Corbyn's New Party Risks Labour's Fatal Mistake – Why "Your Party" Needs Independent Wings, Not Branch Offices

Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's newly announced "Your Party" is already raising concerns among Scottish left activists who warn the venture could collapse before it starts if it continues ignoring the national question. The harsh reality? Scotland's left has watched this movie before – and it always ends in failure.

Bella Caledonia sums it up: "Limited consideration of Scotland has taken place in this attempt to get a left of Labour electoral challenge up and running," observes Democratic Left Scotland, while Richie Venton of the Scottish Socialist Party warns that "any new party that seeks to operate in Scotland must respect the right of the Scottish people to self-determination and must not be a mere branch office of a London-centric project.

This isn't just Scottish sensitivity – it's strategic necessity. The historical record is unforgiving: centralized left parties that ignore national questions don't just fail in Scotland, they fragment entirely. Spain's catastrophic left retreat in the 1990s offers a perfect case study of what happens when socialists dismiss plurinational realities.

The Spanish Warning: How Centralism Destroyed the Left

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) once dominated the left. The left magazine Viento Sur describes its failures. By the 1990s, it had become a "neoliberal force with progressive

trappings," transforming into what critics called a "party-cartel" that monopolized politics through state financing while abandoning its working-class identity. But PSOE's fatal error wasn't just embracing neoliberalism – it was promoting a divisive "theory of two national communities" that alienated Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia.

In the Basque Country, PSOE manufactured a false division between communities, casting Basques as "bourgeois and racist" nationalists opposed to "working-class, socialist, and universalist" speakers of Castilian Spanish. This strategy poisoned dialogue and drove communities apart. This wasn't just bad politics – it was organizational suicide.

Izquierda Unida (IU), formed as a left alternative to PSOE, repeated the same mistakes. Despite its anti-capitalist rhetoric, IU struggled with a chronic inability to accept the plurinational reality of the Spanish state. Strong centralist currents within IU viewed national demands as "sectarian" or "right-wing," fatally undermining the party's ability to build genuine grassroots support in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia.

The results were devastating. In Galicia, the rise of the Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG) captured the "vote of discontent" while IU's components struggled to reach even 3% of the vote. The lesson couldn't be clearer: Spain's alternative left faces a binary choice: **either** genuinely champion the distinct national identities and self-determination rights of its regions, **or** accept political marginalization and eventual collapse.

Scotland's Clear Message: Autonomy Works, Branch Offices Don't

Scottish left parties have learned this lesson the hard way. The most successful examples – the Scottish Socialist Party and Scottish Greens – operate as genuinely independent entities, not subordinate branches of UK-wide organizations.

The Scottish Greens emerged in 1990 when the former UK Green Party deliberately separated into two independent parties. Today, they're completely separate and unique with their own leaders, membership, and policies. Their strong support for Scottish independence isn't incidental – it's integral to their identity and success.

Similarly, the Scottish Socialist Party formed in 1998 from the Scottish Socialist Alliance, explicitly as a distinct Scottish entity. The SSP unequivocally supports independence, framing it through "internationalist rather than nationalist concerns" and advocating for a "Scottish socialist republic."

Contrast this with parties that maintained centralized structures. The Respect Party, "established in London" with no distinct Scottish presence, made virtually no impact north of the border and even lost supporters in England who opposed its organising north of the border. The pattern is clear: Scottish voters reject "branch office" politics.

Ross Greer, the Scottish Green MSP, put it bluntly: "The idea of a new London-based party trying to establish a 'branch office' in Scotland without a clear understanding of our distinct political context is deeply concerning."

Why "Your Party" Risks Disaster

Troubling early indicators suggest "Your Party" risks repeating these historical errors. Scottish commentators describe the initial launch as "badly bungled and incoherent," with conflicting reports about organizational structure and minimal Scottish input.

Helena from 'No Justice' captures the frustration: Rolling out "Jeremy Corbyn as a 'left-leader' and harking back (uncritically) to how wonderful he was" isn't "serious politics." The party risks being dismissed as nostalgic English leftism that ignores Scottish political realities.

Most critically, “Your Party” has yet to clarify its position on Scottish self-determination—a silence that Scottish activists are already interpreting as indifference.. This isn’t a minor oversight – it’s a deal-breaker for many. As Ross Greer notes, “Scotland needs a strong, independent voice on the left, not another Westminster-controlled outfit.”

The electoral arithmetic is brutal. Connor Beaton warns that attempting to contest Holyrood elections without broad engagement could “end up like RISE in 2016, winning a derisory share of the vote which then contributes to the whole project’s collapse.”

The Platform for Socialism and Independence

The good news is that Scottish socialists are already organizing to prevent this disaster. The recently launched Platform for Socialism and Independence brings together Aberdeen Marxist Caucus, the Republican Socialist Platform, Scottish Socialist Youth, and Socialists for Independence. It represents exactly the kind of proactive intervention needed. Rather than waiting for “Your Party” to impose a structure from London, these groups are engaging strategically while maintaining core principles around independence and Scottish autonomy.

The Path Forward: Embrace Plurinationalism

Jamie Driscoll, involved in “Your Party’s” formation, seems to understand the stakes, emphasizing “significant autonomy in the nations and regions” and rejecting a “top-down London-run party.” But good intentions aren’t enough – organizational structure matters.

Based on successful precedents, “Your Party” needs to:

- **Unequivocally support Scottish self-determination**– not as a tactical position, but as a foundational principle. The Spanish experience shows that half-measures create

"artificial barriers of incommunication."

- **Foster genuine autonomy**– Scottish and Welsh wings must have their own leadership, decision-making structures, and tailored political programmes. The Scottish Greens' model of formal separation or the SSP's autonomous development offer proven templates.
- **Build grassroots power first**– Instead of immediate Holyrood campaigns, focus on local organizing and council elections in 2027. This allows time to develop genuine Scottish leadership and avoid the "excessive politicismo" that doomed Spain's IU.
- **Engage existing Scottish movements**– Work with independence campaigns, climate justice groups, Palestine solidarity, and other progressive forces rather than competing with them.

Learning from Failure in the Spanish State

The Spanish left's 1990s retreat wasn't inevitable – it resulted from strategic choices that prioritized institutional power over grassroots organizing and centralized control over plurinational democracy. These same pressures exist today.

"Your Party" can succeed, but only if it learns from these failures. The choice is stark: embrace genuine autonomy for Scotland and Wales, or watch another promising left initiative fragment on the rocks of unresolved national questions.

The Scottish left has been clear about what it needs. The question is whether Corbyn and Sultana are listening – or whether they're destined to repeat the mistakes that have buried left parties across Europe.

As Richie Venton warns: "We've seen countless attempts to build left-wing unity in Scotland only to see them fail because of a lack of understanding of the Scottish political landscape and the need for a genuinely independent Scottish socialist movement."

This is “Your Party’s” moment of truth. The early warning signs are flashing red, but the fatal mistakes haven’t been locked in yet. Corbyn and Sultana can still demonstrate they understand what every successful Scottish left party has learned: revolutionary democracy means unequivocally supporting self-determination. The choice is stark—act now to embrace genuine Scottish autonomy, or watch another promising left initiative fragment on familiar rocks.

Reposted from Red Mole Substack

What do you know about us? by ‘Somebody’s Sister’

A note: If you feel like this article is addressing you, then it is. It’s not my problem if you don’t like seeing yourself in the mirror. To those who do know us and stand with us, I send comradely regards.

It’s a question I find myself asking often enough, but it’s been rattling around in my brain with especially violent force in the days since that accursed Supreme Court decision:

What do you know about us?

I ask you sincerely. What do you actually know of or about trans people, trans communities, trans culture? I don’t ask this facetiously. I really want to know- Do you actually, genuinely, know any of us?

And I don’t mean passing acquaintances in your work, neighbourhood, political organisation, etc., nor do I mean the *idea* of trans people you have from some Twitter posts or

newspaper articles.

Do you have any trans friends? Trans relatives? Do you talk with them and listen to them? And I don't mean talking *at* them or pretending to listen. Do you know how we speak, how we joke, how we love, how we grieve? Do you know about our far-reaching networks of friends and polycules, of our dumb in-jokes, our vernaculars, our tastes in fashion, our traditions of knowledge-sharing and mutual aid, our often-shrouded history of defiant existence and struggle?

Our history and community brims with wonderful writers, musicians, comedians, game developers, scientists, filmmakers, artisans, actors, programmers, activists, artists- Do you even know a single one of their names?

When the Supreme Court judgement went out, did you speak with any of us and hear our sorrow and disappointment, our fear for the future?

I ask because the news doesn't show this. At best, they have on a couple people from a charity or the Green Party, if you're lucky an actual trans person, to offer a quick snippet or quote, and then it's back to the gender-criticals, the ideologues and the cynical politicians. We are mostly just discussed, never truly spoken with.

And it shows! The discourse about us is conducted in terms of grotesque stereotypes and ridiculous "what-if" situations. I've seen the idea of us that gender-critical slopheads in Twitter threads and newspaper columns hold to, an absurd caricature that would be hilarious if it wasn't influencing policy and assisting the rise of the far right. The trans people that exist in their heads are creepy, slovenly, asocial and predatory- essentially, inhuman creatures beyond empathy. And yet, it's these imaginary, stereotypical trans people, imaginary trans women specifically, that all the "legitimate concerns" are premised on.

Legitimate concerns. Let’s linger on that term for a moment. I can think about some other “legitimate concerns”:

The “legitimate concerns” of parents about homosexuals “influencing” their children.

The “legitimate concerns” of Israeli settlers about the “dangers” posed by dispossessed Palestinians.

The “legitimate concerns” of racists all over Europe about Syrian, Afghan, Eritrean, Sudanese, Kurdish and other refugees constituting a force of “fighting-age men” ready to undermine their host country.

And do you remember Emmett Till?

The road to his brutal murder, and the lynching of countless others, was paved with the “legitimate concerns” of white people about “threatening”, “lustful” black people, “concerns” that were just the outward justifications for stereotypes, bigotry, and hatred.

It’s all stereotypes, it’s all horseshit! It’s always horseshit! And you know it. We have seen it all before, past and present, as one group of bigots fearmongers about another marginalised group, and it’s no different with trans people. You might hide behind your “legitimate concerns”, but the truth is that you have more in common with the lynch mob and the settler on the West Bank than any real fighter for human justice.

The trans community as it genuinely exists does not deserve to be demonised like this, just as the concrete, genuine human beings underneath abstractions and umbrella terms like “refugee” or “homosexual” do not deserve to be the victims of prejudice as they try to live decent, dignified lives. Neither me nor the man from Syria should have to answer for *your* ignorance. We just want to live our lives without someone else’s boot on our necks.

Lets face it, whatever legal finery and rhetorical flourishes this offensive against trans people is being draped in, it stems at its core from simple, brutish feelings of disgust. Our enemies are disgusted by us. Or, to put it another way, they pretend that their disgust for us can be hidden by some concocted political or moral ideal. Women with penises give them the ick, and it really does just boil down to that. Never mind that many of us want rid of our dicks at the earliest convenience, and many of us already have vaginas.

Not that genitals are necessarily the ultimate definers of my or any trans woman's womanhood, by the way. Are your genitals the be-all-and-end-all of your womanhood? Or does some man think so? Excuse me- Hasn't the feminist movement been fighting for centuries to destroy a patriarchal tyranny upheld by biological essentialism? And anyhow: *My* genitals are only of significance to me and my partners- The rest of you can fuck off and stop being so bloody nosey!

And yet *we* have to face the consequences for everyone else's creepy obsession with our genitals- And the transphobes call *us* perverts? The nerve!

On the subject of patriarchal domination, let me take this opportunity to point out my own speck of blood on the banner. I've been assaulted by a man on public transport, and I've been sexually assaulted by a man on the street. Do I have to certify my suffering, my oppression by the patriarchy to you, to gain some kind of solidarity and sisterhood?

Let's stop bullshitting. If a man wants to rape a woman, he doesn't go to the ridiculous contrivance of transitioning to be a woman first- What kind of cartoony secret-disguise nonsense do you think rapists operate by? A rapist breaks whatever boundaries he wants- If he wants to force his way into a women's toilet and sexually assault women, he'll try it. If you bothered to know any of us, you'd know that trans women are victims of this too. We are also assaulted, raped

and murdered by men, whether in public or in private. The patriarchy aims to control, exploit and mutilate *all* women, cis or trans.

And yet, you consider me and my trans siblings the threat to women's safety, the obstacle to feminist gains? Fuck off and get a grip. Have a good think and realise who your real enemy is. Trust me, he wants me dead too.

The answer to rape culture and patriarchy is not the toilet gestapo. The answer is a united feminist movement that protects and uplifts all targets of the patriarchy, no matter whether they are cis or trans. Feminist comrades in Mexico, Argentina and Brazil understand this far better than us, and it's no surprise that their feminist movements are bold, powerful and truly inclusive, while ours here is tiny, weak and demoralised.

I'm tired and hurt, and the quiet burning rage I feel at the collapse I'm seeing around me is so palpable, and has made my hands shake with such fury, that it has been hard to set my thoughts out in greater detail or length. I am going to end here for now, but first:

I must say specifically, to all the useful idiots, fairweather friends, grifters, cynics, opportunists and cowards of the left who skipped out on trans liberation, ignored our struggle, or bought into the culture war offensive against us: I despise you, and if you even bother to read and digest the thoughts of a single trans person about the destruction you've assisted by ignorant omission or conscious activity, then I hope you feel sick to your gut with shame for the rest of your life. I hope the guilt chases you forever. You are serving as the "left" wing of a movement for segregation and social murder and I will never consider you a comrade of mine. Ever.

I don't care how you feel about what I've just said. I care about the trans people who will be harassed, beaten, sexually

assaulted and killed in public places, who will face discrimination in workplaces, who will feel like they need to go back into the closet to live. Many trans people, despairing of everything, will take their lives in the years to come, and we both know this- don't you dare be a shitebag and deny it. It is a deeply horrible thing to acknowledge that there are sisters of mine, dear cherished friends, who may not live to see all of this bullshit repealed and sorted. We trans people will do our best to help each other get through this and avoid as much of that as possible. It's going to be a long and painful road, but we will endure it, just as we always do, no matter the circumstances. Do not forget- Once, many decades ago, using bonfires, camps and mass graves, Hitler's men tried to wipe us from the face of the Earth.

And yet, they failed. Trans people will never disappear.

But will the bulk of the left be much help to us in defeating this next round of repression and social murder? After witnessing the way the last few years have played out, I can only laugh at that notion. And the laughter is hollow and bitter.

You have failed not just trans people, but all of us. And when the far right goes after abortion or gay rights next, I honestly doubt you'll understand the connection between all of these assaults on civil rights, and the role the anti-trans offensive has played in galvanising them all.

After all, what the fuck do you know about us?

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Scottish Kurds protest against Erdoğan invitation

Kurds in Scotland and their supporters have protested at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh against any invitation to Turkish state President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to visit Scotland, reports Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot.

