



1st May: International Workers Day

The Plebs News



<https://www.facebook.com/SheffieldCentralCLPEducationPage>

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May 2021

And the Covid Shambles Continues: Time for an Inquiry



Over 17 Million Cases: The Coronavirus Crisis Deepens in India

- Over 2,000 deaths a day, death toll could be 5 times the Govt. 195,000 deaths
- Hospital oxygen shortage and price gouging on private supplies
- India has licenses to manufacture the U.S.'s Novavax and Johnson & Johnson shots, but neither are authorized for use in India
- Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and AstraZeneca have paid out \$26 billion in dividends and stock buybacks to their shareholders in the past 12 months
- private hospitals were allowed to charge ₹250 per dose, costing up to ₹500 for full vaccination, more than a days wage for many
- Govt allowing vaccine manufacturers to dictate prices per dose for state governments and private hospitals.

Left Voice

A timeline of the plague year

With the liberal press unwilling to even try to hold them to account, history needs the true story of the Tories' Covid failures. IAN SINCLAIR introduces his new comprehensive report on the scandal that cost thousands of lives. Partly in response to the media's poor performance at the beginning of the pandemic, since April 2020 Rupert Read and I have been compiling a detailed timeline of the government's response to coronavirus. *Free e-book and report*

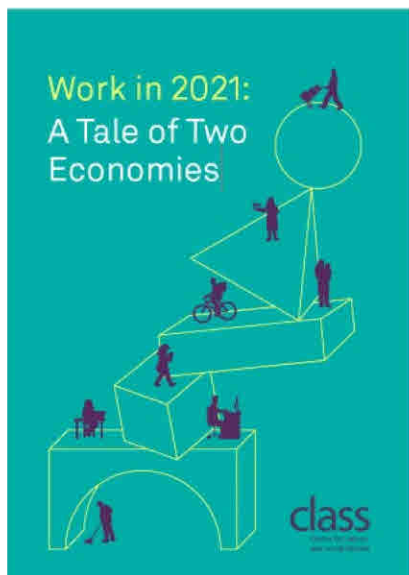
There's still time to attend or watch previous sessions of the Peoples Covid Inquiry



Who will hold the Government to account- Article

What will the workplace look like post-pandemic?

A new report from the Centre for Labour & Social Studies



The pandemic has illuminated how millions of people are struggling to feed their families with the wages they earn doing unsafe and insecure work. The pandemic has spot-lighted sweatshops in Leicester, the appalling conditions of meat processing factories and it has created a situation where NEU members have been even more starkly exposed to the deprivation faced by many children they teach. The pandemic should be seen as a glimpse into the future. It has provided an opportunity to see what awaits us if we do not commit to a significant change in trajectory, but it is also a chance to understand the changes required. We have seen that our current path has created two separate economies where some are left exposed to the increasing volatility of both the natural world and economic shifts, while others shelter in physical and financial safety.

How has the Pandemic Impacted the World of Work?

Whichever metric we chose to look at, at a national level, the past year has been devastating for the economy and for working people. Unemployment peaked at 5.1% in December, a 36% increase from the year before. Open vacancies more than halved between March and June. In 2020 there were 2.47 million redundancies, almost double the number in 2019. But even these dire figures do not reveal the full severity of the situation.

36% Unemployment **97%** Redundancies **58%** Vacancies

A REASON TO ORGANISE

Amongst the gloom described in previous chapters, there has been a clear trend of increased worker organisation. Increased and broadened membership, renewed engagement and new forms of organising have all been seen across the movement. Additionally, the pandemic has provided clear examples of the protection offered by established trade union power.

Throughout our interviews, we heard how industries and workplaces that are heavily unionised were able to win better protections from the economic impacts of the pandemic than others. And in industries like hospitality unions are now making headway in recruitment.

Key Statistics

Over 2.7m

redundancies since the furlough scheme began.

The UK's increase in unemployment is **above the OECD & EU 27** averages.

Last summer, under-25s were **three times more likely** to lose their job than over-35s.

