The Plebs News

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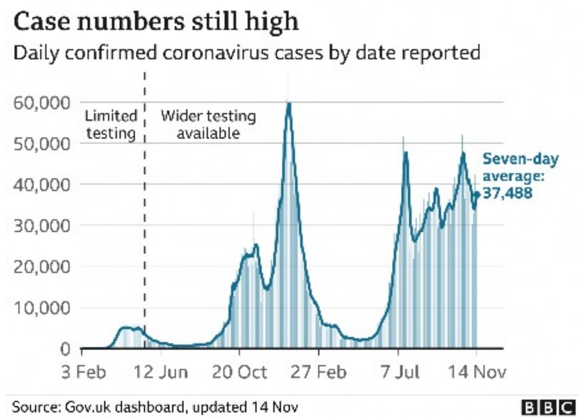
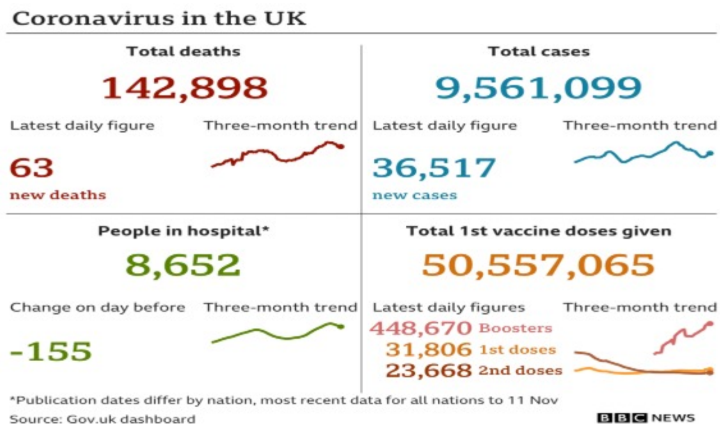
And the Covid Shambles Continues: Government Reject Plan B as cases remain high





Covid is a long term problem for many

More than a million people in the UK are estimated to be experiencing self-reported long Covid, new figures show.

Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggests 1.1 million people in private households experienced long Covid during the four weeks to September 5.

This is up from 970,000 in the previous survey and is the largest monthly increase since estimates of self-reported long Covid prevalence were first published in April, the ONS said.

Self-reported long Covid is defined as symptoms persisting for more than four weeks after their first suspected coronavirus infection that are not explained by something else.

Boris Johnson: “We don't see anything in the data at the moment to suggest that we need to go to Plan B. We're sticking with Plan A. But what we certainly have got to recognise is there is a storm of infection out there in parts of Europe."

The WHO “ an increase in mask wearing could immediately help” (See over)

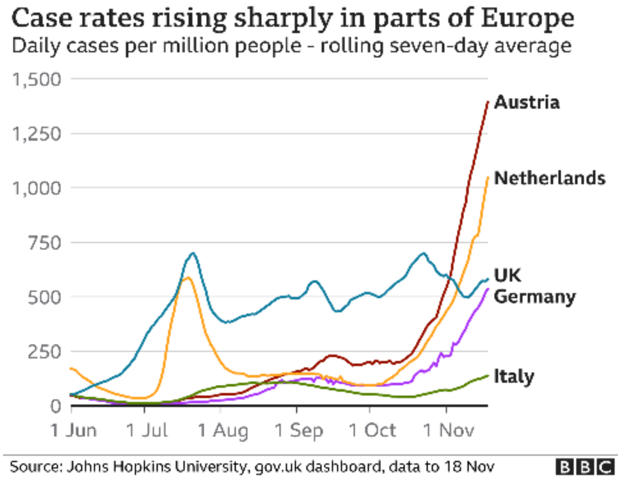
The data also shows an estimated 405,000 people have experienced self-reported long Covid that has lasted for at least a year, up from 384,000 a month earlier.

The ONS said the figures, published on Thursday, reveal a rise in the number of people who were first infected less than eight weeks previously.

It added: “There has been a notable increase in the number of people with self-reported long Covid who were first infected (or suspected they were infected) less than eight weeks previously, from 50,000 (5.2 per cent of those with self-reported long Covid) at August 1 2021 to 132,000 (12.2 per cent) at September 5, 2021.

“These new cases of self-reported long Covid follow a period of increased incidence of Covid-19 infections in the UK during July 2021.”

And the Covid Shambles Continues: Numbers climb in Europe as does pharma profits.



The World Health Organization is "very worried" about the spread of Covid-19 in Europe as the continent battles a fresh wave of infections.

