

[00:00:18.690] - Intro Theme
On the Engender Scotland's Feminist Policy Podcast.

[00:00:26.630] - Alys Mumford
Hello and welcome to On The Engender, Scotland Feminist Policy Podcast. I'm Alys Mumford. And as always, I'm here with Amanda Aitken. Hi, Amanda.

[00:00:33.540] - Amanda Aitken
Hello.

[00:00:34.340] - Alys Mumford
And we are recording this straight after an event, we held with Suki Sangha. Hi, Suki.

[00:00:39.900] - Suki Sangha
Hello.

[00:00:40.520] - Alys Mumford
And Eve Livingston. Hi, Eve.

[00:00:42.550] - Eve Livingston
Hi.

[00:00:42.970] - Eve Livingston
Thanks for having me.

[00:00:45.050] - Alys Mumford
Thanks for coming - over to you, Amanda, I think.

[00:00:48.080] - Amanda Aitken
Yeah.

[00:00:48.440] - Amanda Aitken
So as you said, we're just recording this after hosting an event with you both to celebrate and discuss Eve's book, Make Bosses Pay and why we need unions. So to begin with, do you have any reflections about what was talked about or perhaps even Suki there's a question that was said that we didn't get a chance to bring up. So do you want to maybe just have some reflective time on that event just now?

[00:01:11.740] - Suki Sangha
Yeah. That sounds good. Do you know what I really enjoyed about the conversation and what was so refreshing was, and I spoke a little bit about this, actually, when we were having the event, is the honesty and the conversations around trade unions and the conversations around all the issues, the concerns that people have, sometimes, the sort of gaps that we need to fill and the better organising that we need to do. And that's what I think I really, kind of really took away from that. It's just that honesty. It's about recognising that actually we've got quite a way to go, but we're not going to get there unless we recognise that actually things need to fundamentally change.

[00:01:43.980] - Suki Sangha
So that, for me, was definitely a biggie, and also just the idea that trade unions and I think sometimes a lot of trade union education needs to be done around this and getting people to understand that trade unions aren't, y'know, perfect and they don't exist in a bubble unto themselves. They reflect the wider conditions that we see and we experience in wider society - whether that be sexism, whether it be racism, and all the other things that we have to deal with kind of on a daily basis. So for me, it's just about having that conversation about exactly that and just unpacking that a little bit and about the fact that there's a long way to go and there's a lot of arguments to be had, a lot of winning people to the right positions, to liberation, to justice and all those different things.

[00:02:29.910] - Suki Sangha

So I think for me, some of the things that Eve was talking about in her responses and some of the questions that come up really go to the heart of that for me. I really enjoyed that.

[00:02:39.830] - Eve Livingston

Yeah. I think for me I agree because I think the strength of doing an event about trade unions for a feminist audience is that you can get down to that kind of conversation because what you have is women who are fed up of their situation in their workplace. But quite often they're also going to be fed up of their situation within their union or within the union movement, because it hasn't traditionally always been like a very welcoming place or, y'know, even if it is a welcoming place, it hasn't always put their kind of needs or priorities at the top of what it's doing.

[00:03:15.750] - Eve Livingston

So I think kind of being able to speak to people from that perspective does as, Suki said, kind of open up a really interesting, challenging conversation, which is really valuable, I think.

[00:03:26.990] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, for sure. Just as you were saying, you mentioned in the event about sort of replicating structures within unions that we know to be harmful like the workplace structures. And it reminds me of going to my first women's STUC conference and just being amazed because I was like, I just assumed they'd do things differently and it was so formal and so, y'know, male in the way that I'd experienced student politics and all these things. And I was just quite surprised. I was like, 'oh, okay'.

[00:03:55.550] - Eve Livingston

Yeah.

[00:03:56.100] - Alys Mumford

A bit of an eye-opener. Amanda, how about, you anything in the event that particularly struck you where you want to come back to?

[00:04:02.780] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, I think, especially the discussion at the end, I think Suki brought up about Unite and Central Hotel with the staff grievance and signed letter, and it really got me thinking about kind of young workers in general and kind of how a lot of young workers, I know for myself entering the workforce in, like, my first jobs and stuff, I just had so little knowledge over rights and things and often, y'know, obviously in very precarious work and zero-hour contracts, etc. I'd be curious to know your thoughts as well, Eve, on kind of like how unions can work to protect and maybe prevent youth exploitation occurring because in these jobs, like traditionally, perhaps you wouldn't have unions to turn to or ones that you would necessarily know about, especially as a young worker. So I just was thinking a lot about that just as we wrapped up the event.

