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Editorial of the Socialist issue 1007

Capitalism is a chaotic, irrational system - we need socialist change

We need change and we need it now. A future for humanity and the planet is at stake.

As early as 2030 there will be no summer ice in the Arctic Ocean. Areas of water normally frozen all year round are open for the first time after the oldest and thickest sea ice in the area started to break up for the first time on record. Scientists described this potential turning point as 'scary'. The impact of climate events this summer has been huge - with devastating floods in the south of India and wildfires in several countries.

To avoid a climate catastrophe, any rational society would take urgent action. It would turn the best scientific minds to investigating solutions and preparing contingencies. It would, for example, invest huge amounts in alternatives to fossil fuels.

But this event - and the many others that indicate wide-reaching policy change is needed to save the environment - has led to no fundamental change in governments' policies. Because they dance to the tune of the capitalist system and make decisions almost solely in the interests of short-term profit.

The same has been shown by other recent events. The collapse of the Morandi bridge in Italy and resulting death of 43 people horrified working class people (see [Italy: Morandi bridge collapse - your profits are our dead' at socialistworld.net](#)). But it wasn't a shock from nowhere. It was an almost predictable consequence of the privatisation of Italian motorway management - demanded by a system that sees no use in something that doesn't create profit for the capitalist class.

There had been prior warnings about the risk to the Morandi bridge but nothing was done. And it's not a uniquely Italian problem - even as long ago as 1999 a study found that 30% of road bridges in Europe had some sort of defect. In the US it's estimated that 8.8% of all bridges are "structurally deficient" - that's over 54,000 dangerous bridges. Let alone if we looked at all the other types of infrastructure crumbling under the weight of privatisation and underinvestment. But still far too little will be done.

Austerity kills

If the capitalist politicians don't care enough about roads, the situation is even more pronounced when it comes to their disinterest in the welfare of the majority of people. The UK has experienced the worst slowdown of increase in life expectancy in the top 20 world economies. Experts point out the link to the crisis of social care for the elderly. Austerity is literally killing us. But it makes sense for capitalism so it carries on.

The capitalist press has cheered the alleged emergence of the Greek economy from a three year 'bailout deal' where the Syriza government committed to implementing brutal austerity in exchange for further loans from the European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund and European Union. Over half a million have emigrated. 20% are unemployed. More than a quarter of children live in poverty.

An ordinary person might be forgiven for assuming the celebrations meant the end of the suffering of the Greek people. But the 'emergence' being championed merely means the country can borrow at market rates for the first time since 2010. The repayments are due to continue for decades - at least. The cuts and privatisation will continue.

On all fronts - from the environment and infrastructure, to jobs and services, to health and wellbeing - this system is failing us. It's no wonder that people are looking for an alternative. Poll after poll tells us that an increasing number, especially of young people, have a more favourable view of socialism than capitalism.

And the desire for change is not just in polls. It's seen in the tens of thousands who attended rallies for Bernie Sanders and his 'political revolution against the billionaire class' during the US presidential primaries. In the surge behind Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader and the 'youthquake' in the general election. In the US teachers' strikes and the mass protests against the oppression of women in the Spanish state.

This potential rising tide of mass opposition, combined with the unresolved economic crisis of capitalism, is fundamentally what is behind the political crises of the capitalist classes around the world. It is why US capitalism finds itself with a billionaire president but not under its control. It is also behind the Brexit divisions within the Tory party here in Britain, and the civil war in Labour.

Working class people have the potential power to end this destruction and chaos. The Socialist Party stands for the nationalisation of the major corporations that dominate the economy under democratic workers' control and management. This would allow the formulation of a plan for the production of goods and services in a way that can meet the needs of people and the environment. A socialist world - run democratically to meet the needs and wants of the majority, not the profits of the super-rich - can end the insecurities of war, poverty, and oppression, opening up the possibility of a plentiful and peaceful future for all.

Trump ally prosecutions: beginning of the end for US president?

Helen Pattison, Socialist Party national committee

Trump and his government are facing a fresh crisis. First his election campaign manager, Paul Manafort, was found guilty of financial crimes including tax and bank fraud. Then his former lawyer, Michael Cohen, pleaded guilty to breaking election campaign funding laws.

Trump and his allies continue to expose themselves as the self-interested capitalists they are - not 'anti-establishment' in the slightest.

These rulings are particularly important to the Trump administration as they could mean his election campaign itself also broke the law. It has triggered fresh calls for Congress to begin impeaching the already-weak president - although the Democratic Party, itself no friend of workers, has resisted calls for this so far.

Already, a number of his influential supporters are jumping ship. Some now say they will cooperate with former FBI director Robert Mueller's investigation into claims of Russian collusion with Trump's campaign.

Trump was never the chosen candidate of US capitalism. It was his popularity among a section of voters - compared to business-as-usual Republican (and Democratic) candidates - that allowed Trump to win the Republican Party nomination, and enough electoral college votes to defeat the pro-Wall Street Hillary Clinton.

Up till now, the bosses have been biding their time before tackling Trump's more destabilising policies head-on - while counting their blessings when it comes to cuts in corporation tax, for example.

Ever since Trump's election, the Socialist Party's co-thinkers in the US, like Seattle councillor Kshama Sawant, have raised the need to build a mass movement capable of driving out this rotten, racist, sexist, anti-worker administration. There have been huge protests in the US along with solidarity actions around the world, which have helped force back Trump's government on a number of policies.

If a mass movement does force Trump out, then whoever replaces him, however vile politically, would face even more complications when attacking working people than Trump has - not least the fear of both establishment parties or further movements from an emboldened working class. It would be a huge show of strength by ordinary people of their ability to change US society in their interests.

With such an apparently easy target, there could be the expectation that the Democrats will have an easy midterm congressional election. Understandably, many ordinary people in the US will look to the Democratic

Party, believing it provides the only viable way to get rid of Trump. Some may also believe that 'moderate' - meaning conservative - candidates must be selected to win back seats from Republicans.

Yet it's pro-worker policies that revitalised millions of people in the US to support Bernie Sanders during the presidential primaries two years ago, and which continue to be the most popular: universal healthcare and a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, among others.

It was policies like these that helped Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who calls herself a "democratic socialist," win a Democratic congressional nomination in New York. If the Democratic Party ran on such policies, it would fare much better than in 2016.

But her win is the exception rather than the rule. The majority of voters will be offered two similar establishment candidates in November's midterm elections.

And unfortunately, even Ocasio-Cortez has since tweeted that the late Republican senator "John McCain's legacy represents an unparalleled example of human decency and American service." This shows she is not consistent in opposition to the political representatives of capitalism.

If the Democratic Party makes gains in the midterms despite its programme, the talk of impeaching Trump could grow, as the two-thirds majority needed in the Senate may look more possible. The establishment will continue to grope for a replacement candidate who can represent the ruling class's interests reliably.

But some sections of workers in the US - especially those hostile to the 'Washington swamp' and taken in by Trump's claims that he is on their side - could see impeachment as an establishment attack on an 'anti-establishment' figure, because of Trump's populist posing.

So rather than fighting only for impeachment or the replacement of one capitalist politician with another, the most important task for socialists is building a viable mass movement - ultimately, a new party - against racism, sexism and capitalism. Such a movement will need to force out Trump and the Republicans, but also have no time for the big business establishment in the Democrats.

A movement from below, built on fighting for pro-working class demands - like the recent US teachers' strike wave - can pull together ordinary people across the US left behind by a decade of economic crisis, for a real socialist alternative to capitalism.

Venezuela: How can reaction and imperialism be defeated?

The recent attempted assassination of Venezuela's president Nicolas Maduro has once again focussed attention on the deepening economic, social and political crisis in the country. Izquierda Revolucionaria (CWI in Venezuela) in the following article explains that Maduro is using his party and the state bureaucracy not in defence of 'socialism' but instead to manage capitalism and retain power.

On the afternoon of 4 August, various explosions on Bolivar Avenue in Caracas interrupted the speech of President Nicolas Maduro during a military parade.

