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TUC congress 2018: unions must lead in fight to kick Tories out

From 9 to 12 September, the trade unions will meet in Manchester to mark the 150th anniversary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). No doubt the union leaders will revel in the history of the TUC and the wider labour and trade union movement.

But this congress has to contend with the urgent tasks facing workers and their unions - organisations which still represent what is potentially the most powerful force in society, with over six million members. Not least among the questions facing this congress is that of how the unions can mobilise a mass movement to push out the weak and divided Tory government.

The main lesson of trade unionism has always been that nothing has ever been gifted to workers by governments or the bosses. Everything has been fought for.

This was always the case in periods of relative economic development. But it is particularly true in times such as now, when crisis-ridden capitalism threatens all the past gains made by the working class.

Just yards from the conference centre is the scene of the [Peterloo massacre](#), where workers demanding the right to vote were cut down by government forces. 2019 marks the massacre's double centenary.

But it is another, more recent anniversary that still casts a shadow. The 2008 economic crisis has ushered in a 'lost decade' for workers.

Living standards have been cut by an average of 10% in real terms. But compared to the trends of modest wage growth before the credit crunch, this in reality represents a 20% shortfall.

The brutal pay freeze in the public sector was added to by the attack on pensions in the first wave of the austerity offensive. The Tories looked to make workers pay more in and get less out, as well as to work longer before retirement! This laid the basis for what ultimately became a [public sector general strike on 'N30'](#) (30 November, 2011), when over two million workers took action.

The [Socialist Party argued](#) that the pensions struggle wasn't a 'normal' dispute where the occasional one-day strike could wrest some minor concessions from the bosses. Ending the battle after a single day's strike action emboldened the Tories, in coalition with the Lib Dems, to continue rolling out their vicious cuts programme.

But it could have been different. If that mass joint action had been escalated it could have forced Cameron and Osborne back - and even driven them out of office.

This strike, which saw massive mobilisations in virtually every town and city, gave a glimpse of the power workers have when they act collectively. But the right-wing union leaders have tried to airbrush this, and other examples of mass struggle, from the history of the movement.

General strike

The union for prison and secure psychiatric workers - the POA - moved a [motion calling for a general strike](#) to be considered at TUC congress in 2012, the year that followed both N30 and the mighty TUC demonstration of 750,000 workers. When the POA motion was discussed, one union leader tried to dismiss it by saying "we had a general strike once before and it didn't work."

These so-called leaders bear responsibility for failing to organise the mass fight against the Tories that was possible and necessary, both in 2011-12 and since then. They will point to the [new Tory anti-union laws](#), including the undemocratic voting thresholds that meant civil service union PCS members couldn't take strike action against the 1% pay cap [despite a yes vote of 86%](#) in their ballot. But [the TUC hardly lifted a finger](#) to stop the implementation of the Trade Union Act - not even calling one national demonstration and refusing to enact TUC congress policy advocating a special conference to discuss resisting the laws.

[May 2018's TUC demonstration](#) of up to 30,000 was a fraction of what it could and should have been. At last year's congress the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) organised its rally around the [demand for the TUC to call a national demo on pay](#) to bring together workers from different areas of the public sector where a mood was developing for joint action against the pay cap. Such a march in the autumn could have been huge and would have been a platform for coordinated strike action, potentially on the scale of 2011.

Last year's congress passed a composite [motion on the public sector pay cap](#) unanimously. It called for "immediate steps to develop a coordinated strategy of opposition to the pay cap within the public sector" and, specifically, "a national demonstration in support of our demands". But the demo was not called until seven months later! This led to the isolation of each public sector group and most pay claims being settled. Delegates should hold these leaders to account this week.

There continues to be localised action every week, showing that workers are prepared to take action if a lead is given. However, the role of many of the union leaders has prevented generalised action, helping to create a political vacuum that can complicate the situation, especially when [Corbyn is under relentless attack from the capitalist establishment and their Blairite agents](#).

This will be exacerbated if congress passes motions from transport union TSSA and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) that would, in effect, open the way for a second referendum on Brexit. This would be used by the Blairites and, unfortunately, some Corbynistas, to pile pressure on Corbyn to succumb to another referendum ahead of a showdown at Labour Party conference.

The motions from the Communications Workers Union and [Unite the Union](#) are better and should stand alone. These unions should resist pressure to composite with the TSSA and RCM whose motions are not fighting for a general election to bring down the Tories.

This is the best way to bring the labour and trade union movement together, to [fight for a Brexit in the interests of workers](#) - against the neoliberal policies of the Tories and the EU - and for the policies of public ownership contained in Corbyn's manifesto for last year's general election. This is the way to face down the Tories and the Blairites who want to close any political channels for workers. Most importantly, it's vital the unions mobilise their members now to lead the fight against the Tories.

