

The Critical Mass  
**Sunday Socialist**

July 17<sup>th</sup> 2022

# FIGHT

# BACK!

The system is corrupt. It is set up to ensure that decent, hard working citizens are led by a bunch of narcissistic dissemblers with no sense of reality. They have allowed our planet to come perilously close to destruction. They allowed millions of people to die from a pandemic that could have been avoided. They are watching as families are plunged into poverty.

Whilst you have worked and strived, they have exploited your labour to amass wealth you could only imagine. They are quaffing champagne and caviar whilst you are struggling to put food on the table. They live in mansions whilst thousands remain homeless. And, what's worse, they don't care.

It is not just a lack of ideas; it is that the ideas they have are both

out-dated and discredited.

It is time for ordinary people to realise that they are perpetually the victims of a con trick. That will only change when the reins are in our hands. When we can make decisions about what affects us.

It's not enough to give us a few crumbs off their table, it is time the tables were turned. Read on.....

## inside this issue

JOIN A UNION • Politicians turn their backs on your hunger • Labour in hungry kids row • Tory hypocrisy • Rwanda in chaos • Summer heat sign of a disaster

Plus Notes from the Edge featuring Alex Greene, Marilyn Tyzack, Luke Andreski, Mike Stanton, and Jo Buchanan

# Never Mind the Tories Join a Union

**A**LL eyes have been on the Tories this week. But away from the glare of publicity, more important battles are being fought. The leadership crisis in the Conservative Party may have been triggered by Johnson lying about what he knew about Chris Pincher, but Johnson has lied before and got away with it.

## Crisis

The difference today is that Capitalism itself is facing a crisis. Rampant inflation is threatening profits in those sectors unable to benefit from soaring food and energy prices. And the cost-of-living crisis is generating new levels of militancy from unionised labour. This has led to divisions within the ruling class which find their reflection in the divisions within the ruling party.

So the instinct is to clamp down on public sector pay. But at the same time private sector employers are feeling the pressure to pay more, both to overcome real labour shortages and to avoid damaging strikes.

## Strikes Are Winning

In the last week British Airways has dropped plans to fire and rehire and agreed to union demands to restore the 10% pay cut imposed during the pandemic. Difficulties in recruiting staff had already led BA to cancel 15,000 flights affecting a million passengers this summer.

Stagecoach bus drivers, represented by Unite, went out on strike in Liverpool on 4th July after originally accepting a pay offer, but the company refused to honour

an agreement on backdating. Stagecoach shares are booming after it was bought by German infrastructure giant DWS, whose majority shareholder is Deutsche Bank, in a deal worth £600 million.

And last Thursday on World Chocolate Day, workers at chocolate giant Cadbury secured a pay deal worth up to 17.5% over the next two years. More than 1,000 employees will receive the uplift as well as a 25% pay rise in holiday pay. Cadbury could hardly plead poverty as its owners, Mondelez, with a turnover of \$29 billion, have just paid \$2.9 billion to acquire an energy bar company in America.

## Power in a Union

Deals like this make it much harder for the Government to persuade public sector workers to accept real terms wage cuts with offers of around 3% when inflation is 11% and rising. RMT are calling national rail strikes. Teachers and civil servants are being balloted. Even barristers have taken strike action.

This would appear to be just the beginning of a season of strikes as workers refuse to accept the paltry offers only too often made by employers. Drivers at eight train companies, members of the train drivers'



**Workers rally at the annual Tolpuddle Festival**  
*Image: TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS FESTIVAL 17.07.2011*  
*by wheelzweeler*

union ASLEF, who have not had a pay rise in three years, voted almost unanimously to strike. (More than 90% of the votes cast were in favour of a strike.) Not only this but thousands of TSSA (Transport Salaried Staffs' Association) union members at Network Rail have also voted for strikes, in separate ballot results announced on Monday.

Post Office staff in the CWU (Communication Workers Union) staged a 24-hour strike over pay yesterday, just the first in a series planned this month by postal workers. Royal Mail workers in the Unite union plan to strike next week.

On top of all this, both Brexit ending freedom of movement, and the government's 'hostile environment' to all immigration have contributed to a general shortage of labour with acute shortages in some sectors. With the Government effectively paralysed by the imminent leadership battle and employers divided in their approach to renewed union militancy, now is the time to exploit their divisions and push for real improvements in pay and conditions.

This article originally appeared online:

<https://creatingsocialism.org/never-mind-the-tories-join-a-union/>

## POLITICIANS LOOK AWAY AS FOOD OUTSTRIPS THE FAMILY BUDGET

It is now 63 days since we started our 14-item shopping basket. Nine weeks. And, in that time, not one item has gone down in price. For decades we have got used to the idea that some items go up, some go down and it kind of levels out. But, if any things are going down, we were very unfortunate in our choice of items to monitor. Some items have not gone up. Four of the items in our basket have stayed the same. They are a cheese and tomato pizza, tomato soup, tea bags and baked beans. Most of the items that have risen have risen by just a few pence. The biggest increase was cheese which jumped from £1.99 to £2.19 in one leap. Some items have changed by just loose change. Spaghetti hoops by three pence. But, given that they started at only 13 pence, that represented a jump of 23%. Cornflakes, one of this week’s risers, added just four pence to a weekly shop.

It is through such small but incremental, increases that inflation creeps up on you. The mainstream media love a big figure. Inflation is now in double figures. It’s the highest it’s been since the 1980s. That sort of thing. But for ordinary families, struggling to make ends meet, all that means very little.

Inflation is not whatever the official statistics say it is. It is the difference between what you spent one week and what the same goods cost the next week. Between May 15th and this week, our 14 goods, originally costing £13.43, rose by £1.33. Inflation, for ordinary families, is the difference between what you need and what you have. It is that sinking feeling when you realise that despite your best efforts to be thrifty you are going to have to give something back to pay the bill at the supermarket checkout.