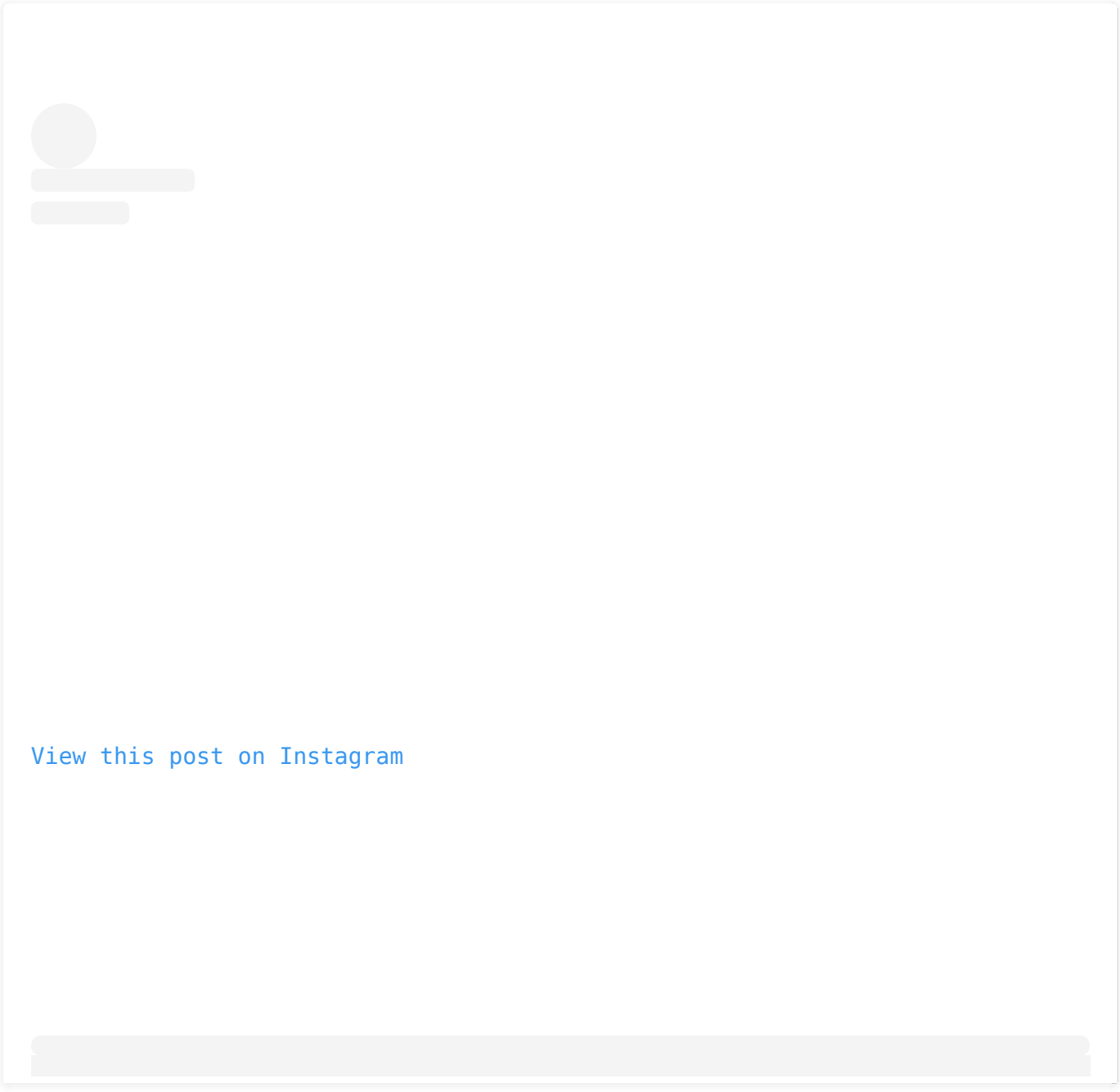
The apparent invitation arose after Scottish First Minister, and leader of the governing Scottish National Party (SNP), Humza Yousaf met briefly with the Turkish state President while they were both in Dubai in December 2023 for the COP28 summit. Kurds are angry that Erdoğan is using the Gaza crisis to launch military attacks on Kurdish populations inside both the Syrian and Iraqi state and continue his persecution and murderous policies towards the 10 million Kurds inside the Turkish state. In the Kurdish-led liberated region of Rojava in neighbouring Syria, Erdoğan has committed exactly the same sort of brutal bombing and attacks on civilian infrastructure that he accuses Israel of in Gaza.



Damage caused by Turkish air attacks on civilian electricity infrastructure in Suwaydiyah North & East Syria. Photo: Rojava Information Center

So when news that Yousaf had invited Erdoğan to Scotland came

out in the media in January 2024, Kurdish and solidarity organisations such as Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan, alongside trade unionists Mike Arnott of the Scottish TUC and Stephen Smellie of UNISON Scotland, moved swiftly to condemn the invitation by issuing a public letter of protest. The Kurdish community in Scotland organised a demonstration at the Scottish Parliament on 25 January to demand the SNP refuse to invite Erdoğan and instead condemn his regime's murderous policy against the Kurds. The protestor's views were recorded by progressive media outlet The Skotia on Instagram (video below) and the open letter of protest received wide media coverage.



A post shared by Media for a better Scotland. (@theskotia)

Prominent Glasgow SNP councillor Roza Salih, herself a refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan, had previously drawn attention to the matter in a post in December on Twitter/X in December, covered by The National daily newspaper:

> *“Humza being friendly and laughing with Erdogan is an offence to the Kurdish people”*
>
> *Roza Salih, Scotland’s first refugee councillor, has criticised Humza Yousaf for shaking hands with the Turkish president https://t.co/XHu2iH28P0*
>
> *— The National (@ScotNational) December 2, 2023*

International Movement demands release of Öcalan on 25th Anniversary of his incarceration

Meanwhile the Kurdish movement internationally is organising a global mobilisation to demand the release of Kurdish political leader, **Abdullah Öcalan**, with demonstrations across Europe up to the **25th Anniversary** of his unjust imprisonment and solitary confinement by the Turkish state. An Internationalist Long March is poised to spotlight this anniversary, beginning in



Basel-Switzerland on 10 February, and will include key events such as a conference in Strasbourg on 15 February and a pan-European demonstration in Cologne and Düsseldorf, Germany, on 17 February. SNP Westminster Member of Parliament, Tommy Sheppard, recently met with Öcalan's lawyers at the Council of Europe meeting and has written to UK government foreign secretary to call on him to take up Öcalan's incarceration by the Turkish government and demand his release (text below).

Text of Open Letter by Kurdish solidarity organisations and individuals on the invitation of Turkish president Erdoğan to Scotland

STATEMENT:
We, the undersigned, condemn the invitation that the First Minister of Scotland, Humza Yousaf, has made to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Turkish state's record on human rights abuses is well documented, both internally and externally. Women, ethnic minorities and migrants bear the brunt of its oppressive policies. In particular, the Turkish state continues a policy against the Kurdish people that seeks to suppress basic human rights and political autonomy through military force, legal repression, and assimilationist policies.

Erdogan's party destroys civilian infrastructure beyond Turkey's own borders for political leverage and to disempower an already economically disadvantaged population in Syria and Iraq. Yousaf's response to journalists was dismissive when

challenged on this. We condemn the cooperation between Erdogan and any segment of the British state. The First Minister's response to press questioning whether the invitation was "a good idea considering his treatment of the Kurds" was that "as a NATO ally", it was a legitimate invitation "if he was visiting the UK". This is hypocritical: The SNP positions itself as distinct from Westminster and with a more discerning eye towards human rights abuses and regional autonomy.

While Erdogan has been vocally supportive of Palestinians, 40% of oil imports to Israel come via Turkey, and the two governments have a long term and high value arms industry relationship that has been ongoing throughout the periods of intensification in Israeli attacks over the last decade. Erdogan does to the Kurds everything that he accuses Netanyahu of doing to the Palestinian people. Both Israel and Turkey have been crafting a Middle East where business and trade with western countries are more valuable than justice or freedom. The power to define terrorism and the legitimate use of violence are now highly developed tools to repress even the most basic self-determination of peoples.

From January 13th – 16th 2024, Turkish military forces carried out 224 ground and air strikes in north-eastern Syria, targeting agricultural and energy infrastructure such as oil fields. In nine locations, electric power stations were struck, which led to power outages and water supply issues that are currently affecting millions of people. This type of attack is a frequent but under reported reality and Erdogan is exploiting this moment when the world media is rightfully watching Gaza. The targeting of vital infrastructure is itself a war crime and these attacks are also an unprovoked act of aggression.

BAE Systems, Thales, Leonardo and other weapons manufacturing companies that have factories in Scotland supply both Israel and Turkey. In 2019, white phosphorous – banned for use as an

incendiary chemical weapon – was reported to have been used by the Turkish military in north-eastern Syria. An investigation at the time showed 70 British export licenses for phosphorous.

Domestically in Turkey, the political repression of the left-wing parliamentary party HDP has led to more than five thousand of its members being arrested, the stripping of MPs' parliamentary immunity and their imprisonment, and widespread implementation of the "trustee" system by Erdogan's party that forcibly removed all elected HDP mayors from office and replaced them with government-appointed officials. This has disproportionately affected the Kurdish people in Turkey, where attempts at democratic expression are crushed, and more than eight thousand Kurdish political prisoners are languishing in Turkish prisons. Kurdish language musicians, teachers and campaigners are often met with criminalisation – the Kurdish language is unrecognised by the Turkish parliament despite being the second most spoken language in the country, and language rights are linked to terrorism as a method of delegitimisation.

The UK government and the European Union countries have shrewdly wedded themselves to facilitating Erdogan's AKP government in exchange for the policing of Europe's land and sea borders and its imprisonment of displaced peoples subject to these "push-backs".

As residents of Scotland and members of human rights organisations, we request that the First Minister and the SNP condemn Erdogan and the AK Party for their actions. The targeting of civilian infrastructure and use of chemical weapons are war crimes, regardless of whether the state that does so is a NATO member.

We request Mr Yousaf's support in condemning these attacks on north-east Syria. We also ask him to assess the human rights abuses that the Kurdish peoples are subject to within the

state borders of Turkey and that he supports the struggle for the freedom of political prisoners in Turkey.

We are in a moment that requires brave leadership on myriad human rights abuses, the repression of the self-determination of peoples and the destruction of the earth, happening across the globe. We implore the First Minister and Scottish government, particularly in this moment, to resist shallow alliances that fail to look at the geo-political situation holistically. The moment demands an uncompromising acknowledgement of the colonial legacies of the current genocidal treatment of the Palestinian and Kurdish peoples.

We ask Mr Yousaf to meet with the Kurdish communities in Scotland and campaigners to discuss this issue. We believe that Scotland can do better and we would like to talk about how.

LIST OF SIGNATURES

Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan
Kurdish Community Scotland
Zagros Community Scotland
Women's Rights Delegation from Scotland to North and East Syria, May 2023
International Human Rights Delegation on political prisoners in Turkey, December 2023
Edinburgh University Justice for Palestine Society
Mike Arnott, President of Scottish Trades Union Congress
Stephen Smellie, Depute Convenor UNISON Scotland
International Solidarity Movement (ISM) – Scotland

Text of Letter from SNP Westminster

MP Tommy Sheppard to UK government foreign secretary David Cameron



The Rt Hon Lord David Cameron
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
26th January 2024

Dear David

I am writing on behalf of several constituents to ask you to make representations to the Turkish Government in the case of Abdullah Ocalan.

You will know that Ocalan is regarded by millions of Kurds throughout the world as their leader and he is key to achieving a permanent and peaceful solution which respects the rights of the Kurds in Turkey and neighbouring countries.

He has been held in solitary confinement on the island prison of Imrali for almost 25 years. This is contrary to several judgements of European Court of Human Rights which have found the manner of his detention to be in violation of the statues to prohibit torture.

As a UK member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I met with Mr Ocalan's lawyers earlier this week.

They tell me that he has been denied any communication with the outside world and any visits from his legal team for almost three years now.

This case does great damage to Turkey's reputation and is an egregious breach of international human rights law. It is also a running sore and an insult to the many thousands of Kurdish people who have made this country their home.

I would ask you to take up this case with the Turkish authorities, demanding that Mr Ocalan be allowed access to his lawyers, that his isolation end, and that after a quarter of a century in solitary confinement, his case is reviewed, and plans made to end his incarceration.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Tommy Sheppard
Member of Parliament for Edinburgh East

Tom Nairn and 'The Break Up of Britain' by Neil Williamson (from the archive)

The work of the Scottish political theorist Tom Nairn (1932-2023), and his seminal work, The Break-up of Britain (available here) , was the recently the subject of a well-attended conference in Edinburgh's Assembly Rooms (for an account of the conference see Sean Bell's article in Heckle). However, whilst there was much of value at the conference, a

critical perspective on Nairn's work – from a left perspective – was largely noticeable by its absence. It was not, however, always so. Shortly after the appearance of the first edition of Nairn's book in 1977, the following review, written by the late Neil Williamson (who tragically died in 1977, obituary here) was published in ***International****, the theoretical journal of the International Marxist Group (then the British section of the Fourth International, forerunner of ecosocialist.scot).*

Despite, being written some decades ago, it remains an important assessment of Nairn's views on socialism, nationalism, and on the nature of the British State, and – as such – it retains much contemporary interest and relevance.

REVIEW OF TOM NAIRN, THE BREAK-UP OF BRITAIN, 1st EDITION, NEW LEFT BOOKS (1977)

As the rate of inflation on its way up meets the rate of exchange for the pound on the way down, an ideal climate is created for books about 'the crisis'. Given the fixation with Britain's decline shared by bourgeois and socialists alike, it is amazing how vacuous and tepid most of these studies have been. Tom Naim's book The Break-up of Britain is a welcome exception. For once we have a study which goes beyond a ritual listing of symptoms, and starts to examine the specificities of Britain as an imperialist state in the late 20th Century.

It will be easier to understand Nairn's book if his argument is discussed in two parts. First, the survey he makes of British imperialism, its rise and present demise; then secondly, the more theoretical conclusions he draws about nationalism and its place in European and world history. Although this order may seem back to front, it relates to the order of the book itself and also corresponds to a much firmer and confident first section which will allow us to make more sense of the author's more speculative and tentative conclusions.

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Nairn starts off by describing what he calls the ‘transition state’ [1] of 18th century Britain which combined in its ruling caste elements from both the agrarian aristocracy and the modern constitutional bourgeoisie. Neither part of the ‘old world’ of Absolutism, nor the ‘modern world’ of representative bourgeois democracy, the result was a social formation with a remarkably ‘low profile’ state and an extremely cohesive, if deferential, civil society.

The basis for the remarkable stability and class quiescence of this society was of course its phenomenal success as an overseas Empire builder and ruler. Unlike the aspiring German or Italian capitalisms, there was literally no necessity in Britain for the restless dynamism so typical of her competitors in the 19th century. It was thus the ‘external’ relations of Britain to world development which moulded and dictated her ‘internal’ social structure.

One of the most crucial features of the complacent rule of Britain’s patrician elite was the wholesale incorporation of the English intelligentsia into the service of the state and its rulers. The civil service and the Oxbridge-public school network were the social cords which bound the loyalty of the British upper middle classes to the ‘ancien regime’ with its monarchy, Lords and assorted paraphernalia which was to disappear elsewhere over Europe by 1920. But there was to be no ‘second revolution’ in Britain, no dramatic rupture with the dynasties of tradition as seen in the Romanov, Ottoman, Habsburg or Hohenzollern territories. The very success of British society (in world terms) was the basis for the social pact between the ruling class and Britain’s ‘hard-headed’ urban middle class. A potentially much more serious threat was of course the developing labour movement. But according to Nairn this threat never materialised. The energy of working class politics was channelled into the Labour Party, probably the most humble and deferential political animal in British

politics.

