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Editorial of the Socialist issue 1004

Corbyn and unions must act to bring down government in crisis

We need to sweep this rotten lot out! The Labour leadership and trade union movement must act now, for a mass mobilisation to boot out the Tories and for a general election. Tories out - a Corbyn-led government in with socialist policies!

As the Brexit white paper staggered its way through the House of Commons, the crisis in the Tory party just deepened and deepened.

Parliament has now broken for summer - no wonder Theresa May wanted to end it all five days early. But the shipwreck they leave behind them in Westminster will not disappear over the summer.

We should prepare for a general election as soon as possible after parliament returns.

With little over two months until an agreement with the EU is meant to be reached in October, 'project fear' of a no-deal Brexit is ramped up, with the likes of Amazon warning of riots if Britain crashes out of the EU.

The attempt at compromise at Chequers lasted less than a week. Tory grandees, like Chris Patten on Newsnight, say they have never seen the party in such crisis.

Still Theresa May has managed to scrape along, despite resignations and open warfare around her between the right-wing Brexiteers and the Remain-in-all-but-namers.

A third Tory front has been opened up by former education minister Justine Greening, backed by former Tory prime minister John Major. Greening openly declared that parliament is unable to come to a decision on Brexit, and so there should be a second referendum, in which she will campaign for Remain. What an admission that her own party is unable to govern.

It appears the new Brexit secretary, Dominic Raab, has already been sidelined by May. He cuts a hapless figure as he attempts to negotiate with EU representatives despite multiple guns being held to his head.

Chief whip Julian Smith now faces a clamour of calls to resign after it emerged that he had instructed MPs to disregard the parliamentary 'pairing' system in order to save the government's neck in knife-edge Brexit votes. Pairing is only a convention, which has, in fact, been broken many times by all parties, but in the heat of this crisis this blatant manoeuvre just serves to underline the murky, untrustworthy, desperate state of the Tory party.

And the open warfare is not confined to issues around Brexit. On Radio 4, Tory MP Dominic Grieve tore into home secretary Sajid Javid's abhorrent decision not to oppose the death penalty when two UK citizens are tried as IS suspects in the US. Again Theresa May is paralysed.

This follows crisis after crisis: universal credit, NHS and social care, Windrush to name but a few.

Underlying volatility

Of course, a general election is exactly the threat they use against each other. Leading Brexiteers threatened that if the government was defeated on the vote on a customs union, there would be a vote of no confidence and a general election - and then the risk of a Corbyn government. Labour is ahead in the polls and only 11% support May's Brexit plans.

What recent polls show is the huge underlying volatility in the situation, due to the depth of the crisis faced by British capitalism.

A poll for the Times on 22 July showed more support for Boris Johnson than May, and 38% saying they would support a new Brexit party to the right. Former Ukip leader Nigel Farage is said to be raising money for a new 'hard Brexit' party, while US alt-right demagogue Steve Bannon says he is raising £1 million for a right-wing mass movement, and has lent support to the recent protests by the 'Democratic' Football Lads Alliance. Meanwhile, polls suggest a third of voters might support a new anti-Brexit centre party.

The crisis is such that some Tories are now voicing an alternative solution to the risks attached to a general election: a national 'unity' government. Anna Soubry stated on Radio 4's Today programme that the problem is that "extremists" are in control in both main parties. Right-wing Brexiteer toff Rees-Mogg is "running the country" and the whole Labour front bench are "old Trotskyists", she said. The only solution therefore would be to appoint a government of national unity.

This would mostly comprise the pro-Remain Osbornite wing of the Tories and the pro-Remain Blairite wing of the Labour party - many of whom, such as Chuka Umunna and Tony Blair himself, are champions of a second referendum or 'people's vote'. She floated the idea of the SNP and Plaid Cymru joining as well. A national government would not in fact be in the interests of the whole 'nation', it would be in the interests of big business, the vast majority of which wants to see Britain remain in the EU.

Political and economic crisis

In a fragile world economy still burdened with debt and facing trade wars, big business wants as much stability as possible in which it can maximise profits with the least barriers, and continue to force the working class to pay for economic crisis through low pay and austerity. For them, the lack of a party that can achieve this outcome is a political crisis of historic proportions.

The idea of a national government is raised when capitalists fear that their traditional political representatives are not strong or stable enough, and they don't have a reliable alternative to represent their interests either. A national government was talked about by the ruling class in 1968 under Harold Wilson's Labour government, and again in the 1970s, when there was economic crisis and a fear of trade union power which could push the Labour Party to the left. In 1931, the Labour Party split and the right formed a national government with the Tories.

This measure is not the most likely, not least because it is such a desperate card that can only be played once. Most importantly, it could leave Corbyn in a powerful position to lead the opposition that would develop.

Behind the scenes, the pro-Remainer Blairites prepare the ground for the possibility of a new 'centre' party. Anything to save capitalism from a Corbyn government. In 1981 the right wing split from Labour to form the Social Democratic Party in order to undermine the chance of a Labour government that could move in a leftward direction.

This time a new party could include Remain elements from the Tories and from the Lib Dems. Tory Remainer Dominic Grieve has warned of a break-up of the current party system if there is no deal. Lib Dem leader Vince Cable was said to be in talks about the creation of a new centre party. But far from being some kind of middle ground, a 'centre' party would be a pro-capitalist, pro-Remain party - the kind of establishment, neoliberal, austerity party that has been rejected in elections in country after country as masses of people have sought an alternative.

Fightback needed

In reality, the only path to solving this crisis in the interests of the vast majority is through a mass determined fight by the labour and trade union movement.

Now is the time for Jeremy Corbyn to seize the moment. Instead of allowing right-wing capitalist representatives on all sides to frame the debate, a bold argument for a workers' Brexit - a socialist Brexit - and a general election to achieve it could cut through the chaos like a scythe.

At the same time, the Blairites in the Labour Party, who act every day to prevent that from happening, need to be ousted.

Pro-capitalist Labour Brexiteers such as Frank Field and Kate Hoey voted to save the Tories last week. And like clockwork, as soon as the Tory crisis flares the Blairites pick up the antisemitism weapon again.

Instead of sensible discussion, a furore is raised about the new code of conduct on antisemitism (once again proving that it is an illusion for those around Corbyn to think they can mollify their opponents).

In extraordinary scenes, Labour Dame Margaret Hodge MP shouted publicly at Corbyn in the Commons, calling him a racist and antisemite, just a day after suspended MP John Woodcock (awaiting a sexual harassment investigation) resigned, claiming the Corbynites were out to get him and the party had been taken over by the 'hard left'.

Labour's shadow cabinet has had an away day to prepare for a possible general election. It is imperative that Labour and trade union leaders act to drive the Tories out and to fight tooth and nail for the programme that inspired millions of people last year and still could again if it is energetically promoted. That is the only way to offer an alternative to the anger and fears of working class and young people on all sides.

We need a mass struggle against the Tories and the Blairites, for a government that can implement the 2017 manifesto and more - jobs on proper contracts, pay rises, council homes, rent control, a £10-an-hour minimum wage and free education. Stop universal credit. Save the NHS from cuts and privatisation. Renationalise rail, water and energy. Take the banks and big companies into democratic public ownership so that the enormous wealth in society can be used for the benefit of all. A socialist, internationalist, anti-racist Brexit in the interest of all workers. General election now!

Tory anti-union ballot threshold frustrates national strike action

PCS members back fightback on pay - keep building pressure

Marion Lloyd, PCS national executive committee (personal capacity)

The PCS pay strike ballot which finished midday Monday 23 July returned a massive majority for strike action, but the vote fell short of the 50% turnout required by the undemocratic Tory anti-union laws.

In a ballot of PCS public service members, the turnout was 59,254 (41.6%), which is the joint-highest in the union's history. Of those who voted, a huge 50,726, or 86%, voted yes to strike action.

This is something that the Tories should not ignore. We may have fallen short of the 50% threshold, but no way can the Tories take any real satisfaction from this ballot.

This is especially true for a Government that received the votes of only 28% of the electorate, and which is propped up by the reactionary DUP.

