

THE MINERS' STRIKE AT 40



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for Peace and Socialism

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Two in five public-service employees looking to quit

HUNT TOLD: TIME TO INVEST IN WORKERS

by Elizabeth Short

TRADE UNIONS called on Chancellor Jeremy Hunt to “act in the national interest” in today’s spring Budget by investing in public services and their workforce.

The TUC warned that without action to address pressure on front-line services, economic inactivity would keep growing.

“Years of underfunding and mismanagement have left our public services and their workforce at breaking point,” said TUC general secretary Paul Nowak.

“Every month experienced and dedicated public servants are quitting in droves because they are burned out, feel downtrodden, undervalued and are struggling to pay their bills.

“If the Chancellor does not invest in our public services the staffing crisis will only get worse and communities across Britain will continue to suffer.”

Mr Hunt is due to announce his spring Budget later today. The TUC argues that strong

public services are “vital for growth” and that fair pay in the sector should be a priority.

“The fastest way to get public-sector productivity rising is to pay people fairly and invest in the equipment and technology they need to do their jobs,” Mr Nowak said.

“Jeremy Hunt must act in the national interest and provide the funding local services desperately need.”

The TUC says that the recruitment crisis that is plaguing public services has been exacerbated by years of “brutal” real-terms pay cuts.

An analysis by the TUC has found that 2022-23 was the worst two-year period for public servant pay since records began, with average salaries falling by 7 per cent in real terms.

It estimates that median pay across the public realm is now £2,200 a year lower in real terms than in 2010.

A fifth of public-sector workers have had to take on additional debt to cope with the cost of living, while one in 10 have used a food bank.

The TUC warned that there could be a “mass exodus” of key workers.

In a poll of 1,000 public-sector workers, it found 38 per cent have already

taken steps to leave their profession to get a job in another field, or are actively considering it.

According to the analysis, around 2.2 million public-sector workers are seriously thinking about quitting their jobs for good.

Unison general secretary Christina McAnea, who chairs the TUC’s public services liaison group, said: “Across health, education, local government, police forces and social care, workers feel guilty they can’t do more to help those needing help and support because services are so stretched.

“Everything feels broken and no longer functioning as it should.

“No wonder so many key workers are leaving their jobs.

“The public wants good, properly resourced, well-staffed essential services.

“Yet more cuts will simply push services to the point of collapse.”

Mr Hunt hinted this week at tax cuts after saying that he

wanted to move towards a “lower-tax economy,” during an interview with the BBC’s Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg programme. When we look around the world, the economies that are growing fastest, whether it’s North America or Asia, tend to be the ones with lower taxes,” he said.

The Times has suggested that Mr Hunt could cut 2 percentage points off National Insurance.

Citing Treasury insiders, the Financial Times said that Mr Hunt is considering slashing billions of pounds from public spending to fund pre-election tax cuts, with the Chancellor looking at “further spending restraint” after 2025.

An analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has found that the health budget is due to go from £168.2bn in 2023-24 to £166.2bn in real terms in 2024-25, after adjustment for inflation.

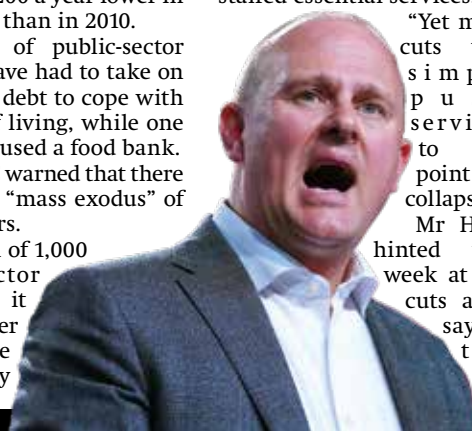
It warned that the cuts, which are worth £2bn, would be the largest reduction since the 1970s.

Mr Nowak called Mr Hunt’s promises “farcical,” saying: “This is desperate spin from a government that has manifestly failed on growth, living standards and public services.”

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SERIOUS CHALLENGES: (Above) Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and (inset) TUC general secretary Paul Nowak



■ EDUCATION

GCSE art's palette missing vital colours

ARTISTS from ethnic minority backgrounds have shocking levels of under-representation in the school curriculum, a new report has found.

The Runnymede Trust and

the Freeland Foundation found that only 2.3 per cent of artists referred to in GCSE exams are from black or South Asian backgrounds.

Of 975 references to named

contemporary artists, there were just 17 references to named contemporary black artists. They included Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui and Kenyan-born potter Dame Magdalene Odundo.

There were only 11 mentions of a contemporary South Asian artist – and three of these referred to the British Indian sculptor Anish Kapoor.

The report said that the level of representation “sets poor expectations for what teachers should be teaching in the art classroom.”

It added that work by ethnic minority artists is often referred to in secondary and subordinate ways.

“It often appears in generalised geographical and movement-based references, and is associated with pre-1800 time periods,” the report said.

The study analysed 27 GCSE art and design exam papers from exam boards AQA, Edexcel, OCR and Eduqas.

It recommended that such papers feature ethnic minority artists at a minimum of 25 per cent of the total.



MINORITY: Magdalene Odundo stands with her installation *Transition II*, part of her *The Journey of Things* show in Norwich in 2019

■ SCOTLAND

Political response needed for housing emergency

by Matt Kerr
Scotland reporter

HOUSING professionals have demanded a political response to Scotland's housing emergency ahead of their Glasgow conference.

The Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland (CIH) joined Argyll & Bute, Edinburgh and Glasgow councils in declaring a housing emergency, hitting out at the SNP-Green Scottish budget, which slashed a staggering 43 per cent – £196 million – from the housing budget while more than 30,000 people remain homeless.

CIH Scotland's Callum Chomczuk said that it was not too late for the Scottish or Westminster governments to take action.

He said: “Scotland is in the midst of a housing emergency and we need a political response.”

“We want to see the UK Budget provide increased spending.

“However, we also want to see the Scottish government prioritise the delivery and building of affordable housing.

“We want to see the affordable housing budget front-loaded so social landlords can keep building, as it is always going to be cheaper



to build today than it is tomorrow.”

“We need an emergency plan and funding for delivering the social homes Scotland needs.”

Green Tenants' Rights Minister Patrick Harvie said: “Recently published figures on homelessness show the introduction of emergency legislation to protect tenants during the cost-of-living crisis has accompanied a reduction in the number of private renters becoming homeless.

“At the same time, Scottish Landlord Register data shows that the number of registered properties for rent in Scotland between August 2022 and January 2024 has increased by 1.7

per cent.

“We have been developing the Housing Bill to deliver a new deal for tenants, including the introduction of long-term rent controls for the private rented sector, creating new tenants' rights.”

A Living Rent spokesperson said: “The government's decision to cut £200 million from the housing budget is utterly baffling.

“One after another, councils are declaring housing emergencies because they simply can't fulfil their statutory duties to house homeless people.

“Cutting the budget shows how out of touch the government is with the housing crisis.”

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ENVIRONMENT: Climate justice campaigners gathered outside the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero in London yesterday in a colourful and musical demo calling on the government not to renew subsidies for burning wood at Drax power station in Yorkshire and Lynemouth power station in Northumberland.

Speakers included Baroness Jenny Jones of Moulsecoomb and Doug Parr, policy director for Greenpeace.

Pics: Tom Dulat



■ SCOTLAND

CALDWELL FAMILY SEEK JUSTICE FOR MURDERED EMMA

Decades of cover-up warrant urgent inquiry into police and Crown Office

by Matt Kerr

THE mother of murdered Emma Caldwell took her demands for an independent inquiry to Scottish First Minister Humza Yousaf yesterday following allegations of police cover-ups in the case.

Iain Packer was sentenced to a minimum of 36 years last week for Ms Caldwell's murder in 2005 as well as 11 rapes and 21 further charges including sexual assaults and abduction involving multiple women.

Judge Lord Beckett called Mr Packer's actions a “campaign of violence and appalling sexual mistreatment of a very large number of women.”

But the Crown Office, Police Scotland and its predecessor Strathclyde Police face allegations of a cover-up after it took almost 19 years for Margaret Caldwell to see her daughter's murderer face justice.

Mr Packer was seen as a sus-



CHANGE REQUIRED: Margaret Caldwell (front left), Aamer Anwar (centre) and family members speak to the media in Edinburgh yesterday

pect at the beginning of the inquiry almost two decades ago.

Allegations persist that police officers pursuing the case were not only dissuaded from doing so but also faced victimisation – and journalists

doing similar found themselves subjects of police surveillance.

While the Crown Office has stated that there was “insufficient evidence of criminality on the part of any police officer involved in the investigation of Emma Caldwell's murder” to



■ CROOKED POLITICS

PM's extremism adviser received Israeli funding

by Elizabeth Short

THE government's "independent" adviser on political violence and disruption has received funding from pro-Israel groups while pushing for a crackdown on pro-Palestine protests, Declassified UK revealed yesterday.

Former Labour MP John Woodcock – ennobled as Lord Walney for backing Boris Johnson in the 2019 election – was assigned in 2021 to produce a report investigating "the extreme fringes on both ends of the political spectrum" in Britain.

Ahead of submitting the review, Lord Walney wrote in the Sun on Sunday that he is urging Britain's political leaders to take a "zero-tolerance approach" to pro-Palestine and climate protesters.

He said Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Labour leader Keir Starmer should instruct their MPs and councillors "not to engage with anyone" from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign "until they get their house in order and cut the hate from their marches."

Declassified UK raised questions about Lord Walney's ability to advise the government on issues related to Palestine.

During his time as a Labour MP, he was appointed chairman of Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) in 2011. He embarked on a trip funded by LFI, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the



IN THE SUN: John Woodcock

Portland Trust the same year.

Lord Walney also accepted funding from the Australia-Israel Cultural Exchange during his time as an MP.

In January this year, while preparing to deliver his report concerning Palestine protests in Britain, Lord Walney visited Israel as part of a parliamentary delegation organised by the European Leadership Network, with flights and accommodation paid for by the organisation. He kept the trip under wraps and did not post about it on social media.

He was joined by Conservative MP Tom Hunt, who described it as a "solidarity mission."

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■ WORKERS' REPRESENTATION

Growing union submits formal bid for recognition at Amazon

AMAZON could be on the brink of being forced to recognise a trade union for the first time in Britain after GMB made a formal bid to government body the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC).

The committee is responsible for regulating collective bargaining between workers and employers and can force firms to recognise a trade union if more than 50 per cent of the workforce are members.

After over a year of industrial action, union membership at the company's Coventry site has grown significantly.

But GMB has warned decision-makers of Amazon's track record of using

union-busting dirty tricks to sidestep recognition.

Union recognition would mean Amazon would be forced to sit down with GMB on matters relating to pay, worker safety, terms and conditions.

GMB senior organiser Amanda Gearing said: "It's been legal gymnastics from Amazon in their attempt to smash drives for union recognition.

"Union recognition really matters, and it's the clear ambition of workers at Amazon Coventry.

"It's only right that an employer with thousands of members of a single trade union in a workplace be asked to sit down and talk to that union."

■ Wales in brief

Drakeford silent on C-19 messages

COVID INQUIRY: A rowdy First Minister's questions yesterday heard Mark Drakeford decline to answer questions ahead of his evidence to the Covid Inquiry about disappearing WhatsApp messages.

The UK Covid Inquiry is in Wales and has heard that Mr Drakeford's adviser Jane Runeckles had set her phone to delete messages; the then permanent secretary Dame Shan Morgan also admitted she deleted messages.

Westminster ducks its coal obligations

MINING LEGACY: Plaid Cymru's Delyth Jewell asked the First Minister yesterday to challenge the UK government's "terrible" environmental legacy of coal tips in Wales and get them to pay towards making them safe.

Mark Drakeford said the Welsh government is spending £44 million towards making tips safe and asked Westminster to pay £22m. The refusal to pay is "in clear breach of their legal obligations," Mr Drakeford said.

Second-home directive on table

LOCAL HOMES: Welsh language campaigners yesterday called on the Eryri (formerly Snowden) National Park Authority to take urgent action to tackle the inequality of the housing market in the area.

Today's authority's planning meeting will consider the introduction of a directive to make planning permission mandatory before changing use of a property from being a main home to a second home or short-term letting accommodation.

Plea to Chancellor for better funding

PUBLIC SERVICES: The Welsh government called on Jeremy Hunt yesterday to help those struggling the most in the cost-of-living crisis.

Finance Minister Rebecca Evans said: "The priority for the Chancellor must be making the critical investment required for public services on which we all rely, including increased funding for pay and public-sector pensions costs."

