WORKERS & STUDENTS UNITE FOR 20 SEPTEMBER CLIMATE STRIKE
British spooks’ role in torture and terror will remain secret

DECLASSIFIED cables provide new details of the torture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Abu Zubaydah were subjected to by the CIA. During their interrogation in Guantanamo Bay British secret services supplied the questions.

“The process for the Tories explains his continued support 12th Duke of Beaufort The Party’ that is keeping and McDonnell Marxists Corbyn terror of the has when he is recognised on David Cameron says he message purge you’ Sadiq Khan Boris Johnson Daily Mai The terror

It’s less safe to be LGBT+ or a woman

PROSECUTIONS for violence against women and girls have dropped by 15.1 percent—despite more offences being reported to police. New figures from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) also found a 14.3 percent fall in convictions in 2018-19. Police are referring fewer cases to the CPS.

WOMEN fleeing domestic abuse are being made homeless due to lack of beds in refuges. The Women’s Aid charity found that 309 women were forced to sleep rough, sofa-surf or stay in B&Bs last year while waiting for a place. The charity said there was a shortage of 1,715 refuge places across England last year.

THE NUMBER of households in temporary accommodation in England has reached its highest level in over a decade. Some 84,740 households were in temporary accommodation at the end of March. It’s the highest number since mid-2007 and represents a rise of 76.5 percent since the end of 2010.

Cancer stats show price of health cuts

PEOPLE with five common types of cancer are more likely to die in Britain than in other countries with similar health systems. A study published in the Lancet Oncology journal compared Britain to six other countries—Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand and Norway.

Butler, said problems in Britain include “lack of capacity” and “staffing shortages”. A report earlier this month found that half of cancer patients are only diagnosed after their cancer has spread. Sara Hiom of Cancer Research UK said, “We hope this report will give people a better chance of surviving.”

Union baroness

TROUBLEMAKER sends warm congratulations to Christine Blower, the former inherited head of the National Union of Teachers. She will be made a peer, which is nice.

Socialist Worker (Britain)
Our chance to transform the struggle over climate

**WHAT WE THINK**

CLIMATE actions planned for this week could open the door for a new phase of a climate justice movement.

Groups of workers planned to take action using their collective and organised power. This is a major step towards seeing action by workers as workers, not individuals.

Millions of young people defy every expectation of them and organise an insurgent movement through the global school strikes. Their action has amplified the terrifying reality of every teenager facing a future of record-breaking temperatures, polluted air, breakdown of food production, species extinction and more.

But they didn’t stay terrified. This generation of climate activists got angry—and organised. Their historic school strikes, alongside the brilliant occupations and protests organised by Extinction Rebellion, have offered hope to everyone feeling despondent about climate chaos.

The rapid-onset climate catastrophe means human society is staring down the barrel of a gun. Climate chaos is already fatal and dramatically affecting the poorest countries, intersecting with existing inequality and racism.

We still don’t know the scale of the deaths in The Bahamas, where close to 80,000 people have been left homeless.

Climate and ecological crisis will mean more tragedies such as the deadly Cyclone Idai which devastated Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi in March. Cyclone Idai killed at least 1,300 people. Widespread flooding has destroyed vast swathes of agricultural crops and displaced tens of thousands of families.

What is the response to this urgent humanitarian crisis? Mozambique, an already debt-ridden country, was offered a £95 million loan by the International Monetary Fund.

Capitalism has no solutions. But the last year of climate activism has re-energised the debate about what kind of world we want, and how we get there. It’s already forced some politicians to take climate action. When the International Rebellion camped out on parliament’s front lawn in April, MPs declared a “climate emergency” just a few days later.

More strikes, protests, walkouts and sit-ins will be needed to win further action.

When groups of workers act together, they can bring everything in society to a stop. Fighting against the climate and ecological emergency is a battle against the fossil fuels that pollute our air and let the rich trouser huge profits.

Capitalism cleaves us into two groups—the rich who profit from fossil fuel capitalism and everyone else, who suffers as a result. But society doesn’t have to be organised like this.

It is possible to build a socialist society (see pages 14&15), but it will take radical action by workers on a mass scale.

Continuing to organise society based on what meets the interests of the rich means death, destruction and horror. This is not a time to retreat, but to push forward.

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**Socialist Worker Appeal to raise £125,000**

Socialist Worker is the voice of people fighting for a better world. It dispels the racist scapegoating and anti-working class metoric of the mainstream press. We publish stories of the strikes, protests and pickets that can beat back the bosses and bigots. We are asking everyone who enjoys Socialist Worker to donate as much as they can and help fund the resistance.

To donate go to socialistworker.co.uk/appeal

Call 020 7840 5620 or send a cheque, payable to ‘SW Appeal’ to PO Box 74955, London E16 9EJ

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**New phase of rebellion in October**

**EXTINCTION Rebellion (XR) activists across the world are preparing for the next phase of the rebellion—7 October. That’s the date that the climate and ecological activists plan to begin occupations in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Toronto and New York. In London, tens of thousands of people are likely to take part. XR said, “Together, we will peacefully occupy the centres of power and shut them down. “You can’t count on us or Greta to do this for you. You have to look inside yourself and rebel.”**

Find your local group at bit.ly/LocalXR

**Arrests for Heathrow protesters**

SOME 20 climate change activists were arrested during attempts to shut down Heathrow Airport last week. Activists flew toy drones in the “exclusion zone” surrounding the airport in an effort to ground flights.

Five members of Heathrow Pause—an offshoot of Extinction Rebellion—were arrested before the action started on Friday.

One, Larch Maxey, was bitten by police dogs on both legs. The group said that the police response was “heavy-handed.”

No flights had been grounded as Socialist Worker went to press.
Workers set to strike on global day of walkouts

Friday 20 September could mark a turning point in the struggle to stop climate change, writes Sarah Bates

**WHY STRIKE?**

At the beginning of this year, millions of people took to the streets in a global movement to demand action on climate change. The next one is coming on 20 September. But what will it take to make the world demand action too?

A year ago, the UN urged countries to take action on climate change. But so far, not much has happened. Instead, we have seen more fires and floods, and a pale world leaders’ conference last week called for a “people’s referendum on climate change”.

A lot of people think there needs to be a climate emergency. That’s why we need a global strike to demand action on climate change. It’s a day to show the world we care about our planet and are prepared to take action to stop it going up in flames.

Emergency rally, with the council chief executive and trade unionists to speak.

Tony Philips, a Unison member of the Electricity, Manufacturing and Electrical Trades Union, said: “If you’re a working-class person and want to see leaders taking action—whether it’s a trade union or a government—then get involved. We need to fight for climate justice.”

In Camden, north London, council workers will vote to walk out on Friday to demand action on climate change. Jon Woods from Portsmouth teachers’ Association said, “It’s important to fight for climate change. We need to fight for the future of our planet.”

