

COMMUNIST WOMEN

November 2022 | 1



Stage 1 down in the Gender Reform Bill

SCOTLAND

THE INTRODUCTION of 'Self-ID' of legal sex looks inevitable in Scotland by spring 2023 with all the predictable consequences that will follow. The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill completed Stage 1 on 27 October, as expected.

However the grassroots feminist campaign against the bill successfully brought about the first backbench revolt and the first ministerial resignation over policy in the SNP's 15 year term in office. Unfortunately the SNP rebels were not joined by any Labour MSPs, who were whipped to vote in favour. Public opinion is firmly against the bill. Even the short consultation survey conducted by the parliament's Equalities Committee found that 59% of people disagreed with the purpose of the bill.

This is a class issue, with working class women and girls already the most exposed to risk and experiencing harm as women's spaces are opened to men. It is also about sexuality; self-ID of legal sex affects the rights

of everyone who is same-sex attracted. Lesbian women speaking out about this have suffered the worst abuse and ostracism.

What's the problem? The original GRA was intended to benefit the tiny number of people who have a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and undergo gender reassignment surgery as a medical intervention. However the bill will allow anyone to change their legal sex based on self-declaration only (self-ID). Applicants simply need to make a declaration that they have lived in "their acquired gender" for 3 months (reduced from 2 years), and intend to do so permanently. Making a false declaration will be an offence. However as the bill does not define "acquired gender" or what it means to "live" in it, it will be impossible to know if a declaration is false.

The Scottish Government has ignored the EHRC's warnings about how GRA reform interacts with the 2010 Equality Act and with legal protections against sex based discrimination e.g. equal pay, maternity. But also about the cross-border implications within the UK. When the Act passes Scotland will have a different legal definition of a man

and a woman from England and Wales. There is nothing to prevent cross-border 'tourism' to obtain a GRC.

The government has also ignored the warnings around safeguarding. The bill creates a loophole for dangerous men to change their legal identities and gain access to women and children – and particularly to the most vulnerable groups.

The unintended consequences of lowering the minimum age from 18 to 16 years have also not been addressed. Scottish Government education policy has been captured by government funded trans rights lobby groups. Scottish schools guidance promotes the social transitioning of children based on affirmation. The interim report of the Cass Review is clear that the social transitioning of children is not a neutral act. Social and medical transitioning predominantly involves adolescent girls, with an over-representation of young lesbians, those with care experience, and with autism spectrum disorder. Despite the closure of the Tavistock, the Scottish Govt has announced no changes to gender identity services in Scotland. The new model of care in England is holistic and child-centred. In Scotland the government is increasing investment in a service model now known to fail children. It also plans to introduce a bill banning conversion therapy for transgender people, which would in effect criminalise the new model of care in England.

The Communist Party's Scottish Committee submitted a response to the bill consultation (see link) and Edinburgh Communists and the YCL joined the Women's Protest outside the Scottish Parliament on 6 October.

But the Reform Act will almost certainly end up in the courts. In November 2022 the Scottish Government returns to court for the second judicial review of its guidance on the Gender Representation on Public Boards Act. This contravenes the Equality Act by changing the legal definition of sex in Scotland. It is shameful that the donations of thousands of ordinary women are needed to fund legal action to defend their rights against their own government.

This fight will go all the way.

More information:

★ CPB response:

<https://tinyurl.com/49bb2m5r>

★ Murray Hunter Blackburn Briefing:

<https://tinyurl.com/57n3v3ke>

★ ForWomen Scotland briefing

<https://tinyurl.com/y39hsrtz>

Issues facing women today

Elle Zwandahl

THE ISSUES FACING women in 2022 were those facing women in 1982 so in 40 years, little has changed. I can remember back in the 1980s speaking at Marxism workshops about class and women's oppression being interlinked – indeed, an essential component for the capitalist class to function, is to keep women oppressed and super-exploited by participation of the labour force as well as having reproductive means to bear children.

The so called 'women's movement' has always been a part of my activism; however, as we all know, it is not one homogenous entity. After four 'waves of feminism' we still need to address the issues around women's oppression and class exploitation. We can only do this by being actively involved as communist party members linking up with progressive alliances and including the dual oppression of our Black and other ethnic sisters. Racist and sexist exploitation is part of the capitalist agenda that continues to subordinate us internationally. EG: Cheaper Black and female labour that means we form part of the exploited working class.