If you have never been in that situation, I can tell you that you want the ground to open in front of you and just swallow you up. Because there is nothing more shaming than standing there going through your pockets hoping to find a fiver you had forgotten about. And muttering how you must have left your other wallet (or purse) at home.

Our Basket	May 15th	Last week	This week
Cornflakes	0.55	0.55	0.59
Cheese	1.89	2.19	2.19
Bread	0.55	0.65	0.65
Milk	0.95	1.05	1.15
Pizza	0.99	0.99	0.99
Tomato soup	0.45	0.45	0.45
Tea bags	0.95	0.95	0.95
Margarine	1.09	1.19	1.19
Spaghetti hoops	0.13	0.16	0.16
Baked beans	0.22	0.22	0.22
Crisps	2.79	2.99	2.89
Digestives	0.39	0.45	0.45
Apples	0.99	1.39	1.39
Pasta	1.19	1.39	1.39
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13.43</b>	<b>14.62</b>	<b>14.76</b>

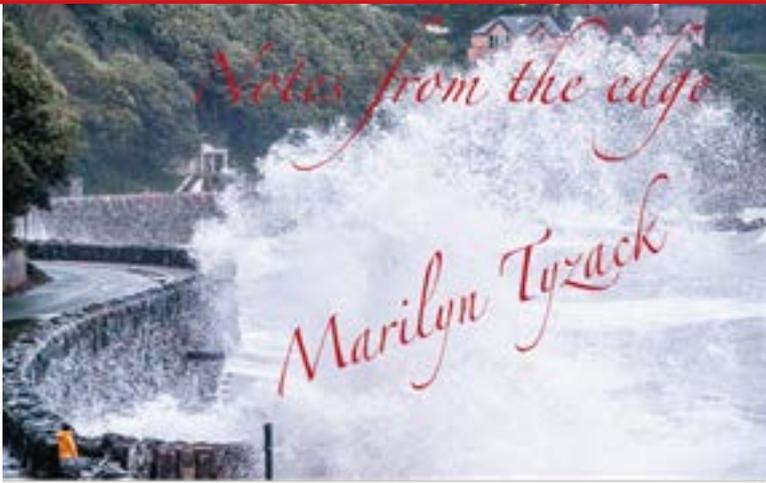
Items in red have risen since May 15th., blue this week, green no change

In some ways that is the worst part of poverty. It is not going without — most people adjust to that. But the constant feeling that you are going to be found out. As if poverty was the defining feature of your character. Made even worse, of course, if you have to play out this scenario in front of children who can see all the nice things other children can have and have to constantly be told to put them back.

As Hollie Richardson, now a journalist, discusses in a column in the Stylist, the shame is felt most acutely by children: ‘The idea of people at my school knowing I was “poor” enough to get free food filled me with dread. We were skint and I spent every day at school trying to hide that from people.’

People should not feel shame for something over which they have no control. But we live in a system that encourages them to feel precisely that. Every politician who refuses to do something to end the scourge of poverty is part of the problem, and that includes a Labour Party scoring political points whilst refusing to support campaigns to reduce child hunger because it might cost too much.





## HOW OPTIMISM TURNED TO ANGER.

The Durham Miners' Gala has been held in the historic city of Durham since 1871.

I last attended the gala in 2017. Like this year's gala, held over the weekend of 9 July, the sun shone, hundreds of thousands packed the streets and the nearby park to watch the parades and listen to the speeches. There was, as always, a sense of solidarity. It is, after all, one of the biggest celebrations of working-class culture anywhere in the world

### *Key differences between 2017 and 2022.*

In 2017 Jeremy Corbyn was the leader of the Labour party and he and members from the Shadow Cabinet were seen on the balcony of the hotel watching the parade. His speech at the rally in the nearby park was greeted with cries of "Oh Jeremy Corbyn" and ended with a standing ovation. That is not to say that there was no longer any criticism. In the bars



*Durham Miners Gala,  
Image Marilyn Tyzack  
©CriticalMassMedia Ltd*

that evening, there were lots of discussions around whether his speech was detailed or offered enough evidence of the possibility of real change. This was, after, all a meeting of the left. Questioning and challenging is almost second nature. The overall feeling, though, was one of optimism and excitement.

There was a sense that, for the first time in decades, change was a real possibility.

Contrast that with 2022. Unlike 2017, there was no longer optimism at the rally last Saturday. But neither was there despair. As the cost-of-living crisis escalates, and more

unions take and contemplate strike action, there was reported to be a real sense of anger and injustice.

### *Dedicated to Key Workers*

This year's gala was therefore dedicated to those key workers. This was intended as a genuine thank you, "Not the platitudes received from government about standing on your steps on a Thursday evening and clapping."

There was a lot of discussion around the absence of Keir Starmer at the rally. Contrasts were made with images of him quaffing champagne at Wimbledon and his non-attendance.

However, because of its focus on key workers, the organisers said he hadn't been invited to address the crowd. This may have been a good move, as whenever his name was mentioned, sounds of booing could be heard. He subsequently said he couldn't attend in any capacity as "he had a prior engagement."

### *Speeches*

The speeches this year were given by union leaders of public sector unions. It was the RMT leader, Mick Lynch, who brought the crowd to their feet when he opened his speech by giving a very clear warning to the government and exploitative employers, "The working class are back, the working class are angry, and the working class are no longer humble". He also strongly advised Keir Starmer to find his voice in support of the working class and urged the crowd to go back to their own unions and demand action.

So, the line-up of Tory hopefuls, who are falling over themselves to appease their base with promises of more tax and regulation cuts, will ignore this growing mood of discontent at their peril.

As Mick Lynch said,

"The Working Class are back, and the Working Class are angry."