■ BUS SERVICES

Cardiff announces 'people first' public transport reforms

BUS service reform in Wales will put people first in a move away from prioritising profit, Climate Minister Lee Waters announced yesterday. "We're moving from a privatised system that puts profit before people towards one that will plan buses and trains together around the needs of passengers," Mr Waters said.

"This is the most far-reaching set of reforms taking place anywhere in the UK."

The current system allows bus operators to decide where to run services based on where they can maximise

profit; this will be replaced by a system of "franchised" contracts.

The plan is for Transport for Wales, councils and the Welsh government to design bus networks that link key services and tie up with other buses and with train timetables, all using one ticket.

Companies will then be able to bid to run the whole package of routes for an area, not just the ones that are the most profitable.

Bus Users UK described the bus reform proposals as a realistic plan taking account of the current funding environment.



■ WALES

Poverty 'the new normal' since Covid

by David Nicholson
Wales reporter

FAMILIES struggling to make ends meet has become the "new normal" in Wales, research by charity campaigners has revealed.

The YouGov survey for the Bevan Foundation, published today, shows that people were pessimistic about the prospects for their community and Wales's prospects as a nation.

Half of people in Wales thought that living standards would worsen in their community and across Wales over the next 12 months.

Foundation director Dr Victoria Winckler said: "We simply cannot let the levels of poverty and financial hardship outlined in our latest data become the new normal in Wales."

"It is imperative that poverty remains a key item on everyone's agenda and that we take action now to reverse the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis on Welsh communities."

The Bevan Foundation revealed that families in Wales are still struggling to make ends meet, with one in eight – some 13 per cent – struggling to afford the essentials.

The Foundation's Dr Stefan Evans said: "Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, people going hun-

gry or going cold has become normalised in many Welsh communities.

"Our new data shows 44 per cent of people reporting that their financial position has had a negative impact on their mental health and 30 per cent reporting the same about their physical health."

A third said that they are going without heating in their home, while a quarter of people report that they are eating smaller meals or skipping meals in their entirety as they struggle to manage their finances.

Others have been pushed into debt, with 28 per cent of people borrowing money and 13 per cent being in arrears on a bill.

Significant numbers of children are missing out on sports lessons or music lessons, with the majority of those missing out missing out regularly.

"Accessing activities such as sport or music are fundamental to children's education and social development as well as for creating happy childhood memories," Dr Evans said.

A Welsh government spokesperson said: "We are working hard to support people during the cost-of-living crisis – targeting help to those who need it the most and continuing to provide programmes which put money back in people's pockets."

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warrant prosecution, it also faces allegations that it intervened to prevent any prosecution of Mr Packer years earlier.

The reports have prompted calls for any inquiry to be conducted by counsel from outside Scotland.

The Caldwell family will meet the Lord Advocate and Police Scotland's Chief Constable later this week, but after yesterday's meeting with the First Minister in Bute House, they said they were reassured that Mr Yousaf would make an announcement within days.


Thanking Mr Yousaf for the meeting, the family's representative, rights lawyer Aamer Anwar, said: "We know that evidence exists that the abduction, rape and murder of Emma Caldwell and the subsequent rapes of women might have been prevented or at least disrupted had allegations against Packer been properly investigated."

"Women not only live in fear of violence on an everyday basis, they live in fear of those who police us: the fear of not being believed, of being dismissed, as Emma was, and the fear of abuse by men in power."

"These are real fears, not imagined, and sadly there are all too many examples of police officers assaulting women and children, sexist behaviour and comments caused by misogyny."

"How many women have to die or be raped before our police service and criminal justice system is held to account?"

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Greetings to all delegates at the TUC Women's Conference

The cost of living crisis is a gendered crisis.

Women remain over-represented in low-paid, insecure employment and are at the sharp end of increases in food, fuel, childcare, housing and transport costs.

Now is the time to value women's work.

Usdaw is campaigning for:

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- Paid parental leave entitlements
- Minimum hours contracts
- Proper flexible working rights for all workers


For more information about Usdaw and our campaigns visit www.usdaw.org.uk or call 0800 030 80 30

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Greetings to everyone at TUC Women's Conference

Ritchie James
Regional Secretary



George White
Regional Chair

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 FRAN HEATHCOTE, PCS GENERAL SECRETARY | ALEX GORDON, RMT PRESIDENT
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JobsPayConditions

■ NURSING

Write off student loans in return for NHS work — RCN

by Elizabeth Short

NURSES should have their student loans written off in return for NHS work, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) said yesterday.

The nursing union said that writing off their student debt would help attract and retain more nurses.

Numbers of student nurses have been falling since their bursary was removed in 2017, leaving students facing fees of more than £9,000 each year.

There were 24,680 nursing applicants to higher education providers in England in January, down from 27,370 applicants 12

months earlier and 33,410 in 2022.

The RCN says there are almost 35,000 vacant nursing posts in England alone.

General secretary Pat Cullen said: “A loan forgiveness scheme for nurses working in the NHS and public services can stop students being shackled with debt and help attract and retain more nurses. It has huge support among the public too.”

“The Chancellor [Jeremy Hunt] has repeatedly said that he plans to deliver tax cuts in the upcoming Budget, but the public don’t agree with his priorities. They want investment in the NHS above

all else. That is a message that needs to be heard loud and clear [ahead of today’s announcement].”

Nuffield Trust senior fellow Dr Billy Palmer said: “The NHS is failing to keep valuable staff in the health service. A student loans forgiveness scheme is an instant and affordable way to increase the number of applications to clinical courses as well as reducing the numbers leaving during training or early in their career.”

A YouGov poll of 2,100 people found that 76 per cent of adults would back a loan forgiveness scheme for nurses who work in the NHS and wider public services.

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■ WALES

Senior docs to strike in dispute with government

DOCTORS’ leaders announced a two-day strike of consultants and specialist doctors in Wales yesterday in a dispute over pay with the Welsh government.

The action is planned to take place on April 16-18 and follows strikes by junior doctors in Wales.

The decision follows a Welsh government offer of a 5 per cent pay rise, though the British Medical Association (BMA) says that for specialist doctors on more recent contracts, the offer is as low as 2.5 per cent.

BMA Wales consultants committee chairman Stephen Kelly said: “No doc-

tor wants to strike, but the conditions now faced in the workplace caused by the extreme pressures on the service and unsafe staffing levels have left doctors with no choice.”

The Welsh government said that without extra funding, it could not offer more than the 5 per cent increase for 2023-24 that other NHS workers have accepted.

The BMA said yesterday it would recommend the latest offer from the Westminster government to consultants in England, but did not know if the extra money would be passed on to the Welsh government.

GET BOOKING: St Paul’s Cathedral’s ‘hidden library’ will be available on Airbnb for World Book Day, the first time that someone has officially slept inside the cathedral since World War II. Opening up the doors ‘for a once-in-a-lifetime stay,’ guests will be able to peruse over 22,000 books for a night of reading



■ NHS ENGLAND

CONSULTANTS REACH NEW PAY DEAL WITH TORIES

TO THE VOTE: Medics to ballot on improved offer as union warns of retention crisis in sector

by Our News Desk

CONSULTANTS in England have reached a new deal with the government that could potentially draw a line under the ongoing dispute and strikes.

The British Medical Association (BMA) and Hospital Consultants & Specialists Association (HCSA) will now put the offer to their members.

If accepted, the new offer would see more doctors getting an additional rise compared with the previous offer, which was narrowly voted down.

The deal would mean top hospital doctors receive a rise of between 6 and 19.6 per cent, depending on the number of years as a consultant.

BMA consultants committee chairman Dr Vishal Sharma said: “This hard-fought-for offer

marks a step forward in restoring fairness.

“If it is accepted, as we hope it will be, it is essential that the pay review process makes recommendations that will further restore consultants’ pay in the coming years to fix the retention crisis among the consultant workforce, and therefore safeguard medical expertise in the NHS.”

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that ending the industrial action is vital “if we want to cut waiting lists and make sure patients are getting the care they deserve.”

The PM made this one of his priorities as premier — but has failed to fulfil his promise.

Health & Social Care Secretary Victoria Atkins said she was glad that unions were recommending the offer to their members, saying it will

“modernise pay structures — directly addressing gender pay issues in the NHS — and enhance consultants’ parental leave options.”

The BMA said that it has also secured important changes to the doctors’ & dentists’ remuneration (DDRB) pay review body which will “return it to its original purpose and independence,” including changes to the way members are appointed to the body and that the government will no longer be able to limit its remit regarding inflation targets.

The DDRB will also make its pay recommendations for doctors in the context of “long-term trends in the wider labour market and comparator professions, including relevant international comparators,” the union added.

HCSA president Dr Naru Narayanan said: “After further

high-intensity negotiations, the HCSA executive feels this package has improved sufficiently to recommend a Yes vote to members.”

The NHS Confederation urged medics to accept the offer to end the “damaging dispute.” -online-

During the current dispute, consultants in England have staged four rounds of strike action across nine days.

Junior doctors, who have staged 10 rounds of strike action, are still waiting to re-enter talks with the government as their dispute over pay rumbles on.

And specialist, associate specialist and speciality (SAS) doctors in England are hoping to restart negotiations after members voted against a new pay offer.

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SHARP SWIMMER: Image issued by the University of Bath of a reconstruction of the *Xinjiangia acuta*. Scientists have discovered fossil remains of a ‘nightmarish’ new sea lizard or mosasaur species with dagger-like teeth that dominated the oceans 66 million years ago. *Xinjiangia acuta* would have lived alongside dinosaurs, co-existing with behemoths such as *Tyrannosaurus* and *Triceratops*

**GREETINGS TO THE
TUC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**



www.rmt.org.uk

General Secretary: Mick Lynch

President: Alex Gordon

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A one-day conference to mark
the 40th anniversary of the Great
Strike of 1984-85

Unite South East



**Greetings to all attending the
TUC women's conference**

**Joe Bleach
Regional Chair**

**Bob Middleton
Regional Secretary**

JOBS·PAY·CONDITIONS



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*Steve Preddy Regional Secretary
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HEALTHCARE

Older people 'denied help for mental wellbeing'

by Elizabeth Short

OLDER people are missing out on vital mental health support due to systemic ageism, according to a report published yesterday.

Commissioned by Age UK, the report found that poor mental health is often dismissed by health professionals as an inevitable part of getting older.

Researchers noted that there is no national strategy to prevent poor mental health later in life, not to meet people's needs effectively and holistically.

Centre for Mental Health chief executive Andy Bell said that ageism is deeply entrenched and systemic.

"The absence of later life from successive national mental health plans means there has been little investment in support for older people's mental health," he said. "This is a form of discrimination that leaves older people without effective help."

Age UK chief executive Paul Farmer said: "There is a paradox at the core of mental health support for older people: under-recognised on the one hand and low mood and depression treated as 'just your age' on the other.

"In either case, the outcome is the same: too many of us going without the care we need to maintain good mental wellbeing as we age."

The report urged integrated care boards to review their provision of mental health support for older adults.

It also called for NHS England to review the effectiveness of its current mental health framework and ensure that it includes specific provisions for mental healthcare in later life.

National Pensioners Convention general secretary Jan Shortt noted that decades of cuts have meant that preventative health services "are practically non-existent."

"No matter how old – or young – we are, we are entitled to be appreciated as an individual with a health issue that should be resolved, not set aside and patronised as aged and inconsequential, having 'lived our lives'," she said.

Ms Shortt called for the introduction of policies that create equal access for all.

Keep Our NHS Public co-chairman Dr Tony O'Sullivan said: "The mental health of older people retired from the workforce is close to the bottom of this government's priorities.

"This government treats older, disabled and minoritised people as expendable – as the vastly unequal Covid death rates attest.

"The NHS must be restored to be able to offer equity of access to mental health support for all ages without discrimination."

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SCOTLAND

Staff at qualification body win fight over F-grade pay

MORE than 400 Unite members at the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) have won an improved pay deal after weeks of industrial action.

The workers had been undertaking a ban on overtime and weekend working since February 16, escalating to a one-day strike a week, after rejecting a pay offer of 4.75 per cent backdated to 2023.

After renewed negotiations in the wake of the strike, workers have backed an increased offer of 5.75 per cent from 2023, 3.15 per cent for this year, plus a £1,000 cash lump sum in recognition of soaring inflation over the last year.

