movement.

Jude McKechnie

RAIL

Chiltern rail strike looms over safety

RMT UNION members working as train managers for Chiltern Railways were set to strike for 24 hours this Saturday over safety concerns.

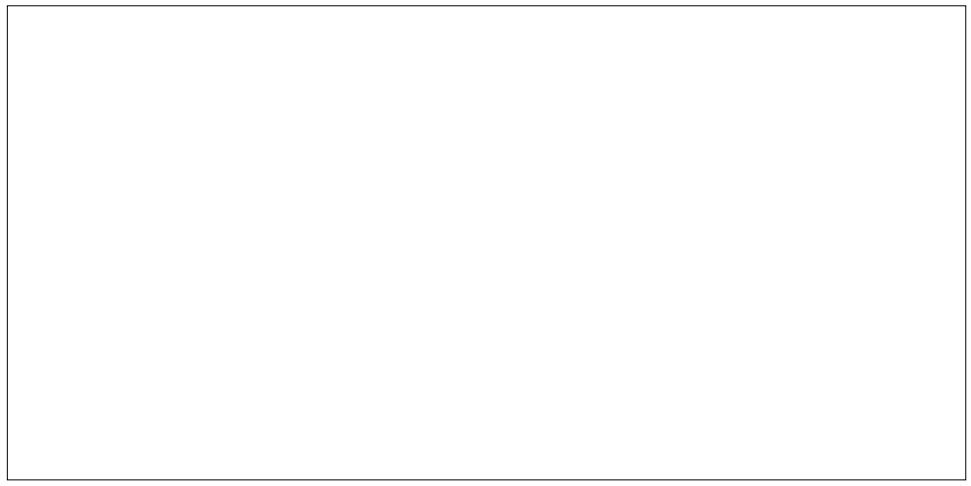
This will be the third time workers have walked out in this dispute.

It revolves around the failure of the company to guarantee the safety critical role of the second person on board the proposed East West Rail line.

It follows a decisive vote by union members opposing driver-only operation (DOO).

This less safe method is intended for the new £7 billion route, which will link Oxford to Milton Keynes.

HIGHER EDUCATION



Solidarity on the picket line at Glasgow Caledonian University

Glasgow Caledonian strikers up pressure

by **CAMILLA ROYLE**

A STRIKE campaign at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) escalated this week.

EIS-ULA union members have already struck for 14 days over bosses' threats to make 100 redundancies.

They began another four day strike on Tuesday this week, and are set to walkout next Tuesday to Thursday and then for four days per week for the following three weeks.

Student Elias told Socialist Worker there is no need for the cuts.

"They want to save £6 million, but GCU has one of the biggest cash reserves of all universities in Scotland and has just spent up to £5.4 million on a new plot of land.

"Everyone can see through their claims that they need to save money.

"Some courses have been shut down completely already. The lecturers are being treated as disposable."

Elias added, "We need more students to come to the picket lines.

"The university needs the workers, but it also needs us to attend and to pay fees. So students supporting the picket lines and not going in is the most important thing they can do to support the strikes."

At the University of Edinburgh, UCU union members celebrated as principal Peter Mathieson announced last week that he will be leaving the role in 2028.

Mathieson has spearheaded plans to make £140 million worth of cuts at the university, which could lead to the loss of 1,800 jobs.

Weeks

The UCU members are currently in their third week of five weeks of action.

At the University of Dundee, UCU members are also striking for five weeks over plans for job cuts.

The university was recently denied funding by the Scottish Funding Council because it already has sufficient funds.

It has led workers to question whether the university's finances are as bad as it says and whether cuts are really necessary.

UCU union members at Goldsmiths in south east London are determined to resist bosses' plans for £22 million worth of cuts. The university workers have rejected another poor offer from management and are continuing their indefinite strike.

Workers at the University of Nottingham have begun a campaign of hard hitting strikes that will disrupt teaching for much of the academic term.

Whole areas of the university are being dismantled in a restructure plan known as Future Nottingham 2.

The plans could mean over 600 job cuts. Courses in music and modern languages have already been closed to new students.

