Young people's rebellions sweeping the globe

Flames of resistance spread in France, Italy, Spain, Serbia and India **Plus** Why left should celebrate riots **>>Pages 4&5 and 10&11**

Celebrations as Lula wins in Brazil... again

Social movement rose against threat of far right. It must remain on streets to defend working class **>>Page 2**

Socialist Worker

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ISRAEL LAUNCHES NEW WAR IN WEST BANK DISPLACING THOUSANDS OF PALESTINIANS

MACRON—HUSH

TRUMP—STILL

MERZ—SILENT

BURNHAM—QUIET

THE SILENCE OF THE WEST

Israeli troops occupying Hebron, in the West Bank, earlier this year

Palestinians speak out against Israeli terrorism

>>Page 3

BUDGET

Let them eat gherkins, says chancellor

ANDY BURNHAM promised "everyday fixes" to tackle the cost of living crisis ahead of the budget on Wednesday.

Labour has pledged to remove import taxes on more than 100 products, such as baked beans and gherkins.

Around three million workers claim mileage expenses for using their own car for work. They will have to pay less tax on those expenses, under changes announced by chancellor John Healey.

Currently, if you claim Carer's Allowance, you lose all of it if you make just 1p over the weekly earnings limit. Labour says that will no longer happen.

Around 150,000 more people will be able to claim parental leave, such as the self-employed.

The measures show the bind Labour is in. Burnham needs to deliver changes to win back voters driven away by Keir Starmer.

But he's unwilling to take on big business and the bond markets, which demand "fiscal responsibility".

Cost

He's relying on low to no cost measures that don't make a substantial difference to working class people's lives.

Trade union leaders said Labour needed "bolder" policies to tackle the cost of living crisis. Unison union leader Andrea Egan said, "These are welcome measures.

"But the cost of essentials, including food and fuel, is going to keep soaring.

"That's why we need to see a bolder approach based on making the wealthy pay their fair share and improving the lives of working class communities in a more enduring way."

Only working class resistance will win such a programme. We need to bring the spirit of France, Spain, Portugal, Albania and India on to our streets.

Labour's in a pickle

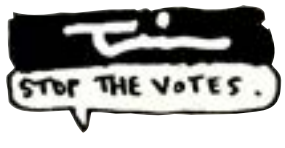
THE THINGS THEY SAY

‘Not all cultures are equal’
Reform UK member of the Welsh parliament **Francesca O’Brien** on a burqa ban

‘Alien culture’
O’Brien continued with an Islamophobic rant

‘Mr Ross’s membership of the Conservative party has been suspended with immediate effect pending an investigation. We cannot comment further while the investigation is ongoing’
Tory spokesperson after an Al Jazeera investigation showed Jack Ross discussing the cost of hiring contract killers

‘They can kick the fuck out of someone. They can start cutting people’s faces up. That’s another amount. They can stab someone. They can shoot someone. They could kill someone’
Ross describes the services a Loyalist paramilitary could provide



Celebrate Lula’s win in Brazil—but the movement is key

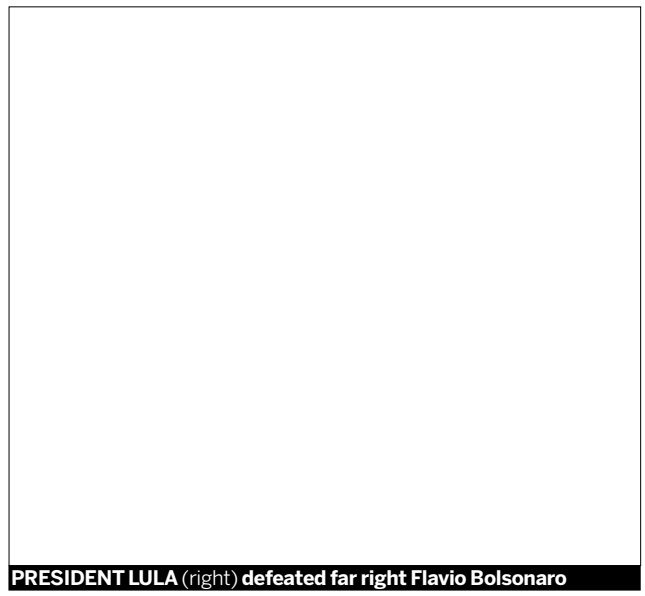
BRAZIL’S social democratic president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, scored a surprise victory over far right candidate Flávio Bolsonaro on Sunday.

Lula won 51.72 percent of the vote in the second round of the presidential election, securing a fourth non-consecutive term.

Bolsonaro, who won 48.21 percent, refused to accept the result. He is the son of Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil’s far right president between 2019 and 2023 who is now imprisoned.

Jair Bolsonaro was jailed for attempting a coup after he lost to Lula in the last election.

The result is a blow to Donald Trump—and bucks the recent trend of far right victories in Latin America.


PRESIDENT LULA (right) defeated far right Flavio Bolsonaro

Limits

But there should be no complacency. The story of Lula’s rise, fall and recovery show the limits of the Workers’ Party (PT).

The PT grew out of the workers’ movement in the ABC region, an industrial centre south of Sao Paulo, during the 1980s dictatorship.

Lula, then a metal workers’ union official, became its figurehead. He stood for the PT several times and was first elected in 2001 with 61 percent of the vote.

Lula built a political coalition made up of different sections of Brazilian society that had lost out due to neoliberalism.

The most important part of the coalition was the PT’s working class base.

But it included sections of big business geared towards domestic markets.

They feared increased competition from multinational corporations and hoped a PT government would protect them and boost consumer demand.

Regional oligarchs in the north, north east and rural interior moved closer to the PT to gain influence.

This meant the PT programme was full of contradictions.

In previous elections, Lula’s slogan was “Vote number 3, the rest are bourgeois.” In 2001, his running mate was millionaire textile boss José Alencar of the Tory-like Liberal Party.

The PT did improve the lives of millions of working class people with welfare programmes, access to university and electrification for poorer neighbourhoods.

But the PT never challenged neoliberalism—it sought to manage it in a fairer way.

That strategy appeared to work in the 2000s when the commodity price boom was in full swing.

The revenues from agricultural and energy exports allowed Lula to redistribute wealth and increase investments without an assault on the capitalist class. His successor, Dilma Rousseff, took over in 2010 in the wake of the global financial crisis.

The commodity price boom had petered out and Brazil’s economy began to nose-dive in 2014.

Rousseff pushed through austerity, but didn’t go far enough for the bosses. The right wing congress impeached her in 2019.

Failures

The PT’s failures opened the door to Jair Bolsonaro’s victory in the 2018 election.

His policies during Covid—which murdered 750,000 Brazilians—and a tanking economy saw voters narrowly swing back to Lula in 2022.

Lula has been able to deliver reforms in his third term, once again thanks to rising commodity prices.

But there has been no assault on the banks, big business and multinationals that fleece working class people.

For example Brazil has the highest level of income inequality in the world.

Lula’s room for manoeuvre will be more limited in his fourth term. Economic growth has slowed to under 2 percent and Lula’s advisors are already weighing up health and welfare cuts.

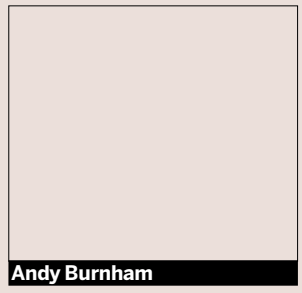
Rejoice at Lula’s win, but people will have to stay on the streets. It will take mobilisation from below to beat back the far right—and win a system that puts people before profit.

Left should support free movement for all

ANDY BURNHAM tried to shift Britain closer to the European Union (EU) while throwing a sop to the right over immigration.

He announced last weekend that he wants an “honest discussion” about freedom of movement in an interview with the Sunday Times newspaper.

He said, the “freedom of movement” within the EU saw a “type of immigration that perhaps wasn’t as difficult” as now.


Andy Burnham

“Revolving-door migration where people would come and then go back is different,” he continued. “The balance of migration has changed, hasn’t it?”

Brexit

Socialist Worker defended freedom of movement for EU migrants—and campaigned to keep it after Brexit.

But the freedom of movement within the EU went hand in hand with a deadly external border.

Burnham saying European immigration was a better “type” will be a dog whistle to the right, who don’t want black and brown people coming to Britain.

The right was enraged that Brexit saw more immigration from outside Europe.

The left should defend freedom of movement for all.

Immigration is not to blame for the social problems facing working class people.

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ANTI-RACISM

Unity marches take on threat of fascism

AROUND 300 people marched against the far right and racism in Sheffield last Saturday.

The Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) unity march came after a surge in far right activity in the city.

After rampaging through Dover, Patriot Platform staged a protest in the Darnall area of Sheffield two weeks ago.

Darnall has one of the largest Muslim communities in the city.

Around 20 young Muslim men from Darnall joined the rally on Saturday—and two addressed the crowd.

“These people, like Tommy Robinson, are trying to intimidate us and dominate us,” they said.

“Women in Darnall are scared to go to the mosque, now we go with them. The men have to stand outside the mosque in hi-vis to make them feel safe and protect them.

“We don’t want violence, we see everyone as equal.”

One of the Darnall residents told Socialist Worker, “Women in the area are scared to walk the streets.

Threat

“The 300 men that marched posed a real threat to us. People have to stand together.”

The Darnall residents wore masks at the protest, fearing that they would be recorded and then targeted by the fascists.

As they arrived in the square, police tried to stop them and force them to take their masks off.

“Why do they tell us to take our masks off but stand around while the fascists wear masks?” they said from the stage.

“They let the Patriot Platform march down the street and marched along beside them. But they try to stop us from joining a protest against racism.”

After the Patriot Platform march, SUTR organised a meeting in Darnall of over 300 people.

Most were local residents. Several cops attended the meeting, claiming they didn’t know the far right protest was going to happen.

Recent events in Sheffield have brought home the threat of the far right. But they have also shown how SUTR building roots in local areas can mobilise people.

Rebecca Long

A full SUTR round-up is on socialistworker.co.uk

Palestinians speak out as Israel launches attack

by JUNE BUDD

THE WEST is standing by after Israel launched a major offensive in the West Bank last week.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu launched the assault on Friday of last week to "destroy" parts of Hebron in the West Bank.

Nisreen from Hebron told Socialist Worker, "It was your government that gave them the right to do all that has happened.

"Governments disappeared during the war on Gaza and didn't ask about what's happening in the West Bank.

"We face oppression, injustice, and the annihilation of everything Palestinian. They must act and do something to rescue and protect us from these gangs."

