



Workers of all lands, unite!
Communist Party
March 2024

Unity!

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COMMUNIST WOMEN **extra**

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Susan Galloway on child sexual abuse

Helen Field on misogyny and sexism

Judith Cazola on trade union education

Carole Stavris on women in leadership

Tories hike income tax

Nick Wright
BUDGET

CHANCELLOR JEREMY HUNT blew the Budget with a two per cent cut in National Insurance contributions to be paid for by further cuts in public service spending.

Labour was wrongfooted with a smash-and-grab raid on its centrepiece plan to abolish the tax relief which lets wealthy 'non doms' dodge taxes on their overseas incomes. The chancellor lifted the ceiling in child benefit payments to allow some higher earners to access the allowance.

The aggregate effect of the changes is to leave people on incomes below £20,000 worse off with the marginal effect of the National Insurance cut only slightly ameliorating the overall effect of the government's policy of stealth tax increases.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies gave the budget the thumbs down and said it would entail cuts in unprotected public services of around 3.3 per cent. TUC general secretary Paul Nowak called Hunt's budget a "political con trick — giving with one hand while taking with another."

"No-one wants tax cuts at the expense of their local services."

He called for a long term plan to raise wages and restore public services.

Communist Party general secretary Rob Griffiths said: "Chancellor Hunt has scattered some sweets before the electorate in the hope of saving Tory skins at the forthcoming General Election. His further cut in employee National Insurance contributions will benefit higher earners the most: someone on £50,000 a year will save £1,310 – five times more than a worker on £20,000 and fifteen times more than

somebody on £15,000.

"Unfreezing tax thresholds would have targeted NI savings wholly in favour of the low paid."

With growth in the economy driven mainly by an immigration-driven surge in the size of the economically active population the chancellor rambled inconsequentially on about "more investment, more jobs, higher growth and lower taxes" and a largely illusory "high skill, high wage economy not dependent on migration."

Rob Griffiths said Hunt's so-called "NHS and Public Sector Productivity Plan" means that any extra public spending will be funded by squeezing yet more unpaid labour out of public servants, while continue to deny negotiating rights to their trade unions."

PAGE 2 Straight Left on taxation

NICK WRIGHT IS EDITOR OF UNITY!

Defend freedom of cultural expression

Ron Brown
CENSORSHIP

THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S Culture Commission has condemned a new Arts Council of England policy as 'dangerous'.

On the 14 February, the Arts Council of England announced a new policy in which it stated "activity that might be considered to be overtly political or activist", including activity by "individuals associated with the organisation acting in a personal capacity" can cause "reputational risk" and breach funding agreements".

Speaking for the Commission Ben Lunn said: "This move is a dangerous one, which sees the Arts Council falling closer in line with the Tory Party's various attempts to silence opposition, and despite claiming this policy acts in defence of freedom of speech, will be a

sinister ploy which can be used to enforce compliance from artists - predominantly freelance artists who are already at the mercy of an unstable and uncertain landscape."

When organisations are being forced to fight over smaller and smaller pots of funds, while our own government continues to burn money in its own militaristic endeavours, this move by the Arts Council of England will be a bribe for compliance which stops the people of this country being able to use their human right to speak out freely against this.

We must support all artists, to fight this move and make sure the freedom of speech is retained.

The Artists Union of England said that the impact of the new Arts Council guidelines would censor artists' freedom of expression. The union welcomed the Arts Council's revised statement, that they "expect all organisations they invest

in to support freedom of expression."

The union pledged to continue to call the Arts Council to account to ensure that they fulfil the new pledge to: "not remove or refuse funding to an organisation or an individual purely because they make work that is political."

Actors' Equity said: "Artists and arts organisations should be free to critique institutions of power or bring attention to issues without fear of losing their funding. Rather, the Relationship Framework should clearly state that attempts to censor artists and their work presents a substantial risk to organisations and their funding, alongside enhanced guidance on protecting best practice in areas of equality & diversity, and dignity at work."

RON BROWN, ALONG WITH MIKE QUILLIS IS JOINT CONVENOR OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S CULTURE COMMISSION

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

CEASEFIRE NOW

STOP THE GENOCIDE

IN GAZA

Saturday 9 March, 12 noon

Hyde Park Corner to the US Embassy

▲ **GAZA AND PALESTINE** continue to face genocide and war crimes at the hands of the apartheid Israeli state and the imperialist powers that support and enable it. Every day more and more innocent men, women and children are slaughtered.

It is imperative that we keep fighting as part of the broad movement for Palestine – even in the face of Tory threats and repression.

Communists from across Britain will attend the national demonstration organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop The War in London scheduled for Sunday 9 March 2024.

We want to ensure that this is the biggest turnout of Communists so far. We want a big and vibrant turnout of Party and YCL members for the march – so please bring your flags and banners and raise them high!

Assemble early from 10am Queen Elizabeth Gate in Hyde Park and march with the Red Block.

Comrades are asked to march with the Party and the YCL as a Red Block.