That night, the information minister Jorge Rodriguez announced that there had been a terrorist attack carried out by drones loaded with C4 explosives. He said that seven soldiers had been injured and several people had been arrested, with the attack attributed to sections of the right and extreme right.

The group claiming responsibility for the attack - 'soldiers of Franela' - are followers of far-right linked military chief Oscar Perez, who died in a shoot-out with the national guard in January, and author of the terrorist attack on the supreme court in June 2017.

The 4 August attack was part of 'operation Phoenix' with the objective of killing Maduro and bringing down the Venezuelan government.

Coup plotters

The violent, terrorist character of the right wing in Venezuela is news to no one. The capitalist media, right-wing governments around the world and many sections of social democracy, present these elements as mere opposition forces fighting for democracy. The reality is that these forces have habitually resorted to violence and terror.

The last 'guarimba' (violent street barricades) episode caused over 100 deaths between March and July 2017. These terrorist methods were one of the reasons for the failure of the opposition offensive and of the MUD's (electoral opposition coalition) attempt to take power.

The 4 August attack took place exactly one year after the government's victory in the constituent national assembly elections. In those elections, while millions of the poorest mobilised to defeat the coup strategy of the right, millions of Chavista (supporters of the late president Hugo Chavez) voters and activists also used them to express their discontent with the capitalist policies of the Maduro government, by organising and supporting critical candidates and demanding a shift to the left.

Since then, the response of Maduro, the state apparatus and PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela - the ruling party) bureaucracy has been to divide, isolate and repress all critical left movements. At the same time it has reaffirmed its policy of agreements with sections of Venezuelan capitalism, following the advice of its international advisers (especially the Chinese government which finances a lot of Venezuela's debt).

Their objective is not to defend or deepen the revolution but to stabilise Venezuelan capitalism with themselves in the lead, and to dismantle, in practice, the most left measures taken by Chavez due to the pressure of the masses.

In reality, Maduro has executed a clear shift to the right in government. His economic policies have led to constant price rises and cuts to the wages and rights of workers.

He has gifted mountains of cash and 'aid' to the new capitalists born from the ranks of the bureaucracy due to its control over the state, and to sections of the traditional bourgeoisie who have made agreements with the government. He has allowed multinationals from China, Iran and Russia - so-called friends - to make juicy profits thanks to mixed companies and trade deals to exploit our natural resources.

While a section of the capitalists and US imperialism still favour an economic collapse to allow them to rebuild their social base and bring down Maduro, another section is in favour of agreements, at least temporarily, with the government. They would like Maduro, or sections of the military leadership or bureaucracy, armed with a Chavista discourse, to lead a transition which liquidates the remaining gains of the revolutionary process.

This shift to the right is in the context of a situation where the vast majority of the working class and poor are struggling hard to survive along with their families. The accumulated fall in GDP (national output) over the last three years is reportedly over 40%.

Annual inflation is around 46,000% according to the International Monetary Fund, which predicts it could reach an incredible 1,000,000%!

Bureaucratism

The attempts by critical sectors within the Chavista rank and file and the workers' movement to struggle against this situation have been dispersed.

Demoralisation and scepticism has been generated among wide sectors of the population by the rightward turn. Also, the lack of a united and independent working class party possessing a clear and decisive political

programme of demands - and which unites the left opposition to the bureaucracy - represents a grave difficulty.

Furthermore, the bureaucratic control over mass organisations which were built in the period of revolutionary growth, such as the CSBT trade union federation and the PSUV, has been reinforced.

The PSUV acts as an appendage of the state apparatus, in a similar way to the communist parties of the former Stalinist states (the USSR, etc) - with the difference that Venezuela is not a 'deformed workers' state' based on a planned economy, but a capitalist state based on capitalist relations of production and dependent on the world market to an extreme degree (due to the size of the oil industry).

Maduro and his collaborators have a model to look to: China, which is a clear promotor of state capitalism based on an authoritarian Bonapartist regime (ie the state 'balances' above the contending social classes) and which has broken any link with revolutionary traditions.

Despite Maduro's continuous pompous declarations about socialism and revolution, his policy consists of using the state and party apparatus to manage capitalism and remain in power.

One of the possible consequences of the 4 August terrorist attack is that it can serve the bureaucracy to justify intensifying authoritarian measures and strengthening the tendency to criminalise protests and left-wing critics.

The counterrevolutionary opposition is trying to take advantage of the terrible economic situation and social discontent by launching the so-called 'Broad Front'. However, for the time being they have had no success and their base remains passive and demoralised.

In the presidential elections Maduro was reelected with an abstention rate of over 50% and the support of less than 30% of the electorate. Imperialism and its Venezuelan puppets refused to recognise the results but their calls to protest on the streets were a failure.

The bureaucracy tried to portray the result as a great victory, but this is easily seen through.

Popular discontent could become even sharper with the new measures announced by the government, including the recent savage devaluation of the currency.

Many Venezuelans have voted with their feet and sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The scale of this exodus is, in turn, producing huge social problems in Brazil, Colombia and elsewhere.

Capitalist failure

The fundamental problem remains the collapse of the productive economy and investment strike, and the looting of oil wealth by the capitalists and bureaucracy.

Weak and parasitic Venezuelan capitalism cannot guarantee a dignified life to the masses. The international ruling class presents the paralysis of the Venezuelan economy as the result of 'socialism'.

The reality is that the Bolivarian revolution was not completed. Chavez implemented progressive reforms which raised living standards. But the measures necessary to end capitalism - the nationalisation of the banks, land estates and big companies, and the destruction of capitalist bureaucracy, laws and institutions - were never taken.

The only alternative is a genuinely socialist programme which takes, once and for all, the economic and political power from the hands of the capitalists and bureaucrats and puts it in the hands of the workers and poor.

- [See full article on socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

China: Solidarity with victimised Jasic Technology workers

Since 18 July, workers at Jasic Technology - a factory in Shenzhen employing 1,000 workers making machines and robots - have been campaigning to set up a democratic, independent, trade union. The company, local CCP ('communist') government, and the official state-controlled union oppose this demand and have viciously cracked down on the struggle.

The company has sacked several workers who are leading the struggle.

Police detained 30 workers on 27 July. Many are still being held. Workers have reported torture and physical assaults by police. Those released are under police surveillance.

Protests

Workers and left-wing student activists have staged protests outside the police station against the repression and demanded the release of their comrades. These workers could be charged with "picking quarrels and provoking troubles" which can result in five years in prison.

On 11 August a leading female activist in the struggle, Shen Mengyu, a well-known worker activist, was kidnapped by unidentified men (suspected security forces) and her whereabouts is still unknown.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) demands that police reveal where she is being held and on what charges. We demand her release and the release of the other detained workers, and that no charges are pressed.

We demand the responsible local politicians and police officials be dismissed for ordering the crackdown. We demand immediate recognition of the rights of Jasic Technology workers to form a democratic and independent trade union and the immediate reinstatement of dismissed workers.

The bosses of this private stock market-listed company have close ties to the local CCP government and are determined to quash this attempt to establish a union that is not under the company's control.

The involvement in this conflict of many left-leaning youth is a complicating factor for the regime and a sign of big changes in the political mood in China this year.

Despite censorship, the Shenzhen Jasic struggle is being widely followed by left youth and worker activists around China.

- Please send your photos, reports and any questions directly to cwi.china@gmail.com
- See chinaworker.info for full story and updates

Even working families £49 a week short of paying for kids

£10 an hour now!

Scrap benefit cuts!

Laurel Fogarty

Feed your child or heat the house; buy a school uniform or pay the electricity bill - these are the kinds of impossible choices faced by more and more working parents every day.

The total cost of raising one child is now £150,753 for a couple - and £183,335 for a single parent, according to Loughborough University research.

As the cost of living skyrockets, any small increase in pay is demolished by the freeze on tax credits. It means that take-home pay, even for two parents earning the Tories' misnamed 'national living wage', falls £49 a week short of providing the "no-frills" necessities of decent life for a family.

