

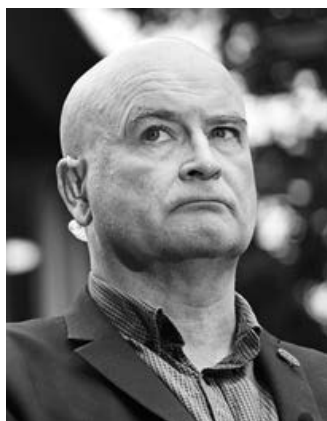
Queen croaks, Labourites crawl

The Queen is dead. A tsunami of national unity is sweeping the country and the press is spewing praise for her “greatness” and “sense of duty”. *To hell with all that!* Queen Elizabeth II lorded over the remnants of the vicious decrepit British Empire—from Quebec to Jamaica to Botswana. Her governments—both Labour and Tory—slaughtered the Mau Mau in Kenya, invaded Suez, bombed and destroyed Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Her army was sent to occupy Northern Ireland, murdering, torturing and starving Irish Republican prisoners. Her Kingdom is a prison for the Scottish, Welsh and Irish Catholics. Her police force crushed the miners strike. She was the living embodiment of all these crimes and more. King Charles III carries on this blood-soaked legacy.

The reactions to her death show all that is rotten about the leadership of the working class in this country. Before her body was cold, Mick Lynch of the RMT and Dave Ward of the CWU—the “heroes” of the so-called “summer of dis-



Ex-Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, RMT general secretary Mick Lynch, Labour MP Zarah Sultana and CWU general secretary Dave Ward.



Alamy photos

content”—cancelled strikes in order to join the orgy of patriotism and national unity. Same goes for ASLEF and the list is likely to grow. As the highest representative of class privilege dies, these traitors are telling workers that fighting against their own starvation must wait, out of reverence to the monarch. These are no working class leaders but lackeys of the ruling class.

Like Liz Truss, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer—this pretentious knight of Her Majesty—is also in mourning. No surprise there. But it is not just the Blairites. Jeremy Corbyn, Zarah Sultana, Sam Tarry, John McDonnell, Ian Lavery, Ian Byrne and

more; all these left Labourites who claim to stand for the working class and “socialism” are weeping and wailing over the loss of...the monarch “by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland & of Her other Realms & Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith”. What a pathetic display of subservience before the ruling class.

Truss’s arch-reactionary Tory government could not have dreamt of a better turn of events. The country is in complete crisis: inflation, recession, soaring energy bills, labour shortages, the near collapse of social services. Even the Royal

Navy’s flagship broke down. The death of the monarch will give the bunch of lunatics leading the government the chance to appear statesman-like and put the national crisis on the back burner—all thanks to the leaders of the working class declaring unilateral class peace.

This country urgently needs a revolution. The only reason it is still ruled by a barbaric remnant of the Middle Ages

and a filthy rich, bloodsucking class of useless financiers is because for over a century the working class has been led by spineless Labourite toadies of Crown and Capital. To go forward, workers and oppressed need to break the chains of Labourism and rally around a new, revolutionary leadership and programme. As Labourites give condolences to Charles III, we communists recall the fate of Charles I.

Down with the monarchy! Down with the reactionary United Kingdom! For workers republics! For the international soviet!

—Spartacist League/Britain
9 September 2022

Royalty, they declare, “does not hinder” the country’s progress and works out cheaper than a president if you count all the expense of elections, and so on and so forth. Such

speeches by Labour leaders typify a facet of their “idiosyncrasies” which cannot be called anything other than conservative blockheadedness. Royalty is weak as long as the bourgeois parliament is the instrument of bourgeois rule and as long as the bourgeoisie has no need of extra-parliamentary methods. But the bourgeoisie can if necessary use royalty as the focus of all extra-parliamentary, i.e. *real* forces directed

Trotsky on the monarchy

against the working class. The British bourgeoisie itself has well understood the danger of even the most fictitious monarchy. Thus in 1837 the British government abolished the title of the Great Mogul in India and deported its incumbent from the holy city of Delhi, in spite of the fact that by this time this title had become only a nominal one: the British bourgeois understood that under certain conditions the Great Mogul

could become the focal point of a struggle of Indian upper-class circles against British rule.

To proclaim a socialist programme and at the same time to declare that royalty “does not hinder” it and comes cheaper is just the same as, for example, acknowledging materialist science but having recourse to a witch’s incantations against toothache on the grounds that the witch comes cheaper.

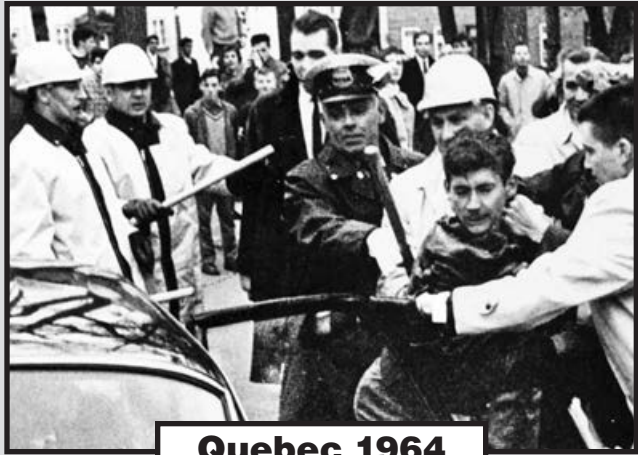
In such a “trifle” the whole man is expressed, along with his spurious acknowledgement of materialist science and the complete falsity of his ideological system. For a socialist

the question of the monarchy is not decided by today’s book-keeping, especially when the books are cooked. It is a matter of the complete overturn of society and of purging it of all elements of oppression. Such a task, both politically and psychologically, excludes any conciliation with the monarchy. —*Where is Britain going?* 1925, in

Trotsky’s writings on Britain, volume 2 (New Park Publications, London, 1974)

Her Majesty's reign in pictures

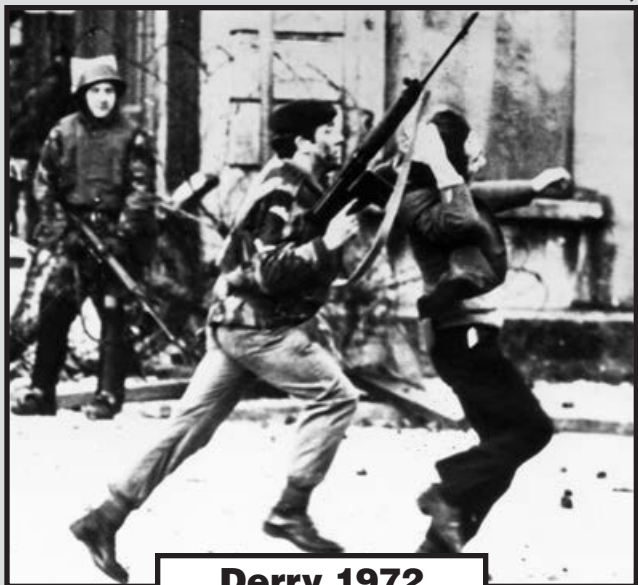
The Canadian Press



Quebec 1964

Queen's visit was met with protest against the monarchy which has oppressed Quebec for over two centuries. Brutal repression ensued in what would be remembered as "Truncheon Saturday".

