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NHS SOS: editorial of the Socialist, issue 1001

After the 30 June NHS demo - prepare for a mass movement

Let's defend our NHS: organise to stop privatisation and cuts

- Renationalise our NHS! Scrap PFI and all privatisation schemes, with compensation paid only for proven need.
- No cuts, closures or job losses in the NHS. Decent pay for all NHS staff. No attacks on NHS workers' pensions or conditions.
- Get the Tories Out! For Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union leaders to call for and lead mass action - both demonstrations and coordinated national strikes - that can force the Tories to call a general election.
- Get the Blairites out! We've had enough of pro-privatisation, pro-austerity politicians.
- Reverse council cuts to social care to relieve the beds crisis.
- Nationalise the profiteering drugs companies.
- For a comprehensive, high quality NHS, under democratic control, with care free at the point of use - for a socialist NHS.
- National march for the NHS - 70th anniversary: Saturday 30 June, assemble 12pm at Portland Place, London, W1A 1AA

The Health Campaigns Together and People's Assembly demonstration on 30 June is an important event for all who are fighting to save the NHS. As we go to press it is unclear how many will attend, but previous protests and what we hear when talking to working class people in workplaces and communities show the appetite there is for a movement in defence of the health service.

The Socialist Party has been building for the demonstration and will fully participate in it. We will be talking to people about what needs to happen next. Because while demonstrations are important as a show of strength and to give confidence to all involved, they won't win alone. 30 June should be a launch pad for mass action involving communities, young people and with workers - particularly health workers - and their unions at the fore.

The demo has been called partly to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the NHS on 5 July 1948. Next week's edition of the Socialist will carry a feature on how working class people fought for and won a national health service free for all at the point of use. The milestone has been marked in many media outlets by nostalgic pieces trying to capture the mood in Britain during the post-war period.

We should of course remember [the struggles that won the welfare state](#), and the workers who have maintained it for generations. But the most important feature of this demonstration is about the struggle today. All of the former NHS workers being interviewed by the establishment press are very clear that, as 89-year-old retired nurse Laurel Robertson put it speaking to the Guardian: "The NHS is in a bad state. Last November, I was admitted as a patient at King's College hospital for two weeks. There were no beds for me at the start so I spent two days on a trolley in casualty." 80% of staff say they have raised concerns about staffing levels having an impact on patient safety and care.

Bed shortage

The shortage of beds in particular was made stark this winter when there were numerous accounts of [patients waiting in corridors or even in ambulances](#) for long periods when they arrived at A&E. The British Medical Journal alleged that 10,000 extra people may have died in the first few weeks of 2018, in part because of the crisis.

Theresa May, feeling the anger about this and the state of the service in general, [claims £20 billion extra will be made available to the NHS](#) over five years. On one hand, this is a substantial move that the Tories didn't want to make. It shows that May is aware of how weak her position is, and that the government cannot afford a mass movement to break out. On the other, the money is simply not enough to reverse the damage that has been done to the NHS through huge cuts and privatisation. It will as best "help stem further decline", as the Health Foundation think-tank put it.

That's not to mention the question of whether the cash actually materialises. May suggests it will be funded in part by the so-called 'Brexit dividend' - even though she was a Remain campaigner who ridiculed the idea that there would be any such thing. The rest, she says, will need to come from raising taxes. She doesn't mean taxes on the super-rich and big business, but on hard-pressed workers suffering years of stagnated pay and rising prices.

Nothing will be gifted to us by the Tories - we need to fight. And working class people have shown themselves willing to fight time and again - with many successes. [Glenfield children's heart unit](#) in Leicester, [Chatsworth rehabilitation ward](#) in Mansfield and the [Huddersfield Royal Infirmary](#) are three recent examples where Socialist Party members have played a leading role in campaigns that have won major victories. Those campaigns share many things. They refused to accept that cuts and closures were necessary. They explored every avenue. And they mobilised the community and the workers involved.

If we take the same approach we can have these successes on a national scale too. Fundamental to this is the trade unions taking a lead. The 30 June demo has backing from the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and at least eleven national unions. But unfortunately, [as with the TUC demonstration on 12 May](#), many union leaders have not taken a serious approach to building for it. The event is not even advertised on the TUC website! This means that even if it is a good and big demonstration, it will not reach the potential of what would have been possible had the unions used their full resources to publicise and mobilise.

But this can be turned around in the aftermath of the demo. Unfortunately, following the leaderships' failure to campaign and give members confidence that anything more could be won, [13 of the 14 health unions voted to accept the government's poor pay offer](#). The GMB will be conducting a strike ballot for an improved offer, which the Socialist Party fully supports.

Pay battle

The [rejection from GMB members](#), along with local votes for action - such as the [Mid Yorkshire NHS Trust strike against privatisation](#) - show that when a lead is given, there is a mood for action. This must be heeded in future battles. All health unions should prepare now to launch and properly build serious campaigns, including strike action, against all attempts to further cut or privatise the service or to attack workers' terms and conditions. They should reach out to the community and organise public meetings on the state of the NHS and call local demonstrations. If serious campaigns like this could be launched over the next few months, another properly-built-for national demonstration in the autumn could be huge.

[As we pointed out in last week's issue](#), the cash boost from May is an attempt to prepare for a general election. She recognises that the chaos of Brexit and the ever-deepening divisions in the Tories mean she may be forced to call one at any time. [Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto pledges](#) on the NHS in last year's general election were a major factor in the surge to support him. But he needs to seize the moment to be preparing much more than May is.

That means a serious campaign to mobilise all those who backed him - inside and outside Labour - to join this demonstration and other campaign events in defence of the NHS. Those who flocked to mass rallies during his leadership and general election campaigns would respond to calls for action on anti-austerity issues if he gives a lead. This means having a clear policy to fully renationalise the NHS - kicking out all the privatisers with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.

But it also means [preparing Labour by clearing out the Blairites](#) - who implemented major privatisation of the NHS when in power - and democratising the party. This is necessary to remove the obstacles inside Corbyn's own party that would attempt to prevent him implementing his radical anti-austerity programme, including on the NHS, should he be elected.

- Join the demonstration - 12pm, 30 June, Portland Place, central London
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Fight to save the Wales NHS

Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales

Hundreds will be rallying in Tredegar in south Wales on 1 July to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the NHS. The march assembles at the house of Aneurin Bevan, founder of the NHS, who based the principles of the NHS on the Tredegar Workmen's Medical Aid Society.

He used his experience in providing cheap healthcare in Tredegar as a model for a national health service. He said: "All I am doing is extending to the entire population of Britain the benefits we had in Tredegar for a generation or more. We are going to 'Tredegar-ise' you."

Bevan attempted to apply socialist policies to solving the health crisis in Britain after World War Two. The concessions he made to private vested interests - the continuation of private health for the wealthy, GP and other services being provided by private business and the unaccountable nature of the health authorities - have haunted the NHS ever since.

Bevan had to overcome the opposition of the Tories and leaders of the medical professions who fought tooth and nail against the NHS being formed at all. And the Tories have been attempting to unravel the gains of the NHS ever since.

But Bevan also faced opposition from within his own party - the Labour right wing who echoed Tory arguments that the NHS was "unaffordable". In 1951 Bevan resigned from the cabinet when the right-wing Labour chancellor Hugh Gaitskell imposed prescription and dental charges. Later in the 2000s Gaitskell's heirs, Blair and Brown, drove through even more privatisation of the NHS than the Tories had.

And [the principles underpinning the NHS are currently under threat in Wales](#) from Welsh Labour. While the demands on the health service have grown, spending in real terms has been cut and access to its provisions has been reduced. Welsh Labour has taken an axe to many services, including A&Es.

The Welsh government intends just five A&E departments for the whole of south Wales. Communities in the south Wales Valleys are still campaigning for NHS services to be returned, [while the Welsh health minister considers more cuts](#).

Cuts

The cuts to the NHS are framed around the idea that there are certain objective forces that are inevitable and the health service must be reorganised to take account of these - an ageing population, an increased demand for health services, a scarcity of doctors and nurses and "scarce resources" (spending cuts).

An ageing population means that spending on the NHS in Wales should be increased not held back. Scarce resources are not inevitable - they are human-made by Tory and Labour governments. The Tory cuts must be fought.

Instead of pretending that the cuts to NHS services are the best way forward, the Welsh government should lead a campaign to force this weak Tory government to come up with the cash. The fact that the Tories have grudgingly been compelled to promise more money for the NHS in the future, shows that they are under pressure.

