



PENTAGON PAPERS' WIKILEAKS PARALLELS

DANIEL ELLSBERG: Whistleblower on Assange's case

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for Peace and Socialism

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DEPORTATION FLIGHTS HIT TURBULENCE

Court halts deportation in blow to Home Secretary

by Bethany Rielly

PRITI PATEL's bid to deport 1,000 Channel-crossing asylum-seekers by the end of the year hit another wall yesterday after a judge halted a charter flight to Spain.

The Home Office had planned to deport a group of up to 20 people yesterday who had recently crossed the Channel in small boats.

But a High Court judge ordered the plane grounded over concerns the deportees were at risk of destitution in Spain.

This was the fate of a group of 11 Syrian asylum-seekers who found themselves homeless on the streets of Madrid after being deported from Britain two weeks ago.

The group were not allowed to proceed with their asylum claims and were denied food or water by the Spanish authorities.

The High Court heard on Wednesday night the new group were also at risk of "indefinite street homelessness" if they were returned to Spain.

The five asylum-seekers who brought the legal challenge had faced traumatic journeys to reach Britain from Yemen and Syria and each had strong asylum claims, according to their lawyers. One had been shot and had to have part of his stomach removed.

Thursday's planned charter flight is part of Ms Patel's pledge to deport 1,000 people who have crossed the Channel by small boat before the end of the year.

Deportations are being carried out under regulations known as Dublin III, which allow asylum-seekers to be returned to other EU countries if they passed through them on the way.

Campaigners have expressed concern that ministers are trying to speed through deportations under these regulations as they are due to end once the Brexit transition period does.

Lawyers also submitted evidence from a team of Amnesty International researchers in Spain which stated that asylum-seekers would be at "real risk" of destitution because of the country's overwhelmed reception system.

Veronica Barroso, an expert on migration at Amnesty International in Spain, told the Morning Star that the country currently has a backlog of more than 50,000 pending asylum applications for just 25,000 reception facility spaces.

The Spanish reception system has long been criticised by the human rights group for failing to provide accommodation to asylum-seekers while they wait for their interviews. A damning Amnesty report from 2016 concluded that the Spanish reception system is "a discriminatory, arbitrary, obsolete and ineffective system that can lead people to poverty in the medium term."

Following the ruling Ms Patel said she was "bitterly disappointed." "This case has not abated our determination, and we have more flights planned in the coming weeks and months," she said.

Labour MP Bell Ribeiro Addy told the Morning Star: "This latest court ruling against a deportation flight is another important victory for due process and another unfortunate reminder that the government is no stranger to breaking the law."

"Rather than further endangering vulnerable people who've made the crossing by scaling up extreme deportation measures, we should show some compassion and put their safety first, offering legal routes and long-term settlement to refugees."

Bail for Immigration Detainees director Celia Clarke described Ms Patel's pledge to deport 1,000 Channel crossing asylum-seekers as "alarming," adding that removals are "often in breach of the law."

"It is utterly shameful that this government should fight tooth and nail to send asylum-seekers to conditions of indefinite destitution in Spain," she said.

"Every one of them has already experienced unimaginable horrors, having fled from countries devastated by war and conflict, some of which are the direct result of British foreign policy."

"Moreover, mass detention and deportation risks accelerating the rise in Covid-19 cases and transmission of the virus across borders."

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■ ECUADOR

Correa barred from standing for polls

EXILED former president hits out at ban on his party from standing in 2021 as tantamount to electoral fraud.

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■ FEATURE

Not all blue-bloods are a drain on life

THE horseshoe crab is in trouble, with extinction looming just as it is set to potentially save millions of human lives. Its contribution? The astonishing powers of its blood – so rare it is selling for £10,000 a pint. PETER FROST dives into the details.

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■ CORONAVIRUS

Leonard calls for systematic testing of home care workers

PILING ON THE PRESSURE:

Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard during First Minister's Questions yesterday



by Niall Christie
Scotland editor

THE Scottish government is being pressed to commit to regular and routine coronavirus testing for home-care workers amid concerns about testing capacity across the country.

SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon was quizzed in Holyrood yesterday on the safety of key work-

ers, with warnings from trade unions that a failure to carry out tests could lead to a second wave of the virus.

At First Minister's Questions, Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard asked the government to allay the fears of frontline staff by agreeing to systematic testing.

Mr Leonard said that a backlog over the past week had revealed issues with the cur-

rent system, and he sought assurances from the government about consistent delivery of testing.

This follows a survey by Unison which showed that half of its members in care homes had not been checked.

Mr Leonard called for "regular and routine access to testing for Scotland's heroic home-care workers."

Ms Sturgeon said that it was right to raise concerns of workers, and that expanding routine testing to home-care workers was being considered.

The issue of testing was also raised by the Scottish Greens, with Alison Johnstone calling for a new strategy to meet the demand.

The Greens' parliamentary co-leader said this must recognise that the British system was failing, increasing NHS Scotland's role.

The First Minister said that Scotland's testing system had "by and large" worked effectively. The government had also received assurances that the country's access to testing units would not be constrained, and that laboratory capacity would be maintained.

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■ SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Neil Findlay slams 'shambolic' voting system

LABOUR MSP Neil Findlay raised concerns yesterday about Holyrood's hybrid voting system in place during the coronavirus pandemic, which has been branded a "farce."

Mr Findlay asked the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) whether it has confidence in the system, which has allowed MSPs to vote both in person and

virtually since they returned to Holyrood last month.

He described a situation which led to a vote being abandoned last week as an "utter shambles," raising points of order in Parliament before submitting a motion stating that he had "no faith in the ability of the new voting system to deliver fair and accurate results."

Mr Findlay warned that

the decisions taken can have a huge impact on people's lives, so a voting system where so much can go wrong does not inspire public confidence.

Andy Wightman of the SPCB called on members to continue to show patience with the system, adding there is a log of all actions taken by MSPs to ensure the validity of votes.

FIGHTING ANOTHER

GOOD FIGHT: The 'Thank You NHS' Spitfire flies over the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh yesterday during a tour of Scottish hospitals to raise money for NHS Charities Together



■ HUMAN RIGHTS

Davis battles to hear evidence of Britain's torture involvement

by Our News Desk

PROMINENT Tory MP David Davis is demanding to be allowed entry to a secret court that is due to hear evidence on Britain's involvement in torture.

The former Brexit secretary, along with human rights organisation Reprieve and Labour MP Dan Jarvis, is bringing a judicial review of the government's refusal to hold an independent inquiry into Britain's involvement in torture and rendition of detainees after the September 11 attacks in 2001.

After announcing the legal action last October, Mr Davis is now battling to be granted entry to the court hearing on September 22 at which the judge will hear from government lawyers alone.

Mr Davis argued yesterday that he should not be barred

from seeing the evidence because he had access to similar information when he held ministerial roles.

The co-claimants have been excluded from the proceedings after the government pushed for parts of the judicial review to be heard in secret courts known as closed material procedures.

Reprieve director Maya Foa said: "If British personnel helped torture people, that should not be concealed from the public behind the doors of a secret court."

"We want the government to keep the promise it made to torture survivors ten years ago and air evidence of past wrongdoing in a fully independent inquiry."

In 2010, then prime minister David Cameron announced an inquiry into British complicity in the torture and rendition of terror suspects following the September 11 attacks, but it

lacked the powers needed to fully expose the truth.

Over the past decade, ministers have failed to deliver on the government's promise of a full independent review.

Mr Davis said: "Torture is illegal, immoral and totally counterproductive when it comes to keeping this country safe."

"Our legal challenge has already revealed 15 previously unknown cases where past governments got us mixed up in torture, and only by confronting these mistakes can we ensure they are not repeated."

In 2018, ministers were forced to give an unprecedented apology for British involvement in the United States' rendition and torture of Abdul Hakim Belhaj and Fatima Boudchar in 2004.

They were kidnapped with the help of British intelligence and tortured in CIA custody.

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Morning Star

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CLOSING DATE: Monday September 28



PALESTINE SOLIDARITY

Sit-in at weapons factory ends with activists arrested

by Bethany Rielly

FIVE activists occupying an Israeli-owned arms factory were arrested yesterday morning, bringing the three-day protest to an end.

The protesters, who are part of the Palestine Action group, scaled UAV Engines in Sharnstone, Staffordshire on Monday morning, holding out on the roof until police moved in to arrest them at 2am yesterday.

Activists were demanding that the factory stop making drone parts used by the Israeli army.

It is owned by Israel's largest private arms firm Elbit Systems which also had nine other sites around the country.

The firm produces more than 80 per cent of Israel's military drones including the Hermes 900 and Hermes 450 which were used in the 2014 bombardment of Gaza in which 2,200 Palestinians were killed.

Speaking from the rooftop before the arrests, Huda Amori said: "We just want to say to everyone that this needs to continue to happen, we're not stopping, nothing is going to stop us."

"And it's up to everyone to do the same. If we all do this we can shut Elbit down for good."

During the three-day occupation, protesters poured red paint down the walls of UAV Engines and smashed windows.

Staffordshire police said that eight arrests had been made in total, including three people on Monday who had locked on to the gates.

The five remained in police custody yesterday afternoon having been arrested on suspicion of criminal damage and trespassing offences, the police said in a statement.

The protest was the latest in a series of actions against Elbit Systems' sites across Britain including its London headquarters in the past two months.

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HEALTH SERVICE

UNISON BEGINS CAMPAIGN FOR £2,000 NHS PAY RISE

COUGH UP: Workers to use social media and online events to demand more than just applause

by Ceren Sagir

NHS staff launched two days of campaigning yesterday, calling for an early and significant pay rise of at least £2,000 for every worker.

Unison members in NHS hospitals, ambulance stations and clinics will be using social media and taking part in socially distanced events to press home the message that health workers deserve much more than applause for their efforts during the pandemic.

Unison's pay claim, delivered to Downing Street last month, seeks an increase of at least £2,000 for every NHS employee by the end of the year.

The early wage increase, equivalent to around £1 an hour extra for all staff, could give ailing local economies a much-needed boost as workers

spend the extra money in their pockets on the high street, Unison said.

With the arrival of autumn and the increasing rates of infection, the union believes that now is the perfect time for the government to show the high regard in which ministers say they hold NHS staff.

Unison head of health Sara Gorton said: "Infection rates are rising in care homes and out in the wider community, and hospital admissions are on the up."

"The pressure on staff is beginning to build again, as the NHS tries to open services shut earlier in the year and deal with the backlog of cancelled appointments and operations."

Ms Gorton said that is why now "would be the perfect time" for PM Boris Johnson and Chancellor Rishi Sunak to "show they can do more than clap" for NHS staff and dem-



onstrate their appreciation in a "much more practical way."

"Boris Johnson's pie-in-the-sky plans for any time, any place, anywhere 'moonshot' testing would cost a mind-boggling £100 billion," she said.

"An early pay rise for NHS staff would be a tiny fraction of that and would make a huge difference to individuals and the services they help provide."

"Investing in the NHS and its

incredible workforce is a must for the government. It would help the health service tackle the mounting staff shortages that were already causing huge problems even before the virus hit."

Ms Gorton added that an early pay rise would also be the country's best way of saying a heartfelt thank you to every member of the NHS team.

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POLITICS

EU maintains call for U-turn on overriding of Brexit deal

BRUSSELS is insisting that the government should abandon plans to override key elements of the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement, after a compromise with Tory rebels was reached in Westminster.

PM Boris Johnson was forced to agree to table an amendment to his Internal Market Bill, giving MPs a vote on whether to use powers which would breach the deal brokered with the EU last year.

European Commission chief spokesman Eric Mamer said: "We have as you know set out a position extremely clearly, it is in our statement and it relates to those clauses being withdrawn from the law."

"That position has not changed and we have asked the UK to do this at the earliest possible convenience, and by the end of September at the latest. That has not changed."

