

TAX CUTS FOR THE RICH LITTLE FOR WORKERS

by *New Worker*
correspondent

BUDGET speeches aren't what they used to be. Almost exactly 170 years ago in 1853, William Gladstone spent four hours and 45 minutes on his. On Wednesday his successor, Jeremy Hunt, got through his first effort in less than a quarter of that time, without a top hat in sight.

But it is the content that matters. That offered by the fifth Tory Chancellor since Boris Johnson became Prime Minister served the interests of the ruling classes rather than the working class just as much as any hard-nosed penny-pinching Victorian budget.

The Budget was delivered against a background of strikes, some by people not normally given to taking strike action such as junior doctors and his own Civil Servants.

There was a hefty boost for unnecessary and dangerous military spending to the tune of £11 billion over the next five years, which will take the proportion of GDP spent in this manner up to 2.25 per cent.

In many cases it pays to examine the small print below even positive headlines. Hunt said he would raise corporation tax from 19 to 25 per cent next month, but at the same time he made it easier for them to dodge it with new rules on tax relief on investments,



• Workers strike against austerity

including measures to deduct the entire cost of some plant and machinery from pre-tax profits. This was a very good budget for corporate accountants.

Apart from the bean counting, Hunt declared that nuclear power was a green fuel, which will make it so much easier to make virtuous noises about being concerned about the environment.

Some say we should be grateful for not making any more cuts to public services, but the main point was that there was nothing to fund urgently needed pay rises for NHS and other public service workers. The continuation of the Energy Support scheme until June is also small beer and Hunt declined to levy a surplus-profits tax on profiteering energy companies, which would be much more effective.

Hunt said he wants to get "hundreds of thousands" people into jobs, which was his rational for childcare. Another way of doing this is to allow people to save more for pensions without incurring taxation, but that only

benefits those with spare money to save. For those further down the food chain he warns that tighter Universal Credit sanctions will be imposed on those not getting on their bike fast enough.

Trade unions were not impressed. The TUC politely deplored the budget, apart from welcoming "some long overdue steps forward on childcare", as "a missed opportunity".

Tellingly, the TUC did not criticise the increase in military spending that could have been diverted to more useful ends and only queried the number of UK jobs this could bring.

Unite's General Secretary Sharon Graham deplored the fact that Hunt had "made the wrong choices and delivered a historic betrayal where there wasn't a penny for the NHS pay in the budget", before adding: "So while Jeremy Hunt rearranges the deck chairs for corporate Britain, workers in the real economy face a crisis. This Budget does next to nothing to address the historic cost-of-living crisis

hitting workers throughout our broken economy. Since 2010, real wages have fallen by 15 per cent and that's going to get

worse." She sounded genuinely surprised that Tories break their promises to anyone but the very rich.

Paddy Lillis, General Secretary of shop-workers union USDAW, lamented that the Chancellor failed to impose an online tax on online retailers, as if there was ever any chance of that happening.

The RMT's Mike Lynch was predictably more forthright, saying: "This is a budget for the wealthy thought up by a government that are servants of the super-rich. The policies of pay restraint mean workers are getting poorer and are having to work for longer just to make ends meet. That is why regardless of what Jeremy Hunt has said today workers will continue to fight for a better deal in the workplace and in their communities."

Let's hope he is right and the strikers who were out on Budget Day continue their fight and are joined by many others.

FUND

The March appeal kicks off with £550 in the bag thanks to a Midlands reader who gave us £50, a Kirkcaldy supporter who made a £100 donation and a supporter in Cornwall who sent in a score. We now need to raise £2,950 to hit our target for the month.

We hope to get nearer our old deadlines next week while we struggle to keep our suppliers happy. Running a communist weekly is never easy at the best of times. We need a constant and generous flow of money to guarantee our survival. And if you think the *New Worker* is worth it – and you must do if you're reading this column – please support the fighting fund.

All donations, big or small, help keep our presses rolling. Please send your donation to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the 'New Worker'.

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THE NEW WORKER

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The language they understand

Budget Day is never good news for workers – least of all when it's under a Tory government. But whilst the Chancellor droned on in Parliament workers were walking out in a new wave of strikes against the austerity regime. Tube workers and train drivers, junior doctors, teachers and civil servants were all taking industrial action over pay.

Down the ages the employers' mantra has always been "Management's right to manage". In its purest form, it is expressed in the Master and Servant laws of the Victorian era when unions were barely legal, and the 'corporate' laws of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In post-war Western 'democracies' the corporate class do their best to marginalise unions and limit the right to strike.

The bosses claim that they have their workers' best interests at heart and that strikes are pointless and useless. But no-one believes them.

If it wasn't for the unions, kids would still be climbing up chimneys whilst their parents slaved away in factories and mines six days a week for just enough to keep them going.

The five-day week, paid holidays, pensions, free health care and education, all the trappings of what we used to call the Welfare State – were won by the labour movement. Genuine reforms by Labour governments brought in the health and safety legislation and recognition laws that empowered the unions in the 1970s.

Those days may be forgotten but what workers still know is that free collective bargaining is meaningless without the ability to withdraw one's labour. And at the end of the day, the only thing Management understands is industrial action.

One–Nil to Lineker

Gary Lineker has been reinstated as presenter of *Match of the Day* following an apology from the BBC. The BBC has wisely backed down over the Lineker saga whilst the Government tries to distance itself from a row that was clearly of its own making.

The Government clearly wanted to silence Lineker who had Tweeted his objections to the Government's new asylum seekers' plan – a widely-publicised but clearly personal opinion made in his own time and on his own Twitter account.

Many believe that the Government wanted the BBC to make an example of the sporting guru. The Government clearly believed that packing cross-Channel asylum seekers off to Rwanda was a vote winner that would shore up Tory support in the so-called "Red Belt" of northern seats taken from Labour at the last general election. But they were much mistaken.

Millions of people supported the football guru who was suspended for comparing the language used by the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, to introduce the new Tory 'Illegal Immigration Bill' to that used in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Millions more defended the former England player's right to free speech – a right supported by Lineker's colleagues who walked out in sympathy. Even the supine Labour leader was moved by the furore over the sports presenter to call on Rishi Sunak to "stand up to his snowflake MPs waging war on free speech" following the Gary Lineker row.

What Lineker said was quite right. The Tory plans are indeed "beyond awful". As he said: "There is no huge influx. We take far fewer refugees than other major European countries. This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the '30s."

A new 'bromance'

by James Tweedie

The leaders of France and the UK have put on a show of unity following talks in Paris on contentious issues.

Relations between London and Paris have been strained over the last decade on issues ranging from people-trafficking across the English Channel, Brexit and competition between defence firms. But the two countries' leaders have now hailed a new *Entente Cordiale*.

Rishi Sunak and members of his cabinet flew to Paris last week for talks with French President Emmanuel Macron and his ministers.

The discussions ranged from the English Channel migrant crisis, arming Ukraine, nuclear energy and military projection into the Asia-Pacific – clouded by the submarine deal with Australia that saw French shipbuilders jilted in favour of British and US firms as part of the new AUKUS alliance [a trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK and the USA].

The pair made a great show of friendship as they entered the gilded Elysée Palace for an hour-long one-on-one meeting, with Macron's hand lingering on Sunak's shoulder. They also swapped gifts of their national football team shirts.

Addressing Sunak as "dear Rishi", Macron hailed the joint declaration they agreed that morning as a "robust piece of work", praising their meeting as a "new beginning".

entente cordiale

He referred to a new "entente cordiale" – the early 20th-century Anglo-French alliance that drew the UK into the First World War – whilst Sunak also spoke of an "entente renewed".

The leaders also agreed to continue military support for Ukraine in its ongoing conflict with Russia.

"We share the same assessment and the same resolve: Russia cannot be allowed to win this war," Macron said, insisting that arming Ukraine would allow Kiev to dictate the terms of an eventual peace.

He also mentioned military co-operation on the "interoperability of future systems" and a joint seaborne cruise missile design.

Sunak said the two countries had agreed to train Ukrainian marines to give Kiev a "decisive advantage on the battlefield" and "mount a successful counter-offensive".

The Ukrainian Navy was destroyed in the first few weeks of the Russian military operation launched on 24th February 2022,



• Macron welcomes Sunak at the Elysee palace

and Ukraine is now losing hundreds of men every week in the defence of the near-encircled city of Bakhmut.

France and Britain have striven to outdo each other in pledges of military aid to the Kiev regime – whilst in practice sending little.

Macron's government claims to be the first to send "Western tanks" in the form of 30–40 AMX-10RC wheeled armoured cars, a type armed with a 105mm gun but without the armour to go toe-to-toe with Russian main battle tanks. Downing Street has pledged "hundreds" of light armoured vehicles plus 14 of its ageing fleet of Challenger 2 tanks and around 24 self-propelled 155mm howitzers – nearly matching the 30 promised by France.

negotiating table

But Sunak now says the conflict would ultimately be ended "at the negotiating table" rather than on the battlefield, edging closer to Macron's position.

As for migrants illegally crossing the English Channel, Macron said the two leaders wanted to "make progress in lockstep" whilst acknowledging the "sensitivity of the issues", and had agreed to improve their "informational surveillance" methods.

Over the next three years, the UK will pay £480 million to tackle small-boat Channel crossings, including helping fund a detention centre in France.