In Scotland a distinct sub-plot was unwinding. Despite its impressive pedigree of national life (its Church, financial system, etc) the partnership colonial and imperial plunder removed the necessity for the middle class of taking the road of forced march to modern development under the banner of nationalism. The result was a withered and pathetic apology for nationalism with Oor Wullie *[newspaper cartoon strip from 1936]* and Dr. Finlay *[fictional GP, televised in the 1960s*] as Scotland's national symbols. Likewise the intelligentsia of 19th century Scotland found themselves functionless in 'their own' society. Some moved south or overseas, where their talents were put to the natural use of ruling the masses. Others stayed in Scotland and, cut off from the metropolis, their parochialism and dourness was only compensated for by the secure living to be made as captains of industry in the Clyde or Tay valleys.

The spiralling economic collapse of British Imperialism, the world of IMF loans and 'one more year of austerity', has undermined the basis of that old stability. Today it is no longer the virtues of talented and successful amateurism which stand out. Instead it is the vices of a creaky and arthritic political rule which personify Britain.

Again according to Nairn, the labour movement has been totally unable to mount any effective challenge to the British state and its 'consensus'. Even the most self-active struggles have not gone beyond the bounds of loyalty to Labour's parliamentarianism. In fact it is bourgeois radicalism which is the most dangerous to the prospects of the British constitution, a bourgeois radicalism in the shape of nationalist movements. Based on oil and the prospects of social-economic renovation which can be derived from its ownership, a mass movement has developed which threatens to go beyond piecemeal reform and political repairing of the 'normal' party system. Independence, argues, the author, would

in fact shatter the old political order for ever. The ‘ancien regime’ is in no position to absorb and incorporate such a radical restructuring of its operations. In fact, the very inflexibility of the British political order (no federalism, no TV in Parliament, obsessive secrecy, etc.) means that even a mere ‘political’ break in the Constitution entails a considerable social revolution, regardless of the wishes of the participants.

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Although this is only the barest sketch of Nairn’s argument, it describes fairly accurately his central thesis. In its detail it is an impressive, often brilliant, analysis, a panoramic survey of British imperialism’s place in world history. It is not necessary to agree with the entirety of his writing to say that the chapter on the ‘stunted’ nature of Scottish nationality, its ‘schizophrenia’ (a nation but not a state), and its reactionary culture, is the most perceptive survey ever written on the subject. Likewise his designation of the nationalist movement as bourgeois radicalism correctly defines the social and class nature of a phenomenon which so mystifies much of the left. But perhaps the most impressive feature of the early section of the book lies in its method.

The book is above all a study of the political nature of the ‘crisis’, in contrast to the predominant economic bias of other doomsday scenarios. As the author explains, this concentration on locating the economy as the source of the British malaise is itself a partial product of the dazzling weight of civil society (e.g. economics) over state life (politics).

But the very ambition of his project is partly responsible for some of the worst defects of the book, for it constantly forces Nairn into a dubious style of argument, constantly vacillating between the extremes of astute political sensitivity on one band and crass impressionism on the other.

Two examples can be used to illustrate lack of concern for political detail.

First there is the decision (presumably the author's) to reprint almost unaltered an analysis of 'English' nationalism written seven years ago. But these seven years have seen the face of 'English' nationalism change dramatically with the growth of the National Front/Party into the largest far-right movement in Europe outside Italy. Inside the very heartlands of working class communities, organised fascism is growing where the far left has only the slimmest of toe-holds. But, according to Nairn, this is ' … largely a distraction. The genuine right – and the genuine threat it represents – is of a quite different character.' As this chapter spells out, that character is no less than *[Tory politician]* J. Enoch Powell . Now it is quite true that Powell's literary and political ramblings sum up quite nicely many of the ideological threads of English reaction – the Midlands self-made man, nostalgic for the village church. But seriously to suggest that this' English' dreamland is in the same political league as the strident 'British' nationalism of the National Front explicitly imperialist, racist and self-organised – is a dangerous mistake for a socialist to make.

The same flippancy towards political details is shown in his view of the efficacy of bourgeois radical nationalism in bringing down Britain's political house of cards. The Scottish Nationalist Party *[sic]* is no longer a party of cranks and eccentrics, and their own perspective is a real and crucial factor in the dynamic of events. As their last conference demonstrated, not only is the central leadership of the party acutely aware of the clapped out condition of British bourgeois democracy, it is also completely dedicated to preserving it.

Many members [2] of the party are in favour of a formal training period of devolution to prevent any sudden radicalism, most [3] are in favour of some jointly

administered use of oil resources, and all [4] are in favour of retaining Elizabeth of Windsor, the Commonwealth and the Christmas message as essential features of our new independent Alba. Of course they may not succeed in channelling the aspirations of Scottish working people into such neat constitutional packages (in fact, if anything, it is unlikely), but at least their conscious desire to do so, when combined with their prestigious role at the head of the SNP should have been given a passing note.

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The greatest strength of Nairn's book is its understanding of the unique continuity of the British state, for its class lineage and powers of incorporation are described in a clear and exemplary way. But paradoxically the author's (justified) concentration on the strengths of the system lead him to a pessimism about the potential of the forces arrayed against it. We shall return to this in discussing Nairn's views on nationalism, but an amazing problem emerges in his narrative of British imperialism. For here is a book written to assess the nature of the present 'crisis' which has nothing to say about the only other period when such a term was really justified – that of 1910 to 1914.

These years are unique in Britain's history for a simple reason. It was only then (as opposed to 1919 or 1926) that the working class experienced a dramatic rise in class confidence and combativity at the same time as the ruling class was increasingly split and demoralised.

The story of the 'industrial explosion' of these years is well known. The 1910 miners' strike, the 1911 transport strike, the 1912 dock strike, and the 1913 lock-out in Dublin were more than isolated economic disputes. Entire communities were involved in often serious confrontations (involving deaths at Tonypandy) with the naked might of state repression. Solidarity strikes were common, and a new leadership was

thrown up deeply influenced by the anti-capitalism of syndicalism and vehemently hostile to the reformism of the trade union and Labour leaders. The real dynamic of these events was seen in the support given to the 1913 lock-out, led by Jim Larkin. With his tour of Britain and in the massive support given to the Dublin workers, a political basis was laid for the political link-up, an 'ideological regroupment', to use a phrase, between the secular Republicanism of Connolly and Larkin and the proletarian syndicalism of the pits, docks and engineering works of the British mainland.

This was the working class who found a ruling class deeply divided as the complacency and inertia of the British 19th Century state came under increasingly vehement attack. Opposition to the passivity and general stupor of the Liberal Government had led the Tory Party under Bonar Law to step outside the framework of parliamentary consensus in an explicit support for armed rebellion from Ulster. That Sunday afternoon in March 1914 when General Gough, commander of the Third Cavalry Brigade at the Curragh, fresh from a point blank refusal to obey the lawful government of the day, sat down to discuss with the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition was an ominous day indeed for the British Constitution.

With syndicalism and Irish Republicanism on one flank, and Tory-army sedition at the head of Ulster's rebellion on the other, this must surely be a crucial episode in the history of British imperialism a vital one to discuss in any survey of a coming 'breakdown' of the Whitehall-Westminster state. Yet in Nairn's book the entire chapter is dismissed in some four lines. 'It is true', he explains, 'that neither the Tory right [?) nor the more militant and syndicalist elements of the working class were really reconciled to the solution up to 1914. The clear threat of both revolution and counter-revolution persisted until then, and the old order was by no means secure as its later apologists have pretended.' And that, it would appear, is that.

This is no academic quibble over historical opinion. There are important reasons why Nairn is forced to dismiss such a central crisis in British imperialism, for his estimation of the forces involved leaves him no choice. Without misconstruing Tom Nairn's views, his assessment of the social forces involved in the pre-1914 crisis can be summed up as follows: *Syndicalism* – a sub-branch of Labourism, no more than the militant wing of a movement almost ready made for incorporation and assimilation into the very pores of British constitutionalism. *Republicanism* – a theocratic, backward-looking ideology, full of morbid ghosts and superstitious ritual. *Ulster Protestantism* – a superstitious creed, but nonetheless a legitimate movement for self-determination.

Through such tinted spectacles it is little wonder that Nairn can see little of importance in the pre-1914 period. It means that his survey of imperialism Is totally lopsided, unable to discern the real and crucial weaknesses of bourgeois power which lurk beneath the all-powerful exterior. A bad mistake to make in historical analysis, it can be a fatal one to make in contemporary practice.

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The exact reasoning behind this view of Britain's last political crisis is found in the last chapter of the book, where Nairn spells out a general thesis on nationalism and its relation to socialism. Correctly he starts from the premise that nationalism itself has unduly influenced attempts to theorise nationalism. Too often arbitrary appeals to the 'national community' or to 'historical continuity' have substituted for a materialist and, rigorous approach to nationalism. However, for the author, this inability to understand the phenomenon is not restricted to bourgeois thought, for nationalism is, in his opinion, Marxism's great failure [5].

In its theorising on the subject Marxism has failed to go

beyond the ‘great universalising tradition’, a tradition which stretches from Kant through German philosophy, English political economy, and French socialism to the proletarian internationalism of Lenin and the Comintern. It is this tradition, Nairn claims, which can only see nationalism as some ‘exception’ to the general internationalist rule, an irrationalism which human progress and world development will overcome. In fact, he claims, the opposite is true. Nationalism has an eminently rational and materialist basis in the very structure of world development. The uneven development of capitalist modernisation has meant that ‘progress’ for the peripheral areas of the world (everywhere outside Britain in the early 19th Century) could not be a linear or even one. Consciously led, *forced* social development was the only way to avoid being left on the margins of historical development. Nationalism was rarely democratic, but always populist, drawing on the symbols and slogans of the ethnic masses. For the first time the masses were invited into the making of history, if only as genuinely enthusiastic footsoldiers of the new ‘national’ elites fighting for their political lives against stronger and more modern neighbours.

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For that reason any neat division between ‘progressive’ nationalism of the Vietnams in modern history and that of the reactionary variety in Germany or Italy is not helpful. All nationalisms, by definition, have to contain both forward looking and reactionary aspects. Nairn describes the egoism and irrationality of all nationalisms with the following metaphor: ‘In mobilising its past in order to leap forward across this threshold (of development) a society is like a man who has to call on all his inherited and unconscious powers to confront some inescapable challenge. He sums up such latent energies assuming that once the challenge is met they will subside again into a tolerable and settled pattern of personal existence.’ It is thus from the ‘inherited and unconscious

powers' that the myths and symbols shared by all nationalisms, no matter what their nature, are drawn. It is the very progress of humanity, the 'tidal wave of capitalist modernisation' lurching forward in drastically uneven ways, which makes nationalism an inevitable phase of human history. Since 1914 Marxism has therefore been on the defensive, its only gains seen in the Third World, where it has contributed to the perspectives of the anti-imperialist revolution. Outside of that unlikely theatre of proletarian revolt, Marxism has been swamped by nationalism, betrayed to its own bourgeoisie.

To this picture Nairn adds a footnote on a new species of nationalism, those of the 'overdeveloped' national communities, surrounded by more historically backward nationalities. Israel, the Basque country, and Ulster [6] are cited as examples of the intractable nature of the national question in these areas. He derives from the 'development gap' between north and south Ireland that only an independent Stormont – independent, that is, of Britain and Dublin – could lay the basis for a 'rational' solution. Ulster nationalism (as opposed to British loyalism) therefore has to be supported as strenuously as an all Irish republic has to be opposed.

From that brief summary everything discussed in the preceding section falls into place. The impotence of 'internationalist' socialist and labourist movements, the progressive nature of some very unlikely candidates for social progress such as Ulster 'nationalism', the remarkable absence of any tradition in Britain of social populism from left or right – all are seen by Nairn as being derived from the inexorable march of nationalism. Essentially there has been a fundamental flaw in socialism, its internationalism turning out on closer inspection to be a naïve cosmopolitanism.

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Before challenging his thesis it is necessary to point out

some of the more perceptive points that he makes in his argument. To start with, he is correct in his concentration on the uneven development of capitalist modernisation as the central dynamic behind nationalism. Nairn goes beyond this not exactly original thesis to draw out the necessity of rejecting any view of nationalism as some internally generated political process (i.e. the need for a national market, a national tariff barrier, etc.), a view which has prevailed on the left since the days of Stalin. One of the merits of the book is that hopefully it kills forever the dogmatism and static sociology behind Stalin's famous definition [7]. It is correct to dismiss arbitrary lists of what is, or is not, a nation. 'Dialects', for instance, have a habit of becoming a 'language' when they get an army mobilised behind them, regardless of their literary merits. As Nairn points out, nationalism does not awaken nations to self-consciousness it invents them where they do not exist. His survey of nationalism and uneven development, regardless of the conclusions he himself draws actually makes it easier to locate nationalism historically with its rise as a system of social thought and its role in class society over the last century and a half.

However, it is very strange that other aspects of advanced bourgeois nationalism were not examined in this book. For instance it is obvious that the participation of the masses in bourgeois democracy, and the visions of self-rule and popular sovereignty which go with it (regardless of their form), is deeply connected with a belief in one's 'own' nation, one's ' own' state. To a large extent such a view more or less sums up belief in parliamentary democracy – that it is actually possible to win anything the majority of the population desire inside a given geographical boundary. This myth reflects of course a certain capitalist reality, for within the 'normal limits' of the system the majority of electors actually do decide who their government should be. As an entire lineage of social democrats from Karl Kautsky to Tony Benn have shown,

once you actually believe that one day the state may be yours through electoral victory (bourgeois democracy) then it becomes increasingly necessary to defend it against intruders (bourgeois nationalism). This remains a crucial theme for later studies on the nature of modern nationalism to take up.

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Despite certain insights by the author, its fundamental argument remains flawed. His conclusion on socialism is summed up thus: 'Exceptions to the rule (of socialism's predominance over nationalism demanded explanations – conspiracy theories about the rulers, and rotten minorities speculation about the ruled. Finally these exceptions blotted out the sun in August 1914'.

Such a strange summary, for three years after the dance of reaction and nationalist hysteria came another momentous historical event – the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. To examine the last fifty years through the prism of August 1914 without any acknowledgement of 1917 obviously produces a gross pessimism towards socialism and bestows on the defeats and setbacks of the last three generations a permanency and depth they do not have.

Instead of some historically inevitable process (which is in essence Nairn's view of nationalism) the experiences of 1914 and 1917 form, in microcosm, a view of world history which has real self-active agents conscious and able to change the course of that development. The choice between *defeat* with its bourgeois hysteria and its nationalist frenzy, and *victory*, with its internationalism and a genuinely new social order, was not decided by some 'law' of history, no matter how materialist it appears.

These two dates are of course only symbolic, for in fact in the decade after the Russian revolution, despite the defeats, a class confidence and (for the want of a better word)

socialist culture flourished all over Europe. One has only to think of the response by millions of working people to the first Russian revolution, to the first German soviets in 1919, to the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 to the civil war in Spain, to understand that there was a 'universalist' consciousness which extended far outside the ranks of intellectuals or party cadre. That consciousness, partly gained from the experience of the mass parties of the Second International, partly developed from the lessons of the Russian revolution, was a tangible and viable building block in the construction of a socialist society.