Significant

The strike ballot result is a disappointment but still represents a significant achievement. Thousands of our reps spent hundreds of hours leafleting, talking to members, organising car park meetings, phone-banking to chase votes and organising in the workplace. New members and new reps have been recruited to PCS in every corner of the country.

The union's National Executive Committee met on Tuesday 24 July to discuss the result and agree a way forward. Socialist Party members argued:

- To call on the government and the other civil service unions to re-open negotiations on the pay remit (1 - 1.5% cap) and our claim for 5%, or £1,200, and for national pay bargaining
- If the government's position remains unchanged, full support to negotiators in all bargaining areas to continue to challenge the pay cap and support submissions for action, working to link up different areas of the union in action
- To ensure that regional and nation committees, group executive committees and national branches see their own turnout so as to continue the major organising work, as we work to build action area by area
- To call a special pay conference in September or October to assess the pay situation and further develop plans for carrying forward the fight against the government's vicious and discriminatory pay cap policy

So long as the pay cap remains, the fight against it goes on.

- Also see a [response by PCS AGS Chris Baugh](#) (in a personal capacity) to the revelation that the Thatcher government blacklisted Militant supporters working in the civil service.

Blacklisting of Militant supporters by Thatcher government revealed

Chris Baugh, PCS AGS, responds (personal capacity)

On 24 July, The Guardian published an article revealing that Thatcher's government worked with MI5 and Special Branch to draw up a blacklist of civil servants deemed to be 'subversives'.

It has been revealed the government was 'most concerned' about supporters of Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party.

Here Chris Baugh (right), the assistant general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), which represents civil servants, and a member of the Socialist Party, reacts to the revelation:

"The latest release of cabinet papers provides yet more evidence of the Thatcher government and secret state carrying out covert work against trade unions in the civil service.

"The Orwellian sounding 'Interdepartmental Group on Subversives in Public Life', shows the collusion between the Thatcher government, MI5 and special branch, in targeting so-called subversives, particularly those identified as supporters of Militant.

"To quote Thatcher herself, the civil service should be "very ready to sack subversive trouble makers..."

This needs to be properly investigated in the Mitting spy-cops inquiry, and by working alongside trade unionists, socialists, anti-racist and environmental campaigners, to expose the level of covert surveillance and the threat this poses to independent trade unions, the right to protest, and fighting for another socialist world."

Victory for Swansea postal workers against management victimisation

Alec Thraves, Swansea Socialist Party

Swansea postal workers have won a big victory forcing Royal Mail management to reinstate postman Martin Henwood, after the threat of strike action at Swansea Delivery Office by Communication Workers Union (CWU) members.

Martin 'Rodders' Henwood has worked for Royal Mail for 32 years and has no previous disciplinary record.

His sacking has caused uproar among the workforce who have witnessed management's increasingly bullying approach over the past few years.

They voted by a massive 89.9% to strike against his dismissal and the company agreed to withdraw his dismissal shortly after.

CWU national officer Ray Ellis, assistant secretary, said: "It's great news and wouldn't have happened without the magnificent support and solidarity from all the members in Swansea and across the South West Wales Amal Branch - as well as the growing support for him from other parts of the country.

"We're meeting management on Monday (23 July) to work out the details of exactly when he will return to work - but it will be as soon as possible and everyone's really pleased that a solution has been reached."

Rodders has worked for Royal Mail for 32 years with no previous disciplinary record, and was sacked in May after bosses accused him of not following a procedure on door-to-door (unaddressed) mail, despite him following the protocol of the office.

His sacking is typical of the bullying approach of management at the newly-privatised postal service.

CWU members at Ferndale in the Rhondda have also won a victory against management bullying when a manager was redeployed following a walk out in protest at his bullying.

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Hull recycling workers win right to sick pay

Mick Whale, Hull Trade Union Council president

FCC recycling workers - members of Unison in Wilmington, Hull - have agreed to suspend their strike action after FCC management agreed to introduce a sick pay scheme.

The Spanish-based multinational had point-blank refused to negotiate on any terms and conditions at the start of the strike and, despite a turnover of nearly €500 million in 2017, they refused to pay sick pay to the workforce.

The strike action, backed up by national and international solidarity, forced FCC to the table and to concede sick pay.

While some of the workforce are concerned that the details fall short of the full demands of the strikers for parity with management, there is an understanding that this is nonetheless a huge victory. The strike is suspended for three months to monitor FCC's integrity to operate a sick pay scheme properly. If FCC reneges on the deal, the workers will be out again!

Important victory

This is an important victory. Not only have the Hull workers got sick pay, all 2,000 of FCC's workforce in the UK will now have some sick pay protection. While many recent strikes have been to protect or defend existing conditions, this is an offensive strike which has improved terms and conditions.

A group of 14 workers have forced a giant multinational company to retreat. This was possible because the strikers were determined and supported at every level of the labour and trade union movement both nationally and internationally.

EDF Energy strike victory against vehicle tracker device

Unite the Union members employed by EDF Energy in its metering and debt sections in south London, and the South East and South West regions, have won a huge victory in a long-running battle over the introduction of tracker devices in vehicles. Members have just voted to accept the wording of an agreement which represents a significant win through industrial action.

Unite members took eight days of strike action. Shamefully the GMB, Unison and Prospect trade unions refused to ballot, stating it was too early to do so and that they would engage in negotiation instead. GMB claimed that it had secured a guarantee that the evidence from the tracker system would not be used in any disciplinary process.

However, as is often the case when employers smell weakness, the employer swiftly denied any such agreement. While the GMB responded with angry words, the union did not follow those words up with a strike ballot. Instead it was left to Unite members to do the heavy lifting.

Automation

This dispute is important because capitalism's automation agenda also includes increased surveillance of workers. More and more workers who drive as part of their role are now subject to tracker surveillance. Therefore this win should be seen as an example for how to fight back against an increasing surveillance and monitoring culture.

The agreement means that the system that will be implemented, referred to as telematics, will only monitor driving for safety purposes. No tracker system will be in operation at all - meaning that the industrial win surpassed the verbal promise given to the GMB.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab stated: "The lesson is simple. We don't win through the power of argument - because even when we are right, the employers choose to ignore us. We win through the power of our collective strength. That is the lesson from this dispute. That is why we stood on the picket line. That is why we were able to force the agreement. That is why we won!"

Sheffield tram workers strike for 72 hours

Alistair Tice, Sheffield Socialist Party

Sheffield Supertram drivers and conductors, members of Unite the Union, took 72 hours' further strike action in pursuit of their pay claim on 20-22 July. This was over the weekend of the city's popular Tramlines music festival. Only thing was, hardly any trams were running!

Despite management's attempts to blame the union, most public and passengers are supportive of the strikers. Management tried to make out that the union wouldn't ballot on an 'improved' offer, but their so-called offer was worth less than that already rejected by nearly 70% in an earlier ballot.

Indeed, active support for the strike is growing. Across the two picket lines, outside the tram sheds and at Castle Square, 133 Unite members attended on 20 July. That's more than the number voting to reject the last offer.

Stagecoach runs the Supertram franchise for the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive. So as well as calling further strike action, Unite should be demanding Labour authority members of the transport executive publicly support the strike and pledge to bring the contract back in-house.

New health secretary. Same privatisation agenda.

Fight to save our NHS!

Beth Webster, nurse and Cardiff West Socialist Party

Anyone breathing a sigh of relief at seeing the back of Jeremy Hunt as health secretary should take a closer look at his replacement Matt Hancock. As well as consistently voting to speed up NHS privatisation, he's taken £32,000 in donations from a millionaire businessman who thinks the NHS should be abolished.

Meanwhile the NHS crisis is worsening. Acute mental health beds have fallen by 30% since 2009. Ambulance response times are still rising, NHS England is short of 100,000 staff, and operations such as hernia repair and tonsil removal are being rationed. Hospitals and services are closing across England and Wales. Whatever Hancock says about his "heartbreak" for NHS staff, he's just as intent on privatising the NHS for profit as Hunt.

