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Issue 1067
4 December 2019 - 8 January 2020

Socialist Party
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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

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END AUSTERITY

SAVE THE NHS

Tories out, Corbyn in



photos Paul Mattsson & Socialist Party

Fight for socialist policies



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

London Bridge attack

UNITE AGAINST TERRORISM, RACISM, WAR AND AUSTERITY

Paula Mitchell
London Socialist Party secretary

Another terrible attack in London. Two people stabbed to death, three more injured, and the attacker shot dead by police. The Socialist Party completely condemns this horrific attack.

It took place on London Bridge, following the attack in the same area in 2017 in which eight people were killed. In that year there were four terrorist attacks in London as well as the horrific Manchester arena atrocity.

Whether indiscriminate or more targeted, as this attack appeared to be, it is always ordinary people who suffer. And it is ordinary members of the public and emergency service workers who showed great bravery in confronting the attacker and dealing with the situation.

The human solidarity expressed from people across London, the country and worldwide has nothing in common with the hypocritical reaction of Boris Johnson and other Tory government ministers.

Their policies create the conditions for such horrific acts, and then they try to make political capital from them.

The political parties officially suspended campaigning in the general election, but that didn't prevent Boris Johnson and the other parties of big business from attempting to use the attack to their advantage, despite appeals from the father of one victim not to do so.

The attacker was out of prison on licence following a conviction for terrorism. Johnson tried to play the hard man saying he had "long argued that it is a mistake to allow serious and violent criminals to come out of prison early."

But it is this Tory government, and the Tory-LibDem alliance before, that have 'talked tough' and presided over cuts to every aspect of the justice system.

Former prison officer Ian Acheson, who led a government review of Islamic extremism in prisons and probation said: "At the heart of this is the destruction of the prison probation service through crazy, failed, ideological austerity cuts."

The Tories haven't just cut 20,000 police. The probation service was privatised and has been such a disaster that even the Tories recognise it needs to be renationalised.

Cuts to funding of the Ministry of Justice of 40%, among the deepest to government departments, have led to big delays and the closures of

courts.

Conditions in prisons are catastrophic with overcrowding, 9,000 cuts in prison officer numbers, and cuts to rehabilitation.

Local councils, including Labour councils, have passed on Tory cuts to young offenders services and all youth services, and working-class people's access to justice has been devastated by the cut of £1 billion from legal aid.

The big business politicians may praise the firefighters and ambulance workers after attacks and disasters, but when he was London mayor, Boris Johnson cut £29 million from the fire service in London in 2013, including the loss of ten fire stations, 14 fire engines and 552 firefighters.

The Tories and the right wing of Labour try to attack Corbyn over 'security'.

But it is the murderous foreign policy of Tory and Blair governments alike, especially in the Middle East, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, that have created a nightmare for the people of that region, and have increased the likelihood of abhorrent terrorist attacks across the world, including in Britain. Those wars were opposed by the majority of the population, including Jeremy Corbyn.

On 12 December there will be an opportunity to boot out these Tory hypocrites - the austerity, pro-war capitalist politicians. But we must be aware that the majority of Labour MPs who get elected in December have also supported war and austerity, and are opposed to the socialist-leaning measures in Corbyn's programme.

We must resist any attempts to divide the working class along racist lines; and prepare for mass struggle to win the popular policies in Corbyn's manifesto.

Fight to end austerity and for a socialist world to end the wars, poverty, racism and terrorism that are created by capitalism.

Keep up to date with our election coverage

The Socialist print schedule

This will be the last issue of the Socialist in 2019. This is because the next paper would have been delivered on or after general election day. A special supplement will be printed immediately after the election and sent to sellers and subscribers. The first issue of 2020 will come out on 8 January. There will of course be regular updates on the website.



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Our website is a vital resource for news and analysis about the election and more. Check here for updates, including after the election and more. Email any urgent reports for the website to editors@socialistparty.org.uk

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Hillsborough justice eluded



photo Linksfluss/CC

Dave Walsh
Liverpool Socialist Party

In a second trial against David Duckenfield, after the first jury failed to reach a verdict, the former match commander stood accused of gross negligence manslaughter of 95 Liverpool fans in the Hillsborough football stadium disaster in 1989. Under the law at the time, the 96th victim, Tony Bland, was not included in the charge because he died more than a year and a day afterwards.

This time Duckenfield was cleared by a majority decision. I wrote a piece for the Socialist after the first trial and made the point that Duckenfield's defence was that there were many failings on the day made by other agencies that were outside his control. But this begs the question; why didn't he say this 30 years ago?

Instead, he lied by saying the fans had caused the disaster by forcing open the gates, and he went along with a gigantic cover-up lasting 25 years, that accused the fans of drunkenness, thuggery and violence which impeded police efforts. The cover-up and lies magnified the pain for grieving families and stigmatised the people

of Liverpool for many years as vicious, drunken thugs. The disaster was a result of gross negligence and incompetence, but the cover-up was carefully planned and contrived and was arguably the greater crime. An inquest jury in 2016 found that 96 fans were unlawfully killed, and cleared Liverpool fans of any blame; only then did Duckenfield's story change.

The victims' families and the Hillsborough Justice Campaign fought long and hard to establish the truth. But despite their achievements, the British justice system shows once again it is incapable of delivering justice for working-class people.

NHS 'promises' and privatisation

The Tory government's pledge to boost GP numbers by 5,000 has fallen short by over 90%. In 2015, former health secretary, Jeremy Hunt, pledged that they would raise the number of full-time equivalent GPs in the NHS up from 34,492 in September that year. But new NHS figures show only a rise of 370, just 7% of what the government promised.

GP groups said that the number of non-trainee GPs had actually fallen by more than 1,000 during this time.

The figures show again that Tory promises on the NHS can't be trusted.

As well as lying over nursing numbers during the election, Boris Johnson is also facing questions over privatisation in the NHS after new research revealed that £15 billion of health service contracts have been handed to private companies since 2015.

The finding exposes health secretary Matt Hancock's promise that there would be "no privatisation of the NHS on my watch".



Unequal Britain

Inequality in Britain is among the worst in the developed world, according to a report by thinktank IPPR North, which found that parts of England have higher mortality rates than places in Turkey, Romania and Poland.

It said Britain is "consistently more divided than any comparable country" when it comes to vital topics such as productivity, income, unemployment, health and politics, the research found.

Six UK billionaires control as much wealth as the poorest 13 million with a combined fortune of £39.4 billion.

London Bridge with its 'anti-terrorist' barrier
photo ChiralJon/CC



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.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15 an hour. 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.

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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.

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!

Do you agree? Join the fightback!
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PREPARE NOW FOR THE STRUGGLES AFTER 12 DECEMBER

While the week before, a You Gov poll pointed towards a 68-majority for the Tories, on 2 December an ICM poll put them on 42% and Labour on 35%, just seven points behind. A Survation poll on the same day put Labour on 33%, a gap of nine. The press talk now is of the possibility of a hung parliament.

The most unpredictable election is still unpredictable.

The election has become polarised. The LibDems are being squeezed to the benefit of Corbyn's Labour Party, whereas they had hoped to mop up remain voters. In the latest polls, nearly half of voters who voted remain are now voting Labour.

This is the opposite of what remain elements in the Labour Party, including the leadership of Momentum, expected. They anticipated a flood of voters away from Labour to the LibDems. They joined the right wing of the Labour Party in pressuring Corbyn to take up a remain position.

Very many young people voted remain from an anti-racist, internationalist viewpoint, a rejection of the racist right who led the leave campaign. Now, with the possibility looming of a Boris Johnson majority, backed by Nigel Farage, the same revulsion and fear can drive young people to vote for Corbyn.

What the 'left' around Corbyn misunderstood or forgot or ignored, was the millions of working-class people who felt betrayed by all the main parties; who have suffered under the blows of austerity for nearly ten years, losing pay, job security, benefits, homes and services, and who expressed this rage in the Brexit vote.

2017 election

In 2017 Corbyn put on 3.5 million votes once the manifesto came out, a big surge in support but not enough to win the election. That could happen again. Of the nearly four million registrations, a majority were young people under the age of 35. But there are still millions missing from the registers - in December 2018 there were nine million missing. That will be lower now, but it's still a lot that won't be voting.

It is absolutely clear, but totally to be expected, that the entirety of the capitalist establishment, the press, the bosses, and the pro-capitalist politicians at the head of not just the Tories but the LibDems, the Scottish National Party (SNP), and of course the right-wing of the Labour Party itself, are all doing their damndest

to attack Corbyn and prepare for his removal.

The billionaire press is proven to be overwhelmingly biased against Corbyn. A study by Loughborough university found that Labour faced overwhelmingly negative coverage, dropping to -75.79 in the third week. This compared to a positive +29.98 for the Conservatives in the first week, and +15.87 in the third week.

It has been clear to Socialist Party members, campaigning hard for socialist policies on our street stalls, at universities and workplaces, that the manifesto is starting to get through. Issues like Corbyn's call to halt US trade talks till the NHS is off the table have an effect.

But the election didn't have to be on a knife edge like this. The big question is the way many working-class people fear Corbyn could betray them on Brexit and on other issues too. The 'red wall' of Labour 'heartlands' is not solid. The allegiance to Labour of past generations had a material base, when workers saw 'their' party build the NHS and council houses and create a social safety net.