The most crucial element in the last forty odd years of European (and in that sense world) history is unseen by Nairn. What took place was a dramatic *regression* of class consciousness inside the European working class. Again it has to be stressed: this was fought out by self-conscious agents, for there was nothing 'inevitable' about fascism's victory in Germany or Franco' s march into Barcelona.

Some idea of the extent of that regression may be gained by looking at a place like Scotland and its contrast with today's corrupt Labour Party and ageing Communist Party. Maclean's role is best known, but there are many more examples of a socialist internationalism among working people which today is not even a memory. When Countess Markievicz, heroine of the Easter Rising, spoke at the Glasgow May Day parade in 1919 there were about 150,000 workers there to listen to her, but this level of popular mobilisation was only reflective of a genuine political sophistication incredible by today's standards. Discussions around constituent assemblies, principled support for self-determination, opposition to imperialist war and militarism were actually commonplace inside the broad labour movement in the immediate post-war period [8].

It was this proletarian consciousness which fascism, the slump and the post-war Cold War were responsible for destroying. The

hysteria of nationalism was a logical, if not inevitable, result [9]. It is the possibility of working class people regaining that type of elemental consciousness which today gives the material precondition for socialism – something which Nairn, regardless of his personal view, cannot fit into his theoretical universe.

Tom Nairn has written an important book, but one whose weaknesses are often those of over-ambition and consequent impressionism. As a study of imperialism in its death agony it should be read, sceptically perhaps, but read. Its faults only serve to remind us Just how far the Marxist left is from producing its own 'concrete analysis' of world capital and its British component.

NEIL WILLIAMSON June 1977

Notes

1. As the author acknowledges, this argument is largely derived from the Influential essay by Perry Anderson 'Origins of the Present Crisis', in *New Left Review* No. 23, January 1964. However also ever-present, but never recognised, is the important study of class structure by Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*(1966).

2. See assorted speeches of Neil McCormick, son of the party's founder and Professor of International Law at Edinburgh University.

3. See the article by David Simpson (Economics Dept., Strathclyde University), published in *Radical Approach,* edited by Kennedy important reasons why Nairn is forced to dismiss such a central crisis (1976). For a fascinating look at the British ruling class's outlook, see Peter Jay's article in support In *The Times*, 13 May 1976.

4. This was the position adopted by the 1977 conference In Dundee with the unanimous backing of the party's leadership.

5. Again, as the author states, this argument is heavily influenced by Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change (*1964), and its chapter seven on nationalism.

6. This section of Nairn's argument is, frankly, total rubbish. His over-developed category of nations is totally arbitrary; what does the Basque country, today the most class conscious and combative part of the population in Spain, have in common with Ulster Presbyterian sectarianism? Why is South Africa not on Nairn's list surely an 'over-developed' country if ever there was one? Perhaps because the contortions necessary for any socialist to support self-determination for white South Africa were more than the author could manage. On Ulster only a comment is possible in this review. Why is there no indication of Ulster nationalism, despite the way it has been kicked about by the British Government since the Troubles began?

The Protestant population can only define themselves in terms of the British connection, and it was this stark fact of political life which led to the eventual demise of the Peace Movement – an inability to take a simple 'yes or no' position on the security forces, and thus on the whole arsenal of Imperialist repression In the Six Counties.

7. *Marxism and the National Question* by J. Stalin, where he states his famous definition listing historical continuity, common language, common territory, and common economic and cultural life as the defining features of a nation.

8. See, for instance, the STUC annual conferences 1919-1923; Labour Party Scottish Advisory conferences 1917, 1918 and 1921, for excellent insights into the debates at the very heart of the labour movement. We can note for instance that the Scottish Council of the Labour Party reported to its 1921 conference on the nine large meetings it had held to demand self-determination for Ireland, all over Scotland.

9. This is not to say that the support behind the spectacular rise of the SNP (or some party *quid et qua* for that matter) in the post-war world is some linear continuation of fascism. There is little in the content of these movements which corresponds to the demoralisation and political decay of 'traditional nationalism'. Unfortunately, a vigorous analysis has yet to be constructed of the features of this new (nationalist) bourgeois radicalism, with its aspirations of social reform and yet its profoundly electoralist and atomised practice.

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Main photo – revised edition of The Break Up of Britain by Tom Nairn, published 2021.

For the full archives of International and other International Marxist Group journals of the 1960s and 1970, see: https://redmolerising.wordpress.com/international-img-journal/

Also see another major article by Neil Williamson from 1977 here: SOCIALISTS & THE NEW RISE OF SCOTTISH NATIONALISM

Post Office: How Corporate Business Stole People's Lives

In this article, writer dave kellaway examines the scandal involving the UK's Post Office falsely prosecuting hundreds of subpostmasters and mistresses due to issues with an accounting system.

Thanks to the excellent ITV drama **Mr. Bates vs. the Post Office,** most people have now heard about how the Post Office falsely prosecuted 736 subpostmasters and mistresses between 1999 and 2015. As we wrote in an ACR article in February 2022, the Post Office first refused to acknowledge any problem and then actively covered up the fact that Fujitsu accounting software (Horizon) used in all its offices was faulty.

Post office operators were accused of fraud, often amounting to thousands of pounds. They were all told that '*it was only them*' so it could not be a fault of the system. People sometimes paid up, thinking that it must be their mistake. They lost their likelihoods, were often declared bankrupt, and were pressurised into pleading guilty to avoid imprisonment. Many suffered from the abuse of local people, thinking they had been fiddling the pensioners out of their money. A criminal record meant that moving on to a different career was very difficult. Some were imprisoned. Many lost their homes, suffered severe mental stress, and at least four committed suicide. It is rightly claimed that this is one of the worst miscarriages of justice on record.

> *"It is rightly claimed that this is one of the worst miscarriages of justice on record."*

Today we learn through a Guardian exclusive that even before the full rollout of the system, there had been a pilot scheme in 300 branches in the North East, and there had been a number

of complaints. Two managers were prosecuted during the pilot. Just as with a full rollout, there may be dozens of victims who have not come forward. Since the TV drama, fifty more victims have emerged. If you think it must have been your incompetence and/or if you feared the consequences and shame of public prosecution, then there was strong pressure to pay up and try to move on.

The TV drama brilliantly captures the courageous campaign by the victims and the extraordinary resilience and leadership of Mr. Bates and others. They fought for over 20 years to rescind the convictions and get compensation, both for the money the Post Office took fraudulently from the victims and for their general economic and mental distress. The Post Office has continuously tried to deny there was any systemic failure and tried to tranquillise the campaign by setting up a mediation procedure that failed to overturn the convictions and by delaying any pay outs. It has deliberately prolonged the agony of the victims. A public enquiry was finally set up in 2022 but has still not been reported. Without the media impact of the TV drama, it is probable that the victims would still be stranded in a bureaucratic and legal quagmire.

So it looks like there is now political momentum in this affair, and the government might be looking to remove the Post Office from the compensation process entirely and rule all the prosecutions as null and void. A petition calling for the removal of the CBE honour from the Post Office CEO, Paula Vennells, has gathered over one million signatures in a very short time. She left the Post Office with a £400,000 bonus. The TV show focuses on her and her immediate colleagues as the villains of the piece. There is a powerful scene where it cuts between her delivering a sermon as a Church of England minister and the effects of the scandal on victims.

The political class would not have finally come to this point without the self-organisation of the victims themselves, some lawyers, and the TV drama. There was the exception of Tory MP

James Arbuthnot, who supported the campaign through official channels. Ironically, he had actually fiddled with his parliamentary expenses, claiming for the heating of his swimming pool, among other offences revealed during the 2009 expenses scandal.

> *"The political class would not have finally come to this point without the self-organisation of the victims themselves, some lawyers, and the TV drama."*

What does the whole affair tell us about how our society works?

Public services under Thatcher adopted a corporate, capitalist model for its operations, both in terms of how staff were managed and how the service was delivered. Labour has basically endorsed this approach.

Such an approach was an integral part of the privatisation of services like gas, electricity, water, telecoms, British Rail, and more recently, the Probation Service. At the same time, this model was systematically applied to those sectors that remained under formally common ownership, such as the Post Office, education, or the NHS. Local or national democratic accountably was severely weakened or removed, so local education authorities now have little control over the school system, and privatised academy networks run many secondary schools. High student fees that each student must pay back over time support universities' operations largely as commercial entities. Health services have gone through several models of an internal market with a crude, artificial provider-client relationship imposed. Private capital, particularly US health corporations, has been allowed to take over certain functions and sectors. Private businesses, including hedge funds, are now running social care more and more.

A corporate model, aping the way big private companies

operate, means cutting jobs, attacking trade unions, and reducing the range and quality of services. Salaries for managers, based on targets more related to cutting costs than maintaining quality, have become similar to the hugely unequal distribution in the private sector. Corporate secrecy and lack of accountability, which have always been the norm in the private sector, now became established even in the public sector, which remained under common ownership, like the Post Office. It is no surprise that Post Office managers reacted the way they did to problems with the Horizon network system. They were more concerned about damage to the Post Office 'brand' than supporting their own operatives, as though delivering the post was like selling cars or baked beans.

Partnerships between digital corporations like Fujitsu reinforce this corporate model, and the systems they impose are not always fit for purpose in a public service environment. The public service managers were not able to critically evaluate the corporate digital projects.

As a senior manager in the secondary education sector, I saw with my own eyes how schools spent huge amounts of their budgets on adopting private company digital systems, particularly for school networks, attendance, and assessment. This was partly in response to Ofsted and Government requirements for data on exam results, absenteeism, and pupil computer skills. SERCO and other companies made a lot of their initial growth out of this market. However, the big education authorities, particularly the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), had their own internal computer operations that could have developed to provide school systems. But this was the time when private was good, seen as always more efficient, and public was bad, seen as old-fashioned and inefficient. Of course, these big digital corporations are well organised in promoting and selling their products to public sector managers. Taking on large-scale digital reorganisations further amplified their sense of becoming like their corporate

counterparts. On occasion, there were some direct inducements between these corporations and public service managers. Certainly, you had the revolving door process where public service managers were recruited by corporations to sell their products to former colleagues. In all this, there was a lot of uncritical acceptance of how wonderful such systems were. Obviously, there was also a knowledge or competence gap where the public service manager was not up to speed about the way these systems worked.

Self-organisation and mass campaigning by victims of miscarriages of justice are vital for any victory against big public or private organisations. The main political parties did not take up the issue.

The TV drama shows visually how Mr. Bates started with half a dozen victims meeting in a village hall and, over the years, built up to five hundred coming together. The federation of subpostmasters and mistresses did not lead the campaign or help very much at all. Apart from the one Tory MP, the main parties did not respond. In fact, Ed Davey was a minister in the coalition government who was responsible for the area and is today under pressure for why he did nothing. His excuse is that the Post Office lied to him. But why did he never listen to the victims? It is a good example of what many commentators (and Starmer in a recent speech) refer to as a lack of trust in the political system or the way politicians do not really relate to people's real needs or struggles.

The British legal system is not very slow, and there is always pressure to come to a deal in order to get some sort of result.

This Government has severely cut back on legal aid; the family of Sarah Perry, the headteacher who committed suicide after a bullying Ofsted inspection, was denied it. Even people who had some savings, such as some of the post office operatives, could not sustain the huge legal fees required to fight the

institutions or the corporations, both of whom have very deep pockets. It is also incredibly slow; cases can take years to progress, as we saw with this case. Bates and his team did take up a class action case for five hundred victims using a top firm. They won, and it was the first decisive victory that put the Post Office on the back foot, but the deal was always that the case was taken up on a no-win no-fee basis, so the damages won were massively eaten into by the legal teams' costs. The TV drama shows this very well, as during the victory report back, the victims discover that this may mean only about twenty thousand each, which is far below the average they were owed and deserve. Even this victory was not total since it was based on a final plea bargain, as the lawyers correctly argued that the Post Office, with their bottomless funds, could keep dragging the case through the courts for years. At least this legal case established that the Post Office was in the wrong and the victims were not crooks.

The mass media, particularly the print media, rarely take up or campaign in such cases.

Once the victims are winning, of course they jump on the winning side and pile into those responsible and the Government, as we see with the screaming headlines in the right wing papers like the Express or the Mail this week. Only one small-circulation magazine, Computer Weekly, responded to the scandal. A postmaster rang up for technical advice, and I think I fortunately found Rebecca Thomson, a 26-year-old, who was not a techie. She helped Bates get more victims to come forward through her article. So it would have been really easy for the mainstream media to pick this up and carry the campaign forward. Obviously, the mainstream media is owned predominantly by right wing tycoons who are very pro-business and generally loath to rock the smooth running of the capitalist system. They focus on celebrity scandals, not on miscarriages of justice that affect hundreds of people. Their

considerable investigative resources were spent at the time tapping the phones of people like Huge Grant.

Will Fujitsu ever pay up for its faulty system?

Voices are finally being raised in parliament about the responsibility of this multinational for the faulty system. So far, it has not paid a penny. As today's Daily Mirror (9 January) reports:

"The Government has continued to work with Fujitsu in the wake of the scandal and has awarded it public sector contracts worth £3billion in the last 10 years. In November, the Post Office extended one contract with the firm – worth an estimated £36million – through to March 2025."

Of course, these private sector companies make sure their contracts are as watertight as possible to avoid having to pay out any money down the road. We have seen this with the Private Finance Initiative contracts made with hospitals or schools. Their lawyers are usually better than those in the public sector. However, public and political pressure could force them to pay out to avoid reputational damage to their brand. Consumers could boycott their products, for example.

Even the left, the trade unions, or other progressive forces were slow to take up the issue.

We have a lot less resources to take up all abuses of power and miscarriages of justice, but we were also slow to make a big deal of this case. Perhaps there was a perception that these people were not really part of the working class; they were not organised in a proper trade union and did not use the language we are used to on the left. Certainly they were small business people, and we should emphasise the word small. The incomes of many of them were less than those of many people organised in unions that we go out and support. There is a lesson here about the need for the left to have a strategic orientation towards those middle layers of society that we

need to win over to a fairer future society. Some may employ one or two people, often family members, but they are not the drivers of exploitation, either of working people or in terms of destroying nature. We need to have policies that relate to their needs for a secure, reasonable income and a better community. Indeed, as the TV drama showed, these people often play a crucial community role, looking after local people with their pensions, helping them sort out bills, and so on. Total digitalisation is not empowering for people who do not own a smart phone.

To a degree, a lot of the points made above were explicit or often implicit in the ITV drama. As always, Toby Jones and Julie Hesmondhalgh gave terrific performances, and the whole cast shone. It looked like they were all committed to the wider impact of the drama, as the actors and actresses have since confirmed. The modest but firm leadership of Bates in particular is an example to all activists about how to listen to people and build a campaign.

> *"As always, Toby Jones and Julie Hesmondhalgh gave terrific performances, and the whole cast shone."*

As we write these lines, it looks like victory is finally in sight. Will the Post Office, as an institution, pay any penalty? Will individual managers who conspired to prevent the victims from getting together by saying 'it was only them' ever be sanctioned? Will the CEO keep her CBE? The petition has reached over a million now. Can she be pursued today for her actions? We will see how far the political class will go to get full justice.