Frederick Hoare/Getty



Derry 1972

On Bloody Sunday British paratroopers opened fire on civil rights demonstrators, murdering 14. British occupation of Northern Ireland has brought humiliation, torture and death for Catholics.

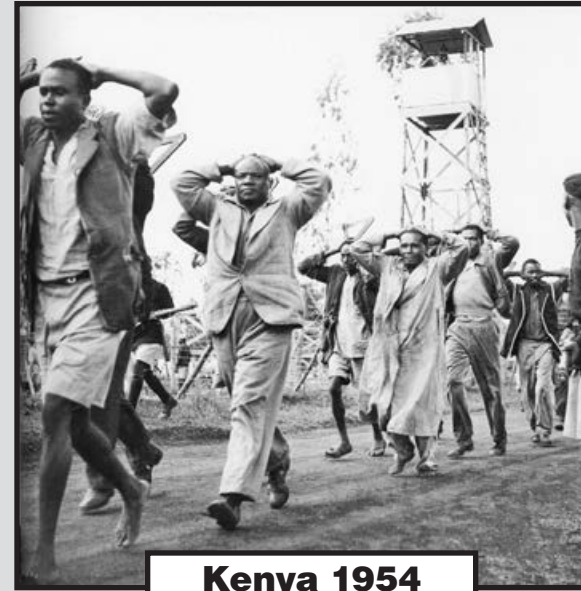
Daily Worker



Malaysia 1950s

British armed forces crushed anti-colonial revolt in Malaysia through mass incarceration, massacre of civilians and beheadings.

Kenya National Archives



Kenya 1954

From 1952 to 1960, Her Majesty's armed forces repressed the anti-colonial Mau Mau uprising. Hundreds of thousands were detained in concentration camps and at least 100,000 killed.

Getty



Iraq 2003

British soldier abusing Iraqi prisoner. Her Majesty's armed forces' participation in US-led invasion destroyed the country, killing and torturing countless.

Jam, the Commonwealth and cancelled strikes



The CWU @CWUnews · Sep 8

Following the very sad news of the passing of the Queen and out of respect for her service to the country and her family, the union has decided to call off tomorrow's planned strike action.



Diane Abbott MP @HackneyAbbott · Sep 9

The death of the Queen has been a terrible blow. She was loved and admired, not just in Britain, but throughout the Commonwealth. Our thoughts are with her family.



Jeremy Corbyn @jeremycorbyn · Sep 8

My thoughts are with the Queen's family as they come to terms with their personal loss, as well as those here and around the world who will mourn her death.

I enjoyed discussing our families, gardens and jam-making with her.

May she rest in peace.



8 September 2022

"RMT joins the whole nation in paying its respects to Queen Elizabeth.

"The planned railway strike action on 15 and 17 September is suspended.

"We express our deepest condolences to her family, friends and the country."

WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain
section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

For a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles!
For a Socialist United States of Europe, united on a voluntary basis!

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For black proletarian power!

Crisis in the unions and the fight for revolutionary leadership

Reprinted below is an excerpt of a 19 July article written by our comrades from Spartacist/South Africa. Since the publication of this article, an opposition grouping within the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) appealed to the capitalist courts to interdict the union's congress, an act of pure class treason that our comrades denounced in a subsequent leaflet, "Capitalist State: Hands Off NUMSA!" (4 August).

* * *

The May congress of the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) made it unmistakably clear that both SAFTU and its largest affiliate, NUMSA, are in a massive crisis. The main expression of this crisis so far is a split in the bureaucracy, running up through the top leadership, and a bitter struggle for organisational control between the two factions—supporters of SAFTU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi on one side and supporters of NUMSA general secretary Irvin Jim on the other. The struggle for positions repeatedly threatened to plunge the May congress into chaos and split the federation. At one point, pro-Jim delegates marched toward the podium singing "*ungayiyjahi impi, iyabulala* [don't rush to war, it's deadly]" as Vavi tried to steamroller obstacles to the election of his slate. Many expect the battle to continue at NUMSA's 11th national congress, which has now been postponed twice as Jim and his allies try to suppress revolts in a

Zwelinzima Vavi, SAFTU general secretary (left) and Irvin Jim, NUMSA general secretary (right), embroiled in unprincipled factional struggle.



number of regions by NUMSA members aligned to Vavi.

Despite the ferocity of the organisational struggle, both sides try to obscure the political issues while making a big show of unity. Behind this crisis is something *neither faction* wants to (or can) address: the utter failure, since the split from the ANC/SACP/COSATU [African National Congress/South African Communist Party/Congress of South African Trade Unions] Tripartite Alliance in 2013-15, to bring about the revival of a militant and powerful trade-union movement that would defend and advance the interests of the black toiling masses. This is what left-wing workers hoped for at the time of the split. Many also expected it to lay the basis for some kind of new political voice of the working class, feeling thoroughly disillusioned with

the wretched pro-capitalist SACP leaders. These hopes have been utterly betrayed. The fundamental reason is not a "lack of urgency" or organisational incapacity, as preached by the pseudo-Marxist left groups whose whole strategic outlook is defined by supporting and pressuring one faction of the bureaucracy or the other—WASP [Workers and Socialist Party], Marxist Workers Party (MWP), Keep Left!, etc. The root cause is the nationalist, class-collaborationist programme of the NUMSA/SAFTU leaders, who despite their secondary differences all seek to re-furbish the nationalist popular front by building a "left" version of the Tripartite Alliance.

The past two years of pandemic and crisis, in particular, have laid bare how totally bankrupt and treacherous this is. As the working class was pummelled by the

virus, capitalist attacks and a worsening jobs bloodbath, the "left" labour traitors at the head of NUMSA/SAFTU stood with the Randlords and the ANC government in every critical situation—from supporting the starvation lockdowns and shoving "shared sacrifice" down their members' throats, to chaining workers to the warring ANC factions and betraying the desperate food rioters during the July 2021 unrest. While the SACP/COSATU tops openly and viciously attacked the workers from inside the capitalist government, the NUMSA/SAFTU leaders loudly denounced the government in words—only to support it and betray workers in deeds. This made them *more effective* at subordinating the mainly black proletariat to the racist capitalist exploiters in this crisis, as they were better able to contain the anger and militancy of left-wing workers.