In Hancock's first speech as health secretary, he announced plans to invest £412 million in improving NHS technology - it seems there's no magic money tree for staff or basic operations, but there is to invest in private technology companies.

Successful public campaigns against service closures such as Glenfield children's heart unit in Leicester show that when we fight, we can win. The mere threat of industrial action by NHS staff forced the government to scrap the pay cap. But the failure of trade union leadership meant NHS staff were only offered a paltry deal of 6.5% over three years. Even this has been revealed to be a sham with some staff getting thousands less than they had been led to expect.

The Tories are disintegrating by the day. May has no credibility even in her own party, and no way to balance the anger of working class people and the interests of big business. Health unions need to build for strike action, fighting to link up and coordinate action with workers across the public sector.

Jeremy Corbyn should be calling for mass action to defend our NHS and bring down the Tory government. He must boldly pledge real funding for the health service, reversal of privatisation and scrapping of private finance initiative deals. A mass movement could bring the Tories down. Join the Socialist Party, join the fight back, and let's kick the Tories out for good!

Fight the racist far right

Trade unions should name the day for a national demonstration

John Reid, RMT member and North London Socialist Party

On 14 July, after participating in a counter-demonstration against a 'welcome Trump' march - organised by the far-right group known as the 'Democratic' Football Lads Alliance (FLA) - a number of members of transport workers' union RMT were subjected to an unprovoked and extremely violent attack.

Those injured included Steve Hedley, RMT Assistant General Secretary. Earlier in the day, racist thugs also held up a bus to intimidate a Muslim woman bus driver.

These events have exposed the racist thugs closely surrounding Tommy Robinson, the former leader of the far-right English Defence League (EDL).

Some angry, alienated and disillusioned people have supported the demos called by the FLA, hit by austerity and decades of cuts and privatisations, betrayed by all the mainstream parties.

But there can be no doubting that the core forces trying to exploit those fears and anger are far-right racists and fascists.

This violent assault on trade unionists has caused outrage among RMT members as well as within the wider trade union movement.

It has shown the FLA as a racist, anti-trade union and anti-working class organisation.

It was no accident that these thugs picked out members of one of the most industrially and politically militant trade unions: the RMT.

At its Annual General Meeting earlier in the summer, the RMT passed a resolution calling on the union to oppose Robinson and the FLA.

Trade union response

Since 14 July, the response of many trade union members has been swift. Activists in the RMT called a meeting of trade unionists and anti-racists which took place on 11 July.

At the meeting, Steve Hedley stated that the RMT would organise to confront the far-right wherever they gathered, but also emphasised the need for a working class, trade union-based opposition to be built.

Socialist Party members in the RMT also pointed to importance of linking the struggle against racism and fascism with building a mass movement against austerity - to fight for jobs, homes and services for all.

On Saturday 21 July, a protest against a mobilisation by the FLA in Cambridge saw a larger turnout from the trade unions than there has been at similar events that have taken place recently.

In particular, it was noticeable that there had been a greater mobilisation by the RMT, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), and Unite. Around 500 joined a march against the FLA, who only mustered a pathetic 30.

Nonetheless, the threat posed by the far right remains a serious one. Reports this weekend have revealed the big money being placed behind Tommy Robinson and his campaign, including from prominent figures in the US 'alt-right' such as Steven Bannon, Trump's former chief strategist.

It is vital that the trade union movement places itself front and centre in the fight against the FLA and other far-right forces.

A branch meeting of the largest RMT Branch - London Underground Engineering - passed the following resolution in response to the events of 14 July.

This union agrees that:

1. If the far right attempt to invade a local community it is essential that we fight for a massive mobilisation of the community to defend itself.

The trade unions can be crucial in this. With an energetically-built campaign in the workplaces we can mobilise members.

Trade unions should provide stewarding instead of relying on the police to keep people safe.

2. Crucially, trade union action can hold out hope and an alternative to those small numbers of people who may be attracted to far-right ideas.

While some of the people that give their support to organisations like FLA, DFLA and 'Britain First' subscribe to the racist rhetoric expounded by their leaders, the people demonstrating are not all 'fascists'.

A lot of them are angry young working class men, deeply alienated by austerity and by decades of capitalist neo-liberal policies.

They have been betrayed by all the establishment politicians, in particular abandoned by the betrayals of Blairite New Labour that has pursued pro-capitalist policies of cuts, privatisation and austerity-lite in councils and in government.

3. When Jeremy Corbyn put forward an anti-austerity manifesto in the 2017 general election a million previously-Ukip voters switched to vote Labour.

While up to 15,000 marched to 'Free Tommy' on 9 June, in March 2011 three quarters of a million marched under the banner of the TUC when people believed the trade unions were going to fight austerity.

4. If the trade unions mobilise with energy and with clear demands to fight for jobs and homes and to kick out the Tories, we'd have hundreds of thousands on the streets and could cut across the appeal of far-right leaders.

This union therefore further agrees:

1. It is essential to build an anti-racist workers' movement that fights for jobs, for council homes, for pay, benefits and decent public services.

2. We resolve to open up a debate in the trade unions about the slogans and tactics necessary to defeat the far-right, putting the resources, authority and power of the organised working class at the centre of a mass anti-racist, anti-austerity movement.

3. To write to the TUC to demand it launch a 'jobs, homes not racism' campaign to unite the wider trade union movement and to campaign effectively against the far right.

This should include workers taking all legal steps (up to and including strike action) to disrupt all attempts to organise for the purposes of extending the rhetoric of the FLA and DFLA or any similar organisation.

4. The trade unions should name the day for a national demonstration.

Universal credit causes £24m rent arrears as working homelessness exceeds 33,000

Sack the Tories!

Scrap universal credit!

Ellen Kenyon Peers, Lewisham and Southwark Socialist Party

The inept Tory government is yet again in the firing line after further details emerged about the shambolic roll-out of the cruel 'universal credit' welfare system.

Meanwhile, of families in temporary accommodation, 33,300 are in work: 55% of the total (see 'Them & us').

Renters entitled to the included benefits are now £24 million in arrears due to late payments, unjustified reductions and the deliberately deceptive claims system.

According to new information from horrified call centre workers, the process passes traumatised claimants from one part of the system to the next in an attempt to stop them receiving what they are entitled to.

One brave whistleblower told the Guardian that the system placed the burden on call centre staff to make potentially life-changing decisions about what meagre benefits a caller is entitled to. "It's me that has to judge whether it's appropriate to ask a claimant if her third child is the result of sexual assault because it may affect her benefit entitlement."

Further revelations included requiring claimants to send papers via post despite the system being equipped to process scanned documents.

And the IT system being needlessly complicated for staff to use, directly resulting in late or no payment.

The work and pensions secretary, Esther McVey, has failed to resign, despite calls from MPs after she attempted to mislead them over the dire effects of universal credit.

Food banks

It has resulted in more and more desperate people using food banks. The Trussell Trust says the increase is on average 52% in a year in the areas where universal credit hit first, compared to a 13% increase in what were at the time non-universal credit areas.

A report by the National Audit Office shows the Tories have already spent £1.9 billion on the project, and it may never offer 'value for money'.

This further substantiates what the Socialist Party has argued and working class people have felt all along: this has never been about a 'good deal' for the taxpayer, but rather benefitting the rich by undermining the idea that workers are entitled to a welfare safety net.

This scandal is the least of the Tories' problems right now. Jeremy Corbyn and the union leaders must act - call national protests, build for strikes, and demand a general election.

Sack McVey and the whole Tory government. Create jobs and a welfare system for the future, not one that sends us back to the past!

Dodgy MP lobbied for genocidal Sri Lankan leader after getting £100,000 of free holidays

No to sectarian politics: fight for jobs, homes and services for all

Suspension shrinks Tory 'majority' further - general election now!

Manny Thain, Tamil Solidarity

Ian Paisley Jr, Democratic Unionist Party MP for North Antrim, Northern Ireland, is set to be suspended from the House of Commons for 30 sitting days.

In 2013 he had taken his family on two holidays to Sri Lanka - all expenses paid by the government of that island. He did not register the trips, then lobbied on behalf of Mahinda Rajapaksa's regime.