ON RACISM & ANTISEMITISM

We fight with all our strength against all justification of the oppression of other nationalities—which means, not only against anti-Semitism in all its hateful forms, but against all propaganda of race inequality and race hatred. We fight for brotherhood and solidarity between the British and the Indian peasants and workers, between the British and the Negro workers, between the Arab and the Jewish masses. **Andrew Rothstein** *Founder member of the Communist Party*

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The violence of misogyny: a global apparatus of oppression

Online webinar panel and discussion

8 March Friday from 6-8pm

Register at <https://cpb.tiny.us/yt6r4v35>

The Communist Party's Women's Commission invites you to hear from an international panel of leading women activists on the causes & consequences of violent misogyny & the fight against it.

Charlie Weinberg has worked for many years with women and girls involved in the criminal justice system and is a member of the London Communist Party Women's Committee

Mary Davis is author of *Women and Class* A Marxist perspective on global women's oppression and misogyny and is a member of the Communist Party Executive Committee

Mariam Dhawale is general secretary of the All-India Democratic Women's Association and will present a perspective from India: violent misogyny and how AIDWA continues to resist.

Yaneidys Pérez Cruz of the Cuban Women's Federation presents a perspective from Socialist Cuba.

Azar Sepher represents the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women DOIW

Pragna Patel is from the Southall Black Sisters TBC

More speakers are to be confirmed



Straight Left by communi populo

CHANCELLOR Jeremy Hunt's National Insurance cut will do very little to lift the burden of taxation on working people that years of Tory and Lib Dem government have imposed.

The Tory tax take – relative to the size of the economy – has soared from 33.2 per cent to 36.2 per cent.

In the modern era taxes have never been higher and they fall mostly on earnings rather than wealth.

The inherent instability of our decaying capitalist economy is no new phenomena. Gordon Brown's response to the 2008 financial shock was to recapitalise failing banks with our money and he continued in the desperate tradition of right wing Labour chancellors.

It was Denis Healey who went cap-in-hand to the International Fund for a bailout in the 1970's Labour government. The price for this surrender to the money markets was a renewed assault on the welfare state.

Since the Labour right, Keir Starmer and the parliamentary Labour Party – backed up by our venal media – sabotaged the prospect of a Labour government in the 2017 general election the Tories have carried through a stealthy tax coup.

The cost, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies adds up to a £3,500 levy on the average household.

The Tories know who their friends are. While workers have suffered systematic robbery the Tory/Lib Dem Coalition government slashed corporation tax from 28 per cent to 20 per cent. So while workers lose more than a third of their wages unearned income from shares, profits and rents is taxed at a significantly lower rate.

The semi-secret strategy hidden in of the Tories' tax raid lies in their freezing of the tax threshold. With wages struggling to catch up on runaway price rises the effect of freezing the tax threshold – the point at which low paid workers start paying income tax and the

point at which better off workers fall into higher rate tax bands – is to make workers pay more income tax.

This device has caught four million new income tax payers and pulled another three million into the higher 45 per cent tax bracket.

All the evidence is that most tax payers are savvy to Tory tricks. Decades now of austerity economics has convinced working people that Tory tax policies give the rich a break and break the bank for people who live from wages or benefits.

Playing around with the contributory principle in paying for pensions, benefits and social security is a sly attack on the post-war welfare state.

The last National Insurance cut failed to give the government a popularity bounce and this time looks no more successful in bamboozling people more worried about rising prices, housing costs and government cuts to public services.

Why we need UNIONS

Join us on **Monday 15th April, 7pm** at Friends Meeting House, Hill Street Coventry CV1 4AN to find out about Coventry's greatest union leader, **Tom Mann**.

Meet and discuss with author activists
Phil Katz 'Yours for the revolution - the evolution of Tom Mann's political thought' and **Nigel Flanagan** 'Our trade unions, what comes next after the summer of 2022.'

ALL WELCOME - REGISTER
<http://tinyurl.com/ManninCoventry>

Supported by Coventry Trade Union Council (CTUC), Coventry and Warwickshire Morning Star Readers and Supporters Group (MSRSG) and Manifesto Press.

Understanding and combating antisemitism a Communist Party course

The course will run over 5 sessions.

All Party members are encouraged to apply.

Each session will be held on Sundays, 7pm.

The aims of the course are to:

- ★ understand the ideological form and content of antisemitism
- ★ examine the history of antisemitism
- ★ recognise and combat the current manifestations of antisemitism in Britain and elsewhere
- ★ analyse the contested relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and
- ★ ensure that our party continues to play its historic role in combating antisemitism.

Sundays, 7, 14, 21, 28 April and 5 May

To register each session <https://cpb.tiny.url.us.3dkbnaya>

VIDEO GAME SURVEY

COMMUNIST PARTY OF BRITAIN
 CULTURE COMMISSION

15 MINUTES

Video gaming is a fast expanding sector of the economy with workers and consumers confronting exploitative practices in employment and the market. Trade union organising is developing at a pace.

The Communist Party's Culture Commission is conducting a survey to connect game developers, technology workers, and casual gamers within the Party, as well as anyone interested in the cultural struggle within the video gaming industry.

HARRY POLLITT SCHOOL

2024

The second ever Young Communist League Harry Pollitt School takes place on the weekend of April 6 and 7 2024!

Named after the legendary Communist leader, the school is for communists, trade union militants, students, and workers. Harry Pollitt School is open to anyone interested in Communist politics, you don't have to be a YCL or Communist Party member to join.