These betrayals underline again a fundamental truth, which class-conscious workers must grasp to advance their interests: The genuine independence of the workers movement from the Randlords and their black government frontmen, can *only* be ensured through forging a revolutionary leadership on the basis of a programme for black proletarian power. Everybody knows that South Africa today is a smouldering powder keg of social discontent—the only questions are when the next explosion will come and, most importantly, which direction it will go. The alternatives, posed point blank, are either the road of workers revolution based on the power of the millions-strong black proletariat, or a worsening spiral of misery and reaction. There is no middle ground.

In the year since the July 2021 food riots, the social misery at the root of that plebeian upheaval has only grown worse in every way, from sky-rocketing costs of living, hunger and starvation, to worsening economic chaos and mass unemployment. This year has also seen a revival of strikes and protests, demonstrating that despite decades of massive betrayal at the hands of its leaders, the South African working class has not been decisively defeated. It remains militant and relatively well-organised, and many workers subjectively want to fight for communism, insofar as they understand it. At the same time, the potential for reaction—marked by increasingly murderous divisions along racial, ethnic

continued on page 4

Québec communists say "good riddance"!

14 September 2022

Dear *Workers Hammer* comrades,

As the workers in your country are being submerged by torrents of patriotism after the death of the queen, communist fighters in Québec say: Good riddance Elizabeth Regina! Class conscious workers in Québec won't shed a tear for this piece of rot, and neither should those in Britain! It is the British Crown that deported the Acadians, conquered Québec by force of arms in 1763, crushed and hanged the Patriot rebels of 1837-38, and forced a

"constitution" never agreed to upon the people of Québec. Elizabeth II was the living embodiment of this blood-soaked institution which is the cornerstone of Québec's national oppression, the very same institution which is the cornerstone of the reactionary British capitalist state. Enough with this stench coming straight up from medieval times, this insult to human reason, this bastion of reactionary powers! Let those labour traitors who bow before the royal carrion drown in their own tears! In their historic task to rid the earth of such

an abject parasite as the monarchy through a socialist revolution, proletarian fighters in Britain will always find brothers in arms among the Québec working class. *For proletarian internationalist solidarity! Down with the monarchy! Pour l'indépendance du Québec! For workers republics! For the international soviet!*

Simon Ricard,

Editor of *République ouvrière*, French-language newspaper of the Trotskyist League in Québec and Canada

South Africa...

(continued from page 3)

and tribal lines—is clearly shown by the near-weekly anti-immigrant attacks and marches by pogromist outfits like Dudula.

In this explosive situation, a programme limited to trade-union struggle is utterly inadequate for addressing any of the tasks facing the working class. To fight for the burning needs of the working masses—for jobs and a living wage; for access to land and quality, racially-integrated housing; for abolition of the racist migrant labour system and liberation of particularly black women from the former bantustans—necessarily poses the question of which class will rule. To defend and advance its interests, the mainly black working class must place itself at the head of the struggle for the liberation of the black African masses and the coloured and Indian toilers—a struggle which must culminate in a black-centred workers government to expropriate the Randlords as a class and struggle to extend proletarian revolution to the imperialist centres. This is the core of the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution, which provides the only progressive solution to the intense race and class contradictions of neo-apartheid.

The key task is forging a *revolutionary leadership* of the working class, based on strict political independence from the bourgeoisie and its nationalist frontmen. The crisis in SAFTU/NUMSA can be an important opening if it is used to bring about a real break from the nationalist-reformist programme of Jim, Vavi and Co among the union militants who are disillusioned with their leaders. This requires cohering a revolutionary pole as the nucleus of a Leninist vanguard party. Toward that end, we offer a Trotskyist perspective on some of the burning issues posed by the current crises, which we believe to be indispensable for this task. To workers and youth looking for a revolutionary road out of neo-apartheid misery, we urge you to consider these points and get in touch with Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) to discuss the way forward.

Permanent revolution vs NDR betrayal

When NUMSA and other unions split from the Tripartite Alliance in 2013-15, it was a response to massive working-class anger against all the betrayals the SACP and COSATU tops committed as a neces-

Hulton Archive/Getty



THE RHODES COLOSSUS

sary part of subordinating the proletariat to the capitalists and running neo-apartheid capitalism—betrayals represented for many workers by the 2012 Marikana massacre. But this response was distorted and deformed by the pro-capitalist leadership of the split, which from the very outset sought to ensure that the *organisational* break from the Alliance would not lead to a *political* break from the bourgeois programme of the nationalist popular front. Vavi, Jim and Co remain fully committed to the nationalist class collaboration that paved the way to the Marikana massacre and all the other bloody betrayals in the first place—just as they were when they supported [Jacob] Zuma as ANC president a second time in December 2012, a few months after the massacre. But they recognised at a certain point that they needed to formally disavow Zuma and the ANC if they were to maintain the credibility needed to continue serving the bourgeoisie as left-talking labour lieutenants.

After decades of neo-apartheid, the betrayal of the anti-apartheid struggle is so glaringly obvious that any political leader now abandoning the ANC must explain this betrayal. The NUMSA/SAFTU leaders' answer is to throw sand in the eyes of left-wing workers. They acknowledge that the negotiated settlement [CODESA, formally ending apartheid] kept economic and social power in the hands of the white capitalist rulers, ensuring the continued national oppression of the black majority. This is

1892 drawing depicts British imperial dominance over Africa with Cecil Rhodes trampling on Egypt and South Africa, holding a telegraph wire. British imperialism still plays key role in oppression of South African masses.

absolutely true, but it is merely admitted as a smokescreen to peddle the lie that this monumental betrayal of black freedom was simply an “unfortunate” oversight by the ANC and Alliance leaders. The NUMSA/SAFTU leaders tell workers that the Tripartite Alliance government could have been an instrument for suppressing the white rulers, instead of “becoming captured” by them, if only the ANC had adopted different policies and changed some clauses in the CODESA agreement and the Constitution.

This is pure parliamentary cretinism. It isn't constitutional clauses and the like—ultimately nothing more than scraps of paper—that are decisive for maintaining the dominance of the bourgeoisie, but the capitalist state. The essence of the negotiated settlement and “power sharing” deal was that the Tripartite Alliance tops took over administering that state—which they *could only* do on behalf of the white rulers, becoming black frontmen for racist capitalist rule. For the capitalists, this was dictated by the need to “adapt or die”: co-opting the leaders of the ANC Alliance offered the best hope for preserving their system in the face of a militant and powerful black workers movement, many of whom saw their fight as being one for socialism and red revolution. *All wings* of the nationalist popular front were critical to helping the capitalists out of this tight spot. This included left critics like the NUMSA leaders, who played a crucial role in pacifying and politically disarming left-wing workers. They betrayed these workers by telling them that, since socialism is supposedly “not yet on the agenda”, the only game in town is “swelling the ranks” of the ANC to push it to the left.