**L**ABOUR peers sat on their hands when they could have voted to take action on child poverty. They were whipped to abstain on a Lib Dem amendment to the Schools Bill that would have entitled every child in a family in England claiming Universal Credit to free school meals. Only three Labour peers defied the whip, and the amendment was lost by 51 to 108 votes. The Social Market Foundation estimated recently that almost two million children go hungry each day. Labour peers find no disjunction between preventing desperate children from having a meal at school and their own £323 a day attendance allowance plus travel expenses and their right to eat in the subsidised members dining room.

### *Labour Abstains*

This is nothing new for Labour. In January Starmer whipped MPs to abstain on Tory proposals to cut the Benefits Cap. Rachel Reeves, the Shadow Chancellor is determined to be tougher than the Tories on benefits. And, lest you think this is some new horror inflicted on Labour by Starmer, let us remind ourselves that the Corbyn leadership was the exception rather than the rule. Between 2010 and 2015 Labour refused to oppose George Osborne's austerity culminating in Harriet Harman, as interim leader, whipping MPs to abstain on the Tory Welfare Bill. Only a quarter of MPs ignored the whip then. But that is still more than the 14 who defied Starmer in January.

If you think Labour in government would be any better, look to Wales where education is a devolved power. In December 2020 Labour Members of the Senedd voted against a Plaid Cymru amendment to the Welsh Budget Bill which would have extended

free school meals to include all children from families receiving universal credit. 129,000 children in Wales live below the poverty line, but over 70,000 do not qualify for free school meals. Labour claimed that the uncosted proposal was simply electioneering. Better it seems to leave children hungry than have to find the money to feed them.

### *Pound Shop Blair*

Image by Mathieu Stern Unsplash



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In a recent article for Labour List, Phil Wilson, the Labour right winger who replaced Tony Blair as MP for Sedgefield until he lost to the Tories in 2019, quoted Shadow Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson, who said that it would be,

**...totally inadequate – the reverse of our socialism – to live in a society where many of us had jobs, sufficient food, warm houses, free hot meals for our kids, and free sanitary products, but didn't have money to spend as we saw fit on anything else. Equality in a free society is about power, not goods.**

*Labour List 12 July*

### *Socialism*

By some bizarre twist of logic, they seem to be



Compiled by  
Mike Stanton

### *Cost Of Living*

Did your cost of living payment arrive on Thursday? Over 8 million people on benefits are entitled to £650, paid in two instalments. But only 1.6 million have been paid so far. The first payment was promised from July 14th. Note that it says from not on. The DWP does not have the capacity to pay everybody on the same day. The best it can say is that most people will get their money by the end of July and some people will still be waiting in August. The system cannot cope. It's time we stopped coping with the system.

### *Covid*

Covid cases are soaring. This is the third wave this year and a fourth wave in the Autumn is expected to be worse. Independent Sage are urging a return to masks in enclosed spaces like shops and public transport, the return of free testing, higher sick pay and for people displaying symptoms to stay at home. And just as we expect clean water from a tap there should be clean air in public buildings like schools. But that would require action from a government that thinks it has "Got Covid Done."

saying that if we feed the poor and hungry, we will remove their appetite for socialism! It is all very well to talk about power and choice. But where is the Labour policy to raise the minimum wage to £15 an hour to abolish in-work poverty? What about supporting striking workers using their power and exercising their choice to fight for higher wages?

Real freedom has to begin with freedom from want. Real equality is meaningless without equal rights to food, shelter, clothing, light and warmth. That may be the reverse of Labour's nightmare version of socialism. But at Critical Mass it is the cornerstone of our dream for a better world.

<https://creatingsocialism.org/labour-votes-to-let-kids-go-hungry/>

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### *Good News on Cladding*

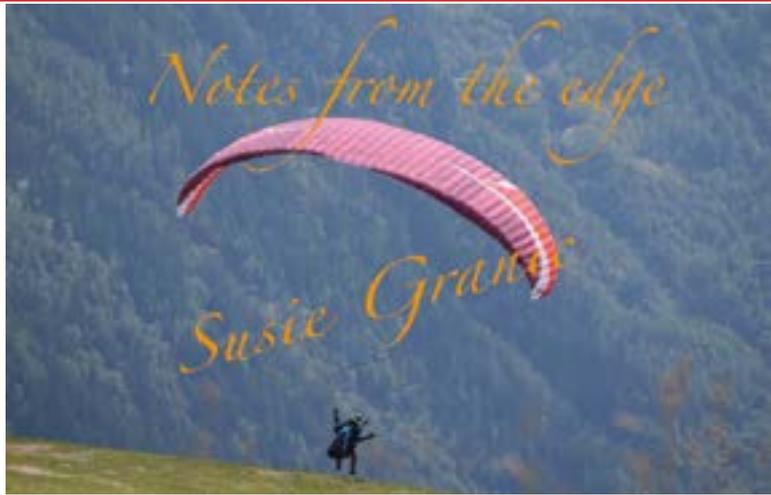
Last week we reported on fears that when Johnson sacked Gove it would mean yet more delays to the cladding replacement programme. But the new housing secretary, Greg Clark is demanding binding contracts from companies to fix fire safety defects on their buildings and a levy on the building industry to pay for upgrades on buildings where the initial developer no longer exists. A Tory taking on the building industry? We predict that Greg Clark will not be leading the Conservative Party any time soon.

### *Wetherspoons Losing Money*

Wetherspoons are heading for a loss of £30 million this year. Tim Martin blames people working at home and not popping into one of his pubs for a drink after work. He has also had to increase wages to keep his staff after the disgusting way he treated them during lockdown. And he is selling less beer as people continue to avoid pubs because of the continuing pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Expect Wetherspoons to put up their prices before long.

### *Wage Freeze*

The TUC says that wages in the UK are set to shrink by £1,750 over the next two years, the worst of any G7 economy. That is on top of the £20,000 loss in real earnings since the bank crash in 2008. TUC general secretary, Frances O'Grady said, "Making ends meet shouldn't be a battle." Critical Mass agrees. The real battle should be for higher pay and the TUC should be leading it.