UCU members are set to strike until 11 December unless bosses rule out compulsory redundancies and department closures.

They took part in a marking and assessment boycott and struck throughout June and July.

That came after nearly 2,700 people were sent letters warning they were at risk of redundancy as part of the restructure plans.

SCHOOLS

West London educators find their voice

STRIKING TEACHERS and support staff at Villiers High School in Southall, west London, showed on Tuesday that they have had enough of being ignored.

They're striking over pay cuts, health and safety and workload. The school's senior leadership team (SLT) has refused to enter talks with the NEU union members.

One union member had their salary slashed by £7,500. Another worker had their pay cut due to being on maternity leave. In total, 14 members of staff faced cuts.

Strikers highlighted being ignored by the SLT. "The school has had consultation meetings for 12 years, since the last strike action occurred here," one told Socialist Worker.

"We've had a year and a half of entering consultations with no change."

The school only recently removed asbestos from classrooms after union members included it in their demands in July. Other health and safety issues, such as disappearing incident records, still need addressing.

"Staff don't have a voice," one member told Socialist Worker. "This is our way to voice where we stand. If we stay together, united, it's how we stay strong and resolute."

Teachers at Villers High School are also set to strike on 21-22 October and 3-5 November.

They are determined to keep taking action until their demands are met.

ROUND-UP

South Bank workers say no to a 'two tier workforce'

WORKERS AT London South Bank University (LSBU) struck all last week over plans to turn them into a two-tier workforce.

The UCU union members have been in dispute with bosses since March. Management is trying to rip up the academics' existing contracts.

They will transfer workers who they think can bring in money through research grants to a new "teaching and research" contract.

Others are now employed through a "teaching and scholarship" contract—they were given a deadline to apply to it in July.

And new hires are employed not by the university but by a wholly-owned subsidiary company.

Around 150 people have lost their jobs already through compulsory or voluntary redundancy. This has left a workforce of about 400 academic staff members on three different types of contracts.

Geoff Goss at LSBU

UCU joint branch chair Geoff Goss told Socialist Worker, "What is happening here is existential. If we lose this our workforce will be split and divided.

"They are doing draconian things, some of the worst practices you would see in the private sector—fire and rehire."

"With 150 people gone, it's already not enough people," said Elisa, the other branch chair.

"Some people who have left were the only person who could do that job. Staff are overworked and have increasing hours."

Geoff explained that the situation has parallels with what is happening at the University of Brighton, where bosses want to derecognise the union (see right).

At LSBU, hiring people through a subsidiary could mean the new employer won't recognise the union. The workers won't have the same terms and conditions as their colleagues, even if they are doing the same job.

The union branch is currently negotiating with bosses over the teaching and research contract.

"But union members want to find a resolution where all the workforce are included in negotiations and no-one is left behind," said Elisa.

"So far we haven't seen anything material that protects all staff. But we are striking in week one of term and that is keeping the pressure on."

UCU members mentioned that they have had a lot of support from students, who have been writing letters to management to demand that the bosses listen to the strikers.

"Higher education is in a mess, something is really going wrong with it," said Geoff. "There is not enough investment from the government in the sector.

"I don't think anyone has the answer. But I think there should be some effort to link up with other union branches to discuss how we can help each other out."

■IN ABERDEEN, UCU union rep David Anderson has been dismissed from his role after 27 years at the university for sharing a document with staff. The union branch is in dispute with management and has been on strike this year.

The UCU says punishing the long standing union activist for alleged misconduct is grossly disproportionate.

●Sign the petition at tinyurl.com/SWDavidAnderson

■ At the University of Brighton, Unison and UCU union members are resisting bosses' plans to derecognise the unions on campus.

University bosses said that they had "formally notified our recognised trade unions that we will be commencing discussions on a new recognition agreement for the future.

"This requires us to serve notice on the existing collective agreements."

Brighton UCU branch secretary Christian Høgsbjerg told Socialist Worker, "This is a massive attack.

"We've already seen the erosion of our terms and conditions but this is taking it to another level.