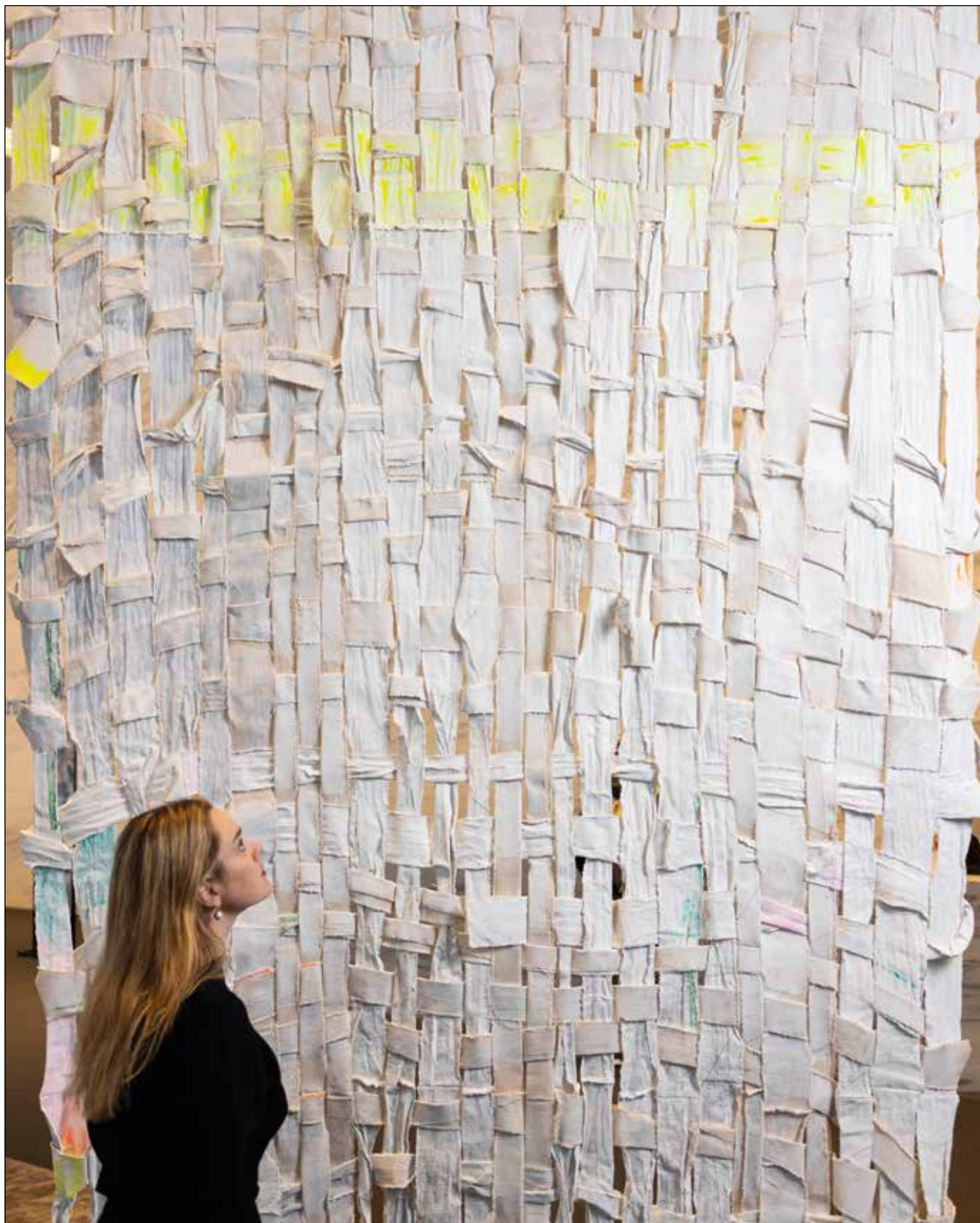
Unite's Alison Maclean welcomed the result, but warned of an increasingly hostile attitude to unions and workers at the agency.

She said: "The SQA has seemed more interested in escalating this dispute rather than resolving it.

"There is also a job of work to deliver the reform agenda, which can only be achieved through a willingness to positively engage with Unite.

"If the prevailing attitude persists, then the tensions between management, the workforce and unions will continue to rise."

The SQA was contacted for comment.



WEAVING A MESSAGE: Beyond the Matrix, a female-led sculpture exhibition by Association of Women in the Arts members, opens at 100 Bishopsgate, London, ahead of International Women's Day

BIRMINGHAM

Rally held against 'devastating cuts'

by Ceren Sagir

PROTESTERS and trade unionists gathered outside Birmingham Council House yesterday to rally against cuts to services in the city as councillors met to sign off on a devastating budget.

The council plans to cut £367 million over the next two years, sacrificing services affecting children, families, libraries, youth, roads, parks and the arts.

At least 600 jobs are

expected to be axed in the process.

It is also putting up council tax by 9.99 per cent and has requested over £1.2 billion from the government, which will be paid back through the sale of council land, properties, and other assets.

Creative sector unions the Musicians' Union (MU), Bectu, Equity, and Writers Guild GB came together with other mass trade unions at the protest.

The creative sector bloc

also had a separate demonstration outside the Birmingham Rep, one of the organisations affected by the cuts, before marching through the city to the Council House.

TUC Midlands creative and leisure industries committee chairman and MU regional organiser Stephen Brown said: "Many of these services are a lifeline for our communities and once they are gone, they are gone.

"In many cases, local people will be hung out to dry to fend for themselves –

whether it's the lost provision of adult social care or the loss of 25 of 36 libraries people rely on.

"These cuts will affect every aspect of life in the city, cause a loss of hope, loss of pride, loss of work, loss of opportunity, impact the most vulnerable, impact people's very wellbeing – and send the wrong message out about our city.

"Fourteen years of cuts is enough, it's time to rebuild, not tear down what's left."

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■ PALESTINE

TALKS WITH HAMAS FAIL TO AGREE ON CEASEFIRE IN GAZA

TIME RUNNING OUT: Israel threatens Rafah bloodbath from March 10

by Roger McKenzie

THREE days of international negotiations with Hamas over a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages ended yesterday without a breakthrough, Egyptian officials said.

The talks closed less than a week before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the informal deadline for a deal, and followed Human Rights Watch saying that Israeli troops' killing of people queuing for aid last week was part of a "decades-long pattern."

The United States, Qatar and Egypt have spent weeks trying to broker an agreement for Hamas to release up to 40 hostages in return for a month-long ceasefire, the release of some Palestinian prisoners and Israel allowing an influx of desperately needed humanitarian aid into the besieged territory.

Two Egyptian officials said yesterday that the latest round of discussions had ended, but Hamas had put forward a pro-

posal that mediators would discuss with Israel in the coming days.

Hamas has refused to release all of the estimated 100 hostages it holds, plus the remains of about 30 more, unless Israel ends its military offensive, withdraws its troops from the territory and frees a large number of Palestinian prisoners.

Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha said the negotiations were ongoing, adding that the Islamist group was "open to proposals and initiatives that are consistent with its position calling for a ceasefire, withdrawal, the return of the displaced, the entry of relief convoys and reconstruction."

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly rejected Hamas's demands and repeatedly vowed to continue the war until the group is dismantled and all the hostages are freed.

Israel did not send a delegation to the talks.

Meanwhile, Omar Shakir, Human Rights Watch's director for Israel and Palestine, accused

Mr Netanyahu's government of "using the starvation of civilians as a weapon of war, which is a war crime."

Israel has "a long track record of using unlawful, excessive force against Palestinians," he said. "The idea that people are being killed as they scavenge for meagre rations of food is just appalling."

Last week, Israeli soldiers opened fire on starving Palestinians trying to get food from an aid convoy, killing at least 112 and injuring 750.

According to media reports, Israeli soldiers fired live rounds on Monday at Palestinians approaching an aid lorry in Gaza City's Kuwait Square, wounding a number of them.

Israel launched its military onslaught on the Gaza Strip five months ago after Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 people and taking 253 hostages.

Since then, at least 30,631 Palestinians have been killed, including more than 21,000 women and children.

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VICTORY: Legislators celebrating on Monday after the Bill was approved by a huge majority

■ WOMEN'S RIGHTS

France enshrines abortion in constitution

FRENCH legislators overwhelmingly approved a Bill on Monday that enshrines abortion rights in the constitution.

France now becomes the only country in the world to explicitly guarantee a woman's right to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy.

The historic legislation was proposed by President Emmanuel Macron to prevent any erosion of abortion rights, as seen in the United States and Poland in recent years.

A special joint session of the

National Assembly and the Senate, held at the Palace of Versailles, approved the measure by 780 votes to 72, triggering a lengthy standing ovation.

Abortion has been legal in France since 1975.

Both houses of the French parliament had adopted the Bill to amend article 34 of the constitution, but the change required final confirmation by a three-fifths majority at the special joint session before it could take effect.

The measure specifies that

"the law determines the conditions by which is exercised the freedom of women to have recourse to an abortion, which is guaranteed."

Sarah Durocher, a leader of the Family Planning movement, described the parliamentary vote as "a victory for feminists and a defeat for the anti-choice activists."

Anne-Cecile Mailfert of the Women's Foundation said: "It's a guarantee for women today and in the future to have the right to abort in France."

■ HAITI

Gangs fight to take over main airport

by Our Foreign Desk

HEAVILY armed gangs tried to seize control of Haiti's main international airport on Monday, sparking exchanges of gunfire with police and soldiers.

The violence at Toussaint Louverture international airport was the latest attack on key government sites amid an wave of violence that has also included mass escapes from the country's two biggest prisons.

The airport was closed when the attack occurred, with no planes operating and no passengers present. It wasn't immediately clear whether the attack had succeeded.

Last week, the airport was struck by bullets amid ongoing gang violence.

The attack occurred just hours after authorities ordered a night-time curfew following the gang attack on the two prisons, which freed thousands of inmates at the weekend.

United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric said: "The



GRISLY SIGHT:

A man pushing a cart past the body of a man shot by unidentified assailants in Port-au-Prince on Monday

secretary-general is deeply concerned by the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Port-au-Prince, where armed gangs have intensified their attacks on critical infrastructure over the weekend."

The government imposed a 72-hour state of emergency from Sunday night. Finance Minister Patrick Boivert, who is also acting prime minister,

said: "The police were ordered to use all legal means at their disposal to enforce the curfew and apprehend all offenders."

Gangs already were estimated to control up to 80 per cent of Port-au-Prince, the capital, and are increasingly co-ordinating their actions.

Unelected prime minister Ariel Henry travelled to Kenya last week to try to salvage sup-

port for a US-sponsored security force to help stabilise Haiti.

He took office following the assassination of president Jovenel Moise in July 2021 and has continually postponed parliamentary and presidential elections, which haven't been held for almost a decade.

Mr Henry's current whereabouts are unknown.
international@peoples-press.com

■ TURKEY

Seven arrested over sale of information to Israel

TURKISH police detained seven more people yesterday on suspicion of selling information to Israeli spy agency Mossad.

The suspects were taken into custody during simultaneous raids in Istanbul, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said on social media platform X.

They are believed to have collected data on individuals and companies in Turkey and sold it to the Israeli intelligence agency, Mr Yerlikaya said.

"We will never allow espionage activities to be carried out within the borders of our country," he insisted.

The state-run Anadolu Agency, citing unnamed security officials, said those detained included a former civil servant turned private

detective who was allegedly trained by Mossad in the Serbian capital Belgrade.

He reportedly collected information on Middle Eastern companies and individuals, even placing tracking devices in the vehicles of people targeted by Israeli intelligence, Anadolu said.

Last month, seven other people, including private detectives, were arrested on similar suspicions. And in early January, 34 people were also detained by Turkish police on suspicion of spying for Israel.

The suspects arrested in January have been accused of planning to carry out activities that included reconnaissance and "pursuing, assaulting and kidnapping" foreign nationals living in Turkey.

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■ COLOMBIA

End of boat firms' protest gets migrants moving again

MIGRANTS aiming to reach the United States are once again crossing the Darien Gap in large numbers, officials in Colombia said on Monday, after a strike by local boat captains ended.

Around 8,000 were stranded in the small town of Necocli on the Caribbean coast for much of last week.

Deputy Mayor Johann Wächter Espitia said that 3,000 migrants had left the town since Friday on boats headed towards the Darien jungle, with another 400 people waiting and sleeping in tents, as they gather enough money to pay for their tickets.

From Necocli, migrants go by boat to two remote villages, where the treacherous trails that cross the Darien Gap begin for the perilous journey to the US.

From Monday to Thursday last week, transit across the Darien dwindled as the two companies operating boat services from Necocli went on strike over the arrest of two of their captains by the Colombian navy.