Sunak promised "more drones" to help "break the business model of the criminal gangs".

Earlier, Sunak defended his promise of a crackdown on people-trafficking across the English Channel, codified in the Illegal Migration Bill launched this week.

That will see most immigrants arriving illegally being deported to their homeland or 'third

countries' such as Rwanda, with no right to claim asylum or appeal under human rights laws dating from Britain's membership of the EU.

"I think you're seeing lots of countries in Europe look at things in this space," Sunak said, suggesting other nations would follow suit. "Clearly this is a challenge that is facing lots of countries and you're seeing other countries are responding to it in their own way."

undocumented arrivals

"Co-operation with the French is important, illegal migration enforcement at home is important," he added. "Returns agreements are important with countries like Albania, so there are lots of things that we need to do. There is no one silver bullet."

Sunak defended up to £250 million in payments to France since 2014 under a series of deals that failed to stem the 45,000 undocumented arrivals last year, saying they had led to "a few hundred different arrests" and "disrupted something like 50 organised crime gangs".

Sunak said that Russian President Vladimir Putin should never again be allowed to "weaponise fossil fuels" – with both leaders pledging to accelerate the move to renewables even as Europe suffers an unprecedented energy and inflation crisis caused by its sanctions on Moscow and the sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipelines.

He and Macron hailed the contract with French national energy firm EDF to build the new Hinkley Point C nuclear power station in south-west England – the first to be built in the UK in more than 20 years.

He further also said that the two had also agreed on measures to make school trips and exchanges between the two countries easier, despite Britain's exit from the EU in 2021.

Sputnik

Workers' Notes

by New Worker correspondent

Our 'betters' in the bourgeois media frequently inform the working class that it is a bad thing to demand a pay rise as this only fuels inflation which only makes things worse.

This is, of course, a load of rubbish. Hard-fought wage increases are very rarely the cause of inflation. It may happen in a few cases, such as couriers win a half decent wage resulting in the price of a takeaway going up to compensate, but these are the exception rather than the rule.

Unite the union has looked at the profits made by those companies making up the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) 350 index of major companies listed in London, comparing the pre- and post-pandemic figures.

It has helpfully produced a 150-page report aptly entitled *Unite Investigates: Profiteering across the economy – it's systematic*, which is partly digested below and can easily be downloaded from the Union's website.

It notes that overall profit margins in the first half of 2022 were 89 per cent higher than in the same time in 2019.

In her comments about the findings, Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham said: "We're in the midst of a cost of profiteering crisis ... The profiteering crisis isn't just a few bad apples, it's systemic across our broken economy. Entire industries are choosing to take advantage of a crisis, resulting in the spiralling prices of goods we all need." Good for them, that is exactly how capitalism works.

She concluded with the obvious point that: "When the profits of Britain's biggest firms have spiked 89 per cent don't tell me the money isn't there for the pay rises workers need and deserve."

The union's first profiteering report, published last July, demonstrated that FTSE 350 companies rose by 73 per cent compared with 2019, but that was comparatively bad year.

The most obvious aspect of this profiteering is when electricity and gas bills drop into the email boxes. The present windfall taxes on energy profits do very little and they are full of get-out clauses, for clever lawyers to drive a coach and horse through.

Unite dismisses the common justification for recent price rises that are "supply shocks", such as climate crises, post-pandemic disruptions and events

Profiteers Galore



• strikes sweep the country

in Ukraine, which many suppliers used to justify inflation.

Readers of a certain age will be aware that increases in wholesale oil prices have a speedy impact on increases in petrol pump prices, but that falls take a long time, if any, on retail prices. Adam Smith's 'Invisible Hand' is more invisible at some time than others.

Leaked Treasury forecasts show that gas and electricity producers are on track to make excess profits of up to £170 billion over two years.

Major supermarket chains are boosting profits by increasing prices much more than supply costs. There is also evidence that that they are exerting increasing pressure on smaller suppliers who depend on the good grace of the supermarkets to allow them on the shelves. Thus, the top three UK supermarkets – Tesco, Sainsbury's and Asda – doubled their combined profits to £3.2 billion in 2021. Food prices have also seen huge increases that are caused by profiteering and not by greedy peasants selfishly demanding to be paid more than 50 pence per day.

Droughts, fires and floods are always good for business. Here again the supermarkets are the major beneficiaries. The three top British chains did well out of the pandemic. Wage increases at these companies require hard-fought battles whilst polite discussions in the boardrooms are enough to magically increase dividends for corporate shareholders.

Food manufacturers are also doing well, even if they are sometimes at the beck and call of supermarkets. The eight major UK food manufacturers raked in £22.9 billion profits

in 2021, more than a fifth over pre-pandemic times. By far the biggest was Nestle, notorious for supplying free formula baby food to Third World mothers so that breast milk would dry and force them to later buy their product. They alone accounted for a profit of £13.7 billion, up a third from 2019.

Further down the literal food chain are the four main UK fertiliser producers, who saw their post-pandemic profits rise by 23 per cent at a time when they were laying-off workers and moaning about increased energy costs.

Less immediately obvious to the consumer is the profiteering by the world's largely agribusinesses – ADM, Bunge, Cargill and Louis Dreyfus – which dominate important crops such as the grain market. Their pandemic profits rose 255 per cent.

Also doing well are the top 10 semiconductor manufacturers, whose profits rose 96 per cent.

In a globalised world where a computer comes with parts and attachments from umpteen different companies, transport is particularly important. Transport companies are masters not just of the high seas, but of profiteering that makes Blackbeard look like a rank amateur. The eight top shipping companies saw their profits rise no less than 20,650 per cent (no typo!). In the light of that we can be grateful that the biggest road freight operators only increased their profits by a mere 149 per cent. It is against that background that P&O sacked its workforce and delivery drivers struggle for a decent wage.

As real wages in both the public and private sectors have fallen in recent years, the notion

that wage demands fuel inflation is nonsense. Whilst the media tell us this, Unite has dug up a wealth of quotes from businessmen themselves to refute this; they like to boast about their roll in pleasing their shareholders so they are not very discreet.

Many years ago the founder of Scottish Television said his commercial station was a license to print money. Today BP's CEO took a more modern stance by saying BOP was a "cash machine".

Petrol, which is essential even for non-drivers, is always a money spinner. When the price of crude oil is low profits can be made both at the refinery and at the petrol pump, and when crude prices are high it is a perfect excuse to raise prices at the pumps.

In Britain just six refineries control almost the entire UK petrol supply. In the course of 2022 the profit refiners made on wholesale petrol tripled from 10p to up to 35p per litre. The wages of North Sea oil workers, delivery drivers and petrol pump attendants (if any exist in the self-service world) have not risen to anything like that.

It is not only the oil companies who benefit from high fuel prices. It is a nice little earner for supermarkets, although it is impossible to disentangle fuel profits from that made on food. The Royal Automobile Club (RAC) says supermarkets and other retailers rake in an extra £84 annually.

Domestic energy bills are at an all-time high, forcing even a right-wing Tory government to step in in case too many elderly genteel voters freeze to death before the next General Election.

Generating companies increased their prices five times in 2021, simply because drastic rises in gas prices enabled them to do so. About 40 per cent of electricity is generated from gas, but that was simply an excuse for the much larger rises. The Big Four energy companies – Centrica, E.ON, EDF and Scottish Power (the latter is actually Spanish) – saw their combined 2021 profits rise by 84 per cent to £9.5 billion in 2021. They have also benefitted from smaller supply firms going bust. Those involved in production and distribution do best, as any short-term losses on the roundabouts can be made up on the swings. Even the Treasury admits that UK electricity generators have already made more than £10 billion in "excess profits".

When Centrica, British Gas's owner, had a £3.3 billion profit for 2022, the CEO said it was: "the most challenging energy crisis in living memory" – but the prize for brass neck must go to the CEO, who warned consumers would have "extraordinarily high fuel bills for at least 18 months" yet announced first-half profits of €2.5 billion and an increased share-holder dividend.

During and after the pandemic there was much weeping and wailing about shortages of new cars, but this was a blessing for all concerned in the industry. The second-hand industry (closely linked to the manufacturing industry) did well, and even if fewer people were buying new cars they bought more spare parts, before "normalcy" resumed when car prices rose substantially. As a result, major car dealerships increased both profits and margins by 110 per cent, whilst making redundant 7,410 second-hand car dealers.

Amongst other sectors, the road transport industry seem to have overcome the problems of fuel price rises and driver shortages to do very well for themselves if their profit figures are anything to go by. Profit margins of major road freight companies rose 67 per cent between 2019–2021, with margins doubling.

Another group of profiteers are the owners of British ports which are now privatised. The UK is the costliest destination, with it costing 25 per cent more to ship a container from Shanghai to Britain than to Rotterdam.

The largest owner is ADP, which made £126 million net profit in 2021 with a margin of 21.8 per cent; at the same time Peel Ports made £143 million with 24 per cent margin.

Although the Unite report does not actually use the word 'nationalisation' in the report, it gives plenty of examples where it is urgently required.

In the Amazon Jungle

by New Worker correspondent

The self-styled 'quality' press has long carried the *Court Circular* to record the public doings of the Monarch and their hangers-on. More recently some newspapers have taken to listing forthcoming strikes in a similar manner because of the increasing number of workers taking industrial action. The Blomberg news agency has even created the position of "Strike Correspondent" to report on the upsurge of industrial action.