Today, the NUMSA/SAFTU leaders must cover up this historic betrayal in order to promote the lie that a solution to the misery of neo-apartheid capitalism can be reached through a “course correction” to re-furbish the nationalist popular front. For Jim and the NUMSA tops, this is expressed in the call to “get the national democratic revolution (NDR) back on track”. For Vavi and his supporters (including pseudo-Trotskyists like WASP and MWP), it is to push for a return to COSATU's founding principles of “democratic socialism” and “workers control”, and resurrect the UDF-era [United Democratic Front] version of the nationalist popular front. While their rhetoric and appetites conflict in some ways, what

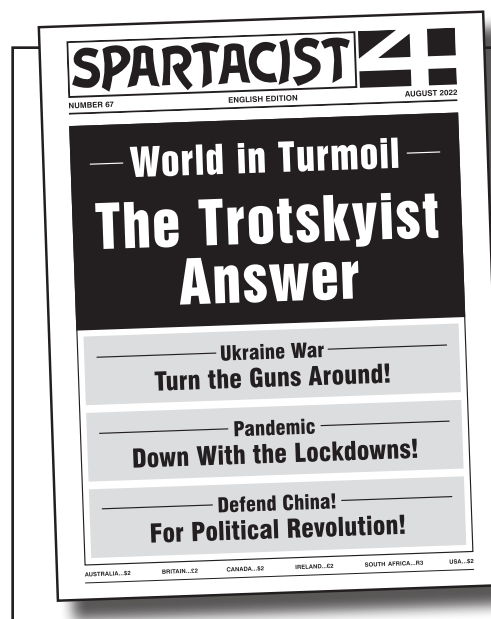
they have in common is that they are pro-capitalist programmes based on opposing a fight for black proletarian power. Instead, they seek to politically tie the proletariat to populist bourgeois-nationalists and other “left-leaning” bourgeois forces (the EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters], NGOs, etc). As a result, they necessarily prepare the way for new betrayals of socialism and black freedom.

Capitalism in South Africa is *built on* the national oppression and dispossession of the black majority. Superexploitation of mainly black labour in the mines, farms and factories produces mountains of wealth for the Randlords and their Anglo-American imperialist senior partners. These rapacious exploiters will never give up power peacefully, through negotiations or reforms. The *only way* to break their economic and social domination is through workers revolution to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the black African masses and the coloured and Indian toilers. **For a black-centred workers government!** The struggle for national liberation will be *the* strategic motor force for proletarian socialist revolution in this country. The key requirement is the proletariat's complete political independence from bourgeois nationalism—both the ANC's liberal brand and more populist variants like the EFF's. This requires a sharp *break* with the nationalist class collaboration of Jim, Vavi and Co.

Since 2013, Jim and the NUMSA tops have endlessly preached that workers need to “get the NDR back on track” by campaigning for the “radical implementation of the Freedom Charter”. It is the same Stalinist schema of “revolution by stages” which the SACP has used for decades to politically chain the working class to the ANC, except now it's offered to workers who are already *gatvol* [fed up] with three decades of ANC-administered neo-apartheid. The ANC has utterly betrayed the aspirations for national liberation, including ditching the vague promises of the bourgeois-populist Freedom Charter to nationalise the mines, land, etc. The NUMSA leaders tell workers that the answer to this betrayal is to desperately cling to that populist programme. They pay lip service to “socialist transformation” as the “most consistent and thorough-going” way to uproot national domination and colonial dispossession, but the *whole point* of “getting the NDR on track” is to (continue to) *postpone* “socialism” to an indefinite future. Thus, Irvin Jim and Co tell the working class that it must limit its struggle to a *bourgeois* programme, the Freedom Charter, before it can “reach the phase of socialist transformation”.

The near-complete overlap of race and class in South Africa gives black nationalism a strong hold on proletarian consciousness, growing out of black workers' just hatred of the racist system of superexploitation. The NUMSA tops and other labour traitors *exploit* this nationalism—the mistaken notion that *all* black people share a common interest standing higher than class divisions—in order to subordinate the proletariat to finance capital. They tell them that the programme of the Freedom Charter offers the way to pry the land, mines, and other wealth of the country out of the hands of the white masters because it represents “all the class forces that suffer under the yoke of colonial dispossession and imperialist domination” (NUMSA 11th National Congress, Secretariat Report).

This is a swindle. Behind appeals for unity of “all the class forces” oppressed by



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white-minority rule, populist nationalism rallies the black toilers behind the class aims of the aspiring black capitalist layers, which nationalist parties like the ANC, EFF, PAC [Pan Africanist Congress] and AZAPO [Azanian People's Organization] all represent. Above all, these parties are committed to *maintaining capitalist class rule*. As a result, they are utterly incapable of ending racial/national oppression, imperialist subjugation, or resolving any of the other basic national-democratic tasks created by colonialism and white-minority rule. On the contrary, in power they inevitably serve as black frontmen for the white big bourgeoisie and the imperialist overlords, employing nationalism to cover for this and attack the working class.

The *only* thing that reviving the NDR can achieve is continued subordination of the proletariat to finance capital, i.e. continued betrayal of *both* the struggle for socialism *and* national liberation. This is clearly shown by looking at what NUMSA leaders did during the period

letariat “on track” for the “first stage” of the NDR meant in reality.

Even NUMSA's leaders were forced to admit that their decades of loyal support to the ANC had “merely resulted in delivering more working class victims, like lambs to the slaughter by the ANC's bourgeois leadership” (NUMSA Special National Congress Declaration, 2013). This in itself is a damning indictment, but to top it all off Irvin Jim and Co brazenly insist that this is something to be “proud” of and for the workers to repeat! In a 2015 speech, Jim explained that “swelling the ranks” of the ANC with workers had all been part of the plan for “a working class led NDR”, which constitutes “the shortest route to a socialist South Africa. We still hold that view.”