The Welsh Labour leaders have not even protested against the Tory cuts to Welsh health spending. They have passively accepted them, seemingly accepting the Tory argument that there is no alternative to the cuts. But of course, as Jeremy Corbyn has pointed out, these cuts are not inevitable - they are a political decision. So too is the decision to cave in to spending cuts and implement an entirely reconfigured health service to match Tory spending priorities.

Where would the money come from? Well if the £20 billion a year cut from corporation tax by the Tories were returned then immediately the Welsh closure programme could be reversed. If we [nationalised the pharmaceutical companies](#) and the rest of the private sector that rip off the health service we would save billions.

Socialist Party Wales demands:

- No more cuts to hospital services in Wales - keep A&E and children's wards at Royal Glamorgan hospital
- Restore local A&Es to Ystrad Fawr, Aneurin Bevan, Llwnypia, Mountain Ash, Neath Port Talbot and Prince Phillip hospitals
- End the staff shortages - for the recruitment of hundreds of new health professionals with free education plus a grant for all medical and nursing students
- For the Welsh government to refuse to implement Tory spending cuts - campaign for a return of the billions cut from spending on public services

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- Rally to renew the NHS in Wales on Thursday 5 July at Aneurin Bevan Statue, Queen Street, Cardiff at 6pm
 - Socialist Party public meeting on Thursday 5 July at Rummer Tavern, Duke Street, Cardiff at 7pm
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Gosport opioid deaths scandal: we need democratic control of our NHS

An NHS worker, Southampton Socialist Party

As a student radiographer I spent a placement at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. And so I was saddened to see newspaper headlines that suggested - wrongly - that another Harold Shipman-type case had happened there.

The headlines were in response to an independent review into deaths at the hospital from the late 1980s to 2001. For 20 years, families campaigned to get to the truth of what happened to their loved ones.

During that time 12 separate investigations took place with much of their findings kept from the families. Their concerns were often ignored, dismissed and even ridiculed.

The review found at least 456 patients died as a result of being over-prescribed opioids like diamorphine. Some were only at the hospital for rehab while they recovered from infections or broken bones and were expected to return home in a matter of days or weeks.

Much of the newspaper coverage has been around the conduct of the doctor in charge at the time. But the review makes clear that consultants knew of the practice and that nurses had raised their concerns and were silenced.

We have a right to expect that when we get old, we will be cared for safely, with dignity and in our best interests. But who will guarantee this?

We have policies in place to encourage staff to be open and honest when things go wrong and to support whistle-blowers who become aware of poor or dangerous practice.

Resources

But it's often the chronic lack of resources and staff which create these issues. We who work in the NHS are often caught between a rock and a hard place, trying to provide the best care.

The families have the right to demand criminal prosecutions. But we should also demand greater accountability, particularly when the establishment media will use this scandal to attack the idea of a public health service.

Hospitals should be publicly owned and [run democratically by our local communities, the people that use the services, and health workers](#) themselves. Not as token representatives on boards stuffed with the same old bosses, but with full control of every aspect of care, of fully funded resources, and to allow transparent investigations when things do go wrong.

Walk out on 13 July against 'Kid Cager' Trump

Charlie Wells, Swansea Socialist Party and Socialist Students

Trump can be beaten. He was forced to order an end to cruel separations of migrant families. But we have to continue fighting - he says that they can be detained together instead!

The brutality of Trump's "zero-tolerance" child separation policy received widespread condemnation, including from many who have not previously been involved in the anti-Trump movement who have felt that separating children from their parents is a step too far.

For many, [the actions of the Trump White House represent a new low in recent US immigration policy](#). This opposition reached a fever pitch with many Americans reacting angrily towards Melania Trump's choice to wear a coat bearing the words "I really don't care. Do u?" on a recent visit to the Mexican/US border which is at the heart of the child separation controversy.

Across the US, activists have been actively seeking out members of the Trump administration and voicing their disdain for their heartless actions towards children and families.

Recently Kirstjen Nielsen, the Trump-nominated secretary for the department of homeland security, was forced to exit a Mexican restaurant in Washington in humiliation due to cries of "shame".

Despite the unpopularity of this policy, in a series of tweets Trump swept the notion of "due process" under the carpet.

In his tirade Trump made the announcement that: "When somebody comes in, we must immediately, with no judges or court cases, bring them back from where they came."

The uncaring nature of this policy and Trump's recent rhetoric displays the systematic hate which is central to the current administration and its politics.

However, we have to remember that the harsh policies which are currently being enacted against migrants by the Trump administration are a continuation of the anti-immigration attitude of the Obama administration.

The way in which immigrants are treated by Trump's government did not come from nowhere - Obama (who is still referred to as the "deporter-in-chief" by some) deported more immigrants than any other president - 2 million over eight years.

Within this context it is important to not just fight against Trump and his disgusting policies but to also fight against capitalism and its racist institutions.

On 13 July Donald Trump will arrive in the UK for a whistle-stop three-day tour. Across the country members of Socialist Students and Young Socialists will be mobilising and organising within our communities, schools and colleges to fight back against [the racism and anti-migrant policies which the Trump administration encapsulates](#).

- [See Socialist Students' Facebook event, search "walk-out against Trump"](#)

Tottenham block evacuations a test for 'Corbynista council'

For a tenants' ballot and mass building of council homes

North London Socialist Party

200 families have been ordered to leave their homes on estates in Tottenham, north London, by October. This has come as a complete shock to residents.

The vast majority are council tenants. The borough council, Haringey, has told them they will be rehoused temporarily, but with no mention of where or for how long. Furthermore the council has told them it will offer one option only - and if they refuse to move, the heating and hot water will be shut down.

This is nothing short of scandalous. Tenants' leader Jacob Secker described the actions of Haringey council as "treating residents of these two blocks in a callous and incompetent manner," as if they were "second-class citizens."

Safety issues only emerged in tests carried out post-Grenfell. They showed that design faults could lead to collapse in the event of a fire or a gas explosion.

A further 554 similar blocks nationally could be at risk as they share the same design. That figure could rise by a further 1,000 according to researcher Hannah Brack.

Haringey Council claims not to have known. But this is contradicted by two independent experts who examined the blocks as far back as 1985, an architect and a fire safety consultant.

Catastrophic

The consultant is quoted in the Guardian stating that "the structural flaws were there from the day it was built, but the gas made it more likely that if there was a fault with an appliance there would be a catastrophic collapse."

[This has all the hallmarks of Grenfell](#): working class lives put at risk to minimise costs. Tenants have known of problems for years, and so has the council. But it did nothing.

Successive councils starved estates of investment, refusing to mount campaigns to demand the money needed to build and upgrade sufficient council housing.

Instead they ran estates down, then claimed they needed demolishing - and that the only viable option was replacing them with expensive new private developments, with only a few homes affordable for former residents. In other words: social cleansing.

This issue will be a huge political test for Haringey Council. At the May elections, a right-wing Labour administration was [replaced with the first 'Corbynista council'](#) - as a result of a [rebellion in the local Labour Party](#), specifically over the question of housing.

In this context, it is entirely understandable that residents are suspicious of any attempt to move them out of the area. There is the risk they may not be able to return.

One option would be to make the current buildings safe. It appears the council is unwilling to cough up the £28 million this might cost.

Local residents have called for an independent report into whether the buildings could be made safe or not. The council should pay for this, and not make any decision prior to it.

Demands

If tenants do agree to temporary rehousing, the council should support their demands and ensure they all have the right to return with secure tenancies, whether the existing buildings are made safe or new homes built in their place. They must remain as council housing.

The residents' association has called for a tenants' ballot on the question of whether the blocks should be pulled down and rebuilt. It is essential that the council agrees to act on the outcome of the ballot.

It is equally essential that the council urgently commences a mass council house building project. This can not only satisfy the demands of any tenants who have to be temporarily decanted, but also the thousands of homeless families in Haringey, as well as those that live in unsafe and shoddy private accommodation.

This was a central demand raised by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the local elections. Now it is more urgent than ever that we fight to implement it.

Michael Crick attacks Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party

The bosses are 'dishonest' - not Militant and its supporters

Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary

Michael Crick, journalist for Channel 4 news and author of a book on Militant (now the Socialist Party), [has attacked what he says are](#) "two Labour figures in charge of Labour Party discipline," Gordon Nardell and Jennie Formby.

He castigates them for having been "part of a secretive and dishonest Trotskyist organisation," Militant, in the past.

These two individuals can answer for themselves over any past political association with us. Militant was a powerful influence throughout the Labour Party in the 1980s, and attracted tens of thousands to our political banner.

We successfully provided the strategy and tactics for the defeat of Thatcher in the epic [Liverpool Council struggle](#), and her further [defeat over the poll tax](#).

But it is completely false and outrageous for Crick to suggest that we were "dishonest and secretive." [We openly declared our programme and never denied that we were organised](#).