Speaking to the BBC, regional director Dr Hans Kluge warned that 500,000 more deaths could be recorded by March unless urgent action is taken.

Dr Kluge said an increase in mask wearing could immediately help.

The warning comes as several nations report record-high infection rates and introduce full and partial lockdowns.

Mistrust of Government fuels Covid protests across Europe.

Governments across Europe have responded to rising Covid numbers by introduction of "lockdown" and compulsory vaccination orders. These measures have been met with demonstrations and violent protests as populations lose patience with previous Government measures and general mistrust of Government.

The mandatory vaccinations have been described as a "double-edged sword" by Andrea Ammon, director for the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.She told the BBC's Andrew Marr that the strict rules could make people who were still doubting the vaccine - but not fully rejecting it - completely turn away from it.

Tens of thousands of people have been marching in the Belgian capital, Brussels, to protest against anti-Covid measures.Some protesters threw fireworks at police officers, who intervened with tear gas and water cannon. This comes after fresh protests in the Netherlands against new lockdown rules.

On Saturday, people hurled fireworks at police and set fire to bicycles in The Hague, one night after protests in Rotterdam turned violent and police fired gunshots. At least three demonstrators are receiving hospital treatment for gunshot wounds, officers said. Authorities have launched an investigation.

In Croatia, thousands marched in the capital, Zagreb, to show their anger at mandatory vaccinations for public sector workers, while in Italy, a few thousand protesters gathered at the ancient Circus Maximus chariot-racing ground in Rome to oppose "Green Pass" certificates required at workplaces, venues and on public transport.

Pharma profits from global pandemic

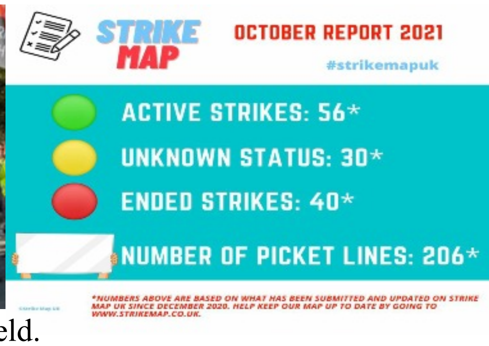
This week Pfizer announced profits of $7.7 billion so far in 2021, up 133% on last year.

And today Moderna announced it has cashed in to the tune of $7.3 billion this year, after receiving over $10 billion of public funding for development and manufacture of its Covid-19 vaccine.

Profits on this scale are only made possible by a system that puts greed before need. Big pharma companies are able to sell almost exclusively to the rich world, while refusing to share their recipes for life-saving vaccines and treatments with other manufacturers who could scale up production.

Thanks to this system, only 3.9% of people in low-income countries have been vaccinated, compared to more than 71% in high-income countries.

The post pandemic labour market and Striktober



Binmen picket line at Veolia in Sheffield.

As we come out of the pandemic workers have started to raise their voices against the rising cost of living caused by the failure of global supply chains and price gouging by multi nationals. Unions have been at the forefront of organising workers in the resistance to further austerity after two years of pandemic stress and patronising praise and "clapping" for workers forced to continue working whilst many managers "worked from home". Key sectors of the economy that have too long been described as "low paid" jobs have started to demand living wages and terms and conditions that reflect their importance to the economy. Workers in transport and logistics, fast food and waste collection have all resolved disputes with employers conceding higher pay after strikes and industrial action.

SCAFFOLDERS on British Steel's Scunthorpe site in Lincolnshire have launched indefinite strike action over pay.

More than 60 workers at the site are employed by contractor Actavo and are members of construction union Unite. The union says the workers are paid 10 to 15 per cent less than the rate set in the national agreement for the engineering construction industry (NAECI), which pays £2 an hour more. The workers are responsible for 60 projects at the British Steel site.The dispute dates back to 2019 when the contract was held by Brand Energy. Actavo took over in February this year and the dispute continued with the new employer. Pickets will be in action from 5.30am to 9.30am every day at three entrances to the site.

Housing is not just a UK problem: Acorn goes international.

This week we joined together with ACORN organisers from across the world Cameroon, Canada, France, India, the Netherlands, the US, England & Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

We missed our siblings from Argentina, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Italy, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Peru and Tunisia, who weren't able to attend due to visa and Covid restrictions. Next year we hope to be even bigger

From ACORN's role in tackling the climate crisis, to labour, tenant & digital organising, from leadership development to how we strengthen and protect ourselves as organisations up against big money and the state. We share what we've learnt, take on what's working for others, add it to our toolbox and keep on working to build the power of ordinary people

But who are Veolia and how outsourcing fuels climate change

By the time you read this newsletter we hope that Sheffield binmen will have won their dispute for better pay and conditions against the employer Veolia. A long running campaign against an employer hostile to trade union organisation the workers have managed to maintain organisation and solidarity. But how did we get here and who are Veolia?