By Sunday morning, Israel had forced over 2,000 Palestinians to leave their homes.

Amal, in Nablus in the West Bank, told Socialist Worker, "Today, settlers and the Israeli army have completely shut down the roads and checkpoints.

HUNDREDS OF people rallied outside Downing Street on Monday night PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Settlers

"Settlers have gathered in the streets, bringing all movement to a complete standstill.

"My two children—aged ten and nine—could not go to school today—they are home now and the day has been lost with nothing to show for it.

"We hear gunfire, screaming and the sounds of destruction.

"There is a children's park nearby where we used to go for some relief, but the settlers have taken it over.

"They have left us with nothing. Is this even conceivable? No water, no electricity, no land, no education, no recreation, no life at all."

Netanyahu promised a "very extensive" military operation across the entire occupied territory "unlike any seen since the Six Day War".

That's when the terror state seized East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967.

Last week Israel put the cities of Hebron and Halhul into lockdown with military checkpoints and roadblocks.

Netanyahu said Israeli forces were going to "evacuate the residents", "go from house to house" to destroy what he described as "terrorist infrastructure".

He praised "our heroic" Israeli settlers in the West Bank for "standing in the breach". "You are a role model for the people of Israel, you are a role model for the State of Israel," he said.

On the same morning, Israel murdered two Palestinians and injured others in a drone strike on Al-Nasr neighbourhood of Gaza City.

The offensive comes after Israeli forces murdered Palestinian resistance fighters Firas Ja'aba and Hamouda Ja'aba last week.

They had killed two Israeli soldiers and injured three more after opening fire on a checkpoint in Hebron.

Israelis had already begun the demolition of Palestinian neighbourhoods near the site of the shooting.

There is a wave of settler and military violence ahead of the Israeli election on Tuesday (see below).

Israel has already placed at least 925 checkpoints or barriers in the West Bank.

The gates of the Massafer Yatta compound of villages, which houses over 10,000 people, were closed last weekend.

Mahmoud, from the village of Umm al-Khair in the West Bank, told Socialist Worker, "People here feel fear, terror and a constant threat."

He said Palestinians' lives "have come under threat again and again" from Israel's far right ministers.

Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, who described himself as a "fascist homophobe", are leading the charge grabbing more Palestinian land. But the violence isn't just down to far right ministers or settlers—it flows from the nature of the Israeli settler colonial state.

A coalition of Western states, including Britain, imposed sanctions on trade with Israeli settlements in the West Bank past month.

This wouldn't have happened without the mass movement for Palestine over the last three years.

But what action is the West taking now? The Palestine solidarity movement is right to keep up the pressure—and demand a full trade and arms embargo.

★Fight the far right ★Resist imperialism

join the SWP

Israelis vote for genocide or apartheid in general election

VOTING HAD begun in the Israeli election, as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday.

It is the first election since 7 October 2023, when the Palestinian resistance launched Operation Al-Aqsa Flood to reclaim stolen land.

There are divisions between Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition parties. But more unites them. None of the major Israeli parties support even the sham "two-state solution".

Gadi Eisenkot, leader of the opposition, has classed himself as an egalitarian liberal. He supports Israeli settlements in the West Bank. He only opposes proceeding with the E1 settlement project which would split the West Bank in two.

Eisenkot favours the status quo of apartheid and occupation before 7 October, with a puppet Palestinian Authority maintaining civilian rule over some areas.

He was chief of the general staff of the Israeli military from 2015 to 2019.

He also pushed the Dahiya doctrine, which saw Israel destroy civilian infrastructure in Lebanon in 2006.

Dockers to strike against war

PORTS ACROSS the Mediterranean will shut down this Friday as workers at over 100 in 17 countries go on strike.

For years, military cargo used to ravage Palestine has gone through civilian ports across the world.

These workers are uniting their demands over pay and conditions with the fightback against war and genocide.

Giorgos Gogos, president of the Dockworkers' Union of Piraeus Port Authority in Greece, spoke to Socialist Worker about the action.

He said, "We have called a global day of action against the militarisation of ports and war. We are calling for an end to austerity and to threats to trade unions' freedoms.

"Across the world, armed conflicts are increasing instability and insecurity," he said. "People are bleeding for the profits of imperialists and capitalists.

"Plans for militarisation like the European Union's ReArm Europe project affect all European ports, states, societies and citizens," he said.

"There is international dialogue between dockers in the European Dockworkers Council and many others.

Revolts

"Dockworkers have a tradition of international cooperation. We have struggled and won together many times."

The strike comes as revolts are spreading across Europe. In Italy a general strike has been called for the same day.

Giorgos said, "We think that every struggle from below has to link with others and in unity for social rights and trade union rights.

"Many social struggles are spreading with shared demands. Our action is following the young people and students in France, Albania, Belgium, Spain.

"We want to connect with them because we face similar problems. People are fed up with decisions from elites.

"Our militant answer to these attacks is going to be more effective if they are coordinated across Europe.

"We are asking British workers to support us practically and participate in the struggle for peace and prosperity. We are demanding welfare not warfare."

Frankie Murden

30 October, International day of action in support of dock and port workers. Go to www.stopwar.org.uk

What are the key challenges facing the movement in France?

by **CAMILLA ROYLE** in France

THE FRENCH state threw everything including the kitchen sink into trying to crush the movement on the streets last Saturday.

Yet people mobilised across France to ensure the state failed. Trade unions said more than 800,000 came out across the country. They scored an impressive victory against Emmanuel Macron and Sébastien Lecornu.

The president and prime minister had mobilised over 70,000 police officers, the paramilitary GBGM with its armoured vehicles and the RAID and GIGN "counter-terror" units.

But hundreds of thousands defied them and took to the streets of Paris. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the left wing LFI party, said the march in the capital was four kilometres—almost two and half miles—long.

The police arrested hundreds of people and blocked protests in some towns and cities.

Defy

Many people did defy the bans and face down violence, including tens of thousands of people in Marseille, 20,000 in Lyon and 10,000 in Bordeaux.

Saturday was a stunning success, but the movement still faces major obstacles if it is going to win.

The school students' demands over staff shortages, crumbling buildings and poor job prospects have fused with anger over police violence, genocide, the threat of fascism and climate collapse.

These fears—and more—combine to give people a sense that capitalism does not offer them a future. But the different elements of the struggle all move at different speeds. Trade unions called strikes on 17 October in a day of action alongside students. It was a glimpse of the potential power of workers to shut down the country and stop the flow of bosses' profits.

A protester amid tear gas in Lyon

French union leaders have put out very militant statements calling on everyone to strike. But the trade union bureaucracy is a major obstacle to the struggle.

There have been dramatic scenes of union members—including parents—linking arms in the face of tear gas to defend students during mass demonstrations.

Bravery

But whatever the bravery of French working class militants, their leaders show the same tendency as leaders here to want to negotiate a deal and return to business as usual.

The key division in the unions is not between left and right, but the rank and file made up of ordinary workers and the paid officials.

Socialist Workers Party founder Tony Cliff emphasised that the bureaucracy was "a distinct, basically conservative, social formation".

This social layer balances between bosses and workers. Its role is to try to negotiate between the two groups, often by securing a deal in the workplace that falls short of what could have been won.

That same bureaucratic pressure can affect layers wider than the officialdom, for example, those elected to leadership bodies.

France has multiple union federations. The largest are the CGT—associated with the Communist Party—and the more moderate CFDT.

The different federations sometimes call actions jointly and tend to prioritise unity between them—even if it means moving at the pace of the slowest.

Chris Harman discussed the French general strike of 1968 in the book The Fire Last Time. He explained that the role of the leaders of the union federations is to establish themselves to the bosses as their preferred negotiating partner.

To prove themselves, they need to show that they can turn on and turn off working class struggles. And, they need to present themselves as a respectable section of the movement. But they also face a competing pressure from the base of the unions.

To achieve this they must visibly be on the side of young demonstrators. And that means rank and file militants have to "work with and against" the bureaucracy. But this doesn't mean working with the bureaucracy over one issue and against it on another.

Nor does it mean cheerleading the bureaucracy when it leads struggle on the way up, then critiquing it on the way down.

The trade union federations have called a general strike for 5 November. Revolutionary socialists welcome it—but are pushing a strategy that goes beyond the horizons of the trade union bureaucracy.

The CGT has called for general assemblies in workplaces everywhere. These have to be sites of struggle over strategy, build confidence and organise at the base.

Rank and file workers can seize on the 5 November general strike to organise action before and after it. They could shut down France with an indefinite general strike, drive out Macron—and beat back the fascists.

All of these questions would be more easily answered with a larger revolutionary socialist organisation in workplaces and neighbourhoods.

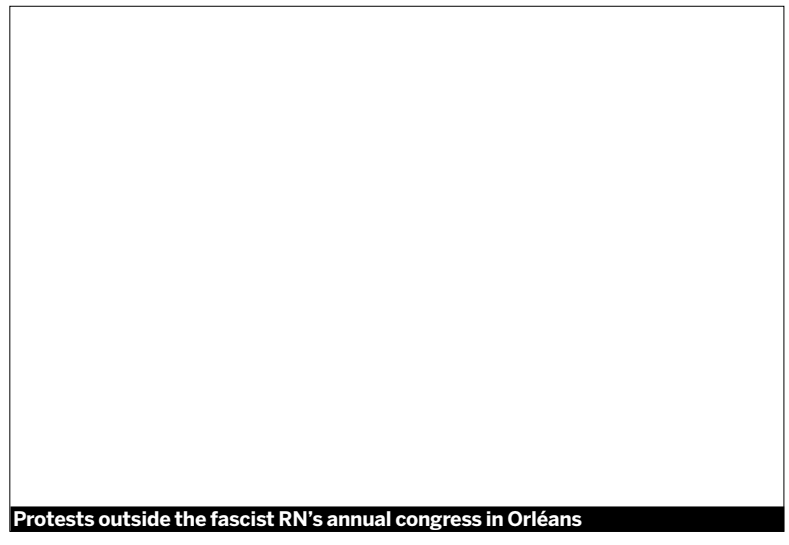
If revolutionaries aren't organised, reformist leadership will limit the movement's potential.

BACK STORY

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

- Mon 21 Sept, First school protests over teacher shortage
- Tue 29 Sept, Strikes join the student movement
- Tue 6 Oct, 100,000 students and workers take to the streets of Paris
- Sat 17 Oct, Widespread rioting follows a day of action
- Sat 24 Oct, Anti-fascists protest RN's annual congress

HUNDREDS OF thousands took to the streets in Paris defying president Macron's armed bodies of men



Protests outside the fascist RN's annual congress in Orléans

"Rank and file workers should seize the general strike and stay out after

Right ousted in Serbia

●HUNDREDS OF thousands of people rejoiced in Serbia on Sunday after right wing ruler Aleksandar Vučić was ousted in historic election.