[00:04:51.170] - Eve Livingston

Yeah, I think the question about kind of young workers is actually in some ways quite similar to the question about, like, women workers and marginalised workers, because for me, it's about the sort of and I think I use this phrase in the webinar - it's like a leap of faith that unions need to take almost to organise those workers, because if they are people who are in sectors where they haven't had traditionally any relationship to unions, then that's a big bit of work that the union needs to do to reach them and to talk to them about unions and to win them over and kind of make inroads in organising that workforce.

[00:05:26.990] - Eve Livingston

And I think that's exactly the same for young people in precarious work where it's exactly the same issue, right? If you're in, like, a restaurant, for instance, it's very likely that your restaurant hasn't ever had a union recognition agreement, and that a lot of the colleagues that you're working with haven't ever been members of a union either. So you're starting from ten steps back from where people, like a lot of the people that were in that webinar today would be, which is that we're kind of switched on and politicised and interested in unions and interested in feminism and interested in these conversations. But the starting point for a lot of people in those workplaces, be they young, precarious workers or

migrant women or whatever.

[00:06:08.430] - Eve Livingston

For a lot of them, it's a conversation that starts a lot further back than that about what is a union and why does it matter and what is my union? Which one should I join? All these kind of questions that people might write off as basic.

[00:06:21.210] - Alys Mumford

I mean, even that idea of, yeah, which is my union because and I've had that working in the charity sector in comms and campaigns, well and is it NUJ? Is it one of the more general unions? And so even though we maybe still have unions set up around this idea of there is an industry and you go into a job and you're in that job for your whole life, rather than actually, most people our age are doing maybe three different jobs, and is that three different unions? All these sorts of things - just on what you were saying there, thinking about it'd be, Suki, it'd be interesting to get your thoughts on this. The sort of idea of unions as gatekeepers and the central sort of conflict you talk about Eve, "We're there to represent our members, so we shouldn't be talking about battles that our members aren't currently having." And that does block out these largely precarious workers. And there's been a similar conversation in political parties. I remember when there was a conversation at a political party to remove the rule that you had to have been a member for two years before you could stand for a position similar to, as you're saying, you need to be a member of the union before they help you with a workplace dispute. And the argument was essentially characterised as older members saying, 'well, no, because they need to have earned their stripes and put in the time, y'know, someone could just join up, walk off the street and get involved,' and the younger people saying, 'yeah, exactly!' In the book, you talk about the researcher Esme Stevens sort of going into an office and trying to get involved and just sort of not being able to do that. So Suki, from being sort of involved day to day in the union movement - how do we square that?

[00:07:58.110] - Suki Sangha

Yeah. I think that's a huge issue. I think in terms of membership fees, it's something that actually really quite frustrates me, because I hear that argument quite a lot. In terms of earning your stripes, you need to make sure that if you're helping someone, they're a member, it's like, 'how else do you get them to join if they don't pay?' It's that kind of argument, that really needs to be broken down. And I do think that people in trade unions need to radically think differently about how it is that we're actually speaking to people and engaging with people.

[00:08:28.040] - Suki Sangha

People don't necessarily care about those issues anymore. I mean, Eve talks a lot about it in her book in terms of how workplaces have changed and how you're winning people to the perspective of joining a trade union. So you can't talk about historical wins that mean nothing to workers and workplaces today where that's so vastly different from their conditions of work, their current pay. And you see that each year replicated around May Day, and I love May Day, I love the symbolism around May Day and everything it represents.

[00:08:55.310] - Suki Sangha

But the reality is that we don't get thousands and thousands and thousands of people on the street from May Day - over recent years in Scotland and in Glasgow, there's been independence demonstrations that are much bigger. So for me, that opens up huge questions around how do we actually win more sections of society to the cause of labour and the trade unions? And for me, the very heart that has to be about trade union education. I actually wanted to circle back to something that I was just thinking about when you were talking previously about where people get their information about trade unions and the lack of availability of trade unions for a very young age.

[00:09:30.440] - Suki Sangha

So I know Eve speaks in the book about how easy it is for the military to go into schools and recruit young people. But the fact that unions going into schools are relying on trade unionists who are maybe teachers or have links with schools in order to get access to places like that. Why isn't it a given that a trade union would just come in? Or that work was built into the curriculum so people

know what their rights are from a very, very young age. And then it got me thinking about trade union education as well.