Manchester: NSSN pre-TUC rally

National Shop Stewards Network

Sunday 9th September 2018, 1pm

Manchester Mechanics Institute conference centre, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD

- <https://www.facebook.com/events/2181274368784813/>

Labour: Blairite wreckers must be given the boot

For international solidarity against all oppression and racism

- Tories Out! General election now
- Blairites out! Mandatory reselection now

Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary

The Tory government is back from its holidays and is once again in meltdown.

The millions suffering pay restraint, benefit cuts and poverty will be hoping that we are about to see the back of this government for the billionaires. The prospect is raised of a Jeremy Corbyn-led government - standing for a £10 an hour minimum wage, mass council house building, rent controls, free education and more.

Obviously the Tories will try to cling on, [even while they fight like rats in a sack](#), to try and keep Corbyn out of office. They do so at the behest of the capitalist class who fear a Corbyn-led government would threaten its gargantuan profits. But the capitalist class has other allies straining every nerve to prevent Jeremy Corbyn becoming prime minister: the Blairites.

It could not be clearer that the pro-capitalist Labour MPs will do all they can to sabotage Corbyn's leadership. We urgently need a Labour Party which is united around a programme to defend the interests of working and middle class people, rather than a party where many MPs are fighting for the interests of the billionaires.

The Blairite saboteurs in the Labour Party have spent the summer [cranking up their false allegations of antisemitism](#) to fever pitch, backed by the virulently anti-Corbyn leaderships of a few Jewish organisations. This furore ignores the evidence that, while antisemitism exists throughout society and must be combated, it is more prevalent among people with right-wing views than it is on the left.

Latest has been the ludicrous claim by the ex-chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks that Jeremy Corbyn was an antisemite who had supposedly made comments worse than anything since [Enoch Powell's viciously racist 'rivers of blood' speech](#).

In reality Jonathan Sacks' views are a particularly intolerant brand of Orthodox Judaism, even refusing to attend the funeral of a Reform Rabbi and Auschwitz survivor on the grounds he was "among those who destroy the faith".

However, veteran right-wing Labour MP Frank Field claimed he was so wholeheartedly in agreement with Sacks that he was duty bound to resign the Labour whip. The threat of Field being deselected by his local Labour Party was the real trigger. In fact, in 2012, Field wrote a piece for a book on Enoch Powell, which recalled his "affection and admiration" for Powell.

Imagine how the capitalist media would have shrieked if Corbyn had written such a piece. But it has barely been mentioned in the fawning coverage of Field's decision. And of course Corbyn - who has a long record of opposing all forms of racism - would not have done so, whereas Field's long record is of being prepared to whip up prejudice against asylum seekers.

Labour's National Executive Committee meeting on 4 September bowed to pressure and adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) guidelines, including all of the examples.

The original motivation for not adopting all of the examples was to ensure that they could not be used as a pretext to try and [prevent criticism of the Israeli government](#), something that even the home affairs parliamentary select committee concluded was a danger in 2016. Blairite Chuka Umunna, now cynically leading the antisemitism furore in Labour, was part of that committee.

The danger of this furore being used to gag criticism of the Israeli government was highlighted in a letter published in the Guardian from members of the Israeli Parliament representing "Palestinian Arab citizens of the state of Israel and Jewish supporters of peace and democracy". They were writing to express their "solidarity with Jeremy Corbyn" and to "register our repugnance at these recent attempts to complete our erasure by forbidding within the UK Labour Party any mention by name of the forces allayed against the Palestinian cause."

They concluded: "we stand in solidarity with Jeremy Corbyn and we recognise him as a principled leftist leader who aspires for peace and justice and is opposed to all forms of racism, whether directed at Jews, Palestinians, or any other group."

Any hopes that the NEC meeting will end the false accusations by Labour's right are completely utopian. Margaret Hodge MP made that clear last week, saying that agreeing to her original demand for the adoption of the IHRA in full was no longer enough and that she would continue to accuse the Labour leadership of antisemitism until Corbyn steps aside because "he is the problem".

It could not be clearer that the agents of capitalism within the Labour Party are determined to prevent a Labour government coming to power and introducing radical policies in the interests of the working class.

They will only stop their sabotage if they succeed in crushing the Labour left and returning Labour to the days of New Labour - supporting privatisation, austerity and war. This is understood by many of those who have joined Labour to support Corbyn, as is indicated by the growing demands for right-wing MPs to be deselected, and the victory of the left slate in the NEC elections.

Warning

Unfortunately, however, at the top of Labour there is not a clear understanding that Hodge, Field, and the other pro-capitalist agents, have no place in a party that represents the interests of the working class.

John McDonnell, for example, is reported to have responded to Field's resignation with a call to the Blairites not to split. Lying behind this is a fear that a split by the right could make it more difficult for Labour to win a general election.

