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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

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STRIKE! 

PROTEST! 

VOTE! 

**KICK THE
TORIES OUT**

**Corbyn in with anti-austerity
socialist policies**



McDonald's workers striking for £15 an hour in Wandsworth, south London, on 12 November
photo Paula Mitchell

Rob Williams
Socialist Party industrial organiser

As MPs move onto the general election campaign trail, increasing numbers of workers are moving onto the picket lines.

Literally days before polling day, there could be national strikes by postal workers and university lecturers and staff. McDonald's workers in south London have already been on strike (see page 3). And workers on South Western Railway, and many others, will be also taking action in the coming days and weeks.

The right-wing Tory-supporting press are raging about workers having the effrontery to take strike action during the general election - adding the usual comments that strikers are out to ruin people's holidays and education.

But strikers struggling to get by on tight budgets aren't in the business of losing pay and standing in the cold for no good reason. These walkouts are the result of long-suffering workers saying "enough is enough" over the issues of falling wages, low pay, pension cuts, safety and working conditions, and bullying bosses.

The right-wing capitalist media sense that these disputes threaten to expose Boris Johnson's fake pro-worker populism.

This is the same party that, when in government, launched the biggest austerity offensive for a century - devastating public services, sacking a million public sector workers and inflicting a lost decade of wage cuts on those still in work.

Tory cutters

Boris tries to portray himself as a 'fresh start', but as Tory London mayor he was a willing cutter of public services on behalf of his Bullingdon buddies Cameron and Osborne.

Never forget that, three years before the Grenfell Tower tragedy, he closed ten London fire stations with the loss of over 500 firefighter posts.

In contrast, Jeremy Corbyn must seize the chance to show how he is the real alternative for workers.

These disputes offer him the chance to present his anti-austerity, pro-worker programme of policies in the most concrete of ways. He could have a daily election press conference on each picket line!

He could talk about renationalising Royal Mail on a posties' picket, and how he will bring in a £10 minimum wage for all workers of all ages and scrap zero-hour contracts with the McDonald's workers.

He could promise to stop privatisation and to bring all outsourced workers in-house at a strike rally at three hospitals in Surrey and Berkshire who are taking action over being transferred out of the NHS.

He could not only stand with the university strikes, but announce a real above-inflation pay rise across the public sector and that university workers' pensions will be left alone. He could tell the RMT union pickets that all guards will be left on the train in a renationalised rail industry.

Corbyn has the opportunity to align himself with the workers in dispute and to hammer home what his programme would do to better workers' lives. He must embrace this fightback.

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Editor of the Socialist Sarah Sachs-Eldridge Editorial staff Dave Carr Scott Jones James Ivens Ian Pattison Circulation Chris Newby Editor of socialistparty.org.uk Judy Beishon

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

ATTACKS SHOW ELITE FEAR A CORBYN ELECTION WIN



WHAT WE THINK

A study into the press coverage of Jeremy Corbyn in 2015 by the London School of Economics media department has found, unsurprisingly, that is overwhelmingly biased against him. Of all the articles in the capitalist press about his policies, 52% did not contain his views on the topic at all, while another 22% included them only to misrepresent them. Only 11% of articles actually reported what he thought. While the right-wing tabloid press were the worst offenders every capitalist newspaper was guilty.

A similar study today would show that the situation is even worse, with increasingly frenzied attacks on Corbyn. Nor are the TV companies - whether privately-owned or the state-run BBC - qualitatively different.

It is not coincidence that the attacks on Corbyn have been stepped up. It is part of a campaign by the capitalist class - the 0.1% - to try and ensure he doesn't win the general election. Criminally, the campaign is being spearheaded by Labour and ex-Labour figures. The most blatant, like ex-Labour MP Ian Austin, have called for a vote for the Tory toff Johnson.

Determined

Those who are still in the Labour Party are generally slightly more subtle, but just as determined to undermine Corbyn. Blairite 'grande' David Blunkett launched a blatant attempt to sabotage Corbyn's election campaign when he told the Observer that he is in "despair" over the "anti-Semitism" and "thuggery" in the Labour Party and that the chances of Labour winning a majority government are "extraordinarily slim".

Socialists are totally opposed to anti-semitism. Clearly action should be taken against any cases of anti-semitism in the workers' movement.

However, the claims of Blunkett and his ilk that anti-semitism has become rife in Labour under Corbyn are not true. Even the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, dominated by Tories and anti-Corbyn Labour MPs, in its 2016/2017 report on anti-Semitism in the UK had to admit that, "the majority of antisemitic abuse and crime" is "committed by individuals associated with (or motivated by) far-right wing parties and political activity."

They went on to say that "around three-quarters" of all "politically-



Jeremy Corbyn and Tom Watson photo Rwendland/CC



Ian Austin photo UK Parliament/CC



David Blunkett photo Policy Exchange/CC

motivated anti-semitic incidents come from far-right sources."

Does this barrage of abuse and lies raining down on Corbyn make it impossible for him to win a general election? No! Corbyn could win a majority provided that he stands on a clear socialist programme - putting forward policies in the interests of the working class majority - and sets out to mobilise the workers' movement to argue his case.

There are already many reports of right-wing led Labour Party constituencies refusing to mention Corbyn or his policies in their election leaflets. Corbyn needs to make an appeal over the heads of the Blairite saboteurs, starting with mass rallies as was done in 2017, and including organising in support of workers planning or taking strike action now, like the university and postal workers.

Winning a general election would

Labour MP targeted by right wing stands as independent

Chris Williamson, MP for Derby North has announced that because of his ongoing suspension from the Labour Party, he has been forced to stand as an independent candidate in the general election.

Tony Tinley, a Unite official who has been endorsed by the right wing Labour First grouping, has been selected to stand for Labour in the constituency.

The Socialist Party is campaigning in this election for a Jeremy Corbyn-led government on socialist policies. Chris has been a strong supporter of Jeremy Corbyn and, for example, the democratic selection of candidates by means of mandatory reselection.

Because of this, he was targeted by the Blairite right wing of the Labour Party and falsely accused of 'anti-Semitism'.

Chris Williamson has a chequered past. As council leader he implemented privatisation, and even formed a coalition with Tory councillors in 2006 after Labour lost its majority. However, since being elected as an MP his trajectory has been to the left. His voting record in parliament and consistent support for Corbyn suggests that he would back a Corbyn government with anti-austerity policies.

This is something that, given Tony Blair's recent statement in the Financial Times attacking Corbyn and calling for votes only for "a core of good Labour MPs who will not be whipped into supporting policy they do not believe in", Labour MPs on the right of the party, including those affiliated to Labour First, would resist.

This year's annual general meeting (annual conference) of the RMT transport workers' union gave its full support to Chris Williamson as an MP who has stood up for workers' rights.

The Socialist Party believes Chris Williamson's candidature would strengthen the struggle of a Corbyn-led government to implement anti-austerity policies. We believe a conference of trade unionists, Labour Party members, community activists and socialists should be urgently called locally - within days if possible - to discuss building a campaign of support for Chris Williamson and the socialist policies on which to fight.

This could form an important part of the struggle to transform the Labour Party into a genuine workers' party, where all MPs are subject to recall and accountable to the workers' movement.

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'McStrikers' demand £15 an hour

Helen Pattison West London Socialist Party

On 12 November, McDonald's workers at six restaurants in south London took strike action, and protests took place in towns and cities around the country, as part of the fast food workers' global day of action.

The main demand of the strikers was for a living wage of £15 an hour to end poverty pay. But they are also fighting for shifts to be notified four weeks in advance, a choice of guaranteed hours up to 40 hours a week and recognition of the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union.

Strikers from the six south London McDonald's restaurants protested in Wandsworth in the morning then at Downing Street in freezing rain at lunchtime. Rob Williams spoke to give solidarity from the National Shop Stewards Network.

Striker Melissa declared: "We've had enough! Of choosing between paying the gas or buying food. Of not being able to buy new shoes for work." Lewis Baker said: "We don't have set hours, so we don't always earn enough to pay the bills. If we got £15 an hour it would have a massive impact - I would be able to afford to pay my rent, to pay bills, go on holiday and have some kind of a work-life balance. It's important to strike against massive corporations like McDonald's who are making millions."

The Bakers Union said that these brave workers were standing up for low paid and zero-hour contract workers across the country. Labour shadow chancellor John McDonnell spoke and pledged support for the strikers £15 claim.



Protest at Wandsworth McDonald's, south London photo London Socialist Party



Solidarity protest at Brimsdown McDonald's, north London photo Pete Mason



photo Paul Mattsson

NHS in critical condition

Clare Wilkins Nottingham Socialist Party

"It was never-ending, there were more and more patients being wheeled in." This was the comment of a man whose 88 year-old mother-in-law spent six-and-a-half hours waiting to be seen at the A&E Unit at Queens Medical Centre (QMC), Nottingham.

That day QMC declared a 'critical incident', which meant its ability to deliver critical services was threatened.

This is one level up from OPEL 4 ('black alert') which had been reported for several days previously - defined as an inability to deliver comprehensive care, placing patient safety at risk.