The captains had been intercepted after they left Necocli in two boats carrying around 150 refugees and were accused by authorities of human trafficking.

Boat journeys resumed on Friday after the companies had several meetings with municipal and national government officials.



ECONOMIC TARGETS: Chinese Premier Li Qiang is seen on screens as he speaks during the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday

■ NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS

China sets economic growth target of 5 per cent this year

by Roger McKenzie

CHINA will aim to achieve economic growth of 5 per cent this year, Prime Minister Li Qiang said yesterday.

Presenting the government's work report at the annual session of the National People's Congress, Mr Li said that ministers planned to boost spending on advanced technology, strengthen China's military and take measures to boost the economy.

There was growth of 5.2 per cent last year, compared to a sluggish 2.5 per cent in the United States.

Many experts believe that China has already overtaken the US as the world's largest economy.

Mr Li told the 5,000 congress delegates the government would continue with a "proactive fiscal policy and prudent monetary policy," suggesting that there would be no major change in its approach to the economy.

He unveiled a plan to boost growth by issuing long-term bonds over the next several years, starting with one trillion yuan (around £110 billion) this year.

The money will be spent to implement "major national strategies" and fortify security "in key areas."

The government also plans a "new development model" for the housing market, including building government-subsidised housing, the prime minister said.

"The foundation for China's sustained economic recovery is not yet stable, with insufficient effective demand, overcapacity in some industries, weak social expectations and still many risks and hidden dangers.

"Achieving this year's targets will not be easy," Mr Li added, referring not only to economic growth but also to other goals, including raising incomes, creating 12 million jobs and making the economy more energy-efficient in pursuit of targets for combating climate change.

China also set a 2.5 per cent goal for reducing its energy consumption.

The government released a draft budget that included a 7.2 per cent rise in defence spending to 1.67trn yuan (£182bn) in response to increasingly aggres-

sive noises from the US and its allies. It keeps its defence spending under 1.8 per cent of GDP.

Mr Li reiterated calls for greater confidence despite the challenges facing China, noting the country's vast market of about 1.4 billion people, its advanced manufacturing capacity and its massive workforce.

"The underlying trend of economic recovery and long-term growth remains unchanged and will not change," he said.

In addition, Mr Li also said the government would focus on employment, including with subsidies for companies able to create jobs.

The legislative session is expected to continue until March 11.

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 in brief

ICC issues warrants for Russian officers

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT: The arrest of two high-ranking Russian military officers was ordered yesterday on charges linked to attacks on civilian infrastructure in Ukraine.

Warrants were issued for the detention of Lieutenant General Sergei Ivanovich Kobylash, commander of the long-range aviation of Russia's Aerospace Force at the time when the crimes allegedly took place, and Admiral Viktor Kinolayevich Sokolov, who was in charge of the country's Black Sea Fleet.

EU plans expansion of its arms industry

EUROPEAN UNION: Top EU officials yesterday outlined plans to expand the bloc's arms industry at an unprecedented pace as it seeks to respond to Russia's war on Ukraine and United States hints that it will scale back its European commitments.

"After decades of underspending, we must invest more on defence, but we need to do it better and together," said EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

Leak of phone call blamed on officer

GERMANY: A military officer used an unsecured phone line at a Singapore hotel to join a conference call that was hacked by Russians and leaked to the public, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said yesterday.

"Not all participants adhered to the secure dialling procedure as intended," Mr Pistorius said as he briefed reporters in Berlin on the initial results of an ongoing investigation.



■ SOUTH KOREA

Striking medics face suspension of their licences

by Our Foreign Desk

THOUSANDS of striking junior doctors in South Korea face legal action and suspension of their medical licences after the government launched a crack-down yesterday.

Authorities have ordered police investigations into the leaders of the walkouts, which have disrupted many hospital operations.

Nearly 9,000 of South Korea's

13,000 junior doctors have refused to work for the last two weeks in protest at a government plan to enrol thousands more students in the country's medical schools in the coming years.

The government has ordered them to return to work by February 29, citing a threat to public health, but most have defied threats of licence suspensions and prosecutions.

Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo said: "For those who

lead the walkouts, we are thinking we'll file complaints with police.

"But I tell you that we haven't determined exactly when we would do so and against whom."

On Monday, the Health Ministry sent officials to hospitals to confirm the absences of the striking doctors in preparation for administrative action to suspend their licences.

So far, the government has formally confirmed the

absences of more than 7,000 strikers.

Mr Park said the striking doctors' licences would be suspended for at least three months, but doctors would be given opportunities to respond before suspensions took effect.

"The trainee doctors have left their patients defenceless. They've even left emergency rooms and intensive care units," Mr Park said.

"We can't tolerate these irresponsible acts."

At the heart of the dispute is a government plan to raise the medical school enrolment quota by 2,000, starting from next year, from the current 3,058.

Officials said that South Korea needed more doctors because the number of elderly people is increasing rapidly.

However, many doctors say that universities aren't ready for such a sudden increase in student numbers.

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Man jailed for plot to bomb LGBT+ march

KOSOVO: A court sentenced Blendi Vrajolli yesterday to three-and-a-half years in prison for planning attacks against an LGBT+ march in Pristina last year.

A court statement said that Mrt Vrajolli had contacted a person in Saudi Arabia to learn how to create bombs that he planned to use against the march in the capital and at the Merdare border crossing.

★ Star comment

Between more war in Ukraine or more war in Palestine, 'Trump v Biden' is a grim choice for the world

THE US presidential election increasingly resembles a ghoulish farce without anything resembling an amusing punch line to anticipate.

Barring some unexpected turn, Joe Biden and Donald Trump will face off against each other once more, two elderly men both displaying clear signs of cognitive impairment. Each routinely confuses countries and people, indicating unfitness for office without taking other considerations into account.

Much comment focuses on the risks for democracy in the US of a Trump victory, given his evident Mussolini-like tendencies. Indeed, the US is an unhappy marriage of an archaic and unworkable constitution and extreme culture war polarisation, presided over by a ruling class wallowing in its own cupidity.

However, the risks for the rest of the world are at least as great, given the outside role the US plays in world affairs, expressed in the course of this century through a series of military aggressions.

On this front, the choice is just as unappealing. Joe Biden's full-throated support for Israel's genocide in Gaza reminds us that US liberalism is a political expression of imperialism.

Indeed, even before the Gaza crisis, the Biden administration had continued the main lines of Trump's policy in the Middle East, with the exception of a fruitless attempt to revive the nuclear deal with Iran which his predecessor had recklessly scrapped.



So too in the Pacific, where Biden has maintained the posture of intensified confrontation with China which Trump had embarked on.

Of course, it is also impossible to present Trump's years in office as constructive. On Cuba and Venezuela, he followed a belligerent course and he blocked efforts to tackle climate change in addition to his sabre-rattling against China and unqualified support for Israel.

The main potential difference relates to the entwined issues of Nato and the Ukraine war. Biden strongly supports the aggressive military alliance and has consistently pushed for the continuation of a proxy war with Russia.

The dangers of that policy become clearer by the day, with the leaks of German military brass discussing missile attacks on Russian territory – including the involvement of British troops in this provocative project – merely the latest indication.

Simon Jenkins put it well in the Guardian yesterday: "Ukraine has come to seem ever more like a Nato mercenary for Western generals wanting to boost their budgets and relive the cold-war games of their youth. The price is paid by their taxpayers and Ukraine's young men."

Trump claims that he would bring the conflict to an end "within a day" if re-elected. He is also sceptical of Nato, although this seems to be largely on the grounds that its European members do not spend enough on their militaries.

However, the US Congress has overwhelmingly passed legislation blocking any president from withdrawing from Nato without their say-so.

Nevertheless, the presumptive Republican candidate speaks for a large body of US opinion in opposing any further transfer of US money or weapons to Ukraine.

Without those resources, the Zelensky government in Kiev would be forced to come to the negotiating table. A Ukrainian military victory over Russia is already a vanishing prospect.

So it is at least possible that a Trump presidency would bring the Ukraine conflict to a conclusion, even as it would certainly entrench Israeli aggression in the Middle East and stoke further tensions elsewhere in the world.

Biden offers a continuation of futile policies aimed at resisting the ending of the epoch of unipolar US power and the emergence of a multipolar world.

The faster that world develops, the sooner the rest of us can stop worrying about US presidential elections.

Eyes Left



Rochdale has shown what can be done

Sunak's quivering, late-night address, expressing dire concerns over George Galloway's win in Rochdale, unveils a profound unease within the elite – good. Now let's build from here, writes **ANDREW MURRAY**

WHEN a Prime Minister decides to make an emergency address in Downing Street late on a Friday evening it usually means that either a general election or bombing another country is being announced.

Not Rishi Sunak. He instead wanted to issue a dire warning – the voters of Rochdale had done a bad thing and democracy itself was imperilled as a result.

The name he gave his nightmares was George Galloway. The incongruity of his pronouncement – itself undemocratic, patronising and racist – speaks to the alarm in the corridors of power.

The prime minister was speaking to a primal fear among the elite. Keir Starmer, naturally, agreed with every word.

If the Rochdale result does not change everything, it changes a lot. Certainly, the dialectic of mass struggle and representative politics has taken another, and positive, turn.

Someone asked me: what are Sunak and Starmer worried about? After all, by-election victor Galloway has done several shifts in Parliament before without the pillars tumbling down.

The approximate answer is this: they are afraid of Galloway plus hundreds of thousands on the streets mobilised in angry opposition to the British state's Palestine policy.

The movement against bipartisan British complicity with the Gaza genocide is reshaping politics.

It dominates the streets, and the Establishment does not have a clue what to do about that. Sunak summoned police chiefs to Downing Street to brace them for more repressive methods to curb the movement.

The truth is the cops are in a jam. They know that politicians' rhetoric collides with policing reality when 200,000

turn out for a demonstration. The Palestine movement's size and endurance make it impossible to manage through the usual methods.

It is the fact of its existence that the parliamentarians find intimidating, rather than any specific actions it undertakes.

It is a cardinal tenet of imperialist democracy that MPs should vote on war and other crimes through the undisturbed contemplation of what passes for their consciences, without the rude intrusion of the people's voices into matters with which they have no business.

But the popular intrusions are getting ruder still. Say what you like about Galloway, and indeed people do, but his quality which is actually salient to the conjuncture is his lifelong campaigning for Palestine and against imperialism and war.

On this, his record is magnificent and devoid of vacillation. On some other matters, there is of course scope for criticism but I doubt if they count for much



REBEL WITH A CAUSE: George Galloway pledged allegiance to the King as part of the swearing-in ceremony on Monday

in Rafah right now.

The world gets it. Rochdale resounded in the Red Sea at the weekend, with Galloway getting a name check from the Houthis in the course of a defiant address aimed at Rishi Sunak.

The masses fighting to save Gaza see in Galloway a champion and are enthused at having a voice in Parliament – a famously fluent one – unencumbered by considerations of the Labour whip.

A left that does not rise to this moment because of other issues risks marginalisation.

Labour is the most threatened by this confluence of protest and parliamentary action. Its votes are the ones going walkabout, its moral self-image is the most challenged by overt complicity in genocide.

That indeed was the spirit and message of the "No Cease-fire, No Vote" conference which brought together councillors and parliamentary candidates who have broken with Labour over its support for Israel, although listening to the speeches of the disaffected it was evident that this issue was the proverbial last straw for people already deeply alienated

from Starmer's party.

Here is another flank. Its strength, as the impressive Claudia Webbe noted, is its organic roots in communities, a political development that has not been spun out of thin air.

Your columnist, in his own address to the conference, noted that it was the old slogan of "think global, act local" taking a novel and powerful form.

It is the unity of these developments that is the menace to Sunak and Starmer. Therefore, it is a unity to be treasured. That involves adaptation.

For one thing, the exclusion of Galloway from the platform at the national rallies for Palestine is not tenable. It would perversely echo the disdain for the masses of Rochdale expressed by the Prime Minister.

And the issue of a unified challenge to Labour in the cause of Palestine, peace and anti-racism at the general election now needs recalibrating.

The Workers' Party is not likely to be that vehicle on its own.

Galloway recognises this. His call for a socialist and anti-war alliance under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership would be immensely popular.



Sunak and Starmer are afraid of Galloway plus hundreds of thousands on the streets mobilised in angry opposition to the British state's Palestine policy

Andrew Murray



JUST CAUSE: A Palestine Solidarity Campaign rally outside the Houses of Parliament, London on Wednesday February 21, 2024

Both bring something to the party.