By pushing to “get the NDR back on track”, the NUMSA tops are preparing the way for a re-furbished nationalist popular front, and their most probable bourgeois-nationalist coalition partner is currently the EFF. It is an illusion to think that a capitalist government with the EFF would



Reuters/Siphiwe Sibeko

South African police shot 112 miners, killing 34, during strike against British-registered Lonmin Platinum in Marikana, 2012. This massacre illustrates the reality of ANC-ruled neo-apartheid.

from the late 1980s until 2013, when they acted as “left” critics to keep left-wing workers trapped in the Tripartite Alliance class-collaborationist straitjacket. For example, in 1989 then NUMSA general secretary (and SACP leader) Moses Mayekiso told NUMSA workers that negotiations with the white rulers were the only way as the “socialist stage” had not yet arrived:

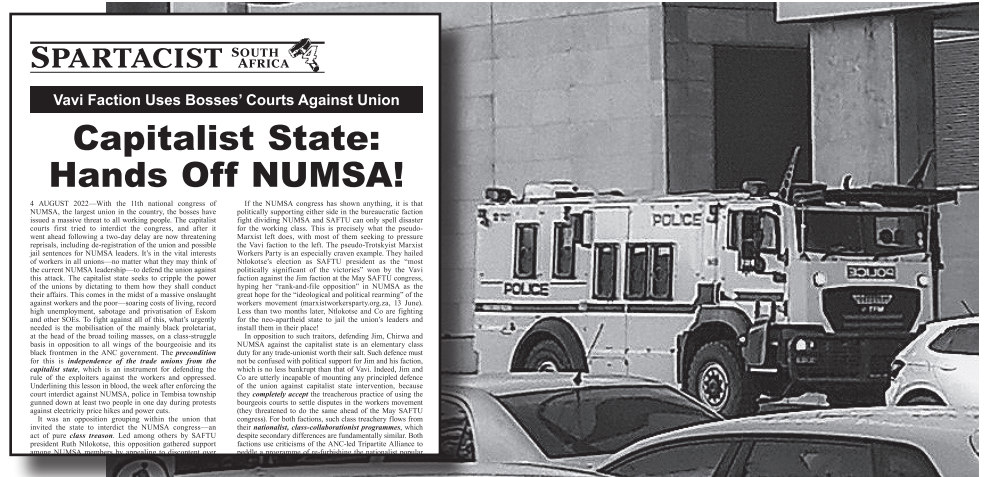
“I believe the solutions to our country's problems will finally come through negotiations. I don't believe that we will be able to get to Pretoria and oust [then head of white supremacist regime, PW] Botha from those buildings.”

The following year, Mayekiso and SACP leader Joe Slovo were brought in by the bosses of Mercedes-Benz SA to put a stop to a “sleep-in” strike by thousands of NUMSA members at the company's East London factory. A few months later, Slovo was in the US reassuring Wall Street and the White House that imperialist finance capital and its controlling stakes in the mines would not be touched by the government that came out of the negotiations: “We know that they aren't charities and they need security, they need the feeling that what they've got they're going to keep.” Strike-breaking and policing the working class on behalf of the white rulers and the imperialists — *this* is what keeping the pro-

be any less subordinate to the white rulers and Anglo-American imperialists than the ANC government today. No different from the ANC in the 1980s, the EFF populists raise calls like land expropriation and nationalisation in order to deceive the black masses, appealing to their anger in order to pressure the white rulers and convince them that they need the populists to keep a lid on things. For example, EFF leader Julius Malema held out an olive branch to the (mainly white) SA Property Owners Association, concerned by the EFF's calls to nationalise the land: “If you are going to invest in property today, it is also going to be wise to invest in the EFF... There is no future without the EFF.”

Irvin Jim has called for a return to “the SACP of Joe Slovo”, and this is the model on which he seeks to build the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP): a new “vanguard party” to lead the working class on a programme of “radical implementation of the Freedom Charter”. This means continuing to betray the aspirations of the black masses for freedom by telling them to leave the resolution of the land question, the nationalisation of the mines, etc, in the hands of the bourgeois nationalists and the capitalist state—a guarantee that the domination of the Randlords and imperialists will remain intact.

Against this treachery, it is necessary to



Spartacist South Africa

Police van parked outside venue of NUMSA congress in Cape Town, late July. Inset: Spartacist protest statement against Vavi faction using capitalist courts to go after factional opponents.

rally the masses behind the social power of the black proletariat in a struggle to *overthrow* the bourgeoisie and its black-nationalist frontmen. To uproot colonial dispossession and end imperialist domination, a revolutionary internationalist programme is necessary. This is underlined by the fact that the mountains of finance capital accumulated over 150 years of superexploitation in the country's mines is parked, for the most part, in Wall Street and the City of London. The Tripartite Alliance government has loyally paid down the debt from the apartheid butchers—a clear index of the nationalists' utter subordination to imperialist finance capital. **Down with the imperialist-imposed debt!**

What would happen in the unlikely event of a bourgeois government adopting a populist course, taking measures like repudiating the debt or nationalising land? First of all, the big bourgeoisie would use massive capital flight, imperialist sanctions and other forms of economic sabotage to retaliate. History shows that there are a few avenues open under capitalism, but *none of them lead to the liberation of the oppressed masses*. The new government could get a few temporary concessions and use them to cut a deal, becoming the new frontmen for the Randlords and imperialists. Alternatively, the regime could end up like Iran or Zimbabwe, isolated and crippled by decades of imperialist strangulation. There could also be a reactionary and bloody backlash fomented by the bourgeoisie, with a section of the army and police commanders attempting to oust the new government by force and crush the proletariat—like what happened to the Allende popular front government in Chile in 1973.

What all of these possibilities show is that a programme based on maintaining capitalism necessarily leads to a dead end. While defending the bourgeois-populist measures as blows against imperialism and national oppression, the proletariat must maintain strict political independence from the capitalist government carrying them out, pursuing the struggle for proletarian revolution and its international extension as the only way to break the chains of imperialist subjugation. What's needed is a revolutionary, class-struggle response to economic strangulation: **Expropriate the banks! For a state monopoly on foreign trade!** This is urgently needed to counter the numerous deceptions the bourgeoisie uses to hide its profits and spirit them out of the country, by uncovering and carefully controlling all the accounts and financial transactions of the exploiters. Introduction of centralised control of production and economic planning; expropriation without compensation of the mines, banks, industry, and the white-owned commercial farms—all of these necessary measures require workers state power.

Of course, a black-centred workers government would also face the threat of economic strangulation by the imperialists, and would still be integrated into a world capitalist economy dominated by the imperialists. The solution is not to withdraw from the world economy—which is utopian and reactionary in any case—but to fight like hell to spread the revolution internationally, especially to the proletariat of the advanced imperialist countries. For this, an international Leninist vanguard party must be constructed through the reorganising of the Fourth International. ■

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Jim vs. Vavi: Both Factions Bankrupt

Corbynism, pandemic, Ukraine and the Crown

The trade union and left-Labour leaders who came into the limelight with the cost-of-living crisis were not born yesterday. Now that Dave Ward, Mick Lynch, Zarah Sultana MP, joined by Corbyn and others are saying “enough is enough” and “we’re going to be standing up for ourselves”, it may be wise to look at what they actually stood up for on the key political issues of the last few years.