The 88 year-old woman, a retired NHS worker said, "this isn't a winter crisis, it's a Tory crisis."

The BBC discovered that in 2018 two NHS trusts spent more than 120 days at OPEL 4.

A&E is the point at which the crisis in the NHS shows most

starkly. It is a symptom of all cuts to the NHS and social care.

The crisis is a result of closures and underfunding that has worsened since 2010. One in six A&E and maternity units have been closed or downgraded or are earmarked for fit.

The NHS is 100,000 staff short. 94% of NHS bosses say that buildings endanger patient safety. The Private Finance Initiative which was used to build £12.6 billion worth of hospitals, is costing the NHS £80 billion in repayments.

18% of NHS work is already privatised and it is in danger of being destroyed by a US trade deal after Brexit. The Tories refuse to sign an election pledge to say that it will not happen.

Labour, on the other hand, has promised to end all privatisation in the NHS as well as increase funding.

The NHS must be fully funded, fully staffed, public and free at the point of delivery, under the democratic control of NHS staff and users.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

The 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.

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.

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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Green Party offers no alternative for young people and climate change chaos



photo estillbham/CC

Gareth Bromhall
Swansea Socialist Party and Socialist Students

This election has been called the most important in generations, and in the days after it was called hundreds of thousands of 18-30 year olds registered to vote.

Anger and desperation has led to tactical voting becoming a hot topic among young people, and the major parties are vying for the growing youth vote.

This year has seen an uprising of young people demanding climate justice and organising in youth-led environmental organisations.

As the election campaigns heat up, it's clear that the environment has become an important factor. The Labour Party at its recent conference passed a motion in support of a 'Green New Deal' and the Green Party has been making a lot about its policies and record.

For some who are concerned about the environment it may be a given that they would support the Green Party, however it's important to look at the reality.

This election is a real chance to sweep aside the Tories and finally put an end to almost a decade of austerity.

The Greens, Lib Dems and Plaid Cymru have announced a 'Remain Alliance' which frames this election around Brexit, instead of focusing on

ending austerity, protecting the NHS and ending climate catastrophe.

This alliance is in fact, apart from a few obvious seats, just an agreement for the Greens and Plaid Cymru to stand aside across dozens of seats and encourage their supporters to back the Lib Dems.

The same Lib Dems who were co-authors of austerity (including then junior minister Jo Swinson) and who have repeatedly ruled out working with Corbyn, but are yet to rule out another coalition with Johnson and his cronies.

The Green Party, despite its assertions, are no strangers to austerity, having carried out savage cuts in local government in Brighton and backing them in Bristol for instance.

The Green Party is trying to capitalise on its environmental and Remain credentials to appeal to the youth vote, but in reality they weaken the chances of a Corbyn-led government that could finally end the Tories tyranny, with a programme that would scrap tuition fees, and could begin to tackle the issues of housing, employment and the environment that are at the forefront of the minds of young people today.

And as well as fighting to elect a Corbyn government we are organising now for the socialist programme and future battles that will be necessary to bring about the change in society an end to climate change that is so desperately needed for working class and young people.

Michael Morgan
Coventry Socialist Party

The panel of speakers at the climate change rally at Socialism 2019 was introduced by chair James Ivens, part of the editorial team of the Socialist newspaper. He opened by saying that capitalism has failed to stop climate change, and change is essential.

The first speaker, Socialist Party executive committee member Judy Beishon, cited people fleeing wildfires in California, Arizona and Australia, and typhoon Hagibis in Japan, as "only the most recent examples" of climate extremes that overall across the globe "affect people in the least developed countries most".

The threat is not in doubt. Concern across the world has been seen in support for the widespread school student-led climate strikes and the protests of a number of environmental organisations.

The capitalist class 'pays lip-service' to climate-friendly policies, with large corporations adopting token green measures. But the pledges made at the 2016 Paris climate accord do not come close to meeting the moderate temperature increase targets it set out.

Judy reminded the audience that the carbon footprint of the rich is greater than that of the rest of us, but outlined why steps by individuals won't solve the climate crisis. Over the last three decades just 100 companies worldwide have been responsible for 70% of the greenhouse emissions. They must be taken into public ownership as part of a socialist plan for environmentally sustainable industry and services, with jobs for all on decent pay.

Chris Baugh, former assistant general secretary of the PCS civil servants' union, explained that "climate change is a trade union issue." The cause of the climate crisis is the same as the cause of the economic crisis - unfettered capitalism.

Chris criticised the approach of some trade unions to the climate



SOCIALISM 2019 RALLY: "SOCIALIST CHANGE NEEDED TO END CLIMATE CHANGE"



From left: Judy Beishon, James Ivens, Pierre, and Bea Gardener photos Urte Fultinavičiute



Kye Gbangbola



Chris Baugh

crisis, such as the GMB, which made an agreement with fracking firm Cuadrilla.

Stopping environmental degradation is an international issue, and in this vein Pierre, a member of Gauche Révolutionnaire, of the CWI in France (the international organisation the Socialist Party is affiliated to) spoke on the recent devastating fire at the Lubrizol plant in Rouen and on the yellow vest protest movement.

We then heard from Kye Gbangbola from the 'Truth about Zane' campaign (see socialistparty.org.uk for more). Seven-year-old Zane died at home in 2014 during floods in Chertsey. Hydrogen cyanide was detected in the house but the authorities claimed that he died from carbon monoxide poisoning. Kye, Zane's father, gave a moving account of this tragic event and the campaign for justice.

We then heard from two school students, Petra and Rowan, who had organised climate protests in Guildford. It was inspirational to hear how they went from an initial protest of 12 people to having 1,000 protesting on 20 September. "The world needs to wake up and change," said Rowan.

The final speaker was Bea Gardener, a member of the Socialist Students steering committee and the University and College Union. She re-emphasized the need for 'socialist change not climate change' and said that struggle is contagious. She reminded us that the student protests against tuition fees in 2010 were a precursor to larger actions in the following years, as the current climate protests will be.

She argued that the trade union movement needs to go "beyond solidarity and move to the centre of the struggle." She criticised Extinction Rebellion's neutral stance on the general election, saying it is depoliticising one of the most political issues of this generation.

She ended by saying that the coming period will be the fight for our futures: against austerity, climate change and for socialism!

Fighting for free education, jobs, homes, and a future worth living

“What kind of world are young people on track to inherit if another Tory government is delivered to Number 10 this winter?”

This was the question posed by Theo Sharieff, national chair of Socialist Students, to a packed rally at Socialism 2019 on 2 November. (see also 'Elections, strikes and revolutions' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Theo graphically explained that it would be a world "where young workers pay over half of their wages, sometimes as much as 70% of their pay, straight into the pocket of the landlord. A world where young people work on demand at the snap of the fingers of the bosses through zero-hour contracts. A world where you leave university with the knowledge that you may be forced to work until you're 75."

But as Theo explained, the Tories are far from satisfied with making students pay thousands a year for an education. "Already the ground has been prepared for a new raft of attacks which could provoke a new revolt over the question of free education."

"They include lowering the income threshold for the repayment of student debt and extending the repayment period from 30 to 40 years. It's a plan to shackle even lower paid graduates in a lifetime of debt."

Bleak future

Of course, it's not only the Tories leading to a bleak future for the majority of young people, it's the system they represent - capitalism.

"Young people know instinctively that something is deeply wrong with the way society is organised. Since last year we've witnessed an almost spontaneous explosion in the streets when tens of thousands of school and college students moved into action in the monthly climate strikes."

Those walkouts demanded 'system change to end climate change'. But many students were also demanding action on much more. "They are struggling for a future worth living. It's the same the world over - Chile, Lebanon, Iraq - the 'children of the financial' crash, as



Theo Sharieff photos Paul Mattsson



the Guardian put it, are taking to the streets", said Theo.

He continued: "The Socialist Party and Socialist Students have fought vociferously within the climate strike movement to win a new generation of activists to the ideas of socialism and Marxism, not for one moment dipping the banner of revolutionary ideas and action."

"And on the campuses, Socialist Students is the only national organisation which points students clearly in the direction of revolutionary ideas."

"We've built Socialist Students groups on the campuses across the country, the only national organisation holding the line in the fight for free education, for decent student housing, for an end to austerity on campus."

"And that means we're ready for this election. We're ready to launch a socialist voter registration drive on campus, linked to the fight for a Corbyn government with a socialist programme. A government which will abolish tuition fees, cancel student debt, reintroduce living grants and guarantee for students a decent job and a home after university."

"We're ready to campaign, demonstrate, occupy for those policies. We're ready to organise joint students', and workers', meetings on the campuses with UCU (university and college workers) and CWU (postal workers) who are preparing for national strike action in the face of a crumbling Tory government (see pages 7 and 11)."

"These are aspects of our socialist general election campaign on campuses which we'll be discussing at the Socialist Students national conference in Birmingham on 30 November."

"We want to build a powerful student movement, fused with the even more powerful workers' movement to get rid of the Tories, and get rid of them once and for all. To build a movement which will abolish capitalism, and for a new generation, translating socialism into the language of free education, jobs, homes, services, and a future worth living."

Socialist Students rally and conference

- Saturday 30 November at Bournbrook and Selly Oak Social Club, 13A Hubert Road, Birmingham B29 6DX
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PCS union general secretary election

ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT FOR MARION LLOYD

The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union general secretary ballot has started and it closes on 12 December.

Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd is one of three candidates. Her 39 Branch nominations outnumber Bev Laidlaw's 16 and puts Marion close to the 62 nominations for incumbent Mark Serwotka. In other words, she can win this election. Activists should unite behind her and make this happen.

Early signs are hugely encouraging. In every town and city a large number of offices have already been leafleted. More of this activity is planned for the days and weeks ahead.

Those leafleting report an enthusiastic and positive membership response to Marion's decision to challenge Serwotka. Her programme has struck a chord among members looking for a Union leadership which will fight for them on the issues of pay, jobs and equality.

Marion told the Socialist "I've been literally overwhelmed by the demand for my election material

and delighted by the response to it. I sensed all along the mood among our members is for change and for a fresh approach. I have become more and more convinced of this as the election has got underway."

Marion's pledge to make no material gain by staying on her current civil servant's wage is well received. As is her commitment to publishing details of her union payback arrangements. Serwotka makes no payback to the union despite his original undertaking to do so. His election material makes no mention of this.

Marion's criticisms of Serwotka's pay strategy which led to two failed pay strike ballots is widely shared. The different approach - a disaggregated ballot - which Marion argued for has been used by the University and College Union in their recent successful strike ballot (see page 11). Had PCS adopted this approach, 21 PCS groups would now have a legal strike mandate.

Marion's commitment to a Union accountable to its members and controlled by its lay structures has gone down well. As president of the

PCS's Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy government department Group, Marion fought against Serwotka's decision to give control of resources to non-elected union officials.

The election of union full-time officers is a democratic demand that Marion supports. In the past, so did Serwotka but there is no mention of this by him now.

Marion supports the election of a Corbyn-led government on an anti-austerity programme, but she makes it clear that this doesn't mean we should be uncritical cheerleaders for Labour. And unlike the other candidates she is opposed to Labour Party affiliation.

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

f 'Marion Lloyd for PCS General secretary'

@marion4gs



Marion got a rousing reception at the recent Socialism 2019 event photo Mary Finch



Trade unionists protesting against outsourcing at Heatherwood Hospital photo John Gillman

Frimley NHS Trust strikes

Health workers walkout against privatisation

Terry Pearce
Chair, Bracknell Unite
(personal capacity)

Facilities staff at Wexham Park and Heatherwood hospitals in Berkshire, and at Frimley Park in Surrey (members of Unite, Unison and GMB trade unions) will strike on 18 and 19 November, in an escalation of their campaign to stay in the National Health Service (NHS).

Their employer, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, plans to privatise up to 1,000 NHS cleaners, caterers, porters, security and estates staff to a new wholly-owned subsidiary (WOS) company early next year.

Staff employed directly by the NHS will maintain their existing terms and conditions. However, staff transferred to the WOS will

only stay on NHS terms and conditions until 2021, and new staff employed by the WOS will be on different terms and conditions.

The spread of WOS's is part of a government strategy to introduce more privatisation into the NHS, to drive down pay and conditions and ultimately boost private profit. They have been introduced into many NHS trusts around the country and are planned for many more.

However, strike action and threatened strike action in 2018 by NHS workers in Mid Yorkshire and in Wigan won major victories against privatisation, as did NHS workers at Bradford teaching hospitals earlier this year.

While all trade union organisations and members must rally to the NHS workers we must also involve the wider community.

There is a history in the area of fighting to defend the NHS including an epic campaign to save Heatherwood Hospital from closure, which was won following a 25,000 strong petition, marches, demonstrations led by the Save Heatherwood Hospital Campaign.

Already Bracknell Unite branch, Bracknell National Pensioners Convention, Bracknell Defend Our Community Services and Save Heatherwood Hospital Campaign have expressed solidarity with the NHS staff and will be joining strikers on the picket lines.

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POSTAL WORKERS' UNION DETERMINED TO RESIST BOSSES' ATTACKS

Gary Clark

Communications Workers Union (CWU) Scotland No.2 branch secretary (personal capacity) and Socialist Party Scotland

Postal workers are involved in the fight of our lives, and our members know it. A massive 97.1% vote for strike action on a huge turnout that demolished the anti-union ballot thresholds tells us all we need to know about the mood of anger and determination among CWU members.

And the reason is clear. Rico Back and the new team of Royal Mail executives want to break up the business. They want to rip Royal Mail to shreds for the benefit of the hedge funds, big business and capitalism.

And they are prepared to use the courts to try and prevent us from fighting back.

Rico Back has come into the role of CEO with a golden hello of £6 million and a package of around £2.7 million a year. His role is to break the strength of the CWU.

This is a result of the sell-off of Royal Mail and the push towards maximum profit and the rundown of the service.

We're due a shorter working week, a one-hour reduction from the 2017 'four pillars' agreement, but management has backtracked. Royal Mail bosses are also walking away from national agreements.

They want to do away with 40,000 jobs, which amount to a third of the

workforce. Bullying of our members by management is rife across the industry.

This is a fight to defend the public service too. If we lose this fight the public service is gone. The biggest obstacle to their plans is the CWU and our determination to resist.

We're planning strike action in the run-up to Christmas. Rico Back is preparing as well. Royal Mail are starting to employ agency staff on a full-time basis, cutting across all agreements and stopping our members getting overtime.

Reportedly, 6,000 extra workers are being recruited for warehouses and as drivers. A large part of this will be an attempt to build an army to undermine the strike.

Injunction

Royal Mail has taken us to the High Court, claiming an irregularity in how the ballot was conducted. This refers to the widely reported fact that CWU reps encouraged members to vote and return the ballot papers en masse. But management say this is breaking the law.

This is a very serious issue for the whole trade union movement as it clearly shows that the Trade Union Act is going to be used to block all action by workers to defend their terms and conditions.

The CWU should call an emergency meeting of all lay officials across the union to discuss the views of the membership, including action to challenge the law by calling industrial action, which would be against any court ruling, and making a call

to all of the labour movement to support us.

This is very likely to be a bitter dispute. We will need the support of the whole trade union movement.

The CWU should call an emergency national demonstration in the next two weeks, and the Trade Union Congress, other unions, Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour leadership, should back it. The demands of the demo should be - 'Defend trade union rights and the right to strike, support the CWU and renationalise Royal Mail!'

In whose interests is Royal Mail to be run? Is it for big business and the vultures of capitalism or about providing a public service?

The general election on 12 December could once again illustrate how important postal workers are. Political parties have election material delivered by CWU members. Postal votes are increasingly important.

It's vital that Jeremy Corbyn uses his pledge to renationalise Royal Mail as a centrepiece of the election campaign. Corbyn's backing for our action is also very important.

Socialist Party Scotland believes that the best way to properly reward the workforce and to improve the public service is by renationalising Royal Mail under democratic workers' control.

Our members are fighting to defend a public service from big business vultures. It's the public's fight too. Support the union, demand public ownership of the industry.

Victory to the CWU!



photo Paul Mattsson

RMT union members at SWR to walk out in December

Guards and drivers on South West Railway (SWR) will be taking an unprecedented 27-days of strike action in December in order to retain safety-critical guards on SWR trains.

The RMT union is incensed that the private rail operator refuses to acknowledge this safety role, but instead is intent on downgrading the role of the guard.

Workers throughout the industry have been battling, with mixed results, in recent years to prevent driver-only operation of trains. RMT members in SWR have already taken several days' strike action this year on this issue.

Back in September, Geoff Kite, RMT national executive member, told the Socialist: "The RMT will continue to fight for a safety-critical guard on every train. We will not allow the company to put performance over safety by diluting the role into a token gesture to the travelling public."



RMT union members striking against driver-only operation in Salisbury photo Jane Ward

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON - JUSTICE FOR CLEANERS!

RMT cleaners working for ABM are balloting for strike action in response to cuts following the loss of Transport for London's subsidy.

All grades, whether London Underground staff or members working for subcontractors, are under attack as employers seek to cut costs and pass on the austerity policies of both the government and the London mayor.

Socialist Party member Jared Wood, who is standing for election to the RMT union executive from the London transport region, said: "We must all help to deliver a resounding yes vote for strike."

"We must also use the strike to build membership in the cleaning grades. Many of our reps in ABM have reported that non-members often ask what RMT is actually doing for cleaners. This strike is our answer. If we can win our dispute and deliver on free travel, sick pay and pensions, then the working life

of our cleaner members would be transformed, but so would the industrial position of RMT."

■ **Socialist Party RMT members on London Underground are also pushing for a ballot on the LU offer on pay and conditions. Management has been pushed into offering concessions on a shorter working week but the offer falls far short on the linked question of pay.**



SAVE EDUCATION - KICK OUT THE TO

Tory and Blairite attacks have devastated our education system, with baleful results for school staff and students. But Jeremy Corbyn has promised a game-changing 'National Education Service', and unionised workers have proven that fighting back works.

Martin Powell-Davies, a teacher, National Education Union activist, and member of the Socialist Party national committee, looks at what's needed to save education.



Valentine School in Southampton won extra funds by striking this year photo Southampton Socialist Party

Corbyn promises building a Education

On becoming Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn pledged to transform education through a 'National Education Service'. The general election gives him the chance to carry out this vital transformation.

Corbyn's initial proposals highlighted genuine 'lifelong learning', including scrapping tuition fees, investing in early-years 'Sure Start' centre provision, and reversing cuts to the adult skills budget.

There was a welcome confirmation at September's 2019 Labour Party conference that a Corbyn government would indeed abolish tuition fees, cap the cost of school uniforms, and provide free nursery education for all two to four-year-olds.

Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner also committed to ending the infamous Ofsted school inspection regime, replacing their often destructive reports with 'health checks' organised through local authorities.

Jeremy Corbyn had previously announced that Labour would scrap 'Sats' exams in English primary schools, including the new baseline assessments for four-year-olds. Correctly, Corbyn has criticised the pressure Sats put on young children, and the way they narrow the primary curriculum as schools concentrate on boosting the test scores on which they will be judged.

Of course, teachers would continue to rely on assessment to inform their work - and to inform children, their parents and carers - but the failing of children through high-stakes testing would cease.

Reversing Blairite marketisation

Abolishing Ofsted and Sats - and their Welsh counterparts, the inspectorate 'Estyn' and the 'National Tests' - would be significant first steps towards ending the pro-market consensus that existed between all the main parties under the capitalist Labour leadership of Tony Blair.

Under 'New Labour', neoliberal education policies were imposed, as they were across the globe at that time. They were designed to cut costs by making schools compete in an education marketplace.

Schools 'failed' by Ofsted, or found at the bottom of Sat league tables, could then be blamed for their poor performance - rather than putting the blame where it really lies, on government failure to tackle poverty and fund schools properly.

Ofsted outcomes have been used to bully staff and undermine schools. Af-

Cuts and crisis: stop Tory school havoc

NEU rep Louise Cuffaro leading strike action in 2018 photo James Ivens



Cuts mean thousands of youngsters with special educational needs and disabilities are not having their needs adequately met. Schools are trying to cater for complex needs without adequate staffing and resources.

Rising child poverty, a direct result of Tory austerity, also has inevitable emotional and behavioural consequences. Yet, with budgets for youth, child and adolescent mental health services all being slashed, underfunded schools are left to somehow pick up the pieces.

Sixth-form class sizes are also mushrooming - in a sector that traditionally always had smaller student numbers per teacher.

Of course, those students won't escape the funding crisis if they continue to higher education. However, they'll have to pay for the privilege by racking up tens of thousands of pounds of debt for huge tuition fees and rising living costs.

Toll on staff

And underfunding is exacting a terrible toll on staff. Salaries for teachers have fallen by over 15% in real terms since 2010. That's been made worse by schools trying to limit their wage bill by refusing annual progression up their pay scales, further adding to staff demoralisation.

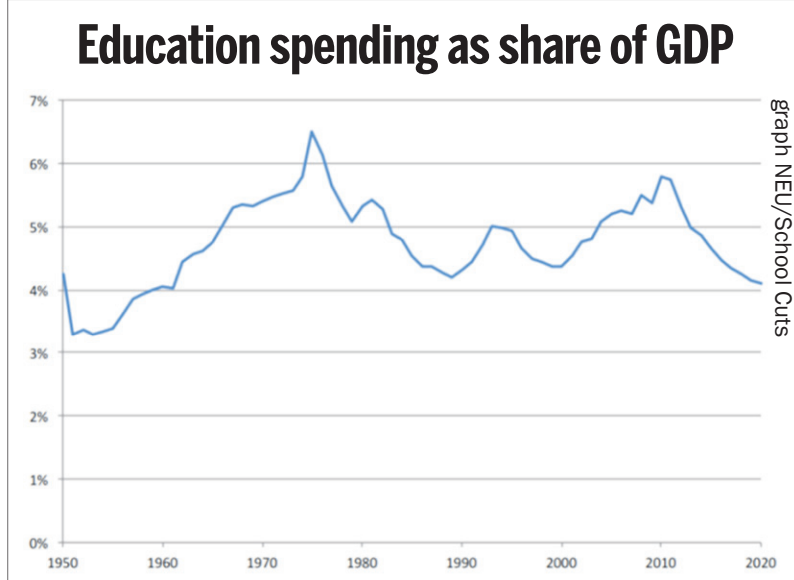
Support staff and teaching posts have been cut, adding to the demands on the staff remaining. Government promises to act on unbearable teacher workload have proven to be worthless.

The average working week for a teacher in England remains a staggering 50 hours - with a quarter working more than 60 hours a week.

Those pressures are deepening the ongoing crisis in teacher retention, with the government's own figures confirming that a third - a third! - of newly qualified staff now leave teaching within the first five years.

Small wonder that schools continue to be blighted by constant staff turnover, especially those supporting the most disadvantaged communities where pressure on staff is greatest.

In short, the Tories have wreaked havoc on our schools, staff and education. They have to go!



Marching against then education secretary Nicky Morgan, 2016 photo London Socialist Party



Whatever the result of the general election, education unions need to prepare for decisive action to defend education



On strike against pay cuts under a Blairite government in 2008

Stop school cuts

Those cuts mean schools have fewer teachers, fewer teaching assistants, and larger class sizes. Staff cuts have particularly hit music, design, arts and language posts in secondary schools, contributing to a further narrowing of the curriculum.

ORIES!

ises change: 'National n Service'

ter receiving 'inadequate' ratings, over 500 primary schools have been forced out of local authority control into the hands of unaccountable, publicly funded but privately run 'multi-academy trusts'.

This has accelerated the fragmentation of education in England. And of course, 'academisation' hasn't improved education - only the bank balances of those private profiteers who control it.

In reality, Sats results and Ofsted gradings have always owed more to child poverty than teacher performance.

Recent research has confirmed that schools where a high number of pupils are entitled to free school meals are far more likely to be deemed 'inadequate' than schools without those levels of poverty. Reversing austerity more generally is essential to improve educational outcomes too.

Reversing Tory cuts

With polling showing that school cuts are an important issue for voters, it's not surprising that all the main parties are promising more money for schools. But who can be believed?

The Tory-Lib Dem coalition government was responsible for year-on-year cuts in the proportion of GDP spent on education from 2010 onwards.

Until recently, the Tories largely denied that school cuts were an issue. In 2018, the then Tory education secretary, Damian Hinds, had to apologise when he was reported to the UK Statistics Authority for making false claims about government school spending!

Knowing a general election was on the cards, Johnson promised schools would have "£14 billion additional funding over the next three years". However, once inflation and double or triple-counting is taken into account, the pledge is actually more like £4.3 billion a year.

That's not even enough to reverse the cuts suffered since 2010, let alone to increase spending to genuinely improve education. 83% of schools would still have less money per pupil in real terms next year than they had in 2015.

Angela Rayner has promised that "a Labour government will fully reverse Tory cuts and give our schools the funding they need to ensure every child gets a good education." Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has pledged that schools will receive some of Labour's proposed £150 billion 'social transformation fund' for upgrade work.

These are policies which every parent, school student and member of staff will be hoping - and expecting - a Labour government will carry out.



Avenue School in east London beat 'academisation' by striking in 2018
photo James Ivens

“ ”

Abolishing Ofsted and Sats would be significant first steps towards ending the pro-market consensus... and a national system can't operate if half of England's pupils continue to be educated in schools controlled by over 1,000 different unaccountable 'multi-academy trusts'



photo Paul Mattsson



Striking against job cuts at Forest Hill School in 2011
photo Martin Powell-Davies



Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell on a joint march of teachers and striking doctors in 2016
photo Paul Mattsson

Standing firm: how to defend education reforms

Education will be one of the key issues that could determine the outcome of the general election. If Labour boldly campaigns to reverse school cuts, and end tuition fees, Sats and Ofsted, it could help convince both working-class and middle-class voters to back a Corbyn government.

But the real test would then follow - to stand up to big business and implement Corbyn's manifesto commitments.

Where's the money?

Corbyn has previously proposed to pay for greater education spending through a small increase in corporation tax from its present very low 19%. It's not a radical step. Even back in 2010, the standard rate was 28%. In 1979, it was 52%!

Nevertheless, any attempt to divert more wealth towards "the many, not the few" will be resisted by the capitalist class. Already, financial institutions - who will be piling on the pressure against the background of a likely world recession - are saying it would result in lower investment in Britain, and so fewer jobs and lower economic growth.

Increased tax rates would also be met with further tax avoidance and evasion by big business. Of course, the best way to combat that, and to genuinely control the economy, would be to nationalise the main firms and financial institutions under democratic workers' control and management.

It seems likely that the Labour election manifesto will pledge to end fee-paying 'independent' schools' spurious 'charitable status'. A further route to provide some additional resources for state education would be to implement the policy also agreed by Labour Party conference to redistribute their assets across state education.

Of course, to be carried out successfully, a Labour government would need to assure staff in independent schools that their jobs and conditions were secure.

However, as it provides such a challenge to the privileges so fiercely guarded by the wealthy, it may well remain just a paper policy unless the workers' movement pushes for its implementation.

If Corbyn is serious about introducing a genuinely transformative 'National Education Service', he will need to ensure that, as with the NHS, it is not continually undermined by the existence of a parallel private sector available only to those who can afford it.

Local democracy, not academies

A more immediately pressing education policy agreed by Labour's 2019 conference is also facing resistance from the right of the party. This called for an end to academy schools, with all publicly funded schools to be placed under the control of their local council through "reformed, democratically accountable local education committees with stakeholder representation."

Without this urgent step being taken, ensuring control lies with school staff,

parents, students and the local community, any 'National Education Service' will fail. A national system can't operate if half of England's pupils continue to be educated in schools controlled by over 1,000 different unaccountable multi-academy trusts, with their own policies and competing interests.

The struggle to reverse academisation is part of the struggle to make sure Labour becomes truly a party that acts reliably in workers' interests. Shamefully, too many Labour MPs and councillors still share Blair's ideological support for the marketisation of schools.

Parents and trade unionists must demand that Labour's conference policy is put into practice, and fiercely campaign against any further attempts to widen academisation if any new administration seeks to implement such a policy after the election.

Trade unions decisive

Whoever wins on 12 December, school staff unions need to organise to demand a national contract that guarantees improved pay, and working and learning conditions. That's essential if we are to reverse the damage done by years of staff turnover and start to provide the stability and resources needed to meet every student's needs.

The best result for education would clearly be a Corbyn-led majority Labour government. However, even in that best case scenario, mass pressure will be needed to counteract the pressures that will be put on a Labour government to accept the diktats of big business - not least via the Blairites in his own party.

If it's a Tory-led administration, then there will be no choice but to fight - and to fight hard.

Already around half of academies are in deficit, and about a quarter of local authority secondary schools are too. Even more will follow once they have spent their remaining reserves.

Labour councillors and school governors should stand with parents and staff and refuse to implement any more cuts, backing unions taking strike action to defend education. They should follow the successful example of Valentine School where a campaign led by the National Education Union (NEU) won a two-year cuts freeze.

Resistance is already growing. Strong campaigns based on strike action, such as those in Newham, east London, have shown academisation can be defeated.

This month will see NEU members in sixth forms, and University and College Union members in higher education, taking strike action in separate disputes over pay, working conditions and other concerns. Earlier this year, Scottish teachers organised by the EIS union were successful in winning significant pay rises just through the threat of national strike action.

Whatever the result of the general election, trade unions need to prepare for decisive action, linking up with parents and school communities, to defend education.

Trade union conference to force secret police disclosure

Lois Austin
 Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance and Socialist Party

For decades, trade unionists, shop stewards and socialists suspected there was an active blacklist and that 'spycops' infiltrated trade unions. The blacklist was preventing them securing work. Even when work was secured, it was more by accident than design, and often that employment was short lived as invented problems meant the job came to an end quickly.

In 2009, the Guardian led a story about the existence of an illegal blacklist. It was compiled and updated by the 'Consulting Association', but the blacklist was funded by some of the country's largest building firms.

Operating for about 15 years the database named approximately 3,200 workers. The building contractors paid flat fee of £3,000 a year and then a fixed fee for each name they wanted checked. Details of workers' trade union activities and past employment conduct were recorded.

The Consulting Association was established after the demise of the 'Economic League' an organisation that traces its history back decades and also kept a list of alleged trade union and socialist 'troublemakers' who were denied jobs. When the League closed down in 2009 its database was passed over to the Consulting Association.

However, it was not just these private organisations which were involved in blacklisting. The Metropolitan Police and other regional police forces were also involved in sharing specious information with the blacklists. Operation Reuben was an internal police investigation into blacklisting launched after reports in the media and parliament.

Police and blacklisting

The report by ex-chief constable Mick Creedon on the findings unequivocally states: "Police, including special branches and the security services supplied information to the blacklist funded by the country's major construction firms, the Consulting Association."

Spycop whistleblower, Peter Francis, confirmed the collusion between special branch and the blacklist when he made his revelations about his activity when working undercover for the 'special demonstration squad'.



photo Paul Mattsson



CPSA picket line with John Macreadie fourth from right



photo Paul Mattsson

However, blacklisting and surveillance went to the highest levels of government. One of the predecessor unions of the civil servants' union PCS - the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) - was infamous as a battleground between the right wing of the labour movement and the left wing specifically the Militant Tendency (now the Socialist Party).

Secret meetings between the right-wing leaders of the unions and a hated Tory government took place to discuss how to deal with members of the Militant like CPSA deputy general secretary John Macreadie and collaborate to get union reps sacked when they led strikes.

Internal government papers seen at the time show Thatcher's government in the 1980s organising regular meetings of the Metropolitan Police, MI5 and government ministers.

The intention was to take down an elected trade union leader, and then to put in place procedures to stop those who were prior to employment, or after employment, active socialists. The papers state "subversives... cannot be tolerated in such jobs." This political interference by the state into workers' democratic structures must be exposed and campaigned against.

The trade union conference into police infiltration and blacklisting comes at a timely moment. It is also important to note it was not just the big construction firms who carried this out, they were helped by and colluded with the police. Indeed, as is clear in the case of the CPSA, it also involved MI5 and the secret state.

Public inquiry

It is important that we demand a public inquiry into blacklisting and hold Labour to account in ensuring that this is delivered. That inquiry needs to not just inquire into the Consulting Association, but the role of the police in facilitating the blacklist along with the secret state.

The events at Orgreave during the 1983-84 miners' strike require investigating, particularly the military role of the police and the role of the secret state in dismantling the National Union of Mineworkers. In addition, the political trial and witch-hunt of the Shrewsbury picketers in the 1970s must also be examined. The state effectively organised a show-trial to cut across the building workers movement.

It is vital that trade unionists, alongside all the campaigning work to end austerity also campaign for democratic rights which include the right to be active in your union free from police spies, subversion and blacklisting.

London: Cops trade union conference

- Undercover policing and trade unions: the political and the personal
- Saturday 16 November 2019, 10.30am-5.30pm
- University of Greenwich, Stephen Lawrence building, Old Naval College, 30 Park Row, London SE10 9LS
- campaignopposingpolicesurveillance.com
- policespiesoutoflives.org.uk

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University and College Union strikes

Union means business in fight against employers

Socialist Party members in UCU

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) have backed strike action in two separate ballots - one over pensions and one over pay and conditions in higher education.

Eight days of strike action have been announced at 60 separate universities. The strike will run from Monday 25 November to Wednesday 4 December. Action short of a strike will also commence from 25 November, which will include staff working to contract and not re-scheduling lectures missed because of the strike. It's estimated that the planned action will affect up to one million students.

Timing

The quick announcement of strike action builds on the momentum of the ballot, where 79% of members backed strike action over contribution changes to the USS pension scheme and 74% over pay, casualisation, equality and workloads.



The eight days of consecutive action reflects increasing confidence and militancy within the union

The swift call for strike action ensures the issues discussed during the ballot are still fresh in members minds and shows both members and management that the union is serious about taking the fight to the employers.

The eight days of consecutive action reflects increasing confidence



UCU members on strike in 2018 against attacks on pensions photo Tom Baldwin

and militancy within the union. The timing of the strike, which will likely overlap with the CWU postal workers strike and finish just days before the general election, may be advantageous if management feels pressure to avoid national action.

Strategy

Combining the two campaigns into one strike action has meant that more universities can participate in the strike - 43 universities met the high thresholds for both ballots, but only 14 would have been able to strike on the pay and conditions dispute alone and three only on the pensions dispute.

Additionally, the disaggregated ballot strategy, where each branches votes are counted separately, has been successful. Earlier this year, over the issue of pay and conditions, the union was left without a legal strike mandate, despite a 70% 'yes' vote, because of a 41% national turnout (the Tory 2016 Trade Union Act imposes a 50% threshold - designed to aid employers).

However, combining the two disputes does run the risk that one issue becomes more dominant - for example, if the union wins concessions on pensions, this could dampen the mood to continue to fight on the other issues.

It's clear for members what the problems we are fighting over are, but it will be necessary for the union to provide clarity on specific demands and what sort of concessions would be accepted. This is needed to ensure that members come out not only in anger at current attacks but with knowledge of what the solutions are and willingness to fight for them.

Last year UCU strikes were emboldened by support from the Socialist Students and other trade unionists including local trade union councils. This year we call on all students, trade union activists and local campaigners to support the university staff's fight against attacks on our pay and working conditions and on the increasing austerity imposed on the education sector.

Socialist Students stand four-square with UCU

Socialist Students welcomes the announcement from the University and College Union (UCU) that members in 60 universities will be taking eight days of strike action from 25 November until 4 December.

In 2018, management of universities tried to weaken and demoralise strikers by pitting students against them. We say staff are going on strike not only to fight against vicious attacks to their pay, conditions, and pensions but to defend our education from Tory cuts and attacks! That's why it is vital students support the UCU in their struggle.

Socialist Students will not only be out on the picket lines supporting our striking university staff, but will be reaching out to local UCU branches on campus over the approaching weeks to build joint student and staff meetings to discuss how we can best build student solidarity with the strikes.

We say student unions should themselves issue statements in support of the upcoming UCU strikes, and use student union resources to build campaigns on campus to mobilise students in support of the strikers.

These strikes, alongside the upcoming industrial action to be taken by CWU members working for Royal Mail, come at an extremely important time. Falling in the middle of the general election campaign period, they have the potential to lead the way in the struggle against the Tories, and embolden students and workers to fight for a Corbyn-led government with a socialist programme which will fight the bosses to the end and end austerity.

socialiststudents.org.uk **socialist students**



Libraries and museum workers in Bradford are fighting spending cuts photo Iain Dalton

Bradford libraries and museums

Unite members escalate action against cuts

Bradford Socialist Party members

Around 50 Unite members in libraries and museums across Bradford have entered their second round of strike action, escalating from two to three days of action this week.

As well as rallying in the city centre, strikers have held rallies outside a number of local libraries linking up with concerned service users in places like Wibsey and Ilkley.

The services face £1.21 million cuts in 2019-20 and a further £1.55 million in 2020-21. There are already half-day closures taking place at libraries at short notice due to

staff shortages. Further cuts will make the service even less sustainable. Both Bradford Industrial Museum and Bolling Hall Museums are already facing reduced openings.

In contrast to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn who tweeted in support of the strikes during the first two days of action, and Shipley Labour candidate Jo Pike who addressed strikers on Tuesday, Bradford Labour council leader Susan Hinchliffe dismissively walked past the strikers. As one of the placards outside of City Hall stated "Labour your leader supports us, won't you?"

At the Keighley rally during the first two day strikes, Socialist Party

West Yorkshire Organiser Iain Dalton called on Bradford council to stop doing the dirty work of implementing the Tory cuts, and instead utilise the £165 million the council has in usable reserves (£31 million unallocated) to continue to fund the service.

Further four and five day strikes are planned to escalate the action, from 18-21 November and 2-6 December.

■ **Please send messages of support and donations FAO Mark Martin to Winwaed House, 64-66 Crossgates Road, Leeds, LS15 7NN. Cheques payable to Unite the Union.**

Campaigns

HELP SOCIALIST IDEAS SPREAD THIS ELECTION: DONATE!



Ken Douglas
Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members and supporters raised a record £42,445 at the Socialism 2019 rally on 2 November. This was a fantastic result, and showed determination to ensure we have the resources we need to produce campaigning leaflets, posters, placards and other materials as we go into the general election.

After less than six weeks, we have already hit the fighting fund target for this quarter, and also beaten the annual target of £120,000. But we can't stop now!

We have a chance to go into 2020 having surpassed the record for the most fighting fund raised in a single year. This currently stands at £143,500 in 2017. But we can beat that if all the pledges from the Socialism appeal are paid in, and we have a determined push over the next seven weeks.

The general election itself gives us opportunities to hold extra campaigning stalls. Weekday lunchtime stalls will attract workers on their break. Workplace sales, and bus and rail station sales, will be good chances to sell the Socialist and raise fighting

fund, by asking for the solidarity price of £2, or simply for a donation. You can increase that by getting an iZettle or other mobile card reader.

In the run-up to Christmas, branches will be planning parties and fundraising events. In London, a Christmas bake-off is planned. Other ideas might be raffling a Christmas hamper to which branch members contribute a single item each if they can.

In this period of political turmoil, the Socialist and Socialism Today, our website and all our other material, shine like beacons through the fog of Brexit - giving a way forward for the working class and a strategy to break the political paralysis at the top.

Finance is vital to ensure our ideas reach as wide an audience as possible. This election is a great opportunity to build support for socialist ideas, and show how a socialist programme could change our lives.

Can you help? If you didn't manage to get to the Socialism rally, and haven't yet been able to donate to the appeal, or you are reading the Socialist for the first time, please consider making a donation to help us achieve our target.

You can donate at socialistparty.org.uk/donate, or by phoning 020 8988 8777.

Help fund the fightback DONATE TODAY

Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or call 020 8988 8777 or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	October - December 2019	Deadline 3 January
Northern	750	1,647		220%
Eastern	1,200	2,494		208%
South East	750	1,136		151%
South West	1,800	2,675		149%
West Midlands	2,600	2,641		102%
Wales	2,300	2,117		92%
Southern	1,600	1,462		91%
East Midlands	1,850	1,566		85%
North West	2,100	1,468		70%
London	6,100	3,308		54%
Yorkshire	3,300	1,172		36%
Other	5,650	12,936		229%
TOTAL	30,000	34,623		115%

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Barking: protest brings pledge to remove dangerous decking



photos Barking Reach Residents Association



Pete Mason
Chair, Barking Reach Residents Association, and East London Socialist Party

Following our protest last month (see 'Burnt-out Barking residents picket builders' sales day' at socialistparty.org.uk), covered by BBC London news, estate residents have received a letter addressing the most prominent fire safety issue.

The Barking Reach Residents Association organised a peaceful protest outside building firm Bellway's big sales jamboree in the Hilton London Tower Bridge hotel on 19 October. We must have caused considerable discomfort and maybe even lost sales.

Residents have been forced back into their flats after fleeing the fire that spread across their block in June. Yet the balconies that caught fire in Samuel Garside House still remain in place, and are still a danger to life.

An 8 November letter from property managers Residential Management Group (RMG) said the balcony decking of some 158 flats in two twin blocks will now be replaced, without delay, at no cost to residents.

This pledge contrasts with RMG's response to the council report the day before our protest. Bosses said they had fulfilled all their legal 'Category 1' responsibilities and that residents were safe to return!

The council emphasised the danger of the wooden balconies. But it told us it could do nothing, because the landlord had implemented a 24/7 waking watch.

In turn, we said a watch could do nothing but watch if a fire took hold, because it spread across the flats in minutes. Preventative measures were needed.

In a letter to council leader Darren Rodwell, we said the law is an ass. These companies are likely guilty of criminal negligence; a fire risk assessment in January had pointed to the danger.

Under decades of compliant capitalist governments, building companies have driven through deregulation and turned a blind eye to fire safety. Austerity has meant huge cuts to fire service and council resources. So existing laws are insufficient to ensure fire safety in countless buildings.

Let's hope the election of a Corbyn government will act to end this laissez-faire playing with lives. A Corbyn government should nationalise the big building firms like Bellway to provide the public housing promised.

Replacement should have happened before residents returned. But this is nevertheless a victory - assuming that Bellway carries out its promise, and with minimum disruption to the traumatised residents.

But there are 200 or more wood-fronted buildings in the surrounding area that are still a fire risk. We have yet to hear anything about this, despite repeated promises. So our protests are set to continue.

We saved Chatsworth Ward - two years on

Tom Hunt
Chatsworth Ward nurse and Mansfield Socialist Party

Two years on from the 'done deal, you will be closing' announcement, the Chatsworth Ward at Mansfield Community Hospital remains open! In July 2017, management told workers at the neuro-rehabilitation ward it would close that October. Horrified staff demanded to know what provisions were being made for their very vulnerable patients.

They were told not to worry because they would be relocated to different jobs. They weren't primarily concerned that they wouldn't have a job, but that their patients' needs had been ignored.

There was desperation and bewilderment, but the anger and mood to fight was tangible. This was initially ignored by the leadership of the local branch of public service union Unison and the Labour Party - although both eventually supported the campaign after the workers won huge community support.

Staff looked for leadership to fight this savage announcement. Luckily, a Socialist Party member worked on the ward.

Quick and decisive moves were made, such as contacting the media and forming a workers' and patients' committee. A march took place in early September. Weekly meetings ensured tactics and strategies were democratically discussed.

We stressed that this was not just a local issue, but linked to the wider crisis in the NHS. The team did not wish to save Chatsworth Ward at the expense of other NHS services, but to fight for them all. So we linked up with other NHS campaigns, such as Save Glenfield Children's Heart Centre in Leicester.

After seven months of heroic struggle, the bosses finally caved in and announced Chatsworth would not close. Many patients and their

photos Elaine Evans



The anger was initially ignored by the leadership of the local branch of Unison and the Labour Party - although both eventually supported the campaign

families have benefited since then from its specialist care.

The campaign highlighted that with bold leadership, workers' confidence increased. They were prepared to fight, and also drew conclusions about this rotten capitalist system.

The ward workers developed politically - but of course, the bosses have learned too. So no one is under any illusion that the war is won - only that battle.

