



for Peace and Socialism Morning Star

£1.70 Saturday/Sunday March 30-31 2024 Proudly owned by our readers | Incorporating the Daily Worker | Est 1930 | morningstaronline.co.uk

As NASUWT conference begins, Tories are put on strike notice



WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS

by **Berny Torre**
in Harrogate

A SECOND teaching union looks set to announce strike action as teachers facing “dystopian” levels of work-related stress look to up the pressure on the Tories this Easter weekend.

NASUWT general secretary Dr Patrick Roach warned his members “can’t go on much longer” without reforms to their pay and conditions ahead of the union’s annual conference.

He accused the government of ushering in an era where “teaching is no longer a sustainable way to make a living” ahead of the union announcing the results of its consultative ballot on possible strike action this weekend.

It comes after the National Education Union (NEU) yesterday announced an overwhelming majority of members in England and Wales voted in support of strike action in an indicative ballot to secure an above-inflation pay rise and further funding for staffing.

Dr Roach said only one in 10 teachers report their workload is manageable, four in 10 are working more than 50 hours a week and nearly 90 per cent are worried about their financial situation, with more than a fifth struggling to afford their pensions.

“This government has ushered in an era where teaching is no longer a sustainable way to make a living and build a career,” he said.

“Forty thousand teachers left the profession last

year – almost 9 per cent of the workforce – 73 per cent have considered leaving their current job, citing pay as a significant factor.

“Schools cannot function without teachers, and children cannot thrive without the care and expertise of their teachers, yet we face having too few teachers left.

“The Department for Education says it wants to build a world-class education system. That will require world-class working conditions for teachers. Our members will keep demanding a better deal for as long as it takes.”

NASUWT has been consulting its members in recent weeks to gauge whether they would be interested in taking industrial action on pay, workload, working hours and well-being.

A poll by the union of more than 7,000 members in England between January and March, suggests nearly three in four have seriously considered leaving their job in the past year. Among those who considered leaving, half cited pay as a “significant factor” in their decision.

Nearly nine in 10 NASUWT members surveyed said they were worried about their current financial situation.

More than one in four said they have had to increase their use of credit or apply for a payday loan in the last 12 months, and one in nine have had to take a second job, the research found.

More than half of NEU teacher members in state schools and sixth forms in England and Wales took part in the preliminary electronic

ballot by Britain’s largest education union. The NEU’s preliminary ballot, which launched on March 2 and closed on Thursday, saw more than half of members in state schools and sixth forms in England and Wales take part.

NEU general secretary Daniel Kebede said: “This is an indicative, and not a formal ballot. But the facts speak for themselves; over half of our members voted in the ballot and overwhelmingly supported a move to a formal ballot to secure a fully funded, above-inflation pay rise which constitutes a meaningful step towards pay restoration.

“The result demonstrates the mass discontent within our profession to which the government should take notice. Urgent steps are required to tackle the

crisis in education and our members know this. Our annual conference gathers in Bournemouth next week and delegates will determine the next steps in our pay and funding campaign.”

The union said it will consider next steps at a special executive meeting on Tuesday.

Any appropriate recommendations will be put to the union’s annual conference in Bournemouth next week and voted on by delegates.

The Department for Education said the independent School Teachers Review Body is considering evidence for this year’s pay award and advised unions to engage with this process instead of striking before they know what the pay recommendations are.

bernytorre@peoples-press.com
Conference latest: p4



THE MORNING STAR WON'T BE PUBLISHING ON MONDAY BUT WE'LL SEE YOU ALL AGAIN ON TUESDAY. HAVE A HAPPY EASTER!



EASTER TRAVEL: Queues mount at rail stations and the Port of Dover yesterday for the long holiday weekend

■ SCOTLAND

Holyrood announces £90m pot for housing hardship

THE Scottish government has announced £90 million in housing hardship cash for the year ahead.

The funding will be allocated to councils to distribute through the discretionary housing benefit (DHP) scheme – devolved in 2017 – designed to support struggling households where other housing benefits do not meet the full costs, but increasingly being used to fill funding gaps caused by the benefit cap.

SNP housing minister Paul McLennan said: “This funding will help to bridge the gap between what people need in benefits from the UK government, and what they actually receive.

“This can be the difference between a family thriving,

or a family experiencing financial hardship.”

Satwat Rehman, of One Parent Families Scotland, welcomed the extra cash and said: “Mitigating the benefit cap is absolutely the right thing to do.

“The increased funding and improved support for families affected by the benefit cap will be greatly welcomed by the many single parents who have been pushed into further hardship by this policy.”

Insisting the benefit cap was “fair,” a UK government spokesperson said: “In recognition that some households may need additional support with housing costs, the UK government continues to provide funding for discretionary housing payments.”



■ HOUSING RIGHTS

Bill to end no-fault eviction becoming ‘landlord’s charter’

by Peter Lazenby

THE government was accused yesterday of turning legislation to outlaw the eviction of tenants for no reason into a “landlord’s charter.”

Housing campaigners said the Renters (Reform) Bill, originally presented as a protection against so-called “no-fault” evictions, is being watered down to apply only to new tenancies.

This will leave 90 per cent of England’s 12 million existing tenants vulnerable to being thrown out of their homes.

The climbdown abandons a promise from Housing Secretary Michael Gove to abolish a notorious regulation known

as Section 21, which gives landlords power to evict without giving a reason, by the next general election.

It was revealed in a leaked letter from Communities Minister Jacob Young and obtained by the Renters’ Reform Coalition (RRC), which accused the government of caving in to pressure from MPs and landlords’ organisations.

Ninety back-bench Tory MPs are also landlords.

RRC campaign manager Tom Darling accused the government of “selling renters down the river.”

He said: “The government’s flagship legislation to help renters is fast becoming a landlord’s charter – watch as landlord groups today declare

victory now having exacted a significant toll on this policy in exchange for their support.

Mr Darling said that unless “significant changes” were made to the legislation by the House of Lords, the amended legislation “will hardly be an improvement on the status quo, and in some cases it will make things worse.”

But he said: “We will continue to fight until the very last to secure a Bill that delivers genuine change.”

Ben Twomey, chief executive of campaign group Generation Rent, said: “This is another missed opportunity for the government to strengthen the law.”

Polly Neate, chief executive of housing campaign Shelter, accused the government of

being “cowardly” and “caving in” to a minority of MPs.

“Only a watertight Bill will curb the unfairness that’s hardwired into England’s rigged renting system,” she said.

Labour’s shadow housing minister Matthew Pennycook said PM Rishi Sunak and Mr Gove had “chosen once again to put the interests of party management ahead of what is right for the British people.”

He said Labour will “immediately abolish section 21 ‘no-fault’ evictions” if elected.

A government source said: “The Bill will return to the House of Commons shortly and amendments will be scrutinised, debated and voted upon in the usual way.”

peterlazenby@peoples-press.com

■ POLITICS

Dodds: I’d not join the Garrick if asked

by Our News Desk

LABOUR’S shadow women and equalities secretary said yesterday she would not join a London all-male private members’ club which is considering admitting its first female members.

Anneliese Dodds (inset) argued the way to achieve equality was to have more women in positions of power and for men to help break down barriers.

The Garrick Club has come under fire over its membership

list, which included the King, Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden and Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove.

Sir Richard Moore, the head of MI6, Cabinet Secretary Simon Case and several judges have since resigned from the club, which has blocked the admission of women since the 1960s.

Seven women in elite roles have reportedly now been proposed to become the first female members of the club if it agrees to change its rules.

Tory former Cabinet minister

Amber Rudd, Channel 4 News presenter Cathy Newman and the classicist Mary Beard are among those put forward to the organisation by a group of current members hoping the exclusion of women will end.

But Ms Dodds has said she would not want to join if asked, saying: “That’s not really how I would want to spend my time.”

Pointing to the issue of women-led start-ups receiving less financing than those founded by men, the Labour Party chairwoman said: “You

need to have more women involved in those decisions about where investment goes.

“We’ve got to have women and working-class people, we’ve got to have minority people.”

The club is considering legal advice on admitting women.

news@peoples-press.com



Annual General Meeting Notification

The Management Board at Wortley Hall wishes to remind Shareholders that the next Annual General Meeting is on

Sunday 21st April, starting at 11am.

The meeting will be a hybrid meeting using teams.

For further information contact the Political Secretary via email
politicalsecretary@wortleyhall.org.uk



WORTLEY HALL The Workers’ Stately Home



HEALTH

HOSPITALISATIONS LINKED TO DIRTY WATER SKY-ROCKET

DISEASE SURGE: As sewage piles up in rivers cases have risen by 60%

by Peter Lazenby

HOSPITAL admissions for people contracting water-borne diseases have sky-rocketed since 2010, according to Labour analysis published yesterday.

Cases of water borne diseases – including dysentery and Weil's disease – have increased by nearly 60 per cent since the Tories came to power, it found.

Analysis of NHS data shows that in the last year alone 122 people were diagnosed with Weil's disease, double the number diagnosed with the same disease in 2010.

The disease, where infected urine gets in your mouth, eyes or a cut, is usually contracted during activities such as kayaking, outdoor swimming or fishing.

Labour's findings come as water companies poured millions of tonnes of raw sewage into Britain's lakes, rivers and seas.

The Environment Agency revealed that last year was the worst for sewage spills since records began.

Sewage was discharged for a record 3.6 million hours across England in 2023.

A series of 31 discharges lasting 118 hours from one treatment plant involved 820,000 tonnes of raw sewage.

In 2023 the number of sewage discharges rose by 54 per cent to 464,092 compared with 301,291 in 2022.

Labour has pledged to put failing water companies under tough special measures to force them to clean up their toxic



mess and protect people's health.

Action would include giving the water regulator Ofwat powers to block payment of any bonuses until bosses have cleaned up their act.

And water bosses who oversee repeated law-breaking will face criminal charges, Labour vowed.

But public ownership campaign group We Own It said: "Labour's response to the sewage crisis is tinkering around the edges. It doesn't tackle the fundamental problem.

"Water company bosses must work for their shareholders, the ultimate owners.

"Their business model is to underinvest in our infrastructure so they can return a profit.

"As long as dividends are flowing out to shareholders around the world, that's money being wasted that could be reinvested to fix leaks and stop sewage.

"England's ideological experiment with water privatisation has been a complete failure. There is no market in water and these companies have us over a barrel.

"The Labour Party needs to recognise that the only way to protect households and our environment is to bring water into public ownership."

peterlazenby@peoples-press.com



TRANSPORT

Rail workers set to strike as two-year fight goes on

RAIL workers across Scotland will strike this weekend as a two-year dispute over conditions rumbles on.

Managers will strike on Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 of March as part of efforts to drive a resolution in a dispute over on-call working arrangements that last saw them strike in December.

Despite discussions between ScotRail and TSSA general secretary Maryam Eslamdoust, no agreement has yet been reached to change the arrangements which workers argue not only risks their own safety, but those of their passengers.

Ms Eslamdoust said: "Our members are vital to the safe running of the Scotland's railways day in day out and deserve to be treated with respect by their employers over their legitimate grievances.

"Since our last walk-out we have only grown in strength among these grades.

"We would prefer to have meaningful talks with ScotRail to move our dispute forward – however we go into these strikes united and determined."

The Scottish government was contacted for comment.

SCOTLAND

Concerns over judge-only rape trials

by Our News Desk

PROPOSALS to introduce judge-only rape trials have split a Holyrood committee.

MSPs on the criminal justice committee agreed the suggestion not to use juries was "one of the most controversial" of a Bill which aims to make major changes to the justice system.

Members of the Scottish Solicitors Bar Association have already threatened to boycott such trials.

Four SNP MSPs on the committee backed the idea, but made clear if a pilot project did go ahead it should be for no longer than 18 months.

But the two Conservative MSPs on the committee insisted such a scheme would represent a "fundamental departure" from the "long-established right" of an accused person to be put on trial in front of a jury of their peers.

Both Sharon Dowey and Russell Findlay insisted there was "insufficient evidence to justify what would amount to an

experiment with people's lives."

The two Labour MSPs, Katy Clark and Pauline McNeill, also made it clear they did not support the proposals in their present form.

They said if a pilot did go ahead, the Scottish government should consider holding trials before a panel of judges, instead of one judge alone, and that there should also be a sunset clause to limit how long it could run for.

The committee was also split on another major provi-

sion in the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill – the proposal for a new sexual offences court.

But the committee did support the Bill's abolition of the not-proven verdict in Scotland's courts.

news@peoples-press.com

**MIND THE CLOCKS
THEY GO FORWARD
AT 1AM ON SUNDAY!**

Communist Party
of Britain



Comrades, supporters,
friends in Greenwich
and Bexley.

Membership applications are
invited for the new Greenwich
and Bexley CPB branch.

*If not you, who?
If not now, when?*

www.selcp.org and www.comunistparty.org.uk

NASUWT CONFERENCE 2024

■ SCOTLAND

SNP & Greens slammed for inaction over class violence

by Matt Kerr
Scotland reporter

TEACHERS have slammed the SNP-Green Scottish government's "complete abdication of responsibility" amid growing classroom violence.

The accusation will be part of a motion from Scottish delegates to this weekend's NASUWT annual conference in Harrogate, as they describe living not only with rising violence, but a Scottish government running a staggering four years late in issuing guidance to deal with it.

Just last year a survey conducted by the union found that 40 per cent of teachers had experienced violence or physical abuse in the previous 12 months – and 93 per cent said the problem was worsening.

Draft guidance on how to intervene to protect student safety issued in 2020 said restraint should only be used as a "last resort to prevent harm, with the minimum necessary force and for the minimum necessary time."

But despite an escalation in violent behaviour since then, Scottish government promises of clear guidance on the use of force remain unpublished.

NASUWT general secretary Dr Patrick Roach said: "This much-needed guidance has been in the pipeline since 2020, yet four years later still nothing has materialised while teach-

ers are experiencing increasing levels of serious disruption and violence in their schools.

"Every day teachers across Scotland are faced with situations where they feel they have to intervene to physically restrain a pupil to try to prevent them hurting themselves or others.

"They are stepping into considerable risk to themselves and we regularly deal with casework where teachers have either been injured or been the subject of disciplinary action or allegations stemming from an intervention.

"Teachers are being expected to put their safety and sometimes, their careers, on the line to keep their pupils safe, but they are doing so without the backing, training and advice they need and have a right to expect.

"The Scottish government must fulfil its responsibility to teachers and commit to working with us to get this guidance published as soon as possible."

The union's top Scottish official Mike Corbett added: "On a matter where the safety of children and school staff is on the line this is dangerous and unfair.

"We need a nationally agreed approach which upholds the duty of care schools have to both teachers and pupils and which comes accompanied with training and resources for school staff."

The Scottish government said it will publish final guidance as soon as possible.

mattkerr@peoples-press.com

ATTENTION PLEASE:
Delegates forgather at
NASUWT's conference in
Harrogate yesterday



■ RASHIDA DIN

New president thanks former teacher

by Berny Torre
in Harrogate

NEW NASUWT president Rashida Din (pictured) thanked her English teacher yesterday for inspiring her to succeed in the shadow of the emergence of the National Front in her native Luton.

She said it was an honour to address delegates as the union's first Muslim president at the opening of its annual conference in Harrogate.

"We are the union of equality, diversity and breaking down barriers and that is why I stand before you today," she said.

"Great teachers change lives, and they come along at the right moment.

"I know this, as a great teacher changed my life – inspired me. She asked me what university I was planning to go to and what I was going to study at college.

"My parents had arrived from Kashmir in the '60s,

not able to speak or write English.

"I had grown up in Luton in the 1970s to the backdrop of Enoch Powell and his 'Rivers of Blood' speech and the emergence of the National Front.

"That was not the journey I, or society, expected me to follow.

"However, to have someone to believe in you lights a spark – in my case, my English teacher, Mrs Burchett.

"I became the first of my family to go both to college and university."

She urged the next Westminster government and those of devolved nations to reverse 14 years of chronic underfunding and invest in the workforce with world-class pay and working conditions.

"On the horizon, the general election approaches," she said.

"Carpe diem – we will seize the moment to organise and hold the next government to account.



"NASUWT will stand with the entire trade union movement in campaigning to defeat the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, using all means at our disposal."

She added the union will continue to fight for human rights and justice, "responding to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and in other nations across the globe."
bernytorre@peoples-press.com

■ RECRUITMENT CRISIS

Delegates back pay restoration & conditions campaign

TEACHERS backed a campaign for pay restoration and improved conditions at NASUWT's annual conference yesterday.

Classroom teachers' starting salaries plunged by 21 per cent in real terms, using RPI inflation, between 2010 and 2023,

according to the union.

Moving the motion, senior vice-president Wayne Broom said: "We believe that addressing this crisis of teaching recruitment, retention and morale must be a core priority of any future government."

He said the national execu-

tive will lobby all political parties in the run-up to the general election to secure a new deal for teachers, which will involve "delivering a programme to secure a real terms pay restoration for all teachers throughout the UK."

The deal also includes

stronger measures to protect teachers from violence, assault or harassment, a national framework of statutory, contractual conditions of service including a maximum 35-hour working time limit and equal rights for supply and substitute teachers.

Communist Party of Britain



Comrades, supporters, friends in Lewisham, Bromley and Southwark.

Membership applications are invited for the new Lewisham, Bromley and Southwark CPB branch.

*If not you, who?
If not now, when?*

www.selcp.org and www.comunistparty.org.uk

■ MINIMUM WAGE

RISK OF MINIMUM WAGE CHICANERY, WARNS TUC

CHEATED WORKERS: Union body says salaried staff could be illegally underpaid at new rate

by Alan Jones

OFFICE workers and other salaried staff could be at risk of being “cheated” out of the minimum wage, unions are warning.

Ahead of the introduction of the new minimum wage rate from Monday, the TUC said a salaried worker is paid an annual amount which stays the same regardless of fluctuations in the hours they work.