### *The Forgotten Women and Children*

ABOUT a year ago the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Trafficked Britons in Syria launched an inquiry into the families and individuals abandoned by the British government in northeast Syria. At the time they found that British officials had not done nearly enough to identify these at-risk individuals, many of whom were under age at their time of travel. The report explicitly criticised the security risk that leaving the detention of suspected ISIS militants - and their families - to the Kurdish-led authorities posed, and still poses.

Yet today, after all this time, many of these British nationals are still being detained in northeast Syria today, yet are victims of human trafficking. While the media loves to vilify these people, usually portraying them as 'men of fighting age', investigations by Human Rights Watch and the charity



Relieve, have found that 84% of the British nationals detained are women and children. Of these, 63% of detained women are likely to be victims of human trafficking. They were often trafficked to the region after being groomed online as teenagers, by ISIS.

### *Human Rights Watch*

Last year, Human Rights Watch estimated that 12,000 children and women who were not originally from Iraq or Syria now live in detention camps for family members of suspected ISIS militants and are being held in inhumane conditions with inadequate access to water, food, and healthcare.

According to the APPG's findings, approximately twenty British families are detained in these camps; around 50 people, half of whom are children. Around 27,000 children in total, of all nationalities, live in these camps, in what charities have called 'unbearable conditions'.

The APPG found, in 2021, "at least 163 people died in al-Hol Camp, 62 of whom were children, and reports suggest that two children die in al-Hol " - described by Kurdish authorities as a "ticking time bomb" - "and Roj camps each week from preventable illnesses."

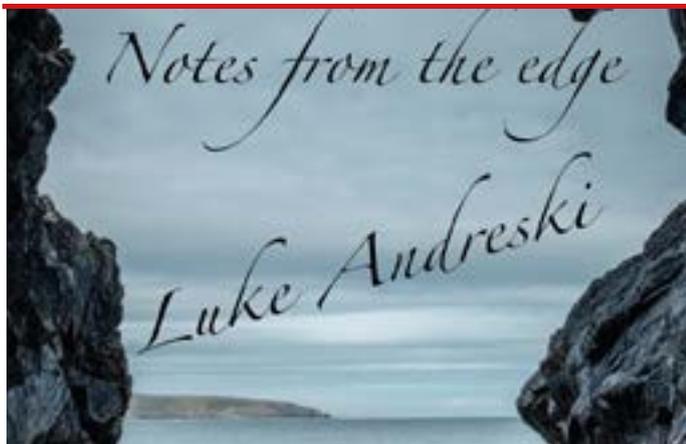
### *Citizenship*

These British citizens have no access to lawyers and the conditions they are living in are clearly dangerous, but of course rather than making arrangements to bring them home, Priti Patel and the government have chosen to cast them out. And the Nationality and Borders Bill is helping the government to wash their hands of these abandoned Britons.

When Shamima Begum was stripped of her citizenship in 2019 for having been groomed by ISIS and having travelled to Syria, many of us voiced our dismay at what the future could bring for other Brits trapped in Syria and elsewhere, and it would appear how concerns were justified.

Do not think that this government will only do this to people who you may not like - if you were to become trapped in a middle eastern country it could just as easily be you.

*Image: "Jordan Camp Host to Thousands of Syrian Cross-Border Refugees" by United Nations Photo is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*



### *Social mobility*

He's not everyone's cup of tea... but Freddie Flintoff's new BBC series, *Field of Dreams*, is well worth watching. Flintoff's challenge is to talent spot a new young cricketer from Preston, a city in the north of England. Currently, eight out of eleven of the England team went to public schools, while very few state schools have the funds or time to organize cricket teams. Cricket equipment is expensive and beyond the budget of most schools.

The series starts with a group of young men who hadn't heard of Flintoff (a former Sports Personality of the Year) and some of whom didn't know what cricket is (despite it being one of the country's most popular sports). What's particularly striking is the lack of ambition and confidence of the teenagers. They're taken to The Lakes for their first game against a team of veterans. They've never visited the lakes before even though it's only an hour's journey from their homes. They're overwhelmed by the space.

The team's star player is a young man seeking asylum from Afghanistan. The issue of institutional racism in cricket isn't addressed, the programme focusses on lack of opportunity. How can you succeed in life if you've lost before the starting pistol goes off?

### *Antidepressants*

For three years we've been encouraged by a gurning fool of a PM to believe that a positive attitude will make Britain great again. An implication of this is that the economic recession we now face must be our own fault, given that last week the NHS reported antidepressant use rising last year by almost half a million to 8.3 million.

The number of people on antidepressants is a good proxy measure for the state of the nation.

The International Happiness Index has the UK

falling from 13th in 2019 to 17th in 2021. Covid hit the index score of most nations, but this doesn't explain the UK's relative fall. Mental health was identified as one of the major factors.

### *Mental Health Care*

The poorest children are four times more likely to have mental health difficulties than the wealthiest. Black people are at a four times higher risk of being sectioned than white people. People with a mental illness have a 15-20 year shorter life expectancy than the rest of the population. Recently an 18-year-old had to live on the floor of an A&E department for 8 days because there was no psychiatric bed for her anywhere in the UK, with safety issues for both the girl and the staff.

This is from the Centre For Mental Health: 'Poverty is toxic to mental health and taking people out of poverty has been demonstrated to improve mental as well as physical health. The Government can seek to reduce poverty by increasing benefit payments, by ensuring employers pay the Real Living Wage and by setting a new target to reduce child poverty.'

Over the past couple of Sundays I've provided examples of how vital health services are being privatized by stealth. With dentistry, community health and mental health, the government's priority is not to improve health care, but to save money for tax cuts. In all cases the services have catastrophically deteriorated, with a disproportionate effect on the less well off. History will judge this government by its attacks on the vulnerable and the poor.