Referendum

Rather than saying he will be neutral in any referendum, Corbyn should have come out fighting for a Brexit in the interests of working-class people, as the Socialist party has argued. He should have laid out clearly that he will fight for a Brexit deal that rejects all the EU laws that demand privatisation, restrict state aid and enable low wages. That he will fight for a deal that will allow him to nationalise, and to invest. It is a fight on the class politics that will make the difference - and you can't be neutral in that.

It is very difficult to win an election in three weeks. The Socialist Party has argued all along that once Corbyn was elected Labour leader there needed to be a fight - to kick out the Blairites and transform the Labour Party into a truly anti-austerity mass party, and to build a mass movement to fight for socialist policies.

Imagine if Jeremy Corbyn had insisted on Labour councils stopping passing on Tory cuts in councils. Imagine if he had called the trade union leaders together for a council of war against the anti-trade union laws and austerity, and had called massive demonstrations. Imagine if he did that now on the postal workers.

After Grenfell, Corbyn stood out hugely from the rest of the politicians. But imagine if he had worked with the local community and trade unions to mobilise masses



The Socialist Party has argued all along that once Corbyn was elected Labour leader there needed to be a fight - to kick out the Blairites



In 2017 Corbyn put on 3.5 million votes once the manifesto came out. That could happen again

We need a mass movement to win the election and also a working-class-led movement and mass workers' party to fight for afterwards photos Senan



of people, and put a resolution to change the law in parliament, they could have really taken over the empty homes.

Mobilising people to canvass in marginals or high-profile areas like the attempts to unseat Boris Johnson and Ian Duncan Smith is good, and the social media campaign is enthusing young people, but it is not the same as a mass party being really mobilised to fight for itself and its programme. It is not the same as meetings of workers and an organised plan of attack in the workplace.

The Socialist Party is fighting hard for a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies. But we have to be prepared for any number of possible outcomes. Whatever happens, there will be no stability and a fight will be necessary.

If there is a hung parliament, exactly how things would play out would depend on which is the biggest party, whether Johnson resigns or whether there is a vote of no confidence, etc. One possibility is for a 'centre' grouping to coalesce against Corbyn - for Tony Blair's proposal of a coming together of 'moderate' Labour and 'independent-thinking' Tories, maybe with the LibDems and the SNP, to come to fruition.

However, it is also possible that a Labour minority government could be formed, with support, perhaps, from the SNP.

Clear

One thing is clear though, that if there is a Corbyn victory, even a majority for Labour would be a minority for Corbyn's programme. A key reason for the need to have fought to democratically remove the Blairite MPs, is because they will surround Corbyn after an election and be the first line of attack in the inevitable sabotage being prepared by big business against a Corbyn government.

Right-wing rags like the Sun have mercilessly and grossly attacked Corbyn because they don't want their billionaire and millionaire interests affected by a government that attempts to take steps in the interests of working-class people.

The more sober end of the capitalist press, the Financial Times, lays things out more clearly. On 28 November, Martin Wolf complained that Corbyn's manifesto doesn't say anything positive about profit. He says "its hugely expansionary programme is likely to trigger capital flight and currency collapse".

This is the other reason why a mass movement is necessary, because there will be a fight to win the implementation of the policies people want. We have warned many times of the lessons of the Syriza government in Greece, swept to power on an anti-austerity wave, but which completely capitulated under pressure from capitalist representatives in the EU and in Greece.

In such circumstances, Corbyn should put his programme before parliament and before the working and middle classes. He should demand that it is supported in parliament, and if not, call another election, mobilising a mass movement around that programme.

It will be necessary to prepare to go further than the current plan to



It is incumbent on the workers' movement and socialists to campaign for an organised form of class struggle

nationalise rail, mail, energy and broadband. When the bosses squeal that nationalisation hurts ordinary small shareholders and pension funds, that needs to be answered with pledges to protect pensions and provide compensation on the basis of proven need.

When sabotage is posed - for example, an investment strike and a flight of capital from the country, as was carried out by the capitalists in Greece - it would be necessary to enact capital controls, to nationalise the banks and major companies, and establish state control of foreign trade. That would enable the vast wealth to be democratically planned for the benefit of all.

If there is a Johnson victory, Vernon Bagdanor, professor of government at Kings College London, writing in the Guardian, makes the assertion that "The path is clear: Brexit by the end of January and five more years of Conservative government." Far from it!

Masses of people will be disappointed when Brexit is not 'sorted' so easily, when the mountain of trade deals pile up. When there's another economic crisis, and there's no jobs or pay rises or extra nurses or hospitals.

There could be immediate disappointment and despair. After 2017 there was despair about the prospect of five more years, but another election was called two years later. There were also youth protests through the summer.

Inevitably, the rage will come out, but it will not be straightforward. It is incumbent on the workers' movement and socialists to campaign for that to be an organised form of class struggle. Having failed to win politically, workers could move to build on the already fairly widespread industrial action being taken or rumbling under the surface during the election campaign - the university strike, the RMT, postal workers, low-paid precarious migrant cleaners, etc.

It will be essential to put forward a working-class oriented socialist programme to fight any potential rise of racism or scapegoating of migrants which could divide workers.

The crisis facing the British capitalist class is immense. There could be major splits in both parties. Out of this process a new anti-austerity, working-class party is possible. If there is a split in the Labour Party, a party with a smaller number of MPs, but with members fighting on socialist policies and with the support of trade unionists, it would have a greater impact than a bigger party compromising to keep its pro-capitalist wing on board.

We would argue for such a party to be opened up on a federal basis to all anti-austerity and socialist forces, including the Socialist Party. It would pose the question to trade unions about what kind of party they want to support and build. The left-led trade unions could ensure that in any new party the voice and weight of the organised working class in the trade unions was reflected.

This unpredictable time will not be over after the election. The fight then begins for a socialist programme that can take the wealth off the 1% and transform lives.

Workplace

SWR dispute It's a strike to ensure the safety of the travelling public

Southern Region Socialist Party reporters

After over 40 days of strike action during the last two years, the RMT transport union reported that a deal had been reached with South Western Railway to retain the safety-critical role of the guard.

However, that deal was then rejected by the company with the RMT believing that government interference has played its part, unwilling to see a victory for the RMT in the run up to the general election, and allow any suggestion that militant action works.

Despite this setback, RMT guards and their leadership on SWR were determined to continue the fight and, on 2 December, began an historic month-long strike to ensure the continued presence of the guard.

Picket lines were the biggest of the dispute so far, spurred on by management bully boy letters sent to the homes of SWR guards threatening to sue them for loss of earnings - a ghostly echo of the infamous 1901 Taff Vale case, when the striking rail workers union was sued by the Taff Vale railway company.

This was seen as an especially cynical ploy as SWR has suffered no losses, being bailed out by the Tory government with public money to the tune of £86 million, even if SWR don't run trains during the strikes.

While the government has sought

to win support from 'long suffering commuters', guards report overwhelming support from the travelling public who value the presence of guards. It's not surprising, since statistics show a sharp rise in violent and sexual assaults on trains in the recent period. What would happen in the absence of guards?

Perhaps in a reflection of the real mood in society generally, twitter feeds were calling for an end to the chaos and for SWR to lose its franchise. Why? Because the overcrowded trains are the norm, not just on strike days!

The RMT recently revealed how the public is being fleeced by privatised rail companies, particularly those that provide the rolling stock - just three monopoly companies have paid out £1.2 billion in share dividends over six years to 2018, enough to pay for 700 new trains.

This is while fares continue to rocket. Some tickets have gone up by 250% since rail was privatised by the Tories 26 years ago. So much for the promise by the then Tory prime minister John Major that prices would fall!

Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto announcement on the first day of the strike, that his government would cut season tickets by a third, a saving of £2,000 for some commuting workers, and provide free travel for under-16s, will undoubtedly be as popular as his call for the renationalisation of the railways and the guarantee of a second safety-critical member of staff on every train.

National Shop Stewards Network backing

"Alongside RMT strike action in the West Midlands, this strike will put the future of transport high on the agenda of the remainder of the general election campaign.

"This historic fight needs the backing of all trade unions. It is a fight for the safety of workers travelling by rail. This month-long strike will hit the pockets of guards hard in the run up to Christmas. The RMT are raising a hardship fund, which we call on all unions to support."

Rob Williams
Chair, National Shop Stewards Network
shopstewards.net

Messages of support to Geoff Kite RMT executive committee.
email: g.kite@rmt.org.uk

Trade union branches should send donations to: RMT Wessex DDO Dispute Fund, account number: 2039946, sort code: 60-83-01



From the picket lines

RMT strikers at Fratton in Portsmouth were as determined to see the back of this bosses' government as they were to ensure their future role. Because after ten years of austerity this fight, like so many others, is a battle for jobs, working conditions, pay and public services over the endless drive for profits.

On the first strike day Andy Mellors, outgoing managing director of South Western Railway, said that drivers should open and close the doors on the train as it improves punctuality. One of the strikers at Salisbury said: "This implied that unpunctuality was the fault of the guards and there is absolutely no proof of that, especially since this would happen on the new trains which were not ready and were untested."

A striking guard at Bournemouth said: "The RMT and the public were being used as a political football by the government. The Tories would not allow a deal to be made as they were holding out until after the election, and if they won, they would introduce new anti-trade union legislation. This would ensure that a predetermined percentage of trains would run during industrial action. If the unions failed to sign up to this, it would cause the strike to be declared unlawful."

