

“YOUR PARTY”

DITCH THE LIBERALS



WIN THE WORKERS

Workers Hammer

Birmingham bin strike, 25 July.

Hatred for Starmer’s Labour is at new highs, Farage is entertaining deals with the Taliban to deport refugees, and the moribund Tories are trying to win back their base by one-upping Farage and promising that they will deport women and children to Afghanistan as well, not just the men, like that softie Farage!

In this utterly miserable state of British politics, the launch of Your Party by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana is a welcome development indeed. It presents a real opportunity to forge a left-wing alternative to the status quo which can win workers away from the right and halt the march of Reform UK.

But this will not be an automatic process; the road ahead is a complete minefield. For starters, not only is the right gaining ground, but many among the left and activist layers are in denial about just how discredited the left is among the working class. If this wasn’t bad enough, instead of debating the reasons

for the gulf between the left and workers (hello lessons of Corbynism!), most are putting the cart before the horse, bickering over organisational questions and whether the structure should favour federalism, one man one vote or sortition (what even is that?).

There seems to be a deep illusion that by having good and democratically arrived at slogans about peace, justice, anti-racism, anti-austerity and socialism, the working class will be drawn to the party like a moth to a flame; everyone will get together and unite—immigrants, minorities, white workers, pro-Palestinians, trans people, feminists, environmentalists and anyone else sick of Broken Britain. Meanwhile, Corbyn and Sultana are engaged in some intense clique fights which have bubbled out into the open, and there’s a fresh new controversy on the trans question. Not a good start, to put it mildly.

At this rate, things could turn into a disaster. To be successful, Your Party needs to

emerge as a serious challenger to Reform. It can only do so by being a pro-working-class party, which means understanding what drove the working class to the right, learning the lessons and not repeating those mistakes. It must also take a hard stance in defence of *all* the oppressed.

Your Party activists need to put the organisational bickering and turf wars to the side and provide real answers to the hard questions polarising Britain: immigration, rising ethno-nationalism, anti-trans hysteria, foreign policy, and the state of the economy. A failure to provide working-class solutions to these problems will guarantee the failure of the new party, turning the left into an even bigger joke, which will only strengthen the right. In short, Your Party needs to win the workers!

How liberalism drove workers to the right

If Reform’s strategy to win the white working class is to be the anti-establish-

ment voice, then why hasn’t the left been successful at doing the same? Surely talking consistently about austerity and fighting the bosses makes the left an anti-establishment voice too, so why hasn’t it gained from the discontent at the system?

The short answer is liberalism. But “what is liberalism?” people always ask. Isn’t it good to be a liberal, to be “progressive”? Liberalism is the use of “progressive” ideas by the ruling class—ie, the City of London—to advance its own interests at the expense of the workers. For decades, in Britain as in other countries in the West, the ruling classes embraced an enlightened view on social issues as they shafted the working class by offshoring vast swathes of industry, leaving entire regions deindustrialised, hollowing out trade unions and condemning working-class communities to rot.

Not convinced? Think back to New Labour: along with bombing Iraq on bits at

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PARTISAN DEFENCE COMMITTEE



AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!

On the banning of Palestine Action

The persecution of pro-Palestinian activists is being ramped up more and more. On 5 July, Starmer's government proscribed Palestine Action under the repressive anti-terror legislation for spray-painting RAF planes earlier this year. Mo Chara (Liam Óg Ó hAinle) of the popular Irish rap band Kneecap is facing charges of supporting a proscribed organisation for allegedly displaying a Hezbollah flag at one of their gigs in London last year. These are just two cases that have received a huge amount of support and publicity.

There is widespread outrage at the government's banning of a group engaged in direct action against Israeli arms manufacturers in the midst of a genocide. Since PA was proscribed, the group Defend Our Juries (DOJ) has organised several sit-down protests challenging the ban, where hundreds courageously defied repression. However, the problem is that this strat-

egy, inspired by the Gandhian method of non-violence (the protesters gathered at the statues of Mandela and Gandhi in central London), relies on the moral virtue of the oppressor. If two years of genocide have not moved Starmer's moral compass, it is unlikely that arresting a few 80-year-olds will. This strategy also leads to demoralisation because those arrested are faced with the consequences of a terrorism charge and get embroiled in legal proceedings for years.

This is a lesson from the experience of Just Stop Oil. Following a years-long campaign of throwing soup at paintings and gluing themselves to roads, many JSO activists have been jailed with no discernible result besides some hysterical headlines from the gutter press. And JSO has now completely disappeared from the political scene.

How then should we organise the fight-

back against the massive state repression? For starters, we should unite all cases together. There are many more activists facing repression for making speeches or social media posts taking a side with the Palestinian national liberation struggle that get far less attention from the left and workers movement. Examples are two students at SOAS as well as Tony Greenstein and journalist Richard Medhurst. Adding to this growing list, on 2 September, police arrested five DOJ organisers for their role in "Lift the ban" protests. The broad support for the most prominent cases needs to be mobilised for everyone facing repression as an important step to strengthening the pro-Palestine movement as a whole.

Moreover, such a defence campaign must also turn to the workers movement. Because of the betrayals of the union leaderships like those of Unite and the RMT, who give speeches at mass protests but refuse to lift a finger in defence of Palestine, some activists in the movement have rejected this perspective. However, the goal is to organise a struggle inside the workers movement and to channel the seething anger in the working class into a defence campaign against the government's political campaign of repression and austerity. Not only is this the best strategy to defend pro-Palestine activists but also the most effective way to fight against Starmer's support to genocide.

Defend the SOAS 2!



Workers Hammer

Sarah of the SOAS 2.

At dawn on 31 January 2024 police raided the home of a SOAS student, Sarah, arresting her for a speech she had given on campus in October 2023. A supporter of the Revolutionary Communist Group/*Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, Sarah in her speech upheld the right of Palestinians to armed resistance against the murderous Israeli state. Zionists tagged the Met Police in a video of the speech, leading to Sarah's arrest. Thirteen months later, she was charged with inviting support for a proscribed organisation under Section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000. In March of this year, a second SOAS student and supporter of FRFI was also arrested on suspicion of an offence under Section 12 as she took part in a rally for Sarah at the police station. Conviction on this charge can see you slammed in prison for up to 14 years. Like thousands of other protesters in Britain and worldwide, the SOAS 2 are being persecuted for the crime of speaking out against genocide in Gaza.

FRFI have mounted a lively defence campaign for the SOAS 2, promoting solidarity with a host of other cases of pro-Palestine activists and drawing in other organisations in united-front protest. The PDC has spoken at several demos outside court hearings for the two comrades. Speaking powerfully at the 17 June London protest defending French activists, Sarah said: "The question of the right to resist by whatever means available is not just an accessory matter to the Palestinian struggle, it is at the heart of it. The designation of resistance as terrorism is a racist attempt to politically delegitimise the Palestinian struggle as a whole and to justify the indiscriminate killing of the Palestinians."

Sarah's trial is set for February 2026. The next court date for the SOAS 2 is on 24 October; come out to the Old Bailey and protest: All out to defend the SOAS 2!

Pakistan: General strike to free political prisoners!



Workers Hammer

Release Imran Khan rally, London, 3 August.

The following was issued as a WH supplement dated 2 August and distributed the following day to a protest of several hundred in Westminster demanding freedom for Imran Khan.

Imran Khan has been languishing in Adiala Jail since August 2023 because he dared to challenge Pakistan's servility to the US and refused to support Ukraine. Since then, the establishment has slapped more bogus charges on him to keep him locked up and crush his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and supporters.

As communists, we don't agree with Imran Khan's politics. But we firmly believe that it is not up to the US or the Pakistani military to decide who should rule the country. Therefore, we support the fight for Khan's freedom. We differ in our strategy, however: to free Imran Khan, it is necessary to mobilise all the masses of Pakistan! *For an all-Pakistan general strike!*

The Sharif-Bhutto government is fearful for its stability due to its extremely narrow base and a collapsing economy. To maintain itself, it is carrying out mass repression against anti-government activists—from the arrest of hundreds from Khan's party and the Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party, to the recent arrest of members of the Awami Action Committee in Gilgit Baltistan, to leaders of leftist political parties such as the Mazdoor Kisan Party, not to mention daily state violence against the Baloch people.

To fight back, the struggle to free Khan must be joined up with the struggle to free other leftist political prisoners because they all have *one common enemy*: the Pakistani government, backed by the US. When Khan supporters demand the freedom of those fighting for Gilgit, KP and Balochistan, it will forge ties of unity between the oppressed nationalities in Pakistan and the majority. This could strengthen the overall movement against the government and the US, which is bleeding Pakistan through the IMF, and could inspire a similar struggle on the other side of the border where Trump is slapping huge tariffs on India and Bangladesh.

*For a general strike to free Imran Khan and leftist political prisoners!
Down with US imperialism! Inqalab Zindabad!*

WORKERS HAMMER



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Transgender liberation: Fighting the backlash

The following presentation, edited for publication, was given by comrade Gabriel Perrault at a panel discussion last June organised by the Platypus Affiliated Society titled "Gender and the left".

The purpose of this panel, as I understand it, is to discuss the state of the movement for gender liberation and how it relates to the left, in particular the Marxist left. The first point I would like to argue is that both movements are currently in a profound crisis.

Regarding the first, the trans question has been one of the focal points of right-wing reaction in the current period. The backlash on this question has been used by a wing of the ruling class to push for a broader rupture with the liberal status quo which has dominated Western societies in past decades.

Today the trans movement finds itself more and more isolated, abandoned and betrayed by those who previously claimed to be on its side. The Labour Party's transition from lukewarm ally to being totally bigoted is a clear example of this trend.

As for the Marxist movement, it is splintered and weak. I cannot today go into all of the reasons for this, but the basic point is that those who have claimed to be Marxist have been unable to offer an independent working-class perspective for the struggles of the oppressed. The transgender question offers a prime example of this failure.

On one hand you have the Marxists who use a crude materialism to argue openly anti-trans positions. The CPB is a prime example of this. (I'm talking here of the *Morning Star* and not my CPGGB co-panellist.) On the other, you have Marxists who simply latch onto the coattails of the LGBTQ+ movement, adding Marxist verbiage to the liberal programme of the movement. Here the Socialist Workers Party is a prime example.

This is how we in the Spartacist League understand the current situation.

Our thesis

The basic thesis I want to argue in the remaining time is that Marxism is not only relevant to the question of gender emancipation but is an essential tool to advance it. But to be relevant it must learn from past mistakes and provide answers to the political questions which have undermined the LGBTQ+ movement. To do this we must start with understanding the political polarisations around the trans question.

On the anti-trans side of the argument, the fact that society as it currently exists is defined by rigid and largely impermeable gender categories is presented as a fact of nature which cannot and should not be challenged. You have religious versions of this: God created man and woman. A TERF version: the protection of women requires maintaining rigid barriers between the sexes. And even scientific (sometimes with Marxist lingo): there is a material difference between men and women.

The pro-trans side of the debate seeks to push back against these views, which repress

peoples' desires to live outside the oppressive norms of patriarchal society. Unlike the anti-trans views, these are entirely legitimate and progressive impulses. However, the ideological tool used to fight these norms is generally liberal idealism, which is both ineffective and counterproductive.



Trans+ Pride London, 26 July.

In other words, in pushing back against the reactionary view that gender is a fact of nature which cannot and should not be violated, most pro-trans discourse attacks the very notion that these rigid social barriers exist. It is often argued, for example, that there is no sharp dichotomy between men and women and that gender is defined by one's own subjective will.

The problem with this is that it is not true. Society as it presently exists is defined by a very rigid gender segregation. The fact that it is possible but very difficult to socially transition from one gender to another is an example of this. These sharp gendered divisions are the very basis of women's and of LGBTQ+ oppression.

The crux of the problem is the following: To accept that society is defined by a rigid segregation of the sexes does not in any way imply accepting that this is how things should be. In fact, understanding that gender segregation is profoundly embedded in every institution is essential to developing a programme and strategy to change this reality. Here is where Marxism comes in.

To summarise my main point: Anti-trans discourse uses the prevalence of dominant gender norms to justify their maintenance and legitimacy. The mainstream pro-trans discourse seeks to undermine gendered norms by denying that they are rooted in material reality. But the result is to deny social reality as it currently exists. This necessarily focuses the struggles on the realm of ideas, language and norms, and not on overcoming the economic and social roots

of gender oppression, mainly the patriarchal family.

Marxism for its part takes existing social norms as a starting point to change society. It roots its understanding of the world in existing material reality, but it takes this reality not as a fixed eternal norm but as one

that can be shaped by the struggle of classes and individuals. This starts not in some distant communist future but here and now.

So far this is a fairly theoretical argument, so I will try to make it concrete with an example.

Workers and trans liberation

It is no secret that workers throughout the Western world have been moving to the right on social questions. This shift has been largely fuelled by a rejection of the previous liberal status quo, which covered itself in grand ideals of equality and social justice while workers were experiencing a constant decline in their social conditions. Since the left has failed to provide a progressive alternative to the status quo, the right has so far succeeded in leveraging economic grievances into a social backlash against minorities and other oppressed groups.