He also insisted the EU carries out negotiations in "good faith" after Mr Johnson told MPs on Wednesday that he did not believe they had done so in the Brexit talks.

NORTH-EAST ENGLAND

MPs seek clarity on new Covid-19 rules

LABOUR MPs representing the north-east of England have sought urgent clarification of new coronavirus-related restrictions announced by the government.

Starting from today, residents of Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead, Sunderland and County Durham should not socialise with people from outside their own households or support bubble, Health Secretary Matt

Hancock announced yesterday.

In the hospitality sector, food and drink will be restricted to table service only and leisure and entertainment venues will be required to close between 10pm and 5am.

A letter to Mr Hancock from Sunderland Central MP Julie Elliott was signed by 14 others, including shadow chief secretary to the treasury Bridget Phillipson and shadow science, research and digital minister Chi Onwurah.

The letter stated: "We agree that restrictions must be put in place in order to protect public health and prevent the further spread of Covid-19 and we support measures taken in order to save lives."

"We do, however, believe that this must be done in close collaboration with local authorities, who must have access to all appropriate information, data and support in order to make the best decisions for their areas."

LABOUR & THE MEDIA

Online Event

WHAT CAN WE DO TO DEMOCRATISE THE MEDIA, BREAK THE BIG BUSINESS STRANGLEHOLD, AND GET OUR MESSAGE ACROSS?

Morning Star editor **Ben Chacko** will be joined by Labour's former deputy director of strategy and communications **Steve Howell**, former shadow cabinet member **Laura Pidcock**, **Claudia Webbe MP**, **Unite AGS Howard Beckett**, Scottish Labour leader **Richard Leonard**. Chaired by **Bob Oram** from the Morning Star Management Committee.

**SATURDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2020
4.30PM - 6PM BST
<http://mstar.link/starlabourfringe>**

★ Morning Star

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE AND FIGHTING BACK. COME AND HEAR FROM OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS



ACTION NEEDED: Acorn Community Union demonstration in Bristol in May

HOUSING

Labour warns: 48 hours left to protect renters

by Ceren Sagir

LABOUR warned the government yesterday that it has just 48 hours to protect renters and avoid a homelessness crisis this winter by extending its evictions hiatus.

The evictions ban is due to end on Sunday – September 20.

Labour's Thangam Debbonaire wrote to Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick after the suspension was extended in August, calling on him to use the short parliamentary time available to bring proper legislation protecting renters.

The shadow housing secretary also urged him to keep his promise that "no renter who has lost income due to coronavirus will be forced out of their home."

Ms Debbonaire, said: "Coronavirus cases are rising, vast swathes of the country are set to be under local lockdown and the Covid jobs crisis is set to get worse. This is no time to re-start evictions."

"The government is walking right into a homelessness

crisis this winter.

"They've wasted the short time they bought themselves by extending the ban in August, prioritising reopening old wounds on Brexit above protecting renters."

Ms Debbonaire said the ban must be extended before Sunday and demanded that the government come forward with a "credible plan" to ensure that no renter will be evicted because of the pandemic.

Acorn housing group's joint secretary in Brighton, Leila Erin-Jenkins, said that Labour "doesn't go far enough" in holding the government to account.

She told the Star: "Labour should be calling for the abolition of rent debt accrued as a result of Covid-19."

"If they really want to offer protection for renters and stop people from losing their homes then surely a key part of this is tackling the rent debt that keeps building up and hanging over the heads of renters who will never be in a position to pay."

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TRANSPORT

'Fares must be frozen to encourage work return'

RAIL fares should be frozen to encourage commuters to return to work, Labour said yesterday.

Shadow transport secretary Jim McMahon also pressed Transport Secretary Grant Shapps to introduce a part-time season ticket as rail users brace themselves for another fare increase in January despite the Covid-19 pandemic pushing passenger numbers down.

Mr McMahon said: "The average commuter will be paying £3,000 for their season ticket, over £900 more than they would have done in 2010."

"To encourage commuters back safely, will the government commit to freezing fares and introduce part-time season tickets in the way that Labour has proposed?"

Mr Shapps replied that passenger numbers were below half their normal level, with 42 per cent returning last week.

He added: "And I think it's incumbent on all of us to demonstrate that the railways are safe, to take the railways from time to time, and to reassure people of the safety and efficacy of the use of the railways."



CULTURED CUBES: Justine Simons OBE, Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries unveils an installation by Rasheed Araeen at The Library at Willesden Green as part of the first BRENT BIENNIAL, presented by Brent 2020, London Borough of Culture and taking place in public spaces across the borough from September 19 to December 13 2020

ASSANGE HEARING

'Trump most aggressive president ever on leaks'

by Tim Dawson

DONALD TRUMP'S administration has prosecuted national security leaks more aggressively than any presidency in US history, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange's extradition hearing was told yesterday.

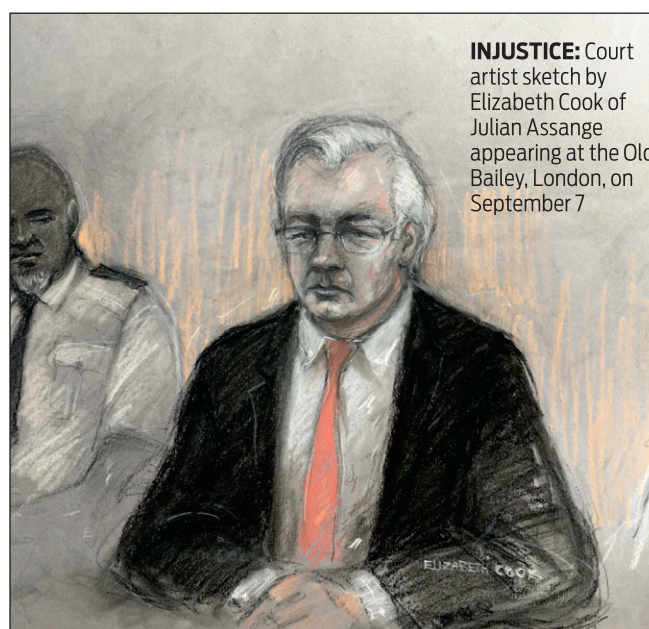
Lawyer and historian Carey Shenkman said that the US President is on track to exceed the number of Espionage Act cases brought under Barack Obama's two terms in less than four years.

Assange, 49, is fighting extradition to the US to face 17 charges under the 1917 law, as well as an 18th charge alleging he plotted to hack computers.

Giving evidence by videolink at the Old Bailey, Mr Shenkman described the espionage act as "extraordinarily broad" and "one of the most contentious" in the US.

He said that eight prosecutions of media sources under the act were brought under Mr Obama: more than all previous administrations combined.

The Trump administration indicted its eighth alleged



INJUSTICE: Court artist sketch by Elizabeth Cook of Julian Assange appearing at the Old Bailey, London, on September 7

journalistic source, Henry Kyle Frese, under the act in October last year, he added.

"This escalation in prosecutions is consistent with a dramatic policy shift in approach to applying the espionage act," he wrote in his report.

"There has never, in the century-long history of the Espio-

nage Act, been an indictment of a US publisher under the law for the publication of secrets."

"What is now concluded, by journalists and publishers generally, is that any journalist in any country on earth, in fact any person, who conveys secrets that do not conform to the policy positions of

the US administration, can be shown now to be liable to being charged under the Espionage Act of 1917."

Professor John Sloboda, the co-founder of Iraq Body Count (IBC), earlier gave evidence of the importance of Wikileaks revelations to his organisation's work.

From 2003 IBC meticulously logged civilian deaths in Iraq, basing their work on dependable media reports that they were able to verify.

"I quickly realised that the Iraq War Logs were the single biggest contribution to our knowledge of civilian deaths in Iraq that has ever come to light," said Mr Sloboda.

The log added 15,000 to the known death toll.

Mr Sloboda described what he called a meticulous process of redaction to ensure that names, places, occupations and other identifying details were removed from the files.

Challenged by Joel Smith, counsel for the US government that Assange took a "cavalier" approach to redaction, Sloboda said that his experience was quite the opposite.

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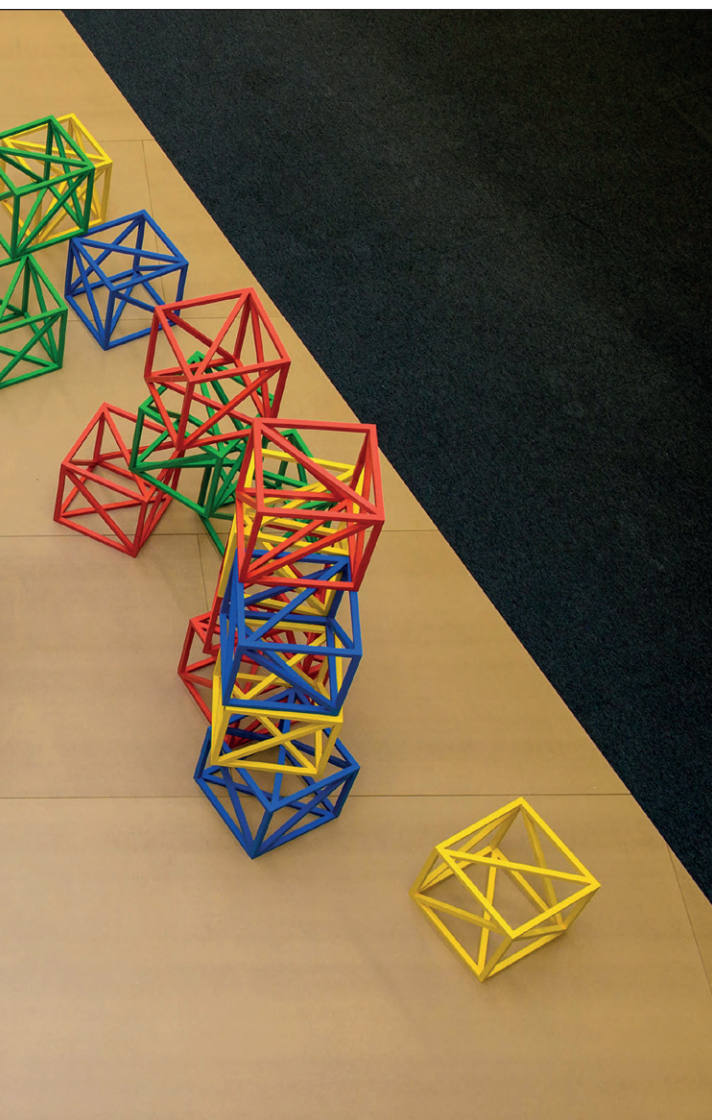
Remembering

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His contribution to Scottish CND and the wider Peace Movement will never be forgotten

Arthur West,
former chair Scottish CND



■ ENVIRONMENT

Two thirds think health more vital than GDP

TWO THIRDS of British people believe the government should prioritise the health and wellbeing of citizens over GDP in the wake of the coronavirus, a cross-party group of MPs has found.

A consultation carried out through polls, telephone conversations and workshops found strong support for plans to create a fairer and greener society.

It found that 65 per cent of respondents thought the government should intervene to make society fairer, while 63 per cent supported a jobs guarantee.

Sixty-six per cent said they thought the government should focus on the health and wellbeing of citizens rather than GDP growth.

The report notes: "We are at a crossroads, and the decisions that the government takes this autumn will lock us into one of two alternative routes.

"Ministers can either rebuild the existing system or they can use this moment to lay the foundations for a greener, fairer Britain and set the economy on a path to a modern, post-carbon future."

■ SCOTTISH LABOUR

STARMER CALLS FOR PARTY TO 'PULL TOGETHER'

by Niall Christie
Scotland editor

SIR KEIR STARMER gave his full backing to Richard Leonard's leadership yesterday as he refused to comment on whether MP Ian Murray should be investigated over defection talks.

Mr Starmer, who spoke from Edinburgh ahead of a meeting with the Scottish leader, said that he looked forward to working with Mr Leonard ahead of next year's Holyrood elections.