The state of mental health in the UK is just not cricket. Image courtesy of <https://www.needpix.com/photo/362276/>

# *Mo Farah's story shines a light on the hypocrisy of Tory policy*



*Images courtesy of Erik van Leeuwen and Ronnie Macdonald*

**W**ITH Mo Farah's revelation of having been trafficked into the UK under the name of another child, the Government's refugee policy again raises its head. If indeed it ever lowered it. In shame as it should. Born Hussein Abdi Kahin, in Somaliland, north of Somalia, Mo said he had been brought to the UK with a woman and her children under the name of another boy called Mohamed Farah.

The four-time gold medallist has told his life story in a documentary broadcast by the BBC last night. His childhood sounds quite horrendous and, instead of condemnation of his 'deception' as a child, one should look into the reasons behind his change of name and identity. In the documentary he does not attempt to fudge any details but gives a clear account of what happened to him, and doubtless has happened and is happening to countless others.

## **Harrowing account**

Following his father's death in 1987, Mo and his twin, Hassan, were sent by their mother to live with an uncle in neighbouring Djibouti for their own safety. He recalled a woman visiting the house several times to observe him. He was told that she would be taking him to Europe to live with relatives and the nine-year-old had no reason to disbelieve her. What nine-year-old orphan would?

But, when he reached the UK, things were not as they seemed. He said: "I had all the contact details for my relative and once we got to her house, the lady took it off me and right in front of me ripped them up and put it in the bin and at

that moment I knew I was in trouble."

He was told to work around the house if he expected to be fed."If I wanted food in my mouth my job was to look after those kids, shower them, cook for them, clean for them, and she said, 'If you ever want to see your family again, don't say anything. If you say anything, they will take you away'."

It's a harrowing account, but there's more to it than just this one man's story. Mo Farah and his wife,



Tania, consulted lawyers who told them that he could be stripped of his nationality because the citizenship was obtained by fraud. However, they thought that the risk would be lessened because he was trafficked to the UK. And indeed, it is understood the Home Office will not be taking any action against the famed athlete. Home Office guidance assumes that a child is not complicit in gaining citizenship by deception. A spokesperson said: “No action whatsoever will be taken against Sir Mo”.

## Nationality and Borders Act

This is all as it should be, but what about all the other victims of trafficking? Those who are not as high profile? Under the Nationality and Borders Act passed towards the end of April this year there were some frightening reforms. Tougher penalties for people smugglers with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment is one, and, while many may applaud this move, it will do nothing to deter these smugglers, some of whom are traffickers, preying upon the vulnerable looking for safe haven.

The Home Office also introduced new measures to end what they call ‘the merry-go-round of legal challenges which can be used to frustrate removal of those with no right to be in the UK’. Barring them their right to a lawyer? Is this what we have become as a society? We are going to deny vulnerable people

the right to counsel?

## Hypocrisy

And just before this Bill passed we all heard of the horrific measures the Government is taking to have refugees/migrants who enter the UK in a manner deemed illegal by the Government, processed in Rwanda. The Government likes to say ‘processed’ but what is not made as much of as it should be is that these people sent to Rwanda are not being processed and allowed to return to the UK if asylum is granted; oh no, they are to stay in Rwanda and build their lives there. No matter that they have no connections with anyone in Rwanda. If the Tories had their way, Mo would have drowned in the channel or been deported to Rwanda.

There are those now saying his knighthood should be taken from him and others saying, “Well, it’s okay for him, he’s an Olympic Gold medallist, but those others eh?”. Hypocrites, the lot of them. And I include the Government in this. If this had been a case of ‘plain old’ Hussein Abdi Kahin seeking refuge, Priti Patel would have had him shipped off or detained more quickly than you could say ‘evil’.

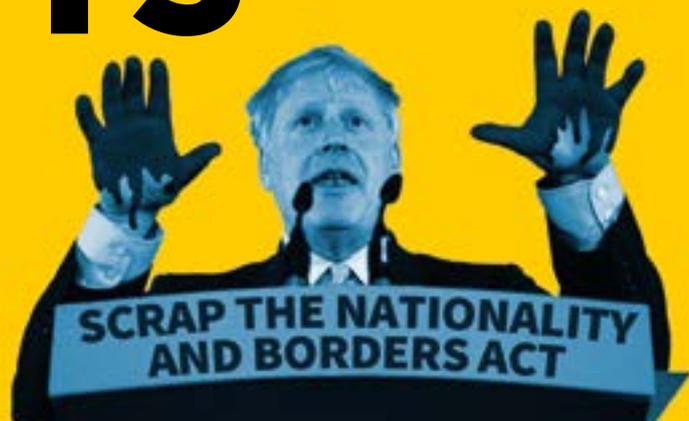
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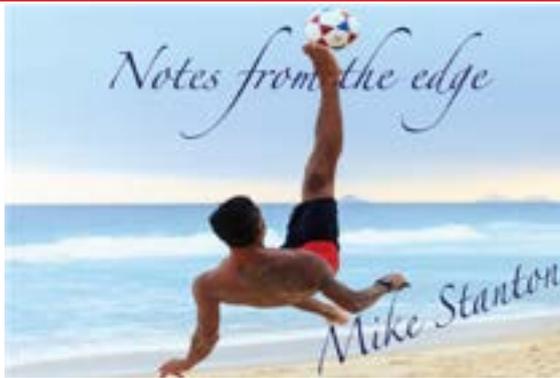
<https://creatingsocialism.org/mo-farahs-story-shines-a-light-on-the-hypocrisy-of-tory-policy/>

# STOP RWANDA FLIGHTS

## NO OFFSHORE DETENTION

## TUESDAY 19 JULY





## MARX - THE FINAL YEARS

The end of the 1st International marked the end of Karl Marx's direct involvement in the class struggle. Long years of poverty had left him physically and mentally exhausted. Marx's financial situation improved in the 1870s when Engels sold his share of the family business and moved to London, but his health was shot.