The strikers are seeking a 43 per cent increase from £10.50 to £15.00 per hour.

One of these strikes this week is at the Coventry warehouse, sorry, "fulfilment centre", belonging to Amazon, the predatory retailing company.

Under the auspices of general union GMB, 450 workers there are taking a whole week's strike action that began on Monday and continued to Friday. This comes after three earlier one-day



strikes. There have also been short unofficial walkouts at other Amazon warehouses in Britain, discretely co-ordinated via social media.

The battle is basically over pay but as regular readers know, life at Amazon is no bed of roses, with long hours and overbearing micro management. Amazon did very well out of the pandemic, when high street shops were closed. In the UK, sales jumped by 51 per cent to £19.4 billion, it made a profit of £204 million on which it paid a mere £10.80 in tax.

It has now announced plans to cut 18,000 jobs worldwide as people are now brave enough to venture out. These plans include the closure of three warehouses at Gourock, Doncaster and Hemel Hempstead, with the loss of 1,200 jobs.

One striking worker told the left Labour magazine *Tribune* that: "We weren't saving lives during the pandemic, but were doing work. We were working with approximately 800 people every night in a warehouse. At that point, I had an email to show the police that I was a key worker

if I got stopped on the road; two years on, I'm just unskilled."

Although the striking workers are a minority out of 1,400, GMB has done well to get so much as a foot in the door. Recent attempts at unionisation in the USA were defeated after brutal opposition using techniques that even the American courts found unacceptable.

The strikers are seeking a 43 per cent increase from £10.50 to £15.00 per hour. Amazon have offered a rise of 50 pence on the hourly rate. This is only just above the bare legal minimum of £10.42 per hour. Workers are supposed to be grateful for the £500 cost-of-living Christmas bonus they received.

Senior GMB organiser Amanda Gearing was quoted as saying: "This unprecedented week-long strike shows the anger among Amazon workers in Coventry. They work for one of the richest companies in the world, yet they have to work round the clock to keep themselves afloat." That is a good metaphor, recently Amazon's founder and Chairman took delivery of a \$500 million yacht. All the more justification for her to add that: "It's sickening that Amazon workers in Coventry will earn just eight pence above the minimum wage in April 2023. Amazon bosses can stop this industrial action by doing the right thing and negotiating a proper pay rise with workers."

Amazing for the era of Keir Starmer, the strikers have the support of Zarah Sultana, Labour MP for Coventry South. She earlier pointed out that: "Amazon is one of the most profitable companies in the entire world. During the pandemic, Jeff Bezos

could have given every single worker a £90,000 bonus and still be as wealthy as he was during the start of the pandemic."

She also pointed out the deplorable health-and-safety record at the warehouse with 59 ambulance call-outs since 2018, with people fainting from overwork and suffering burns and traumatic injuries.

It is worth noting that the anti-union hostility from the top at Amazon is not the only problem facing union organisers. *Tribune* reports that it has been necessary to translate union literature into many different languages due to Amazon employing many desperate recent arrivals. They are of course unfamiliar with trade unions.

The difficulties of organising at Amazon were made clear by a remark that from a GMB organiser who said they have been doing so for 10 years. Readers can form their own views as to whether or not 450 members out of 1,400 is a success. It is comfortably above the 23 per cent union density in the private sector.

GMB claims to have recruited 700 people, but with a constant turnover of staff a great deal of running has to be done to stand still.

This unprecedented week-long strike shows the anger among Amazon workers in Coventry.

Picket lines and recruitment drives in the car park are always carefully monitored by security Staff. CCTV cameras have recently sprouted around the site and a formerly public path has been closed.

On a positive note, Amazon workers are taking inspiration from the battles at Coventry, and the battles by better organised workers such as the railway workers and the NHS strikes. The local trades council has also come to the aid of the pioneers of trade unionism in the Amazonian jungle.

**20 years ago
this week
in the New Worker**

THE IMPERIALIST invasion of Iraq is underway and millions of people throughout Britain and the world are leaving their work-places, homes, colleges and schools as town and city centres fill up with peace protesters.

Prime Minister Tony Blair is hoping for a swift end to the conflict, which is now so unpopular that his career is likely to be ended whatever the outcome of the fighting. It can hardly be called a war; the two sides are so unequal. It is an unprovoked imperialist invasion.

In committing British government support to President Bush's warmongering, Blair has isolated himself from his European allies, from the UN, from popular support at home and abroad, from his own party membership, from the trade unions and from a growing number of MPs. His term in office is unlikely to survive this.

The revolt by MPs against British government support for the US attack on Iraq grew to an unprecedented level last Tuesday night – despite frantic efforts by the whips to sustain support for Tony Blair's warmongering position.

One hundred and thirty-nine Labour MPs voted against the Government and in support of a motion that said the case for war is "not yet proven".

The motion was of course defeated, by 396 votes to 217, with Tory support. But even amongst the Tories, 16 MPs voted against

the war, including former Chancellor Kenneth Clarke and John Selwyn Gummer.

Former junior Defence minister Peter Kilfoyle led the attack on Blair's position in the House of Commons debate, saying that "once in a generation" there comes an issue that transcends party ties. "We are having a 19th Century gunboat war in the Gulf, when the real dangers of terrorism should be isolated and dealt with as the first priority," he added.

Members of the Scottish parliament have also been voicing their opposition to war. Scotland's Health Minister Malcolm Chisholm told peace protesters at Leith that he regretted his former support for Tony Blair. He said he should have put his confidence in what he knew to be right above his loyalty to his colleagues.

Solidarity with Palestine

by R Arun Kumar

A FORMER dictator of El Salvador, Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez, once said “killing an ant is a greater crime than killing a man”. Although said in a different context and well before the formation of the State of Israel on Palestinian land, it captures the mindset of the rulers of the present Israeli State. More than one Palestinian is killed every day by the Israeli government in these last two months. And this is done with impunity. This should not be allowed to go unchallenged.

Immediately after taking oath once again as the prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu had clearly stated the agenda of his new extreme right-wing government: “These are the basic lines of the national government headed by me: The Jewish people have an exclusive and unquestionable right to all areas of the Land of Israel. The government will promote and develop settlement in all parts of the Land of Israel – in the Galilee, the Negev, the Golan, Judea and Samaria.” This is literally cocking a snook at the UN and world public opinion.

“Palestine belongs to Palestinians, as much as France belongs to the French and India to Indians.”

Gandhiji

Incidentally, the State of Israel was formed on 29th November 1947, through Resolution 181(II) adopted in the UN General Assembly that recommended the plan to partition Palestine into an Arab State, a Jewish State and the City of Jerusalem. This proposal was resented by the Palestinians even at that time, whilst the Zionists welcomed the decision as they were allotted 58 per cent of the land. Despite



• Young Palestinian boys sits in what used to be his grade school classroom

this favourable allocation, Israel did not rest and started its expansionist policies from day one. It fought many wars and occupied territories.

In order to control Israeli expansionism, the UN General Assembly adopted another Resolution (194), directing Israel to withdraw from all the territories it had occupied since 1967. It also called upon the Israeli government to accept the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian State with pre-4th June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. It needs to be understood here that even this Resolution is very liberal towards Israel because it allowed Israel to retain 78 per cent of the historic Palestine land it had occupied by that time. Not satisfied with this huge concession, Israel is continuing its occupation policies and today it occupies more than 90 per cent of the historic Palestine. Netanyahu's statement shows that it does not want to stop even here but wants to occupy the entirety of Palestine and flush out all the Palestinians who have been living in their homeland for generations.

Debunking the myth that Israel was founded on lands that historically belonged to Jews, Prof. Ze'ev Herzog of Tel Aviv University, who reviewed the archaeological findings of the entire last one-and-a-half centuries, wrote: “This is what archaeologists have learned from

their excavations in the Land of Israel: The Israelites were never in Egypt, did not wander in the desert, did not conquer the land in a military campaign and did not pass it on to the 12 tribes of Israel. Even harder to swallow is the fact that the united monarchy of David and Solomon, which is described in the Bible as a regional power, was at most a small tribal kingdom.”

Despite of such conclusive evidence, he says the Israeli State is cold to these facts because “any attempt to question the reliability of the Biblical descriptions is perceived as an attempt to undermine 'our historical right to the land' and is shattering the myth of the nation that is renewing the ancient kingdom of Israel... The blow to the mythical foundations of the Israeli identity is apparently too threatening and it is more convenient to turn a blind eye.”

Explaining the political purpose behind this, Israeli geographer Oren Yiftachel writes: “The territorial restructuring of the land has centred around [the] all-encompassing and expansionist Judaisation (de-Arabisation) programme adopted by the nascent Israeli State... The Judaisation programme was premised on a hegemonic myth cultivated since the rise of Zionism that the land belongs solely to the Jewish people.”

The present Israeli government led by Netanyahu and his governing coalition that

includes the Religious Zionist Party (RZ) and the Jewish Power bloc wants to take this Zionist project of expansion to its culmination, which involves territorial consolidation over the whole of the ‘promised land’, by further dispossession of Palestinians from their native lands. The objective is to drive away the Palestinians from the region by taking away all their best land and resources, such as water. Around 70 per cent of all Palestinians are refugees as they are pushed out of their houses and lands by the Israeli military. One out of every three refugees in the world is a Palestinian. Israel is denying these refugees their basic right to return to their homeland.