The union organisation said it was easily able to find online adverts for salaried jobs still advertised below the incoming minimum wage.

Salaried workers will find that they are being illegally

underpaid if their salaries do not rise, said the TUC.

It warned that desk-based office workers are often expected to put in hours of overtime as part of their job.

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said: “The minimum wage is the very least employers should pay their workers. It’s their legal duty.

“But too many workers are cheated out of pay by bad bosses, who choose to pay staff illegally low rates.

“Minimum wage cheats exploit workers from a range of jobs – and desk-based office jobs are no exception.

“To make matters worse, many desk-based workers are expected to put in hours of overtime for free.”

The Living Wage Foundation highlighted the difference between the new official adult rate of £11.44 an hour and the voluntary so-called real living wage of £12, and £13.15 in London.

Katherine Chapman, director of the foundation, said: “The rise in the statutory national living wage from April 1 is welcome news for the 3.7 million low-paid workers across the country, but this still falls short of a wage which takes into account the real cost of living.

“Over 14,000 employers across the UK are living wage-accredited and committed to going above the government minimum to ensure their staff are always paid in line

with the cost of living.

“As well as good for workers and their families, business that pay the real living wage report improved staff retention and productivity.”

A government spokesperson said: “Paying the minimum wage is a legal requirement, including all office workers.

“Any employee who thinks they are not being paid correctly should speak to their employer or can speak to Acas confidentially.

“We are increasing the national living wage from April for 21-plus-year-olds by almost 10 per cent, giving a full-time worker on this rate a pay rise of over £1,800 a year.”

news@peoples-press.com



YORKSHIRE: Kirklees District Council in West Yorkshire has elected its first female Asian mayor.

Labour Councillor Nosheen Dad, 34, will also be the youngest mayor in the council’s 50-year history.

Councillor Dad will take office at a Mayor-Making ceremony on May 22.

■ GLASGOW

Council backs call for arms embargo

by Matt Kerr
Scotland reporter

GLASGOW City Council has overwhelmingly backed an Israeli arms embargo and voted to cut any links with occupation profiteers.

Scotland’s largest local authority came close to unanimity at its full council meeting on Thursday as Green, Labour and SNP councillors backed a motion not only expressing solidarity with the people of Palestine, but setting out actions to put it into

practice.

The city, which is twinned with Bethlehem, backed Scottish government calls for an arms embargo on Israel, but challenged First Minister Humza Yousaf to do all he could to halt arms supplies to Israel and its allies from Scotland.

Closer to home, the motion committed the council to widen “the present human rights due diligence process” used for the award of council contracts to “assure itself of supply chains that do not conflict with international humanitarian law.”

It also called for all organi-

sations seeking contracts with the council to “provide an assurance of best practice in relation to their operations to satisfy the council they are not engaging in grave professional misconduct by operating in a manner that breaches ... human rights.”

It further instructed officers to prepare a report on all goods and services bought by the council “wholly or partially manufactured, assembled, or operated by companies operating in the occupied territories as per the updated UN database of business enterprises in rela-

tion to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.”

The two-man Tory group countered with an amendment, which welcomed the UN security council’s recent resolution for an immediate ceasefire but offering no action.

After a series of impassioned speeches from across the political parties, the Green mover of the motion, Leodhas Massie, accepted minor amendments from Labour and SNP and his motion passed by 73-2 as the chambers echoed to the cry of “ceasefire now!”

mattkerr@peoples-press.com

■ FLAMING ANGRY

Gas engineers to ballot over safety, hours and bullying

ALMOST 1,000 gas engineers in northern England have voted to ballot on strike action over excessive working hours, safety and an alleged culture of workplace bullying.

Members of general union GMB working at Northern Gas Networks (NGN) voted 99.5 per cent for action in a turnout of 97 per cent.

NGN is responsible for repairs and maintenance of domestic and business gas supply networks across the region.

GMB organiser Andrew Aldwinckle said: “These workers put their lives on the line daily to protect the public and keep the heating on –

but they are consistently overtired and undermined.

“We are convinced the public would be appalled by how these front-line workers are treated.

“This huge mandate for industrial action shows just how strongly our members feel about NGN’s attitude.

“It’s time that this multimillion company did the responsible thing and paid these workers properly for a decent working week and improve their conditions.”

NGN chief operating officer John Richardson said: “The safety of our colleagues and members of the public is our priority and conversations are ongoing.”

**DOUBLE
CROSSED:** The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby carries a wooden cross as he takes part in the Walk of Witness from the Holy Family Catholic Church, Maidstone, Kent, part of his Holy Week engagements



THE YCL'S WEEKEND OF COMMUNIST EDUCATION IS BACK

COMMUNITY ORGANISING PALESTINE COMBATTING LANDLORDS

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC 21ST CENTURY ORGANISING

RED JOURNALISM COMMUNIST HISTORY

PROGRESSIVE PATRIOTISM THE NATIONAL QUESTION

MARXIST FEMINISM OUR FUTURE IS RED LONDON RECRUITS

HARRY POLLITT SCHOOL
APRIL 6TH-7TH MANCHESTER

GRAB YOUR TICKETS NOW
YCL.ORG.UK/POLLITT

■ CANADA

Schools launch legal action against social media sites

by Our Foreign Desk

FOUR of the largest school boards in the Canadian province of Ontario have launched lawsuits against TikTok, Meta and SnapChat for disrupting student learning.

The lawsuits claim platforms social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are “designed for compulsive use, have rewired the way children think, behave, and learn” and teachers have been left to manage the fallout.

Meta Platforms Inc owns Facebook and Instagram, while Snap Inc owns SnapChat, and ByteDance Ltd owns TikTok.

Rachel Chernos, a trustee for the Toronto District School Board, said teachers and parents are noticing social withdrawal, anxiety, attention problems, cyberbullying and

mental health issues.

“These companies have knowingly created programmes that are addictive, that are aimed and marketed at young people, and it is causing significant harm, and we just can’t stand by any longer and not speak up about it,” Ms Chernos said.

Dozens of US states, including California and New York, are also suing Meta Platforms Inc for harming young people and contributing to a youth mental health crisis by knowingly and deliberately designing features on Instagram and Facebook that addict children to its platforms.

The school boards in Canada suing are the Toronto District School Board, the Peel District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

They are seeking damages in

excess of \$4 billion Canadian dollars (£2.3bn) for disruption to student learning and the education system.

Duncan Embury, a lawyer for the firm representing the boards, said the companies have knowingly and negligently designed their products to maximise the amount of time young people spend on their platforms at the expense of their well-being and education.

international@peoples-press.com



FREED: Recently released students of the LEA Primary and Secondary School Kuriga gather upon arrival to reunite with their parents after more than two weeks in captivity, in Kuriga, Nigeria. On March 7, motorcycle-riding gunmen seized them from their school in the remote town of Kuriga in the north-western Kaduna state

■ FUNDING

EU to bypass safeguards and fast-track Egypt aid

THE EU intends to fast-track some of its aid money to Egypt using an urgent funding procedure that bypasses parliamentary oversight and other safeguards.

The €1 billion (£854.8 million) intended for this is part of a larger package of €7.4bn (£6.3bn) in financial assistance to the North African country that the EU announced on March 17.

European Commission president Ursula Von der Leyen blamed “a very large exposure to the economic effects of Russia’s full-scale war of aggression on Ukraine, the wars in Gaza and Sudan, and the Houthi

attacks in the Red Sea,” and said it was “imperative to make sure that a first significant contribution” would get to Egypt by the end of 2024.

To do so, the commission would employ a seldom-used part of the EU treaties, Article 213, which stipulates that the 27 member countries must endorse the funds – but not the parliament, the bloc’s only democratically elected institution.

The deal also includes a €1.8bn (£1.5bn) investment plan and €600m (£512m) in loans, including at least €200m (£170m) that will go to Egypt for “migration management.”

■ GANG SURGE

Haiti ‘needs up to 5,000 police to deal with violence’

HAITI now needs between 4,000 and 5,000 international police to help tackle “catastrophic” gang violence which is targeting key individuals and hospitals, schools, banks and other critical institutions, the UN rights expert for the conflict-wracked Caribbean nation said.

Last July, William O’Neill said Haiti needed between 1,000 and 2,000 international police trained to deal with gangs. He said yesterday the situation was so much worse that double that number and more are needed to help the Haitian National Police regain control of security and curb human rights abuses.

Mr O’Neill spoke at a news conference launching a UN Human Rights Office report he helped produce which called for immediate action to tackle the “cataclysmic” situation in Haiti where corruption, impunity and poor governance compounded by increasing gang violence have eroded the rule of law and brought state institutions “close to collapse.”

The report, covering the five-month period ending in February, said gangs continued to recruit and abuse boys and girls, with some children being killed for trying to escape.

■ TAJIKISTAN

Nine detained over suspected links to Moscow attackers

by Our Foreign Desk

NINE people have been detained in Tajikistan over suspected contact with the perpetrators of last week’s terrorist attack on a Moscow concert hall that killed 144 people, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti said yesterday.

“Nine residents of the Vakhdat district were detained for contact with the persons who committed the terrorist attack at Crocus City Hall on March 22,” the agency reported, citing information from an unnamed source in Tajikistan’s special services, who said that Russian security forces were also involved in the operation to detain the suspects.

Those detained are also suspected of having connections with the Islamic State group, according to RIA Novosti.

Russia’s Investigative Committee said on Thursday it

had detained another suspect in relation to the raid on Crocus City Hall, on suspicion of being involved in financing the attack. It did not give further details of the suspect’s identity or alleged actions.

Russian officials previously said that 11 suspects had been arrested, including four who allegedly carried out the attack. Those four, identified as Tajik nationals, appeared in a Moscow court on Sunday on terrorism charges and showed signs of severe beatings. One appeared to be barely conscious during the hearing.

A faction of the Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the massacre. But Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin, have persistently claimed, without presenting evidence, that Ukraine and the West had a role in the attack.

The death toll from the raid continues to rise, with the number of deaths increasing to

144 yesterday when a severely injured victim died in a hospital, according to Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko.

Meanwhile, Russia launched a large-scale attack on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure yesterday, with a mass barrage of 99 drones and missiles hitting 10 regions, Ukraine’s armed forces said.

Air raid warnings rang out across the country, with 10 Ukrainian regions coming under fire, the Interior Minister, Ihor Klymenko, said.

Ukraine’s state-owned grid operator, Ukrenergo, said that yesterday’s attack targeted thermal and hydroelectric power plants across central and western regions.

Elsewhere, five people, including a five-year-old girl, were wounded during the attack in Ukraine’s Dnipropetrovsk region, said local governor Serhii Lysak.

international@peoples-press.com

Bristol, Bath and Gloucester Communist Party



Rob Griffiths
General Secretary of the CPB
At Tony Benn House, Bristol and online
TinyURL.com/CostofProfit

Wednesday 10 April 2024 19:00 - 21:00 BST

London Communist Party



stands in solidarity with the struggle for peace and justice for the Palestine people.

On May 2 2024 vote Communist and for all other candidates who will stand up for peace.

www.comunistparty.org.uk

■ HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

NETANYAHU AGREES TO RETURN TO TABLE WITH HAMAS FOR DEAL

GAZA: Israeli PM confirms delegation will join talks in Qatar and Egypt to discuss possible ceasefire for hostage release

by Our Foreign Desk

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday that his government will return to the table for ceasefire talks with Hamas.

The announcement marks yet another attempt to reach a deal with the militant group that would pause Israel's brutal offensive in Gaza in exchange for the release of Israeli hostages.

Mr Netanyahu said he had spoken with Israel's lead negotiators and authorised Israeli delegations to join talks in Qatar and Egypt over the coming days.

With the war now grinding

through a sixth month, the United States, Qatar and Egypt have spent months trying to negotiate another ceasefire and hostage release. But those efforts have stalled.

Hamas has previously proposed a phased process in which it would release all the remaining hostages in exchange for an end to the war and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the opening of its borders for aid and reconstruction, and the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including top militants serving life sentences.

Mr Netanyahu has called the demands delusional and vowed

to resume Israel's offensive after any hostage release and keep fighting until the militant group is destroyed.

Hamas is believed to be holding roughly 100 hostages, as well as the remains of about 30 people killed in the group's October 7 attack or who died in captivity.

Meanwhile, the top United Nations court on Thursday ordered Israel to take measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including opening more land crossings to allow food, water, fuel and other supplies into the war-ravaged enclave.

The International Court of

Justice issued two new so-called provisional measures in a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of acts of genocide in its military campaign.

Israel denies it is committing genocide and accused South Africa of trying to "undermine Israel's inherent right and obligation to defend its citizens."

Thursday's order came after South Africa sought more provisional measures, including a ceasefire, citing starvation in Gaza.

Israel, which had urged the court not to issue new orders, said it places no limits on aid entering Gaza and vowed to "promote new initiatives" to

bring in even more assistance.

In its legally binding order, the court told Israel to take measures "without delay" to ensure "the unhindered provision" of basic services and humanitarian assistance, including food, water, fuel and medical supplies.

It also ordered Israel to immediately ensure that its military does not take action that could harm Palestinians' rights under the Genocide Convention, including by preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The court told Israel to report back in a month on its implementation of the orders. international@peoples-press.com

■ NORTH OF IRELAND

Donaldson quits DUP after historical sex offence charges

by Our Foreign Desk

SIR Jeffrey Donaldson quit as leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) yesterday after being charged with historical sex offences.

The 61-year-old politician (pictured) is due to appear in court in Newry, Co Down, on April 24 having been arrested and charged in relation to non-recent sexual allegations.

A 57-year-old woman has been charged with aiding and abetting additional offences in relation to the same police investigation.

The Lagan Valley MP has been suspended from the DUP pending the outcome of the judicial process and East Belfast MP and deputy leader Gavin Robinson has been appointed interim party leader.

The DUP said it had received a letter from Sir Jeffrey stating that he had been charged with allegations of a historical nature and that he would be stepping down as leader.

In a statement, the DUP said: "In accordance

with the party rules, the party officers have suspended Mr Donaldson from membership, pending the outcome of a judicial process.

"The party officers have this morning unanimously appointed Mr Gavin Robinson MP as the interim party leader."

Overnight, Mr Donaldson's website and social media accounts, including on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, were deleted.

The shock announcement comes just weeks after Sir Jeffrey made the decision to bring the party back to powersharing in Northern Ireland.

Sir Jeffrey's leadership saw him steer the party's two-year boycott of Northern Ireland's political institutions in protest over post-Brexit trading arrangements.

After protracted negotiations, the DUP agreed to return to Stormont in February following the agreement of a new deal and a series of assurances around Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom.

international@peoples-press.com



ATTACK: Police officers examining the site of suicide bombing at a highway in Shangla, district in the Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, on Tuesday. A suicide bomber in north-west Pakistan has rammed his explosive-laden car into a vehicle on Tuesday, killing five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver, officials said

■ PAKISTAN ATTACK

Chinese investigators join terror probe

A TEAM of Chinese investigators arrived in Pakistan yesterday to join a probe into a suicide attack that killed five of its nationals earlier this week, officials said, as Pakistan continued its own investigations into the attack.

The slain Chinese engineers and workers were heading on Tuesday to the Dasu Dam, the biggest hydropower project in north-west Pakistan, when a suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden car into their vehicle.

A Pakistani driver was also killed in Tuesday's attack in

Shangla, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Beijing condemned the attack and asked Pakistan to conduct a detailed investigation and ensure protection of thousands of its nationals who work on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

According to a government statement, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi briefed the Chinese investigators yesterday about Pakistan's investigations into the attack.

Two days earlier, Pakistani officials shared with the Chinese embassy the preliminary

findings of their investigation into the attack, for which so far no group has claimed responsibility.

Chinese working on CPEC-related projects have been targeted in Pakistan in recent years.

In July 2021, at least 13 people, including nine Chinese nationals, were killed when a suicide bomber detonated the explosives in his vehicle near a bus carrying Chinese and Pakistani engineers and labourers, prompting Chinese companies to suspend work for a time.

 in brief



Zuma 'not eligible to run in elections'

SOUTH AFRICA: Former president Jacob Zuma (pictured) is not eligible to run in upcoming elections, the Independent Electoral Commission ruled on Thursday.

In July 2021, Zuma was sentenced to 15 months in prison for defying a court order to appear before a judicial commission that was investigating corruption allegations during his 2009-18 presidency.

South Africa's constitution bars people convicted and sentenced to more than 12 months' imprisonment, without an option of a fine, from holding public office.

Four die in separate drowning incidents

SPAIN: Four people died after falling into the sea in three incidents on Spain's Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts on Thursday.

The deaths came amid warnings of strong winds and widespread rain across many parts of the country, and warnings of high waves on Portugal's coast to the south-west.

Spanish police said a young male of Moroccan nationality and a German adult had died on the Mediterranean coast near the eastern city of Tarragona.

A man and a woman died after falling into the Atlantic Ocean on Spain's northern coast.

Radio Free Asia bureau 'shut down'

HONG KONG: The president of US-funded Radio Free Asia (RFA) said its bureau in the city has been closed.

RFA president Bay Fang said in a statement yesterday that it will no longer have full-time staff in Hong Kong, although it would retain its official media registration.

"Actions by Hong Kong authorities, including referring to RFA as a 'foreign force,' raise serious questions about our ability to operate in safety," Mr Fang said.



Struggle on the Streets

the best photos from the week's protests around the world



ABOVE: A woman holds a sign with a message that loosely translates from Spanish: 'Children should not be harmed,' during a demonstration protesting against the kidnapping and killing of an eight-year-old girl, in the main square of Taxco, Mexico, Thursday March 28 2024. Hours earlier a mob beat a woman to death because she was suspected of kidnapping and killing the young girl.



ABOVE: Georgia state Sen. Clint Dixon (R-Buford), left, front, talks to reporters after the passage of a Bill that would ban transgender girls from playing high school sports on Tuesday, at the Georgia Capitol in Atlanta. Protesters supporting transgender rights stand behind Dixon.