[00:09:59.880] - Suki Sangha

And I think that I'm actually quite passionate about trade union education because I actually think it could look so vastly different, because at the minute, what happens is that, and I know that the funding for trade union education and learning was cut in England, but we still have it in Scotland, and it's funded by the Scottish Government. But often I find that some of those courses have to be written in a particular way in order to get through the bids, and a lot of it doesn't really go to the heart of the type of political consciousness that trade unions should be doing in the sort of trade union courses we could be doing out in our communities and not just in our workplaces.

[00:10:31.490] - Suki Sangha

So aye, in some ways, I think the whole trade union education agenda needs to be overhauled because I think it's so so important to winning a huge new layer of workers to the movement. But it just got me thinking about those sort of ideas. I don't know if I've gone off, but like...

[00:10:44.900] - Amanda Aitken

No no, definitely. Eve, in the book, there's so many examples of successful campaigns and union action, but I'm curious to know what your favourite story was to research and also Suki what your favourite one was that you read whilst reading the book?

[00:11:00.570] - Eve Livingston

That is such an interesting question. I think for me some of it was some of the action from the US because obviously that's like a very different context, but because it wasn't necessarily actions that I'd kind of been reading about in the news the same way as I had been following the kind of UK based examples. And I think the US is a really interesting example because of the way that health care works there. So, y'know, your access to health care is so contingent on your work, and it's built into union collective agreements a lot of the time, like what kind of healthcare you'll be able to access based on being a union member. So I find that really interesting just in terms of how that gives you an explicit framework to tie things like gender to collective bargaining because you're able to say then, well, if we have a woman employee, she's going to need different type of health care than a male employee or a trans employee is going to need different type of health care from a cis employee. And that has to be built into the kind of collective bargaining that's happening around healthcare access. So that's not, I guess, kind of one specific union action. But I think it helped, I found it interesting because this idea of a liberatory unionism that I'm calling for this sort of structural reorganisation is quite intangible and it's quite challenging and quite big. But I felt like that provided a really solid example of what that might look like. And it's just because in the States, they have no choice but to be doing that kind of organising and that kind of work.

[00:12:34.660] - Alys Mumford

Well, yeah, and as you say, really again, shows as Suki said at the start that unions need to become better for women. That really stark example in the US, we do see lots of things around access to abortion, access to contraception and women being denied it in their health plans. So it's like a really easy way, almost, I guess for those unions, those women union members to say, 'look, this is what the result of having a union that's dominated by men or doesn't allow us in results in.' Suki, how about you?

[00:13:05.430] - Suki Sangha

My favourite story? Right, there was loads of stories, honestly, I'm not just saying that Eve, because I love that the book actually has loads of different anecdotes and stories throughout it, it's really good. I suppose some of my favourite stories were actually the ones that were talking about transcending the workplace, I know that's one of the chapters in the book, but it's that idea about forging workplace struggle with the struggles in your wider community and how you build power in our communities. And actually it's the strength of the organising that you do in the workplace combined with what you're doing in the communities that gives us a greater strength. So one of my favourite stories, it was actually earlier on in the book, and it was the IWGB's University of London branch. And the story was

about the fact that they have quite a large Latin American workforce. And the unions and the workers usually bookend their meetings with socialising where workers can bring along their family, they're sharing food, they're sharing drink, they're sharing music, but they're forging greater solidarity and collectivism. And I think that's really, really important and something that actually sometimes we don't do enough about because I think that like I said, there's a lot of power there that we don't yield in terms of forging those things together.

[00:14:17.050] - Suki Sangha

And also it goes to the heart of the sort of idea that we're not just workers in our workplace, we're actually people that live in our communities, we're family members and all those other things that I think sometimes we forget when all we're thinking about is your trade union meeting about very specific workplace issues completely removed to what's happening in your community. And there's loads of good examples through the book in terms of the work that Living Rent does in terms of bringing together the struggles of the renters and also the struggles of workers and how those actually come together.

[00:14:44.680] - Suki Sangha

But for me, that's important because if trade unions got that bit right and some do it really well, so it's not a criticism of everyone, that's when you start to sort of break down the individualism, that argument about Thatcher and her agenda of bringing in and making people feel kind of individual and all the isolation that's attached to that. And that's really when people forge that kind of class consciousness, which we know is really powerful. So those stories were my favourite.

[00:15:12.010] - Eve Livingston

I was just going to say on that because you mentioned that Latin American example, and actually I can't remember off the top of my head whether I included this, but I don't think I did, an interesting bit of the conversation about that organising Latin American workers is that Jamie Woodcock, the union member who kind of recounted that example to me. He talked about a situation where a visiting kind of union delegation had been to one of those meetings and had kind of thought it was amazing and had said to him, 'Oh, this is great. We're going to go back to our union and we're going to do, y'know, serve empanadas and play Latin American music, and it'll be great.' And then Jamie Woodcock said to them, 'Do you organise Latin American workers?' And they said, 'No.'