If you are both black and under 25, you are **9 times** less likely to find work than white adults.

7% of those surveyed by CLASS had lost their main job.

18% were unable to pay household bills.

Only 53% agreed that they felt financially secure enough to isolate when guidelines suggested.

10% were unable to pay their mortgage or rent.

33% had to use savings during the pandemic, but **27%** increased their savings.

35% of workers under 35 have been pressured to go to work by their employer when they felt guidelines said they shouldn't.

40% think the last 10 years of the Government had a negative impact on the response to the pandemic.

4 times as many Care and Social Workers said it had a negative impact than positive.

37% of people who worked from home during the pandemic said it increased their workload.

50% of education workers think the same.

57% of under-35s working from home said they felt pressured to return to work before they were comfortable.

When Picasso came to Sheffield: The Second International Peace Congress 1950



An International Peace Congress in Sheffield - 1950

(Angela Martin, Sheffield Creative Action for Peace)

On November 12th, 1950, Pablo Picasso got out of a train in Sheffield to be greeted with a bunch of flowers. He was, though, asked to hand the flowers back as they were needed to welcome other guests arriving for the 2nd International Peace Congress, held in Sheffield for 'want of a suitable venue in London.

2,500 delegates were expected, from all over the world; in the event only 5-600 arrived, because visa requests for the majority *had been deliberately refused by the then Labour Government in order to scupper the gathering.*

Picasso turned out to be the star delegate, and his visit spawned many stories, particularly about the - few or numerous - drawings he left behind, of the dove of peace. His visit was much later the subject of a stage play, by Dave Sheasby, which was more recently the basis for a short fiction film, *Trimming Picasso*, by Tim Newton.

But the strangest story was the Congress itself and its being held in Sheffield. Local people went all out to prepare for the event, in the context of destruction from the second world war and the fact that rationing was still in place. *Most of this preparation was done by volunteers.*

A marquee big enough for 1,700 people to sit down and eat together was erected on a bomb-site in West Bar, with floor, plumbing and gas stoves. It cost £4000 then - equal to £138,000 today. In the City Hall, 2,845 pairs of earphones were temporarily installed to allow interpretation of the speeches into six languages. Accommodation had been found, mostly hotels *in Leeds*, and 64 coaches were booked for the 90-minute journey forth and back.

But with the majority of delegates prevented from attending, inevitably the Congress moved after a couple of days - to Warsaw, where it received a magnificent welcome and Sheffield was left in the lurch.

The Government's decision to undermine the (pacifist and socialist) Congress, unacceptable for many, can at least be seen in the context of its time.

In 1950, five years after the devastation of the 2nd World War, there was a world-wide hunger for peace. The League of Nations had been set up in 1920, following the end of the 1st World War in 1918 and a Peace Conference in Paris, in January 1919. The League's Covenant of Peace did not prevent further war, however, and following the 2nd, its powers and functions were transferred to the newly formed United Nations (1946).

In fact, *neither* the League nor the UN had been able to achieve real peace or even sustain peace such as it was: both wars, with Germany and then Japan, had resulted in millions of deaths.

And there was a tragic irony in the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing 200,000 people, supposedly being “the only way to end” the 2nd war. On 25 June 1950, a new war started with North Korea’s Soviet-backed invasion of into South Korea, emanating from the post-2WW ‘cold war’ of growing hostility between America and Russia. This, in the year following the gathering of a Congress that took place in Paris (1949) and led to the creation of the World Committee of Partisans for Peace.

The Paris Congress confirmed the (Soviet) Cominform line that the world was divided between “a non-aggressive Soviet group and a war-minded imperialistic group, headed by the United States government”. (Wittner, Lawrence S, Vol. 1 of *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, 1995) The Sheffield Peace Congress was ‘the second’ Peace Congress.