In Portsmouth, workers plan a rally on Friday. In Edinburgh, council workers hope to link up with other trade unionists on the streets to show their support for the action.

**WHAT’S NEXT?**

The action on 20 September will mark the start of a series of strikes and protests in the run-up to the run-down of the Paris climate talks. The Paris accord is the only agreement that has been signed by any country.

There’s no better way to hit back at ruling class attacks on public services than by joining the strike on Friday. We need more of them to join the strike and ensure we have a massive global strike on this issue and others.

Some socialists will have put the argument for an excellent weekend on Friday and won’t be away from the action. But now people will have taken part in some sort of action or protest over the weekend and will be better armed to take part in the big national strike on 20 September.

When people take action, it can change the world. But it’s up to us to get involved in the strike and make sure we are part of the big global strike.

People were born to be the ideas of a strike as a way of fighting back. The 20 September will prove to be an alternative to those who want to see the world change for the better.

**NO MORE WARS OVER OIL**

S A LIEMAKA and the US are waging war to control the Middle East. They say they are doing it for the sake of world energy supplies. But the real reason is to maintain control of the Middle East and its vast oil and gas reserves.

The US has been involved in the Middle East for decades. When it was under the rule of the Shah, the US was able to control the region. But when he was overthrown, it was replaced by a government friendly to US business interests.

The Western-backed Saudi oil conglomerate has killed tens of thousands of workers in the Middle East. It has also backed US actions in the region.

Working class people are the ones who suffer from wars over oil. They are the ones who have to pay the price for wars and who are left to clean up after them.

In the Middle East, there are mass protests every day. But when people take action, it can change the world. But it’s up to us to get involved in the strike and make sure we are part of the big global strike.

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**WHAT WE THINK**

There must be no more wars over oil. It’s time to stand up for the people and demand action on climate change.

**CLIMATE STRIKES AS THEY HAPPEN**

For rolling news from all the day’s events go to socialistworker.co.uk

**Send reports and photographs to reports@socialistworker.co.uk**
The Iraq war is still haunting US policy

WHEN DONALD Trump sacked his national security adviser, John Bolton, the international relations academic Lawrence Freedman tweeted, “I never thought I’d feel sorry for John Bolton and actually I’m not.” Some American liberals are so obsessed with opposing Trump that they did mourn Bolton’s passing.

But his dismissal can be traced back to an earlier Republican presidency in which Bolton served, that of George W Bush. Bolton was one of the most strident advocates of invading Iraq, as part of a broader offensive against Bush’s “Axis of Evil”. Bolton wanted to extend this beyond Iraq, Iran, and North Korea to Cuba, Libya, and Syria.

This offensive never took off because the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 led to the most serious defeat the United States has ever suffered. Armed resistance to the occupation forced the US to rely on parties based on the Shia Muslim majority, who had been oppressed under the previous regime of Saddam Hussein.

These politicians have many links with the Islamic Republic of Iran in Iraq. Meanwhile the Iranian Revolutionary Guards backed the insurgency against the American occupation of Iraq. And of itself the removal of Saddam strengthened Iran’s hand.

It was able further to extend its influence by successfully backing the regime of Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian civil war. Enter Trump. His Middle East policy has struggled with a basic contradiction. On the one hand, like his predecessor Barack Obama, he is determined to avoid getting the US involved in another land war.

On the other, egged on by his cronies in Israel and Saudi Arabia, Iran’s two main regional rivals, he has sought to curb Iran’s influence.

Withdraw

So he withdrew from the nuclear deal that Obama had negotiated with Iran and re-imposed full-scale sanctions.

Trump thought this “maximum pressure” would force the Iranian president Hasan Rouhani to surrender. Instead, the strategic intelligence website Stratfor comments, ”Iran may be weak, but its strategy is working.” This has involved a combination of tight economic controls, pressuring the European signatories to the nuclear deal, and attacking Iran’s oil facilities in the Gulf. Last weekend highly precise drone attacks on two key installations forced Saudi Arabia to cut more than half its oil production.

According to Stratfor, “Ultimately, Iran’s summer brinkmanship paid off. First, Tehran demonstrated that it poses a highly credible military threat to the Strait of Hormuz. Second, it exposed Trump’s extreme reticence about engulfing the United States in another Middle Eastern war.”

“Third, rather than bring European powers closer to the US sanctions strategy on Iran, Tehran’s threat to commerce in one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes sent the [French government] into a diplomatic frenzy, paving the way for Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif’s surprise visit to the G7 in Biarritz to discuss a French proposal for a $15 billion oil-backed credit line. “So now it is Trump who has been pleading for a summit with Rouhani. Rouhani contemptuously brushed him off, saying if Trump wants a nice picture he can always Photoshop them together. Iran has been pleading for a summit with Rouhani. Rouhani said they would campaign for Remain in any new Brexit referendum.

Labour’s current position is to support a referendum on any Brexit deal, with options to support a “credible” plan to leave the EU, and to remain. This would presumably apply to a Brexit deal negotiated by Labour—meaning McDonnell and Abbott could end up campaigning against their own government.

Motion

Now a motion to Labour conference proposes that the party should “campaign energetically” for Remain.

It even suggests that another EU isn’t possible. At last year’s conference, Labour agreed a fudged position that kept backing a referendum as an option “on the table,” but preferred a general election. That gave the right enough space to push Jeremy Corbyn into supporting a referendum over an election.

Labour agreed a fudged position that kept backing a referendum as an option “on the table,” but preferred a general election. That gave the right enough space to push Jeremy Corbyn into supporting a referendum over an election. It’s allowed Watson to demand a referendum instead of an election.

Pressure

The pressure on Corbyn over the EU led him to pass up the chance to get rid of the Tories—taking the impetus out of protests against Boris Johnson.

Instead Labour has followed a strategy in parliament little different to what it would have been if Corbyn hadn’t won the leadership election in 2015. Backing Remain would not only strengthen the hand of the Labour right. It would also allow Johnson and the racists of the Brexit Party to say Labour has betrayed the ordinary people who voted Brexit to hit back at the establishment. Labour can win a general election—but it won’t do that if it excludes Leave voters and drops its radicalism.

It needs to return to the radical message of the 2017 general election that nearly beat the Tories—not put back the EU above anti-austerity, anti-racist class politics.

EU is for the capitalists

THE MOTION submitted by Another Europe is Possible claims the European Union (EU) can be “transformed” to challenge capitalism.

“Capitalism is transnational. We need transnational institutions and workers’ movements to challenge it,” it says.

“The world of tomorrow is a world of empires,” it adds. “We will build cross-border alliances to transform Europe with socialist policies.”

But the EU’s chief Brexit negotiator Guy Verhofstadt is more honest about what the EU is—a bloc of capitalist countries protecting their interests in competition with others across the world.