Our real 'crime', in the eyes of the right wing of the Labour Party, was that we were better organised than them. They could not defeat us politically, so resorted to the most underhand, undemocratic methods to purge us from the Labour Party.

Witch-hunt

One of those anti-Militant hatchet men was Tom Sawyer, a renegade 'left', who famously declared in the middle of a witch-hunt: "I defy anyone to tell me how you can go to Liverpool and defeat Militant by argument."

Moreover, Michael Crick remains completely silent over his own role in the undemocratic, underhand methods of the right in trying to politically defeat Militant. For instance, he admitted at a debate with me at Socialism 2016 that he had sent a spy into our Swansea organisation to gather information on us to be used in the witch-hunt.

Now he is acting as a finger-man for the Blairite right to once more undermine the left and thereby Jeremy Corbyn by drawing attention to past political associations and giving them a sinister connotation.

However, he does not behave in an even-handed manner towards the right. For instance, John Mann, right-wing Labour MP and bitter opponent of Militant, admitted on BBC Question Time that he had met former North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung, the present North Korean leader's father.

The Evening Standard commented that the "normally unruffled David Dimbleby was... taken aback by the news." Mann's answer to Dimbleby's question, "how did you meet him," was: "Erm, it was at a conference... You know. No one was talking to me, and no one was talking to him... So I went and had a word with him."

Why no media denunciation of Mann, for his past support for a dictatorial Stalinist leader? On the contrary, the Evening Standard, which reported the story, just comments: "Perhaps the meeting dates back to Mann's time as leader of the National Organisation of Labour Students" attacking "Labour's Militant tendency during the 1980s."

And this was "certainly the time when left-wing activists could find themselves being invited on jollies east of the Iron Curtain." So Mann was associated with Stalinist bureaucrats! But this does not call forth denunciations of him by the press and media cabal.

Michael Crick is two-faced. He can admit on BBC Radio 4 that Militant was "brilliantly organised, brilliant orators. They plan things, know what they're doing and they keep at it.

"They're committed, they put the hours in, they go to meetings night after night after night and they commit huge amounts of their own personal income and their lives."

He is telling the truth here, which completely contradicts his failed attempt to discredit our ideas and methods. "Dishonest" applies to the bosses - not to Militant, or the Socialist Party today.

Them & us

£11bn for the super-rich, austerity for us

Britain's super-rich have made off with £11 billion that could have gone on public services thanks to Tory tax cuts.

George Osborne reduced the highest rate of income tax from 50% to 45% in 2012, backed by the Lib Dems.

Since then, up to 19,000 top 'earners' have trousered over £1 million extra a year, says the Mirror.

And the total bounty for big business from post-2010 corporation tax cuts will hit £110 billion, according to Labour.

In December, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that one-fifth of Britain now lives in poverty.

NHS underperforming on common causes of death

The NHS underperforms on eight of the 12 most common causes of death compared to other advanced capitalist countries.

Patients in Britain still have far better access and report fewer financial barriers to treatment. But outcomes are below average for four cancers, two groups of respiratory illnesses, heart attack and stroke, according to the multi-thinktank report '[The NHS at 70](#)'.

Meanwhile, Sir Richard Branson, founder and owner of health privateer Virgin Care, is worth \$5.1 billion according to Forbes. He owns a 74-acre private island in the Caribbean.

Despite decades of attacks, the NHS actually appears to be improving in some of these areas. A testament to the dedication of health workers - and a warning to [reverse ruinous cuts and sell-offs now](#).

£2.3m for consultants, rail chaos for us

Having squeezed the railways into a state of bedlam, the private sector has now charged the government millions... for explaining how to run a railway.

The Department for Transport forked out £2.3 million to private consultants for advice on operating the East Coast Main Line, according to documents seen by the Mirror.

Years of failures by privateers have [forced the Tories into temporary renationalisation](#).

Here's an idea: ask the workers how to do it!

When asked to account for ongoing anarchy on Britain's trains, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling told BBC Radio 4: "I don't run the railways"! Well, you do Chris - along with parasitic big businesses - but you shouldn't.

Nationalise public transport now - under the democratic control and management of workers and passengers.

The gathering new world disorder

Robert Bechert, CWI International Secretariat

Trump's claims of success after his recent Singapore meeting with Kim Jong-un were in complete contrast to the downbeat mood among most of the other world leaders who had been with him at the preceding G7 summit in Canada.

This collection of capitalist leaders really had nothing to say on the key issues facing the world. The G7's decline was sharply symbolised by Trump withdrawing US agreement with its final communique.

This largely token example of Trump's "America first" policy was followed up by something more significant, the imposition of extra tariffs on a range of Chinese exports to the US.

These steps, along with the earlier imposition of extra duties on steel and aluminium imports to the US, have increased fears among Trump's opponents and some key sections of US business that these penalty tariffs could trigger a trade war, or at least a slowing down of the world economy.

Taken together these steps, and other developments like the Russian regime reasserting its role in the Middle East and elsewhere, are opening up a new chapter in world relations.

The clashes between individual leaders were not just the result of Trump's bluntness, ego, making up his own fake "facts", and rapid switches of policy. More fundamentally they reflect the changes taking place in world political and economic relations as rivalries and instability increase at a time when the international economy has still not escaped from the consequences of [the capitalist crisis that began in 2007-08](#).

A key fundamental has been [the rise of newly capitalist China as a world power](#) and the relative weakening of US imperialism. This decline is one reason Trump is using tariffs against China.

Historically the leading power in any epoch has stood for free trade, due to its dominance of the world market, as Britain did in the 19th century.

Additionally, the international strategic dominance which the US enjoyed after the collapse of the former Soviet Union is over.

But, despite China's rise and increasing international role, the US remains the world's leading economy and the predominant global military power.

World economy

Added to this volatile international mix is the future character of work as a result of the far-reaching structural changes which are taking place both in national economies and in the world economy [as technology and digitalisation further develop](#).

A key question will be who benefits from these changes - the capitalists and a small elite or the mass of humanity.

Currently many of these developments are being used to boost profits and sharpen competition at the expense of workers.

Against this background the world economy has been growing again, albeit at a slower rate than before the 2007-08 crisis.

However much of this growth is based upon the use of debt to try to overcome the continuing after effects of this crisis.

Just in 2017 total world debt rose by over \$20 trillion to \$237 trillion, equivalent to \$30,000 for every human being on the planet, something which has given rise to fears of a new financial crisis at some stage.

Simultaneously the European Union (EU) is faced with its own issues of tensions between its members, the effects of Brexit, preventing a renewed euro currency crisis, dealing with the impact of the migrant inflow and its own relative international decline.

All this has resulted in sharpening contests between the rival powers to maintain, or increase, their share of a slowly growing and more intensively competitive market.

Trump's administration does not mind the instability its actions are creating. They view it as striking their rivals off balance and freeing US imperialism from some of the constraints brought about by working jointly with other powers.

Trump is also always looking to keep his domestic base secure. Most of his tweets are aimed at them, a regular diet of boasts of what he has "done", nationalism and populist attacks on those who oppose him.

Alongside right-wing support, a significant part of Trump's base are those whose living standards were falling already before the recession and felt ignored by what they saw as an elite establishment.

Thus Trump keeps promising to "make America great again", bring back good quality jobs and hypocritically attack those fellow members of the US ruling class who dare to oppose him.

But, in many ways, the situation in the US is not unique. Around the world there is anger and alienation that is undermining existing institutions and structures, including parliaments and political parties.

Growing polarisation

Already in many countries before the 2007-08 crisis, years of neoliberal attacks and setbacks for the workers' movements had resulted in a growing polarisation of wealth and undermining of living standards both for the working class and sections of the middle class.

Along with the fact that many of the banks, which are popularly seen to have triggered the 2007-08 crisis, have returned to making huge profits this will only reinforce this bitterness.

A further source of bitterness is that the recent limited economic growth has not, in many countries, resulted in sustained real rises in workers' or middle class incomes and conditions.

In Britain the Bank of England estimates that the richest 10% of families each benefited on average by £350,000 thanks to its quantitative easing operations between 2009 and 2014, each getting around £1,345 extra income each week, and have certainly gained more since then.

After the crisis's onset, country after country saw protests, whether in terms of industrial battles, mass demonstrations or the birth of new political movements.

However, so far, these developments have not led to decisive change. This is largely due to those leading such movements lacking a programme to, or not being willing to, challenge the capitalist system.

This failure, most strikingly seen in [the betrayal of the Syriza leaders in Greece in 2015](#) when they agreed to implement austerity policies, has often opened the way to the growth of right populists and far-right parties.