Vučić, who could not legally stand for a third term as president, resigned from the post last month in the hope of becoming prime minister.

But the Student List won 53 percent, while Vučić's SNS came second with 39 percent.

In 2025, a student movement erupted after the Novi Sad railway station disaster to demand justice and an end to corruption.

The movement organised through "plenums", which selected people without a background in politics to stand for the Student List.

The Student List has a broad range of supporters ranging from the left to liberals and conservatives.

But the left can use the energy of the protests to push for socialist demands and build movements outside parliament.

Revolt spreads in Spain

●Workers in the Spanish state are preparing for a general strike on 11 November ahead of a snap general election.

There are talks between Spanish and Portuguese trade union federations about launching a historic strike across the Iberian peninsula.

There is a revolt over housing in both countries. The involvement of organised workers could deepen the political crisis facing the ruling class.

Massive democracy protests set for India

INDIA'S democracy movement plans a massive "Save the Vote, Save the Country" demonstration in the capital, New Delhi, this Sunday.

Organisers hope to unite the student Cockroach protesters, who have fought valiantly over the issue for several weeks, with workers, farmers and traders.

The new push is being led by Congress Party leader and MP, Rahul Gandhi. He hopes to pull in much of the parliamentary opposition behind him.

Many in the Cockroach movement will feel relieved that some major political forces are now backing their demand for the chief election commissioner to resign.

The students face the state's wrath for daring to accuse Narendra Modi's far right BJP regime of "vote theft."

Cops have rounded up hundreds of movement leaders on trumped-up charges and thrown many into jails. A New Delhi court last week, for example, refused to reduce the bail it set for imprisoned protest leader and revolutionary Marxist, Neha Bora.

Judges told them that they would still need to produce 10,000 rupees to be released from custody—that's enough money for a rural family to live on for about two months.

What are the charges against Neha? That they shouted radical slogans and called on fellow students to join a Cockroach demonstration. Hundreds of other activists are now fighting similar court battles.

Since late September, protesters have been demanding the resignation of the Modi-appointed head of the election commission, Gyanesh Kumar. If they are successful, it could lead to demands for a rerun of recent elections won by the BJP—including the 2024 general election.

Kumar has led a "revision" of India's electoral roll that has seen some 130 million names be removed, many of them in the poorest areas and many of them Muslim.

Anger over the revision has combined with huge resentment among young people at record levels of youth unemployment, a rigged exam system and rapid price rises.

Radical protest leader Neha Bora

Nearly 40 percent of graduates under 25 years old are unemployed, despite India's economic growth rate of nearly 8 percent.

"Modi is scared," says one arrested young woman, speaking from behind a metal grill as the police bus pulls away. "He is using the police to crush us. We are on the roads to save the constitution of this country, to save democracy."

"This outpouring is taking on every issue with Modi's regime

Detained

Dev Sharma, a software engineer who says he's been detained on multiple protests, sees the voter-roll dispute as one piece of a much larger "package of frustration."

"This outpouring is about everything wrong happening in this regime, and we are going to take on every issue, one by one," he says.

The entry of Congress leaders and other MPs into the field of battle might reassure activists under pressure from the state. But there are also dangers. Congress is a neoliberal party of the centre.

It seeks to use the democracy movement to reestablish its credentials as the main opposition. Sure, it wants to make life difficult for Modi, but it doesn't want radical change or major disruption to capitalism.

That means Congress will likely seek to blunt the radicalism of the Cockroach protests, limiting its scope and removing revolutionary content. Nevertheless, it will want to tap into the growing sense of contempt among young people.

Devyani Sarkar, a Delhi University graduate student in English literature, says the wave of demonstrations builds on earlier student-led protests over education and violence against women, and the crackdown has only added to young people's frustration.

"The more they try to suppress people, the sharper the movement becomes," she says.

Anti-fascists take to the streets of Orleans against National Rally

AT LEAST 30,000 people marched through Orléans in a show of defiance against the fascist National Rally (RN) as it held its annual congress.

The protest was organised by local activists and supported by the anti-racist group Marche des Solidarités (MDS).

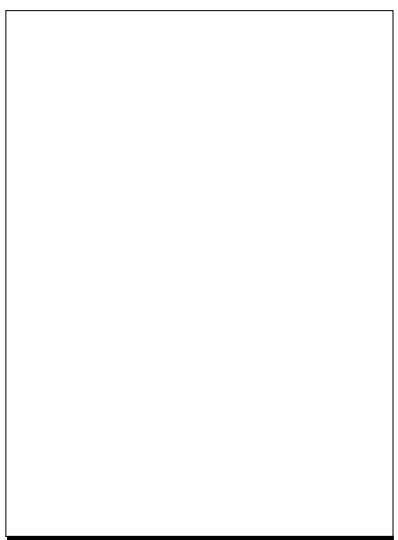
It drew anti-fascists from as far as Brittany, Marseille and Toulouse. And, there were around 20 coach loads of people from Paris and the surrounding areas.

There were blocs from several of the major trade union federations and large groups of young people.

A delegation of undocumented migrants, known in France as sans-papiers—without papers—were set to join the demonstration. But three coaches from Paris were stopped by the paramilitary Gendarmerie.

The cops refused to let them pass without showing their identity documents. So about 200 people occupied the motorway.

Anti-fascists explained to Socialist Worker why they had wanted to come to Orléans.


Protesters occupying the motorway

"Fascism is a virus," said Abdelkrim. He said it infects society when there is a bad financial situation, dividing people and making it impossible to build unity.

Elias told Socialist Worker, "We should fight the extreme right by all means necessary. The extreme right is increasing the tension in France and it's increasing the hatred towards Muslims and Jews."

"Some say what is happening will strengthen the far right because of the state propaganda," Oscar told Socialist Worker.

But the movement on the streets also gives anti-racists hope because it brings people together.

Oscar explained that the movement has become more politicised in recent years, especially since the revolt in 2023 over the killing of Nahel Merzouk.

The march on Saturday followed a suspected racist and Islamophobic attack in Trappes, west of Paris on Friday that provoked fear among the local population. A shooter killed one person and injured five others.

Anti-fascist Sebastien spoke about the need to combat racism from mainstream politicians.

"We need to continue the demonstrations, kick out Macron and make the media accountable for what they say," he told Socialist Worker. Saturday was a stunning success—but the movement still faces major obstacles if it is going to win.

ANALYSIS
ALEX CALLINICOS

Can the fires of France spread here?

LOOKING ACROSS the Channel at the magnificent mass eruptions in France on 17 and 24 October, and the other protests across Europe, one is tempted to ask—"Why not here?" Is it something about the British?

The writer GK Chesterton cynically suggested that even during the English Revolution of the 1640s and 1650s "a few men talked of freedom, while England talked of ale."

Equally cynically, the Paris-based journalist Simon Kuper writes about the French events in the Financial Times newspaper—"In France, the first question to ask about revolutionary action is always—is this real or just theatrical? The French are raised to revere and re-enact their past uprisings." In other words, there are deeply entrenched cultural differences that explain why some peoples revolt and others don't.

I'm not persuaded. If we stick just with the neoliberal era in Britain, Margaret Thatcher's government saw inner-city risings in 1980, 1981 and 1985, the epic struggle of the miners in 1984-5 and the mass movement against the Poll Tax in 1990 that brought her down.

Fast-forwarding to after the financial crash in 2007-08, the Tory-Liberal coalition was greeted by massive and violent street protests by university and college students against increased fees in 2010, and another bout of inner-city riots and two public sector mass strikes in 2011.

Nevertheless, one could say that there is more of a puzzle around the past 15 years. British capitalism has, like the main continental European capitalisms, been stuck in a post-financial crisis economic rut, with their mainstream political systems fragmenting and the welfare state shrinking. So why has France stood out with the Yellow Vests movement before the pandemic, the huge strikes against president Emmanuel Macron's pension "reforms" in 2023 and now these new mass upheavals?

Polarisation

An explanation that won't wash is the displacement of discontent onto racism. One of the paradoxes of the French situation is that Marine Le Pen of the fascist National Rally is running at 36 percent in the latest poll for France's presidential election next year. France is marked by extreme socio-political polarisation to the left and right.

Two inter-connected factors may help explain the difference. One is that Labour isn't quite as decrepit as many other social-democratic parties in Europe. In government, despite being locked into appeasing the financial markets, Keir Starmer threw a few scraps to the trade unions. Andy Burnham has taken this balancing act to new levels as he tries to give the impression of caring while actually offering very little more.

And, one of the British ruling class's greatest assets remains that Labour is buttressed by the dead weight of the trade union bureaucracy holding back the workers' movement. It sold out the 2011 mass strikes and made sure that the pay revolt in 2022-23 didn't develop into a bigger challenge.

If we look at France and Italy, the two big European countries to have seen militant struggles, it's not just that organised reformism is weaker, giving openings to a right wing chancer like Macron or the fascist Giorgia Meloni. It's also that the trade union movement in both countries is fragmented into rival federations. This allows cracks to develop that can be exploited by small left unions—for example, Si Cobas in Italy, which organises especially migrant workers and has driven the solidarity strikes with Palestine.

In Britain, by contrast, anger at where society is going has been expressed by a series of mass popular movements around political issues. This started with the revival of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1980s, developed especially with the Stop The War Coalition's campaign against the Iraq War and continues today with the Palestine solidarity movement. Palestine remains a lightning conductor of mass radicalisation. Western ruling classes' complicity in the genocide offers a window into the reality of imperialism.

The differences I've been talking about are mainly at the level of what Karl Marx called the political superstructure—the institutions that ruling classes use to manage their populations. But material suffering, hatred of the super-rich and their hangers-on and anger aroused by the genocide feed into each other, cutting across national frontiers. This volatile mix could ignite here too.

LETTERS

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

Indian police are targeting the women who protest

YOU HAVE highlighted the ongoing police brutality against protesters here in Delhi (Socialist Worker, 21 October).

They have indeed been vicious and horrible—particularly towards women activists. In one video from our protest sites, a rape survivor speaks out.

She wanted to know why there are so many cops to harass women who protest, but none when women want action against rape.

The fact that the Delhi police, controlled by a Hindu nationalist government, specifically target women during the Hindu festivals of Navratri and Durga Puja is itself an irony and an outrage.