It is a fact that since the 1945 election candidates of left-of-labour parties have prevailed on just three occasions in parliamentary contests.

On each occasion – Bethnal Green 2005, Bradford 2012 and now Rochdale 2024 – the successful candidate was Galloway.

Yet Corbyn has that broader political reach, outside the Muslim communities at any rate, that comes from being Labour's socialist leader through two general elections.

They share a firm anti-imperialism and democratic conviction but offer complementary political skillsets. One advocates for "kinder, gentler politics," the other – not so much.

However, an alliance is not likely to emerge in that form. If it doesn't, then Galloway has indicated he will forge ahead anyway, backing a mixture of Workers Party and independent challenges to Labour, particularly in seats with a significant Muslim electorate.

“

Peace, freedom, human dignity and community cohesion are engaged, all menaced by the bipartisan imperialist war party

Paradoxically, that would leave the future of "Corbynism" largely in the hands of Galloway rather than its progenitor.

There are several issues, some of them important, on which large sections of the left do not agree with Galloway. Climate change may be the most consequential.

But there is a basis for unity, resting on the immediate framing of the impending general election. As it happens, they were spelt out more than 22 years ago, at the founding of the Stop the War Coalition.

In addition to the principal slogan embodied in the coalition's name, it adopted just two other demands – opposition to a racist backlash caused by the "war on terror" and a defence of civil liberties.

That trio of central causes has worn well. A Prime Minister and Labour leader both backing genocide and wallowing in Islamophobia, with basic democratic rights threatened simply because so many people are exercising them in the "wrong" cause – there has not been a point in all these years where they have seemed more relevant and vital.

Naturally, other issues clam-

our for attention – the fall in workers' living standards, the crisis in the NHS, reaching net zero. But the main battle lines on war, racism and democracy are clear.

Suella Braverman, Liz Truss and, despite his very partial eviction from the Tories, Lee Anderson, are making the running in the Conservative Party. Sunak bobs along before them. The state prosecutor waits to take over.

Peace, freedom, human dignity and community cohesion are engaged, all menaced by the bipartisan imperialist war party. Rochdale has shown it can be beaten. If Sunak and Starmer are scared by the northern town's choice, we should rejoice.

Political policing: one small victory for the CPGB (M-L)

I reported a few weeks ago on the arrest of members of the CPGB(M-L) at a Palestine protest for selling a pamphlet the police had been told to find objectionable. It is good news that no charges are to be pressed in this case, although the outcome of subsequent arrests under terrorism legislation remains pending.



DIFFERENT STROKES: Protest against the war in Gaza outside Old Trafford before game between Manchester United and Fulham on February 24, 2024. In 1992, amid war in the Balkans Yugoslavia were kicked out of Euro 92 10 days before the tournament

Kamala Harris's Selma ceasefire call: a breakthrough?

Harris's acknowledgement of our protests only goes to show how much harder we must now push for real change from the US state in its slavish support for Israeli aggression, writes **CJ ATKINS**

SPEAKING at one of the civil rights movement's most sacred sites – the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama – Vice-President Kamala Harris uttered a phrase that has up to now seemed impossible for anyone in the Biden administration to let slip from their lips – "immediate ceasefire."

Harris was addressing an audience of thousands gathered for the 59th anniversary of the "Bloody Sunday" attacks. In 1965, police beat civil rights activists there, most of them black, who dared demand the right to vote. The assault became a key moment in the fight against racism in the South and for civil rights nationwide.

The bulk of the vice-president's remarks were aimed at reminding US citizens that the "fight for freedom is not over," and she pointed to attempts by Republicans across the country to limit early voting, absentee voting, and gerrymander districts to limit the political power of people of colour.

It was Harris's comments about Israel's war in Gaza, however, which stole headlines around the world.

Of course, the US vice-president didn't characterise the war as the genocide of Palestinians that it really is, but given the complicit stance that the Biden administration has taken so far, her words suggest that the mass ceasefire sentiment sweeping the country is putting heat on the White House.

"Too many Palestinians have been killed," she began, before turning to what has now become known as "The Flour Massacre" in Gaza City. "Just a few days ago, we saw hungry, desperate people approach aid trucks, simply trying to secure food for their families after weeks of nearly no aid reaching northern Gaza. And they were met with gunfire and chaos."

Discussing the immense suffering caused by the war, Harris forcefully declared: "Let's get a ceasefire! Let's reunite the hostages with their families, and let's provide immediate relief to the people of Gaza!"

When cheers erupted from the crowd, it felt for a moment like the Biden administration had joined the movement protesting the foreign policies of

the Biden administration. Harris acknowledged that "people in Gaza are starving" and "the conditions are inhumane." Recounting some of the horrors Palestinians face, she said, "Our common humanity compels us to act."

She's right; people of decency should certainly be moved to take action. So, in what ways is the Biden-Harris government feeling compelled to act?

Is it feeling compelled to cut shipments of weapons to the Israeli military – weapons which are being used to maim and murder Palestinians every single day?

No.

Is it feeling compelled to exert the powerful influence of US imperialism to force its ally Netanyahu to halt the march of his war machine?

No.

Is it feeling compelled to restore the funding it cut to UNRWA, the aid agency for Palestinian refugees?

No.

Is it feeling compelled to stop vetoing internationally-backed resolutions at the UN calling for a ceasefire?

No.

Is it feeling compelled to join the South African genocide case against Israel at the World Court?

No.

So what is this? Are we just witnessing a good cop-bad cop strategy? Harris throws a bone to the ceasefire movement while Biden keeps approving

missile shipments to Tel Aviv?

Taken as a whole, it has to be said that Harris's critique of Israel's brutal offensive was relatively mild compared to what UN experts and lawyers at the International Court of Justice have said on the matter.

But it's important, nonetheless, because it shows that Biden's re-election campaign has been compelled to stop ignoring the millions of angry US citizens upset over the president's backing for Netanyahu.

It is no coincidence that this hint of a course change from Harris came just days after 101,000 Michigan voters cast "uncommitted" ballots in the Democratic primary and after a major trade union called on voters in other states to do likewise.

With polls showing Biden splitting the unity of his own coalition with his stance on the war, the Democratic Party has little choice but to go into damage control mode.

That's why the nationwide movement for a ceasefire cannot let up. Harris's remarks prove that those who demand peace in the Middle East have leverage, and they must continue using it. Keep marching. Keep petitioning. Keep voting uncommitted. Keep demanding, as Senator Bernie Sanders said this weekend, "not another damn nickel" for Netanyahu to keep up the slaughter in Gaza.

Even if a temporary ceasefire is agreed to in the coming days, it can't be taken as a signal to ease the squeeze. Activists should remember that there was previously a temporary ceasefire in November and December. After it ended, the IDF's rampage resumed, and the death toll in Gaza doubled – from 14,500 to over 30,000.

What's needed now is not just an immediate ceasefire, but a permanent ceasefire and negotiations to not just release hostages (on all sides) and get aid in, but to achieve lasting peace. That ultimately means cutting off US support for the apartheid policies of the Israeli state, ending the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, and moving toward a two-state solution.

■ This article appeared on Peoplesworld.org.

“

Harris throws a bone to the ceasefire movement while Biden keeps approving missile shipments to Tel Aviv?

WEATHER OUTLOOK



TODAY

Any fog patches lifting during the morning. Cloudier skies in the east, perhaps with some light drizzle. Brighter in the west, with long sunny spells developing. Temperatures near normal.

NEXT FEW DAYS

Cloudy with occasional showers near eastern coasts tomorrow and on Friday. Drier with sunny spells further west. Chilly in the east. Rain and cloud pushing in from the south-west on Saturday.

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Fighting Fund with Keith Stoddart

25 days left

YOU'VE RAISED: **£3,902** WE NEED: **£14,098**



THE numbers are not as dramatic as yesterday's, but thanks are nonetheless due to 26 contributors sending a total of £471.50. March's Fighting Fund appeal now stands at a more than respectable £3,902.50 – not at all bad for the month's second report.

To be honest, there isn't really very much to report. What I do know is that it

looks like all but one of today's haul is the result of readers and supporters' recurring monthly payments to the Fund.

This is by far the best way to help us, as there's no chance of forgetting to transfer the money, spoiling your holiday or missing the post, and if you abandon the latter method of sending, you'll either be £1.35 better off or the Fund will be if

you add that to your donation. I realise that it's not for everyone, but please have a think about becoming a "regular" – you know it makes sense.

Anyway, here's what I do know. Of four lots of £50, one came from a Birkenhead supporter with praise for "a Great Paper." That's good to hear.

Eleven folk sent £5, one of whom is in Milton Keynes.

There was also £3.50, £7, three lots of £10, a brace of £15, £20 and £25, but I've no idea where any of them arrived from.

What I'm sure of is that all of today's contributors – not least the person who gave the nice round sum of £100 – have ensured that we'll be around for while longer, riling the boss class and praising the peace lovers.

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DAILY SUDOKU (advanced)

8	6		1					4
9	5			3	4	1	2	6
							1	9
			6	8	2			
5	4							
3	8	4	2	1			6	5
	9				5		3	1

Solution tomorrow...



Yesterday's sudoku

5	7	3	8	9	6	1	4	2
1	8	9	4	5	2	3	6	7
4	6	2	7	3	1	5	9	8
8	1	6	9	2	4	7	5	3
7	3	4	6	1	5	8	2	9
2	9	5	3	8	7	6	1	4
3	4	1	2	6	8	9	7	5
9	5	7	1	4	3	2	8	6
6	2	8	5	7	9	4	3	1

TV & radio preview with Maurice Oxford



DOOMED: An image from a reconstruction of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370

Can new technology help clear up the greatest mystery in aviation history?

TEN years on from the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 with 239 passengers and crew on board, its fate remains the greatest mystery in the history of aviation.

Why Planes Vanish: The Hunt for MH370 (8pm BBC1) looks at whether new radio technology may help locate the missing plane and asks what lessons can be learned to make flying safer. The Kuala Lumpur-to-Beijing flight disappeared from air traffic controllers' radar on March 8 2014 having sent no distress calls, and was never heard from again, but evidence soon emerged that it had stayed in the air for seven more hours.

As new evidence emerges of MH370's possible location through pioneering radio technology, the documentary hears from scientists at the Univer-

sity of Liverpool who are trying to verify how viable the technology is and what this could mean for locating the aircraft.

With Chancellor Jeremy Hunt unveiling the government's 2024 Budget today, **Politics Live** (11.15am BBC2) includes live coverage of the announcement, starting at 12.30pm, plus analysis and reaction.

The Rise and Fall of Boris Johnson (9pm Channel 4) begins a four-part series on the life of the former prime minister by looking into the childhood of the tousle-haired one.

According to the programme, Bojo's early years were difficult, leaving him with emotional wounds that were to shape the key decisions he made in pursuit of power. In other words, he screwed up the country because he was screwed up

himself. Well, I suppose that might be part of the story.

On the radio, **How to Build an Oil Field** (11am Radio 4) looks at the development of Rosebank, this country's largest untapped oil field, which received government approval last September.

The programme, first broadcast on Monday evening, considers who will really benefit from all the oil and money that flows from the field west of Shetland and how its development flies in the face of Britain's climate commitments.

Strike Boy (12.04pm Radio 4) is the third of 10 programmes by Mark Watson, who was 10 years old when the 1984-85 miners' strike took over his life and now wants know what really happened. The previous episodes can, of course, be heard online at BBC Sounds.

QUIZMASTER

with William Sitwell



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

1. In which Asian country did a goods train run loose without its driver recently? **India, on a journey between Kashmir and Punjab**
2. True or false: blue tits (pictured) can hang

upside down when feeding. **True. This is one of their distinctive habits**

3. A petrologist would study what? **Rocks and minerals**

Getting to grips with China's 'new productive forces'

BRAIN-COMPUTER interfaces, humanoid robots and artificial intelligence. These terms once occupied the realms of science fiction, but are today regarded by the Chinese government as the most important forces in the drive for sustainable economic development. The term "new productive forces" has recently emerged in the country, and captures the trend.

As the country's top legislature and political advisory body meet for the Two Sessions, China's biggest annual political gathering, delegates and members are set to discuss plans to shift future-oriented industries from a focus on quantity to quality.

The phrase "new productive forces" was first uttered by Chinese President Xi Jinping in September 2023 when he listed "new energy, new material and hi-tech manufacturing" as key areas to focus on.

China's economy expanded by 5.2 per cent last year, ensuring the country maintains its position as the biggest engine of global economic growth. However, the country remains in a critical period of economic transformation, as the economy faces difficult challenges such as insufficient demand, overcapacity, and weak social expectations.