“The world of tomorrow is a world of empires,” he said last week’s Liberal Democrat conference, to great applause. “We Europeans, and you British, can only defend your interests, your way of life, by doing it together, in a European framework and in the European Union.”

Verhofstadt shows that another EU isn’t possible.
Boris Johnson's Brexit balance deepens division among Tories

Johnson hopes he can deliver Brexit come what may on 31 October—and win back right wing votes. But he still has to appease the pro-EU big business, says Tomáš Tengely-Evans

BORIS JOHNSON was running out of time and options when he met the European Union's (EU) rulers on Monday.

He met EU Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker for the first time since becoming prime minister in July.

Johnson's visit ended in chaos and humiliation after noisy protests left him backing out of a press conference. Xavier Bettel, Luxembourg's prime minister, spoke next to an empty lecturn and blasted Johnson.

Johnson had already ruled out any delay beyond the scheduled leave date of 31 October. He wrote in the Telegraph newspaper on Sunday, “We will leave by that date—deal or no deal.

“Yes, it may now be harder to get a deal, since MPs seem set on tying the government's hand behind its back.

“But we are working flat out to get one.”

Johnson has promised to deliver Brexit on 31 October. He has calculated that he could win back right wing voters from Nigel Farage's Brexit Party in a general election.

While his strategy has played well with sections of the Tory base, it has deepened the party's divisions.

There will continue to be lurches in policy as Johnson seeks to balance business demands for a deal and the Brexit Party's pressure to rebuffer any EU demands.

Foreign secretary Dominic Raab refused to rule out trying to side step the “Benn Act”—the legislation to stop a no-deal Brexit.

He said the Tories would “always behave lawfully,” but that they would have to look at “all the variables” and the “precise implications very carefully”.

The meeting came as the Supreme Court was set to hold a hearing this week on whether the “prorogation”—suspension—of parliament is lawful.

Joked

Johnson's adviser Dominic Cummings apparently "joked": that the Tories could suspend parliament again if the ruling didn't go their way.

Another Tory split erupted on Monday about what would happen if Britain and the EU managed to negotiate a deal.

Under Theresa May's negotiated Brexit deal there was supposed to be a 21-month transition period after Britain left the EU on 31 March.

There would now only be a 14-month transition period because of the delay under May.

Brexit secretary Stephen Barclay said the government could now extend it—but that was quickly ruled out by Raab. And the EU said that it would take at least eight months to put together a negotiating team for a trade deal—and two years to negotiate it.

Labour and union leaders should use the Tory splits to force out Johnson's government.

Action on the streets, workplaces and campuses over class issues can unite Leave and Remain-supporting working class people.

One opportunity is the People's Assembly demonstration against the Tory party conference in Manchester on Sunday 29 September.

On other pages...

Partnership with bosses is a bad deal for workers >>Page 17

INDUSTRY

‘Chaos’ warnings are an excuse to attack workers

BIG BUSINESS is ratcheting up pressure on the Tories over a no-deal Brexit.

The luxury car manufacturer BMW said it would shut its Mini plant in Cowley, Oxford, for two days if Britain leaves without a deal on 31 October.

But workers at the plant fear that they could go for two weeks without pay—not just on 31 October and 1 November.

The plant previously shut down ahead of the missed Brexit deadline in March.

Tories and bosses would use the initial shock of a no-deal Brexit to push through more austerity and

Bosses caused a Mini panic

squeeze workers. Whatever the impact, bosses would try to make workers bear the cost.

The problems in the car industry are part of a global crisis of overproduction, not Brexit.

Bosses have slashed thousands of jobs across North America and Europe in the last year—and far greater numbers have been lost in Germany than Britain.

BMW's plans came as the Tories were forced to publish a document outlining contingency plans for a no-deal Brexit. Known as Yellowhammer, it predicts some food and medicine shortages, miles of tailbacks in the port of Dover and price rises.

It's not possible to know if the predictions are correct.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said Yellowhammer showed Johnson is "prepared to punish those who least can afford it".

Unfortunately, Labour and the union leaders have largely couched their opposition to a no-deal Brexit in terms of what's good or bad for big business.
West offers no solution to Hong Kong protesters

by SADIE ROBINSON

THE BIGGEST protests since the withdrawal of a hated extradition bill took place in Hong Kong last Sunday.

Tens of thousands of people joined a pro-democracy rally that had been banned by the cops.

Protester Winnie Leung said, “The government wants to block us with the ban. But the people will not be afraid.”

Hong Kong’s leader Carrie Lam earlier this month promised to withdraw the extradition bill that sparked the protest movement in June. The bill would have allowed the extradition of suspects to mainland China.

But now, 100 days into the movement, protesters want more than just the scrapping of the bill.

They are demanding more democracy. Lam’s resignation, an investigation into police violence and the unconditional release of jailed protesters.

Cops

Protests have now taken place in Hong Kong for 15 weekends in a row.

Last Sunday cops attacked protesters with tear gas, rubber bullets and a coloured water cannon, to help identify them later for arrest.

Protesters threw bricks and petrol bombs at cops.

They set fire to a red banner proclaiming the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China on 1 October.

Some activists started fires at MTR metro station entrances and forced the closure of Wan Chai, Admiralty and Causeway Bay stations.

Cops responded by threatening more repression. Lam Chi-wai, chair of the Junior Police Officers’ Association, said on Monday that cops might shoot protesters with “live ammunition”.

Some protesters are looking to Western governments to protect them. One banner read, “President Trump—please liberate Hong Kong.”

Others waved US and British flags, while those protesting at the British consulate sang God Save the Queen.

Some commentators have raised the idea that the US could impose sanctions on China. But looking to Western rulers to protect democracy and freedom is a mistake.

Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997, having run it as a imperialist battle with China.

Under British rule, most public protest was illegal and ordinary people lived in poverty. There was no democracy. Instead, Britain appointed governors to run Hong Kong, who chose executive and legislative councils.

US and British governments claim to be bastions of democracy and freedom. In reality they are ruthless backers of ruling classes that think nothing of tearing up people’s rights if it is in their interests.

The movement in Hong Kong has shown the strength of ordinary people.

Their collective action is what can win real change, not looking to do deals with ruling class hypocrites.
Honour for Boycott is a disgrace

SOME YEARS ago Theresa May famously wore a T-shirt reading, “This is what a feminist looks like.” Yet she has awarded former cricketer Geoffrey Boycott a knighthood.

Boycott was convicted in May 2000 by a French court of assault on his then partner Margaret Moore in 1998.

Her bloodied and bruised face is there for all to see in photographs of the assault. Boycott was given a three-month suspended sentence and a measly fine.

Labour’s Dawn Butler, shadow minister for women and equalities, has correctly demanded that Boris Johnson immediately withdraw the knighthood.

Everyone should flood politicians and the media with complaints.

Boycott’s knighthood sends a horrific message to thousands of women who suffer violent abuse at the hands of men they know.