Mr Leonard saw off an attempted challenge to his authority, as well as a motion of no confidence at the party's Scottish executive committee last week, which Mr Murray and deputy leader Jackie Baillie are understood to have supported.

The Scottish Labour leader has repeatedly been given the backing of Mr Starmer, who called for unity within the party ahead of next year's Holyrood elections.

Mr Starmer said: "I have an excellent working relationship with Richard Leonard and I am here to talk to him about our priorities going into the election next year. I look forward to working very closely with Richard.

"What I want to see here in Scotland is for our party to pull together and to focus on the job in hand."

Edinburgh South MP Mr Murray was also backed by the party leader, despite reportedly holding two sets of talks with other parties about defecting in 2019.



The Morning Star understands a number of members have submitted complaints to the party regarding Mr Murray's behaviour.

But Mr Starmer refused to say whether he felt that Mr Murray should be investigated for speaking with both the now-defunct Independent Group and the Liberal Democrats about leaving the party, adding that Mr Murray has his "full confidence."

He said: "The leader of the Labour Party doesn't get involved in individual complaints: I'm not going to do so.

"We've got a process in place, but my relationship with Ian is a good working relationship, he is widely respected, and I will be working with him in the coming weeks, months and years to turn around what we need to do in Scotland."

Mr Starmer was also asked whether he supported moves to deselect sitting MSPs James Kelly, Jenny Marra, Daniel Johnson and Mark Griffin who had spoken out against Mr Leonard.

He said: "I am a strong believer in a united Labour Party and that is one of the central arguments of my leadership."

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■ TRACK & TRACE

Sack 'crony' Harding, MP Burgon tells PM

LABOUR MP Richard Burgon called for Baroness "Dido" Harding to be sacked as head of track and trace programme and replaced with an expert yesterday.

His condemnation of the Tory NHS tsar came after official figures revealed that the number of Covid-19 tests being completed within 24 hours had hit a new low.

Mr Burgon said: "This issue is too important to have someone in charge who just isn't up to the job.

"And to be frank her appointment to this role stinks of political cronyism."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson had promised that 100 per cent of tests results would be returned within a day by June, but only 33 per cent have been this month.

Test and trace figures also showed that the weekly number of positive tests in England has risen to its highest level since the system was launched at the end of May.

NHS Providers, which represents NHS trust leaders, argued that the country was "a long way off where we need to be with testing."

■ SNP

Hollyrood hopeful reported to IOC over data breach

by Niall Christie
Scotland editor

THE SNP has been forced to report complaints to Britain's data protection regulator following concerns about a data breach by a Holyrood hopeful.

Inverclyde councillor Chris McEleny is said to have accessed the personal information of party members and supporters without their permission.

The Morning Star understands that Mr McEleny had used data relating to Inverclyde SNP members, sending notices to their home addresses.

Supporters are believed to have received these in July, with a number of complaints of a data breach subsequently made to SNP party headquarters, as well as the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

It is understood that party rules state a councillor can only access members' details if they live in the ward they represent. But Mr McEleny is said to have contacted members across the entire branch.

The ICO confirmed that it had received reports of concerns from the SNP.

A spokeswoman for the regulator told the Star: "We are aware of concerns about correspondence sent by an SNP candidate.

"The SNP have contacted us and indicated they are satisfied the issue does not meet the threshold for data breach reporting to the ICO."

The councillor, who was SNP group leader at Inverclyde council until last month, announced his intention to seek nominations to become a Holyrood candidate at the end of July, where he will challenge sitting Greenock and Inverclyde MSP Stuart McMillan.

He was questioned on the issue on Twitter in response to a post announcing his candidacy bid, but failed to respond.

The councillor has twice stood unsuccessfully for deputy leader of the SNP and served two terms on the national executive committee.

Both the SNP and Mr McEleny were approached for comment. niallchristie@peoples-press.com

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■ MEDITERRANEAN

76 refugees jump overboard in desperate bid to get to Italy

by Ben Cowles

MORE than 70 refugees jumped overboard from an NGO rescue ship yesterday in an desperate bid to swim to Palermo on the Italian island of Sicily.

Seventy-six of the 275 refugees on board the Open Arms threw themselves into the water in the morning, their ninth day waiting for a European country to let them come ashore.

The Open Arms's crew managed to provide the 76 with lifejackets before the Italian coastguard brought them to land. The crew rescued 278 people, including two pregnant

women and 56 children, as they escaped Libya in three separate rubber boats across the central Mediterranean in four days last week. Two of the rescues took place within Malta's search-and-rescue zone.

Last Sunday, both the Italian and Maltese authorities denied the ship's doctor's request for an emergency medical evacuation for the women and nine others with severe burns.

On Tuesday night, however, the Italian coastguard did evacuate the two pregnant women and the husband of one of them to Sicily.

The Open Arms arrived off the coast of Palermo on Wednesday and continues to

wait for the Italian coastguard to authorise it to disembark the rescued.

Oscar Camps, the founder of the Spanish charity Open Arms which operates the ship, blasted EU member states on Twitter yesterday for making the crew beg them to uphold human rights law.

"Given that their human rights had already been violated, the authorities must ensure their physical and mental integrity. These are people at risk who only seek to access the rights recognised by international conventions, which some countries trample on."

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■ SPAIN

Torra undeterred as case comes to a close

CATALAN President Quim Torra said his fellow separatists must not "cede one inch in our political convictions and goals" as Madrid's Supreme Court heard the closing arguments on

whether to bar him from holding public office.

Mr Torra displayed a banner reading Free Political Prisoners and Exiles on his office building during an election campaign in viola-

tion of rules against using public buildings for electoral purposes. He was referring to Catalan politicians jailed or driven abroad for holding an unconstitutional independence referendum.

■ MIDDLE EAST

UN calls for renewed peace negotiations

UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres has called on Palestine and Israel to use the "opportunity" of Israel's normalisation of relations with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to renew negotiations.

Mr Guterres has welcomed the US-brokered agreements, signed at a White House ceremony this week amid protests from dozens of organisations.

The UAE agreement to recognise Israel required Tel Aviv to suspend its plans to annex

Palestine's West Bank. But Palestinians including the head of Palestine's mission in Britain, Husam Zomlot, have warned for months that Israel would use minor concessions to its annexation threat to create a new normal in which a Palestinian state is further away than ever.

Prior demands from Arab states that recognition of Israel would be dependent on the establishment of an independent Palestine have been dropped.

"Does this bring us closer to

peace in the Middle East? It's a capital No," Mr Zomlot said this week. Palestinian People's Party politburo member Walid al-Awad said the agreements were "shameful" and that the "treacherous pens that signed them are no different from the machetes, knives and axes that killed our people in Sabra and Shatila in 1982."

The White House ceremony's timing on the anniversary of the notorious massacre has been widely condemned.



PROTESTS: Demonstrators are dispersed with jets of water thrown by a police water cannon, at the Plaza de Santo Domingo near the government palace during a protest to reject the economic policies

■ ECUADOR

CORREA SLAMS BAN ON PARTY AHEAD OF 2021 ELECTIONS

'ELECTORAL FRAUD': Former president's movement not allowed to stand

by Ben Chacko

FORMER Ecuadorean president Rafael Correa has denounced a ban on his new movement standing in the 2021 election as a form of "electoral fraud."

The National Electoral Council confirmed on Wednesday that the Social Commitment Force of Mr Correa, part of the Union for Hope Coalition, would not be allowed to stand, having originally suspended it in July.

The former leader, driven into exile by his successor and one-time deputy Lenin Moreno, had been selected to stand for the vice-presidency.

Mr Correa tweeted that the Ecuadorean government was banning opposition parties because of its fear of "assured defeat at the polls."

An early day motion in Britain's Parliament cited the

ban on Mr Correa standing as an example of the "growing abuses of the legal system for political purposes in Latin America," alongside the prevention of Brazilian former president Lula from standing in Brazil last year and the exclusion of Bolivia's Evo Morales, overthrown in a military coup following his re-election last November, from that country's upcoming elections.

On Wednesday Mr Morales publicly thanked MPs Richard Burgon, who put down the motion, and Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott, the first to sign it, for standing up against "the judicial persecution of Rafael and me."

Mr Moreno faces growing popular unrest over terms on which the International Monetary Fund is proposing to lend Ecuador \$6.5 billion (£5bn) to "help ease the economic bur-

den following the Covid pandemic."

IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said the loan would "support economic policies to help Ecuador's people overcome the current crisis."

These include guarantees that crisis-related spending will be cut next year, a "fiscal reform package" that would "moderate" public spending in the future and "comprehensive tax reform."

Critics scent a resurrection of the hated "package" of neoliberal reforms that sparked huge protests last year that forced the government to flee the capital, Quito, and promise to back down.

Morning Star

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CLOSING DATE: Monday September 28



in brief

Austria rebuffs Trump trees claim

AUSTRIA: Agriculture Minister Elisabeth Koestinger has rejected US President Donald Trump's claim that Austrians "live in the forest."

Mr Trump said this week: "You look at countries, Austria ...

"They live in the forest, they're considered forest cities. So many of them.

"And they don't have fires like [the recent wildfires in California]. And they have more explosive trees."

In an article in the Independent, Ms Koestinger said that Austrians "don't live in the forest" and added: "To clarify: No, we don't have any exploding trees."

Rise in rapes sees harsher penalties

NIGERIA: Kaduna state Governor Nasir Ahmad el-Rufai has introduced "drastic penalties" for rapists following a surge in reported cases during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The maximum penalty for raping someone over 14 has been increased from 21 years' imprisonment to life behind bars and surgical castration, while for the rape of children under that age it has been increased from life to death.

Tyre firm to cut 900 jobs despite state aid

FRANCE: The CGT union said yesterday that Japan-based company Bridgestone should return state aid to the public coffers after it said it would shut a tyre factory in Bethune and lay off 900 workers.

Trade unionists protested outside the factory yesterday, setting off flares. They were addressed by French Communist Party leader Fabien Roussel, who denounced the "brutal, unfair, inhuman" decision, and by Communist Party senator Cathy Apourceau-Poly, who said the closure was an indictment of the French government's lack of an industrial strategy.

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UNITED STATES

WHO warns against plans to reduce quarantine period

by Our Foreign Desk

THE World Health Organisation's (WHO) European director, Dr Hans Kluge, has warned countries not to reduce quarantine periods for people suspected of being exposed to Covid-19.

Dr Kluge said that "even a slight reduction in the length of quarantine" could have a significant effect as coronavirus cases begin to spike again across the continent.

WHO Europe's 53-country region recorded more than 300,000 confirmed coronavirus cases in the last week, and more than half of the countries reported a rise of more than 10 per cent in cases over the last

two weeks, he said, adding that this should be "a wake-up call for all of us."

The medical expert's intervention came after France cut its required quarantine time from 14 days to a week.

And he addressed international divisions over the virus, arguing that responses had been effective when "prompt and resolute" but that "the virus has [been] merciless whenever partisanship and disinformation prevailed."

This was seen by some as a reference to the US government, which has withdrawn from the WHO and used Covid-19 as a political football against China internationally and against the Democrats at home.

US President Donald Trump contradicted Dr Robert Redfield, his own appointee to head the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, who told a congressional hearing on Wednesday that a Covid vaccine would probably only become "generally available to the American public" in the "late second quarter, third quarter 2021." Mr Trump has claimed one could be ready very soon.

Mr Trump told reporters that Dr Redfield must have been "confused" when he addressed Congress, adding: "It's just incorrect." He also took issue with Dr Redfield's claim that masks might prove more effective than a vaccine at limiting the spread, saying: "Maybe he misunderstood it."

Though the US government advises people to wear masks when in close contact with others, Mr Trump again queried whether doing so was a good idea.