As president, Rajapaksa was behind the genocide against Tamils at the end of the civil war in 2009. But by 2013 he was on a charm offensive.

Sri Lanka was preparing to host the Commonwealth heads of government meeting. David Cameron, then Tory prime minister, attended. To the Tamil audience - a significant part of Britain's electorate - Cameron spoke of the need for 'justice'. But to Rajapaksa and his cronies, Cameron talked trade.

Needless to say, Cameron did not stand in the way of the continuing military occupation of Tamil land or countless other abuses. He went on granting arms export licences and training to the Sri Lankan military.

The next year, Rajapaksa faced criticism at the UN. Having enjoyed his lavish hospitality, on 19 March 2014 Paisley wrote to Cameron. In the words of the Commons standards committee, to "lobby against a proposed United Nations resolution setting up an international investigation into alleged human rights abuses in Sri Lanka."

The committee says Paisley's trips were worth up to £100,000. Paisley said "around £50,000." At the time, the threshold for registering benefits like this was £660!

The committee called it "paid advocacy," lamenting that it could "bring the House of Commons into disrepute." It's a bit late for that! But for a parliamentary committee to state so is a big deal - the 30-day ban is the harshest for 15 years.

The suspension has to be ratified by MPs - media reports say it will be; we'll see - and would begin on 4 September. As parliament does not meet in the party conference season, it would last into early November.

That's bad news for Theresa May's weak and split minority government - relying on DUP backing to survive - in the face of finely balanced Brexit votes.

It is also another reminder of the divisive sectarian politics at play in both Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland - able to thrive when there are no mass campaigns on jobs, homes, education and democratic rights which could unite the working class and all oppressed people.

Them & Us

Boris's millionaire squat...

After quitting the cabinet, Boris Johnson is still living rent-free in a £20 million official residence.

The Foreign Office pays six-figure rent to the queen for Johnson's squat - £482,341 in 2015, says the Mirror. At the same time, he is collecting "rental income of more than £10,000 a year" from a £2.3 million house he owns, according to parliament's register of interests.

The millionaire Tory gets big money from the Telegraph for columns - £250,000 a year while he was mayor of London. He'll also get £17,000 compensation for resigning, on top of his £77,379 MP's salary - before pension and expenses.

... 33k working homeless

Meanwhile, the number of working families in temporary accommodation has risen to 33,300, says Shelter - up from 19,300 in 2013.

Shop workers, builders, engineers and chefs are among those holding down jobs while having no home to show for it. In expensive cities like Bristol, workers even bed down in caravans, horse boxes, railway arches and disused public toilets.

Of course, with leeching buy-to-let landlords like Kent's Fergus Wilson running the show, it's no surprise. Not content with barring "coloured" tenants from his homes for leaving a "curry smell," the bigot has just evicted four single mothers.

His reason? The council only lets him leave new mums without hot water for four days at a time. Rather than forking out for proper boiler maintenance, Wilson kicked out his rent-payers.

The Socialist says: kick out Wilson and the big landlords! For compulsory registration of private landlords, caps on rents, and a mass council house building programme!

£7m for dinner with May v school breakfast queues

The Tories made £7.4 million from selling access to the prime minister in the last year. 81 business owners paid tens of thousands a head for dinner, lunch or drinks with May, according to the Conservative Party.

Meanwhile, in Cardiff, around 130 parents queued from before dawn to get their kids into a school's free breakfast programme. Parents who can't afford the food - or pre-class morning childcare while they work - started queueing from 3am, says the Guardian.

250,000-strong human tide sweeps London against visit of bigoted billionaire Donald Trump

Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Party youth organiser

A human tide swept central London on 13 July in an historic mobilisation against the racist, sexist billionaire president of the US, Donald Trump, who was visiting the UK.

It is estimated that more than 250,000 people took to the streets - an enormous figure, especially considering that this took place on a normal working weekday.

Homemade banners, huge Trump marionettes, whistles, vuvuzelas, drums and megaphones - as well as the incredibly large turn-out - all made for one of the most lively and energetic demonstrations in years, in spite of the marches' snail's pace due to over-packed streets.

The day started with [a protest led by Socialist Students and Young Socialists](#). Students at a number of London schools responded to the call we had put out to walk out of classes and join protests against Trump.

Similar school student actions also took place around the country - reports to follow.

Gathering in Trafalgar square at 10 am, school students who had taken the brave step of striking, in spite of intimidation that included police intervention, marched down Whitehall, around the giant Trump baby balloon, and up to Portland place to join the main demonstration.

Chants led by the students including "Trump, May, hear us say, how many kids have you caged today?" and "Trump out, Tories out" were taken up by other demonstrators as well as passers-by.

As well as being a protest against Trump, for the vast majority of those taking part, this was also a mobilisation against Theresa May and her ailing Tory government.

It is an indication of the depth of the crisis faced by the Conservatives that Trump's visit, along with the mass protests it has provoked, has opened up a fresh nightmare for May.

Trump's attacks on the prime minister over Brexit, which came at a time when her party's civil war has been brought out into the open, have served to heighten the crisis she faces.

The massive mobilisation which took place on 13 July gives a glimpse of the potential that exists - to build a mass movement to kick out the Tories.

Among those taking part in the protest there was a strong understanding that it was necessary to protest not just Trump, but Trumpism.

That means challenging divide-and-rule politics on behalf of the super-rich 1% wherever it is found, including in Britain.

It is essential that this mass protest is not a 'one off'. The leadership of the trade unions have a responsibility to act now to mobilise working class people to see off this Tory government once and for all.

This demonstration with all its determination and energy, can act as an important launchpad for building such a movement.

Along with the Socialist Party, Socialists Students and Young Socialists will continue to organise over the summer, building the fight against racism and sexism, for a £10 an hour minimum wage, for free education and for the socialist alternative to capitalist society for the billionaires. Join us and get involved.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 16 July 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

School students: why we walked out against Trump

Students from several schools in London walked out to join protests against Donald Trump on 13 July, led by Socialist Students and Young Socialists.

'It is the responsibility of all young people to stand up'

Tamsin Jacobs, school student, Highgate Wood School

When Donald Trump came to visit on 13 July, I and several of my classmates walked out of school in protest. We acted in this way to show governments and certain political leaders that their actions do not benefit the majority.

In the act of walking out, we wanted to show that young people are politically engaged and care strongly about our future. We wanted to stand in solidarity with all the American high school students who walked out of their classes to protest against Donald Trump and his dangerous and discriminatory politics.

Donald Trump's policies are the epitome of inequality and prejudice. The fact that school students such as myself are the ones who recognise this issue more clearly than Trump's cabinet and other high-ranking officials speaks volumes.

It is essential to understand that it is not only Trump we are protesting against, but the entire premise of Trumpism and all that his philosophy represents. Trump's presidency is a mystery to me. How is it possible that a man of his overt bigotry has risen into such a powerful position?

I believe it is the responsibility of all young people to stand up against Trump and his destructive lunacy.

Interview: 'we could really go and just get our voices heard'

The Socialist spoke to school student Naomi Hunter Epton from Park View School in Tottenham.

Why did you decide to walk out?

I thought it was really important that - for this march to be a success - we have lots of people. And I totally support everything it stood for. So I thought, why not?

My friend Tania let me know about it, and I just thought it was a great idea to come together, and we could really go and just get our voices heard, because so far we haven't had a good opportunity.

How did you organise it?

My friend Tania, I think, she was initially contacted from Socialist Students, and then she sent round an email. And then she got leaflets and gave them out to me, and we all handed out leaflets in the community and in the school. And on the actual day we waited outside the school, like a checkpoint kind of thing, to collect people, and then we could all go.

How was the demonstration?

Oh, it was fantastic! It was so big, for one. And it was so great reading all the signs people had written because people had obviously spent a lot of time coming up with really witty things to say about Trump. It was brilliant.

Such a lovely atmosphere, because everyone was obviously there for the same reason. You didn't know who was standing next to you, but you were all shouting the same thing - and yeah, it was brilliant.