Added to this is the drastic reduction in funding for refuge support services under years of Tory austerity.

It is not possible for any Tory to claim any sort of feminist values. Feminism cares about women and children. The Tories do not.

We have a government of perpetuators of all forms of oppression.

We must have a general election and vote for a Labour government lead by Jeremy Corbyn who has more feminist values than any Tory woman! We must take to the streets to end Tory rule.

Liz Kitching
Leeds

British Gas is driving down our wages to boost profits

I’M WRITING on behalf of my colleagues from British Gas. British Gas sells energy and mechanical services. The energy side is failing and the heating installation side is the most profitable, so they’re taking money from here to bail out energy.

To do this they’ve created a new schedule of rates (SOR) for every heating installation contractor. Previously an hourly rate meant every install was a tailored price, which was quite fair.

The new rate means cuts of between 25 and 35 percent. For example, a job that would have been £300 is now around £200. This will have a huge impact on workers’ livelihoods. The customer is still being charged the same. So British Gas is making even more profit.

For some people, British Gas has been a career. A lot of contractors are ex-British Gas and many have been there 10-20 years, feeling like employees and part of the family. It’s us that give customers confidence that they have an experienced person in their home. We are the face of British Gas.

These cuts have been so drastic that a lot of contractors are considering moving on or cutting their hours. New labour may come from agencies or recently qualified engineers, leaving concerns over safety and quality. Contractors across Britain have discussed a strike and the GMB union is looking into the unfairness of the pay cut.

British Gas threatened to close contractors’ diaries unless they agreed to the new contract.

Some reluctantly agreed, feeling they are held over a barrel. But many are refusing to agree and will simply walk out.

A joint contractor email was sent to management but they have not responded.

British Gas has a cheerful advertising campaign with the motto, “We’re with you!”

But it is considerably less so with its own workforce. A British Gas worker

McDonnell’s ‘Right To Buy’ plan is no solution

LABOUR shadow chancellor John McDonnell’s proposals for a “Right To Buy for Private Housing Tenants” has caused a debate.

Most people do not understand the principles and the purpose of this proposal.

Recently I became aware of situation where a disabled person’s housing benefit had covered enough to buy the property outright. The property’s disrepair was shocking. But the person’s benefit entitlement had also covered enough money for repairs. This person would benefit from McDonnell’s proposal. Housing associations have the right to buy property.

However, why would they do so and then pay for all the repairs?

At the moment all power lies with the landlord. McDonnell should go further—and ensure immediate ownership to the social housing sector.

Mark Perciani
Glasgow

IT IS good to see Socialist Worker reporting on the desperate state of the social care system (Social care is ‘on the brink’ 4 September).

The system has suffered many years of systematic privatisation and underinvestment. Age UK’s Caroline Abrahams is right to note that one of the consequences is that older people are more and more left to “fend for themselves”. This is also a huge problem for many disabled people.

Abrahams welcomed a report by Guy Standing on piloting a Universal Basic Income at its launch earlier this year. But sadly she celebrated the worrying idea that a basic income would allow people to care for family members. Throwing even more pressure back on the family to provide care would further undermine the right of people to access professional social support. It would leave people at the mercy of their families’ personal circumstances. A serious approach is needed, not fantasies about what small cash transfers and a reheated version of David Cameron’s “big society” can achieve.

Mark Dunk
South London

Thanks for post support

ONE OF your guys gave me a paper at our CWU union gate meeting in Hove last week.

I just wanted to say thanks for that and for coming to support us. I will buy the next edition now to support you.

Post worker
Brighton

Election now or a bit later?

AN ELECTION right now would be an act of self-harm for Labour. You’re in an echo chamber if you think it wouldn’t be.

Gemma Cade
On Facebook

The SUPPORT of presumably left Labour supporters for the Corbyn position reflects the lack of a radical insurgent campaign by Labour.

Tony Horne
On Facebook

FOR ALL our sakes, let’s vote the Tory toffs out and get a socialist government in ASAP.

Paul Harris
On Facebook

Can we have global unions?

WHILE passing through Stansted airport on the first day of Ryanair’s second pilot’s strike, I was struck by the large number of Ryanair planes flying as normal.

Workers’ unity is their greatest weapon. They need to be at least as broadly organised as their employers.

National unions will be increasingly powerless against multinational capital unless they develop international links.

John Shemeld
Nottingham

Don’t fall for lies on crime

THE MEDIA, a right wing propaganda machine, sensationalises knife and gun crime to promote fear and racism.

They heighten the idea that crime is out of control. Then the government says it will increase police numbers. The real criminals are those who justify a system of inequality and war.

Lambsh Bournemouth

Basic income can’t replace key services

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Mark Dunk
South London
Royal Mail bosses think the only way forward is slash and burn

Royal Mail was made Royal Mail chief executive last year with a clear job of turning the company around. It was a job that looked impossible, but it quickly became clear that this was a man with the right skills to do it. Under his leadership, Royal Mail has made significant improvements in service, reducing complaints and increasing customer satisfaction.

In March, Royal Mail announced a 10% increase in profits, driving the share price up by 20%. The company has also announced plans to invest £2.5 billion in new technology and infrastructure, which is expected to create tens of thousands of new jobs.

Despite these positive developments, many analysts remain cautious about the future of Royal Mail. The company is facing intense competition from online retailers, who are using their own delivery fleets to deliver small parcels. This has put pressure on Royal Mail's profits and forced the company to raise prices.

However, Royal Mail's boss has remained confident about the company's future. "We are seeing a shift in customer demand," he said. "More people are choosing to shop online, which is good news for us as we are well-placed to benefit from this trend."
The Testaments—a rich and complex sequel from Atwood

The follow-up novel to The Handmaid’s Tale has been a long time coming. It’s grim, but also exciting and never straightforward, writes Sarah Bates

HOW DID author Margaret Atwood cope with the 34-year wait for a sequel to The Handmaid’s Tale? If The Testaments is anything to go by, very well indeed.

Set some 15 years since the cliffhanger finish of its predecessor, it tells the story of three characters in ultra-conservative society Gilead.

Three interlinking narratives—the testaments—detail efforts to bring the religiously repressive society to its knees.

The book treads familiar territory, as it examines the right wing coup by Christian fundamentalists that has taken over much of North America.

The takeover is driven by a crisis of low birth rates. Most babies die shortly after birth, and are known as “unbabies”.

“People became frightened. Then they became angry,” writes the formidable Aunt Lydia, a central character.

We see her somewhat improbable seamless transition from family judge to architect of the new regime.

In Gilead some women are forced to become Handmaids—servants who are ceremoniously raped in the hope they will produce healthy babies.

Handmaids are considered merely vessels for childbirth—and the upper class wives of high ranking officials don’t fare much better.

Many women in Testaments come to a brutal end.