Mr. Bates vs. the Post Office is currently available for streaming on ITVX, and there is also a Panorama programme available on IPlayer.

09 Jan 2024

*This article was originally published on Anti*Capitalist Resistance: https://anticapitalistresistance.org/post-office-how-corporate-business-stole-peoples-lives/*

The Hydrogen Economy – yet another mirage

Sean Thompson writes on Red Green Labour:

Over the past few years, much has been made (particularly by fossil fuel industry lobbyists) of the potential for the development of a 'hydrogen economy'. The great attraction of hydrogen to the proponents of the status quo, whether Tory or Labour, is that it feeds into their fantasies about 'green growth' – a lower carbon version of business as usual. Hydrogen, it is claimed, could replace fossil fuels as an energy source, not only for energy intensive heavy industries like steel and glass production but also for powering cars, public transport, aviation and home heating. However, as the estimable Ben Goldacre said of other sensational claims "I think you'll find it's more complicated than that."

Hydrogen comes in three colours:

- Grey: Hydrogen produced from a natural gas feedstock.
- Blue: Hydrogen produced from a natural gas feedstock with capture of the by-product CO2.
- Green: Hydrogen produced by splitting water molecules through electrolysis using renewable energy sources

According to the International Energy Agency, 95 million tonnes (Mt) of hydrogen is produced worldwide and 99% is

‘grey’. In 2022, hydrogen production generated more than 900 Mt of CO2 emissions – more than the entire global aviation industry footprint of almost 800 Mt. At the same time, less than 0.1 per cent of the world’s hydrogen production (less than 0.08 Mt) was green hydrogen.

In the run-up to COP28, its president, Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology of the United Arab Emirates and head of theAbu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), repeatedly urged agreement by governments to almost double current global hydrogen production from 95 Mt to 180 Mt per year by 2030. Reaching that goal with green hydrogen would require a 2,068-fold production increase in seven years. This is, to say the least, a highly unlikely scenario, so the reality would be a massive boom in grey hydrogen and good news for ADNOC and the rest of the fossil fuel industry.

The idea that green hydrogen can replace the energy currently provided by fossil fuels for most transport and for domestic heating/cooling is fanciful in the extreme. Even more fanciful is the suggestion currently being promoted by aviation industry lobbyists that hydrogen might be used to power zero carbon flying, either by using it to manufacture yet to be discovered ‘alternative’ aviation fuels or via hydrogen fuel cells for electrically powered aircraft.

- A kilogram of hydrogen – the unit of measurement most often used – has an energy value of about 33.3 kWh.So a tonne of hydrogen delivers about 33 MWh and a million tonnes about 33 terawatt hours (TWh). To provide a sense of scale, the UK uses about 300 TWh of electricity a year.
- Many estimates of the eventual demand for hydrogen are of at least 500 Mt. A world that requires 500 Mt of hydrogen will need to produce 22,000 TWh of green electricity a year just for this purpose. 22,000 TWh is roughly equivalent to 15% of total world primary energy demand, and today’s global production from all wind and

solar farms is a little more than 10% of this figure.

- A huge global increase in green energy generation capacity will thus be needed to produce 500Mt of hydrogen. As an example of the scale of of increase needed, for every gigawatt of capacity, a well-sited North Sea wind farm will provide about 4,400 GWh a year, or 4.4 TWh. At a future efficiency level of about 75%, this will produce around 100,000 tonnes of hydrogen. Therefore most of the UK's current North Sea wind output from 13 GW of wind would be needed to make just one million tonnes of H2.
- The amount of electrolysis capacity required to make 500 million tonnes of hydrogen a year depends on how many hours a year that the electrolysers work and how efficient they are. If we assume an average of about 60% of the time, at a prospective 75% efficiency level, then the world will need around 4,500 gigawatts of electrolysis capacity – about five hundred times what is currently in place.

While the creation of such a vast new industry is clearly possible over a period of time, particularly if such an huge initiative isn't left to the hidden hand of the market or the not so hidden hands of the fossil fuel industry, it is clearly not possible in the time left to us to avoid global catastrophe. Nonetheless, the use of hydrogen and the development of green hydrogen production capacity will be essential if we are to move to a zero carbon economy – but because the supply of truly clean hydrogen is going to be limited – certainly for the next two or three decades – it should be prioritised for uses where there are no alternatives.

In an analysis for Bloomberg in 2020, Michael Liebreich pointed out that hydrogen has serious limitations in many applications:

"as an energy storage medium, it has only a 50% round-trip

efficiency – far worse than batteries. As a source of work, fuel cells, turbines and engines are only 60% efficient – far worse than electric motors – and far more complex. As a source of heat, hydrogen costs four times as much as natural gas. As a way of transporting energy, hydrogen pipelines cost three times as much as power lines, and ships and trucks are even worse."…"What this means is that hydrogen's role in the final energy mix of a future net-zero emissions world will be to do things that cannot be done more simply, cheaply and efficiently by the direct use of clean electricity and batteries"

The [UK] Government's own Climate Change Committee (CCC) analysis in their 6th Carbon Budget Report, showed that hydrogen production is not the best use of renewable energy if it can be used in other ways, thus we should only use hydrogen where it is near-impossible to reduce demand or use electricity directly. As a leading analyst at CCC has put it: *"In our view, you should be looking to electrify wherever you can. Where that's prohibitively expensive , or where that's not feasible, that's the role that you're looking for hydrogen."*



The EU Energy Cities network has actually put together a hierarchy of uses for hydrogen(see graphic) which seems a good starting point. *A* is use by energy intensive heavy industrial processes needing high temperature heat like steel, chemicals or glass, *B* is grid-level storage – storing otherwise 'waste' energy produced by off shore wind during periods of low electricity demand, *C, D* and *E* for powering heavy transport – shipping, trains and buses/HGVs respectively. Way down at *F* and *G* are

hydrogen fuel cells for cars and home heating. Speculative technologies like synthetic aviation fuel don't even figure on the list.

It's important that an incoming Labour [UK] government doesn't commit to high cost options involving blue – or even grey – hydrogen, which would suit the gas industry, but which would do little or nothing to reduce CO2 emissions. And it's equally important that governments realise that, whilst green hydrogen is vital, it will not be available in infinite quantities and isn't going to be a panacea for all the delivery challenges and investments that need to be made across buildings, transport and industry.

Despite this, both Tory and Labour politicians, along with a rag bag of lobbyists for various techno-fix solutions, from nuclear to carbon capture and sequestration and the wilder regions of geo-engineering, try to avoid the reality that there are no silver bullets that will somehow exempt capitalism from the laws of physics.

For example, in 2020, the Tory [UK] government launched its 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution', which included a commitment to investing up to £500m in new hydrogen technologies. It claimed that the energy produced could be used *"to carry on living our lives, running our cars, buses, trucks and trains, ships and planes, and heating our homes while keeping bills low."* It announced that as part of a trial of hydrogen heating, two 'hydrogen villages' of around 1,000-2,000 homes, in Whitby, near Ellesmere Port and Redcar, Teeside, where the homes would be converted to hydrogen for heating instead of natural gas. In July this year, the plans for the Whitby pilot were abandoned in the face of local opposition and in December the proposed Redcar pilot was also scrapped. This leaves National Grid's £32m pilot project in Fife, where about 300 homes in Methil and neighbouring Buckhaven in Levenmouth were due to be converted from natural gas to hydrogen next year, as only remaining attempt in the UK

by energy industry to show that hydrogen is a viable (and cost effective) alternative to natural gas for domestic heating. Unsurprisingly, the project is much delayed and the are doubts whether it will actually get going. Ofgem has warned that *"delay in the commencement of this project would materially impact the evidence base for an energy system transition to hydrogen as a means of decarbonising heat and industry".*

Capitalism, dependent as it is on the constant and infinite expansion of the production of commodities, is being forced by the inescapable reality of climate change to move from denial to a (partial) recognition of the terrible price that humanity and the planet as a whole is beginning to have to pay. However, its enthusiasm for the mirage of 'green growth' is making it grab more and more desperately at technological straws – some of which, like green hydrogen, have the potential to actually play a valuable, if limited, role in combatting global heating.

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Fight the Racist Campaign Against Palestine Solidarity by Heckle Editors

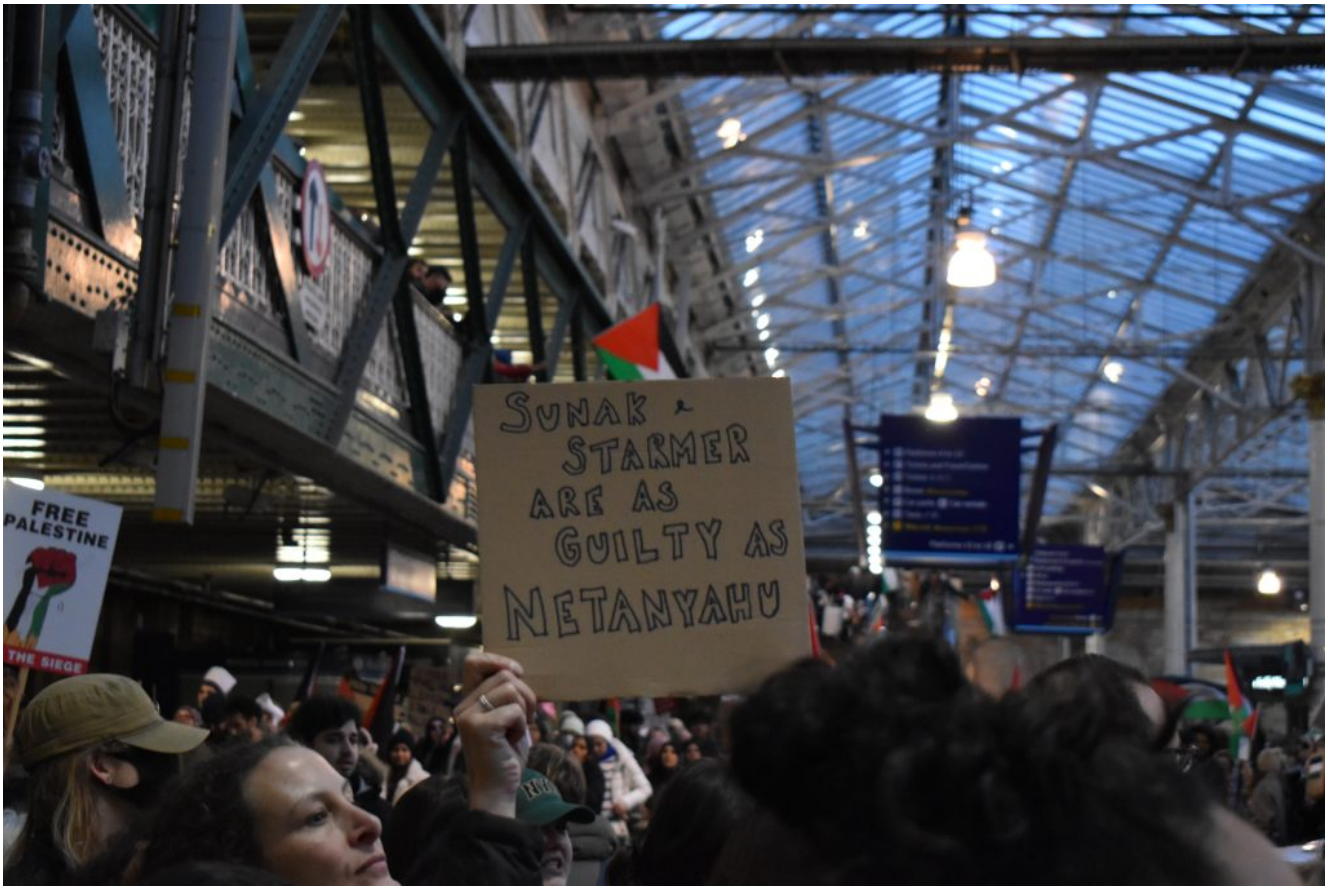
Suella Braverman's smearing of the huge and diverse Palestine solidarity movement as "hate marchers" bringing violence to the streets of cities like London and Edinburgh is not merely, as some have suggested, a provocative preamble to her future

Conservative leadership campaign – it is yet another example of a wider turn to authoritarianism in the UK and other European states in order to forcibly suppress democratic and progressive challenges from below.

It is significant and welcome that those organising marches and rallies for Palestine in towns and cities north and south of the border have so far refused to be cowed. They have maintained their determination not only in defiance of the Westminster government and virtually all of the mainstream media, but also frivolous arrests and violent threats from police and far-right networks.

The sheer size of these demonstrations over the past month, across these islands, Europe and the world, has already succeeded in greatly amplifying the voice of the occupied and blockaded Palestinian people and robbing the extremist Israeli government of the moral authority it claims in its military campaign against Gaza. We should recognise this enormous achievement.

Still, it is clear that these massive mobilisations alone will not be enough to stop the bombs falling on Gaza and the tanks rolling in, much as millions taking to the streets just over two decades ago could not stop the criminal Iraq War. This is why large parts of the renewed movement have embraced radical tactics including civil disobedience – as seen in train station occupations, university student walk-outs and trade union boycotts – as well as direct action targeting arms manufacturers and other institutions complicit in Israeli apartheid and genocide. These bold actions are justified and must continue. The Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions also remains extremely relevant (even if regularly misrepresented).



That this movement is so large, broad, increasingly militant and willing to break the law to prevent a greater injustice is a powerful combination. This is why there has been such a sharp state response from western governments who have, for 75 years, ranged from sponsors to allies of Israeli settler-colonialism for their own economic and geopolitical advantage. This is another expression of the same anti-democratic impulse which has seen, for example, the criminalisation of the climate justice movement. The blocking of a Scottish independence referendum by the UK Supreme Court is also, in fact, part of this campaign against popular sovereignty.

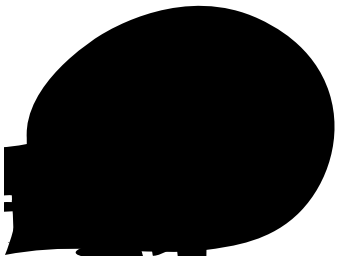
The suppression of Palestine solidarity, however, has a unique racialised character. Across Europe, ostensibly liberal and right-wing governments alike have smeared millions of Palestine supporters as 'Islamists' to justify harsh restrictions on immigration, weaponising citizenship against protesters. The UK is far from an outlier in this regard; a looming threat is a likely expansion of the racist Prevent programme. Building strong community networks to protect our

neighbours from all forms of racism, including Islamophobia and antisemitism, will be a crucial challenge in coming months.

Overcoming all of these obstacles necessitates unity and bravery. We saw an extraordinary example of this last week when the Ukrainian left journal *Commons* published its statement of solidarity with Palestinians, rejecting those – including the Ukrainian government – who have counterposed solidarity between one of these peoples and the other. We will need many more principled initiatives like this, that forge links between all those asserting the power of people against the power of states, to eventually win a democratic, peaceful and free world.]

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To join the Republican Socialist Platform, visit: https://join.republicansocialists.scot/

Main photo: Edinburgh Gaza demo 11 November 2023, ecosocialist.scot, other photos and graphics, Heckle and

Stand with Ukraine: UK TUC backs their right to resist Russian aggression

Fred Leplat reports on the UK TUC Congress in Liverpool
The TUC congress on 12 September adopted overwhelmingly a motion in solidarity with the people Ukraine in their war of liberation from Putin's invasion of their country. Three major unions, the RMT, the UCU and the NEU, abstained while the FBU spoke against the motion. It commits the TUC to support "The immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian territories occupied since 2014" and "A peaceful end to the conflict that secures the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the support and self-determination of the Ukrainian people". The motion also states that the TUC notes "That those who suffer most in times of war are the working class, and that the labour movement must do all it can to prevent conflict; however, that is not always possible".

