How have US midterm elections damaged Trump?

Full analysis of the votes and why right wing Democrats hate the left more than Republicans

>> See our online coverage

What makes mass strikes so special?

As hundreds of thousands join French general strike this week, Camilla Royle discusses what makes it so significant >>Pages 10&11

Socialist Worker

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BANNED CAMPAIGNING AUTHOR SPEAKS OUT

Supporters of banned campaign group Palestine Action gathered at the US embassy in London last weekend. Cops detained some 320 people

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

'WE'RE RIGHT TO FIGHT FOR PALESTINE'

Andreas Malm on why the British state fears his support for resistance

Andreas Malm defends the oppressed

'What of those who support the genocide? Are they banned?'

THE LABOUR government has ramped up repression ahead of the Supreme Court's review this week into the ban on Palestine Action.

The Home Office banned Andreas Malm, a Swedish author and activist, from coming to Britain on Friday of last week.

He was due to speak at an event alongside Huda Ammori, co-founder of the non-violent direct action group banned under the Terrorism Act 2000.

As news about Andreas broke, the police declared that "all those coming" to a protest

Protesting against genocide

against the Palestine Action ban "are essentially meeting to purposefully commit a crime" (see page 5).

Andreas told Socialist Worker, "The only reason I have been given for the ban is that my presence in Britain is 'not conducive to the public good'."

It's a similar wording given to US political commentators Hasan Piker and Cenk Uygur. They were banned from entering Britain in June this year for their support for Palestine.

Andreas said, "I defend the right of the Palestinian resistance to use armed struggle.

"What about those people who say genocide is part of Israel's right to defend itself? They condone the worst crimes.

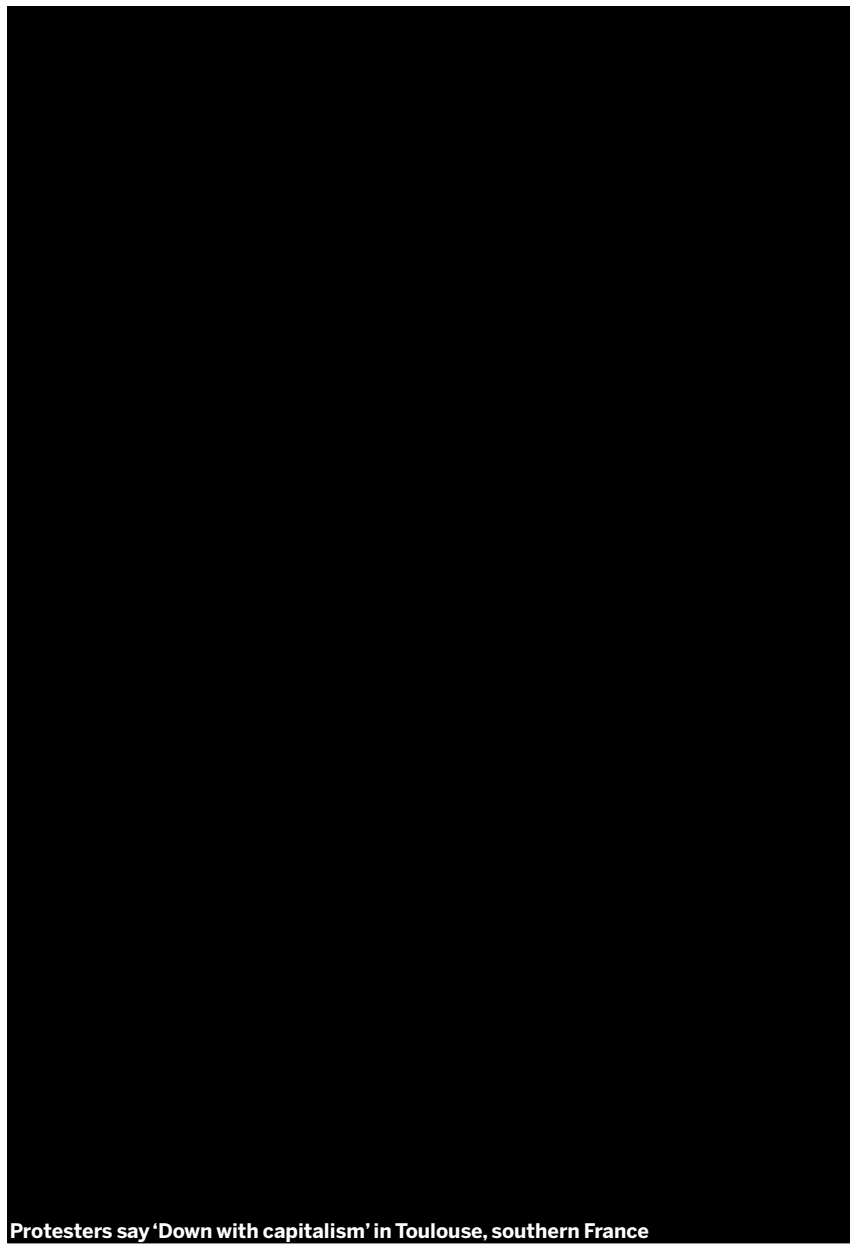
"Do they face the same restrictions? Of course not. They can go anywhere they want."

Andreas mentioned that

>>Continued on Page 5

WORKERS TAKE TO THE STREETS OF EUROPE

Hundreds of thousands of workers struck across Europe last week, with more set to walk out this week. Socialist Worker spoke to workers and protesters from Italy's general strike


Protesters say 'Down with capitalism' in Toulouse, southern France

REVOLT IS growing in Europe—and workers are showing their power. Hundreds of thousands of workers in France were preparing for a general strike on Thursday, as Socialist Worker went to press (see right).

It comes after dockers across the Mediterranean struck last week against arms sales to Israel and the European drive for rearmament.

The call for the day of action came from dockers in Italy, France, Greece, Turkey, Morocco and the Basque Country in the Spanish state. But it was taken up by workers in the US, Australia, India and elsewhere.

In Spain, rail workers struck for safety last week after the second fatal crash this year (see right).

In Italy, the dockers' action was part of a general strike called by the smaller USB, ADL Cobas, Clap, SIAL Cobas and Cobas unions.

Roberto is a rail worker and USB union member in Livorno, where some 15,000 people took part in protests. He told Socialist Worker, "It was a major day of mobilisations—it's likely more than one million people took part.

Italian students rallying in Turin last Friday. The placard reads 'You call them maranza [a slur for immigrants] , we call them by their names'

PICTURE: LEDA BARTOLUCCI

"Transport workers joined the strike, defying the ban imposed by the minister of transport Matteo Salvini.

"Salvini wielded law 146/90—one of the most repressive pieces of legislation on the right to strike in Europe."

There is widespread fury with Italy's far right government, led by fascist prime minister Giorgia Meloni. The protests in Italy, like those in France and the Spanish state, erupted over better funding for education and schools.

But the explosion has fed off the general strikes for Palestine last year.

Roberto added, "The spirit of last year's Block Everything movement—organised in solidarity with the Palestinian people—echoed again in the public squares.

Imperial

"This time, the squares were filled with a focus on the cost of living that we, the working class in the imperial heartland, are enduring.

"This is a direct consequence of the wars being unleashed in the Middle East."

Thousands of workers and students in Turin, northern Italy, rallied against the spike in fuel prices and to oppose rising defence spending.

Leda, who attended the demonstration in Turin city centre, told Socialist Worker that the day's actions were "heartwarming" with tens of thousands "rising up against this government".

She said that farmers unloaded barrels of manure in front of Turin's city hall before the demonstration.

A banner with the inscription, "Stop high cost of living, no to war, no to rearmament. We produce wealth, you thieves of the future," led the march.

"It was ordinary working class people who showed up," said Leda.

Police brutality—and ever-expanding state repression—have galvanised large numbers of people. And opposition to the Italian state's racism runs through the protests.

The government passed a decree earlier this year aimed at capping the number of "migrants" in classrooms to 30 percent and banning the burqa and niqab in schools. Leda said, "One of the biggest topics of discussion has been anti-racism. The young people protesting are being called 'maranza' by right wing politicians and the press. The word is a slur used to describe second-generation migrants.

Chaos

"There is a connotation that immigrants are causing chaos in cities, that they are the problem.

"But people were carrying signs that read, 'You call them maranza, we call them by their names'. They are saying we know them, they are our friends—they are all of us."

The general strike this week follows an eight day strike by lorry drivers in Italy that disrupted fuel and food deliveries.

Leda said that some people who voted for Meloni are now turning on her government. "When the gas prices went up in September, truck drivers in southern Italy went on strike," she argued.

"They blocked roads in protest because it didn't make sense to move produce because of high gas prices.

"The important thing for us to do now is to unite the struggles in the south with those in the north."

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‘We’ve got to bring the spirit of France here’—building Britain’s youth strike

STUDENTS AT universities across Britain are mobilising for the International Youth Strike on 20 November.

It’s a chance to bring the spirit of the uprisings in France, Portugal, the Spanish state, India and elsewhere to Britain.

Fergus, a student in Bristol, told Socialist Worker, “We’re calling for a full day walkout, a rally and a march.

“We’ve been working with lots of progressive societies, and we’ve communicated with students at the other nearby university, the University of the West of England.

“We will be holding stalls outside a few sixth form colleges in the city to build for a wider demonstration.”

The International Youth Strike was called by Stop The War (STW) and others. The UCU and Unison unions have called a national day of action to defend education also on 20 November.

Students in Bristol have won support from the local UCU and NEU union branches, as well as campaign groups STW and Stand Up To Racism (SUTR).

Fergus added, “Until then, we will be relentlessly covering our campuses in posters and flyers, doing lecture callouts and spreading the word any way we can.”

Rimaz, a student at the University of Portsmouth, told Socialist Worker, “We are organising a group of students to walk out of lectures on 20 November.

“We think it’s particularly important in Portsmouth with the number of cuts within the university. Our university is sending money to BAE systems, an arms company, rather than funding the education students are paying for.”

BRITISH STUDENTS hope to take the lead from huge protests in India

Unveil

Portsmouth students are also planning to unveil a banner in support of the youth strike from somewhere high up on their campus.

At King’s College London, Ivo told Socialist Worker, “We’re planning a walkout.”

“We’re reaching out to the UCU branch, the executive and the departmental reps to make sure it’s really spread. Then we’re going to do the same with Unison,” he added.

Students are not just angry about cuts—they want to fight against war and the far right too.

“The walkout is mostly against militarisation and education cuts,” said Ivo.

“It seems like the government has money for everything but not people’s futures. The money is instead directed towards arms and genocide in Palestine.

“There’s also a feeling that the cost of living crisis is becoming more acute and the government is not providing the right answers for people.

“People are seeing what’s happening in France and saying we’ve got to bring it here.”

After crash, rail workers in Spain demand investment

TRAIN DRIVERS in the Spanish state struck last week after Europe’s deadliest railway disaster in more than a decade.

At least 69 people died after two trains collided in the central province of Toledo last Tuesday.

The Semaf union had already called a 24-hour strike for last Thursday to demand investment into the unsafe network. Drivers on private operator Ouigo struck on Friday—and again on Monday.

Spain’s railways were opened to privatisation in 2020 at the behest of the European Union, which imposes free market policies.

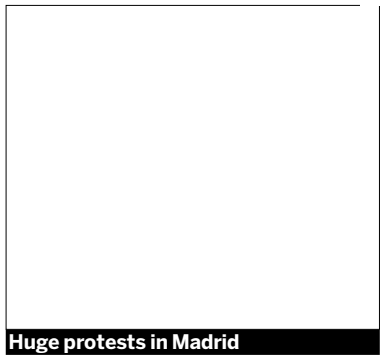
Diego Martín, a Semaf member said, “We will continue demanding the necessary measures to make this sector safe again.”