The waste management workers were originally employed by the Council but outsourced or sold to Veolia as part of a 25 year contract to provide waste collection and disposal to the city. The prevailing political climate saw privatisation as justified at the time as a way to remove troublesome employees but also as a way of providing capital for projects unable to be funded by cash strapped councils. In Sheffield this materialised as capital for a new incinerator, now dubbed the Energy Recovery Facility, and the change to wheelie bin collections.

Unfortunately, most contracts went to multi nationals, bent on squeezing costs, normally wages, and repatriating profits to shareholders thousands of miles away damaging local economies and democratic control through contracts and legal challenge. For those interested in the Community Wealth Building initiatives the leaching of local capital through multi national profit and jobs is a major source of economic decay. Environmentally it was damaging, too, in that improvements can only be delivered by profit driven measures rather than popular support.

But who are Veolia?

Veolia are a global waste management company, under nominal French ownership, hoovering up contracts in waste, water and utilities around the world. They have also been involved in controversy around the world

Revenue €24.390 billion (2016)

Operating income €1.384 billion (2016)

Net income €610 million (2016)

Total assets €37.949 billion (end 2016)

Number of employees: 163,226 (2016)

Antoine Frérot, Veolia's Chairman & CEO recently commented :

«As we had committed to, our performance is substantially above 2019: Veolia is off to a flying start in 2021! In a global context that remains difficult, Veolia has announced an outstanding pace of growth of both revenue and profits, notably thanks to our diversified client mix, our treatment solutions for new pollutants and our international footprint. ***Moreover, our strict cost control has enabled us to recover a strong operating leverage and to register an EBITDA growth of more than 13% compared to Q1 2020 and of 7.5% versus Q1 2019.*** We are therefore ahead of our 2021 objectives and I can confirm that 2021 will be a very good year in terms of growth and profits. (My italics)

ISDS - The big threat to human rights hidden in our trade deals

Egypt has developed rapidly in recent years, but despite this, much of its population lives in poverty and workers' wages are very low. In response to this, the Egyptian government decides to increase the minimum wage. However, the increase angers a French multinational company called Veolia, because they employ low-skilled Egyptian workers and the policy will increase their wage bill. They therefore challenge the policy by taking the government of Egypt to an international court - something which Egypt is forced to cooperate with as part of their commitments to international law.

How Africa is leading the way to a zero waste future

Vera Weghmann

This article is part of our Economy's 'Public ownership in times of coronavirus' series with TNI.

The Covid-19 pandemic affirms the need not just for adequate public health care services, but also the many other services that are essential to keep society running and maintain a sustainable environment. Waste management is one such service: if not properly managed, waste can pollute our waters, soils and air. This is the case for large parts of Africa, where up to 45 per cent of the generated waste is simply not collected. Privatisation efforts contribute to a general poor waste service provision. To maximise profit, private providers tend to exclude poorer or rural areas.

Dar es Salaam in Tanzania has been regarded as a leading successful example of privatised solid waste management by UN Habitat, yet in fact, the privatised system failed to keep the city clean. Residents are not satisfied, as it is considered too expensive, unreliable and does not cover the entire area. The privatised waste management service is mainly financed through household payments. Consequently, there is not much incentive for the privatised companies to offer services to people that cannot afford to pay for them, effectively a large part of the population of Dar es Salaam. Similar to how the coronavirus disproportionately affects vulnerable communities because they simply cannot afford to follow necessary health recommendations, this exclusion puts poorer people at a greater risk. Left with no option, the residents are forced to dispose of waste either informally, through illegal dumping into waterways, or by burning it.

Seeking to solve these problems, communities across the continent have developed waste management solutions specifically tailored to meet local and regional needs. In the Egyptian cities of Cairo, Alexandra, and Giza, local authorities, community members and workers have brought waste services back under public control and with it, ended years of inefficient waste management. Other places are re-instating traditional waste management solutions to rid themselves of organic waste.

The struggle against privatised waste management in Egypt

Before the 2000s, Cairo’s waste system was informally managed by a community of Zabaleen Christians. Through a sophisticated sorting system, using among other things pigs to feed on the food waste, the Zabaleen community is believed to have sorted up to two-thirds – 15,000 tons – of Cairo’s overall daily waste. Recycling rates were up at 85 per cent. Despite this success, the government decided to privatise the system as a part of a larger gentrification process, ultimately pushing the Zabaleen out of urban areas. Both Giza and Alexandria had seen the same privatisation happening just years earlier.