Women protesting against arrests in Delhi

These festivals are dedicated to the worship of the feminine divine.

The police are detaining everyone and putting them in buses. No lawyers are allowed to see them or are provided for them. Our phones are being snatched. All these people are being sent to jail for daring to raise the Indian flag.

Meanwhile, there are far right, pro-government goons on the street, and they are "protected" by the state.

That's why I believe our liberation cannot come from symbolism alone.

It demands a struggle against patriarchy, class oppression and the institutions that reproduce them.

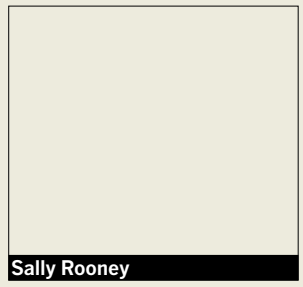
Anju
New Delhi, India

Big book sale boost for Rooney

LAST WEEK, Sally Rooney's books were set to be pulled from bookshops' shelves across Britain.

Her public support for Palestine and the direct action group Palestine Action is the reason for this absurd censorship.

Rooney has used her money to support the group in their lengthy battle for justice against the government's ban on them as a proscribed terrorist organisation. She was told that the sale of her books would be a "serious criminal offence".



Sally Rooney

The government's plan is backfiring though.

Each attempt to silence supporters of Palestine brings more people to its defence and sales of Rooney's books have skyrocketed 300 percent since the publisher's announcement.

Brenda Beaver
Hampstead

ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Keep calm and carry on—while stocks last

WES STREETING, the nauseatingly smug defence secretary, was everywhere this week.

Every time I turned on the radio news, he was telling us to stock up on water, batteries, toilet rolls and tins of beans.

This has come across to many people as scaremongering.

People who lived through the pandemic are worried that his comments will make people panic buy.

But worse than that, he seems to think that individuals are responsible for dealing with the disasters inflicted on us by warmongering governments and climate destroying corporations.

I don't know about Streeting, but I find it hard enough to pay for what I need day-to-day.

And I haven't got the space to keep more stuff.

Streeting sounds like a throwback to the public information broadcasts that told people to protect themselves from nuclear attack by hiding under the table.

Spend less on weapons, Streeting. That would make us safer.

Julia Ryder
Malvern

Stop this data centre

100 LOCAL people gathered outside the meeting of Broadland District Council to protest at the proposed building of a massive data centre in Norfolk.

The campaign is growing. The plans are opposed by local residents, many councillors, the local Labour MP and climate campaigners.

There is anger about the destruction of a protected marshland and the impact on local residents.

The demonstration was loud, lively and positive and another is planned in November.

Mary Littlefield
Norwich

HATE FASCISM, WAR AND CAPITALISM?

- Want to see the global youth rebellion spread here? ☐
- Oppose the rise of far right hate across Europe? ☐
- Support Palestine and oppose imperialism? ☐
- Oppose sexism and the assault on trans+ people? ☐
- Want a socialist alternative to the Labour Party? ☐

YES? Then you should be in the Socialist Workers Party

socialistworker.co.uk/join-swp

Or scan this QR code to join

THE UPRISING OF 1381—WHEN THE PEASANTS FOUGHT BACK

The new film The Uprising has brought to life the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. **June Budd** spoke to **Martin Empson** about what we can learn from the uprising today

AFTER A deadly pandemic swept the world, an uncaring government fleeced the poor for years to pay for war. Life became unbearable and the people of England were not happy.

This is not 2026, but 1381.

Life for ordinary peasants and labourers was dire. But when revolt broke out, they rose up in their thousands and demanded that all property, land and wealth "should be held in common" by the people.

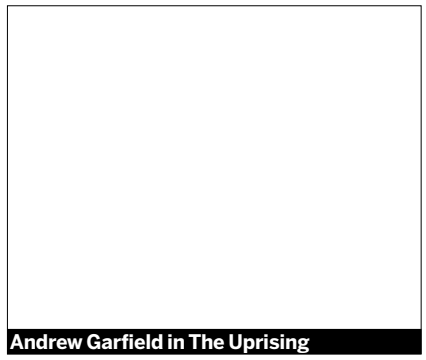
The Black Death hit England in 1348 and killed nearly half of the population. Those who were left had much more work to do and the ruling class needed them to do it. This meant labourers started to recognise their value in society.

Initial pushes for higher wages in the 1350s were met with vicious repression.

But demands kept coming from below. The revolt over living conditions combined with huge questions around the role of the Church. Radical preachers such as John Ball began to call into question the way property was divided among people.

Anger at decades of relentless taxation reached a head when a poll tax was introduced in 1380. This demanded that every person over 14 years old pay taxes.

To ensure this, the ruling class implemented a "puberty test" to discover if girls were 14. Drill gangs of tax collectors would violate girls by inspecting their genitals and measuring their pubic hair.



Andrew Garfield in The Uprising

The peasants had enough of exploitation and violation. They organised and fought back.

Initial uprisings in Essex and Kent grew when the mysterious Wat Tyler was elected to lead perhaps as many as 140,000 men.

They marched to London with a dream of equality. They also dreamt of blood—namely that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Sudbury.

The peasants felt that the 14 year old king, Richard II, was being misled by councillors like Sudbury. This was a huge undermining of authority which was then believed to be given to monarchs by God himself.

This revolt did not succeed in overthrowing the system. It ended in bloody state terror. But it struck at the heart of feudal power structures, scared the ruling class and affected permanent change.

It also represents the first time the people of Britain raised socialist demands.

This is the scene set by the new film, The Uprising. Socialist Worker spoke to historian and author Martin Empson about the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and its impact today.

> **Revolt was the first time socialist demands were raised in Britain**

What caused the Peasants' Revolt of 1381?

PEOPLE WERE fed up with the systematic oppression and exploitation they faced on a daily basis. They worked incredibly long, hard hours, then had to pay taxes to the feudal lord and the Church.

One of the most odious taxes was that, if the father of a peasant family died, the mourning family had to pay the lord for the loss of "his" peasant.

These were brutal societies where there was always the threat of torture and violence.

The new film follows the main character, Ploughman (top) **Wat Tyler was elected by the masses and led hundreds of thousands of men into London** (below)

The depiction of the peasants in the film is quite accurate, but it misses the sense of systematic, centuries-long repression, which meant revolts broke out all the time.

It's well documented that the trigger for the rebellion was the imposition of the third poll tax, to pay for what we now know as the Hundred Years' War—conflict between England and France from 1337 to 1453.

One scene of "The Uprising" presents this quite accurately. Tax collectors assault a girl by checking her genitals to see if she is eligible for taxation. The response of the villagers is quite spectacular.

But we have to be careful that we don't say the revolt happened because of this one instance. We must understand the revolts as a continuity of resistance.

What conditions did peasants face?

I THINK it's fair to say that the levels of poverty and exploitation were extreme. There was a complete gulf between the labouring classes and the lords.

There's a great scene in the film where a peasant storms into a hall and the tables are stuffed with food—abundance unlike anything they would've seen before.

The lords had wealth, money and what they needed to survive.

But they also had culture, music and

art. They had leisure time, we often forget that.

The author A K Blakemore makes the point that those who had extreme wealth spent most of their time frivolously. On the other side, the peasants worked all day.

The Church was incredibly wealthy, the peasants saw it as part of their exploitation. They had to work on the Church's land while it was accumulating massive wealth. This is why they targeted Sudbury, the archbishop, and beheaded him.

How did the revolt organise itself?

IT CAN be hard to comprehend how such a massive uprising could be co-ordinated in such a narrow space of time.

There is speculation of a secret organisation. My personal thought is that, while there wasn't a secret revolutionary party hidden in the hedges of England, there certainly was networking.

The first thing the peasants did when they rose up was send messages to local villages to rise.

The word spread very quickly and the march to London brought out many more as they went through towns and villages on the way.

Were peasants all the same?

THERE WAS a lot of differentiation among the peasantry—some didn't own any land, some owned some and some owned a fair bit. Some even had labourers of their own.

Serfs depicted working the land in a 14th century manuscript

Living under capitalism, we often think of workers as people who just sell their labour. But the peasantry included those we wouldn't typically think of as such, many would've been small artisans, such as blacksmiths.

But 1381 was a revolt of the entire peasant class. It wasn't just the serfs—those who were bound to their lords, nearly slaves—but they did make up the majority. Entire villages rose up and marched on London.

Women took part in many feudal era revolts, and they often played important roles. It's shown well in the new film that the march on London involved everyone.

What could the revolt have achieved and what were its limitations?

THE PEASANTS did win some gains and the government and kings were very wary of upsetting them. But what the peasants actually wanted was the fundamental transformation of society.

They wanted to end serfdom, the world where the rich hoarded all the wealth while they suffered in poverty.

If you read speeches at the time, such as those from radical preacher and leader John Ball, they are calling for something closer to a socialist society than you might expect. This sentiment is shared in other peasant revolts of the era.

But this dream wasn't realisable, partially because of the limitations of peasants as a class. There were differing interests among them which meant there would always be tensions at the base.

The English ruling class still had an enormous ability to repress.

The peasants didn't have the capability to develop the sort of social force needed to change the world.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels celebrated peasant rebellions, but they knew the peasantry didn't have what it took to be a class "for itself"—proper class consciousness.

What value does the revolt hold today?

THE STORY inspires us. When we look at history we see war, plague and exploitation everywhere. But people organised and protested. People did try to change the world, even if they weren't successful.

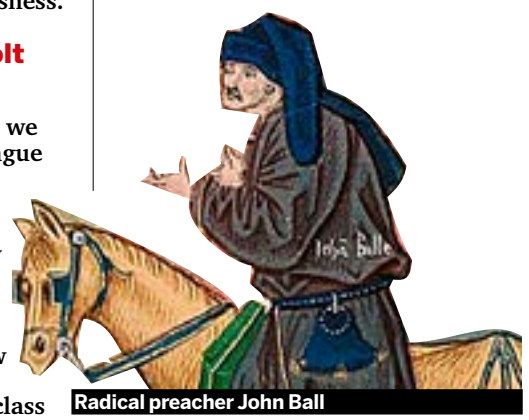
The revolt terrified the ruling class and it made them think very carefully about how they treated the peasantry in the future. The British ruling class didn't try and institute another poll tax until Margaret Thatcher.

One of the great things about the film is that it reminds us that ordinary people are part of history. We are told that history is kings and queens and generals, but the film shows that in crucial moments of history, ordinary people play a role.

It reminds us that, as Ball said, "They have handsome seats and manors, when we must brave the wind and rain in our labours in the field. But it is from our labour they have the wherewith to support their pomp.