However, Trump's victory itself has spurred on opposition within the US. Fearing future electoral defeats he is desperate to hold his base together by presenting himself as an "outsider" and blaming others for all his failures.

Trump's crude tactics, often based on divide and rule both domestically and internationally, can themselves increase turmoil and provoke rapid changes.

Despite its international character, much enhanced by globalisation, capitalism by its very nature is rooted in the nation state, something that produces rivalries, clashes and is the source of repeated conflicts and wars.

But it is not only Trump's policies which are causing disruption. Tensions are escalating again within the European Union. Not since the 1930s have international capitalist divisions been so open.

The polarisation taking place within the US shows how Trump's policies, enrichment of his own family and personal behaviour are all provoking opposition.

At the same time the combination of limited economic growth and huge jumps in many companies' profits in the US is beginning to encourage workers to press their demands.

Significantly total US trade union membership grew by 262,000 last year, and three-quarters of the new members were under 34 years old.

[This year has already seen a wave of teachers' strikes](#), often organised from below by the rank and file, demanding extra spending on education alongside better wages and conditions.

But in the US itself the growing interest in socialism reflects a search for a way forward for society.

Among those looking for an alternative there is an understanding that the victories for the right, first George W Bush and now Trump, were the results of popular disappointment with Bill Clinton's and Obama's presidencies.

This is why building a socialist alternative to the turmoil and disruption of capitalism is so necessary.

There will be struggles over important issues like living standards, oppression, the environment and democratic rights along with protests against the policies of capitalist politicians.

Policies and strategies to win these battles are vitally necessary, as Socialist Alternative (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) argues, but to achieve lasting change they need to be linked to building, or re-building, a socialist movement independent from, and opposed to, capitalism...

- [Read the full article, 'Open splits at G7 jamboree', at socialistworld.net](#)

Turkey's 'strongman' Erdogan tightens grip on state power

Turkey's right-wing president Recep Erdogan has tightened his grip on state power following snap elections carried out under a continuing state of emergency.

New powers conferred on the presidency in [last year's narrowly won referendum](#) will mean a strengthening of his authoritarian rule.

In addition to the electoral process being manipulated and fraudulent, the absence of a credible alternative ensured Erdogan's victory.

His AKP party and its far-right MHP ally also secured a parliamentary majority. However, the left and pro-Kurdish party HDP (People's Democratic Party), despite heavy state repression (its presidential candidate Selahattin Demirtaş, is in jail awaiting trial on trumped-up charges) achieved the 10% voter threshold with 12%.

Electoral victory will not mean plain sailing for Erdogan as Turkey's capitalist economy is already on the rocks.

This will exacerbate the country's social problems and, at some stage, provoke a working class response.

- [See socialistworld.net for analysis and updates](#) from Sosyalist Alternatif, CWI in Turkey

Defending women's services

Women's services, especially for those fleeing domestic violence, are under enormous threat from Tory and Blairite austerity. Socialist Party members have been involved in campaigns to defend services in Doncaster and Derby. From their experiences we have also drawn up a model motion, below, which we appeal to trade unions to discuss and support.

Fighting for domestic violence services in south Yorkshire

Amy Cousens, Women's Lives Matter

It was summer 2017 when South Yorkshire Women's Aid (SYWA) was told that the service, come the end of that year, would [no longer receive financial support from Doncaster Council](#).

Women's Lives Matter (WLM) had [started in 2016 to defend Doncaster Women's Aid](#), which closed due to funding cuts. Led by a staff member Louise Harrison, WLM campaigned for eight months and won the £30,000 grant to set up SYWA, a service won mainly by women in the community, which belonged to the community.

The WLM campaign was not prepared to lose the service again due to funding cuts and so re-launched the campaign with full fervour. The service was told there were no funds due to cuts and that the Labour council's hands were tied. So challenging austerity politics was at the core of the campaign.

Using campaign resources produced by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and the Socialist Party, we showed the amount of money Labour councils across Britain held in reserves. We were clear: Labour councils' hands are not tied, the Labour council can and should use its reserves as an emergency measure to fund needed services and set no-cuts budgets while fighting for government funds.

Mayor Ros Jones was eventually forced to address our demands after a formal question to the council. Despite her [complete unwillingness to look for no-cuts alternatives](#), it raised the sights of campaigners - including Labour Party members.

At the height of the campaign we had secretaries of trades councils from across Britain, Labour Party branches and trade union branches pledging their support to our battle. We raised more than £10,000 from the solidarity of the labour movement nationally.

Even John McDonnell made a public statement in favour of our campaign, criticising the three Labour MPs in Doncaster who had stayed deafeningly silent.

The WLM campaign showed incredible determination. We did bi-weekly campaign stalls on the streets of Doncaster for four months, we staged a protest inside the council chamber and attracted national press coverage. SYWA service users heart-warmingly dedicated a therapeutic session at the service to writing letters to local Labour MPs Rosie Winterton and Ed Miliband.

Our demands on the council were common sense to working class people in Doncaster. Many had personal connections to the service and would often join our stalls and protests - for some it was their first political activity. The campaign emboldened and politicised working class women in the community in particular.

SYWA was saved by a big lotto bid. This would never have happened without the work of staff, volunteers and WLM.

However, unfortunately the campaign was ultimately sold out by some in the labour movement who worked closely with Doncaster council, including some who have been awarded with councillor positions. The same people had tried to tell the campaign to not be vocal against the council.

Eventually, through vindictive tactics, WLM was forced out of SYWA. Louise Harrison, [the staff member who set up the service, did not have her contract renewed](#) - a decision made by SYWA trustees who have been working closely with the council.

After five months of 'back room' conversations with the council, the supposed victory from these tactics is a £200,000 grant from the big lotto. This is not substantial to the service in the long term. Without secure local authority funding, in a few years the service faces the same fate as many other domestic violence services across the country - scraping by from one financial year to the next, or complete closure.

WLM continues to fight for secure and substantial funding for violence against women's services. Women's lives are lost to cuts and only uncompromising and consistent organisation against all who implement them - including right-wing Labour councils - will give domestic violence services the lifeline they need.

Ultimately we need socialist policies like those which Corbyn's general election manifesto gave a glimpse of - mass council housing, a £10 an hour minimum wage now for all, a fully publicly funded NHS - to start to create a society based on the understanding that all women's lives matter and the fight to end inequality and exploitation means we can be truly free from violence.

How Derby Women's Centre was kept open

Derby Socialist Party members

Derby Women's Centre has existed since 1978 and has been supporting women throughout Derbyshire who are at the most vulnerable point in their lives. The main aim of the centre is to reduce the devastating impact of mental health issues and domestic violence, but it offers many other vital services too.

Until early 2017 the centre had survived with funding through charitable grants, donations and fundraising efforts. Last May [the centre's most substantial grant came to an end and it was faced with the threat of closure](#).

The centre has remained open only as a result of the heroics of two women. Both were users of the centre and were determined to save the centre - which they say saved their lives.

Annette and Kelly launched a campaign. Kelly attended a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition post-general election meeting in June 2017 and both subsequently joined the Socialist Party. We discussed what the party could do to help.

We held campaign stalls in the centre of Derby with the slogan 'Save Derby Women's Centre'. This was the first time Annette and Kelly had done anything like this and the response was amazing. They ran the stall with support from others and it attracted an incredible response, mainly from women but also men.

Annette has personally raised over £15,000 during the last year. This has come from events such as 'Samosa sales'. An event including music and speeches organised by the daughter of a Socialist Party member raised over £2,000.

Annette wrote a letter that was emailed to all Trade Union Congress-affiliated unions. Many responded with donations, again raising thousands.

Annette also spoke at many meetings highlighting the campaign, including a National Shop Stewards Network meeting held in Birmingham. The campaign has also had support from Unite locally and Momentum in Derby.

A group of us attended the councillor surgery of Rangit Banwait, Labour leader of Derby City Council. We pointed out that the council had funded the centre until five years ago.

He was asked for a loan to tide the centre over. He refused.

It was then put to him that the council has millions in reserves. He could offer some of this to help fund the centre.

His response was that the reserves were for emergencies. You can imagine our faces when he said that.

The Socialist Party campaigns for council reserves to be used to prevent any further cuts to jobs and services. This could then be the starting point for Labour councils to launch a mass campaign for the funds required to fully fund all the services we need.

This would mean that the women's centre would be fully funded by the local authority and not have to rely on charitable donations which have shown how precarious they can be.

At the moment the centre is providing a limited service compared to what it has done in the past but remains open and is awaiting the result of a bid for lottery funding. The fight goes on!