Since 1967, Israel has completely controlled Palestinian water resources and deprives them of access to their rightful share of water. Israel allocates more than 90 per cent of available shared water resources to itself, leaving the Palestinian people less than 10 per cent. Some of the best agricultural land belonging to the Palestinians has been seized by the Israeli State and converted into residential blocs for its occupants. Israel constructed an unethical and illegal wall, which further pushed Palestinians into small, disconnected cantons. This wall was constructed in contravention of all the international treaties and the promise it had made during the Oslo negotiations. With this construction, Israel

annexed practically more than 60 per cent of the West Bank land, 60 per cent of its water resources and even the 40 per cent of land is left dissected and cantoned. Israel strictly controls and monitors the movement of Palestinians within these territories. Various permits must be obtained from Israeli military authorities for the Palestinians to go to their work and return to their homes.

The situation in Gaza is even more terrible. Gaza is a small strip of land where nearly 1.5 million Palestinians live. Surrounded on three sides by Israel and the Mediterranean on the other side (with a small tiny border with Egypt in the south), it is virtually a prison.

Nothing can pass in or out of Gaza without the permission of the Israeli authorities. Israel is strangling Gaza and its intensity increased after the victory of

Israel allocates more than 90 per cent of available shared water resources to itself, leaving the Palestinian people less than 10 per cent

Hamas in the elections held in Palestine in 2006. Former UN special rapporteur for human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, Richard Falk, states that Israel maintains its “Gaza siege in its full fury, allowing only barely enough food and fuel to enter to stave off mass famine and disease”. Quite remorselessly, Dov Weisglass, an adviser to former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, said: “The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger.”

On top of this forceful occupation and strangulation, Israel had passed a new law called the 14th Basic Law, which is also termed as the ‘Jewish Nation State Law’. This law declares Israel as a Jewish State. The law invites Jews from anywhere in the world to come and settle in

continued on page 6...

continued from page 5...

Israel, promising them land. On the other hand, it drives away Palestinians from their homeland and denies their rightful return.

The law downgrades Arabs to second class citizens. A prominent Israeli daily, Ha'aretz, published an editorial highlighting the plight of Arabs: "No minority in Israel suffers as much discrimination as the Arab minority, which is also Israel's largest minority. It is frequently the target of normalised, institutionalised racism..." This law officially refuses to accept either the 1967 borders or East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian State. This is a denial of the right of the existence of the Palestinian State.

In 2021, for the first time an Israeli human rights organisation called the Israeli State for it is – an apartheid regime. A reputed human rights organisation from Israel – B'Tselem – published a detailed report reasoning its arguments: "Although Israel never formally annexed the West Bank, it treats the territory as its own. More than 2.6 million Palestinian subjects live in the West Bank, in dozens of disconnected enclaves,

under rigid military rule and without political rights. In about 40 per cent of the territory, Israel has transferred some civilian powers to the Palestinian Authority (PA). However, the PA is still subordinate to Israel and can only exercise its limited powers with Israel's consent."

In 2020, the UN called the Israeli occupation in Palestine, which is more than 52 years old, "the longest belligerent occupation in the modern world". This is the reality confronting us today. Israeli unilateral expansionism challenges the UN, the Palestinian Authority and the governments around the world. With open support from the US government, it is moving with renewed aggression. The extreme right-wing government in Israel is showing no signs of adherence to UN Resolutions.

Instead of playing a lead role in mobilising world public opinion against Israel, the [Indian] BJP government is deepening its ties with a 'thug' in West Asia, who blatantly violates all the UN resolutions. India has now become the largest purchaser of Israeli armaments and thus, the largest financier of Israeli

military attacks on the Palestinians!

The ruling Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has openly and enthusiastically embraced the Jewish State because it suits its own ideological project. If the BJP government really recognises and accepts that the entire world is one family, it should work towards breaking all the divisive walls – particularly those that Israel is building – both physically and conceptually.

Israeli unilateral expansionism challenges the UN, the Palestinian Authority and the governments around the world

Accepting and categorising Israel as an apartheid State is a first step that should lead us to isolate Israel diplomatically and force it



Ahead of the arrival, of the U.S. president to Tel Aviv, the Israeli rights group B'Tselem launched a campaign seeking to turn Biden's attention to the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

to respect UN Resolutions, Palestinians and accept the two-State solution. As people who believe in the unity and equality of all human beings, we should express our solidarity with the people of Palestine who are demanding their just rights. For this, we have to force the current BJP government to forego

its pro-Israeli foreign policy and revert back to the traditions we have inherited from our freedom struggle.

Celebrating 75 years of our independence, we have to remind the BJP (for it was never part of that struggle) that our struggle for freedom from colonial rule included our support to

all such countries fighting for their own freedom from colonial rule. As Gandhiji stated: "Palestine belongs to Palestinians, as much as France belongs to the French and India to Indians."

People's Democracy (India)

Linekergate: BBC's Bias Laid Bare

by Ilya Tsukanov

Gary Lineker's broadcasting career was put on hold last week after he sharply attacked the government's proposed policy on small boat migration by comparing it to the policies of 1930s Nazi Germany.

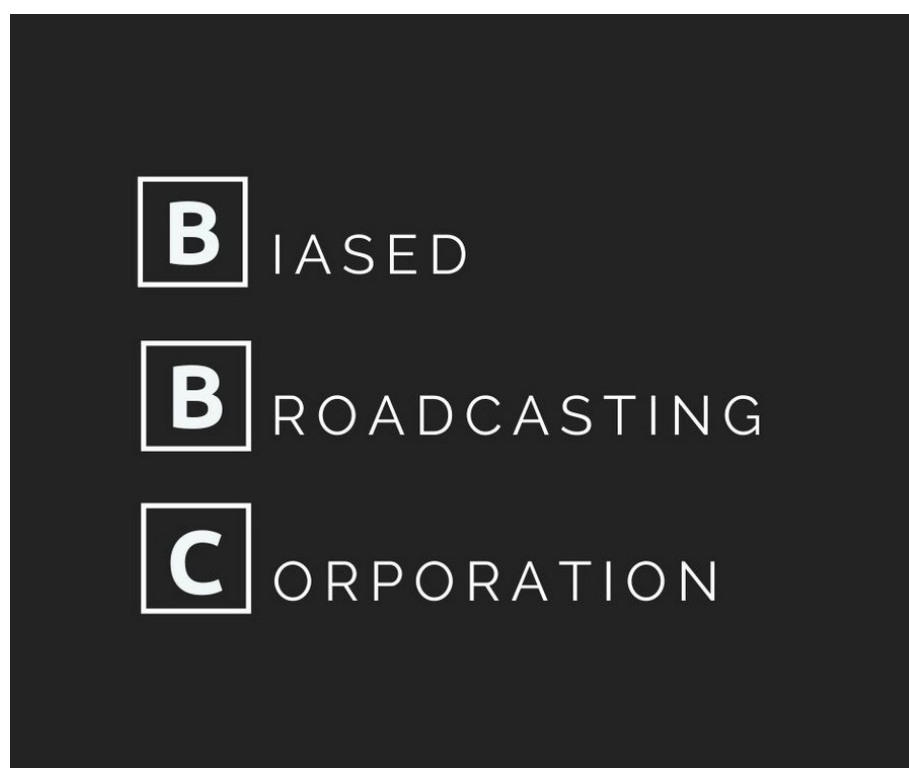
Veteran football presenter and ex-professional footballer Gary Lineker was suspended by the BBC last week after a much-publicised Twitter spat with the government over its asylum policy. How does the scandal square with the BBC's much-touted claims of "impartiality", and with similar scandals of years and decades past?

Whatever one may think of his remarks, and London's approach to dealing with the ongoing illegal immigration crisis facing Britain, the reaction of the

BBC's brass is revealing, given that Lineker was hired not for his political views, expressed privately on social media, but his knowledge of the game of football. As one commentator astutely put it, going after Lineker is comparable to attacking BBC food critic Prue Leith because she once admitted to voting for Brexit.

The difference between Lineker and Leith seems to be that the ex-footballer's remarks were a sharp criticism of the ruling Tory government, whilst Mrs. Leith's effectively amounted to an endorsement.

Wave after wave of high profile Tory politicians lined up to reprimand Lineker this week, with Home Secretary Suella Braverman calling his comments "disappointing" and "unhelpful", whilst



Party deputy chairman Lee Anderson asked whether "this is the type of comment [the BBC] expect from their publicly funded presenters".

Although the BBC has long prided itself on the "impartiality" it says is "fundamental to our reputation, our values and the trust of audiences", the broadcaster apparently followed Anderson's advice, first "reminding" Lineker "of his responsibilities" and ultimately suspending him until "an agreed and clear position on his use of social media" could be reached.

The BBC's employee guidelines don't restrict staff from "engag[ing] in social media activities if they wish", but asks those who are "clearly identified with the BBC and/or discuss[ing] their work..."

behave appropriately and in ways that are consistent with the BBC's editorial values and policies". Employees are asked to refrain from expressing political preferences or views on policy issues, a rule which sparked a backlash for tamping down on free expression when it was first implemented in 2020.

Lineker's case is more complex, however. Not only is he a freelance broadcaster, rather than a permanent staff member, but all the work he does for the corporation is related to football, not presenting the news or discussing politics on air. In fact, apart from a pair of ostentatious Ukrainian flag-themed hearts, his Twitter profile offers no clues of his employment for the BBC. "Once kicked a ball about. Now talk about kicking a ball about," his simple Twitter bio reads.

The Lineker row certainly isn't the first time the 'impartial' and 'non-partisan' broadcaster has been caught in a scandal over perceived bias. In a sense, his suspension offers Britons a fresh opportunity to witness the disconnect between the BBC's self-professed neutrality, fairness, objectivity and political non-bias and an extensive history of bending at the knee to party, state, corporate and even royal interests going all the way back to its creation in 1927.

BBC bias extensive

The list of the evidence of BBC bias is extensive enough to fill a small library's worth of books, and indeed, many have been written.

Focusing therefore on just a few of the latest examples of biased coverage:

- In October 2022, British Hindus protested outside the broadcaster's London headquarters over "anti-Hindu and anti-India bias" over its coverage of unrest in Leicester between Hindu and Muslim groups.
- Last April, readers couldn't help but feel a "slight bias" in the broadcaster's reporting after it labelled late Russian opposition leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy "Putin's ultranationalist ally and clown".
- In February of 2022, a BBC anchor's neutrality in covering the crisis in Ukraine was called into question after a Ukrainian official told

him that he was overwhelmed with emotion after seeing "European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed".

- China banned BBC World News from the airwaves in the Asian nation in 2021 for spreading "fake news" about the coronavirus crisis and the treatment of ethnic minorities. The broadcaster vociferously protested, although ironically, Britain's own telecom regulator had then recently banned China Global Television Network (CGTN) due to its purported control by the Chinese Communist Party.

Going further back nets reams of evidence of systemic biases, from systematic efforts to block to cover-up stories that could embarrass the Royal Family, to the broadcaster's rabid riling-up support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq by feeding audiences UK and USA government propaganda, including pushing the lie that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). In fact, nearly all of the West's 'democracy at the barrel of a gun' interventions, from Libya to the dirty war in Syria, have been treated in a similar manner, with the broadcaster not only regurgitating government talking points but in some cases even covering-up evidence by its own reporters of false flag incidents.

The good news is that Brits generally don't buy into the broadcaster's impartiality claims, and haven't for many years, with a 2018 poll by BMG Research finding that just 37 per cent of respondents felt the broadcaster was impartial. In 2021, the BBC was slapped with over 462,000 complaints of "perceived bias", up from about 218,000 in the 2018-2019 period.

The broadcaster's partiality is exemplified in the cult-1980s political hit series *Yes Minister*, where the details about the tools that the government and civil service bureaucracy have at their disposal in pressuring the 'impartial' broadcaster's executives into submission are laid bare with diabolical comedic flair. It's one of those ironies of history then that the series itself was produced by the BBC. Or perhaps they were trying to tell us something.

Sputnik

A false list with political motivations

By Maria Josefina Arce

Joe Biden who became president of the USA in 2021 has forgotten his electoral promises. The announced change in policy towards Cuba has not materialised; on the contrary, hostility towards the small Caribbean island persists.

Once again Washington has decided to keep Cuba on the unilateral list of countries supposedly sponsoring terrorism, a selection that everyone knows the Americans make up as they please according to their interests.

As denounced by Cuban President Miguel Díaz Canel, the US administration is hiding behind a lie to try to justify the blockade against the Cuban people, which has been condemned on 30 occasions by the UN General Assembly.

An opinion shared by political personalities, governments and peoples. As the US weekly *The*

Biden, the current US president has followed in the footsteps of previous administrations, of manifest hostility towards the Cuban people.

Nation pointed out, in Washington everyone knows that Cuba is not a state sponsor of terrorism and that this only adds more sanctions to the already long and genocidal economic siege. This is an unavoidable aspect that



former US intelligence officials have also referred to and which makes clear the lies and political motivations on which the decision is based. They have affirmed with absolute certainty that it is a fiction created to reinforce the logic of the blockade.

In the last days of Donald Trump's presidency, Cuba was once again unjustifiably included on the list from which it had been removed in 2015 by the administration of Barack Obama, in which Biden served as Vice President.

The reality is that the presence of Cuba on the US list reinforces the deterrent and intimidating impact of the economic siege, and the difficulties to insert us in international trade and perform financial operations.

Let's go back to the article in the weekly *The Nation*, which insists that Havana should be removed from that list, which, it stresses, should be accompanied by other steps such as the removal of the

the blockade remains intact, including the application of Title III of the Helms Burton Act

243 measures imposed by Trump, many of them in the midst of the COVID19 pandemic.

The fact is that although the current government has taken a series of provisions, described as positive by Havana, the blockade remains intact, including the application of Title III of the Helms Burton Act, which internationalised that unilateral measure almost 27 years ago.

This section allows US citizens to sue any person or entity that does business with properties

legally nationalised by the Cuban Revolution.

It is good to clarify that the revolutionary government reached compensation agreements with other countries such as the UK, Spain and Canada, but not with the USA, which refused any understanding, whilst, as historians recall, it was planning the mercenary invasion of Playa Giron in 1961.

Article III of Helms Burton had been suspended by successive US administrations since the 1996 Congressional passage of the law but was activated in 2019 by Trump.

Biden, however, has also done nothing about it. What is certain is that his promises have been left in the past. The current US president has followed in the footsteps of previous administrations, of manifest hostility towards the Cuban people.

Radio Havana Cuba

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

If the USA and its sidekick NATO are stupid, desperate and reckless enough to commit a major terrorist attack, such as blowing up the Nord Stream pipelines, what else are they capable of? What do they know about the origin of COVID19 or the deliberate shooting down of Malaysia Airline Flight MH17 over Ukraine in 2014? Also countless false-flag incidents, staged for propaganda purposes, used to justify imperialist aggression, crippling sanctions and to start a new cold war. The USA seeks to benefit from the tragic consequences of its hidden hand as the innocents are left to suffer.

It is against this

The editor welcomes letters from our readers. If you have a contribution to make please make sure it reaches us before Wednesday. You can send your letters to: PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ, or email party@NCP.clara.net

background that the welcome launch of No2NatoNo2War marks an historic new page for the British peace movement. The New Communist Party of Britain (NCP) applauds the joint initiative of George Galloway's Workers Party and Chris Williamson's Socialist Labour Party. We now again have a genuine peace movement that is very different from the weak and vague Stop the War Coalition. An impotent body that attracts do-gooders, confused Social Democrats and the fake left as represented by the *Morning Star* and the Communist Party of Britain.

Western powers, led blindly by the USA, have failed to achieve their chief objectives from the Ukraine project that they had planned in 1990 and commenced with a coup in 2014. Russia has not been brought to its knees and NATO has failed to establish a foothold on its South Western flank as Russian speaking regions have been liberated. Despite the tragic loss of life in Ukraine and the economic chaos in Europe, the USA appears

anxious to move on to its next targets. It is trying to promote conflicts in Iran, Georgia, Belarus and China's Taiwan. Wars by proxy that could kill millions with the intention to weaken Russia and China.

Today the world has changed in many ways. Apart from the EU, Anglo Saxon nations and a handful of corrupt dependents, there is a growing international opposition to US hegemony. The days of the US bully are numbered. It is in decline economically, socially and morally. It has not accepted that we now live in a multipolar world that wants to be free and independent of the USA and former colonial Western powers.

John Maryon
Suffolk

Dear Comrades

The Tories' anti-Putin propaganda gets into the TV programmes, not only the news – and the blame game continues ad nauseam. They will not defeat Russia. They have forgotten how dear the Motherland is to the people and how they fought the Nazis in the Second World War and won!

Pat Abraham
Uxbridge

Dear Comrades

We would like to place on the record Communist Reconstruction's support for Marie Lynam's letter in the *New Worker* of 3rd March [NW:2198; 3 March 2023].

Shifting the trade union movement's approach to the situation in Ukraine is not an easy task. Their positions are well-entrenched, still greatly influenced by the 'free', anti-Soviet trade unions in the mould of Solidarnosc. We would be very pleased to work with the International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity (IUAFS) campaign.

We applaud the role of the *New Worker* in presenting an unflinching defence of the peoples of Donbas and Crimea, against NATO aggression, and would draw attention to our own contribution on these issues:

<https://communist-reconstruction.co.uk/2023/02/16/ukraine-a-different-perspective/>

We additionally recognise the important work that the NCP has done over the years to advance the cause of progressive co-operation within the British communist movement, including your proposed communist liaison committee, and therefore sincerely wish that

you see our project as complementary to your approach.

Our journal's purpose is in critically reviewing British Communism: reassessing strategies, discussing current controversies and proposing new solutions for our times.

Communist Reconstruction's core platform is based on the need to win consensus in addressing the organisational needs of British Communism, the most pressing of which are of:

- clarifying the points of disagreement between, and the issues faced within, different traditions and parties;
- ensuring the relevance of these to the needs of the class struggle in the 21st Century;
- identifying and pursuing possibilities for rapprochement; and finally
- achieving the convergence of all communists in Britain into a single Marxist-Leninist party.