"Let us go to the king, telling him we must have it otherwise, or that we shall find a remedy for it ourselves."

This interview is longer at socialistworker.co.uk


Radical preacher John Ball

This compelling retelling lurches into bizarre fantasy

IT IS strange that the Peasants' Revolt has had to wait this long to appear as a major film. But now one is here, what should we make of it?

The important moments of the revolt are all there. The depiction of its outbreak in Essex is excellent, showing the arrogance of the tax collectors and their rough treatment of the villagers. When Ploughman—the central figure played by Andrew Garfield—explodes and screams at them, "We have given you enough!" you really believe him.

Very quickly, and with a pace that captures the breathless speed of the events, we are in the forest with the rebels. This part is great. The news of other risings, the conspiratorial letters, the meetings with neighbouring villages, the leaders, Wat Tyler (Cosmo Jarvis) and John Ball (Jamie Bell), are all compelling.

It is noteworthy that the plot involves a significant woman rebel—Alyce (Thomasin McKenzie).

Best of all are the aerial shots of the great marches. The images of ordinary people descending on the centres of power and realising their strength were the best visuals in the film.

Misrepresents

But it was with the events in London that for me the film began to change.

The occupation of London is portrayed as an orgy of bloodletting. This misrepresents things. There was violence, but it was not random.

It is too easy to come away with the impression that this was no more than a violent frenzy, what happens when the masses are allowed free rein in revolution—an old trope.

You see the people realising their strength

We should have been shown more of the planning before the revolt.

Many of the difficulties I've mentioned I might have put aside as the limitations of mainstream cinema.

However, in the last part of the film, director Paul Greengrass comes close to destroying his creation. The final 20 minutes are a bizarre and frankly unforgivable lurch into fantasy.

Ploughman, having returned to his fields, now becomes a rebel hero—lurking in the woods, wearing a hood—to seek the people's revenge.

Now, it seems Robin Hood has travelled forwards in time 200 years to be with us as the action hero Ploughman has become. Because it all has to come down to an individual, doesn't it? Not the ingenuity, self-organisation and political intelligence of ordinary working people.

The question is why on earth did Greengrass end his film like this?

He has said he wanted the conclusion to be one of hope. But this wasn't the way to do it.

Mark O'Brien

This review is longer online at socialistworker.co.uk

TEENAGE RIOTERS in France expropriate luxury items from the country's largest symbols of wealth

RIOTS AREN'T MINDLESS — THEY ARE POLITICAL

The establishment wants us to dismiss riots as irrational violence and looting as greed. But throughout history, rebellions on the streets have challenged the power of the state, writes **Judy Cox**

CIVIL rights leader Martin Luther King said in 1967, "In the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard".

King is now revered as the dignified face of the non-violent black civil rights movement. But his understanding of rioting and looting does not find much echo among those rushing to condemn looting in French cities.

The hypocrites who justify genocide in Gaza and the bombing of schools in Iran rush to denounce teenage rioters.

More progressive thinkers often celebrate the riots of yesterday as understandable and edgy. But they condemn the riots of today.

Politicians and the media line up to denounce rioters as criminals whose selfish actions undermine legitimate protests. But we live in a society which constantly tells us to measure our value by the clothes we wear, the phones we have and the homes we live in.

And most young people know they will always be denied the chance to enjoy those things.

Rioting and looting have always played a huge role in the history of social change.

They are not controversial because they undermine protest movements—they are controversial because they are often the movement's most radical tactic. This is the argument of Vicky Osterweil in her book, In Defence of Looting.

RIOTS work. Britain's inner city revolts of 1981 forced the Tory government to divert money to urban communities.

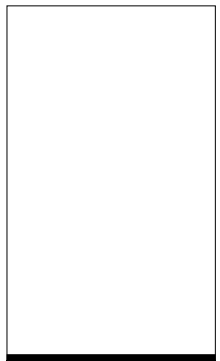
The riot against the poll tax in London's Trafalgar Square in 1991 forced the "invincible" Margaret Thatcher to drop her policy.

And, looting works. It enables the poor to enjoy the exclusive commodities held up as symbols of success. More often, it means families get basic necessities they can't afford. Looting—or "proletarian shopping"—is an effective means of direct expropriation.

As Delio Vasquez writes in The Poor Person's Defence of Riots, looting "results in you acquiring the things you are seeking".

The media always focuses on "criminality" and ignores rioters' political grievances. But peaceful and "well-behaved" protesters are not platformed.

The media never objectively reports protests. In 1967 The Movement, the magazine of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the US, explained the futility of appeasing the media. It wrote, "The white-run daily press in America is not an objective, critical viewer of events. Newspapers are industries."



Civil rights leader Martin Luther King

The media ignores the poverty endured by marginalised communities. So when they explode in fury, it appears irrational.

The police do not need an excuse for their violence. They attack peaceful protesters and brutalise racialised communities. Rioting is more often a response to police brutality than its cause.

Rioting is often blamed on "outside agitators". In the US, South racists often blamed activists from the North for stirring up black people.

> **Riots and looting have always played a huge role in the history of social change**

Today, it is everyone from billionaire George Soros, to antifa, anarchists, Muslims and the revolutionary left who are the "outside agitators".

The whole idea of "outside agitators" strips protestors of their agency. It assumes rioters' own experiences are insufficient to inspire acts of resistance.

Riots can be chaotic and destructive, especially when rioters are prevented from reaching centres of power and wealth. Many can understand the looting of designer stores, but recoil from the destruction of small, family-owned businesses.

But all serious protests, from civil disobedience to strikes, make life difficult for some ordinary people.

Back in the 1960s, Black Panther Assata Shakur was asked to condemn rioters who set fire to their own neighbourhoods. She replied, "They don't own those stores. I'm glad they burned down those stores because those stores were robbing them in the first place."

RIOTERS are condemned as opportunist criminals who are outside the political struggle. "Good protesters" care about political issues while "bad rioters" are just after trainers and handbags.

As Osterweil writes, "At the basis of this criticism is the idea that poor black or working class folks don't know what they're doing—that, when they riot and loot, they're acting outside reason, outside of 'real' struggle."

These accusations reached fever-pitch during the Los Angeles riots of 1992. The riots were a protest against the beating of a black man by cops who were acquitted of wrong-doing by an all-white jury.

Novelist Sylvia Wynter explained that rioters were seen as "seduced by the clamour of advertising". When this manufactured desire to consume was frustrated, they turned on each other. This dehumanised and depoliticised the rioters.

The idea that riots are opposed to political movements perpetuates the criminalisation of working class and black communities. When Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, prejudices about black criminality shaped the response.

Prisoners locked in cells as waters rose and families trapped on rooftops begging for milk and nappies were dismissed. Police and white vigilantes murdered people fleeing and arrested those trying to help the dying.

After the London riots of 2011, Evan Calder Williams published an essay, "An Open Letter to Those Who Condemn Looting".

He addressed the home secretary writing, "You are not condemning those who loot because they loot. You have condemned them long before. The fact that they loot just gives you some ammo in your long war of exclusion and denigration."

Williams argues that beneath attacks on the rioters' "crass materialism" is a "nastier worm, one that supports dissent only to the degree it remains irrelevant and immaterial".

Rioting and looting are disturbing to the establishment because they disrupt the core assumptions of capitalist society—the legitimacy of private

property and the right of the police and military to protect it.

When something is looted, it ceases to be a commodity and is removed from the cycle of exchange and profit. It is liberated through shared activism—rioting and looting are not individual acts.

Anthropologist Neal Keating has compared looting to the "potlatch"—common among the indigenous people of the north west Pacific.

The potlatch was held at weddings, births and deaths. At a potlatch, wealthy people competed to give away the most possessions. Any remaining possessions were burnt on bonfire. This prevented inequalities developing.

The potlatch was outlawed by the Canadian government and designated as a threat to civilisation and capitalism.

Our understanding of rioting and looting is shaped by this colonialism.

While riots are seen as incoherent outpourings of anger, historically they have often been intentional and targeted.

During the 18th century, angry mobs of starving English peasants chose not to steal from grain merchants. Historian E P Thompson described how peasants, "took corn from the farmers and sold it at the popular price in the market, brought back to the farmers not only the money but also the sacks."

HISTORICAL riots have given birth to coherent political movements. The storming of the Bastille sparked the French Revolution. The Stonewall Riots inspired the gay liberation movement.

And, riots are not outside the labour movement. Mass strike movements have involved elements of rioting, often provoked by police protection of scab workers.

The Tonypandy riots were a series of violent confrontations between 12,000 striking coal miners and the police in South Wales in November 1910.

During an evening of rioting, miners and their families looted and held a festive parade. Home secretary Winston Churchill sent in the military. One miner, Samuel Rhys, died and hundreds were injured.

The Tonypandy parade recalled a long history of community celebrations that tipped into rioting and mischief making against church, king and lord.

In his book, Riots, Risings and Revolution, Ian Gilmour describes how "violent repression and official terrorism can be justified by their success in quelling revolt, and abuses excused by reasons of state. Popular violence is given no such latitude."

The Los Angeles riots exploded in protest at police racism (top) **Looters carry boxes out of a home-cinema during the riots across England in 2011** (above)

In 18th century England, Gilmour writes, "violence came much more from the rulers than the ruled"

The legacy of this violent, colonial past endures. During the 2014 riots in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked by the police murder of Michael Brown, a hashtag appeared on Twitter. Under #suspectedlooters people posted pictures of colonial Europeans, plantation owners and racists.

Rioting and looting can challenge the authority of the state and the logic of capitalism.

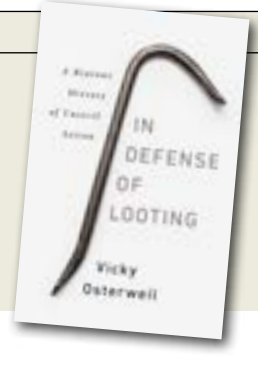
But they are not enough to transform society. Collective struggle in the workplace is democratic in a way riots can never be.

We need to create a new world as well as tearing down the old one. That can start on the streets—but it must finish where we have the power to create a new society, in the workplaces.

READ MORE

- **In Defense of Looting: A Riotous History of Uncivil Action** by Vicky Osterweil, £10
- **Reading Riots** by Tim Newburn, £17.99
- **Riots, Risings and Revolution: Governance and Violence in 18th-Century England** by Ian Gilmour, £16

Available at Bookmarks bookshop.co.uk



TEACH YOURSELF MARXISM
with Judy Cox

Are institutions independent from capitalism?