### *Critique of the Gotha Programme*

Despite his ill health Marx still took a lively interest in politics, especially in his native Germany. In 1875 the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was established at a congress in Gotha. Marx wrote *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* criticising the new party's concessions to the ideas of Ferdinand Lassalle. He and Marx had been friends and, as a dedicated socialist who had been imprisoned after the Revolution of 1848 and had set up Germany's first socialist party, his ideas still had influence even though he had died in 1864.

### *Ferdinand Lassalle*

Lassalle believed that the state was neutral, and that universal suffrage would allow the workers to capture the state and bring about socialism. He also believed in "the iron law of wages." Under capitalism wages would always be driven down to the minimum and so trade union struggles were a diversion from the true struggle for socialism and should be opposed. He was also a devoted German nationalist. So, it is easy to see how he and Marx had fallen out.

## *Anti-Dühring*

The German SPD was nominally a Marxist party. But in 1877 at a time when revolution was, definitely, off the agenda and the party was facing persecution by the authorities, Engels wrote another pamphlet, *Anti-Dühring*. This was prompted by German socialist Eugen Karl Dühring's attempt to turn the SPD away from Marxism. Many of the party leaders were influenced by Dühring and by the start of the Great War in 1914 it had become a thoroughly reformist party.

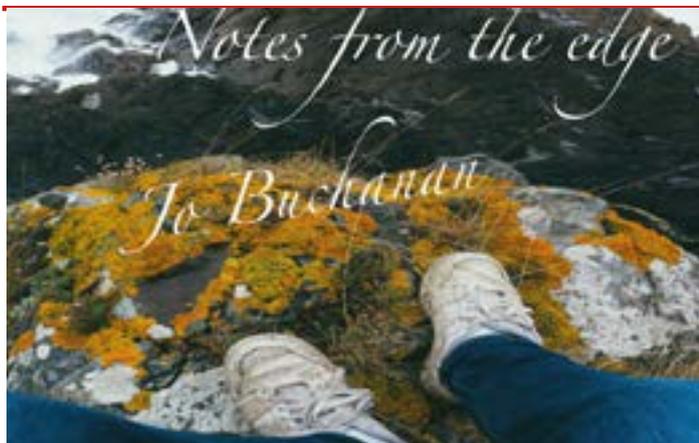
So even as the socialist organisation was just beginning, questions of revolution or reform and nationalism versus internationalism were already at the heart of our movement. It was battles like these, often with people who thought they were followers of Marx, that led Marx to declare, "All I know is that I am no Marxist."



*Image courtesy of <https://www.needpix.com/photo/854621/>*

Marx lived out his final years free from poverty but dogged by ill health. Then tragedy struck. His wife Jenny was diagnosed with an incurable cancer. She died in 1881 and after his eldest daughter, also called Jenny, died in 1883 Marx was soon to follow and later that year he died peacefully in his sleep.

Regular readers may have noticed an omission from this series of articles: Marx's magnum opus - *Capital*. Most of it had been written in manuscript form in 1864 and 1865 and Volume 1 was published in 1867. But Marx kept on amending it until his death and it was left to Engels to prepare the remaining volumes for publication. It really deserves its own mini-series, and I will return to this in the autumn.



## *Is net zero a fantasy?*

There is too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We need to stop emissions and remove some of it. Various techniques have been proposed to call a halt to global warming. The plan is to achieve 'net zero', whereby we balance the remaining emissions of greenhouse gasses by removing them from the atmosphere using technology.

But should we be relying on technology to save us from global warming, especially as the prospect can remove any sense of urgency?

## *Warnings*

We have had many warnings. In 1988 James Hansen demonstrated that our climate is warming, mainly as a result of human activity.



Hope was raised at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio and the 1997 Kyoto Summit and, during the 1990s, there was a focus on increasing energy efficiency and changing our sources of energy in the hope of halting the growth in fossil fuel emissions. But these hopes were never realised and, post-millennium, there was a greater focus on the possibilities of carbon capture and storage, which would involve taking the carbon dioxide from coal-fired power stations and storing

the carbon deep underground. Unfortunately the prospect of these schemes was used as an excuse to avoid making the vitally important cuts to greenhouse gas emissions.

Now comes a focus on Bio-energy Carbon Capture and Storage, or BECCS. Instead of coal being burnt in power stations, biomass such as agricultural waste, wood and crops could be burnt, and the carbon dioxide captured and stored underground. More trees would be planted to take in carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

At the 2015 climate conference in Paris, there was jubilation, as it seemed that a huge breakthrough had been achieved. The international community had agreed to limit global warming closer to 1.5°C. But there remained doubts among the scientific community

A later UN report stated: "If the Paris Agreement was unable to limit global warming to 1.5°C, the number of lives lost to more intense storms, fires, heatwave, famines and floods would significantly increase."

## *Doubts*

Climate scientists expressed doubts and, as BECCS clearly became less and less workable, other schemes were proposed, such as direct air capture and, more recently, geo-engineering, interfering in the Earth's climate system, is being researched. There may be arguments for these processes, but we continue to burn fossil fuels and destroy habitats.

Many scientists consider 'net zero' as something of a fantasy. There is concern that we are failing to speak out and act now. "If we want to keep people safe, then large and sustained cuts to carbon emissions need to happen now. That is the very simple acid test that must be applied to all climate policies. The time for wishful thinking is over."