Part I: The Corbyn years

The left Labour MPs, trade union leaders and most “socialists” wholeheartedly supported Corbyn from beginning to end and Jeremy remains the hope and model for many. There is a profound sense of denial around Corbyn. While he gained the leadership of Labour by riding a wave of built-up discontent in the country, his leadership was an absolute debacle. On one question after another, he betrayed. Opposing NATO? Dropped. Trident? Dropped. The European Union? Not only dropped, but he campaigned for “remain”! The goal of many leftists today is to revive the “Corbyn spirit”—or Corbyn himself—but it might be a good thing to reflect on exactly what went wrong.

There are all sorts of explanations on the left for Corbyn’s demise: “the right wing was too strong”, “Corbyn was too nice”, “he should have formed another party”, etc. All of these simply avoid the main problem: it was Corbyn’s *political programme* from the start that led him to betray the working class on one question after another.

Corbyn’s programme had nothing exceptional; it was classic left-Labour parliamentary socialism. His popularity stemmed from a real pent-up loathing of the Blairites, their austerity and wars, which catapulted him to Labour leader and potentially to future prime minister. But Corbyn’s parliamentary socialist programme is based on administering British capitalism, not overthrowing it. And if one is to manage the affairs of the British bourgeoisie, one cannot be for scrapping Trident, cutting the armed forces or questioning NATO. One cannot oppose the monarchy or let Scotland go. The bourgeoisie will not let some Labourite prime minister nationalise their industries and take their profits without fighting like hell. So Corbyn either had to confront the ruling class and Blairites or capitulate.

In such a situation, there can be no middle ground: either you stand for the over-

Left Labourism in times of crisis

throw of the exploiters by the working class—that is the only way to successfully confront the rulers—or you bend. Corbyn bent. Not because he was weak-willed, but because his parliamentary Labourite programme was not based on the material interests of the working class. It was based on vague notions of “peace” and “social justice”, on the supremacy of Parliament, the rule of law and, of course, the unity of the Labour Party. In short, Corbyn capitulated because his left-Labourite programme seeks to reconcile the working class with the bourgeoisie.

Today, disgruntled with Sir Keir Starmer, the Enough is Enough campaign, left Labourites and their socialist tails have as their maximum aim a repeat of the Corbyn experience, which can only amount to a repeat of the same debacle. The working class needs this like a hole in the head. The lesson of the Corbyn years is precisely that workers and youth, if they want socialism, need leaders fighting for a revolution. This requires *breaking* from the Labourite reformist programme of Corbyn.

Part II: The pandemic

Everyone knows that the lockdowns intensified Britain’s economic mayhem. Workers lost their jobs by the millions and were locked in their homes for months. Those at work faced speed-ups, pay cuts and anti-union attacks, all in the name of “saving lives” and “national unity”. Everyone knows what a nightmare that was. But everyone also thinks that this was the only choice: “What else could we do? It was painful but necessary.” That is true only if you believe the capitalists or their mouthpieces in Labour and the trade unions.

Faced with massive attacks by the bosses, unsafe working conditions, an NHS on the verge of collapse, crumbling schools and decrepit housing, it is a lie that nothing could have been done but to stay home or “sacrifice” by overworking yourself to

death for the good of the nation. *There needed to be a fight!* Against lockdowns, for unions to control safety at work, for a massive reinvestment in the NHS, for safe and modern schools and housing *now!* But instead, the whole TUC, the Labour Party (from Starmer to Corbyn) and even all the other groups who claim to be socialist demanded *more and longer lockdowns!* The leaders of the working class rallied behind Queen and Country, cancelling strike actions (CWU leader Dave Ward cancelled a strike at Royal Mail in the “national interest”) and tying workers’ hands behind their backs while the bosses smashed them. A total betrayal of the working class!

Faced with a major health and social crisis, socialists had to seize the situation, organise a fightback and advance the struggle to put workers in charge of society, not support the measures of the reactionary bourgeoisie!

Part III: The war in Ukraine

Since the start of the war, the British ruling class has been the most rabidly pro-NATO, pro-Ukraine and warmongering of all. This war is about which gang of thugs will pillage Ukraine: the Russian capitalists or the British, US and NATO/EU imperialists. Supporting Ukraine means supporting the British rulers, who want a “fair share” in the imperialist pillage of that country. It is essential for the working class to oppose this. How? Not with tepid calls for “peace” and “diplomacy” which can only mean a ceasefire between capitalist robbers. And it’s not enough to merely point out that NATO might be responsible—obviously they are guilty. What is needed are workers actions against NATO, against sanctions on Russia and against British imperialism. We need cheap gas: the Russians have some! Crucially, workers here must advocate that

Ukrainian *and* Russian workers turn their weapons against *both* the Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs. That is the only socialist position.

But the leaders of the workers movement have all rallied behind the British bourgeoisie and NATO’s aims. The Labour lefts all embraced the Ukrainian government’s cause, in tandem with the Tories. And when Sultana and other left-Labour MPs co-signed a letter tepidly criticising NATO in February, they all repudiated it as soon as Keir

demanding so. If they can’t find a backbone against Starmer, they won’t find one to stand against the British ruling class! In March, Unite leader Sharon Graham (lauded as a new “militant”) proudly mobilised Unite dockers to refuse to unload ships transporting Russian oil. This was literally carrying out Boris Johnson’s diktat! How can the working class mount an offensive against the bosses here if its own leaders serve as foot-soldiers for the bosses’ pillage abroad?

Part IV: The Queen’s death

As the highest representative of the British ruling class and empire died, these “socialist” MPs and so-called working class leaders all sang the praises of Her Majesty and criminally cancelled strike actions out of respect for the Royals.

Labourites like Corbyn or Lynch have no problem claiming to be “republicans” in “normal times”, ie when saying this has no real implications. But as the Monarch dies, opposing the monarchy actually becomes a concrete and burning question for the class struggle. Are workers going to fight against the destruction of their standard of living, and connect this struggle to the need to abolish the monarchy and the whole system that oppresses them? Or are they going to stand down and bow to the Crown? As our article on the front page shows, the Labour lefts have opted for the latter.

Whether it’s support to Corbyn’s reformism and betrayals, to lockdowns and national unity during the pandemic, to British imperialism over Ukraine or bowing to the monarchy, left Labourism betrayed workers at every turn. To go forward, the working class needs a big clean-up in its house, and fast. *Dump the Labour traitors, dump the bureaucrats left and right—for revolutionary leadership!* ■

Lessons of Corbyn:
Bankruptcy of left Labourism



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Workers...