We've been pleased with the positive response to our project from various quarters so far, as promoted tentatively on social media, although it is of course very early days.

We would be very pleased to receive any comments, suggestions or contributions to our website that you might make, and we hope this will be the start of a productive dialogue.

Communist
Reconstruction
Britain

Diary

UNTIL 31 MARCH
Victoria and Albert Museum: Ospaaal: Solidarity and Design: Cuban posters supporting Third World movement. Cromwell Road, London SW7

UNTI 21 APRIL
Working Class Movement Library: Shirley Baker Photographing Salford. Exhibition. Wed-Fri afternoons. WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX

MON 20 MAR – WED 26 MAR
Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Israeli Apartheid Week 2023. Nationwide campaign at universities and colleges in support of cancelling investments in Israel. Includes Lobby of Parliament on Weds 22.

WED 22 MAR
Marx Memorial Library: Thomas Kuczynski on his New Edition of Marx's *Capital* Vol 1. 19:00. Online. Book via MML website.

WED 22 MAR
Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Viva La Educación acoustic music fundraiser, 19:30-22:00. The Casa, Hope Street Liverpool L1 9BP £5.00

THUR 23 MAR
Marx Memorial Library: Gawain Little et al. Lessons in Organising: What Trade Unionists Can Learn from the War on Teachers Book launch. 19:00 MML on site and online.

SAT 25 MAR
International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity campaign: Free all Ukrainian Political Prisoners! End the fascist reign of terror! Picket 14:00 – 15:30 opposite Downing Street, Whitehall, London SW1.

SAT 25 MAR
Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Barclays: Don't Bank on Apartheid – Day of Action! Nationwide events on PSC website.

THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

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Killing ourselves to live by Daphne Liddle £1 plus 50p P&P (New Worker reprint).

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NCP Lit. PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

(cheques to New Worker)

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

This week we will allow the continuing SNP factional bloodbath pass without comment whilst the three contenders for the throne scramble around to garner votes in the race for the leadership of the Scottish National Party.

Although the acrimonious debates have done little to sway opinion one way or the other within the ruling party, all three have already demonstrated that they have made a better fist at attacking the legacy and competence of Nicola Sturgeon than all the opposition leaders past and present.

Their fate is now left in the hands of 78,000 people (alive and dead) who are still on the much-reduced SNP membership roll. Supporters of two candidates (and Ash Regan herself) have expressed the opinion that the contest is rigged to favour Humza Yousaf because it is being administered by the SNP HQ themselves and, in particular, overseen by the spouse of the departing First Minister. To add to the suspicion, the result will be announced by reporting the percentages, not the actual numbers.

The Staggering State of the Scottish Press

Instead, we will look at the state of the newspaper press in Scotland. The Scottish media landscape is overwhelmingly dominated by four companies: National World, DC Thomson, Newsquest and Reach. National World and DC Thompson are the two 'native' owners, National World is the former John-son Press that expanded from its Falkirk base to build an empire of local and regional papers across the UK before coming a cropper in 2018.

DC Thomson is based in Dundee, with a strong but recently reduced empire of newspapers, comics and popular magazines. Newsquest is owned by the Virginia-based Gannett while Reach is the present incarnation of the owners of the Mirror and Express titles.

Scotland's major cities still sustain daily newspapers and every Scottish county and decent sized town has a weekly.

Glasgow has its Herald, and Daily Record, or as some say the Daily Ranger. Edinburgh has the Scotsman, Aberdeen the Press & Journal, Dundee the Courier and Advertiser, along with their evening papers.

Sunday papers got off to a slow start in Scotland but there are now four. For some unknown reason the Greenock Telegraph and the Paisley Daily Express still survive as dailies. The most recent addition to the field is the SNP-supporting National and its Sunday version from Newsquest, which shares the sports pages of the Herald and much more.

The 'English' papers have of course had a long-standing presence in Scotland, they have and have long and separate Scottish editions, and in some cases titles, with the Guardian being a notable exception.

For many decades the Scottish Daily Express was the only truly national newspaper in Scotland. The Express was also noted for a 'Spot-the Ball' contest whose winners for years were usually relatives of Express employees. Even at its best the Scotsman was always an east-coast paper and the then Glasgow Herald was the voice of the west, with the Dundee and Aberdeen titles covering the northern parts. The Times has perhaps gone furthest in successfully combining a London and Scottish paper. It and the Herald seem to be the only papers regularly doing serious journalism by badgering the SNP Government with Freedom of Information requests, which are the only way to extract information of any importance.

The concentration of ownership is a very mixed blessing, while the fear of overweening press monopolies is a real one, in one respect they have the advantage of sharing facilities such as editing and printing, economies in journalism have gone too far. The 'local' paper in this correspondent's town of 80,000 does not even have a local office, but one can meet a journalist in a café two hours on one day per week. It does not even have an editor and has about three journalists, all of whom have responsibilities for other neighbouring papers in the same chain. This is not an isolated case and with sub-editing is carried out at remote hubs by people who know nothing of localities, sometimes with amusing results.

The picture is the same even for the dailies, with

editors also being in charge of the so-called evening papers (which can be now picked up with the morning rolls) and Sunday papers and their websites. Editors no longer command regiments of journalists, but are lucky to have a platoon.

The possibility of robots coming along to fill newspapers is a real one, not that many will notice the difference.

TV viewers have been helping to support the grasping multinationals that own the Scottish press. At present there are 20 "local democracy" journalists paid out of BBC license fee money to enable "important local news stories to get coverage where otherwise they might not". By that they mean that journalists cover court cases, which was once a staple of local journalism.

As in the rest of Britain, Scottish newspapers are in a dire state. Circulations of daily and weekly newspapers are in free-fall. The internet took away the clas-sified advertising that was their lifeblood. Although pandemic restrictions that kept people at home have been removed, commuters now only pick up the free Metro.

Revenues from online subscriptions are proving difficult to find, The Herald seems to have an almost permanent "special offer" of £1 per month for its offerings. Online sub-scriptions are only feasible when newspapers such as the Times and Financial Times have something seri-ous that cannot be obtained elsewhere, and the Scottish press rarely has material that is not cut and pasted from press releases. Only exiled Scots eager for news of Rangers or Celtic are likely to be attracted by online offers.

Precise circulation figures are hard to find because they are too em-barrassing to publicise,

but one thing is certain: In modern progressive Scot-land the two best-selling newspapers are the Scot-tish Daily Mail and Scot-tish Sun, with the latter seemingly just on top. The 'quality' Scotsman, which once sold around 100,000 copies about 30 years ago, is now down to 7,000 paper sales. The Sunday Post, which once sold a mil-lion copies in a country with a population of five million, recorded sales of precisely 44,655 for Jan-uary. The Herald, which sold 120,000 copies when the Scottish Parliament was established, is now down to 13,000; five years ago it was double that. The only recent boost to circulation all round was the Queen dying, and that does not happen every decade.

The 2022 UK-wide results for Reach show that whilst its revenue was £600 million, stable compared with 2021, advertising revenue was down by 16 per cent with digital revenue only up by a single per cent. Profits fell by 27 per cent due to rising costs, particularly of newsprint. Unsurprising, share prices fell 80 per cent. At DC Thomson, the notoriously anti-union family firm has announced the closure of some magazines and has warned that 100 of its 270 journalist posts in Scotland are at risk.

Only local papers in rural areas are doing rea-sonably well, by which we mean they have declined less, perhaps because read-ers find reports of the re-sults of the local flower show the most exciting thing in their lives.

Nationalists, who like to blame the state of the Scottish press on newspa-pers not uncritically sup-porting the SNP, should note the sales of the Na-tional are about 4,000, which is less than half that of the Greenock Telegraph.

New Worker Supporters' Groups...

New Worker supporters groups exist to support the weekly newspaper of the New Communist Party.

Individual membership is £10.00 (8 Euros or \$10) for all or part of the calendar year and every mem-ber will receive a New Worker Supporters Group (NWSG) card and a copies of the Internal Bulletin for the year.