*With thanks to James Dyke, Robert Watson and Wolfgang Knorr for much of the information and the quotations in this piece.*

*Image: "20091212\_14k Carolin & Greenpeace's hand-out placard before the big climate protest during the UN climate conference in Copenhagen, Denmark" by ratexla*

# Summer heat could kill thousands

**C**LIMATE experts warn that the hot weather currently being ‘enjoyed’ by much of Europe could be responsible for hundreds of excess deaths. This bout of hot weather, far from being just a seasonal happening, is directly related to changes in the earth’s climate. “In 2020, in the UK alone more than 2,500 people died because of hot days – and those were less hot and less frequent than what we are already seeing this year,” Friederike Otto, who leads The World Weather Attribution, told the [Independent](#) newspaper.

Those still wishing to deny we are in the midst of a climate crisis, or even to acknowledge global



*Image courtesy of <https://www.needpix.com/photo/404325/>*

warming exists, are pointing to the infamous ‘summer of ’76’ as proof that these extreme temperatures Europe is now experiencing have happened before.

They are falling into the trap of confusing weather and climate. Weather refers to short term atmospheric conditions – such as the fortnight of high temperatures in 1976 – while climate is the weather of a specific region averaged over a long period of time. And climate change refers to long-term changes such as the loss of ice in the Antarctic. Since the early nineties, Antarctica has lost about three trillion tons of ice, and Greenland and Antarctica together have lost 6.3 trillion tons since 1994.

Antarctica hasn’t always been covered with ice. It remained without freezing over for almost 100

million years. Then, about 34 million years ago, a dramatic shift in climate happened and the warm greenhouse climate, which had been stable since the extinction of the dinosaurs, became dramatically colder, creating an ‘ice-house’ at the poles that has continued to the present day – or was continuing.

Just for the doubters amongst us, the Earth’s temperature has risen by 0.14 degrees Fahrenheit per decade since 1880, but the rate of warming since 1981 is more than twice that: 0.32 degrees per decade with 2021 being the sixth-warmest year on record. Will 2022 exceed that?

## High pressure system

This latest hot spell to hit Europe is being caused by a high pressure system called the Azores High, which usually sits off Spain. It



*Image courtesy of <https://www.needpix.com/photo/382993/>*

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has grown larger and has pushed farther north, bringing high temperatures to the UK, France and the Iberian Peninsula and trapping a bubble of rapidly warming air.

We may complain of high temperatures here in the UK as they hit the mid-thirties on some days, but in Western Europe they are looking at temperatures above 40 degrees and which will continue for not just days, but weeks. Winds are expected to turn southerly, bringing hot air up from North Africa and the Sahara, and the Saharan dusts which usually come with the winds. By the end of this week, temperatures are expected to hit 40-45 degrees across France and Spain. And in parts of the Central and Eastern Mediterranean temperatures are predicted to rise about 10 degrees above normal. It is expected they will exceed the 40 degree mark right across Italy and into the Balkans.

### State of emergency?

The Portuguese Government declared an eight-day state of alert last week due to a high risk of wildfires, while Europe as a whole has just experienced its second warmest June on record. Here in the UK the Met

Office has issued an amber warning because of the conditions posing a potential threat to life. It said there is a chance the all-time UK record could be beaten; this was the 38.7 degrees recorded in Cambridge University Botanic Garden in July 2019.

And once again we are likely to see the understaffed and under-funded NHS bearing the brunt of this as vulnerable people – the elderly, those with cardiovascular problems and the very young – are at particular risk from this extreme heat. However, the healthy should not take unnecessary risks as illness and even death can occur amongst them too.

A national heatwave emergency may very well be declared which will have an impact on transport, food and businesses. So... Brexit, the Covid pandemic, the cost of living crisis... they are all going to come together and hit as one if temperatures do reach the expected highs. We may soon be longing for the heady days of 2018.

This article originally appeared online:

<https://creatingsocialism.org/more-extreme-heat-on-the-way/>

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## Evicting The Squatter

*By Alex Greene*

Welcome to my weekly column about finding, and having, a very real, practical faith that we need every day, just to get up in the morning.

### Law 31

Robert Greene's *The 48 Laws of Power* has this timeless advice.

The best deceptions are the ones that seem to give the other person a choice ... give people options that come out in your favour whichever one they choose.

This past week has been an exercise in Law 31. Johnson is playing a macabre game of bluff with us all.

### Control Of The Rules

His "resignation" was the opening gambit in a game he is playing, which ultimately has him coming back into Number 10 in triumph.

The game is this – fake his resignation, then set up a leadership challenge. He stays in Number 10 "until his successor has been chosen" - whoever that is.

The problem with this game is that, clearly, the candidates are so awful, morally bankrupt, and incompetent that he is counting on the public screaming for Johnson to return because he thinks they'll see him as the least of many evils after all. They'll never be allowed to see that he placed these pawns on the board for this specific reason.

Johnson has always been like this – scheming, playing the game, cheating if it'll get him into 1st place. He is always playing these little gas-lighting games.

There's really only one way to end this nightmare.

We have to declare the game over - break the cycle of gas-lighting, open the door, and send Johnson through it. No more games.

He knows it's over, but until we wise up and compel his immediate departure, he, and the media, are going to play us all for fools and run an unelected tyranny from his squat at Number 10, always being on the verge of leaving, but never quite actually doing so.

Have a good week, everybody\*

\*except Johnson, the Tories, and the media.



Image from Government of India, Wikimedia Commons

# Sri Lanka descends into chaos as protests force resignations

**P**ROTESTORS have forced the resignations of both the President and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka as the biggest anti-government protests in years have taken to the streets.

As inflation in Sri Lanka reaches 70%, there are widespread food shortages with the UN World Food Programme reporting that nearly nine in 10 families have been skipping meals or otherwise skimping to stretch out their food, whilst 3 million are receiving emergency humanitarian aid.

Against this backdrop, Sri Lanka has been in no position to pay back its loans and the International Monetary Fund is, as always, putting the interests of creditors above those of ordinary people. The majority of Sri Lanka's loan debt is held by China.