From an anti-trans standpoint, "trans ideology" is an academically driven phenomenon totally disconnected from the real world. The growing backlash among workers is viewed as the triumph of common sense and is wielded as a spearhead to foster further social reaction.

On the pro-trans side of the argument, the hostility of large swaths of the working class poses a profound problem. If we look at the right-wing shift of the working class purely on the ideological level, the situation can seem hopeless and liberals can appear to be a much better ally than socially conservative workers.

However, if we approach the problem

from a Marxist point of view, we can understand that workers whose existence is defined by their exploitation have much more of an interest in defending trans people than liberals, whose careers depend on being accepted in the upper layers of society. From this understanding we can develop strategies to overcome the political divide by focusing on the common interests of workers and trans people.

Here I do not mean focusing on economic issues while putting the trans question on the backburner, as vulgar Marxists and social democrats advocate. A Marxist approach seeks to show to the working class how it is in its own material interests to defend trans people against the current reactionary backlash. This does not mean they must become enlightened liberals on the question of gender norms but simply that they must oppose bigotry and oppressive conditions for trans people because these will contribute to the degrading of their own conditions.

A basic example is that restricting the civil liberties of trans people is a step towards attacking the civil liberties of everyone. In fact, every day the Trump administration helps prove this point.

Conclusion

Marxism is first and foremost a programme of struggle. It is impossible to separate Marxist analysis from its aim of emancipating the working class through revolutionary struggle.

Marxism can provide a road forward for trans liberation because it can offer a path from the realities of current capitalist society to the ideals of gender emancipation. This path is not built in the heads of individuals or on pieces of paper but through guiding struggle, based on a materialist and revolutionary working-class programme.

If Marxists have played a marginal role in the struggle for gender liberation in the past decades, it is not the fault of Marxism but of those who claim to be Marxist. At bottom, they failed to use Marxism as a tool to overcome the conflicts which have paralysed the LGBTQ+ movement and led it to its current enfeebled state.

We in the Spartacist League have certainly had our own set of failures on this front. Today we do not claim to have all the answers. What we can offer is a basic materialist approach which can explain why the LGBTQ+ movement is in crisis, and some broad elements of programme to overcome this crisis. ■



STARMER DISASTER

One year of Labour. One year of disaster. From the freebies scandal to the winter fuel debacle, from Starmer mimicking Enoch Powell's "island of strangers" to then apologising for it, from the backbench rebellion over welfare cuts to chancellor Rachel Reeves in tears in Parliament—this has been a slow-motion train wreck which feels like a bad episode of *The thick of it*, only without a Malcolm Tucker to make us laugh. And now, with the economy stagnating, public services collapsing, inflation climbing and public debt soaring, the government has to produce a budget this autumn. No one knows how it can dig itself out of such a massive hole. As if things were not bad enough, Angela Rayner just resigned in disgrace for dodging stamp duty.

Why is the Starmer government so impotent? It is not only incompetence or poor PR. Something more fundamental is at play. British capitalism is confronted with a crisis, and Starmer is incapable of solving it because he is torn by irreconcilable contradictions and class forces pulling in different directions. These have sunk the government in an intractable quagmire, paralysing it as Reform UK circles for the kill. For leftists now trying to build Your Party, it is essential to understand this dynamic.

Starmer's quagmire

Britain's economy is stagnant, and the City of London and big businesses are growing restless. To stay afloat, they need tax cuts, deregulation and a more "business friendly" environment: lower wages, state subsidies and privatisations. This is how hedge funds keep raking in profits, which is what passes for "growth" in modern Britain. Furthermore, with Trump back in power, the US is tightening the screws



Anthony Devlin/Getty; Chip Somodevilla/Getty

"Boohoo I can't cut welfare to the disabled"

"Not now Rachel, I'm working"



on its allies, demanding increased military spending (to buy US-made weapons), better terms for American companies and stricter obedience to US foreign policy.

But to buy F-35s, cut corporate taxes and subsidise companies requires money—and the government has *none*. Public debt is soaring, and higher interest payments are devouring ever larger chunks of the Treasury's budget. More borrowing at this point risks financial instability. The only options for the government are to cut public spending—benefits, education, public services, etc—or raise taxes, which are already at historic highs. The rich will not accept another tax rise, and since Starmer is desperate for their approval, Labour will have to turn to the middle and working classes

and squeeze more out of them. Concretely, to do the bidding of the City and toe the line for the US—which is what Starmer promised to do—he needs to impoverish and attack large layers of the population.

But the problem is that Starmer cannot do that. Most of the population is restless, choked by sky-high energy bills, bloated mortgages and stagnant wages. Public services are already on the brink of collapse, leaving little left to cut—short of mass NHS privatisation. But not only is this widely unpopular, the government is so despised that it has no political authority to preside over any important cuts and attacks on working people.

Crucially, Starmer's paralysis lies in the Labour Party itself. Starmer crushed the left in the party—his only real achievement. But in doing so, he also hollowed out the base of the party, forcing those that were not purged to swallow blow after blow against the very idea that Labour had anything to do with the working class. Yet, Starmer cannot evade it: the source of his power, the Labour Party, remains the main obstacle to fully embracing the interests of the City.

This was most clearly seen with the backbencher revolt against the proposed £5bn cuts to benefits. Everyone could see trouble brewing in Labour. Yet, Rachel Reeves pressed ahead, desperate to prove how "tough" she is. Starmer, meanwhile, spent most of his time jetting to summits on Ukraine and could not care less. They probably thought there would be no problem—after all, most Labour MPs are obedient toadies, hand-picked by Labour HQ for their cowardice.

But over a hundred MPs did rebel. Not out of courage or as a result of a left-wing upsurge, but because they knew that ripping away the crumbs from sick and disabled people would sink their already fragile re-election prospects and cut their career short. They could hardly face their union backers, NGO sponsors, or—worst of all—their impoverished constituents if they voted for it. In a sense, their narrow careerism forced them into a confrontation with

the party tops. The reform collapsed—and with it, the government's credibility in the eyes of the City, washed away with the tears of Rachel Reeves.

The result is that Starmer is stuck in the muck. Stuck between his commitment to the City and the seething anger of working people, able to satisfy neither. For a year, the government muddled through: giving a little bit to the City, a little bit to workers, tinkering with the books while praying that the next growth forecast would be slightly higher. But now, the government's goal is simply survival.

We cannot know how long it will last. It is possible that it muddles through a little longer, particularly if the impending financial crisis is delayed. However, rumours of a £50bn hole in the budget are growing, alongside warnings that Britain might need an IMF bailout—which would be a catastrophe and humiliation for the ruling class. But behind this chatter is the very real possibility that the City might crack the whip on this government much harder than it has until now. So far, Starmer's only luck is that there isn't a viable alternative to him...yet.

The rise of Reform

Meanwhile, the main political force taking advantage of this disaster is Reform UK, which now tops the polls. Reform's strength lies in its ability to channel the deep anger in society into anti-immigrant sentiment, something at which it is particularly successful in working-class areas and former Labour strongholds, where bitterness runs deepest.

In many ways, Reform is a product of the rottenness of British capitalism. As society stagnates, as living standards fall and as everyone fights over crumbs from a shrinking pie, Reform provides a clear outlet for this massive anger. This is rendered easier by the fact that the left has spent decades defending the very liberal values and institutions used by the ruling class to crush working people, shut down industries and bring high levels of immigration. Thus, not only are liberal demonstrations and moralist appeals to love refugees useless in quelling the right, they feed it (see article on page 16).

Unsurprisingly, Labour's answer has been to copy Reform, a disastrous course which has only succeeded in boosting Farage while further angering Labour's base. Reform voters, or even most who look to Tommy Robinson, are not irredeemable racists. Most are angry working-class people, looking for a fight with the liberal establishment and a radical alternative to the status quo. The fact that they find it in anti-immigrant bigotry is an indictment of the left, which has clung for as long as possible to the lackeys of the City.

While Reform is winning workers, a growing section of the ruling class is also throwing its lot behind it. Not because they are convinced of Farage's plan, but out of lack of an alternative. The British rulers are also very sensitive to the political winds

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Spartacist League public meeting

YOUR PARTY: How to win the workers



Mark Barratt/Shutterstock

Saturday, 11 October, 5pm

Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8JR

WorkersHammer • workershammer@btconnect.com

Your Party...

(continued from page 1)

the orders of the White House, Blair went on a union-bashing spree and rammed through huge privatisations of public services. But at the same time, Blairism was also defined by socially liberal policies, such as anti-racism, feminists in the cabinet, huge hikes in immigration and the Good Friday Agreement. Blairism pandered to certain segments of society using progressivism while openly mounting attacks on the working class. This dynamic continued under the Tories and drove large layers of white workers to hate “woke” ideas and resent those they supposedly benefited, ie, racial and sexual minorities, seeing them as responsible for their worsening conditions and a general breakdown of society.

There is no better example of this than the EU and Brexit, a decisive question for Britain on which most of the establishment banded together under the banner of “Remain”. Brexit was a referendum on the liberal status quo that was devastating the country, pure and simple. Most of the working class was done and wanted out but it faced a barrage of blackmail by the City and the *Guardian*-progressives: Leavers were hordes of backward Northerners (ie, anyone living north of the M25) and uncultured anti-immigrant bigots who hated diversity; in short, Brexiteers were racists.

This hysteria divided the country along the lines of “backward Northerners” vs “progressive Londoners”, buried the genuine grievances of native-born workers, abandoning them to the likes of Johnson and Farage, and shackled immigrants and their defenders to the “progressive” wing of the ruling class, their real enemy!

Instead of providing a working-class opposition to the EU, most of the left and trade union leaders criminally echoed the same liberal blackmail about open borders and anti-racism. This is true first and foremost of Corbyn who jumped ship from “Leave”—his historic position—and campaigned for “Remain” because he prioritised keeping unity with the Blairites, ever faithful servants of the City. As such, despite all the talk of socialism and workers’ struggles, the left failed to emerge as a real alternative because it was completely bathed in the very liberalism of the ruling class. Either it was unable to see how the ruling class was using “progressive” ideas to sink the rest of the country, or it consciously embraced liberalism as a step forward.

In the last decades, these same dynamics were constantly at play on a whole number of questions making it easy for the right to use anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ+ poison to whip up reaction. The unions, for their part, while holding immense potential for organising the multiracial working class, are becoming more of a joke everyday: they organise anti-racism and anti-everything campaigns but are incompetent at winning real gains (no, petty annual raises are not gains), which only drives workers further away. The 2022-23 strike wave was a case in point. It was driven to defeat by trade union leaders who couldn’t bring themselves to put the Tory government out of its misery. Would Starmer’s Labour or the



right act so emboldened if they were afraid of union power? Absolutely not.

Your Party and all those looking to it must understand what got us here: decades of assault by the City waged under the banner of progressive ideas, with no credible force on the left and the labour movement to mount a fundamental challenge to this liberal poison—*this* has pushed workers towards the nativist poison of the right wing as the only anti-establishment, anti-liberal voice, ultimately pitting them against immigrants and minorities. Of course, there are nuances here and there, but only wilful idiots or apologists for liberalism and the union tops will deny the broad contours of our explanation. (We of course welcome debate.) What is urgently needed to avoid repeating past failures and build unity in the multiracial working class is a *political break with liberalism*. This just so happens to be the *central lesson* of Corbynism.

Your Party: why so cliquey and bureaucratic?

One million have signed up to Your Party’s mailing list, unofficial branches are already popping up, and activists are hosting a slew of (sometimes chaotic and undemocratic) meetings. At the same time, since the very start there has been constant drama between the faceless and nameless cliques behind Corbyn and Sultana. Many are rightly concerned that Your Party could turn into a bureaucratic and factional mess and self-destruct. What’s behind this and how can we prevent it?

The source of bureaucratism is the unfortunate combination of *zero* strategy and careerist appetites (did you really think Corbyn and Sultana are above careerism?). Without any meaningful answers for anything and lacking genuine differences, all struggles end up revolving around secondary questions and ultimately get posed on the organisational plane: how to use structures and connections to best secure influence, leadership, money etc. Politics and empty slogans of class solidarity get tacked on to this infighting to keep the hope alive for the masses.

Sceptical? Let’s make it concrete. Both Corbyn and Sultana have thrown punches out in the open, with Sultana calling out Corbyn’s capitulation on the anti-Semitism witch hunt and Corbyn rebuking her for it; they don’t see eye-to-eye on the Greens and there are many other issues which, if left unresolved, promise to tear the party apart.

But instead of genuine and open debates, what we see is a giant shroud of secrecy and a ridiculous focus on the party structure. Corbyn wants a federation, ie, a coalition of different entities and groups under the umbrella of Your Party, but Sultana wants a more “unitary” structure

with “One Member One Vote” (OMOV). Both insist theirs is the best model for ensuring democracy, and the “grassroots” activists are losing sleep figuring out which structure is best—after all, both have their merits and flaws, so how to decide?