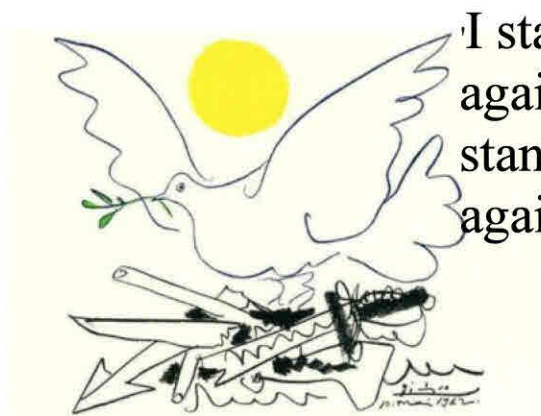
In the above context, however, the British Government was convinced that the expected ‘aliens’ - the delegates to the Congress with its Soviet Union connection - would foment revolution amongst the huge S Yorkshire workforce of steel workers and miners. Refusing visas to enter the country was the only legal way they could find to impede it.

The much-depleted event began to take place nevertheless, and Picasso - one of the few to get through - arrived at a Sheffield station surrounded by streets of tiny terraced houses, frequently covered in industrial smog and *in need of* considerable social revolution. He was met by trade unionists Bill Ronksley and Bas Barker. Many years later, Bas Barker, a life-long member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, ‘dangerous’ in 1950, was granted the Freedom of the Borough of Chesterfield for his services to the town.

This is an important part of Sheffield’s history to commemorate, and SCRAP (Sheffield Creative Action for Peace) planned to do so for the 70th anniversary last year. We hope to mount an exhibition this year, including the continuing campaign against nuclear and other weapons of war.

SCRAP is collecting personal stories, political memories and memorabilia related to the event, and would be very pleased to hear from anyone with family members or others who might have been part of it, or anyone who knows trade union history of the time etc., not least re the electricians who worked on the City Hall interpretation system.

If you have anything relevant, however small, please email peacecongress1950@gmail.com so we can contact you.



**I stand for life
against death; I
stand for peace
against war.'**



City of Peace is a permanent sculpture in Peace Gardens, Sheffield.

The stainless steel sculpture, features seven life-size doves perched on the chimney of HaHa Bar (Browns), next to the Peace Gardens, was inspired by Pablo Picasso’s visit to the Second World Peace Congress held in the city in 1950.

More Articles on the Peace Congress. A landmark in the struggle for peace- Morning Star

Trimming Pablo: Picasso film transforms Sheffield back to 1950

The History of May Day By Eric Hobsbawm

In 1990 Michael Ignatieff, writing about Easter in the Observer, remarked that “secular societies have never succeeded in providing alternatives to religious rituals.” He pointed out that the French Revolution “may have turned subjects into citizens, may have put *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* on the lintel of every school and put the monasteries to the sack, but apart from the Fourteenth of July it never made a dent on the old Christian calendar.”

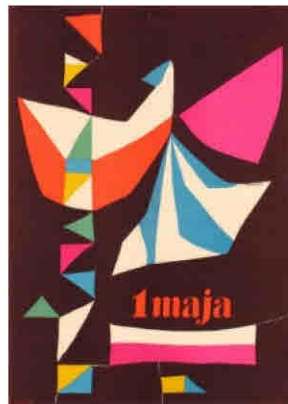
My present subject is perhaps the only unquestionable dent made by a secular movement in the Christian or any other official calendar, a holiday established not in one or two countries, but in 1990 officially in 107 states. What is more, it is an occasion established not by the power of governments or conquerors, but by an entirely unofficial movement of poor men and women. I am speaking of May Day, or more precisely of the First of May, the international festival of the working-class movement, whose centenary ought to have been celebrated in 1990, for it was inaugurated in 1890.

“Ought to be” is the correct phrase, for, apart from the historians, few have shown much interest in this occasion, not even in those socialist parties which are the lineal descendants of those which, at the inaugural congresses of what became the Second International, in 1889 called for a simultaneous international workers’ demonstration in favour of a law to limit the working day to eight hours to be held on 1 May 1890. This is true even of those parties actually represented at the 1889 congresses, and which are still in existence. These parties of the Second International or their descendants today provide the governments or the main oppositions almost everywhere in Europe west of what was the self-described region of “really-existing socialism.” One might have expected them to show greater pride, or even merely greater interest in their past.