"Establishing the new before abolishing the old" is the central government's goal for economic development this year. Central to this is the effort to upgrade existing productive forces.

The question is, how? The task is even more pressing, given the way scientific and technological innovation have become key battlefields of international competition.

One important area for China is its industrial chain.

In terms of manufacturing, the country has more than 200 mature industrial clusters in which upstream and downstream enterprises are better able to collaborate to adapt to the revolution in productivity.

From the central government to local authorities, China has sent a strong signal to promote the development of the new productive forces. In turn, the transformation from quantity to quality has already started.

Changzhou in Jiangsu province used to rely on the textile and machinery manufacturing industries. After electric vehicle giant Li Auto was introduced in the city in 2016, Changzhou has worked to complete the sector's upstream and

Instead of the alleged 'economic woes' you read about almost weekly in the Western press, let's look at the futuristic industries that are driving Chinese real-world economic growth, writes **GUO TIANQI**



WORLD-BEATER: The Wuling Hongguang city mini electric vehicle has been manufactured since 2020 has become the best-selling electric car in China - global sales recorded in February 2023 passed 1,100,000 units
Pic: JamesYoung8167/CC

downstream industrial chain.

In 2023, new energy vehicles were among China's most popular exports. Lithium batteries and photovoltaic products accounted for 4.5 per cent of China's total export volume, with more than 1 trillion yuan and a year-on-year growth of 29 per cent.



REDUCING CARBON FOOTPRINT: Energy Vault announces interconnection of China's first 100 MWh EVx gravity energy storage system to the state grid. A second EVx system in Zhangye City, Gansu province, started in 2023 has completed foundation work and initial four floors



The country remains in a critical period of economic transformation, with challenges such as insufficient demand, overcapacity, and weak social expectations

Sichuan province has also cultivated a world-class new display industry, based on its expertise in advanced electronics and information. Shanxi province has issued a long-term plan for the development of hydrogen energy, to boost its use in the transport sector.

Since 2022, China has built computing centres in the west of the country, to calculate the huge amounts of data generated in the developed eastern regions.

Today, there are 10 major national supercomputing centres nationwide, and the number of 5G stations reached 3.38 million by the end of 2023. As the cost of computing power gradually decreases, AI and

other smart applications are stepping ever closer to use in daily life.

The key to new productive forces lies in technological progress, which also requires high-quality workers. Despite its ageing population, China's "demographic dividend" is being transformed into a "talent dividend."

The average years of schooling for the working-age population in China has increased to more than 11 years, while the total number of R&D personnel in China exceeds 6 million.

Moreover, financial support for fundamental research is also increasing. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the total expenditure on



China's determination to promote productivity through science and technology could mark a new period of economic growth

R&D in 2023 was 3.327 billion yuan, an increase of 8.1 per cent over the previous year, accounting for 2.64 per cent of GDP.

Different from traditional productivity driven by labour, land and capital, the new productive forces are driven by technology. With large-scale investments in the fields of manufacturing, human resources, computing power and financial support, it's clear that the new productive forces are expected to become a new driver of economic growth.

"China is unlikely to relive Japan's experiences and enter a period of balance sheet recession, as long as it promotes technological innovation and industrial upgrades, and creates more investment opportunities for enterprises," said Justin Yifu Lin, Dean of Peking University's Institute of New Structural Economics.

In the near future, it's not hard to imagine how science and technology will change lives in the most profound ways. From the central government to the private sector's efforts to achieve technological breakthroughs, China's determination to promote productivity through science and technology could mark a new period of economic growth and confidence across the globe.

■ Guo Tianqi is a CGTN reporter - www.cgtn.com.

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Women on the picket line at the Orgreave Coking Plant near Rotherham, June 6 1984

21ST CENTURY POETRY

Women Against Pit Closures

She blooms
badged and blue-jeaned
in the sunshine.

In the shadows -
her husband
her father
her sons,

the gate
the hearth
the alarm clock, ringing.

This hybrid rose -
her eyes, anthracite on fire
her lips, the curve of a pickaxe.

New Aphrodite.
One of the first
to clamber up, up, up
and over
the pit-yard wall

SARAH WIMBUSH

■ Sarah Wimbush is a Yorkshire poet. Her first collection, *Shelling Peas with My Grandmother in the Gorgiolds*, was published by Bloodaxe in 2022. Her new collection, *STRIKE (Stairwell, 2024)* commemorates the 40th anniversary of the miners' strike 1984-85.
■ Poetry submissions to thursdaypoems@gmail.com

TV SERIES REVIEW | **THE WAY**
★★★★☆ | BBC IPLAYER

Junk mythologising

To depict workers in Port Talbot as passive, mediatised addicts does no service to reality, muses DENNIS BROE

"I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take this any more," about-to-be-fired news anchor Howard Beale screams in a television rant, urging everyone to go to the window and yell the same thing.

This scene from the film *Network*, much honoured and claimed to be prescient, in fact represents simply mindless ungrounded fear, vaguely articulated, not drawn from the specific material aspects of people's lives and thus open to a kind of manipulation that can easily be converted into simple resentment and will become the basis of today's populism.

Unfortunately, just such ungrounded impulses, after 45 years of devastation wrought by Reagan/Thatcher et al's austerity and neoliberalism, are the basis of the BBC series *The Way*. It is a by-product of documentary film-maker Adam Curtis, who helped conceptualise the three-part series, who contributes not inconsiderable strengths (such as tracing advertising industry manipulation in *The Century of the Self*) but also glaring weaknesses (evidenced in the more recent anti-revolutionary, rabid anti-populism of *Can't Get You Out of My Head*).

The Way blends a loosely constructed family fiction, around the Welsh steel and former mining town of Port Talbot, with documentary footage of the 1984 miners' strike and a mythical otherworldly aspect that summons King Arthur's pulling the sword from the stone. It has lifted the series title phrase "The Way" from the *Star Wars*' world's Mandalorian code of conduct, and the image of a proselytising Red Monk who kick-starts a town rebellion from Scottish folklore.

Into the soup is thrown the actual condition of the steel-works, with an Indian owner (in the series Japanese) who is always on the verge of closing the plant.

The problem, and this is a Curtis mainstay, is that the characters are utterly deceived by a passive, mediatised lifestyle: Owen the lead character, who "can't remember the last time

I felt anything," is, as his love interest describes, "a drug addict in recovery dealing drugs," to which her response is: "I don't care, it's not my business."

This passivity and foolishness influences their actions as workers. A strike is called for at the plant before the decision is made to close it. Unlike the actual situation in Port Talbot no immediate closure is threatened. Owen tosses a lead pipe, which ignites a confrontation with the police, echoing the bone thrown across the ages in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, only this time signalling the breakdown of labour relations, and civilisation itself, rather than, as in Kubrick's film, signifying its terrifying advance.

Wales is sealed off from "Britain" and thus begins in Episode Two the family's own odyssey as they attempt to march to safety in a now open police state.

In the series, much hostility is summoned but it remains vague ("The British don't revolt, they gripe"), with the actual problems of deindustrialisation and a devastated economy expressed in generalised slo-



gans that do not directly confront the power structure and the massive redistribution of wealth that began in 1980 with the launching of the neoliberal era, in the moment a little after *Network* premiered. In that film, people start throwing their televisions out the window when they might better have stormed the television station and taken over the media means of production.

Both the original and this new iteration of an ungrounded

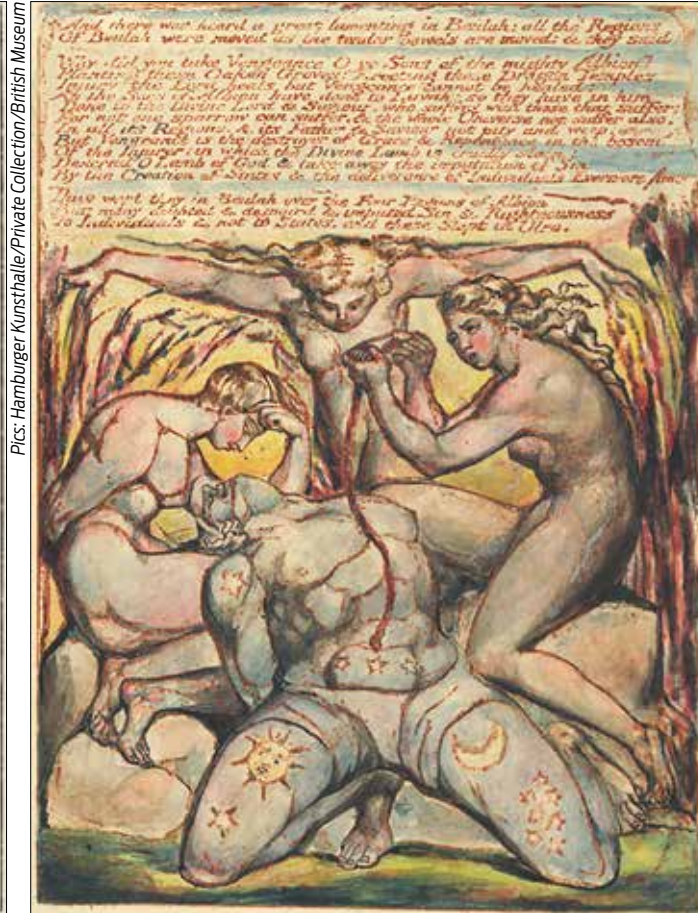
populism give much credence to the abstract expression of grievances felt by the population, but behind each lies the firm conviction that workers are too coddled and deceived by omnipresent media to be able to do more than threaten irrational action.

This is a mindset disproven, for example, in the massive entertainment and service industry strikes which marked the summer of discontent in Los Angeles and which continue throughout the US. These strikes, though, have specific demands and represent a growing understanding and awareness by workers of not only their situation but also of how to use today's media for their own purposes, an understanding of which in *The Way* is not present.

If the site of this action, the Port Talbot steel plant, actually closes, then Britain would, instead of making steel, only be fashioning steel from scraps and leftovers. In a way, *The Way*, with its muddled mix of genres and its deceived chaotic individuals, is also fashioned from scraps; that is, from the leftovers and the detritus of the entertainment industry and the subjectivity of its victims who, in this telling, offer only confused and unconvincing resistance.



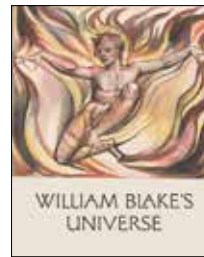
RIGHT-WING FANTASY: Casual paramilitaries on the border between Wales and England in *The Way*



BOOK REVIEW | **WILLIAM BLAKE'S UNIVERSE**
 DAVID BIRDMAN AND ESTHER CHADWICK | PHILIP WILSON, £35

God's other Englishman

SYLVIA HIKINS revisits a view of the vision of William Blake that sets him alongside his European contemporaries



WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827) is possibly best known as the creator of England's unofficial national anthem. When I was a kid, my mother used to take me with her to the local Co-op Women's Guild, and at the start of every meeting we would heartily sing "Jerusalem."

England's green and pleasant land was written in the context of a turbulent age of political upheaval where the American, French, and Haitian revolutions combined with the growth of modern capitalism. Unsurprisingly, both dissenting and visionary art flourished across Europe.

When you flick open the pages of this book, images and words created by European artists, including Blake, absolutely take your breath away. It's obvious that William Blake was not simply the ultimate English eccentric that many of his contemporaries would want us to believe. Religious radicalism forms a central focus of his words and images.

In Jerusalem, which he created between 1804 and 1820, Blake produced over 100 relief-etched plates, many hand coloured. The figure Albion represents England on the journey through ancient religious human sacrifice, to Anglicanism and Christ's sac-

rific and in conclusion, sees Jerusalem as the final unity of all living things.

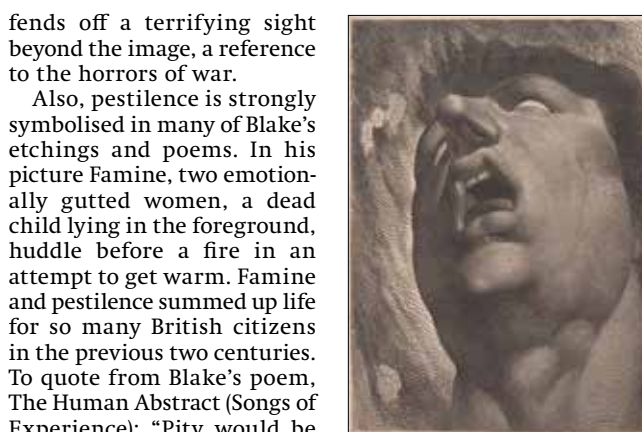
Blake produced many images of redemption. His print, Albion Rose, puts Albion as the central figure, a shining, naked body with a burst of bright light behind. With arms outstretched, Albion is ready to embrace a new dawn.