(Thanks to Jane Ward)

Solid support for guards on West Midlands Trains

There was an upbeat mood on the RMT picket line at Worcester Shrub Hill in the continuing dispute with West Midlands Trains over retaining the safety-critical role of train guards.

This was the third Saturday strike day of six planned and support is solid. Pickets are on a rota system so the load is spread.

Socialist Party members attended to show solidarity with the strikers and there was also support and greetings from the Fire Brigades Union, recently in dispute, and Worcester Trade Union Council.

We were told that RMT has made proposals to reach a deal which are in the hands of the employers lawyers. The RMT members know that

there are few better jobs to go to if they lose this fight. Also, it seems the number of ASLEF (train drivers) union members declining to cross picket lines is growing.

Four copies of the Socialist were bought, including one at the solidarity price.

Worcester SP members

Royal Mail court ruling

National reps meeting and solidarity action essential

The High Court has dismissed the appeal by the Communications Workers Union (CWU) against the scandalous decision to stop the postal workers taking national strike action in Royal Mail, despite winning its strike ballot with an incredible 97% yes vote on a 76% turnout. This dispute, and indeed the very right of the CWU to be able to organise and defend its members, is on the line.

Gary Clark, Socialist Party member and branch secretary of CWU Scotland no.2 branch said: "The whole labour and trade union movement must immediately come to the aid of the CWU. There should be an emergency TUC general council, which Jeremy Corbyn should attend. It should discuss solidarity demonstrations and action."

In the remaining days of the general election, Jeremy Corbyn should appeal directly to the 110,000 CWU posties and their families and the many other workers who are furious

about the strike ban.

He should emphasise his policies of repealing Tory anti-union laws as well as bringing Royal Mail back into public ownership. This would include the removal of Royal Mail's bullying and anti-union management.

Threat

This court decision was in the same week as Boris Johnson threatened to go even further than his Tory predecessors - Thatcher, Major and Cameron - in wanting to bring in new anti-union legislation. It is targeted at the rail unions but would be rolled out to all unions.

The CWU postal executive is meeting as the Socialist goes to print. Socialist Party members in the CWU believe that an emergency reps meeting is vital for a debate about where next in the dispute.

Alongside discussing further appeals and a re-ballot, a clear strategy of action can keep the campaign

Jared Wood overwhelmingly elected to RMT executive

Socialist Party member Jared Wood won a resounding victory in the ballot for London Transport Region representative on the RMT union national executive committee. He secured 1,443 votes, more than double that of his main challenger.

Jared stood on his record of defending jobs and conditions and the socialist aims of the RMT - campaigning for a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government armed with socialist policies. He gathered support from the vast majority of reps and branches who campaigned hard for him.

Jared will give an industrial and



Jared Wood

political lead to: combat the £1 billion worth of cuts by Transport for London; to end shift patterns that are killing tube workers, and fight for a four-day week, and for repeal of the anti-trade union laws.

Result: Jared Wood 1,443; Jayesh Patel 629; Lorna Tooley 321.18.4% turnout

Northern Ireland

Health workers take action over understaffing and pay equality

25,000 hard-pressed healthcare workers in Northern Ireland - including nurses, social care staff and support services - took action at NHS sites on 25 November, demanding that their longstanding concerns over safe staffing levels and pay parity be addressed.

Health workers in Northern Ireland are paid less than their colleagues in England, Wales, and Scotland, as a result of not receiving the same pay awards by the Northern Ireland Executive under the now suspended devolved Stormont Assembly.

Unsurprisingly, 92% of Union

members in a ballot voted yes to strike action.

Given the suspension of the Assembly, it's incumbent upon the department of health to end the staffing crisis and to pay health workers their just deserts.

The first phase of the action, which runs to 18 December, will involve all members taking action short of a strike and selective strike action by Union members at five health and social care trusts.

The strikers will be joined by members of the RCN nurses' union who voted for the strike action for the first time in their 103 year history.



"The whole labour and trade union movement must immediately come to the aid of the CWU" - Gary Clark, CWU branch secretary

focused. This could include another national gate meeting day, where workers refuse to go back to work. Or a London protest outside Royal Mail HQ, with an appeal to other trade unions to support it.

The Parcelforce force strike ballot is still live and they could still take action this year, which the whole union movement needs to get behind them. Support the CWU and the posties. Defend the right to strike!

PCS union general secretary election

An alternative vision for fighting back against employers' attacks

There are just a few days remaining before the PCS civil servants' union general secretary ballot ends at noon on 12 December.

Candidate Marion Lloyd, a long-standing PCS activist and Socialist Party member, has had an enthusiastic response from activists throughout the union:

Marion Lloyd's programme, and the tremendous support of activists, has put her in a winning position. Incumbent Mark Serwotka and those around him have become remote and bureaucratized. There exists a mood for change among PCS members, and it's vital, in the short time that remains, to make a determined push for those last votes that really could count.

Marion is campaigning for:
 ■ An alternative vision for fighting back on pay and other attacks such as jobs and conditions
 ■ An equality agenda starting in the workplace and union branches
 ■ Unified campaign against office closures, protecting jobs and local services

■ Priority for green issues
 ■ Lay structures to exercise full accountability and democratic control
 ■ Election of full time officials
 ■ Tories out and Corbyn in on an anti-austerity manifesto
 ■ Pay back to the union the difference between her current pay and the £100k+ general secretary salary



Marion Lloyd

Left Unity conference

Against this background, and as a footnote to the election campaign, PCS Left Unity is holding its annual conference in Manchester on 7 December. Once an open fighting democratic rank and file led organisation, Left Unity has become a narrow and sectarian shadow of its former self as Serwotka and his support group Socialist View (aided by the Socialist Workers Party) have taken control.

Attacks on good left activists over policy differences have gone hand in hand with flagrant abuses of the rules and a purge of those who disagree with them. They have departed a long way from the fine tradition of Broad Left/Left Unity leading many activists to question its relevance and value.

Carmarthenshire: Winter gritting dispute

Our branch had every confidence in our members that they would vote to take industrial action. This was due to the strength of the feeling of being undervalued by the Plaid Cymru-led Carmarthenshire County Council for the hard and dangerous work that they do in keeping the public safe on the highways and byways.

Our members have sent a clear message to the council of what they thought about the council's 'final offer'. The council should stop providing this statutory service on the cheap and pay significantly more in retainer payments to employees carrying out winter gritting.

Representatives of all the unions - Union, GMB and Unite - will be meeting shortly to plan out the action we will be taking to encourage the employer to significantly increase its 'final offer'.

Union ballot result:
 Turnout - 84.2%
 Number voting yes to strike action and action short of strike action - 100%
Mark Evans
 Branch secretary,
 Carmarthenshire County Union

Npower jobs massacre

A huge body blow was dealt to workers at Npower which announced 4,500 redundancies at the energy utility owned by E.on, which made £2 billion profit in the first nine months of its financial year. The 4,500 figure follows the announcement of 900 job cuts by Npower in January.

Unison union, which organises among the workforce, must call workplace meetings and pledge to fight these devastating cuts. A swathe of smaller energy companies has gone belly-up in recent months due to intensive competition in the energy supply market. Another reason why Jeremy Corbyn must trumpet Labour's manifesto call to renationalise 'big energy'.

Tata announces 1,000 job cuts

Tata Steel has given steel workers the worst possible Christmas message: 1,000 jobs to be axed across the UK. The huge Port Talbot steel-making plant, employing 4,000 workers, almost half of its UK workforce, is expected to be hardest hit.

See article on socialistparty.org.uk

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General election - NSSN workers' rights leaflet available now!

NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

The government spends billions funding research and development (R&D) but has to spend billions more purchasing the drugs that are developed from this research. High-priced medicines prevent patient access to lifesaving drugs around the world. For example, for three years, the parents of children with cystic fibrosis have been forced to watch their child's health deteriorate as the US drug company Vertex Pharmaceuticals has pushed for the NHS to pay the highest possible price for their drug Orkambi. In that time, hundreds of eligible patients have died.

The report analyses problems in R&D, patents, pricing and lobbying.

R&D and Innovation

Although there have been breakthroughs, R&D led by private pharmaceutical (pharma) companies, often results in products which offer little benefit. In France, Germany and the Netherlands, analyses of new medicine approvals revealed that over 50% of new medicines did not offer any additional health benefits. Meanwhile, urgent public health needs, like antibiotic resistance, and poverty diseases like tuberculosis, are ignored as they are not considered profitable enough.

Extensive public funding supports the basic science behind pharma innovation yet the public gets barely any return on that investment when the research is commercialised, and the benefits do not accrue to society.

For example, British scientist Greg Winter undertook groundbreaking work on 'monoclonal antibodies' at a lab in Cambridge, and went on to found a company that discovered a monoclonal antibody now known as Humira. Acquired by pharma giant Abbvie, Humira is now the biggest-selling prescription drug in the world, with global sales of nearly \$20 billion in 2018 alone.

Abbvie went on to file a vast array of patents on Humira. This led to the company being free to charge extremely high monopoly prices. The lab receives royalties but they are a tiny fraction of the revenues earned by Abbvie.

The biggest players are increasingly specialising away from 'breakthrough innovations' to maximise profits in the short term - a feature of capitalism generally today. This means disinvesting from riskier research, accessing products that are already in later clinical trial stages through acquisitions, and focusing more on development, marketing and patenting.

Globally, the sector's spending on marketing outstrips R&D. Rates of share buybacks are also extremely high - with some spending more of their revenue on their own stocks, boosting share prices and executive pay, than they do on innovation.

Patents

The biopharma sector interacts with academic institutions and publicly funded research labs and institutes. The system is highly fragmented with each working in isolation, with insufficient collaboration. 50% of clinical trials don't publish results, presenting risks to health, and research duplication and wastage.

Patents prohibit the manufacture,

use or sale of an invention without the patent-holder's permission, for a minimum 20-year period. They provide the owner with market exclusivity so they can charge a premium on new drugs rather than reducing the price to the cost of production or that of competitors.

This market exclusivity is the largest public subsidy to the industry. It means companies are often paid many times above the costs of production and should be incentivised to undertake further innovation. In reality, patents provide excessive financial rewards. Companies frequently try to extend patents beyond the minimum 20 years, a practice known as 'evergreening'.

While critical health needs remain unmet, the patent system rewards the pharma industry for developing medicines that have little or no added therapeutic value. These 'me-too' medicines replicate existing drugs, but are sufficiently different to obtain patent protection, allowing for monopoly control and increased profits.

Prices

The government directly funds a network of institutions which support the innovation of researchers, spending £2.4bn in 2015. This sits alongside research funding from charities of £1.3bn. To 'incentivise' private-sector innovation the government purchases medicines at premium prices rather than the cost of production. The bulk of NHS spending on medicines goes on patented medicines. NHS England spent £18 billion on medicines in 2018.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) independently assesses new medicines and advises whether they should be used in the NHS. NICE typically approves a medicine for use if it comes in under the threshold of £30,000 per quality adjusted life year (QALY) it delivers. This exercises some control on price because the monopolies know there is a cap. However, the pharma lobby constantly seeks to counter these controls and profits remain huge.

Lobbying

Big pharma is the biggest spender on lobbying in the US Congress, and a 2005 Health Select Committee report concluded that "the industry was, and is, permitted to have privileged strategic access to and involvement with government regulatory policy over and above any other interest group."

There is a revolving door between industry, the NHS and government. Andrew Witty, the boss of the biggest UK pharma company, took over implementation of the government's pharma policy, while his former GlaxoSmithKline colleague took over as the government's chief scientific advisor.

Industry figures have established themselves on key decision-making bodies in the health service, such as Erik Nordkamp, former UK boss at Pfizer, who sat on the board of Kings NHS Trust. Andrew Lansley, a former health secretary, moved jobs from the Department of Health to advising pharma companies. And pharma payments to NHS doctors, a potential source of corruption within our health system, are still shrouded in secrecy.

END PROFITEERING FROM HEALTH

Nationalise big pharma

The issue of allowing US corporations access to the NHS and the affect this could have on the cost of drugs has featured prominently during the election campaign. Jeremy Corbyn recently announced that a new public pharmaceutical company would be created if Labour is elected. This follows the publication of a Labour Party report: 'Medicines for the the many: public health before private profit'. The report contains an excellent analysis of how the profit motive and private market system in pharmaceuticals fails to meet the needs of society. **Adam Goulcher** from Gloucestershire Socialist Party looks at the report.



The report therefore shows that there is a great deal wrong with the profit, based pharma industry and makes proposals for change.

Labour's proposal

Corbyn announced Labour's plans to put "public health before private profit" by ensuring that companies make vital drugs available at prices the NHS can afford. Promising to take on the big pharma companies, he announced plans to secure generic versions of patented medicines at an affordable price, make public funding for research conditional on the resulting drugs being priced affordably for all, and create a new, publicly owned generic drugs manufacturer to supply cheaper medicines to our NHS.

Labour will use 'voluntary and compulsory licences' to secure affordable generic versions of patented medicines - these enable a government to issue a licence to another manufacturer to produce a patented drug at a lower price.

Labour will also increase the transparency of medicine prices, the true cost of R&D, and pharma company finances, so that the NHS can have informed discussions on drug pricing. It is also committed to resisting efforts to increase corporate control over medicine and drug intellectual property rights in future trade deals.

Longer term, Labour will create a publicly owned pharma company to manufacture generic drugs to sell to the NHS at affordable prices, with profits reinvested back into publicly funded R&D, used to offset the cost of more expensive drugs, or fund public health interventions.

They will also create publicly owned entities with the funding and capacity to undertake late-stage drug development with the aim of forcing the private sector to accept conditions if they want to license publicly funded technology.

A new system of innovation funding based on upfront grants or subsidies and funding awards, tied to social priorities such as antimicrobial resistance, will focus R&D on health priorities. And public interest conditions attached to public R&D funding will ensure patient access and affordability.

Is this a solution?

Socialists support the opening up of big pharma's books to scrutiny and ending the patents system that leads to excessive prices. A publicly owned drug company, and publicly funded R&D, as steps to reduce profits and focus on priorities, together with collaboration to share research and trial data, would also be welcomed. However, the key question is whether this will be enough.

There is likely to be very strong lobbying to water down the impact of these measures on the pharma companies' profits. Further, it is unlikely that genuine collaboration will result, as the proposals rely on incentives and rules which big pharma can avoid. For example they can undermine the scheme by:

- Stepping up their own R&D (and withholding information), rather than relying on public R&D. This would get around any conditions the government may want to attach to funding.
- Poaching the best researchers and

scientists, paying more than the public sector can afford and setting up their own institutes.

■ EU regulations permit non-patent protection which further strengthens their market position; data exclusivity, preventing generic manufacturers utilising existing clinical trial evidence to secure approvals, marketing exclusivity (granted to prevent other manufacturers from selling an entirely different drug for the same condition), and Supplementary Protection Certificates (which extend monopolies beyond 20 years).

On the other hand, the record of public sector firms is one of uncertain funding, bureaucratic management, a lack of investment, and subject to continual worsening cuts due to the endemic crisis in British capitalism.

A public sector company would be up against well-resourced global pharma multinationals. It seems very unlikely that the public company would have the resources and scale needed to compete with the big corporations, which can shift production around the globe to minimise costs and maximise profits.

Labour's solution basically leaves the 'free' market intact but attempts to create incentives and some new regulations. This is the approach that has been used in the utilities (power, water, rail, etc.) since they were privatised, with a system of rules, incentives and regulations overseen by powerless government 'regulators'.

The private sector will find ways to work around the restrictions, including legal action, etc. There is a whole industry of advisers, which since the privatisation of the now 'regulated' industries have developed ways to beat the systems and enrich shareholders, executives and their hangers-on in consulting, tax, audit etc.

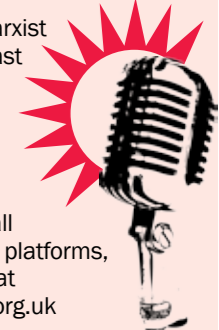
So the proposal raises the question of how to create a sustainable alternative. How can a Labour government provide the resources needed? The Socialist Party argues that all the big pharma operations in the UK, along with the banks and other funders should be publicly owned and democratically run through workers control.

A sector could be created that was truly integrated, starting with the priorities of society, the science, the R&D, trials and production, all as part of a fully public and properly funded NHS, within a democratically planned socialist economy. Why spend billions attempting to influence and regulate the market, when it can be abolished and replaced with a system of rational planning and production based on need?

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“Time socialism was back on the agenda”

Since the general election was called, Swansea Branch has been organising at least three city centre and one campus campaign stalls a week, usually comprised of a main Socialist Party campaign stall and a separate Young Socialist stall nearby.

Saturday 30 November was very much a successful day for us with 26 papers sold and £20 raised in fighting fund donations. There was a lot less hostility, a lot more openness and positivity.

While it is clear that there is still a silent majority who aren't talking about the election or their intentions, the polarisation has meant that those who care the most, either way, are more vocal.

Over the course of the two-hour stall we met:

An older woman from Coventry fondly remembering the legacy of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) in the city, praising Dave Nellist as a worker's MP on a worker's wage, and Rob Windsor, "the best councillor I've ever had".

A young, homeless bloke who was initially hostile to us. The previous week I had given him a paper and some leaflets, and after a long chat he said that he felt there was no reason for him to care about politics. This time he told me he had gone to the shelter to register to vote!

And finally, a working-class couple, both on Universal Credit, who gave us a raised fist salute and said it was, "time socialism was back on the agenda!"

There was also a steady stream of people concerned about the future of the NHS and education under the Tories, and the legacy of a decade of austerity.

It felt like a decidedly different stall to those previously, perhaps a reaction to the barefaced media smears against Corbyn, and the announcement of the Tory lead being halved in the latest major polls. It will be interesting to see whether this trend continues.

Gareth Bromhall
Swansea Socialist Party
and Young Socialists

Great conversations in Stoke

In Hanley we spoke to a fella from Romania who told us, "Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto is good but it's not going far enough". He read out aloud from our Socialist Party leaflet, "A socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies that dominate



Stratford, east London photo Niall Mulholland



Newcastle photo Elaine Brunskill

the economy and run them under democratic worker's control and management - that's exactly what we need!". He then bought a copy of the Socialist and donated £5 to our fighting fund.

Sam said she had never voted before, but will do this time because of Corbyn's policies, and will keep in touch with us via social media.

Cael told us that he has become interested in politics because of Corbyn, and will be voting Labour. He also wants, "to learn more about politics". But he was shocked about us being forced out of the Labour Party in the 1980s and that the right wing still existed inside the Labour Party.

A fourteen-year-old lad came up to us asked us for more information, and took away many different leaflets. As he walked off he stuck his fist in the air and shouted "the workers united will never be defeated!"

We had a great conversation with a young Keele University student which included why the Russian revolution was a victory for the working class, why the German revolution in 1918 failed and various issues concerning the current general election. She agreed to do an introduction on the German Revolution at one of our branch meetings, paid £2 for the Socialist and said she wants to join the Socialist Party!

Andy Bentley
Stoke Socialist Party

Change of mood in Newcastle

Despite the proximity of Christmas (lots of people had their heads down - determined to shop 'til they drop) we had a good response on our Socialist Party stall in Newcastle. There was a very strong anti-Tory mood.

Our call of 'Get the Tories out! Fight to save the NHS' was well received. People are worried that Boris will want to sell off what's left of the NHS.

The mood is definitely moving towards Corbyn. Even those who aren't too keen on him agreed it was his policies that would have them voting Labour. People are beginning to see his manifesto is pro-working class.

Socialist ideas are beginning to be

discussed. People were telling us they were socialists.

One fella asked whether we thought Corbyn would stick to his policies. He agreed with our attitude that there were no guarantees, and there would have to be a battle to ensure Corbyn's policies weren't scuppered by the Blairites in the Labour Party.

I really enjoyed the stall. We had our hands shaken and people thanking us for getting out and fighting.

We sold 17 papers, raised around £20 in fighting fund and met a person interested in joining the Socialist Party.

Elaine Brunskill
Newcastle Socialist Party

Campaigning in east London

We had our best campaign stall of the general election so far. And the best response I've ever experienced in Stratford, east London.

People who might normally walk past our stall, wanted to stop and talk. Their interest had been piqued by Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies. And they were angry about Tory NHS lies.

The Labour Party stall was opposite us. They were sympathetic to what we were doing. One of them bought a copy of the Socialist for £2 solidarity price.

But we heard Labour activists excusing Tony Blair's NHS cuts and privatisation and complaining about how many children Boris Johnson has! That won't win over working-class people sceptical of all politicians, particularly following the negative role of the Blairites in power.

16 people bought a copy of the Socialist. Another two wanted to get involved with the Socialist Party. And we raised £20 on our card machine, for those that don't carry cash.

Ian Pattison
East London Socialist Party

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Socialist Students conference
STUDENTS AND WORKERS UNITED IN STRUGGLE

Ella Doyle
Birmingham Socialist Students

Students from across England and Wales came together in Birmingham for the 2019 Socialist Students national conference in Birmingham on Saturday 30 November.

Berkay from London Socialist Students chaired the 60-strong rally on fighting for a Corbyn victory with socialist policies.

Michael, Warwick Socialist Students, spoke about the need to fight the attacks on free speech on campus. Some student unions have banned general election campaigning on campus. Some universities threatened to penalise students supporting the UCU strike.

Sundar, a student activist in Pakistan, phoned in about the fight for student unions, banned by the Pakistani government since 1984.

Connie, a school student from Birmingham who has been involved in the climate strikes, called for nationalisation of the polluting industries. Connie also explained the important role that Socialist Students can play in assisting in setting up

student unions at schools.

Lucy, a strike committee chair from the University and College Union, highlighted the shared struggle of students and workers under a management system that runs universities as businesses. Many contributions from the floor revealed the positive impact that student involvement has had on these movements.

After lunch Bea Gardner, Socialist Students national chair, introduced a really useful discussion on building our societies on campuses, which dealt with organising good political meetings, a focus on activity on campus, linking up with struggles in the wider area, standing for positions, and involving new people.

Andrea, a student from Chile, gave an inspiring report of the mass upheaval in her home country.

Finally, the Socialist Students steering committee was elected. Theo, national organiser, explained its role and candidates were invited to come forward. The conference prepared us for the battles to come - in this election, on the day after, and in 2020.



Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	October - December 2019	Deadline 3 January
Northern	750	1,870		249%
Eastern	1,200	2,613		218%
South West	1,800	3,568		198%
South East	750	1,179		157%
West Midlands	2,600	3,525		136%
East Midlands	1,850	2,428		131%
Southern	1,600	2,066		129%
Wales	2,300	2,877		125%
North West	2,100	2,067		98%
London	6,100	5,180		85%
Yorkshire	3,300	1,843	56%	
Other	5,650	13,122		232%
TOTAL	30,000	42,339		143%

Cardiff

At Cardiff University, every strike day UCU members have picketed over a dozen university buildings and held strike rallies of hundreds. Students have been involved on the strike committee.

At one of the strike rallies, strike committee chair and Socialist Party member, Lucy Riglin, highlighted the casualisation endemic in UK universities, one of the four main issues in this strike. Cardiff University is responding to criticism for employing academic staff on zero-hour contracts by "kindly moving them onto two-hour contracts - that guarantees them two hours work a year!".

Central to the dispute has been the slide towards insecure casualised work. Craig Gurney, a lecturer with 25 years experience, explained: "I was moved onto a 17½ hour week but all of it was teaching time, so I am expected to work unpaid as well. I was also told that if I wanted to move to a full-time post I had to submit research papers worked for in my own time. I've got three jobs, so just to keep up with that work I routinely have to work until three or four in the morning, with profound implications for my physical and mental health."

Colin Reardon (the vice-chancellor) earns ten times what I do, and let's be charitable, he has a difficult job to do, but I don't think he works ten times as hard as I do.

"The main reason that there is a gender pay gap is that there are far more female colleagues on part-time, precarious contracts than male colleagues, so equal pay overlaps the issue of precarity."

"Often our we are not paid on time for [casual] hours worked and I have to take our short-term loans just to meet basic bills. Last year we had to cancel our summer holiday because I wasn't paid on time. That is not acceptable."

University staff are under enormous strain with a steep rise in mental health and the tragic suicide last year of Malcolm Anderson, who was suffering workload pressures. The university responded to Malcolm's suicide by putting locks on windows in university buildings, not reducing staff workload.

No wonder UCU members at Cardiff University have been so determined to see this strike through to the end.

Dave Reid

London

Socialist Students led a large and loud contingent on the joint UCU, CWU and climate protest on Friday 29 November.

Starting at Malet Street the crowd grew as we marched past the different London universities, picking up strikers and students. We chanted loudly in support of our staff "Say hey, say ho, pension cuts have got to go!"

18 months ago when we were last protesting in support of UCU was during a snow storm. This time it was alongside the climate strikers. Our placards read 'Socialist change not climate change' and we made the call to get rid of the Tories, and big business which is destroying our planet for their profits, and for climate jobs

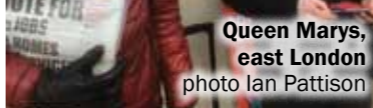
University and College Union strikes: more determined than ever



Leeds photo Iain Dalton



Goldsmiths, south London photo Paula Mitchell



Queen Marys, east London photo Ian Pattison



Sheffield photo Alistair Tice

with decent pay. Speakers on the Socialist Students open mic talked about the huge impact that Corbyn's policies would have on the lives of ordinary students and workers, and how the removal of the anti-trade union laws would mean workers like those in Royal Mail, and in a number of universities who were prevented by striking this time, would be able to strike against cuts and attacks to their working conditions.

The demonstration met up with school students striking for the climate in Parliament Square before a rally.

Helen Pattison

Leeds

After having the highest number of pickets ever, around 200, outside Leeds University on the first day of the strike, over 100 pickets have determinedly turned out most days.

There's been a high level of support from other unions for the strikers. On Friday 29 November, Socialist Party member Iain Dalton

addressed the strikers on behalf of Leeds TUC which had agreed to donate £200 to the strike's hardship fund.

On 2 December, Socialist Students members joined others in the 'Students support striking staff' group protesting outside Leeds University Union, demanding they reverse their 'neutral' stance on the strike. Chants of 'Students and Workers Unite and Fight', 'Shame on you, LUU' and 'Students not consumers' drew a crowd and forced one of the sabbatical officers to come out and discuss with protesters.

Leeds Socialist Party members

Sheffield

Over 300 striking UCU members and supporters from Sheffield and Hallam universities rallied on 28 November in the city centre over pay, conditions, workload and pensions. Angry at university employers and management but very determined and upbeat due to solidarity and camaraderie on the picket lines.

Alistair Tice

Why I joined: "Proud to be a socialist"

Andrea Ruiz-Prato
North London Socialist Party

As a foreign national in the UK I felt disenfranchised and, many times, completely impotent about the country's convoluted political scenario. After years of frustration, I came to realise I had two choices; to remain a passive spectator or, somehow, to take action.

The truth is that I did not know where to start. I did not have any politically active friends in the country or a thorough academic understanding of politics. Reading the Socialist was a great start as it gave me the right tools to be properly informed.

The Socialist newspaper critically reports on issues other newspapers and media just ignore, and has no problem calling out parties from across the political spectrum when required.

To me, the Socialist Party seems to be in a league of its own; unlike most parties, it is truly militant and ready for action at any point it witnesses

an injustice in society. Members are invested, brave, keen to learn, well informed and open to debate and discuss. One can really taste democracy in action.

I think this is probably the only political party in the country, and internationally, that truly cares and works to have a fairer society where no one is left behind but included. I am proud to formally call myself a socialist today.

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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or call **020 8988 8777**
or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**
to find out more about joining us today



Carlisle election meeting
EDUCATION - TIME TO MAKE THE MEGA-RICH AND CORPORATIONS PAY

The Labour candidate for Carlisle, Ruth Alcroft, spoke at a Socialist Party public election meeting in the city on 2 December. It followed the handing over of a petition to her from 500 local parents and teachers against the Tory cuts to school funding. The signatures had been collected by us on regular city centre campaign stalls this autumn.

Ruth said: "I am proud of the Labour manifesto for education. We have committed not only to properly funding schools, not only to removing the stress of SATs and Ofsted to focus on delivering education that is meaningful to each student and trusts teachers, not only to keeping class sizes below 30 throughout primary school, but also to 'poverty proofing' schools, introducing free school meals for all primary school students, encouraging breakfast clubs and tackling the cost of school uniforms."

Martin Powell-Davies, a member of the teachers' union NEU and the Socialist Party, offered an alternative to the schools crisis. "We need 15,000 more teachers immediately and more to bring class sizes down. We should scrap student fees and restore the grant for uni and FE students. We should replace academies, grammar and public schools

with a comprehensive education system under the democratic control of parents, teachers, students and the local community. After a decade of sacrifice by our kids it's time to make the mega-rich and corporations pay."

Don't assume that your child will benefit from the Tory election giveaway. The Education Policy Institute has discovered that most of this money will go to schools in wealthier areas, while those with already 'disadvantaged' (working-class) children will miss out. England's 163 grammar schools will be given an average extra £130,000 each.

And how about this for class prejudice and buttering up your core voters: 93% of the schools receiving more than £100 per pupil extra are in Tory strongholds! They will get an average £116 per non-disadvantaged pupil, while schools with those eligible for free school meals will only get another £56.

We want sufficient resources for all children, students and trainees to get the academic, vocational and life education they want. The first step to that is to get the Tories out and let Corbyn build his National Education Service.

Brent Kennedy
Carlisle Socialist Party

Corinthia Ward North Birmingham Socialist Party

Friday 29 November saw the broadcast of the first ever election debate over climate change - no doubt arranged in response to the global mobilisation of young people protesting for immediate action to be taken to save the planet. Unsurprisingly, Boris Johnson did not feel it was relevant or important enough to attend. The Brexit party was a no-show as well. In their absence two blocks of ice were slowly melting - a blunt reminder of what is happening to the polar ice caps. On transport, the policy flaunted by the Greens was to charge a tax on those who make multiple long-haul flights and to limit access to cheap budget airline flights in order to encourage people to use trains. All the parties, except Labour, promised the status quo of chucking more tax payers' money at private companies - something which has worked so well over the last 30 years!

Corbyn

Only Corbyn raised the nationalisation of rail, to not only improve the service but to make it more affordable for ordinary people, rather than penalising them for having to use a cheap airline flight as the alternative. When it came to energy and housing, Corbyn put forward the policies of having a state-owned energy company, nationalising the National Grid, for a new 'green' council housing programme, as well as interest-free loans for lower earners to fit their homes with green technology and alterations. The alternative by the other party

leaders was to incentivise ordinary people through individual change into slapping some solar panels on their roofs, and calling for energy to no longer rely on fossil fuels, without actually presenting a plan on how we do this!

How are we meant to produce all the renewable energy needed if we don't have control of the industries and infrastructure which provide it to homes, or even produce the housing, in the first place? As Corbyn pointed out, once we have control of these industries we can transfer to renewable energy while at the same time creating new jobs, and provide decent 'green' housing.

Greens

While claiming to be the voice of the Earth, part of the Greens' answer to tackling climate change was to make ordinary people take on more financial burden - such as a tax on meat and dairy to force people to eat more vegetables. Corbyn pointed out the link to food poverty and how it would be better to ensure people could actually afford decent food by better wages, etc. Sadly, all the parties missed the opportunity to link the food industry to nationalisation and public ownership.

As long as the farming industry and giant supermarket chains are under the control of a few wealthy individuals, they will continue to put profit before people and the environment. It is only if these industries are taken under democratic workers' control and management that green policies can be enforced while ensuring people actually have access to healthy diets. It is a positive step forward that Corbyn's manifesto promises to

Once we have control of these industries we can transfer to renewable energy, create new jobs, and provide decent 'green' housing

Climate change election debate CORBYN OFFERS BEST GREEN SOLUTIONS BUT NEEDS TO GO FURTHER



photo Channel 4 News/ITN

bring key aspects of the big carbon producers into public ownership, but he shouldn't stop there. The top 100 companies alone produce 70% of the world's carbon emissions. Only by taking all the major industries which contribute to climate change - energy, transport, construction, farming, fashion, etc - under planned, democratic workers' ownership can we ensure the future of our planet.

It will be workers themselves who can transform society to no longer leave a carbon footprint. But this can only be done under socialism, where production is no longer profit-driven, but instead organised to meet the needs of people and the planet.

Help fund the fightback DONATE socialistparty.org.uk/donate

How are we meant to produce all the renewable energy needed if we don't control industry and infrastructure?

Climate strikes: Students and trade unionists protest together



London

London

On Friday 29 November Parliament Square filled with striking school students. They marched off around central London before meeting up with the University and College Union (UCU) strikers as the latter's march was ending. Many UCU members were pleased to see so many climate-justice students. Many of the students liked what the Socialist Party had to say on climate

change and workers' control, kicking out the Blairites and socialism. We met eleven people who wanted to know more about joining the Socialist Party and left their details. The Socialist paper was perfect for the demo. The back page was on climate change. The front page was on the UCU strike, with more reports inside. And the general election was peppered throughout. 41 protesters bought a copy. Ian Pattison East London Socialist Party



Newcastle

Newcastle

Newcastle's Climate Strike rally was roughly 500 strong. Compared to previous climate protests there were less school students, however there were more trade unionists present. It was good to have trade union speakers from Unison, UCU, RMT and NEU. However, it wasn't so much of an open mic, and local young people weren't getting up and speaking in the way they previously have. As far as we could tell, they weren't being invited up to speak. The protest - due to the lower number of younger participants and the rather scripted manner of it - was less energetic than earlier

climate demos, despite a rather minor clash with police about marching routes. Unsurprisingly, the people there were mainly anti-Tory, including a young Jewish lad that we spoke to who was voting for Labour, while his parents are very much against Corbyn. Sam Morden Newcastle Socialist Party

Swansea

Several young members from the Swansea Socialist Party branch have been involved in organising the Youth Strikes 4 Climate since the beginning of the year. This month's



Swansea

strike was smaller than the 20 September peak, but the link between the youth and the trade unions was maintained as the strikes are being co-hosted with Swansea Trades Council. Around 70 young people and a smaller group of XR supporters gathered to hear young campaigners, trade unionists and researchers speak at a rally. The crowd then marched to the city's civic centre and onto the council chambers where an open mic was held where more school students and local scientists where given the chance to speak. Gareth Bromhall Swansea Socialist Students

THE GREAT BIG SOCIALIST PARTY QUIZ 2019



photo UK Parliament

- 1. Which organisation voted to strike for the first time in its 103-year history? 2. Whose Trump-backed attempted coup collapsed? 3. Who did actor Christian Bale play in the film Vice? 4. How many working days into the New Year did top UK company executives 'earn' the same as the average worker's annual salary? 5. How much is the average top CEO paid for every £1 earned by their workers? 6. Who was no April fools joke? 7. Whose murders 100 years ago were commemorated on 15 January? 8. Who was toppled after a 30-year dictatorship? 9. Where did 200 million workers walk out on strike? 10. Name the reported fan of Bismarck, who became Special Adviser to Boris Johnson? 11. Who wrecked a £68,000 Land Rover? 12. Where were 51 Muslim worshippers murdered by a far-right terrorist on 15 March? 13. Where were Christian worshippers murdered on Easter Sunday this year? 14. Whose blacklisting dispute ended in victory in March? 15. Whose 80 days of strikes secured a victory in May? 16. Which group of activists was paid £24,300 by South Yorkshire Police? 17. Name the MP who was suspended and later resigned from Labour over false allegations of antisemitism? 18. What was "irredeemably flawed" after five years? 19. Which group of UK car workers marched against the closure of their workplace? 20. How much have the world's top five oil and gas companies spent opposing the Paris Agreement on climate change since 2015? 21. Who told billionaires to "stop

- talking about philanthropy and start talking about taxes, taxes, taxes. All the rest is bullshit." 22. Why have millions of young people been striking every month around the world? 23. How much in shareholder dividends are UK businesses expected to pay out this year? 24. Name the airliner grounded after two fatal crashes caused by profit-driven technical failures? 25. Name the National Union of Journalists member murdered in Northern Ireland in April? 26. Name the socialist elected to Fermanagh and Omagh council in May? 27. Who was cleared of charges over the Hillsborough stadium disaster despite a second coroners finding of "unlawful killing"? 28. Who said they would "rather die in a ditch" if Brexit didn't happen on 31 October? 29. Name the school where National Education Union members successfully halted spending cuts? 30. What proposed law in June sparked ongoing pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong? 31. According to the Sunday Times Rich List, the top 1,000 wealthiest individuals and families in Britain are sitting on a record: a) £551 billion, b) £661 billion or c) £771 billion? 32. Which company was fined £126 million after "being run with scant regard for its responsibilities to society and the environment?" 33. Who struck a blow against Turkey's 'strong man' president Recep Erdogan in June? 34. In July, what workplace occupation succeeded in saving the workers' jobs? 35. Who was ousted by a mass movement after tweeting homophobic, racist and insulting text messages? 36. Where did mass protests and strikes oust the country's prime minister? 37. Where did a metro fares hike lead to a countrywide social uprising? 38. Whose 'special status' was ended in August? 39. What 200-year anniversary of a mass working-class protest in England was commemorated in



photo Graham Hogg/CC

- August? 40. Who was sentenced to imprisonment for organising a referendum? 41. Who voted by 97% for a national strike? 42. In commenting on collapsed tour operator Thomas Cook in Parliament, who callously recycled a two-year-old statement? 43. In which government department did outsourced union members win pay rises and improvements to working terms after months on strike? 44. Name the worker-militant and former socialist councillor in Liverpool who sadly passed away in October? 45. Where did a twelve-day uprising force the government to reinstate a fuel subsidy? 46. Which fast food workers struck for £15 an hour in November? 47. Whose anger over pensions, pay and working conditions led to an eight-day strike? 48. Who pledged to abolish the House of Lords? 49. Where was Johnson given short shrift over his handling of the floods in November? 50. What member of the establishment failed to apologise to victims of sexual abuse by US businessman Jeffrey Epstein?