Book your place now: <https://tinyurl.com/2y7w93xs>

Women and the struggle for peace

Saturday 9 March 2024, 6.45 pm - 9.00 pm

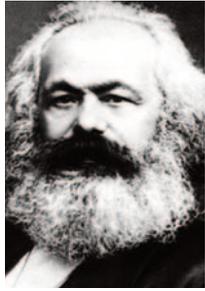
Ealing Green Church, Ealing Green, London W5 5QT (Nearest Underground - Ealing Broadway, a short walk away. Bus 65,

Speeches by: Women activists from Britain, Bangladesh, Cyprus, Guyana, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Spain, and Sudan

Live music: Iraqi, European, Bangladeshi, Iranian Cultural items

Entry free. All welcome

Organised by the Co-ordinating Committee of Communist parties in Britain



POLITICS AND ECONOMY

“Since the capitalist and workman have only to divide this limited value, that is, the value measured by the total labour of the working man, the more the one gets the less will the other get, and vice versa... “If the wages change, profits will change in an opposite direction. If wages fall, profits will rise; and if wages rise, profits will fall.”

Karl Marx *Value, Price and Profit*



The momentum behind George Galloway’s campaign reflects people’s anger at Britain’s complicity in Israel’s genocidal war on Gaza and its endorsement by Labour. Communists correctly concluded that only a vote for Galloway would send a message of solidarity with Palestine and see off the far right.

March marks the 25th anniversary of NATO’s illegal bombing of Yugoslavia which set the scene for unbridled US-led imperialist military aggression across several continents in the intervening period. As our sister Party the NCP of Yugoslavia (NKPJ) stated at last international communist conference: “the aggression against FR Yugoslavia, was done for the sake of the expansionist and predatory interests of significant Western capital.” The political committee recommended that the Executive Committee send a solidarity message to the NKPJ on this inauspicious anniversary.

KEVAN NELSON POLITICAL REPORT

AT THE ROCHDALE count George Galloway told Keir Starmer “This for Gaza! You have paid and will pay a high price for the role that you have played in enabling, encouraging, and covering up for the catastrophe presently ongoing in occupied Palestine in the Gaza Strip.”

The margin of his victory took all commentators and initially even the bookmakers by surprise. He overtook a 10,000 Labour majority winning 12335 votes with a majority of 5697. His 39.7 per cent of the vote overwhelmed the 12 per cent won by the Tories and Labour’s 7.7 per cent – down from 43.9 per cent in 2019. Although the selected Labour candidate Azhar Ali was disowned by the Labour leadership less than three weeks before polling day, he was a senior and well-known councillor and retained the support of some Labour councillors and members on the ground. He was the bookies favourite as polling closed. The internal chaos around the dumped candidate was rooted in cynical attempts to appease widespread local anger at the plight of the Palestinians.

Much media coverage and political commentary referred to Galloway “courting the Muslim vote” or targeting “one section of the community” thus feeding the establishment narrative of extremism. Yet Rochdale is three quarters white, one in five Asian with one in twelve of mixed ethnicity.

Internationalism and Class Politics

Anoosh Chakelia reporting for the *New Statesman* stated that the “mainstream campaigns underestimated how well Galloway understood the voters of Rochdale”, that Galloway “ran a predominantly pro-Palestinian campaign and put a lot of work into meetings with local Muslim groups, including private

women’s meetings”. She reported that “Gaza was a motivating issue for a significant and engaged part of the electorate... including White British voters” and that Galloway had engaged on local matters such as NHS services.

Communists who campaigned for Galloway report that he combined internationalist support for Gaza with serious class politics – shining a light on the betrayal of the Rochdale working class by both the Tory Government and the Labour dominated rotten local council where 46 out of 60 councillors are Labour).

Galloway’s comment that Starmer has paid a high price was spot on. Reports of Saturday’s “No Ceasefire, No Vote” meeting in London indicates the emergence of a country-wide movement ready to challenge Labour’s indifference to Palestinian suffering and its renewed embrace of neo liberalism.

Some of Galloway’s positions are problematic. He opposes a two-state solution thus contradicting our position and holds reactionary views on issues such as a women’s right to choose which will inhibit political unity across the left in what is becoming a crowded field of post-Corbyn campaigns and organisations. Certainly, that has been the case in the anti-war movement in recent months.

Political Earthquake?

However, on the wider political implications of Rochdale, the ruling class response, as voiced by Sunak, confirms that it amounts to a political earthquake in British politics. We are likely to witness a level of character assassination, ostracism and smears of an elected MP not seen since the well documented state harassment and surveillance of communist MP Phil Piratin after 1945.

With characteristic hyperbole Galloway referred to a shifting of the political “tectonic plates”. Time will tell but Galloway’s previous and equally momentous victories in Bethnal

Green and Bow (2005) and Bradford West (2012) did not lead to a sustainable challenge to the *status quo*. Often too much can be read into these isolated political developments, but it may be the case that we are entering a new era in British politics in general and left politics in particular. Mick Lynch said last month that “the only Government we’re going to get as an alternative will be led by Keir Starmer, so people have to deal with that.” This approach understates the crisis of working class representation and can result in the subordination of trade union interests to Labour electoralism – which incidentally was well documented in the *Morning Star’s* Full Marx article on 4 March 2024.