Do you think it will have an effect?

On Donald Trump - well, he's definitely got the message that in fact we don't like him over here. I think we've made it clear that what he previously thought about Britain was not true.

On our school - I think for the students who came, yeah, it was definitely a kind of - like we can actually be part of something. That Socialist Students - I didn't know about it before, but it's actually a really good opportunity to be part of something that can get your voice heard, and contribute to something.

For some of the teachers - it's a definite 'oh no, we actually can't stop them from leaving! They're gonna leave if they want!' And now they know which ones to watch out for, which ones are the political ones. Yeah, the headteacher's a bit wary now.

Did you get support from some of the teachers?

So much support. It was very split. As we were standing outside and we had other teachers coming and shouting at us, telling us to get inside, we also had teachers coming past going "this is amazing, I will be joining you after school, this is so good girls, keep it up!" So much support, it was really lovely.

What do you plan next?

We were talking just before the march with other people from Socialist Students at Trafalgar Square. In our community we thought that the biggest thing we should tackle should be racism. So we had talked about doing meetings at our school, maybe taking it out further in the community.

But also making it a regular thing, and seeing how many people from school would come. Because not a lot of people came to the march during the day, but a lot of people came after school. So we thought that would be a really, really good opportunity in our school. And then maybe, if we had a session in our school, we could partner it up with the other schools who came.

Are there issues at school you'd like to campaign on?

We do definitely have a lack of resources. It can be little things like glue sticks, or just in general, cutting down on printing and things.

Also funding in terms of trips. It feels like - what normally happens is there'll be a trip - for example, we were going to go to Germany, because I did GCSE history. They subsidise it - but still, every student has to pay £200 or whatever.

And then only like two people out of the whole GSCE history classes would pay, because people just can't afford it. If the school could subsidise it more - because people in our community, we actually can't afford this. And it's such a shame that we all have to miss out on it.

So if there was something the government could do to help schools in deprived areas to pay for these trips, because I don't believe it's fair that we miss out because we're poor.

We say that education funding cuts should be reversed - and that means political change

Yes, which we need.

Protesting Trump's visit - action around the country

Southampton

In Southampton, Young Socialists held a protest against Trump and the Tories on 13 July that ran from the Southampton Bargate to the Guildhall.

As I led the protest I found that many students were especially explosive and keen to get their voice heard. Plenty were leading the chants and giving spontaneous speeches!

This will have been the first demo the majority of these students have ever been to, and the energy felt as we chanted in unison was electric. Many of us felt that after so long of being belittled, and having some adults try to tell us what we need, now our voices could finally be heard.

Lots of students signed up straight after the protest. This is very promising for us. We will not be voiceless anymore and will continue to fight for victory against capitalism's doomed future!

Michelle Francis, college student, Southampton Socialist Party

Leicester

Donald Trump's visit provoked anger, disgust, and protest as young, working class people rejected his offensive policies that only benefit the super-rich. Building for the demonstration, we held weekly meetings on subjects related to Trump and the struggle for socialism.

On the Saturday before Trump's visit we did a campaign stall in Leicester. Students from my school saw me on it and shared it on their social media. Others stopped me in school and we had in-depth conversations about how they disagree with Trump and how May has welcomed Trump with a red carpet and open arms.

We had a demo of about 150 people on 13 July. Young people were really keen to hold our placards and sign our petition.

I gave a speech drawing links between Trump and capitalism, and it attracted bunches of youth who listened and spoke to us at our stall. We also had a large group of school students come and we are hoping to build a Young Socialists group in Leicester.

I think the campaign was especially successful because capitalism only works for the rich, not the working class, and we know how badly we are being affected by this messed-up system.

Youth are passionate and ready to make a change. It is only through the socialist transformation of society that we will prevent people like Trump exploiting the working class. If we fight, we can win.

Bethany Morgan Smith, school student, Leicester West Socialist Party

Birmingham

Hundreds attended our protest in Victoria Square, a mix of all ages; students, workers and trade unionists. Birmingham Socialist Students and Young Socialists got great responses from young people on the protest.

People wrote their reasons for protesting on posters which we made into an anti-Trump wall. When asked to pick a reason many responded with "where do I start?" We were the only group calling for an end not just to the Trump presidency, but also to the Tory government.

Lily Branchett, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

Leeds

Around 1,000 marched in Leeds. Trade unionists, young people and campaigners voiced why they were protesting on the Socialist Party's open mic. There was a real international feel as well, with Americans and Mexicans living in Britain speaking.

We ran out of Young Socialists placards before people even started speaking prior to the march, with many others bringing homemade placards or filling in our blank placard posters with their own slogans.

Our call to fight to bring the Tories down saw a flood of people come over to the Young Socialists stall to find out more, with a number paying to join there and then.

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

Hull

Around 200 gathered to hear speeches and music as Hull celebrated what brings working class people together against what divides us.

Coming the day after two of the inspirational striking teachers from West Virginia had spoken at a rally here, numerous speakers made points linking the situation there to Hull and other deindustrialised areas in Britain.

West Virginia had the highest Trump vote in the presidential elections - yet saw an illegal strike spread like wildfire.

Matt Whale, Hull Socialist Party

Labour 'Alternative Models' report: A break with Blairism but Corbyn must go further

The case for socialist nationalisation

Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary

The Alternative Models of Ownership report, launched in June 2017, days after the general election, was commissioned by shadow chancellor John McDonnell.

Although it is not, in itself, official Labour Party policy, many of the points in it were reflected in the popular 2017 election manifesto.

The report starts by stating, "The predominance of private property ownership has led to a lack of long-term investment and declining rates of productivity, undermined democracy, left regions of the country economically forgotten and contributed to increasing levels of inequality and financial insecurity. Alternative measures of ownership can fundamentally address these problems."

And it concludes by declaring their goal as, "nothing other than the creation of an economy which is fairer, more democratic and more sustainable; that would overturn the hierarchies of power in our economy, placing those who create the real wealth in charge; that would end decades of under-investment and wasted potential by tearing down the vested interests that hold this country back. The historic name for that society is socialism, and that is Labour's goal."

The report is one more indication of the positive break with the Blairite era represented by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. Berating the report the pro-capitalist blog CapX demanded investors: "ask yourself this question: would Tony Blair, Gordon Brown or Peter Mandelson have ever let this collection of far-left proposals be published as a Labour Party document when they were in charge?"

The answer, of course, is no. Under Tory governments Britain has led the world when it comes to privatisation.

Of the total value of assets privatised in the world's biggest economies (the OECD) between 1980 and 1996 40% was in the UK.

When New Labour came to power in 1997, however, they didn't set out to reverse the fire sale of public assets, but instead continued it.

Under New Labour the role of the private sector in the NHS and education increased enormously. British Nuclear Fuel and the National Air Traffic Control service were privatised outright, and the preparatory work was done for the privatisation of Royal Mail (which was then completed by the Tories).

Today, the Blairite pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party still makes up a majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party and will do everything it can to prevent the implementation of any policies - including some of those in 'Alternative Models' - that will threaten the interests of the capitalist class.

There are many positives in 'Alternative Models'. When talking about 'national ownership', for example, it emphasises that it "has historically tended to be too centralised, with power in the hands of a private and corporate elite.

"To improve national ownership in the UK requires taking measures to increase the democratic accountability of state ownership."

Post-war era

Today, millions of workers look back to the post-war era, with its larger public sector, as a golden era.

Nonetheless, it should not be a model for the future. Companies that the bosses had brought to bankruptcy were taken over by the state, with the bosses paid lavish overcompensation.

They were then run on a bureaucratic model with pro-capitalist management, often former owners and managers, installed.

Publicly-owned companies in the future should instead be run under democratic workers' control and management, based on elected committees including service users and representatives of the trade union movement in each workplace, the trade unions nationally, and to a government representing working class interests as a whole.

'Alternative Models' also makes good points about how new technology is currently used to throw workers on the scrapheap, when instead it should be used improve society for all, for example with shorter working hours.