Sultana’s OMOV is geared to her goal of securing the co-leadership with Corbyn and advancing her career as the face of the British left. How exactly does OMOV help her? Because it allows her to appeal to the masses (hurrah democracy!) against the existing trade union tops, independent councillors and MPs, and even socialist groups all concerned about their turf (read “local issues”). On the other hand, the federal model suits Corbyn better because it allows him to duck responsibility, avoid taking hard positions and keep being Corbyn (ie, a conciliator) while pretending to do something. In reality, neither one is inherently democratic because both serve the interests of these two great leaders, not the working class: a federation hands more influence to sellout trade union leaders and local politicians; OMOV democracy guarantees drowning critics and detractors in mass Zoom meetings which always operate as the stomping grounds of those in charge.

Beyond the specific clique dynamics, the emerging bureaucratism in Your Party is fundamentally about containing the various contradictions pulling at the yet to be formed party. Bureaucratism is not the evil creation of “bad people”, but is the unavoidable consequence of conciliating the ruling class. We can already see this in Corbyn’s angry reaction (what happened to the cute grandpa vibes?!) when asked if he is anti-Zionist. The problem he faces on the question of Zionism and many others is that he cannot sit on the fence. If he respects the red lines of the ruling class over Israel to appease the petty bureaucrats, careerist councillors and local “personalities” flocking to the new party, he will necessarily have to trample the radical aspirations of his base. For this, bureaucratism is indispensable.

This goes to show that if the party is not built on a clear working-class programme, one that can overcome the various conflicts between oppressed groups through a consistent struggle against the *entire* ruling class, it will necessarily have to suppress the legitimate aspirations of certain segments of the party, whether that be anti-Zionists, trans activists, communists or the working class. To fight

bureaucratism, we must of course fight for rules which will best favour the most radical segments of the new party; but we cannot do this in a political void. This struggle must be based on a set of clear principles which can unite the working class.

How to win and unite the working class

1. Palestine and NATO

While Britain has seen some of the largest pro-Palestine demonstrations in the world, they have also been detached from large layers of the working class. The truth is that not everyone is spurred into action through moral outrage; many don’t see Palestine as a cause linked to their lives and even come to resent those who they deem to be distracting from “domestic issues”. Still more, there are those who are patriotic or who work in the arms industry. That a spectacle of such unimaginable horror and devastation as we see in Gaza hasn’t jolted workers into taking mass action is not due to their moral failings, despite what many think. It’s because the pro-Palestinian movement has been unable to link the fight for Palestinian liberation to the needs and struggles of the working class.

The pro-Palestinian movement must stop counting on empty appeals for peace and justice and build alliances with the working class (no, union leaders speechifying doesn’t count) on an anti-imperialist basis. It must show how the struggles of British workers for their needs are inseparable from the cause of Palestine, and that common to both is the foreign policy of the ruling class—NATO and Zionism.

When it comes to NATO many are quick to point to the fact that many workers support the alliance. This is true, but the answer is not to back down, but to convince workers why it is important to oppose NATO. The argument is simple: all of Britain’s recent wars were to secure its position as top US lapdog; workers, sent to kill and be killed, lost out and this only created new problems which have come home in the form of a refugee crisis. More wars, for the increasingly crazy plans of the White House, will plunge Britain into a spiral of disaster. Like before, the working class will be the first to lose, whether through austerity or conscription. The way to break out of this spiral is to make a clean break with allegiance to the US, NATO and British imperialism.

As Trump squeezes the allies to cough up more for NATO, many in left and liberal circles are outraged. But any who cross this red line for the British establishment are *persona non grata*, putting them in the impossible position of opposing NATO while eyeing No 10. Their solution is to ask for a nicer NATO (à la Zack Polanski, new Green Party leader) while maintaining intact Britain’s partnership with the US, giving oxygen to the horrendous



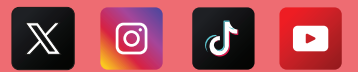
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illusion that Britain, and NATO generally, play a vital role in ensuring safety or defending democracy against authoritarianism (ie, the Ukraine war).

Whether over NATO or Palestine, the equivocations of the liberals end up conceding on key principles of anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism. But they also abandon the arguments most likely to win over the working class: those based on a clear class opposition to the ruling class. This is why on these questions, as on all others, ditching the liberals is necessary to win the working class.

2. No alliances with the Greens

Your Party must oppose all alliances with the Greens and the pro-green agenda. With Greens having gained a chunk of Labour's vote in the last general election and with new leader Polanski spitting radical truths, there is pressure on Your Party to merge or build coalitions with the Greens to consolidate the progressive vote. This would be a mistake that would drive working people away.

Green Party politics are the quintessential expression of petty-bourgeois metropolitan liberalism. Huge swathes of working people hate the green agenda because the ruling class has co-opted the concern for the environment to mount countless attacks against workers, closing factories by upholding the banner of net zero.

The climate crisis is real and there is an urgent need to find answers, but the Greens' solution is to tweak the status quo at the expense of the working class, which is a recipe for disaster. Consider ULEZ: exacting an extortionate levy *each day* someone with a polluting car comes into London makes no qualitative difference to the climate problems of London or Britain. Nor does filling the coffers of the Mayor of London improve public transport, contrary to many promises. It is a pure tax on working people for not being rich enough to afford "clean" cars.

Your Party must not conciliate the green agenda and must oppose Sultana's overtures to the Greens. Instead, it must win environmental activists to the understanding that their very association with liberalism alienates the working class, the only force that can change the direction of soci-



Zack Polanski

We hope not...

ety in a positive way and ultimately fix the climate crisis.

3. The trans conundrum

The trans question shows most clearly just how easily differences threaten to blow apart Your Party. Tensions over the trans question are the latest scandal, with Independent MP and Your Party secretary Adnan Hussain tweeting in defence of trans-exclusionary women's "single sex spaces". Since then, many have called on Corbyn and Sultana to denounce him, with Sultana tweeting that "bigotry has no place" in the new party, only to get heat from those sympathetic to Hussain. Quickly, supporters from both sides launched into fiery exchanges on backwardness, Muslims, conservative women, the woke left—all to the delight of the right.

In one of her tweets Sultana aptly pointed out that "The same forces targeting migrants and Muslims are attacking LGBTQ+ people, especially trans people." This is true, but it will take much more to really unite the LGBTQ+ movement and the Muslim community. The only way to cut through

the poisonous debates on this question is to frontally take on wrong views on both sides.

The starting point must be the *defence of the rights of trans people*. It is essential that the new party patiently explain to Muslims and other socially conservative sectors of society why it is in their own interests to oppose the backlash against trans people. We must sharply oppose comments like those of Adnan Hussain and show how restrictions on the rights of trans people to accessing facilities corresponding to their gender are the same kind of encroachment on civil liberties as the ban on veils enforced in many countries. The point is that individuals should be free to choose what they want to do with their own bodies. This should be a basic unifying principle in Your Party.

The main aim must be to push back against the mounting wave of reaction. This does not require that we agree with everything in each other's heads, but that we defend each other's rights. We should not expect all Muslim people to agree with gender transition, nor should we expect the socialists in Your Party to agree with women being veiled. The point is to unite against a common enemy.

But for this to have any chance of happening, pro-trans activists need to consider the precarious position they find themselves in and adapt their strategy to these conditions. They must understand that the socially conservative sentiments on gender and sexuality in the Muslim community or in the working class won't go away through moral blackmail or shocking their sensibilities. The sharp social segregation of the sexes is not simply the product of conservative ideas but is rooted in the millenary institution of the monogamous family. You can't shame this institution away. You need to transform social conditions, and you cannot do this in isolation from the rest of society.

What does this mean concretely? It certainly does *not* mean conceding when it comes to the rights of trans people. But it does mean making certain adjustments to reach out to socially conservative layers of society. For example, when it comes to women's shelters, we should insist that trans women have access to women's shelters. But we should also demand that more shelters be built and that some cater for socially conservative women

who insist on strict biological segregation. Only through such a flexible (and non-liberal) approach can a real alliance be built between trans activists and other oppressed sectors of society (see article, page 3).

4. The immigration quagmire

It's starting to be a bit scary to be a minority in Britain. The dominant strategy to fight back is to shout and yell "Racist!" at those who question the immigration problem, rather than pinning it on the liberal status quo of the last 30 years. This hysterical defence model only drives people towards racist reaction and strengthens the far right, and ultimately, it *undermines the defence of immigrants*.

The most important thing in mounting any kind of fightback against racist reaction is to not be seen in any way as defending the current status quo. It is not inherently racist to oppose the current government's policy of housing refugees in deprived communities or of encouraging mass immigration to keep Britain's decaying economy sputtering a little longer. To convincingly show that Farage is scapegoating immigrants and letting the real culprits off the hook, we must not shy away from acknowledging that the status quo is a disaster. Only then can we start to get a hearing for socialist solutions that address the roots of Britain's social decline (see "How *not* to fight the right", page 16).

The task for communists

To be successful, Your Party needs to unite the working class and oppressed. Many in the socialist left will agree with this. The real struggle will be over *how*. We have argued that this can only happen through an intransigent struggle against the influence of liberalism in the party. Most groups will either reject this or minimise its centrality by talking endlessly about the perfect 5, 10 or 20 point transitional or revolutionary programme, or whether there should be nationalisations or expropriations with compensation.

The differences among the revolutionary left at this stage of development of this party are not about who screams most loudly about socialism or communism, but about the *tasks*; how will the far left shape the politics of this party and fight to strengthen the position of the working class? How can socialists use this moment to change the balance of class forces in Britain?

In our view, Marxists have two interrelated tasks: first, as we have been insisting, to fight as hard as possible for a working-class break with liberalism by sharpening the class polarisations on key questions. The Marxist movement has long known that any party of the working class must be politically independent of the ruling class, its ideology and any elements tied to these. Failure to fight for this means that the pro-socialist impulses of this party's supporters—opposition to the ruling class, imperialism and Zionism—will be swamped by conciliation of the status quo, paving the way for another Corbynite debacle.

The second task must be to win over left-wing elements to a Leninist banner, the only antidote to the plague of left-Labourism. For this we must cohere a revolutionary wing which demonstrates through debates why the Marxist programme (yes, including the dictatorship of the proletariat) is essential to overcome the reactionary polarisations and advance the struggles of the working class *now*.

The launching of Your Party presents an occasion for left groups to work together on common issues, as well as to fight out political differences. Key to the success is for the left to break from its usual cliquy *modus operandi* and keep the interests of the working class front and centre. ■

Three socialist principles for the new left party

No NATO, no Greens, no Zionism

AUGUST 2—The founding of a new left party opens the possibility of building a radical left-wing alternative to the status quo. But to succeed, socialists and communists must *not* remain passive cheerleaders. Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party ended in failure because he was unable to stand up to the liberal establishment when it mattered most. The same mistakes cannot be repeated.

We must *organise now* to shape the politics of this new party. The left is divided on many things, but *all genuine socialists should agree to collaborate and fight side by side for the following three principles*:

1) No to NATO

Increased militarism and austerity go hand in hand. There can be no talk of a fairer Britain if it remains a member of NATO and a partner in US crimes around the world.

2) No alliance with the Greens

The Greens do not stand for socialism but for middle-class liberalism. Socialists cannot be associated with anti-working-class policies such as ULEZ, which seek to fight the climate crisis on the backs of workers. A coalition or non-aggression pact with the Greens would only push the working class away.

3) No to Zionism

The Zionist project is based on the displacement and genocide of the Palestinians. Socialists must oppose Zionism and be clear that the current state of Israel is incompatible with the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

Revolutionaries will be a minority in the new party; we will not control the rules or the structure. It is all the more important that we win the battle of ideas. The three principles above are not inherently communist. Yet they draw a basic political line against the liberal middle-class politics which dominate the British left. A victory on these three points would not only establish the new party as a genuine alternative to the status quo, it would also open a real political space for Marxist ideas.

The truth about the Birmingham bin strike

The Birmingham bin strikers are the most courageous and determined fighters this country has seen for decades. For six months they have been locked in a battle to beat back a monumental attack by the Labour-led city council and the Starmer government's commissioners. The strikers, members of Unite, have shown courage, tenacity and a level of class consciousness that we rarely see today.

The employers have tried every trick to break the strike, from coercion by police and court injunctions to scabbing, using agency workers, and bribery, tempting strikers with voluntary redundancy packages. But the strikers refuse to be coerced or bought. They have voted by 99 per cent to continue the strike, until next year if necessary.

If courage and tenacity could win this strike it would have ended in victory months ago. But their union leadership has failed to turn their determination into a winning strategy. In the beginning, when rubbish was piled high in the streets, the council was on the back foot. But soon the rubbish was being collected, the union was on the back foot and the strikers were forced into a war of attrition.

Battle lines are drawn

Birmingham City Council, under the dictatorship of government-appointed commissioners, drew up a battle plan designed to inflict a crushing defeat on the city's working class. For their opening shot, the commissioners threw down the gauntlet to the bin workers. They targeted a job category that was created when the union won the 2017 bin strike. The commissioners decreed that this job grade would be abol-

ished, slashing the pay of some 150 bin workers by up to £8k a year.