Answers

- 1. The Royal College of Nursing in Northern Ireland, over pay. 2. Venezuela's right-wing opposition leader Juan Guaido. His 'acting presidency' was also recognised by Theresa May's government. 3. Dick Cheney, the right-wing Vice-Assistant Brenton Tarrant was linked to a number of European far-right organisations. 4. Three days. 5. £133. 20 years ago the ratio was 45 to 1. 6. Comedian Volodymyr Zelenskyy, having cared for into a lowly Kia and 2. Venetian island, over pay. 7. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. 8. Sudan's president Omar al-Bashir. 9. Sheffield tree campaigners, having been wrongly arrested under anti-trade union laws. 10. Derby North MP, Chris Williamson. 11. The privatised probation service, according to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. 12. The extradition Bill would have allowed political opponents of Beijing to be extradited to China. 13. Low-paid Birmingham home care workers. 14. Birmingham bin workers, members of the Unite union. 15. Valentia School in Southampton. 16. The still alive Boris Johnson. 17. The 'superintendant' David Duckenfield. 18. The then police chief International member Donal O'Corraigh. 19. Honda workers in Swindon. 20. A reported \$1.1 billion. 21. Dutch historian Rutger Bregman at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Belfast. 22. Why have millions of young people been striking every month around the world? 23. How much in shareholder dividends are UK businesses expected to pay out this year? 24. Boeing's 737 Max 8 series. 25. Name the National Union of Journalists member murdered in Northern Ireland in April? 26. Name the socialist elected to Fermanagh and Omagh council in May? 27. Who was cleared of charges over the Hillsborough stadium disaster despite a second coroners finding of "unlawful killing"? 28. Who said they would "rather die in a ditch" if Brexit didn't happen on 31 October? 29. Name the school where National Education Union members successfully halted spending cuts? 30. 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Legislation was recently passed in the US that could involve sanctions against China over human rights violations in Hong Kong.

Some demonstrators in the territory welcomed this support, but many will be sceptical of the Trump-led administration.

In spite of its trade war with China, it has ignored the massive human rights abuses which take place daily across that vast country.

As protests on the streets of Hong Kong resumed, clashes were reported in the town of Wenlou, Guangdong Province, just 60 miles away.

"The whole town is protesting!" said one resident, angry at the total disregard of local wishes over a construction project and at the beating by police of students and elderly protesters alike.

"The people of Wenlou are pledging their lives to resist," said a Weibo user whose posts had been deleted.

Clare Doyle of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) reports on the ongoing and intense struggle in Hong Kong.

The massive vote for anti-government candidates in Hong Kong's District Council elections on 24 November, coming on top of the heroic struggle for democratic rights, has shaken the rotten Beijing dictatorship to the foundations.

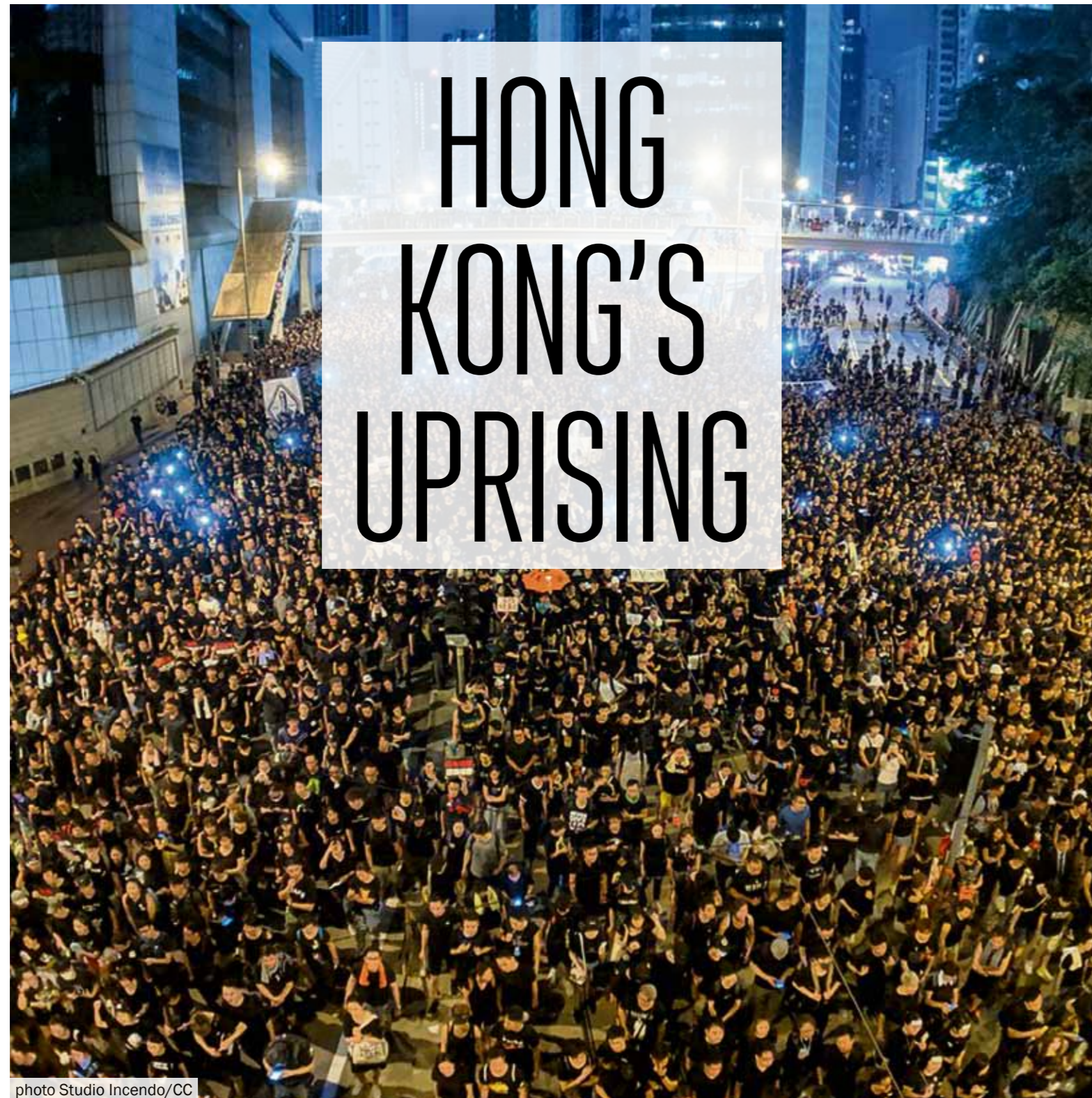


photo Studio Incendo/CC

The election results have refuted every claim that the students and their allies fighting for real democratic rights do not have overwhelming support from the 'silent majority' of the local population.

The newly elected councillors, many of them very young first-time candidates, marched to the occupied university buildings with hundreds of students holding their hands high with the five-finger 'salute'.

Five-finger salute

Each finger represents one of the now famous five demands of the movement - no extradition, the freeing of all those arrested, an independent inquiry into police brutality in the conflict, the removal of the Chief Executive Carrie Lam, and universal suffrage in all elections.

The turnout was a record 70% of registered voters - twice as many as last time. Around 400,000 new voters had been registered, mostly the younger generation who are widely supported by the older generation. Queues formed around the polling stations and calm reigned in the streets.

Before the election, the pro-administration parties had a majority in all 18 councils. Now the opposition parties control all but one of them after winning nearly 90% of all

the seats.

The councils themselves have little formal power to change the way Hong Kong is run or bring an end to the six-month confrontation with Beijing and the puppet Lego administration.

But the results of the vote - the only one on the territory based on one person one vote - are a crushing refutation of their claims that the struggle on the streets is that of a small 'criminal' minority.

In spite of the limited programmes of the so-called 'pro-democracy' parties, this election represents a sea-change in the struggle between the majority of Hong Kongers and rule from Beijing.

The big question is whether it will lead to concessions that could satisfy the movement or provoke aggression from Beijing.

If the Chinese government resorts to repression, this will widen the circle of discontent in Hong Kong and in the rest of China, sowing the seeds of further rebellion,

HONG KONG'S UPRISING

discontent and, ultimately, revolution.