There are plenty of hangings, beatings and even a poisoning. But the book isn’t simply a list of bad things happening to women.

Some of the most exciting elements look at resistance group Mayday, and its Female Railroad network that helps women escape to Canada.

Peril

Elements of it are character-driven espionage, with peril at every corner, and all the better for it.

It appears as though Gilead is run entirely by men, but the Testaments blows that wide open.

After the transition of power, women—who later perform the role of Aunts—shaped the later society.

Yet seen from a male perspective, the women’s story is one of survival.

The confessional diary-style tone of The Testaments allows the internal contradictions to play out at length.

For those waiting to find out what happened next, The Testaments is a fantastic conclusion to the story.

The Testaments by Margaret Atwood is published by Chatto & Windus, £20

TELEVISION

WORLD ON FIRE
On BBC1 from 29 September and on BBC iPlayer bbc.co.uk/iplayer

THE SECOND World War figures large in popular culture. But rarely do we see a war story that focuses on ordinary people rather than the event as a whole.

World on Fire—the BBC’s offering for the eightieth anniversary of the outbreak of war—aims to do just that.

This series tells the story of the first year of the war—from the Nazi invasion of Poland to the Battle of Britain. It features an all star cast.

Oscar winner Helen Hunt plays a US war correspondent desperately trying to spread the news of Poland’s invasion, while Sean Bean plays an anti-war shell-shocked veteran.

The first episode opens with two young activists disrupting an Oswald Mosley fascist rally before being thrown in jail by police.

In Poland, we see soldiers defending Danzig in scenes that don’t shy away from depicting the horror that took place.

In Warsaw a young waiter—Kasha—has to choose between escaping Poland or sending her little brother to safety.

World on Fire promises to be an unflinching look at what the war was like for the people who fought it, and those caught in the crossfire. The variety of actors from different backgrounds makes it all the more authentic and interesting.

It doesn’t suffer from the pitfalls of a heroic British narrative. Instead it allows us to think about how Britain benefits from the conflicts it has a hand in.

World on Fire focuses on real human stories—and does it in a way that avoids a gung-ho viewpoint well.

When one character insists that this war is different Bean replies, “All wars are different, until they aren’t.”

Gabby Thorpe

MUSIC

AMADJAR
By Tinariwen. Out now

RECORDED ON the road in a campervan-turned-studio. Amadjar is the ninth album by internationally acclaimed Tuareg nine-piece Tinariwen.

It was written and recorded as the band journeyed from the Moroccan desert to Mauritania, via Southern Morocco, Western Sahara and the Atlantic Coast.

The result sounds as epic and exciting as that journey.

Tinariwen are widely regarded as pioneers of the rebellious Tichumaren sound. It incorporates a mixture of electric blues with African and Middle-Eastern sounds.

It emerged in North Africa linked to the struggle of the Tuareg people divided by the borders of Mali, Niger and other countries that failed to recognise their traditional homeland.

Tinariwen is an example of the longevity and originality of this distinct sound.

Electric guitars weave in and out of traditional percussive instruments.

Raw and passionate solo vocals are juxtaposed with epic group harmonies and call-and-response patterns.

The lyrics may be lost on anyone unfamiliar with the Tuareg language of Tamashaq. But the immediacy and passion can definitely be felt in the richness of the sound of this album.

James Pettefar

DANCE

WASTELAND
By Gary Clarke
On tour from 25 September, starting at the Northern Stage in Newcastle. Go to wastelandtour.co.uk

WASTELAND LOOKS at how two generations coped with the destruction of the mining industry. As we see one generation grind to a halt, we follow the next into the 90s illegal rave scene.

Bringing together dancers, a community cast of singers, brass musicians, archive film footage and rave music, Wasteland tells a story of loss, hope, escapism and survival.

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Bringing together dancers, a community cast of singers, brass musicians, archive film footage and rave music, Wasteland tells a story of loss, hope, escapism and survival.
It’s not a system that can or should be fixed. The only solution is to get rid of it. And what’s the best way to do that? The best way to get rid of it is to bring it down, to overthrow it. And that’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to overthrow it, and we’re going to do it because that’s the only way to save the planet.

The path for transformative change lies in challenging the whole system. We need to challenge the entire system, not just parts of it. We need to challenge the entire system, and we need to do it because that’s the only way to save the planet.

In summary, there are three key points: 1) The system is broken. 2) We need to overthrow it. 3) We can do it.

The path to transformative change is not easy, but it is possible. We need to work together, and we need to be brave. We need to be willing to take risks, and we need to be prepared to fight. But if we do that, we can save the planet. We can save the future.
Cops ramp up brutal refugee crackdown

**POLICE FORCED** refugees to leave with their belongings in bin bags

Four boats were stopped last weekend. And at least 86 men, women and children tried to make it to Britain on Tuesday of last week—the highest recorded number in a day. The crossings come after a meeting between Tory home secretary Priti Patel and French interior minister Christophe Castaner. They agreed to make life even harder for refugees. Aid workers have said there is “direct correlation” between the rising numbers trying to cross the channel and repression. Over 100 French cops cleared the large site in Grande-Synthe, Dunkirk, on Tuesday morning. British Home Office officials were present. Around 800 refugees, including many families with young children, relied on the gym building there for shelter and toilet facilities. The eviction at the Dunkirk gym will force hundreds more to take the dangerous journey across the channel. And French authorities bulldozed one of the largest refugee settlement near the Vermotieres Road in Calais on Tuesday.

**Swept**

French officials swept through the settlement and threw tents and other belongings into a rubbish skip.

The police clearances were carried out after a French court issued eviction notices on refugee settlements in Calais and Dunkirk.

Police also raided a smaller refugee settlement near the lake in Dunkirk last Saturday afternoon. The only solution is to open the border and let them in safely.

**REFUGEES IN northern France are facing a brutal border clampdown by British and French authorities.**

French police have ruthlessly cleared refugee camps in Calais and Dunkirk, and desperate people are taking to boats in an effort to get to Britain.

UK Border Force (UKBF) patrol boats intercepted two boats in the English Channel on Monday morning.

One group of 11 refugees was brought ashore at the Port of Dover, searched, then bundled into a van.

The UKBF had already stopped another small boat in the channel at around 4.30am. On board were eight men, one woman and two children who had fled war, dictatorship and poverty in Iraq and Iran.

A few hours afterwards the French coast guard stopped a boat carrying nine refugees and handed them over to police in Boulogne-sur-Mer.

The crossings were the latest by a rising number of refugees trying to flee police repression in northern France. Some 41 refugees in two boats were stopped last weekend. And at least 86 men, women and children tried to make it to Britain on Tuesday of last week—the highest recorded number in a day. The crossings come after a meeting between Tory home secretary Priti Patel and French interior minister Christophe Castaner. They agreed to make life even harder for refugees. Aid workers have said there is “direct correlation” between the rising numbers trying to cross the channel and repression. Over 100 French cops cleared the large site in Grande-Synthe, Dunkirk, on Tuesday morning.