Full Article- Tribune May 2021



May Day poster from the Italian Socialist Party, 1902.



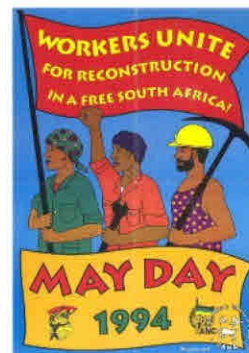
Polish May Day poster from Roman Cieřlewicz, 1957.



Manchester and Salford Council of Labour May Day poster, 1945



Somalian May Day poster, 1977.



South African May Day poster, 1994, ten days before Nelson Mandela’s inauguration.

Mayday Sheffield 2021



French Elections 2022

Last month Plebs launched a series of articles looking at the political situation in France and the leadup to the presidential elections in 2022. This month we continue with another article from John Mullen looking at the part 1968 plays in French political history and Macrons response to the Covid crisis.

France in 1968: myths, realities and unanswered questions

Written by John Mullen for Counterfire in 2018 marking 50 years

What's so special about France in 1968?

Why was this fiftieth anniversary such a talking point that it seemed far more visible in public debate than the centenary of the First World War? Certainly, the events were sufficiently out of the ordinary as to challenge our conceptions of normal political life. There were barricades on the streets of Paris, pitched battles between police and young people with hundreds injured on each side, and tanks prepared on the outskirts of the city, in case the government should feel they were necessary. It saw a flowering of creativity and imagination of what another society could be like: the emblematic slogans “It is forbidden to forbid”, “Under the paving stones you will find the beach” (making reference to the experience, felt as liberating, of throwing the stones at the police) or “Be realistic, demand the impossible!” covered the streets, along with slogans referring to the lives of factory workers, such as “Down with the hellish speed-up!”.

1968 saw at least nine million workers on strike for several weeks, often occupying their factories, offices, and schools. It was, at the time, the biggest general strike in history, and it counted four times as many strikers as the historic general strike of 1936 in France, long hailed as a major turning point in its gaining of the right to paid holidays.

Full Article

France Heads to Monthlong Lockdown as Virus Gains in Europe By Ania Nussbaum

31/3/21 Bloomberg

French President Emmanuel Macron announced a nationwide four-week lockdown, closing schools and business, in the latest and alarming sign that Europe is yet again losing control of the pandemic.

“We did everything we could to make these decisions as late as possible, when they became strictly necessary. That is now,” Macron said in a televised address on Wednesday. New variants make the virus “more contagious and deadlier.” It represents a policy reversal for Macron. He had favored a localized approach, which the U.K. had also tried with little success, and his rejection of advice for stricter measures sooner comes with political risks a year out from presidential elections.

January 2021: Paris



Tens of thousands protest against new French security bill

Demonstrators, including gilet jaunes activists, also protested against Covid restrictions

The Guardian

The flag Keir Starmer is looking for can be found on a council estate in Wigan



The strategy of continual posing with a Union Jack and St George style leaflets failed to deliver a victory in the Hartlepool by-election and resulted in the vote going to the Tories. The parachuting in of a Remainer into the most Leave seat in the country had predictable results, for some the final insult. The misunderstanding that the flag does not represent Empire and conquest but protection from the liberal market of Friedman, Keith Joseph and Thatcher is a lesson that the Party and its leaders still have to learn. But an ex Radio 1 DJ offers them some advice and an alternative view of love of the State.

Between the end of the Second World War and the entry of Thatcher into Downing Street, the state generally did what it thought was the best for the very best of reasons. It was progressive, imaginative, adventurous, caring and responsible. The years since then have seen not salvation but a shrinking, the slow sour closing of the English mind and heart, as we turn to worship at the altar of the private sector. The modern boasts of self-actualisation and empowerment are all very well, the talk of pride and identity. But the state is there for you when you do not feel proud or sexy or empowered. It is there for you when your self-belief has evaporated and when there are more important things than pride at stake. There are the simple joys of brotherhood and the common herd. There is such a thing as society.