In some ways this is a standoff between the IMF and China, one wanting to restructure the loans and the other seemingly prepared to loan more money to help Sri Lanka out of its present crisis. Clearly, the IMF which is a pro-capitalist, pro-USA institution does not want China, the only economic power that is strong enough to challenge US imperial ambitions, to be the major financier of a country which occupies one of the main shipping lanes in the region.

Meanwhile, ordinary people have had enough. The protests, organised by opposition party Samagi Jana Balawegaya led by Sajith Premadasa, have seen hundreds of thousands on the streets of Colombo. On Saturday thousands of men, women and children were pouring into the imposing state mansion, queuing to sit on President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's chair on the upper floor while children and parents banged on a grand piano downstairs.

Rajapaksa, 73, fled the presidential palace back entrance under military cover. Ordinary Sri Lankans were able to see the opulence surrounding the corrupt old guard with marble floors and central air conditioning. A monk, one of many taking part in the protests, told the **“When leaders live in such luxury, they have no idea how the commoners manage. This shows what can be done when people decide to exercise their power.”**

Monk Sri Sumeda



Image by Silar, Wikimedia Commons

Sri Lanka may seem a long way from Britain, but

there are clear lessons here. Once a prosperous nation with a large middle class enjoying a good standard of living, it has rapidly become an economy in trouble with increasing poverty, food shortages and a corrupt political elite focused more on their own needs than the needs of the country.

Most of the western media are united in one thing. This is a crisis caused by corruption. Of course, corruption has played a part, but corruption is not a uniquely Sri Lankan problem, and neither is inflation which is occurring everywhere at the moment. This is not a Sri Lankan problem. It is a problem for all capitalist nations.

In the UK, inflation has gone from 3% to 11% in a matter of months. Food poverty is on the increase (our Socialist Sunday basket of goods has risen over 8% in just 7 weeks, a marginal annual rate above 60%). People

are angry at rising fuel costs, and wages seem the only lever the government is prepared to pull.

One major difference between the UK and Sri Lanka is that we have no opposition leader prepared to call for mass civil disobedience. Our opposition party falls back on the tried and failed mantra of ‘change the government’ as if having different individuals desperately trying to stop the wave of economic misery would have anything but the same result. No modern day King Canute can hold back the tide of economic misery, and, if politicians won’t call for mass strikes and civil disobedience, then perhaps it is time for ordinary people to make that call themselves. When they do, Critical Mass will be right alongside them.

This article originally appeared online:

<https://creatingsocialism.org/sri-lanka-descends-into-chaos-as-protests-force-resignations/>



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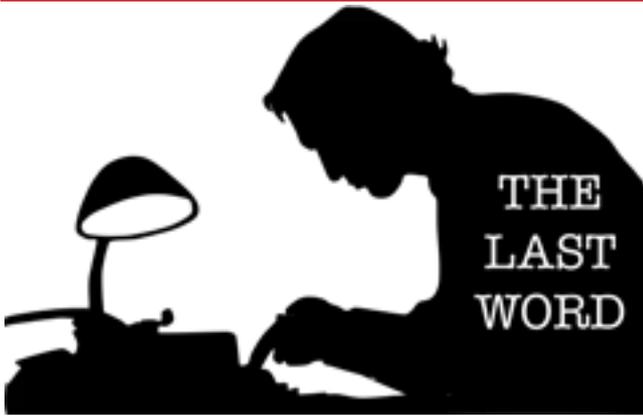
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We have not written much about Scottish Independence in Critical Mass. This short piece is not an attempt at the 'last word' on this topic. Hopefully, it will prompt others with far more knowledge to put fingers to keyboard and fill in the considerable gaps in my knowledge. But, here goes.

Support for Scottish independence is growing with the latest polling putting the 'yes' camp narrowly ahead. In Wales, whilst the independence campaign is not leading, polling suggests that the anti-Westminster mood is growing. Whilst the movement for the reunification of Ireland looks to be unstoppable as the Unionists gradually lose their grip on the Six Counties.

For socialists the question of supporting independence movements can be difficult. At one level the independence movements tend to be dominated by nationalists. Whereas socialists claim to be internationalists. How can internationalists support nationalist movements?

Interestingly enough, this question was debated by the Bolsheviks prior to the success of the 1917 Revolution. In 1914 Lenin wrote a number of short articles concerning the movement for the secession of Ukraine from Russia.

His point was quite simple. Simply seceding to become a minor capitalist state was not a step forward for working class Ukrainians. They would simply replace a Russian ruling class with a Ukrainian

ruling class.

But, equally, he did not advocate, as some have claimed, that the only valid struggle was class struggle. When he writes "class-conscious workers do not advocate secession," he follows it with this: "large states can be democratic only if there is complete equality among the nations; that equality implies the right to secede."

In other words, it is not class struggle or nothing. It is struggle of various kinds. When our Scottish comrades support independence it is because they feel that there is no equality between their rights as Scots and those of the English ruling class based in Westminster.

The fact remains that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have only limited democracy granted to them by Westminster, and that can be removed at the whim of the Westminster parliament. The independence that is being sought is not so much national independence it is territorial independence.

As far as I am aware nobody involved in the Scottish Independence campaign is promoting Scottish purity as the aim, it is simply asking that the people who live in Scotland, regardless of where they came from originally, should be able to control their own destinies. As a socialist it seems to me that the desire to have some control over your own life is fundamental to our struggle for a future socialist society.

Of course, as a socialist I would prefer those fighting for independence for their country to put their efforts into fighting capitalism. But perhaps independence can be the catalyst for a genuine internationalist socialism.

I should also acknowledge that the arguments for Scottish, Irish or Welsh independence have much in common with those of people in the North of England or Cornwall. Of course, being from the north is not quite the same as being Scottish. Or is it?

Dave Middleton