Rising rates of misogyny, violence and racism is the highest it has ever been; (UN Secretary General).

I have spent my life campaigning, attending protests from Greenham Common to the anti-war marches in the late 1990's.

I was a 'real Labour' councillor in a Conservative town in the East of England, whilst bringing up a baby as a lone parent, working and fighting the institutionalised sexism within the council.

The obstacles are still there; trade unions should play an integral role in help eradicating this, progressive campaigns should always have on the agenda the Woman Question, not as an aside, but as part of the class struggle. We must organise and actively support our younger comrades in the YCL and beyond to become the future voice and leaders of our revolutionary movement as well as collectively giving a voice and solidarity to our sisters all over the world.

An old newspaper clipping of my first strike action as a 12-year-old in school; strike action against an increase in bus fares.

We need a new Women's Liberation Movement as part of the Communist Party of Britain's new agenda



Published by the Communist Party Women's Commission November 2022



YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

A woman's place is in the revolution!

WOMEN NOW account for 72.2% of the workforce in the United Kingdom.

However, we are still in charge of care duties and are subjected to the double burden of capitalism and patriarchy, which condemns us to a life in worsened conditions.

Young women in All-Britain are the most affected between the union of capitalism and patriarchy. The expense of the cost of the living crisis onslaught against women and girls has resulted in the normalisation of prostitution and pornography among us. Sexual exploitation has become a way for

young women to make more money and pay for their studies or obligations.

All around the world reproductive rights are under attack. The revoke of Roe v. Wade in the United States, Italy's new far right president Georgia Meloni defending Law 194 in Italy, which aims to "protect life from its inception," the harassment of women at abortion clinics in Britain and so on are just a few examples of how capitalism threatens women's own health on behalf their benefits- more workforce, difficult assistance for women's workers...

No government has been able to change women's condition in society. The normalisation of prostitution, pornography, women's barriers to the workforce... only contribute to the dichotomy between the traditional role of women and the sexualisation of our bodies.

The Young Communist League's women's conference takes place on 26 November in Ruskin House, London.

We will discuss the topics mentioned previously, our role in the trade union movement, the situation of women internationally such as Cuba or Vietnam, etc... We are setting up a member-only gender-based workshop and a wider discussion about sex and gender only for members of the YCL and CPB.

The Women's Conference aims the discussion and advance in our political positions on women's liberation. If you are interested in attending, contact women@ycl.org.uk.



"Much depends on us, the women's workers. The days are passed when the success of the workers depends only in the organisation of men." Alexandra Kollontai.



FELICIA BROWNE

Felicia Mary Browne (18 February 1904 – 25 August 1936) was an English artist and member of the Communist Party. She was the first British volunteer to die in the Spanish Civil War. Her militia attempted to sabotage an Aragon railway line. In a surprise attack by fascist forces that greatly outnumbered them, an Italian miliciano was wounded. Felicia went to his rescue and both were cut down by machine-gun fire and killed, probably on 22 August 1936.

Communism and Christianity

M. Ruskin
RELIGION

The funeral of Queen Elizabeth show-cased what might be called the unacceptable face of Christianity, the unholy alliance of Church and State. Throughout 19 September, we witnessed the established church attempting to provide a veneer of divine sanction on class, money, power and - perhaps worst of all - the military. It was not always thus. Socialism and Christianity were once close allies and should be once more

In its earliest years, Christianity was a protest religion, with - in the words of Liberation Theology - a preferential option for the poor. Throughout the Gospels, Christ himself repeatedly showed himself on the side of the marginalized and oppressed. This was a stance taken up with gusto by the early Church. In its first three centuries, Christianity was very much the champion of the poor.

There is crucial evidence in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles to prove that the first generation of believers practised a proto-communism in which everything was held in common. This was an ideal later developed by monastic communities.

Christianity was also, and this is extremely important, a broadly pacifist religion. This is again following in the footsteps of its founder, who explicitly cautioned against the use of violence. Very often, the early Christians refused to serve in the army. There are many second and third century martyrs who forfeited their lives because of their pacifism. St Martin of Tours is perhaps the first conscientious objector, still celebrated as such by the Peace Movement.