But, [as we have warned](#), the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party is actively working to prevent a Corbyn-led Labour victory. They are openly discussing how to do so most effectively - whether to split and form a new centre party now, to split after a general election to stop Corbyn becoming prime minister, or to keep up the pressure to force Corbyn out before an election.

A party without these blatant saboteurs would be far stronger in its ability to act in defence of the working class. It is extremely urgent that action is taken.

Some of [the key measures that are needed](#) are the reintroduction of mandatory reselection of MPs, and the democratisation of the selection of Labour councillors.

The restoration of trade union rights within the Labour Party, under the democratic control of trade union members is also vital. It would be part of returning the Labour Party to a modern version of its founding federal structures. This would enable all socialist and working class forces to come together to build a powerful, 100% anti-austerity party.

If a clear call for such measures was made it would enthuse all those who support Corbyn's anti-austerity policies but are currently feeling disorientated by the lack of clear message on how to combat those who are determined to return Labour to being another pro-capitalist, pro-austerity party.

Theresa May's 'Chequers deal' mauled by Johnson and EU: fight for a socialist Brexit!

Iain Dalton, Socialist Party national committee

Not even Theresa May's 'dancing' on her African travels could distract from the crisis her government faces on two fronts: from the right-populist Tory Brexiteers, and the European Union itself.

Boris Johnson's manoeuvrings for leadership are ever more blatant. In a Telegraph column, he denounces [May's 'Chequers deal'](#) for demanding "diddly squat" from Brussels.

He writes that the Tories have "gone into battle with the white flag fluttering over our leading tank."

Tory MPs grouped around the 'hard Brexit' European Research Group, chaired by Jacob Rees-Mogg, number around 60.

Tory election guru Lynton Crosby - who was blamed by May for 2017's general election fiasco, but previously helped Johnson into London City Hall - is reported to be working with the group.

With that backing, Boris Johnson could be a frontrunner to replace May as Tory leader. A Conservative Home poll put Johnson top, with 29% support out of 14 options.

However, it is still very questionable whether Brexiteers could win a majority of Tory MPs to unseat May if she contests a no-confidence vote.

Barnier

At the same time, neoliberal Remainers have been bolstered by EU lead negotiator Michel Barnier. In a German newspaper, he too denounces the 'Chequers deal' - for demanding too much from Brussels.

The deal proposal agreed by May's cabinet at her official Chequers residence in July contained a number of fudges.

It retained [capitalist 'free movement'](#) for physical goods, in part as an attempt to overcome the stubborn problem of an Irish border, as well as to guarantee market access.

But it did not retain this for services - which dominate the British economy. This would have meant reduced access to the Single Market, but also the possibility of even less financial regulation.

Sure enough, Barnier responds on behalf of EU big business that it would mean "unfair competition if the United Kingdom has weaker legal requirements than we do."

He also claims that "for example, 20 to 40% of the total value" of a mobile phone comes from services, not physical goods.

These illustrate the intractable problems for British capitalism of untangling from the EU in a world based on globalised production and markets.

Meanwhile, Tory Remainers like Chancellor Phillip Hammond spread fear about a 'no-deal' Brexit in an effort to retain as many of the [EU's pro-big business arrangements](#) as possible. Hammond says it would mean an £80 billion increase in borrowing by 2033.

Some Conservative donors have stopped funding the party or switched to the Lib Dems over Brexit. A growing section of the Tory establishment is calling for a second referendum - including donor and former Rolls-Royce chair Sir Simon Robertson, former prime minister John Major, and hard Remainer MPs such as Justine Greening and Anna Soubry.

Trying to keep the show on the road, May's new Brexit secretary Dominic Raab has even talked of pushing the date for agreeing a deal with the EU back a month, to November.

Splits

The Tory splits reflect the uncertainty among Britain's capitalist class, and the contradiction between the overwhelmingly pro-EU majority of big business and the Tories' narrow membership base.

But absent from the official debate is the interests of workers and young people. For the Tories, and likewise Labour's Blairites, the debate is a question of how British capitalism can best escape the additional [crisis it](#)

[entered because of the Leave vote](#).

Part of their hesitation is based on their infighting providing the opportunity for a fresh general election, and their fear of a Jeremy Corbyn-led government coming to power and enthusing the working class to fight for more.

Thankfully for the bosses, [the Blairites have dutifully manufactured their own crisis in Labour](#) to try to prevent that.

Meanwhile, neither Corbyn [nor the union leaders](#) have yet moved to seize this historic opportunity.

But Corbyn's pro-worker, anti-austerity programme [points to the outlines of a solution](#), which would need to be based on bringing the key sections of the economy into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management.

Only socialist policies and working class internationalism can deliver a [pro-worker Brexit](#) and offer a real alternative to British and EU capitalism.