Model motion on defending women's service for trade union bodies

This union notes that:

1. Domestic violence kills women. On average two women a week are murdered by a male partner or ex-partner in the UK and a further three women a week kill themselves to escape abuse.
2. Services for women and children fleeing domestic violence are being slashed. Since 2010 almost a quarter of the funding for council services has been cut on average - with almost half in some areas. Over a six month period last year 1,000 women and children were turned away from refuges due to lack of funding.
3. Government changes to funding of council domestic violence services through the introduction of Universal Credit will exacerbate this with four out of ten remaining refuges threatened with closure. Theresa May's domestic violence bill does nothing to address the funding crisis.
4. While charity funding for these essential services shows the breadth of support for such services it is not a reliable source for services that cannot be allowed to fail. Councils have billions in reserves which could be used to prevent the closure of vital life-saving services.

5. Austerity, low pay, lack of council homes and the cuts and privatisation of public services make it harder for people fleeing domestic violence to escape and to rebuild their lives.

This union agrees that:

1. Domestic violence is a working class and trade union issue that affects workers and their families.
2. The trade unions have an important role to play in defending and fighting for women's rights and services. Working class women were key to the fight for women's right to vote; striking women workers laid the basis for the Equal Pay Act; the biggest demo in defence of abortion rights was initiated by the TUC.
3. Councils can resist. They can refuse to pass on the Tory cuts. By using their reserves and borrowing powers they can sustain services while they fight for government funding for all services.
4. Services must be democratic and accountable and suit the needs of service users. Bring services in-house so there is democratic oversight in how services are run by the community
5. Jeremy Corbyn has correctly called for the halting of the roll out of Universal Credit. Labour councils could refuse to implement the cut to refuge funding and help make the UC unworkable.

This union therefore further agrees that:

1. Every cut to domestic violence services must be opposed and that trade unions can play a leading role in this.
2. We resolve to appoint a member to look into local services and the cuts they face and to hold a public meeting to discuss a working class and trade union response to the cuts as soon as possible.
3. We resolve to contact other trade union bodies, anti-cuts bodies, women's campaigns and working class fighters to build a campaign in defence of women's services linked to the fight for decent jobs and pay, council homes and public services for all
4. We resolve to seek to work with above bodies and supportive local councillors to hold a people's budget meeting to produce a no-cuts budget which is necessary to prevent the destruction of domestic violence services and the lives they protect.

Some facts and figures

2

On average in the UK two women a week are murdered by a male partner or ex-partner

3

A further 3 women a week kill themselves to escape abuse

1

Domestic violence is Shelter's single most quoted reason for homelessness

24%

Estimated cut in spending by councils on domestic violence services since 2010

1,000

Women and children turned away from refuges in a six month period in 2017

PCS union pay strike ballot - win the vote, win the claim

Marion Lloyd, PCS national executive committee member and PCS Left Unity chair (personal capacity)

The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union pay strike ballot has started. From now until 23 July, when the ballot closes, only one thing matters - winning the vote. The union is balloting 125,000 members and [needs a 'yes' vote on a turnout of over 50%](#).

The early signs are that this can be achieved. Activity in branches and workplaces is at a high level with local reps engaging with members - making the case for the union's claim for 5% (or £1,200 a year) and a 'yes' vote.

Tory anti-union laws are designed to make the winning of statutory ballots more difficult. But [the Communication Workers' Union](#) and [University and College Union disputes](#) show these ballots can be won. PCS strike ballots have also been won, including most recently [the union's members in the conciliation service, Acas](#).

Currently, the government remains entrenched on its 1% pay cap. A massive yes vote for strike action will strengthen the union's position in talks. But it would be wrong to place all our hopes on a yes vote alone doing the trick.

Tactics

As the ballot progresses, [simultaneously with driving out the vote, the activist layer will increasingly question what sort of action will be required](#) to shift the government.

The union is committed to consulting groups and members on this issue. We need to start that dialogue with groups now. A mixture of national action and prolonged/intensive targeted action should be talked about.

We need to identify with groups potential strike action targets. Selective action will have an important role to play in the campaign strategy.

However, the main ingredient needs to be national action, [possibly of an escalating character as seen in the UCU dispute](#).

Socialist Party members in PCS are working for a massive turnout and a huge vote for strike action. We will also be arguing for a strike action strategy than can shift the government and win the pay claim.

- Show solidarity with PCS members who are holding lunchtime rallies on Friday 29 June over their pay claim

Unite union conference - drive out the Tories!

Kevin Parslow, Unite LE/1228 branch secretary (personal capacity)

Two years ago, Unite the Union's policy conference met [as the Owen Smith-led Blairite challenge to Jeremy Corbyn's leadership took place](#).

So outraged was conference at this attack on Labour's first leader for decades to reflect the views of ordinary trade unionists, that it backed Jeremy's leadership and passed a resolution - moved by a Socialist Party member - supporting mandatory reselection of Labour MPs.

However, Labour's right remains a Trojan horse, despite last year's general election when they hoped Labour would be trounced and Jeremy would be forced out.

The tasks facing this conference are how to transform Labour into a fighting, socialist party - alongside building the union's industrial strength which combined can force out this weak Tory administration and elect a Labour government which can implement last year's manifesto.

Resolutions that should be supported include one from the London and Eastern Local Authorities Regional Industrial Sector Committee - which opposes cuts and privatisation, highlights the crisis in social care funding, while calling for a united campaign against austerity with trade unions and local councillors at the forefront.

If Labour councils don't [oppose Tory austerity in practice by setting no-cuts budgets](#), workers can draw the conclusion that nothing has changed in Labour from the Blairite years.

This was the main lesson of [the victorious Birmingham bin workers](#), when our members defeated the shameful attacks by a Labour council.

The Unite housing workers branch draws the lessons from the Grenfell disaster. It calls for a housing workers' and residents' campaign to prevent the austerity that created the conditions which led to Grenfell from recurring.

Bart's Hospital branch, which had a [big campaign on pay among privatised health workers last year](#), urges the Trades Union Congress to take the lead in fighting the destruction of the NHS by opposing privatisation and fighting for a pay rise to end years of real cuts in health workers' living standards.

One of the most important debates will be on Brexit. This is important in the light of the statements by Airbus and other employers to reduce employment in Britain after it leaves the EU. But British capitalism, both inside and outside the EU, has been deindustrialising for decades and Unite needs to lead the fightback against a jobs massacre.

Conference two years ago, in the aftermath of the EU referendum, voted to defend collective agreements and oppose racism. Conference has the chance to vote [for a socialist Brexit](#) through the resolution, or composite, sponsored by Waltham Forest council branch.

- Socialist Party Unite conference meeting 5.15pm (or immediately after conference), Tuesday 3 July 2018. Grand Hotel, Kings Road, Brighton. Speakers include Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary

East Dunbartonshire council workers strike to stop pay and leave cuts

Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland

A four-day council workers' strike (21, 22, 25 and 26 June) took place in East Dunbartonshire involving Unison, Unite and GMB unions. This is in response to an onslaught on workers' terms and conditions by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition council.

It includes the removal of three days' annual leave, increasing the notional working day and reducing the time when unsocial hours payments apply, removal of enhanced overtime and cuts to the redundancy payments framework, opening the way to compulsory redundancies.

48 hours before the strike action the council offered to cut just one day of annual leave and small concessions on other issues. Mass meetings of council workers rejected the offer.

The strike was widespread and solid. Pickets and union stewards told us that this was the biggest strike mobilisation since the pensions dispute in 2011, possibly bigger.

A huge rally took place at the Marina council headquarters in the evening of the 21st, taking up the whole road. Over 2,000 attended, with workers' families supporting.

Tory and Liberal councillors were booed as they entered for a council meeting.

The local labour movement has mobilised in support. Solidarity has poured in, with socialist-led Glasgow City Unison donating to the strike fund.

Consideration will have to be given to escalating the strike action, possibly to a week-long walkout, if the council does not back down on the attacks.

This strike also raises important political questions as the SNP and Labour have publicly supported the strike.

This is while both are making cuts and attacking workers' terms and conditions in other Scottish councils such as neighbouring West Dunbartonshire (SNP) and North Lanarkshire (Labour).

- [See socialistpartyscotland.org.uk](http://socialistpartyscotland.org.uk) for full report and details for solidarity and union donations

Unison union conference: delegates can't be cowed

Socialist Party reporters

At Unison conference in Brighton the leadership claimed that the union is "seen as the world's leading progressive union". However, among delegates there was a clear mood that the branches have to bear the weight of all the attacks on jobs and working conditions but with fewer activists, less facility time and so on, while the union leadership has no answers.