Civil Liberties under threat

Thursday’s election took place in the context of moves by the British state to delegitimise and stop political protest. This has been ratcheted up for months, started by Suella Braverman as Home Secretary, continued by James Cleverley and his infamous “you’ve made your point, stop the protests”, assorted Tory MP’s making statements about “mob rule” and “no go areas” and escalated by Labour’s cowardly weaponisation of MP safety to provide cover for political manoeuvring on the Gaza genocide. Disgraced former Labour MP, John Woodcock, elevated to the Lords, by Boris Johnson, who functions as the Tories’ Independent Advisor on Political Violence and Disruption, is advocating enhanced police power to ban pro-Palestinian protests and ban MP’s from engagement with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Sunak’s attempted *coup de grace* was an impromptu, *al fresco* Downing St press conference to call George Galloway’s election “beyond alarming”. He smeared the newly elected MP by linking him to fascist Nick Griffin and the Establishment’s manufactured narrative of alleged extremism and intimidation. The British Government currently defines extremism as: “vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.”

Sunak has directed Michael Gove MP to review the definition of extremism and the *Times* reports that the new definition could include promoting an ideology that undermines the “rights or freedoms of others” and the capitalist liberal democratic political system itself. It is unclear where Labour will stand on this attack on civil liberties but Starmer’s support for Sunak’s call for “national unity” does not augur well.

Galloway says his party’s intention is to intervene in the May local elections. They will be held as English council’s face an unprecedented financial crisis. A s Local Government Information Unit survey found that one in ten councils face bankruptcy in the next 12 months. Eight councils have declared themselves bankrupt since 2018, most notably Birmingham City which will voting on £149m budget cuts and making asset sales of £500m.

With councils facing an estimated shortfall of £4bn widespread cuts are in the pipeline with devastating consequences for jobs and services. There is no prospect whatsoever that the Conservative Chancellor Hunt will provide any respite to council workers and local communities in the Spring Budget. Local government will be the site of intense political and industrial struggle in the coming period.

Solidarity with Palestine

Over 150 days into the conflict, the Palestinian people in Gaza are facing an extreme humanitarian crisis – a mounting death toll of 30,000 including 12,000 children, up to 100,000 wounded, two million displaced and 500,000 at risk of famine according to UN. As Ramadan approaches the treat of a final large scale military offensive by Israel looms large. The world bears witness to horrific scenes in Gaza on an almost daily basis. The 29 February 2024 “flour massacre” in Gaza City in which over 100 Palestinian civilians seeking food relief from an aid convoy were massacred was followed days later by a similar attack in Deir el-Balah in which nine died.

The national demonstrations in London under the slogan “Ceasefire Now, Stop the Genocide in Gaza!” require maximum support as do the solidarity actions with Palestine taking place in towns and cities across Britain. Campaigning work on an end to arms sales to Israel, BDS and reinstatement of British funding of UNWRA must be stepped up by the labour movement.

Ukraine War

The war in Ukraine has now entered its 3rd year and is in its most dangerous phase.

The resignation from the Biden Administration of warmonger Victoria Nuland who was instrumental in the 2014 Ukrainian coup has big implications for the conflict.

The NATO alliance is wracked by economic and political convulsions. French President Macron’s statement that he refused to rule out sending ground troops to Ukraine was quickly repudiated by other NATO members.

This was followed by German Chancellor Scholz confirming that British soldiers are deployed supporting Ukrainian forces launching long-range Storm Shadow missiles including at economic and military targets in Russia itself. The long-range cruise missiles were first deployed in May 2023 which points to extended British military direct engagement in the conflict.

The response from Putin in a state of the nation address on Thursday 29 February 2024 was to threaten the use of nuclear weapons if Western powers send soldiers to within striking distance of Russia. Arguably that criterion has been met.

The threat posed to world peace by the war in Ukraine is clear and present. The call to stop the war and start the peace – with an immediate ceasefire – remains the Communist Party’s firm position.

KEVAN NELSON IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY’S INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY



COMMUNIST WOMEN

Published by the Communist Party Womens Commission

Abuse, crime and coverup

Secrets and Silence

Uncovering the Legacy of the Cleveland Child Sexual Abuse Case

Beatrix Campbell
Virago 2023

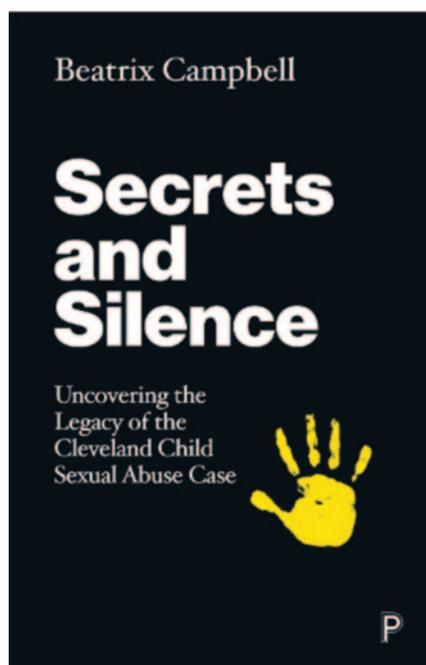
Susan Galloway

CRIME

IN 1987, 121 children, from toddlers to teenagers, were taken from their parents by social workers in Cleveland, after local paediatricians identified physical evidence of rape and buggery. Bea Campbell's latest book, *Secrets and Silence*, reveals the legacy of the resulting Cleveland Inquiry. Following up her 1989 book, *Official Secrets*, it is essential background for understanding where we are today.