The rail disaster comes amid a revolt over housing—and ahead of a general strike on 11 November.

Train drivers are furious with transport minister Óscar Puente, who was quick to blame “human error” before an investigation.

Vicente Almenar, a driver and UGT union member, wasn’t convinced by Puente’s words. “He’s just shifting the blame outside his area of responsibility,” he said.

The right has rushed to capitalise on the disaster to grab votes in the snap general election next month.



Huge protests in Madrid

But the far right has no answer to the rail disaster—it wants to make deeper public spending cuts if it gets into office in next month’s election.

David Karvala, a socialist and campaigner with United Against Fascism and Racism in Barcelona, told Socialist Worker, “There is real hypocrisy from the right who want to blame the government when they are the worse for cutting services.”

The Toledo disaster is the second deadly rail crash in the Spanish state this year. In January, a train on the same railway line derailed in Andalusia in the south. The crash killed 46 people and injured 152.

Now it must keep escalating the action.

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

France braces for renewed blockades and strikes

Blockades returned to French schools on Monday after a two week break for the holidays.

According to the education ministry, 41 schools were affected by blockades and protests on Monday morning, with more schools joining the movement by Tuesday.

The government has made some concessions. It has promised more teachers, and a cap on the number of students in classrooms, as well as a replacement for the hated Parcoursup university admissions system.

But it doesn’t go far enough to fix the education system.

Across the country around half a million people protested last Saturday for the third weekend of marches in a row.

Authorities in Paris demanded that marchers follow an approved route that avoided the city centre. But some defied these orders.

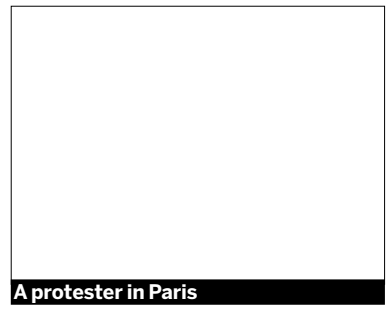
At the end of the official march a large group headed towards Place de la Bastille before being blocked by the paramilitary gendarmerie.

Protesters fought against the 70,000 cops sent to police them and, in one case, a rioter used a Molotov cocktail.

Six union federations have backed the general strike this Thursday as they face a proposed budget with £45 billion worth of cuts.

The revolt in France begun by the school students has ignited wider anger over the cost of living, war and the fascist threat.

There are important questions about where the movement goes next. Will the school student blockades regain momentum after the holiday break? And will the strike movement be a one-day event or will workers push for continuous action, known as a renewable strike?



A protester in Paris

Election in Israel shows state is built on racist foundations

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU has resorted to the Trump-play book after failing to win a majority in the Israeli election last week.

The Israeli prime minister claimed that Arab parties "stole" the vote with the help of Qatar.

Neither of the two main groupings of parties had the necessary 61 of 120 seats to form a government.

That means the main parties will attempt to form a coalition government in the coming weeks.

Netanyahu's far right coalition emerged as the biggest bloc with 53 seats—and his Likud party also holds the most seats, with 26.

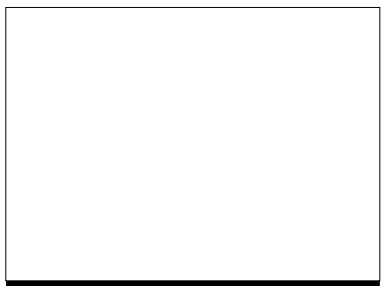
Itamar Ben Gvir's Jewish Power and Bezalel Smotrich's Religious Zionist Party are key players in the far right bloc. Gvir said Palestinian prisoners "should be shot in the head instead of being given more food".

That sentiment has support among young Israelis in particular, who overwhelmingly back the right.

Some 74 percent of Israelis aged 18 to 22 identify as right wing.

The relative success of Netanyahu's coalition challenges the liberal myth that he is an "outlier", unrepresentative of Israeli society.

Gadi Eisenkot's opposition bloc won the second largest number of seats at 48, with his Yashar party coming in behind Likud with 21 seats.



Bezalel Smotrich with a map of land he wants to colonise

Success

The former Israeli army general's bloc has been dubbed the "change bloc", to create the impression of opposition to Netanyahu.

But the "change" it demands is one of personnel, not policies.

It ranges from Eisenkot's "centrist" party to Avigdor Lieberman's right wing nationalist party. During the 2010s, he was one of the most right wing figures in mainstream Israeli politics.

In 2018, Lieberman resigned from a previous Netanyahu government demanding it continue a round of bombing in Gaza.

The bloc includes the remnants of Labour Zionism, which once dominated politics in the settler colony. The Democrats, led by former general Yair Golan, are the liberal face of Israel's racism. He supports a two-state solution and working with Arab parties.

But that's because he fears that annexing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza would undermine Israel as a Jewish state.

Netanyahu's far right bloc explicitly rejects forming a government with Arab parties and Eisenkot is deeply reluctant to cooperate with them.

Palestinian citizens of Israel were able to form two blocs in the election—the left wing Joint List and conservative religious Ra'am.

They are the descendants of Palestinians who managed to stay after the Nakba of 1948, when Zionist forces ethnically cleansed 800,000 of them to found Israel.

They were subject to military administration until 1966—and are treated as second-class citizens.

Joint List, which won 11 seas, is the only bloc to call the Israeli state's genocide a genocide.

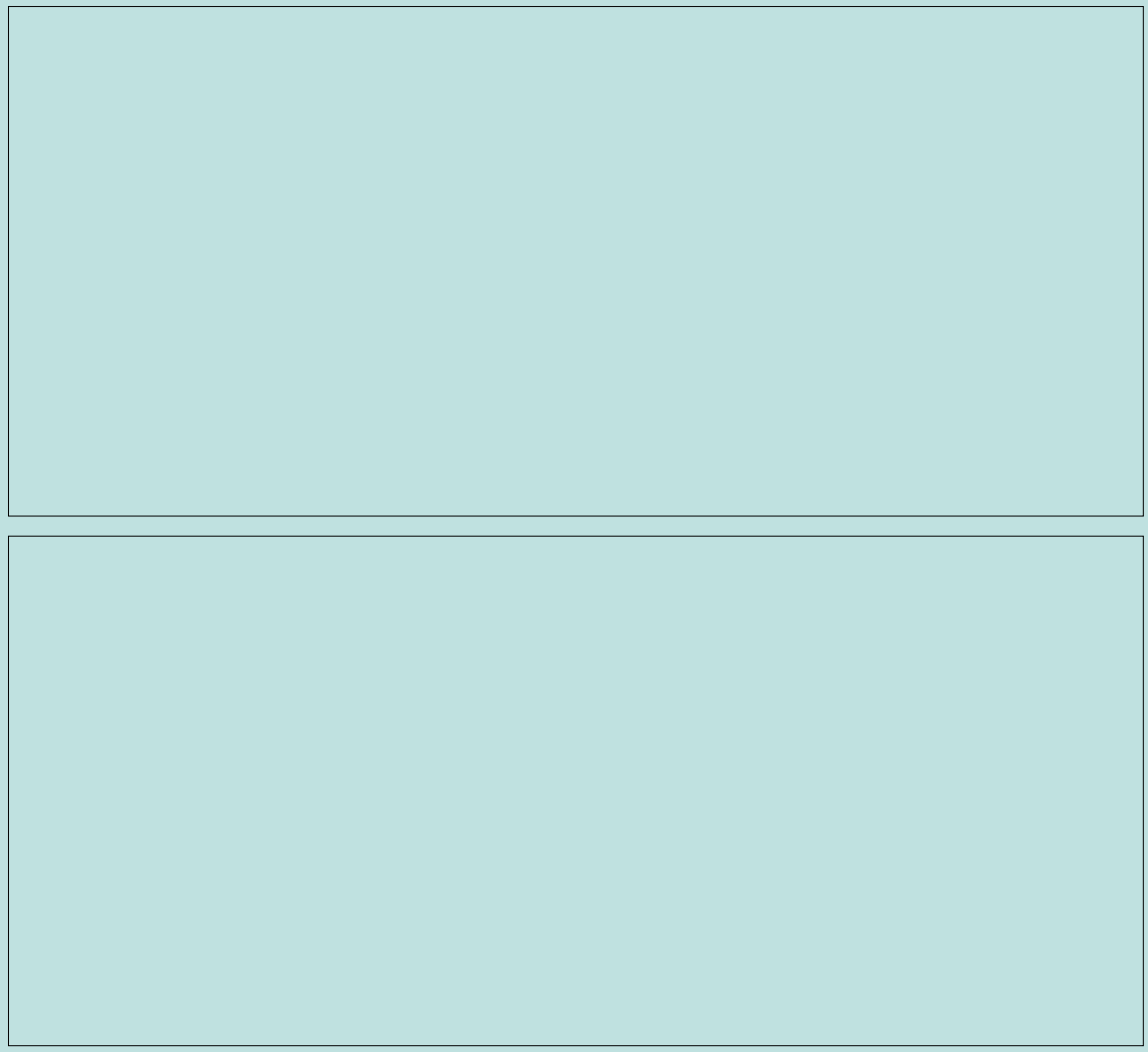
Ra'am, which won eight seats, happily joined an Israeli coalition government in 2021-22.

Both Arab parties accept a two-state solution, which would leave Israeli settler colonialism in place.

That major Zionist parties refuse to cooperate with Arab parties exposes the racism built into the Israeli apartheid state.

The election confirms how Israeli society is marching rightwards.

Each time Israel fails to crush the Palestinian resistance, it lays the ground for a more right wing and murderous version of Zionism to grow.



Spot the difference? More unites than divides prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu (top) **and 'opposition' leader Gadi Eisenkot** (above)

'They put you in a small dark room and assault you' says Palestinian

by **JUNE BUDD**

ISRAELI FORCES withdrew from the city of Hebron in the West Bank on Monday morning after a ten-day siege.

But they left a trail of death and destruction behind—and are planning new assaults.

The Israeli military launched the siege after it murdered two Palestinian freedom fighters, who had shot dead two soldiers.

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

Reem, a head teacher in Hebron, told Socialist Worker, "The whole city was affected by the siege.

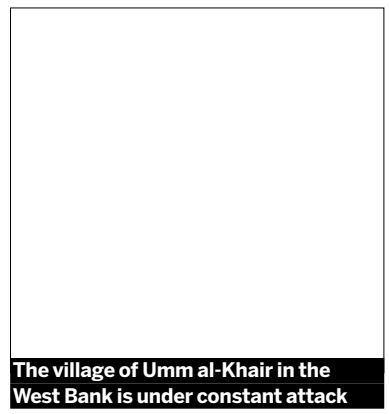
Siege

"The seven gates of the city were closed. We were under siege. We were not allowed to leave the city.

"Some people were more affected than others. But throughout the whole city, not many people could go out and buy things and traffic was less than usual.

"Schools were closed because it was difficult for teachers to reach them and because it was not safe.

"Settlers made use of the closure of the city. They attacked the farmers who were harvesting olives and kicked them out of their lands and stole the olive harvest."



The village of Umm al-Khair in the West Bank is under constant attack

Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian olive groves at least 401 times last month.

Nisreen, who lives in Hebron, told Socialist Worker, "The army carried out forced displacement and closed off neighborhoods and the city."

The Israeli withdrawal from Hebron does not mean much for villagers under constant attack from settlers.

Mahmoud is from the village of Umm al-Khair in the West Bank. "I think they will put more and more obstacles in the lives of the Palestinian people until it becomes impossible," he told Socialist Worker.

"Umm al-Khair is now surrounded by three gates and the first one was closed for five days last week.