This lousy Tory government is hell-bent on destroying our NHS so their big business friends can line

Why I joined the Socialist Party

I'm 90 and still a socialist - Blair chased me out of Labour

Roger Priest
Aylesbury Socialist Party

I'm coming up to 90 and have been a socialist since 18. I became an active socialist in the labour movement in the East End of London before moving to Buckinghamshire after the war.

I was active in the Labour Party, and 'father of the chapel' (union branch secretary) of the largest printing press in southern England. I was the Labour parliamentary candidate against David Lidington, now a Tory minister, when he first stood for Aylesbury in 1992.

I have always been on the left,

and resigned from the Labour Party when Tony Blair went to war in 2003. I resigned because Labour had moved to the right under Blair and I couldn't function as a socialist under his regime.

About ten years ago, I met a comrade in the Socialist Party in Aylesbury. I found that my beliefs coincided with theirs, especially in relation to the economy and nationalising its commanding heights, a policy the right wing is continually undermining.

I remain active to this day when I can. I still discuss politics and encourage people to join the Socialist Party and trade unions.



Since joining the Socialist Party in spring, I've been told that this was the one thing I must absolutely come to. I don't regret it: I met socialists from all over the world, and heard stories and news about places I knew next to nothing about. It was a great atmosphere, and I absolutely loved it.

Sam Morden

So, the weekend was really interesting, all the talks I went to were really engaging, and the opportunity for questions and speakers to talk was really nice to see - though the sheer variety of choice was a touch intimidating at times! The rallies at the end of the days were really energising.

Ashley Davenport

All the members in Wales want to thank Sarah Sachs-Eldridge and the Socialism 2019 team for another brilliant Socialism event which really inspired everyone, young and old. Thanks for all the hard work over many months.

Alec Thraves

There was evident keenness for the printed words of the Marxist classics, and topical interpretations and lessons, with the sale of over £3,000 worth of books and pamphlets from the Left Books stalls. This included particularly big sales of the new Socialist Books title, In Defence of Trotskyism, covering the recent debate in the Committee for a Workers' International.

Keith Dickinson

Really well done on organising such a successful Socialism event. The Saturday night rally was excellent, we had positive feedback on the workshops, and the three closing rallies idea was genius. Some who came for the first time last year thought this year's was even better.

Alistair Tice

Leanna especially liked the one on housing and homelessness. It was Jane's first full weekend, and she enjoyed the one on the revolution betrayed. Connie, who was at Socialism for the first time, said her favourites were on spy cops and the rally on climate change.

Corinthia Ward

It was very good and productive. Most of the contributions showed a high level of political understanding. Thank you for inviting Tamil Solidarity to participate in Socialism 2019.

Lawanya

Another amazing weekend of discussion and solidarity! Great to see socialists from all over the world, and the best way to get ready for the fights to come, including the general election and beyond!

Dan Gilmore

A brilliant weekend. I think everyone is going home with renewed confidence.

Annem Baron-Cohen

Everything I was at was sharp politically, good discussion, enthusiastic fighters everywhere!

Nick Chaffey

Read more comments about Socialism 2019 at socialistparty.org.uk



Twitter's banning of political ads threatens workers' voice

Joshua Allerton
Wolverhampton and Black Country Socialist Party

On 30 October, Jack Dorsey, CEO of Twitter, announced in a tweet that Twitter plans "to stop all political advertising" on its platform. His apparent reasoning behind this was his belief that "political message reach should be earned, not bought!"

This may look like a courageous move by a social network giant which made over £100 million revenue in just the UK last year. But actually, it will have very little consequence for their finances. Only 21 advertisers across the EU ran ads on Twitter during the European elections earlier this year.

For the working class, the consequences are much worse. The policy will still allow big companies in the pharmaceutical and fossil fuel industry to buy ads that promote

and distribute misinformation. However, an activist who dares criticise these companies will be seen as political, and therefore banned from buying ads to do so.

For Dorsey, it seems he wants to add fire to the rivalry with Facebook, which made \$857 million on political and issue-based advertisements from May 2018 to June 2019. Nick Clegg, ex-deputy prime minister and now Facebook's policy chief, recently announced it is considering restricting politicians' ability to use highly detailed demographic data to target voters with ads.

Tax dodgers

Facebook has bitten the bait. And while the tech giants fight over who is more 'democratic', it will be the working class which has its voice stifled more through their actions.

What should be done? To begin with, Twitter could start paying more taxes. Last year, the UK arm



of Twitter only paid £41,000 in corporation tax despite making more than £100 million. Immediately, this money could be spent on decent mental health provision and other services needed by those users affected by social media.

We need to nationalise Twitter, and other social media platforms, and bring them under democratic working-class control. Regulation and licensing done with no democratic input would be a transfer of power from company to the capital-

ist state. Our media could become even more biased towards capitalist propaganda.

By nationalising social media, advertising and profit is no longer the main factor. In fact, networks like Twitter and Facebook could really become social. Workers would be able to voice their opinions more freely than in the workplace, movements could be organised, and you could challenge your MPs more directly.

The social data we could gather from these networks would be im-

portant in democratic economic planning. Instead of capitalist businesses looking at where to plug products, under a socialist society we could find out quickly where needs are not being met and provide the services that are required.

For Twitter, this is just a publicity stunt to convince their users that 'they're not political'. Although we know the answer, I still pose the question that was in the last issue of the Socialist: whose side are you on, Jack?

Bolivia: Right-wing coup ousts Morales

Workers and indigenous people face vicious attacks on their rights and living standards unless resisted

Niall Mulholland
Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

A right-wing, US-backed attempt to overthrow the Movement for Socialism (MAS) government in Bolivia, and to replace it with a vicious anti-working class regime, is under way.

Evo Morales, South America's first indigenous national president, resigned on 11 November and fled to Mexico, where he's been granted political asylum. His departure came after the country's chief of the armed forces urged him to stand down in "the interests of peace and stability". In a televised statement, Morales had earlier denounced the "coup" against him and his MAS government.

This followed what was, in effect, a police mutiny in several parts of the country starting on Friday 8 November, when police officers refused to leave their barracks. Rank-and-file police and military joined opposition protests.

It was clear that Morales had lost control of crucial parts of the state machine. At the same time, violent anti-government protests took place. Outrageously, the leadership of the main trade union, Central Obrera Boliviana, also called for Morales to stand down to "avoid bloodshed".

Street protests

The coup provoked street protests in the capital, La Paz, and in El Alto. The military has been deployed on the streets.

It is not clear yet whether these protests will grow and spread and act as a serious challenge to the right-wing coup consolidating its power. If there is momentum, mass resistance should be linked to a

revolutionary struggle against capitalist reaction, making a class appeal to the rank and file of the soldiers and police, and for socialist change.

The right-wing opposition used the outcome of the 20 October presidential elections, which saw Morales secure a fourth term, to mount street protests.



During Morales' third term in office he faced many of the problems associated with a reformist programme

Recently revealed audio recordings of discussions, ahead of the elections, involving Bolivian opposition politicians and US senators, indicated they were making plans to organise disruption.

Morales was re-elected in the first round with 47.08% of the vote. Mesa got 36.5%. The opposition claimed fraud after the electoral commission decided to freeze updates of the election count for nearly a day.

When updates resumed, Morales had gained on his lead, allowing him to hold onto office without needing to go to a second-round vote. MAS supporters pointed out that the countryside, which takes longest to count the vote, has always strongly returned higher support for Morales.

Nevertheless, a failed attempt by Morales, in 2016, to use a referendum to change the 2009 constitution to allow him to run for a fourth term in office, which was later overturned by the supreme court that ruled term limits infringed human rights, fed into widespread concerns over the 20 October vote.

As anti-government protesters from several parts of Bolivia made their way to La Paz, on 2-3 November, the US-dominated Organisation of American States (OAS) claimed "irregularities" in the election and vote counting and called for a new vote. This was a big blow to Morales, who had called on all parties to await and respect the

OAS findings (which the opposition had said they would ignore if they did not go their way).

Morales was in power for 14 years, winning three presidential elections on the back of "nearly halving poverty rates and a quadrupling of gross domestic product, due to gas and mineral exports," according to the Financial Times. Access to clean air and water was made a legal right.

The Bolivian masses long struggled against neoliberalism. Semi-insurrectionary movements, known as the 'Gas Wars', took place in 2003 and 2005.

The protesters demanded the expulsion of the multinational gas and mining corporations, the ending of the big landowner system and a revolutionary constituent assembly.

The militant movement saw a succession of neoliberal presidents forced out of office and opened the way for Morales and the MAS government to come to power. They carried out the partial nationalisation of the gas industry and introduced subsidies for the poor and social programmes.

This enabled Morales to win landslide election victories, and the MAS to gain control over both branches of Congress.

Yet the lives of many workers and poor did not fundamentally improve as they had hoped.

Inflation often wiped out subsidies for the poor and workers' wage increases. The large landowners maintained their monopoly over the land. The multinationals, including the oil and mining companies, continued making huge profits.