THE CORNELL 7 case has once again propelled institutional sexual abuse into the spotlight.

Members of Chi Phi frat house at Cornell University sexually assaulted Jane Doe. The university tried to hush it up.

Why do respected institutions choose to protect their reputation at the expense of survivors of abuse?

Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci distinguished between the institutions of the state and the institutions of what he called civil society.

Civil society is made up of voluntary organisations which exist between state institutions and the privatised family.

State institutions—the police, the courts, prisons, the armed forces—systematically use violence to reinforce hierarchies of control.

The ruling class exerts its ideological influence through civil society—the Church, the media, leisure and sport.

The intuitions of the state and of civil society reinforce each other.

They also reproduce hierarchies, those with influence can coerce and silence those with less power.

The Protestant and Catholic Churches have harboured abusers and exploited people to organise cover ups.

Decades before Jeffrey Epstein recruited politicians, CEOs and celebrities to his grooming gang, there was the Kincora Boys' Home in Belfast.

Protected

"Housefathers" there sexually abused boys at the home for 20 years before it was exposed in 1980. British intelligence protected senior figures from the military and judiciary who were involved in the abuse.

Jimmy Saville used his status at the BBC to abuse hundreds of children. Saville was protected by BBC executives, government ministers and his friendship with the then prince Charles.

They ignored rumours about his paedophilia and necrophilia to bask in his celebrity. He was only exposed after his death in 2011.

CHURCHES HAVE covered up abuse for centuries

An inquiry into the scandals of Kincora and Saville found that political and religious institutions "regularly put their own reputations or political interests before child protection".

Institutions such as the BBC are formally independent of the state. But they reflect and reinforce social inequalities. The rich create and sustain institutions and networks that protect each other.

Their schools and clubs are based on excluding, bullying and abusing others. This trains them to be brutal and ruthless "leaders".

But the institutions of civil society reflect something deeper than the interests of the ruling class.

Capitalism alienates us all from what makes us human—our capacity to work collectively to produce what we need.

We attribute human powers to inanimate objects. The things we create come to dominate us.

Karl Marx observed that under capitalism, "It seems as if the thing itself possesses the ability, the virtue, to establish production relations", rather than the workers who produce the thing.

"Human action can tear sick institutions down"

What happens in relation to commodities generalises across society. It appears that some mysterious force called "the market" causes prices to rise and fall.

Function

The extension of the state and the development of huge corporations have created sprawling bureaucracies. These bureaucracies take on an existence independent of their original function. They become an end in themselves.

Hungarian Marxist George Lukacs described how these institutions generate a "bureaucratic 'conscientiousness'". The worker in the bureaucracy develops a "sense of responsibility" towards the institution that employs them.

The bureaucracy itself becomes the important thing, not the service it was set up to provide for people.

This creates what Lukacs called a "ghostly objectivity" in which institutions appear to represent an objective force for stability and order.

Making the institution work, and protecting its reputation, becomes the primary objective for those enslaved to an institution.

But human action creates institutions and human action can tear them down. And we have the collective power to challenge the sick system which dehumanises us all.

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.

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

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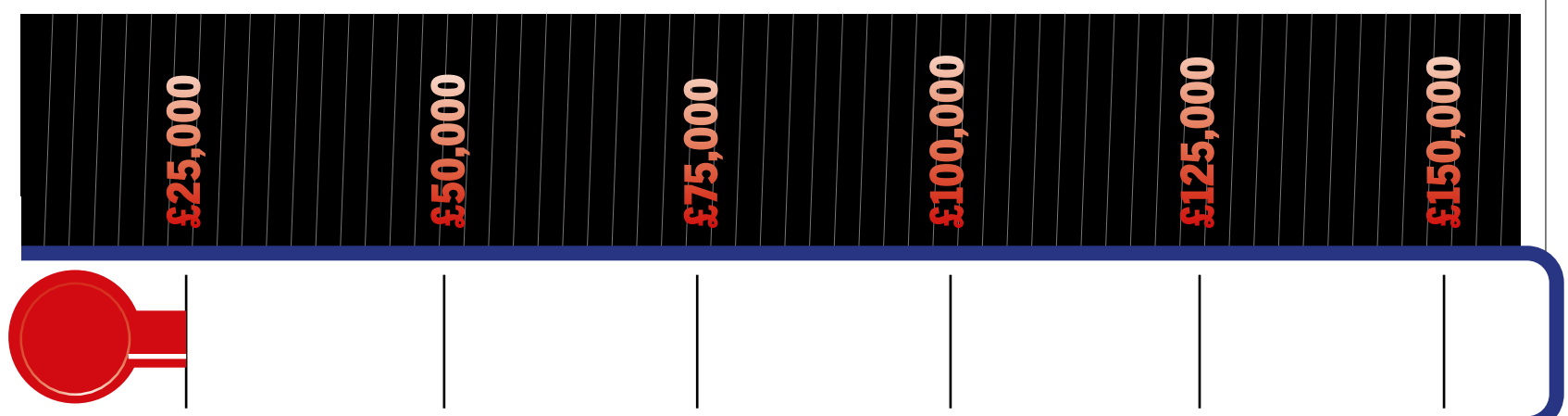

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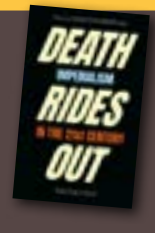

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Book celebrates Asians in Britain's history of fighting

by YURI PRASAD

I ADDRESSED a union-organised event on the history of Asian working class struggles in Britain recently.

Many in the audience were young workers and union reps whose families hailed from the subcontinent.

I talked about the vicious shopfloor and street-level racism in the decades after the Second World War, and the tales of heroic resistance. But it soon became clear that most were hearing this vital history for the first time.

Some expressed disbelief that their parents and grandparents had told them nothing and had hidden their scars from the younger generations.

But without knowledge of past struggles, and the lessons and inspiration we draw from them, we are hindered in the battles of today.

That's why socialist writer Taj Ali's new book, Come What May, We're Here To Stay, is so timely and vital.

Ali traces South Asian resistance in Britain back to the "lascars", a term originally for seafarers from the Indian subcontinent but later for wider non-white crews.

He describes the battles lascars fought from the 16th to the mid-20th centuries against racism and poverty, both on board merchant ships and in the communities they settled in.

And he documents the 1919 race riots around British ports, when racist gangs, sometimes hundreds-strong, hunted down black and brown seamen, while union leaders demanded laws to stop lascars "stealing" white jobs.

But it's in the post-Second World War era of mass immigration into Britain that Ali really hits his stride.

From the mills in the north to the foundries of the Midlands and the factories of the south, Ali's book is rich with accounts of newly arrived migrants learning how to organise.

MOST WORKERS at Grunwick were Asian women. They struck over racism, union recognition and conditions (above)
Author Taj Ali and his new book, Come What May, We're Here to Stay (right)

We hear Balwinder Rana talk of how he and his friends broke the colour bar in Kent pubs and formed Britain's first Asian youth movement.

Lesson

Later Rana's group would also teach marauding fascists in Gravesend a lesson.

And we learn how workers in London, Loughborough and Leicester utilised community support to sustain strikes that union leaders had washed their hands of.

In the battle against racist violence on the streets, young Asians understood that the state would not protect them and that they must learn how to protect themselves.

Keeping the fascist National Front out of Asian areas became a vital battleground.

It was in this context that the slogan "self-defence is no offence" echoed in the second wave of Asian youth organisations that flourished in the 1970s and 80s.

Ali has lots of interviews and quotes from participants which bring alive the history, and the political arguments that flow from it.

In early 1960s Britain, many white trade union activists believed that Asian workers were incapable of fighting back against even ruthless exploitation.

"Passive," was a word they used to describe recent migrants, and many thought Asian workers were a bosses' ruse to drive down wages. But after the wave of Asian-led strikes from the 1960s to the 1980s, few could maintain that view.

And, after the Grunwick strike that began in 1976, the unions started to wake up to a further reality—that Asian women, too, were fighters.

A criticism that could be levelled at Ali's book is that it doesn't pay enough attention to the effect Asian strikes had on the wider working class.

Take postal worker Derek Walsh, for example, a white member of the UPW union at Cricklewood delivery office. He boycotted mail bound for the striking Grunwick factory.

"It was one of the most inspiring times in my life, a time when I was really proud to be in the union and to be a postal worker," says Derek.

Transform

"Working people, most of them men and most of them white, stood shoulder to shoulder with immigrant workers, most of them Asian and most of them women… I remain proud of what we did."

Asian workers, in the struggles that Ali captures so well, did more than carve out space for themselves—they helped transform the whole working class movement.

And in doing so, they helped to transform Britain.

"Asian workers transformed the whole working class movement"

Come What May, We're Here To Stay by Taj Ali, £20. Available from Bookmarks bookshop

REVIEW
JUNE BUDD

NAZA unveils horror of Israeli genocide from the inside

NAZA IS a documentary consisting primarily of interviews with Israeli soldiers and intelligence agents about the horrific crimes they committed in Gaza and the West Bank for the state.

It was directed by Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor, two of the directors of No Other Land, about the destruction of a Palestinian community in the West Bank. This film won an Academy Award for best documentary last year.

The word "Naza" is Israeli military lingo for the number of Palestinian civilian casualties in an attack. For example, if 15 women and children are killed in an attempt to take out a single member of Hamas, the attack would have "15 Naza".

The film focuses primarily on the distance which makes the genocide in Israel possible. It is about the evil of that distance—how it creates and reinforces the dehumanisation that makes genocide possible.

This distance is in the geography and apartheid that the Zionist project is built on. But it takes new forms in the modern day. New technologies provide new ways to dehumanise and slaughter people, to create artificial distance from your actions.

But, it is also in the minds of the Israelis, who, even as they condemn themselves, reflexively fall back on common defences. These guilty few interviewees—intentionally and unwittingly—peel the curtain back on the culture of silence, hatred and complicity which dominates the Israeli military.

The documentary makes decisions which have proven to be controversial. It has been accused of erasing Palestinian voices because it is made by Israeli filmmakers and interviews only Israelis. The Palestinian voice is entirely absent until the emotional final moments of the film.

But this is a highly effective choice—and in many ways, the only way it could've worked.

Confession

The Israeli soldiers, as if at confession, have their faces shrouded in shadow for anonymity. And, also like confession, they expect no judgement in return.

The choice of setting and interviewer create a sense of safety for the Israeli soldiers so they can speak their mind. But the documentarian never shies away from difficult questions, forcing the subjects to acknowledge the humanity of the people they killed.