Everything changed with the Conversion of Constantine in the fourth century and the adoption of Christianity as a state religion. Faith could then be used to prop up the most repressive regimes and the most malignant of policies, from the colonization of South America to criminalization of homosexuality.

There have, of course, been pockets of resistance to this dominant narrative, particularly with the rise of the Peace Churches (the Quakers and the Mennonites) in the 17th century, the influence of Christian Socialism in 19th century Britain and, as has already been mentioned, Liberation Theology in 20th century South America.

It is the purpose of this essay to rally Christians to return to their roots, to the fundamentals of their faith, and to Communists, woman and men, to welcome this powerful ally.

On overcoming the inequalities of life

Jean Turner
LIBERATION

AT AGE 93, and reliant on carers for everything has fortified my views on the vital contribution made by women to our very existence.

While, as communists we recognise the importance of the class struggle in the achievement of socialism, this is sometimes defined as the industrial struggle only. But there are several strands to this struggle. Overcoming the existence of inequalities in the life of workers is also vitally important.

The fight for decent wages must include equal rights for women and BAME people.

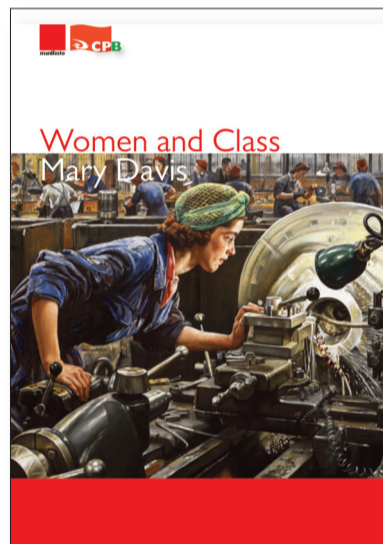
My carers come into the latter categories and despite the efforts of trade unions for fair wages for a fair day's work I can see how women have been brain-washed into accepting lower wages per hour for the punishing work they do as carers. The fact is that whole families and especially children are dependent on their income per week and without a second income, which is rare, to boost their earnings the families could starve and lose their home. This means that without the industrial struggle embracing their case they have no choice but to accept lower wages.

It is a dilemma faced by millions of women workers every day and is not a unique one within the labour force. It

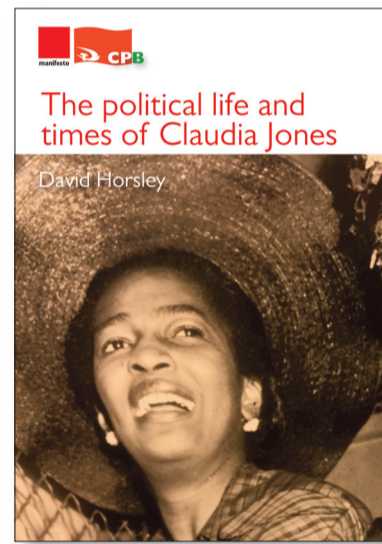
has been at the root of family life for centuries.

From an early age. I was conscious of how class distinction affected our family and how badly my parents were treated. This meant that I paused my education at 19 and found work to help them out of the humiliating dependence they had on greedy and selfish employers. And I've fought their case and others ever since while holding down a full-time job, rearing three children and completing my studies. The Communist Party has been my inspiration in this for over 70 years.

JEAN TURNER IS FORMER CHAIR OF THE LONDON COMMUNIST PARTY



Women and Class
by Mary Davis



The political life and times of Claudia Jones
by David Horsley



Communist Party 2021 Congress Report
£2

Study notes on Women and Class



Elle Zwandahl
WORKSHOP REPORT

I'm not going to discuss the historical position of women's oppression, we should be aware of this by having read Engels *Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State*, or Mary Davis *Women and Class*. We know that it wasn't until the ownership of private property and class society that women were then considered oppressed and the 'weaker sex'. Prior to this, societies were largely matrilineal.

Patriarchal society appeared at the same juncture as private property, with the purpose of passing on wealth via the male line. It was then that working women became oppressed in their roles in the workplace as well as in the family home.

We know that Lenin was an advocate of equality for women, he stressed the need to understand the real material conditions and circumstances of women and highlighted the importance of freeing women from domestic work in order to bring them into the political struggle, as well as the need to educate and challenge patriarchal attitudes of male comrades.