The student youth need to remain on the offensive, linking up with the newly elected councillors and the working people of Hong Kong to carry the struggle through to a conclusion on the basis of socialist ideas and programme.

Since the beginning of the struggle nearly six months ago, literally millions of the 7.2 million population have been involved in peaceful protests, some brutally assaulted by the police and state-sponsored goons.

Outrage and admiration have spread across the world as the daily confrontations have been televised - unarmed demonstrators viciously beaten, attacked with teargas, rubber bullets, water cannon and even live ammunition.

It is possible that the severely weakened local regime will now try to make some concessions. The proposed extradition law was suspended and then completely dropped,

and more recently the local judiciary reversed an order banning the wearing of face masks on demonstrations.

Carrie Lam admitted long ago that she regretted the actions of her government and her Beijing masters have considered her removal. But that could open the floodgates for renewed efforts to extract concessions and give encouragement to the numerous suppressed revolts in mainland China itself.

State forces could crack

There are signs that local forces could crack, with individual officers telling journalists that they didn't join the police force to carry out this warfare against the population. A new police chief, Chris Tang Ping-keung, is vowing to adopt a new approach. But some of the most intense battles have taken place on his watch.

The siege at the university appears to be at an end. But even as the local election results were being

announced, new demonstrations were mounted.

Many of the youth involved see this confrontation with the Carrie Lam regime and its backers as literally a life-and-death struggle. They carry in their pockets a form of last will and testament as they go into battle with a sometimes crazed police force.

The tragedy of the situation is the inexperience of the youth, and the absence of a clear leadership and mass radical workers' party, able to channel this heroism into a struggle that can achieve all the now famous five demands, but that goes far further.

As the CWI has advocated from the beginning, not only are democratically-elected committees needed in every workplace and local neighbourhood to link up and provide leadership to the movement.

But a programme needs to be drawn up that aims for power to be taken into the hands of the working people, ousting not only the spineless regime in Hong Kong, but spreading the struggle to the rest of China, including Taiwan and Xinjiang.

It must be only a matter of time before workers and youth in the 'People's Republic' are affected by what they hear is happening in Hong Kong - not believing the lies about foreign-backed subversion, but seeing the need for struggle against a regime that is prepared to use arrest and torture to hold a people in submission.

Regime unnerved

The Hong Kong election results will have served to unnerve the Xi Jinping regime. It had already viewed with alarm the reversal of the ban on demonstrators wearing facemasks. This had been defied, anyway, from day one without arrest or punishment.

The so-called Communist Party can rail against the defiance of the protests and the president has talked of "smashing bodies" and "grinding bones to powder". But this is not 1989 when the revolt of workers and youth in China was crushed by the tanks of the People's Army, killing thousands in Tiananmen Square.

At that time, the ruling bureaucracy could lean to some extent on the rural masses and certain layers in the urban areas. It is much more difficult for them to intervene with impunity now in Hong Kong.

The small territory is home to the biggest concentration of millionaires in the world. Many of them have big money at stake in the Chinese economy.

Many of China's ruling-party elite use the special status of this 'financial hub' to protect and increase their vast fortunes. Laying waste to this haven would be much more difficult and cause big problems for the regime in Beijing. The world is watching and repression has already rebounded on them.

The Hong Kong economy has already been quite seriously affected by the events of the past six months and gone into recession. The Chinese economy is struggling with slowing growth and an on-off trade war with the US.

The nature of the state in China is still a very special form of state capitalism. Politically, the so-called Communist Party aims to keep the lid on freedom of expression, organisation, strike and protest and has no intention of allowing socialism, let alone real communism to bloom!

Xi Jinping has tried to consolidate his personal power, declaring himself president for life, and the recent plenum of the ruling party avowed a tough line against the Hong Kong protests.

Professor Steve Tsang at SOAS, University of London writes: "There is no indication that China's President Xi Jinping wants to destroy Hong Kong". But he also says that if the Hong Kong police cannot put an end to the protests, "the Chinese leadership will ultimately send in its security forces to subdue them" (Evening Standard 22 November).

Others say it would be of no help to Beijing if the movement in Hong Kong were crushed. Not only would there be anger in other parts of the vast country of China, but there would be outrage worldwide.

The labour movement internationally, already inspired by the youth in Hong Kong, would be forced to raise its voice and condemn Beijing's action.

New era

A new era has broken - of dictatorial methods of rule being challenged by mass movements, including general strike action - in Chile, Lebanon, Iraq and elsewhere. The days of quiescent and ineffective representation of working and young people in Europe are also numbered.

Participants in the movement in Hong Kong have learned a great deal. It needs an organised force and the backing of working-class power, a mass popular party of workers and students who have earned the right to have a major say in the future of society.

Local representative committees and elected workplace bodies need to link up. The slogan, "our revolution", needs to be channelled into calls for general strike action and a widespread campaign for a revolutionary constituent assembly.

Only by stepping up the fight against dictatorship and for democratic socialism can the movement be taken to a conclusion.

With the majority of the people in Hong Kong in a defiant mood, now is the time for a fight to the finish. Fighting for the right of genuine self-determination in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang and even Tibet needs to be part of an historic struggle for a socialist confederation with China.

Huge lessons are to be learned from the current titanic struggle for democracy in Hong Kong. But the study of the historic mass strikes of the past is also vital.

In May of 1925, the one-time "fortress of British imperialism in China" was brought to a standstill, resonating throughout China - a country in turmoil at the time. This experience must be used in the fight to build an invincible movement to end capitalism and build socialism across Asia.

Read article in full on socialistworld.net



Our banner on the workers' demonstration photo Marxist Workers' Party

South African Airways workers win wage increase after strike action

Weizmann Hamilton and Bongani Nkosi (SAA worker) Marxist Workers Party, CWI South Africa

The outcome of the South African Airways (SAA) strike is a victory. The National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (Numsa) and the Cabin Crew Association of South Africa deserve the applause of all aviation workers, and the working class, as a whole.

Every strike is a battle for the hearts and minds of the public; for organised workers, those of the working and middle class public, in particular.

Despite the capitalist media's attempts to mobilise public opinion against the strike, by raining down a torrent of abuse on the workers and the unions, the strike enjoyed widespread public sympathy, including from inconvenienced air travellers.

Cynical divide and rule

Management's tactics included a cynical attempt to use the well-known one of divide and rule, by settling first and separately with the pilots who won a 5.9% increase, and offering the cabin crews an insulting 0%. In addition, they sought acquiescence to the plans to retrench 944 workers.

The capitalist media is now trying to wipe the rotten eggs from their faces after this setback for the SAA management and their capitalist ANC government by belittling the outcome.

The fact is that the unions mobilised to strike against the 0% insult. Once the 5.9% was offered on the eve of the strike to prevent it, workers

were absolutely correct to attempt to press home the advantage of the bosses' retreat.

They did not secure 8%. But this does not detract from the stubborn fact that they prevented an effective wage cut and secured an increase no less than that obtained by the pilots.

In picketing in support of a strike, co-led by a union not affiliated to the federation, the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) demonstrated not only the principle of working-class solidarity in action. It was also recognition that what was at stake were not only the wages, jobs and conditions of SAA workers, but public sector workers as a whole and the working class in general.

Wider assault

The SAA management's government-backed strategy was to bring the SAA workers to their knees, in preparation for a much wider assault on Eskom (the state-owned electricity company) workers, followed by other state-owned enterprises and public sector workers.

The strike was also meant to serve as a testing ground for their new legislative weaponry in the coming wider class war - the Labour Relations Act (LRA) amendments calculated to cripple the right to strike.

That the LRA's anti-strike provisions failed to intimidate the cabin crew workers, has set an example to the working class against whom these weapons will almost certainly be deployed in the battles to come.

Read article in full on socialistworld.net

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FIGHT FOR YOUR FUTURE



Young people are striking to stop climate change
photos Paul Mattsson



Workers are striking against austerity

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ISSN 1366-9621



Mark Best
West London Socialist Party

Whatever the result on 12 December, we know one thing for certain - for working-class and young people the fight will not be over.

Across the world the warnings are there. Capitalism is heading toward a new crisis and the bosses are unable to stop it. It is a system driven by

profit instead of what the majority of us need - that's what leads to poverty, inequality and environmental destruction.

It's the bosses' race for profit that means we will need to continue fighting.

If we're faced with a Johnson government or a coalition of pro-capitalist austerity parties we will need to fight against any attacks on our pay, rights to organise and protest, living standards, and public services. It will be a weak government, one that can be beaten back by a

movement of the trade unions, service users and young people.

And if Corbyn heads a government, his manifesto will be met with opposition from the bosses against any threats to their profits. The sabotage will begin on day one through the media, the courts and their representatives in the Labour Party itself - the Blairites.

The capitalists have already been discussing how to break a Corbyn-led government by taking their capital out of the country and refusing to invest.

SSE, one of the big six energy companies has moved itself to a Swiss holding company.

We will need our own determined movement to fight against the bosses, relying especially on our power as workers through the trade unions.

What's needed is to use the wealth and resources that are there in society. We need to take the levers of power away from those at the top and run society on a democratic basis. By taking the top 150 companies and the banks into democratic

public ownership - under the control of

the working class - to prevent the capitalists' sabotage, and run society on a planned basis - a socialist society.

If you want to be a part of the fight, to improve the lives of workers and young people across the world through the socialist transformation of society, and to fight for what's needed to win it - united working class action then you should join the Socialist Party today.