"The new ones are open, but the settlers will close them in time.

"Settlers attacked ten teachers in Massafer Yatta, our collection of villages, on Sunday."

The Israeli settlers have the full support of the state to ethnically cleanse Palestinians and steal their land.

Mahmood said, "It's forbidden to speak to settlers, photograph them or treat them poorly.

"The settlers are a red line and there will be harsh punishment if you break these rules.

"They will put you in detention in terrible conditions—a small dark room where they brutally assault you."

As well as in the West Bank, Israel is keeping up its attacks in Gaza. An Israeli drone murdered five Palestinians in al-Mawasi near Khan Younis on Sunday.

Another three were killed in drone strikes on the Rimal neighbourhood in Gaza city, including a four year old boy.

Arrests of Palestine Action supporters reach 4,000

by JUNE BUDD

HUNDREDS OF people defied police intimidation to protest outside the US embassy in south London against the ban of Palestine Action last Saturday.

The police have escalated their repression.

They announced the night before that "all those coming" to the Defend Our Juries (DOJ) protest "are essentially meeting to purposefully commit a crime".

Cops have arrested over 4,000 people at DOJ protests since the Labour government banned the non-violent direct action group under the Terrorism Act 2000 over a year ago. Their only crime is holding up placards, saying, "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action."

This time the cops wanted to intimidate anyone who joined a DOJ protest—regardless of whether they held the sign. On Saturday they arrested at least one person before the signs had even been written.

Tim Crosland, a leading DOJ figure, told Socialist Worker, "It could not be clearer at this point how serious the intervention on freedom of expression has become.

"This is what authoritarianism looks like—people being punished for saying the wrong thing to power."

Tim added, "If the Supreme Court is serious about protecting people, it will overturn the ban."

The action took place ahead of the Supreme Court's review of the ban, which is set to take place on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

Protesters slammed Labour's hypocrisy over Palestine Action.

HUNDREDS OF signholders were arrested on Saturday PHOTO: GUY SMALLMAN

It was forced to admit the Palestine movement was right in a bid to win back voters—but it continues to repress people taking action.

Tim said that we have "absolutely seen a change in rhetoric" from Labour. "But when we see these scenes today and all the things we're seeing in the West Bank, where is the follow-up?," he asked.

Meaningful

"Where are the sanctions? It's hard to find evidence of a meaningful shift."

Lyndall, from the Jewish Peaceniks UK group told Socialist Worker, "It's absurd to classify peaceful protesters as terrorists.

"But what we've heard from Miliband is important progress."

Another protester, Chris, said, "We did feel that once Labour got past Keir Starmer it would be better, but there's not been any action.

"Burnham is still tiptoeing around Donald Trump—that's why we're here outside the US embassy," he told Socialist Worker.

When the police try to intimidate people from joining DOJ protests, it's an attack on the whole Palestine and labour movement.

The TUC union federation passed a policy to oppose the ban on Palestine Action in 2025.

Protest Is Not Terrorism, set up in the wake of the ban, said defiance was key.

"We urge activists across the trade union movement to continue campaigning against the proscription of Palestine Action," it said.

Academic barred from entering Britain

>>continued from front page

he had been to Britain several times recently without facing any restrictions—including for an event in May.

"I have been called an 'ecoterrorist' in the past because I wrote a book called How to Blow up a Pipeline," he said.

"But it's the extreme sensitivity towards Palestine. We have seen hundreds of arrests this weekend over Palestine Action. It's part of that."

Andreas was banned the week before the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration of 1917. This declared British imperialism's support for the Zionist settler colonial project in Palestine.

He argued, "Britain is not the only place doing this"—but there is a "historical logic" to the way the British state is acting.

"It was Britain that started this colonial outpost in the first place."

Andreas Malm

Andreas said it was "a heavy blow" to be barred from Britain.

"I did my PhD research in Britain and have lots of friends there and had been intending to go back," he said.

"I haven't lost my job let alone been through the things Palestinian scholars have been subjected to.

"I can still feed my kids and my house hasn't been turned to rubble. But I can't move freely and do my job."

In a statement for Malm's publishers Verso, veteran author Tariq Ali said, "Never in over 55 years of publishing has a British government revoked the right of one of our authors to enter the country."

Pressure from the Palestine solidarity movement forced Labour to announce plans for sanctions on trade with settlements in the West Bank.

And, shortly afterwards foreign secretary Ed Miliband told the Palestine movement, "We hear you, you were right."

If the Palestine movement is right, why is the British state arresting pensioners and banning authors at the border?

The only way to make Labour act is to keep up the pressure.

Sign the open letter to reverse the ban here: tinyurl.com/DefendAndreas

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

AN HONEST RECKONING WITH BRITAIN'S PAST

WHEN ANDY Burnham suggested last week that he was open to calls for Britain to apologise for its role in the slave trade, the right was predictably enraged.

Tory leader Kemi Badenoch replied that no apology was needed as slavery was an evil "in which people from every continent and region participated".

But the transatlantic trade was different to those that preceded it. It was distinctive in its scale, its racialisation of black people and its role in the development of capitalism.

And it is impossible to imagine Britain today without the vast wealth it generated for slavers and investors.

Around 12.5 million Africans were forcibly transported across the Atlantic between the 1500s and 1800s—and around 1.8 million died during the crossing. British ships carried approximately 3.1 million of them.

More than the rich of any other nation, the British ruling class grew fat on profits derived from selling human beings on an industrial scale.

The obscene trade generated wealth that helped finance the industrialisation that made Britain the pre-eminent world power.

Another key difference with slavery in previous societies was that now the trade was racialised.

Those who profited justified slavery by insisting that Africans were inferior to white people and did not deserve the same rights.

That meant skin colour became a marker of enslavement. Slavery was generally lifelong and hereditary—children born to enslaved mothers were enslaved too.

Earlier forms of slavery could also be lifelong and hereditary. But they were not organised around a single racial hierarchy. People of many ethnicities could be enslaved and the granting of freedom was widely practised in the Roman Empire. Hereditary slavery was rare in Africa or the Arabic world.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the resistance of enslaved people and the Abolitionist movement combined to make slavery less attractive to Britain's ruling class. This change did not result from some sudden moral discovery that the rich made themselves.

Britain abolished slavery in most of its colonies in 1833 but the government paid £20 million in compensation to slave owners, while the formerly enslaved received nothing. That's the equivalent of £300 billion in today's money.

The poisonous racist ideology used to justify the trade lived on, helping to justify colonialism and later the division of workers in Britain.

That's why we need more than Burnham's talk of an apology.

Reparations would mean at the very least, the cancellation of debt for the Global South.

We need to re-orientate economies away from exporting raw materials and rebuild them to serve the interests of ordinary people.

And we need an honest reckoning with Britain's horrific past—and the rich who continue to benefit from it.

DEMOCRATS DIVIDED

THE MIDTERM elections to the US congress could spell the end for Donald Trump. But that didn't stop senior Democrats from attacking the left instead of the right.

Results were due after Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday.

Michigan Democrat Haley Stevens, who lost to left liberal Abdul el Sayed in the race to be the senate candidate, endorsed his Republican rival Mike Rogers.

El Sayed has openly accused Israel of genocide. He campaigns on three major points—money out of politics, money in your pockets and Medicare for all.

Rogers supports war and Israel, pushes Islamophobia and homophobia and wants a national abortion ban.

El Sayed was polling narrowly ahead of Rogers on Tuesday. This is precisely because his progressive politics are popular and have broad appeal.

That's why other establishment Democrats, including former president Barack Obama, have endorsed el Sayed.

They hope to contain the mood he reflects into the dead end of the Democrats.

COMMENT

ANALYSIS
ALEX CALLINICOS

Palestine will remain Burnham's bane

FOR ALL Andy Burnham's talk that he intends to "end 40 years of neoliberalism", it's been clear from the start of his premiership that he has an Achilles' heel.

He is as much wedded to the Atlantic security system—or to put it more plainly, Western imperialism—as Keir Starmer. This may well doom his government, as it did his predecessor's.

The most important example of this commitment isn't Burnham and chancellor John Healey's efforts to drive up military spending, reprehensible though that is. It's in the increasing repression of the Palestine solidarity movement.

The complicity of the Western imperialist states in the genocide in Gaza has created a legitimacy crisis. They have utterly failed to punish the murderous Israeli settler regime and to compel it to rein back its slaughter and dispossession of the Palestinians. The failure has exposed the reality of the imperialist system to huge numbers of people worldwide.

The general reaction of Western governments has been to carry on supporting Israel and to ratchet up repression of the supporters of Palestine among their citizens.

This isn't primarily because of Zionist influence within ruling class circles, real though that is. But because the dominant classes in the West continue to see Israel as a valuable asset in a region that is slipping from their grip.

Burnham apologised for Labour's past failure to condemn Israel, and allowed foreign secretary Ed Miliband to sanction the illegal Zionist settlements on the West Bank. Yet Britain remains an active economic and military partner with Israel.

And the Palestine movement is being hit by attacks that are simultaneously vicious and absurd.

Swedish Marxist Andreas Malm has been barred from entering Britain. He's the author of the classic Fossil Capital, which was awarded the Isaac and Tamara Deutscher Memorial Prize in 2016.

The Financial Times newspaper was quick to pick up on another of his books, How to Blow Up a Pipeline. But there seems little doubt that Malm was banned not because of his climate activism, but because of his vocal support for the Palestinian resistance.

Discredited

A bizarre interview on BBC Radio 4's Today programme last Friday had the presenter robotically asking Malm about his connections with Palestine Action, rather along the lines of the old McCarthyite question, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?"

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police says it won't simply arrest protesters against the ban on Palestine Action but also anyone present who supports them, intensifying this discredited campaign of repression.

Burnham's attack on the Green Party as antisemitic because of its conference vote that Zionism is racism belongs to the same repressive wave. Instructing local Labour parties to break up coalitions with Green councillors is a pretty naked ploy to try to see off the left challenge from the Greens.

All this is nasty and reinforces the trend towards increased authoritarianism and attacks on civil liberties that began with Tony Blair's Terrorism Act 2000 and has accelerated since the pandemic. But I don't believe it will work.

All the indignation about the Zionism is racism vote has been undercut by the outcome of the Israeli elections. Despite the fact that record number of Arab members of parliament have been elected, the Israeli Jewish parties are almost unanimous that they can't play a part in a new government.

This is a lesson in the reality of Israel as a Jewish supremacist state where an apartheid—in some ways more vicious than the South African original—is being perpetuated.

Growing numbers of people in the Western capitalist societies reject their rulers' continuing collaboration with this state. They're not intimidated by lies about antisemitism.

This is reflected in the transnational wave of strikes against rearmament and the genocide on Friday last week.

Burnham's success in partially reducing support for the Greens arises from his promises of a real progressive break with the era of neoliberalism.

But, after the budget, says the Financial Times, "neoliberalism is still looking rather secure". If Burnham carries on like this, and continues to libel the Palestinian movement, he'll fail, just as Starmer did.

LETTERS

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

The historic win in Brazil brings lessons for the left

THIS LETTER doesn't seek to glorify Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. But I would like to disagree with the analysis of Lula's win over the far right in Brazil in Socialist Worker (28 October 2026), specifically when you say it was a "surprise victory".

The left wing movement on Brazil's streets was extremely well organised, focused and tactical.

It recovered previously lost ground on social media. It brought millions more people to vote.

It was a workers' movement composed of a united front between the far left, centre and even centre right in defence of democracy and workers' rights.

A campaign was organised to convince people who didn't vote in the first round. The strategy was to avoid hard-right supporters of Flávio Bolsonaro and focus on people who cast blank votes or were undecided.