The scandal of Cleveland was not the "official" one – the breaching of parental rights, the arrogance of all-powerful professionals - but the fact that the Thatcher Government, on Treasury advice, decided that "it was more important to save money than to save children." An independent medical assessment validated the paediatricians' findings in at least 80% of cases, the Inquiry found. And yet 98 of the 121 children were returned to their abusers, and even more shocking, never followed up.

In the mid-1980s, familial sexual abuse of children was still a relatively new "discovery." The setting up of Rape



Crisis and Women's Aid services in the 1970s by feminist activists played a key role in this. Social workers and health professionals began developing ways of detecting, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, in what was an emerging priority area for action.

The events at Cleveland reversed all this. Child sexual abuse within the family was put back in the box and the lid closed. As Campbell shows, the climate created then has had a "chilling effect" on child protection practice ever since.

By drawing together the threads of the history of child sexual abuse and exploitation cases and inquiries since Cleveland, Campbell shows that what happened there was not an "event" but part of a historical pattern of behaviour in which those who speak out about child sexual abuse or take action for sexually abused children are first ignored and then, if they persist, not just silenced, but vilified, ostracised, professionally discredited and attacked by male dominated institutions. In 1987 it was Marietta Higgs and Sue Richardson. Thirty years later, Maggie Oliver and Sara Rowbotham in Greater Manchester (with a long list of others). The unbearable result of this is the prolonged suffering of thousands of children over the decades, failed by systems and institutions meant to protect them.

The official lie about Cleveland helps keep a secret that society does not wish

to confront about this highly gendered crime: that while most men do not rape or assault children, male sexual interest in children is not rare. In the age of digital pornography and child abuse images this fact is much harder to conceal. Sexual offences reported to the police are the tip of the iceberg and 40% of all recorded offences including rape are committed against children.

The "resource consequences" of better detection and prevention were too great for a Tory government in 1987, intent on public spending cuts. No change in 2023. The implications of the recommendations from the 8-year long Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse proved too much for the current Tory government. Its chairwoman, Professor Alexis Jay, condemned the government's response as weak and disingenuous, saying it would allow "the scourge of CSA to increase unabated."

Sexual violence and abuse against women and children are preventable social problems rooted in sex inequality and the power imbalance between adults and children. That these atrocities continue, in Bea Campbell's words, to be simultaneously condemned and 'condoned', tells us how fundamental that inequality is to preserve the status quo in our society.

SUSAN GALLOWAY IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S WOMEN'S ORGANISER IN SCOTLAND.

Women and Trade Unionism/ Train the trainers course

Tuesday 21 May and on Saturday 25 May.

Judith Cazola

TRADE UNION TRAINING

WHEN WOMEN sewing machinists working at Ford Dagenham left (and later at Ford's Halewood plant) walked out in June 1968 in a fight for equal pay, they contributed to the struggle against sex discrimination at work.

The women made car seat covers and, as stock ran out because of the strike, all car production came to a stop.

The women set an example which ultimately resulted in the passing of the Equal Pay Act 1970, entering into force in 1975

Trade union membership was down by 200,000 in 2022. Women working in the private sector account for a stunning two-thirds of this reduction (129,000), according to Department of Business and Trade figures.

The Women's Commission of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League have organised a Women and Trade Unionism/Train the trainers course which will discuss the essential role of women in the trade union movement. It will take place on Tuesday 21 May and on Saturday 25 May.

The course will be geared at

comrades who have prior knowledge and experience in trade unions. We will discuss the history of women in trade unions, including the Matchgirls Strike and Dagenham with workshops and training on public speaking, organising, and how to get active in your union.

Communist Party Districts and Nations will be asked to appoint two delegates each to attend the course with a view to share the training with women comrades in branches within their District/Nation. The Young Communist League is invited to attend under the same conditions. The session on 21 May will take place online. The session on Saturday 25 May, will take place in Birmingham.

Any comrade interested should contact comrades Carol Stavris, women's organiser for the Communist Party, and Micaela Tracey-Ramos, industrial organiser for the Young Communist League.
carol.stavris@btinternet.com
m.tracey-ramos@outlook.com

"From when we are young, women are told by society to conform and to keep our mouths shut; the trade union movement at its best has always said the opposite."

JUDITH CAZOLA RODENAS IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S CENTRAL ORGANISER



Prostitution

Prostitution is one of the worst forms of human exploitation and although some men and boys are exploited in this way it remains the case that the vast majority of those trapped in the sex trade are women and girls.

Prostitution is not a form of work, it is a social ill and research has consistently shown that prostitution increases in societies that have high levels of inequality and where economies are unstable

Helen O'Connor
EXPLOITATION

EXISTING TUC policy affirms that prostitution is inherently exploitative. This echoes the views of most workers who hate and fear the idea of themselves or their families being forced into prostitution through economic necessity.