Tory and Blairite racist policy is behind Windrush fatality

Unions must lead fight against racism

Hugo Pierre, Socialist Party black and Asian group

The inquest into the death of Dexter Bristol, a victim of [the Windrush generation scandal](#), has revealed another sorry face of the 'hostile environment' that faces migrant workers.

Dexter died in March this year following a ten-month battle with the Home Office to prove he was not an 'illegal immigrant'.

His employer sacked him and the state refused him benefits, all because he didn't have a passport. He had lived in Britain for 50 years after coming here when he was eight.

The coroner refused to take into account medical evidence submitted by his family showing that the stress of the racist policies pursued by the Home Office contributed significantly to his death.

The hearing continued after the family walked out because of the coroner's actions, and reached a verdict of death by natural causes. This family is rightly angry after this further injustice.

There is no doubt that enormous stress is caused by the Home Office's treatment of [the Windrush generation](#).

The meaningless apologies ministers have issued, including new home secretary Sajid Javid, have not stopped the government pushing racist policies.

The Tories' hypocrisy is incredible - attacking Jeremy Corbyn with false claims of antisemitism while presiding over real and fatal acts of racism.

And the "hostile environment" slogan came from [the Blairites who are leading these attacks](#), and implemented similar racist policies when they were in government.

What is clear is neither the Tories nor Blairites can be trusted to act in defence of any workers or their families, in particular workers born outside Britain.

Trade union action exposed this scandal. Michael Braithwaite, a member of public service union Unison in Camden, north London, brought it to light in the first place. The fallout has already removed one home secretary.

The [trade unions must now act](#) to coordinate support for the Windrush generation and all migrant workers.

They must also lead campaigning to end the 'hostile environment', and oust the Tory government and Blairite saboteurs responsible for it, to fight for a government prepared to side with the working class.

Self-harm soars among young: fight the mental health crisis

Lindsey Morgan, Leicester West Socialist Party

Our young people are hurting. Capitalism and the austerity agenda have put enormous pressure on them and their families, and an expression of this is the tragic rate at which young people are self-harming.

22% of 14-year-old girls are self-harming, according to the latest Children's Society report. They are more than twice as likely as boys - themselves at an unacceptable 9%.

Additionally, young people attracted to those "of the same gender or both genders were much more likely to self-harm" - 46% had.

Unsurprisingly, the report also finds that children from lower-income households have a higher-than-average risk of self-harming.

The report gives a number of recommendations for how society can improve the wellbeing of young people. One that is key is for parents to spend quality, unstructured time with their children.

But this can be almost impossible with low wages, a lack of free time, unstable employment, and the rise in mental illness for adults as well. And sadly, self-harm is only the tip of the iceberg.

After my partner died I became extremely ill with depression and anxiety which had been made worse by grief and trauma. I needed help.

I was put on a waiting list but because I needed a specialist form of therapy. I had to wait for just over a year.

Paralysed

I was paralysed by flashbacks to my partner's collapse and death. Ambulance sirens would trigger panic attacks that left me vomiting in the street.

But because I wasn't self-harming or suicidal, the system didn't view me as in crisis.

Our benefits were stopped. I had to fight for my 'employment and support allowance' by taking the Department for Work and Pensions to tribunal, just to get that measly amount of money to survive on.

It enrages me that my circumstances are far from rare in terms of the squeeze on quality of life for so many.

Young people's happiness with their lives has taken a big hit since 2010. Young people [feel increasing alienation and insecurity](#) about their futures.

But as socialists, we know the working class has the power in its hands to transform society.

As part of this fight, we demand [less pressure on students from endless exams](#). We demand that schools be publicly owned and democratically controlled, with all the funding they need, and extra support for vulnerable students.

We fight the discrimination from the top and [backwards attitudes that capitalism fosters](#) that make LGBT+ young people so much more likely to hurt themselves.

We demand an NHS under public ownership and democratic control, fully funded and [able to deal with all the ways mental health has been damaged](#).

We are sick of [words from this government of the super-rich about help for mentally ill](#) people, without ever putting their money where their mouth is. We are sick of them making us sick.

Them & Us

Lehman blow-out...

Lehman Brothers bankers who helped [cause the 2007-08 financial crash](#) are throwing a ten-year reunion party, says Financial News.

The collapse of the investment bank was a major turning point in the credit crunch. Why celebrate that?

Ordinary workers at Lehman Brothers and in wider society faced redundancy and eviction. But top bosses snuck out the back with the swag - and moved on to the next cushy gig.

... workers' debt

For the working class, of course, the credit crisis never ended. Not only has the economic 'recovery' not reached us - but UK households have hidden debts of £18.9 billion, says Citizens Advice.

The sum of missed bill payments has soared by 34% since 2010 when the Tories came to power. And consumer borrowing is rising well above meagre pay - hitting £213 billion in June, says the Bank of England.

Golden wings...

Are you so revoltingly, dizzyingly minted that gold is literally disposable for you? How about chowing down on some gold-plated fried chicken?

An upmarket New York restaurant began selling \$1,000 chicken wings slathered in 24-carat gold sauce earlier this year.

Or you could jump in the chopper and head to Miami, where you can pick up a dozen gold-coated doughnuts for \$1,200.

... kids' junk food

Meanwhile, [anti-union multinational McDonald's](#) is allowed to plug junk food to our children because Britain's advertising regulator has ruled Happy Meals 'healthy'.

The Advertising Standards Agency said last month that Coco Pops and KFC commercials are not allowed around kids' shows. But cartoon-themed McDonald's nosh is acceptable because it can include non-junk options.

Of course, parents should be allowed to treat their kids to McDonald's. But get real. Pushing the brand during Peppa Pig is not about encouraging balanced dietary choices.

Capitalism in crisis: news in brief

Bezos wants workers terrified

Hundred-billionaire [robber baron Jeff Bezos](#), founder of Amazon and owner of two - yes, two - historic Washington DC mansions (connected by a walkway), says this: "I constantly remind our employees to be afraid, to wake up every morning terrified." The statement recently emerged from a 1999 letter to shareholders.

You know what makes Jeff Bezos wake up terrified every morning? The thought of a unionised workforce, and the growing public sympathy with socialist ideas.

That's why he targeted Socialist Alternative's Seattle councillor Kshama Sawant. She [tried to tax his massive corporate profits](#) to pay for affordable homes. So let's make his nightmares come true.

Exit stage right

Spare a thought for Eddie Izzard. He only got to enjoy a couple of months of using his Labour NEC position [to undermine Corbyn](#) before being voted off. Love him.

Ross Saunders, Cardiff

What we heard

May's Mandela mess

Theresa May's African tour took in Robben Island, the prison where [South Africa's apartheid regime held Nelson Mandela](#).

Channel 4 hack Michael Crick - himself no friend of the left - pressed the PM on her record.

Crick: Mrs May, you're about to visit Robben Island. You were active in politics in the 70s and 80s. What did you do to help release Nelson Mandela?

May: Well I think what is important is what the United Kingdom did...

Crick: No, what did you do? Did you go on protests? Did you get arrested outside the embassy? Did you boycott South African goods? Did you do anything?

May: I think you know full well that I didn't go on protests, Michael.

But while the Tories were attacking anti-apartheid campaigners as terrorists, Jeremy Corbyn was on the aforementioned protests, fighting to end the regime.

Farewell, Frank Field

Vicious old right-wing MP Frank Field has resigned the Labour whip after his constituency members threatened to deselect him.

As well as saving face, Field has timed the jump to cause maximum damage to Corbyn's anti-austerity leadership.

Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe was interviewed by LBC radio about Field's resignation and record. [Hear the socialist view at our Facebook page.](#)

PCS union: build the fight for a pay rise and against austerity - re-elect Chris Baugh

Chris Baugh is the assistant general secretary of the civil servants' union PCS which organises civil service workers.

He is [seeking nomination as a candidate for re-election to this position within PCS Left Unity](#), the union's broad left organisation.

Here, Chris speaks to the Socialist in a personal capacity about the challenges currently facing the PCS, the trade union and labour movement more widely, and about the way forward in the struggle against austerity.

The mainstream media tell us trade unions are out of date. With a further fall in the recorded membership of unions and historically low strike figures, is there some truth in that position?

These figures disguise the fact that the need for unions is as strong now as it has ever been. The scale of insecurity of employment in non-union areas has grown massively from the Thatcher government onwards.

But if unions fight, they can attract a new generation of workers, who are often super-exploited. There have been some notable disputes such as [McDonald's](#), [TGI Friday's](#), and now [cleaners working in the Ministry of Justice](#) (MOJ) that our members there are supporting.

There has also been action against bogus self-employment. It remains a provable fact that workers in unionised workplaces have better pay, terms, and conditions.

I have played a leading role in negotiating a national apprenticeship agreement which means that a new intake into the civil service will benefit from trade union-secured protections.

Because of the Tory anti-union laws, despite a huge yes vote, PCS can't now go forward with a strike on pay. What faces the union now?

[Were it not for the undemocratic anti-union laws](#), we would now be celebrating a massive strike vote that we could put into practice.

It's a testament to the huge effort of our reps and activists across the whole of the union. And it will be vital to continue to put pressure on a Tory government that has singled out civil servants for extra attacks.

The civil service unions have applied for a judicial review against the government's failure to consult us on the pay guidelines.

But the most important task for PCS is to support campaigns in the MOJ, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs and any other group in the union challenging the 2018 pay offer.

We welcome the [fantastic vote by MOJ members](#) whose employer is seeking to impose a derisory pay rise in return for worse conditions.

We will again be coming to the Trade Union Congress to [call on public sector unions to apply coordinated pressure on the Tory government](#) to halt and reverse the decline in workers' pay.

Last year, TUC congress unanimously passed a motion agreeing coordinated ballots and action. That didn't happen so what are the lessons?

The [TUC demonstration that took place this May](#) should have happened much earlier to act as a platform for coordinated action.

But instead, yet again the Tories were able to play workers from different sectors off against each other.

While the Tories relaxed the pay cap in some areas, albeit in a very uneven manner, public sector workers and PCS members in particular are still suffering declining living standards.

The lesson is that, as well as calling on the TUC to enact successive congress policies for coordinated action, unions who are serious about a fight need to come together and plan for action in 2019.

That's why we need to talk to the University and College Union [who have started a pay ballot](#) and others like the National Education Union [who have been discussing it](#).

As well as pay, there will be other interesting debates at TUC such as Brexit and climate change, about which you have been a longstanding campaigner.

Yes. On Brexit, we have been fighting for extra jobs and resources for the civil service as a result of the Leave vote and the extra work that is involved.

The former head of the civil service has talked about up to 20,000 extra civil servants. We also continue to fight for the rights of EU nationals working in the civil service, including their right to remain in the UK and continue working in the civil service.

On climate change, [there can be no dispute about the science](#). As we've seen just this year, climate is a trade union issue.

Austerity and the cutting of emergency services such as firefighters have been tragically highlighted.

Trade union pressure is needed in fighting for a just transition from an economy reliant on the burning of fossil fuels to a zero-carbon economy based on public ownership and run in the interests of working people and the vast majority in society.

Fracking has been banned in Wales and Scotland and a number of countries across Europe, yet the [Tories have overridden the wishes of local people](#) in areas such as where I'm from on the Fylde, despite the risks to the environment and public health.

This reveals how beholden the Tory government is to big business. There needs to be union support for action against fracking.

Finally, how do unions support Jeremy Corbyn from the attack by the Tory establishment and the Blairites?

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell have been longstanding friends of PCS and supported many of our campaigns and disputes over the years. While PCS isn't affiliated to Labour, we welcomed Jeremy's election as Labour leader.

And we hope that if we can force a general election as soon as possible, the [policies in his manifesto that will benefit working people](#) can be implemented, such as renationalisation instead of privatisation and outsourcing.

DWP: PCS union builds fightback on pay

Dave Semple, PCS DWP group assistant secretary (personal capacity)

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) published its pay offer to staff on 3 September. What has shocked and surprised many PCS members is that the DWP didn't even write to the Treasury to make a case for much-needed extra money to fund a pay rise.

The Treasury only funded the amounts already agreed in [the 'Employee Deal' of 2016](#). In that deal workers were offered modest pay rises if they were willing to accept contractual changes, including alterations to opening hours and other changes to working conditions. Higher-grade staff were not included in the deal, and received just 1%.

No one will begrudge hard-pressed senior staff a pay rise. Staff excluded from the Employee Deal were still expected to fall in line with the new ways of working.

However, many low-paid members are likely to be angry that extra money found from existing budgets and recycled from the bonus pot was not directed towards all staff who had not had an above-inflation pay rise.

Members voiced their anger when senior [DWP management said it was going to delay the pay rise](#) agreed under the Employee Deal which was due to be granted in July 2018.

The strength of feeling expressed by PCS members [forced management to consult with the union and to back down](#). They paid up on time.

Now members will also be angry at DWP senior management's so-called review of the Employee Deal, which 'protected' the planned pay increases from inflation using the figure as it stood in 2016.

Inflation has substantially risen since. This makes management's review meaningless if it does not include demanding extra money from the Treasury to address the external and economic factors, like the 2% increase in inflation since 2016.

Failing to demand more from the Treasury also means not addressing the paltry 0.25% 'pay rise' that was paid for the 17% of staff who were entitled to the Employee Deal but who chose to opt out rather than accept the contractual changes.

Worse off

The Employee Deal pay rises were agreed to address the chronic lack of pay progression and the inability of workers to get onto to the rate for the job at the max of the pay scale. This was in the context of years of pay restraint.

For those who had been stuck at the bottom of the pay scales this required 20% increases over the four years of the Employee Deal.

The refusal to undertake a proper review and address the devaluing of the deal in relation to rising inflation means everyone is worse off.

There is a need to unite all staff and grades to build the fightback.

Clearly [the PCS pay campaign must continue](#), and department union groups should coordinate campaigning together to maintain pressure on the government for this year's pay round as well as building the strategy to fight on 2019 pay.

In DWP, the union's group executive committee met on 30 August and made clear that the offer is unacceptable as it falls so far short of the union's pay demands.

DWP has granted time for members to be consulted, and workplace meetings will be organised in every office to give a clear response to management on what our members think of the offer.

PCS members in Land Registry demand 6% pay rise

Dave Lunn, vice-president, PCS Land Registry group (personal capacity)

PCS members in HM Land Registry (HMLR) group have lodged a 6% pay increase claim with departmental management.

This demand largely echoes the national campaign, but goes further than the 5% claim as HMLR pay has not only been pinned back by ten years of Tory wage restraint, but has also fallen behind comparable areas of the civil service.

The 6% claim seeks to address this as well as overtaking (on pay scale) issues which were brought about the employer's decision to 'buy out' contractual pay progression.

Demands

The key demands of our claim are:

- 6% on all pay points, or £1,200 - whichever is the greater - in order to achieve parity with the average pay of other government departments,
- for all allowances to be increased by 6%,
- for a living wage of at least £10 an hour,
- that all apprentices be paid at the rate for the job rather than a reduced apprentice rate,
- the abolition of 'non-consolidated' payments to help fund these meaningful consolidated and pensionable increases
- and where we do not have 'spot rates' for grades, to reduce pay progression steps.

Last year during pay talks, HMLR management was keen to publicly point out that it wanted to and could afford to pay us more.

It argued that government pay restraint prevented it doing so. We will be very clear in our upcoming pay negotiations that we had [huge support from our members for the national pay campaign](#).

Should HMLR management fail to go back to the government and make the strong case for a pay rise, in line with our claim, it will make it crystal clear to our members that the responsibility for continuing unacceptable pay lies not only with the government, but also with our direct employer: HMLR.

In these circumstances, we would be obliged to consult and potentially ballot our members for action specifically within HMLR. This allows us to put management's professed desire to pay us more to the test.

We have a proud history and tradition of bargaining, campaigning and organising in our group. We have reps in every workplace and 99% of the work we do is lay rep-led. Importantly none of these aspects of our work are done in isolation.

Results

We have achieved results through our bargaining: positive changes to the sickness absence policy and hundreds of fixed-term posts being made permanent. And through campaigning: defeating privatisation twice as well as defeating plans to close 75% of our offices.

These are the reasons why we are able to organise effectively and recruit and retain members. Our members see the union as being relevant and effective and they play an active part in our campaigns and in recruiting new members.

For us to be able to make progress on pay, it is really important that the national campaign does not lose momentum.

In parallel to the campaign we run in HMLR group, we need maximum pressure placed upon the government across as many areas of the civil service as possible.

It is also vital that the future direction of the national campaign is member and activist-led, with groups being able to coordinate campaigns and action wherever possible.

This must not be a top-down or one-size-fits-all approach imposed on different groups.

Our members have suffered long enough and we are ready to do everything within our power to try and deliver the sort of pay rise they need and deserve.

Germany: violent attacks in Chemnitz - how can the far right be stopped?

Sozialistische Alternative (CWI Germany) and CWI reporters

The 27 August pictures from Chemnitz, in the German state of Saxony, were shocking: over 5,000 far-right protesters moving through the city centre.

Some of the crowd beat migrants, throw bottles at counter-demonstrators, and attack journalists. The police appear unwilling or unable to stop the Nazi assaults...

These events had an enormous impact nationally. Reports of the 'pogrom atmosphere' in Chemnitz spurred anti-racist protests and solidarity actions in other cities.

On 30 August, in Berlin, around 10,000 took part in an anti-far-right demonstration initiated, at two days' notice, by Sozialistische Alternative.

Then 65,000 came to the 3 September "wir sind mehr" ("we are more") anti-racist and anti-far-right concert in Chemnitz.

The size of this event, far bigger than anything the far right or fascists have been able to mobilise on the streets, showed the potential for building a counter-movement.

The question that is sharply posed now is exactly how to combat racism, the growing far right and the increasingly confident neo-Nazi groupings.

This is not just a question in eastern Germany. Currently polls are showing increasing [support for the right-wing Alternative for Germany](#) (AfD) party - that, nationally, could be overtaking the Social Democrats (SPD) as Germany's second most popular party.

Neo-Nazi thugs

The initial trigger for the 27 August protests was the tragic death, in the early hours of the previous Sunday, of 35-year-old Daniel H at a Chemnitz festival.

The background is still unclear although a Syrian and an Iraqi have been arrested for his killing.

At first the fight that led to Daniel H's death was described as a dispute over 'assaults' against several women.

But this account appears to come from the realm of fantasy. While the Bild newspaper, in particular, eagerly spread the tale of an assault on German women which three Germans tried to prevent, the police strongly disagreed with this version of events.