TUC Resolution Affirms Solidarity with Ukrainian People

The position now adopted by the TUC, which has unions representing over 5.5 million workers, is a huge boost for the morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in particular. The TUC policy is now to support "The full restoration of labour rights in Ukraine and a socially-just reconstruction that … rejects deregulation and privatisation," which is the opposite of what the Tory government was pushing at its Ukraine Reconstruction conference in June with its neoliberal emphasis on private investment and reforms.

> *"The position now adopted by the TUC…is a huge boost for the morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in particular."*

The TUC resolution is pro-Ukraine, not pro-war. However it was caricatured by Andrew Murrayof the Stop the war Coalition as "a call for the trade unions to align in support of the most hard-line elements among NATO policy-makers and push for the war to continue until Russian surrender". The StWC denounced the vote as "A vote for war that Sunak and Starmer will welcome", while the SWP declares that the "TUC backs war and clears the way for more arms spending." These responses fall into the binary trap set by Blair and Bush to win support for the war in Iraq: "Either you support the war or you support Saddam Hussein." It is entirely possible to support the people of Ukraine in their armed resistance, be critical of Zelensky's neoliberal government and also oppose NATO.

No to NATO Expansion and Arms Escalation

Internationalists cannot condemn Ukrainians because they are using every means available for their self-defence. If the war is one mainly for liberation of the country from Russian imperialism, Western imperialism is also involved for its own geostrategic interests. Of course, NATO and Western imperialist countries have not suddenly been converted to being fighters for democracy. They happily support and sell arms to many dictatorships, such as Saudi Arabia, provided they are loyal to their interests. While the TUC motion is silent on the role of NATO, conversely, it does not repeat the Starmer position of "unshakable" support for NATO. The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected. Describing the conflict as only a "proxy war" by NATO removes from the Ukrainians any self-determination, and erases Putin's responsibility for the military aggression and

the brutal treatment of Ukrainian civilians.

> *"The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected."*

The position adopted by the TUC is a welcome contrast to that adopted a few days earlier by the G20 summit in India. The G20 stepped back from the support they gave to Ukraine in 2022. The G20 summit last year declared that it "deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine". This year, it did not directly mention Russia or Ukraine, and stated vaguely that states should "refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition."

Eighteen months after the beginning of the war, there seems to be no quick end. While the Ukrainian army has made some gains recently, it has not yet routed the Russian troops. Arms continue to be supplied by the West, but not in sufficient quantities. Internationally banned cluster munitions and dangerously toxic depleted uranium shells are being supplied to Ukraine. These risk the war escalating into a direct inter-imperialist conflict.

The Ukrainians desperately want peace and freedom. But a ceasefire for peace negotiations without simultaneously a withdrawal of Russian troops is in reality and annexation of parts of Ukraine. This will not bring lasting peace. While there have been several attempts at peace negotiations, some were not encouraged by Western leaders who see the war as an opportunity to marginalise Russia. However, Russia's position has remained that any peace plan can only proceed from Ukraine's recognition of Russia's sovereignty over the regions it annexed from Ukraine in September 2022, and that Ukraine should demilitarise and "de-Nazify". While Ukraine, quite

reasonably, wants recognition of its territorial integrity along internationally recognised borders. Putin is unlikely to make any moves for peace any time soon as he has already suffered two defeats. He failed in a quick war for regime change in Kyiv, and NATO has expanded further with Finland and Sweden joining the alliance. Putin's naked aggression and invasion of Ukraine has been a gift to NATO which has found a new purpose in a fight for democracy, replacing the failed war against terrorism. Hence the push for increases in defence spending and the possible return of US nuclear weapons to Britain, both of which should be opposed.

The Ukrainians have made tremendous sacrifices and suffered enormous casualties with over 70,000 dead and 120,000 injured. Russia's casualties are even higher, with close to 300,000 of which 120,000 have been killed, according to the Guardian. A staggering total of 500,000. Apart from the ecological devastation, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes, Ukraine is now the most mined country in the world.

The mood of Ukrainians is resigned and sombre, but support for the war effort is still there. A Gallup poll conducted a year ago in September 2022, showed that 70% of Ukrainians wanted to continue the war with Russia until victory. Political solidarity and humanitarian aid are necessary to demonstrate that the Ukrainians have not been abandoned. There have been many spontaneous and independent efforts of practical support for Ukrainians. Today, 64% of Europeans agree with purchasing and supplying military equipment to Ukraine (it is 93% in Sweden). With the US presidential elections in 2024, Trump's continuing electoral threat and his isolationist policies are affecting the mood in Washington. How long will NATO's support for Ukraine last if the economic cost for western capitalism is too high a cost to pay for the Ukrainians fight for democracy? That's why it was always right

to say “don’t trust NATO”. No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them.

“No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them.”

What you can do:

- Circulate the motion from the TUC, and amend it as necessary.
- Invite Ukrainian trade-unionists and socialists to speak to your organisation.
- Twin your workplace or trade-union with a similar organisation in Ukraine.
- Raise funds for medical and humanitarian aid.
- Support the anti-war activists being persecuted and imprisoned in Russia.
- Affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. info@ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org www.ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org
- or in Scotland
- uscscotland@gmail.com https://ukrainesolidarityscot.wordpress.com/https://www.facebook.com/groups/USCScotland



Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Fringe meeting at TUC Liverpool. Included in the

picture: Maria Exall TUC President, Gary Smith GMB National Secretary, Barbara Plant GMB President, Chris Kitchen NUM General Secretary, Simon Weller Assistant General Secretary ASLEF, John Moloney PCS Assistant General Secretary.

This article is reposted from Anticapitalist Resistance: https://anticapitalistresistance.org/stand-with-ukraine-tuc-backs-their-right-to-resist-russian-aggression/

Headline picture: Ukraine refugees hold GMB We Stand with Ukraine placard, George Square, Glasgow, August 2023 (M Picken)

BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE Campaign Launch – Glasgow Friday 29 September

*Get Glasgow Moving are launching **BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE** – a campaign focused on winning an improvement to bus services in the greater Glasgow/Strathclyde region. They are holding a launch in Glasgow on Friday 29 September, details from Get Glasgow Moving's news release below.*

JOIN THE LAUNCH RALLY

> ***Friday 29 September 2023, 9:30am***
> *SPT Head Office, 131 St Vincent St, Glasgow, G2 5JF – Journey Planner here*
>
> *Please share details on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram to help spread the word.*

The next year is crucial in our long-running fight to **take our buses back into public control**. So we're joining forces with trade unions, community councils, environmental groups, students and pensioners associations and more, to launch a new region-wide campaign.

Better Buses for Strathclyde is inspired by the success of the Better Buses for Greater Manchester campaign, which pushed their transport authority, TfGM, into bringing their region's buses back into public control in order to deliver a fully-integrated, accessible and affordable public transport network called the Bee Network:

By bringing together bus users and employees from across Strathclyde's 12 council areas, Better Buses for Strathclyde will put pressure on our regional transport authority, SPT, to utilise the new powers in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to deliver a similar fully-integrated, accessible and affordable system for us – and on the Scottish Government to provide the necessary funding and support.

THE NEXT YEAR IS CRUCIAL

From September 2023 – March 2024, SPT is developing the new 'Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy' which will set the direction of bus policy in our region for the next 15 years (until 2038).

This offers us **a once-in-generation opportunity** to end the

chaos caused by bus deregulation (introduced by Thatcher in 1986), which has seen millions of miles of routes cut and fares hiked well above inflation.

We must ensure that SPT's strategy sets out ambitious plans to:

- re-regulate the all private bus companies in our region (through 'franchising') so that it can plan routes to serve communities' needs and connect seamlessly with trains, ferries and Glasgow's Subway, with one simple, affordable ticket across all modes.
- And to set-up a new publicly-owned bus company for Strathclyde (like Edinburgh's Lothian Buses) which can start taking over routes and reinvesting profits back into expanding and improving our network.

And we must ensure that the Scottish Government provides the funding and support necessary for SPT to deliver the world-class public transport system that the 2.2 million people living across Strathclyde need and deserve.

Please join the Better Buses for Strathclyde launch rally on Friday 29 September 2023, 9:30am at SPT Head Office, 131 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5JF – as we get ready to build the campaign

over the next year.

The launch rally takes place as part of the Better Buses National Week of Action and Scotland's Climate Week.



Bus Campaigners including Get Glasgow Moving protest at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh

Republished from: https://www.getglasgowmoving.org/campaign/betterbuses/

Rising Clyde: Cumbrian Coal – leave it in the ground

This month's Rising Clyde programme is about the protest movement against the proposed coal mine in West Cumbria with a discussion with Cumbrian climate justice activist, Allan Todd, and interviews with Cumbrian activists at the 'speakers' corner' events against the coal mine.

Rising Clyde is the Scottish Climate Show, presented by Iain Bruce, and broadcast on the Independence Live Channel. Previous editions can be found in the embedded video above, Episode 14, by clicking in the three lines in the top right hand corner and choosing from the video list.

Allan Todd is a climate and anti-fascist activist, and has been active with Greenpeace and XR. He participated in the anti-fracking protests at Preston New Road in Lancashire, where he organised the 'Green Mondays' from 2017 to 2019. Allan is a member of Anti- Capitalist Resistance and of Left Unity's National Council. He is the author of Revolutions 1789-1917 (CUP) and Trotsky: The Passionate Revolutionary (Pen & Sword). His next book is Che Guevara: The Romantic Revolutionary.

The host of Rising Clyde, Iain Bruce, is a journalist, film maker and writer living in Glasgow. Iain has worked for many years in Latin America. He has worked at the BBC and Al Jazeera, and was head of news at teleSUR. He has written books about radical politics in Brazil and Venezuela. During COP26, he was the producer and co-presenter of Inside Outside, a daily video briefing for the COP26 Coalition.

Building International Solidarity for Ukraine: Three Perspectives

The Russian left wing website Posle (После – 'After') recently published three perspectives on Building International

Solidarity for Ukraine, from the UK state, from Poland and from the USA, that ecosocialist.scot is republishing below. You can find about Scottish solidarity with Ukraine from the website of the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland.

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine the Western left split into two camps. Yet, attempts to build a broad solidarity movement with Ukraine have been underway since February 24. International activists talk about their work:

Simon Pirani [UK], honorary professor, University of Durham

His most recent book on Russia is *Communist Dissidents in Early Soviet Russia* (2023)

I have always believed that support for people resisting imperialist violence is central to socialism. It was the US war in Vietnam that first moved me to political action, when I was a teenager. Supporting Ukrainian resistance to Russian imperialism is consistent with supporting Vietnamese resistance then, and supporting Palestinian resistance to Israeli apartheid. For me, the difference is that Ukraine is closer, in the sense that I have been travelling there, and to Russia, for the last thirty years. (I worked in both countries as a journalist and doing academic research.)

After the invasion in February last year, the most effective responses from the labour movement and social movements in which I am involved were the direct ones. Some young people from the UK and other European countries travelled to Ukraine to join volunteer units; a much larger number of people organised material aid for front-line areas. Personally I supported those efforts, and played a small part in trying to highlight the situation in the Russian-occupied areas.

In the labour movement, perhaps the clearest voice in support of Ukrainian resistance was that of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). We have no deep mines left in the UK, but the union – which historically was one of the strongest, until its defeat in the big strike over pit closures in 1984-85 – continues to support former miners and their communities. It has a historical connection to Ukraine: links were established in 1990 between the miners union in Durham, in north east England, with the Independent Miners Union of Ukraine, in the first place in Pavlograd, in the western Donbass.

Straight after the invasion, the NUM and other unions sent more than £20,000, and supported trade unionists who drove vehicles full of medical equipment and other supplies to Ukraine, and left them with miners' union activists there. There have been at least seven deliveries of that kind. Along with the NUM and the train drivers union ASLEF, a strong source of support has been a cross-party group, Senedd Cymru [Welsh parliament] Together for Ukraine. The chief legal officer of Wales, Mick Antoniw, is a labour movement activist of Ukrainian family background, and has travelled several times to deliver vehicles, with fellow parliamentarians and trade union representatives.

Other unions have participated in, or at least declared support for, such solidarity actions, including those representing civil servants, teachers, university staff and health workers: efforts to win them over have been coordinated by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, which works with the Confederation of Independent Unions of Ukraine (KVPU).

The USC last month also organised a conference, Another Ukraine is Possible, at which labour, feminist and anti-capitalist perspectives on the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine were advanced, in contrast to the neoliberal slant of the government-level talks also held in London. Another initiative, that I have myself been involved in, has been to raise the profile of Solidarity Zone, the group supporting

Russians who take direct action against the war, for example by translating and circulating material.

In terms of actual material aid delivered, all these initiatives by labour movement and anti-capitalist movements are smaller than the mountains of support given to Ukrainian people by civil society in a wider sense. Community groups, churches, voluntary associations, charities, and e.g. Ukrainians living in the UK and their friends have not only raised very large sums of money but also taken vehicles and other aid to Ukraine. On the other hand, the UK's support for Ukrainian refugees, or for Russians fleeing war and repression, has been very limited. While the government, for cynical political reasons, made it easier for Ukrainians to get to the UK than it is for most refugees from other wars, it is still difficult. The number of Ukrainian refugees here is negligible compared to Poland, Germany or other countries in continental Europe.

In my view, in the UK there are two problems that we face, in building a broad Ukraine solidarity campaign. The first is that, for reasons we all understand about inter-imperialist rivalries, the UK government has steadfastly supported Ukraine militarily, e.g. with weapons supplies. This has given the most right-wing UK government in decades the opportunity to pose as lovers of freedom. And this has its effect on society: the media reports Ukraine sympathetically; president Zelensky appears smiling for the cameras with our ministers, who to people here represent austerity and racism. The hypocrisy of the British ruling class, who for so long prevailed over an empire that dripped with blood (and who have spent the last thirty years gearing its financial system to the benefit of Russian kleptocrats), is obvious – especially to migrant communities whose suffering has been shaped by British and other western imperialism.

There is a danger that this hypocrisy can cause resentment and division. People in the UK who face constant pressure from the

state for supporting Palestinian rights, or who deal daily with the consequences of the state's racist migration policies, can not fail to be struck by the state's "favouritism" towards Ukrainians, or, for another example, political refugees from Hong Kong. Socialists and labour movement activists who support Ukrainian resistance have answered this in the best way possible – by seeking to build alliances between Ukraine's struggle and others resisting other imperialism. This is a work in progress.

The other issue is that, as in other western countries, there are post-Stalinist tendencies that in practice oppose solidarity with Ukraine. A tiny handful of pro-Putin extremists issue soundbites à la Solovyev or Rogozin. But more numerous groups describe themselves as "anti imperialists", seeing the Kremlin as the lesser evil and Ukraine as a tool of the western powers, or "pacifists" who issue disingenuous calls for peace talks, without e.g. withdrawal of Russian troops, and repeat Kremlin talking points about NATO being to blame for the war. So in the Labour party, the left minority is divided: John McDonnell (effectively deputy Labour leader when Jeremy Corbyn was leader), has supported "the provision of weapons to Ukrainians to defend themselves"; Corbyn himself is against that.

> ***Just as the sore of the illegitimate, Russian-supported "republics" festered in the body of Ukrainian society, so reactionary forms of ideology that supported them gnawed away at the labour movement across Europe***

Looking back, I think that, collectively, those in the labour movement with connections to Russia and Ukraine did far too little after 2014 to explain our case. This socalled "anti-imperialism" was already vocal, with regard both to Ukraine and Syria. Like others, I made individual efforts to oppose it (see e.g. here, here, here and here) but these efforts were inadequate. Just as the sore of the illegitimate,

Russian-supported "republics" festered in the body of Ukrainian society, so reactionary forms of ideology that supported them gnawed away at the labour movement across Europe.

> ***Hopefully the very widespread, and very human, feeling among ordinary people in the UK, that Ukrainians deserve solidarity against a brutal, violent onslaught, will serve as the background for a new clarification of what socialist anti-imperialism actually means***

One good thing that has happened in the last 18 months is that these issues have come out into the open and been discussed more widely. Hopefully the very widespread, and very human, feeling among ordinary people in the UK, that Ukrainians deserve solidarity against a brutal, violent onslaught, will serve as the background for a new clarification of what socialist anti-imperialism actually means.

Zofia Malisz [Poland], Razem International Office

Razem is a left party in Poland with six members of parliament and structures at home and abroad. We support the sovereignty of Ukraine as well as the efforts of the Belarusian and Russian people to democratise their countries since our party was formed in 2015 (see "Polityka wschodnia"). After the Russian invasion we launched and co-organised several campaigns, often in cooperation with Sotsialnyi Rukh, to gain support on the European and global left for sending weapons that the Ukrainian people needed to defend themselves.

We co-founded the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine (ENSU), which is so active today. There we worked within the feminist "right to resist" group. Our co-leader Magdalena Biejat and other female left coalition MPs filed a motion in the Sejm to expedite access to abortion for

Ukrainian refugees who had been raped. Unfortunately the right-wing parliamentary majority rejected it. Other initiatives of ENSU also include a visit to Lviv in 2022 with various left parliamentarians. Right after the invasion we gathered members of Nordic and Eastern European left parties in Warsaw and issued a statement in support of Ukraine, condemning the invasion and appealing for sanctions against Russia. Our cooperation on a range of issues including cancelling Ukrainian external debt has made a difference, in the form of several legislative efforts in Europe and the US in favour of supporting the cancellation. This was a result of broad social media campaigns, meetings, press conferences and articles on the topic that we took direct part in, initiated or co-ordinated.

We took part in countless meetings, live and remote in 2022, with the global left, to challenge Russian propaganda regarding the invasion and Ukrainian statehood. We confronted falsehoods embedded on the left, particularly within the Western "peace" movement. We did our best to explain the complexities of our regional situation that many were disappointingly ignorant about or chose to ignore – despite decades-long relationships. As a consequence of such unwillingness to engage with the challenges facing the Eastern European left and to support Ukrainian sovereignty, we decided to leave Progressive International and Diem25 shortly after the invasion.

We do feel the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian opposition left movements have unique contributions to make to the global left. Our traditions and the challenges we face, be it geopolitical or stemming from the transformation, are different, so are our solutions and ways of communication. Much can be learned from us. One of the hardest challenges is the neoliberal ideologisation in our societies. Due to that we see the great risk that rebuilding Ukraine entails – we believe, together with our partners in Ukraine, that it should

be rebuilt for the benefit of the people, not foreign corporations or domestic oligarchs, with great focus on social infrastructure and support for workers, women as well as on nurturing bottom up communal organising that grew strong during the war. Our politicians have been communicating this constantly: there can be no sell-out of Ukraine to corporations in exchange for weapons. These days we put most of our efforts for Ukraine into campaigning for socially oriented rebuilding.

> ***We do feel the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian opposition left movements have unique contributions to make to the global left***

Razem also wants to offer to millions of Ukrainian refugees in Poland our vision of a safe, environmentally sustainable welfare state for everyone. A vision that we believe we can realise together both in Poland and in Ukraine. We want to show that Ukraine, in order to rebuild itself, needs its workers to return to stable working conditions with expanded labour rights. It needs its veterans to heal and to receive support from a well funded public services sector. Its children need to be able to grow up with the prospect of a planet that is not only livable, but thriving. We need Ukrainian victory for that, as well as a great deal of left cooperation and campaigning together for social Ukraine. We continue paving the way for that with our partners, both within the Central-Eastern European Green-Left Alliance organisation including Ukrainian partners that we have been building (that is launching at the moment). We also work with partners on the Western left who are willing to engage and to develop concrete proposals of rebuilding plans that challenge the liberal plans (e.g. many activists in the UK and some Labour politicians).

There is broad consensus in Poland, as you know, regarding condemning the invasion as well as political and military help

for Ukraine. There are no disagreements on that within the left in Poland. We are a political force though that keeps a watchful eye on the government's attitude and possible emerging far right threats to Ukrainian refugees. We also criticize any attempts to sacrifice human rights, the right to due process etc., regarding whatever issue concerning Russian citizens on Polish soil.

John Reimann and Cheryl Zuur [USA],

co-chairs Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign

Supporting Ukraine is the concrete expression of the number one responsibility for any socialist. That responsibility is international working class solidarity. But that is not just some moral responsibility; it is directly connected to the class struggle at home.

We see Putin's invasion of Ukraine as a decisive step in the general world process of the rise of extreme right wing nationalism, bigotry and counterrevolution. The more Putin succeeds, the more that process advances. We saw that with the Assad/Putin led counterrevolution in Syria which played a big role in the setback of the whole Arab Spring. And the Arab Spring did, in fact, inspire workers and young people around the world. The result of its defeat (for now) has been, among other things, the increase of religious reaction – Islamic fundamentalism in this case.

Here in the United States, Trump used Islamic fundamentalism and Islamophobia as a major tool to get elected in 2016. Once in office, his first major initiative was to, in effect, bar Muslim people from entering the United States. This is an example of how the Putin-led counterrevolution had an effect on politics here in the United States.

Trump supports Putin not only because he served as a money launderer for the Russian oligarchy for many years. His support is also because of political affinity. That is also why extreme right wing politicians, even outright racists and fascists like *America First* and individuals like Matt Heimbach, support Putin. If Putin's imperialist invasion succeeds even in part, it will strengthen these forces and further drive forward global reactionary movements.

Finally, if we as socialists and as working class activists ignore this massive attack on the Ukrainian people, what are we saying to US workers? We would be telling workers "think only of yourselves in the most immediate sense. Think only of your own paycheck. Don't think about the wider issues that directly affect our lives." It would be no different from saying that oppression of women, or people of color or LGBTQ people is not a matter for all workers to oppose. It would be impossible to help strengthen the working class with that attitude, never mind to build a truly working class socialist movement.

As a result of this, a small group of us founded the Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign shortly after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine started. (In reality, Putin's military invasion of Ukraine started in 2014!). We base ourselves on several points of unity, including the demand that in order to fight the invaders Ukraine should receive all the weapons it needs and with no strings attached. That means we criticize Biden not because he is sending arms to Ukraine but, on the contrary, because he is too hesitant and putting too many handcuffs on Ukraine, on how it may use these arms. That is an unusual position for socialists to take, but it is not unprecedented. During the Spanish Civil War, US socialists called on the US to send arms to the Spanish republicans who were fighting fascism, and during WWII no socialist in the U.S. would have opposed the US's sending arms to the Soviet Union to fight the Nazis.

The Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign has a lively presence on social media, including a Facebook group with over 630 members and almost 2,000 followers on Twitter. Both of these present news and analyses related to the war in Ukraine. We have a linktree with quite a few public resources. We also have regular public Zoom forums on topics such as the environmental aspects of the war in Ukraine, the Iranian revolution, whether Russia is fascist (with Ilya Budraitskis), the present political situation in Ukraine, and coming up a presentation on the Holodomor. Recordings of those forums are available on our youtube channel.

One of the most important discussions we had was a two part series on "fascist ideas on the left". That was a discussion on how and why the ideas of the far right, including even fascist ideas, have come to permeate the socialist movement. This is vitally important because – we have to admit it – the majority of the socialist movement and the "left" in general supports or at least apologizes and makes excuses for Putin's invasion of Ukraine. We explicitly decided to include "Socialist" in our name because we believe it is vital to reclaim socialism from this betrayal.

This betrayal is not accidental. It relates to the generally low political level of the US working class, a working class that has never had its own political party and that has been under attack, both ideologically and practically, for many decades. This ideological attack has been carried out not only by the capitalist class, but also from our very own leaders – every wing of the union leadership – who have also collaborated in helping the capitalists drive down the living conditions of US workers.

So, while the majority of US workers support Ukraine, they do so passively. "It's not for me (us) to play an active, independent role in politics," is the attitude.

In addition to our regular forums, the Ukraine Socialist

Solidarity Campaign has mobilized in the streets where and when we can. We have participated in wider street mobilizations in support of Ukraine, for example a unity march organized by Iranian Americans in San Francisco. We have also mobilized to counter the pro-Putin propaganda of the "left", such as Code Pink and various "socialists." We also have done some fundraising for Ukraine, including selling t-shirts we designed, and a member of ours actually carried medical supplies to Ukraine last year. We are currently encouraging unions to pass a resolution we produced calling for full support – including arms – for Ukraine and we also have a petition calling for the IAEA to take over operation of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (you can sign it here).

We are still a very small group of activists and, can hardly have a major effect on objective events. What is needed is a renewed uprising of the working class in the United States and globally. We hope to help prepare the way by trying to clarify some of the most vital political issues of the day, many of which revolve around the fascistic imperialist invasion of Ukraine. That and building support for Ukraine to the maximum degree we can.

It is an honor and a privilege to work with and be associated with those brave Ukrainian and Russian comrades (as well as others) who are fighting against the Putin-led counterrevolution. We think that, together with a renewed worker uprising, this sort of collaboration in both the ideological and the practical realms will be the basis for the rebirth of a new, healthy, working class oriented socialist movement.

1 August 2023

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Not Coal, Not Dole! Just Transition & Climate Jobs – protest against Cumbrian Coal Mine Sat 22 July

There is a “Speakers’ Corner” public protest against the UK government’s approval for a new coal mine in Cumbria on Saturday 22 July noon. Details are below.

ScotE3 (“Employment, Energy and Environment – Campaigning for climate jobs and a just transition) and Edinburgh Climate Coalition are mobilising from the Edinburgh area, so you can contact them for details of transport. The West of Scotland is nearer to Cumbria, for many it’s nearer than Aberdeen, but the only possible transport is by car. We are not aware of any other transport but will publicise details if we get any. Let us know at info@ecosocialist.scot.

Our friends in Anti*Capitalist Resistance in England & Wales have an article by Cumbrian activist Allan Todd on their website

>> *here*

and you will be able to get Allan Todd's new book "Ecosocialism Not Extinction" from our Resistance Books bookstall at Climate Camp Scotland.

> ***From the organisers of "Speakers Corner" Cumbria***
>
> ***Join us in Whitehaven on Saturday 22nd July, at 12 noon, to oppose the West Cumbria Coal Mine. We say: Not Coal, Not Dole! We want Climate Jobs and a Just Transition***
>
> *We are inviting Trade Unions and supporters to join us for the third Speakers' Corner event which will explore the themes of Climate Jobs and Just Transition.* ***Bring your Trade Union banners!***
>
> *Is it possible to campaign against the proposed coal mine while supporting jobs for local people and boost Cumbria's economy? We believe it is. Thousands of jobs could be created in Cumbria in renewable energy, transport, housing retrofitting, and other sustainable activities. We can not have our communities left behind but coal jobs are not the jobs for the future or the present. Local communities shouldn't be held to ransom by West Cumbria Mining Ltd which is 82% owned by a Capital Investment company registered in Singapore!*
>
> ***Join us at the site to hear from great speakers talking about the prospect of Climate Jobs for Cumbria and a Just Transition for the area as an alternative to the coal mine.***
>
> *More**information by South Lakes Action on Climate Change** about the mine and why we oppose it.*
>
> *Speakers TBC.* ***You can also share and invite friends on the Facebook event.***
> ***Meeting point:*** *Outside the Marchon site, Whitehaven. On Wilson Pit Road, near junction with High Road. SatNav: 54°31'25.6"N 3°35'35.6"W. Click here for Google map pindrop. More information about parking will be shared closer to the date.*

Travel: Note that the RMT union has announced a train strike for 22nd July. *We are still going ahead with the event but you wont be able to travel by train. You will have to travel by vehicle to the event. We will try coordinate and support attendees with their travel arrangements.*
Direction: Arrive via the A595, as if heading for Whitehaven. Stay on that road until you see a road off [R., if travelling from the north; L., if travelling from the south], signed: 'St. Bees/Sandwith' – this is Mirehouse Road. Travel along this until you meet the B5345: turn L. onto St. Bees Road, and then, almost immediately, take the first R. on to Wilson Pit Road. The coalmine site is on the L., next to West Coast Composting (Wilson Pit Yard).SatNav: CA28 9QJ. Note there are limited parking near the site.
Accommodation*: You may also want to stay over if you are travelling for far afield so you may want to book campsite/accommodation early. So far we haven't made arrangements to support people with accommodation but we will explore accommodation with local people and other options.*
We are also hoping on the day to also carry out some outreach/door knocking activity in the local area and hold a social/film event tbc. More information soon.

From ScotE3

Solidarity with stop the Cumbrian Coal Mine Campaigners

- *Keep the carbon in the soil: Scientists across the globe are clear that if we are to prevent catastrophic global warming then we can't continue to develop new oil fields and dig new coal mines.*
- *Coal energy has the highest carbon footprint of all energy types.*

In December 2022 the Westminster government gave the green light for the development of a new coal mine at Whitehaven on the Cumbrian coast. The decision flies in the face of statements made by the Tories took while the UK hosted COP 26 in Glasgow. But post-COP and during an ongoing cost of living crisis their mantra has become 'energy security'. This apparently justifies opening a new licensing round for North

Sea oil and gas, massive investment in nuclear and a U-turn on coal. As we write this it looks likely that the Tories will use their majority in the House of Commons to strike out a Lords amendment that would ban all new coal mining.

The new mine is intended to supply coal that can be processed into coke for use by the UK steel industry. Tory ministers argue that coke is essential for steel production and that domestic production will cut the carbon emissions resulting from the transportation necessary for imported coal. But the focus of the two major UK steel producers is on decarbonising steel production by using green hydrogen, moreover the Cumbrian coal is unsuitable for steel production:

'The UK steel industry has been clear that the coal from the West Cumbria mine has limited potential due to its high sulphur levels," said Chris McDonald, chief executive of the Materials Processing Institute, which serves as the UK's national centre for steel research.'

So, in reality, the government's arguments are simply a poor attempt at greenwashing. It's estimated that if the project goes ahead around 83% of the 2.8 million tonnes of coal extracted each year will be exported. They talk about it being a Net Zero coalfield. It's the same sleight of hand as they use to argue that the North Sea will become a Net Zero oil and gas producing area. You electrify the industrial processed required for extraction, offset other emissions and don't count the carbon embedded in the coal (or oil) because that's the responsibility of the end user! All in all It looks like the government's coalition to go ahead is an entirely political strategy aimed at pushing back genuine action on climate in favour of the big corporate interests that dominate energy production.