He considered human imagination to be transformative, an aspect of life that every one of us can access at any time.

This book contains many extraordinary contemporary portraits of Blake, a man sporting long curly hair, whose huge eyes penetrate you from the printed page. In one, his hand gently rests on a human skull. There's no doubt that Blake was a complex character suffering from mental hallucinations, but his creative output, as evidenced in this book, was astonishing.

Blake's idea of liberation embodied the abolition of all laws that constrained imagination and sexual freedom. Along with other European artists illustrated here, his images of oppression and poverty are often interpreted in terms of biblical apocalypse.

Many of these illustrations still convey powerful meanings for us today. For example, an old, bearded man with his wife or daughter crouching and clutching his lower body,



fends off a terrifying sight beyond the image, a reference to the horrors of war.

Also, pestilence is strongly symbolised in many of Blake's etchings and poems. In his picture *Famine*, two emotionally gutted women, a dead child lying in the foreground, huddle before a fire in an attempt to get warm. *Famine* and *pestilence* summed up life for so many British citizens in the previous two centuries. To quote from Blake's poem, *The Human Abstract* (*Songs of Experience*): "Pity would be no more/ if we did not make somebody poor/ And many no more could be/ if all were as happy as we".

Blake's intention was to bring about change in both the social order and in the minds of men, which many

people found disquieting. He was labelled an eccentric.

This absorbing book in which Blake is seen alongside other artists and influential friends in a European and global context has been pub-

(Above Left) *Distress of the Fatherland* (Not des Vaterlandes), Philipp Otto Runge, 1809; (Above Middle) *Albion and the Fates*, William Blake, 1804-1820; (Above) *Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave*, William Blake, 1793; (Below) *The Slave awakes*, 1793-1821. By 1793, the Haitian Revolution was under way in the Caribbean and the image may contain an allusion to these events; (Left) *Head of a Damned Soul* (after Henri Fuseli), William Blake (Far Left) *Pestilence*, William Blake, c.1780-4



lished as part of an exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, that runs until May 19 and some 180 paintings are on display from artists who never actually met, but whose intentions were remarkably similar.

Blake's Universe revealed to me a constellation of European artists seeking spirituality in their lives in response to war, revolution and political turbulence. Blake was not alone in using art and poetry as a tool to reconstruct the world anew in the face of shattering political crisis, elements of which remain with us today.

In this large-sized book, beautifully reproduced, the combination of words and images are unforgettable.

TRIGGER HAPPY:
Grant Shapps



TRIDENT

What went wrong with our missile?

OUR man at the MoD Grant Shapps was rather tight-lipped when asked why a Trident missile test went wrong.

As taxpayers, we should be informed why it went wrong. HMS Vanguard, which he happened to be on board, is a very expensive bit of military hardware.

He should be more open: after all, my taxes are paying for it all.

At least Luftwaffe general Adolf Galland, in his book *The First and the Last*, gave a brief description of what made the V1 – better known as the doodlebug – tick.

MARTYN M LEWIS
Leighton Buzzard, Beds

BRITAIN

Devolution is not democracy

REGARDING recent letters on devolution: Britain is presently the most undemocratic it has been in my adult lifetime.

Until just recently, the trade unions have been on a steady decline in number and strength since the 1970s, and this in a context of a considerable increase in population. This has been accompanied by ever stronger anti-trade-union legislation.

Devolution has not made us a more democratic country, nor would breaking our country up into independent statelets. This would not be a solution to our problems but an expenditure of energy on a “solution” of balkanisation – eg: Yugoslavia being broken up into five countries with still ongoing strife. A solution it most certainly is not.

The SNP’s call for independence is a busted flush. The party’s prior nepotistic governance in Scotland did not, nor will the current one, take it down a socialist path any more than Labour will, which has simply sought to manage capitalism’s unarguable decline.

What we need is the overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of a workers’ state to commence the building of real socialism.

Personally, I look forward to it. Our utterly greedy and totally incompetent rulers certainly seem to be doing their best to help us achieve this.

HANK ROBERTS
London NW10

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH:

A panel from the 1935 Nazi exhibition in Berlin, the *Miracle of Life*. The text reads: “This is how it would end. Qualitative increase in population with too weak reproduction of the higher-ranking. This is what will happen when inferior people have four children and superior people have two children.”



Pic: Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-16748 / Georg Pahl / CC-BY-SA 3.0

EUTHANASIA

The pitfalls of ‘assisted dying’

FRANK FRIEDMAN (Letters February 27) pointed out that Cuba has authorised medically assisted suicide.

This reminded me of a debate some years ago at the TUC women’s conference on the right to assisted dying.

I spoke against this, arguing that such legislation could only be safely introduced in a socialist country.

Only a government that is truly humanitarian and

accountable should have power over life and death.

In support of my position I reminded sisters that the Nazis’ first eugenics law, introduced in July 1933, allowed for the forced sterilisation of Germans with physical or mental health conditions assumed to be hereditary.

My mother was born in Germany and her elder sister (born in 1913) was bipolar.

The family did manage to

keep her safe until after my mother and her English mother fled to this country. No one knows exactly what happened to her after she was taken away to be sterilised.

The only thing we know for a fact is that family in Berlin got a package in the post in winter with Rosalind’s ashes and a note that she had died as a result of a hunger strike.

ANITA HALPIN
London E3

GAZA

Where are they supposed to go?

THE Israelis have proposed the evacuation of civilians from Rafah in anticipation of the March 10 deadline/onslaught.

But where to – and will they be allowed to return?

PHIL BRAND
London SW17

SIMON RENTON explores the Star archives

80 YEARS AGO TODAY...



Hollywood rebuked for film glorifying collaborator

THE Daily Worker frequently reported on the traitorous role played by General Draza Mihailovich in Yugoslavia and his royalist and nationalist movement and guerilla force, the Chetniks.

On March 6, 1944, the Worker reported that a US-made film that glorified the actions of these quisling collaborators was being shown in British cinemas.

The Worker pointed out that even such a committed anti-communist as Churchill had declared that Mihailovich and the Chetniks did not fight against the Nazi occupiers, as shown in the film. The “Hearst press” refers to the papers owned by WR Hearst, a Nazi sympathiser and dedicated propagandist against socialism, communism and the Soviet Union.

“PRO-MIHAILOVICH FILM STILL SMUDGES OUR SCREENS”

“TWENTIETH Century Fox Film Corporation are still showing in various parts of the country the film Chetniks, glorifying Mihailovich, the renegade Yugoslav. This fact emerges from a correspondence between Mr Francis Harley, Twentieth Century’s chief in Britain, and myself, as well as from replies given by Mr Harley to the trade press.

“Called on to withdraw the film, Mr Harley gives the evasive answer that he will do so if requested by the government.

“It is easy to imagine what the Hearst press, Chicago Tribune and other reactionary US propaganda agencies that delight in sowing mistrust between the Allies, would make of it if the British government were to be provoked into asking – without any legal right to do so – the American firm of

Twentieth Century to withdraw one of its pictures.

“CHURCHILL’S VIEW”

“In his speech on February 22 the Prime Minister said of Mihailovich: ‘General Mihailovich, I much regret to say, drifted gradually into a position in which some of his commanders made accommodations with the Italian and German troops, which resulted in their being left alone in certain mountain areas, and, in return, doing very little or nothing against the enemy.’

“In other words, Mr Churchill’s authority confirms that Mihailovich is carrying out no operations against the enemy, and that his commanders and forces have come to agreements with the Germans and are co-operating with them against the patriots.

“Yet Twentieth Century apparently persist in purveying to the public their misleading film Chetniks, depicting as the hero of the anti-German struggle. And it appears they intend to go on doing so not only in Britain but in other countries as well.

“Cinema audiences should not hesitate to express to the manager of any cinema that may be due to show the film, their views on this attempt to glorify a traitor.”

You can read editions of the **Daily Worker** (1930-45) and **Morning Star** (2000-today), online at mstar.link/DWMSArchive
Ten days’ access costs just **£5.99** and a year is **£84**

HAVE YOUR SAY Write (up to 300 words) to... letters@peoples-press.com
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- CYMRU/WALES** – New Welsh group established. Contact David at davidedwin.nicholson@gmail.com.
- DORSET** – New group. Contact Ruth Pitman at dorsetrsrg@gmail.com.
- DUMFRIES** – Email Stuart Hyslop at stuart.hyslop@hotmail.co.uk.
- DUNDEE** – dylanmarshall1000@gmail.com.
- EDINBURGH** – Email Richard Shilcock at rcs@staffmail.ed.ac.uk.
- FIFE** – Email Tam Kirby at kirby1962@hotmail.com.
- GOVAN & SW** – Email David Ferguson at david-ferguson23@hotmail.com.
- SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY** – Email Vince Mills at vpills@outlook.com.
- SCOTLAND** – Women’s RSG. Contact: Kate Ramsden on email: katearamsden@gmail.com.
- LANARKSHIRE** – Email: jimhoey@msn.com or call 07749 366730.
- LONDON** – Call Paul Clyndes on 07969 321-657 or email londonmorningstar-group@gmail.com.
- MANCHESTER** – Email Martin Hall on greatermanchestersrsg@gmail.com.
- MARKET HARBOROUGH** – New group formed, email Peter at peterwhalen13@gmail.com.
- MERSEYSIDE** – Meets regularly. Email Helen at merseycpnews@gmail.com.
- MILTON KEYNES** – Meets regularly. Email Clive Swan cliveswan@gmail.com.
- NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK** – Contact Sean Meleady on smelea@hotmail.co.uk or call 0775 814 5671.
- NORTH-EAST ENGLAND** – Email ronnie49@live.co.uk.
- OXFORDSHIRE** – New group formed, Geoffrey Ferres at oxonrsg@gmail.com.
- SHROPSHIRE** – Regular paper sales & monthly socials: Call Phil on 07816 641-884 or email shropshiremorningstar@gmail.com.
- SOUTHAMPTON** – Regular group: Contact Glynn Tudor, Glynt1951@gmail.com to get involved.
- SOUTH YORKSHIRE** – Email Carrie Hedderwick at hedderwick@gmail.com.
- SUNDERLAND** – Email Alec McFadden at alec.stuc@gmail.com or call 07831 627531.
- SUSSEX** – Email Ruben Brett at rubenbrett@gmail.com or call 07831 627531.
- SWINDON** – Email Pete Webb at jackobadenski@yahoo.com.
- WATFORD** – Call Phil Brown on (01923) 239-512 or email leveller@myphone.coop.
- WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE** – Email George Kirkpatrick at george.kirkpatrick@hotmail.com.
- WEST YORKSHIRE** – Email westyorkmorningstar@gmail.com.

Eagles centre Jason Kelce announces his retirement

JASON KELCE (pictured) needed only seconds to burst into tears.

Kelce's eyes flooded each time he relayed a story about backyard football games with his brother, the love he felt from his parents and the devotion of his coaches – even a band teacher – that shaped him along way. But it was his career with the Philadelphia Eagles that choked up Kelce the most. The Super Bowl. The parade. His beloved offensive line coach.

All of the memories, the wins, the brotherhood – both with his fellow Eagles players and younger brother Travis, a tight end for the Kansas City Chiefs – consumed Kelce to the point where he needed about 45 minutes to reach the inevitable conclusion that everyone inside a crowded auditorium knew was coming from the moment a news conference was announced.

It was time to retire.

The 36-year-old Kelce officially called it quits on Monday at the Eagles' training centre, ending a 13-year career spent entirely with Philadelphia in which he became not only one of the great centres of his era who played a key role in the franchise's lone Super Bowl championship, but a beloved Philly personality and popular podcast host.

"Let's see how long this lasts," said Kelce, wearing a sleeveless Eagles T-shirt, before he burst into tears and needed several moments to compose himself at the news conference attended by his parents, wife Kylie and Travis, who was wearing sunglasses inside the auditorium. Eagles coach Nick Sirianni sat behind reporters.

"I have been the underdog my entire career," Kelce said.



"And I mean it when I say it, I wish I still was."

Kelce was a sixth-round pick out of Cincinnati in the 2011 draft. The burly, bushy-haired and bearded Kelce has been a stalwart of the offensive line since he was drafted and as an Iron Man after he missed most of the 2012 season with a partially torn MCL and torn ACL.