A united front was formed "Left and right against Bolsonaro" and spread like wildfire. This started as an online campaign by centrist voters who didn't like Lula, but recognised a vote for him as the only solution.

Finally, but most importantly, the movement built hundreds of student-led demonstrations. These were rooted in class struggle. Class consciousness spread.

All of this happened in 21 days. As a result, Lula won the votes of an extra 7 million people.

Millions of people became aware of class struggle, the dangers of the Bolsonaro family, of fascism and of Trump.

As SW says, Brazilians will have to stay on the streets to make sure Lula delivers.

The organised left can learn from this win. We can make big gains in a small time and we should not despair while we have time to change things.

Débora O
East London
This letter is longer at socialistworker.co.uk

Fascists won't silence us

I WAS attending a Socialist Workers Party meeting in Glasgow on 22 October when around 20 fascists attempted to storm the building.

Our comrades stood firm, kept those of us inside safe and the allowed the meeting to continue.

The meeting brought together university strikers fighting to defend their jobs, a striker from the Institute of Cancer Research and a revolutionary from Paris discussing the revolt in France.

The fascists wanted to intimidate people organising resistance to exploitation and oppression. But the attack failed to silence us. Instead, it exposed their violence.

The far right have portrayed the attack as a victory. This is a cynical attempt to rewrite what happened. The attackers did not achieve their aim.

But we should not underestimate the danger they pose. Opposing fascism cannot stop at condemning its ideas.

The answer is solidarity organised in workplaces and communities. We must transform solidarity into mass resistance. Fascists won't drive us out of our meetings or our streets.

Emma Edwards
Glasgow

Illustration: Tim Sanders

Who is paying for Trump's tariff wars?

DONALD TRUMP'S so-called "tariff war" has made life in Canada more difficult.

The cost of living has gone up considerably due to product and service limitations or simply because of corporate greed.

Please remember that our Canadian government knew the US was going to invoke a policy using tariffs to get what it wanted.

Trump spoke about using tariffs as a political-diplomatic tool over a year before he was re-elected. All our Canadian corporate heads and politicians let this information pass over their heads.

From the corporate world, to our Liberal Party government to the opposition parties, all failed to see what he proclaimed clearly.

In my sector, working with metals, thousands of workers may lose their jobs in layoffs.

Tariffs are being utilised as a weapon. For shame.

Now the average consumer and worker is suffering for this lack of foresight.

Steven Kaszab
Bradford, Ontario, Canada

Fight arms spending

DEFENCE SECRETARY Wes Streeting said that British factories making tank parts will provide "the firepower that will make us warfighting ready by 2030".

Will someone ask him how likely it is that we will be fighting in tanks on British soil?

People are suffering and dying now because of lack of money in health services, from food insecurity and homelessness.

There needs to be a debate about further increasing what is already one of the world's biggest military budgets.

Brendan O'Brien
North London

Race is on to tell Labour to stop drilling at Rosebank

Labour is divided over North Sea oil, writes **Camilla Royle**

CLIMATE JUSTICE protesters gathered in Westminster, central London, last Saturday to tell energy secretary Miatta Fahnbulleh to turn back from fossil fuel expansion.

The Fossil Free London campaigners brought giant inflatable eyeballs to tell the Labour government, "We are watching you."

Fahnbulleh is set to make a decision over drilling at the giant Rosebank oil and gas field in the North Sea.

Fossil Free London director Robin Wells said, "Burning more oil and gas is not compatible with a livable future in which we can enjoy safety in our homes, workplaces and the national parks we love.

"Fires and heatwaves will only get worse. Andy Burnham knows this."

But with the Labour government split over the decision, there is still time to stop the development.

Some reports say Fahnbulleh doesn't want to give the green light to Rosebank but is under pressure from Burnham and chancellor John Healey to approve it.

Labour promised in its 2024 election manifesto not to award new licences for North Sea drilling.

Opponents

Rosebank's owners already have a licence. But opponents say that allowing drilling would go against the spirit of the manifesto.

One Labour MP said, "If Healey pushes through Rosebank, there will be blood. It's economically shortsighted as well as politically explosive—they aren't listening at all to the discomfort on the backbenches."

Anger over climate breakdown has fed some of the revolts across Europe over the past few months.

Kaïna Privet, a museum worker and member of the CGT union federation in France, said, "The heat waves of the summer of 2026 were both a catalyst and an accelerator for the high school protests."

She explained that school students and museum workers are both suffering in buildings that aren't equipped to cope with heat.

Kaïna was speaking at a conference last Saturday organised by the Campaign Against Climate Change trade union group.

Bus driver and Unite union shop steward Peter Skinner spoke about the victorious strike at Arriva North London over the summer for air conditioning.

"We brought north London to a standstill," he said. "What else can we do? We needed the bosses to listen."

Mike Sarnecki is an oil rig caterer and organiser with Platform. He spoke about the need to involve workers in drawing up a plan for their futures.

He said that workers are watching their jobs disappear as the North Sea oil industry declines but they don't trust that there is a credible alternative plan.

The whole union movement should pressure Labour to oppose oil and gas drilling.

No to Rosebank

BACK STORY

After a summer of heatwaves, drought and wildfires in Britain, Burnham wants to pour fuel on the fire

- Miatta Fahnbulleh gave the go ahead to drill at the Jackdaw gas field on 21 October
- Rosebank is Britain's largest untapped oil and gas field
- The giant field would release 250 million tonnes of carbon dioxide over 25 years.
- Rosebank is jointly owned by Adura and Ithaca energy. Ithaca is majority owned by Israeli firm Delek, which operates in illegal West Bank settlements.

KEEPING AN eye on the Labour government PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Budget of little change from Labour

WHEN HE was elected as prime minister, Andy Burnham promised us a break from the last ten years of "drift".

But chancellor John Healey's much-anticipated budget last Wednesday was one of very little change.

Healey spoke endlessly of giving us "breathing space" from the cost of living crisis. He talked of a break from the Keir Starmer era. But he also talked at length of "global uncertainties", such as Donald Trump's war on Iran, to dampen expectations.

Healey has deferred several significant decisions until after his budget.

Instead, he gave us a flotilla of small announcements, none of which added up to much more than a tin of tariff-free beans.

Healey says he will fund his small changes by taxing banks. The bankers squealed that the tax was a "stupid surcharge on these engines of growth".

But the increase in the surcharge on profits was smaller than the sector had feared and will last only 15 months. Shares in British banks rose amid relief that the taxes remained so low.

Labour's election manifesto committed to scrapping "discriminatory" age bands and to increasing the minimum wages for 18 to 20 year olds so young workers are paid the same as those over 21.

Healey broke this promise—18 to 20 year olds will still earn nearly £2 an hour less.

Protests on the eve of budget day PICTURE: DAVE GILCHRIST

And, the 3.9 percent rise is below the rate of inflation for the lower paid, who spend a greater proportion of their income on food and energy.

Burnham and Healey are under pressure to deliver changes that can win back voters driven away by Starmer.

Unwilling

But they are unwilling to take on big business and the bond markets, which demand "fiscal responsibility".

So, Labour is relying on low-to-no-cost measures that don't make a substantial difference to working class people's lives.

In total, the budget means an immediate pledge to spend £7.6 billion. That's a small figure compared with the £66 billion announced in former chancellor Rachel Reeves's first two budgets.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast no real earnings growth in Britain next year. That means inflation will devour every crumb of pay rises workers win.

Trade union leaders said Labour needed "bolder" policies to tackle the cost of living crisis. On the eve of the budget, Unison union leader Andrea Egan said, "These are welcome measures. But the cost of essentials, including food and fuel, is going to keep soaring."

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

BARBARA FINALLY FOUND A PLACE THAT MADE HER GLAD TO BE ALIVE... NOW COUNCILLORS WANT TO CLOSE IT

Glasgow City Council is in financial crisis and preparing to slash services that offer people a lifeline. **Jude Mckechnie** spoke to people who depend on them, groups that run them and the workers' unions that are fighting for them

"I LIVE in a high rise flat and at times my depression was so bad I felt like just jumping out the window," says Barbara, a 76 year old who lives in Drumchapel, in the north of Glasgow.

"But then my occupational therapist told me about the Focal Point day care centre. And from day one, I felt like I was drunk on happiness.

"I started there two years ago and before that I was miserable. Then I found the place that I was meant to be in and it's brought me out of myself."

But for Barbara, and all the others who use the centre, there is now terrible threat—that the council may decide to cut the service as part of debate on "balancing council budgets."

Councillors see only revenue and expenditure, but for Barbara the service is a "lifeline" where twice a week she can meet friends, escape isolation, receive support and remain independent.

"I've been in this house for years on my own," she said. "I don't know where I'd be if it wasn't for Focal Point. The carers there are so dedicated. They helped build my confidence up."

"We're like a family. If it were to shut, it would break my heart."

Focal Point is under threat. It is one of ten older people's day centres under review by the SNP-led Glasgow City Council, which is planning to reduce the number of centres to just four.

The reason? Glasgow's budget crisis is enormous. The council has identified a three-year financial gap of more than £100 million.

Activities at Focal Point day care centre

Barbara is just one of many who are fighting the cuts. She started a petition to "push for people to do something" to save the day centre when it was announced that it could close. She added that many of the people that use the service have Alzheimer's and have not grasped what's at stake.

If the day care centre shut, it would break my heart

"Losing it would be devastating to these people. We get everybody up dancing and having fun. And to me that's just brilliant. I go two days a week but there some people are there for three or four days who would just be sitting at home alone if it weren't for Focal Point."

The centre closing would have a huge impact on the community, not just those attending it, Barbara explained.

Pressures

"This affects the carers too. People's families only get one or two days a week where they can do what they want to do."

The proposal has been put forward by the city's Integration Joint Board (IJB) that directs the city's Health and Social Care Partnership. It says it is carrying out a "service prioritisation" scheme due to funding pressures.

Known as the "Step Forward" programme, the aim is to find £10 million of savings in the current financial year and another £10 million by April 2027.

Years of austerity mean that Glasgow, once famed as a friendly city, is now more synonymous with rat infestations, fly-tipping and damning statistics around homelessness and drug abuse.

For anyone walking through its centre it can feel as though you're navigating a never-ending series of uncompleted projects and roadworks.

'People Make Glasgow," goes the slogan. But the council's cuts package will devastate thousands of lives (above) **Day care centres like Focal Point are a 'lifeline'** (below)

A series of devastating fires, emergency water repairs and road schemes gives the sense of a city that is broken, constrained and in need of fixing. And across the city, services that people depend on are being squeezed, reduced or closed permanently.

Glasgow's drug crisis is one of the clearest examples. New figures from the National Records of Scotland showed last month that the country remains the worst in Europe for drug-related deaths. There were 196 drug-related deaths in Glasgow in 2025, an increase of 6 percent on the previous year.

It is working class communities that are paying the highest price. People living in the most deprived areas of the country were 15 times more likely to die from drugs than those in the wealthiest.

On the same day as these shocking figures were released, the IJB voted to close two specialist drug services in Glasgow—the Enhanced Drug Treatment Service and the Complex Needs Service. It is replacing them with a combined model to save about £2 million. But the figures show that Scotland needs to be scaling up its emergency response, not scaling it down.

Social care charity Turning Point Scotland has been involved in providing specialist drug and alcohol services in the city, including the two specialist services which were recently scrapped.

PICTURE: BILLY KNOX

Lack of resources for survivors allows sexual violence to thrive

Patricia Tracey, Head of Alcohol and Other Drugs at the charity, told Socialist Worker that the situation around drug and alcohol use in Glasgow was "extremely challenging".

"Every opportunity to prevent a death matters, and every person deserves the chance to recover, rebuild and live a fulfilling life."