My own experience as a mother is that the cost of childcare while the parent is at work can rival or even exceed the cost of housing. So it's no surprise that single parents are hit particularly hard.

There is no doubt the Tories are pushing increasing numbers of children into desperate situations. Over the school holidays, as many as one in eight children don't get enough to eat, according to a poll for Kellogg's.

What is most startling about these harrowing statistics is that the majority of children growing up in poverty now have working parents.

These children are not struggling because their parents can't find work - or because unemployment benefits are insufficient, although they are. They are struggling because bosses simply do not pay workers enough to support a family.

Bosses and landlords are happy to let our children quite literally starve to defend their profits.

Rigged

The Socialist Party fights child poverty and the capitalist system that is rigged against workers and our kids. We fight for free childcare, a real living wage for all, and to reverse the cuts to benefits that keep families afloat - along with any barbaric limit on the number of children the state will give the support they need.

But we are fighting for more than just survival for our children. We are fighting for their right to flourish, to take a full part in society and to reach their potential, whatever that might be.

That means opposing Tory and Blairite austerity wherever it threatens our children's futures - from joining thousands on the streets opposing NHS cuts, to taking part in local campaigns to keep our libraries and community centres open.

And it means fighting for a future free from profit-driven inequality and cuts: a socialist world.

Permanent Arctic ice melting: nationalise the energy giants to combat global warming

Richard Worth, Bristol South Socialist Party

The oldest, thickest, most frozen sea ice in the arctic, to the north of Greenland, remains frozen all year. But this year it has broken away - twice! This has never been seen before.

In February and August, abnormal European heat waves caused by global warming sent hot winds to Greenland, pushing the ice away from the coast and leaving it shattered and broken.

Between 1995 and 2017, about 3,600 gigatonnes - that's 3.6 trillion tonnes - of water came from melted ice in Greenland. That's a lot of water.

For example, there's only about 300 million tonnes of water in Lake Windermere. So 120,000 Lake Windermeres have melted out of Greenland's arctic ice in the last two decades.

Hotter summers are contributing to the large ice melt, which is raising sea levels worldwide. The arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet. This threatens wildlife, like polar bears, and people.

In June, a four-mile-long iceberg broke away from a glacier in eastern Greenland. In July the village of Innaarsuit was evacuated because of the threat of a devastating tsunami from a massive fall of melting ice. The same month, hundreds were killed by flooding in Kerala, India.

As sea ice melts, sunlight that would normally be reflected back into space is instead absorbed by the darker blue of the ocean, further heating the water and surrounding air. This kickstarts a vicious cycle, resulting in even more ice melting and ocean heat absorption.

More than two years after 195 countries pledged to support the overly modest targets of the Paris Climate accord, global emissions of carbon dioxide are still rising, furthering global warming. President Trump has withdrawn even from this insufficient agreement, and many other countries are failing to meet their pledges.

The accord is not enforceable or even binding, and capitalist governments won't take actions which might threaten the profits of big business. Words are easy, but national capitalist leaders have no commitment to act.

The fate of humanity depends on all peoples working together to mitigate climate change. Only international socialism, based on public ownership and democratic planning, will enable workers to take control of energy production and force the investment in renewables needed to transform the lives of the world's poorest and all of us.

Them & us

McCain dead

John McCain, the anti-worker, warmonger US senator and former Republican presidential candidate, has died. Seattle city councillor Kshama Sawant, a member of Socialist Alternative, the US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party, responded on Twitter:

"A politician's legacy is a political not personal question. An enthusiastic supporter of every imperialist war while in office, John McCain shares responsibility for hundreds of thousands of deaths. To whitewash that is to disrespect those who died in Iraq, Afghanistan, elsewhere."

Kshama went on: "Not to mention the countless working people's lives damaged by McCain's support, as a Senator, for brutal neoliberal social and economic policies in the United States. Our solidarity belongs with the millions of families suffering under such policies here and abroad."

Wonga broke...

Spare a thought for payday parasite Wonga. The leeching loan shark is in financial distress - and could be on the brink of collapse.

Small comfort for low-paid workers struggling under the burden of Wonga interest payments, though. The firm's owners and creditors will get off scot free in the event of bankruptcy. But debtors will have their accounts sold to other bullying bloodsuckers to keep collecting.

... sardine-tin flats

Residents of Newbury House in east London are crammed into 'studio' flats sized just 12 feet by 12 feet, according to a Guardian investigation.

Greedy developers can change office blocks into filing-cabinet 'homes' without even needing planning permission. The block is right next to the noisy, exhaust-clouded A12 trunk road. And - surprise, surprise - its owner is registered in a tax haven.

Restaurant tips walkout: "Hold the burgers, hold the fries, TGI are telling lies"

Ian Pattison and Robert Sharkey, East London Socialist Party

"Hold the burgers, hold the fries, TGI are telling lies." "Hold the burger, hold the ribs, TGI are telling fibs."

Restaurant chain TGI Fridays has cut staff tips. When you tip using card at TGI, 40% of what would normally go to waiting staff now goes to kitchen workers.

TGI isn't interested in helping low-paid kitchen staff. The new scheme was only brought in after TGI cut kitchen staff pay, provoking a recruitment crisis.

Young waiting staff are paid as little as £5.90 an hour. Kiran Dhingra-Smith, a Unite the Union rep at TGI Stratford, told the Socialist that she is down £900 in lost tips since March while her restaurant takes £100,000 a week. In addition, workers are on their feet for an outrageously long time without a break.

TGI workers have joined Unite and taken strike action at several restaurants against the outrageous tip policy. Workers at TGI Stratford were striking for the first time on 24-26 August.

All who have joined the union were on the picket line alongside 30 supporters. Socialist Party members Suzanne Muna and Rob Williams spoke to offer their solidarity from the Unite executive committee and National Shop Stewards Network respectively.

We marched past the restaurants, up and down the outskirts of the enormous Westfield shopping centre to whoops, cheers and applause from the people around.

On the second day of the strike, Westfield management organised a blockade when the workers tried to march past the shopping centre again. But security guards voiced support for the strike.

Jennifer Batista, Team leader, TFI Friday, and Unite the Union member spoke to the Socialist: "I'm striking here because I've been in the company for two years now and I've seen a dramatic change in the way company treat us, in tips, in wages, conditions, all sorts. And I'm here with the rest of my team because we want to fight for our future here at TGUI Fridays. We love the company but it's the way that we are treated. We're not heard and it's getting worse, so we need to speak out now.

"It was the 40% trunk scheme that threw us over the edge - it's to do with taking 40% of our card tips on a weekly basis. The company estimated it would take £9 a week from our wages but in the end it takes around £40 -£50 and that's a dramatic change for us. We've got bills to pay. That's a major reason why we are here."

Sunderland: Resolute Liebherr workers in pay strike

Elaine Brunskill, Northern Socialist Party regional secretary

Liebherr strikers on their Sunderland picket line on 24 August were resolute. Talking about the importance of their picket line - which is highly successful in turning away deliveries to the company - one of the strikers commented: "Even if it's thunder and lightning, we'll be standing here." Their placards state: "Liebherr - no cranes today".

Both Unite the Union and GMB members are out on strike to improve their pay. Workers at Liebherr produce high-quality marine cranes.

The company is global, and their Sunderland plant is profitable. Internationally, the company boasted of almost €10 billion turnover last year.

One of the strikers pointed out that, according to Liebherr's company accounts, one of the directors at the Sunderland site received an annual salary of £151,000 - that's around £3,000 a week!

Over the coming weeks Liebherr workers are intensifying their strike action. There is also an overtime ban in place. There is clearly a mood to further escalate the action if management fail to improve their offer.

- Send messages of support to Unite the Union regional officer Mark Sanderson mark.sanderson@unitetheunion.org and donations to Unite the Union, John Dobson Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8TW.

Merseyside fire authority forced to postpone night closures

Dave Jones, Merseyside Socialist Party and Wallasey Hands Off Our Fire Station

The Labour-controlled Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority planned to close four stations in Merseyside during nighttimes. But they have now backed down on the closure of two.