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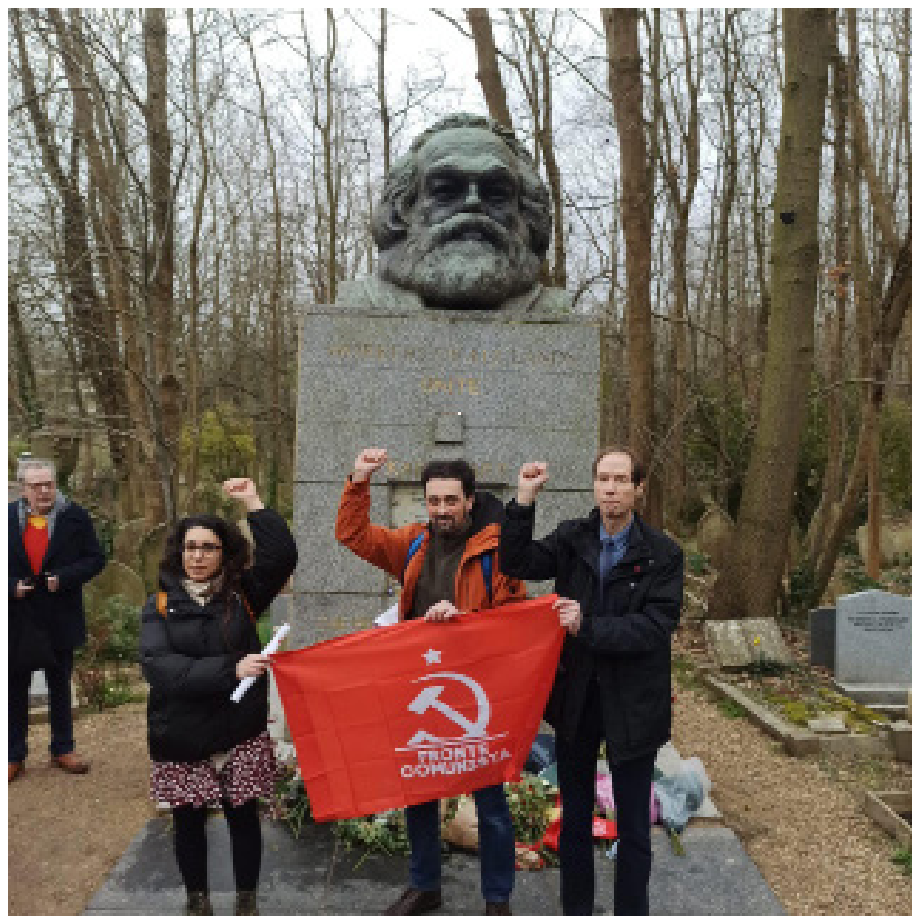
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His name will endure through the ages

by *New Worker*
correspondent

Communists and progressives gathered alongside representatives of the embassies of the socialist countries beside the grave of Karl Marx last Sunday, to commemorate his death on 14th March 1883.

The event was led by Communist Party of Britain (CPB) central committee member Alex Gordon, who said: "People have gathered at this spot for many years to mark Karl Marx's death. Marx spent the longest period of his life in London. At his funeral his life-long friend and comrade Frederick Engels gave the oration, on 17th March 1883, saying: "at quarter to three in



• Theo Russell and Italian comrades at the tomb

the afternoon the greatest living thinker ceased to think."

To commemorate his passing, the Marx Memorial Library has for many decades held an annual graveside oration at his burial place in Highgate Cemetery with leading members of the working-class movement paying tribute to Marx's enduring legacy to today's class struggles.

This year Fran Heathcote, national president of the Public and Commercial Services union, and CPB International Secretary Kevan Nelson, spoke about the current wave of strikes and the issues confronting trade unions in Britain.

Representatives of communist parties and the socialist countries were called on to lay flowers on Marx's grave, including the Cuban Ambassador, Barba-

ra Montalvo Alvarez, Guo Yuliang of the embassy of the People's Republic of China, and representatives of the Laotian and Vietnamese embassies.

Flowers were also laid by members of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the French Communist Party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Frente Comunista (Italy), the Communist Party of Italy, the Communist Party of Spain, the Tudeh Party of Iran, the Iraqi Communist Party, and Theo Russell of the New Communist Party of Britain.

Although only a handful of people attended Marx's burial in 1883, the words of Frederick Engels were to become reality: "His name will endure through the ages, and so also will his work."

My path to studying Chinese

by James Cheese-Probert

It is no secret that China has an incredibly rich, complex and ancient history and culture. Unfortunately, many people around the world do not have the privilege to experience this vibrant culture. Furthermore, speaking from a Western perspective, much of the exposure that the public receives is political commentary as opposed to cultural insight or historical examination.

My first exposure to Chinese culture came at a very early age, totally by chance. At 8-years-old, I sneaked into my grandfather's personal library and plucked a book from one of the many shelves. Blissfully ignorant, and simply curious, in retrospect, perhaps it was the intriguing foreign symbols on the spine, or perhaps the delicate artwork on

the cover that caught my attention. Nevertheless, the book turned out to be the *Tao Te Ching*, a deeply philosophical book that forms part of the core doctrine of Taoism. As an 8-year-old, the book's content was obviously lost on me, but it provided me an early connection to a beautiful and profound

inspired by Chinese traditional culture and martial arts such as *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat*. Both cartoons depict beautiful landscapes and architecture not too dissimilar from those found in classical Chinese paintings. This further developed my fascination



• Tourists in historic old Beijing

philosophical tradition that still influences me today.

Around this time, I also came across several cartoons that were heavily

with the rich and beautiful culture.

At school I began studying Latin and ancient Greek, in addition to developing competence

in French. My interest in languages developed early on, combining my love of travelling with my love of meeting new people. I always love hearing different perspectives and learning about countries and cultures. The linguistic proximity of Latin and ancient Greek to many modern European languages enabled me to experience the culture of my closest neighbours.

Later on, my interest in languages blossomed into exploring far-flung cultures on other continents. I wanted to challenge myself in a totally novel linguistic landscape and listen to the lives and stories of others in their own languages. I have been lucky enough to live in six different countries and have lived in China cumulatively for around three years. I loved every second I spent there; the people are friendly and hospitable, and there is never a shortage of things to see and do, people to meet and foods to enjoy.

Culture and food are closely connected and perhaps nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in China, a huge country which boasts 34 administrative divisions and is home to 56 ethnic groups, resulting in a uniquely diverse range of cuisines. Coming from London, which is a global and cosmopolitan city, Chinese restaurants can be found in every corner of the metropolis. Due to historic relations, many of these restaurants serve southern Chinese-style cuisine. In recent years there has been a rise in restaurants offering foods from other parts of China, such as Sichuan province or the country's North-east. I have introduced many of my friends to Chinese history and culture through a shared love of food – something we all share and which is necessary for life – but it is through this shared experience that one may be welcomed into a totally different historical tradition.

It is safe to say that my journey has only just begun, and so far I have met many friends along the way. These first steps are only a drop in the ocean of lifelong learning, but as the Chinese philosopher Laozi says: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

The author is an undergraduate student in Modern Chinese at the University of Cardiff

Beijing Review

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Donbas: Mariupol after the fighting

by Stefan Natke

This article, one of a series on the war in Ukraine, was published on 6th March in the left German daily newspaper Junge Welt. Its report on the reconstruction of a city on the coast of the Donbas region clashes with the propaganda in the corporate media.



• Mariupol: still scarred by war

Once again we are awakened at seven o'clock in the morning by the thunderous fire of heavy artillery. But this time the earth does not vibrate. Ljoschka, our constant companion, says: "Don't worry, this time they're ours; they're giving back what we got yesterday. Return shipment, so to speak."

Guillermo calls out: "Guys, there is running water, but only cold." After a shower, a quick breakfast and we're off again. "Dawai, dawai!" ... off we go on the bus to Mariupol.

Leaving Donetsk, we pass the soccer stadium. Further along in the suburbs, we pass shot-up factories and then, after the city exit check-point, we get on the highway to

Mariupol. Whereas in the previous days we drove over roads between Lugansk, Gorlovka and Donetsk full of large potholes, today we roar over a completely renovated highway with a perfect asphalt surface.

The transport of goods to Mariupol has absolute priority. We can see this for ourselves when we arrive. Although there are virtually no undamaged houses here, the renovation and construction work in

the city on the Sea of Azov is in full swing. As we drive into the centre, we see new windows being installed on several rows of houses.

An historic block of houses from the early Soviet era is being repaired by a Turkish company. With the help of the Turkish members of our group, we can talk to the workers.

Trucks loaded with rubble or building materials pass us continuously. Whilst old buildings in the city centre are being renovated, workers erect new buildings in open areas and build entire new construction districts on the outskirts of Mariupol. We have the opportunity to visit one of them and are even allowed to look at the apartments.

We speak with residents we meet on the street near the playgrounds. Some of them lived in the old buildings in the centre before but are now happy about the new apartments.

They also tell us how they suffered as [ethnic] Russians through the time before the intervention. "You were suddenly a foreigner in your own homeland. We never experienced anything like that before," one of the residents tells us.

Those whose previous homes were destroyed get a certificate that entitles them to a new place to stay. The destroyed furniture is also replaced by the state. There is no charge in the first year. After that, they must pay only the fees for electricity, water and heating.

The new construction projects began in the summer of 2022. The initial residents have already moved in, and new ones are moving in every day.

Then for us, it's off to the centre once again and we visit the city's train station, which is right by the sea. The burnt-out trains are still standing on the tracks and the destruction of the infrastructure is clearly visible. It will be

some time before it will be open for business here again.

We cannot visit the Azov Steelworks, which made the city world-famous months ago, because the fascist Aidar and Azov battalions had entrenched themselves there, but we can visit the city's market.

Hustle and bustle dominate, and an astonishing number of goods are offered. From vegetables to underwear to fried chicken legs, everything is there.

As always, we want to talk to the people on the street, and we reach out to a woman. The experiences she describes to us are moving, but she is glad that she can now breathe freely again and that the nightmare is over. On this day, the sun announces the approaching spring for the people of Mariupol. After a small snack at the market, we get back on our bus – the journey continues.

Junge Welt

American lies and fake news

by Zhong Sheng

An American journalist recently made public a series of Twitter files that exposed the US government's involvement in social media platforms and their deceptions in publicity.

The US government has long been spreading fake information and weaving a net of rumours to manipulate public opinion, demonise other countries and maintain US hegemony across the world.