"It's a clear attempt to make staff pay for the crisis in education with longer working hours, more precarity and to soften us up for redundancies. They are pretty transparent about wanting to cut staff costs."

"People are joining the unions in response," said Christian. "The best way to fight this is to use our collective power while we still have it."

HEALTH

Leeds strikers are marching on together

by **JUDE MCKECHNIE** in Leeds

"WE ARE going to stay out until we win—we're determined," was the message from striking operating theatre workers on a vibrant "mega picket"in Leeds last Friday.

Unison members at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust began an indefinite strike on Monday as part of a long-running battle over re-banding.

They are furious at being paid at band 2—the lowest NHS pay band—despite performing vital duties.

These include reducing infection risks, assisting with specialist surgical equipment, supporting clinical teams during operations and helping patients recover afterwards.

One striker based at Leeds General Infirmary (LGI) told Socialist Worker, "It's a lot of responsibility. We do a lot of training for this and we should be recognised for it.

"People are dealing with death on a daily basis, there's a psychological and emotional side to our job too."

The operating theatre workers have already taken 40 days of discontinuous action over more than 18 months. Strikers told Socialist Worker that escalating to an all-out strike was the only way to win.

"It's costing the Trust massive amounts of money to cover these shifts. So, how long is it going to sustain this without putting the Trust into massive debt?

Theatre assistants picketing in Leeds

"It's paying enhanced rates for other staff to cover the work that we'd normally do. So, it's in its interest to get back around the table and sort this," she said.

Refusing

Strikers are furious that other workers are covering their shifts during the strike.

One worker appealed to other NHS staff employed by the Trust to support them by refusing overtime.

"Our strike opens up the opportunity for overtime, really well-paid overtime, for other members of staff to take easier shifts for more money," they said.

"I would like to see the union circulate the information around our colleagues and to ask them not to take that overtime for a week or two. That would make a real difference because when they work those shifts it undermines the impact of our strike."

She is absolutely right. All health unions at the Trust should tell their members not to do the strikers' work. If the operating theatre workers win, everyone fighting for better pay gets a boost.

Another striker explained how low pay is having catastrophic consequences for the NHS.

"When I started working in the NHS fourteen years ago, band 2 was quite a bit above minimum wage. But that's been squeezed to nothing.

"We've slowly got to the point that now the stalwart, loyal NHS workers, are not just considering leaving the job they're in, but leaving the NHS completely. I always say the NHS isn't failing, it's being failed.

"The hourly rate for an NHS worker at band 2 is just £12.92. It's really difficult to keep up with basic expenses. Once all your bills have come out there's barely anything left," he said.

"I worry when I hear the latest inflation rates because I'm thinking how am I going to keep up? My pay isn't going up by that much."

Meaningful

The employer remains unwilling to resolve the dispute or enter meaningful negotiations, despite more than 100 NHS trusts having already agreed re-grading.

Unison should increase the pressure to stop strikebreaking at the Trust and fight for greater solidarity across the trade union movement.

An RMT union member told Socialist Worker at the mega picket said he had come with members of his branch.

They were there to return the favour after other unions supported them in their own battles over the past year.

"That's what being in a union is about.

"You always have to support other colleagues in other trade unions because you need that joint up approach to win. And you have to get the public on side as well."

Tower Hamlets community care strike is urgent issue

TOWER Hamlets community health workers struck for three days last week in a fight for fair pay, terms and conditions and recognition of their vital work.

The 120 Unite union members include care navigators and admin workers at the local urgent treatment centre, employed by Tower Hamlets GP Care Group.

Strikers demand NHS Agenda for Change salaries and terms and conditions, with jobs properly aligned to comparable roles across the NHS.

They are angry that workers delivering NHS services can find themselves on different pay and contractual arrangements from colleagues undertaking comparable work elsewhere in the health service.

Strikers want a comprehensive review of their jobs, responsibilities and pay so that the work they actually undertake is properly recognised.

This is particularly important for care navigators and admin staff.

Their contribution can sometimes be overlooked, but clinical services cannot function effectively without them.

Unite argues that providers commissioned to deliver NHS services should not be reliant on poor pay and conditions.

Importance

If a provider cannot afford to pay staff fairly and provide appropriate terms and conditions, it says there is a bigger question to answer—should that provider continue to hold the contract at all?

During the dispute, more staff are recognising the importance of collective organisation and trade union membership.

If management fail to negotiate seriously and make meaningful progress towards the workers' demands, Unite says more action will follow.

Kambiz Boomla

Bosses give in before strike

LORRY DRIVERS for NHS supply chain firm GXO have been offered a pay deal before beginning the first day of their strike.

The strike was suspended for workers to ballot on the offer.

This is the second offer GXO made, after workers rejected a 4% increase.

GXO runs the NHS supply chain contract for Supply Chain Coordination Limited, and is wholly-owned by NHS England.

The Unite union members work at sites in Yorkshire, Warwickshire, Tyne and Wear, Suffolk, Kent and Derbyshire.

GXO DRIVERS are vital

Drivers deliver general equipment, such as bandages, dressings, gowns and gloves to hospitals across England.

Strikes were set for Tuesday to Thursday for the next five weeks.

AUSTERITY

'We're protesting against austerity on the eve of Budget Day'

ACTIVISTS ACROSS London are gearing up for a March Against Austerity on Tuesday 27 October—the evening before the budget.

The march organisers are demanding funding for public services, welfare not warfare, no to racism and that the rich pay more tax.

Jordan Rivera is the secretary of Homerton hospital Unison, in Hackney, east London. She has been centrally involved in organising the demonstration.

She told Socialist Worker, "Andy Burnham says he will be better that Keir Starmer, but he has to actually be better. It can't just be words. He has to act".

"Our march was initiated in Hackney because we had the Summit Against Austerity here, organised by the Green Party-led council. And we wanted to make sure something came out of that summit.

"So Homerton Unison, Hackney National Education Union and Hackney Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) were the first groups to support the march.

"The summit did decide to support the march. But they said it was too soon to organise it for budget day. We were able to say, 'We're already doing it'.

"Lots of other union groups have since backed the march."

Press reports say Burnham rejected a call from the health secretary Yvette Cooper for extra funding for the NHS.

That means any pay rise for health workers will come from hospitals' budgets—which are already being cut.

Campaigners—Homerton Unison... and friends

A Whitehall source said the NHS must "live within its means".

Jordon said, "Health workers are talking about the story.

"I know workers in the NHS are worried about their jobs. Hospitals face millions of pounds of cuts. It beggars belief that they can say we should pay for our own pay rise when our hospital alone is facing £26 million of cuts.

"On what planet can they say that is okay? The teachers' pay rise is now being funded, which must be a relief for them, although it's still not a good pay rise.

"The NHS agreed 3.3 percent for health workers and were negotiating over the pay structure. There should be extra money to pay for that. We need a pay rise and we need it to be fully funded, we don't want it to come from them closing down departments.

"We have an open organising meeting for the protest every week and more are people coming on board.

"We are trying to make sure those groups that have pledged support mobilise their members too," she said.

"SUTR was included from the start. That's crucial, because we know not being able to access from services makes some people turn to Reform UK and fall for the lies that refugees are to blame.

"Fighting racism and fighting austerity must go hand in hand.

"We are finding there is a lot of enthusiasm for the march. We want people to spread the word in their workplaces, in any networks they relate to and on social media."

■Eve of Budget protest against Austerity, Tuesday 27 October, 6pm, Rally at Victoria Embankment for march to Downing Street, London

■Sponsors include Hackney Trade Union Council, Camden Trade Union Council, Redbridge NEU, Daniel Kebede, NEU general secretary, Tower Hamlets Unison, East London NHS Foundation Trust Unite, London Region UCU

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Struggling to make it through the month...

FAMILIES SET TO BE £3,000 WORSE OFF

by JUDE MCKECHNIE

THE COST of living crisis has left families almost £3,000 a year worse off, according to the Resolution Foundation think tank.

And it's about to get worse unless Labour takes action against the fat cat utility bosses.

Energy prices could go up by 16 percent in the new year, with a typical bill predicted to jump £276 to nearly £2,000 a year.

At the same time, energy bosses have raked in profits creamed from your bills.

The 16 individuals and families in Britain linked to the energy industry saw their combined wealth rise by £2.8 billion in a year.

Wealth

Jenny, a single mother in a small town in west Suffolk, told Socialist Worker that she simply cannot keep up with the increasing cost of living.

"My immediate reaction to bills going up is to feel annoyed and concerned for how much less I'll have for things like food shopping," she said.

"How am I going to buy things I need for my son like clothes, toys, medicine and whatever else I still need to cover every month?

"My previous energy bill was already high. I was quoted at £190 for a single month—but we're barely home as it is.

PARENTS ARE struggling to pay the bills

"I just don't see how I can cut down on our usage of water, gas and electricity."

Jenny is one of many who is facing rising debt.

Almost one in five households in the poorest half of the country were behind on an essential bill by March, the Resolution Foundation found.

Jenny explained that her Universal Credit payment is not enough to cover her costs and that she is forced to rely on "buy now, pay later" (BNPL) schemes to make ends meet.

"I've found myself using things such as Klarna just to make it through the final two, sometimes three, weeks of the month," she said.

"But it leaves me with less money as I still have to pay that back. It feels like you don't have a choice but to get into debt.

"I'm a single mum with a two year old. It feels as though you either struggle and barely eat so you don't cut into your next month's budget or you use those BNPL schemes or loans.

"The choice is to be poor and starve—or know that you'll be poorer next month but be able to eat."

The Burnham government says it wants more "public control" of utilities to keep bills down.

But it doesn't want to nationalise the energy companies that are fleecing us.

If Burnham is serious about breaking with neoliberalism, he would have to break with the failed privatisation model.

Energy companies should be nationalised and run as public services, not for profit.

And the fat cats shouldn't get any compensation.

Jenny is a pseudonym

'We know that we can win,' say striking Camden workers

LABOUR'S Sagal Abdi-Wali held off the Greens to be elected as MP for Holborn and St Pancras in last week's key by-election.

Striking workers are still demanding the council listens to them in Camden, the north London borough where the election happened and Abdi-Wali has been council leader.

Traffic wardens, teaching assistants (TAs) and teachers from Camden, and housing workers from nearby Tower Hamlets—all in the Unison union—rallied at the town hall last Tuesday.

Chants of "Low pay, no way" and "Camden council, no slave labour" could be heard from half a mile away.

Over 100 traffic wardens, who are Unison members, are in the third week of an eight week strike over pay and terms and conditions.

These low-paid workers are outsourced to private contractor NSL, part of multimillion pound company Marston Holdings. They are demanding a £2 an hour pay rise, seven extra days of annual leave and company sick pay from the first day of absence.

One traffic warden told Socialist Worker, "This is the fifth time we have had to strike in ten years. Every strike we have won—we know that through strikes we can win whatever we want."

"We are here to say to other workers that strikes are how we won before. They are how we will win now—and how you will win too."

TAs at Primrose Hill and Richard Cobden primary schools in Camden also struck last week in a long-running fight over pay.

"We are here because we are not just fighting for our one cause but for them all," one TA told the rally.

PHOTO: GUY SMALLMAN

Traffic wardens are on strike

She explained to Socialist Worker that TAs are demanding that they be regraded from pay scale 3 to scale 4. "We're fighting so hard," she said. "We're not fighting for millions.

"We just want the council to pay us fairly and to treat us with respect and value the work we do."

Aidan is a Unite union member at the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR). ICR workers scored a historic victory after 68 days of strikes, with the lowest-paid winning rises of 52 percent.

"The lessons that you are learning here are not just for yourself," Aidan said. "You are inspiring other workers and they will stand up too."

Liz Wheatley, branch secretary of Camden Unison, celebrated the explosion of resistance in France and the Spanish state.

"We have to say that those people resisting are a real source of inspiration," she said.

"The young people in France, and the people of all ages in Spain, show how we can fight back.

"We're all part of that same struggle against a world that puts profit before people."

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