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Partnership with bosses is a bad deal for workers

The Labour Party has unveiled ‘radical measures’ under a new Ministry of Employment Rights. Tomáš Tengely-Evans casts an eye over the plans.

AFTER decades of bosses’ attacks, Labour has promised to “put power into the hands of workers”. Labour’s shadow business minister Laura Pidcock unveiled the “radical measures” at the TUC union conference last week. She said “tinkering around the edges will no longer do”, listing stagnating wages and runaway bosses’ pay, zero hours contracts and declining union membership.

But will Labour’s policies meet the scale of the challenges outlined? At the heart of the plans is a Ministry of Employment Rights and Workers Protection Agency.

The minister would be tasked with rolling out workers’ rights across the economy. And the new agency would have “extensive powers to inspect workplaces and bring prosecutions and civil proceedings on workers’ behalf”. Unions would have far greater rights, including being able to go into workplaces to organise (see below).

Bedrock

But the bedrock of Labour’s plan is rolling out “sectoral collective bargaining” across the economy.

This would see bosses and union leaders negotiate national agreements on pay and terms and conditions. Each industry, whether fast food, retail or building, would have its own joint bosses and workers’ council. It would set a legal minimum for wage rates and working conditions, then unions could push for more from individual companies.

This would be an obvious advantage for workers, particularly those in workplaces with weak or no union organisation. But there are also dangers. Unions could see their job as negotiating national agreements, and walkouts at workplaces as rocking the boat. There have been plenty of sweetheart agreements between bosses and union bureaucrats in the past.

A lot of Labour’s plan rests on a “social partnership” between government, bosses and unions.

Many European governments brought in this model during the long boom of capitalism that followed the Second World War. Sections of big business saw it as a good way of managing capitalism and keeping “industrial peace”.

Jeremy Corbyn argues that it’s still a system used “in many of the most successful economies” and “fosters workplace stability”. But everywhere it’s been tried, it’s often been about putting a cap on workers’ demands. Bosses in Britain loved it in the 1970s because it meant stifling militant local struggle. Union leaders agreed to years of bad pay deals under a Labour government, and it laid the ground for Margaret Thatcher’s Tory government and the defeats of the 1980s.

Now bosses don’t even want social partnership. Global capitalism hasn’t recovered from the credit crunch of 2007, and bosses want to squeeze more out of workers to restore profitability. Other European countries were slower to dismantle “social partnership” than Britain, but they are all moving in that direction.

In France, for instance, 98 percent of workers are covered by national or industry-level agreements, but bosses have launched big attacks. And many of Germany’s industries have seen a dramatic decline in bosses being part of collective agreements since the 2000s.

Unions will have to take on bosses to “put power into the hands of workers”.

Why won’t Labour scrap all the anti-union laws?

LABOUR’S PLEDGE to “repeal the Trade Union Act in its entirety” could make a difference to working class struggle. The Tory law brought in thresholds in ballots for industrial action.

Even if a majority votes for strikes, the law says agency workers can’t walk out if the turnout is below 35 percent. And in “essential public services” such as health, education and transport, a minimum of 40 percent need to back the action.

The law requires unions to give 14-days’ notice of a strike. And the ballot has to be renewed after six months—or nine months if bosses agree to it.

Labour’s plan to repeal the act and give unions access to workplaces to recruit workers would be positive.

But Britain already had some of the most draconian union laws before the Trade Union Act was passed. Labour has not said it would get rid of them. These laws ban working class solidarity, for instance.

A group of workers could not legally vote to strike in support of workers on strike in another workplace.

Labour has said it would introduce electronic and workplace ballots. Details about what a “workplace ballot” would mean are unclear, but it should go further.

Workers should have the democratic right to vote for strikes at workplace meetings and walk out without any notice to the bosses. Without the right to strike, promises of collective bargaining amount to little. The TUC’s official policies to push for “trade union freedom” go further than what Labour’s promising. But union leaders have all staked their hopes on waiting for Labour to bring in the changes.

Union leaders will have to fight now—and defy the present law—as part of the fight against the Tories and union-bashing bosses.

Get bosses in line with a fine

LAURA Pidcock outlined a major improvement in individual rights at work.

Labour would ban bosses’ right to pay agency workers less than directly-employed workers. Unpaid internships would be outlawed. And instead of zero hours contracts, workers would have the right for genuinely flexible hours to give them a work/life balance.

But there also needs to be a bigger overhaul of employment law in favour of workers.

For instance, there should be increased fines for employers who have victimised workers or not paid wages.

And workers should not have to have worked somewhere for two years in order to qualify for a claim under unfair dismissal.

You could enjoy to self-employ

THE Ministry of Labour would “create single status of worker for everyone apart from those who are genuinely self-employed”. This would be a blow to bosses in industries that try to push workers into bogus self-employment.

This denies them a steady wage and statutory employment rights.
Sodexo workers vote on St Mary’s battle

UP TO 100 workers outsourced to Sodexo at St Mary's hospital in west London began a strike ballot this week.

Cleaners, porters and caterers at the United Voices of the World union are demanding the living wage and payment for overtime. They want Sodexo to provide routine vaccinations and supply workers with more sets of uniforms.

One worker said, “Sodexo has provided only two pairs of work trousers over the last five years.”

Gabby Thorpe

Turnout threshold missed by one vote

UNITE UNION members at homelessness charity St Mungo’s were set to meet this week after a vote for strikes. The workers voted for strikes against a punitive new contract by 78 percent. But they missed the 50 percent threshold under the anti-union laws—by one vote.

Isn’t this an obvious case for union leaders defying the law and urging workers to take action anyway?

Liverpool university workers say no cuts

UNIVERSITY OF Liverpool support staff were set to begin strikes on Saturday.

The Unite union members, are fighting over changes to terms and conditions which could see them lose £3,000 a year.

They planned further 24-hour walkouts on Tuesday and Friday of next week and Saturday 10 October.

Bradford vote to bring library bosses to book

THE UNITE union has begun a ballot for strikes for library and museum workers in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

Workers at the 14 sites have suffered a decade of cuts imposed by Bradford district council.

They face £950,000 worth of cuts this year—and a further £1 million from April of next year. The ballot ends on 27 September.

Luton settlement after 73 strike days

SECURITY GUARDS at Luton airport have ended their long-running dispute after talks. The Unite union members staged 73 days of strikes against bosses’ plans to impose a new shift pattern.

The plans would have seen 15 extra days of work with no extra pay and the loss of a number of full weekends.

Unite says airport bosses “finally accepted alternative proposals which workers could also support”.

SOLIDARITY IS growing for pharmacy workers on indefinite strike in Tayside, Scotland.