Despite general secretary Dave Prentis claiming "we are a left union, who never backed Blair and always backed Corbyn", and giving public support to [strikes in Wigan](#) and [Birmingham](#), he suffered a personal defeat when he failed to get a major review of the union structures through conference. The conference didn't trust what the leadership was up to and saw it as a money and power grab of the branch funds and union democracy.

Delegates felt strongly that union resources need to be put on the front line where the fight is and not soaked up in the jobs and wages of increasing numbers of unelected full-time officials, who more often than not 'police' the membership.

Despite the vote clearly being lost, the vice-president called it carried and then tried to deny a card vote. The conference erupted and chanted "card vote, card vote" until he relented. Delegates overwhelmingly defeated the motion.

At the end of the conference it was announced the same person had just been elected by the national executive to be next year's president. Spontaneously a chant went up: "card vote, card vote"!

Once again, the conference was sanitised by the standing orders committee which managed to keep off the agenda any controversial issues, hiding behind the infamous "legal jeopardy" defence.

In the local government conference, the lay members' leadership's own motion to see how the union could trigger a national dispute over local government cuts was not allowed on the agenda.

However, the demand for a fightback by members couldn't be quelled and 300 attended the evening [Unison Action](#) fringe meeting, determined to win a new, fighting and democratic leadership. 300 delegates also attended a lunchtime meeting the same day with workers in dispute (see [Mid Yorkshire NHS strike article](#)) and to hear Labour shadow chancellor John McDonnell.

An excellent Socialist Party public meeting had 50 in attendance and seven delegates gave their names to [join the Socialist Party](#). Socialist Party members produced an eight-page conference bulletin, sold a magnificent 250 copies of the Socialist, and raised £1,600 towards the fighting fund.

NHS Mid Yorkshire strike suspended following productive talks with trust

Adrian O'Malley, branch secretary, Unison Mid Yorkshire Health (personal capacity)

The [strike action of Unison estates and facilities staff](#) at Mid Yorkshire hospitals against outsourcing planned for 2 July has been suspended. The trust management has agreed to investigate [keeping the staff in the NHS pension scheme and employment](#). They have also suspended a committee looking at inferior terms and conditions and a potential two-tier workforce.

In a statement to members, Mid Yorkshire Health Unison branch said:

"Our strike action is suspended but the dispute and strike ballot result remains in place until 12 December. We will update you regularly on the talks and if they break down strike action will be reinstated immediately."

NSSN conference, 7 July 2018: fighting back against the Tories and bosses

The Unite union has [recently affiliated to the National Shop Stewards Network](#) (NSSN). Len McCluskey, general secretary of the Unite union, says:

"The NSSN plays an important role in getting the word out and helping to build support and solidarity when a hostile Tory media is attacking us for defending our members.

"I spoke at the [NSSN rally at the TUC last September](#) alongside our [striking bin workers from Birmingham](#). I look forward to our union developing a relationship with the network for the benefit of our members."

2018 National Shop Stewards Network annual conference will be from 11am-4.30pm on Saturday 7 July in Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. There is a £6 attendance fee and it is open to all trade union and anti-cuts campaigners

NSSN conference agenda

10am: registration

11am: opening session - Organise our fightback

Chair: Linda Taaffe, NSSN national secretary

Speakers: Rob Williams, NSSN national chair; Howard Beckett, Unite assistant general secretary; Amy Murphy, Usdaw president; Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary; Sean Hoyle, RMT president; Ian

Hodson, BFAWU president; Joe Simpson, POA deputy general secretary; Terry Pullinger, CWU deputy general secretary, postal

Discussion including speakers from local and national disputes

1pm: lunch

1.45 to 3.15pm: workshops - Fighting school cuts; Windrush and fighting racism; Organising in retail, fast food, leisure and hospitality; Save out NHS; Resisting Trump; Striking against the pay cap

3.15pm to 4.30pm: closing session - How can unions lead resistance?

Chair: Katrine Williams, NSSN national vice-chair

Speakers: Hugo Pierre, Unison NEC (personal capacity) on Windrush; Lawanya Ramajeyam, Refugee Rights Campaign; Richard Shattock, BFAWU McDonald's striker; Resist Trump speaker

Discussion from the floor

4.30pm: conference ends

- [Get the latest news at shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

Homes and Communities Agency workers vote to strike over pay cuts and inequality

Unite union members at the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) have overwhelmingly voted for strike action in protest at years of real-terms pay cuts and pay inequality.

The organisation is home to the regulator of social housing and Homes England brands, and Unite is the largest of three recognised trade unions.

This will be the third time that Unite has taken strike action over pay at the HCA. Staff were given a real-terms pay cut in 2017 without any pay negotiations. It follows a decade of pay caps.

Thousands snap up issue 1000 of the Socialist

From Newcastle to Southampton and Swansea to London, Socialist Party members have been out in force giving as many people as possible the chance to join in the celebration of [the 1000th issue of the Socialist](#) by buying a copy. Extra sales have been planned across England and Wales, in town and city centres, train and tube stations, workplaces and estates.

We've even reached John McDonnell who bought two copies from our sellers in Hayes, west London. Some of the standout sales include 113 from two stalls in Waltham Forest, east London, over 100 sold in Sheffield, 95 in Swansea and 80 at the ['Engage for Change' festival in Hull](#).

But every event organised for the sale of the Socialist is vital. One of our members in east London sold six to his fellow bus workers and two members in the Coventry West branch sold four after the football on 24 June.

Chris Newby, the Socialist sales organiser

Mears housing workers

In recognition of our paper's [support for their 87-day strike](#) Mears housing workers in Manchester saw issue 1000 as an opportunity to take out a subscription to the Socialist, and paid for three months in advance through a workplace collection.

Paul Gerrard

Brighton

Members of Brighton Socialist Party made a special effort to help sell copies of the Socialist at our campaign stall on 23 June. Our petition against cuts to local GP services drew a great deal of support. Our target of 30 extra sales of the 1000th issue of the Socialist was smashed as we sold out of the 60 we brought. The stall also marked the debut of our new card reader, which helped us raise more than £20 we may otherwise not have, helping us get over £60 in fighting fund donations.

Connor Rosoman

Swansea

Swansea and West Wales Socialist Party hit the road with a train station sale before our meeting on 21 June. We sold five copies of the Socialist.

The Friday city centre lunch sale on 22 June was a chance to test out [our front page on 'Save our NHS'](#). Raising the 70th anniversary of the NHS and 'not trusting the Tories' saw us sell an excellent 30 papers, with nine more sold at the station later.

Our Saturday stalls in Swansea and Llanelli achieved a further 25 and 26 respectively bringing our total so far to 95 with a target of 100 for the week and more sales planned.

Alec Thraves

East London

Waltham Forest Socialist Party members campaigning to celebrate and defend the NHS on its 70th anniversary and the Socialist paper on its 1000th issue sold 113 copies on 23 June, an indication of the support for both. And the same day at a lunchtime campaign stall in Romford fighting NHS cuts, 37 people bought copies of Issue 1000 of the Socialist and four people gave their details as interested in joining the Socialist Party.

Cardiff and the Valleys

The 1000th edition of the Socialist has been flying off the stalls and our hands in Cardiff and the Valleys. We sold more than 100 papers in three stalls with 41 papers sold at Blackwood on 22 June, 36 sold on a stall in Canton, Cardiff and 25 sold in a lunchtime stall at Cardiff town centre on Monday.

João Félix

West and north Yorkshire

The Socialist has reached tens of extra readers across west and north Yorkshire as branches have run extra stalls campaigning against NHS wholly-owned subsidiaries proposed to be set up in Wakefield, York, Leeds

and Bradford, while Huddersfield branch has launched a campaign against plans to close the town's two post offices.

We decided to do flash stalls and set up for an hour each time and really push the issue and the paper.

In Huddersfield we're already pushing 50 sales for the week, which has enabled us to reach our quarterly target for papers, and with two more stalls planned, two train station sales, and hopefully a leafleting session outside the local job centre to promote a yes vote in the national PCS ballot.

Branches have been selling the Socialist on other activities too, from leafleting PCS offices in support of their pay ballot to reinstated sales at train stations to commuting workers.

We're getting an eager response from new buyers - one said: "The Socialist? I've been looking for something like that!"

Iain Dalton and Matt Hirst

Fighting for rights for Windrush generation and other migrants

Isai Priya, Socialist Party Black and Asian group

22 June marked the 70th anniversary of the arrival of Caribbean migrants on the Empire Windrush ship to the UK.

These migrant workers contributed enormously to our public services such as the NHS and public transport.

Their contribution to society must be remembered as well as acknowledging the difficulties they had to overcome during those difficult years.

70 years on, and [the Windrush generation is continuing to face discrimination by both the 'hostile environment'](#) first pushed through by Theresa May as home secretary and the anti-migrant racist propaganda of successive governments.