The moment that endeared him for life to the Philly faithful came at the Super Bowl parade following the 2017 season when he dressed as one of Philadelphia's famed Mummers, and he delivered a fiery, profane speech that whipped the crowd into a frenzy.

Kelce recalled that moment Monday, saying: "I won't forget the parade and what it meant to the city of Philadelphia. The

joy in our community and the closure it gave so many."

"That wasn't my speech," Kelce said. "It was Philadelphia's."

The Kelce brothers played each other in the Super Bowl two seasons ago, which was won by the Chiefs – "I won't forget falling short to the Chiefs," Jason said on Monday. Jason attended the Chiefs' play-off game in frigid Buffalo temperatures this season. He ripped off his shirt and chugged beers with fans.

It was the Jason Kelce way. He's been a showman off the football field, singing the national anthem at a 76ers game, partying with the Phillie Phanatic and pounding a beer to a roaring ovation at a Phillies post-season game.

But it was his work on the offensive line that made him a star. Kelce ended his career by making 156 straight starts, and he earned six All-Pro Team selections.

He was part of Philadelphia's core four of players that have experienced droughts and championship runs, multiple coaches and one of the worst collapses in the city's sports history. Fletcher Cox and Brandon Graham are the lone holdovers from former coach Andy Reid's last season with the Eagles in 2012. Lane Johnson completes the four veteran anchors and was a rookie in former coach Chip Kelly's first season in 2013. Kelce is the first one to call it quits.

Eagles fans came prepared to toast Kelce with a cold one.

He and his family were greeted by cheering fans – and yes, one even brought a keg of beer – outside the complex.

He thanked a long list of mentors from his high school football, hockey and lacrosse coaches and his old band teachers at Cleveland Heights (Ohio) high school for putting up with a "rambunctious kid that was will full of immaturity, stupidity and cockiness."

He thanked his coaches at Cincinnati for believing he could play centre, a fortuitous decision that made him a great fit in Philadelphia, then thanked his four coaches with the Eagles.

Kelce choked up again thanking Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie for his leadership and general manager Howie Roseman for drafting him. He shared memories of his Eagles career and said he would never forget the day Reid called to tell him Kelce had been drafted by the team. Kelce's father rushed into a room, "with tears streaming down his face," in the pure joy of the moment.

He never made the Eagles regret their decision.

"Has there ever been a more perfect marriage between a player, a city and a team?" Lurie asked.

Kelce, who made seven Pro Bowls, and former Pittsburgh Steelers Dermontti Dawson and Mike Webster are the only centres since the 1970 merger to earn All-Pro nods five times. Dawson and Webster are both in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Kelce played 193 regular-season games for the Eagles.

"It has always been a goal of mine to play my whole career in one city," Kelce said. "I couldn't have dreamt of a better one if I tried."

BY DAN GELSTON

in brief

Sri Lanka take lead into Bangladesh tie

MEN'S CRICKET: Sri Lanka take a 1-0 lead into today's second leg of their three-match Twenty20 series with Bangladesh in Sylhet. Chasing 207 to win in Monday's opening game Bangladesh fell four runs short despite Jaker Ali smashing 68 from just 38 balls as Dasun Shanaka took two wickets for eight runs in the last over. Sri Lanka currently sit eighth in the world's Twenty20 rankings with Bangladesh one place below them.

Arsenal host Aston Villa this evening

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL: Holders and six-time winners Arsenal host Aston Villa at Meadow Park this evening in the first League Cup semi final. The Gunners currently sit third in the Super League while Villa, who have never reached the final before, are eighth. Tonight's winners will face either Manchester City or Chelsea, who play tomorrow, in the final at Wolves' Molineux stadium at the end of the month.

Copa Libertadores qualifiers continue

MEN'S FOOTBALL: Chile's Deportivo Palestino, who still include an outline map of 1948 Palestine on the shirt sleeves, take on Paraguay's Nacional this morning in the first leg of their final qualifier for the Copa Libertadores, South America's equivalent to the Champions League. Paraguay's Sportivo Trinidense take on Chile's Colo Colo and Brazil's Botafogo and Bragantino meet tomorrow before Bolivia's Always Ready play Uruguay's Nacional on Thursday.

London Lions face Ankara in EuroCup

MEN'S BASKETBALL: Three days after London beat Leicester 105-89 to retain their British Basketball League title with five games to go, the Lions face Turkey's Ankara in the last 16 of the EuroCup at the Copper Box arena tonight. Last year's runners up Ankara struggled to qualify this time around, finishing with only eight wins and ten losses whereas London suffered just six defeats and were their league's third highest scorers.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Boulter eager to continue rankings rise after San Diego win

by Our Sports Desk

KATIE BOULTER has set her sights on pushing further up the rankings after winning the biggest title of her career.

The British number one defeated five top-40 players to win the San Diego Open, bringing her a first WTA 500 trophy and elevating her ranking to 27.

With Cameron Norrie slipping to 28, it means Boulter is the highest-ranked British sin-

gles player of either sex heading into Indian Wells, which begins today.

The same week a year ago, Boulter was ranked outside the world's top 150, and she does not have many points to defend until the grass-court tournament in Nottingham in June, where last year she picked up her first WTA title.

"I feel like I've started the year very well and I've given myself the best opportunity to set myself up for the rest of the

year," said 27-year-old Boulter.

"I've got a free swing, I don't really have too much pressure. I'm just here enjoying myself and working as hard as I possibly can with a great team. You never know what could happen so I'm looking forward to the rest of the year."

The weekend was made even more special for Boulter by the success of boyfriend Alex De Minaur, who successfully defended his title in Acapulco on Saturday before catching an

early morning flight to cheer on the British star.

They join the likes of former couples Jimmy Connors and Chris Evert and Lleyton Hewitt and Kim Clijsters in winning titles on the same weekend, and Boulter said: "I think that is very cool."

"I had no idea other people had done it. To share something with my other half is going to be something that we won't forget."

While the two titles both earned their recipients 500 rank-

ing points, De Minaur took home around £325,000 and Boulter just £112,000, highlighting the continuing disparity between the ATP and WTA Tour away from the biggest joint events.

There is parity in Indian Wells, where the tours come together at a big event for the first time since the Australian Open.

Boulter's elevation to the top 30 comes too late to earn her a seeding and she will be back in action today against dangerous Italian Camila Giorgi.



WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP BID CONSIDERED BY ENGLAND

Authorities confirm 'aspiration' to submit offer for tournament for first time

by Our Sports Desk

UK SPORT has outlined ambitions for Britain to host its first Fifa Women's World Cup in the 2030s, it was reported yesterday.

The global showpiece is the biggest sporting event Britain has never held, and one of several new additions to the funding body's latest list of major event hosting targets alongside a World Athletics Championship in 2029 or 2031 and a men's Rugby World Cup in 2035 or 2039.

The target list comprises 70 events – including 18 world championships – across 32 sports taking place between 2024 and 2040, and while inclusion on the list is just the first of a number of steps before a decision to bid is made, it marks another move forward.

Esther Britten, head of major events at UK Sport, said: "If we had this list without [the Women's World Cup] on we'd all be saying, 'Why is it not on it?' We want to explore this meaningfully in the 2030s and make the right decision about which iteration of the Women's World Cup is one to go for."

"The environment that we land any of these women's sports events in is one where we have athletes that are getting increasing cut-through,



LIONESSES: England's Chloe Kelly (right) celebrates scoring against Germany in the Euro 2022 final

that are championing their sports, that are speaking out for their sports, and we have increasingly an environment where we have people who want to go and watch these sports.

"That's why it should be on our list for consideration, but choosing the right time will be [about] the wider international relations factors."

Every event is subject to a feasibility evaluation which considers factors such as

chances of success, venue selection, bid process, financial contributions and costs, as well as the social impact potential.

Such a study would be the next step for the Women's World Cup, which is currently on the list as an "opportunity" alongside a potential men's Rugby World Cup.

UK Sport deputy CEO Simon Morton said it is likely stakeholders would gather after the 2027 Women's World Cup hosts

are announced at the 74th Fifa congress in May 2024.

A joint bid from Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands is being considered alongside one from Brazil, while the United States and Mexico have also put themselves forward as co-hosts, while the 2031 hosts will be confirmed in 2025.

Morton said the 2027 host selection may help narrow down which of the next decade's three Women's World Cups could give Britain the

best chance, while also needing to factor in the Lionesses' prospects of success in each of those years.

"We have to respect the fact that there are other countries interested in hosting them, so the sort of political dynamics across international federations, in terms of where these events might go, is something that's outside of our control," he said. "So that's why you see a little bit of an open-ended position."

"There's definitely an aspiration to host the Women's World Cup in the 2030s, but we need to see who Fifa will go with for that (2027) tournament."

"I haven't met anyone who thinks that going for the Women's World Cup is a bad idea, and I think most people would want it to happen as soon as possible, but we're open-minded about when it might be in the 2030s."

UK Sport is also exploring the possibility of establishing a new central body to help deliver events where sports and cities are unable to do so.

The Women's World Cup is one of several events on the list that would also require government funding. Events can move into the feasibility study phase regardless of which political party is in power, but decision-making about investment will need to be taken by ministers.

WOMEN'S FOOTIE

Kerr pleads not guilty to harassment of policeman

CHELSEA striker Sam Kerr has pleaded not guilty to racially aggravated harassment of a police officer, according to the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Australia captain was charged with causing a police officer harassment, alarm or distress during an incident in Twickenham, south-west London, on January 30 last year.

A Metropolitan Police spokesperson said the incident involved an officer who was responding to a complaint about a taxi fare.

Kerr, of Richmond, denied the charge at a plea and trial preparation hearing at Kingston upon Thames Crown Court on Monday.

She is due to face trial next February, according to reports.

Chelsea have been contacted for comment by the PA news agency.

Kerr is two months into a lengthy period on the sidelines after sustaining an anterior cruciate ligament injury during the Blues' warm-weather training camp in Morocco.

The 30-year-old – Australia's all-time leading scorer with 69 goals – joined Chelsea in 2020 and has helped the London club win the last four Women's Super League titles as well as the FA Cup three times.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Halep free to play again after doping ban reduced

by Our Sports Desk

SIMONA HALEP (pictured) is free to resume her career after the Court of Arbitration for Sport reduced her doping ban from four years to nine months yesterday.

The former Wimbledon champion tested positive for the blood-boosting drug Roxadustat at the US Open in 2022 and was handed the long ban last September.

Halep appealed to CAS and, following a hearing last month, the court has dramatically reduced the Romanian's suspension.

A CAS statement read: "The CAS panel has unanimously determined that the four-year period of ineligibility imposed by the ITF [International Tennis

Federation] independent tribunal is to be reduced to a period of ineligibility of nine months starting on October 7, 2022, which period expired on July 6, 2023."

The International Tennis Integrity Agency, which oversees tennis's anti-doping programme, had also appealed seeking an even longer ban, but this is a major victory for Halep, who was staring at the end of her career if the original sanction stood.

The independent tribunal had not accepted Halep's explanation that a contaminated supplement was the source of the Roxadustat in her system, while a charge of irregularities in her athlete biological passport was also upheld.

But the CAS panel took a different view, with a statement



reading: "Having carefully considered all the evidence put before it, the CAS panel determined that Ms Halep had established, on the balance of probabilities, that the Roxadustat entered her body through the consumption of a contaminated supplement which she had used in the days shortly before August 29, 2022 and that

the Roxadustat, as detected in her sample, came from that contaminated product.

"As a result, the CAS panel determined that Ms Halep had also established, on the balance of probabilities, that her anti-doping rule violations were not intentional."

"Although the CAS panel found that Ms Halep did bear some level of fault or negligence for her violations, as she did not exercise sufficient care when using the Keto MCT supplement, it concluded that she bore no significant fault or negligence."

The ITIA has also been ordered to pay Halep around £18,000 as a contribution to her legal fees and expenses.

Halep was the highest-profile tennis player since Maria Sharapova to fail a drugs test,

having won the French Open in 2018 and Wimbledon the following year as well as being ranked world number one.

The 32-year-old, who strongly criticised the original process, will now look to rebuild her career.



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TODAY'S TIPS

Farringdon's Doubles

JUNGLE MAC
Kempton 6.30 (nap)
SWEET FANTASY
Catterick 3.15

Houseman's Choice

BURROWS HALL
Catterick 4.15 (nap)

Compulsive gambling can harm your health and relationships, and leave you in serious debt. For advice on gambling from the NHS, visit: www.bit.ly/NHSGambling