However people with a commercial interest in the sexual exploitation of women and girls are running campaigns inside and outside the labour and trade union movement to get prostitution badged as 'work'.

This dangerous view that 'sex work is work' is gaining traction in the labour and trade union movement. And it gives a message to young women and girls that if they want to have access to income they can live on, they don't fight for it at work, they can seek it via prostituting themselves.

Trade unionists 'organising sex workers' come up against multiple obstacles. In the strip clubs, the legalised part of the sex industry, many of the women consider themselves to be 'entrepreneurs', not workers and they don't want to join trade unions. The 'campaigning' where it has occurred, has been limited to keeping sexual entertainment venues open which is exactly what the profiteers and exploiters want.

Opponents of prostitution are often accused of not talking to prostitutes or lacking empathy with women trapped in commercial sexual exploitation. But trade unionists sacrificed much because of their empathy and solidarity with working class women and girls who were forced to sell their bodies so that their families could eat.

From the start communists correctly saw prostitution as a social ill to be eradicated not to be encouraged or excused:

'...for the rest it is self evident that the abolition of the present system of

production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from the system ie of prostitution both public and private'

Karl Marx Communist Manifesto 1848

When I was a nurse in the NHS I worked with prostitutes. I listened to their harrowing stories and observed the brutal conditions of their lives. You would never see any of the women I met on social media platforms or in the media telling you that prostitution is a career choice for women. Those women were forced into prostitution through poverty and lack of choice.

I learnt that the existence of prostitution has far reaching consequences not just for prostitutes themselves, for the children born out of this activity and for society. For example, one prostitute I met was on her seventh pregnancy by her early 30's – all of her other children had been removed and taken into care and were scattered across London and the south east. Prostitution is rife with similar accounts

The voices of the prostitutes I met have informed my view that prostitution is not a form of work. Trade unionists should be arguing for well paid, safe and secure jobs for women too. Any trade unionist worth their salt should reject any idea that extreme violence, rape and murder, which are integral parts of prostitution, can be seriously described as work. Research shows that prostitutes face a particularly high level of violence- In a Sheffield study 76% of prostitutes reported that they suffer violence at least once a week. Prostitution is the oppression of women and girls in one of its most violent and damaging forms.

There are of course jobs in which workers are exposed to danger and it is the job of trade unions to work for and campaign for adequate health and safety. Women and girls in the sex trade are beaten up, raped,

tortured and murdered with alarming regularity and these crimes are notoriously hard to investigate. The idea that adequate health and safety measures could apply in prostitution – which itself is based on the exploitation and subjugation of women is delusional.

Along with high levels of substance abuse prostitutes also suffer severe and enduring mental health impacts.

Existing research on prostitution requires far more rigorous scrutiny. For example the hypothesis that prostitutes are less likely to be victimised in countries where the sex industry is legal should be questioned. This idea is based upon tiny samples of qualitative research conducted in countries where prostitution is 'illegal' and 'not legal'. It is therefore incorrect to reach a conclusion that prostitution is 'safer' and better for the women in countries where it is legalised.

A lie has taken hold that feminists who are opposed to prostitution are uptight puritanical moralists when nothing could be further from the truth. Our opposition to prostitution is not a moral question, it's a class issue and a human rights issue. Trade union and socialist feminists stand in opposition to all neo liberal objectification and consumerization of women's bodies. We absolutely reject the false framing that this objectification and consumerization of women is some kind of civil liberty issue.

Union organisers should be leaving no stone unturned to assist women to get organised in workplaces in order to fight for decent pay and health and safety protections at work. We should roundly reject the 'sex work is work' line and demand safe, fully funded exit routes out of the sex industry as advocated by Nordic Model now.

It is in the interest of the exploiting class, every bit as much as it was in the times of Karl Marx to give an ideological justification for the exploitation of women and for prostitution itself. In our age the worst type of reaction has been expressed in terms of liberal identity politics which seeks to reframe prostitution, into which working class women enter, as a free and liberating choice. For socialists this is not some niche issue and part of women's debate, nor is it an issue for feminists alone, it is an issue that affects every single worker, male or female as the presence of such exploitation degrades, weakens and divides the entire working class.

The struggle to fundamentally change society for the common good should never include an acceptance that the commercial sexual exploitation of women's bodies is suitable alternative work for the daughters of the working class. The battle for the liberation of women from all forms of exploitation including prostitution is intrinsically linked to the struggle to liberate working class people as a whole.

High quality, non-judgemental services to support those in prostitution and help them build a new life outside it, including: access to safe affordable housing; training and further education; child care; legal, debt and benefit advice; emotional and psychological support.

A public information campaign; training for police and CPS; tackling the inequality and poverty that drive people into prostitution; effective laws against pimping and sex trafficking, with penalties that reflect the enormous damage they cause.

HELEN O'CONNOR IS VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

What is the Nordic Model?

The Nordic Model (sometimes known as the Sex Buyer Law, or the Swedish, Abolitionist, or Equality Model) is an approach to prostitution that has been adopted in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Northern Ireland, Canada, France, Ireland and Israel. It has several elements:

1. Decriminalisation of those who are prostituted

Prostitution is . Women should not be criminalised for the exploitation and abuse they endure.