On Tuesday, while celebrating normalisation of relations between Israel and the Gulf dictatorships of Bahrain and the UAE, the president said: "There are a lot of people that think that masks are not good." Asked who, he said: "Waiters."

He has also accused Democrat presidential hopeful Joe Biden of promoting "anti-vaccine conspiracy theories" for questioning whether a US vaccine will be safe to use this year.

internaitonal@peoples-press.com

JOURNALISM

Fears raised over watered-down FB rules

THE International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has expressed concern at Australian plans to water down proposals to make Google and Facebook pay for journalism.

Canberra's fair trade regulator Rod Sims said he was dealing with the companies' objections to the proposed rules.

Facebook has warned it might block Australian news

content rather than pay for it, while Google says it will put free services at risk.

IFJ general secretary Anthony Bellanger said the bargaining code Australia proposes is "a welcome first step towards making the tech giants pay for the content they exploit [but] it already did not go far enough [or do enough] to ensure the workers in the media industry secured their

fair share of revenues.

"Any further watering down in the face of threats from these tax-dodging companies would undermine its credibility and effectiveness.

"It is time for governments to stand up to the tech giants. Treat them as publishers, tax them and use those funds to help sustain vital local and community media jobs which are being decimated."

UNITED STATES

US 'undermining relations with China' with Taiwan visit

by Our News Desk

US UNDER-SECRETARY of State Keith Krach began a three-day trip to Taiwan yesterday, becoming the highest-level official of the US State Department to visit the island in decades.

The mission follows US ambassador to the UN Kelly Craft lunching with Taiwan's top official in New York on Wednesday, the first time anyone in her role as met a senior Taiwanese official since 1971, when China's seat at the United Nations passed from the Republic of China on Taiwan to the People's Republic on the mainland. Ms Craft said she was "looking to do the right thing by my president" by deepening relations with Taiwan, which China sees as a provocative attempt to undermine the one-China policy.

The Donald Trump administration has made high-profile overtures to Taiwan while



PROVOCATIVE: Keith Krach arrives in Taiwan

escalating its global attack on Chinese trade and businesses.

The Chinese island of Taiwan was the last province to remain under the control of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party after the communist revolution that swept the country in 1949.

In 1950 the United States sent its seventh fleet to prevent the communists carrying the revolution across the Taiwan Strait, and the island has been self-governing since.

Both Taipei and Beijing assert their sovereignty over the whole of China, including Taiwan, and countries recognising one government are obliged not to recognise the other.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the visit "bolsters separatist forces and undermines China-US relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

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GREECE

Police move refugees to 'another Moria camp'

GREEK police began moving refugees displaced by the fire at the notorious Moria camp to a new location on Lesbos yesterday.

A stretch of motorway on which thousands of asylum-seekers have been sleeping rough for over a week was divided into sections and people were tested for Covid-19 in batches before transfer.

Sonia Nandzik, co-founder of citizen journalist project Refocus Media Labs, told the Morning Star that people did not wish to move to "a new Moria."

Since the new camp at Kara Tepe was set up at the weekend just 550 of 12,000 refugees had moved in voluntarily.

"People say it's the second Moria," Ms Nandzik said. "It looks nicer of course because of the white tents, next to one another, but it's very close to the sea. When the rain comes, it's going to be a tragedy because they will not withstand the wind and rain."

A post by Aegean Boat Report agreed, stating: "The tents are mostly put directly on the ground, without palettes underneath, and when it starts to rain, water and mud will be a huge problem." It added that press were being denied access.

Cotopaxi Indigenous and Farmers Movement leader Leonidas Iza said the conditions would force workers to pay the price for the Covid crisis.

"We do not rule out another massive uprising," he warned. "The government should listen."

Ecuador has among the highest death rates and the worst unemployment crisis in Latin America, having failed to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

Mr Moreno, who stood for the presidency as the candidate of the PAIS party founded by Mr Correa and on a platform of continuity with the latter's socialist policies, U-turned in office, privatising public services, renewing collaboration with the US military and launching purges of socialists from the courts and state administration.

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TARGETED:
Rafael Correa



★ Star comment

Myriad problems remain for Johnson over Internal Market Bill divisions

BORIS JOHNSON'S partial retreat over his latest wheeze – the rejigging of his Internal Market Bill, originally presented as the solution to the problems caused by British imperialism's grip on its colonial dependency in the north-eastern bit of Ireland – is still not enough to get him out of trouble.

The Prime Minister conceded a little ground to his critics in the parliamentary Tory Party by agreeing that the Commons will be able to approve – at some subsequent date – new powers he wants in order to re-engineer the critical portions of the EU Withdrawal Treaty.

Kicking this problem into the long grass may be enough to divert Tory rebels but it won't solve the myriad problems that the continuing division in our ruling class presents to this most incompetent of premiers, or for that matter the unresolved question of Irish national unity.

At its first appearance the EU Withdrawal Bill was presented as the mechanism to break the deadlock and a failure to offer it unqualified support was enough put Tory MPs on the purge list. The more obdurate Tory Remainers were put to the sword.

Now only a willingness to repudiate key elements in the treaty is a sufficient test of Tory loyalty.

How these tensions play out in the committee stage next week and later in the Lords will show whether the deal concocted between No 10 and the Bill's Tory critics can survive.



With Keir Starmer's clear signal that Brexit is a done deal – and the country should move on – there is more misery in the ranks of those Remainers who don't quite get the point that the warring wings of our bourgeoisie are finding a way of working with the new reality.

Getting Brexit done is the new orthodoxy that is leaving shoals of innocent Remainers stuck in a muddy mess of their own making as the tide goes out on a project that was as much about stopping a Corbyn-led Labour government as any other objective.

The principal driver for the Brexit vote was a strong sense that membership of the EU compromised national sovereignty and this sentiment stretched across class and political divides to mobilise a big proportion of working-class voters who had abandoned, or never participated in, electoral politics.

No-one should think that the left-wing case for leaving the EU – centred on the possibility that breaking free from the neoliberal EU would allow for a new economic strategy based on capital controls, public ownership and state investment in productive industry – was decisive.



But allied with the prospect of a left-led Labour government, it alarmed the decisive centres of power in big business and the banks.

If Labour's renaissance over the last few years represented a threat to the way politics is traditionally done in Britain, Labour's present restorationist regime is essentially a force for capitalist stabilisation – a guarantee of Labour loyalty to the system.

For such a project to work and for illusions about the reformability of the capitalist system to recover there needs to be some prospect of Labour taking a turn at forming a government.

In this connection Starmer's stark realism is the foundation of a revived attempt to reconstitute Labour's electoral challenge.

Any revival in Labour's electoral credibility with the working class and wider sections of the population is welcome, but Labour's challenge needs to be based on a serious attempt to promote precisely the policies which the Labour leader made the foundation of his appeal to party members.

There is no future for Labour in a revival of New Labour's circling around an imaginary centre.

A combination of the Covid-19 crisis and the intensified class contradictions since the 2008 capitalist crisis increasingly allow little room for tinkering with the system.

'Wikileaks is among the most important revelations of state behaviour in US history'

Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, now 89, sees parallels between his own case and that of Julian Assange.

TIM DAWSON reports

ON May 3 1972, Daniel Ellsberg spoke at a peace rally in Washington DC.

It was a year since he had leaked the Pentagon Papers to the New York Times and the Washington Post revealed that successive presidents had lied about US involvement in Vietnam.

What Ellsberg didn't know, as he stepped up to the microphone on the steps of the Capitol building, was the the crowd had been infiltrated by CIA "assets."

Their instructions were to "break both his legs" or even kill him.

President Richard Nixon had personally acquiesced to the planned assault during a meeting with Henry Kissinger.

The attack, however, was aborted as the speakers took to the rostrum.

It was not, though, to be the last of the Nixon administration's dirty tricks to "get" the former marine, whose whistleblowing did much to bring the Vietnam war to an end.

At the time of the speech, he was already facing charges under the Espionage Act with a 115-year jail term.

When his trial started in January 1973 he was forbidden from explaining to the court his motivations for leaking – despite having revealed for the first time the secret bombing of Laos and Cambodia and the gravest lies by a succession of presidents.

And one of Nixon's senior staff members had secretly offered trial judge Matthew Byrne the top job in the FBI if Ellsberg was convicted.

By chance, his trial ran concurrently with the Senate Watergate Committee, however.

Day by day, the hearings in Washington brought the various conspiracies against Ellsberg to light. Eventually Judge

Byrne felt he had to intervene.

"The bizarre events have incurably infected the prosecution of this case," he ruled. Ellsberg was acquitted "with prejudice," meaning that he could never be tried for those offences again.

It is easy to see why Ellsberg, now 89, sees parallels between his own case and that of Julian Assange.

"Wikileaks provided the first unauthorised disclosure of such magnitude for 40 years," he believes.

"I observe the closest of similarities to the position I faced. The [US government] intended to crush [me] in part in revenge for my act of exposing them but in part to crush all such future exposure of the truth."

In his evidence to the Wikileaks founder's ongoing extradition hearing, Ellsberg says: "I have followed closely the impact of [the Wikileaks revelations] and consider them to be amongst the most important truthful revelations of hidden criminal state behaviour that have been made public in US history.

"I view the Wikileaks publications of 2010 and 2011 to be of comparable importance [to the Pentagon Papers]."

Ellsberg worked with Assange at the height of the Wikileaks. They met several times and Ellsberg held one of the encrypted back-up copies of leaked US military files on behalf of Wikileaks.

"I have also spoken to [Assange] privately over many hours. During 2010 and 2011, at a time when some of the published material had not yet seen the light of day, I was able to observe [Julian's] approach. It was the exact opposite of reckless publication and nor would he wilfully expose others to harm.

"Wikileaks could have published the entirety of the material on receipt. Instead I was able to observe but also to



discuss with him the unprecedented steps he initiated, of engaging with conventional media partners, [to maximise] the impact of publication [so] it might [best] affect US government policy and its alteration."

Cross-examined by the US government by James Lewis QC, it was put to him that there was a critical difference between himself and Assange.

Ellsberg had purposefully kept secret four chapters of the Pentagon Papers because he did not wish to jeopardise efforts for a negotiated peace in Vietnam.

Ellsberg dismissed out of hand the frequently made assertion that "the Pentagon Papers were good and Wikileaks bad," robustly stating his view that the government's behaviour was the same in both cases.

If anything, Assange took a more sophisticated approach to redaction than he had been able to, he says.

"For years I was vilified in many quarters," he told the

court. "Only since the Wikileaks revelations have I been praised as some kind of foil to Assange, Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden."

He says, however, that Assange uncovered a dark change in US military behaviour.

"The most shocking aspect of the Wikileaks revelations is that corruption, torture and assassination have become so common that they are not even classified top secret.

"When I was an officer in the field, or when I was compiling the Pentagon Papers, incidents of this kind would have been given the highest possible classification.

"Today, they have become so normalised that they are in files to which literally thousands of people have access."

Ellsberg has always maintained that his actions were those of a patriot.

"The oath of office that I took was to defend the Constitution of the United States," he says, making clear that he considers

the most of criminal history'



his actions to be true to that commitment.

Nonetheless, he still feels a weight of responsibility for not acting earlier, he says.

"I have long regretted not releasing the documents in August 1964, and it is a heavy burden for me to bear. Had I done so that terrible war might well have been averted altogether."

His whistleblowing did presage a change of direction in US policy, but not before nearly 400,000 military personnel and as many as four million civilians had been killed.

Wikileaks' Afghan and Iraq revelations came far more quickly after those conflicts and, according to other expert witnesses to the hearing, they caused a similar sea change in public perceptions of those conflicts.

Ellsberg suggests that the Afghan war logs exposed the "Vietnamisation" of that conflict in which a military stale-

mate led to the civilian population no longer been recognised as human beings, resulting in crimes against humanity and mass killings of the worst kind.

Today Ellsberg lives in northern California with his second wife Patricia Marx.

His devotion to working for a better world is undimmed. Three years ago he published his third book, *The Doomsday Machine: Confessionals of a Nuclear War Planner*, about his working life before the Pentagon Papers.

He remains a director of the Free Press Foundation, of which he is co-founder, and retains academic affiliations with two universities.

He also remains in no doubt that he and Assange are brothers in arms.

"The prosecution he faces [is] clearly focused, fairly and squarely, at the centre of political movements of which I regard myself as part and which much of my life has spent committed to pursuing."



Solomon Hughes

Private hospitals get mega-bailout from the NHS

The privateers facing a huge loss of business because of Covid-19 were happy to snaffle up a 'cash positive' deal thanks to block booking of beds, whether they were used or not

WHEN talking about the danger of NHS privatisation, we should remember how much NHS privatisation has already taken place.

Both "New" Labour and Tory ministers had a simple but crude way of hiding NHS privatisation: they treated the NHS as a "brand" and stuck the big blue-and-white NHS logo on the front of private health companies.

So many operations people think are run by the publicly owned National Health Service are actually handed over to private firms.

This simple trick worked so well on politics that you find out more about it by looking through company accounts than parliamentary debates.

Take the latest accounts of Ramsay Healthcare UK, published at the start of September.

It is the British arm of an Australian-based firm that calls itself "one of the largest and most diverse private healthcare companies in the world."

It is pretty big in Britain. Ramsay UK had a £502.9 million turnover in 2019.

It runs around 30 private UK hospitals with some 6,100 staff. So private healthcare is booming in Britain.

Except it isn't. The accounts say that "NHS volumes were consistent year on year and represented 79 per cent of admissions."

So the bulk of Ramsay UK's half-a-billion quid turnover comes out of the NHS.

Thanks to New Labour and Conservative government policies which force the NHS to buy operations from private hospitals – instead of investing in expanding public hospitals – Ramsay is a "private" UK health firm largely reliant on the public sector.

When it comes to traditional private medicine, Ramsay says: "Private volumes saw a downward trend in the year, due to falling numbers of members in private medical insurance schemes, and in particular outside major UK cities."

So the number of privately funded operations only counts for a fifth of the firm's business, and is falling.

Ramsay might do the work for the NHS, but it doesn't act like the NHS. The firm made a £7.8m profit, so it is taking money away from the health service for its shareholders.

Ramsay's highest-paid director – most likely chief executive Andy Jones – was given £616,000 in 2019.

That actually represents a pay cut, as in 2018, the highest-paid Ramsay Healthcare UK director was given a £1m salary.

The accounts don't make it clear, but I suspect that huge sum went to Jones's predecessor, former Ramsay chief exec Mark Page.

Either way, these "fat-cat" salaries are coming out of the NHS and into the bank accounts of private health bosses.

The accounts cover the pre-Covid-19 period, but they do also discuss what happened in the pandemic, under the heading "Subsequent Event."

On March 11 the NHS block-bought pretty much all the private health beds in the UK, including from Ramsay.

The private hospitals were used to cover vital non-Covid treatments, such as cancer, that were displaced from the NHS by Covid-19.

The firm says that "under the contract, Ramsay receives operating cost recovery for the costs incurred in providing this support, plus an amount relating to infrastructure cost equal to 8.6 per cent of the qualifying costs that are reimbursed."

Ramsay says that "the current NHS Covid support contract may reduce profitability in the early part of the year," which makes it sound like the firm is making a sacrifice.

However, the directors agreed to the deal "because of the cash positive nature of the arrangement."

What this means is that the Covid-19 pandemic stopped almost all private "elective" surgery – a fifth of Ramsay's work.

It would have also seriously disrupted most of Ramsay's NHS work. So the very regular payments from the NHS – what they call the "cash positive" deal – actually bailed Ramsay out of a hole.

So David Rowland, director of the Centre for Health and



Public Interest, told the Financial Times that the deal would come as a relief to the private sector at a time of massive uncertainty because it would have suffered if all non-urgent operations had been cancelled and consultants redeployed.

Mobilising all the private hospitals to support the NHS during the Covid-19 crisis was undoubtedly the right thing to do – and no doubt Ramsay's nurses, doctors and support staff did great work. But there is a sting in the tail.

Not only was the deal a help to struggling private health corporations, it was also written in such a way that many of the beds went unused.

BBC health editor Ben Pym said: "This block booking has cost an estimated £400 million a month, whether or not the facilities were used."

By August there were moves to go back to paying per operation rather than block booking for all beds, whether filled or empty.

According to Pym, the change "will certainly save money and the Treasury will have pushed for a more effective use of resources."

Or to put it another way, the

block booking wasted millions of pounds of NHS cash, and was an ineffective use of resources.

The private hospitals that faced a huge loss of business because of Covid-19 got a big bailout – where the NHS paid for actual operations, but also paid for a whole load of empty beds.

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, Boris Johnson has preferred to waste money on privatised programmes rather than expanding the NHS or strengthening local authorities.

They haven't worked well, but they have enriched the corporations the Tories favour: so the "cash positive" deal for empty beds in private hospitals sits with Serco's test and trace, the privatised "drive through" testing centres and the privately run "Lighthouse Labs" as one more part of our bad Covid-19 response.

The government is spending billions on what look like poor anti-pandemic measures which are actually strong bailouts for corporations.

It is weak virus control, but strong stimulus to their corporate friends.

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Frosty's Ramblings

A blue-blooded ally in battling coronavirus

PETER FROST unveils some less well reported ramifications of the coronavirus pandemic**CONFUSING:**
Horseshoe crabs are not really crabs at all

IN PREVIOUS Ramblings I have written about a remarkable creature, the horseshoe crab.

This 10-eyed "living fossil" isn't actually a crab at all but it is very endangered and becoming more so.

Horseshoe crabs are arthropods. They live in salt and brackish water, primarily in and around shallow coastal seas. The first time I saw them they were climbing mangrove trees in Florida's everglades.

All mammals, including you and me, have metabolisms based on iron. That is why our blood is red.

Most other animals have red blood like mammals, but horseshoe crabs have bodies based on copper salts, so their blood is blue.

Today that blue blood is so valuable that a pint sells for £10,000. The blood is being used to help scientists research potential coronavirus vaccines.

Private health companies in the race to develop a successful vaccine are milking thousands of horseshoe crabs for their pale blue blood.

The scientists take about a third of each animal's blood from a vein near the horseshoe crab's heart to make something called lysate.

Once the blood is taken they are supposed to return the animal to the wild. Even so at least one in three animals dies, and bled females are unlikely to breed for many years.

Less scrupulous hunters and laboratories don't even bother

returning the horseshoe crabs to the wild.

Why bother? It is simpler and cheaper to catch fresh ones. Well over half a million horseshoe crabs have been bled so far.

In 2016, a synthetic alternative to horseshoe-crab lysate was approved as an alternative.

European researchers and a handful of US drug companies began using it, but in June this year US Pharmacopeia, which guides standards for drugs and other products in the US, banned synthetic lysate, demanding that only horseshoe-crab blood could be used.

Now companies everywhere will need to use real horseshoe crab blood if they ever want to sell their vaccine to the US.

This is not just driving the price of blue blood up but is also pushing the horseshoe crab ever-nearer extinction.

It is certainly a difficult call: is the survival of a rare and endangered species more important than finding a coronavirus cure?

We do know from long experience that when we humans seriously interfere with nature we usually get it wrong and live to regret it.

Horseshoe crabs are a unique part of the ecosystem and it might well be that in the future we may face worse threats than the coronavirus.

Then we just might again need the assistance of our blue-blooded ally.

By then, if they have gone forever, it will be much too late.



Keeping our eye on the green ball

WORLD leaders like Donald Trump in the White House and equally right-wing Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro are pooh-poohing personal protective equipment (PPE) while millions of us are still trying to keep safe washing our hands and using masks, gloves and antibacterial gels.

Even when Bolsonaro caught the virus he removed his rarely worn mask to show journalists how healthy he looked.

Worldwide, those rich enough to afford them are using and throwing away 200 billion face masks and over 100 billion pairs of gloves every month.

Far too many of those disposable masks, gloves and similar items are ending up in the sea.

Divers and maritime observers are spotting more and more

discarded waste floating underwater and causing problems for wildlife.

Conservationists around the world are sounding the alarm over where all these single-use products are ending up, joining the already horrifying day-to-day detritus in our ocean ecosystems.

One horrifying statistic is that there are now more masks than jellyfish in European and Asian coastal waters.

Even before coronavirus, each year eight million tonnes of waste plastic were adding to the estimated 150 million tonnes already circulating in the marine environment.

One study estimates that in the UK alone, if every person used a single-use face mask a day for a year, it would create

Executions back open for business in the Lone Star State

DONALD TRUMP'S most strident call is to blame China for the coronavirus. Not far behind is his "Open Up America Ra Ra Ra" policy – despite more than six-and-a-half million new US pandemic cases and more than 150,000 US deaths.

There was no need to reopen gun shops of course. Gun-owner Trump and his government classed them

as essential right from the start. The gun departments at Walmart, the US's biggest gun-seller never closed.

It is, of course, every US citizen's birthright to shoot not only as much of the country's rich wildlife as they can, but also the occasional bank clerk, annoying neighbour, cheating partner and even the odd president.

Texas is among the US states hardest hit by coronavirus, with 14,500 deaths and more than 650,000 cases, and huge hospitals closed to any new cases.

Despite that, the Lone Star State has reopened an important feature of Texan life.

Death row is open again for executions and in July Billy Joe Wardlow joined the long list of people killed by the Texas state prison authorities.

Texas tops the state league of US executions with 569 lives taken since death sentence reintroduction in 1982.

Wardlow's execution, like all others in Texas, was by lethal injection.

Ten years ago the poisonous injections were supplied by a small chemical company at the back of a driv-

ing school in Acton, west London.

The tiny company supplied death-penalty kits to countries across the globe.

Today Trump insists that all fatal injections are Great American fatal injections.

Each Texas judicial death is attended by the executioner and his assistant, the prison governor and his deputy, up to five witnesses chosen by the prisoner from an approved list, enough heavily armed guards to control those witnesses and finally one or more religious chaplains.

It isn't clear if there is enough space in the death chamber for adequate social spacing.

Trump decrees that the wearing or otherwise of masks will be at each attendee's personal discretion.





DISMAL: There are now more masks than jellyfish in European and Asian coastal waters

an additional 66,000 tonnes of contaminated waste along with almost the same amount of plastic packaging.

It would be an ironic disaster if the mask that saves your life goes on to kill a whale, a turtle or indeed any ocean creature.

Of course it isn't just whales and other lovable and photogenic animals that are at risk.

Today plastic micro-beads are being found in fish being sold in British supermarkets.

It might be that you will soon be consuming microscopic bits of your own coronavirus mask or antiseptic gel bottle – delicious.

Single-use plastic waste is not the only impact the coronavirus is having on the environment.

On the positive side carbon emissions are right down as air and land travel is curtailed. Industrial activity too is much reduced.

One of the main environmental worries is that the pandemic will divert governments' attention away from green issues.

Already the UN's climate change conference has been postponed for a year, to November 2021.

Some US cities have paused recycling and parts of Italy and Spain have stopped recycling too.

The quarantine economy has driven more people to shopping online, resulting in greater packaging waste from doorstep deliveries.

How much of the Amazon rainforest ends up making Amazon delivery boxes?

Import and export restrictions and reductions in the availability of cargo transportation mean that much food is being dumped.

As this organic waste decays it will release greenhouse gases – a double whammy.

Unless we keep our eye on the green ball there is a risk of any sudden upsurge in construction and manufacturing being allowed to ignore the previous environmental rules that have taken decades of hard political campaigning and struggle to achieve.

Will corrupt Mexican ex-presidents face justice?

PROGRESSIVE Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (Amlo) has in the two years since his election concentrated his efforts on two main goals: justice for the poor and ending corruption and impunity.

With the slogan "For the good of all, the poor come first!" Amlo has launched a raft of programmes to benefit the deprived and excluded: proper universal old-age pensions, a Mexican NHS with free and universal coverage, scholarships for millions of school and university students, a huge agro-forestry programme for peasant farmers, grants and low-interest loans without collateral for small businesses, much improved labour laws, and jobs in major public works schemes, among other things.

Returning stolen goods to the people

All of this has been achieved without raising taxes but by reducing inflated salaries, expenses and privileges of all high officials including the president himself, ending tax evasion, prosecuting those responsible for corrupt sweetheart deals and privatisations and ensuring that the proceeds of such crimes are collected and invested in public services and infrastructure.

The "Institute for Returning Stolen Goods to the People" is a central component of this process, together with an independent and determined attorney-general and a criminal-investigations team working to bring corrupt and repressive officials to justice.

In the past few months the legal process has come to a head with the arrest and charging of several prominent individuals, notably Emilio Lozoya, head of Pemex (the national oil company) under president Enrique Pena Nieto (2012-18) and Genaro Garcia Luna, Secretary of Public Security Under President Felipe Calderon (2006-12).

Lozoya was extradited to Mexico from Spain in July and has been spilling the beans on bribery and corruption worth hundreds of millions of dollars in the privatisation schemes of Pena Nieto: prominent in those shady deals was the notorious Brazilian Odebrecht company whose sleazy operations have already caused scandals in several Latin American countries.

Garcia Luna was arrested in the US on narcotics and money-laundering charges in a high-profile case still under way in New York: co-operation from Mexico has been of assistance in the case.

In a climate of mounting tension, Lopez Obrador is seeking to hold a referendum on removing immunity from prosecution for both former and serving presidents.

DAVID RABY explains what's at stake



CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE? President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (right) and first lady Beatriz Gutierrez Muller on the annual Independence Day military parade in Mexico City earlier this week

The issue here is that president Calderon launched a very violent and counter-productive "war on drugs" which caused a bloodbath in Mexico with the loss of many innocent lives, and evidence suggests that Garcia Luna negotiated a deal to protect the Sinaloa Cartel while going after other drug outfits.

Calderon is also suspected of having authorised an illegal covert intervention in Mexico by armed US agents.

Former presidents may face trial

Several other officials, including former ministers and state governors, have been charged or are under investigation.

But the biggest, and indeed explosive, issue here is that former presidents themselves may well be found guilty if brought to trial: Calderon and Pena Nieto for sure, and possibly others from the neoliberal era going back to 1988.

Under the constitution presidents enjoy immunity from prosecution except for treason or a very few other categories of serious crime.

Amlo wants to remove this immunity for both former and serving presidents: he has already succeeded in getting corruption classified as a serious crime for which they can be prosecuted.

Amlo wants to avoid any accusation by the opposition that he is conducting a vendetta against his predecessors, and made it clear that any decision to prosecute them should be taken democratically by the people in a referendum ("consultation").

Constitutionally such a consultation could be held along with next June's mid-term elections, and the deadline for authorising it was September 15.

In a climate of mounting tension, Amlo formally announced on the morning of September 15 that he was asking the Mexican Congress to authorise such a consultation.

Congress did so that very afternoon, and a popular petition on the matter (which needed two million signatures to be valid) reached and exceeded its target with 2.7 million. The matter now goes to the Supreme Court.

As was to be expected, there is an outcry from the conservative opposition (including many of those linked to former administrations), from most of the media and prominent intellectuals.

They claim that the signatures are false, that Amlo is persecuting the opposition and is intimidating the media, when he has gone out of his way to ensure freedom of the press, democratic rights and judicial impartiality.

Growing confrontation

Indeed Amlo has declared that in the referendum he himself will vote against prosecuting the ex-presidents because he does not want revenge: what he wants is to reveal the truth and to discredit those responsible for corruption rather than punish them, and above all to prevent future corruption.

But if the people vote for prosecutions to take place, he will obey their democratic will.

In all his actions so far Amlo has shown great skill in avoiding or minimising confrontation, but he knows it cannot be avoided.

In his speeches he condemns neoliberalism as the source of corruption, criticises conservatives as hypocrites, and calls for peace and equality both domestic and international.

September 16 is Mexican Independence Day, and Amlo presided over the traditional military parade and proclaimed the "Grito," the Shout of Independence, but with additions of his own: "Vivas" to the native peoples, to the female as well as male heroes of independence, to democracy, equality and universal fraternity, and to Hope for the Future.

He has drawn a line in the sand, and from now on we can expect the struggle over Mexico's future to intensify.



WEATHER OUTLOOK



TODAY

A little rain in the far north and north-west. Elsewhere, dry with plenty of sunshine in many areas. Fairly warm but distinctly breezy in the south and gusty winds in some parts.

NEXT FEW DAYS

Drizzle in the north easting, then many parts sunny tomorrow, though showers later in the south. Heavy showers in the south on Sunday, but sunny in many areas. Mist giving way to sunshine on Monday.

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Fighting Fund with Keith Stoddart

YOU'VE RAISED:
£9,557

WE NEED:
£8,443



AS EXPECTED, we passed the halfway point yesterday, thanks to the arrival of 13 cheques in the weekly post. Sums of £20, £22, £30, £200 and a couple of tenners arrived with no story to tell, but they were both needed and welcome. A card with £5 bore the message "much appreciated," as was its arrival, and a similar amount came in from Sheffield.

Unite's wonderfully named London mechanical construction branch, formally known as London's united craft branch, sent £70. Thanks, brothers and sisters.

We all have our reasons for supporting the Fund, but a reader in Ilkley who sent £100 had three. The first was to mark the sad passing of Hilda Whittaker, since both she and

her husband were lifelong supporters of the paper. The other two are linked – 21st Century Poetry featured wordsmith Dave Puller, who performed at Clarion House's Big Red Picnic in support of the Star, and a report on the Red Shed Players' film on the inhumanity of benefits for disabled people, who have also used their talents in aid of the Fund.

A 94-year-old supporter sent £150 and from Rochdale came £20.20, which was a 1 per cent increase on the donor's usual contribution. If everyone did this, we would have no problem hitting the target every month.

I'll report on more gifts tomorrow, but with £742.20 in cheques and £176 from other sources, September's total now stands at £9,557.20. Thanks all.

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Cheques to PPFF, 52 Beachy
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DAILY SUDOKU

(hard)

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

Solution tomorrow...



Yesterday's sudoku								
6	5	3	7	1	8	9	4	2
1	8	7	2	4	9	3	5	6
9	2	4	3	5	6	1	7	8
3	6	5	1	8	4	7	2	9
7	9	8	6	2	5	4	1	3
2	4	1	9	3	7	6	8	5
8	3	6	5	7	1	2	9	4
5	7	9	4	6	2	8	3	1
4	1	2	8	9	3	5	6	7

TV & radio preview

with Ricky Fender

FUNKY FINGERS: Bass virtuoso Marcus Miller is among the contributors to Soul America



How US soul music shifted from songs against racism to seductive smoochers

INEXPLICABLY, this column has not previously mentioned **Soul America** (9pm BBC4), which tells the story of soul music from its origins as a secular offshoot of gospel in the early 1960s through to its eclipse by hip-hop in the '80s.

Well worth watching on the iPlayer, the first and second parts of the series drew out the socio-political context in which the genre evolved in the '60s, as endemic racism in US society fuelled the rise of the civil rights movement and other more radical responses.

Tonight, we see how soul grew softer in the '70s, as hard-edged music that often featured elements of social commentary gave way to silky-smooth string-laden love songs with a seductive vibe, of which Barry White and the Philadelphia

label's roster of artists were leading exponents.

BBC 4's other musical highlight is **Jimi Hendrix: The Road to Woodstock** (11pm BBC4), showcasing the guitar great's legendary set at the 1969 Woodstock festival, alongside interviews with Woodstock promoter Michael Lang and Hendrix's band members Mitch Mitchell, Billy Cox, Larry Lee and Juma Sultan.

The gig itself is a stunning performance by Hendrix at the peak of his powers, featuring signature renditions of Purple Haze, Voodoo Child and the Star Spangled Banner, and drummer Mitchell also excels.

Music fans of an analytical bent may enjoy today's edition of **The Listening Service** (4.30pm Radio 3), which looks into why babies seem to enjoy

music right from the day they are born.

Tom Service is joined by infant psychology expert Dr Laurel Trainor to find out how infants interact with music, while Andrew Davenport, creator and composer of iconic preschool hit *In the Night Garden* and *Moon*, explains how to go about writing tunes for tiny people.

In **The Austerity Audit** (11am Radio 4), Institute for Fiscal Studies director Paul Johnson continues his examination of what lessons can be learned from 10 years of austerity as the coronavirus crisis sends Britain into its deepest ever recession.

This week, he analyses two especially hard-hit areas – local government and its provision of social care and the Ministry of Justice.

QUIZMASTER

with William Sitwell



Pic: Deipnosophista/
Creative Commons

TODAY'S QUESTIONS

- In which English county were the remains of a Roman temple found recently?
- A Reliant Regal van was a feature of which TV comedy?
- Maggie is the name of a pet tortoise belonging to which notable politician?

They were represented by Labour prime ministers (Wilson, Blair and Brown)

3. What is the name of the Roman road that runs from Devon to Lincolnshire? **The Fosse Way (above: a section in Wiltshire)**

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

- One of the two chemical elements that make up butane is hydrogen. What is the other? **Carbon**
- What do the constituencies of Huyton, Sedgfield and Kirkcaldy have in common?

FILM OF THE WEEK | **ROCKS (12A)**
DIRECTED BY SARAH GAVRON | ★★★★★

Rock-solid reality

MARIA DUARTE sees an impressively authentic take on teen friendship in east London

IT'S rare for a film to paint such a realistic and captivating portrait of teenage female friendship and growing up in London within such a pointed social critique.

And it's also refreshing to see young women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds mirroring the youth in east London where the drama is set.

The story follows 15-year-old Olushola Joy Omotoso (impressive newcomer Bukky Bakray), an aspiring make-up artist known as "Rocks" to her friends, whose world is upended when her troubled mother (Lauo-Christina

Akinlode) suddenly disappears again, leaving her and her seven-year-old brother (a delightful D'angelou Osei Kissiedu) to fend for themselves.

Fearing she and her brother will be split up by the authorities, Rocks does her utmost to keep their situation a secret.

As her predicament worsens, she is forced to make dubious decisions as she pushes away her loyal crew, including best friend Sumaya (Kosar Ali), who she feels lives a perfect life and so cannot relate to her dire situation.

Based on a script by award-winning playwright Theresa

Ikoko and Claire Wilson, the drama was a creative collaboration which developed out of extensive workshops involving the young female cast, all discovered via casting sessions in local schools.

They provide an authentic energy, voice and vibrancy which belies their inexperience.

Bakray imbues Rocks with an inordinate strength, combined with vulnerability and, despite all her suffering, there are flashes of sheer bliss as she hangs out with her friends.

Singing, rapping and dancing, she is just a normal teenager in such candid snapshot



moments.

The film shows the insensitivity of social services, who treat Rocks as a nuisance and belligerent teen rather than as

a child in pain, and there is a lack of help and support for her mother, struggling with depression and mental illness.

Even so, this film celebrates

the resilience, joy and power of sisterhood and it ends on an uplifting and inspiring note.

FILM ROUND-UP **VAN CONNOR | MARIA DUARTE**



The Devil All the Time (18)
Directed by Antonio Campos
★★★★☆

THIS deeply disturbing Midwestern gothic tale, set in the backwaters of Ohio, explores the complex relationship between family and faith.

Based on the award-winning novel by Donald Ray Pollock, who narrates, the film centres around young Arvin Russell (Tom Holland) as he battles to protect his family and himself against the forces of evil, in the shape of an unholy preacher (Robert Pattinson) who preys on young girls, a twisted killer couple (Jason Clarke and Riley Keough) and a bent sheriff (Sebastian Stan).

Numerous interwoven stories, spanning from WWII to Vietnam in a non-linear timeline, prove a little confusing to follow. But if you persevere, co-writer and director Antonio Campos delivers a cleverly crafted and suspense-filled crime thriller which features a career-defining performance from Holland, and Pattinson in his creepiest turn to date.

But its brutal violence is not

for the faint-hearted.

■ Available on Netflix.

MARIA DUARTE

Barking Dogs Never Bite (tbc)

Directed by Bong Joon Ho
★★★★☆

FOLLOWING last week's reissue of Memories of Murder, this week sees Bong Joon-Ho's 2000 directorial debut Barking Dogs Never Bite garner a long-overdue launch on British screens.

A blackly comedic tale of an aspiring college lecturer driven mad by the barking of his apartment building's assorted canine residents, it's the kind of darkly hilarious Hitchcockian tale you'd absolutely expect of the man who'd go on to give us Okja and this year's acclaimed Parasite.

Its B-plot can't measure up to a bonkers tale you'd reductively describe as "The Simpsons' Frank Grimes with serial dog murder," but it's otherwise a wonderfully executed balance of sadistic and satirical comedy from a young helmer whose

precise crafting and unique vision are apparent from the opening reel.

Masterly comedic timing from Lee Sung-Jae and a delightfully playful score by Jo Seong-Woo abound. But it's rightly all-eyes on Bong Joon Ho for this growling good time.

VAN CONNOR

Bill and Ted Face the Music (PG)

Directed by Dean Parisot
★★★★☆

IN WHAT must be one of the longest-ever awaited sequels – it took almost 30 years in the making – hapless rockers Bill (Alex Winter) and Ted (Keanu Reeves) are back for their final hurrah in Bill and Ted Face the Music.

It's been worth the wait, because this final instalment in the trilogy captures the spirit, joyfulness and humour of the original films without feeling contrived.

Winter and Reeves are on most excellent form as the now-middle-aged duo whose marriages are on the line – the storyline takes couples counselling to a whole new level.

They are given just 77 minutes to pen the greatest song ever written to unite the world and save reality and in their bodacious quest they encounter multiple future versions of themselves while their music-obsessed daughters (a phenomenal Samara Weaving and Brigitte Lundy-Paine, channelling their parents) embark on a mission through time to find the best musicians to help their dads.

Great and uplifting fun and a fitting end to the franchise.

MD

Hurt by Paradise (tbc)

Directed by Greta Bellamacina
★★★★☆

"NOBODY cares about poets!" we're told offhandedly during this lacklustre vanity project from former Harry Potter extra-turned-aspiring laureate Greta Bellamacina, a statement you'll understand after 83 excruciating minutes of this incessantly grinding dramedy.

A woefully self-indulgent venture that attempts to fuse the hard graft of writing poetry with the day-to-day grind of being a disgruntled self-aware gal about town, Hurt by Paradise teeters aimlessly between yet another Fleabag cash-in, a Woody Allen flick and just about every disenfranchising slice of mumblecore Telluride-glistened waffle-fodder foisted upon near non-existent audiences for the past decade.

It's a chore and the sort of film that asks – with complete sincerity – for its audience to accept unemployed characters renting sizeable apartments in central London while simultaneously complaining about the cost of broadband.

There's little on which to recommend Hurt by Paradise beyond being "just about capably directed."

VC

The Tunnel

Directed by Pal Oie
★★★★☆

INSPIRED by real-life events, this disaster thriller explodes into hair-raising action when a tanker truck crashes and catches fire inside a tunnel in the Norwegian mountains,

leaving hundreds of people fighting for their lives.

The action is a grim and intense ride, with the claustrophobic conditions inside the burning and smoke-filled tunnel contrasted with breathtaking shots of the snow-covered mountainous outside.

Apparently, most tunnels in Norway apparently don't have emergency exits or rooms and under Norwegian safety rules it is every man, woman and child for themselves in finding their way out – absolutely terrifying, as this film demonstrates.

MD

Nocturnal (15)

Directed by Nathalie Biancheri
★★★★☆

DOCUMENTARIAN Nathalie Biancheri makes her narrative feature debut with this convoluted but ultimately admirably sturdy character drama in which Cosmo Jarvis is Pete, a downtrodden painter and decorator who finds a kindred spirit in cynical and irascible schoolgirl Laurie.

Initially a story of the connection that can build between people across the age gap, it's not long before Biancheri and Olivia Waring's otherwise quite nuanced script can't help but venture into more soap-opera-like terrain.

Mercifully, Jarvis – he should be a lot bigger a name than he is at present – and co-star Lauren Coe offer up more than enough chemistry and performative smarts to keep it all on course, with Michael Dymek's crisp cinematography skilfully bolstering their would-be bubble.

And Biancheri's documentary background comes into full force in the film's handheld slice-of-life kitchen-sink sensibilities.

For most of its runtime, Nocturnal is a pretty smart and savvy affair, careful always to show with a glance rather than tell in its dialogue.

But a lazy inversion of that towards its conclusion weakens the story, making the impressive sum of its parts eventually more effective than the whole.

VC



■ WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT

We have the right to amend WA Bill

THE EU pledged in the Withdrawal Agreement to reach an arrangement with Britain that respected our sovereignty and unity.

The EU is legally obliged to negotiate in good faith. But the day after the referendum, the then president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker stated: "This will not be an amicable divorce."

The EU's intent is clearly punishment, not partnership. So, throughout the negotiations the EU has refused to respect our sovereignty and unity. It has been negotiating in bad faith.

The EU is now threatening to block the movement of goods from Britain to Northern Ireland by imposing EU tariffs on all such goods.

It has even threatened to stop the transport of food products from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Any such tariffs or blocks would divide Britain, which would clearly change the constitutional status of Northern Ireland.

This would breach the key principle of the Good Friday Agreement, that there can be no change to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement is an international treaty. So, the EU – not the British government – is in breach of international law.

This is not the first time that the EU has broken interna-

tional law. The EU has refused to comply with judgements of the World Trade Organisation on GMO crops, hormone beef and Airbus subsidies.

The European Court ruled in the 2008 Kadi-Barakat case that the EU could disregard the UN Charter, the supreme charter of international law, if the EU's own constitutional order conflicted with the Charter.

It is legitimate for a state to amend or end a treaty when the terms of the treaty become a danger to that state's sovereignty and integrity.

The Withdrawal Agreement clearly damages the integrity and sovereignty of Britain, so we have every right to amend it or end it.

WILL PODMORE
London E12

■ POLITICS

Blair's riches show he should not be trusted

I THINK Star readers will like this tweet from the son of Harry Leslie Smith – not original but neat: "A person who comes out of politics far richer than he came into politics should never be trusted, on anything. Hashtag Blair."

CAROL WILCOX
Highcliffe

■ BREXIT

Breaking the law not a good plan

I'M A LONG-TIME Eurosceptic who is glad that we are pulling out of the European Union.

But I don't agree with going back on our word by breaking international law in order to do so.

That will hardly help us in making the necessary deals with non-EU nations.

TIM MICKLEBURGH
Grimsby

■ ECONOMICS

Great money trick still at capitalism's heart

ANDREW NORTALL (M Star September 12-13) says rightly that "we need a clear-eyed concrete analysis of concrete reality, of public finances and economics, not magic or mysticism."

He also says: "Banks can only lend against what they have as assets." This statement is somewhat simplistic.

If I were to lend Andrew some money, it would have to be money that I actually have. However, an economist in the late lamented German Democratic Republic explained to me that banks can lend more money than they have received as deposits because not all depositors opt to withdraw their money at the same time.

So, apparently banks can lend money they do not have and charge interest on it.

Now that really is magic!
TONY BRISCOE
South Ockendon

■ LOCKDOWN

Furlough scheme must be extended

IF ANOTHER UK-wide lockdown is implemented due to a rise in Covid-19 cases, then the furlough scheme should and must continue for as long as the second lockdown continues.

PHIL BRAND
London SW17

■ BELARUS

Imperialism not the answer to dictators

BRYN WATERS makes a good point about the progressive nature of the GDR's childcare, social housing, etc. (Housing crisis has roots in GDR fall, M Star September 15).

Also Oleg Podolinski (We need support from the world, M Star September 10) is not wrong about Lukashenko running a brutal and repressive regime.

And so did Gorbachev in the USSR, Yanukovich in Ukraine, Morsi in Egypt and Saddam in Iraq. However, the "solutions" offered by Western imperialism under the guise of "peace, justice and democracy" eliminate past social gains.

The "cure" was and will be far worse than the "disease."

And we do not forget that the geopolitical targets of US imperialism are Iran and both Russia and China.

Borotba, the leftist Ukrainian communists, make the following points in a statement on August 25: "The real labour movement, thanks to skillful manipulation, served as a screen for the liberal-market

movement led by leaders of the pro-Western opposition. Such examples are well known in history: for example, the protest of freight carriers in Chile against the Allende government and the protest of miners in 1991 in the USSR (in support of Yeltsin)."

The Berlin Wall fell to the right and to US imperialism, not to the left and a class conscious, resurgent working class. Borotba explains how that worked out in Belarus: "The working class of large enterprises actually acted as a separate 'party' to the conflict. It was for the allegiance of the working class that the main struggle between Lukashenko and the opposition unfolded ...

"While sympathising with those arrested, the working class was not at all ready to support the political agenda of the protest leaders: privatisation, market reforms, nationalism, and the plan to rouse the workers for a nationwide strike actually failed."

GERRY DOWNING
London



by Jab

Exploring the Morning Star archives

DAILY WORKER

80 YEARS AGO TODAY...

Delegates visit the Home Office

THE Daily Worker of September 18 was again reduced to four pages owing to the cutting of electricity which rendered the printing machinery useless.

Alternative arrangements were made which meant that "compositors and editorial staff were rushed miles across London at a moment's notice. Machinery and type were transferred. Talk about 'go to it,' the paper reported.

It was just as well that it was produced as the this edition carried important splash: "Delegates of 500,000 ask for real protection."

Representatives of half a million people from all parts of the country went to the Home Office to demand adequate ARP.

The "terrible urgency of the situation was expressed by the deputations of the National ARP Co-ordinating Committee which included members from local authorities in various parts of the country, trade unions, tenants' associations and many other bodies."

The delegation told officials that "cement

and steel were being held back from use in construction of shelters, but used to construct business premises for commercial firms.

"In Durham the government has refused a grant for shelters, although conditions are ideal and 30,000 miners are out of work.

A vigorous attack on the government's ARP policy was made by councillor Laithwaite, speaking on behalf of the Birmingham ARP Co-ordinating Committee which represented about 54,000 people.

He said that it was laid down in a government handbook that providing production is not hindered, civil casualties did not matter.

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**

■ MEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE

Watson confident Watkins can contribute from the go

by Our Sports Desk

SALFORD coach Ian Watson hopes England international Kallum Watkins can hit the ground running when he makes his debut for the Red Devils tonight.

The former Leeds and Gold Coast Titans centre will play his first game for six months when Salford take on Catalans Dragons in the Challenge Cup quarter-final at St Helens.

The 29-year-old, who had a knee re-construction in 2019, was picked up by Toronto Wolfpack after cutting short his stay with the Titans for personal reasons, but he was left in limbo when they pulled out of Super League.

Watkins, who won the Cup with Leeds at Wembley in 2014 and 2015, was thrown a lifeline by the Red Devils, who offered him a three-year deal, and Watson is looking forward to watching him in action.

"He looks really good," Watson said. "He has kept himself in condition and certainly looks the part."

"You only get match fitness through playing so I'm sure he will be blowing at some point but I'm equally sure he's smart enough to know when he can catch a breather. I'm sure he will handle that fine."

Watkins will potentially go up against Israel Folau while Watson says he has a number of options to replace the injured Niall Ewalds at full-back, including Dan Sarginson, who played full-back for Wigan in their



RARING TO GO: Kallum Watkins

2016 Grand Final win over Warrington.

Last season's beaten Grand Finalists will be playing only their fourth game since the resumption, having been one of the clubs most affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

They spent 14 days in isolation after beating Hull in their first game back, were without a fixture last weekend because of Toronto's withdrawal and have suffered further disruption in the build-up to tonight's cup-tie.

"We've had a few issues this week," Watson said. "A few of the players' family members had colds so we had to delay their return to training until they had their tests."

"Everybody passed but it meant we were without quite a few players for the first few

days of this week.

"But having the week off and being able to train fully as a team has been good for us and should stand us in good stead."

The Catalans, who won the Cup in 2018, were pulled out of the hat first in each of the last two draws but have once more been forced to fly to England for the match.

"We feel very disappointed this game isn't at home, more for the financial impact it has on the club, not only with the loss of revenue but a huge cost going the other way as well," said coach Steve McNamara.

"But we've got used to the travel. We have our own routine and it is exciting. There are eight of us left competing for the last four spots."

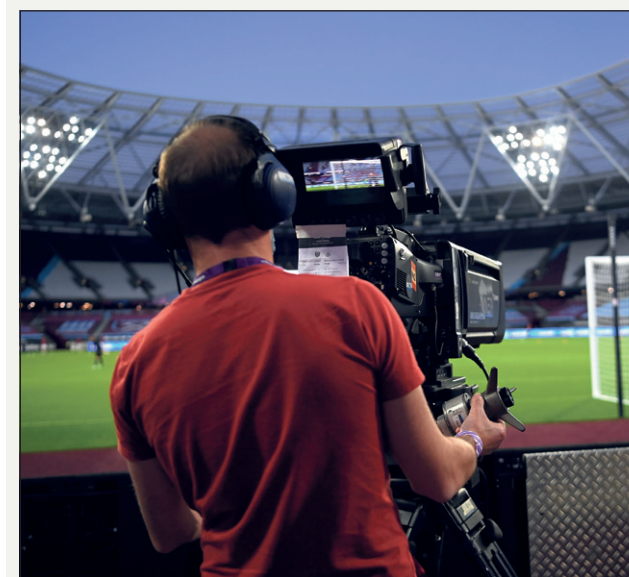
The Catalans are boosted by the return of scrum-half Josh

Drinkwater, hooker Michael McIlorum and prop Sam Moa.

The tie will be part of a quarter-final double-header which concludes with a repeat of the 2015 final between Leeds and Hull KR which got the go-ahead yesterday morning when a second Rhinos player returned a negative Covid test.

Leeds returned to training yesterday but without one unnamed player who has received a second positive result and three others who were told to isolate as part of track-and-trace protocols.

Alex Sutcliffe and Brad Dwyer also miss the game through suspension and Bodene Thompson is cup-tied having played for Toronto earlier in the competition while Jordan Abdull is suspended for Rovers.



■ MEN'S FOOTBALL

Prem agrees new deal with China

by Our Sports Desk

THE Premier League has agreed a television deal in China for the current season after terminating its previous arrangement.

The new agreement with Tencent Sports will give Chinese fans access to all 372 remaining English top-flight matches, with more than half set to be accessible free to air.

The league terminated its agreement with PPTV – which had been due to run until the summer of 2022 – earlier this month after a payment due in March was not made.

The Premier League also retains the right to

sell a small number of matches to other free-to-air broadcasters in China, and – after agreeing a deal for this season – it is understood now to be focusing on securing a longer-term deal for 2021-22 and beyond.

The deal will come as a relief to the league and to its clubs.

The chair of the European Club Association, Andrea Agnelli, said last week that the Premier League faces a rebate to broadcasters of £330 million for the disruption to the 2019-20 season caused by the coronavirus pandemic, and its deal with PPTV was reported to be worth £564m over three seasons.



TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF THE COVID GUIDELINES: Sheffield United boss Chris Wilder

■ CORONAVIRUS

Wilder: So I can't see my nan but fans are allowed back?

by Our Sports Desk

SHEFFIELD UNITED boss Chris Wilder admits he has been left confused by the pilot scheme allowing fans into grounds this weekend.

Eight English Football League (EFL) matches are set to be played in front of crowds of up to 1,000.

That is after the government granted the EFL permission for selected fixtures to be used as pilot events for the programme to reintroduce spectators to venues – on a socially distanced basis – amid the coronavirus pandemic.

When asked about that, Wilder made reference to the

"rule of six" as he expressed his bemusement at the situation.

"I just don't where we are with it all, I've got to say, I haven't got a clue," Wilder said ahead of his side's Carabao Cup clash with Burnley last night.

"Am I allowed to see my nan? Am I allowed to see my mum? But then we can have 1,000 people in a ground but we can't have 15,000 and then I can't go and have a pint with my mates unless there's only six of us."

"So I've got to say I'm like the majority of the people in this country – I have not got a clue what's going off, haven't got a clue."

"If anybody can help me ... I'll try and affect that game of

football and help with the staff and the boys getting a result but everything else, all that other stuff, I ain't got a clue."

The games this weekend set to become the first professional league matches in England to be played in front of fans since March are Middlesbrough v Bournemouth, Norwich v Preston, Blackpool v Swindon, Charlton v Doncaster, Shrewsbury v Northampton, Hull v Crewe, Forest Green v Bradford and Carlisle v Southend.

Any social gathering of more than six people in England is against the law, with people facing fines if they do not abide by the new measure, which applies to both indoor and outdoor settings.



■ EMPTY STADIUMS

A functioning testing system would have had fans back sooner says Labour MP, who hits out at this government's response to Covid and labels them:

INCOMPETENT

by Our Sports Desk

A LABOUR MP has slammed the government over its "incompetence" regarding coronavirus testing, saying it has hampered efforts to get spectators back into sports venues.

Governing bodies are hoping to get an answer next week about whether fans can return to stadiums on October 1, when capacities are set to be capped at between 25 to 35 per cent to allow for social distancing.

A number of pilot events across a range of sports have already taken place this month with more lined up, with capacities at those events currently capped at 1,000 spectators regardless of the size of venue. Sport's finances are in crisis because of the inability to welcome back spectators and shadow sports minister Alison McGovern, the Labour MP for Wirral South, believes further progress could have been made with a more effective testing programme.

"If we had a competently run, good, functioning system, then that would help in every aspect of our lives and that would definitely help get supporters back watching the sport that they love," she said.

"The reason for getting that testing system right is so that we can get back to normal a little bit. The failure to do that is having a huge knock-on effect to sport and a whole range of other things."



Official NHS Test and Trace figures published yesterday showed that the proportion of people in England receiving an in-person Covid-19 test result within the government's 24-hour target period has hit its lowest point since the middle of June.

There have also been reports of shortages in testing capacity in areas of high incidence, with the Conservative MP for Bolton West Chris Green saying people were increasingly turning up to hospital A&E departments in the hope of getting a test in his area.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson admitted to MPs on Wednesday that there is not enough capacity in the testing system, after demand "massively accelerated" in recent weeks.

McGovern also said the government had been too fix-

ated on the Premier League's Project Restart in the early period after lockdown, at the expense of lower-profile sport which relied more heavily on gate income.

"There has been too much focus on getting the Premier League back on people's tellies and not enough focus on lower-league football, other sports and participation in grassroots sport," she said.

The English Football League (EFL) is still in discussions with the Premier League over a rescue package, with its chairman Rick Parry saying solutions were needed "really, really quickly" in an interview on BBC Radio Four's Today programme yesterday.

The EFL estimates its clubs will lose a combined £200 million without spectators this season.



"I think it's really unfortunate that we've got to this point now where football could be described as being in real crisis," McGovern said.

"If there had been that bit more attention from the government earlier on, it might have helped to avoid the situation."

"However, there's no use crying over spilt milk, what we need now is a plan from the government so we know the work clubs have put in to making grounds Covid-safe is not going to waste, and that no town is going to lose a much-loved sport club."

On Wednesday the league confirmed 10 matches where up to 1,000 spectators would be allowed access this weekend across the three divisions, but that is now down to seven after Hull were refused permis-

sion to go ahead, while Luton and Morecombe pulled out on Wednesday.

The director of public health at Hull City Council said the local infection rate stands at 15.3 per 100,000 people, up from 4.2 per 100,000 last week.

There was more positive news from rugby union and rugby league, with two more Premiership matches and four Super League fixtures selected as test events.

Up to 1,000 spectators will be allowed to attend Bath against Gloucester at the Recreation Ground next Tuesday and Bristol against Leicester at Ashton Gate on September 30.

The same applies to the Super League matches on September 30 between Wigan and St Helens, Castleford and Hull, Huddersfield and Hull KR, and Leeds and Catalans Dragons.

TONIGHT'S FOOTBALL

Championship

Coventry City.....QPRs, 7.45pm

Welsh Prem

Aberystwyth...Flint Town, 7.45pm

SPORT ON TV

■ AUTO: World Rally Championship, Rally Turkey – BT Sport 13pm.

■ CYCLING: Tour de France, stage 19 – Eurosport 112.25pm and ITV4 2pm.

■ DARTS: World Series of Darts – ITV4 8pm.

■ FOOTBALL: Championship, Coventry v QPR – Sky Sports Main Event 7pm; Bundesliga, Bayern Munich v Schalke – BT Sport 1 7.30pm, Hamburg v Fortuna Dusseldorf – BT Sport 1 5.30pm; Ligue 1, Lyon v Nimes – BT Sport/ESPN 7.45pm.

■ GOLF: US Open, second round – Sky Sports Main Event, Sky Sports Golf 12.30pm and Sky Sports Main Event 10.30pm.

■ MOTO: MotoGP, Grand Prix of Emilia-Romagna free practice – BT Sport 2 8am and 12pm; World Superbikes, Acerbis Catalunya Round free practice – Eurosport 2 1.25pm.

■ RUGBY LEAGUE: Super League, Catalans Dragons v Salford – Sky Sports Arena 6pm, Leeds v Hull KR – Sky Sports Arena 8.15pm.

■ RUGBY UNION: Challenge Cup, Bristol Bears v Dragons – BT Sport 2 7pm.



TODAY'S TIPS

Farrington's Doubles

ABSTEMIOUS

Ayr 3:55 (nap)

TREVOLLI

Ayr 1:40

Houseman's Choice

PA NAP NAME HERE

Racecourse 00:00

■ MEN'S CRICKET

Silverwood confident England will have a winter schedule



by Our Sports Desk

ENGLAND head coach Chris Silverwood is optimistic of a full winter schedule for his side as the cricketing world comes to terms with playing through a pandemic.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) pulled out all the stops to get the international game back up and running inside bio-secure bubbles at the Rose Bowl and Old Trafford over the past three months, successfully staging all six of its planned series.

As it stands the men's side have no more fixtures, but with the ECB blueprint providing the basis for other boards to work from, there is growing

optimism that some sense of normality could return – albeit with empty grounds likely to become the norm.

Talks are going on behind the scenes, but a best-case scenario would involve England fulfilling a white-ball tour of South Africa from late November, then holding a training camp in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ahead of a rescheduled two-match tour of Sri Lanka and a lucrative Test series versus India.

The latter trip could also be relocated to the UAE, as the forthcoming Indian Premier League season has been, but the once-distant prospect of a packed playing calendar is back on the agenda.

"It's been successful here and

if we can do it so can other countries," said Silverwood. "Getting cricket on everywhere around the world is what we all want."

"There's quite a bit up in the air but we're hopeful after Christmas the Test tours [Sri Lanka and India] will go ahead. South Africa we're looking at before Christmas for a white-ball tour and then we're looking at a red-ball camp in the UAE as

well to prepare the guys.

"We're hopeful that all this will be on. We're learning every day of how we deal with Covid and hopefully if we continue to do that we'll play."

HAVE YOUR SAY

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