But despite the positive aspects of 'Alternative Models', it has a serious weakness. It assumes the capitalist elite in Britain will acquiesce to its proposals and therefore has no plans to counter their sabotage.

Yet all the evidence suggests that the capitalist class in Britain is terrified of a Corbyn government and will do all it can to try and prevent it being elected and, if it is, implementing a radical programme.

Look at how Labour overtaking the Tories in the polls over recent weeks has led to a renewed frenzy of attacks on Corbyn by the right wing media and the Blairites - yet this is as nothing to what they would do to try and undermine him if he wins a general election.

John McDonnell has suggested it will be possible to win much of big business and the city to Labour's programme.

However, big business has responded to this very clearly and very negatively. Carolyn Fairbairn, director-general of the CBI bosses' club, has repeatedly urged Labour to abandon its: "vision of significant state intervention including nationalisation, PFI and government procurement".

The CBI has been particularly vehement against proposals to reverse privatisation in the NHS, saying 'investors would run for the hills'.

Over the coming two decades around £200 billion is due to be paid out of the public sector to private companies involved in PFI schemes.

The corporations that have bled our public sector dry will not easily give that money up.

It would be naive to imagine that the enormous pressure to capitulate and accept austerity which was exerted on the Syriza government in Greece, not least by the International Monetary Fund, would not be repeated if a Corbyn-led government came to power in Britain.

On the contrary, it would face a situation comparable to the experience of the 1981 French Socialist Party government led by President Mitterrand.

Swept to power on a wave of enthusiasm, the Mitterrand government's programme included a 10% increase in the minimum wage, the introduction of a 39-hour week, increased pensions, and nationalisation of a number of major corporations and banks.

Initially a number of these reforms were implemented, but the government came under wholesale attack from French and international capitalism and from the markets.

After only a hundred days in office, the government went into reverse. In June 1982 a freeze on wages was introduced and public spending was cut by 20 million francs as a part of a general turn to what today would be called austerity.

In Britain from 1974-76, when the Harold Wilson Labour government, far more modestly than Mitterrand, just attempted to increase taxation on the major corporations, the capitalist class conducted a huge campaign against it, including threatening a strike of capital. The result was the proposal being watered down so far it was effectively annulled.

However, far from putting forward a programme to defeat such sabotage, 'Alternative Models' suggests that the capitalist class are sympathetic to Labour's programme.

It points to how "around the world, countries are now rejecting privatisation" and argues that: "This is creating the space for a range of alternative models of ownership." No concrete examples are given of countries rejecting privatisation.

There is growing opposition to privatisation among the working and middle class people in many countries, as indicated by the popularity of left figures from Bernie Sanders in the US to Corbyn in Britain.

It is a very different story when it comes to the capitalist classes of the US and Europe, who continue to favour privatisation.

In 2017 alone, five countries received recommendations from the EU to privatise state-owned companies.

In Britain, despite the gigantic scale of privatisation that has already taken place, further chunks of the public sector, particularly of the NHS, continue to pass into private hands.

Where such measures are prevented it is only as a result of determined struggle by workers and service users.

McDonnell has also repeatedly insisted that the nationalisation that Labour is proposing will be 'free' because the government will be buying an asset.

The price, he has suggested, would be decided by parliament. It is absolutely clear, however, that the owners of the private companies will try to sabotage that plan, including by demanding the highest possible price.

They have already suggested that it would cost £90 billion to nationalise the water companies!

It is easy to imagine them fighting a Corbyn-led government for years through the courts to try and delay nationalisation while bumping up their price.

These vultures have made a fortune from our public utilities. In 2013 alone, for example, The 19 water firms made profits of more than £2.05billion, handed out £1.86billion to shareholders but paid just £74million in tax.

Seven of them paid no corporation tax at all. The way to answer their sabotage would be immediate nationalisation with no compensation to the fat cats, but only to small shareholders on the basis of proven need.

The same goes for the railways. Corbyn has said the railway companies will be nationalised when the franchises come up for renewal.

However, the normal length for the franchises to run is seven years. This would mean that, even after five years of a Corbyn-led government, some companies will still be in private hands.

Of course it is true that the capitalist class are not opposed to nationalisation in all circumstances.

In the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, governments in a whole series of countries - starting with Britain - stepped in to underpin or nationalise banks in order to prevent the economic meltdown that would have resulted from their collapse.

This, however, was a totally different thing to nationalisation in order to build a society for the many not the few.

On the contrary it was nationalisation to save the fortunes of the few while the rest of us paid for the economic crisis with a decade of austerity.

There was virtually no punishment for the bankers who had triggered the crisis - not one was jailed!

Fred 'the shred' Goodwin had his knighthood removed, but was allowed to retire with a £16 million pension - hardly punishment! And the banks continued to be run on a big business model - it was socialism for the rich not the working class majority.

Far from starting a trend towards ending privatisation the Tories are moving to try and put the banks back into private hands at the earliest opportunity.

As 'Alternative Models' recognises, the banks are currently only willing to invest if they can make a quick buck, and it is therefore often difficult for small businesses and cooperatives to gain access to financial support.

Cooperatives are given considerable weight in the document, and are put forward as a possible 'alternative model'.

This idea is badly undermined however when it says that the "jury is still out" on whether John Lewis is a worker cooperative!

Tell that to the staff who were paid below the minimum wage for six years and who have no union recognition.

Nonetheless, there may be circumstances where genuine worker cooperatives could play a positive role.

However, while it recognises the difficulty in cooperatives and other small businesses gaining access to finance, 'Alternative Models' does not come up with a convincing solution.

McDonnell has put forward the idea of a national investment bank to provide finance for investment. He has pledged that the government would put up £250 billion over 10 years, and would attract another £250 billion from the private sector.

This will be welcomed by many, but to have any significant effect, British capitalism would have to be willing to start investing.

Yet, over the last decade rates of investment have been at historical lows - not because the capitalist class have no cash - but because they prefer to sit on it than to invest it, lacking confidence that they could make fat enough profits from doing so.

This is a condemnation of modern capitalism, which no longer carries out its historical role of developing science, technique and industry.

Even before the economic crisis, when profits were at an all-time high, levels of investment remained low.

The way forward would be for a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government to nationalise the banking and finance industry, under the democratic control of workers and users.

This would provide the credit required to develop all socially-useful sectors of the economy. Unfortunately, however, Corbyn and McDonnell have not proposed this, instead going out of their way to reassure the City that they will not even bring the Bank of England back under government control instead leaving it as 'independent' - that is private.

But this leaves enormous power in the hands of the banks and finance sector to not only continue to refuse to invest in cooperatives and other small businesses that 'Alternative Models' favours, but also to actively sabotage Corbyn's programme.

Does this mean that a programme to create a society for the many not the few is utopian? Not at all! But it would be necessary to go further than 'Alternative Models' does.

Alongside nationalisation of the banks and finance houses there would also have to be capital controls to prevent any flight of capital.

Beyond that the only way to stop the endless sabotage of the capitalist class would be nationalisation of the small number of giant corporations that dominate our economy.

Monopolies

The FTSE 100 accounts for 81% of market capitalisation in Britain. Nationalising them would lay the basis for a democratic plan of production run by elected representatives of the workers and the wider community.

On this basis it would be possible to harness the new technology created by capitalism, not to increase exploitation of the working class, but to build a society that met the needs of all.

Any government carrying out such a policy would need to mobilise the working class in support of its policies and to have an international perspective, collaborating with the workers' movement in other countries to develop socialist planning at an international level.

However, in a globalised world, the enormous similarities between the struggles facing the working class in different countries mean that such a government would have a very immediate and widespread resonance.

A socialist government in any country of Europe that acted to break with capitalism would immediately receive enormous support from workers across the continent, above all in those hardest hit by austerity.

- Hannah Sell will be a keynote speaker at [Socialism 2018](#). This weekend event will provide the opportunity to discuss and debate these questions of public ownership, the civil war within the Labour Party, how can socialism be achieved and much, much more. 20% discount on tickets available now!