2. Buying sex becomes a criminal offence

Buying human beings for sex is harmful, exploitative and can never be safe. We need to reduce the demand that drives sex trafficking.

3. Support and exit services

Carol Stavris reports

THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S new executive committee met in January 2024. I am really pleased that, of the 35 members of the EC, 13 are women and that six of us have been elected onto the political committee of eleven.

Ruth Styles continues as the Communist Party chair and Helen O'Connor is now one of the two vice-chairs. Women comrades involved in the labour movement feature strongly in the team looking at the Party's Industrial Strategy which will include preparing for the Women's TUC taking place 6-8 March, and the convenors of several of the Party Commissions are women.

The Survey of women comrades into attitudes and behaviours within the Party towards women and women's issues is currently being assessed by three women executive committee members and a report will be prepared in time for its March meeting.

I urge you to join the National Assembly of Women if you are not already a member. Campaigning, amongst other things, for women's equality and women's rights, for an end to wars, racism and sexism, NAW is a key organisation for progressive women. Its publication, Sisters, is an important and essential read.

Membership of NAW isn't essential for attending its events but I highly recommend it.

If you have any concerns, please contact me through Party Centre – meetings of the Women's Commission are usually held monthly and each District/Nation has a representative.

CAROL STAVRIS IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S WOMEN'S ORGANISER



THE 2024 MARX ORATION

Sunday 17 March 2024 - 1:30pm
Highgate Cemetery London N6 6PJ

Morning Star
For peace & socialism
Incorporating the Daily Worker

Morning Star Scotland Spring Conference
Funding War, Slashing Services – We Demand More!

24 March 2024

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/3ijnck9e>

Misogyny and sexism are institutionalised

Metropolitan Police spending on human resources and on, contracted out services and consultants:

The estimated cost of in-house and contracted HR services nearly doubled from £35.4m in 2015-16 to £68.5m in 2021-22. Spending on contracted services more than doubled from £24m in 2017-18 to £54.5 million in 2021-22. Spending on consultants, excluding HR, finance, and commercial services, more than tripled from £10.4 million in 2015-16 to £32.1 million in 2021-22.

For the years 2017-18 to 2020-21 it was spending circa £50 million each year on consultants.

Over the last decade, significant changes to the Met's budgets and workforce and organisational structure, appear to have been imposed upon them, "driven primarily by a significant period of austerity, by financial uncertainty and political targets."



Helen Field
SEXISM

IT'S OFFICIAL Sexism is widely covered in the media including sexual assault and harassment on public transport; in the Red Arrows; in parliament; Downing Street; MacDonalds and the armed forces. And trade unions are not immune.

Karon Monaghan's 2020 report investigated sexual harassment complaints within the GMB union; there are Fire Brigades Union reports from 2022 and 2023, and a survey by the National Education Union into sexism in schools entitled *It's Just Everywhere*. They make shocking reading. The information is invaluable for anyone committed to challenging sexism and misogyny.

A recent 2023 report, published in the wake of the rape and murder of Sarah Everard is by a serving Metropolitan Police officer. An independent review by Baroness Casey into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Met concluded that:

- *The Met is failing women and children*
- **After a decade of austerity, frontline policing has been deprioritised and degraded**

• *There is institutional racism, sexism and homophobia within the force itself, and how communities are policed.*

What we know about sexual offences from the Casey Report.

(While this data refers to London, the patterns and outcomes of recorded sexual offences are similar across the UK.)

There were over 9,000 reported rapes in 2022-23, up 244% from 2012-13, and nearly 16,000 other sexual offences reported, rising 152% over the same period.

The volume of domestic abuse crimes rose to over 95,000 in 2021-22, having doubled since 2012-13 with additional evidence suggesting that domestic abuse incidents were not treated with the same seriousness in the Met as in other forces.

Government policies of austerity have profoundly affected all our public services and the Met is no exception. In real-terms, the Casey Report has calculated that the Met now has £0.7 billion – that's £700 m – less than at the start of the previous decade, meaning its budget is 18% smaller. It has lost 21% of its civilian staff and two thirds of its Special Constables while the number of Police Community Support Officers has halved. Between 2010 and 2022 it closed 126 police stations.

The effect of reducing civilian staff.

The number of full time equivalent civilian staff has fallen by almost a quarter, from 13,033 a decade ago to 9,934 in 2022-23. These reductions have created higher

administrative burdens for warranted officers and reduced levels of specialist support. For example, there are fewer analysts to assist in dealing with rape and sexual offences.

Training changes and reorganisation since 2017 mean less experienced detectives being employed on rape and sexual offence cases. Combined with a national shortage of detectives, this has led to seriously depleted teams with huge caseloads. Officers are exhausted and overwhelmed.

Examples:

Of respondents 83% reported "Detectives regularly work extended hours and on weekends and rest days to try to keep up with their workloads, but were still not able to."

"I've got 40 rapes; one of my colleagues is on 57. I went to therapy...I had 65 victims [caseload]. (The optimum caseload was set at 13 cases per officer).