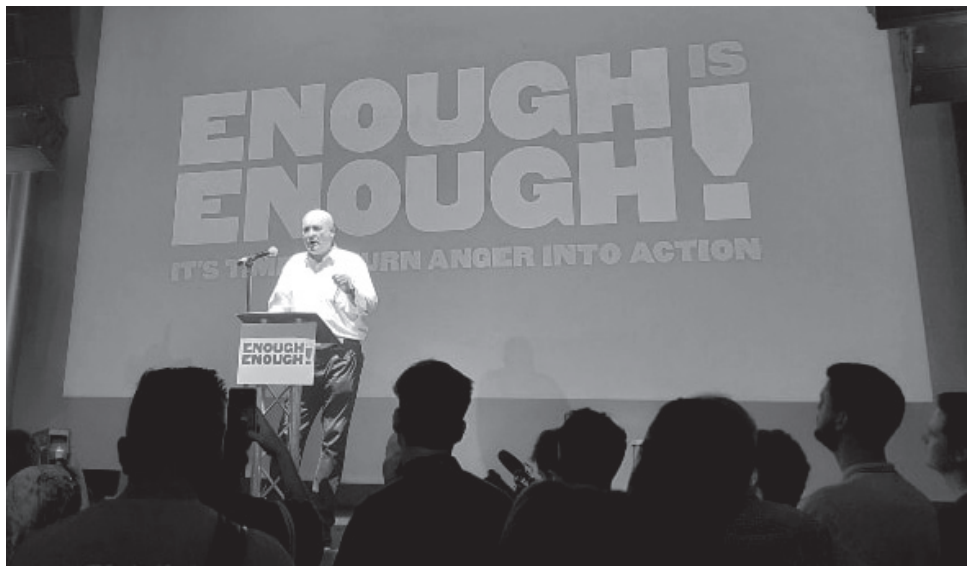
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presented as ancient history by the very leaders of the trade unions. They comply with the most draconian anti-union laws, waiting until they are repealed in Parliament. Fat chance! In the meantime, unions scabbing on each other's strikes has become the norm. Anti-union agency work is tolerated. Even the most barbarous capitalist attacks such as the sacking of the P&O workers last March have not been answered with solidarity strikes. These members of the RMT were left to hang by Lynch. Truly *enough is enough!* For mass picket lines that stop scabs in their tracks! An attack against one is an attack against all! No more agency work! Hire agency workers at full union conditions! Picket lines mean don't cross!

These are not revolutionary calls, but basic principles of class struggle. For the labour movement to advance it must revive these methods which are today rejected by the likes of Mick Lynch. More fundamentally, what is required is a leadership in the trade unions which will wage the day-to-day battles for the immediate betterment of working and living conditions as part of a broader strategy of bringing the working class to power. A leadership that thinks that with the right amount of pressure and "good will on both sides" workers and bosses can mutually prosper will always sacrifice the interest of workers. Capitalist profit comes from the exploitation of workers; "fair play" with the bosses means workers get fleeced. Only a leadership that understands the utterly reactionary nature of the capitalist class and the need for workers to replace it in running society, can organise a winning offensive right now, win real gains and advance the struggle to end all exploitation and oppression.

The Enough is Enough campaign

In the current context it is obvious to all that piecemeal strikes in individual industries will not solve the generalised crisis in Britain. In such situations the trade union bureaucracy usually relies on Labour to put on a left face and dangle the illusion of real improvement under a Labour government. The problem facing Mick Lynch, Dave Ward, Sharon Graham and Co is that the current Labour leader is hell-bent on purging any whiff of Corbynism from the party and establishing himself as a staunchly pro-business leader. With mounting pressure from workers who want and need radical change, this situation puts the trade union leaders in a bind. Given that Labour refuses to channel the bubbling pressure in the union ranks towards Parliament and the



Socialist Worker

Mick Lynch addressing Enough is Enough rally in London, 17 August. This campaign channels legitimate anger into reformist dead end.

trade union tops refuse to wage a real struggle, there needs to be another outlet.

This is where the Enough is Enough (EiE) campaign steps in. Led by Mick Lynch and Dave Ward, in alliance with socialist-lite Zarah Sultana, and a handful of other left-Labour politicians, its stated aim is to fill the political vacuum. Since its launch EiE has garnered widespread support. This popularity is due to the real thirst for a political alternative to the reactionary policies currently on offer as well as to the simplicity and appeal of its five main demands: 1) A real pay rise 2) Slash energy bills 3) End food poverty 4) Decent homes for all 5) Tax the rich.

The truth however is that EiE is designed to be nothing but a toothless public opinion campaign. It is not a step in the right direction as most on the left argue but an obstacle to mounting a fight for real change. It is centred on appealing to politicians in Westminster to take up the campaign's five points. The main target is Starmer who EiE hopes to pressure into a more leftist stance. Lynch has been pretty clear that he thinks "Starmer would be a good Prime Minister, he's very thoughtful and competent — but he's got to find a spark" (*London Economic*, 25 July). EiE hopes to be Starmer's spark. To really turn up the pressure the CWU under Ward has suspended any donations to the Labour Party... apart from affiliation fees. Until Sir Keir fulfils his "leftist potential" Lynch and Ward are aligning themselves with the Labour left, working with MPs, mayors and councillors "who have our backs" such as Sultana and (ex-Blairite) Andy Burnham. In short, the whole reason for EiE's existence is to soothe the need of Lynch and Ward for a political solution which *isn't* a general offensive against the capitalists.

But let's say the wildest dreams of the Labour left come true: Corbyn wins back the leadership of the party and is swept to government on a wave of popular support for socialism, then what? To achieve such basic things as "decent homes for all" they would have to seize the property of huge swathes of the ruling class and go against fundamental interests of the capitalist class. How? With a bill in Parliament? It is enshrined deep in the Labourite DNA that this is the only legitimate vehicle to enact social change. The ruling class unfortunately does not have such qualms and will sooner get rid of Parliament than let itself be dispossessed by some piece of paper. Whoever does not understand this understands nothing of class struggle. Left Labourism is not a programme for struggle but a programme for conciliation and capitulation.

The attempt by EiE to revive the popularity of left Labourism after the Corbyn debacle can only swindle discontented workers and youth into a time-tested dead end.

Socialists should fight for... socialist leadership

The left scene in Britain is rife with "socialist" groups all virtually indistinguishable one from another, many claiming to be Trotskyists. With so many organisations claiming to be socialist, one cannot help but wonder why it is that the fight for socialism plays no significant role in the national debate? To understand this quandary, it is necessary to have a look at what these "socialists" do exactly.