The Windrush scandal exposed the brutal racist immigration system that, to this day, sees innocent victims suffering and lives ruined.

The government announced this month that an annual Windrush Day would take place on 22 June. The Socialist Party recognises that anniversaries are important to remember these workers and victims - but it's simply not enough for those still affected.

The London Socialist Party Black and Asian group organised a discussion on 23 June on the Windrush scandal and refugees rights.

There are still many more people affected, including real tragedies of deportation and denied access to return to their homes in the UK.

Hugo Pierre, a member of the Unison national executive committee (in a personal capacity), drafted an emergency trade union motion.

This demands that the UK government operate a 'fast track' stand-alone system to enable any of the Windrush generation to gain immediate citizenship rights free of charge, without citizenship test requirements, whether they are in the country or abroad, as soon as possible.

The working class in Britain has a proud history of fighting against all forms of racism and there is an urgent need again for trade unions to lead the fight on these issues.

We appeal for all those that want to get involved to take part in the session ['Windrush Scandal and Fighting Racism' at the National Shop Stewards Network conference](#) on 7 July.

Fight to save Devon hospital services

Alex Moore, Torbay and South Devon Socialist Party

Dartmouth Hospital was closed with 16 beds last year on a promise to provide some beds at Riverview Care Home. But it turns out Riverview is owned by a hotel group and they only built it so they could later apply for a 'change of use' and turn it into a hotel!

The [deal with the local NHS clinical commission group \(CCG\) - if there ever really was one - collapsed](#) and now there is no provision in the town. Over 500 turned up at a meeting called by the CCG to demand the hospital be reopened.

To add insult to injury the sale value of the hospital in this prime site is only £2 million. This is a riverside plot on the embankment with potential to cram in many properties and a few hundred yards along the embankment family homes go for more than a million each. People are furious and rightly so.

On 11 June 250 turned up to endorse setting up a 'health action' group. I gave my greetings from Save Our Hospital Services and was well received but unfortunately the meeting was dominated by speakers who wanted to "keep politics out of it" and think the way to win is not to ask for too much in the first place.

But then the meeting came alive when someone said: "Where I come from people stand up and fight. It was our hospital and we want it back - we want it back and made even better!" That is telling it as it is I thought, so at the end of the meeting I asked her and her friends to join me in the pub for a chat.

Lynn told me more about the background to the closure and her feelings about the meeting: "They shouldn't take the crumbs, they should take the cake, after all we made it and no one is entitled to take it away.

"This was all planned and now the plan is being implemented. The full responsibility falls on the Tory party who want to asset strip the NHS."

Now Lynn and her friends are coming along to our next Socialist Party public meeting.

Support growing against incinerator in Washington

Elaine Brunskill, Northern Socialist Party secretary

A recent House of Commons report, ['Improving Air Quality'](#), points out that: "Air pollution cuts short an estimated 40,000 lives across the country each year.

"Children, the elderly, and those with existing medical conditions are at greatest risk."

Yet in Washington, Tyne and Wear, the energy company Rolton Kilbride wants to build a gasification plant, which local campaigners point out is a "posh term for incinerator".

If their plans get the go-ahead from Sunderland's Labour-controlled council, the plant will be within 1,200 metres of three primary schools.

The nearest homes are within 300 metres. There's also a risk to wildlife at the nearby Washington Wildfowl Park.

Campaigners from the surrounding villages of Sulgrave, Barmston and Concord are worried about the health risks posed if this project goes ahead.

Alongside health risks, the campaign has cited the increase in traffic on already congested roads, and the noise and odours from the plant. Already 9,000 have signed a petition opposing the plans.

One resident from Barmston said: "I can't understand how a Labour council can even consider allowing a company to build this type of plant only hundreds of metres from people's homes!"

Another, from Concord, angrily retorted: "If the council aren't backing us - it means they've declared war on the people of Washington".

The campaigners have set up a Facebook page "[WAGG - Washington & Wearside Against Gasification \(Incinerator\) Group](#)".

Hull unions organise 'Engage for Change' festival

Mike Whale, Hull Socialist Party and Hull Trade Union Council

Hundreds of local trade unionists and young people attended the second Hull Trade Union Council-organised music festival 'Engage for Change' on 23 June.

As well as bands on the main stage, there was an acoustic and debating tent, a bar and a fantastic young children and family area.

Alongside local speakers, Theo Sharieff from Waltham Forest Socialist Party in east London spoke about the plight of homeless young people in the capital.

Jessy Ní Cheallaigh, a young activist in the recent [Irish abortion rights referendum campaign](#) got a great response, as did a speaker from the Kurdish Solidarity Campaign.

The festival ended with a rousing performance of Clash songs by 'The Crash' tribute band. Onlookers could barely believe their eyes when Joe Gibbins, Trade Union Council secretary and long-standing Clash fan, joined the band on stage.

Matt Whale finished the festival by calling on all of those present to join the anti-Trump protest in Hull on 13 July.

The Engage for Change youth committee of the Hull Trade Union Council has raised thousands of pounds from the trade union movement to fund the festival and has shown that [they can organise a major event encouraging young people to get active](#) in the labour and trade union movement.

The Socialist Party stall, complete with new gazebo, was very busy. We sold more than 80 copies of the Socialist and several young people signed up to [join the Socialist Party](#).

Huddersfield set to lose two town centre post offices

Matt Hirst, Huddersfield Socialist Party

Huddersfield residents were shocked when news was leaked that the 103-year-old building on Northumberland Street that housed one of two town centre Post Offices is earmarked to be sold off.

The post office will be merged with the other post office building, already up for sale, and the new one will to be located on a new site, run by a private franchise.

Readers of the Socialist in Wakefield and Halifax will immediately be thinking of WHSmith. Recently, both Wakefield and Halifax, in close proximity to Huddersfield, lost their post office buildings, and have to go to small booths inside WHSmith to get their postal service.

But with large [high street retailers failing left, right and centre](#), no retailer is guaranteed to stay afloat, never mind remain open. So if WHSmith goes the way of [Woolworths](#), [Toys R Us](#) and [Maplin](#) to name a few, what will happen to the post office located within?

The post office is not part of Royal Mail. It is still owned and run by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Through our stalls and leafleting we will campaign to keep our post offices open!

Prison: life inside a living hell

A former prisoner

I was in a Category B prison for just over two months. I had never been in trouble with the law before. What I saw left an indelible impression on me.

I spent my first week on an induction wing. The cell itself was very small with a bunk bed, sink and toilet. No chair, no TV - no toilet curtain.

The window panel behind the bars was broken so at night time it got very cold. We had to eat all our meals in the cell on our bunk beds.

When we used the toilet we had to take turns turning our backs. We were locked up 22.5 hours a day.

When we were eventually moved, we found that our cell had no toilet curtain once again, and the water from the tap was boiling hot and so dangerous. We complained but nothing was done.

I saw people who should not be in a prison. There were people who had mental health problems who would have been better treated in hospital. I saw evidence of people self-harming. I saw people with learning difficulties.

There were many homeless people. I spoke to a man about 68 years old who was homeless. He told me he had broken into a social club to keep warm. He was glad he was in prison because he had free meals and accommodation.

The prison did try to release him but he refused to go because they had found him no accommodation. They did offer him a tent at first, but eventually found him hostel-type accommodation.

I kept myself busy reading books and working in the education department. I read a letter in the prison newspaper that claimed that out of the national prison population of 85,000, about 17,000 should not be inside. I am sure the figure is higher.

During my time inside there was an inspection - which the prison failed. The findings of the inspectors were quite shocking, so much so that they brought matters directly to the attention of the secretary of state. There have been nine suicides at the prison I was in.

Hardly a week went by without someone smashing up their cell a couple of nights a week. The sound of the porcelain being smashed against the floor made my heart jump. I could not sleep.

The prisoner would usually be on black mamba or spice, strong drugs with unpredictable effects. I don't know how mamba is smuggled into the prison but it is a massive problem.

The number of prison officers and support staff has fallen by something like 10,000 since 2010. The [officers were under enormous pressure](#) as they were short of staff. Many were doing long-hour shifts and overtime.

Lockdown

This had an effect on the ability of officers to interact with prisoners. When there was not enough staff you would have 'lockdown', which meant no association time, which causes enormous tension as you can imagine.

Why can prisoners only have access to their own money at a set amount per week? The 'basic' spending allowance is £4, 'standard' is £15.50 and 'enhanced' £25.

The right to spend higher amounts of your own earned money is what is called an 'incentive-earned privilege'.

But when people are sentenced to prison, the judge hands down a sentence of a period of loss of freedom. Nothing more, nothing less. It is not right that prisoners should also have to make a choice between a £3 phone credit to maintain contact with families, or buying shower gel and toothpaste for the week.

Another punishment is the work, which really is close to slave labour. I was told by many prisoners from other prisons of the existence of its various forms.

Inmates told me that prison seems like a third-world country, where thousands are slaving in workshops making profitable goods for private companies who pay a pittance far below the minimum wage.

How shameful that grown men and women are forced to carry out menial tasks for £9 a week. I had experience of this myself, working as an assistant in education, getting £10 a week.

Then later, in an open prison, working six hours a day for five days getting £10 in total.

I even heard that when prisoners work outside for a firm, the prison takes a percentage of their pay.

I have now left prison but am on home curfew, known as 'tag'. It is a device fitted around my ankle. I cannot leave my house after 7.15pm, not even go into my garden, until 7.15am the next day.

The tag comes off at the end of September. I thought my sentence would end then - but it does not, as I am still on licence until May 2019, then post-supervision until the end of September 2019.

I may not be allowed to travel abroad again until even longer after that. My relatives live abroad. This is so wrong, I feel I have been punished enough.

Prison needs more investment and radical reform. Prisoners should not just be banged up, but should have real rehabilitation, real education and not Mickey Mouse courses which just tick boxes.

They should be given the opportunity to learn a trade so they have something to support them other than crime, and if working while inside get a decent rate of pay.

Socialists campaign to end the economic system which creates the conditions which breed crime. However, at the same time, we should expose the exploitation of the tens of thousands of people inside our prisons today and the conditions they live under.

Blairite cuts and restructures make social work dangerous

A Sheffield social worker

Our NHS is being dismantled piece by piece before our eyes. Meanwhile, [something very similar is happening to adult social care.](#)

In Sheffield, once again, the 'money-saving changes' the Blairite council is making within adult social care are like a wrecking ball destroying a building when none of the occupants have been evacuated.

This may sound dramatic, but we are talking about some of the most vulnerable people in the city being left at serious risk. I'm sure you'll start to see my point.

Over the last six years there have been three major changes to the structure of adult social care. A major restructure every two years. At what cost?

These supposed money-saving changes included the disbandment of specialist social work teams. All of these teams were multidisciplinary, meaning we worked alongside other health professionals to provide greater expertise and a more collaborative service.

Given that hospital admissions and delayed discharges are one of the greatest challenges to health and social care budgets, it doesn't take a genius to see that getting rid of teams like this has serious implications.

It has led to each respective body jealously guarding its own budget, while communication and relations between health care and social care feel at an all-time low.

The most recent restructure, rushed through in 2017, saw the disbandment of the specialist learning disability service, which has now been assimilated into the rest of adult social care - adults with physical disabilities, and older adults with mental health problems.

These are three enormously different and complex groups of service users.

Social workers have spent years and years developing skills, knowledge, expertise, and the teams that we feel secure and supported in.

We have now had our specialist teams pulled apart, and we are thrown back in a mix as 'generic' social workers.

This happened without any additional training. How are we expected to keep vulnerable people safe under these conditions?

Needless to say, the fallout was swift when it came to staff morale. A number of disillusioned managers left the service, while numerous deskilled and devalued frontline workers have either left or been signed off with stress.

So ultimately, there aren't enough staff left standing to manage caseload and keep people safe.

Over the past few years, the council has made efforts to demonstrate consideration of and consultation with frontline workers regarding major changes to the services, supposedly in recognition of us as experts in our own field.

However, those of us who have been around for a while know this is a facade.

We have spoken out against these rushed plans, which lack any foresight, time and time again. We have pointed out when changes won't work, that making these changes will just waste valuable budget because it will just need to be changed back again, that skills and confidence will be lost.

But the changes go ahead regardless - and, lo and behold, they don't work - and eventually we are returned to a more damaged and dysfunctional version of what we had before.

This is a situation where legislation cannot be followed, mistakes will be made, cases go to court, valuable budget is lost - and people end up injured, or worse.

- The Socialist Party says: [councils must refuse to implement austerity!](#) Use reserves and borrowing powers, and fight to win the money back!
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The Socialist inbox

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, phone 020 8988 8771 or email editors@socialistparty.org.uk.

We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Views of letter writers do not necessarily match those of the Socialist Party.

Homelessness and housing costs

In the case of both migrants and people already here without a house to live in, council houses aren't being built and empty properties aren't being used for these people. This keeps house prices high and rents high.

Basically homelessness is helping to keep rents high by holding ordinary people to ransom, which is good for landlords and bad for everybody else. High rents create homelessness and homelessness creates high rents.

The knocking down of council estates, particularly in London, and their replacement with luxury flats for the super-rich, unaffordable to ordinary people, doesn't help either. This makes the housing crisis even worse.

Our demands should be more council house building, and private housing monopolies to be taken over by the state, so everyone can have somewhere to live.

Andy Atkin, Bristol

More privatised rail chaos

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling gave a statement in parliament on 4 June about the chaos on the Northern Rail and Govia Thameslink franchises.

He could have saved a lot of breath by just saying "trust me, it will be all right on the night" and then sitting down.

He basically said he had had assurances - from the very people who said there would be no problems in the first place - that these problems would be sorted... sometime.

Some of the criticism of [the debacle of cancelling trains at the same time as introducing a new timetable](#) has been personalised - the press calls him "Failing Grayling" and so on. He is clearly out of his depth. However, it is the privatised franchise system which is failing - because there is no overall plan for services, connections, staffing or training.

Each train-operating company does its own thing. If that means poaching drivers or other staff from another company, then so be it, as long as 'our' trains run.

Experienced rail workers would think long and hard before attempting to introduce a new timetable, as everything else then changes, connections, the effect on rosters, breaks, training.

It seems managers are unwilling to oppose such schemes as they do not want to be seen as weak, even when they fear the schemes will fail.

Grayling said the two franchises could borrow drivers from other companies if needed. At best this is robbing Peter to pay Paul. But he didn't say which companies or drivers would be helping out.

I am not holding my breath. Most train-operating companies have an agreement with train drivers' union Aslef allowing drivers to work on rest days.

As they cannot staff services with the resources they have, rest day working - doing a full shift on a day off - is used to plug current gaps.

It is hard to imagine drivers from other franchises voluntarily going to face the wrath of Northern and Govia Thameslink customers when they can experience much the same by staying put - and that's even if they have the required route and traction knowledge to transfer.

The transport secretary blames the train-operating companies, they blame Network Rail, and so it goes on.

Without a long-term national and local plan, fully funded under public ownership, democratically produced by passengers and the workforce through our trade unions, the rail industry will remain subject to private companies squeezing profits out of what should be a public service.

An Aslef member, Worcestershire

Unison witch-hunter elected

The Blairites are still firmly holding onto most significant elected positions within the Labour Party, be they MPs or local councillors. But that is not enough, and the Blairites want more power still.

Take the case of well-known Blairite Linda Perks, who until recently was the London regional secretary for public service union Unison.

Perks won the selection process to become a Labour Party council candidate for the Charlton ward in Greenwich, south London, and was subsequently elected.

In this case, the incumbent Labour councillor since 1998, Gary Parker, is one of the few Labour councillors in the country who publicly defended Jeremy Corbyn against the 2016 leadership coup led by Blairite contender Owen Smith.

Perks' credentials are, however, about as far removed from Corbyn's anti-austerity leadership as could be.

Indeed, just four months before being selected as Labour candidate, she was strongly criticised by a judge for having abused her authority within Unison.

Evidence came to light that she had told her staff to campaign during work time for right-wing general secretary Dave Prentis during the 2015 Unison election.

Perks has form on such matters. In 2007 she was at the centre of the scandal regarding [Unison's witch-hunt against four members of the Socialist Party](#).

In this instance, after a long battle for justice, the four Unison branch secretaries were reinstated - as detailed in [the Socialist Party pamphlet 'Unison Bureaucracy Unmasked'](#).

At the time, Labour backbencher John McDonnell actively opposed the witch-hunt against socialists, making it clear: "I am a Unison member myself and I therefore want to go on record as pledging my support to those activists now being witch-hunted by a section of the union."

One can only wonder what McDonnell now thinks about the ongoing attempt by Perks and her fellow Blairites to oust Corbyn-backing Labour councillors.

I say "wonder" because so far Labour's left leadership has done nothing to head off such problems, and has singularly failed to encourage the Labour membership to organise against the Blairite enemy within.

Mike Barker, Leicester

Audio version of this document

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

What the Socialist Party stands 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), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Public services

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- 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.
- Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- 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 unrecycled 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, 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!

Audio version of this document

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/27559>