The bin workers rose to the challenge and fought back. They began a series of strikes in January and escalated to an all-out strike on 11 March. By the end of that month, with rubbish mounting high, deputy prime minister Angela Rayner sent military advisers to the city to help put the commissioners on a war footing. The employers put their battle plan into full swing with a massive scabbing operation, hiring agency workers to operate refuse trucks, using court injunctions to make picketing ineffective and bringing in scabs from neighbouring councils.

The union, on the other hand, went into the strike with no battle plan. According to some strikers, the union had an inkling from late last year that an attack was coming down the pipeline, but union officials said there was nothing to worry about. By mid-April, when the commissioners had the upper hand, Unite leader Sharon Graham and national lead officer Onay Kasab put an offer from the council to the strikers. Some say it was as bad or even worse than the original offer that sparked the strike. Workers voted it down by 97 per cent!

The battle is joined

All the union bureaucrats did was plead for negotiations, hoping that they could go back to the membership with a revised offer. Unite's leaders kept up a toothless appeal to the toothless council, with a ridiculous "where's Cotton?" campaign. It was delusional to think that



Bin workers picket line, 9 May.

John Cotton, the council leader, was calling the shots. Kasab and Graham knew as well as anyone that the battle was with the government's commissioners, not the council, yet they entertained this fiction among strikers. The commissioners were appointed for a purpose—to squeeze every drop of blood out of the working population of the city. They have fleeced working people by jacking up the council tax, gutting social services and slashing hundreds of council jobs. In the bin strike, they ripped up the usual rule book in which the employers throw a bone to the bureaucrats

who sell it to their members. The commissioners are absolutely not interested in a compromise; for their part the strikers are not willing to give up. They are too far in and have sacrificed too much. Caught between these two determined forces, the union leadership has no cards to play.

Frustration on the picket lines

Strikers have been fighting every way they can to stop scab refuse wagons, despite court injunctions and their picket lines being crossed on a daily basis by agency workers. On the picket lines, militant strikers freely vent their anger and frustration against the impotence of the union leadership. Early in the strike, pickets were defiant and would openly criticise the union leaders as "weak" and "not up to the job". Again and again, strikers angrily said that the union should "pull the plug on the funding" of Labour. Needless to say, strikers expressed contempt for Labour, often in colourful terms: "We live in a uni-party state" and the political parties are just "two cheeks of the same arse".

The strikers remained steady, the union leaders dithered, but the commissioners ramped up the attack. They declared that the same savage pay cut of £8k imposed on 150 loaders would be extended to 200 drivers as well. The drivers joined the strike, giving it a shot in the arm and boosting morale on the picket lines. The strikers kept finding new ways to hamper the scab refuse operation, including by slow-walking wagons leaving the depots and moving picket lines. *continued on page 10*

Bin strikers:

Take matters into your own hands!

The following WH (May 2025) supplement is one of several leaflets distributed by the Spartacist League on the picket lines of striking bin workers in Birmingham.

If courage and determination alone could win this strike, it would've been won already. But it's not enough. **Something needs to change.** The commissioners and the council are planning their next move; union members need to do the same. If the commissioners get away with crushing the bin strike, they will throttle the city of Birmingham. The whole working class of Birmingham is under attack but the bin strikers are fighting alone. This is **not good enough.** The unions must change course before it's too late. As a first step, ordinary union members must take charge of running the bin strike. Across the city, there is plenty of support for the strikers, but it has been wasted on a photo-op dressed up as a "mega picket".

Enough empty words and useless gestures! The bin strike needs solidarity **in action.**

The current union game plan is not working, and the existing leaders who refuse to change course are not up to the job. They place great faith in ACAS, which is rigged against the working class. What did the commissioners bring to the negotiating table? They upped the ante by announcing that around 200 drivers will lose up to £8k in wages now too. The current union negotiators are no match for this. Instead of negotiating from a position of strength, they are negotiating from a position of weakness: rubbish is being collected and pickets face the threat of arrest under Section 14 of the Public Order Act if they try to stop scabbing.

The stakes are high and there are obstacles to be overcome. But strikers have been out on picket lines for ten weeks and their courageous sacrifice must not be in

vain. They must ask themselves this question: do we carry on like this, and allow demoralisation to set in, giving the existing union leadership an excuse to blame the members for a sell-out deal? Or do we turn the determination of the strikers into a battle plan that can win?

This is a historic battle: we must look to the lessons of Saltley Gate. The strikers were isolated, outnumbered by police and the coking plant was working. Arthur Scargill brought hundreds of Yorkshire miners to support the strikers, but the police turned up in greater force. The battle was won because union meetings were organised across the city at which Scargill appealed to those unions to turn solidarity into action. With the whole union movement out on strike for a day there was nothing the police could do. Saltley Gate was closed and a historic victory was won.

What to do now?

1. Don't wait for the union officials! Elect a committee of ordinary union members to run the strike.
2. Demand a union meeting to discuss the strike and hold union reps to account.
3. Ballot all unions in the city for strike action and send delegations to motivate why the bin strikers' fight is their fight.
4. Appeal to agency workers—never cross a picket line! Scabbing on the strike is against their own interests.
5. Unite, Unison: pull the plug on funding Starmer's Labour Party! Use the money to support Birmingham bin strikers!

It's late, but not **too** late. We can beat the Labour-run city council and London government that are trying to throttle this city. Bin the commissioners!

Reviewing “Theses on Ireland”

The presentation printed below was given during a day of discussions, focussed on the national question, between representatives of the ICL and the International Bolshevik Tendency. The debates, which took place in London in July 2025, are collected in Spartacist Letters no 2 (August 2025).

For almost 50 years, the iSt [international Spartacist tendency—former name of the ICL] and the organizations in its tradition have upheld the “Theses on Ireland” (*Spartacist* No. 24, Autumn 1977) as a revolutionary program for Ireland and even a unique extension of Marxism. As my presentation will show, it is neither.

In our last issue of *Spartacist* (No. 70, May 2025), we published an article titled “For a United Irish Workers Republic!” This article does not claim any new theoretical discovery but rather defends the long Marxist tradition on the question of Ireland. Our article presents the Irish question in its historic evolution and offers a revolutionary program for Ireland based on a critique of Irish nationalism and British Labourism.

However, the article does not offer a detailed refutation of the “Theses on Ireland.” Since we defended this program for decades, it is only right that we offer such a refutation. I welcome today’s discussion with the IBT as a chance to do just that.

The difficulty in refuting the “Theses on Ireland” is that it is a centrist document. It covers what is essentially a traditional Labourite program on the Irish national question with all kinds of Leninist phraseology and overcomplicated theoretical schemes. By Labourite program on Ireland, I mean a program which advocates all kinds of supportable reforms while fundamentally upholding the unity of the United Kingdom.

Bait and Switch

For anyone not already predisposed toward supporting the unity of Ireland, the Theses can appear to offer a left-wing working-class perspective. Early on it makes a strong declaration against British imperialism:

“British imperialism has brought centuries of exploitation, oppression and bloodshed to the island. No good can come of the British presence; the existing tie between Northern Ireland and the British state can only be oppressive to the Irish Catholic population, an obstacle to a proletarian class mobilisation and solution. We place no preconditions on this demand for the immediate withdrawal of all British military forces or



lessen its categorical quality by suggesting ‘steps’ toward its fulfilment (such as simply demanding that the army should withdraw to its barracks or from working-class districts).”

However, right after this passage it states:

“At the same time we do not regard the demand as synonymous with or as a concrete application of either the call for Irish self-determination (that is, a unitary state of the whole island) or for an independent Ulster—two solutions which within the framework of capitalism would be anti-democratic, in the first case toward the Protestants and in the second toward the Irish Catholics.”

Here you get a classic bait and switch. The Irish have fought for British imperialism to leave their island for centuries. This has been the focal point of their struggle. The Theses appears at first to support this struggle, basically calling for Britain out of Ireland, only to then present the main conflict in Northern Ireland not as one against imperialism but as a national struggle between two peoples fighting for the same territory. From this it goes on to present the realization of Irish unity, the natural outcome of any successful struggle against British imperialism, as a reactionary outcome.

The Theses later goes on to quote the *Observer* (!) presenting the continued presence of Britain in Northern Ireland as motivated by “moral” considerations. It uncritically quotes this and goes on to state that British imperialism “is not now committed to the preservation of the Orange statelet and would prefer a settlement which would remove its direct political responsibility on the island” and that “British imperialism is

constrained to maintain capitalist law and order and prevent a complete breakdown in the social order.” Really? That is the reason why Britain is still in Ireland? Of course not.

There is a reason that Britain partitioned Ireland, and it sure as hell wasn’t for humanitarian reasons. Ireland has always been viewed as an essential part of the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland leaving the UK would undermine the unity of the entire state, opening the door for Scottish secession and maybe even Welsh independence. This is why to this day British imperialism will not part with its Irish territory.

The point of all of this is to once again deny the centrality of the fight against British imperialism. Despite the strong words at the start, this is the common thread of the entire Theses.

Straw Man

But what about the Protestants? This is the straw man argument used by the British to partition Ireland. The Theses recycles this argument, covers it with Marxist verbiage about the national question and uses it to present the reunification of Ireland as undemocratic.

To promote this charade, the Theses needs to present the Protestants as some kind of proto-nation akin to tribal people whose language, culture and economy were not yet sufficiently developed to lay the basis for a nation-state. This is total bollocks.

The dominant ideology of Protestants in the North of Ireland is not national but anti-national. It’s all in the name: Ulster loyalism. The whole point is to stay in the United Kingdom, not form an independent state.

It is true that sometimes the loyalists clash with the British government and they have on occasion threatened separation. But these were always maneuvers to stimulate in the rest of Britain a reactionary royalist response to giving democratic concessions to the Irish. They are loyal first and foremost to the British monarchy and have no intention whatsoever of breaking with it, since loyalty to the crown is the core of their ideology. Here is an excerpt from the Ulster Covenant of 1912 against Home Rule in Ireland:

“BEING CONVINCED in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V, humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant, throughout this our time of threatened calamity, to stand by one another in defending, for ourselves and our children, our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means

which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland.”

Loyalism is difficult to understand today because most people understand the world through the prism of nationalities. But this was not always so. Under feudalism, there were no nation-states, and what mattered was the dynasty that owned the land, not the people who inhabited it. As such, the monarchies of Europe actively fought against national consciousness, viewing it as a dangerous, revolutionary idea—which for the feudal system it was. It is these reactionary royalist conceptions which are the basis of Ulster loyalist ideology. They owe their allegiance not to a nation with a definite territory but to a divinely ordained royal family and its rotting empire. It is no coincidence that their hero is the restorationist monarch William of Orange and that they hate Wolfe Tone, even if he was a Protestant.

The point is that pro-imperialist monarchism is not a national culture whose democratic rights Marxists should defend. It is a reactionary ideology which we must fight. We should, of course, defend the religious rights of the Protestant minority in Ireland. But they do not have, *nor do they want*, national rights.

Let me put it this way. What is left of the so-called Protestant national culture if you take away pro-imperialism, monarchism and anti-Catholic bigotry? Basically, Protestant religious beliefs and Irish culture. This is not the basis for a separate nation.

The “Theses on Ireland” confuses all of this. It falsely presents the conflict in Northern Ireland as one of “interpenetrated peoples” when in fact it is and always has been a conflict opposing republican Irish nationalism to British imperialism. Neither of the conflicting parties wants to displace the other population from the land to form a national state. The conflict is



Charles McQuillan/Getty

Loyalist “culture”.



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ENOUGH WAITING

Fight for a border poll!

The SL/B issued the following statement on 10 June.

The majority of people in Ireland have been promised a referendum on Irish unity, but no one is doing anything about it. Sinn Féin talks about a border poll in the distant future, but won't campaign for it. Everyone

IRELAND

is expected to wait patiently for the British government to allow for a vote. And when a majority votes yes, as is expected, Britain will supposedly hand the Six Counties back to Ireland, just like that.

This is a dead end. Irish unity is impossible without a struggle against imperialism. And a border poll will not drop from the sky. It will only happen if there is a militant fight for it. All those who want to see a united Ireland within their lifetime must take matters into their own hands. We call for the creation of a militant campaign for a border poll!

The notion that a united Ireland will be achieved without a struggle against imperialism is a liberal fantasy indulged in by Sinn

Féin and most of the left in Ireland. Britain has held the Six Counties by force of arms since Partition, as they did with the whole of Ireland for centuries before that. History shows that it will take revolutionary struggle against British imperialism—and today against the EU and the US—to reunify Ireland. History also teaches that this task cannot be left to the nationalists, who have betrayed the national struggle by accepting Partition, both in the 1921 Treaty and again in the Good Friday Agreement. The unification of Ireland will take a mighty upsurge of the working class, north and south, united in struggle that is anti-sectarian and directed against all the imperialist powers and their lackeys, the Irish ruling elite. Our goal is to build a revolutionary movement in Ireland based on this perspective.

But such a movement does not exist today, and there are many obstacles to be overcome in the course of building one. For starters, most people believe that a referendum is the only route to a united Ireland. We know that Britain will not concede anything unless it is forced to. At the same time, the mass sentiment for a border poll is progressive and we support efforts to achieve this. Fighting for a referendum

will prove to be an effective remedy for liberal illusions as people will learn that the “democratic process” will be thrown aside as soon as it threatens the interests of London and the Irish capitalists.

A militant fight for a border poll will also hold Sinn Féin's feet to the fire. They cannot campaign for a united Ireland because they must be seen as respectable and fit for government. To this end the party has made its peace with the British establishment, including by bending the knee to King Charles III, Colonel-in-Chief of the Parachute Regiment. Sinn Féin has also cosied up to the US and EU by dropping its pledges to withdraw from EU military arrangements and NATO's Partnership for Peace. Placing our hopes for a united Ireland in these people is a recipe for defeat.

In fighting for a border poll, we're *not* talking about a referendum as specified in the Good Friday Agreement. It's an outrage that the decision to hold a referendum should be left to the British government. Hell will freeze over before Keir Starmer will permit the Irish to vote for an end to British rule in the north. The Starmer government, which backs Israel's genocide of the Palestinians to the hilt, is ferociously

anti-Republican. It brands Kneecap—and Gerry Adams—as terrorist suspects. It's ridiculous to think that the British establishment will peaceably agree to give back the Six Counties, which would reduce the decrepit “United Kingdom” to a rump, just because that's what the Irish want.

All of Ireland, north and south, should vote on Irish unity! Protestants should take their rightful place as part of the Irish nation, in the tradition of Wolfe Tone's United Irishmen. Centuries of acting as lackeys of British imperialism has brought the Protestant working class nothing but exploitation, deindustrialisation and ruin. For the decades of the Troubles, the IRA's response to British repression included sectarianism, which pushed Protestant working-class communities into the arms of the Loyalist paramilitaries. Protestant workers, join the fight for a better future: break with the rule of the British Crown! Join forces with your Catholic comrades in a mighty struggle to end the rule of imperialism and the Irish capitalist exploiters.

Forward to a militant campaign for a border poll! Forward to a united Irish workers republic!

Get in touch with us to build this campaign. ■

whether Northern Ireland should be part of the Republic or the United Kingdom. On this issue, communists all the way back to Marx have always had a clear side for Irish separation.

To reject this historic Marxist position, the Theses raises the specter of a genocide of the Protestants. This is another straw man argument. The Catholics do not want to drive the Protestants into the sea; they want to drive the British Empire out, a position that the Theses supposedly shares. Something we seem to forget is that there are Protestants who live in the Republic of Ireland. Were they put in camps and exterminated? No, they were not, because the existence of a Protestant minority—unlike the existence of the Palestinians for Israel—poses no existential threat to the Irish nation since they are part of the Irish nation. It is entirely false and quite reactionary to posit that a united Ireland would necessarily or even likely lead to a genocide of the Protestants.

One of the most outrageous statements in the Theses is that “the communalism/nationalism of the Protestants has a defensive character and is not the chauvinism of a great power.” This is wrong in so many ways. First of all, it is simply false historically. Protestants have never been oppressed in Ireland, and it is the Catholics who have always been the oppressed. There is nothing defensive about Protestant communalism. But also, it is self-evidently absurd to argue that so-called Protestant nationalism,

which is expressed through British imperialist royalism, is not great power chauvinism! If this is not the ideology of great power chauvinism, then what is?

Dodging the Hard Question

Beyond explicitly opposing the reunification of Ireland, the Theses rejects in fact one of the main political tasks in Northern Ireland: fighting to break the Protestant working class from British imperialism and royalism. This is an essential condition for the unity of the working class, yet the “Theses on Ireland” does not so much as attempt to make an argument as to why Protestant workers have an interest in opposing British imperialism.

The thing is, there is a quite straightforward argument to make as to why British imperialism is bad for the Protestants. Just look at Northern Ireland—it is utterly devastated. The cause of this devastation is not the sectarian conflict but the City of London, which has also devastated the rest of Britain. Protestants just like everyone else on these Isles have an interest in fighting British imperialism for their own self-preservation.

Of course, it would be much easier to break Protestants from British imperialism on the basis of an internationalist revolutionary program rather than a Catholic-tinged nationalist one. This is one reason why it is essential that communists fight against the hold of the nationalists on the struggle for a United Ireland. But since

the Theses rejects the very cause which animates Irish republicans, it of course cannot even begin to offer a program that could challenge the nationalists' leadership of the Irish working class.

What we have instead is pure Labourite economism. The Theses expects Catholic and Protestant workers to unite on the basis of economic demands and certain democratic rights, but not based on sup-

port to Irish national freedom. The thing is that the Catholics will never abandon their struggle for reunification. And nor should they. As for the Protestants, if they are broken from their support to the British Empire and face an Irish workers movement which extends a fraternal hand, there will be no real basis to oppose Irish reunification. This is the only way true proletarian unity can be built. ■

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U.S. IMPERIALISM TURNS THE SCREWS

Also in this issue: Palestine • South Asia • China • Ireland • and more
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For a United Irish Workers Republic!

The following article, drafted by Eibhlin McColgan, was adopted at the April plenary of the IC/FL International Executive Committee. It is a call to action for all workers who are tired of the current system and who believe that their only hope for a better future lies in the struggle for a United Irish Workers Republic.

Today, Irish liberal historians equate the struggle for independence with sectarianism for which they overwhelmingly blame the nationalists. The present Taoiseach (prime minister) Michael Martin, stated this view bluntly last year. It was “a war between two sides, not a war against the British Empire as we have often been told. The war was not caused by the British Empire but rather was engineered by the Irish people themselves. It was a civil war, not a war against the British Empire.”

Read at iclfi.org:

First they came for benefits... then they came for porn

The Online Safety Act 2023 has now had its most oppressive measures implemented. Any content deemed to be “harmful” or “hateful” now requires age verification. What is this supposedly harmful content? Anything from images of Gaza to forums for young people on trans and sexual health. But the biggest target by far of the genocide-supporting feminists of the Labour Party, the most sinful of all, is porn. And if suppressing young people’s sexuality and access to health information isn’t bad enough, the law has created an open goal for Farage.

The government claims this bill is about protecting young women from online abuse. It is undeniable that there is a rise in misogyny. In schools, you would not be able to spend a day without hearing numerous anti-woman comments. At home and in the family, violence against women is ever rising. In fact, there is not an area of life where the rise in misogyny isn’t reflected—

including through social media and porn.

However, the Online Safety Act does nothing for the fight against misogyny—it is a classic example of liberals attacking the symptoms and not the cause. The growth of misogyny isn’t a result of social media or porn, but the utterly desperate conditions for the working class and youth today.

The schools are falling apart while kids are treated like prisoners. Youth centres are a distant memory of past generations. Other public services such as leisure centres and libraries are closing by the hour. The screws are increasingly being tightened on young people as society crumbles before their eyes. Limiting access to the internet further fuels resentment and does the opposite of protecting young women.

Human nature is a factor too. According to liberals and conservatives alike, young people are sweet and innocent little things until easy and/or accidental access to porn

corrupts them. Either that, or they must be “damaged” by some kind of “abuse” to want to explore their sexuality. But this is nothing more than moral fantasy. The reality is, when kids reach puberty, a whole array of hormones are awakened, and it is natural to want to explore these new feelings and desires. The main purpose of puberty, regardless of what age it begins, is to form sexual capability and needs. No matter how hard liberals try, they cannot stop pubescent teens becoming sexual beings—it simply goes against human nature.

It is also important to understand the social conditions for teenage sex during this period. Anti-sex moralism is at a modern high; sex and relationship education in schools is diabolical and finding a comfortable and private place for teens to do it is almost impossible. Not only does this make the possibility for teens to engage in sex so difficult, but it is why teens are so reliant on porn today. In the

absence of more natural ways, ie with one another, young people have little choice but to explore their sexuality through porn.

So, alongside everything else, it is no wonder that in response to the liberals blocking porn to youth, many kids are turning to the right since Farage & Co are the most vocal opponents of the Online Safety Act. Obviously, Nigel Farage does not care about kids’ safety and frankly shares the same moral opposition to youth sexuality as the liberals; but this becomes secondary because he is seen as at least opposing the establishment and their law.

Farage also hits on real and genuine concerns of working people, namely that “harmful” or “hateful” are vague terms that can be used to censor political opponents of the establishment. The liberals are policing the internet more than ever before. And it’s not just the right that is threatened by it; the left too can be further censored. As an example, social media companies who use the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, which equates anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, now pretty much have free rein to silence any anti-Israeli genocide post they want on the basis of “hateful” speech. Of course, Farage is fine with censoring the left and only wants right-wing demagoguery to be freely allowed. This is all the more reason why the left must stand against the liberals and oppose the Online Safety Act. If the left stays silent on this issue, it will be another example of why the working class sees the left as establishment stooges. ■

Bin strike...

(continued from page 7)

lines to where the court injunctions did not apply. The strikers’ tenacity and ability to disrupt rubbish collection infuriated the employers. In July they upped the ante once again, declaring that *all* bin workers must accept the new conditions, including the massive pay cuts, or they’re out of a job.

This provocation infuriated the union leaders who heard about it during a Unite conference in Brighton. The union made the headlines by suspending deputy prime minister Angela Rayner from the union and making noises about cutting off the funds to Labour. This move, and an angry speech by Sharon Graham against Rayner, briefly lifted the mood on the picket line. It seemed like the first time strikers had a good word to say about Graham. But after the grandstanding was done and dusted and nothing happened, any illusion that the Unite leadership might grow a backbone and make a push on behalf of the strikers was short-lived.

Our leaflets (one of which is printed on page 7) urged strikers to win agency workers to the strike, approach other unions to ballot their members for strike action, pull the plug on funds to Labour and turn this into a city-wide fight against the commissioners. Above all, we called on union members to take the running of the strike into their own hands. On one occasion, when a small group of strikers read our leaflet and talked to our comrades, one of them asked: are you saying that we have to not only fight the council and the commissioners, but our own union leaders as well? Yes indeed.

Many strikers agreed that the demands we raise are in fact what’s needed, but found it hard to see themselves stepping up to the task of leading the strike. They are sceptical about the prospect of winning sup-

port from the rest of the labour movement, given the state it’s in today. However, as the strike dragged on, with no end in sight the mood of the strikers became downbeat. The shift in their outlook can be measured by the difference in their attitudes to the two “megapickets”. The first megapicket in May was seen by strikers as a nice gesture, but useless in helping them to win the strike. By July the pickets were so completely boxed-in by injunctions that the megapicket, which managed to stop some wagons, was seen as their *only* way of stopping wagons. When Corbyn showed up, to the delight of the left, most strikers listened politely to his speech although they view him as part of the political establishment that has driven the working class into the ground.

The left and the strike

The left has only played a walk-on part in this drama. Of course, every group abstractly called (on who?) for solidarity with the strikers. But these calls were utterly meaningless coming as they did from left groups who support the leaders of Unite, who are the biggest *obstacle* to escalating the strike! The Socialist Party is a prime example, writing that “Unite should initiate a ‘council of war’ with the other council unions in Birmingham, including Unison” (socialistparty.org.uk, 23 July). How about the bin strikers initiating a council of war against the SP’s beloved bureaucrat Onay Kasab, Sharon Graham and all their socialist cheerleaders! The left’s actual contribution to the Birmingham bin strike is to cover for the bureaucracy, painting a rosy picture as if the strike is winning and hiding the truth from themselves and everyone else in their bubble.

The ending to the story of the Birmingham bin strike has yet to be written. If it wins, it could begin to turn the tide in favour of the working class, in Birmingham and the rest

of the country. If they lose, it will deepen the disillusionment among workers in the organisations of the working class and strengthen Farage who many strikers already look to. Even at this late stage, it is possible to turn the tables in favour of the strikers. The tactics

needed are obvious enough. It’s a matter of choosing a leadership that will fight to win and persuading those who are not up for such a fight to step aside. There’s no guarantee of victory, but strikers who’ve fought so hard and given so much deserve better. ■

Heatwave

Bus workers should be treated better than cattle!

We reprint below a leaflet issued to bus workers in July by the Committee for a Fighting Transport Union. With winter coming, the same can be said of heating.

It is already a hot summer, and it has only just begun. Luckily for Britain’s livestock there are rules to protect them in hot weather. The same can’t be said for workers and passengers on our buses. And knowing this, the bus operators have cut costs by letting the air conditioning systems rot and break.

UNITE has promised to defend members who take a break “if you feel that you are suffering any adverse affects due to the heat”. Drivers should not be pressured to carry on to the point of collapse and then forced to tell angry overheated passengers to get off and wait for the next bus. This is a set-up for accidents, heat stroke and assault. Already there are some calls to take things a step further, demanding better fans, ventilation, sun blinds in the cab, etc. This is all necessary, but it is not nearly enough. The safety and health of our drivers and passengers are worth more than the profits of bus operators.

The current laws show that the government thinks our lives are cheap. The Labour Party, to whom our union tops bow, is too busy debating how much to cut benefits so that when you become too sick to work you can starve to death. To protect ourselves we must make refusing a bus without working AC the policy of the entire union. **Not a single bus should leave the garage without working AC!** For the safety of our cleaners and engineers, as well as for drivers’ breaks, there should be working AC in all lunchrooms and canteens. **Organise to press your union rep to make UNITE refuse unsafe buses and unsafe work!**



Committee for a Fighting Transport Union
Text 07907 329 659 or scan to join WhatsApp group:
X @MakeUniteFight



THE SCAPEGOATING OF LUCY LETBY

Interview with



As part of our ongoing campaign to free Lucy Letby, Workers Hammer conducted the following interview with a representative of Nineteen Nurses, whose members must remain anonymous out of fear of retaliation by NHS management. See also “Why we defend Lucy Letby” in our last issue (Workers Hammer no 255, Winter 2025).

What is Nineteen Nurses?

Nineteen Nurses was founded in the aftermath of Lucy Letby’s conviction because her case exposed a crisis in how the NHS and wider system treat frontline staff. Instead of addressing structural failings—chronic understaffing, unsafe working conditions, and poor management—responsibility was laid on one nurse.

We believe this scapegoating does not make patients safer. In fact, it endangers them by silencing nurses, fostering fear, and discouraging staff from speaking out when things go wrong. Every healthcare worker should be concerned by what has happened: if systemic failures can be ignored in favour of criminalising an individual, then no nurse is safe from becoming the next target.

Our mission is simple: to defend the integrity of nursing, to protect patient safety by amplifying nurses’ voices, and to challenge a culture that punishes those at the bedside while shielding those in power. We call on unions, colleagues, and the public to recognise that the safety of patients depends on supporting, not scapegoating, nurses.

How does the Lucy Letby conviction impact nurses in their day-to-day work?

Nineteen Nurses was founded in the wake of Lucy Letby’s conviction because her case exposed something deeply troubling about how the NHS and the justice system treat frontline staff. Rather than interrogating systemic failings, it became easier to single out one nurse. We came together to ensure the profession has a collective voice when these failings are unfairly placed at our door.

For many nurses, her conviction has bred fear and mistrust. Day-to-day, it translates into defensive practice, anxiety over being second-guessed, and a sense that we are working under a cloud of suspicion rather than professional trust.

The international panel of experts now working with Lucy’s defence team has concluded that no babies were murdered, yet Lucy remains in prison. Why should this alarm NHS workers?

The fact that expert evidence challenges the basis of Lucy’s conviction, yet she remains behind bars, demonstrates that nurses are not protected by the principles of fairness we

should be able to rely on. If this can happen once, it can happen again.

NHS staff make difficult decisions every day under huge pressure and with limited

nurses’ voices endangers patients. How does the climate of fear affect patient care?

Fear silences people. When staff believe that raising concerns will bring punishment, they stop speaking up. That means unsafe conditions, short-staffing or clinical risks are left unchallenged, which directly undermines patient safety.

Nurses should never be afraid to advocate for patients, but the culture of retaliation is so strong that many feel their jobs or reputations are on the line if they

the hierarchy and win?

It is rare and important when a nurse successfully challenges the authority of consultants. Lucy’s grievance victory demonstrated that even those at the bottom of the hierarchy can expose unfair treatment. It is virtually unheard of for any nurse to take a grievance against one consultant. To win this grievance against a multitude of consultants is frankly astounding.

However, her later treatment shows just how threatening it is to speak up against senior figures. The lesson for nurses is mixed: yes, you can win against authority—but you may also pay a devastating personal price for doing so.

Nineteen Nurses wrote an open letter to healthcare unions asking them to stand up for nurses. Why is this important, and what has been the response?

It’s essential because frontline nurses are carrying the burden of failings they did not create. Chronic understaffing, unsafe environments and poor decision-making at management level are not the fault of nurses, yet we are the ones punished when things go wrong.

By writing to the unions, we are demanding that they confront these realities on behalf of their members. Sadly, the response has been cautious, even muted. While there have been words of concern, few unions have taken the bold, public stance we believe is necessary. Nurses need their unions to be fearless advocates, not quiet observers. ■

“Every healthcare worker should be concerned by what has happened: if systemic failures can be ignored in favour of criminalising an individual, then no nurse is safe from becoming the next target.”

resources. To know that their professional judgement might be criminalised—even when evidence is uncertain or contested—should be deeply alarming to anyone working in healthcare.

Nineteen Nurses says that suppressing

resources. To know that their professional judgement might be criminalised—even when evidence is uncertain or contested—should be deeply alarming to anyone working in healthcare.

Lucy Letby won a grievance against consultants who later scapegoated her. How significant is it for a nurse to challenge



Free Lucy Letby protest in Liverpool initiated by the Partisan Defence Committee, 17 March.

Workers Hammer

Iran under attack

Marxists who failed the test

The following article was first issued by the ICL as a 1 July Spartacist supplement.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel has been on an offensive to crush the Palestinians and cripple any resistance to Zionist genocide in the region. In attacking Iran, Netanyahu moved against Israel's most significant counterweight and a longtime thorn in US imperialism's side. The US bombing brought its military power to bear behind the assault by its Israeli attack dog. The US attack was intended not only to strengthen its control over the Middle East but also, at a time when the American empire is in decay, to send a message to the world that any resistance will be met with overwhelming force.

On the part of Israel and the US, this was a reactionary war of aggression. It was an extension of Netanyahu's murderous onslaught against Gaza, aimed at giving the Zionist butchers a free hand in the region and disarming and prostrating Iran before the imperialists. Iran, on the other hand, was not fighting to oppress anyone. It waged a just and necessary war to defend the country against attack by the oppressor powers that dominate the region. A victory for Iran would have impeded Israel's slaughter of the Palestinians and weakened the US's and Israeli stranglehold on the Middle East. It would have provided a powerful impetus to struggle for the oppressed around the world, not least for workers in the US.

Now an unstable ceasefire is in force, with all sides claiming victory and none of the underlying conflicts resolved. Israel appears to have inflicted greater damage on Iran, but it did not succeed in knocking Iran out as a regional power. The US made a show of force, seeking to compel Iran to accept a humiliating peace deal that would disarm the country and discredit the regime. But Iran has not capitulated. It inflicted damage on Israel, but it did not change the balance of forces in the region. The situation is at a stalemate.

One thing that is clear is that the workers movement was not a factor in this conflict anywhere in the world. It's telling that the opposition in the MAGA movement had more weight. In Israel and the US, union leaders either supported their own rulers' war or said nothing. What little opposition there was around the world was dominated by pacifism. It is a real sign of weakness that the US imperialists could go to war and the workers movement was nowhere to be seen.

What should Marxists have done to advance the struggle for revolution in these circumstances? It was necessary to fight for the working class to become a factor. In the first instance, this meant taking a correct position on the war. Revolutionary Marxism has always taken a side with oppressed nations against predatory great powers. In the current war, standing for the *victory of Iran* and the *defeat of the US and Israel* was the basic and necessary starting point. This includes defending Iran's right to nuclear weapons, a basic measure of self-defence

for oppressed countries. But it was also necessary to fight for the independent mobilisation of the working class, against reliance on BRICS, the Iranian regime or any other capitalist force to fight against imperialism.

The Marxist left overwhelmingly failed this test. Some tendencies, like International Socialist Alternative (ISA), directly capitulated to imperialism by drawing an equal sign between the US and its victim.



Others, like the International Communist Tendency, arrived at the same position with ultraleft arguments against siding with any bourgeois state, denying the fundamental distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations. Most Marxist groups were not openly social-chauvinist: they opposed the war and denounced Israel and the US but still refused to defend Iran. Some organisations took the side of Iran while also supporting its reactionary regime.

Around the world, only a few tendencies took a correct position for class-struggle defence of Iran. But most of these did so only on paper. For the working class to emerge as a factor in this situation, it was not enough simply to come to a formally orthodox position. It was necessary to fight to make the labour movement act on this position.

The tasks of Marxists in Iran

The main argument internationally against defending Iran in the war is that the regime brutally oppresses the population of the country. Obviously this is true. First and foremost, this is a problem for the Iranian left, which makes one of two mistakes on this count. One is to reject the defence of Iran in this war because the regime is reactionary and oppressive and would be strengthened by a victory. This is a mistake that the communists of the Manjanih organisation make. The defeat of Iran by the US and Zionist Israel would be not just a defeat for the regime but a catastrophic blow

to everyone who lives in Iran—just look at what US-engineered regime change meant in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. A US/Zionist victory would put the workers movement in a much worse position to struggle.

Whether or not the victory of Iran would strengthen the regime would depend on the Marxist left itself. What most strengthens Iran's rulers is for leftists to stand by when the country is under attack and do

stance as a defender of the Shia, an oppressed minority in the region as a whole. Since the overthrow of the US puppet the Shah in 1979, the regime has continued to challenge US and Zionist interests. The wave of national unity that swept Iran after the Israeli and US attacks speaks to the depth of this sentiment. By refusing to stand for the defence of Iran, leftists only alienated themselves and were rightly reviled by the masses.

The bankruptcy of this position is most clearly seen when posed concretely. What would it mean for workers in Iran to oppose the war? It would mean that they actively try to stop the Iranian government's military activity, for example, stopping weapons production and transport. This would be a totally reactionary response. It would only help the Israelis and the US to dominate the country. In contrast, in the US and in Israel, workers' action to stop the flow of weapons would be a progressive action.

The second mistake that the Iranian left makes is to drop their opposition to the regime in the war. In fact, it is suicidal to rely on the regime to defend the country, as the period since October 7 shows. Tehran failed to organise a serious opposition as Israel ravaged Gaza and the West Bank, beheaded Hezbollah and invaded Syria. This isolated the country and weakened it in the face of US and Israeli attack.

The reactionary nature of the Iranian regime undermines its opposition to imperialism. Since it is based on the country's elite, calling the impoverished masses into the struggle threatens its material privileges. Its Shia sectarian character alienates women and religious minorities, and its Persian nationalism makes it an enemy to the Kurdish, Baluch and Azeri peoples, who are forcibly retained within Iran. This pushed many Kurdish and women's groups to either support Israel in the war or, like Komala/the Communist Party of Iran and socialist-feminist Frieda Afary, to refuse to defend Iran against attack.

In the current context, Marxists in Iran



Tehran, 24 June: most Iranians rallied around the flag in response to Israeli-US aggression.



Workers Hammer



RCP

London Palestine demonstration, 21 June. As bombs rained on Tehran, Spartacist contingent took a clear side. Meanwhile RCP slogans echoed dominant pacifism.

need to fight to put Persian workers and peasants, women and national and religious minorities in motion to defend the country based on measures that would strengthen the oppressed. All the best measures to defend the country require a struggle against the regime. Championing the right of the Kurds and other national minorities to form their own separate states is the surest road to building an alliance with Kurdish, Baluch and Azeri fighters who are deeply committed to their peoples' liberation. Demanding an end to state religion and freedom from the veil would undercut the pro-imperialist elements in the women's movement and bring working women into the anti-imperialist struggle. Workers control of the factories and land and debt forgiveness for the peasants would give a tremendous impetus to the country's defence. These measures would be a beacon to the peoples of the Middle East, as well as to workers in the imperialist world.

The Tudeh Party of Iran failed the test on both defence of the country and defence of the oppressed. It wrote declarations calling for the defence of Iran—but also issued a joint statement with the Communist Party of Israel that didn't even take a side in the war but condemned military action and nuclear armament on both sides ("Stop the killing! End the war now!", solidnet.org, 17 June). Rather than winning the Iranian masses away from the regime, Tudeh ceded leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle to the mullahs. At the same time, Tudeh insisted on defending "the territorial integrity of the homeland", thus capitulating to the Persian-chauvinist regime and upholding the forcible retention of national minorities within Iran. A new course is needed for the Iranian left!

Social-chauvinist capitulation in the West

When the Trump administration waged war on Iran, there was very little opposition in the US. The Democratic Party's main problem with bombing Iran was that it hadn't been properly authorised by Congress. Liberal politicians like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez found common ground with the MAGA opposition, arguing that a costly new "forever war" would jeopardise broader US interests. The leaders of the unions either hailed the bombing—like the ILA's Harold Daggett—or said nothing, like the UAW's Shawn Fain. At bottom, the problem is that all these people support US empire and agree on the need to disarm and subjugate Iran.

The task of revolutionaries in the US in this context was to fight this attack: to

stand for the victory of Iran and the defeat of their "own" imperialist rulers. As Lenin explained already during World War I:

"A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, and cannot fail to see that the latter's military reverses must facilitate its overthrow...."

"[Socialists] must explain to the masses that they have no other road of salvation except the revolutionary overthrow of their 'own' governments, whose difficulties in the present war must be taken advantage of precisely for that purpose."

—*Socialism and war* (1915)

For the working class to emerge as a factor in this conflict, it was necessary to drive a wedge between the union leaders, liberals and social democrats who support the US-dominated imperialist order and the workers, who are being squeezed to pay the costs for keeping the US boot on the neck of the world.

What did the far left do? International Socialist Alternative wrote:

"The only road forward is one of mass working class struggle against Israeli capitalism and US imperialism, and against the capitalists regimes which exploit and repress workers, women, and oppressed nationalities and minorities throughout the region."

—"War on Iran escalates as Trump moves towards intervention", internationalsocialist.net, 18 June

Behind the unobjectionable platitude that mass working-class struggle is the only solution, the ISA equates the US, the world's dominant imperialist power, with Iran, a country which has been devastated by US imperialism. The conclusion to this analysis is that the ISA doesn't take a side.

The ISA goes on with lofty words about the international unity of the working class:

"Working class organizations must come together in struggle across borders and communities to fight for a shared future of freedom from occupation and imperialism, full democratic and national rights, and public democratic ownership and control over wealth and resources."

The fact is, working-class organisations will never come together "across borders and communities to fight for a shared future"—unless the workers movement in the imperialist countries actively takes a side against their "own" ruling class's ravages and enslavement in the Global South.

Pacifist obfuscation

Threatening to drag the Middle East into a regional war, the Israeli and US attacks on Iran came as unwelcome shocks to the rulers of the other imperialist countries in the

West and Japan. They issued grandiose declarations for peace, de-escalation and negotiations. But since these lackey imperialist powers are totally dependent on the US for their place at the table, they go running where the US throws the stick. So while initially opposing the Iran war, in the end they hailed Trump's bombing as an act of "peace".

In these countries, the pacifist trend in the union leadership and among the liberals reflected the hypocritical posturing of the ruling class. For the imperialists, taking a side with Iran is a red line. The Palestine movement and the protests against the war in Iran were careful not to cross it. What did the far left do in these countries? For the most part, it raised the exact same slogans as the liberals: "Stop the war", "Hands off Iran" and nuclear disarmament. This obscured the fundamental point that *there was a side* to take.

The Revolutionary Communist International presents itself as totally devoted to the struggle for revolution. So how did it fare in the test of war? After producing a number of lengthy analytical articles that obfuscated what the war was about, ten days after the start of the war the RCI finally produced a statement acknowledging:

"The real purpose of this war is not stability, peace, democracy or the destruction of nuclear weapons. It is about the Israeli ruling class, and its western backers, reserving for themselves the undisputed right to do as they wish in the region: to bully, bomb and invade anyone, anywhere, at any time, without meeting any resistance."

—"Down with the war on Iran! Down with US imperialism!", marxist.com, 23 June

From this, they correctly concluded: "The main enemy is at home, and the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed nations is the same as the struggle against the capitalist class in the West." However, the RCI *still* stopped short of drawing the necessary conclusion from this analysis, ie taking a stand with Iran in the war. It was only on 30 June—almost a week after the ceasefire—that the RCI announced: "Revolutionary communists stand fully on the side of Iran, even though we have no sympathy for the political regime of the ayatollahs, which is a reactionary, anti-working class regime."

During the whole time the US and Israel were at war, the RCI did not take a side with Iran. This is not an issue of using different language to express the same idea. In the Western countries where the RCI is centred, a wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie sought to use the legitimate pacifist sentiments of the masses to mobilise support for its own predatory interests. To

intervene as revolutionaries meant exposing the ruling class's hypocritical pacifism and showing the masses that the road to peace led through opposing their "own" rulers. This could only mean the victory of Iran and the defeat of the US and Israel.

The RCI's main slogans during the war were "Hands off Iran" and "Down with the Warmongers", slogans which swam with the stream of pro-imperialist pacifism, with the trade union officialdom in Britain and with Bernie Sanders and AOC in the US. While the RCI wrote volumes against Trump, Netanyahu and the warmongers, it had nothing to say against the deception of bourgeois pacifism. Adding slogans like "Down with US imperialism" and "Revolution against the billionaire class" did not draw a dividing line, since the demands were totally abstract and had no practical implications. What the RCI did was to create a bridge between the wing of the bourgeoisie that opposed the war and the radical left.

What constituted a revolutionary intervention in the war was not calling for revolution or waving red flags but fighting to break the hold of the supporters of imperialism on the workers movement and to take the Palestinian movement out of the hands of the liberals. The RCI's intervention in the war was not revolutionary—all it did was muddy the waters.

The Global South

A decisive defeat of the US-Israeli attack on Iran would have directly advanced the struggle for national liberation across the Global South. Here the task of Marxists was to bring the masses to their feet on this basis. One of the main obstacles to this was the double game played by leaders in the dependent countries. From the Arab world to Latin America, most governments denounced the war. But at the same time, most are closely allied to the American imperialists and barely lifted a finger against the US/Zionist offensive.

Across the Global South, a lot of the left looks to BRICS, which is dominated by these same leaders, to provide an alternative to US domination. If Russia or China had come to the support of their Iranian ally in this war, for example, by protecting Iran under their nuclear umbrellas, this could have decisively impacted the balance of forces in the region, pushing back Netanyahu's offensive and weakening his regime and also undercutting the US's power. But Putin's Russia and Xi's China did nothing of the kind. Instead, Putin seized the opportunity to expand his reactionary conquest of Ukraine while Xi negotiated new trade deals while promising to not

interfere in other countries' affairs.

Both Putin and Xi have refused to take a single step to defend Iran, instead calling for peace, de-escalation and respect for international law. This outright capitulation to US imperialism shows the total impotence of BRICS as an alternative. At every step, this bloc is hamstrung by its leaders' pursuit of their own narrow and reactionary interests, and by their reluctance to alienate the US.

Another example of this faith in the international community is provided by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Reflecting the healthy impulses of the party's base, the CPP insisted:

"People all over the world, including the Filipino people, must stand with the people of Iran, as well as with the Palestinian people, in fighting the US-Israel war machine, as it rampages through the Middle East to force nations to bow to its power, and surrender their freedom...."

"They must resolutely fight against US imperialist wars, and stand firm and united in demanding an end to US military intervention and military presence in the country."

—"Unite and strongly condemn US bombing in Iran", 22 June

It was correct to call for the masses to come to the aid of Iran by struggling against the imperialists and the Philippine government. However, the CPP undercut this correct call by presenting a false picture of the situation which made it appear that a progressive outcome to the war was possible without the involvement of the masses. It wrote:

"Israel and the US are now increasingly isolated from the international community of nations. From Europe to Asia, there is a unified call for Israel to stop its attacks on Iran. In the face of widespread international and local opposition, Trump is now backpedaling on his planned direct involvement in the war and the dropping of 30,000-pound bombs on Iran."

—"Condemn the US-Israel war of aggression against Iran", 21 June

The day after this article was published, Trump dropped his 30,000-pound bombs.



Weekly Worker

weekly
worker

"Of course, there were those on the pro-Palestine demonstration who carried the current Iranian flag, some because they support the odious regime in Tehran because of religious conviction or, as with the Spartacist League contingent, because of a warped version of anti-imperialism."

—weeklyworker.co.uk,
26 June

Spartacist response:



The CPP's mistake was not a simple analytical blunder. The political content of its statement was to pacify the masses instead of pushing their struggle forward, with the illusion that Trump could be forced to back down through pressure from the "international community of nations"—a community made up of the reactionary powers in the West who ultimately supported Trump and the rulers of the Global South who capitulated to him.

Whatever the party leadership says now about mobilising the masses to fight imperialism, their policy going back to their founding has consistently been to support the liberal wing of the Filipino bourgeoisie, who are the most devoted supporters of US imperialism. This strategy has led the anti-imperialist movement to a dead end, in the Philippines and many places in the Global South. To go forward, it is necessary to break the alliance between the masses and the lackeys of imperialism. As the Comintern's 1922 Theses on the Eastern Question laid out, "The oppressed masses can be led to victory only by a consistent revolutionary line aimed at drawing the broadest masses into active struggle

and an unconditional break with all those who seek conciliation with imperialism in order to maintain their own class-rule."

In reacting against parties like the CPP which capitulate to the bourgeoisie in the Global South, a number of tendencies, such as Marxist Forum in Manila, reject the defence of Iran itself as a nationalist capitulation. This puts them in opposition to the correct sentiments of the masses to struggle against imperialism and its Zionist agents. Again, the Comintern Theses insisted: "Any refusal of Communists in the colonies to take part in the struggle against imperialist tyranny, on the excuse of supposed 'defence' of independent class interests, is opportunism of the worst sort that can only discredit the proletarian revolution in the East."

Centrism vs revolutionary struggle

A small number of tendencies internationally adopted a formally revolutionary position on the war. While we have important differences with the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency, it stands out for fighting for a principled position on the war within the left and workers

path to power looks straight and clear.

Who will confront the City?

This is the context in which the new party of Zarah Sultana and Jeremy Corbyn is being born. From the standpoint of the working class, the fundamental political problem in the current landscape is that there is no force willing to confront the City of London and go for its jugular.

The City of London is the cancer eating British society from within. The fact that the entire economy is organised around banking, financial wizardry and land speculation is the root cause of the housing crisis, the lack of productive investments, stagnant productivity, the deindustrialisation of entire regions, the divide between North and South, the syphoning of resources into offshore accounts, the crippling of state revenues and the ruin of public services. It is the City which needs privatisations so that hedge funds can loot state assets and which requires that Britain be constantly doing the US's bidding—from arms to Ukraine and warmongering against Russia and China, to assisting genocide in Palestine.

Yet, to confront the City is *precisely what the leaders of the left and trade unions have refused to do*. Corbyn spent his time at the head of Labour clinging to the liberal establishment—despite its never-ending attempt to crush him. Despite flowery words about "for the many", he was always looking to appease

the Blairites rather than organising a fight. As a result, he was paralysed, weak and became the candidate for a second referendum on the EU—pushing large numbers of workers into the arms of Johnson and Farage.

As for the trade union leaders, impotent and comfortable, they are still beholden to Starmer. Every major strike organised in recent years has been led to defeat by these misleaders, who are more worried about rubbing the Labour tops the wrong way than mounting a real struggle against the rich and powerful (see article on the Birmingham bin strike, page 7). The new party is already dominated by ex-Labour councillors, trade union bureaucrats and political advisors who joined it to advance their careers. These people constitute an endless reservoir of conservatism and accommodation with the establishment and intelligentsia, which, in the end, means accommodation with the City.

With these people at the helm, the party will never go for the jugular of the City. And, thus, it will never win the working class away from Farage, it will never be a pole of struggle and it will remain an outfit for middle-class do-gooders and careerists. This is why we say that the main task of socialists in this party is to fight to avoid this outcome and ditch the liberals (see article on front page).

In more left-wing corners, Zarah Sultana & Co are talking tough against the billionaires and for taxing the rich. But again, even such small measures will require war with the

movement. Most other groups failed to go from abstract commentary to active intervention aimed at reorienting the left and workers movement. The Trotskyist Fraction (TF) is a case in point.

This tendency's initial position was to be neutral on the war, capitulating to imperialism by presenting "Israel, the Iranian regime, the imperialist powers" as equally reactionary ("Israel attacks Iran: The Middle East on the brink of all-out war", leftvoice.org, 15 June). It was not until the next day that the TF's French section issued a statement taking a side with Iran.

It is a good thing that TF changed its position and took a side with Iran—that was a progressive step. But what did they do to make this position a reality? So far, their US section has not made any criticisms against the trade union bureaucrats, liberals or leftists who refuse to defend Iran. TF's refusal to fight for defence of Iran in reality rendered that position completely hollow.

* * *

Israel and the US's confrontation with Iran is not over. Nothing has been resolved. More chaos is looming, for the region and the world beyond. In their determination to maintain their weakened empire, the US rulers are turning the screws on the world and their war in Iran is a warning of what's to come. The fact that the workers movement did not act as a factor against the US-Israeli war must be a wake-up call to the Marxist left. It is urgent to learn the lessons—and learn them quickly.

Around the world, a fight is needed to split the workers movement from the pro-imperialist elements and their conciliators. That is the essential precondition for the proletariat to emerge as a revolutionary force. As Lenin insisted in his fight to construct a revolutionary international: "Unity with the social-chauvinists means unity with one's 'own' national bourgeoisie, which exploits other nations; it means splitting the international proletariat" (*Opportunism and the collapse of the Second International*, January 1916). ■

Starmer...

(continued from page 4)

across the pond, which point in Farage's direction. There is a hope among some that Farage's ability to contain mass discontent and channel it against foreigners might enable him to do the overhaul the British state desperately needs, ie massive cuts in benefits and privatisations in the NHS.

That said, the majority of the ruling class are not quite ready to hand him the keys yet. They remain wary of a sharp break with the post-War order, even if Trump is imposing one on them. They are also happy with high immigration numbers, which has helped to keep wages low and artificially grow the economy. This is why the anti-immigrant hysteria is largely focused on so-called illegal immigrants arriving, which number in the tens of thousands, and not on "legal" migration, which is in the hundreds of thousands. In this way, Reform wants to convince the City bankers that it can be trusted to protect their interests, that they will continue to profit from cheap "legal" immigrant labour as long as they need it, while cracking down on "illegals", pitting poor people against each other and polarising the country along poisonous lines. The winner would be the City, obviously. And unless the political landscape shifts dramatically, Farage's

City, which Sultana herself, or certainly her partners in the leadership, definitely do not want. And on the other side, big businesses will not give up their wealth—or part of it—just because some MPs pass a bill in Parliament. Look at what happened to Liz Truss. As soon as they don't like a government, they bring it down. There is no space for a gradual and peaceful accommodation with the City. Either the City loots the country, or the working class seizes it. There is no middle ground.

This is why building a new political force is not only about having a few good policies on paper. It isn't only about adopting an "anti-capitalist programme" as many leftists hope it will. Even the most radical programme will remain a dead letter *as long as* the party is dominated by liberal forces and middle-class elements, tied to the ruling class by their ideas, way of life and ambitions. For nearly a century, the Labour Party stood for the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy. Yet, this never prevented it from being a loyal servant of the City.

In the end, building a new party which can change the direction of this country is about organising a confrontation with the City and with US imperialism. Workers are looking for a fight, not for a thousand-points programme. And if the party is led by hippy dippy liberals, Waitrose "socialists" and satisfied bureaucrats, workers know there won't be one. And they will be right. ■

Fight the right...

(continued from page 16)

do—is dead wrong. It will further divide the working class, making this struggle impossible. This is the argument to be made, based not on moral appeals and liberal platitudes as SUTR does, but on the principles of the class struggle.

Look to workers, not bureaucrats

For many workers, the most immediate tie to the government and the status quo is their very own union leaders (if they even have one). They led the last strike wave to defeat, refusing to pull the plug on the hated Tory government. Then they put all their



Knelstrom Ltd/Alamy

Under cover of darkness, right-wing provocateurs set a trap for zealous liberals.

energy and money into electing the now hated Labour government. The union leaders are themselves a key part of the establishment. At every step they have shown they are unwilling and unable to take on the City of London. They are rightfully hated by many workers as pillars of the status quo.

Yet, a core part of SUTR and the SWP's strategy is to court these union bureaucrats, which is also why SUTR demos never raise slogans against the government—or Zionism—fearful of upsetting their backers in high places. Their strategy for mobilising the working class is not a direct appeal to workers for their own interests, but an appeal to the union bureaucrats for endorsements. This means that their politics must be acceptable to these same bureaucrats. It may lend them some prestige, but only further alienates the mass of the working class.

The problem with this approach was on full display at the October 2024 march against Tommy Robinson. SUTR's own generous reckoning is that their march, which was endorsed by nearly every trade union, and which had the character of a pro-government rally, got 20,000 people, while Tommy Robinson got 25,000. Further, it is very likely that more workers were on Robinson's side. The upcoming September march, called on the same politics with the support of the same bureaucrats, will be lucky if it only fails this badly. Despite the blood and sweat of SWP activists, and even though we will march with them, this is what you get when you rely on liberalism and union bureaucrats.

There is no quick-fix solution to this mess. For militants who want to stop the right, and are willing to put themselves in harm's way to do so, we do not want those efforts to be in vain. We must tie the plight of immigrants and refugees to that of those left behind in Britain. We must fight in the movement for our watchword not to be "refugees are welcome here" but "jobs for all,

Deport the real culprits!



Leon Neal/Getty



Niall Carson/Getty

They gutted Britain, destroyed Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, fuelling the refugee crisis.

rebuilding broken Britain". A small start would be a call to create jobs by finishing and expanding HS2, addressing the isolation of the North and the lack of decent jobs. If we show at every turn how this struggle runs right up against the City of London, and our determination to fight, we can begin to win workers to our cause.

This struggle must be brought into our

own workplaces. Not on moral grounds, but in opposition to our union leaders and for a new leadership. This is crucial for rebuilding union strength and convincing workers that we are serious about breaking from the status quo. For a return to the traditions of the working class: *workers of the world unite!* To the left: *break with the status quo, fight for the working class!* ■

Letter to Weekly Worker

SPART PROPOSAL

The following letter, dated 1 September, to the CPGB is a response to Mike Macnair's letter "Spart leopard", which appeared in Weekly Worker issue 1550, 28 August.

Dear comrades,

I appreciated the exchanges I had with comrades of the CPGB at the Communist University, in particular the openness of your organisation to engage in frank political debate. However, when it comes to the pages of Weekly Worker, we feel you engage our organisation in an unserious manner. A few weeks ago, you falsely claimed we supported the Iranian regime. Last week we had comrade Macnair's letter entitled "Spart leopard" whose purpose seems to be to cast a shadow over us. In it he implies we still hold the aim of effectuating "short-term raiding" operations on other organisations. Again, it seems no

attempt was made to look at our actual position which is clearly laid out in the current issue of Spartacist:

"The perspective of the ICL is to work toward a political realignment in the international left. We must seek to regroup the truly revolutionary elements that are today spread across various organizations as a result of coincidence and political unclarity. Our objective is not ultimately to win one or two members from other organizations but to engage in a genuine fusion process with much larger forces."

—"The crisis in the Marxist left and the tasks of the ICL", Spartacist no 70, May 2025

We have no problem exchanging vigorous polemics, but for the exercise to be productive it needs to hold some relation to what we write and do. We do not ask that you forget our past, which we certainly do not, but we do ask that your critique of our

politics be based on more than impressions from decades ago and lurid tales about our late comrade Jim Robertson.

If I raise these points, it is not to whine, but to propose that our respective organisations engage each other in a more serious and sustained manner. Let's get real and deal with the politics at hand. The founding of a new left party in Britain offers a chance to change the overall direction of British politics. We believe it is also an important opportunity for the splintered communist forces to clarify their differences and work together. However, in both cases there is a big difference between latent potential and real potential.

There can be no doubt that left to their own devices the leaders of "Your Party" will repeat the disaster of Corbyn 1.0. In the same way there is no reason to doubt that most communist organisations will act in their usual self-interested sectarian ways. Thus, if we want the outcome to be different, we must act to make it so.

To this end we think it makes sense for our two organisations to seriously engage with each other and look for ways to work together. First because we seem to align on certain important principles regarding the new left party: opposition to a coalition with the Greens, to Zionism and to support for Ukraine. Second because we both share the aim of political clarification and regroupment within the communist left. If you are interested in our proposal, we think an obvious first step would be to exchange views on our perspectives towards Your Party (we will be publishing a substantial article in the coming days [see front page]).

Of course we are two very small organisations, but we think that fruitful exchanges could exercise broader influence on the far left. It certainly could raise the level of political debate among communists and put pressure on other groups to work together in building a left pole in the new party.

Comradely,
Gabriel Perrault
For the Spartacist League

How **NOT** to fight the right

It's the end of summer in Britain, and we all know what that means. Football on the telly, a new season of *Taskmaster* and the left and right in the streets yelling about immigration. Protests against migrants have once again blown up across the country. The spark this time was the arrest and charging of an asylum seeker, Hadush Kebatu, for sexual assault of a teenage girl. Kebatu is one of around 140 asylum seekers currently housed in the 80-room Bell Hotel in Epping. The town has since become both an epicentre and symbol of protests and counter-protests, now happening at similar hotels around the country.

In the streets there is a stalemate. But the mood of the country is shifting to the right, clearly seen in the growing support for Reform UK, which now claims it will deport 600,000 people. The rightfully hated Labour government, already scrambling to make the numbers add up for the autumn budget, now scrambles to jack up deportation numbers as well. The slogans of the left, "enough is enough", "broken Britain", etc, are now taken up by the likes of Reform, who gain much more traction with them. They are peddling right-wing populism while stoking racial divisions that divide an already weakened working class. The ugly expression of this is racist thugs in the streets driving fear into minorities around the country.

Standing at the head of the current counter-protests is Stand Up to Racism (SUTR), with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) behind them. While the impulse to want to fight these right-wing mobilisations is correct, SUTR's strategy is based on liberal politics and moral outrage and ends up being counterproductive. Rather than fighting the right, it is fuelling it.

The immigration system is broken

The main problem is their refusal to acknowledge that there is a problem with the immigration system in the first place. For example, the SWP writes that: "trying to win people away from the fascists doesn't mean accepting their 'concerns' about migrants and refugees as 'legitimate'. These are racist ideas. We can talk about housing, healthcare and welfare. But we need to say clearly that bosses and landlords are to blame, not migrants" ("Stop the far right in its tracks", *Socialist Worker*, 27 August). For the SWP, anyone expressing "concern" at the government's immigration policy is a racist, and socialists should talk about housing, healthcare and welfare but *not* about immigration. Most would see this as a defence of the government's immigration policy.

The truth is there *are* legitimate concerns about the government's immigration



Guy Bell/Shutterstock

Stand Up to Racism demonstration. Liberal anti-racism is not working.

system. The asylum system in Britain is as broken as everything else. There are nearly 80,000 claims waiting to be processed. Tens of thousands make the channel crossing every year, and thousands who arrive are dumped in the around 200 hotels converted to asylum waiting centres, mostly in small and dilapidated majority-white towns. While the numbers of asylum seekers is tiny compared to the overall number of immigrants arriving every year, it is a useful flashpoint for the right. As for "legal" migration, while we must certainly oppose the right-wing calls to slash it, there is nothing progressive about the ruling class's policy of bringing large numbers into a rotting country. There is no way in hell that anyone claiming to be a socialist should want to associate themselves with the disastrous policies of capitalist governments in this mess.

Yet, the SWP's admonition that socialists must remain silent on this only ends up being a defence of the status quo. And indeed, at times, the SWP *does* defend the government openly. After the court injunction mandating an end to housing refugees at the Bell Hotel, *Socialist Worker* wrote an article headlined: "Moving refugees out of Epping hotel will lead to more fear and violence" (20 August). Marginalising refugees in these hotels at tax payers' expense, cut off from meaningful contact with the communities they are dumped in, *has* caused "fear and violence". The government sending refugees into those hotels just shows their contempt for refugees *and* for residents in those communities. By implicitly calling to keep the Bell Hotel open, the SWP ends up on the side of the government!

The status quo in Britain means no jobs, falling living standards and people fighting each other over the crumbs from the

bosses' table. This, not racist ideas in people's heads, is the cause and real strength of divide and rule. Converging on small towns chanting "refugees are welcome here" and calling anyone who disagrees a racist does not combat divide and rule, it feeds it. It only convinces locals that you want to put the needs of immigrants above their needs, which drives residents in these towns further into the arms of the right. The question of industrial revival, of jobs, is central both to the needs of the working class and to combating the growth of the right. But scolding any concern as racist while appearing like defenders of the government is a guarantee that all the SWP's good words about "housing, healthcare and welfare" will fall on deaf ears.

The basis for the unity of the working class is internationalism. This is not a moral appeal. The conditions people are fleeing from in their countries are the result of the imperialist rulers, very much including the British ruling class. The ruination of the working class at home is caused by these same capitalists. Immigrants and workers have a common enemy. The fight for the freedom of the Global South, and for a decent life here, is against this same ruling class. The working class doesn't need unity because it wants to be good and noble, it needs unity to win this fight. In order to convince the working class to join that fight, it is first necessary to convince them we are serious about making it. But any tie to the status quo, to the hated government which carries out the wishes of the ruling class, will convince workers we are not serious.

Dodging the hard questions does not help

We also must face head-on the rallying cry for the anti-migrant demonstrations:

the "protection of women and girls". Remember that these protests started over accusations of sexual assault. What do SUTR and the SWP have to say about this? The short answer is next to nothing. There is a longish article about the historical uses of such accusations to breed racism and divide the working class ("How the ruling class racialised sexual violence", *Socialist Worker*, 25 July). This is true enough, but hardly convincing to, say, the people in Epping where a real accusation of assault exists.

To the extent it is mentioned in articles about the current protests, they simply paint the people raising it as unrepentant racists and the right as the real threat to women. As an example, they quote one of the counter-protesters who "cited the statistic that 41 per cent of people arrested at the race riots last year had convictions for domestic violence.

"They pretend to stand up for women and children. The so-called defenders of women are misogynists. They are looking to Andrew Tate, Elon Musk and Donald Trump, the biggest haters of women in the world" ("Cheshunt anti-racists say 'we won't let the fascists divide us'", *Socialist Worker*, 29 August).

This does not respond to the right's argument that refugees endanger women, but only deflects it, which many interpret as downplaying violence against women. In turn, the right answers with their own deflection: "we have enough abusers of women, we don't need to import any more". Pointing out that native-born people also abuse women does nothing to counter this.

But this question does need to be answered. To do this we need to be clear. We were not there during Kabuta's alleged offence. But he has now been found guilty. Refugees come from all kinds of backgrounds: some were workers, some were hoods, some were even the local lackeys of failed British occupations, like Afghanistan. Further, the very difficult journey here and the extreme isolation on arrival, which groups like the SWP are good at pointing out, can and do mess people up psychologically. Being blind to this is counterproductive and acknowledging it is, in fact, the first step in undercutting the right. Poverty and isolation feeds violence against women. This is true among the increasingly impoverished working class and poor in Britain and among migrants confined to hotels and unable to work.

The only thing that can combat this is integration into the productive life of the country, that is, real and decent jobs. *Both* for immigrant *and* native workers. This obviously requires a fight against the ruling class. And this is why supporting deportation—as many working people

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