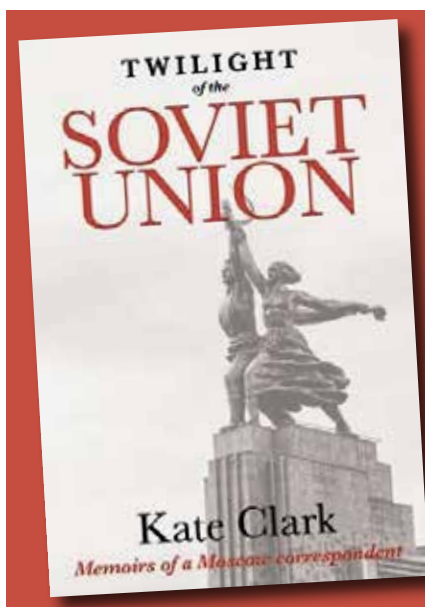


ABOVE: People take part in a protest organised by the Slovakian opposition parties in Bratislava on Wednesday. People in Bratislava have formed a human chain around the building of Slovakia's public radio and television to protest against a plan by the government of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico to take over the broadcasters.

RIGHT: Abortion-rights activists hold their signs as they protest outside of the Supreme Court during a rally on Tuesday, in Washington. The Supreme Court is hearing arguments in its first abortion case since conservative justices overturned the constitutional right to an abortion two years ago.



ABOVE: Members of Aam Admi Party, or Common Man's Party, shout slogans during a protest against the arrest of their party leader Arvind Kejriwal in New Delhi, India, on Tuesday. Indian police have detained dozens of opposition protesters and prevented them from marching to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence to demand the release of their leader and top elected official of New Delhi who was arrested last week in a liquor bribery case.



What was life like in the USSR?

Read *Twilight of the Soviet Union* by the Morning Star's former Moscow correspondent

'A frank warts-and-all account of the world's first socialist country'
- Ben Chacko, Editor of the Morning Star

'A well-written book portraying a lively picture of life in the USSR'
- Prof David Lane, University of Cambridge

Order now from the Morning Star shop, price £14.99 + P&P
<https://shop.morningstaronline.co.uk/>

Who is Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Senegal's new president?

OPPPOSITION leader Bassirou Diomaye Faye is set to assume the presidency of Senegal after the historic election of March 24.

On March 27, the Court of Appeal of Dakar announced the official provisional results based on data from all polling stations, with 44-year-old Faye securing 54.28 per cent of the votes. In second place is former prime minister Amadou Ba, from outgoing president Macky Sall's ruling Alliance for the Republic (BBY) coalition, with 35.79 per cent.

The Constitutional Council will now examine any possible appeals ahead of the validation and official declaration of the final results. 7.3 million people were registered to vote in the elections, which saw a voter turnout of 61.3 per cent.

Faye's victory had been all but confirmed by Monday as initial results showed him with 53.7 per cent of the votes with data from 90 per cent of polling stations. Later that day, Ba conceded the election, with both him and Sall congratulating Faye on his victory. Faye will assume the presidency after Sall's term expires on April 2.

Sunday's election took place against the backdrop of a political crisis in the country that had escalated dramatically since 2021, punctuated by bouts of protests that were met with severe state repression and violence.

Sall came to power in Senegal in 2012 and then in 2019 in what would be his second and final term under Senegalese law. However, Sall's refusal to definitively state whether or not he would seek a third term – after amending the length of presidential term which Sall claimed “reset the clock” – coupled with what was seen as the instrumentalisation of state institutions to target dissenters and opposition fuelled public anger.

Much of this anger coalesced around the arrest of leading opposition figure, 49-year-old Ousmane Sonko, in March 2021. A former tax inspector, Sonko founded the African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity (Pastef) in 2014, was elected to the national assembly, and went on to contest the 2019 presidential election – coming third with 16 per cent of the vote.

Positioning themselves outside “the system,” Sonko and Pastef drew huge support among Senegalese youth, addressing long standing issues of unemployment and poverty

44-year-old Faye won the March 24 election with 54.2 per cent of the vote. He has promised to restore the republic's institutions, renegotiate mining and energy contracts, and work towards monetary reform, including potentially a new currency, writes **TANUPRIYA SINGH**

in a country where a 5 per cent economic growth rate has failed to translate into better living conditions for the population.

Sonko's arrest in 2021 triggered five days of massive protests, during which at least 14 people were killed by state forces. His subsequent conviction and sentencing in June 2023 would trigger another round of unrest, with at least 15 people killed.

Sonko was imprisoned at the end of July, amid the imposition of a slew of new charges including “fomenting an insurrection” and Pastef was declared dissolved.

In November, Pastef first announced that it would support Bassirou Diomaye Faye, the party's secretary general, as a candidate while continuing to push for Sonko's bid in the face of legal challenges. Faye played a central role in Pastef's formation, and subsequently in formulating Sonko's 2019 presidential programme.

However, in April 2023, Faye himself was put under detention over a social media post criticising the proceedings in a defamation case against Sonko. He was accused of “undermining state security” and faced charges including defamation, contempt of court, and “acts likely to compromise public peace.”

Despite this, and even as



Senegalese people have chosen a break with the past to give substance to the immense hope that our social project has raised



NEW BROOM: Senegal's presidential candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye, in white, and opposition leader, Ousmane Sonko (left) hold a broom, a symbol of their campaign, at a final rally in Mbour, Senegal, last Friday

Faye remained in prison, his candidacy was accepted by the Constitutional Council, placing him among 19 other candidates vying for the presidency. The continuity between Sonko and Faye's political project was reinforced by the phrase “Diomaye moy Sonko, Sonko moy Diomaye” (Diomaye is Sonko, Sonko is Diomaye).

On the eve of the start of the campaigning period, Sall announced the postponement of elections, triggering another round of protests in which at least three people, including a 16-year-old child, were killed by state forces.

Sall's “constitutional coup” was ultimately thwarted by the Constitutional Council, as the Senegalese people and civil society groups firmly rejected

any attempts to postpone the election.

Nevertheless, on March 14, 10 days before the election, Faye and Sonko were finally released from the Cape Manuel prison, with celebrations held in the streets of Dakar.

Speaking at his first press conference after the results on Monday, Faye stated that the “Senegalese people have chosen a break [or rupture] with the past to give substance to the immense hope that our social project has raised.”

Sunday's election marked for people a chance for a “radical change” and a “vote of sanction” against the prevailing regime. Expectations will be high for the ability of the incoming Faye-led administration's social and economic

agenda to deliver on their promises to the country's youth.

Faye has promised the “rehabilitation of the institutions of the republic” and the “restoration of the rule of law” and to address “hyper-presidentialism” which has led to a “stranglehold of the executive over the legislative and judicial power.” To this end, the campaign has proposed political reforms to place limits on presidential powers, including through the creation of a post of vice-president.

On the economic front, Faye has pledged to renegotiate mining and energy contracts signed by the Senegalese government, to maximise revenues from oil production and to “make the mining industry an important lever of our socio-economic development.”

In a country whose presidents have held close ties with France, the former coloniser, Faye's electoral campaign also outlined plans for a new national currency, breaking away from the neocolonial CFA Franc which is in use by 14 African countries and is pegged to France's currency (the euro), historically accruing immense benefits to the French state and its corporations.

“Senegal has built up a formidable relationship with France, despite a painful beginning marked by slavery and colonisation. This must not be allowed to continue in a neocolonialism that keeps us dependent on France,” Faye had told *Le Monde*.

Meanwhile, during Monday's press conference, Faye appealed to “our African brothers and sisters to work together to consolidate the gains made in the process of building Ecowas integration, while correcting weaknesses and changing certain methods, strategies and political priorities.”

The incoming president has also announced plans to review Senegal's fishing agreements, including under the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) signed with the European Union. Sonko himself has been a sharp critic of the EPAs, warning that the open border and no customs policies under the agreement would work to the detriment to the development of Senegal's own key sectors.

While it remains to be seen what shape these changes and negotiations will take, these conversations are taking place within a broader process in Senegal, including the “France Degage” (France get out) campaign of the Front for an Anti-Imperialist Popular and Pan-African Revolution (FRAPP) which has mobilised against France's neocolonial hold on Senegal to push for issues of economic and political sovereignty, all in the face of repression and arrests.

■ This is an edited version of an article that appeared at *peoples-dispatch.org*.

★ Star comment

Labour must forget 'small state, small spending' orthodoxy

THE contours of Labour's 2024 election pitch have emerged with the now standard warning from Keir Starmer that there is no "magic money tree."

This routine response has its origin in the orthodox neoliberal wing of the party Establishment that was most recently voiced by Lord Mandelson who warned against "rushing" to implement labour law reforms. This is in line with the Confederation of British Industry pitch which warns against increased employment rights as a constraint on productivity. In big business language, for "productivity" read "profits."

When pressed on whether Labour would carry through the changes in its first term the Labour leader – constrained somewhat by Anneliese Dodds's forthright assertion that Labour's priority lay in "boosting productivity and getting more money in people's pockets" – gave a one-word and grudgingly positive answer.

We will see. But the wearying repetition of the worn-out notion that there exists a fixed pot of money available for public investment signifies Westminster Labour's absolute poverty of imagination.



National economies are dynamic entities that respond more surely to government initiative than to private caprice. The difference – as exemplified by the scandalous but entirely predictable way in which Southern Water's private owners diverted investment funds to dividends and loaded the enterprise with debt – is clear.

When Margaret Thatcher initiated the privatisation bacchanalia as "a new beginning" she was really signalling the end of the post-war compromise which compelled capitalism to meet a measure of working-class demands.

Labour's insistence on maintaining the Tory spending plans in its first term of government will drive it into exactly the same kind of problems which beset Gordon Brown who, in order to meet the spending constraints that EU membership entailed, mortgaged public finances and public services to money market devices like PFI.

A Labour election victory will give expression to the almost universal demand of the British people for the government to get a grip. Where the Tories talk about diminishing the role of the state Labour needs to fashion a new narrative which places the state – acting for the people – at the centre of a renewal process.

If they need some validation for such an approach they could perhaps cherry-pick one element from the US while abandoning Starmer's support for the Gaza bloodbath.



The US government is carrying through the largest federal investment in decades.

The reason why can be found in the 2021 report by the US Society of Civil Engineers which asserted that if unaddressed the US's infrastructure investment gap of nearly \$2.6 trillion could cost the country \$10tn in lost gross domestic product by 2039.

The parallels with Britain are striking.

One in three US bridges need replacing according to the US Road Builders Association. Amtrak has a railway repair backlog of \$45 billion. The Environmental Protection Agency says the drinking water and wastewater systems need at least \$744bn. Increased power outages are costing the economy billions of dollars.

Corporate capitalism cannot be trusted to manage modern society.

And it is to the US Council on Foreign Relations that we owe the insight that China's infrastructure spending is ten times greater than the US by percentage of GDP. And for comparison where China spends 4.8 per cent of its GDP on infrastructure its nearest rival, Australia, spends 1.5 per cent. Number six in the global ranking is Britain at 0.9 per cent!

Of course, capitalist states are quite capable of taking the initiative and will do so if it serves the accumulation of capital or the state's survival.

But the only guarantee that investment serves only the people is when land and property are in the hands of the people.

Aw That

with Matt Kerr

Seizing agency: local or global, we have the power

MATT KERR reminds us that grassroots movements can win – and are winning now

AS I sat through a motion on local democracy and funding at council on Thursday in which opposition members were denied the right to speak, I had some time to think about the state of the place.

I heard fine words about sexy subjects like "powers of general competence" being given to local authorities, and I remembered how when these powers being given to councils was last suggested some 10 years ago by the then Labour administration, the SNP opposition claimed we already had them.

If you hang about on the riverbank long enough, I suppose... What is it that has changed over that decade to turn the idea of councils in Scotland having the same powers as just about any other equivalent body in Europe from an absurd demand into one that has the backing of the parties of the Scottish government?

Follow the money, as they say. Weeks after councils across the land have slashed budgets and jobs in essential public services, it's clearly beginning to dawn on some that councils shouldn't just be arm-length cuts machines any more – they can do that and tax too.

These powers would negate the need for individual pieces of legislation to create things like tourism levies, congestion charging and the like. On a matter of principle, I think that that is the way to go. Councils could then justify whichever levies they impose by pointing to how the cash is spent, and the electorate can judge the fairness and kick them out if necessary.

I listened with fascination to one colleague telling us it would return "agency" to local government.

The council I sit in spends half a billion a year less every year than it did a decade ago. No levy on hotel beds is going to undo that damage.

The tragedy is that should the shift of those powers ever make it out of rhetoric and into



SHOWING WHAT'S POSSIBLE: After years of campaigning, Living Rent tenants' union has forced a rent cap on the Scottish government

some form of reality, it will come for all the wrong reasons.

It's not resurfaced on the agenda because of some great urge to reinvigorate local democracy, but because even Scottish government ministers cannot help but see the damage they have wrought as they gaze out of their office windows.

It's easy to blame ministers, north and south of the border, Tory, SNP and Green, for the state we're in – the evidence of their failure is abundant after all – but councils have to shoulder some blame. Agency,

you see, isn't something to be conferred on you by a higher power, it is something to be realised – to be taken.

This month marks the 30th anniversary of just such an act.

The pre-devolution Scotland of 1994 still had two tiers of local authorities – regions and districts – but they faced extinction in the Local Government Bill. Not only did the Tory secretary of state Ian Laing propose to abolish regional councils, but he also planned to take water out of their hands and privatise it as his government

had done elsewhere in Britain a few years earlier.

What happened next was a remarkable demonstration of political will, combined with sheer audacity. That year Strathclyde Regional Council sent out its council tax bills as usual, but it also sent something else to the people of the region.

A public body with no power conferred upon it to do any such thing sent out ballot papers to the households of Strathclyde, asking 1.2 million people if they agreed with water and sewerage services being sold off. What could have died a death as mere "gesture politics" instead launched a massive campaign to defend public ownership and encourage people to return their ballots.

The result was clear and the case to abandon the proposals became unanswerable when 97 per cent voted to retain their ownership on a 71 per cent turnout.

The regional councils might not have survived the 1994 Local Government etc (Scotland) Act, but publicly owned water did.

While Scottish Water has sadly and undoubtedly since become contaminated with the same sort of corporate culture that has spread across myriad public services – from further and higher education to health and, yes, councils – it nonetheless remains in public hands and has avoided the obscene levels of asset-stripping and profiteering experienced elsewhere on this island, and all because a council seized the power to say No.

It is far from the only example of that realisation of agency.

The women who organised the rent strike on the Clyde during the first world war which went on to change the law of the land for generations didn't stop to ask permission for their actions or abandon all hope because they had yet to win the right to vote. Instead, they seized power and changed the law of the land benefitting generations of working-class

people in the process.

The reason these events, and countless others, are rarely talked about, or are patronised out of relevance by a school of thought that insists that these were quaint exercises that have no place in the grown-up 21st century, is because they still work.

After years of campaigning and the hard graft of genuine community organising, tenants' union Living Rent is on the verge of changing the law of the land too. After years of obfuscation, excuses and bizarre defences of landlords' human rights, the Scottish government has finally published its proposals for permanent rent controls.

No-one is under any illusions that it will end the disaster-capitalism of rampant landlordism, or solve Scotland's housing crisis overnight, but neither of these things are possible without this vital first step.

There is no doubt whatsoever that without the Living Rent, a parliament as packed with landlords as Holyrood would never have had to come face to face with the realities of being a tenant, or have had any sort of inclination to act.

It's as true today as ever it was that nothing is ever truly gifted to our class, but conceded, as Living Rent's seizure of the agenda on the housing crisis, its causes and solutions is yet another demonstration.

Those work too. Demonstrations, I mean.

When the UN security council backed a ceasefire, it didn't just fall from the sky. While the positions of Joe Biden, Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer have not shifted by anything like enough, at least they are no longer playing ludicrous word games to avoid saying "ceasefire."

This hasn't happened because they have suddenly developed consciences, but because we live in an age when the images and reports of the horrors being perpetrated in Gaza cannot be hidden or ignored.

This week a Palestinian surgeon, Gassan Abu Sitta, who worked for 40 days to save lives in Gaza as the Israelis pounded hospitals, won 80 per cent of the votes to become the next rector of the University of Glasgow, just days before the council passed a motion to cut ties with companies in the occupied territories.

All of these shafts of light come not from the political classes, but from the millions who have marched week after week across the globe, demonstrating not only their disgust at the genocide in Gaza but also their opposition to building economic growth on the back of a war economy that can only end in calamity and bloodshed.

It may seem like a long way from a water referendum in a small patch of north-west Europe to the hell of war in Gaza, but wherever we are, whatever the cause on the path to peace and socialism, we must know our own strength.

Call it agency, if you like.

THE GENTLEMEN continues the writer-director Guy Ritchie's ongoing fawning obsession with the British upper classes, probably stemming from his privileged upbringing.

Ritchie was privately educated at posh Windlesham House and Stanbridge Earls School. His well-heeled parents John Vivian Ritchie and Amber Parkinson both made prestigious second marriages, respectively to Shireen Ritchie (nee Folkard), Baroness Ritchie of Brompton, and Sir Michael Leighton, 11th Baronet of Loton Park.

It has to be said that when he started out in the movie business, Ritchie obscured the bovy-argot of what he imagined was modern-day Cockney to further his career.

Guy Ritchie was born in leafy Hatfield, Herts, in 1968; when asked whether he was a "genuine Eastender" the response was: "No. I come from a mix. But I've been to both extremes one way or the other. When I was at school I was fucking seriously into socialism."

"And as I tried to then make a pound or a penny – I used to speak for the socialists at school, and it was a right-wing school, really. I'm not claiming that I'm mister fucking street tough, you know what I mean? But I've taken a few slaps, and I understand slaps ... and I am one to believe that some people should be slapped."