Around 100 people joined a “Mates at the Gates” solidarity protest outside Ninewells Hospital, near Dundee, last Friday.

It came at the end of the fourth week of action by the 39 Unite union members.

They are fighting a “flawed job evaluation” that has left some workers “on lower grades than they should be”.

The solitary protest came after hopes of a resolution fell apart last week. Hannah, a Unite union member, told Socialist Worker that workers were “willing to stay out despite the anger and disappointment”.

“We are out every single day and all three picket lines are very active,” she said. “Unite Community branches have been really supportive of us and we’ve had messages of support from other community groups. "The Unison branch at Dundee City Council got in touch to give us support too."

Bosses at Tayside NHS set up a job evaluation panel that was supposed to deliver its final decision on 4 September. But “consistency checking” of the panel’s decision could not take place after a staff-side member pulled out of the panel.

Hospital bosses claim they couldn’t find a replacement—which Hannah said many striking workers find “hard to believe”.

The dispute is likely to go to the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee (Stac), a joint bosses and workers’ council for NHS Scotland.

But Hannah said workers have had “no feedback about how long it might take” and “Stac has never been in touch with Unite” contrary to bosses’ claims.

The Tayside workers are right to stay on the picket line until they have a won their demand.

Trade unionists should raise funds and solidarity in their workplaces and union branches for their fight.

Donate at bit.ly/UniteTayside or phone Unite Dundee 01382 227369

HEALTH VISITORS

Defiant Lincolnshire action

STRIKING HEALTH visitors in Lincolnshire have refused to back down after a Tory council leader tried to dismiss their action.

The 38 Unite union members began another 48-hour walkout over pay on Monday—after a seven-day block of action last week.

Striking health visitors and their supporters protested outside a council meeting last week.

At the meeting Tory executive councillor for adult social care Patricia Bradwell claimed, “We know we’ve got 10 people striking. If people don’t want to work for Lincolnshire county council we can’t help that.”

The health visitors were transferred from the NHS to the local authority in October 2017. They have not had a pay rise since even though both NHS and local government workers have received below-inflation pay increases.

The health visitors received support from the TUC union federation conference in Brighton last week. Unite assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail said, “The strike is unprecedented in the health visiting profession.”

Tweet solidarity to @UniteEastMids

ASDA

Now there Asda be a strike

ASDA supermarket workers staged protests across Britain for the second week in a row on Monday.

The GMB union members are fighting against bosses attempts to force them to sign a punitive new contract.

Protests took place in Leeds, Glasgow, Nottingham, Walsall, Bolton, Brighton, Ellesmere Port, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Norwich, Stanley, Taunton and Manchester.

Bosses at Asda have told workers they must sign up to the new contract by 2 November—or face the sack.

Gary Carter, GMB national officer, said, “Workers who have given years of loyal service are being told ‘sign this brutal contract or get the sack in time for Christmas’.

“By forcing people to sign this contract, Asda are making people choose between their families or their jobs.”

GMB should ballot its members for strikes.

TRANSPORT ROUND-UP

MEMBERS OF THE RMT union on the Central, Jubilee, District and Northern lines have voted overwhelmingly for action short of a strike over excessive track noise.

TUBE WORKERS on the District line have voted 95 percent vote for action on attacks on under-represented workers.

They are going to work from “within a place of safety when lone-working”.

The action is set to start on 27 September.

Support workers

SUPPORT ON the picket line

‘The uncharitable charity’

SUPPORT staff in the Unison union working for Addaction in Wigan struck for a third day last week.

Bosses have reneged on their promise to honour the NHS pay rise following privatisation.

“It’s vital we win this,” said striker Kathryn. “We’ve done everything to try and discuss this with Addaction and followed all the procedures, and still we got nowhere.

“They’re not even recognising the trade union. For a charity they’re not being very charitable.”

“We’ve all been let down” said Lloyd.

Values

Phil and Dan have had years of experience working for the NHS. “There’s a complete change in values—now it’s all about money and profit,” they said.

“The decision to strike was scary and hadn’t been an easy one” said John. “I’ve been amazed and humbled by the amount of support we’ve received from the union, the trades council, NHS colleagues, members of the public and local MPs.”

The strikers’ determination to win is impressive. Vulnerable people who use the service have joined picket lines, together with members of other unions showing solidarity and support.

Pickets have been invited to other union branches and hardship funds are being organised. Messages of support are coming in.

A rally at the end of the third day’s strike heard Wigan MP Lisa Nandy express wholehearted support for the strike.

Unison officials said they are determined to turn this into a national issue.

Barry Conway

@Messages of support to enquiries@wiganunison.org.uk

HEALTH WORKERS

Still solid in Tayside on an indefinite strike

by TOMAS TENGLEYEVANS

Community branches have been really supportive of us and we’ve had messages of support from other community groups. “The Unison branch at Dundee City Council got in touch to give us support too.”

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COMPASS AND MEDIRED

HEALTH WORKERS in the north west of England planned a 72-hour walkout this week.

Union members at Blackpool Victoria hospital were set to walk out on Thursday.

And workers at the Whiston hospital were set to begin their own three-day strike the following day.

The workers want outsourcers Compass and MediRed to give them the same rates of pay as workers employed directly by the NHS.

They are paid £8.21 an hour, but work alongside NHS workers in the same roles who earn £9.03 an hour.

Some workers can lose as much as £1,600 a year.

ASDA
University workers build walkout votes

by SADIE ROBINSON

AROUND 125,000 UCU union members in universities across Britain have started voting in ballots for strikes. One ballot, for action over pay, workloads and unequal contracts, involves union members at 147 institutions.

And of 69 of them, workers are also voting for strikes to defend their USS pension scheme.

Union members took to Twitter to share pictures of their voting Yes to strikes in the ballots. Voting ends on 30 October and activists are fighting to win the biggest Yes vote and turnout in the ballots.

Workers are fed up of real terms pay cuts, the gender pay gap and insecure contracts. One UCU member told Socialist Worker, “If you are a fixed term contract, you

get your reports and pictures to us by 12 noon on Monday

Post PO Box 74955, London E16 9EJ Phone 0207 840 5656 Email reports@socialistworker.co.uk

and bosses give themselves

enough.”

Workers have suffered real terms pay cuts of 21 percent in the last decade. And UCU members will be over £200,000 worse off because of attacks on the scheme. Solid strikes last year blocked bosses from shifting the scheme from a defined benefit to a defined contribution one. But they are still insisting that workers pay higher contributions.

And the Joint Expert Panel (JEP) set up after last year’s strikes to look at the future of USS hadn’t fended off the attacks.

UCU member Erin said, “USS have ignored the majority of the JEP’s recommendations.”

“As the JEP found, there is no reason for workers to pay higher contributions. If we accept higher contributions, we are accepting the slow attrition of our pension scheme.”