Marxist-feminist analysis is a scientific one. It isn't a special interest, if you have a commitment to structural and economic change, then you have to be committed to Marxist feminism.

In what ways are women exploited through the capitalist system? How does patriarchy fit into this?

Women constitute over 70 per cent of the workforce, over 54 per cent of trade union membership, but are twice as likely to be poor, known as the feminisation of poverty, they earn 47 per cent of the National Minimum Wage.

Zero contract hours, insecure employment, the gig economy, housing, healthcare- and black women and women of colour suffer more than dual oppression known as misogynoir; their position as women and being black means they experience both misogyny and racism.

Half the world's population are women who sell their labour, yet receive the worst oppressive wages and conditions. Wages are the product of labour; surplus value is the unpaid wage of the labour women have made; this is then the profit of the capitalist.

Women's position in regard to the means of production- the material interest in earning money results in higher levels of profit to the capitalist class.

We also have the added exploitation of unpaid labour and reproduction. Women contribute to unpaid labour, housework, childcare, and as carers, results in a disproportionately deeper entrenchment of oppression.

I was listening to Radio 4 the other day - the term 'destitution' was used several times; the true meaning of this word is; 'poverty so extreme that one lacks the means to provide for oneself'.

Over five million children are living in food poverty, over 17 million families in deep poverty-we are living in the most difficult of times; end stage capitalism is both exacerbating inequality, intensifying poverty and perpetuating instability. This is no accident, it is deliberate. It is deliberately divisive; men earn more than women despite the Equal Pay Act of 1979; the figures are that women earn just 41 per cent of male earners. And this is despite any women's rights legislation arising from the trade unions, guided by the Communist Party, women's organisations and Left activists.

The Secretary General of the UN has recently commented that misogyny and violence towards women is at the highest rates ever. In 28 weeks in early 2021, we all know about the murder of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa, but how many women were murdered by men? Over 80 women and counting.

- Women are used as a weapon of war-rape.
- Covid; increased levels of domestic abuse ever; and latest football championships increase the levels of DA.



A CHARTER FOR WOMEN

The Charter for Women does not offer new policy but instead seeks to bring together the key demands for which progressive women are fighting in various arenas. The charter covers three broad areas, social policy, the labour market and the labour movement.

WOMEN constitute half the working population in Britain and yet the gap between men's and women's earnings is widening despite the fact that girls perform better than boys in public examinations. (55% of girls gain five or more A-C grades at GCSE compared with 44% of boys.)

Women over 21 have had the right to vote since 1928 and yet only 27% of local authority councillors are women, 18% of all MPs and 24% of MEPs are women. In the home, up to one in 10 women experience domestic violence each year, one in four will experience this type of abuse at some point in their lifetime. An incident of domestic violence takes place in Britain every six to 20 seconds.

The oppression of women is consistently denied or trivialised by the mass media and the state. New Labour claims that they have made great progress to equalise opportunity for women – the facts do not bear this out. On the left, there is a tendency to subsume women's issues within the general class struggle, or to relegate them to a secondary position. The right have always trivialised or ignored our concerns.

Women's membership of trade unions is rising. However, women are not represented in proportion to their numbers within the trade unions. The position for black women is even worse.

Women have always fought for their long-denied rights; we must do so again.

We hope to inspire a new and inclusive socialist feminist theory and practice that will motivate a new generation of women activists and revitalise the fight for women's liberation. One of the ways of doing this is to unite around a **campaigning programme**. This is the purpose of the **Charter for Women**. It does not offer new policy but instead seeks to bring together the key demands for which progressive women are fighting in various arenas. The charter covers three broad areas, social policy, the labour market and the labour movement. It raises the main progressive

concerns/campaigning points under each heading. We want it to be discussed, adopted and promoted by all progressive women's groups and organisations.