The filmmakers also make the feeling of Israeli surveillance technology bleed through every frame. Large portions of the film consist of slice-of-life shots through Israeli citizens' windows.

These shots are careful never to give away identifying information but capture moments of intimacy between ordinary Israeli people. Meanwhile, the soldiers narrate their experiences of hacking into children's phones to optimise how to target their parents.

In one confession, a soldier talks about snipers shooting Palestinians running to humanitarian aid distribution points. He refers to the starving Palestinians only as "bodies" before they are even dead.

Another has an Israeli soldier reckon with his experiences visiting the Nazi extermination camp at Auschwitz as a child in comparison to his own actions in Palestine. He says he understands where the Nazis were coming from and is unsure if this makes him evil.

While most of the bombshell revelations the documentary carries have been in the public domain for years, Naza brings eyes to these topics in a brand new way.

It forces the very genocidal machine which created the crisis to confront itself in the mirror, even in limited ways. And it is as thoroughly beautiful as it is harrowing.

Naza's gorgeous, thoughtful cinematography that softens that onslaught of horror without taking away from its significance. It manages to make itself a project for the Palestinian people while not including any until the end. It is about Gaza and the West Bank, while it is shot in Tel Aviv.

These contradictions would shatter a lesser project. But in Naza, they add nuance which forces you to think about creative choices and their meanings. It's an incredibly clever and moving documentary I'd recommend to all.

NAZA is in cinemas now

IN BRIEF

Civil servants to strike on budget day

WORKERS AT the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) are set to strike on budget day this Wednesday.

The PCS civil servants' union members are taking targeted action as part of their long running dispute over office closures, office attendance and recruitment.

In the last two years six offices of the MHCLG have closed, in Newcastle, Truro, Exeter, Sheffield, Birmingham and Warrington.

Regulator up a creek without a paddle

WORKERS AT the water regulator Ofwat are set to strike over job security amid ongoing "limbo" over the regulator's future. Some 73.7 percent of voting members of the PCS civil servants' union voted for strikes.

After a summer of severe drought in Britain and an ongoing crisis of sewage leaks into our water system, these workers are fighting to keep Britian's water safe.

Is V&A strike drawing to a close?

WORKERS AT the Victoria and Albert museums (V&A) have suspended strikes planned for this week to allow for ACAS-facilitated talks to take place.

The PCS and Prospect trade union members at the South Kensington site are fighting for health and safety provisions, such as water and seating in heatwaves, and for a pay award that would equal the London Living Wage.

Museum workers and members of the Prospect union at the Royal Greenwich museum, in south east London, are set to strike on 31 October over annual leave, pay and terms and conditions.

Time to start caring for the workers

CARE WORKERS in Oldham, Manchester, are demanding pay parity with their colleagues and a sick pay scheme.

The Unison union members who work in "extra care" are employed by Oldham council-owned company, MioCare.

They are set to strike for four days this week from Friday to Monday.

Extra care workers look after people in on-site accommodation so they can retain their independence.

They want pay parity with colleagues in the supported living department.

Despite performing similar duties, some workers are earning £2.10 an hour less than their colleagues.

Workers are also demanding the introduction of a sick pay scheme, which other MioCare workers receive.

HEALTH SERVICE

The government have proposed a derisory 2.4 percent pay rise for health workers

NHS pay is in critical condition

by JUNE BUDD

THE GOVERNMENT'S recent proposed pay rise for NHS workers in England has been revealed at a pitiful 2.4 percent.

This pay "rise" sits comfortably below current inflation rates, meaning NHS workers are facing a real-terms pay cut.

The report from the Department of Health and Social Care states that the government isn't able to afford a higher increase. It threatens "difficult trade-offs" if this number is exceeded.

Jordan, an occupational therapist, told Socialist Worker, "It's upsetting. NHS workers have been under attack a lot in the media lately.

"Over the pandemic, health workers were treated like heroes for going to work in such dangerous conditions. But it feels like people are changing their mind.

"Why would a below inflation pay rise be enough? Especially off the back of 20 years of not being enough?" she added.

The proposal will next be considered by the NHS Pay Review Body (NHSPRB), which will take opinions from unions and employers. They then must propose a pay rise, which the government must find a way to fund.

However, the NHS Pay Review Board (PRB) is highly likely to swallow the government's figures and reasoning.

Negotiate

"Unions are trying to move away from the PRB, like in Scotland where they negotiate with the state directly.

"Their pay is higher than here, and the gap gets bigger and bigger by the year," Jordan said.

"Our salaries aren't compensating us for our hard work. But more than that—it's just not enough to live. Pay isn't competitive, especially in lower bands.

"But they're saving money by making staff work harder."

The last time NHS workers got a real-terms pay increase was 2006.

"It's a disgrace, the lack of value placed on us," Janet, a nurse and Unison union member, told Socialist Worker.

"Young nurses are struggling a lot. Many can't afford their training and leave. The ones who do qualify struggle with the shifts, struggle to live on the money they're paid.

"And every newly qualified nurse has a massive debt to pay back.

"One of the worst things people do is opt out of the pension scheme. To live on a nurse's wage, people think it's sensible to not pay into a pension."

"People are deeply cynical that they could even get a real pay rise. There needs to be a lot more acknowledgement of the fact that we live in the 6th richest country in the world—we can afford it," Janet said.

THEATRE ASSISTANTS

Health workers are sick of poverty pay

STRIKING THEATRE assistants in Leeds remain strong in their indefinite strike for pay re-grading.

The Unison union members say they are performing technical and clinical duties that mean they should be on band 3—not band 2, the lowest rung on the NHS payscale.

The workers moved to all-out strike on 7 October and have been in dispute with bosses since last year.

Unison this week called on the newly-appointed chief executive of Leeds Teaching Hospitals, Brendan Brown, to make resolving the dispute his top priority.

Nearly 300 workers at the Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust in central London returned to picket lines last week in a dispute over pay and grading.

The Unite union members walked out for a second time in as many months demanding bosses recognise their skills and re-band them to NHS band 3.

Unite rightly calls the £15.89 an hour that porters, store operatives and food service assistants receive "poverty pay levels."

The union has also raised allegations of bullying and racism within facilities management and concerns about inadequate welfare provisions, such as showers and changing rooms.

DOCTORS

Senior doctors in England to go on two-day strike

SENIOR DOCTORS and hospital consultants in England announced this week that they plan to walk out for two days on 25 November.

The BMA union members voted by more than 75 percent for strikes after Labour awarded them a meagre 3.5 percent pay rise.

Consultant last struck in 2023 but have been in dispute with the Department of Health since last year.

Dr Helen Neary and Dr Shanu Datta, co-chairs of the BMA's consultants committee, said, "As the most senior and skilled doctors in the NHS, consultants not only provide frontline, life-saving care, but they are central to running and designing services, training and supervising the future workforce, and ensuring patients get the best treatment possible.

"Our pay is still a quarter down in real terms what it was 17 years ago and we are also not being given time to dedicate our all to the NHS and patients, with quality and improvement being traded for the treadmill of target-chasing."

The strike announcement ought to be a signal for all other health trade unionists.

Everyone working in the NHS suffers low pay. In order to defeat the government, we should all stand together.

PORTERS

Fair overtime pay is overdue

PORTERS AT the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading began a five-day strike on Monday in a dispute over overtime pay.

The GMB union members are angry after Trust bosses broke with rates set out in the Agenda For Change national contract and instead moved to a bank service, provided by NHS Professionals.

This "internal" agency pays porters between £6 and £7 per hour less than the normal rate, and prioritises other workers for overtime portering shifts.

GMB official Louis Bryson said, "Our members won't accept a deal that puts them into financial difficulty, even if the trust offers to postpone the financial damage for ten months.

"What's more, porters no longer even get priority for their own shifts—we have reports of untrained admin staff taking these shifts and even people who aren't NHS employees.

"It's unacceptable for our members and it's dangerous for patients and the public."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Council care workers strike against a two-tier workforce

HOUSING AND social care workers in Barnet, north London, walked out for the first time on Tuesday in a battle against outsourcing.

The Unison union members who work for The Barnet Group (TBG), a company wholly-owned by the council, do not receive the same pay, annual leave, sick pay, overtime rates or other terms and conditions as council workers. They also do not have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

TBG includes Barnet Homes, which provides housing services, and Your Choice Barnet, which provides social care and support services.

Both were once council services. Moving workers outside direct council employment has left them doing essential jobs without the same contractual protections and benefits as their council colleagues.

One worker on the picket line outside Barnet Council offices, who is a carer at a day centre,

Picketing the council offices

told Socialist Worker, "We just want everyone on the same terms and conditions.

"At the moment, I'm working with people and we're doing the exact same job and we've got completely different contracts.

"It's not fair and it doesn't make sense. It creates a bad atmosphere in the workplace when some people work a shorter week for better pay and get the council pension, and some of us do not."

After workers voted for strikes, TBG said it wants to negotiate.

When workers fight back, it turns up the heat on the bosses.

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITIES

Fighting the ghost of universities to come

by CAMILLA ROYLE

UCU UNION members mourned the slow death of their universities on Tuesday as they took to the picket lines dressed as ghosts and skeletons.

At the University of Nottingham, workers who are on strike until 11 December held a funeral march.

Bosses plan to slash jobs and have already closed courses in music and modern languages to new students.

Nottingham UCU vice president Andreas Bieler told Socialist Worker, "Higher education in Britain is being sacrificed.

"The university has accepted some of our proposals. But it is still closing down modern languages. We would need more action for a full victory.

"I think we should explore the possibility of a nationwide dispute. The dynamics are similar everywhere. It's very difficult to fight institution by institution."

Elsewhere, UCU members at the University of Edinburgh are in their final of five weeks of strike action. At Goldsmiths, in south London, workers are still on indefinite strike.

EIS-ULA union members at Glasgow Caledonian University are set to strike this Monday to Thursday and have more walkouts planned next week and the following week.

UCU members at the same university are planning strikes for three days this week and six further days in November.

At the University of Dundee, UCU members called off the last day of their strike last week after bosses paused the compulsory redundancy process. The union branch is now set to meet with bosses.

Strikers in Nottingham weren't charmed by bosses' plans

UCU members in striking branches are trying to coordinate with each other.

But they are asking why the union leadership has not acted to bring together the strikes.

The union has rightly backed a day of action on 20 November in every university, the same day there are also calls for students to mobilise and protest.

But the onslaught of job cuts and course closures has been going on for years with very little action from the top of the organisation.

At Nottingham and elsewhere, hundreds of people have taken voluntary redundancy. Many are leaving a sector where morale is at rock bottom.

Ruth Ballardie, co-chair of the University of Greenwich UCU, said, "I think across a lot of branches right now there's been a lot of dissatisfaction with what's going on in the sector and the national UCU's inadequate response.

"To a large extent, branches have been left on their own to fight redundancies.

"So being part of sharing knowledge with other branches and other unions within higher education has been really encouraging that you're not alone."

Grassroots members and branches have been "pushing and pushing" for UCU to take more action," she added. "They're doing it because they're being forced to."

Aberdeen bosses blown away as rep reinstated

UNIVERSITY OF Aberdeen UCU union rep David Anderson was relieved last week to have been reinstated to his job.

After 27 years of working for the university, he was facing dismissal for sharing a document with staff members.

The union launched a campaign to defend him including a petition that gathered nearly 1,300 signatures.

It said this "concerns everyone who believes union reps should be able to speak up for those they represent without fear of victimisation or disproportionate punishment".

The union branch is still balloting over job cuts until 30 November.

SCHOOLS

Southall strike scares bosses

EDUCATORS AT Villiers High School in Southall, west London, struck last Wednesday for the second time in two weeks—and were planning a total of six days of walkouts over three weeks.

Morale among NEU union members was high despite school bosses employing two private security guards to keep watch on them.

The strikers are fighting management victimisation of their union rep, pay cuts, excessive workload and poor working conditions.

Debra Beale, joint president of the national NEU union, joined the picket.

"Well done for coming out in the face of intimidation. You're doing the right thing," she said in a speech.

One teacher told Socialist Worker, "Some 12 members of staff have lost money. Leadership is on much higher wages—are they willing to lose money like they're asking us to?"

The union called off the planned picket last Friday after management accepted most of the union's demands.

But two major demands remain—an end to union rep victimisation and the restoration and protection of pay for additional responsibilities in the school.

Workers must be ready to return to picket lines if management don't give in.

COUNCILS

Havering stands up to rubbish Reform council

●***Continued from back page***

with the other end of the extreme weather as storms battered many parts of Britain this month.

"This weekend is Halloween, then Bonfire Night and we've got to go round and pick up the fireworks and the pumpkins. And with Christmas coming up, everything's more expensive," David said.

Last year they got just two days off for Christmas—Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The workers also do not get any sick pay.

"It's not just about pay, it's also about terms and conditions," said David. "They just don't engage with us. For them it's all about profit."

The strike is one of the first under a Reform UK-run council. The far right party won 39 of the 55 council seats in May. Reform UK paints itself as an "anti-establishment" party that stands up for the "ordinary man". But it is stuffed with former Tories who scapegoat migrants for problems caused by profiteering bosses.

The leader of Havering council, Keith Prince, was a Tory member for nearly 50 years before defecting to Reform UK. Deputy mayor Christine Vickery is also a former Tory. It's no wonder this council is against workers.

"They need to treat us with some respect," said David.

"FCC don't see the importance of us or what we do. It's about welfare. The thing is if we didn't do the job there would be a plague, with all the foxes and rats."

If their demands are not met, they are determined to stay out until they win.

ENVIRONMENT

Jackdaw decision is a climate disaster

LABOUR LAST week decided to pour fuel on the fire of climate change by approving more drilling for fossil fuels in the North Sea.

Energy secretary Miatta Fahnbulleh announced she was giving the green light for gas production at Jackdaw gas field, off the coast of Aberdeen.

The government also looks set to approve drilling at the mammoth oil and gas field known as Rosebank in a matter of weeks.

Fahnbulleh claims that oil and gas extraction can be ramped up but that somehow this will help Britain shift away from fossil fuels.

She said, "The decision is compatible with our legally binding climate commitments and we remain resolute in ending new licences for oil and gas and achieving net zero by 2050."

But Fahnbulleh knows that new oil and gas will make it near impossible to meet the government's own net zero climate targets.

Prime minister Andy Burnham waited until the summer's climate chaos has left the headlines and until Labour had seen off a Green by-election challenge before giving Jackdaw the go ahead.

Labour promised in its 2024 election manifesto not to award new licenses to oil and gas projects in the North Sea. But both Rosebank and Jackdaw were already approved under the previous Tory government.

Oil giant Shell has a license to operate at Jackdaw. Plans to drill were ruled unlawful in an Edinburgh court in 2025 because it had not taken into account the emissions associated with burning the oil and gas produced meaning it needed to resubmit its plans.

Blocked

Polly was one of dozens of supporters of Just Stop Oil (JSO) who blocked roads outside Burnham's first prime minister's Question Time in parliament last month.

She told Socialist Worker, "What is in the ground should be left in the ground and greed must not control our politics."

She added that some people in JSO once had hope in Burnham but "belief in him doing anything is falling."

While protesters rage against the plans, the leaders of some unions support it. The Unite union has a position of "no ban without a plan".

Rosebank smells fishy

It says that Labour's ban on new licenses for oil and gas drilling in the North Sea pushes workers and communities off a cliff edge. And, they say there needs to be a plan to stop this leading to redundancies.

Unite leader Sharon Graham has said, "Domestic gas from Jackdaw and oil from Rosebank are essential for jobs and for energy security."

But Jackdaw would create only 27 full time direct jobs. The project involves connecting the gas field via pipeline to an existing hub called Shearwater.

Minimal

The fact that a lot of this infrastructure already exists means the jobs created are minimal.

Tahir Latif from the Greener Jobs Alliance told Socialist Worker, "It's an incredibly small number of jobs that aren't going to solve anything for the community."

The oil and gas fields in the North Sea are declining. The companies that are investing there are only interested in extracting as much of the remaining fuel as possible, rather than thinking about long term jobs or energy security.

Gas exploration at Jackdaw will not reduce prices and help the millions of people in Britain struggling to heat their homes this winter. Fahbulleh has admitted as much.

Labour is driving us in the wrong direction on climate.

Burnham wants to make Britain reliant on oil and gas for "decades to come". Some of the poorest people in Britain and around the world will pay the price as climate related disasters intensify.

Unions, including in polluting industries, should argue for real alternatives to the road to ruin.

Camilla Royle

■JOIN THE Campaign Against Climate Change trade union conference. Saturday 31 October, Crowndale Centre, London NW1 1BD

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CAMDEN STRIKERS ‘WON’T GIVE IN’

by JUDE MCKECHNIE

TO MARK their fifth week of strikes, Camden traffic wardens in north London hosted a bustling solidarity picket on Monday.

The mood was jubilant with Unison union members chanting “Low pay, no way” and “No slave labour”.

The strikers were given a boost in their fight by other trade union branches who’d come to show solidarity.

These included Homerton and UCL Hospital Unison branches, the RMT and UCU union members and students from King’s College London and the London School of Economics.

The traffic wardens are employed by private contractor NSL, part of the multi-million pound company Marston Holdings. They are demanding a £2 an hour pay rise, seven extra days of annual leave and sick pay from day one.

They currently work a 42.5 hour week. That’s around 50 extra days a year compared to other council workers. Yet, they only receive 20 days annual leave.

One worker told Socialist Worker that they were “still very motivated” and they “would not give in”.

“NSL are taking the piss,” she said. “Nobody likes to be taken the piss out of. That’s why we’re sticking our feet in the mud. We’re not budging until we get what we want.”

TRAFFIC WARDENS rallied on Monday

She added, “The company doesn’t care about the conditions that we work under or about whether we can afford to live.

“We’re the ones out there making all the money and we’re not seeing any of it.

“While we’re striking, that’s hundreds of thousands of pounds that the council is losing too. But NSL isn’t losing anything.”

The striker was furious that workers delivering a public service were employed by a private company that treats them worse than the council’s own workforce.

“I’m a resident of Camden,” she said. “I pay my taxes to the council and those taxes are then used to pay companies like NSL rather than bring us all in house.”

NSL’s parent company Marston Holdings has a contract with the Labour-run Camden council worth around £100 million. They renewed that contract in January until 2030.

“The council had an opportunity earlier this year to do the right thing,” she said. “That opportunity was wasted.

“As a Camden resident, like lots of us here, I am really angry that they chose to continue to outsource us to this really nasty company.”

Another striker told Socialist Worker that it was “frustrating” to have to continuously fight for the bare minimum.

This is the fifth time Camden traffic wardens have had to strike in ten years. But the score is four-nil to the workers—and they are confident they can win again.

The traffic wardens struck for better wages in 2023 and won an 18.1 percent pay increase after moving to an indefinite strike. After 56 days, NSL was forced to improve on its initial pay offer of just 57p an hour.

“The company doesn’t give us anything. Everything we have gotten, we have had to fight for.

“But we have always won. That’s why we know that when we’re together, we can win,” he said.

“We want everything that we are asking for and nothing less than that.”

If the Camden strikers win, others will be encouraged to fight and win.

Their fight is your fight. Your solidarity donations can help keep them standing strong on the picket lines.

Donate to the strike fund, gofundme.com/f/support-camden-unison-strikers

Bin workers won’t let outsourcers trash pay and conditions

by REBECCA LONG

REFUSE COLLECTORS in Havering, east London, began a five day strike on Monday over pay, working conditions and outsourcing.

The Unite union says bin loaders are paid £12.88 in Havering—and £15.72 for the same job in Redbridge, the borough next door.

The strikers are employed by outsourcer FCC Waste Management. Their contract does not expire for eight years—they are demanding a better deal or to be brought in house.

David, one of the strikers, told Socialist Worker, “I took a £5,000 pay cut when I started working here.”

He switched from another borough to work closer to home and spend more time with his partner.

“It’s my first time on strike and my first time being a union rep,” he continued. “But it’s not about me, it’s about the boys and getting a fair deal for them.”

He added, “We work Monday to Friday, then go out at the weekend, that’s putting money back into the economy. But we can’t really afford that anymore. I don’t get paid for a couple days and I’m already £250 down.”

Throughout the conversation, strikers went to stand in the gate of the depot to block bin lorries from leaving. They spoke to the workers inside, most of whom are agency workers brought it to break the strike. The council also normally uses agency workers alongside the fulltime team.

Strikers blocked bin lorries

Because there are workers from agencies, the council and private companies, many do not know each other. This makes it harder to unionise and understand how they are all being mistreated.

Full-time workers like David, who have full-time contracts from FCC, make only 11p more per hour than the agency staff.

Throughout the summer, the drivers and collectors worked in boiling temperatures, sometimes up to 38 degrees.

In other boroughs the workers are allowed to wear shorts, but in Havering they still had to wear full workman’s trousers and hi-vis.

They also have to deal

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