On 24 July, six local activists - including from the Socialist Party, Fire Brigades Union, and trade union council - met to launch a community campaign - Wallasey Hands Off Our Fire Station.

We announced a planned public meeting on 14 August. This quickly found an echo in the local community. The fire authority responded in a cowardly way by bringing the closure forward to 10 September.

This, however, backfired. Our community was outraged and over 200 people packed into the public meeting. A noisy lobby in the local shopping centre followed.

The impact was noticeable as local politicians started to back the campaign and, in some cases, to backtrack.

Then, on 24 August the fire authority announced a climb down 'for now' and placed the closures on hold - a massive victory for the local community. But we won't rest until we achieve total victory.

We will proceed with a demonstration against the closure on 1 September - assemble 11am Wallasey Central Park car park, Liscard Road.

We call on the fire authority to:

- Stop all cuts and closures
- Use reserves of £25 million plus
- Scrap the 'resilience contracts' - whereby firefighters are paid £1,000 to leave the union and join a strike breaking section

Northern Rail guards continue fight against driver-only operation

Newcastle Socialist Party

Train guards in Newcastle, members of the RMT union, are participating in the ongoing battle against driver-only operation.

Speaking to the Socialist on 25 August one of the strikers said: "This is our 24th day of strike action. The mood on our picket line is very determined and the strike is rock solid."

Despite the strike creating disruption, the support from the travelling public was reported as being "incredible". Strikers said that there is an understanding that this dispute is about passenger safety: "We've had strong support from disabled people, who are worried about their ability to access trains. Also from women's groups who are concerned about anti-social behaviour on trains. At a time of increased sexual assaults, having no guards on the train is crazy."

There is a lot of anger against Arriva Rail North. It was explained that: "The union entered into talks with the company for the first time in months. The union even called off strikes for the talks to take place. Despite this act of good faith by us, the talks were just a sham - a stalling tactic. They treated our officials with complete contempt. It became clear they had no intention of reaching a settlement."

This stalling tactic has clearly enraged RMT members. There is a growing mood among guards that the strike action needs to be ramped up.

From the picket line, RMT members also stated their support for Liebherr strikers in Sunderland who are fighting for an improvement in their wages.

- South Western Railway guards are walking out against driver-only operation between 31 August and 2 September, with further 24-hour strikes planned on 8 and 15 September

East Dunbartonshire council workers back further strikes

Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland

Unison, GMB and Unite members in East Dunbartonshire council took four days of coordinated strike action at the end of June against the Tory and Lib Dem administration's cuts programme - including a major assault on workers' terms and conditions.

The action was very solid, with a total shutdown of council services, hundreds of new members joining Unison, and over 2,000 at the strike rally. At the beginning of July the council made an offer under the threat of further strike action.

They retreated on significant issues including workers' demands for no reduction in annual leave, no change to overtime rates and no change to the notional working day. This shows coordinated strike action works.

The dispute continues, however, as the council is continuing with attacks on the redundancy payment framework due to be imposed in November. East Dunbartonshire Unison has warned members: "East Dunbartonshire Council do not have a 'no compulsory redundancy policy' which could mean if this package is not attractive enough to encourage employees to volunteer to leave, we could all find ourselves in the position of being made redundant on a compulsory basis with absolutely no say in the matter".

The trade unions ran a consultative ballot during August recommending acceptance of the agreement on leave, the working day and overtime but recommending rejection of the attacks on the redundancy payment framework and asking for a mandate for further strike action. Unison members voted by 80% to reject the package on redundancies and 85% for continued strike action.

Socialist Party Scotland gives its full support to East Dunbartonshire council workers in their fight.

Exam factories, cuts and violence - Fight for our future!

Adam Abdullah, school student, south London

On 23 August, this year's GCSE students faced the dreaded 'results day' - luckily for me it's not until 2019. But with every passing day you grow a little more scared of that looming event.

That's natural though, right? It's normal to be afraid of exams, right? Yes, fear of an exam hall is normal. Working in a system set up against you on the other hand, shouldn't be.

In the last five years alone, almost £1 billion was cut from youth services. From 2012 to 2016 almost 600 youth centres shut. Who knows how many more since then? On top of council-run services, local authority funding for voluntary sector youth work has fallen by an average of 35% too.

If money in these areas is all going down, what's going up? The bonuses, the profits and the fat cats' bellies. Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos makes over \$250 million a day! Meanwhile, last year Amazon paid only £4.6 million in UK corporation tax.

Why does this matter to us in schools? In real terms, £2.8 billion has been cut from our schools since 2015.

Gove - the Tory education minister who brought in the GCSE changes - said the new exam system was to make Britain compete with Hong Kong and Shanghai. But the most successful education systems are those with fewer exams - they tend to correspond with lower wage inequality, higher educational attainment and fewer mental health issues among students.

Why is the government - aided and encouraged by their big business friends - cutting education, youth services, housing and healthcare while the pockets of the super-rich get heavy with gold? Why, when they know people will suffer? Why, when they know there's a link between this austerity and youth crime?

The GCSE changes turned everything into a stressful memory test you have to do in year 11. You have to memorise a novel, poems and context - never mind all the equations. Who can do that while they watch an aunty cry because the bailiffs knocked on her door, or because her son was stabbed?

They know what they're doing. And they know we can stop them. Let's fight back.

Join Socialist Students!

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CWI school 2018

The ongoing capitalist crisis and the struggle for a socialist world

Each year, the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) - the international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated - hosts a summer school bringing together its members based throughout Europe and the world. The discussions provide an invaluable opportunity for socialists to share their experiences of participation in different struggles, analyse world events, and develop a strategy for building the forces fighting for socialist change internationally. This year, the school took place in Barcelona and was attended by 400 CWI members coming from over 30 different countries. Here, we carry a report written by Kevin Parslow, outlining the opening discussion on the worldwide crisis of capitalism and the development of the workers' and socialist movement internationally.

The CWI School 2018 opened with a lively and confident discussion on the turmoil and upheavals facing global capitalism and prospects for the class struggle and socialism. This session was opened by Peter Taaffe and replied to by Tony Saunio on behalf of the CWI's international secretariat.

Peter emphasised the developments of a hectic year and the sheer accelerated pace of events, in which the CWI has played a key role in some battles. In particular, he mentioned the great victory in Ireland on the abortion referendum and the similarly tremendous intervention

of our members in the Spanish state in many class battles, particularly on the right of self-determination in Catalonia, and in the protests and strikes over violence against women. Once more, the Students' Union (Sindicato de Estudiantes) has played an irreplaceable role as a catalyst for mass opposition.

Barbara from the Spanish state detailed the struggles of working class women against oppression and their effect on consciousness. In the Spanish state, there has been a dominance of working class women on these protests, and they are not led by any leaders of the main parties. Izquierda

Revolucionaria (IR - CWI in the Spanish state) had to organise, through Libres y Combativas (Free and Combative, IR's socialist feminist platform) against the pro-capitalist feminist leaders. They opposed our general student strike on 10 May against the absolving of the so-called 'wolfpack' on rape charges, precisely because it challenged the capitalist system.

These kinds of struggles, Peter continued, are part of the worldwide process of incipient revolt - particularly of the youth, of women and working people generally, as we enter a new period of upheaval.

This had been shown in the previous weeks by the colossal parliamentary and social uprising in Mexico that has brought Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Amlo) to power with 30 million votes, after his two previous attempts ended in probable rigging and defeat.

There are now two roads before the new government and the Mexican masses: one towards confronting capitalism and landlordism - not just in Mexico but internationally, including its northern giant and neighbour, the USA. The other road is of compromise, and ultimately setbacks and defeat, as we have already seen in Latin America.

We do not accept the ingrained pessimism of superficial commentators who talk about an 'inevitable move to the right in Latin America'. There are limits in this period as to what reactionary forces can achieve.

True, Amlo seeks to conciliate the capitalists and played down some social issues during his campaign. But socialists must not underestimate the colossal stored-up pressure of the masses which brought him to power and the mood for decisive change. This will provide the ground for the growth of Marxist forces in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America.

Carla from Mexico emphasised there was no basis for Amlo to build a government of class conciliation. Any reforms will be bitterly resisted by the ruling class. There will be battles, including an opening for industrial struggles to develop.

Peter showed how Brazil exemplifies the volatile situation and the weakness of many governments in Latin America. President Temer has the approval of just 3% of voters with a 2% margin of error either way! His defeat in the recent lorry drivers' strike shows this weakness. These developments were expanded on by Katia from Brazil.

The Mexican elections are just the latest example of the volatile world we are experiencing, with the dominating issue of world politics being Trump and the fate of the US, including its working class. Linked to this, is the question of perspectives for the world economy and Trump's role.

There has been an inevitable 'recovery' in the US economy, but the jobs created are mainly low paid and insecure. In some cases this has fuelled strikes with workers demanding 'our share'.

Weak recovery

The chronic crisis of capitalism has not been overcome. This is one of the weakest recoveries on record. The main reason for this is the lack of investment of the surplus extracted from the labour of the working class. The ruling class internationally is incapable of harnessing new technology.

'Modern' capitalism - more like senile and decaying old capitalism - shows pronounced parasitic tendencies, preferring to boost shareholders through fat dividends, buybacks and share options. It has long abandoned what Marx called its only justification and historic mission: developing the productive forces, preparing the way for the working class.

Ten years on, they have not learnt anything from the crisis of 2007-08. We predicted the crash, if not its timing, but warned that if the working class did not seize opportunities there would inevitably be a sickly recovery. There will be no 'final crisis of capitalism' unless the working class seizes power to change society.

But any recovery now is based on colossal debt accumulation. This is why some of the more farsighted capitalist institutions - like the Bank of International Settlements - have already warned of another crash, and they are right to.

Luckily for the strategists of capital, they had a huge stroke of good fortune in that the collapse of Stalinism took place before the bottom fell out of their system. The planned economies were not only liquidated, but Stalinism's downfall was used to throw back the consciousness of the world's working class. The idea of 'socialism' all but disappeared under the rubble of the Berlin Wall.

Imagine the effect of the 2008 crash had the workers' organisations remained intact. We would now more likely be discussing openly either the strategy for the socialist revolution in mass organisations or what to do with our victory.

Instead, the leaders of the former workers' organisations and trade unions lurched towards the right. The CWI was virtually alone in maintaining the banner of socialism, revolution and the transformation of the world.

The result of the lack of bold leadership was a catastrophe for the working class, in some senses worse than even the 1930s, certainly in its scale in southern Europe. Large swathes of formerly industrialised areas now lie derelict in the US and Europe, while the neocolonial world never escaped its poverty trap.

Middle East

Peter commented on the situation in the Middle East where we see features of the European medieval 'Hundred Years War'. There is the slaughter in Syria while Turkey opens war on the Kurds and others. Israel has also intervened in Syria while continuing to perpetuate the horrors of Gaza.

But the masses cannot forever tolerate the present situation. The recent general strike in Jordan shows that millions are looking for leadership. Even after the sectarian bloodbath in Iraq, the recent general election saw the bloc of Muqtada al-Sadr with the Communist Party win on an 'Iraqi nationalist' platform against some of the more sectarian forces. In Iran, protests including of the trade unions and the youth, have rocked the regime and the masses are losing their fear.

Adam from Israel/Palestine expanded on the role of Iran in Syria. It was seen as an opportunity for Iran to break its international isolation. The defeat of anti-Assad forces in Syria is a defeat for the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia. US control of the Middle East has been very much undermined.

Peter argued that in the neocolonial world the 'emerging markets' will never 'emerge' from the depths into which millions are being cast by completely outmoded capitalism and landlordism. The 'growth path' mapped out by capitalists for the Asian masses was clearly a delusion. This has caused crises in that continent and Africa, too.

Speakers from some of these countries underlined the depth of the crisis and the fear of the ruling classes. Ferron from South Africa explained that the new president, Cyril Ramaphosa, a former trade union leader but now a billionaire, had introduced anti-trade union laws in hope of preventing strikes.

Wars and economic breakdown, Peter went on, show the failure of the existing system. Mass unemployment in the US and Europe has helped to build the 'populist right', and was a factor in Trump's emergence. Now, there is revulsion at his locking up of immigrant children, 'fascistic' in its implementation. The political basis for the emergence of the Trump phenomenon and populism internationally has been the previous failures of ex-workers' parties or, in the US, the liberal, pro-capitalist Democrats.

However, new struggles are opening up in the leading country of capitalism. Ryan and Chuck, supporters of the CWI in the US, expanded on developments in the labour unions, drawing on the lessons of the teachers' strikes, the struggle of the transport union in Minneapolis and elsewhere, and the battles opening in UPS.

Keeley, also from the US, outlined the deep class polarisation in the country and the growth of interest in socialism since Occupy in 2011, as well as in reaction to the AltRight. She said that the

victory of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and a Bernie Sanders supporter, in a New York City primary, should be used to build a real movement against capitalism and play a role in the formation of a new left party.

Peter said that Marxists need to discuss how to work with and influence formations such as the DSA. On the other hand, layers of particularly the middle classes, but also some workers, have turned in desperation to demagogues through history. Trump's former aide, Steve Bannon, is trying to expand the AltRight's influence by developing a 'populist international'.

Trump is like a rampaging infant smashing up the previously accepted 'rules-based system' of world capitalism. His unpredictable erratic character has enormously compounded the problems of the capitalist system globally.

This has been shown in the negotiations with Kim Jong-Un and North Korea - where effectively very little has been gained, in his attitude to Nato - which he has previously called obsolete, and also at the 'G6+1' meeting in Canada, where he effectively walked out and angered the other leaders by promising an escalation in the trade war.

Victor, from the Spanish State, said the failure of the G7 summit is presented as a first breakdown but, in reality, it is a new failure in a series of summits since the 2008 crisis and not just since Trump. There is the possibility of fights between capitalist powers - imperialist conflict - because it is impossible to solve the crisis of overproduction.

Paul Murphy, TD (member of the Irish parliament), elaborated on Trump's protectionism. Global supply chains cannot be easily unwound. The lack of growth complicates discussions on the division of 'the cake'.

The decisive influence of US imperialism was an important factor in the post-war boom. The current multipolar world gives no country the power to dictate terms. Trump is an active agent of the destruction of the world order and does not fully represent capitalist interests, which is a recipe for an unstable world.

Trump's trade war

Peter explained that Trump could pull back from a full-scale trade war but could also escalate it. Trump has been warned this could produce a new economic downturn and deep crisis but this has had no effect on him, it seems. China and the EU could also collaborate against him.

Such an outcome threatens a rerun of the Smoot Hawley Act in the 1930s which led to a tit-for-tat trade war which enormously aggravated the depression, with not just capitalists but the working class as the losers. But Trump and his advisers are not really capable of learning from history. The Financial Times has called him a "dangerous ignoramus"!

The post-war 'General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade' lowered barriers but was a factor in the creation of trade blocs, integrated and long chains of production, and the international division of labour. This is part of the difficulty of 'independence' or 'Brexit' on a capitalist basis. A workers' Brexit and a socialist confederation of Europe would be different. A trade war, though, particularly against China and the EU, would put the world on 'rations' and have repercussions in the US.

China is now the main rival economic power to the US, with Russia a strategic rival. In its 'Belt and Road Initiative' - a series of projects with inducements and strings - there is a kind of new imperialism, which Jaco from Hong Kong described as "imperialism with Chinese characteristics". This is something which faces growing opposition.

Vincent from China described the historic developments in the country, with the biggest concentration of power held by one person, President Xi Jinping, since the reintroduction of capitalist features. There has been a transition from collective to one-man dictatorship. There have been protests in China, including strikes which have been on a bigger scale than in the past.

In his concluding remarks, Peter reiterated the explosive world situation and the possibility of colossal revolutionary waves. The real history of Trotskyism - of revolutionary Marxism - begins in the next period.

Rotten capitalism has laid the ground for a new, powerful internationalism and an instrument to further this will be the workers' mass international which we will build.

Unification

The CWI's fusion with Izquierda Revolucionaria, which was formally agreed one year ago, has already been highly successful. We will work to build the basis of a mighty workers' international in the decades opening up.

Anthony from Australia, at the beginning of the discussion, outlined the effects of a boom which has lasted for more than 25 years. But this is beginning to change, reflected in the massive trade union demonstration which took place in Melbourne and in the fact that many young people, despite the boom, have lost confidence in capitalism.

"A world in turmoil the likes of which has not been seen for whole historical period" was how Tony Saunio of the CWI's international secretariat analysed the current international situation when replying to the discussion.

He described the new era of inter-imperialist rivalry as a "convulsive economic, political and social situation". On the world economy, Tony commented that there are dangerous political warnings: an incredible growth of global debt which increased by \$25 trillion in just three months, now standing at 240% of global GDP

(\$30,000 per person in the world). This cannot be an indefinite process. There are a series of 'time bombs' waiting to detonate, such as Italy and Argentina.

The trade wars are representative of the decline of US imperialism. The Financial Times warns of the danger of a new \$1 trillion worth of tariffs and it is not clear how far the process will go. Tony reminded the meeting that because of the explosive social consequences, the ruling classes may pull back from an all-out trade war.

He emphasised the crucial importance of developments in the US - especially the recent upsurge in labour disputes and the political polarisation which has taken place. The growth of the DSA was described as extremely significant but it was pointed out that it is important to grasp the limitations at this stage.

In summing up the situation in Latin America, Tony pointed to the different phase of the situation in Mexico compared to other parts of Latin America, where there have been defeats. But in none of these countries do the right's victories reflect an ideological swing to the right. There is a very fragile basis to the more authoritarian right-wing governments which have come to power in some countries. There have been three general strikes in Argentina since the election of President Macri, for example.

Tony concluded the session by remarking that the world of capitalism and imperialism is dying, but that the new forces have yet to emerge. The situation offers the working class opportunities to fight and the CWI decisive chances to grow.

The CWI, Tony finished, has the clearest understanding of the world situation and we will fight to strengthen our forces, and help build a mass international organisation that can challenge capitalism and reconstruct the world on a socialist basis.

NHS: Mass fightback is needed

Scott Jones

NHS services are showing the strain of cuts, privatisation and insufficient funding.

In England, expectant mothers have been turned away from maternity units due to a midwife shortage which the Royal College of Midwives has warned numbers 3,500. This meant that maternity units were forced to close 287 times last year.

It has also been revealed that between June 2017 and June 2018 ambulances from four health trusts have taken up to 24 hours to reach patients, with the worst example being recorded in Wales, where one patient waited 62 hours! The trusts claim that the longest waits were for "less serious calls" and that life-threatening or 'urgent' conditions were prioritised.

But why should ambulance services be forced into a position of leaving patients without care for a day or more? And why should some pregnant women face a lottery on whether they receive care or not when turning up to maternity units?

They shouldn't. That's why the Socialist Party campaigns each week, up and down the country, to save our NHS. And we can.

Workers have shown this at Chatsworth rehabilitation ward in Mansfield, which was saved from closure after trade union members fought back. Communities can play a vital part too, as demonstrated by the campaigns that saved Glenfield heart unit in Leicester and Huddersfield A&E. Socialist Party members played a leading role in all three.

We demand an end to all cuts and privatisation of the health service and fight for proper funding now. We need a huge movement to save our NHS, led by health workers and their trade unions, and bringing together community struggles and campaigns. These local victories show, where a lead is given, working class people are more than prepared to fight to defend the health service.

Health unions should be building for strike action, fighting to coordinate action across the NHS and to link up with workers across the public sector.

Jeremy Corbyn should also be calling for mass action to defend the NHS, and to fight to bring down this weak, divided Tory government, pledging to reverse privatisation, abolish private finance initiatives and secure the NHS for future generations.

Battle growing against Loch Lomond area big business sell-off

Lynda McEwan, Socialist Party Scotland

A major battle has broken out over the £30 million privatisation of land in Loch Lomond, West Dunbartonshire in Scotland, which has given rise to fresh resistance against the for-profit model of big business.

In early spring of 2017, plans began to emerge from Iconic Leisure, which owns Flamingo Land - a theme park in Yorkshire - for what could only be described as a massive land grab in a world-renowned beauty spot. Comprising 44 acres and including upscale hotels, lodges, a monorail and a brewery, most of the land around Drumkinnon Bay and the banks of the River Leven is being sold off.

Almost immediately after the news broke, an online petition against the development was created with over 30,000 signing. It seems that local opinion does not support the proposal.

Concern for the environment, about local infrastructure being overwhelmed, over the quality of the jobs, and that a national park is being sold to the highest bidder, are among the reasons for such strong opposition.

Iconic Leisure has unveiled its plans, hosting a public consultation attended by hundreds of angry residents wanting clarification on details. But locals were met with corporate suits using patronising language in order to deflect the residents' questions.

Socialist Party Scotland has joined the struggle, particularly as it became clear that any jobs would be seasonal and offer only low pay or zero-hour contracts. We also oppose the environmental destruction that this would cause.

Local activists have organised a 'Hands Round Drumkinnon Bay' event, which around 300 attended, and which brought much needed interest from local newspapers, spreading the word on the dangers of this privatisation going unchallenged. Scottish Enterprise and the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority - which owns the land and chose Iconic Leisure as the preferred buyer - have come under huge pressure to reconsider this sale.

Another key consultee, the Balloch and Haldane Community Council, received 25 petitions from local residents to hold a meeting where they could raise concerns. Held in a local church on a Tuesday evening, there was standing room only and an outpouring of anger that the council had given its approval.

Going forward, we say that working class people deserve more than seasonal, low-paid, non-unionised jobs and point out that there are no guarantees that any companies contracted to build will be local small businesses.

Furthermore, the scale of the project and the price of the current lodges at the sister site would mean what is currently free and accessible land, enjoyed by families for generations, faces being gentrified - locking local children out.

- A demo will be held on the 8 September in Balloch. We will be attending and speaking, raising the need for a mass campaign of civil disobedience against the construction.

Leicester lobby calls for consultation on NHS closure plans

Tom Barker, secretary Save Our NHS Leicestershire

Leicester City Council's health scrutiny commission meeting was met by a lobby of up to 60 demonstrators on 23 August, concerned about proposals that could lead to the loss of acute services from Leicester General Hospital without a public consultation.

Speaking to BBC Radio Leicester, Steve Score, Socialist Party member and co-chair of Save Our NHS Leicestershire, explained why the lobby was taking place: "We are worried that the removal of the intensive care beds from the General Hospital will pre-empt the potential closure of this hospital as an acute hospital.

"What we need is a public consultation and we are seeking the support of the committee for the idea of a public consultation on these proposals. If they refer it to a body that can make decisions, then all the good. We want to raise it everywhere we can."

Chair of the committee, Councillor Elly Cutkelvin, said it was "quite understandable" that the public were concerned about the lack of consultation and that the committee would recommend that this matter is referred to the body that has a duty to examine the proposals.

This referral is a necessary first step and marks the achievement of our first campaign objective. The next is to secure formal consultation of the public.

The lobby coincided with the publication of a significant report by De Montfort University's Health Policy Research Unit, which outlined a number of critical problems with the proposed changes being made by University Hospitals Leicester (UHL) - the body which runs Leicester's hospitals - to acute services at the General.

One of the authors of the report, Dr Janet Underwood, pointed to a lack of transparency in UHL's current plans: "Probably one of our biggest concerns is the fact that a lot of the detail is in the appendices - not in the public domain - which stops us from evaluating, fully, the plans."

This is despite the fact that works are set to commence in October 2018!

The report demonstrates how the removal of the intensive care unit is a part of UHL's wider strategy of "moving from three acute hospital sites to two." If UHL is successful in removing the unit, it would effectively make the closure of the General as an acute hospital a done-deal when they come to consult on it some time in the near future.

This is not about efficiency, it is about austerity. Staff and users are both set to lose out if these plans go ahead.

The campaign to save the heart unit at Glenfield showed that when we fight together against unjust proposals, we can win. Now we need to mobilise again in defence of the General.

Socialist sales success in Cardiff

The Socialist sales drive we launched to mark the 1000th issue of the paper smashed through the target we set ourselves of 1,000 extra sales. We want to build on the success of this campaign by launching a new sales drive for issue 1011 at the end of September. Beth Webster, of Cardiff West Socialist Party, reports on success selling the Socialist in her branch.

Selling issue 1000 of the Socialist was a roaring success in Cardiff, showing the appeal of socialist ideas to working class Cardiffians. In that week, Cardiff West branch more than doubled our usual sales, buoying them ever since.

We sell the most papers on stalls campaigning to prevent NHS cuts. Some people, though sympathetic to our ideas, doubt the power of ordinary people to make significant change, so it's invaluable to be able to open up a paper and show them successful campaigns we have led and participated in. The prevention of the Chatsworth neuro-rehabilitation ward closure is a great example.

Sometimes people passing only need a brief glimpse of a 'Tories Out' headline before shouting their agreement and coming to talk to us more.

We have also been campaigning on the escalating housing crisis, with 3,000 empty homes in Cardiff and homelessness very visibly on the rise. We recently sold five copies of the Socialist at a local housing development meeting. Despite it being held to air residents' concerns, rather than being a political meeting, people were attracted to our programme of jobs and housing.

We also encourage both current and potential Socialist Party members to read the paper to help with understanding our ideas by pointing out relevant articles in meetings. A young reader said she liked our paper because, instead of the jargon mainstream papers use to obscure political and economic issues, alienating most ordinary people, our paper is clear and down to earth.

Ours is the only paper reporting the battles and successes of the working class, encouraging working class people to see their potential to effect real change.

EDL sent packing in Worcester

Worcester Socialist Party

In mid-July the far-right English Defence League (EDL) announced its plan to come to Worcester on 21 July. The intention was to protest against the replacement of the old mosque with a new one, and to divide our community. Only 25 of them made the journey.

The counter-protest, organised by Worcester Trade Union Council, brought together community groups and activists, mobilising up to 300. Our main focus was to occupy the end rallying point of the proposed EDL march. We were determined to stop them handing out leaflets or giving speeches.

What do the likes of the EDL offer as an alternative to endless austerity in food-bank Britain? Nothing! The EDL puts forward no vision for reversing the cuts that destroy people's lives, has no plan for housing, jobs, education, or vital services, but instead does the dirty work of the establishment by distracting people and misdirecting people's anger towards their fellow workers.

That is why it is important for workers to mobilise any time racism or fascism rears its ugly head in society.

The EDL supporters were held at their assembly point following a confrontation with a group of Asian young people. With the eventual EDL rallying point occupied by the counter-protest, and the confrontation at their assembly point, the police were not prepared to allow the EDL to march. It was clear that we had won an important victory. The numbers confronting the far right subsequently swelled and eventually the police moved the EDL away and out of town.

All is not over though! They have announced their intention to return on 1 September with a potentially larger mobilisation than previously. Once more Worcester Trade Union Council is organising to make it clear they are not welcome here, expose their lies and attempts at division and oppose them with solidarity and unity.

Huddersfield Socialist Party organise counter-protest against EDL

Huddersfield Socialist Party

As the capitalist media focuses on the release of far-right leader Tommy Robinson, who is awaiting a retrial, we have seen an increase in action taken by far-right groups. Clearly, the media portrayal of Tommy Robinson as a 'man of the people' has emboldened the far right. Next on their radar is Huddersfield, with protests planned on the 5-6 September.

In response to a trial of 31 men and women, all accused of sex crimes against young women and girls, the English Defence League (EDL) has focused on the fact that the accused are Muslim.

The Socialist Party utterly condemns such heinous crimes. But we recognise that the perpetrators can come from all walks of life, from many religions and none, and from all races. The EDL is cynically attempting to play on the rightful disgust of working class people at this awful alleged abuse with the aim of pushing their racist bigotry and stirring up hatred against all Muslims.

The Socialist party is calling on the residents of Huddersfield and nearby towns to say no to the EDL and its racist views. We call for counter protests, and have welcomed the support of the local trade union council and other groups. It is essential that the trade union movement takes a lead in the fight against the far right.

We will fight to stop racist views being spread in our town!

Fracking companies backed by government and courts

A lot has happened on the fracking front in recent months. Notably, fracking companies Cuadrilla and Ineos have been awarded High Court injunctions which, in effect, restrict many forms of legitimate protest.

Any protest which slows down operations at fracking sites or at sites belonging to contractors will be considered in contempt of court, and any protester involved could face a prison sentence or have their assets seized. There has been a number of appeals against these injunctions but all cases have failed.

Ineos is also in the process of taking the National Trust to court because they are refusing Ineos access to their land at Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire to carry out seismic testing.

Ineos has also recently won an appeal against Derbyshire County Council's refusal to allow them permission to drill in the village of March Lane.

Government-appointed planning inspector Elizabeth Hill said: "I have found that there would be slight harm in terms of the living conditions of neighboring occupiers in terms of nighttime noise, to which I give limited weight. However, this would not outweigh the benefits of the exploration in terms of its potential to improve resources for energy supplies to which I give substantial weight. In any event, the minor harm in this case is outweighed by other material considerations." The profits of Ineos maybe?

The Tory government now plans to allow fracking companies to bypass local planning laws. In future, fracking applications would be decided by central government.

The Socialist Party fights against fracking and for proper democratic control by working class people of land and resources in order to protect the environment.

Jon Sibbald, Wakefield and Pontefract Socialist Party

Leeds protest against NHS treatment cuts

Campaigners from local groups involved in Health Campaigns Together gathered on 22 August to protest outside Leeds Town Hall, where a consultation on plans to remove 17 treatments from the NHS was being held.

These treatments have been dubbed 'unnecessary' by NHS England, who wish to take away the ability of doctors to refer patients for them. It is really a measure about cost cutting, which could push those who want such treatments into the private sector.

The treatments include a number of measures to ease pain, from carpal tunnel syndrome to back pain. One of the treatments, grommets to treat glue ear, is something I had as a child, which made a big difference to my hearing but also my ability to fully take part in lessons at school.

The idea that such treatments will be denied to others is motivation enough to fight this and other penny-pinching measures the Tories have lined up to run down our NHS.

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

100 years since police went on strike: "never nearer to Bolshevism"

Iain Dalton, Socialist Party national committee

On a number of occasions, the ruling class in Britain has trembled with fear when faced with mass struggles of workers which could threaten their rule. Such movements as the 1984-85 miners strike and the 1926 general strike brought clashes between striking workers and the powers of the capitalist state.

Nothing terrified the ruling class as much as the thought that the very 'armed bodies of men' making up part of their state machine - the police and army - could become infected with the revolutionary malady. But this was the very real prospect in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917. It led the then prime minister, David Lloyd George, to declare the country was 'at no time nearer to Bolshevism'.

Mutinies in the armed forces took place throughout 1917-19, in revolt against the bloody destruction of World War One, as well as once the armistice was signed in 1918. The demands were for rapid demobilisation, rather than continuing to be used as fodder for the imperialist powers now aiming to crush the Russian revolution by military force.

But the committees formed to organise the struggle in the army came and went as troops were dispersed and demobilised. Within the police, however, a more permanent form of organisation among the ranks developed through the formation of the National Union of Police and Prison Officers (NUPPO).

Over the course of the war, the wages of the police had declined relative to other workers. Policemen who had been recruited from the army in previous years were recalled to their original units. This resulted in shortages. Police officers lost 17 days leave without any compensation.

This combination of low wages and the restriction of leave became a breeding ground for revolt, and anger began to be channelled through the NUPPO which gained a new leadership as a result of the discontent.

This was brought to a head as those at the tops of the Metropolitan Police began to try and repress the union and its agitation by victimising its organisers. A prominent case was of Sergeant Tommy Thiel, the NUPPO organiser responsible for making links with police forces outside London. His victimisation provided the

spark for the union to make demands not only for Thiel's reinstatement, but for a pay rise, an increased war bonus and the recognition of the union.

The strike caught the government off guard. Believing their own propaganda claiming that police officers had nothing to complain about, the key officials in the Metropolitan Police and the Home Office were out of London on Friday 30 August 1918 - the evening NUPPO held a mass rally and put out the call to strike.

At midnight, policemen began to leave their patrols and refuse to turn up for duty. Meetings took place in police stations where officers voted to join the strike. Pickets at Scotland Yard even managed to get 25 sergeants and 16 constables from the Special Branch to take part in the action!

A mass march and rally addressed by the secretary of London Trades Council and other labour movement figures attracted 20,000. Following an abortive meeting with a government representative who refused to meet the union, the City Police were called out at 6pm, further swelling the ranks of the strikers.

Attempts to further solidify the strike saw roving pickets march from police station to station, checking for strike breakers. Vine Street police station was besieged until strike breakers holed up inside left the building.

With the soldiers who were replacing striking police guards beginning to fraternise with police pickets, and the possibility that the forthcoming TUC congress could declare a sympathy strike with the police, the government became prepared to agree almost anything to stop the strike developing further.

When a delegation from the union met with Lloyd George, he granted them the bulk of their demands, including Thiel's reinstatement, guarantees against victimisation for union membership, and an immediate pay rise.

But on the issue of recognising the union, he resorted to a subtle trick, claiming he couldn't recognise a union for the police in wartime. This was naively understood by the NUPPO leadership as meaning that once the war was over they would be recognised.

In truth, it was a measure - much like the nine-month subsidy to the coal industry - granted with the aim of giving the government breathing space to prepare to crush a general strike. Lloyd George certainly wasted no time in making preparations to break the union, appointing General Sir Nevil Macready, who had commanded troops during strikes in the 1910-14 'Great Unrest'.

Over the next year NUPPO was to grow into a national union with branches throughout the country, as industrial unrest continued to grow. NUPPO affiliated to the TUC and the Labour Party, which had just adopted the socialist Clause IV of its constitution, showing the developing radicalisation which the government was determined to crush.

- Never Nearer to Bolshevism: The Police Strikes of 1918-19 by Iain Dalton. [£3 plus postage - leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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Blairite lies

Bog-standard Blairites like Alistair Campbell are on the BBC seemingly every day advocating a second referendum on the EU. If they succeeded in getting a second referendum and the vote went in favour of the

EU, this would be construed as a victory for the EU policies of austerity and privatisation.

For Blairites, this is preferable to a general election because they are too busy fighting the Labour Party's current leadership to be bothered fighting against the Tories. An election would place before the voters a clear choice between austerity and privatisation and a Labour alternative. That is a choice the Blairites do not want to be presented with.

In the event of a second referendum, they can rely on the BBC to help them present their own 'dodgy dossier' of 'facts' on Brexit. Threats like 'you will all be starving', 'there will be troops on the streets to quell social unrest and keep essential supplies moving', and so on. If that is the BBC 'fact check' on Radio Four then I wonder what their fiction department is like. Project Fear with knobs on!

Their stock-in-trade is lies.

The fight to bring down this ramshackle government is one which will have to take place without the help or hindrance of bog-standard Blairites. They are good for nothing.

Derek McMillan, Worthing, Sussex

BT pensions

I received the annual funding report of the British Telecom (BT) pension scheme recently and it was mentioned that the old (ie better) scheme covering older workers was closed to benefit accrual from 30 June and that the unions had agreed to that. It also pointed out that this will have "no material effect on the funding of the scheme". If that is the case, why did BT propose it and why did the unions agree to it?

Reasons given for cuts to pensions include that low interest rates cause investments to perform worse than originally predicted.

So if workers don't get crucified with high mortgage repayments and credit card charges which increase investment income, they will often end up with a worse pension. Under capitalism, workers' pensions are at the mercy of the spivs and speculators.

Workers deserve better than that - pay and pensions should be the most important priorities. With a democratically planned and publicly owned economy these things would be provided, not dependent on the fortunes of a few wealthy 'investors'.

It's funny how senior executives are never in the same pension scheme as their workers. Under capitalism the rich look after themselves and rarely pay for their own mistakes.

We need a Corbyn government prepared to take the economy over and guarantee a decent retirement income for all workers. Unions should start by campaigning against all attacks on pensions.

Clive Walder, Birmingham

Muddled thinking

Capitalist Labour MPs like Liz Kendall just can't keep themselves from plotting and scheming against socialists. Earlier this month Kendall retweeted a vile anti-Corbyn attack piece that had been published in the Evening Standard by her right-wing Blairite friend, Ian Austin, the Labour MP for Dudley North.

Austin, in a fit of capitalist rage, alleged that Jeremy Corbyn "has spent his entire political career mixing with or defending all manner of extremists, in some cases, antisemites."

And as if this wasn't bad enough he moaned that Corbyn's years of engagement with socialist ideas had muddled his mental capacity too: "Thirty years in protest movements making the same speech to people who agree with him means Jeremy has never had to answer a tough question, or think about complex problems and difficult solutions."

But it would seem more likely that Austin's own embrace of New Labour's capitalist approach to politics has stultified his thinking. Austin feels it necessary to attack Corbyn because, shock horror, Labour's socialist leader had previously played a leading role in founding the Stop the War Coalition.

This is not to say that Corbyn or the Stop the War Coalition are beyond criticism.

Austin and Kendall, however, are only capable of critiquing Corbyn from a capitalist perspective, always acting to undermine both Corbyn and all mass movements for socialist change, by privileging the needs of big business over the working class.

Marxists, by contrast, provide comradely criticism of Corbyn. Not because we idolise the man, but because we hope to see Corbyn fight for the type of socialist policies needed to empower the working class in each and every fight against our capitalist foes.

Mike Barker, Leicester

Soulsby sell off

You know how it is: you've got a few bob lying around in bank accounts earning a measly 0.5% interest. If only it could be put to better use and earn a decent rate of return. Suddenly you have a light-bulb moment - give a helping hand to big business!

Sir Peter Soulsby, Leicester's lord mayor, has persuaded his 'fiefdom' - the overwhelmingly Labour city council - to agree a £10 million leasehold arrangement with Travelodge to create a 67-room hotel above the Haymarket shopping centre.

In a debate prompted by some Labour councillors' discontent, Sir Peter's rebuff relished the 'lucrative potential' of his proposal: the council's rate of return would supposedly be £9.7 million over 25 years and, potentially, £27.7 million over 50 years. Ah, the Blairite dream of long-term capitalist enterprise! As councillor Ross Wilmott pointed out: "Travelodge could disappear in 25 years and still owe £2 million".

Sir Peter knows a lot about long-term loan arrangements. As an MP he supported New Labour private finance initiative schemes which lumbered schools and hospitals with long-term debt, as well as backing the introduction of tuition fees.

But as a pro-big business Labour lord mayor, his leasehold agreement with Travelodge is far more favourable to the loanee. He boasted it would benefit the city's regeneration, its economy and "bring jobs to the city". But, as always, the devil is in the detail. The Haymarket shopping centre is at one end of the High Street and, at the other end... there's another similar-sized Travelodge hotel! This one was built during New Labour's push for 'super casinos' and sits next to a casino. Is it already counting its future losses to the 'new kid on the block'?

So goes the sorry tale of a supposedly cash-strapped Labour council which apparently can't afford a no-cuts budget or investment in housing, but which seemingly does have enough spare cash to make a substantial loan to a major private company.

John Merrell, Leicester

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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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