Tory laws mean that turnouts would need to be 50 percent or higher in order to have legal strikes. But

UCU members have beat the threshold in the past—and can do it again.

Workers know they are fighting not only for their own pay and pensions, but also to shape what universities look like in the future.

As Erin said, “I am voting to strike because I love the profession. I want it to have a future. I want my students to see that they can demand more, too.”

ACADEMIES

Bexleyheath restructure campaign

NEU EDUCATION union members at Bexleyheath Academy were set to strike on Wednesday over a restructure.

Workers at the south east London school have faced months of turmoil after the school was said to be failing by schools inspectorate Ofsted.

The Academies Enterprise Trust manages Bexleyheath Academy.

It was told earlier this year that the school could have its funding cut if the academy failed to make “clear improvement”. (Send messages of support to Debbie.jones@neu.org.uk)

FUNDING CUTS

Nottingham College holds defiant action

A STRIKE at Nottingham College on Wednesday of last week drew between 20 and 25 strikers picketing at all five college sites for the first day.

The action is against new contracts, drastic cuts in terms and conditions, and sacking of members who refused to sign.

This was in addition to the bullying environment generally affecting other local and national disputes.

Calculations show that to extra funding the government has promised to the FE sector in the previous week would mean over £1.2 million extra funding for the college. But the local employer has refused to reconsider. The pickets were

visited by local Labour MP Lilian Greenwood and Sally Longford, deputy leader of the city council.

Students also joined the pickets and others showed support by going into college wearing stickers supporting the strikers.

A rally heard speeches from a number of UCU reps, the Nasuwt union, students and Unite Community.

The next strikes were set for Thursday and Friday of this week, dates chosen to coincide with the climate strike.

Workers plan a three-day strike the following week and then four and five days the weeks after.

Richard Buckwell

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Picket at Bromley libraries

TALKS BETWEEN bosses and striking library workers in south east London were set to take place as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday.

Unite union members working in Bromley libraries have been on all-out strike since June.

They returned to the picket line last week in their long-running dispute with GreenIQ, the company that runs the libraries.

Workers are battling over staffing and other issues. Library bosses have failed to fill vacancies and want to bring in a new staff structure

which would mean job losses.

Shadow minister Andrew Gwynne MP joined the picket line and highlighted Labour’s manifesto commitment to bring services back in house.

It is good that Labour is making these promises. But the Bromley strikers are right to fight for jobs and services now, not wait for a Labour government to stop outsourcing.

If bosses don’t back down, the union movement must give its support to make sure this important battle can win.

Mark Dunk

PCS UNION

Civil service strikes soon

OUTSOURCED workers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office were set to begin a week-long strike from Thursday.

The cleaners, porters and maintenance workers—members of the PCS union—are fighting a battle over low pay and union recognition.

They have returned to strikes after talks between PCS and the outsourcer Interserve broke down.

Interserve wants to make it harder for the PCS to achieve union recognition.

And bosses have not resolved issued such as

changes to pay dates.

BIT WORKERS in the

Driver and Vehicle

Standards Agency (DVSA)

in Nottingham and

Swanssea began the fourth week of a month-long strike on Monday.

The PCS union members are battling against staff shortages and bosses’ plans to increase working hours.

Their action could be followed by strikes by other workers in the DVSA as part of a rolling plan of action.

They include driving test examiners and vehicle safety enforcers.
OUTSOURCED workers have vowed to keep up their indefinite strike after bosses claimed to give in to one of their central demands.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Beis) apparently promised the striking cleaners and caterers the London Living Wage (LLW) last week.

Workers say they will keep striking until they get a deal. The PCS union members have been on indefinite strike since mid-July. They're demanding the LLW of £10.55 an hour from their current employers, outsourcers ISS and Aramark.

They also want improved sick pay and holiday pay, and ultimately to be brought back in-house.

Surprised

Strikers were surprised when PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka told the TUC union federation congress last week that Beis had emailed him promising the LLW.

Serwotka told the TUC union PCS general secretary Mark Surprised

but strikers have rightly said they won't go back to work until they see an offer in writing—and their other demands are met.

Cleaner Roman told Socialist Worker, “Until it's written in black and white on paper, we are staying out. Everyone is happy to keep going.”

Another worker said strikers won't go back until they get an acceptable offer over sick and holiday pay. Currently they are only entitled to statutory sick pay and 20 days' holiday.

“It’s not only the pay we’re challenging,” she said. “It’s the other conditions.”

“I had a fall in the building and had to take two days off. They didn’t pay me for that.

“Other people have had hospital appointments and there’s no support.”

The worker said strikers would need to know that, if they got the LLW, it would increase every year. “We need to thrash that out before we go in,” she said.

Previous pay rises for Beis workers have since been outstripped by inflation.

Escalation

The move on LLW by Beis was won by strikers’ determination to stay out, and by an escalation in the action.

Porters, post room, security and reception workers joined the strike for two weeks, ending on Friday of last week. They plan rolling action—one week on strike and one week off—from Monday of next week.

Cleaners and caterers hoped to speak to striking cleaners at tax offices in Bootle via Skype this week.

And Beis strikers planned to join the climate rally in London this Friday.

Roman said the news that Beis might back down has made strikers “more confident to stay out”.

Diageo workers strike to demand more than scraps from the fat cats’ table

AROUND 1,500 workers at Diageo plants across Scotland were set to begin ten days of strikes over pay on Tuesday night.

Talks between bosses and the GMB and Unite unions were continuing as Socialist Worker went to press.

After seven hours of talks on Monday the drinks company refused to put forward an improved offer.

Union leaders had said bosses decided to “act out a worthless charade, claiming they couldn’t afford to meet workers’ aspirations”.

The workers have been offered a rise of a mere 2.8 percent. This only just meets the RPI measure of price increases.

Diageo is fantastically profitable, and workers want a rise of 5 percent.

A few months ago Diageo revealed annual profits of over £4 billion. This fuelled a £4.5 billion share buy-back that showered money on shareholders.

And chief executive Ivan Menezes grabbed a 30 percent pay rise, taking his package to £11.7 million a year. GMB Scotland organiser Keir Greenaway said, “Strikes are a consequence of insatiable corporate greed.

Unchallenged

“Our campaign for a pay deal that beats the cost of living is modest against Diageo’s staggering financial results.

“A huge chunk of Diageo’s success is built on the back of the working class and rural communities that distil, mature, store and bottle their lucrative range of whiskies and white spirits.

“If any business can afford to make work pay for its employees it is Diageo. Instead we have the grotesque spectacle of Menezes and his shareholders carving up the spoils while workers get thrown scraps from the fat cats’ table.

“We aren’t going to leave this unchallenged.”

Diageo produces Johnnie Walker whisky among other brands and has Scotland’s largest grain distillery at Cameronbridge.

Strikes were scheduled at over 40 distilleries and bottling plants on different days between Tuesday this week and 27 September.