It quickly became clear that the new private companies where not able to do the same, efficient work as the Zabaleen. Recycling rates dropped to 20 per cent. Residents were also charged for waste collection services through their electricity bills, effectively giving the companies ‘ownership’ over the collected waste. Frustrated by increased service prices and the loss of work, both residents and the Zabaleen resisted. After years of protests, the Egyptian government eventually accepted that privatisation was a failure, and Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria had public waste collection systems reinstated. In 2011, the latter became the first city to end its private contract with Veolia and establish its own, state-owned enterprise, Nahdet Misr, to operate waste services.

Africa’s zero-waste potential

The Zabaleen in Egypt demonstrate that there is a huge potential for zero-waste programmes in Africa. In contrast to many other places in the world, the continent’s waste composition is characterised by a high percentage of organic waste due to the preparation of fresh food and limited use of packaging. The method of feeding organic waste to animals is old and has been applied also in cities such as Sousse in Tunisia and Moshi in Tanzania. Another striking example is Bamako in Mali, which has reached a high recycling rate through terreautage – the practice of selling unprocessed and partially composted waste to crop and vegetable farmers.

COP26: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly

by Anne Grange, Climate Change Officer, Walkley Labour

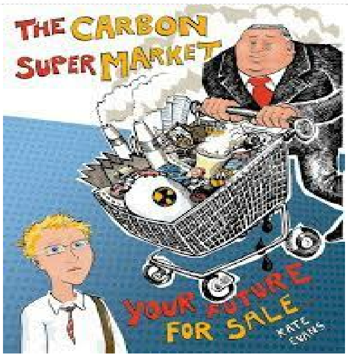
How did COP26 go in Glasgow?

The United Nations Conference of the Parties 26 has now come to an end, following two weeks of in-depth discussions in Glasgow.
Despite promises from all nations, including UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson declaring himself an environmentalist, commitments to tackling climate change globally are still fairly weak.
For example, an international agreement by over 100 governments that promises to end deforestation by 2031 looks great on paper, but that gives climate villains such as Brazilian president Bolsonaro ten more years to cut down forests that are vital to the climate world-wide.
There was a new agreement about carbon trading and carbon offsetting by the most polluting countries, which just hides the issue and allows huge companies to look “green”, while continuing to run polluting industries, such as aviation.
India have promised to go net zero carbon by 2070, but that’s far too far off, when we need action now. And that’s the problem with a lot of the COP26 agreements and promises.
However, there is some new hope. The Conference of the Parties has agreed to come together again next year, in 2022, to return with stronger targets to aim to keep on track for a temperature rise of under 1.5◦C. If the nations don’t manage it, then the human race and the entire world as we know it is in danger of disappearing forever.

Here’s a link to an excellent Greenpeace article by Mal Chadwick that explains some of the key decisions and implications of COP26.

https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/what-happened-at-cop26/?source=EM&subsource=ECCLREINEM01N4&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=COP26+Wrap-up+Blog+Lead+Gen+IN+20211117&utm_term=Full+List

A New FOE Report- The billionaires and multi nationals think they can use climate change as a business oppoortunity but a new report spells out the problems.



Sheffield Takes Action on Climate Change for COP26

by Anne Grange, Climate Change

Sheffield Cares About Climate Change

Sheffield had an excellent turn-out f several thousand people for the International Day of Action on Climate Change for COP26. We joined people from all around the UK and all over the world as we took to the streets, starting at Devonshire Green in the sunshine and finishing in the rain at Barkers Pool for some excellent speeches from different sections of the community, including Labour MP for Heeley, Louise Haigh.

Individuals, families and people representing many different organisations in Sheffield, from local wildlife groups, international organisations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth attended the event. Walkley Labour also attended the event, and there was a strong Labour Party presence.

Lucinda Wakefield, one of the organisers from the Sheffield COP 26 Coalition, who led the procession at the head of the march, said: “We’re here today to send a clear message to those holding the event in Glasgow (Cop 26) to demand that they do something about Climate Change.

"We feel we need to be present in Sheffield. There are 300 of these events internationally and it's about having our voice heard.

https://www.thestar.co.uk/news/politics/hundreds-turn-out-for-sheffield-city-centre-cop-26-demonstration-over-global-warming-3448008

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And what the news didn't tell you.