Challenging

She explained that Glasgow's drug death crisis is driven by a complex combination of factors, including poverty, trauma, inequality and barriers to accessing the right support.

"Working across homelessness prevention, mental health and justice, we see first-hand the need for a joined up approach that addresses the wider needs of people affected by alcohol and other drugs," said Patricia.

"If Glasgow—and Scotland—is to make meaningful progress, we need sustained investment and accountability to ensure our strategy translates into action that saves lives.

"Any loss in this type of provision risks leaving vulnerable people without timely access to the support they need. It potentially increases pressure on other services and creates further barriers to recovery."

This is the truth that gets lost when politicians talk about Glasgow as a "lawless" city.

Thomas Kerr, MSP and deputy Reform UK leader in Scotland, portrays Glasgow as a place descending into crime, drugs and disorder and blames the high number of refugees housed in the city for this.

Cuts have left Glasgow with damning statistics on homelessness (above) **Stuart, Glasgow Unison social work convener** (right)

He stood by comments describing the neighbourhood of Govanhill, south Glasgow, as a "ghetto", full of nothing but "mass illegal migration and street gangs."

As the hollowing out of the city's infrastructure continues, the far right is exploiting a real despair that people feel after being abandoned by those in power. In Scotland, it is pointing the finger at migrants, saying they are compounding the housing crisis, draining resources and making the city less safe for women and girls.

But there are no statistics that show immigration as the cause for any of these problems. And they cannot be solved by scapegoating people who are often struggling themselves.

Weaponised

Nicola works for Rape Crisis Scotland. She told Socialist Worker that the issue of women's safety was being weaponised to push a racist agenda and misdirect anger over the city's decline.

"There is not one type of man who commits violence against women. I urge people to question anyone who wants to misunderstand that in order to scapegoat migrants and refugees.

"There's an inability to tackle the poverty and the cost of living pressures that are allowing sexual violence to thrive. We're not making meaningful strides to deal with the root causes of violence against women."

She added, "We are quite close to having to cut services in parts of Scotland, with Glasgow being one of those places.

"Some parts of Scotland have a nine month wait before someone can access justice advocacy. There's thousands of women who are in that position.

"That can be very painful for workers who want to give that support to people but can't because we do not have the resources.

"In the last round of funding we only got around 60 percent of what we asked for. That was four years ago and now we need emergency funding. We can't provide the support to deal with the scale of demand.

"But it doesn't have to be that way. The solution to supporting survivors is simple—funding."

Glasgow does not have to accept managed decline. There is another response. Trade unionists, anti-racists and community campaigners have repeatedly mobilised to defend public services.

Members of the Glasgow City Unison union branch protested against welfare rights cuts and day centre closures outside the council building in September.

Council workers are also deciding whether to walk out in opposition to a new pay and grading system which could see some 2,000 workers lose thousands of pounds a year.

Stuart Graham, Unison social work convener for Glasgow, said cuts to vital services would "have a devastating impact" on the lives of working class Glaswegians if not stopped.

And this is only the start of the IJB's strategic cuts programme.

"The Step Forward programme is a juggernaut of cuts," he told Socialist Worker. "There are other services lined up for cuts that will impact on the most vulnerable people.

"We need much more detail and transparency regarding how they are making decisions and evaluating the impact of cuts of this scale."

He added, "In the last ten years, I haven't seen any services that are being expanded. It's always a reduction or closure. You can see everywhere the impact that's having on communities we live in.

"If more and more people are living in poverty, why is the council cutting welfare services?

"If elderly care is a lifeline for pensioners that prevents them from having to move into a care home, why cut elderly care?

Inequalities

"The cuts agenda is clear. The council has a figure that they want to save and they're using a lot of rhetorical devices to push it through.

"But I've not seen anything to convince me that the plans will make inequalities in the city better."

Glasgow, like many other places around the country, faces a choice. It can allow the slow erosion of the services that keep people connected, supported and safe. Or it can demand the money needed to properly fund them.

Everyone knows the city needs change. But the far right wants people to believe that the problem is your neighbour who happens to have been born somewhere else.

The people on the front line of Glasgow's services know the real issue is different. The city needs more resources for the people who are struggling to survive in it.

PICTURE: BILLY KNOX

ITALIANS STRIKING in Genoa over Palestine in 2026

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE MASS STRIKE?

Mass strikes have long been upheld by socialists as a necessary step towards working class power. Now, as revolt hits Europe and the world, we need to double down, writes **Camilla Royle**

ACROSS the world, in many languages, people are talking about general strikes.

Socialists champion huge movements of striking workers. But for many people, protesting on the streets or building barricades seems like an equally militant and effective way to win change.

The union movement at present faces problems. It is sometimes slow to act. Its actions are often limited to walkouts that last for just a day and are easily controlled by the union leaders.

Students in France had already shut half the secondary schools and 90 percent of universities by early October—a whole month before the strike day set for this Thursday.

So why do socialists think strikes are so important?

For workers who want to improve their pay and conditions, strikes can and do win. London bus drivers won their demands over air conditioning this summer and strikers at the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) scored a massive pay increase.

But when workers take part in a general strike, it has a different effect. By taking action nationwide, it becomes a movement against the state as well as their own employer.

STRIKES were called across Italy last Friday by grassroots unions. While, in Portugal and the Spanish state unions are set to strike later this month.

And the strike movement is wider than Europe. There was a three-day general strike in Senegal in west Africa last month over pay and working conditions.

Argentina was rocked by a general strike in February as the far right government introduced new labour laws. And India saw immense strikes in February this year that organisers estimated involved 300 million people.

Taking national industrial action helps tip the balance of power in favour of working class people.

If such strikes continue for long enough, employers feel the pressure and could start to lobby for the government to give in to the workers' demands.

The state itself will lose money if public services slow down and the state is no longer able to function normally.

During the British general strike of 1926, the king was forced to declare a state of emergency to try to maintain the supply of goods.

But the power of mass strikes is greater than their ability to achieve economic goals.

Socialist trailblazer Rosa Luxemburg

Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg argued that the strike movement over workers' economic demands can feed the political struggle—and vice versa.

She wrote The Mass Strike the year after the Russian Revolution of 1905, drawing out its lessons and noting the role of strikes within it.

She argued that mass strikes are an essential part of any revolutionary movement.

1905 saw some 150,000 workers take part in one of the biggest strikes in St Petersburg. They demanded an eight-hour working day and a pay rise. But they also wanted democratic rights, public education and an end to the war with Japan.

> **Mass strikes are an essential part of any revolutionary movement**

Luxemburg said, "Every new onset and every fresh victory of political struggle is transformed into a powerful impetus for economic struggle.

"Conversely, the workers' condition of ceaseless economic struggle with the capitalists keeps their fighting energy alive in every political interval."

She said that struggle forms the "permanent fresh reservoir" of working class strength.

FRANCE TODAY is not yet in the kind of revolutionary situation Luxemburg describes. But the same dynamics of political and economic struggles feeding each other can always be seen in mass strikes.

Similar interactions were seen when trade unionists last month mobilised in their thousands to demonstrate against the fascist Rassemblement National in Orléans.

And strikes have helped build the school students' movement. On 29 September when school workers and others struck, it helped spread the school blockades and turn them into a nationwide movement.

This prompted six union federations to organise strikes in France on 5 November. They are striking over wages and pensions—but also against a proposed budget that "turns its back on young people".

Mass strikes create a sense in society that things can't continue as normal.

In every workplace, people will be discussing the strike. Every worker will be forced to make a decision—do you oppose the government's austerity budget? And are you willing to take action against it by joining the strike?

Schools and offices shut down and the transport system grinds to a halt. In France, even Uefa league football matches have been moved to another day to avoid the strike.

Workers are freed from the daily grind of their usual working lives. Even on a one-day strike they can spend their day supporting the school students or the university occupation and march together with other workers from their area.

Luxemburg wrote her essay A Test Based on a Sample around the same time as her writing on the mass strike. She wrote that normally the working class "is welded to the chain of capital. It is tied down in factories, workplaces and mines and, at the same time, it is isolated and fragmented.

"If the working class wishes to undertake any kind of direct political mass action, it must before all else lay down tools and leave the factories, workplaces and mines.

"Thus, the general strike is the first step and the natural initial form of every open mass action—or, at any rate, of every modern revolution in the streets."

Mass strikes are democratic events. Workers meet on the picket lines and form assemblies and strike committees to decide on the next course of action.

This kind of action can draw in and include those workers who may not have been part of the old leadership of the union.

It can give confidence to a new layer and give them a space to raise their own demands.

We can see some of this even in strikes in individual workplaces. For example, one element of the strikes at the ICR was the leading role played by some of the lowest paid workers. Migrant workers also raised their own demands over the high cost of visas.

This doesn't mean every mass strike is the same. Luxemburg distinguished between two different forms—"demonstration strikes" and "fighting strikes".

Demonstration strikes are often time limited and tightly controlled by the union leadership. For example, Luxemburg described annual strikes on May Day in Warsaw and Lodz in Poland which had "not yet been celebrated to any appreciable extent by abstention from work".

THERE ARE those on the British left who spend their whole political careers begging the unions to call a general strike.

Sometimes these calls get heard. For example, in 2012 the TUC union federation voted to consider the "practicalities and possibilities" of a general strike against austerity.

In reality, there were only sporadic strikes by individual unions in the following year. 2013 became part of a low point in the number of days "lost" to strikes in Britain.

Calling on the British union leaders to deliver a mass strike from above rarely results in the kind of action the initiators of such calls would like to see.

Even if the TUC did call a one-day general strike, it could still be a top-down, bureaucratic event.

Demonstration strikes are purely political. They raise demands, but don't display the interaction between political and economic struggles that defines the mass strike.

The strikes in France have the potential to be either a demonstration strike or a fighting strike.

The union blocs can be an impressive show of strength, with thousands from each federation marching together.

But it makes a difference whether union members just leave work as individuals and join their union bloc—or whether they organise and picket, or even occupy their workplace.

French revolutionary socialist organisation Autonomie de Classe argues for workers to escalate the strikes. It says, "We must build 5 November in such a way that it goes beyond demonstrating in large numbers.

"This strike must assert our collective power. We've already shown that we can reclaim control of our streets. Now we must show that we can reclaim control of all of society.

"The students who are occupying their universities and offering courses on their own terms are showing the way. Let's do as they do—occupy and decide for ourselves."

In France, the working class stepping up could be the force that makes the state ungovernable.

Mass strikes are a necessary element of the mass movement of people demanding a better future in France and elsewhere.

Whether these strikes play a transformative role, deepening the movement, will depend on organised socialists fighting for a vision of working class emancipation.

1926 British general strike—Mounted police prepare to crush rioting (top)
Strikers making demands (above)

READ MORE

The Mass Strike
by Rosa Luxemburg, £5.00

Revisiting the General Strike of 1926
by Charlie Kimber and Judy Cox, £11

Marxism and Trade Union Struggle: The General Strike of 1926
By Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein, £9.99

Available at Bookmarks bookshop.co.uk

TEACH YOURSELF MARXISM
with Judy Cox

Will we still work in a socialist society?

ARE YOU a skiver or a striver?

The "parasitic scrounger" rivals the migrant for the role of scapegoat in the imagination of politicians and media.

Governments of all stripes are obsessed with driving us into work. They frame working as a moral stance that will benefit us practically and psychologically.

Our experience of work is often deeply contradictory. The average working day can be both fulfilling and frustrating, boring and stressful.

Being out of work can be even worse. The isolation and feelings of worthlessness, as well as the poverty, destroy people.

Often, it's our workmates who make working life tolerable. And the chance of getting one over on the boss.