Officers gave examples of trying to cope by starting work an hour early, finishing an hour later and working on rest days, unpaid. This reminds me of Education where teachers and support staff too work extra unpaid hours. Many NHS staff at the end of a shift report staying on, unpaid, and similarly across other public services.

Examples given too of overtime being used to plug the gaps where there are not enough officers. "constant ping of requests to come in on rest days."

There was clear pressure to close cases as early as possible. Detectives were constantly making difficult decisions about which cases to prioritise, focusing their limited resources where the chances of a court outcome were higher - "The incentive is get it NFA'd [no further action] because we have to do so much work and then the CPS [Crown Prosecution Service] will NFA anyway."

"Due to the volume of cases, officers told us that they didn't have the time to use protective measures such as Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders, Sexual Risk Orders and Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, or 'Clare's Law'. Clare's Law enables the police to reveal information about a domestic abuser's history on request or to protect victims."

Following on from this, on 12 January 2024 BBC news reported that Wiltshire Police have confirmed that two women suffered physical harm after unsuccessful attempts to check with police that their partners had a history of violent behaviour. The force said 25 such failings have occurred over the past nine years.

There is more evidence that good service was hampered was by a lack of training, resources and facilities. Austerity measures are listed again as leading directly to a lack of

analytical service, and delays from essential services, like forensics and toxicology.

Examples were given of freezers crammed full of evidence samples, which were overflowing, frosted over and taped shut and of year-long waits for toxicology results and forensic examination of phones. This has undoubtedly led to huge waits for court cases – often as long as three years.

What an utterly damning indictment on government policy and austerity.

Finally, some information detailing the treatment of women.

15 victims of a broad range of crimes including rape, stalking and domestic abuse took part in a listening event for the Casey Report. In all cases, the victims felt grossly let down by the service they received.

There were 14 case studies given in the report of female police officers being abused by male colleagues either in relationships with other officers or in their working life. Dreadful situations were given of women not being believed or being ignored, and their abusers not being dealt with.

The everyday experience for many women ranged from patronising comments and downplaying of women's achievements, to overt inappropriate sexual comments, unwanted attention, harassment and violence.

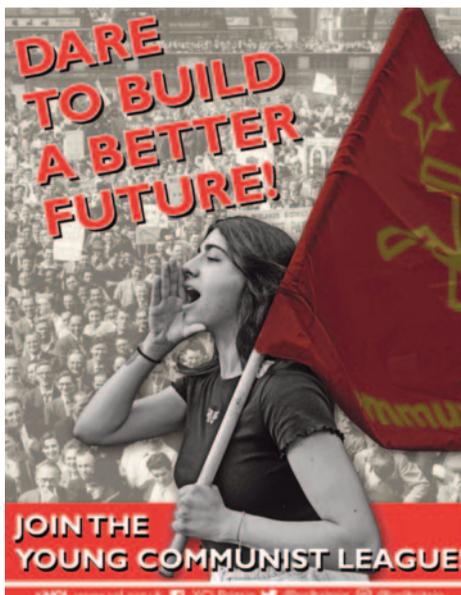
"We have seen that structurally, women remain underrepresented in the Met, particularly ethnic minority women, with deficits in supervisory ranks and the majority at lower ranks. The 'boys club' culture, particularly in the specialist commands, creates a vicious cycle. The more male-dominated the command, the less women seem to be able to break through. However, it was the day-to-day experience of sexism, bias, bullying and misogyny against women employees that the Review Team found concerning."

"The failure to see violence against women and girls in the same category as 'serious violence' means it has not been treated as seriously. We have not witnessed a 'violence against women taskforce' or 'violence against women suppression unit' in London in the way we have for other forms of serious violence."

HELEN FIELD IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S SOUTHERN DISTRICT WOMEN'S ORGANISER.

References

- ★ Casey Report: One recommendation is that the Met needs a dedicated women's protection service <http://tinyurl.com/yc84jpuz>
- ★ NEU: <http://tinyurl.com/mu463esw>
- ★ UK Army – Woman's Hour <http://tinyurl.com/yfm7ck3z>



Women of the Young Communist League

Georgina Andrews
YOUTH

Young working-class women in Britain cannot escape violence and discrimination. They are subjected to misogyny at work, in their homes, communities and in every matter of life. **WOMEN ARE** more than twice as likely as men to miss out on statutory sick pay with black and other ethnic minority women disproportionately affected. This particularly affects young women, who are more likely to be in zero-hour contracts with nearly a third of workers on zero-hour

contracts earning less than £123 a week – the minimum threshold for statutory sick pay. It's appalling that in one of the richest countries in the world, young women are having to go to work unwell to pay their necessities rather than face increasing financial burdens for resting.

Young working-class women today face an onslaught of issues related to class politics that the Young Communist League must be equipped to challenge head-on. In a capitalist society that doesn't value women, our Marxist-feminist outlook is a call to action for all working women in

struggle and later this year the YCL will be holding its second Women's Conference to discuss theoretical and practical topics to progress the Women's Liberation movement in Britain. The first conference was a massive success, resulting in comrades across Britain motivated and eager to deliver fantastic initiatives and campaigns. Join the Young Communist League at our Women's Conference to build the struggle for women's emancipation!

GEORGINA ANDREWS IS GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE