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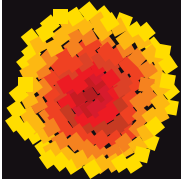
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# the Socialist

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# Boot out Boris

## and his

## bosses' deal



# GENERAL ELECTION NOW

- **Mass action to force an election**
- **No to a Tory bosses' Brexit**
- **For an anti-austerity, Corbyn-led government with socialist policies**
- **For an EU exit deal that defends jobs, workers' interests and the environment**

**T**he Tory party chose Boris Johnson as its leader because he promised to deliver Brexit by 31 October 2019, even if it meant leaving without a deal.

When push came to shove, however, in a childish gesture of defiance he sent his request for a further extension to Article 50 unsigned - but he sent it, along with his own letter opposing an extension.

Johnson, of course, has never been motivated by the needs of the working-class majority. The Tories are a party of big business and the super rich. Risking a disorderly no-deal Brexit, with its likely disruption of their profits, was not in the interests of the capitalist elite. It is pressure from them that forced Boris to blink.

The Brexit deal Johnson is now trying to push through parliament is a bosses' Brexit, designed to aid the further undermining of public services and workers' pay and conditions. It is worse even than May's deal. Legal commitments to keep as a baseline the minimal, and often unenforced, current level of workers' and environmental protections that exist in the EU have been removed.

In their place - in a desperate bid to try and get Labour MPs to vote for the deal - Johnson promised that a government minister would be obliged to report on any lessening of employment rights as compared to the EU! As if having the vampires report how many pints of blood they were planning to drink would lessen the crime.

The latest round of parliamentary shenanigans will have deepened millions of people's frustration at the pro-capitalist politicians who dominate the Palace of Westminster.

There is an overwhelming need for a general election, and the election of a government that stands in the interests of the working class. Such a government could negotiate a Brexit deal based not on a Tory bonfire of workers' rights, but on a programme for decent jobs, wages and public services for all.

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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."

Karl Marx



WHAT WE THINK

**A**nxious to avoid a no-deal Brexit, and desperate to avoid the blame for causing one, both Boris Johnson and the institutions of the EU have stepped back from the brink.

Johnson has been forced to send off a request for an extension to Article 50. And his proposed withdrawal agreement has crossed lines he previously refused to cross. At the same time, the 27 countries of the EU amended the withdrawal agreement, despite months of claiming it was impossible to do so.

If the Tory toff Johnson, with a parliamentary majority of minus 43, can force concessions from the EU, imagine what a Corbyn-led government could achieve if it negotiated on an entirely different basis - demanding not a weakening of workers' rights but their strengthening; insisting on the abolition of laws that attempt to prohibit nationalisation and state aid, and undermine trade union and workers' rights!

It would then be possible to appeal for solidarity from workers across the EU. Millions of them, like the French transport workers striking against Macron's neo-liberal pension reform, are angry about the same issues as workers in Britain and would be inspired by such a call.

Right-wing Tory dream

The concessions Johnson has won, of course, are not in favour of working-class people but of the Tory right's dream of an ultra-Thatcherite Britain with even fewer workers' rights than today.

Hence the removal from the legally-binding withdrawal agreement of the reference to a 'level playing field' on workers' rights and environmental standards. In order to satisfy the Tory hard right, the reference to being 'aligned' to the EU has also been removed and replaced with 'a future free trade agreement'.

Johnson's deal is not quite, therefore, May's deal in a blond wig, but many of its central tenets remain the same. The other substantial change, however, is on the question of Northern Ireland.

May's backstop has been replaced by a situation where Northern Ireland remains aligned to the EU from the end of the transition period for at least four years. This effectively puts a border in the Irish Sea, a situation which May had said no British prime minister could allow.

All of the supposed 'solutions' put forward by capitalist politicians to the question of Brexit and the Irish border would aggravate sectarian tensions - pointing to the inability of capitalism to solve the national question in Ireland.

Nonetheless, it is a sign of Johnson's extreme light-mindedness that he has done an abrupt u-turn on

# GENERAL ELECTION IS THE REAL 'PEOPLE'S VOTE'



photo Chatham House/CC

the issue, not knowing or caring about the potential for it to result in increased conflict in Northern Ireland.

The weaknesses of Johnson's deal make it unattractive to the pro-remain, pro-capitalist politicians. For the British capitalist class and their political representatives, however, there are no good options. They want to avoid a no-deal Brexit, and to remain as closely aligned to the EU as possible.

The EU granting an extension in itself, however, solves nothing. It just kicks the can a little way down the road.

The threat of a no-deal crash is only removed by agreeing a deal. It is possible, therefore, that despite the opposition of the DUP, a version of the current deal could scrape through.

Even if this were to happen, however, the situation would remain crisis-ridden for British capitalism. Negotiations on a future trading relationship would just be beginning, led by a minority government which is unable to govern. A general election would still be inherent in the situation.

The majority of the capitalist class are also desperate to avoid a Jeremy

Corbyn-led government. They fear that such a government could be pushed from below to implement a socialist programme that threatened their rule. Therefore, pro-capitalist politicians from every party, including Labour, are working to try to avoid a general election and, in particular, a Corbyn victory.

Mistakenly, Corbyn and the Labour left have been sucked into parliamentary manoeuvres at the expense of a clear campaign for a general election. The workers' movement now needs to fight remorselessly for an immediate general election and for the election of a Corbyn-led government on a socialist programme.

Common class interest

Such a campaign could cut across division, by bringing common class interests to the fore. In doing so, it would also assist the workers' movement in Northern Ireland in its fight for workers' unity and against the sectarianism Johnson so lightly fuels.

It could also cut across division in Britain. While parliament was meeting on Saturday hundreds of thousands of protestors took to the streets to demand a new 'peoples'

vote' on EU membership.

Many of the platform speakers - such as Jo Swinson who served in the vicious anti-working class Condem government, and Tory grandee Michael Heseltine - are completely opposed to the interests of the working class. Many of the working and middle-class protestors, however, were motivated by anger at Boris Johnson and his ilk.

A mass workers' movement campaign for a real 'peoples' vote' - a general election - could win the support of many of those protestors.

Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour affiliated unions are pushing for a confirmatory referendum on a deal. However, in order to speak to the millions of workers who voted leave - creating unity and not division - it would have to be combined with a pledge to negotiate a Brexit deal in the interests of the working class, and to argue for such a deal in any referendum.

Far more important for creating a united movement to get the Tories out, however, would be fighting on a socialist programme that offered a real alternative to austerity: decent public services, mass council house building, free education, a living wage and more.



photo Paul Mattsson

A leading member of the CWU postal workers' union will be speaking at the rally at **SOCIALISM 2019** 2-3 Nov, central London  
socialism2019.net

## CWU VOTE FOR STRIKE ACTION WILL BOOST WORKERS' CONFIDENCE TO FIGHT BACK



WHAT WE THINK

The incredible Communication Workers Union (CWU) ballot result in Royal Mail - a 97% vote for national strike action on a 76% turnout - must be a watershed moment for the whole trade union movement. See 'Postal workers: we're out to win' and 'Vote yes for Royal Mail strike action' at socialistparty.org.uk for more information about why CWU members voted for action.

The ballot result proves beyond doubt that the undemocratic Tory anti-union laws can be surmounted, providing a fighting lead is given and members are mobilised. It will give confidence to other workers that a fightback is possible.

Was it even possible?

Many in the union movement raised doubts about whether it would even be possible to have national industrial action because of the legal restrictions.

There has been a rising number of localised disputes, but it has been far more difficult to win national ballots of bigger numbers of workers, spread over hundreds of workplaces. Now over 110,000 postal workers have now blown a major hole in this idea.

This is the second time in two years that the CWU has won a legal strike ballot, overcoming the new 50% turnout threshold. For workers in essential services the hurdle is even higher, at least 40% of members must vote yes.

Disgracefully, the Tories were able to bring in their 2016 Trade

Union Act, of which the new voting thresholds were a major part, without any significant fight by the trade union leaders. It represents a further escalation of Thatcher's anti-union laws.

While 250,000 marched against Tory Ted Heath's Industrial Relations Bill in 1971, not one national demonstration in London was called this time by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the unions.

The TUC organised one midweek rally of a few thousand in Westminster in November 2015, and even then hundreds had to stand outside Central Hall because the TUC hadn't booked enough seats!

Yet just four years earlier, 750,000 workers and their families had marched against Tory cuts, which prepared the way for the November 2011 two-million strong public sector pensions strike.

If a serious fight against the Bill had been linked to the struggle against Tory austerity, hundreds of thousands could have been mobilised.

But the right-wing union leaders' role was shown in the way that the TUC, Unison and GMB leaders ended the pensions battle by capitulating to the Tories.

The CWU's campaign to overcome the thresholds was a model that should be a blueprint for the rest of the union movement.

It wasn't a passive ballot but a whole process of engaging with members and mobilising them. The union conducted members' meetings in the workplace and even on the gate.

The demands of the union were spelled out clearly. The CWU used social media and other 'modern' methods of communication but they were to supplement, not instead of, engaging with the shop floor.

Photos of members' meetings

were put on social media to build confidence among members and create momentum.

One of the main reasons why Thatcher introduced postal ballots for industrial action was to try and take workers out of the collective atmosphere of debate and discussion in the workplace when voting, usually by a show of hands.

Instead, it was hoped, they would be more under the influence of the mass Tory media on an individual and isolated basis.

But the CWU acted to circumvent this by calling on members to bring their ballot papers to work and fill them in and post them together.

Queuing to vote

At one Royal Mail office, workers took a video where they lined up in a queue to put their ballots in the post box. If the dispute is conducted with the same determination as the balloting process, they have every reason to be confident of winning.

But solidarity from other sections of workers will be important. The bosses will also be attentively watching this key battle.

Striking Royal Mail workers will undoubtedly face an onslaught from the Tories and the media in an attempt to defeat a key workforce in a crucial struggle that could inspire workers to fight more widely.

Workers should be looking to set up support groups, via trade union councils where possible, in preparation for strike action in Royal Mail.

At the same time, strike action by CWU members could be an excellent opportunity for Jeremy Corbyn to push his pledge to take Royal Mail into public ownership - a vital step for protecting the future of the service, and the jobs and conditions of workers, as well as a way of mobilising support for a Corbyn-led Labour victory in a general election.



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

**T**he Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world. Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

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- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites.

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to find out more today!



Clare Wilkins Nottingham Socialist Party

# "I NEED TO GET TO WORK! I NEED TO FEED MY KIDS!" Extinction Rebellion action opens up divisions on how to stop climate change

The attempt by an Extinction Rebellion (XR) protester to superglue himself to a tube train at Canning Town station on 17 October proved to be a 'tipping point' in a way that no one expected. The tense atmosphere of the morning commute unfortunately spilled over into an attack on the protester which was stopped by tube staff and other passengers. The man was pulled down off the train by another man shouting 'I need to get to work! I need to feed my kids!'

certain number of arrests will lead to the change that they ask for. They cite the Suffragettes and the US Civil Rights Movement in particular. The success of campaigns, however, cannot be reduced to arithmetic, cherry picking elements from or misunderstanding historical movements, nor can it be divorced from involvement of the working class, democratic organisation and a programme capable of winning. XR say that they are 'apolitical'. They do not want socialist ideas or proposals for a democratically elected and accountable leadership raised at meetings, as Socialist Party members have discovered. They exploit the disillusion with mainstream politics to organise on the basis of self-appointed, top down

leaders with small 'affinity' groups organising action autonomously 'in the spirit of non-violence'. The backlash against what happened at Canning Town has brought all the disquiet and divisions in XR to the fore. Some supporters are upset about the targeting of workers trying to get to work. The first task of supporters proposed by XR for the latest 'rebellion' was to take two weeks off work! This shows a complete lack of understanding of the nature of work for working-class people. Making someone on a zero-hour contract, shift work or in precarious work even minutes late for work would lead to loss of pay or even losing their job. XR's initial official statement after

the incident showed how out of touch their leaders are. They pointed out that the protester was a clergyman, another a solicitor and a third a Buddhist. They said that workers needed to remember that this is a climate emergency and that they are protesting for 'everyone'. The tactic of deliberately seeking arrest shows no understanding of working-class and especially, black people's experience of the police. There is no doubting the enthusiasm and energy of XR supporters, but the tactics of some groups can alienate the working class and give the capitalists and the mainstream media another excuse to practice 'divide and rule'. The climate crisis is urgent. 100 companies cause 71% of climate

emissions. Capitalists will not take the measures necessary to make a sustainable planet. There is not an 'apolitical' way to bring about change. We need an effective programme and a democratic and accountable campaign. Trade unions, workers and communities all need to be part of it. Fighting austerity and all the immediate issues facing the working class and the poor have to be addressed. We need a socialist transformation to solve climate change.



## Rail report into death of Cardiff Socialist Party member raises new passenger safety questions

Ross Saunders Cardiff Socialist Party



Beth Roper 1990-2018 read her obituary 'Comrade, friend and fighter' at socialistparty.org.uk

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) has published its report on the death of Beth Roper, who died in an accident on a train near Bristol last December. The report has been anticipated by many in South Wales. Beth's tragic death at just 28 was a great loss to her family, her numerous friends and the Socialist Party, especially in Cardiff where she was a leading member. Beth was a real campaigner. Family and friends have set up two organisations in her name to fight for refugees and for marine conservation, and many of us remarked that if one of her friends had been taken from us in the way that she was, she would have fought tirelessly to try and make sure it couldn't happen again. The report confirmed what many of us knew already, that train company Great Western Railway (GWR) "had not provided adequate mitigation measures to protect against the risk".

the same way that she was but did nothing significant to address the danger. The trains that GWR was operating use a method of opening the doors which should have ended with World War Two. Passengers have to pull down the window, lean out and turn the handle on the outside. Despite the fact that the trains routinely travel over 75 miles an hour, the windows can be opened at any point in the whole journey. The RAIB report doesn't go far enough in its recommendations: these trains need to be immediately replaced so that no-one else is hurt

or killed in the same way. But we shouldn't have to wait for a tragedy before action is taken. Passenger safety, not profit, should be at the heart of the rail industry. That's why we support the campaign of the RMT transport union to keep the guard on the train and oppose driver-only operated trains. And that's why GWR must be stripped of the franchise, which should be taken into public ownership with the rest of the rail network to ensure that short-term cost-cutting profiteering won't put anyone else at risk.

## Boot racism out of football - reclaim the game!

Hannah Davis Birmingham South West Socialist Party

Football fans were shocked and disgusted when play was stopped twice during the Bulgaria v England Euro 2020 qualifying match on 14 October due to racist chanting from a section of Bulgarian fans. Black England players were subjected to monkey chants and Nazi salutes leading to a PA announcement for the group to stop and then play being halted while the group was removed from the stadium. England manager Gareth Southgate actioned European governing body Uefa's 'three step protocol', created to deal with racist incidents, which has been in place for ten years but not used until now. However, for many this game demonstrated how ineffective Uefa's approach of fines, sanctions and bans is in dealing with racism. Bulgaria had already been 'punished' by having some of the stands closed due to racist abuse at previous matches but clearly this did nothing to stop racist fans from buying tickets. Though progress has been made on tackling racism in football, this game was a reminder of how racism still exists in some sections of fans as well as in wider society. In England too there has been racist abuse on social media. And in an FA Cup tie on 19 October Haringey Borough players walked off the pitch

following abuse of their black players from some visiting Yeovil fans. While it is important that clear action is taken against racism in football it is also important that we recognise not all fans share these attitudes. Frequently the media focuses on acts of hooliganism or racism by specific fan groups at games while not showing many of the positive anti-racism and anti-discrimination campaigns that football fans and players are central to. This wrongly scapegoats football fans and these stereotypes should also be challenged. We need to reclaim the game, and society, from the big bosses and millionaires who are only in it for profit and put the management of clubs back in the hands of working-class fans and communities. Clubs should be collectively owned, and run by delegates elected from the supporters, from the players and employees' unions, and from the local community. This form of democracy should be emulated in the ruling bodies of the game too. Racism in football is not divorced from the racism in society in general. We need a united fight back against racism in football linked to the wider struggle against racism in society. Supporters have a common cause and can be united to reclaim our game. We want football that we can afford to watch, in a safe environment free of racism, football that we run, and facilities that we own! 'Reclaim the Game' - a socialist programme for football by John Reid - available from leftbooks.co.uk



photo David Ingham/CC

Hosted by the Socialist Party socialistparty.org.uk THE RALLY THAT DARES TO FIGHT Part of SOCIALISM 2019 A festival of ideas on how to boot out the Tories, end austerity & change the world SAT 2 NOV, 6.30PM, AT THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION, CENTRAL LONDON Rally speakers: PETER TAAFFE former editor of Militant that dared to fight Thatcher - and won; MARION LLOYD socialist candidate for PCS general secretary fighting to rebuild left trade unionism; DONAL O'COFAIGH councillor in Northern Ireland standing for a united working class fightback; HANNAH SELL deputy general secretary of the Socialist Party, putting forward a fighting strategy for the working class; leading member of the CWU postal workers' union leading the fight against the bosses and privatisation; THEO SHARIEFF national organiser of Socialist Students, the main campus organisation fighting for socialist change to end climate change

## ENFIELD NORTH LABOUR PARTY: DEFEND LOCAL DEMOCRACY

North London Socialist Party members



photo Paul Mattsson

Many Labour Party constituencies finally got the go-ahead to start the process of selecting their parliamentary candidate in September. One of them was Enfield North, where there has been a vacancy since February following the departure of arch Blairite Joan Ryan. Enfield North members waited for seven months to start the process, bitterly complaining that the time could have been used to campaign around a new, socialist candidate. The process finally began in September, but alas only briefly. In that short time local ward nominations were carried out with results that showed support for local socialist candidates. But after only a few weeks Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) stopped all similar processes nationally, stating the lack of time before an imminent general election and an urgency to speed up the procedure. Members were dismayed by the arrogance and obvious lack of respect for their time and efforts. They rightly asked what took the NEC so long to give the green light in the first place. When the NEC came up with a timetable for Enfield North that is supposed to end the process with the final hustings on the same

date as the original timetable, members' outrage rose. The outrage reached its highest level when the NEC produced a longlist of candidates. The longlist is secret, and the panel that produced it is also secret. Yet the members know that none of the popular local left candidates are on it, because none of them have been notified. The whole affair is painfully reminiscent of the Blairite era with bureaucratic top down imposition

of candidates. With the election of Corbyn, a new way of politics was promised, which attracted hundreds of thousands of new people to the party. But has the promise really been delivered? Many of the members in Enfield North, and nationally, are questioning that. Two parties in one The truth is that Labour is two parties in one, with a left leadership and the majority of the membership on

one side, and the Blairite right-wing representatives of capitalism on the other. From the moment Corbyn was elected leader, the Socialist Party argued the impossibility of unity with the Blairites, and the need for decisive action against them. However, there now seems to be a rift developing within the left itself, between a section of the left bureaucracy that dominates the NEC and the grassroots membership. A group that calls itself Enfield

Labour Socialists has now published a damning statement demanding that the NEC process be stopped and the local selection committee - which was overwhelmingly left wing - be reinstated. It states that they will not accept another parachuted careerist candidate and that the NEC runs the risk of Labour losing Enfield North. On Monday 21 October Enfield North Constituency Labour Party passed two emergency motions, demanding the reinstatement of the local selection committee and expressing no confidence in the NEC process. Both motions passed with an overwhelming majority. There is also a petition to the NEC: Search 'Reinstate democratic PPC elections' at change.org

Join the fightback JOIN THE SOCIALISTS Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8777 or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more about joining us today

## Interview with Jared Wood - candidate for RMT union executive

Elections to the RMT union national executive committee (NEC) are taking place and RMT activist and Socialist Party member **Jared Wood** is contesting for a place representing the London Transport Region. Ballot papers will be posted to members' homes on 21 October. Jared spoke to the Socialist about why he is standing.

### What does the NEC do and why is it an important body?

The NEC is responsible for implementing and developing union policy between annual general meetings (conferences). It is responsible for organising our membership in all sectors of the transport and maritime industries.

The NEC directs the political policy of the union and governs our relationships with the Trade Union Congress (TUC), other unions and the wider labour movement.

It is the only body of the union that can instruct members to take strike action or end strike action and accept a settlement with an employer.

### What are the key issues facing RMT members in London and nationally and what can you offer in terms of addressing these issues?

The key issue we face in London is the £1 billion a year cut to Transport for London (TfL) funding as a result of the Labour Mayor and Tory government joining forces to withdraw the subsidy for London's transport system.

I will focus on the need to bring together workers, unions and passengers in a united fight to restore that funding. Unless we win our fight and restore the subsidy, we



Jared Wood

will be facing battles against new cuts in jobs and conditions every few months.

The latest cuts programme from TfL is called "transformation" and threatens widespread job cuts and regrading of our engineering members. We have to resist this and maintain a safe railway as well as

protecting members' jobs, pay and conditions.

We are currently in dispute over London Underground pay and conditions. Members on the tube are suffering brutal shift patterns and we need this addressed. We routinely work seven days without a break including shifts

starting before 5am, finishing after 1am or working overnight. It cannot go on like this.

Members working for the tube's sub-contractors are also fighting for their rights. Our cleaners are now balloting for strike action demanding travel facilities on the tube and sick pay. Winning these demands and increasing our membership amongst cleaning grades is important for RMT.

### What role do you think the RMT should be playing in shaping a trade union response to the Johnson government?

RMT has been instrumental in getting the TUC to agree resolutions calling for generalised strike action against Tory austerity. We must continue to do this, but it is clear that the bureaucracy of Congress House (TUC) is not keen to put these resolutions into action.

I will be arguing that we do more to build alliances and joint action between those unions that are willing to fight austerity alongside us.

The TUC and, for that matter, the Labour Party have missed a huge opportunity to call a national demonstration to oppose the Tories and demand a general election. RMT should seek to develop a coalition of the willing to build a unified trade union resistance to Johnson and the Tories.

**Along with the Socialist Party, Bob Crow of the RMT in 2010 initiated the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) as a left alternative to New Labour. The election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader has significantly changed things, even though the majority of Labour MPs and councillors remain Blairites. What political stance should the RMT adopt?**

The election of Corbyn transformed the political situation. However, he has not used his victory and re-election to the leadership of Labour to deal decisively with the Blairites and a Parliamentary Labour Party that would seek to block his left programme in government.

He has also not been able to clearly promote a position of leaving the EU on the basis of enhancing workers' rights while rejecting the EU's constraints on nationalisation, state aid and public investment.

All of this together is undermining Labour's support but it is still possible that a radical manifesto and an energetic campaign could deliver a Corbyn government at the next election. Therefore, it is right that RMT does whatever we can to bring this about.

**jaredwood4NEC**  
for full programme  
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## Marion Lloyd for PCS union general secretary

**Katrine Williams**  
Vice-president PCS DWP group (personal capacity)

Nominations for the PCS union general secretary election closed on 14 October, and details of branch nominations have now been published.

Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd received 39 nominations from all parts of the union. Incumbent general secretary Mark Serwotka received 62 nominations and Bev Laidlaw 17.

From the nominations, both in terms of the number and spread across the union's groups, it is clear that Marion Lloyd is the candidate best placed to challenge Serwotka. Her nominations reflect a mood in

the union for a fresh approach - a leadership that gives members the confidence and the means to fight on the issues that matter to them.

We call upon activists to unite behind Marion's candidacy for a union democratically controlled through its elected lay structures, and a leadership which will actively coordinate across the union our fight on pay, jobs, pensions and office closures.

Support Marion Lloyd for PCS general secretary!

**If you can help or want more information contact Marion4GenSec@gmail.com**

**Marion Lloyd for PCS General secretary**

**@marion4gs**

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**nationalshop**  
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NSSN bulletin: [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)



Marion (above right with BEIS strikers) hailed the tremendous victory of her outsourced members in BEIS, working for ISS who have now won the London living wage just as those working for Aramark did recently. "As BEIS group president, I'm again immensely proud of my members and the branch reps. Two victories in a few weeks after these low-paid workers took indefinite strike action shows what can be achieved. It confirms that we can attract outsourced workers into PCS and link them with members who are directly employed, with the demand that these workers are brought in-house." photo Paula Mitchell

## Asda contracts: Vital that GMB mobilises for industrial action

**Iain Dalton**  
Socialist Party West Yorkshire organiser

About 400 hundred Asda workers and members of the GMB union marched defiantly through Leeds on 16 October, angry at the company's plans to sack staff members that hadn't signed up to the company's 'Contract 6' - with its unacceptable working conditions - by a 2 November deadline.

Unfortunately, this demo passing Asda house in Leeds (the third to date) was smaller than the previous one back in August. It reflects the fact that many workers had signed the contract, feeling that the alternative of losing their job was far worse.

While the GMB has done more to mobilise its members in Asda than other unions in retail have done when companies have been attempting to impose contract changes, much of this has been too little, too late.

Although GMB general secretary Tim Roache made fiery announcements that the union would never accept workers being transferred onto Contract 6 and - following security being beefed up around Asda House for this protest - that he was prepared to be arrested, other parts of his speech told a different story.

He explained how he'd personally



GMB members at Asda are facing the sack photo Sheffield SP

agreed to 'Your Choice' the forerunner to Contract 6 being introduced on the basis of it being voluntary for staff to move onto it - in effect that the collective bargaining of the union had been abandoned for each member to fend for themselves.

As multi-tier contract situations with workers eventually being forced onto the worst one by companies, did he really expect Asda

would act any differently?

He said the GMB would fight through legal channels for those who wouldn't sign the new contract, but did that mean he saw no alternative way to stop the sackings?

He also said that this isn't the end of the campaign and that GMB is starting "phase two" to get workplace union density up to 50%.

But the best way to achieve this is to prove the union is prepared

The general strike - a tool for our movement one of the discussions at  
**SOCIALISM 2019**  
2-3 Nov, central London  
[socialism2019.net](http://socialism2019.net)

### News in brief

#### Derbyshire: Flooring workers strike

More than 70 production workers at Forbo Flooring UK in Ripley, Derbyshire began a series of 48-hour strikes on 15 October.

The day before, the workers had rejected, by a huge majority, a slightly improved offer from management for a two-year package backdated to 1 January 2019, running to 31 December 2020.

The basic package was for a 2.2% salary increase in Year 1, and 2.1% in Year 2, with two extra days holiday at Christmas 2019.

The Unite union stated that the staff have been undervalued and disrespected throughout the dispute, in addition to a prevalence of a culture of bullying and harassment in the workplace.

The 48-hour strikes are to run for ten weeks until Christmas and these will be accompanied by a continuous overtime ban.

Unite members voted 61% in favour of strike action for better pay, terms and conditions.

**Ian Hunter**  
Derby Socialist Party

#### Liverpool Uni strike

About 20 security staff, members of the Unite union, took action over bullying management at Liverpool University on 19 October. The action arose after a vending machine was damaged and two security staff suspended.

The Unite members say that the machines are often damaged by students but management is targeting staff. They also told me that management didn't follow procedure before suspending the two workers and this was the final straw after a history of intolerable management behaviour.

Unite officer Brian Nelson said there are 600 Unite members working at the university and he has received similar complaints from a number of them. Further action is being planned if the issue is not resolved, and a mass meeting of all 600 members is being proposed.

**Dave Walsh**  
Liverpool Socialist Party

#### Trade Union Conference Opposing Political Policing

16 November at the Queen Anne Buildings, Greenwich University.

Request a speaker from Cops by emailing [opposingpolicesurveillance@gmail.com](mailto:opposingpolicesurveillance@gmail.com)

Register for the conference by searching 'undercover policing' in London at [eventbrite.co.uk](http://eventbrite.co.uk)

## NEU members strike against sixth-form funding cuts

"The funding for school kids has been cut catastrophically, but the cuts for students aged 16-18 have been even worse," said Alan Clifford, National Education Union (NEU) teachers' rep at Notre Dame Sixth Form College, to Socialist Party members visiting their picket line.

Notre Dame was one of 25 sixth-form colleges where NEU members, both teachers and support staff, took strike action on 17 October. The sixth-form college sector has faced cuts of £1.1 billion since 2010.

Consequently, "class sizes have got bigger, our pay has been depressed," Alan explained. In recent

years pay for sixth-form college teachers has been separated from schools as well.

A good turnout of NEU members on the picket line was joined by other trade unionists and several students from the college.

As Alan made clear, the £400 million pledged from the government to education both "isn't real yet, but is nowhere near enough to reverse the cuts that we've suffered."

If the Tory government doesn't budge, then NEU members will be back out on strike on the 5 and 20 November.

**Leeds Socialist Party**



NEU pickets at Notre Dame sixth-form college photo Iain Dalton



Bradford council Unite members striking against cuts photo Iain Dalton

## Bradford: Workers walk out over council cuts

"If these cuts go through we won't be able to run these services," said Unite libraries shop steward Karen Raynor, on the £2 million cuts to Bradford council's libraries, museums and galleries.

The libraries service has faced year-on-year cuts as the council has aimed to replace trained staff with volunteers.

Karen told us that libraries have been shut for an unprecedented 203 hours, which would otherwise have been open, due to staffing shortages over the last six months.

Many staff are outraged that at the same time as making these cuts the council is spending £1.4 million on

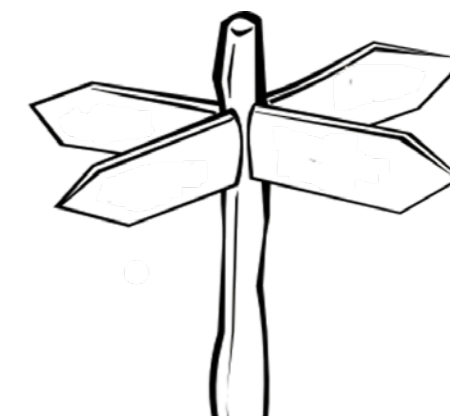
a bid to be the city of culture. As Karen said: "When I heard the news, I had to check it wasn't 1 April!"

Not only are workers in libraries and museums set to take 14 days of strike action over the next two months, but workers at the National Science and Media Museum in Bradford are in dispute with their employer too.

Socialist Party members have been building support for the strike and demanding that the council temporarily use its reserves to keep services open as part of a campaign alongside the trade unions and the public to fight for the funding the city needs.

Rebuilding a fighting left in PCS one of the discussions at  
**SOCIALISM 2019**  
2-3 Nov, central London  
[socialism2019.net](http://socialism2019.net)

# 70 years since the declaration of the People's Republic of China CHINA AT THE CROSSROADS



In the final part of the Socialist's trilogy marking the 70th anniversary of the Chinese Revolution, **Nick Chaffey** examines China today and where it's heading.

Seventy years on from the 1949 revolution China stands at the crossroads. A revolution whose official long-term aim was to abolish landlordism and capitalism and emancipate the poor peasants, and workers from exploitation and persecution, has resulted in a communist China in name only.

Billionaires sit in the Chinese Communist Party regime not elected workers' representatives. In fact, the estimated net worth of the 153 members of China's Parliament and its advisory body amounts to \$650 billion!

The introduction of market reforms from the 1970s has transformed China from a Maoist-Stalinist planned economy to the second largest economy in the world, increasingly integrated into the global economy.

Decades of double-digit growth, surpassing other capitalist economies, has created a new Chinese capitalist class, 40 million private companies, giant Chinese and foreign-owned corporations and, a huge growth of the working class.

All of this was carried out by a brutal state machine - a Stalinist bureaucracy run by an elite determined to maintain its rule and which continues to control important economic levers.

The result is a regime that the Socialist Party has described as a special form of state capitalism.

## Market 'reforms'

Two previous articles in the Socialist have outlined the victory of Mao Zedong's peasant Red Army in China's civil war of 1944-49. However, the CCP's failure to develop a healthy planned economy through democratic workers' control and management led to the bureaucratic mismanagement and economic and social crisis that Deng Xiaoping inherited following the death of Mao in 1976.

Despite this, the planned economy, based on the revolutionary aspirations of workers and peasants, had ensured a basic development of the 'Iron Rice Bowl' ie the establishment of secure jobs, food, housing, health and education for workers in the cities and the commune system in the rural areas.

Deng and his grouping, attempted both to maintain the rule of the elite and to overcome the bureaucracy's stifling effect. He initially introduced market reforms with the aim of try-

ing to boost the planned economy. They were implemented in a series of zig-zags and in brutal fashion. Agriculture, industry, foreign trade and investment was opened up to capitalism.

Since then, China's policies have reflected domestic and international economic and political pressures - particularly the impact of the Tiananmen Square uprising in 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union and other Stalinist states, the Asia currency crisis in 1997, the Great Crash of 2007-08 and now the developing trade war with Trump and the US.

Carried out under the banner of 'developing a socialist mixed economy', these measures were nothing to do with either socialism or the interests of the working class.



**Under the hammer blow of an economic crisis and revolutionary struggle the state bureaucracy will not remain unaffected**

Reforms began in agriculture, where farmers, under the direction of the state, were given fixed price incentives for their produce, stimulating growth and private wealth with the winding up of the rural communes. It was this peasant layer that provided the first new large layer of capitalists.

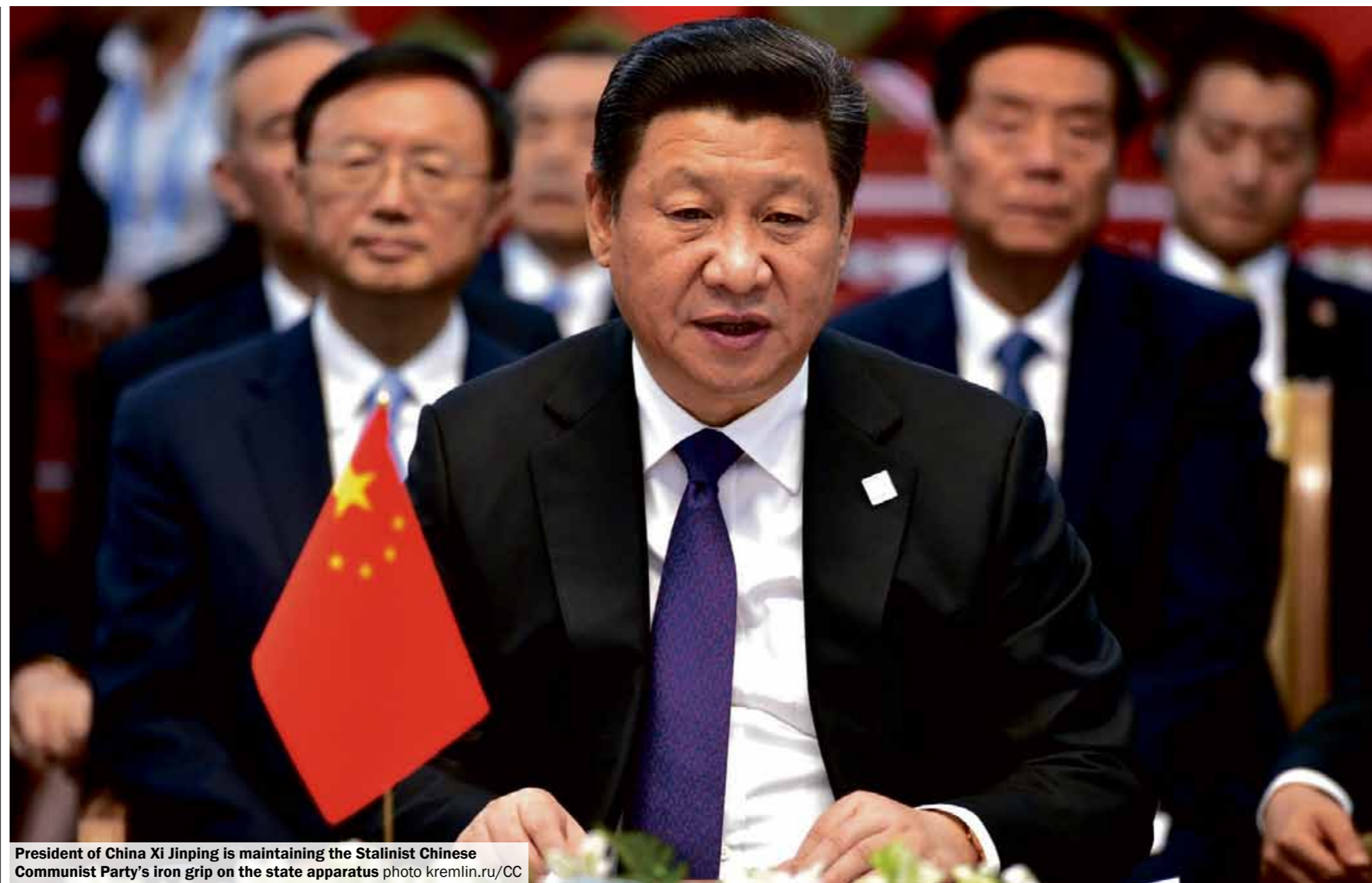
Industrial reform developed further from 1979 with four Special Economic Zones for foreign investment, primarily in the Guangdong province, close to Hong Kong, through joint enterprises with the state.

State income from foreign trade increased from 15% in 1980 to 35% in 1986. With this the Chinese economy would increasingly become intertwined in the fluctuations and crises of the world capitalist economy.

Industrial investment by the state, the emerging capitalists and foreign companies over this period saw an enormous expansion in the working class.

But the reforms of this period came at a heavy price and in a brutal fashion. To provide the workforce for the growing industries, poor peasants were forced from the land into sweatshops and construction sites. For the growing sections of workers, industrialisation came with intensified exploitation and the continued repression of a monstrous state bureaucracy, with no independent trade unions to defend their interests.

Horrified at the scale of the uprising, Deng held to his pro-capitalist



President of China Xi Jinping is maintaining the Stalinist Chinese Communist Party's iron grip on the state apparatus photo kremlin.ru/CC

The Tiananmen Square uprising of 1989 did not come out of the blue, but mirrored features of the political revolution previously seen in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The accumulated dissatisfaction among workers, youth and students at the impact of inflation and widespread corruption, burst to the surface in 1989 with demands for democratic reforms, freedom of the press and organisation, as well as challenging the control and privileges of the bureaucracy.

But without a farsighted revolutionary party, with roots in the working class, and despite the determination and heroism of the struggle (which opened up splits in the Chinese bureaucracy), the movement was crushed in bloody repression.

Horrified at the scale of the uprising, Deng held to his pro-capitalist

view. But the bureaucracy's fear of losing its positions of wealth and privilege led to a strengthening of state repression.

With the economic collapse of the Stalinist Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Chinese bureaucracy feared a 'big bang' rapid introduction of capitalism through privatisation would destroy the bureaucratic apparatus and the so-called Communist Party they ruled through.

## State control

Despite capitalist development and privatisation, dominant sections of the economy remained in the hands of the state - banks, telecoms, transport, energy and defence production while currency control and trade controls meant that the Chinese state bureaucracy retained important levers of control not available to capitalist governments in the west.

In the 1990s, despite the monstrous regime that ruled in China, capitalist governments led by the US and Europe were keen to seize investment opportunities and profits in the land of a cheap but skilled workforce. In this process China opened its economy more to the travails of the world capitalist economy.

As a producer of consumer goods by 2013, China was exporting \$4 trillion worth of goods - up from \$100 billion in 1988 - opening up a huge trade surplus with the rest of the world and in particular with the US. This surplus reached \$232 billion in 2006. Alongside strategic rivalry this has been a source of Trump's trade war with China.

With the huge growth of the working class came class struggle. There are an estimated 263 million industrial workers today, a doubling from the mid-1980s. Bitter struggles have

developed especially over unpaid wages, wage increases and over improving working conditions.

Enormous factories, employing tens of thousands in appalling conditions became the norm. In 2010, mass strikes at Foxconn, Honda and Toyota saw workers win wage rises of up to 30%.

Currently the Chinese regime is worried about 'contagion' from the sustained mass protests over democratic rights in Hong Kong of spreading into nearby Guangdong province, the most densely industrialised region on the planet - home to 32 million workers.

How China will develop is a vital question to Marxists and the world revolution. Is it possible, given the trajectory of economic developments in China, that a capitalist counterrevolution could be completed, ending the CCP's monolithic grip?

slowdown, the Chinese state injected an unprecedented \$586 billion to invest in new production, mainly infrastructure projects and the imperialist expansion of its 'belt and road' project west towards India.

As a result, China trebled its production of goods and services to \$9.5 trillion in 2014, whereas GDP (total output) in Britain fell from \$3 trillion to \$2.67 trillion in 2014.

While this staved off an immediate crisis, the bureaucracy is unable to extricate itself from the slowdown of domestic growth or further crises developing in the world economy. This will have its reflection politically both within the state and society, among the emerging capitalist class and the working class.

## Privileged elite

At this stage many of the capitalist class have links to the state itself and maintain their wealth and privileges through its protection.

A big section are the 'princelings', children of top officials, making up 90% of the billionaires.

But in the face of a new crisis, splits in the state will create different wings with varied outlooks, which would include a pro-capitalist reform wing seeking support for capitalist political change as a basis for ending the current bureaucratic state control and the removal of remaining constraints on the capitalists.

In the same process, under the pressure of a revolutionary movement of the working class, other sections of the state could be pushed to grant reforms in the interests of the working class to try and protect its rule from revolutionary overthrow.

Under the hammer blow of an economic crisis and revolutionary struggle the state bureaucracy will not remain unaffected.

The tasks for the working class and Marxists in China and internationally are to continue to fight for and build independent trade unions and establish the basis for a workers' party with a programme to introduce the eight-hour day, raise wages, invest in social housing, education and healthcare; the introduction of workplace committees for the democratic control and management of the economy and the renationalisation of elements of the privatised economy.

It is on the shoulders of the mighty, multimillion Chinese working class, harnessed in a movement for social and political revolution, that the future of China will be decided.

See also 'Chinese revolution of 1944-49: 'The second greatest event in human history' and 'China after the 1949 revolution: the benefits of the planned economy stifled by bureaucracy' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)



Co-leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky fought for workers' democracy and against the Stalinist bureaucracy

## Workers' democracy

Deng's reforms were not the only option. As Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution in October 1917 explained, a "nationalised planned economy needs democracy as the human body needs oxygen". But the Chinese revolution from its outset was a deformed workers' state, where the working class was pushed aside from playing the leading role in the revolution, replaced by Mao's peasant-based Red Army.

The development of workers' democracy, through workplace committees, on a local, regional and national basis could have provided the outline of a plan that met the needs of society, guided by the working class itself.

A healthy workers' state would have ensured elections of officials and that no official received more than the average wage of the workers they represented; be subject to immediate recall and through the circulation of elected positions among the whole of society ensure the participation of all sections of the working class in the running of society.

With no standing army but an armed people under the democratic control of the workers' committees, a workers' state would have served to defend the gains of the revolution from capitalist counterrevolution and bureaucratic deformation. To do this a political revolution would have been necessary by the working class to remove the bureaucracy and implement workers' democracy.

An internationalist appeal would then have been directed towards the masses in South East Asia and internationally to end capitalism and take the road of the socialist revolution.

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

October issue includes...

**The brutal faces of capitalism**  
**Neoliberalism on steroids**  
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Recommended further reading from a series of articles in Socialism Today (the magazine of the Socialist Party) debating the nature of the Chinese state today

- **The Writing on the Wall, Will Hutton reviewed by Peter Taaffe - Issue 108 (2007)**
- **Can China be a new tiger? - Issue 109 (2007)**
- **China's capitalist counterrevolution - Issue 114 (2007)**
- **The character of the Chinese state - Issue 122 (2008)**
- **China's Hybrid economy Issue 122 (2008)**
- **Capitalist or not? Asks Andy Ford - Issue 131 (2009)**
- **A state in transition: reply to Andy Ford - 132 (2009)**
- **Red Capitalism, Walter & Howie reviewed by Peter Taaffe - Issue 150 (2011)**

see [socialismtoday.org](http://socialismtoday.org) - back issues available £3 each



## The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

■ Send your news, views and criticism in no more than 150 words to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk) - or if you're not online, Socialist Inbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

### ■ It's OK to talk. But what if the service I need to talk to has been cut?

The acceptance of mental health issues in society is a huge positive. I think the national and local campaigns - encouraging, in particular, young men to open up about their mental health issues - is a massive progression from years gone by.

The concept of 'it's OK to talk' and such ideas are important. They open up the possibility of being open about mental health and I applaud and encourage them.

That being said, talking to my mate often isn't enough. The disgraceful state of professional mental health services in Britain is a scandal that needs shouting about on Mental Health Day and every day.

I've seen friends, family and loved ones ignored, discharged and put on waiting lists due to a crisis in resources. I've sat with someone who's openly admitted they're close to killing themselves, tried to find a safe place for someone admitting to me they've been self-harming and had to wait hours for the professional help these people needed.

That's just me, I'm sure everyone has a personal story about the mental health crisis. It's a national scandal.

I could go on about the general impact of austerity - its impact of low wages, poverty and service cuts on mental health - but that's a separate point. I'll stick to mental health services.

The NHS, and in particular mental health, is at breaking point. We need proper full funding for all our health needs.

And we need to oppose a capitalist system that profits off the woes of the masses and fight for a socialist society that can deal with the root causes of mental health problems.

**Matt Whale**  
Hull, nurse

### ■ "Equal"? Equal exploitation!

The High Court decision - that the government's handling of the rise in the state pension age for women was not

unfair - is yet another perfect example of how workers cannot trust the legal system to defend their interests!

The High Court is made out to be an impartial and fair system, above politics to defend people. After the recent ruling that Boris Johnson acted unlawfully in the suspension of parliament, some trade union leaders and left activists praised the court as a 'defender of the people'.

This is not true, and dangerous for left figures to declare! Most laws are created by the capitalist establishment to defend their power, positions and interests.

When workers have been able to win changes in the law, it's only been through collective struggle, like the mass mobilisation of workers in trade union movements.

If the current legal system was truly on the side of justice - it would be for workers' justice!

The government raised women's state pension age from 60 to 65 to make it 'equal' with men - now both sexes suffer the same 'equal' exploitation and have to work longer!

If there was actually any justice, the pension age for men would have been reduced to 60 so all workers have more time to enjoy their lives.

If it were up to the capitalists, they would have us work until we die and the idea of retirement becomes a fairy tale. However, if history teaches us anything, it's that workers have fought to better their living standards, so I'm sure the story will not end here.

**Corinthia Ward**  
Birmingham

### ■ Deselecting 'Blairites' for 40 years

Dave Nellist's article was most welcome. (See '40 years on: Mandatory reselection more vital for Labour than ever' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk))

Dave states: "The conference decisions (agreeing to mandatory reselection) became a key trigger for the formation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in March 1981 and split the Labour vote in the 1983 election, allowing the Tories to be re-elected."

This may have impacted on the scale and implementation of mandatory reselection because those local parties that



photo Mobilus In Mobili/CC

embarked upon replacing MPs like Reg Prentice were subject to enormous media pressure.

"Mandatory reselection lasted only a decade." And so did the SDP who merged with the Liberals to form the Liberal Democrats in 1988.

The 'Gang of Four', who set up the SDP, claimed their objective was to "break the mould" of British politics. In that they failed.

But their real objective was to prevent a left-wing Labour government, led by Michael Foot, being elected in 1983. In that regard it was 'job done', even though it paved the way for a decade of Thatcherism!

This year we had a repeat. Blairite MPs, led by Chuka Umunna and Luciana Berger, split off with disenchanted Tory MPs to form Change UK. According to the Times newspaper, "Change UK was born at the Labour Party conference of 2018" where the reform of the trigger ballot system made it slightly easier to get rid of MPs.

The SDP took seven years to merge with the Liberals. These Blairite MPs took less than seven months to join the Lib Dems.

How ironic that the Lib Dems, who in

coalition with the Tories implemented their programme of austerity, have now become a refuge for 'homeless' MPs.

Dave rightly says: "The election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in September 2015 fundamentally altered politics in the party." But four years on, the struggle for control and leadership of the party continues.

If Jeremy Corbyn leads the party to victory in the next general election that will be an important battle won, but the undeclared war against capitalism inside and outside the party will have only just begun.

**John Merrell**  
Leicester

### ■ Climate profit

I thought it was a really good article by Ben Robinson in the Socialist. (see 'Climate change: what's socialism got to do with it?' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)). But unfortunately one paragraph let it down!

He talks about the profit motive and says: "The results of our work are transformed by employers into capital, of which we receive a fraction as wages. The bulk is claimed by businesses as

profit".

I'm not sure this is correct in that it is surplus value that is created, out of which a profit is made but certainly not the amount that the article puts forward. Could an explanation be provided on this so that readers don't get confused?

**Ruthie McNally**  
Worcester

### ■ Health profit

Above the Daily Mirror NHS poll is a list of 70 Tories and Liberals who have been, or are currently, connected financially to private health companies. The list of shame would make for a good poster.

**Mike**  
Southampton

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## Minimum wage debate

# WHAT SHOULD WE BE DEMANDING?

In the last issue of the Socialist, we initiated a debate about how we can end low pay and what level of minimum wage we should be fighting for. See 'Minimum wage debate: how can we end the scandal of low pay?' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk). Three readers have sent us their thoughts and we print them below. If you've got a view, email [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk).

### The end of mining and public sector cuts have cost us better-paid jobs

**Jon Dale**  
Mansfield Socialist Party

What should the minimum wage be? Alistair Tice wrote an excellent article in the Socialist (see above).

A Trade Union Congress (TUC) study reported average weekly wages in Mansfield fell from £379 in 2008 to £322 last year. In 2008, Mansfield average pay was £84 a week below the national average - £125 below in 2018. So Mansfield Socialist Party recently discussed this.

The Office for National Statistics said the median hourly wage for full-time Mansfield workers in 2018 was £11.01. It's probably less for part-time workers.

Such low pay is a condemnation

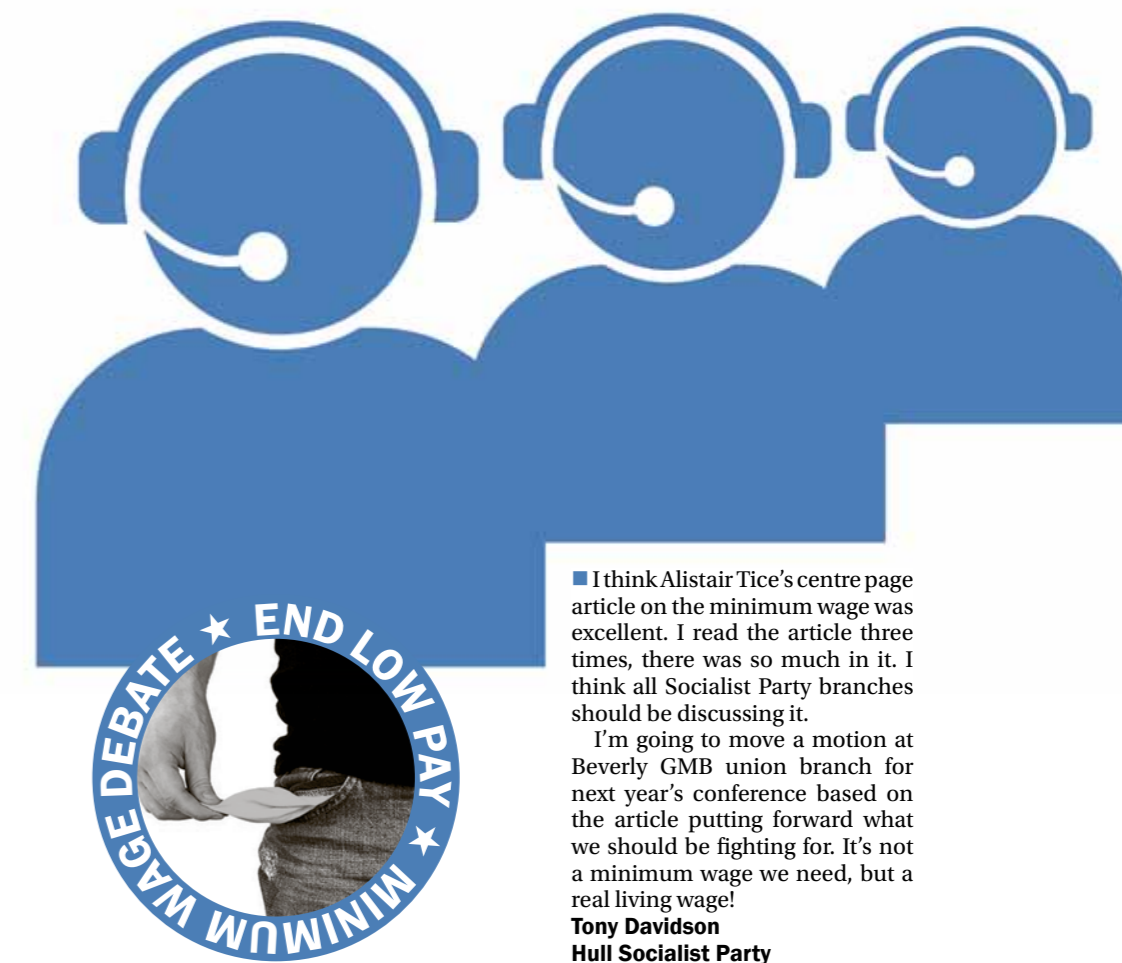
of large local employers like Sports Direct. The end of mining and public service cuts lost us better-paid, trade union-organised jobs. The TUC produces well-researched reports, but fails to seriously fight to win decent pay for the army of low-paid workers.

Mansfield Socialist Party's campaign stall carries a poster for a £10-an-hour minimum wage. We get comments from small traders like gardeners and hairdressers that it would drive them out of business, as they couldn't afford to employ anyone.

We reply they should be subsidised, but big business should pay up. This usually satisfies them, if they stop for a discussion.

Recently, a health worker angrily said his qualification would be worthless if the minimum was £10. It turned out he was on Band 3 - on barely £10 - and agreed NHS pay bands needed a hike.

A serious national trade union struggle to end low pay would give confidence to workers and small businesspeople. In a low-paid area like Mansfield we think £12 an hour should be the headline figure - a step towards £15, which should be the main demand in high-cost areas like London.



■ I think Alistair Tice's centre page article on the minimum wage was excellent. I read the article three times, there was so much in it. I think all Socialist Party branches should be discussing it.

I'm going to move a motion at Beverly GMB union branch for next year's conference based on the article putting forward what we should be fighting for. It's not a minimum wage we need, but a real living wage!

**Tony Davidson**  
Hull Socialist Party

## What if you're not able to work?

**Eleanor Donne**  
Essex Socialist Party

Wages are only part of the battle against poverty. What if you are not working through sickness or disability, can't find a job or are caring for someone?

What if you are bringing up young children or retired? How can socialists fight for decent benefits which reflect the real cost of caring for children or living as a disabled person?

Sajid Javid said recently "we want to support hardworking people to succeed and provide for their families." This just isn't true.

In fact, it's very difficult for working-class and many middle-class people to earn enough to live comfortably on their wages alone, even with two wages coming in - because of soaring private rents, the cost of child care and wage freezes.

Increasing numbers of families, in

particular, rely on in-work benefits such as housing benefit, tax credits, or now Universal Credit.

New Labour and Tory governments, with a lot of help from their friends in the media, created a 'hostile environment' for benefit claimants to prepare the way for significant cuts.

Since 2010, Tory-led governments have imposed the benefit cap, the 'bedroom tax' for council and housing association tenants with spare rooms, and limited tax credits and limited Universal Credit to the amount for two children from 2017 onwards.

They have also cut maternity and pregnancy grants and ramped up benefit sanctions for people who can't or don't meet the punishing regime of job searching (which low-paid and overworked Department for Work and Pensions staff are having to implement).

Universal Credit is a 'top up'

benefit, paid whether you are in work or out, designed to bring you up to a subsistence level.

This has enabled employers to pay no more than the minimum wage, and get away with zero-hour contracts, knowing that the state will make up the difference. In effect, this is a transfer of wealth from taxpayers in general to large company shareholders.

### Claw back

Our demand for a real living wage would claw some of this wealth back. But it is also important to fight for decent benefits which reflect the real cost of (for example) bringing up children, or living as a disabled person.

Jeremy Corbyn announced recently that an incoming Labour government would abolish the benefit cap and the two-child limit, shorten the wait for Universal Credit to two weeks, and split the payments

between adults in the household.

His longer-term aim would be to abolish Universal Credit and "introduce a system that will be based on the principles of dignity and respect, and it will alleviate and end poverty, not drive people into it".

Our demands on benefits and pensions should start, like our wage demands, with what we need to live on. But, as with wages, we also have to consider what demands people can realistically be mobilised to fight for.

Before Social Security benefits were slashed by Thatcher's government in the 1980s (and further cut by Tory and New Labour governments), if you lost your job you were paid unemployment benefit at 75% of your wage, at least for a time.

This reflected the strength of the trade union and workers' movement in the 1970s, but also the remnants of the post-war boom when capitalism could afford to concede

more 'generous' spending.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement in the 1920s and 30s demanded work or full pay. Given that today's labour movement representatives have neglected to fight, and at worst colluded in the driving down of benefits, both these demands may seem unrealistic at present.

Our first demand on a Corbyn government should be to reverse all benefits cuts. But we should also demand an increase in all benefits linked to a minimum wage set at a level that lifts people out of poverty.

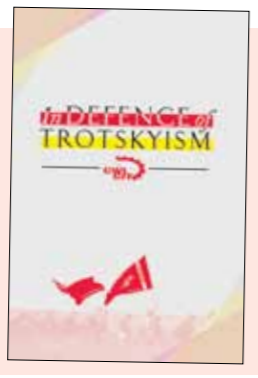
£15-an-hour minimum wage - is this what we should fight for? one of the discussions at **SOCIALISM 2019** 2-3 Nov, central London [socialism2019.net](http://socialism2019.net)

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Hear some of the book's authors at the Rally for Socialism 2019 - full details on p5



## POSTIES SPEAK AT BASINGSTOKE SOCIALIST PARTY PUBLIC MEETING

**Mayola Demmenie**  
Basingstoke Socialist Party

Four postal workers due to strike with the Communication Workers Union (CWU) were among the 15 people at Basingstoke Socialist Party's public meeting on 16 October. We discussed organising workers to defend jobs and wages.

One CWU member reported on the dispute. Our next public

meeting on Wednesday 20 November should have a CWU shop steward from the local sorting office speaking.

We had a lively debate about Brexit and concluded that we must stand united against the capitalists, the biggest threat to the living standards of working-class people. A student who came to the meeting joined the Socialist Party that night, and bought her ticket for Socialism 2019 (see page 5) shortly after.

## SOCIALISTS ATTRACT SUPPORT AT FIRST NEWTON ABBOT MEETING

**Richard Worth**  
Torbay and South Devon Socialist Party

The Socialist Party held its first public meeting in Newton Abbot on 15 October: 'Political parties in crisis, living standards falling - the case for socialism!' We are fighting for ourselves, our children and for children yet to be born. In today's crisis-ridden capitalist world, the choice really is socialism or barbarism.

The meeting was really well attended with new faces, many

Socialist Party members, and some Labour Party members too. A financial appeal raised £105.30, which after paying for the meeting's costs gave a magnificent £58.70 to the Socialist Party's fighting fund.

Local NHS campaigner Lynn Gunnigle spoke about the fight to save Dartmouth Hospital from sell-off, and to reopen it. Robin Clapp, Socialist Party South West regional secretary, explained why Jeremy Corbyn must take action against the Blairites and fight the coming general election on socialist policies to beat the Tories' attacks on workers.

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**Socialist Party Fighting Fund**

	£ target	£ received	October - December 2019	Deadline 3 January
South West	1,800	455	25%	
West Midlands	2,600	303	12%	
Southern	1,600	172	11%	
Northern	750	80	11%	
East Midlands	1,850	175	9%	
Wales	2,300	203	9%	
Yorkshire	3,300	229	7%	
London	6,100	413	7%	
South East	750	36	5%	
Eastern	1,200	38	3%	
North West	2,100	40	2%	
Other	5,650	425	8%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>2,569</b>	<b>9%</b>	

## Socialist Party Nigeria speaking tour WHICH WAY FORWARD FOR THE WORKING PEOPLE AND YOUTH OF NIGERIA?

Come hear about the struggle for a mass party of the working class and a socialist programme in Nigeria. Peluola Adewale of Socialist Party Nigeria, sister party of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, will be speaking at meetings across the country.

Despite enormous natural resources, for the big majority of Nigerians capitalism means misery. More than 90 million Nigerians live on less than \$1.90 a day. By 2030, a quarter of the poorest people in the world will be Nigerian, according to the World Data Lab.

In this year's presidential elections, incumbent Muhammadu

Buhari was re-elected - but with only 35% of the electorate voting. This reflects the deep-rooted anger at all of the 'moneybags' corrupt capitalist politicians.

In April, in the aftermath of the election, the government promised to increase the minimum wage. This still hasn't been implemented, despite the government striking a deal with the trade unions.

In recent years there has been a decline in workers' struggles, primarily because of frustration at the failure of the trade union leaders to give a serious lead.

However, Nigeria has a powerful working class, which many times

has shown its potential to draw all the oppressed masses and youth behind it in struggle. Between 2001 and 2012, there were at least ten general strikes.

The Socialist Party of Nigeria is campaigning for a 24-hour general strike, to be seriously built for by the trade union leaders, demanding implementation of the minimum wage and ending casualisation of work.

For all dates and meetings near you, visit [socialistparty.org.uk/whats-on](http://socialistparty.org.uk/whats-on) or contact the Socialist Party national office on [info@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:info@socialistparty.org.uk) or 020 8988 8777

## BURNT-OUT BARKING RESIDENTS PICKET BUILDERS' SALES DAY



**Pete Mason**  
Chair, Barking Reach Residents Association

Our protest outside the builder Bellway's sales event, at the Hilton Tower Bridge hotel next to City Hall in central London, was a huge success.

After the London Fire Brigade condemned the government for doing nothing to get flammable cladding removed from over 100 high-rise buildings which still have it, the BBC recognised the importance of the protest and filmed it, interviewing residents of Samuel Garside House. This block on the Barking Riverside estate in east London suffered a terrible fire which spread along the decorative wood cladding on the balconies.

We leafleted potential home buyers going in, explaining that Bellway and another firm, Mace, built the houses and flats on the estate, but have yet to respond to demands to remove wooden cladding from

the houses. The latest promise, which arrived the day before the protest, is that we will hear something in November.

Bellway made £2.3 billion in revenue and £660 million in profit in the 12 months to July. Yet bosses ignored a recent fire risk assessment which suggested the simple measure of fitting fire boards to the balconies, for the cost of a few pounds each, until removal by Bellway next spring.

Residents have won this promised removal, and consultation on balcony replacement - as well as continual extensions of their insurance-funded alternative accommodation. Almost every week since the fire, various agencies acting for the landlord and insurers have told residents they must go back!

But the changes are nowhere near complete. As recently as 18 October the fire alarm showed a fault. This has led to huge anger.

Residents have pushed the council to investigate the building, and

the insurance company to withdraw from forcing them back until the council's report. This was released the day before our protest.

The report states the balconies "remain a significant risk to the spread of fire." Why should they be forced back in the face of this? There is a 24/7 waking watch, but there is no confidence this will impede a fire in the way that fire boards could.

Will the builders and landlords implement suggested changes before trying again to force residents back? Their current record suggests not.

That's why one of our banners calls for resident control over our estate. This means democratic election of residents to majority control over the 'community interest company' that, in theory, runs it.

But in the end, you can't control what you don't own. The big landlords, builders and insurers should be nationalised under democratic workers' control and management, to build homes for the benefit of all, not for profit.

# JOIN THE PARTY THAT DARES TO FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM



More than a decade on from the world economic crash, the ongoing capitalist crisis is ravaging lives across the planet - with wars, homelessness, poverty and inequality.

Increasingly, the majority see nothing on offer from capitalism. This is what lies behind the workers and young people taking to the streets in Chile and elsewhere (see page 15).

The president of the Santiago Metro Workers' Union said: "It's the low pensions, the privatisation of water, the rise in electricity prices, the healthcare system, the need for equal education rights... The metro fare was just the trigger, it is symbolic. It made people say - enough."

As socialists, we don't only decry these rotten conditions - we fight them. We always say what needs to be said and organise to do what needs to be done - to point to what is necessary to win.

To do that, we help to build collective action and democratic organisation of the working class. We participate in campaigns and movements to help show how we can achieve the maximum unity of all the different sections of the working class, with all their different experiences and demands, around a programme of struggle.

The trade unions are the basic organisations of the working class, through which millions of workers can defend themselves against



their employers in the workplace. Key to our work is participating and campaigning within them to be able to fight most effectively.

We always link this to explaining how capitalism is incapable of solving our problems. Therefore we need to transform society in a socialist direction.

And another role of a party like ours is to keep safe the memories of the working class for future generations to benefit from the experiences of past struggle and learn

the lessons. This is what our brave comrades in Chile, Socialismo Revolucionario, are doing now. This is the way we aid our movement in speeding up its understanding of what is necessary today to win.

You can make socialist ideas stronger. Join the Socialist Party.

Order our reprinted pamphlet 'The case for socialism: why you should join the Socialist Party', or our leaflet outlining our record in struggle, at [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

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**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**

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## PACKED LABOUR MOVEMENT SERVICE A FITTING FAREWELL TO TONY MULHEARN

**Theo Sharieff**  
Socialist Party youth and student organiser

Hundreds of people packed the pews and aisles of the Unitarian Church in Liverpool's Sefton Park on 21 October to pay their respects to Tony Mulhearn.

Over five decades, Tony was a lifelong supporter of Militant and member of the Socialist Party, and a leading figure in the 1983-87 socialist city council that beat Thatcher.

Tony was a giant of the workers' movement in Liverpool and Britain. Just glancing around the service, it felt like a labour movement mass meeting - there were banners from unions including PCS and Unison, local trade union councils, the Socialist Party, and others.

Over 700 people turned out from across Liverpool and across the country - as many people as attended Liverpool District Labour Party delegate meetings when Tony was its president!

Touching speeches were given by Tony's children throughout the day, as well as Derek Hatton, who was a Militant supporter and deputy leader of that Liverpool Labour council.

Speeches by Socialist Party members, as well as delicately recount-



photos Yorkshire Socialist Party

**The legacy of Tony Mulhearn and the Militant in Liverpool**

**SOCIALISM 2019**  
2-3 Nov, central London  
[socialism2019.net](http://socialism2019.net) >p5

as many enemies as friends along the way.

Dave Walsh, member of Liverpool Socialist Party, talked about what Tony's struggle meant to a working-class boy like himself growing up in Liverpool in the 1980s.

The whole establishment, including the capitalist press and the right wing of the Labour Party, poured scorn on Tony for the stand he and others took against Thatcher's austerity programme. But Tony and the Militant's defeat of Thatcher meant that Dave had an apprenticeship and a decent future growing up in Liverpool.

Tony was a Marxist and a genuine working-class intellectual who helped translate socialism into the language of jobs, housing and services for thousands of poor and working people in Liverpool.

The speeches served as a reminder of the inspiration Tony is, and will continue to be, to working-class and young people in Liverpool and beyond. They illustrated why so many people beyond Tony's family and close friends attended to say farewell.

Saying goodbye to Tony was heartbreakingly sad for his family, and for anyone who was lucky enough to have met him. But it was hard not to leave feeling inspired after listening to what Tony did with his life.

His story, and the story of the Militant in Liverpool, will no doubt inspire a new generation of class fighters who will stand in this tradition, determinedly and patiently fighting for a socialist future, free from capitalism, poverty and injustice.

The attempt to crush the aspirations of the majority of Catalans for self-determination by the Spanish state - now headed by the Psoe-led government of prime minister Pedro Sánchez - has not succeeded but instead has ignited widespread anger.

Mass protests condemning the brutal jail sentences meted out to elected representatives of pro-Catalonia independence parties culminated in a general strike on 18 October.

In order to try and dampen-down the movement the establishment media has focussed on outbreaks of disorder after the peaceful mass protests have ended, while downplaying violence perpetrated by the police and some small right-wing groups.

The following article, written by **Tony Sanouis** before the general strike, analyses the current struggle, the role of the working class, and what demands and movement are needed for Catalan independence to happen.

Following a month-long trial, the Supreme Court of the Spanish state pronounced brutal prison sentences on nine leaders of the Catalan independence movement.

In total, prison sentences of over 100 years have been imposed on these former Catalan government ministers. At the same time, a renewed European arrest warrant has been issued for the former Catalan President, Carles Puigdemont, who is in self-imposed exile, in Belgium.

These draconian sentences handed down by the Supreme Court, coupled with the recent arrest of members of the Committees for the Defence of the Republic (CDRs), are a statement from the Spanish ruling class that they will not tolerate the idea of an independent Catalonia or secession from any part of the Spanish state.

In the light of this latest attack, it is urgent to draw the lessons from the experience of the revolutionary upheavals which took place in Catalonia in 2017 (see: [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net) - 'Catalonia two years on from the independence referendum').

### Laws inherited from Franco

Following the announcement of these sentences by the court, imposed by the regime of 1978 inherited from the Franco era, mass protests and strikes have erupted throughout Catalonia.

Hundreds of thousands took to the streets in Barcelona and other towns and cities. Tens of thousands occupied the 'El Prat' airport at Barcelona. At least 100 flights were cancelled.

The metro workers in Barcelona and other workers in the public sector took unofficial strike action in protest at the draconian sentences.

Spain's Foreign Minister, Josep Borrell, also the EU's foreign policy chief-elect, was whistling in the wind when he declared that the verdict could "serve as a means to bring Catalonia's deeply divided society back together".

The Catalan police, Mossos, and others carried out brutal repression and attacks on the demonstrators especially at El Prat airport.

This repression has further enraged the people of Catalonia. It is likely to reignite the mass

movements which had declined following the defeat of the 2017 movement.

Rather than bring charges of 'violent rebellion', the state prosecuted the independence leaders variously with 'sedition', the 'misuse of public funds' and 'disobedience'.

However, the viciousness of the sentences passed, against pro-capitalist nationalists, who when in government had introduced austerity measures against the working class and people of Catalonia, illustrates the ruthlessness of the Spanish state and capitalist class.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has bowed before this pressure and treacherously declared that his government "respected the court's decision", which he alleged met all the requirements of "due process, transparency and separation of powers".

Sánchez and Psoe are determined to demonstrate their reliability to the Spanish ruling class in the run up to the general election which is scheduled for 10 November. Psoe's election slogans, "For government" and "For Spain" make it crystal clear where it stands.

In a further act of betrayal of the movement, Pablo Iglesias, radical leader of the left populist Podemos declared that "everyone must respect the law and accept the sentences". In other words, accept the dictates of the Supreme Court bequeathed from the Francoist constitution of 1978!

This was a continuation of Iglesias's previous position of maintaining 'equidistance' between the pro-independence movement and the Spanish state during the movement which erupted in 2017, simply urging negotiations and agreement to be reached by both sides.

What these leaders of the 'left'

## Catalonia

# DRACONIAN PRISON SENTENCES OF INDEPENDENCE LEADERS PROVOKES MASS PROTESTS AND STRIKES



photo Sònia Calvó and Marta Pérez/CC

fear more than anything is the independent revolutionary movement of the masses and the threat that this potentially could pose for capitalism.

The brutal sentences handed out by the Supreme Court are not because they fear the pro-capitalist Catalan nationalist leaders.

What they fear is the potential revolutionary movements of the working class, and all those oppressed by capitalism, striving for Catalan independence, which could endanger the ruling class and their system.

If the struggle for an independent Catalonia were linked together with a struggle to break with capitalism and establish an independent socialist Catalonia, it would set example for the working class throughout the Spanish state.

Workers could be roused to come together with the Catalan workers in a united struggle against capitalism throughout the Spanish state for a socialist alternative.

The false idea of a 'progressive' capitalist European Union was clearly exposed during the revolutionary events which developed in 2017. The EU refused to condemn

the Spanish government and its use of brutal repression.

This same EU has remained silent on the issue of human rights abuses by the Spanish state and has not condemned the vicious sentences announced by the Supreme Court.

The mass movement which has erupted in protest against the sentences and the struggle of the Catalan masses will undoubtedly arouse the sympathy and support of workers and socialists across Europe.

This has been graphically shown at recent rallies for Scottish independence. The struggles in Catalonia will possibly give a certain boost for those supporting independence for Scotland.

### They fear mass movements

Yet, like their counterparts in Catalonia, the Scottish National Party (SNP) leadership of Nicola Sturgeon fears the mass movement of workers and youth. In 2017, and still today, it urged "negotiation" and an attempt to secure an agreement between the Catalonia and Spanish government.

What was needed, however, was the mass mobilisation by the working class and youth, on an independent class programme, and for

full democratic rights. Not placing confidence in the pro-capitalist Catalan nationalists - which unfortunately the leadership of the ERC (Republican Catalan Left) did in 2017 and subsequently.

It is necessary to draw the lessons of the movement in Catalonia and the struggles of the working class and youth throughout the Spanish State, and to take up a struggle for:

- A general strike and the building of democratically-elected committees of action, in all communities and workplaces
- A party of the working class in Catalonia, and also in the Spanish state, that will fight to break with capitalism
- Release of all political prisoners and the dropping of all charges against them
- The right of self-determination for Catalan, Basque and all peoples
- An end to austerity and cuts programmes; repeal of all anti-labour laws
- An independent socialist Catalonia; a united struggle of the working class against capitalism and for a socialist alternative, throughout the Spanish state



The **Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)** is the world socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.  
[socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)



# Chile: An outpouring of rage against the capitalist system

Thousands took to the streets of Chile on Monday 21 October to protest against government repression in the face of the social explosion and outpouring of rage which has rocked the country.

Earlier protests against the metro fares hike in the capital Santiago (now rescinded) ignited years of accumulated anger over poverty wages, expensive services and the widening inequalities between rich and poor.

In Santiago, a massive march was prevented by state forces from heading towards La Moneda Presidential Palace. Instead, the protesters headed towards the wealthy area of Las Condes and the Escuela Militar (Military School). Here they were confronted with the army and deployment of tanks and military personnel carriers.

At the time of writing there has been eleven confirmed dead and 1,500 arrested.

In the local communities, fear of attacks has resulted in local neighbourhoods coming together to protect themselves.

The government of president Sebastián Piñera has now lost all authority and credibility. One minute Piñera speaks of being at "war with a powerful internal enemy," the next he calls for dialogue.

He and his government of billionaires has been rocked to its core by the massive social explosion which has taken place. Many are now comparing these events to the 'Caracazo' 30 years ago in Venezuela. The outpouring of anger then gave way to the coming to power of Hugo Chávez and the 'Bolivarian revolution'.



photo Carlos Figueroa/CC

While the Piñera government has lost all credibility, no organised alternative yet exists. A welcome step is that the 'Mesa Social' - an umbrella grouping comprising the Colegio de Profesores, the health workers union, the CUT union confederation and the No+AFP pensions movement, has called for a 48-hour strike and protest on 23- 24 October.

This must now be built on. Local committees of action need to be

elected in all communities, workplaces and schools and universities. These need to link together on a citywide and national basis to build for an alternative to Piñera's discredited regime. A programme as outlined in the declaration by Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI, Chile), see right, is essential in order to secure a transformation of Chile in the interests of the working class and the poor.

## Extracts from the declaration by Socialismo Revolucionario, Chile -18/10/2019

The social explosion that has erupted in Chile today was inevitable. It represents the accumulation of too many years of abuse of the majority of Chilean workers, on miserably low salaries, in one of the most expensive countries in the world.

The massive greed of the big companies, the capitalists and their governments has meant expensive private education - with youth indebted for life; a public health system which they have destroyed in order to do business with the private health clinics; the AFP (pensions system) which has robbed us for decades; companies charging rip-off bills for light, water, gas; and a very long list of other grievances. Inevitably all of the anger on these issues was going to burst out.

Rebellion and civil disobedience is a right that people have when they are being abused and repressed permanently by those who control the state.

The working class and its trade union organisations must give a powerful response and put itself at the head of this movement. Spontaneous struggles are in themselves not enough to provide leadership and organise the struggle to get the results that we want.

It is essential that democratic committees of struggle and self-defence are formed in all communities to protect our districts and neighbourhoods.

We demand an end to the State of Emergency and the return of the military to barracks. We appeal to the soldiers not to fire against their working-class brothers and sisters.

We demand the immediate resignation of Piñera and his government; they are inept and incapable of resolving the concrete problems of the people.

We also demand the end of the constitution of the dictatorship and demand a revolutionary constituent assembly where the demands of the workers and the poor are really taken into account.

Capitalism is incapable of solving any of the problems that the working class faces. The only alternative we have is to build a democratic socialist society to counterpose to this system of injustice and inequality.

■ See full statement and video footage on [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

## Solidarity with the Kurdish people

**Paula Mitchell**  
London Socialist Party secretary

As the Turkish onslaught in the Kurdish area of Syria continued last week, the campaign Solidarity with the People of Turkey (SPOT) organised a protest at the Turkish embassy in London.

A representative of each of the organisations present (including the RMT trade union, Socialist Party, National Shop Stewards Network, Enfield North Labour Party, Campaign Against the Arms Trade, and Stop the War) laid a black wreath on the steps of the embassy.

A SPOT statement calls for the end of the Turkish state attacks on the Kurds, and for the withdrawal of all foreign forces.

Socialist Party stalls on the second London demo against the invasion attracted a number of people who wanted to discuss the situation.

Our leaflets argued for mass



photo London Socialist Party

united action against the war, and no trust in imperialist powers. How can we rely on governments of the rich, which carry out austerity policies at home and have pursued bloody wars in the Middle East for decades, to act in the interests of Kurds and other oppressed minorities?

We argued that the Kurds and other oppressed people can only rely on their own strength, self-or-

ganisation and class solidarity.

Solidarity protests were also organised in a number of cities in Britain. In Hull the Trade Union Council organised a solidarity rally.

Around 150-200 people including people of Kurdish descent and trade unionists marched from Spring Bank into the city centre Victoria Square. 26 copies of the Socialist were bought by protesters.

## Massive protests against Lebanon's corrupt elite

Mass protests have engulfed Beirut and other cities across Lebanon demanding the ousting of the government.

What has driven hundreds of thousands of people into the streets in recent weeks is anger at a political ruling class which has grown rich while the vast majority in the country have seen a collapse in services.

This has been accompanied with a worsening economic crisis that has squeezed wages and wrecked the employment prospects of young people in particular.

Shaken by the scale of the protests prime minister Saad al-Hariri has promised some measures to eliminate "waste and corruption," freeze some taxes and cut MPs salaries. He has blamed his colleagues for stalling reforms.

This is unlikely to pacify protesters demands for the government to resign and for fresh elections. But

this poses the question of what party would replace the current regime.

The significance of the protests is that they have cut across the sectarian divides in Lebanese society. In order to build upon that, the protesters must call assemblies to build a movement based on the working class and rural poor to fight for a democratic workers' government.

Such a movement must also develop a programme of ending unemployment, raising wages and investing in public services. That can only be guaranteed by demanding the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy.

■ More in a future issue

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# SOCIALISM 2019

## Join us for a festival of ideas

**Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 November, central London**

**Info and tickets: [socialism2019.net](http://socialism2019.net)**

**Opening rally: 6.30-8.30pm on Saturday 2 November  
- see page 5 for details and speakers**

**Sarah Sachs-Eldridge**  
Socialism 2019 organiser

**S**ocialism 2019 is taking place at a time when the suffering inflicted by capitalism is at horrendous levels. Millions fear for the future. That's why so many have taken to the streets in the lightning flashes that warn of storms ahead.

We'll be getting together two days after 'Brexit Day' on 31 October, and as the Westminster crisis spirals deeper.

Socialism 2019 is ambitious. We set out to provide the ideas to fight back and win for the working class, young people and all suffering under capitalism in Britain and internationally. That means the fight for a socialist alternative to the chaos of capitalism.

Trump, the Tories, Erdogan in Turkey, Bolsonaro in Brazil, the Blairites opposing Corbyn, and the rest of the defenders of the capitalist system have no solutions to the problems we face. Impending environmental catastrophe, crippling poverty, inequality, and austerity compete to inflict even more suffering.

### **Growing support**

No wonder the polls show growing support for action - but also for socialism, especially among young people. What is not clear is how this is going to be turned into mass action to fight the right and fight for socialist change.

Unfortunately, that is largely because the most prominent proponents of an anti-austerity position have not linked it with a programme for building mass action and organisations of the working class. So the theme of Socialism 2019 is that central task: how to fight the right and win.

Socialism 2019 is a call to action - to fight for united struggle against the right-wing defenders of capitalism, their attacks, their attempts to divide and weaken us.

That's why you need to be there.