For us the price of progress is eternal vigilance – we must ensure that women's demands are heard and acted on

In society

- Highlight the feminisation of poverty and campaign to reverse cuts in welfare state and public services.
- Expose the ideologies that are used to perpetuate women's inequality (for example, the notion of family values and the family wages).
- Draw attention to the role of the media and other cultural agencies in shaping gender identities that reinforce the unequal relationships between men and women.
- Campaign for greater support for lone mothers, carers and women subjected to domestic and other violence.
- End the oppression of Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans women
- Improve access and rights to abortion.
- Ensure that women and girls are entitled to the full range of free and high quality educational provision (from nursery to university) and subject choice.
- End women pensioner poverty by paying men and women equal State Pensions and restoring the link to average earnings or prices, whichever is the higher to at least two-thirds of male median earnings.
- Demand statutory pay audits.
- Equalise opportunities and improve conditions for women workers.
- Demand full-time right for part time workers.
- Root out bullying and sexual harassment.
- End casualisation and especially zero hours contracts.
- Reduce job segregation by providing training opportunities for women in non-traditional areas.

- Campaign for affordable child care including pre-, after-school and holiday provision.
- Campaign for a shorter working week for all.
- Improve maternity leave and pay, including paid paternity leave.
- Campaign for a change in the qualification criteria in the Industrial Injuries/Disability Benefit scheme, to end discrimination against women and in particular to extend the list of disorders in the prescribed disease schedules

At work

- Campaign to end institutional and other forms of racism and ensure that the status and pay of Black women workers is a bargaining priority.
- Campaign to reduce the gender pay gap and highlight its causes
- End job segregation by improving training and opportunities for women.
- Ensure that unions fight more equal value claims.
- Campaign to change equal pay law to permit class actions (group claims) and remove employer get out clauses.
- Campaign to raise the level of national minimum wage to at least half, and rising

In the labour movement

- Tackle the under-representation of women in the labour and trade union movement structures by proportionality and other measures.
- Ensure the accountability of women's structures to women.
- Maintain and extend women's committees, women's courses and other measures to ensure that women's issues/concerns are collectively articulated and actioned.
- Campaign to raise the profile of the TUC, STUC and Welsh TUC's women's conferences as the parliaments of working women.



Sisters

- 2 may day greetings
- 3 cost of living crisis
- 4 rebuild the nhs
- 5 fighting outsourcing
- 6 say no to nato
- 7 women and climate

National Assembly of Women
72 Beaconsfield Road,
Coventry CV2 4AR

Email – naw@sisters.org.uk

● Police recorded a 7 per cent increase from the previous year in domestic abuse offences, between March and June 2020 in England. Figures rose each month compared to less than 15 per cent in the previous two years.

There were 64 domestic murders in England and Wales recorded by the police between January and June 2020, this then increased further see below, end of report; (81 murdered women's names).

There was also an increase in demand for domestic abuse services during the pandemic, women faced increasing difficulties in seeking safety, the reality is that the Tory governments over the years have reduced any funding to Women's Aid.

Military, NATO, Media, Weapons, history of war, pornography, sex work, medically controlling women's bodies, over 60% of women needing gynae appts are still on a waiting list two years post covid, housing, diminishing and undermining sex-based rights of women = all created by men.

There is casual condescension towards women, on a daily basis there is mansplaining, hepeating, manspreading, man slamming. A male comrade stressed that the speaker refrain from using acronyms; may I politely request that if male comrades do not know the terms, then look them up.

Over 300 decades of oppression for women and it is divide and rule; why? It benefits capitalism.

Women bear the biggest burden of austerity, the cost-of-living crisis, yet we play a vital role in regard to the means of production. Capitalists benefit from us.

This also means that this creates the material conditions towards revolution and system change. Capitalism doesn't hate women because we're weak, they hate us because we're powerful.

What can be done?

- Trade unions need to step up.
- The Morning Star needs to keep to its commitment of making it more 'female friendly'. (As per CP Women Workplan).
- All communist men to read *Women and Class*; given a copy on membership?
- Women's input in every campaign; eg; local campaigns that put women's issues at the top of the agenda.
- Monitor progress and membership levels of women in the CPB- currently only 21%- this is not good enough.
- Strategic vision; use the Charter for Women as a campaigning tool.
- Roles of women within the party.
- Regular reports from branches and districts from women.

Questions for group discussion;

- What is the biggest concern for lack of women's participation in the cpb?
- What can we do as communists to eradicate inequality and misogyny?
- What can we all do to ensure women's voices are heard?
- How can we make women's rights and sex based materialism a priority?