Apologists for the system have long preached the virtues of hard work and the discipline imposed in the workplace.

Kathi Weeks in her book The Problem With Work, describes how "once we enter the workplace, we inevitably find ourselves enmeshed in the direct and personal relationships of the rulers and the ruled".

Militancy

Those relationships breed resistance. In Britain and elsewhere the early 1970s was a period of industrial militancy.

But these overt workplace rebellions were eventually defeated. Instead of collective control we got "managerialism and shopping", according to writer Mark Fisher.

Today, it's not enough to turn up—we have to love work. In her book, Work Won't Love You Back, Sarah Jaffe argues that from feudal times until the 1970s and 80s, "everyone knew work sucked".

But, she writes, "Neoliberalism relies on the labour of love ideology to cover up the coercion that was in fact required to push people into the workplace".

Increasing numbers of service sector jobs involve a "compulsion to be happy" not required by the assembly line workers of the past. Long hours, weekend emails and escalating demands from bosses became normalised.

WORK SUCKS now, but it doesn't have to

The contradictions we experience at work are rooted in something more profound than neoliberal work culture—they are rooted in our human nature.

Karl Marx wrote that labouring on nature to supply our needs is the "everlasting, nature-imposed condition of humanity".

As we work alongside others, we plan new ways to produce what we need. Marx wrote that by acting on the external world and changing it, workers change their own nature.

Work is a necessity, but it is also a dynamic process by which labourers reshape their world and themselves.

But under capitalism, we have to sell our ability to work to survive. We are denied any role in deciding how we work, what we produce or how we relate to others. This alienates us from our human nature.

We are forced to spend all our energies on making profits for the bosses. Our jobs are broken down into a series of mundane, repetitive tasks.

All our interests, talents and abilities are suppressed

Our interests, talents and abilities are stunted, distorted and suppressed.

Surveillance

Caring jobs, such as nursing and teaching, are subject to constant surveillance, target setting and regimentation.

Weeks explains, "Dreams of individual accomplishment and desires to contribute to the common good become firmly attached to waged work, where they can be hijacked to rather different ends", to produce privately appropriated surplus value.

But this is not inevitable. As Weeks writes, "That every individual must not only do some work, but often a lifetime of work, that every individual must not only work but become a worker, is not necessary to the production of social wealth."

Work might leave us feeling depleted and ill. But it also gives us a collective power that can't be realised by any other form of resistance. Workers who strike discover their power. Workers who take democratic control over production can direct their efforts towards satisfying human needs.

Marx envisaged a socialist society in which work would become "not only a means of life but life's prime want."

So it's OK to admit that work "sucks". But our creative capacities also offer the possibility of building a new society.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We support all genuine national liberation movements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Come to a socialist meeting near you

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

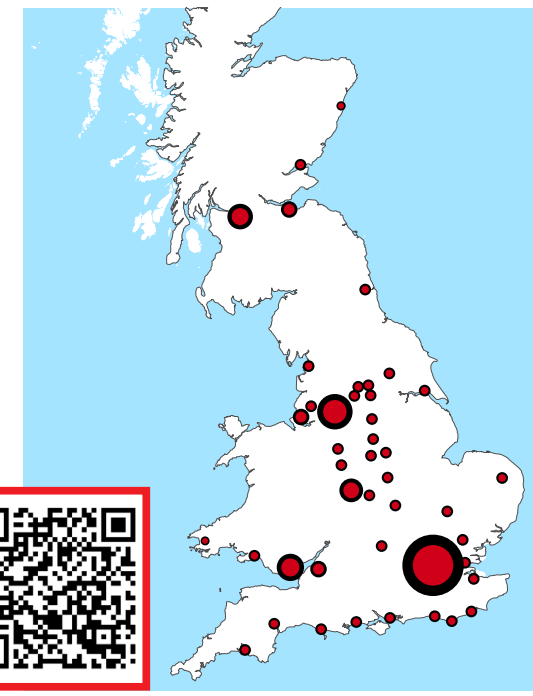
Midlands
- Birmingham
- Black Country
- Coventry
- Crewe and Stoke
- Chesterfield
- Derby
- Leicester
- Nottingham

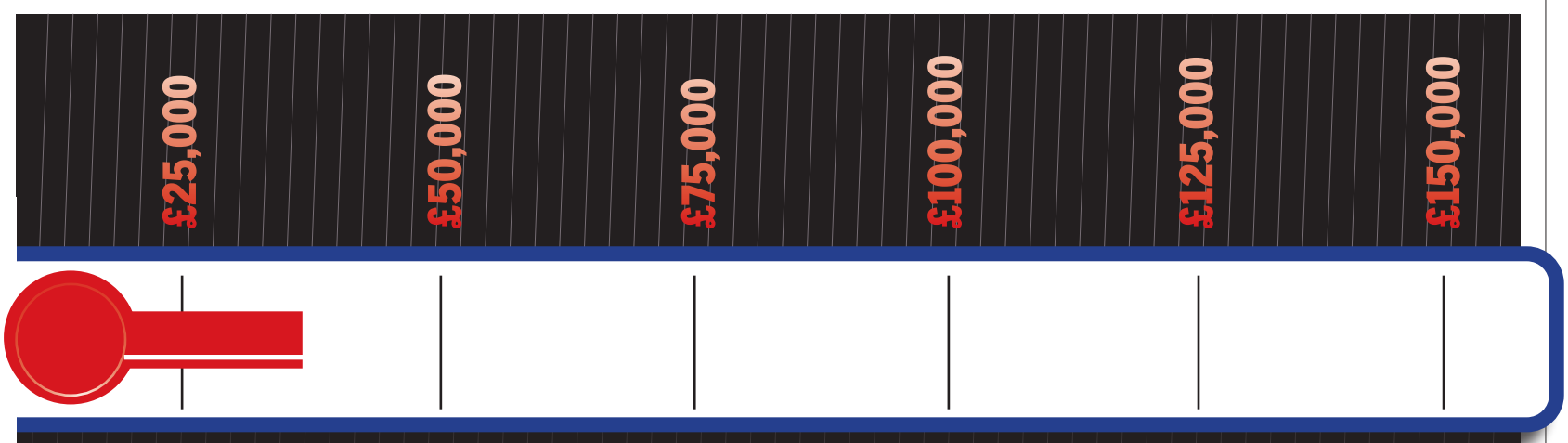
London
- Hackney
- Haringey
- Islington
- Newham
- South London
- South east London
- Tower Hamlets
- Waltham Forest
- West and north west London

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

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

Wales
- Cardiff
- Swansea
- West Wales





Help Socialist Worker raise £150,000

This week the SW fundraiser grew to a massive £30,000 thanks to a flurry of donations big and small. Craig donated £20 because 'left wing media doesn't have Murdoch money'. And Marika put in £50, noting, 'We are at a critical political point in the world and we need voices that counter the mainstream narrative'

Donate by scanning this QR code...

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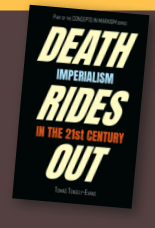

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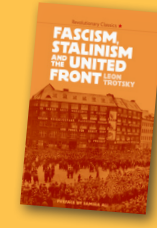

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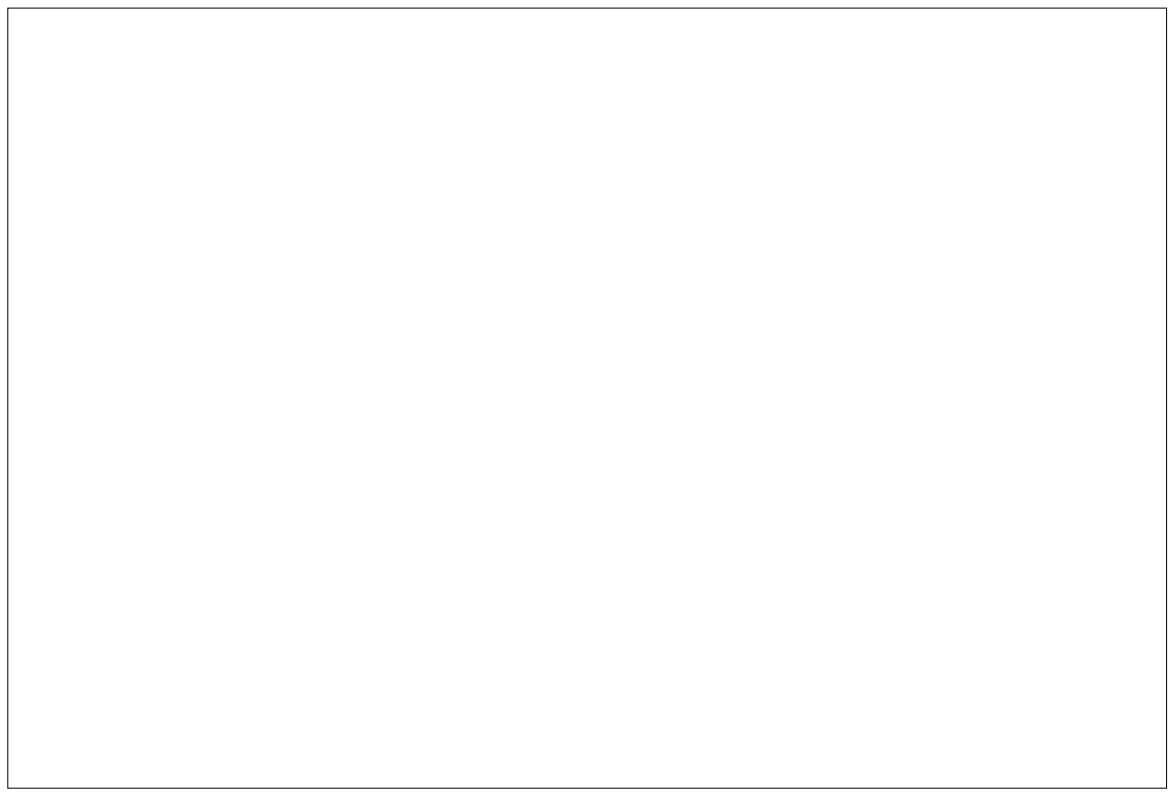
How right wing populists turned cruelty into political spectacle

Jonathan Darling is an urban and political geographer, and author of the upcoming book Taking Back Control—How Populists Captured The Asylum Debate. Frankie Murden asked him about right wing populism—and how to fight it



RIGHT WING myths about 'small boats' have been used to demonise asylum seekers

FOCUSING ON policies around "small boats", asylum hotels and deportations, the book looks at how the right have taken control of the debate to demonise migrants and asylum seekers in "spectacles of cruelty".

Right wing populism welds together popular prejudices and right wing myths into a world view that legitimises people's fears. It is able to capture the imagination and convince people that society is coming apart—and that they are losing out to another group.

Why did you start your analysis in 2019, instead of with Brexit or Donald Trump's populism?

Brexit was important in shaping the cultural conditions for a growing acceptance of anti-immigrant sentiment. I argue that there is a longer arc back to New Labour—which is conveniently forgotten sometimes.

But the focus on asylum became more significant after the 2019 election. The rise of "small boats" and the increasing use of hotels to house asylum seekers meant that their position became a much more salient political factor.

I also think that Boris Johnson's government, and those after him, were significant in changing the nature of asylum policy. Prior to this, policy was seeking to achieve something.

The Johnson government, as a result of Brexit and the lessons learned there about theatricality, led to a shift where policy increasingly became about headline grabbing.

They built upon theatrical staging of policy claims that were never going to be followed through on.

"What is consistent with the rise of the right globally is the shift away from traditional forms of media

You present policies as having failed because they weren't workable, but do you think anti-racists or the left played a role in stopping them?