Lord Deben, Tory chair of the UK Climate Change Committee stated in June 2022 that:

‘As far as the coal mine in Cumbria is concerned, let’s be absolutely clear, it is absolutely indefensible. First of all, 80% of what it produces will be exported, so it is not something largely for internal consumption. It is not going to contribute anything to our domestic needs in the terms we’re talking about, the cost of energy and the rest.’

The other argument used by ministers, however, is one that we do need to take seriously. Whitehaven is a one-time coal and iron mining town and currently has high levels of deprivation. Proponents of the mine say that it will guarantee 500 jobs for 50 years. Putting the investment required for the mine into almost any other form of local economic activity would produce more jobs and certainly investing in renewables in the Whitehaven area would provide, more and more long-term sustainable jobs. But while local people have no faith in their being such investment the pull of the mine remains attractive.

Two court cases aimed at stopping the mine are due to be heard near the end of October 2023. In the meantime, a coalition of national and local environmental organisations are organising resistance. On Saturday 22nd July there will be a day of action in Whitehaven with a rally, leafletting and door to door conversations with local people.

We want to coordinate solidarity contingents from Scotland. If you are able to join It would be very helpful if you could answer these three questions.

I am interested in joining the delegation to Whitehaven on 22nd July.
I could provide a car and take passengers.
If it’s an option, I would prefer to stay overnight and return on Sunday 23rd.

Please reply to triple.e.scot@gmail.com (you can use the contact form on the ScotE3 if you wish) and cc

edinburghclimatecoalition@gmail.com

https://scote3.net/2023/06/23/climate-jobs-not-coal-or-dole/

Climate Change Committee Report – None of this is Working

Mike Small, editor of Bella Caledonia, reports on the latest report of the government's Committee on Climate Change and exposes the latest incarnation of climate denialism and pandemic disinformation at the heart of Westminster.

John Gummer's latest (and last) Committee on Climate Change report has just dropped and it's damning. It says we're falling behind and nowhere close to enough on all fronts in tackling the climate crisis and this is caused by the total vacuum of political leadership at the heart of the British government. The headlines are: "UK has made 'no progress' on climate plan, say government's own advisers".

Incredibly fewer homes were insulated last year under the government-backed scheme than the year before, despite soaring energy bills and a cost of living crisis. There is pitiful progress on transport emissions, and no coherent programme for

behaviour change (there's a surprise).

The report also found:

The number of homes receiving energy efficiency improvements under the government's Energy Company Obligation scheme more than halved, from 383,700 in 2021 to 159,600 in 2022. At least 1m to 2m homes should be upgraded each year to meet net zero.

Homes are still being built that will need to be retrofitted with low-carbon heating and efficiency measures, because the government has not yet brought in its promised future homes standard.

No decision on whether to use hydrogen for home heating will be made until 2026, leaving households and boiler companies in complete limbo.

Emissions from transport have remained "stubbornly high" as the government has "made a political choice" to allow an increase in road traffic, instead of encouraging people on to public transport.

There is no clear policy to decarbonise steel production, or emissions from other heavy industries.

In a letter from Lord Deben (Gummer), Chairman of the Climate Change Committee, to Rishi Sunak about the 2023 Progress Report he bemoaned "The failure to act decisively in response to the energy crisis and build on the success of hosting COP26 means that the UK has lost its clear global climate leadership." This idea of the success of COP26 or of Britain's 'climate leadership' is a Tory myth and an appeal to national hubris. He also complained about the 'Inaction has been compounded by continuing support for further unnecessary investment in fossil fuels.' Like, No Shit Sherlock.

The illusion of action, the mythology that meaningful change is underway is laid bare.

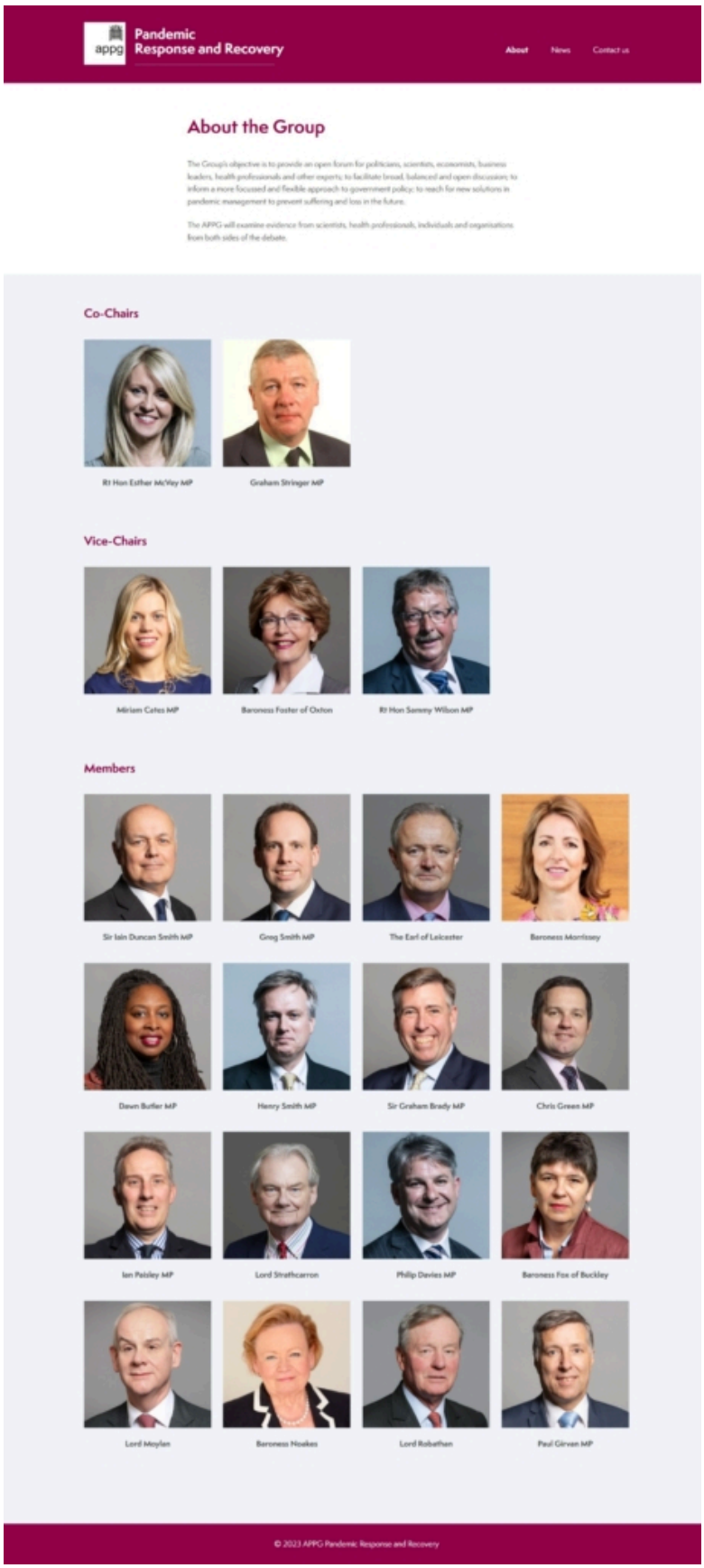
Climate Denialism and Pandemic Disinformation

Meanwhile (h/t to Leo Hickman) a letter to the Daily Telegraph has revealed for the first time the names and numbers of the tiny grouping of climate-sceptic UK parliamentarians who call themselves the "Net Zero Scrutiny Group". There's no surprises:

Craig Mackinlay MP (Con)
Sir Iain Duncan-Smith MP (Con)
Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg MP (Con)
Lord Frost (Con)
Esther McVey MP (Con)
Sir John Redwood (Con)
Dame Andrea Jenkyns (Con)
Sir Robert Syms (Con)
Mark Francois (Con)
David Jones (Con)
Kelly Tolhurst (Con)
Sammy Wilson (DUP)
Andrew Lewer (Con)
Jack Brereton (Con)
Miriam Cates (Con)
Chris Green (Con)
Jonathan Gullis (Con)
Philip Hollobone (Con)
Adam Holloway (Con)
Julian Knight (Ind)
Marco Longhi (Con)
Karl McCartney (Con)
Holly Mumby-Croft (Con)
Philip Davies (Con)
Bob Seely (Con)
Greg Smith (Con)
Andrew Bridgen (Reclaim)
Scott Benton (Ind)
Baroness Foster of Oxton (Con)
Baroness Lea of Lymm (Con)
Lord Lilley (Con)
Lord Moylan (Con)
Lord Strathcarron (Con)

The Telegraph splashed with a front-page 'scoop' from the "Net Zero Scrutiny Group" clearly designed to distract from the Committee on Climate Change's damning report But as John Bye has pointed out there's an interesting crossover between the Net Zero Scrutiny Group and the All-Party Parliamentary Group 'Pandemic Response and Recovery'.

This crossover includes such luminaries as Esther McVey (Chair), Sammy Wilson (Vice Chair), Iain Duncan Smith, Baroness Foster of Oxton, and Lord Strathcarron.



The APPG group has some interesting backers. As Byline Times reported the group is “being funded and managed by Collateral Global – the successor organisation to the ‘Great Barrington Declaration’ (GBD), established by two of its co-founders, Oxford epidemiologist Professor Sunetra Gupta and Ministry of Defence contractor Alex Caccia.”

“The GBD is a pandemic disinformation group backed by the Koch climate science denial network, known for promoting a ‘herd immunity by natural infection’ approach to the Coronavirus crisis.”



Support from HART and Climate Science Deniers

The APPG has also received PR support from the Health Advisory and Recovery Group (HART), which harbours a range of conspiratorial anti-vaxxer views about the pandemic – including the idea that Coronavirus death certificates are fake, that deaths are really being caused by vaccines rather than COVID, and that the both the disease and vaccines are part of a global depopulation conspiracy by elites.

A press release announcing the creation of the APPG was sent out by Jemma Moran – HART’s head of communications.

Baroness Foster was conferred a Life Peerage after a nomination by Prime Minister Boris Johnson as part of the 2020

Political Honours. In January 2021, she was elevated to the Lords as Baroness Foster of Oxton. Not to be confused with Baroness Fox (aka Claire Fox, aka Claire Foster), also a great Koch enthusiast, also present.

This convergence between the far-right, libertarian conspiracism and climate denialism is not a coincidence.

The APPG also include Labour MP Graham Stringer who is a trustee of the Koch-connected Global Warming Policy Foundation, Britain's most prominent climate science denial lobby group which takes funds from fossil fuels companies.

Stringer has denied the IPCC's conclusion that humans are the dominant cause of current climate change. So has his colleague in the APPG, the DUP's Sammy Wilson, that human-induced climate change is a "myth based on dodgy science".

Today's revelations will be no real new news to anyone. We all knew this anyway, but now it's official, laid out by the government's own committee. While we are led to believe that progress is being made and everything is in hand, the government is actually going backwards, introducing anti-climate policies so that nothing can change.

28 June 2023

Mike Small

Republished from: https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2023/06/28/none-of-this-is-working/

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‘Tsunami’ of industrial action to hit oil and gas operators as 1400 offshore workers set to strike – from Unite the Union

From Unite the Union:

> ***Dozens of platforms in UKCS set to be brought to a ‘standstill’ with BP, Shell and Total hit***
>
> *Unite the union announced today (Monday 20 March) that major oil and gas operators in the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) face a‘tsunami’of industrial unrest within weeks as around 1400 offshore workers across five companies demand a better deal on jobs, pay and conditions.*
>
> *Unite, whose members will take action at companies enjoying record-busting profits, predicts that platforms and offshore installations will be brought to a‘standstill’due to the specialised roles its members undertake.*
>
> *The action will hit major oil and gas operators including BP, CNRI, EnQuest, Harbour, Ithaca, Shell and Total.*
>
> *Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said:**“Oil and gas companies have been given free rein to enjoy massive windfall***

profits in the North Sea; drilling concessions are effectively licences to print money.

“1400 offshore workers are now set to take strike action against these employers who are raking it but refusing to givethem a fair share of the pie. This will create a tsunami of industrial unrest in the offshore sector.

“Unite will support these members every step of the way in their fight for better jobs, pay and conditions.”

The prospective action includes electrical, production and mechanical technicians in addition to deck crew, scaffolders crane operators, pipefitters, platers, and riggers working for Bilfinger UK Limited, Stork construction, Petrofac Facilities Management, the Wood Group UK Limited and Sparrows Offshore Services.

*John Boland, Unite industrial officer, added:**“Unite has received unprecedented support in favour of industrial action in the UK Continental Shelf. It is the biggest mandate we have received in a generation in the offshore sector. There is no doubt that this is directly linked to oil and gas companies reaping record profits while the workforce gets scraps from the table.***

“Unite’s members are angry at the corporate greed being shown by offshore operators and contractors. Now these major global companies are set to face the consequences as dozens of offshore platforms will be brought to a standstill in a matter of weeks.”

Details of the disputes

Around 700 offshore workers atBilfinger UK Limitedare set to down tools after Unite members voted in favour of taking industrial action as part of a pay dispute. Bilfinger workers are demanding an increase above the base rate of pay set in the Energy Services Agreement (ESA) for 2022.

Meanwhile, 350Stork constructionworkers are set to take strike action after Unite members also supported industrial action in a dispute over working rotas and rates of pay.

Unite members employed byPetrofac Facilities Management Limitedon the FPF1 platform also voted in favour of strike action. Around 50 workers are involved in the dispute over holiday entitlements. Offshore workers can be asked to work at any time for no additional payment. The operator, Ithaca Energy, has a 'clawback' policy of 14 days, double the industry norm of 7 days.

Unite members employed by theWood Group UK Limitedon TAQA platforms similarly voted to take strike action. Around 80 members are involved in the dispute which is focused on a 10 per cent cut made to salaries in 2015 worth around £7,000 a year.

The mandates for industrial action follow the recent announcement by Unite that around 200Sparrows Offshore Servicesworkers will take strike action across more than 20 oil and gas platforms in disputes over pay. Strike action is set to hit various platforms from 29 March and until 7 June in a series of 24, 48 and 72-hour stoppages. This action will hit a number of major operators including BP, Shell, Apache and Harbour Energy.

A further two industrial action ballots are due this week at Petrofac BP involving around 80 workers (21 March), and at Worley Services UK Limited on Harbour Energy platforms involving around 50 workers (24 March) in disputes over pay. The pending ballot results could bring the final total to around 1500 offshore workers taking industrial action.

Unite recently blasted the UK Government's inaction on taxing oil firms as BP posted the biggest profits in its history as it doubled to £23 billion in 2022. BP's bonanza profits come after Shell reports earnings of £32 billion, bringing the

combined total profits of the top two energy companies in Britain to a record £55 billion.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Ballot results in full

1. *Bilfinger – Yes to strike action – 97%*

2. *Stork – Yes to strike action – 98%*

3. *Petrofac Facilities Management Limited – Yes to strike action – 100%*

4. *Wood Group UK Limited – Yes to strike action – 93%*

Republished from: https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2023/march/tsunami-of-industrial-action-to-hit-oil-and-gas-operators-as-1400-offshore-workers-set-to-strike/