Feedback report from the contributors who attended the college

congress members involved in the congress workshop; An afternoon of debate and challenge on the topic of women and the Communist Party.

I collated the post-it notes from all the participants; (5 women and over 25 men). Having read through the responses from an afternoon of sharing ideas to help improve the position of women, male comrades proved themselves to be allies, although much more education is needed in order to prevent 'the woman question' not appearing as an aside or tagged on the end of each agenda.

*Inequality in society is to some extent reflected in the Party. It is self-replicating. Sadly, the Party at grassroots level has normalised this.

● The Party lacks a strong women's voice to raise 'women's concerns.' It therefore presents itself as intimidating, unwelcoming and inconvenient to women. (EG: times of meetings, men engaging in 'traditional female roles' such as childcare to support attendance).

● Men dominate public and private space as well as dominating the conversation, men want authority, it is exclusive and off putting for women. Political engagement has to be worthwhile for women.

● Women have to bear the physical day to day tasks and also bear the intellectual labour of responsibility; EG; appointments for doctors/dentists/inoculations/homework, alongside bringing up children, there is the added insecurity and stress of low wage, part time, zero hours contracts in work, this

makes them/us time poor.

● We have to name it; in fighting inequality, call it out. Use language that is inclusive and challenge discrimination from men. Women are 51% of the class we're trying to organise and lead. There has to be a shift in this power imbalance.

● Class nature of language is authoritarian, used specifically to oppress women. The Party needs to use language that matches the material reality of women's class position.

● Men have to recognise that they must cede their power and actively plan to 'feminise' the party. Women's empowerment will have a cost on men, but this will rebalance and address stereotypes.

● 'Feminise The Demands'.

● Male allies in the Party and in the workplace need to acknowledge and reflect upon the class position of women and be vocal, in the office, in the pub. Actively acknowledge women's skills.

● The Women's Commission is an active tool that all districts should be consulting with.

● All male comrades should be given a copy of *Women and Class* by Mary Davis. Everyone should be cognisant of this book, along with the Charter for Women.

● The Trades Union Movement needs to step up. Male trade unionists need to be vocal about the inequality of women on all levels of the capitalist system. Challenge liberal, gender stereotypes, challenge through education, challenge entrenched ideas and liberal ideologies that pervade society and normalise Communist thinking.

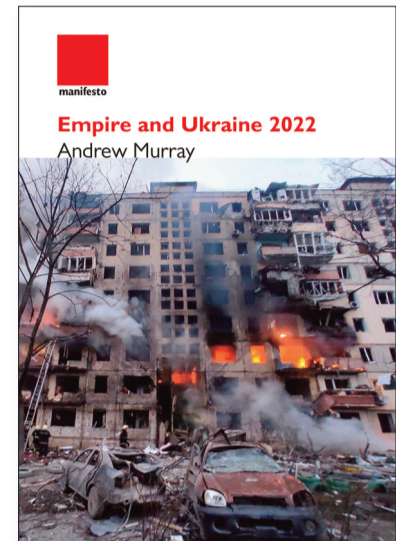


NATO WAR ON GERMANS

“The idea that we are punishing Putin by impoverishing millions of families in Germany and destroying our industry while Gazprom is making record profits – how stupid is that?”
Sahra Wagenknecht Bundestag deputy and former co-chair of Die Linke



The programme of the Communist Party – *Britain's Road to Socialism* – is now available as an audiobook. The first instalment was launched at the TUC on 20 October.
 The audiobook is free, though donations to cover the cost and future productions are welcome and is available at <https://www.comunistparty.org.uk/listentosocialism> and on the Communist Party YouTube channel.
 The audiobook is voiced in a full range of accents and dialects and plans are in hand to produce a Welsh language version. You can now listen to socialism, on the bus, in a train, in your car, while on your way to work or even while doing the shopping!
 The audiobook is in a format that works effortlessly with all mobile devices and computers.