Many of these policies fail because they're not particularly well considered. And in some ways, the success or failure of the policy is kind of irrelevant.

Something like the Rwanda plan kept the question of migration in the public imagination and that was calculated to benefit the Conservative government electorally. They went into it knowing that it was highly unlikely to be effective.

But it was about staging a confrontation with legal activists, with the refugee sector and with international law. In some ways staging that confrontation had political capital as well.

There are different ways these policies can be of value to a government. And part of the argument I'm making in the book is that that becomes very damaging for democracy and public conversation.

We've seen the rise of Reform UK and Restore Britain who have taken that lesson on and moved with it.

One of the key messages of this period was that there was a considerable amount of effort put into delegitimising and demonising opposition.

A lot was put into normalising the idea that the refugee sector and progressive political movements are somehow traitorous or a threat. I don't think that happens unless there is a concern that that sector is effective at challenging them.

This was largely written before Restore Britain gathered steam, how do you think it is accelerating the process?

The Labour government and the Conservative Party are increasingly moving even further to the right as a result of Reform UK, but now Restore Britain are out-flanking Reform.

Once you allow far right views into the mainstream you open up space for constant demands for more security, more control.

Reform UK has accelerated this by calling for mass deportations and Restore Britain has taken that even further.

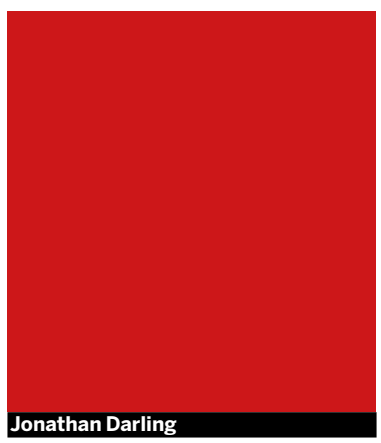
Ten years ago, no mainstream political party in Britain would have made the case that we should abandon human rights for refugees. Now, several mainstream parties are—if not explicitly making that case—certainly flirting with it.

I do think that Restore Britain is taking on positions that are so explicitly ethno-nationalist and nativist that there is a ceiling to it electorally.

But the effect it has on the public conversation is significant.

How does media and the online right influence this?

It is undeniable that the shift in how the media operates has changed politics.



Jonathan Darling

What is consistent in the rise of the right globally is the shift away from traditional forms of media to a much more diffuse media landscape that is fragmenting people's access to news.

The news now relies more on the acceleration of spectacle, confrontation and of theatrics—we see this on the left as well. It relies on short interventions that gather attention rather than detailed discussions of issues.

The political and financial backing in the media is also vital. It's undeniable that algorithms promote certain types of content to benefit the right.

The need for more content, rolling news cycles, social media platforms all require new information and it drives some of the need for spectacle.

What is the role of the populist left in this arena?

It's a difficult space for the populist left. There is a risk that you only go so far by feeding into the social media spectacle.

But, at the same time, the left needs to reach people, it needs messages that resonate. There are mass demonstrations and protests that carry aspects of spectacle that can be useful in challenging and questioning the right.

But they have to be followed up and supported by more sustained work.

On the left, that work means looking at the ways we can organise. Anti-raid networks are a great example of this and are based upon people identifying with their neighbours who are being targeted by the state.

Is it possible to get away from the politics of spectacle?

It would be incredibly depressing if it weren't at least possible.

I hope that work like my book might be helpful in pointing in directions away from the theatrical.

We need to talk about practical steps in policy—such as ending the use of hotels to house asylum seekers but not being backed into a corner around this.

If you say we're going to end the use of hotels by 2029 and there's still one in use in 2029, then you've failed in that policy, but you've also conceded the ground to the right.

But there are pragmatic things that can be done. Providing the right to work for people in the asylum system would be really progressive, but it is also a straightforward, economically sensible step.

But the wider shift away from the theatrical involves political leadership. There is such frustration with Labour that the leadership is not saying "This is racism". The conversation around anti-racism needs to be reinvigorated.

Taking Back Control—How Populists Captured the Asylum Debate by Jonathan Darling (£14.99 paperback) available for pre-order

HEALTH ROUND-UP

‘We won’t let bosses bleed us dry’

BLOOD SCIENCE workers at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Trust this week began a month of strikes over unpaid overtime and absence pay.

Dozens of Unite union members across Chorley and South Ribble Hospital, Royal Preston Hospital and the Specialist Mobility and Rehabilitation Centre in Fulwood walked out on Monday and plan to stay out until Friday.

They then plan to strike from 9-13, 16-20 and 23-27 November.

The strikes cover vital blood testing services.

The dispute centres on the calculation of overtime and absence payments. Workers say they have been denied money that they are owed.

Workers are pressing ahead with strikes after months of dispute.

Unite accuses management of refusing arbitration and backing out of a proposed settlement.

Bosses have also brought in outside providers and other NHS trusts to carry out work during the dispute.

That’s an expensive move that could instead have helped resolve the workers’ grievances.

NHS workers tell Burnham to dump tech giant Palantir

HEALTH WORKERS demanding US spytech firm Palantir is removed from the NHS are planning to hand in a petition to prime minister Andy Burnham next week.

Palantir, which provides information for Israeli military operations in Gaza, is bidding to run more NHS contracts.

It already runs the NHS’s £330 million patient data platform.

Campaigners want health workers to rally in Whitehall, in central London, to help hand in the petition.

They urge supporters to come to the protest wearing their NHS uniforms and to bring placards.

- Petition hand-in, Thursday 12 November, 12.15 pm.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Striking bin workers outside the town hall in Havering, east London

Bin strikers refuse bosses’ rubbish

by REBECCA LONG

REFUSE WORKERS in Havering, east London, struck over pay, conditions and outsourcing last week.

The Unite union members staged a demonstration outside the local town hall on Friday of last week, the final day of their five-day walkout.

David, one of the strikers, spoke to Socialist Worker at the demonstration. “It’s a two-tier workforce, definitely,” he said.

“We’re all on different contracts here.”

The workers are outsourced to FCC Waste Management.

Loaders are paid £12.88 per hour, compared to the £15.72 for the same job in the next door borough of Redbridge.

“They’re squeezing more and more work out of the boys,” David continued.

“Our hours are meant to be 7am to 3pm, so by then we should be out the gate.

“But we’re still loading at 3pm, then doing extra runs.

“We’re doing extra work but we don’t get paid overtime.”

In Havering, the council does not use curb side bins—rubbish bags are left in piles outside houses.

Often loaders have to do several trips to deal with huge piles.

“It’s heavy work, it’s a strain on your body,” said David.

After less than a week on strike, management requested a meeting with the strikers.

David said, “The boys are still adamant they want to stay out until we get a good deal.”

Collectors

With Christmas approaching, the workload increases for the bin collectors. The cold weather also makes the job harder.

As heating bills soar and food prices are set to rise this winter, it becomes even more urgent that these workers are getting proper pay.

Havering council has been using agency workers to try to break the strike.

They have paid to bring workers from as far away as Edinburgh in Scotland. Bosses pay these workers twice as much as the strikers are demanding, as well as covering accommodation costs in London.

But, refuse workers in other London boroughs are refusing to be brought in to cross picket lines.

The Unite branch in the London borough of Hackney has pledged money in support of the Havering strikers and asked their members not to scab.

This is one of the first strikes in a Reform UK-run council.

The far right party won 39 of the 55 council seats in May.

The dispute exposes its claims to stand up for ordinary people as a lie.

And, the Reform UK council leadership is stuffed full of former Tories.

The leader of Havering council, Keith Prince, was a Tory member for nearly 50 years before defecting to Nigel Farage’s party.

Every trade unionist should back this crucial fight.

NORTH LONDON

Solidarity just the ticket for wardens

TRAFFIC WARDENS in Camden, north London, began their sixth week of strikes on Monday over pay and conditions.

The Unison union members, who are employed by private company NSL, walked out for eight weeks last month.

They are demanding a £2 an hour pay rise, an increase of seven days annual leave and sick pay from day one.

During the strike, it is estimated that Labour-run Camden council is losing at least £50,000 a day.

If the council ultimately wants to stop losing money the answer is simple—bring the workers back in house.

Workers hoped they would be brought back in house in January. Instead, council bosses opted to sign a four-year contract with NSL worth around £100 million.

Picket lines rotate between the three sites, 7-10am:

- Mondays: 13-15 Guilford St, WC1N 1DW
- Wednesdays: Camden Car Pound, Regis Rd, NW5 3EW
- Fridays: 199 Belsize Rd, NW6 4AA
- Tuesdays and Thursdays: pickets at all of the above
- Solidarity messages to unison@camden.gov.uk

BUDGET

Protest demands end to austerity at Number 10

HUNDREDS OF people protested outside Downing Street on Tuesday of last week ahead of the Burnham government’s first budget.

They demanded that Labour breaks with austerity and tackles the cost of living crisis.

Unison union member and health worker Jordan told Socialist Worker, “The government has said they will give NHS workers a 2.4 percent pay rise.

“It’s not enough. We need a rise above inflation and we need that kind of thing across the board.

“We’ve seen things cut back for nearly 20 years now and we can’t continue down the same road with more cuts.”

A member of the NEU education union in Lambeth, south London, said, “Austerity is a political choice.

“Families being left unable to pay their rent is a political choice.

“Children come to school with acute trauma and other needs because of austerity.”

Your Party MP Jeremy Corbyn said that workers’ demands, for better pay and an end to cuts, “are not utopian demands.”

There was a significant turnout of Green Party supporters at the march.

Green leader Zack Polanski told the crowd, “The answer is pretty simple—it’s time to tax the rich.

“The chancellor has said that this is a continuity government, but we do not want a continuity government.

“The people of this country cannot survive a continuity government.”

Green councils now face a choice over austerity—to implement cuts or not.

Illegal

An alternative is to set an “illegal” no cuts budget. But council leaders, including left wing ones, say that would mean government-appointed commissioners stepping in to run the council.

So, instead, they campaign for more funding, but reluctantly implement cuts.

But there is an alternative—mobilising workers and service users to strike, occupy and protest.

Green councillors could help build that resistance outside the council chamber and refuse to implement cuts.

INQUEST

Inquest into Colleen Madden death slams state’s failures

COLLEEN MADDEN was failed at every step of the way leading up to her death after her release from prison.

An inquest into the 31 year old’s death concluded last month that she was “let down” by those who were meant to support her. The coroner said she “deserved and should have been given something better”.

Colleen was released from prison into temporary hotel accommodation in King’s Cross, in north London, on 13 January 2025 and found dead just three days later.

It was the fourth time she had been released.

Probation

The first three times she was recalled back into prison due to problems finding her the right accommodation and because the probation service was unable to support her in the community.

The coroner identified a failure to begin accommodation planning earlier, confusion over who was responsible for her support and failure to assess her needs adequately.

The coroner added that if Camden council had carried out its statutory duties it is possible that she may not have died in the manner that she did.

Colleen’s family said, “Our family has suffered immensely since Colleen’s death. We miss our sister beyond words.

“She was our everything, and she deserved compassion, dignity and proper care.

“Instead, we feel she became little more than an administrative task, with no one taking responsibility for her needs.”

Selen Cavcav, from the Inquest charity said, “The failures exposed at this inquest are shameful.

“Colleen needed care, housing and support, not repeated recalls to prison and release into homelessness.

“Her death is a stark reminder that prison is not the answer to poverty, homelessness, poor mental health and substance use.”

Colleen was one of 1,413 people in England and Wales who died while being “supervised in the community” by the probation service in the year to March 2025.

Her case is one of many examples of how the state criminalises people who need safe housing, mental health support and help with trauma and substance misuse.