While groups like the Socialist Party, *Socialist Appeal*, the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party of Britain all swear to be for a "socialist transformation of society" and such radical measures as nationalising the "top 150 companies", they all support and promote leaders and movements who are explicitly opposed to socialist revolution. For example, they are all jubilant about Mick Lynch, who proudly calls himself a "reformist" and wants nothing to do with revolution. The EiE campaign is similarly hailed as "a welcome development" (eg *Socialist Appeal*, 19 August). It is a welcome development that there is a rising sentiment for radical change. But it is a huge obstacle to the fight for socialism that this sentiment is being channelled onto an explicitly parlia-

mentary reformist road.

Socialists must fight against workers and youth being led by non-socialist movements like EiE. If they do not do this, they are not socialists but left cheerleaders for a reformist movement.

The main focus of most of the "socialist" left has been to pressure the TUC to "co-ordinate strikes", some go further and advocate the TUC call a "general strike" (*News Line*, 6 September). It is certainly necessary to organise and advocate such working-class offensives, but the real question is who will lead them and under which programme? To be successful such battles need to be conducted by working-class leaders who are ready to go all the way in their fight against the ruling class. Instead of this the current trade union leadership is made up of the same spineless people that oversaw the last 30 years of sell-outs. Any left organisation which is calling on the current TUC to lead a general strike is advocating going into battle with leaders that will sell out at the first opportunity, just like the TUC did in 1926.

The situation in Britain does urgently cry out for a general strike! The first step to prepare such a strike is to break with the TUC-begging, Lynch-tailing socialists who are busy building those very leaderships that stand as obstacles to victory. To advance the cause for socialism there needs to be a fight throughout the labour movement for a new leadership that is committed to the working class taking power. To this end, we put forward the following programme to be fought for *now*, in the trade unions, Labour and the socialist left:

- For mass picket lines that stop scabs in their tracks!
- For a 30 per cent pay rise and a sliding scale of wages!
- Seize the North Sea oil rigs! For union control over distribution of gas and energy at production costs!
- Down with sanctions against Russia! Let Russian gas in! Down with NATO and British imperialism! Ukrainian, Russian workers: Turn the guns against your rulers!
- For a planned economy to rebuild the NHS, rehouse and reindustrialise Britain!
- Down with the monarchy and the reactionary United Kingdom! For workers governments! ■

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To hell with half measures

Workers must run the country!

SEPTEMBER 7—Britain is in shambles. Inflation, energy bills and recession spell disaster for working people. Labour shortages are rampant in almost every industry, social services are teetering towards collapse and housing is crumbling and unaffordable. Trains, airports, sewage, the NHS: nothing works.

Just like the country, the ruling Tory party is in perpetual crisis. After Johnson's ignominious resignation, Liz Truss is now at the helm, replacing an opportunist moron by a fanatical moron. In the spirit of Thatcher, Truss has promised to crush the unions and further bleed workers. Meanwhile Starmer is rising to the occasion by licking the boots of the ruling class and presenting himself as a reliable technocrat who won't give an inch to workers. Both have the same answer to the cost-of-living crisis: throwing tens of billions at energy companies, kicking the can down the road hoping the crisis will melt away. Obviously it won't. Small patch-up jobs will solve nothing and make everything even worse in a few months.

How did we get into this mess? Part of the answer lies with the disastrous government response to the pandemic and Ukraine war. This collided with the effects of the open season on working people since Thatcher defeated the miners. But what most politicians, journalists and leftists won't say is that these are the symptoms of a deeper problem. British capitalism has been in terminal decline for more than a century. Unable to maintain its empire or compete in anything productive, the ruling class has increasingly liquidated Britain's industry, putting all its eggs in the City of London. The result is economic desolation throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, privatisation of public services and the prospering of finance capital. From the Queen to the City to the miserable letting and job agencies, the whole ruling class of this country are parasites sucking working people dry.



Striking Felixstowe dockers, 21 August. Eight-day strike demanded wage increases as inflation soars.

The solution to the current crisis is simple: the working class should sweep away all these useless parasites and run the country from top to bottom. With the working class in charge and the profit motive cut out, the scourges of price gouging, unemployment, expensive housing and deindustrialisation can all be rapidly eliminated. Obviously, this cannot be accomplished by sending Labour MPs to Her Majesty's Parliament in Westminster. The parliamentary circus with all its talk, costumes and demagoguery is not where real power lies, but in Whitehall, the stock exchange and armed forces. The working class cannot take these over but needs its own organs of class power which can rule the country in its own interests.

Workers rule in Britain is no far-fetched utopian scheme, but the only realistic answer to the crisis. It is urgently needed. What is truly fantastical is to think that the utterly reactionary British ruling class will somehow start caring about workers, or that the Labour Party can be pressured

into fighting for working people. Labour has always been and will remain a loyal servant to Crown and City.

So, if the solution to this crisis is straightforward and to a certain degree obvious, why then are we so far from achieving it? This brings us to the nub of the problem, the gigantic gulf between what is needed in Britain today to meet the basic needs of working people and the political solutions put forward by the leaders of the working-class movement in the Labour Party, trade unions and socialist left.

Which road forward?

As the summer of discontent turns into autumn and winter, bills rise and the strike wave continues and expands. Two conclusions can be drawn so far. First, there is obviously seething anger and a clear will to fight among workers. Second, the summer of discontent was not actually very hot. The strikes have been atomised, have had a limited economic impact and have

not been a real threat to the bosses and their government.

What is clearly needed is an offensive by the entire working class against the bosses in the form of a general strike. This would be guaranteed to wrest the most concessions for workers as the crisis hits *right now*. If the entire economy is brought to a halt by the working class, it will also pose the question of who is in charge in the workplace and the country, workers or bosses? But although the need is dire and conditions ripe, no general offensive is being organised. Why not? Because no one in the trade union leadership or Labour Party has any intention of even raising the question of which class should call the shots in this country.

Over the last few months trade union leaders like Mick Lynch (RMT), Sharon Graham (Unite) and Dave Ward (CWU) have been painted as emerging heroes of the working class and the left. Mick Lynch in particular has been effective in shutting up ignorant right-

wing journalists. But when it comes to organising a real fight against the bosses, he and the rest of the trade union leadership have in fact been slamming the brakes on class struggle. They have co-ordinated their strikes to *not* create a major crisis for the government and economy. Their entire strategy rests on running a media campaign that will pressure the bosses, government and Labour to care more about the worsening situation. This is a losing strategy relying on the communication skills of bureaucrats rather than the social power of the working class. It leads to long drawn-out demoralising conflicts which will most likely lead to defeat and drive away popular support.

A consequence of the union leadership's strategy of appealing to the ruling class is its rejection of the most basic methods of class struggle. Britain's labour history is famous for its mass picket lines which stop scabs in their tracks. But such methods are

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