▲ The pamphlet is £2.50 from www.manifestopress.coop. Get it with the original book – now available for a knockdown price of £8

Stop violence against women

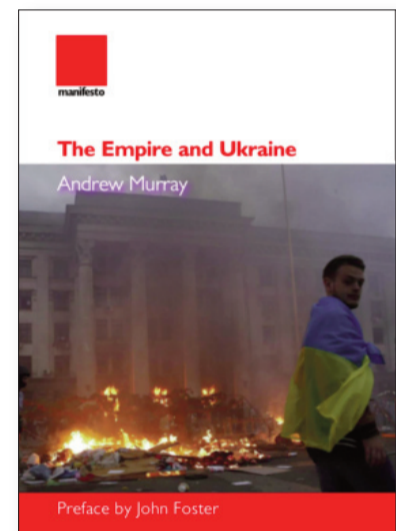


Jade Welburn
CAMPAIGNING

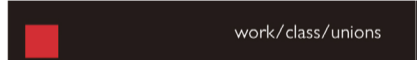
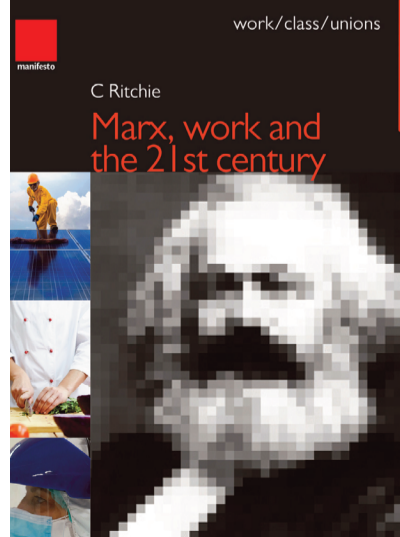
The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day.
 It was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organising strategy by individuals and organisations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.
 In support of this civil society initiative, the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign (UNiTE campaign) calls for global actions to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts, and share knowledge and innovations. The global theme this year is “UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls”.

Unions and the capitalist crisis

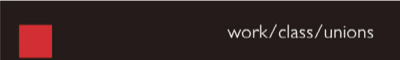
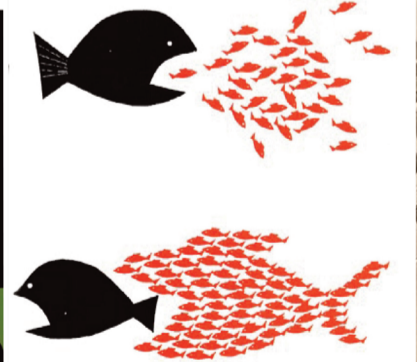
The present strike wave is reviving militant trade unionism in new and innovative ways. Communist trade unionists are in the thick of these struggles and drawing on their experience and the history of the working class movement have set out the Communist Party's ideas on building and rebuilding the trade union movement.
 This new pamphlet tackles the position of unions in Britain today and focusses on the battle for leadership and how left unity and organisation be built.
 Giving priority to building unity in the workplace and the unions the pamphlet tackles the issues faced by Broad Left organisations. Drawing on more than 100 years of deep involvement in the working class movement and in particular, the 1970s class battles the pamphlet sets out the role of the Communist Party and argues the case for socialism and working class state power.



The Great Money Trick
 Adapted from Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Dicks*
 Illustrated by Andy Vine
 Essay by Jenny Farrell



Our trade unions
 What comes next after the summer of 2022?



Class against class



Coming this autumn in our new series *work/class/unions* **Class against class** by Mike Squires on the critical period when the Communist Party built its industrial strength and launched the *Daily Worker*

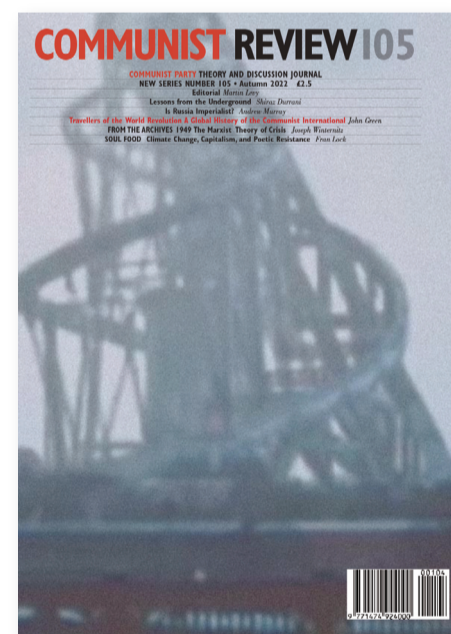


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