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITIES

EDINBURGH STUDENTS and university workers protesting last week at influence of 'defence' industry on campus

How university bosses learnt to love the bomb

by CAMILLA ROYLE

STUDENTS AND university workers are up in arms about the growing influence of the "defence" industry on campus.

UCU union members at Northumbria University produced a report titled "Is It Worth It? Northumbria University and Lockheed Martin" after their university became a founding member of the Defence Universities Alliance (DUA).

Northumbria University has a close relationship with Lockheed Martin, the world's largest weapons manufacturer.

It has funnelled some £25 million into a joint project with the arms giant called North East Space Skills and Technology Centre.

"We are saying not on our campus, not in our name and not with our money," said Adam Hansen, the branch chair of Northumbria UCU.

He told Socialist Worker, "Northumbria University gets most of its money from students. They are now subsidising Lockheed Martin."

Made by Lockheed Martin. Used by Israel. Aided by our universities

"Weapons made by companies such as Lockheed Martin are used against educators and students.

"The things it produces have been used to destroy universities.

"We have seen that in the genocide in Gaza.

"As a union, we need to take a stand against that. War does not allow people to teach and learn. It goes against the values of the university and of trade unions."

A motion passed at the TUC union federation congress last year called for investment in wages, not weapons.

This year, the TUC reaffirmed its commitment to this anti-war stance.

As the Northumbria UCU report states, "Lockheed Martin is the world's largest weapons manufacturer and supplier of fighter jets, transport aeroplanes, Hellfire missiles, helicopters and rocket launch systems".

It provides aircraft to the Israeli airforce and enables Saudi Arabia to bombard Yemen with airstrikes.

University bosses say that the space research division of Lockheed Martin is separate from its development of war related technologies.

But workers aren't convinced. They say arms manufacturers cross-subsidise from one area of their work to others.

Adam said, "We are happy for teaching and research into space technology to take place at Northumbria.

"But unless it can be proved that it doesn't have the potential to be dual purpose we oppose it."

The university itself states that the Lockheed Martin partnership is part of the reason it is now part of the DUA.

This is a scheme from the Labour government to embed military research further into universities and promote "defence" related careers to students.

Elsewhere, university workers and students from the Universities of Brighton and Sussex protested last Friday at arms company L3Harris.

The company makes bomb release mechanisms for Lockheed Martin's F-16 and F-35 fighter jets.

FIGHTING CUTS

Bosses' cuts are relegating Nottingham uni

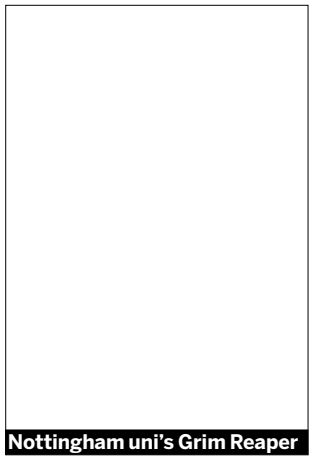
UCU UNION members at the University of Nottingham are set to strike until 11 December unless bosses back away from plans to slash jobs and courses.

Around 300 people have already left through voluntary redundancy.

Resources

But bosses still want more cuts.

They have already closed three whole departments—music, modern languages and American and Canadian studies.



Nottingham uni's Grim Reaper

Meanwhile, student support has been slashed and personal tutors have been scrapped.

Despite the disruption to a whole term of teaching, there is strong support for the strikers from Nottingham students.

Students have produced a website to document the impact of the crisis and provide resources such as petitions and ideas to support the strikers.

UCU UNION members at Goldsmiths in south London are on indefinite strike over £20 million of planned cuts. At Glasgow Caledonian University EIS-ULA and UCU members are striking together this week and next week.

At London South Bank University, two days of strikes planned for this week have been called off for talks.

And, at the University of Sheffield, UCU members have voted to accept an offer meaning that strikes are called off.

■Read more about the courses slashed at Nottingham at uon.rip

SCHOOLS

Posho school punishing lowest paid gets whacked

WORKERS AT the private Forest School in Snaresbrook, east London, began two weeks of strikes over pay cuts on Monday.

The Unite union members are contracted by Compass to work as catering and cleaning staff at the school.

Compass reported £1.5 billion in profit last year. Yet it is cutting contract hours for its Forest School workers by 13.5 percent.

Intimidate

Luisa, a catering assistant at the school, told Socialist Worker that this means £400less for her each month.

"The kitchen staff and cleaners, they're working longer hours and they're expected to do more work," she said.

Their current strike is set to last for two weeks. Workers had already walked out for a week at the start of October.

"For me, the idea is to stay out. I don't care how long it takes," said Luisa.

The school has been trying to intimidate the strikers. They have accused them of scaring the students and banging on car windows.

"But that's not true," said Luisa. "They're intimidating us. There's some people who didn't come out today because they feel intimidated."

Bosses should learn to read

The strikers have been getting support from the students and many parents. The students have given Luisa and other staff cards, thanking them for all their hard work—which the school have taken away from them.

As well as attacking their lowest paid workers, the school has also cut the quality of the food the children receive.

Forest School charges £10,898 per term, and its headteacher takes home £300,000 a year. It reported an income of over £39 million last year.

Rebecca Long

Standing strong with Tom

UNISON UNION members at a special educational needs school in Leicester are set to strike in support of one of their union reps who has been unfairly dismissed.

Workers at Ash Field Academy, a school operated by Discovery Schools Academies Trust, have called on trade unionists and supporters from across the country to attend a strike rally outside the school this Wednesday—the 16th day of their strike.

The strikers' one demand is that their union rep, Tom Barker, is reinstated.

Tom was suspended in October 2025 after workers voted for strikes over unsafe staffing levels and workloads.

Unison maintains that Tom's suspension was in retaliation for his union activity and that bosses are trying to cut staff off from their union rep.

Unison Leicester City branch secretary, Sam Randfield, said, "We consider the allegations against Tom to have been made in bad faith and we don't believe the evidence supports the Trust's decision.

"Rather, we consider these acts to be vindictive attempts to punish Unison members at Ash Field for pushing back against dangerously deep cuts to the workforce."

■Messages of solidarity can be sent to unison.leicestercity@gmail.com

■Solidarity rally, Wednesday 4 November, 7.30am, Ash Field Academy, Broad Avenue, Leicester LE5 4PU

●WORKERS AT six nurseries in Barnsley, south Yorkshire, held a rally in the town centre last week to protest against private company Limetree taking over their service.

The new firm has refused to honour existing pension agreements.

The Reform UK local council leader claims the outsourcing decision was taken to "protect jobs" and "retain services".

But one nursery in Grimethorpe has already closed leaving vulnerable children and parents without support. Workers who were based there now have to travel across Barnsley to other nurseries with no travel expenses paid.

One of the workers said, "Our work is vital and we expect to be treated properly by the new employer.

"If we are good enough to look after Barnsley's future, we are good enough to have a decent future ourselves."

Workers plan to strike on 9, 18 and 26 November.

■Messages of support to Barnsley GMB secretary victoria.austin@gmb.org.uk

George Arthur

Socialist Worker

£2 No.3030 4 November 2026

HOME SECRETARY BACKS DOWN FROM ATTACKS ON CARE WORKERS

NOW FIGHT FOR ALL MIGRANT WORKERS

by JUDE MCKECHNIE

LABOUR HOME secretary Shabana Mahmood was forced to make concessions this week over plans to crack down on migrants' rights.

She increased the time migrants have to wait before they can settle in Britain. Those earning less than £50,000 a year will have to wait ten instead of five years for indefinite leave to remain.

But Mahmood made an exemption for health and social care workers after a campaign by the Unison union.

She said the government would uphold its promise of five years to permanent settlement for health and social care workers who arrived before May 2025.

Many migrant care workers will be relieved. But not everyone is covered by it.

Lal is a care worker who was recruited to work in social care four years ago to plug the gaps created by the Covid-19 pandemic. He is one of thousands of migrant care workers who will still have to wait ten years before they can apply for indefinite leave to remain.

They will only qualify for exemption if they can prove that they have undertaken continuous employment for five years and earned at least £25,000 a year.

Lal told Socialist Worker that the announcement was "the first step, but it's not exactly what we wanted."

UNISON UNION members took their fight for migrant rights to parliament PIC: GUY SMALLMAN

"It doesn't cover everyone," he said. "I'm not covered in this policy. My company's licence has been revoked because of the actions of the employer, so I lost my job.

"I have eight months left before I will have been here for five years.

"There's 45 people who were employed by my company, who are in the same position as me. They will not be eligible to apply for the exemption through no fault of our own."

He added, "We should be protected. We did everything just as we were supposed to. But now we're stranded in between."

He explained that, because of low pay and irregular hours, many would not meet the £25,000 per year threshold to qualify for settlement.

There is a recruitment and retention crisis in the social care sector because of low pay and excessive workloads.

The truth is that without migrants like Lal, the health and social care service would have already collapsed.

Lal slammed the language used by the home secretary to push a racist narrative. Mahmood said, "Settlement should not be automatic. It should be earned."

She implied there were migrant care workers who were exploiting the system to gain access to Britain's education, healthcare and welfare system.

"That is a wrong statement from the home secretary," said Lal. "Migrant care workers uprooted themselves to come to this country because we were needed.

"When we got here, the sector abused, exploited and mistreated us. There's been modern slavery.

"We did not exploit the system, it was the system that exploited the care worker."

Lal has been involved with Unison's Fair Visa Campaign. It has been at the forefront of opposition to the home secretary's plans and led by migrant care workers themselves.

The campaign is demanding a five year route to settlement for everyone, a sector-wide visa system allowing care workers to change employers without risking their immigration status and fair pay.

"Migrant care workers want to push for more than what's in this new policy.

"We've asked our union to keep campaigning until there is a fair visa for everyone, not just a chosen cohort or group," said Lal.

Mahmood's concession shows Labour is vulnerable.

Unions and anti-racists should up the ante to push back the government's migrant crackdown.

Demand Oxford pulls event with Jason Arday witch-hunter

by REBECCA LONG

DOZENS OF MPs, academics, students, celebrities and union leaders are demanding the University of Oxford pulls a meeting with Nathan Cofnas, who led the racist witch-hunt of Professor Jason Arday.

Labour MP Diane Abbott, writer Afua Hirsch, singer Beverley Knight and actor Zawe Ashton are among the signatories of an open letter organised by BLM UK and Stand Up To Racism (SUTR).

The Reform UK student society invited the eugenicist Cofnas to Oriel College on 17 November. He will be discussing "Is Diversity, Equality and Inclusion undermining higher education?"

Cofnas was dismissed from the University of Cambridge in 2024 after arguing that "blacks would disappear from almost all high-profile positions outside of sports and entertainment" under a true meritocracy.

After his dismissal, Cofnas began hounding Arday. This summer the mainstream media seized on Cofnas's accusations that Arday was a fraud appointed due to "woke" policies.

The media published over 250 articles on Arday in just 22 days. He was found dead in his home in August amid the racist onslaught.

Vigil for Professor Arday

Samira Ali is a national organiser for SUTR and its campaign Women Against The Far Right. She told Socialist Worker, "Cofnas has blood on his hands for the witch-hunt of Arday.

"It's a disgrace that the University of Oxford is hosting him. It tells you everything you need to know about the racism of Reform UK that their society organised it."

Reform UK student societies have appeared in universities across Britain, but anti-racists have been organising to kick the far right groups off campus.

The letter says, "If the event goes ahead, we support a demonstration opposing the event."

Samira said, "We're not going to let this event happen. Join us on 17 November to shut down Cofnas and all his far right fanboys."

Sign the petition at bit.ly/Cofnaspetition
Join the demonstration on 17 November

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