Kentish Road victory: Respite centre saved by determined campaign

Keith Morrell Southampton anti-cuts councillor and Sue Atkins Southampton Socialist Party

"This has not been the city council's finest hour", said Southampton Labour's new leader as he announced that Kentish Road Respite Centre is to be reopened. He apologised to all the families who use the centre for what they have been put through.

For over a year families have fought to save the centre from closure. The centre provides vital support to families caring for loved ones with life-long special needs. Losing it would have had a devastating effect on some of the city's most vulnerable people.

When Labour councillors voted unanimously to close the centre, few people even knew it existed. As a result of the campaign by families, 'Kentish Road' is now known throughout the city.

Campaigners, led by Lisa Stead and Amanda Guest, have broadcasted their message of defiance and received overwhelming support. Using demonstrations and the local press, television and radio they have battered the city council.

City Councillor Keith Morrell and the Socialist Party has fully backed the campaign from the outset.

There have been casualties. In May, the previous Labour council leader, who took personal responsibility for the closure, lost his seat on the council. The cabinet member for adult social care has been sacked from the cabinet.

It is regrettable that despite Momentum supporters capturing the leadership of Southampton Labour Party this year and expressing sympathy for the campaign, they failed to take any meaningful action to hold Labour councillors to account. It was only the determined campaign which forced the reversal of the closure decision.

The Tory opposition jumped on the campaign bandwagon. They proposed handing the running of the centre over to a private provider or charity. But campaigners insisted that it should be funded and staffed as a council service, and that will now happen.

Initially, the centre will reopen at weekends only, with emergency respite during the week. But Lisa and Amanda have promised that "we will continue to fight" until the full range of services previously available is restored.

This is a massive win for the families and demonstrates that putting up a fight and mobilising local communities can save public services.

Tories' LGBT Action Plan: 'A cynical ploy with no solutions'

Michael Johnson, Socialist Party LGBT+ group

Two thirds of LGBT+ people are afraid of holding their partner's hand in public, or being open about their sexuality for fear of a negative reaction.

More than a quarter of young LGBT+ people in education have experienced verbal harassment, insults or forced 'outings'. A quarter of LGBT+ people in work have had negative reactions to their sexuality in the last 12 months.

Nearly half of LGBT+ people have faced homophobic reactions from strangers in the last year. Nearly all LGBT+ people experiencing this harassment do not report it for reasons like "it happens all the time" or the feeling that nothing would change.

The Tories have launched their LGBT Action Plan to tackle these issues. Unsurprisingly it fails to do anything of the sort.

The plan acknowledges a huge number of the issues facing LGBT+ people. From lack of education in schools about sexuality, to shrinking services for LGBT+ people. From the disproportionate representation of LGBT+ youth in the homeless population, to lack of access to mental health services. More than half of LGBT+ people trying to access mental health services report difficulties due to long waiting times.

Of course nowhere in this plan is there any recognition of the Tories' role in creating this environment. Policies like Section 28, and in the modern day, austerity and privatisation, have had a brutal impact on the NHS and LGBT+ services.

The plan frequently acknowledges services like sexual health (where a number of services across England have had funding cut in half), gender identity, domestic violence and victim support are massively oversubscribed.

But the solution of ending austerity and properly funding these services is ignored. A £4.5m 'LGBT Implementation Fund' will barely meet existing need, let alone improve access to services.

Indeed, very few of the problems raised in this action plan are met with real solutions. To the question of tackling LGBT+ youth homelessness, their answer is data collection. Not building affordable, safe council housing.

Meeting LGBT+ people's physical and mental health and social care needs? Data collection and policy writing. Not ensuring a fully-funded NHS and social care system.

Addressing LGBT+ people's safety around the world? Giving them travel advice. Do the Tories realise that deporting LGBT+ asylum seekers doesn't count as giving them travel advice?

There's no doubt that this plan is a cynical ploy by the Tories to appear 'progressive' without providing any genuine improvements in LGBT+ rights or services.

In truth, the only way the needs of LGBT+ people highlighted in this plan can be met is the same way all the steps forward for the community have been made so far. Fighting and campaigning. LGBT+ people should unite with trade unions and other campaigning groups to build a united working class movement against Tory austerity and for socialist change, the only way to win real liberation for all.

Fighting for trans rights at Bristol pride

Maddy Steeds, Socialist Party LGBT+ group

The biggest Bristol Pride yet took place on the 14 June. Following the attempts by anti-trans rights campaigners to hijack London pride, Bristol Socialist Party was out campaigning to support trans rights and fight for the rights of all LGBT+ people and oppressed groups in society.

Our message of supporting trans rights and fighting for the right to self-identify your gender was strongly supported by the crowd. Our material pointed out the need to build a united working class struggle as the way to ultimately end all forms of oppression.

500 leaflets were given out and one passerby said "I'm so glad to see you here after the events at London Pride".

On the day we sold badges and painted rainbows on people's faces in exchange for a donation. Over £50 was raised for the Socialist Party.

The depoliticisation of Pride has meant many people go to Pride to party rather than protest. However our success in Bristol shows that people at Pride are open to socialist ideas and see the need for Pride to be political.

10,000 at Northern Pride

Initial estimates put the draw for Northern Pride in Newcastle at way over 10,000. LGBT+ people from across Britain were drawn to the energetic and vibrant event to celebrate our sexuality.

A number of trade unions participated too, albeit and sadly in a muted tone. Pride is an event which should offer an alternative vision of society for working class people, one in which demands for LGBT+ rights are pronounced strongly.

As regular readers of the Socialist will be aware however Pride has fallen prey to the infection of corporate propaganda and encouragement from bosses for LGBT+ people to rally around marketing brands instead of our demands for liberation, to end austerity and unite working class people.

I was outraged to discover the LGBT Tories marching ahead of the GMB general union. LGBT+ workers should be marching at Pride events behind trade union banners, not the logos of their respective employers.

William Jarrett, Newcastle Socialist Party

Durham Miners' Gala 2018

The Socialist Party took part in the Durham Miners' Gala, the largest trade union gathering in Europe, on 14 July. Tens of thousands attended the 134th 'Big Meeting' which saw the crowds march behind hundreds of trade union banners and other groups like the Liverpool 47 socialist councillors, who fought Thatcher in the 1980s.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn spoke at the rally and pledged a future Labour government would restore trade union rights. Another theme of the gala was opposition to Donald Trump's visit to Britain that weekend.

The Socialist Party sold 200 copies of the Socialist and met lots of young people interested in joining us.

Obituary: Ged Travers 1957-2018

John Boadle, Coventry Socialist Party

Socialist Party members in Coventry were saddened to learn that Ged Travers passed away on Saturday 14 July, after two years of a brave and dignified struggle against cancer.

Ged learned a healthy disrespect for authority during his service with the RAF. He first joined our party in the early 1980s.

Years as a firefighter at Birmingham airport introduced him to trade unionism. And as a Coventry bus driver he successfully helped lead a major strike in 2001, where his character and vast knowledge of past strikes were invaluable.

He always had a passion for reading and learning. This included areas like film and photography but mostly he wanted to know about working-class struggle. This took him to study at Ruskin College in Oxford.

He was incredibly well-read and was debating the details of Trotsky's memoirs with party members only days before passing away. One Coventry Socialist remarked "Ged inspired me to read, read independently and read critically".

There was a personal struggle as well, over some years, with alcohol and drugs. We mention this because in 2011 he achieved the rare feat of giving both up completely. The determination and strength of character that took was one of Ged's most impressive characteristics.

Free to resume life, he took a low-cost journey around the Balkans ending up in Greece, a country entering political crisis. He took a liking to that country's fighters, as they did to him. We can do no better than end with extracts from the obituary they wrote:

"On July 14, our comrade Ged Travers left our life.

"We met Ged in Greece in 2011 when he first came here for a few months to find out what was happening in our country during the crisis. He liked and stayed in Thessalonica, where he photographed scenes in the city, mainly from a political and journalistic perspective.

"He stayed in our country for several years, making friends and forming relationships with many people. He actively participated in the political life of Xekinima (the Greek sister party of the Socialist Party) despite the language barrier and took part in many mobilisations of the anti-gold mining movement in Halkidiki.