[00:15:58.370] - All

[Laughter]

[00:15:58.370] - Eve Livingston

I think there's like a real kind of - it's funny. It made me laugh too - but there is also a real lesson there, right? That's like one size does not fit all, and you have to be active to the needs of the members that you're organising, particularly when we're talking about kind of marginalised workers or marginalised groups. So yeah, it made me laugh, but it's also, I think instructive.

[00:16:23.390] - Alys Mumford

I think it partly goes back to the sort of core principles of organising and education that you were talking about Suki, and I was thinking about this when you read the extract, Eve. So for those listeners that haven't or weren't at the event or haven't watched it back, there's a link in the show notes. But, Eve, you read out an extract that talked about the Grunwick strikes, at the film processing plant, and although obviously I read the book, y'know when you hear things out loud, sometimes they strike you differently. And I was reminded that I was doing a workshop at Climate Camp this summer around direct action.

[00:16:51.560] - Alys Mumford

And I just had some examples of different forms of direct action for people to think about. What do we mean when we say protest? When we say activism? And the Grunwick strikers, so I had a picture of the mural and that was the one that no one in the workshop knew of, which was interesting. But then actually, the point you make in the book is far deeper than actually that. Even if you know about that, people often think that that's the example of like, 'oh, look, minoritised women do take action.'

And as you say, the sort of pejorative 'protestors in Sari's' idea. So it's almost like, the need for education is so deep you need to get that first level of like, actually, this stuff exists and then the second level of and it has done for a long time and is still going on. Yeah, it's not just they just watch Pride to find out about unions or whatever. Sorry, that was a rambling point, but it just struck me.

[00:17:46.190] - Suki Sangha

No, I think it's really important. I think that a lot of our examples are stuck in time. You hear the same thing about the same struggles. I mean, like, the Grunwick strike, as an Asian women in the trade union movement. That's like, probably the only one that I hear about when we know there are so many other examples of South Asian women or different minority groups having organised, so it takes away their power as well. Do you know what I mean by not talking about them and someone celebrating some of those wins, I think, is a total disservice to those workers that are working hard to organise in various different workplaces.

[00:18:19.200] - Alys Mumford

So one of the questions that was raised in the event that we didn't get a chance to answer, because it is a biggie, is looking at the idea of corporate creep that you talk about, Eve, of sort of these alternatives to unions, which seem to be about worker power but don't actually offer that power. So things like staff committees or reps, things like self-help books. We've seen a lot of discussion lately about 'What do millennials want? Beanbag chairs' Like, no, we want maternity pay and decent wages so that these things should be in addition to pay and terms and conditions and not in place of them.

[00:18:55.200] - Alys Mumford

And we had a question specifically around the third sector and the violence against women sector within that. And you do mention in the book the United Voices of the World attempt to unionise the violence women sector in the UK. But the question in the event was saying that often it's used that, 'Well, we're a charity and, well, we all care about the work we do, and we all have the same mission. Why would you want to unionise? Why would you not want to do over time?' Or these sorts of emotional sort of manipulation, I guess, of workers. Have you got any thoughts on that?

[00:19:26.600] - Eve Livingston

Yeah. I mean, I'm not sure that I have the answers to it. I certainly recognise it. There is a whole section in the book about exactly that issue of kind of the move to workplaces being described as like homes from home and your boss saying, 'we're all a family here' and all of this kind of thing. And there's quite a wild example in the book of a tech company where someone was essentially fired for what I think would be categorised as like union activity, being discriminated against being a union member. That company called themselves a 'fam-pony', like a portmanteau of family and company.

[00:20:03.660] - Alys Mumford

I was honestly a little bit sick in my mouth when I read that. [Laughter]

[00:20:08.490] - Eve Livingston

And so, y'know, again, it's like completely silly. But it's also really insidious to be kind of explicitly calling yourself that. And they were explicitly saying things like 'this person thinks that they're a representative for the whole workforce, but that's not how we work here, because we're all one.' So they were making very explicit things that bosses previously have known that they probably shouldn't say out loud. And I think that is a real challenge is how we kind of navigate those types of workplaces. Luckily, I think there are instructive examples.

[00:20:41.880] - Eve Livingston

So you've mentioned the United Voices of the World Violence against Women Union. And I talk in the book about media unions. So Vice Media, for instance, being this kind of company that's synonymous with edginess and skateboards in the office and vending machines with beer in them and all of this kind of thing. But they've also had a kind of very successful unionisation campaign, both in the UK and in the US. Against all those odds of that kind of narrative of like, 'why do you need a union when you've got beers at your desk on a Friday?' And all of that kind of thing.

[00:21:18.870] - Eve Livingston

There are examples I think that we can look to, but yeah, I certainly think it's something that we need to be really vigilant of, as kind of Suki's alluded to the kind of labour market itself is changing. And there are more of these kind of startups. There are more of these sort of what kind of academically might be described as like 'knowledge work' jobs, and there are less kind of obviously defined sort of factory floors and shop floors. And so I can only see that stuff becoming more and more insidious. So I think it's a conversation that the union movement needs to keep on having about we how kind of navigate some of that.

[00:21:54.600] - Suki Sangha

Can I come in and talk about some of my experiences in the third sector? I'm just thinking, I worked in the third sector for around ten years or just less than that, seems a very long time ago. But I remember and it goes to the point that Eve made. I remember a lot of the chat in the workplace around us all being part of a family, and it was all very emotive. And it's actually when you're in that situation, it's sickening, right? As trade unionist going into that kind of situation it's quite sickening.

[00:22:22.110] - Suki Sangha

But you can see how much of a hold it has on people, and it can be incredibly difficult. I think one of the other things that I sort of observed, in the third sector is that there's often a perception that the public sector is bad and the public sector has abandoned all the vulnerable groups that the third sector is then sort of supporting. And I think that's an issue because it's almost used to sort of undermine the third sector and the pay and terms and conditions that workers sort of experience in that sector.

[00:22:50.410] - Suki Sangha

And I think part of that is probably about the fact that a lot of the work that you do in the third sector (not always) is pretty emotive. Like, I say, some of the groups that you're working with, some of the issues that you're sort of dealing with, it can be pretty heavy stuff, and that has an impact on people. And I think that sometimes those arguments that you hear about why they don't have greater public holidays is because they have to support vulnerable groups is actually just a way of, like I say, undermining your terms and conditions.

[00:23:19.900] - Suki Sangha

The reasons why the public sector is the way it is isn't because they care any less about the people that they work with. But it's the fact that they are members, a lot of the public sector are still members of strong trade unions, where they are paid better, they have better terms and conditions, and actually they don't experience a lot of the stuff that the third sector is having to then contend with. And that's what leads to a lot of the burnout that people experience and exposes them to some of their toxic cultures and the corporate creeps that Eve talks about in the book.

[00:23:47.160] - Suki Sangha

So really, I don't know for me, I think that you need to have conversations with colleagues fundamentally about the power imbalance that exists within your workplace. And that chapter that talks about HR not being your friend for me goes to the very heart of that, because often in the third sector you get the person that's doing the HR work in the very same sort of open environment that you're sort of working in. So everyone's everyone's friend and stuff, and it becomes more difficult to have conversations like that. But I think that's exactly those are the difficult conversations that a lot of colleagues need to have with each other in terms of the interest of the bosses and what the interests of the workers are and how actually they're vastly opposed a lot of the time, regardless of how nice your HR manager is or any other manager is the interests are vastly different, and that can only be done through one-to-one conversation and organising as workers to join a union.

[00:24:36.310] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, it's interesting, again in the event, Eve you talk about things springing up in the pandemic. And I remember on a previous podcast, Amanda, we've mentioned about even just sharing with other freelancers what rates people were charging and those sorts of things. And again, Eve, there's a reason we're discouraged from talking about pay rates, and it's not because it's not British to talk

about money. It is that insidious thing. So yeah, really interesting to see that even if people aren't joining unions, I guess the sort of idea that we need to organise and collectivise keeps coming up. It's a good idea - people recognise it's needed.

[00:25:16.690] - Amanda Aitken

I wanted to ask a little question about automation in the sense of how workplaces and work are changing. And obviously there's this kind of like sci-fi view that automation is going to have robots taking over everything, although we do see now drones delivering things. So maybe that is something that's going to happen, but it's also impacting, obviously on sectors that are dominated by lower paid women, for example, like the automatic checkouts that we see now in shops. And so Eve, I wonder for you, what do you think can be done to make this a gendered issue more, to consider automation as a gendered issue?

[00:25:54.530] - Eve Livingston

Yeah. I mean, think you're right, that the view that it has in the public imagination is like the sort of sci-fi one. And to me that's quite also quite a masculine conversation, when the research backs up exactly what you're saying - that the people who are most affected are kind of low paid women and marginalised workers. For me, the issue is less of that kind of conversation about robots coming and taking your jobs and more about ownership and use of technology, how we can use the advances of technology as kind of workers and unions rather than our bosses using it against us. So that is the kind of trend of history is that new technology comes around, we can't stop it and it gets used against us by our bosses, right?

[00:26:44.630] - Eve Livingston

So you get yourself a check-out thing that displaces a worker or you get kind of surveillance technology that our bosses use to track our toilet breaks and things like that. We often kind of talk about that as just something that's happening to us without us being able to resist it if you like. And what I kind of talk about in the book is this sense that we need to be kind of fighting for ownership and control of some of that new technology. Now where I think it becomes a kind of gendered issue and also racialized issue is that a lot of that new technology comes from low paid workers in the global south, right? So what we're talking about is these kind of new things arriving for us in the west - it's not good enough then for trade unionists to just be like, "how do we use this great new technology to get back our boss?", we have to be having that deeper conversation about the people who have made that technology and how exploited they've been in the process of it being made and formed. And so for me, actually, it's that first bit that's the kind of most pertinent sort of racialized and gendered conversation that we need to be having rather than the kind of end point, because I think that's still kind of up in the air about how much automation will displace us. And there's some arguments that perhaps it might lead to other kind of problems in terms of being pushed into other low paid work. But for me, it's like that's the kind of question that we need to be asking about when it comes to gender and race and technology is way back at that first step.

[00:28:19.600] - Alys Mumford

I think that's super interesting. And I think it links in when you're saying about sci-fi as being quite like a male thing, and this sort of bro culture. And I think that is something that a lot of people do associate with women...and can be very off-putting to women that the unions feel very 'boys club' in lots of ways, or the perception of them. How do we other than...I mean, sort of, we talk a lot about equal representation, so getting more women involved in these sorts of things. But how do we challenge that attitude that we still do see, you know, of "we sort out the class problems and that's what unions focus on. And Then we'll sort out gender, hen". Any thoughts

[00:28:59.590] - Eve Livingston

I wish I knew the answer.

[00:29:01.380]

[laughter]

[00:29:03.350] - Eve Livingston

Yeah. I mean, I had that person that kind of voice in my head the whole time I was writing this book where I was thinking like, I can picture a certain type of male trade unionist who's going to say "this is all very nice chat, but it's about class solidarity" and all of the kind of things that you're talking about. And for me, the best answer to that is just that that is so limited as a view of kind of organising, because if you're not organising in a way that accounts for how our gender and our race and our sexuality and all of these things shape and are shaped by our class and our experience of work, if you're not accounting for those things, then you're just limited in how much you can succeed, because fundamentally, my experience of work is very different than a black woman or a disabled man. And is not because it's a kind of 'trendy conversation' to have about identity politics. It's because the fundamental material way that I'm experiencing work is just shaped by those other factors. So I think it's very limited view in terms of kind of organising. And then I think some of the ways we get around that is just by seeing successful actions that have kind of women at the heart of them and have gender politics at the heart of them. So I talked a lot about the Glasgow women's strike in the webinar, but I think one of the reasons that moved me so much was the solidarity shown by the refuse workers who are now, as we talk, kind of out on their own strike, but they backed the women strikers and kind of came out, walked out of their workplaces against Trade Union regulations or, sorry, against Trade Union legislation. I found that really moving because that's very subversive if your narrative is this kind of idea that a white working class man wouldn't be able to understand gender and politics.

[00:30:56.400] - Eve Livingston

So I think we also have to kind of recognise that there are all those opportunities for solidarity out there and that there are lots of really well-informed male trade unionists who are right up for kind of backing women workers, but also that when you see that kind of powerful organising happening amongst women and it works and it's successful, then you kind of have no choice but to back it as a kind of key organising priority because it's winning. So yeah, it works.

[00:31:28.740] - Suki Sangha

Can I comment on that? Because I think it's a really interesting discussion. I think it does go back to some of the early discussions we had about changing union organisation and how we win people so often being in a Union, you are confronted by people that we don't necessarily agree with, but how much work are we putting in to actually convincing them? And sometimes it's not the person who is on the receiving end of some of the views that has to do that work, but it's about identifying the right person that can have a conversation with a colleague that's winning them to a better position, because part of this is about...It's not about whether or not it's class or race or class and gender, but it's about fundamentally, how do we want to transform society? And a lot of that is about having difficult conversations with people that we don't necessarily agree with. And I think that really is crucial, and it's not always everyone's favourite answer. But I think it's something that we all have to do. And for me, conversations like this do have to talk about structure because I find it really difficult to have these conversations in the absence of structure and about understanding the impact that structure has around the wins that we have in our workplace, around any particular issues like race, gender or whatever.

[00:32:37.800] - Speaker 2

We can't just celebrate individual women reaching the top of society if the majority are still stuck to the floor and low pay and insecure jobs. So that's something we fundamentally need to take on. What I thought was also interesting this week. Actually, people might have different views about it, and that's fine. But I did see some of the, again, stuff on Twitter around the strike action that cleansing workers are taking. And I know that the leader of the Glasgow City Council came under quite a bit of attack over some of the things that she says about striking workers. But I know that some of the arguments that people were using were "well you can't attack a female, a women Council leader", and for me that completely obscures the role of the state and capital. And it undermines the fact that workers interests, like I said before, are different to the interests of bosses. And I think sometimes those arguments are weaponized against workers, and I think that we need to call it out when it happens.

[00:33:34.060] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, I think that's true. But I also think there's potential that some folk...you know we do also see a

lot of misogynistic language used against leaders. So I'm not disagreeing with your point, but I think it actually reinforces the point that lots of people in the movement, the union movement, maybe don't get that distinction and think that actually we're not calling out that because you're criticising a woman's decisions. We're calling out because you used the fact that she was a woman to make that insult about...you know, misogynistic. So yeah, I think you're totally right. But it's not an easy thing to parse.

[00:34:13.390] - Alys Mumford

I don't see that that just struck me...you mentioned climate change, and it's obviously in the book, and it's one of the key, well *is* the battle of our time, and obviously this week - we're recording this in the two weeks of COP, it will come out after that. But we have seen some really great solidarity happening between unions and the climate movement, which has been happening for a long time in talking about just transition and green jobs with the STUC have got a really big bloc at the people's mobilisation on the 6th, and we've seen the climate justice campaigns in strike solidarity action with the cleansing workers and GMB strike and things. So, I guess that's just maybe a little bit of a little bit of hope that these things are happening and it definitely did used to be, you talk about in your book Eve, that oil workers and climate change movement can never come together because they're fundamentally after different things. But actually, that's not the case. And I think there is that understanding of a holistic view of yeah, as you say, Suki, keep making the world a better place and how we can do that together. Sorry, I just went a little bit like "Jerry's thought for the day", didn't I, that was bad....Amanda, over to you!

[00:35:23.470]

[laughter]

[00:35:27.410] - Amanda Aitken

Well, I guess we're that was a lovely way to start wrapping up the podcast and yeah. [laughter] Thank you again, Eve and Suki, for being here, but I want to end with a recommendation now. So this could be anything that you've read, someone you like following on Twitter that you think is like good chat, something that brightens your day, just anything. A recommendation. I'm going to start with you, Eve, because you're smiling like you've got something.

[00:36:00.390] - Eve Livingston

I just like the call for something that brightens your day. But yes, I thought to keep it on a similar theme to all the stuff we've been talking about. I wanted to give a shout out to the American Labour journalist Sarah Jaffe, who some people will recognise her name because she's endorsed my book, which isn't why I'm now endorsing her book...

[00:36:21.710] - Speaker 1

[laughter]

[00:36:26.590] - Eve Livingston

I think that she talks about kind of 'labour journalism' being a really quite lonely place, I think, particularly for women freelancers, as both of us are. So she's not only been like a great support to me, she's also someone who I really recommend following for kind of insights into labour politics, not just in the US, but also kind of conversations about work kind of generally and ideologically. And she's written a book called Work Won't Love You Back, which covers in more detail some of the conversations we've had about the kind of "we're all family here", sort of what we would call the third sector in the UK and all of those conversations about how difficult it can be to organise in those conditions. So yeah, a kind of shout out for her book and for her kind of social media presence generally.

[00:37:11.420] - Amanda Aitken

Great. Suki, what about yourself for recommendations?

[00:37:23.870] - Suki Sangha

Well I actually had a lot, but Alys has already mentioned it! What I want to leave us with I suppose are

some of the images in of this week because I've been down to a lot of the picket lines this week, and I think that there is nothing more beautiful than worker solidarity and seeing international delegations on the picket lines as well was just such a beautiful sight this week. And I think particularly today when those cleansing workers are joining forces with those young climate strikers, you can see the power of sort of taking those different struggles and actually bringing them together and really getting people to understand that there is a common struggle there, and it very much unites us. And I think that that lies at the very root of our strength as a class and as workers in society. And really, when we start to make those connections, to start to join up the dots and make those links, really, that's when we start to transform society and transform the kind of world that we live in for the better. So yes, those themes and those images, those pictures that we see in the videos circulating for me are just, yeah, they've been beautiful.

[00:38:20.080] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, definitely. I feel really amped and powerful now. I'm like rargh.

[00:38:24.140] - Eve Livingston

I know! All of these like, big soap box speeches, it's amazing. [laughter]

[00:38:28.310] - Alys Mumford

Christ, you're gonna have to think of something better than Bake Off...I'm joking.

[00:38:41.350] - Alys Mumford

I think I've limited myself to one Bake Off recommendation per series, and I've already had it. I was going to recommend something I haven't yet seen myself, so it's a gamble, but it's a Joan Eardley recommendation at the Glasgow Women's Library. Love Joan Eardley, love the Glasgow Women's Library - can't go wrong. So, yeah, a simple recommendation. I don't limit myself to only recommend the Glasgow Women's Library once per series, and I think I pretty much do every time.

[00:39:08.830] - Amanda Aitken

We should make a fake advert that we're sponsored by the library or something, you know, that you get beginning of podcast. Or they could just sponsor us.

[00:39:14.950] - Alys Mumford

Hello Fresh. Amanda! What's your recommendation?

[00:39:23.830] - Amanda Aitken

Well, Hello Fresh! No, it's not. My recommendation is for one of my favourite - I love every time it comes into my inbox - my favourite newsletters is Vittleit s. It's like food, like media newsletter that kind of publishes food and culture from around the world and really highlights a lot of writers that perhaps you wouldn't see in traditional food media. It's a great newsletter anyway, but today they actually just released their newsletter and its on 'views from the hospitality crisis, from the workers themselves'. And it's all about how 'you are not replaceable'. And so people who have perhaps seen what's been going on recently around, obviously, we're talking about, like, deliveroo strikes and things, but then also the sudden lack of available staff to work in hospitality because they were all furloughed and then they all left and then been like, "no, this is a horrific environment". But then there's just, like, forever in the UK just been this, like, idea that staff in hospitality are like, transient and temporary and can be replaced when actually this article it kind of goes on to discuss how fast-paced and how the entire industry relies on everyone being in-line and how in collective action you aren't replaceable. If you're a chef there and you decide that you don't enjoy your work environment, if you all down tools, then there will be no food there. People will go elsewhere for food and stuff. And so it's kind of talking about how we've had this idea for ages that we are replaceable in that industry. And now they're just like, "no, well, why is there a crisis?" It's an interesting article. They often have good articles just on, like a tour of different pies and football stadiums, and then occasionally, then they have ones like these. And I'm like, oh, this is why I subscribe.

[00:41:15.950]

[laughter]

[00:41:18.570] - Alys Mumford

That's reminded me that I've been going to the World Cup qualifiers of Scottish National team. And it always makes me laugh because they serve pies, obviously. And they have macaroni pies, the only veggie option. And they're always sold out by halftime. Well, then they say, like, "oh, they always sell out at the women's games". I'm like, "Well, yeah!"

[00:41:42.610] - Amanda Aitken

I went to the Scotland Women's Sweden Friendly in Paisley the other week, and I arrived, and then my partner was like, "I think this is going to be a two pie kind of night". And I was like..what?? She got a macaroni pie at the start. And I was like, no, I'm waiting until half time like, that's crazy. And then went back. And I was like, Can I get my macaroni pie at halftime? They're like, "oh, we've sold out" and I was like "gargh!"

[00:42:04.910] - Alys Mumford

I got there an hour early last time just to get my macaroni pie. It was very cold, but worth it.

[00:42:08.510] - Amanda Aitken

I had to have a sausage roll that wasn't from Greggs. And I was like, "I've not had a non-Greggs sausage roll in...?" But they had vegan sausage rolls as well. So give a couple of months into like the women's qualifiers, there'll be like an Oat Milk stand.

[00:42:21.580]

[laughter]

[00:42:23.570] - Alys Mumford

This is why we need to increase attendance at women's sports games. Amazing. On that incredibly unrelated note, we should also obviously recommend Eve's book. It is brilliant, we're not just saying that. And we'll put links to it in the show notes as well as to the recording of the event earlier. Thanks so much Suki and Eve, it's been a joy, chatting to you. And thank you listeners, and, yeah, stay safe, everyone.