Reformist failures

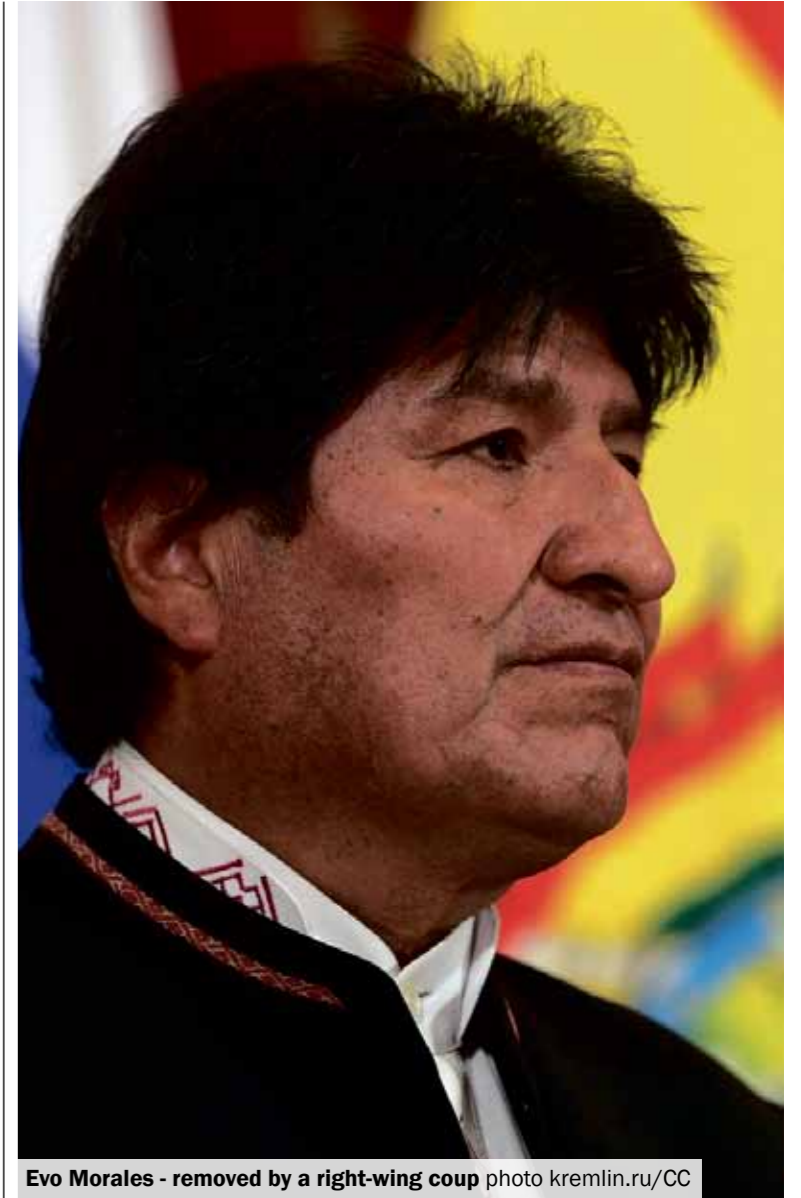
During Morales' third term in office he faced many of the problems associated with a reformist programme, as growth slowed, public debt soared, and foreign exchange reserves almost halved due to a high fixed exchange rate against the dollar.

Yet the MAS government was still an affront to Bolivia's elite and US imperialism. "My sin is to be indigent, a trade unionist and a coca grower...", Morales commented during his resignation speech.

The forces of reaction demanded concession after concession from the government while biding their time to overthrow Morales.

Despite the threat from the right, the MAS government adopted an increasingly conciliatory approach towards the corporations, big landowners, and ruling class. This eroded support from the working class and the poor.

The huge wave of enthusiasm that



Evo Morales - removed by a right-wing coup photo kremlin.ru/CC

brought the MAS government to power has been steadily declining. Morales won over 63% of the vote in the 2014 election; in October 2019 his vote fell to 47%.

The right-wing opposition eagerly exploited the situation. In Santa Cruz (the largest city), since the 20 October elections, hard-right leader, Luis Fernando Camacho, of the Comité pro-Santa Cruz - "a group with roots in the department's elite that now claims to represent everyone" (The Economist, 7/11/19) - organised street barricades and "strikes" to bring down Morales.

If a new right-wing regime is able to consolidate itself, all the social gains that are left of the years of Morales' rule are in serious jeopardy, as well as the lives and liberty of many left activists and trade unionists.

Workers and the indigenous people will face vicious attacks on their rights and living standards. This will be a boost for right-wing

forces throughout Latin America, including the capitalist opposition in Venezuela.

But it will not be a stable situation. The class and ethnic base of the right-wing opens the way to the possibility of deep conflict.

Lessons

Socialists and workers everywhere must oppose this US imperialist-backed coup with solidarity actions.

We also need to draw the necessary lessons. Piecemeal actions taken against the rule of oligarchs and big landowners will not satisfy the needs of the masses and will earn the ire of reaction.

But a workers' government taking the rich natural resources of Bolivia into public ownership, along with the large landed estates, democratically planned and managed by the working class, will fundamentally transform society, and act as a spur to similar socialist change throughout the continent.

Theatre: On Bear Ridge

An examination of loss - set in a post-apocalyptic world



photo Mark Douet

Scott Jones
East London Socialist Party

On Bear Ridge is the story of John Daniel (Rhys Ifans), his wife Noni (Rakie Ayola) and Ifan William (Sion Daniel Young), friend of the couple's dead son, and the trio's struggle to survive in a derelict butcher's and general store on a desolate mountain in Wales.

The shelves, shop and nearby village are equally empty. All they have left are memories. The shop and village have been left behind and it takes on a post-apocalyptic feeling. A feeling confirmed when it's revealed that the village and the "city by the sea" have been ravaged by war and unrest. Jet fighters roar overhead and the characters shout abuse and wave knives at the unseen combatants.

Even all-important memories are under threat. John Daniel fights the turning of his trousers into dusters because of their link to his memories - it's hilarious and tragic.

But more fundamentally, many

of Daniel's memories are in, and linked to, the "old language", different from the one everyone now speaks. This clearly resonates profoundly in the play's Welsh setting but is also a warning about loss in a world torn apart by capitalist crisis. Writer Ed Thomas draws no conclusions, but the major theme is loss. Compounded further by the story that the Captain (Jason Hughes) tells when he shows up at the shop. Especially the loss of community, people, society and its memories and relationships.

The loss is cleverly illustrated as the spartan, but evocative set disappears throughout to leave only Bear Ridge mountain. The use of music and lighting is brilliant too. It all complements the powerful monologues and lovely humour of Ifans and co. The play will have you on the edge of your seat as you watch these characters on the edge.

■ **On Bear Ridge is currently showing at the Royal Court Theatre in London until 23 November. See royalcourtheatre.com/onbearridge**



Kshama Sawant reelected in Seattle

Seattle socialist councillor Kshama Sawant has been reelected in the US city following a bruising battle with an Amazon-backed, big business Democrat candidate.

See socialistworld.net for full report

Leicester campaigns to

SAVE OUR NHS

A mass campaign saved the children's heart unit at Glenfield hospital in Leicester in 2017
photo Leicester Socialist Party



Lyndsey Morgan
Leicester Socialist Party

As the general election goes into full swing, so do the Tory lies about the NHS. Boris Johnson claimed at the Tory party conference that they would build “40 new hospitals” in ten years.

That turned out to be untrue. They claim they will increase the number of GPs by 6,000 over the next five years. But they made a similar claim in 2015 to increase by 5,000 and

there are now 1,500 less!

The Tories have also said they will fund the NHS by an extra £20.5 billion by 2024. This is a less than average increase for the NHS over its existence and comes after years of underfunding.

Some investment in hospital buildings that was held up for years by austerity measures has now been agreed. But it comes with a sting in the tail.

The government has promised £450 million for Leicestershire hospitals. We welcome money for new buildings. But years of cuts and

swathes of professionals leaving the NHS means investment in buildings will result in very little improvement without enough staff to work in them!

People power saved the children's heart unit at Glenfield hospital in 2017 and those campaigners are now fighting to protect hospital services in Leicester.

Save Our NHS Leicestershire (SONHSL) has been warning for a long time that the trust's plans, involving the closure of one of the three acute hospitals in Leicester, mean no increase in the number of beds for

decades to come, despite an ageing and growing population.

At a public meeting organised by the campaign, NHS England (which oversees the NHS budget) admitted that their plans for the reconfiguration are dependent on carers taking on more care in the home. With the pressure already on families due to austerity, many will not be able to take the extra strain.

In order to fight to see the full details of the plans and to protect our services, SONHSL will be holding a demonstration in the city centre at the clock tower on Saturday 16

November at midday. The Socialist Party has a proud record of fighting and saving NHS services. The fight continues!

■ Demonstrate 12 noon Saturday 16 November at Leicester clock tower, Leicester city centre
■ See pages 3 and 6 for more reports on the NHS

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