Fabricating and spreading fake information is a common practice of the US government's lie-machine.

During the Cold War, the USA launched Opera-

tion Mockingbird, which enlisted at least 400 journalists and 25 large organisations around the world to fabricate fake news and manipulate public opinion.

In 2003, with only a test tube of undetermined white powder, or what some describe as "washing powder", the Americans accused Iraq of developing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and provoked the Iraq War. In 2016, it galvanised Syria's 'White Helmets' into making fake videos and spreading misinformation in an attempt to smear the Syrian government. It also resorted to a 'presumption of guilt' against China when tracing the origins of COVID 19.

Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo admitted that: "We lied, we cheated, we stole...it reminds you of the glory of the American experiment."

Over recent years, the USA has launched frequent public opinion and cognitive warfare to maintain its hegemony, taking fake information as a tool to oppress and contain other countries. It instigated 'colour' revolutions around the world, suppressed other countries' enterprises in the name of so-called national security, and fabricated big lies about China's Xinjiang such as "genocide" and "forced labour".

The USA has time and again whitewashed its subversion and infiltration

efforts; its bullying and robbery and trampling on lives, calling them "democratic progress", "maintaining justice" and "safeguarding human rights". This fully exposed the USA's hegemonic, domineering and bullying mentality.

Gordon Adams, professor emeritus at Washington's American University, noted that "concealment, deception and outright lies have characterised US national security policy for decades".

Framing other countries with fake information in cyberspace has now become a weapon of the 'New Cold War' of the USA.

A study by the Australia

Institute, a Canberra-based thinktank, identified 5,752 accounts that spread mis- and disinformation regarding COVID19 in 2020, many of which were bot-like accounts that had connections to the USA.

To spread fake information, the Americans have established a rumour network by launching covert influence operations and other similar strategies.

According to the report *Unheard Voice: Evaluating five years of pro-Western covert influence operations*, which was jointly issued by the Stanford Internet Observatory and Graphika, a social media analytics firm, accounts used in covert influence operations created fake personas and posed as media outlets to disseminate news materials of low credibility, and smeared and attacked relevant countries in a targeted manner in at least seven languages, including Russian, Arabic and Urdu.

The fabrication and spreading of lies by the USA has led to a constant decline in trust in the country amongst the

international community, including the American public.

According to a survey by the Gallup and Knight Foundation, half of the US respondents disagree with the statement that national news organisations do not intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public.

Another survey, conducted by *US News & World Report* and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, also indicated a 50 per cent drop in the world's trust in the USA from 2016, the largest decline in the world.

US Senator Rand Paul said during a hearing last year that the American government is the world's "greatest disseminator" of misinformation.

Fabricating and spreading lies will never expand US influence, but only lead to the bankruptcy of the country's credibility. The country should stop fooling the world and quit smearing other countries.

People's Daily (Beijing)

Turkey: They call us Cubans

by Roberto Morejón

They greeted them with a hand on their chest as a sign of gratitude. Despite the language barriers, Turks managed to convey their gratitude to a brigade of Cuban doctors who came to assist them in the aftermath of an earthquake that caused the painful loss of more than 45,000 lives.

The earthquake of last 6th February and the subsequent series of aftershocks mobilised international solidarity towards Turkey, and amongst those who arrived in Ankara were the Cuban doctors.

On their return after



• The Cuban medical brigade returns to Havana

completing their mission, the professionals are once again adapting to the traditional heat of the tropics, after enduring

freezing temperatures in the Eurasian country.

This adversity, which forced them to wear more clothing than expected

thanks to donations from the Friendship Association between the two nations, was not an obstacle to tending for more than 3,700

patients during their 24-day stay and performing 60 surgeries and 6,000 nursing procedures.

Their contribution was decisive in a region overwhelmed by the total or partial destruction of more than 230,000 buildings and the evacuation of more than three million people.

The people welcomed them in the southern province of Karaman Barach, the epicentre of the earthquakes, where the Cubans work together with the local colleagues at a high technical level.

The Cubans attended mainly to the poly-traumatised and also patients with other ailments inherent to the strong shock received.

Cuba is proud of the exemplary work carried

out by its doctors in Turkey, as is usual in this type of missions, carried out temporarily or for prolonged periods since 1963.

Cuba's white-coated professionals have served since that year in 165 countries and today they are present in 56 nations.

The imperialist press usually speaks very little of such self-sacrificing work of Cuban doctors and when they make an exception, they often echo negative campaigns launched by the US administrations.

All in vain because in many latitudes the altruism of the Cubans is acclaimed and welcomed with recognition.

Radio Havana Cuba

Battling for Bakhmut

by our Eastern
European Affairs
correspondent

Fierce fighting continues in the streets of Bakhmut as Russian forces battle to drive the Ukrainians out of their last strongholds in the western part of the strategic city in central Donbas. Russia has dismissed US claims that a Russian warplane downed an American spy drone over the Black Sea, and US imperialism's efforts to kill the Chinese peace initiative are faltering as France breaks ranks to discuss the proposals in Beijing.

Wagner units, Russia's 'foreign legion', are tightening their grip around Bakhmut whose only road in and out of the city is now under fire by Russian troops. On the diplomatic front, Chinese efforts to end the conflict continue with Chinese leader Xi Jinping set for talks over the next few weeks with Vladimir Putin and French president Emmanuel Macron. Xi is

also, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, going to hold a video conference with Zelensky – although this has yet to be confirmed in Beijing.

In Washington, however, the American focus has been on the loss of one of their combat drones, brought down, they say, by a Russian war-plane that dumped fuel on the remote-controlled drone to damage or blind it and then clipped it to tip it into the sea.

US European Command (EUCOM) was not happy about what they said was an "unsafe and unprofessional intercept" over the Black Sea. Nor was US President Joe Biden. In Washington Biden's spokesman John Kirby said the incident was "unsafe and reckless". Kirby also said the USA "will continue to fly in international airspace and over international waters, including over the Black Sea".

The Kremlin says they had nothing to do with the crash, which they say was down to mishandling by the drone's controller. The American drone fell into the Black Sea "due to its own sharp manoeuvring, Russian fighters did not come into

contact with it and did not use weapons" the Russian Defence Ministry said.

But no-one should be surprised at American hypocrisy. In Moscow a leading academician said double standards are one of the major characteristic features of American foreign policy. Dmitry Suslov, the deputy director of research at the Russian Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, said: "The United States used military force and used their aviation in order to destroy Chinese civilian meteorological balloons, which did not pose any military danger to the United States, just because those balloons were above the United States or approaching the American territory. At the same time, the United States criticised Russia for intercepting their military drone, which is basically an attack drone and it is also an instrument of espionage."

US job market falters as bank goes under

by Masao Suzuki

Cracks in the economy began to show up as the Silicon Valley Bank,

based in Santa Clara, California, just north of San José, was shut down on 10th March. The bank was the 18th largest bank in the USA, and mainly served high-tech startups, venture capitalists and wealthy individuals.

The recent slowdown in Silicon Valley and interest rate hikes by the US central bank, the Federal Reserve, undid the bank. A run on the bank developed, as depositors pulled their money out of the bank. The bank was forced to sell US government bonds at a loss because of higher interest rates and tried to raise more money or sell itself. When this failed, the bank was shut down by California regulators and control handed over the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, or FDIC.

This bank failure is the largest since 2008 when Washington Mutual was taken over by JP Morgan Chase during the financial crisis. The failure of Silicon Valley Bank followed the announcement by Silvergate that it would be winding down because of losses in crypto-currency markets. These two bank failures in one week shook Wall Street, extending the sell-off in stocks and

sending Bitcoin back below \$20,000.

Another sign of a slowdown came on 9th March when the Department of Labor reported that new claims for unemployment insurance rose more than 20 per cent, to 211,000 for the week ending 4th March. Whilst the total number is relatively low, this is the biggest increase in new applications in eight months.

The Labor Department's report on jobs and unemployment released the next day also showed a slower job market. Some 311,000 net new jobs were created in February, a good pace but far lower than the more than 500,000 new jobs in January. Industries hit hardest by the 2020 pandemic were still in recovery mode, led by gains in the leisure and hospitality. But the announced job cuts by tech firms and falling online sales caused losses in information, transportation and warehouse jobs. The slowdown broadened across industries, as the percentage of industries showing job losses grew from 32 per cent in January to 44 per cent in February.

The unemployment rate in February ticked up by two-tenths of one per cent from the record low in January, coming in at 3.6 per cent. But whilst the unemployment rate for white Americans only rose at 0.1 per cent, jobless rates of oppressed nationalities all increased by much more, with the highest increase amongst Latinos, whose unemployment rose 0.8 per cent to a total of 5.3 per cent.

The unemployment rate for teenagers (16–19 years old) and those who had not graduated from high school saw their unemployment rates rise by 0.8 and 1.1 per cent, respectively. A big surge in the number of people unemployed for less than five weeks increased 17.5 per cent to 2.3 million, showing that job losses were driving the rising unemployment rates.

Average hourly wages were up 0.2 per cent but average hours of work per week fell by 0.3 per cent, meaning that average weekly earnings fell in February. These were money wages, however, whilst purchasing power fell even more because of continuing inflation.

Fightback News (USA)