The 'other' arf

Ritchie currently resides at his Georgian pile of Ashcombe Park, a 1,134-acre estate on Cranborne Chase, in the parish of Berwick St John, near Salisbury, Wiltshire. The grounds of the Ritchie mansion were voted one of Britain's 10 top venues for pheasant shooting by The Field magazine. He also owns a brewery, a pub, an airfield and an outdoor equipment company.



NOT FROM THE EAST END: Gangster-obsessed Guy Ritchie

In 2011, Ritchie's swanky £6 million London home was briefly occupied by members of squatter organisation The Really Free School. Shame, said absolutely no-one.

The director presumably knows of what he writes, at least in terms of Britain's nob. While The Gentlemen's toffs are idolised as either heroic (Theo James), goofily loveable (Daniel Ings, Nigel Havers) or stoic (Joely Richardson), everyone else is patronised, be they slavishly loyal family retainers, effete foreigners, thieving travellers, seedy journalists, bent Turkic boxers,

After The Gentlemen: let's meet some real-life upper-crust crims

Guy Ritchie's latest Netflix series delves into the world of bent aristocrats, revealing the dark underbelly beneath their veneer of privilege. Here **STEPHEN ARNELL** takes a look at some of the real British toffs who engaged in criminal activity

caricature Scousers, or the oikish working classes in general.

Ritchie's admitted fascination with the Kray twins mirrors that of sleazebag Tory peer Lord Boothby, who in the 1960s was regularly seen slumming it with the Krays, Ronnie in particular.

In 1998 Ritchie opined: "Everything, more or less, of the old-school villainy related back to the Krays at some point. And the Krays were a lot worse than everyone thinks they are ... And that was why I had a big problem with the film [The Krays, 1990]; they just looked like a couple of f'ggots as far as I was concerned, even with what they were showing."

"And I know what those boys were doing was a hundred times worse than what everyone thought was going on. So it's inevitable that anything that is genuine, and old, and British will somehow have something to do with the Krays."

Admittedly, there is some truth-telling from Giancarlo Esposito (as shady US billionaire Stanley Johnston) regarding exactly how Britain's blue-blooded elite acquired their lands, when William the Conqueror divvied up Anglo-Saxon England after defeating King Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Ritchie appears to have had Wikipedia permanently open when writing the script, given the regurgitation of facts and figures on a range of subjects (from how to sample fine wines to weed production and inheritance tax), underlining the fundamentally lazy nature of The Gentlemen, which also recycles familiar riffs from his other movies (Snatch, Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, RocknRolla), as well as the 2019 picture of the same name.

But Ritchie has a valid point when shining a light on the criminal activities of the upper classes – that is routine tax-dodging, treason (Jacobites, Nazis etc) and non-routine murder (Lord Lucan and others).

Here's a few wronguns in a rogue's gallery of crooked coronets (and precious little in the way of kind hearts).

Lord Brocket

Old Etonian Charles Ronald George Nall-Cain, 3rd Baron Brocket of Brocket Hall, grandson of Nazi sympathiser Ronald Nall-Cain, the 2nd Baron Brocket was born in 1952. The profligate

playboy baron (who at one point owned 42 Ferraris) was on the skids after frittering away the family brewing fortune and took to insurance fraud, for which he served 2½ years of a five-year sentence when sent down in 1996.

But luckily for Charlie, ITV threw the disgraced toff a lifeline with I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here, giving Brocket a few years of semi-fame to cash in on his notoriety. He was last seen on British TV screens in 2017, featured in – appropriately enough – an episode of Channel 5's repossession show Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away!

Charles James Spencer-Churchill

Charles James Spencer-Churchill, 12th Duke of Marlborough, was born in 1955. The preening, drug-fuelled narcissist spent six months in prison for forging prescriptions in 1995; in September 2007, he was sentenced to another six months in jail for dangerous driving and criminal damage after a road rage attack on another motorist's car.



NOT A CALM DRIVER: Charles James Spencer Churchill

He was also banned from driving for three-and-a-half years. In an apparent attempt to improve his reputation, Blandford participated in BBC1's 2009 documentary Famous, Rich, and Homeless, in which "famous" people spent three nights on the streets with only a sleeping bag.

Negating the point of the show, Blandford didn't actually sleep rough, claiming that on the first night, he kipped in the car park of a five-star hotel (his sleeping bag was unopened); on the second night, he demanded to be put up in accommodation befitting his status. He gave up completely by the third evening. Hardly a Churchillian display of fortitude.

John Wilmot (1647-1680)

John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester, the dissolute Restoration rakehell poet immortalised by Johnny Depp in The Libertine (2004), composer of verses including Signor Dildo and the drama Sodom, or the Quintessence of



NOT A DOCTOR: Perverted impersonator John Wilmot

Debauchery was a rum cove.

His most infamous exploit was posing as the character "Doctor Alexander Bendo," a physician with special skill in treating infertility and other gynaecological ailments. From his Tower Hill "surgery" Rochester also pretended to be the good doctor's wife, the staid "Mrs Bendo," a pretence to first "inspect" young women in his practice without rousing the ire of their husbands before he got to work in earnest.

It was noted at the time that Rochester's treatment was "not without success," presumably meaning Wilmot was a clandestine sperm donor. At the ripe old age of 33, Lord Rochester passed away from a lethal combination of tertiary venereal disease and chronic alcoholism.

Charles Tennant (1957-1996)

Charles Edward Pevensey "Charlie" Tennant was the eldest son of the 3rd Baron Glenconner, a descendant of Sir Charles Tennant whose riches stemmed from his St Rollox bleach works in Glasgow.

Possibly a model for coke-addicted Freddy Halstead (Daniel Ings) in The Gentlemen, in 1978 Tennant stole some private photographs of Princess Margaret and sold them to purchase smack.

Although his story could at first appear that of a typical upper-class wastrel, Charlie cleaned up his act and devoted the rest of his short life to helping educate vulnerable people about the dangers of drug addiction. In 1996, Tennant died of hepatitis C, caught from an infected heroin needle.

Thomas Cochrane (1775-1860)

Thomas Cochrane, 10th Earl of Dundonald: this scallywag seafarer, dubbed "the sea wolf" by Napoleon, had a successful career on the high seas, but in 1814 was dismissed from the Royal Navy after being convicted for fraud



NOT TO BE BESTED AT SEA: Fraudster Thomas Cochrane

on the London Stock Exchange.

Cochrane was also stripped of his appointment as Knight of the Order of the Bath in a degradation ceremony at Westminster Abbey, his banner was taken down and literally booted out of the chapel onto the steps outside. Unsurprisingly, the oldish sea dog slung his metaphorical hook and carved out a career as a mercenary/freedom fighter in the southern US and Greek wars of independence.

In 1832, Cochrane was granted a pardon and restored to the Navy List; his knighthood was restored in 1847, but only in 1860 was his banner returned to Westminster Abbey, the day before his funeral.

Anthony Moynihan (1936-1990)

Antony Patrick Andrew Cairne Berkeley Moynihan, 3rd Baron Moynihan, 3rd Baronet of Carr, lived a disreputable life, decamping from Britain to the Philippines after multiple charges of fraud in 1970, where he was allegedly involved in organising prostitution rings, confidence swindles, and drug-trafficking.

Moynihan was also a grass, working as an informant for the US Drug Enforcement Administration, ratting out Welsh drug dealer Howard Marks who, with some justification, called the baron "a first-class bastard."

He was married five times (the last bigamously) and left no legitimate heirs, necessitating the elevation of his Tory politician half-brother Colin to the baronetcy.

And there's probably many (many) more of their ilk still at it.

First do no harm

ROS SITWELL reports from a conference held in light of the closure of the Gender Identity and Development Service for children and young people, which explored what went wrong at the service and the evidence base for care

AFTER 35 years, the NHS Gender Identity and Development Service (GIDS) clinic closes its doors for good this Sunday.

This service catering for children and young people with gender issues, and based at north London's Tavistock and Portman Foundation Trust, announced its closure in 2022 following criticism from an independent review conducted by Dr Hilary Cass.

It is to be replaced by two new regional gender clinics, and previous treatment using so-called "puberty blockers" – drugs which delay the changes of puberty – has been restricted, with the NHS announcing last week: "We have concluded that there is not enough evidence to support the safety or clinical effectiveness of puberty-suppressing hormones to make the treatment routinely available at this time."

So in a time of uncertainty, controversy and rethinking of best practice for children and young people, last weekend's Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender (CAN-SG) conference – the first such event the group has held – could not have been more timely.

The conference, held under the slogan derived from the Hippocratic oath, "First do no harm," brought together clinicians, scientists and others at the Royal College of General Practice in Euston Square to explore what had gone wrong

at GIDS, failures of the NHS and the lack of high-quality data to assist decision-making.

Clinical psychologist Dr Anna Hutchinson, who worked at GIDS between 2013 and 2017 and was one of several staff who raised concern over practices there during that time, explained that part of what had set alarm bells ringing was "a huge increase in the number of referrals of young people to the clinic between 2008/9. And 2022/3 it went up by 10,000 per cent – this is extraordinary," she emphasised, "I cannot find anything in the literature

Pic: CAN-SG



WHISTLEBLOWER: Safeguarding lead Sonia Appleby

which is equivalent.

"We were aware that not only were the numbers going up but the complexity was going up and these young people had incredibly complex lives and huge amounts of co-morbidities," she added.

Hutchinson said that a culture developed at GIDS where these complicating factors were not discussed; that these young people presenting at the clinic with gender dysphoria had multiple different psychological issues that needed resolving.

"Alternative hypotheses – necessary in science – became themselves taboo and people argued that they were in themselves damaging and as a result extraordinary hypotheses became in a sense understood to be facts. And as a result we had extraordinary clinical practice following on from those extraordinary hypotheses."

She added: "So people raised concerns about this. People raised concerns in lots and lots of forums and eventually NHS England got involved and they commissioned Hilary Cass to conduct an evidence review, so in January 2020 they put together a working group to look at the published evidence on the use of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones in children and young people."

Cass's interim report, published in 2022, concluded that "the evidence just wasn't of good enough quality to claim anything in either direction," Hutchinson said.

Although Cass's final report

has not yet been published – it is imminent in the next few weeks – NHS England is now steering towards a more cautious approach towards treatment of children and young people due to this lack of evidence over puberty blockers – and England is not the first country to do so.

Keynote speaker Riittakerttu Kaltiala, chief psychiatrist at the department for adolescent psychiatry in Tampere University Hospital, explained how the public health service in Finland had followed a similar pattern, after it was the first country to perform a systematic scientific review of the evidence.

Giving the background, she said: "Services for adults were established in the 1990s and three teams for minors were opened in 2011. The opening of the teams for minors did not arise from needs recognised in child and adolescent psychiatry but there was great political pressure – it came from adult psychiatry and political pressure, activists and politicians, the notion that we should be providing these services for minors as well."

She said that based on practitioners' early understanding, "we expected to find out that in Finland there would be about 20 minors at any given time

who would present with gender dysphoria [...] We expected to receive very few cases with mainly childhood onset gender dysphoria that would have intensified in puberty; they would be predominantly the male sex [...]"

“

Cass's 2022 interim report concluded that the evidence just wasn't of good enough quality to claim anything in either direction

"However what we actually saw – the young people who contacted were 85 per cent biological girls and this has continued until today [...] and they continued to have a great over-representation of the young people of the female sex."

Kaltiala explained that the treatment they were offering did not seem to be effective: "After a little while still we had a group of adolescents who had proceeded to hormonal treatments and we started to see that they were actually not getting better, the adolescents did not thrive."

"Contrary what we had been suggested from the literature and our international networks we started to see that they were not getting better as to psychiatric symptoms and adolescent functioning [...]"

"We did not see the expected improvements in any domains of life that we were hoping to see."

"Therefore we could not be convinced that it was generally in the best interests of those adolescents to encourage medical gender reassignment and the gender identity teams under all these pressures requested the national body, COHERE Finland, to issue national guidelines for what kind of treatments are indi-





cated for whom in the publicly funded health services and the national guidelines for treatment were issued in 2020 [...]

“COHERE Finland performed a systematic review of the then literature and found the evidence base for medical interventions initiated during developmental years to be on a very weak scientific basis and this is why the guideline[s] became so restrictive.”

Sociologist, Professor Michael Biggs of Oxford University, said that it was important to question “whether cross-gender behaviour requires medicalisation.”

“It’s not clear why this should be regarded as a disease or a pathology,” he said. “Moreover we know that there’s a strong association between cross-gender behaviour and same-sex attraction. More feminine boys have a higher chance of coming out as gay.”

And consultant psychiatrist Az Hakeem also noted a link between gender non-conformity in young people and them growing up to be gay.

“GIDS encouraged social transition, facilitated transition at school and seemed to make no attempts to encourage the notion of gender non-conformity as developmentally

normal,” he said.

“GIDS was created to cater for children who are not seeming to be like caricature stereotypes of ‘boyish boys’ or ‘girly girls.’ When I was at GIDS what I observed was a transing factory. Young children were being

brought in by parents who had noticed their child was showing gender non-conforming behaviour. I saw camp boys and tomboy girls but instead of any possibility that these children would grow up to be gay adults, the clinic seemed invested in reinforcing sex stereotyped clichés and encouraging the notion of the trans child.

He added: “I remember asking the original lead of the clinic ‘Isn’t what you are doing mad? Surely if left alone, these camp young boys will just grow up to be gay adults without a gender dysphoria?’ The response I got was ‘Would it be any less mad if they were to be gay?’”

Biggs highlighted the lack of a robust evidence base for puberty blockers’ effectiveness. He said it was a originally Dutch team of researchers who “came up with this idea of early puberty suppression, they published evidence in 2011, 2014 – then it was taken up all over the world and there was only one other clinic that decided to do some research on this to see if the Dutch results were replicated and that is the Tavistock GIDS here in London.

“They announced with great fanfare their study in 2011 and then it completely disappeared from view and it was only five



They announced with great fanfare their study in 2011 and then it completely disappeared from view

HIGH PROFILE:

The conference (below) was held at the Royal College of General Practice in London, and featured, among others, Finnish psychiatrist Riittakerttu Kaltiala (right)

Pic: CAN-SG



Pic: CAN-SG



years ago that I revealed in the Daily Telegraph that the results were actually negative rather than positive.”

Biggs added that the negative effects of medical intervention must be admitted by the medical community: “The initial promise of puberty blockers was [that they were] just ‘pressing a pause button’ – completely innocuous. They would say things like ‘side effects such as insufficient formation of bone mass are of no great concern.’

“But bone density is one side effect that has been studied quite well,” he said, explaining how his own analysis of the Tavistock’s data showed that bone density of the children who had started early puberty suppression were at risk of osteoporosis, and he pointed to the example of a famous Dutch detransitioner, Valentijn de Hingh, who was diagnosed with gender dysphoria at the age of five – and now, at the age of 33, has osteoporosis.

Ritchie Herron, also a detransitioner, spoke movingly about the problems he faced after beginning cross-sex hormones at age 26 and, four years later, having genital surgery which he now regrets, believing that what he had believed to be problems with his gender were in fact linked to other issues in his life at the time.

“I had very bad stenosis which is the collapsing of the urethral passage and that was the worst pain I’ve ever felt in my life. I couldn’t pass urine at all, the catheter couldn’t even work, you know. I had

two follow-up revisions and despite all the pain and suffering I feel nothing down there, just totally numb. Toilet’s a huge issue – and this is just me, there are people who are far worse, there are people who are bleeding years after surgery, they’ve got discharge years after surgery and, trans or not, no-one knows what to do with them, so I think ‘do no harm’ doesn’t have an age limit on it.”

He continued: “I’ve got a lot of limitations, travel, I’ve got a lot of issues, I’ve got a lot of geriatric appointments in terms of [the] hospital, like, my 92-year-old granddad does not have as many hospital appointments as I do. I’m talking not dozens, hundreds in the last decade alone, well over 400 now. Lots and lots of investigations.”

And former Tavistock children’s safeguarding lead and whistleblower Sonia Appleby discussed how the problems at GIDS had come about in terms of the organisational culture there and threats to patient safety.

Appleby was awarded £20,000 after an employment tribunal ruled in 2021 that the NHS’s trust’s treatment of her had damaged her professional reputation and “prevented her from proper work on safeguarding.”

She drew a parallel with the medical scandal at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, in which an estimated 400 to 1,200 patients died as a result of poor care between 2005 and 2009 at Stafford hospital. A subsequent report into safety in the NHS

was conducted by Professor Don Berwick, which Appleby cited: “When the central focus on patients falters, Berwick [...] observed the accuracy of reporting to regulatory and supervisory bodies becomes contaminated. Bad news becomes unwelcome and over time it is too often silenced.

She added: “When financial challenges within the NHS are pressing, which we all know – and they have been exactant since its inception – with decades of severe underfunding the NHS has basically become desiccated. Starved NHS organisations have often by necessity promoted amongst their senior managers and leaders to follow the money, enabling, they hope, the survivability, of their organisations [...]

“The call for critical accountability relates not to good-faith errors of judgement but wilful behaviours that perpetuate rather than prevent harm.

“Culturally the GIDS service built a field of dreams – whether intentionally or not, the service struggled because in practice there were not sufficient resources to provide a holistic service, including talking therapies.”

We will find out soon enough what Cass says in her final report, which is keenly anticipated by healthcare practitioners not only in England but around the world, but the case of GIDS shows the need to prioritise medical evidence over politics in the treatment of minors, and for properly resourced services to provide the best possible care.

WEATHER OUTLOOK



TODAY

Largely dry to start with the odd shower. Sunny spells through the day with a few showers breaking out though the afternoon, though less heavy than of late.

NEXT FEW DAYS

Turning drier tomorrow with lighter winds. Becoming unsettled again through Monday and Tuesday with further showers or spells of rain, especially in the south. A touch cooler too.

CONTACT US

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

The Morning Star,
Ruskin House,
23 Coombe Road,
London CR0 1BD
enquiries@peoples-press.com
(020) 8510-0815
(Mon-Fri 10am-5pm)

ADVERTISING

Moshfiqur Noor
ads@peoples-press.com

CIRCULATION

Bernadette Keaveney
circulation@peoples-press.com
0778 0220-391

CAMPAIGNS

Calvin Tucker
campaigns@peoples-press.com

Tell us what you'd like to see
more of in your paper! Email
editorial@peoples-press.com

Fighting Fund with Keith Stoddart

YOU'VE RAISED: £15,511 **WE NEED: £2,489**



WE'RE back in the game thanks to the arrival of £1,827 which has given March's Fund a dramatic advance to £15,511.

So, with around 47 hours until the Fund's end we need just under £2,500 to hit target.

It's going to be a challenge, but it is possible, the springing forward by an hour in the early hours of tomorrow makes it even more important that you

transfer what you can right now, don't leave it to the last minute as that minute might already have been lost!

Truth is for us up here it just means an hour's less rain.

Lots of cash has arrived but little is known about where folk are or why they've supported our rapid advance, so thanks go to all who've got us here.

The folk that I do know about include two supporters in London who were among the half dozen who sent £5s, also from London was £7 in contributions handed over at the Star sale outside the court by Julian Assange protesters.

From Waltham Forest came £10, from Edinburgh "The mainstream newspapers and the BBC try to smother the

important issues, so I am always thankful for the Morning Star for uncovering the important news," accompanied £20, and £100 from Loughborough in Leicestershire came with high praise "Besides excellent news coverage, the culture reviews are great."

That's all I can do to get you all up, it's now down to you to send what you can now.

Give by BACS...

Sort code 08-90-33, account 50505115,
name PPPS LTD — FIGHTING FUND

online...

morningstaronline.co.uk/
page/support-us

by phone...

(020) 8510 0815
(Mon-Fri 9am-4pm)

...or by post

Cheques to PPF, 23 Coombe
Road, London CR0 1BD

Commie Chef from the archives

Bread & butter pudding

I won't lie to you. This isn't the healthiest dessert you're ever going to make. It is, however, cheap and a marvellous national tradition, one of the very few things which appeals across classes.

I realised the rich were a different species when I found out that they don't like the smell of fish and chips, but I have never met anyone rich, poor or middling who didn't like bread and butter pudding.

It's quintessentially a winter dish, but this is the time of year when fresh fruit is most limited in range and

quality, and we eat quite a lot of last year's crop of plums, blackberries and so on, which have been waiting in the freezer for that privilege.

But we also get through more dried fruit than usual, and this is one of our favourite ways of doing so.

For the bread, white is traditional, but I use brown or wholemeal. Same for the sugar, I use brown, but white or caster are more usual.

Again, it's usual to remove the crusts, but we love the crunchy bits you get if you don't, so please yourselves.

Ingredients

- 12-20 thin slices bread (enough to cover the pan with a few slices left over)
- 110g/4oz butter, spread evenly on these slices
- 3 eggs

- 110g/4oz currants
- 110g/4oz sultanas or raisins
- 55g/2oz sugar
- 1 pint/570fl.oz milk
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon, nutmeg, or a mixture of both

What to do

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F mark 4.

Cover the bottom of the dish with buttered bread slices. Cut them so that they fit well, and cover the bottom of the pan, then the sides, butter side downwards on the bottom and outwards on the sides.

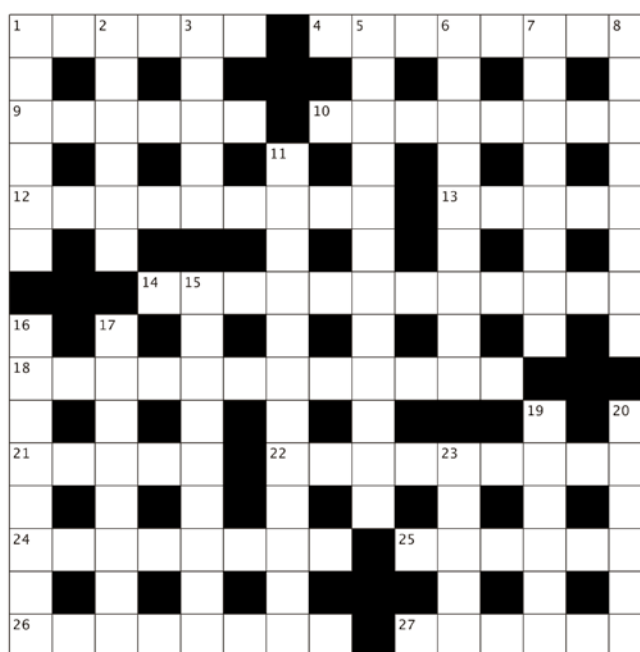
Mix together the dried fruit, sugar and spices.

Lay a third of this mixture on the bottom layer of bread, cover with another layer of bread (butter side up) and repeat twice, so that the final layer of bread is on top.

Mix together the eggs



CROSSWORD 1,536 set by Alamet



ACROSS

- Red tended to be awkward (6,6)
- Kind of group getting better information on material here at centre (8)
- see 1 across
- Tom goes this way and that in very disconnected fashion (8)
- Slate tile going around the moon (9)
- Stopped losing barrels and did some gardening (5)
- Could it be a top source of profit? (5-7)
- Horrify a Scotsman after companion starts scaling mountains (12)
- Meaning doctor provided treatment at first (5)
- Share much hinted at on the radio (9)
- Twists when criminals embraced wrongdoing (8)
- Walk half of 24 back to local extremities (6)
- China casts aside fence (8)
- Did business with some extra deductions (6)

DOWN

- Birds exist outside puzzle (6)
- Decorative gold bottom for the most part (6)
- Live band finishes agreeably (6)
- Wizard protection for starting in place of hospital burial ground (7,5)
- Raid pub containing various curious (9)
- Being grateful to Thailand dynasty leader (8)
- Again sends for non-Conservative judges (8)
- Not happy with decent Danish play (12)
- Former student of ancient language accepts old society offerings (9)
- Worker in charge of a power block (8)
- Freely paint loo? It's not compulsory (8)
- Instant following (6)
- Many write up papers which are dull (6)
- Display dissatisfaction with soldiers' teacher (5)

Solution on Monday...

QUIZMASTER with William Sitwell

TODAY'S QUESTIONS

- Which Spanish painter of the 20th century shares his surname with the cargo ship that recently collided with the Key Bridge in Baltimore?
- Cuculus canorus is the Latin name for which bird associated with spring in Britain?
- Fans of Cologne football club sing a tune which shares its melody with which well-known Scottish ballad?

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

- Which character in Shakespeare's Hamlet shares his name with the father of Odysseus? Laertes
- True or false: dingoes can bark? True, but they more often howl rather than bark
- In the North Sea, Thistle, Piper and Forties are all names of what? Oilfields

DAILY SUDOKU (difficulty)

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

Solution on Monday...

ACCORDING to key findings from the International Energy Agency (IEA)'s latest Annual Methane Tracker, in 2023, global methane emissions from fossil fuels stayed close to a record high despite new global reduction pledges.

Human activities like agriculture, oil and gas production, and the accumulation of food waste in landfills produce methane – a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Methane emissions from the energy sector are responsible for roughly a third of global temperature increases since pre-industrial times, reported Reuters.

“Emissions of methane from fossil fuel operations remain unacceptably high ... There is no reason for emissions to remain as high as they are,” said Tim Gould, IEA chief energy economist, as AFP reported.

The new IEA report estimates that methane emissions from fossil fuel use and production were nearly 120 million tonnes (Mt) in 2023, with another 10 Mt from bioenergy – primarily coming from traditional biomass use. This level of emissions has held relatively steady since reaching a record high in 2019. Since then, the supply of fossil fuels has expanded, indicating that the average intensity of methane production worldwide has decreased slightly.

Analysis of the new IEA data, based on energy sector methane emissions, along with new scientific studies, satellite information, and measurement campaigns, indicates signs of progress, as well as some concerning trends.

An increasing number of fossil fuel companies and governments have committed to taking action on methane emissions, while efforts to report estimates of emissions transparently and consistently are strengthen-

Methane reached a near-record high in 2023, despite pledges

Research reveals that companies are still getting away with driving climate change through methane emissions – but new tracking technology may finally make enforcement of existing regulations a reality, writes **CRISTEN HEMINGWAY JAYNES**



ing. Studies also suggest some regions are experiencing less methane emissions.

On the other hand, methane emissions overall are still much too high to meet global climate targets. Satellites detected a more than 50 per cent increase in large methane emissions events in 2023 compared to the

previous year, including more than five Mt from big fossil fuel leaks worldwide, such as the blowout of a well in Kazakhstan that lasted more than 200 days.

Around 80 of the 120 Mt of emissions estimated by the IEA to have come from fossil fuels last year came from the top 10 methane-emitting countries.

The US leads the way as the largest emitter of the toxic greenhouse gas from oil and gas production, followed by Russia. China is the biggest emitter of methane in the coal sector. Additionally, 170 billion cubic meters of methane were lost globally last year from fossil fuel operations – more

than the entire natural gas production of Qatar.

However, this year is likely to be a “turning point,” according to Gould, with new satellite images helping to improve transparency and monitoring surrounding methane leaks, helping companies to address them in a more timely manner,

reported Reuters.

The IEA estimates that if all the methane pledges and policies made by companies and nations thus far were put into practice and achieved completely and on target, fossil fuel methane emissions would decrease by roughly half by the end of the decade. In most cases, however, pledges have yet to be backed up by detailed policies, plans, and regulations.

“The detailed methane policies and regulations that currently exist would cut emissions from fossil fuel operations by around 20 per cent from 2023 levels by 2030,” the IEA report said. “The upcoming round of updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, which will see countries set climate goals through 2035, presents a major opportunity for governments to set bolder targets on energy-related methane and lay out plans to achieve them.”

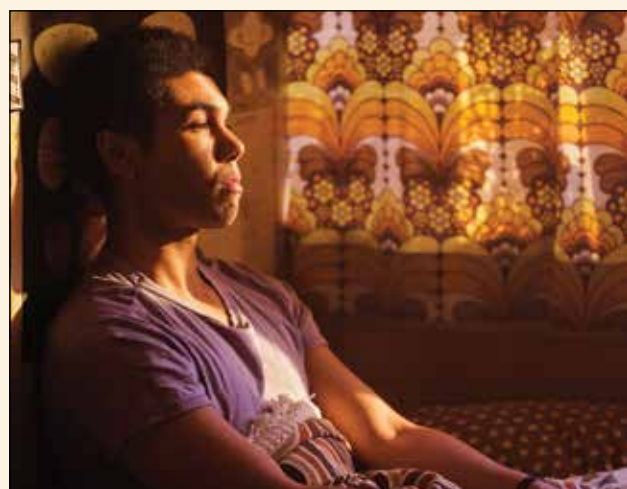
The report emphasised that it will take more than reducing the use of fossil fuels to cut methane emissions enough to keep global heating to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

“In our Net Zero Emissions by 2050 (NZE) Scenario – which sees the global energy sector achieving net zero emissions by mid-century, limiting the temperature rise to 1.5°C – methane emissions from fossil fuel operations fall by around 75 per cent by 2030. By that year, all fossil fuel producers have an emissions intensity similar to the world’s best operators today,” the IEA said. “Targeted measures to reduce methane emissions are necessary even as fossil fuel use begins to decline; cutting fossil fuel demand alone is not enough to achieve the deep and sustained reductions needed.”

■ This article appeared on Peoples-world.org.

TV Weekly Preview

with Ann Douglas



ON THE ROAD TO SOMEWHERE: Levi Brown as Dante Williams

Monday
This Town, 9pm BBC1
 Dante’s family made up of Irish and Jamaicans are reunited at a funeral in Birmingham. A poignant

drama exploring Birmingham in the early 1980s, and how its rebellious music scene united different cultures and races.

Film

Sunday
Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory, 12.25pm ITV1

Although Roald Dahl has become a somewhat problematic figure in recent years, this is a classic – if sadistic – story, with a moral point. Gene Wilder’s wild performance has never been matched. And it’s about lots of chocolate – a great film to enjoy with an Easter egg or three.

Sunday
The Wizard of Oz, 4.20pm Channel 5

Another classic to watch on Easter Sunday has to be Mervyn LeRoy and Victor Fleming’s technicolour groundbreaker. Judy Garland stars as Dorothy who has to find

her way back home to Kansas from Emerald City after she’s whisked off during a tornado.

Tuesday
Apocalypse Now, 10pm BBC2

Francis Ford Coppola’s epic war drama based on John Milius’s novel.

Documentary

Saturday
A Life in Ten Pictures, 8.35pm BBC2

An evening of Ella Fitzgerald starts off with this documentary. It looks over the remarkable lives of a handful of remarkable people in a selection of 10 photos and speaking to those who knew them best. This episode looks at some extraordinary snaps of Fitzgerald. Followed by several documentaries

on the incredibly talented and successful singer and some of her most iconic songs. A fascinating performer whose career was marred by racist prejudice.

Tuesday
Saving Lives at Sea, 8pm BBC2

The pretty exceptional RNLI volunteers rescue a fisherman in Castletownbere who’s had a suspected heart attack, as well as those on a houseboat which is sinking in Somerset.

Tuesday
Solar Panels: Are They Really Worth It? 7pm Channel 5

An investigation into how people can reduce soaring home energy bills, while also considering the cost of using solar panels – are they worth it or is there a better alternative?

What to miss

Thursday: The Apprentice: You’re Fired, 10pm BBC2

What could’ve been an interesting experiment exploring innovative ideas, this show got too caught up in the catty, bullying competition that reality shows often do. And it launched the celebrity careers of Alan Sugar and Katie Hopkins.

Yesterday’s sudoku

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

OPINION

Glazergate: DENNIS BROE interprets the film director's challenge and the zionist chorus in response to it

JONATHAN GLAZER is the Academy Award and Bafta-winning director of *Zone of Interest*, a film that highlights, as he says, "dehumanisation" as practiced outside the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz where the carnage only appears on the off-screen soundtrack.

He has come under attack, not for anything in the film, but for daring to insinuate in his Academy acceptance speech that there is an echo of the film in the "dehumanising" way the genocide in Gaza is being routinely fostered, facilitated and ignored in the West.

Glazer's film is about the callousness of the family of the German commandant of the death camp whose job it is to oversee extermination. The film's perspective, in some ways all the more chilling, is that of an intimate glimpse of the family as it goes about its daily activities, surrounded by off-screen cries, screams and orders to shoot and drown the victims just beyond the family garden. Meanwhile the commandant's wife makes the claim that in their privilege,

with a lush vegetation and swimming pool guaranteed by Jewish slavery, they have fulfilled the fuhrer's dream of "a living space in the east" for Germans.

The most incendiary part of Glazer's speech is neither his renunciation of Jewishness, nor the fact of the film being hijacked by the Israeli occupation of Gaza, which is what his now over 1,000 Hollywood critics have focused on in a letter denouncing the speech. Rather, it is the fact that he had the audacity to state that his film is not just about the past but also about the present.

The parallel in the present that he implies is that of those in the West who watch this new holocaust (for that is what it is being called in the Arab world) being livestreamed, and who don't simply ignore it but actively refute that it is happening.

By suggesting that the film is not "look what we did then" but "look what we do now," Glazer is making an equivalence between US and Western complacency (and in some

cases the active cheering on of the genocide in Gaza), and that of the commandant and his privileged family in the film. Indeed, both benefit from the carnage, as Israel remains the key to US dominance of the Middle Eastern oil that is necessary for fuelling its allies in Europe.

The attack on Glazer gives credence to this interpretation of the film: that the West has situated itself just outside what has been called the concentration camp of Gaza. His attackers simply cannot stand, or let stand, the accusation that they are complicit in genocide. Instead they resort to zionist arguments and talking points to refute his accusation, speaking of "an Israeli nation that seeks to avert to its own extermination," an "indigenous Jewish people defending a homeland" and a "distortion of history."

But the "extermination" is not being carried out by the Palestinians but by the zionists against the actual indigenous people of the region who 75 years ago saw their homeland

usurped by the creation of an apartheid state, perhaps a new homeland, but of a state that members of the US military have often described as "an American aircraft carrier in the Middle East."

Each day, in our privileged position outside the camp, in the garden where life goes on as usual, we hear the sounds and watch as the terror increases, now to the point where we all know that the official number of 30,000 Palestinians dead is an underestimate, and where Al Jazeera reports credibly that 25,000 of them are women and children.

Israel is worried that gunshots are too noisy and might disturb us in our gardens, and so have resorted to the more "humane" method of starvation, though they are not above mowing down Palestinians who clamour for the food when one of the few aid trucks gets through.

If any voices are raised to challenge this carnage, as Glazer's was, the attempt is quickly to silence them so we can all go back to our finely manicured front lawns and backyards where we join Commandant Rolf, his wife, and their children at the pool.

MATTHEW HAWKINS | FOLLOW THE MOVEMENT



Effectiveness lies in how much we identify with protagonists akin to ourselves

WHEN, at the end of *Curious Seed's* show *And the Birds Did Sing* (★★★★), the performer Christine Devaney voiced the question: "Has anything changed?" I could have leapt to my feet and honestly answered yes.

Her timing was apposite. I had begun to be keenly aware of how differently I now felt, in comparison with having breached Glasgow's Tron Theatre for a nestle and a curious watch, just an hour prior.

By what alchemy does Devaney draw us in? Certainly, our author and guide shapes up radically; enjoying a spine of tempered steel and the surprising stealth to reconfigure herself into deep folds and asymmetric knots.

She indicates narrative twists and turns with a range of bird-like head-swivels and a blink of her doleful eyes. She palms her props with adept care, adopting a legible catalogue of clearly motivated functional and reflex movement. In a heightened whirl of extended limbs, she speaks of love and of "bursting with belief."

Elsewhere our barefoot protagonist pads around her stage insistently, at a measured rate of approx. 120 paces per minute. Using clay bricks, she assembles



A SPINE OF TEMPERED STEEL: Christine Devaney

a momentary pulpit/pedestal or teeters atop an extemporised low-rise wall, thereafter accelerating her movement modes into an edgy mash, projecting febrile optimism or nameless crises.

Hard on the heels of initial scene-setting, *And the Birds Did Sing's* script also vents the rhetorical question: "what have we made?"

Metropolitan Glasgow (Christine Devaney's birthplace) with its cling of trees and moss; its hillside vistas; its post-industrial voids, looming Victoriana, fanciful sandstone, infinite pebbledash neighbourhoods, and baf-

flingly deserted service areas, could be indicted in answer, whereas here at *The Tron* we witness an alternative, in the form of this show's installation of hand-hewn hangings and floor pieces by Yvonne Buskie. In a world constructed (horribly misconstrued?) by men, here is the considered subtlety of a multi-media performance that allows us to perceive its responsiveness, couched in aesthetic gesture, or something more "other," more traumatised at root.

The fluctuating audibility in this work's spoken monologue is striking, given the perform-

er's clear timbre and evident lung power at key moments. On reflection, Ms Devaney's writing is not solely in quest of ear-catching stylised prose. She is (bletheringly?) aiming toward something else.

Equivalently, Luke Sutherland's instrumental/electronic taped score never fully alights on "earworm" melodic figures. Instead, his is a soundworld of lyrical plucks and tones, undercut with episodic industrial pounding – an ominous pulse.

As in storytelling procedures hereabouts, effectiveness lies not so much in detailing the iconic artefact, or even in the significance of a topic, but more in the degree to which we are beguiled into seeing, listening hard, and receiving; how much we identify protagonists as akin to ourselves; how much we're all in this together.

Innovatively, this show plays alongside a locally curated second half called *Staying On* which will vary in solo personnel with each successive evening – perhaps elaborated by Devaney in mufti, as happened here. I found it rewarding to stay on. Three artists successfully aired something new.

The contrast between fresh freestanding items and an incrementally evolved first act is bracing and rather magical.

■ On tour in Scotland until April 6. For more information see: curiousseed.com



EXHIBITION REVIEW | THE SPACES BETWEEN: RICHARD WELSBY

★★★★★ | PIER ARTS CENTRE, STROMNESS, ORKNEY

Visions of horror and joy

ANGUS REID welcomes the retrospective of a unique photographic artist for its demonstration of new avenues in British art, and the human insight it delivers

AT the centre of Richard Welsby's work lies a unique account of art in the service of a humanitarian mission in the aftermath of war.

The words are simple, honest and direct. They describe the days and the people encountered during an independent film project in Bosnia in 1997, that accompanied a returning refugee and her need to find both her missing husband, and to grieve, and to begin life again. It was a brief but significant intervention that crossed the paths of several witnesses, and led to a forbidden place: a dank cellar beneath a camp that had formerly been a school.

There are two sets of images from this experience, both black and white.

In one, Welsby documents the objects and encounters in a series of elegant and telling images – prisoners' home-made playing cards, the rooms and toilets of the vacant, abandoned camp, and the dreadful cellar with an inscription in Serbo-Croat on its wall: "Whoever survives this lives 100 years." Many of these images can be found in the eventual film, *The Ring*.

In the other, which form part of the current retrospective of Welsby's work at Pier Arts Centre in Stromness, Orkney, are photographic images that do something else entirely: they demonstrate in figurative terms what the face of a damaged soul looks like. They could be snapshots taken by Dante on his journey through the *Inferno*. They are hard to look at.

These images are mostly printed on black paper painted roughly with white and then brushed with photographic emulsion, in a unique and painterly way to treat the photographic image that Welsby mastered, and made his own.

The method alters the status of the photographic image in both obvious and subtle ways. First, and obviously, it makes the print a singular event that cannot be duplicated. Thereafter, the singular image can escape the banality of mechanical reproduction to assert its own relationship to art, and the history of art, as well as the specific time and place from which it draws its existence.

This meditative way to use a documentary medium is unprecedented in contemporary photography. They testify as a clear-eyed if horrified witness to damage done in the contemporary world. This is the damage done to the rela-



(Far left) Three images from *Bosnia Journeys*, 1997-1998, black and white image projected onto hand painted photographic emulsion on watercolour paper; (above and below) Two images from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Somerset, 1991; (left) One image from *Flotsam and Jetsam* showing Welsby's reflection in a window, digital colour photograph, 2014

tionship between people, to what the show describes as Welsby's attention to "the spaces between."

Like everything in Welsby's work they have the flavour of discovery and chance, as well as that of images that are the result of a profoundly introspective process, and they reward attention. The human face is presented as a mask that has an air of weariness and unchangeability – a mask that has become

inseparable from being itself. These faces could be those of a god, or a child, or a bureaucrat, or a Stoic, but they all seem determined by the attrition of war and mutual alienation.

And they contrast, in the work of this remarkable and ultra-sensitive artist, with his own vision of paradise: the delicate celebration of natural forms that make up another series produced in a similar way: "The Garden of Earthly Delights."

Here the emulsion is painted onto white cartridge paper and the resulting prints have both the delicate delineation of natural form, like a sketch in graphite, and the precise line and depth of field that could only be photographic. For a precedent you must look back to the meticulous fascination with ordinary nature that you find in the north European Renaissance, and images like Durer's *Great Tuft Of Grass*, 1503.

This artist, in other words, is able to capture and transmit his lived experience of both Heaven and Hell, horror and joy, Innocence and Experience, and we never doubt the authenticity of his statements.

The images may look instant and lucky, but the path by which Welsby came to perfect this practise required a life-long and disciplined interrogation of form. His early work and his film-making are characterised by rigorously structuralist processes that are scrupulously impersonal. The meaning is always deferred through multiple surfaces in a kind of "serial music for the eye," as though John Cage had chosen to compose with Bolex, multiple mattes and London in the 1970s, in a gentle deconstruction of the ordinary.

What is revealed by this retrospective is that the self-imposed limitations of Welsby's practise served to achieve something transcendent. His work may be founded in the non-subjective demonstration of a process but it develops into singular images that, even in their

delicacy, are monumental and objective, and a deeply humanistic celebration and critique of our time and its zeitgeist.

This development marks Richard out from his better known brother, the doyen of British experimental film-making, Chris Welsby. Chris is the master of process; Richard is the master of image.

So – who was he?

In 1994 he was invited to contribute a self-portrait to a group show in Orkney and the experiment emphasises the conflict in Welsby's work between process and image. He says: "I decided to use a photograph taken without my knowledge and therefore without any personal self-consciousness involved. This freed me to work personally with my photographic treatment..." So far so orthodox in adherence to structuralist method, and the resulting image is a series of

rubbings out and a kind of erasure of the self.

But when Welsby himself was "erased" by a stroke in 2008 that paralysed his "useful" right side, this ineradicable and persistently creative artist produced a series of altogether more remarkable self-portraits that riff on his familiar themes of transience and texture, reflection and shadow, using a cheap digital camera with his left hand to capture himself in the act of creation.

Once again, these images are very modest but nevertheless extraordinary achievements that both portray his disability and surpass it. They are not just a benchmark in disabled art but a portrait of the contemporary artist as marginal but unapologetic; as curious, playful and insistent: a real embodied presence in a world that we share. They seem joyful.

Welsby died in 2022, and throughout his life supported himself and his family with commercial photography, living a modest and marginal existence. His photographic archive of Orkney – a comprehensive historic, environmental, social and cultural record – has been gifted to Orkney Library and Archives. This retrospective, curated by Clare Froy, offers an overview of his development as an artist in parallel to that existence.

A labour of love, it presents iconic works that reward serious attention and deserve wide recognition both for the way that they demonstrate new avenues in British art, and the human insights they deliver.

■ Runs until June 8. For more information see: pierartscentre.com.



Pics: Courtesy of the Estate of Richard Welsby

“
At the centre of Richard Welsby's work lies a unique account of art in the service of a humanitarian mission in the aftermath of war

■ RACISM

McKenzie's writing is a credit to this here paper

ROGER MCKENZIE's article "Anti-black racism remains overt, pervasive – and exhausting" is powerful and pertinent (March 21).

We are fortunate to have Roger writing regularly for our paper; he is able to write about this particular subject as it is something he encounters personally.

A white academic or activist would not be able to deal with this problem in such a way, no matter how well-informed they are.

His article particularly touches me as my own daughter encounters sly remarks from young white men about "brown girls being dirty." It tears me up, but I cannot understand the emotion she goes through, wondering whether to respond or ignore depending on the situation.

The great majority of readers and members of the Communist Party are white, so our priority is to extend solidarity to black people we



STANDING STRONG: Diane Abbott

see encountering racism.

We also need to call out racists: racism is the disease of a white capitalist society; it is not a black problem.

This is the very least we should do and the Communist Party has to put anti-racism at

the very top of its agenda, just as the Communist Party of the United States did in 1930 and continues to do to this day.

How wonderful it would have been to see hundreds of white male Labour MPs immediately show solidarity and support for

Diane Abbott as soon as Frank Hester's vile remarks were made public.

But alas, the majority of Labour MPs are as spineless as their leader and are in denial about the racism shown to her over the years from within their party.

Keep on keeping on, Roger – you are very important both to the Communist Party, and the Morning Star.

DAVID HORSLEY
London SW4 9RP

■ ABBOTT

Hester should be punished

WHAT Tory donor Frank Hester said about Diane Abbott MP was disgusting, he should face the full force of the law for his actions.

PHIL BRAND
London SW17

■ WORKING-CLASS ART

Education is key to culture

I READ Ben Lunn's article (M Star March 23-24) with interest. As a regular visitor to eastern Europe in past years I observed how opera and ballet were a part of working-class culture, part of the everyday life of "ordinary people."

Theatres and concert halls were grand and ornate. Looking along aisles I saw people wearing jeans and clothes, as if they had arrived after the close of the working day. The ticket price was within reach of all.

Ballet and opera are not my favourite art forms, but I was fascinated to see the enormous difference in how

they were owned by all instead of the few, as in Western society.

This does not have to be. To correct this, we need to fight for change, mainly in the education system but beyond it too. All children entering school at the beginning of their formal education should be exposed to all art forms in sufficient quantity and quality so as to have an understanding and appreciation of all.

In this way we can begin to reclaim art forms that have been stolen from our class and made the preserve of the bourgeois.

NIGEL HOLDEN
Leicestershire

■ LINDSAY HOYLE



Speaker must be held to account

AS A Chorley resident, I saw (pictured) Sir Lindsay Hoyle's elevation to the role of Commons Speaker as a positive for the locality, but in light of his conduct on February 21 regarding the proposed SNP motion relating to a ceasefire in Gaza and on March 13 with to his failure to allow Diane Abbott to speak at PMQs, the time has come to review his record.

Sir Lindsay's departure from established parliamentary protocol on February 21, whether prompted by the Labour leadership or not, which allowed an amended Gaza ceasefire proposal by the Labour Party to be voted on instead of the SNP motion, was a serious error of judgement. Rather than calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza as per the SNP motion, Labour called for a ceasefire with conditions, essentially helping facilitate Israel's continuation of its plausibly genocidal actions in Gaza. Sir Lindsay then worsened his error by suggesting his actions were due to his concern for the safety of MPs – somewhat disingenuous when one considers the danger Palestinians are facing.

he took all focus away from the crisis in Gaza, is arguably further compounded by Sir Lindsay's relations with the Israeli regime, particularly being seen on a recent trip to Israel with the controversial Israeli ambassador to Britain Tzipi Hotovely. Sir Lindsay may indeed be well intentioned in his actions, but this does not mean he is not misguided.

On March 13 it was reported that Diane Abbott stood up 46 times at PMQs to address the Prime Minister on racist comments attributed to Tory donor Frank Hester. Given these comments were directed at her, it again seems a case of very poor judgement to not let her speak. This is particularly the case when considering an issue that undermines our parliamentary process, which was then so inappropriately dismissed by the PM. He should have been held to account.

MJ BRIGGS
Chorley, Lancs

HAVE YOUR SAY

Write (up to 300 words) to
letters@peoples-press.com or
23 Coombe Rd, London CR0 1BD

■ CHARLOTTE CHURCH

Gaza evokes folk song for dead children

CHARLOTTE CHURCH'S blog post "I am a mother on Mothers' Day" was relayed as a Star feature: "I will do everything in my power to help Gaza" (March 12).

Given the singer's Welsh connections and the senseless murder of children with the tacit acceptance and even procurement by Western powers, I am reminded

of the song Grey October by The Critics' Group, of which Peggy Seeger's rendition can be heard on YouTube.

In The Cruel Wars: 100 Soldiers' Songs from Agincourt to Ulster, Karl Dallas, the book's compiler, notes: "The same day that a coa Imine slid down and engulfed a school in Pantgias Junior School in Aberfan, Glamor-

gan, south Wales, a similar school in Thuy Dan, Thi Bin Province, North Vietnam, was hit by US bombs. The Critics' Group, an interesting project formerly run by Ewan MacColl, composed this elegy to the children of both schools collectively."

I heard when I was a regular at The Grey Cock Folk Club in Birmingham in the

mid-1970s that the bombing incident sparked a minimalist back page story in The Times.

The song lyric concludes: "Grey October in Glamorgan, warm October in Vietnam, where children die and we stand by, and shake the killer by the hand."

ALAN WHEATLEY
Hereford

★ Readers & Supporters

GROUP CONTACT DETAILS

ABERDEEN – Email Tommy Campbell at ennskillen102@gmail.com.
AYRSHIRE – Email Jim Whiston at jimwhiston@mac.com.
BELFAST – Call Greg Sachno on (02890) 232-381 ext 50764.
BIRMINGHAM – Email andychaffer@tiscali.co.uk.
CALDER VALLEY – Email Peter and Joan at petejoan@btinternet.com.
CAMBRIDGE – Contact Simon Brignall at cambsmorningstar@gmail.com
CENTRAL SCOTLAND – Email Colin Finlay at buses0768@gmail.com.
COLCHESTER – The Colchester Morning Star Readers and Supporters Group meets every third Tuesday of the month.
COVENTRY & WARWICKSHIRE – Contact Phil on pks52@outlook.com.
CHELTENHAM – Email Simon Meddick at cheltmorningstar@gmail.com. Meets on fourth Monday

of every month.
CROYDON - We meet regularly at Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon CR0 1BD. For further details email croydonmorningstarrsg@gmail.com.
CYMRU/WALES – New Welsh group established. Contact David at davidedwin.nicholson@gmail.com.
DORSET – New group. Contact Ruth Pitman at dorsetrsg@gmail.com.
DUMFRIES – Email Stuart Hyslop at stuart.hyslop1@hotmail.co.uk.
DUNDEE – dylanmarshall1000@gmail.com.
EDINBURGH – New group, contact edinburghmorningstar@gmail.com.
FIFE – Email Tam Kirby at kirby1962@hotmail.com.
GOVAN & SW – Email David Ferguson at david-ferguson23@hotmail.com.
SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY – Email Vince Mills at vpmills@outlook.com.
SCOTLAND – Women's RSG. Contact: Kate Ramsden on email:

katearamsden@gmail.com.
LANARKSHIRE – Email jim-hoey@msn.com or call 07749 366730.
LONDON – Call Paul Clydes on 07969 321-657 or email londonmorningstargroup@gmail.com.
MANCHESTER – Email Martin Hall on greatermanchestersrsg@gmail.com.
MARKET HARBOROUGH – New group formed, email Peter at peterwhalen13@gmail.com.
MERSEYSIDE – Meets regularly. Email Helen at merseycpnews@gmail.com.
MILTON KEYNES – Meets regularly. Email Clive Swan cliveswan@gmail.com.
NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK – Contact Sean Meleady on smelea@hotmail.co.uk or call 0775 814 5671.
NORTH-EAST ENGLAND – Email ronnie49@live.co.uk.
OXFORDSHIRE – New group formed, Geoffrey Ferrer at oxonrsg@gmail.com.
SHROPSHIRE – Regular paper

sales & monthly socials: Call Phil on 07816 641-884 or email shropshiremorningstar@gmail.com.
SOUTHAMPTON – Regular group: Contact Glynn Tudor, Glynt1951@gmail.com to get involved.
SOUTH YORKSHIRE – Email Carrie Hedderwick at hedderwick@gmail.com.
SUNDERLAND – Email Alec McFadden at alec.stuc@gmail.com or call 07831 627531.
SUSSEX – Email Ruben Brett at rubenbrett@gmail.com or call 07831 627531.
SWINDON – Email Pete Webb at jacobadenski@yahoo.com.
WATFORD – Call Phil Brown on (01923) 239-512 or email leveller@myphone.coop.
WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE – Email George Kirkpatrick at george.kirkpatrick@hotmail.com.
WEST YORKSHIRE – Email westyorkmorningstar@gmail.com.

This intervention, in which



■ DEMOCRACY

Putin isn't alone in election shirking

WHILE people might wag their justified finger at Vladimir Putin's election result because there were no serious challengers who were given the right to stand and that Russian media is controlled by him, we should remember that we have had two prime ministers since Boris Johnson resigned in 2022, neither of whom had to face the British electorate at all.

People may raise their cynical eyebrows at the claimed 87.2 per cent of votes that

Putin received but even Tory Party members were not given the opportunity to elect Sunak. A tiny number – 193 Tory MPs – voted to put Sunak in No 10, representing a staggeringly tiny 0.0004 per cent of the over 46.5 million eligible to vote. Our claimed democracy is thus as poorly served as Russia's, rendering any lectures aimed at them as thoroughly hollow.

STEVE ARLOFF
Clayton, West Yorks

■ ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI will put wages out to grass

AI AND robotics will do to the capitalist and working-class wages system the same as the engine did to the horse: it will put them out

to grass – it says so in Capital volume 1. We will be free at last. S COOKE
Sheffield

■ ALSTOM UK

Fight to save locomotive works

WITH Alstom's UK managing director Nick Crossfield claiming that Derby's locomotive building works are under threat of imminent closure, please hear the real background to the crisis from the transnational company's CEO Henri Poupard-Lafarge.

He says that HS2 developments caused them no real problems, the real issue is Alstom's €2 billion debt, and their need to €1bn of "non-core" assets before the end of 2024 in order to reduce that debt.

He describes his profit-before-people "asset disposal" programme in an interview with Bloomberg UK.

Alstom operates in 68 countries with 80,000 workers; crossing Derby off the map won't cause them much distress. It's all about money and profits – not the wellbeing of their workers or

our communities.

Now is the time for a campaign to save the industry based in Derby, including 3,000 jobs and 15,000 more in the supply chain. We did it before in 2011 when the works were owned by Bombardier and were threatened in the same way.

A vibrant campaign saw 10,000 people marching through Derby in defence of jobs and industry; the powers-that-be had to listen. We need to do it again – people must come first.

Maybe the government, if they wanted to protect our communities, would take Alstom into public ownership?

Derby People's Assembly launched such a campaign last November with a petition.

Now its time to step up a gear!

BILL GREENSHIELDS
Derby People's Assembly

■ MINERS' STRIKE

Loss of faith in Labour heralded neoliberalism

I DON'T entirely share the analysis summarised in the headline above John Hendy's graveside oration at the tomb of Karl Marx, published in the Star (March 19): "The defeat of the miners' strike 40 years ago ushered in the era of neoliberalism."

The defeat of the miners' strike was a disaster for working-class power and solidarity, of course.

But that defeat was itself the outcome of a neoliberal campaign – as we would label it today – that started at least as early as the publication of Friedrich Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* in 1943 and other works by the so-called Austrian school of economics.

It took 30 years for that campaign to come to electoral success.

In the 1940s, the workers would have nothing to do with these theorists. Something changed: by the time Thatcher was elected, too many of them welcomed her.

Thatcher's tactics in the miners' strike undoubtedly created victory for her and defeat for workers across many more industries, but what ushered in the era of neoliberal success was loss of trust in the Labour Party, at Westminster and in local authorities.

We need to look at that process, not the Thatcher's tactics once in power, if we want to



IDEOLOGICAL CONTINUITY: Former prime ministers Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair

prevent the same from happening again.

And this time it is not a Tory leader at the helm of the next setback for our class, but the leader of the party that has usurped Labour ideals.

Comrades, we differ among ourselves about how that loss

of faith came about. I have shared my thoughts on that in these columns and I know many of you disagree with me.

But can we at least unite around the idea that the successful counter-attack this time round needs to be led by values much closer to Corbyn's

than to Starmer's?

We invite failure if we attribute past defeats only to the skills of the ruling classes. Let's do better this time: for workers, humankind, and the ecosystem that upholds us all.

RIVER AXE-THE-TAX
Manchester

SIMON RENTON explores the Star's online archives

80 YEARS AGO TODAY...

Church rebuked for 'tainted money' from Paddington rents

ON MARCH 30, 1944, the Daily Worker reported on the Church of England's response to allegations that was in receipt of "tainted money," since it received rents from buildings in the Paddington area that were used for purposes of prostitution.

It had been alleged that: "There is apparently no worse plague spot in the brotheldoms of London than the Paddington area, in which the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are the ground landlords of much property." Predictably, the special committee that looked into the matter found that the rents were not "tainted," since prostitution, they said, did not increase the value of rents.

"'Tainted Money' Charges Denied in Church Report"

Although immoral conditions exist in some houses on the Paddington estate, ground rents received by the Church are not 'tainted money,' says the report of the special com-

mittee appointed by the London Diocesan Conference, urging a general review of the law regarding prostitution.

"If the money received by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were directly or indirectly increased by the use of the house for immoral purposes, the money would be tainted.

"But we are satisfied that it is not increased in any way by any actual or possible user for immoral purposes.

"The truth is that the existence of immoral conditions on the estate depreciate its value greatly. It is to the financial interest of the Commissioners as well as their moral duty to do all they can to stamp out the evil."

"The investigation followed complaints by

Mr Thomas E A Stowell, a member of the conference, that 'there is apparently no worse plague spot in the brotheldoms of London than the Paddington area, in which the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are the ground landlords of much property.

"LAW EVADED"

"The Paddington Trustees are the owners on a term of 2,000 years, grant the leases, and receive the rents, but the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are parties to the leases, and their concurrence is necessary.

"The report concluded: 'There is no reason why the Ecclesiastical Commissioners should dispose of their interest in the estate. To do so would be to shirk their responsibility, 'which might justly be regarded as a betrayal of trust'."



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

The Red List

March 30 - April 6

▶ SATURDAY 30

Ceasefire Now: Stop the Genocide in Gaza!
12pm in central London — exact assembly point to be confirmed later. The latest national demonstration calling for an end to Israel's massacre of Palestinians. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Friends of Al-Aqsa, Stop the War Coalition, Muslim Association of Britain, Palestinian Forum in Britain and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Boaters' Easter Regatta
12pm at Paddington Station canalside
Regatta against the surcharge in Paddington, one of the most corporatised parts of the network.

Air Pollution action in Clapham Junction
11am on the corner of Lavender Hill and Falcon Road, London SW11
Leafleting and green man swarming with hazmat suits, toxic air signs, and banners declaring Air Pollution Kills and We Want To Live.

Palestine Land Day
12pm at Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester
Marking the 1976 Palestinian uprising.

Save Our River
1pm at The Walks, London Road, King's Lynn
Spectacle to protest the ongoing pollution in the rare Gaywood River

chalk stream, and highlight the pristine water which should be flowing through it.

Women in Black Peace Vigil
2pm Martyrs Memorial, St Giles, 13 Magdalen Street, Oxford OX1
Oxford Women in Black hold a silent vigil for peace and justice every Saturday from 2pm to 3pm at the Martyrs Memorial, bottom of St Giles, Oxford.

Fundraiser for Palestine
4.30pm at Martlesham Community Hall, Ipswich
Food, speakers, face painting, arts and crafts plus an auction and henna stall. Tickets £8 from tinyurl.com/2xa34j98

Vigil for Palestine
5.15pm at Salisbury Library, Market Walk, Salisbury
Half-hour silent vigil to press for a ceasefire in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank.

Free Julian Assange
11.30am at Woolwich Market, London SE18
Opposing the Wikileaks founder's extradition to the US and demanding his release. Street stall followed by protest at HMP Belmarsh from 1.30pm and the Eros Statue, Piccadilly Circus, at 4pm.

Screening: Shadow World
7.30pm at Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon
Based on the book by Andrew Feinstein who will hold a Q&A after. Arms deals under the protection of "national security" account for almost 40 per cent of global corruption.

30th-31st: Palestine Weekender
From 2pm, various venues
Music, spoken word and general creativity in solidarity with Palestine. Details at enjoykingsheath.com

▶ SUNDAY 31

Direct Action Training Day
11am in Manchester, to join apply at palestineaction.org/apply
Learning the ropes to mount solidarity actions.

▶ MONDAY 1

Black History Walks: Regents Canal
1pm meet point on request
Explore quiet backwaters, hidden streets and busy highways while filling in the blanks on the banks of a long-neglected watery history. Tickets 313 from tinyurl.com/yc6zpe4t

▶ TUESDAY 2

Elbit 3 Pre Trial Hearing
9.30am at Minshull St Crown Court
Solidarity action backed by Manchester PSC, Manchester Palestine Action, Oldham Peace and Justice, Greater Manchester CND, and Manchester Jewish Action for Palestine

▶ WEDNESDAY 3

Free Assange Protest
3-5pm at the Australian High Commission, Strand, London WC2
Opposing the Wikileaks founder's extradition to the US and demanding his immediate release.

Book talk: Free and Equal
6pm at The Conduit, 6 Langley Street London WC2
LSE economist Daniel Chandler makes the case for progressive reform via John Rawls, Porto Alegre's experiment with participatory democracy, the abolition of fee-paying schools in Finland, burgeoning global interest in a universal basic income and Germany's model of worker co-management. Tickets £19.96 from tinyurl.com/yc8mn323

Book talk: Child Migration and the Geopolitics of Compassion

5pm at Room 313, School of Law, Queen Mary University, London E1
Anita Casavantes Bradford and Francesca Meloni will discuss Anita's new book arguing that US activity has been consistently driven by foreign policy and domestic political objectives over children's best interests.

Screening: Born in Flames
6.30pm at the Feminist Library
Opening event for the library's new free film club featuring Lizzie Borden's cult 1983 feminist classic. Followed by conversation, no expertise needed.

▶ THURSDAY 4

No To NATO, Yes to Peace
7pm in Deptford Town Hall, New Cross.
Talk featuring Andrew Murray, Kate Hudson, Sami Ramadani and Fiona Sim, organised by Lewisham and Greenwich CND.

▶ SATURDAY 6

Free Assange Protest
11.30am at Woolwich Market, London SE18
Opposing the Wikileaks founder's extradition to the US and demanding his immediate release. Street stall followed by protest at HMP Belmarsh from 1.30pm and the Eros Statue, Piccadilly Circus, at 4pm.

Midlands Just Stop Oil Strategy Launch
2pm at The Warehouse, 54-57 Allison Street Birmingham
Meet other like-minded, radically minded individuals from all across the Midlands at this All Mids and

North Wales social, strategy launch and workshop. There'll be free vegan food, an interactive workshop and a chance to hear Just Stop Oil's plans for 2024 and beyond

Direct Action Training Day
2pm in Northampton, to join apply at palestineaction.org/apply
Palestine Action initiative to support sustained solidarity actions.

Queer Craftivism Collective
2pm at The Higgins, Castle Lane, Bedford
Activist crafting projects for people of all skills and none.

6th-7th: Harry Pollitt School 2024
9am at the Irish World Heritage Centre, Irish Town Way, Cheetham Hill, Manchester
Weekend school for communists, trade union militants, students, and workers. Open to all featuring talks, workshops, and panel discussions with communist speakers from Britain and all around the world. Tickets £11.55/22.38/33.22 from tinyurl.com/jcyv47vs



Saturday 6
Harry Pollitt School
Irish World Heritage Centre, Manchester
Youth-focused communist educational event with workshops, panels and speakers.



CONTACT US
Promote your events!
redlist@peoplespress.com



I read the Morning Star because I want to read a paper I can trust.

It tells me about the issues I want to read about, the news I want to read about. It touches on issues the other papers don't.

MAXINE PEAKE
MORNING STAR AMBASSADOR



morningstaronline.co.uk/subscribe

Sign up to the Morning Star e-edition and online pdf — exactly the same as your printed paper



Racing Guide

with Farrington

■ HAYDOCK, MUSSELBURGH, FAIRYHOUSE

'Champagne Mystery looks up for a solid gallop at Haydock'

THE Grand National may still be two weeks away and the start of the flat season kicked off last weekend, but the national hunt campaign still has plenty of legs in between and the highlight this afternoon is the set of Challengers Series Finals at Haydock Park alongside the final of the Middle Distance Veteran's Handicap Chase (3.15). Let's start with the last named over two-and-a-half miles, where 10 well-known names are set to line up headed by the mare Pink Legend, set to race off a mark of 136. The Venetia Williams-trained charge was not surprisingly well-beaten in the Mares Chase

at Cheltenham Festival, but this is a case of out of the frying pan and into the fire here as she takes on the boys under her burden of 12 stone.

I fancy that there will be no shortage of pace on as Riders OnThe Storm (made most in a class two, two-mile handicap at Doncaster) and set to race off the same mark is likely to be at the sharp end along with Numitor and the old boy of the part Top Ville Ben.

So with a solid gallop almost guaranteed, the vote goes to hold-up charge **CHAMPAGNE MYSTERY (nap)** (pictured) who is still finding his feet in this country and remains open to improvement following two runs in a Grade Three handicap at Cheltenham and a class-two event at Kempton. It is hard to fathom why he has been dropped from an initial mark of 130 to 127 here, and I think he has every chance of picking up the pieces down the long home stretch for Jon Burke.

My other main bet at the Merseyside track will be on **PLAYFUL SAINT** (2.05) in the two-mile handicap hurdle final, a race that has quite obviously been his aim all season. The Skelton charge ran a lovely warm-up race for this when just going down by a neck to Milldam at Stratford earlier in the month, and that run should have put him spot on for this target. I suspect tactics will change here and this very lightly campaigned nine-year-old will be held up off a sharp enough pace.

The Tim Molony Handicap



Chase (3.50) has been won by some dour staying chasers down through the years and if his jumping holds up, **INFLEXIBLE** can add his name to that list today. He put in one of his better rounds of jumping last time out at Wincanton, but ironically when he needed it most the selection went through the top of the last obstacle when still in contention, eventually dropping back to third. He has been put up

a pound to a mark of 110 for that run, but is still reasonably treated and can reverse form with his conqueror that day, No Hubbs No Hoobs, on 6lbs better terms here.

Later on, **BEST LIFE** can make the most of his light weight in the staying hurdle at 4.25, while **SI ELEGANT** (5.00) can make his freshness count in the concluding two-and-a-half-mile handicap chase. The first named has been crying

out for a step up in trip on his handicap debut, and being by Leading Light out of a Supreme Leader mare, the very lightly raced six-year-old should relish the task in hand.

The Queen's Cup (3.35) at Musselburgh has attracted a field of 14 this year and as usual the Johnston yard have made a strong play for the main prize with four entries. The best of the quartet could well be Hope You Can Run who ended last season on a high with an easy success at Catterick.

This will require more in a much better strength in depth event and will be only his 12th career start. He is made the main danger to **SWEET FANTASY** who is one of only a handful in the field that will relish the give underfoot. She made good progress on the level last season winning off marks of 77 and 82 on soft ground, and then continued that progress over hurdles when going two from two in mares novice events.

The Scottish Sprint Cup (3.00) has surprisingly attracted a poor turnout of just eight runners, and in a race which normally requires plenty of luck in the run in a double-digit field, may well be more straightforward this time around and the very well-treated **SILKY WILKIE** could be the answer when he defends his title.

Karl Burke's charge was rated as high as 110 last year when second in a Listed race at York and has since gone 12 runs without a win, placed off 107 and 108. Fit from three recent runs on the all-weather and

with Sam Feilden set to take 7lbs off his back, the five-year-old will race off a mark of 90 and gets the nod over Zarzyni, who ran fifth 12 months ago.

The Silver Arrow Handicap (2.25) over seven furlongs has plenty of pace in the race and that could suit **ZIP** who ran a cracker last Sunday at Doncaster, when a close up fourth to Knebworth over a furlong shorter. This is more his set up and the grey can deny the highly progressive Poet Master.

There are some cracking races on show on day one of the Irish National Festival at Fairyhouse, and the highlight is the Listed Rybo Handicap Hurdle at 5.05 and the mare **RISK BELLE** can successfully defend her title off a 2lbs higher mark. She never got a shot at the leaders when eight lengths eighth of 17 in the County Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival, but has a tremendous record at the track and could prove too good at the weights for Noel Meade's Helvic Dream.

Finally, a quick word about Monday and the feature Irish Grand National at 5.00 where all the ante-post money has been for the Willie Mullins-trained novice Nick Rockett. However, I am happy to let him win at the price and two better each-way plays are the stamina laden **DESERTMORE HOUSE**, and at an even bigger price, **WHERE IT ALL BEGAN**. The last named was far from disgraced when fourth in the Kim Muir, and this deeper test of stamina looks sure to suit better.

WEEKEND TIPS

Farrington's Doubles

Saturday

CHAMPAGNE MYSTERY
Haydock 3.15 (nap)

SWEET FANTASY
Musselburgh 3.35

Sunday

LOOK TO THE WEST
Fairyhouse 2.35 (nap)

ZANAHIYR
Fairyhouse 4.55

Houseman's Choice

Saturday

DISCO DAISY
Haydock 1.30

Sunday

KNICKERBOCKERGLORY
Plumpton 4.15



■ MEN'S FOOTBALL

Alonso rules out summer move to Liverpool

by Our Sports Desk

XABI ALONSO (pictured) announced yesterday he will remain as manager of Bayer Leverkusen next season, effectively ending Liverpool's hopes of appointing him as Jurgen Klopp's successor.

The former midfielder has guided the Bundesliga side to a 10-point lead at the top of the table with eight games to play, in a so-far unbeaten season in all competitions as they also target Europa League and DFB-Pokal glory.

It had been hoped at Anfield that the 42-year-old, who played 210 games for the Reds between 2004 and 2009 and won the Champions League during his first campaign, could be persuaded to take over from Klopp when he steps down in the summer.

However, those plans have been scuppered by Alonso's decision to stay and build on what looks to be a first-ever title for the side.

"I'm in the right place here," he said yesterday at his press conference to preview the weekend clash with Hoffen-

heim. "I'll stay with Bayer."

There is a chance that the two teams could meet in what would be Klopp's final game in charge, the Europa League final in Dublin on May 22, having been kept on opposite sides of the draw for the quarter and semi-finals.

Leverkusen face West Ham in the last eight whilst Klopp's side take on Serie A outfit Atalanta.

Alonso's decision forces Liverpool to consider alternative candidates to succeed the German, who has won the Premier League and Champions League

during his near nine seasons in charge.

Sporting Lisbon boss Ruben Amorim and Brighton's Roberto De Zerbi are the two names most strongly linked with the job.

Alonso had been courted by another of his former clubs, Bayern Munich, who are in search of a manager with Thomas Tuchel due to step down at the end of the season.

Real Madrid, with whom he won two LaLiga titles and the Champions League after leaving Anfield, had also reportedly been interested.

in brief

Llandovery fall to heavy 24-6 defeat

MEN'S RUGBY UNION: Reigning Welsh Premiership champions Llandovery failed to score a try for the first time in 21 games as they were defeated 24-6 on Thursday evening by a Newport team that replaces them as the new league leaders. Newport's twelfth win in a row has moved them four points clear but they have played a game more than Llandovery. The result guarantees Newport a home tie in the end of season play-offs.

Ipswich comeback sinks Birmingham

SPEEDWAY: Jason Doyle top-scored with 14 points on his season debut as the Ipswich Witches came from behind to see off Birmingham 49-41 in the only Premiership meeting to survive the wet weather on Thursday night. Last year's Grand Final runners-up have now won both of their opening fixtures and sit top of the table ahead of new-boys Oxford Spirens on points difference.

Littler secures 6-4 win over Aspinall

DARTS: Luke Littler won his first ever Premier League of Darts event after beating Nathan Aspinall 6-4 in Thursday night's final in Belfast. Littler had knocked out World Champion Luke Humphries in the quarter-finals before seeing off Michael van Gerwen in the semis. He is now second in the table, four points behind Humphries. Round 10 of the 17-week tournament takes place in Manchester next week.

The New Saints face Cardiff Met tonight

MEN'S FOOTBALL: Holders The New Saints face Cardiff Met in the second semi-final of the Welsh Cup at Newtown's Latham Park this evening. The New Saints will be looking to bounce back from last weekend's 2-1 Scottish Challenge Cup final defeat to Airdrieonians that ended their record breaking run of 26 consecutive wins. The winners will face Connah's Quay in the final after they edged out Bala 1-0 in the other semi.

Requiem for a heavyweight: The life and times of Bugner

JOHN WIGHT describes the boxer's decades-long career that saw him take on some of the most legendary sporting figures of all time

AMONG the pantheon of fan-favourite British heavyweight fighters of all time, Joe Bugner (pictured) is one name that doesn't immediately jump out, which, given his record and legacy, belongs in the box marked travesty.

Though his was a career that stretched from the 1960s all that way up into the 1990s, Joe Bugner is most synonymous with the 1970s, along with such cultural artefacts as flared jeans and long hair for young male hipsters; T-Rex, Slade and The Glitter Band for those old enough to remember when glam rock was a thing; the three-day week and power cuts; and also such TV classics as Love Thy Neighbour, Bless This House, George and Mildred, and Grange Hill.

Joe Bugner – like John Conteh, John H Stacey, Dave Boy Green, and Charlie Magri – flew the flag for Britain throughout that tumultuous decade, but did so while being much maligned.

Legendary Scottish boxing and sportswriter Hugh McIlvanney once opined in one of his widely read columns, for example, that "Joe Bugner possesses the physique of a Greek statue but with fewer moves." Michael Parkinson in a 1974 episode of his then hugely popular show on the BBC derided Bugner as a "bum." This he did during an interview with Muhammad Ali and despite the fact that at the time Bugner was ranked three in the world.

Just imagine for a moment being a young man in your twenties and having dedicated your life to the hardest sport there is, watching the country's premier talk show host dismissing you on air to an audience of tens of millions of viewers as a "bum." You'd have to be made of special stuff for it not to floor, never mind affect, you.

Joe Bugner was born Jozsef Kreul Bugner in 1950 in a small village in southern Hungary. His family fled Hungary for Britain in the late 1950s after the 1956 Soviet invasion. His initial foray into boxing began in the early '60s in the amateur ranks, in which he fought 16 times and lost three.

Encouraged by his amateur trainer to turn pro, he did so in 1967 at age 17. After three years of fighting in near complete anonymity, he burst onto the world professional scene in



1970, a year in which he fought an astonishing nine times without loss, defeating among others Chuck Wepner of the United States and British heavyweight stalwart Brian London.

At 6ft 4in with striking blonde hair and blue eyes, Bugner certainly was the impressive physical specimen Hugh McIlvanney described. He carried a stiff left jab, had decent feet, and a good engine in the era of 15-round-bouts. He was fairly easy to hit though, and lacking the power of many of his counterparts, the majority of his victories came on points after going the distance.

On March 16 1971, Bugner faced Henry Cooper at Wembley's Empire Pool in London for the British, Commonwealth and European titles. Cooper by then was a national treasure and so Bugner's victory by way of a controversial points decision saw him caricatured as a pantomime villain, an impostor who was never able to win the acclaim and affections of the British boxing public. Indeed, from that point on he was no longer British but a Hungarian refugee masquerading as such.

Just six months later Bugner lost his titles to fellow Brit Jack Bodell, again at the Empire Pool in London. Undeterred, he continued on and managed to claw his way back into contention. On February 14 1973 he entered the ring at the Convention Centre, Las Vegas, to face his biggest test yet against none other than Muhammad Ali.

This was a non-title bout, but nonetheless it introduced Bugner to US fight fans and he did not disappoint, taking Ali the 15-round distance. Five months later on July 2, he fought another ring legend in the shape of Joe Frazier, again in a non-title bout. This fight took place at London's Earls Court, and though losing on points, against an in-prime Frazier it is considered by many to have been Bugner's finest-ever performance.

Bugner fought Ali again in 1975, this time for the latter's WBA and WBC world heavyweight titles. Fighting in the sweltering heat of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Bugner did more holding than fighting against Ali and though lasting

the 15-round distance, he was roundly panned by the writers at ringside not to mention the many fans who'd taken the trouble to tune in at home. One US boxing writer quipped afterwards: "To win a world title, a boxer has to be prepared to die, but Bugner wasn't even prepared to try."

Fortune smiled on Bugner again in 1976, though, when he regained his British, Commonwealth and European titles against Richard Dunn at Wembley in front of a sold-out crowd, which was solidly behind Dunn going in. Regardless, Bugner came out swinging from the opening bell and had Dunn down on the canvas just six seconds in. Dunn got up but quickly found himself down again on the back of a straight right hand while pinned against the ropes. With Harry Carpenter providing commentary at ringside, Bugner went on to close the show with a spectacular first round KO.

Bugner was part of a heavyweight generation of fighters who stayed in the game too long. In 1987 he faced Frank Bruno at the old home of Tot-

tenham Hotspur FC, White Hart Lane, in another classic domestic dust-up. It wasn't to be his night and he got stopped in the 8th round by the much younger and stronger man.

Bugner wisely retired after the Bruno fight, only to unwisely return to the ring eight years later in 1995 against the unknown Vince Cervi in a non-title bout at the Carrara Sports Complex in Queensland, Australia – a country to which the Brit had by then decamped with his wife and kids to start a new life.

Joe Bugner's final ring outing came in 1999. A win by disqualification against another unknown opponent brought to a close a decades-long boxing career that saw him fight some of the most iconic and legendary heavyweights of all time.

Sadly, in 2023 it was revealed that Joe Bugner, by now in his late-seventies, was living in a care home in Australia, struggling with severe dementia to the point of no longer remembering anything of note about his long ring career.

Fortunately, there are many of us who still do.

WHEN Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers of Major League Baseball, the team's president and general manager, Branch Rickey, was concerned as to how his new signing would respond to racist abuse.

Robinson had a history of fighting back.

While in the military he was recommended to be court-martialled for refusing to move to the back of a bus by a driver who enforced racial segregation even on an unsegregated army bus, and for subsequent confrontations with military police related to that incident.

This was part of the reason Robinson was signed by Rickey, who recognised the player needed to be strong in the face of segregation and abuse.

But Rickey also wanted Robinson to rein in his instinct to fight back.

An article for ESPN by Larry Schwartz recounts a condensed version of the conversation between Rickey and Robinson.

Rickey: "I know you're a good ballplayer. What I don't know is whether you have the guts."

Robinson: "Mr Rickey, are you looking for a negro who is afraid to fight back?"

Rickey: "I'm looking for a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back."

This was 1945. Robinson was the first black player to play in Major League Baseball, breaking the sport's colour line that had previously seen black players excluded from the major leagues and limited to a separate competition called the Negro Leagues.

As a pioneer and a trailblazer, he was expected by Rickey to clear the way, not to add further complications.

It was an unreasonable ask, but at a time when racism and segregation were still rife, and in many places the accepted norm, Rickey thought it necessary.

In 2024 it should be ludicrous to suggest that a black player keep quiet in the face of racist abuse. That they should keep their head down and not fight back. That they should rein in their confidence and expressive ability to avoid being a target for racism.

But it appears this is what many think the 23-year-old Real Madrid and Brazil footballer Vinicius Junior (pictured) should be doing.

Vinicius is currently one of the best players in the world. A star player in the post-Lionel Messi, post-Cristiano Ronaldo era.

He's a skilful showman in the way other great Brazilian wingers before him have been. A two-time league champion (likely soon to be three-time) and a Champions League winner. He also finished sixth in voting for the 2023 Ballon d'Or.

He has also become a regular target for racism in Spain, during games and in their aftermath as figures within the game try to excuse it.

After being racially abused



Importance of fighting back against racial abuse in sport

JAMES NALTON explains how Vinicius Junior has become a regular target for racism in Spain, as figures within the game try to excuse it

at a game in Valencia in May 2023, Vinicius responded: "It was not the first time, nor the second, nor the third. Racism is normal in La Liga."

"The league considers it normal, the federation considers it normal and the opponents encourage it."

"The league that once belonged to Ronaldinho, Ronaldo, Cristiano and Messi today belongs to the racists."

Racism today is normalised in different ways than it was when Robinson joined the Dodgers in the 1940s, but it is still normalised nevertheless.

Spanish sports journalist Kike Marin tweeted this week, "It is not racism, it is Vinicius."

Marin's tweet included three videos of Vinicius fighting back, with the suggestion being the player brings racism upon himself through his actions and words.

It's a common excuse (the tweet has almost 2,000 likes) and the excuse is itself an extension of the racism Vinicius receives at his workplace.

They are effectively saying

racism is acceptable because the player fights back.

It is almost an admission that the world is just as racist now as it was 80 years ago – that any prominent black professional athlete should keep a low profile and not fight back against racism lest they aggravate the situation.

La Liga president Javier Tebas said last week in an interview with Politico that racist incidents "don't happen all the time or a lot, and they are mainly focused on Vinicius."

"Maybe that's because Vinicius is leading a case against racism so that's why we have these isolated events that attack him," Tebas added.

"So what La Liga is doing is to protect Vinicius as much as we possibly can."

But it doesn't appear that La Liga is doing much to help him at all.

This month Real Madrid filed a complaint to the Spanish authorities over alleged racist chanting towards Vinicius from Atletico Madrid and Barcelona fans at these clubs' respective

Champions League last 16 games versus Inter Milan and Napoli. Games not even involving Real Madrid or Vinicius.

"I hope you've already thought about their Champions League punishment, Uefa," Vinicius responded last week. "It's a sad reality this happens even at matches I'm not at."

Vinicius does have some support from within the game, and from within his club.

"The Spanish league has a problem, and it's not Vinicius," Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti said last year. "Vinicius is the victim. The problem is very grave."

Brazil's President Lula said: "It is not fair that a poor boy who is winning in his life, becoming one of the best in the world, certainly the best at Real Madrid, is insulted in every stadium he goes to."

"We can't allow fascism and racism to dominate inside a football stadium."

Vinicius broke down in tears at a press conference last week ahead of Brazil's friendly against Spain.

The game was set up as an event to highlight racism in football and work to combat it, but the Spanish federation's involvement and promotion of this aspect of the fixture was tepid at best.

It's something Vinicius is sadly used to.

"It's exhausting because you feel quite alone in this battle," he said in the pre-match press conference, translated via Agencia Brasil.

"Despite my numerous complaints, no-one is held accountable, no club faces punishments."

"Each day when I return home, I feel more disheartened, but I've been chosen to champion such an important cause."

"I study more [about racism] daily, learning so that in the very near future, my five-year-old brother won't have to endure what I'm going through."

"I'm 23 and I'm still learning. Why can't the Spanish reporters, who are older than me, study and see what's really going on?"

"I'm getting sadder and sad-

der, I feel less and less like playing, but I'm going to keep fighting."

"I'm going to stay here fighting, playing for the best club in the world, winning titles and scoring goals, and they'll have to see my face even more."

Vinicius wants measures put in place so that racists are the ones who are scared and afraid to air their views at football stadiums, but instead, it is currently Vinicius who goes into every game apprehensive.

It is 79 years since the colour line was broken in baseball and Jackie Robinson was encouraged to stifle his instincts to fight back against racism so that other black players could follow in his path.

Vinicius is not breaking a colour line and he is not the first professional black footballer, but it feels like he is facing many of the same challenges Robinson faced.

It shouldn't be the case that in 2024 a high-profile black athlete is still expected to grimace and bear it.



MEN'S FOOTBALL

ARTETA: GUARDIOLA IS BEST COACH IN WORLD

Arsenal and City gear up for potentially seismic game in Premier League title race

by Our Sports Desk

ARSENAL boss Mikel Arteta (pictured, right) has hailed Pep Guardiola (left) as "the best coach in the world" as the close friends prepare for a potentially seismic game in the Premier League title battle this weekend.

Manchester City play host to their title rivals at Eastlands on Sunday, having won the last seven home meetings between the two sides.

Arsenal finally managed to record a rare victory over City when they won the reverse fixture at Ashburton Grove earlier this season and go into the weekend top of the table – above Liverpool on goal difference with Guardiola's reigning champions a point further back.

The two Spaniards are good friends, Arteta having worked under Guardiola at City between 2016 and 2019 and played his part in two Premier League title wins.

Now though, they will once again be in opposite dugouts as Arteta prepares to lock horns with a manager he believes is without rival.

Asked if his relationship with Guardiola was different now, Arteta replied: "It had to change.

"My admiration and what I



feel for him certainly hasn't. In my opinion he's the best coach in the world by a mile and he's one of the nicest people that I've met in football.

"Certainly he's one of the ones that I've had the most fun and laughter working with. That's going to stay there forever.

"At the moment the rules are what they are and you're going to have to adapt to it."

Having sparred for the title last season, before City ultimately pipped Arsenal for the trophy en route to winning the treble, Arteta is keen to go one better this term.

"Probably I would prefer to do it against someone who I don't have those feelings for but that's not a choice," he added.

"It's what it is. We both want to win.

"We'll prepare the game very well. You cannot feel different

about the person, but professionally you have to act differently."

Arteta confirmed forwards Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli could feature having missed the international break with minor injuries, while Gabriel Magalhaes is also expected to be fit enough to start.

The challenge for Arsenal is not only end a nine-year wait for a league win at City but to also emulate their rivals in establishing themselves as a major power in European football.

"They have raised the bar in this league and football in general to levels that haven't been seen before," he added on City's success.

"That's the beauty of this sport because it makes you better and challenges you more. You have to keep up with that pace and that's what we're trying to do.

"It's a massive game for both teams. It will give us a huge boost again if we go there and win it. Still there is a long, long, long way after to make the ground to win it."



LGBT+

US midfielder apologises for 'insensitive' TikTok posts

KORBIN ALBERT, a midfielder for the US women's national team, apologised on Thursday night for having liked and shared social media posts that she described as "offensive, insensitive and hurtful."

The 20-year-old Albert, who plays for PSG, had reportedly reposted anti-LGBT+ content on her TikTok account.

"I want to sincerely apologise for my actions on social media," Albert wrote on her Instagram story. "Liking and sharing posts that are offensive, insensitive and hurtful was immature and disrespectful which was never my intent."

According to multiple media outlets, Albert shared a video from a Christian sermon that described being gay and "feeling transgender" as wrong.

Albert's apology came shortly after PSG's 3-0 win over Hacken in the Women's Champions League quarter finals – she scored in the game – and followed criticism from recently retired US star Megan Rapinoe.

"I'm really disappointed in myself," Albert continued, "and am deeply sorry for the hurt that I have caused to my teammates, other players, fans, friends and anyone who was offended.

"I truly believe that everyone should feel safe and respected everywhere and on all playing fields," she wrote. "I know my actions have not lived up to that and for that I sincerely apologise. It's an honour and a privilege to get to play this sport on the world stage and I promise to do better."

Former US captain Rapinoe, didn't identify Albert by name but in her Instagram story urged people not "to hide behind 'my beliefs'" because "kids are literally killing themselves because of this hate."

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Kirk sacked after allegation of relationship with player



by Our Sports Desk

LEICESTER have sacked women's first-team boss Willie Kirk (pictured) after the club determined the Scot had "breached the team's code of conduct to a degree that makes his position untenable."

The 45-year-old last took charge of the Foxes when they lost 4-0 in the Women's Super League to Chelsea on March 3, before the club subsequently announced that Kirk was "assisting the club with an internal process" and would not be on the touchline for their March 9 FA Cup quarter-final.

Kirk's then-assistant Jennifer Foster, supported by first team coach Stephen Kirby, oversaw

that 2-0 victory and have remained at the helm since.

They will remain in charge until Kirk's permanent successor is named.

A Leicester statement read: "Leicester City Football Club can confirm that Willie Kirk has been dismissed from his position as LCFC Women Manager.

"Following an extensive internal disciplinary process and respecting the Club's obligations to individual privacy, Willie was determined to have breached the team's code of conduct to a degree that makes his position untenable.

"Established and implemented ahead of the start of the current season, the code forms part of the Club's ongoing commitment to profes-

sionalising the women's game since the takeover of LCFC Women in 2020, promoting a performance-led culture among players, coaches and technical staff.

"First Team responsibilities for LCFC Women will continue to be led by Jennifer Foster, supported by Stephen Kirby, while the Club begins the process of appointing a new permanent manager."

Published by Peoples Press Printing Society Ltd (12750R), Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon, London CR0 1BD. Telephone: (020) 8510-0815. Email: enquiries@peoples-press.com. Printed by trade union labour at Reach.