"Laughing and always easy to talk to, he was a very warm presence for all of us. Farewell good comrade Ged, we will always remember your smile!"

Plastic waste - capitalism's Frankenstein monster

Only socialist planning on an international scale can protect the environment

Pete Dickenson, Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

Plastic waste is now penetrating every corner of the globe, from the Arctic to the Antarctic and including the Mariana Trench, the deepest point on Earth.

Pollution caused by discarded plastic has become a major environmental threat. Apart from causing a major littering problem, plastic debris is entering all levels of the ocean food chain, and can end up in the seafood we eat, where the long-term health effects are unknown.

Big pieces of plastic are choking and entangling seabirds and minute pieces are clogging the stomachs of marine creatures who mistake it for food, from plankton to whales.

Globally, annual plastics production has risen from 2 million tonnes in 1950 to 380 million tonnes in 2015, with 12.7 million tonnes of this ending up in the oceans. The increase has been driven by plastic items that are used once only, such as for food packaging or disposable water bottles. In the UK alone, the volume of such single-use plastics discarded each year would fill the Royal Albert Hall 1,000 times over.

Major culprits are the supermarkets, who use 800,000 tonnes of plastic packaging every year. To counter the criticism, Morrisons has declared that it will switch over to paper-based packaging. This type of packaging can have the advantage of being bio-degradable if it is manufactured in the right way, which will break down quickly and be reabsorbed into the earth, in contrast to plastic that will continue to pollute for hundreds of years.

But there are problems with this, because paper packaging requires more energy to manufacture than plastic and therefore will generate more greenhouse gases that cause global warming. Also, because it is made from timber, its use could accelerate the destruction of the world's forests that absorb the carbon dioxide which is the main greenhouse gas threat, and so compound the problem.

This highlights the danger of looking at an environmental problem from one side only. Consideration of the hazards of plastic and paper use have to include their impact on global warming. The greenhouse gas emissions resulting from making four plastic bottles are the same as travelling one mile in a medium sized petrol car (Bright Blue website). World plastic production is projected to rise to 34 billion tonnes by 2050, nearly 100 times the present level, by which time it will account for 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

This figure could be even higher if financial pressures from austerity lead to plastic being converted into jet fuel, which is technically possible and more profitable than recycling, but will ratchet up greenhouse gas output even more.

The danger of this happening is real, because the drive to recycle plastic, which can reduce the scale of the problem, is under huge pressure from government cuts. And as mentioned already, paper production will generate even more greenhouse gases if it takes over from plastic as the main method of packaging, if it is not done carbon free.

Recycling

In theory, recycling existing plastic, so that it is used over and over again, rather than being dumped in landfill or tipped into the oceans, could reduce the impact on the environment but not solve it, because recycling itself requires large amounts of energy and therefore can drive global warming.

Also, there is a limit to what can be recycled. Current estimates are that a maximum of 56% is recyclable. Despite the recycling mantra heard all the time from establishment politicians looking for green credibility, the reality is that only 9% of all the plastic ever produced has been recycled. This is because it is more profitable to dump plastic waste than to recycle it. Governments, particularly in the age of austerity, are not prepared to meet the bill and so are looking for a cheap way out.

A recent article in the Mirror exposed the racket that is currently going on. Because it is much cheaper, Britain like most other industrialised countries exports nearly all of its plastic waste to poorer countries 'for recycling'.

Until recently China was the main recipient, but in 2017 refused to take any more because processing the material was proving to be more difficult than expected, ie more expensive. As a result, other poorer countries like Bangladesh along with Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, are now taking Britain's waste plastic.

In the first four months of this year plastic waste exports to Vietnam for example, increased by 51%.

A Mirror reporter went to Bangladesh and found that most of the plastic was being tipped into rivers or put in landfill by super-exploited child labourers. As a result, Bangladesh as well as Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia are now in the top ten countries contributing to ocean plastic waste, but nearly all of this pollution originates in industrialised countries like Britain.

In December last year, Michael Gove the environment secretary announced that we had to 'stop offshoring our dirt', but his department later confirmed that that were no plans to stop sending plastic scrap abroad.

Urgent action is needed to reverse the projected explosion in plastic waste, but the response of the government and Theresa May was to launch a 25-year programme to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste, that will include abolishing plastic straws and introducing plastic-free aisles in supermarkets.

May made the proviso though that only those measures that were economically practical would be implemented. Pointing out that it was already three years behind schedule, Labour's environment spokesperson, Sue Hayman, correctly called this a 'cynical attempt to rebrand the Tory image'.

Way forward

What needs to be done is to cut down plastic use as far as possible and recycle what remains. The demand for single use plastic water bottles can be reduced by providing hygienic drinking fountains and refill points for reusable bottles. For sit-down customers, cafes should use reusable cups.

These measures would cut down the use of disposable plastic cups and bottles significantly. What remains will have to be recycled. At the moment, 16 million single-use plastic bottles are not recycled, but a deposit scheme on bottles has been shown to increase collection rates by 90%.

Plastic food wrapping is largely single use and often cannot be recycled. This needs to be replaced with paper-based packaging where it is not possible to eliminate packaging altogether. (Packaging can prolong the life of perishable food products, so removing it could lead to greater waste, so the scope for doing this will be limited.)

But, since manufacturing paper packaging exacerbates global warming by increasing greenhouse gas emissions, it must be generated carbon free, and the timber that is used as its source material must be guaranteed to be replenished, in order not to solve one problem and replace it with something worse.

These measures to remove the menace of plastic pollution are simple and, compared to the cost of tackling global warming, not expensive. But there is no sign of even these limited reforms being addressed in a serious or urgent way. We are just left with Theresa May's 25-year programme to eliminate plastic straws and introduce plastic-free checkouts in supermarkets.

Recycling has become a sham, with the majority of the UK's waste now ending up in landfill in poor countries or dumped in the oceans. Even for cheap but effective measures like introducing a deposit scheme for plastic bottles there is no sign of government action.

The reason for this deadlock is not just due to the financial pressures of austerity, it goes deeper than this. It is because tackling environmental threats is always near the bottom of the priorities of any capitalist government, because taking effective measures in this area threatens profits, the competition for which is at the heart of the market system.

For example, even before the Great Recession and financial crisis of 2008 and the start of the present era of austerity, all governments had refused to take any meaningful action to address the mortal threat of runaway climate change for more than 15 years.

Even if the Tory government did eventually end austerity, the main beneficiaries would be its friends in big business, not the environment.

May has already signalled this by saying that only measures that are 'economically practical' would be considered. Michael Gove is currently baulking at the cost of introducing a deposit return scheme for plastic bottles, so what chance is there of serious action on the main measures to cut plastic pollution, never mind global warming?

It is welcome that Jeremy Corbyn has put democratic public ownership back on the political agenda and by linking this to achieving environmental objectives, seriously addressed the threats facing us. This is a refreshing contrast to the cynical green phrase-mongering that the Tories have been guilty of since Cameron posed with his huskies in the Arctic.

But a future Corbyn government will face an onslaught from the capitalists and their co-thinkers in the right wing of the Labour Party, including huge pressure to drop any radical plans on the environment.

There is a warning in the attitude of Gove in resisting making even tiny concessions on the question of a deposit scheme for plastic bottles. The bosses he represents do not want to give an inch where their profits are concerned. Even the very limited piecemeal programme Labour has put forward will be bitterly fought, but to have any chance of being effective on the environment a radical approach is essential.

The only meaningful way to tackle environmental threats is to replace the capitalist dog-eat-dog system, where competition for profit between the main imperialist powers prevents any meaningful cooperation, and to replace it with a democratically run, publicly owned economy.

In such a society for the first time it will be possible to plan for the harmonious development of the economy alongside taking the serious measures that are needed to address the range of environmental threats facing us.

Planning for the Planet: How Socialism Could Save the Environment

- by the author of this article, Pete Dickenson £10 plus p&p
- Available from Left Books, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, 020 8988 8789
- leftbooks.co.uk
- bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk

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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!

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