Those few decades have been alternately mocked and romanticised but from here it's hard not to see them as a Golden Age, the years of the NHS, the Arts Council, the National Parks, the Open University, the Third Programme and wonderful Radio 1, of the Beatles and the Stones, mods and rockers and folkies and hippies and punk, of soul and ska and roots rock reggae, of Larkin, Hughes, Pinter, Delaney, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, Finney, Courtenay, Tushingham, Bates, Burton, the Festival of Britain, Olivier and the National Theatre, the '66 World Cup, the achievements of an enlightened and responsible establishment in tandem with bright, brilliant generations of working and middle-class kids raised on rationing and free school milk and orange juice, free specs and dentures, cheap buses, grammars and comprehensives and the whole flawed but beautiful public realm.

The people who complain about the nanny state are the people who had nannies. They continue to divide and rule, to buy and sell, to trade in our future for their profit. These rich and privileged figures, mostly white men who went to the same schools, have no need of the simple things this book celebrates. You will not find them in doctors' waiting rooms, on the muddied pitch, on the swings in the park or in the noisy chaos of the baths on Saturday morning. They will be somewhere else, in their private world of old money and secret ties. They have their nannies. We have the nanny state: kind, brisk, more concerned with fairness than fashion, with decency rather than dogma. The struggle to save her goes on, but the appetite is there. The nanny state made me. It made you too. We have never needed her more. It's time to bring her back

Excerpt from The Nanny State Made Me



Stuart Maconie, was born and raised on a council estate in Wigan and is an author of numerous books on Northern politics and culture. He is proud of his roots and hopes that his children can share some of the benefits of the State that he enjoyed. He asks the question ; -

“ What was so bad about properly funded hospitals, decent working conditions and affordable housing? What was so wrong with student grants, council housing and free school meals? And where did it go all so wrong?”

Two events to look out for



The Empire Strikes Back: 21st Century Imperialism & What it Means For You and the World

DATE

Fri 28 May 2021
7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

VENUE

Online

REGISTER NOW
Free

John Smith is the author of *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century: Globalization, Super-Exploitation, and Capitalism's Final Crisis*, and winner of the Paul M. Sweezy Memorial Award.

Leah Sullivan is Senior Campaigns Officer for International Trade at War on Want, whose slogan of 'Poverty is Political' has seen years of actively campaigning for political change as the solution to the problems of the Global South.

In partnership with the Independent Working Class Education Network

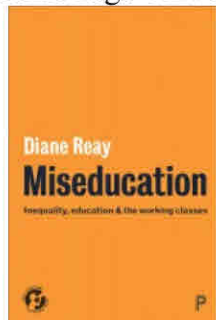
Black Lives Matter, Brexit and the Union Jack have thrown up associations of colonialism and imperialism as historical concepts driven by nationalistic sentiments and conquest. But has imperialism disappeared or merely cloaked itself in a new identity to suit the neoliberal era? Has military conquest been replaced with economic conquest under the guise of trade and the dominance of international capital?

The speakers will investigate the global economic architecture of the Washington Consensus that dominates global affairs and imposes conditions on the Global South by the developed nations acting on behalf of capital.

Sheffield Central CLP Education Coordinators invite you to:

Why we need a National Education Service

A National Education Service was one of Labour's key policies in its 2019 manifesto and in Sheffield Central we held a conference addressed by Melissa Benn, author of a number of books on the failure of our current education system. The pandemic has shown even more failings and the need to change is greater than ever. This session organised by the CLP Education Co-ordinators bring their own experience and speakers critiquing the current failures of the system but also looking for guiding principles of a new National Education System. The major speaker will be Professor Diane Reay, Professor of Education at Cambridge University and author of *Miseducation: Inequality, Education and the Working Classes*.



Make a note in your diary and further details to follow

June 12th 2021

Why we need a National Education Service

Winner of the Jake Ryan Book Award

'Working-class children get less of everything in education - including respect' in The Guardian