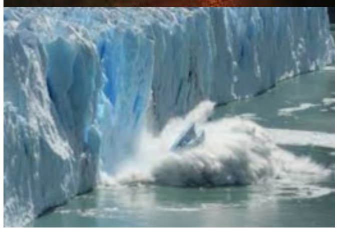
Faulty finance and slow progress at COP26

One of the biggest disappointments has been, yet again, the failure for rich countries to meet the already insufficient $100 billion a year climate finance target. Initially set for 2020, this will now not be met until 2023.

This may seem at odds with the numerous announcements made by the UK government of increased funding for climate projects. Announcements made just before and during the first week of COP26 have brought total UK climate finance to $3.4 billion a year.

This is less than one thirteenth of the $46 billion a year that the global south demanded before the talks to represent the UK's "fair share" of historical carbon emissions.

These consistent failures to provide adequate additional finance for the global south are totally unjust. We must stand in solidarity with negotiators from the global south who are now calling for new climate finance targets between $700 billion and $1.2 trillion a year.



COP26: China and India must explain themselves, says Sharma

Fossil fuel firms sue governments across the world for £13bn under "free trade" deals as climate policies threaten profits

Five energy companies, including British companies Rockhopper and Ascent, are using a legal process that allows commercial entities to sue governments under international laws governing trade agreements and treaties. These corporate arbitration courts operate outside of a country's domestic legal system.

The $18bn they are collectively suing for is almost a quarter of the entire climate funding provided by developed nations for developing ones, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development's (OECD) most recent assessment.

WTO rules against India in solar panels dispute with the US

In 2015 the WTO ruled against India preventing it from developing its own solar panel industry by insisting on local content and manufacture of solar panels. The Indian government needed to develop technology and save foreign capital but was opposed by the US, claiming the move was anti competitive, who referred the decision to the WTO settlement court. The court found in favour of the US but implementation could be delayed by up to two years while the Indian government appeal is heard.

XR Rebellion-Thousands of protesters marched through Glasgow on Wednesday, 3 November to confront the threat of greenwashing. They will accuse COP26 sponsors of covering up their destructive habits with this PR trick while corrupting climate negotiations and endangering life on Earth.

Extinction Rebellion activist Helen Smith, 34, from Glasgow, said: "I'm so tired of the number of companies profiting from a disingenuous perception of themselves as 'ethical' or 'green' when the reality is totally the opposite. It makes us all sceptical of genuine green claims at a time when this action is more important than ever. I'm marching to take a stand against all companies harming the planet while offering inexcusably skewed perceptions of themselves for the benefit of their own brand image. And to call to our government to improve regulation to make misguiding the public illegal."

Indian farmers score spectacular victory as Modi repeals farm laws

INDIAN farmers scored a spectacular victory today as Prime Minister Narendra Modi repealed three marketising farm laws after 14 months of mass struggle.

Mr Modi made the announcement on national TV on the day of the Guru Purab festival, when Sikhs celebrate the birthday of the religion's founder Guru Nanak. Sikhs from Punjab made up many of the farmers whose roadblocks and rallies have besieged New Delhi for almost a year.

He appealed to the demonstrators to return to their homes, saying the formal repeal of the laws would go through parliament in December. He said he was "apologising to the nation" — but for failing to convince farmers of the benefits of the laws, rather than for pushing them through in the first place.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha — an umbrella group of mass farmers' organisations which co-ordinated the protests — said it would remain mobilised and continue to surround the capital until the laws had actually been repealed.

"Nearly 700 farmers have been martyred in this struggle," it noted, pointing out that farmers had perished from cold and been assaulted by police over the course of their long ordeal. "The central government's obstinacy is responsible for these avoidable deaths, including the murders at Lakhimpur Kheri" (where a car carrying employees of the far-right ruling BJP mowed down four farmers, and the crowd set upon the driver and passengers, killing three. A journalist was also killed).

The group added that the government had not addressed another key demand — a guaranteed minimum support price for crops above the cost of production.

"The farmers have taught the Modi government a lesson it should not forget. Dictatorship in India does not work."

The BJP rammed the three laws through parliament in September 2020, and opposition parties said they were prevented from debating them and many had their microphones cut off during a controversial "voice vote."

They deregulated the sale of food across state borders, legalised private stockpiling and speculation in foodstuffs and removed price controls, effectively marketising the sector and threatening food security for hundreds of millions of Indians.

The Modi government faces upcoming elections in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, which has been cited as one reason it decided to retreat in the face of the ongoing resistance.

Zindabad! Victory! for Indian Farmers

The biggest strike in history by Indian farmers has been won! And of course its all over the capitalist media! NOT!!

Please circulate this Banner video to celebrate! :

Watch Zindabad Now!