Seizing an opportunity, Nazi groups - such as 'Kaotic Chemnitz' and 'NS Boys' - and also the racist AfD, immediately called for demonstrations that Sunday.

Around 1,000 people came to that protest, which soon saw migrants and anti-fascists being attacked. Many were chased down streets while the attackers were largely unhindered by the police.

The following day, more than 5,000 far-right protestors rallied again in Chemnitz, some of whom had been mobilised nationally to attend.

Claiming that this Chemnitz man's death was the cause of this orgy of violence is dishonest. Daniel H had Cuban roots and was certainly not a person who tolerated Kaotic Chemnitz, the NS Boys or the AfD.

On his Facebook page he liked the pages of 'Die Linke Chemnitz' (Left Party Chemnitz), 'FCK NZS' (F*ck Nazis) and 'Storch Heinar' (a satire on the right-wing clothing brand Thor Steinar).

It is not credible to simply argue that Daniel H's death led to these completely out-of-control, far-right demonstrations.

Even Saxony's minister of the interior, Roland Wöllner - from the right-wing CDU party - had to admit that the far right's use of violence had reached a new level.

Since October 2014, [the racist 'Pegida' movement](#) has been regularly on the streets of Dresden, Saxony's state capital.

This has changed Saxony, even if the Pegida marches currently mobilise only a fraction of the people they did at the beginning.

Far-right groups were given a tailwind and felt encouraged by growing support. As Franziska Schreiber, former regional chair of the AfD's youth organisation Junge Alternative (JA), notes in her recently published book, both the JA and AfD recruited new supporters at the Dresden Pegida demonstrations.

The subsequent AfD electoral success, along with racist speeches and statements, gave the right-wing activists an additional boost.

State apparatus

A few weeks ago, an employee of the regional police agency LKA taking part in a Pegida demonstration in Dresden against a visit of the German chancellor Angela Merkel got the police to obstruct a news team from the public television service ZDF filming the protest.

This off-duty LKA employee was filmed shouting the Pegida slogan "Lügenpresse" ("lying press") before the police held the ZDF camera team for 45 minutes.

This incident shows the extent to which the Saxon state apparatus seems to have been infiltrated by far-right thugs and racists.

Above all, these events show one thing: we can only win the fight against racists, Nazis, right-wing populists and the 'Reichsbürger' (a movement arguing that the pre-war German state still exists within its 1937 borders) by fighting back together in a mass, united, working class struggle.

Furthermore, the state apparatus cannot be relied upon to provide a defence against these forces. Anyone who wants to stop the far right and the Nazis must become active.

Taking to the streets can be a first step, but action must also be taken in workplaces, communities, schools and universities.

This has to include uniting and organising collective resistance, including providing defence against Nazi and racist violence especially given the police's record of failure on this.

Saxony's minister of the interior emphasises his support for the police. But Heidenau, Bautzen, Freital and Colditz are all Saxon towns known for racist assaults. Burning asylum seekers' hostels, violent attacks - the list is long and frightening.

In none of these examples did the police play a glorious or heroic role. In fact the far-right thugs were often tolerated, as was initially the case with the now jailed neo-Nazi Freital terrorist group.

At the same time there were huge police mobilisations against left-wing counter-protests.

Socialist alternative

Countering the gains of the AfD requires building a mass working class alternative armed with a socialist programme of demands.

This is especially so in eastern Germany where Die Linke (the Left Party) is seen as part of the establishment - making it easier for the AfD to grow.

But the AfD, which has both neoliberal and more populist wings, has no answer to the increasing poverty or the bosses' drive to hold down wages.

For example, according to its co-chairs, Jörg Meuthen and Alice Weidel, the AfD wants to base pensions solely on private finance.

Weidel is a member of the neoliberal Hayek Society, which has set itself the goal of 'freeing' large companies from any social restrictions.

But, more than that, elements within the AfD cheered on the Chemnitz protests and, by implication, attacks on migrants.

One AfD member of the Bundestag (parliament), Markus Frohnmaier, tweeted: "If the state is no longer to protect citizens then people take to the streets and protect themselves.

"It's as simple as that! Today it's a citizen's duty to stop the lethal 'knife migration'!"

Another AfD Bundestag member, Udo Hemmelgarn, reportedly sympathetic to the Reichsbürger, tweeted after the clashes: "The problem isn't the peaceful protests by the brave people of Chemnitz against criminal Muslim migrants, it is the rapes and murders by illegal immigrants - migrant violence!"

Protests not enough

Saturday 1 September saw rival mobilisations in Chemnitz. While the joint far-right march was bigger than the counter-protest, it was not massively larger than on the previous Monday.

However, unfortunately this counter-protest was politically dominated by representatives of the pro-capitalist parties whose policies over the last decades have paved the way for the growth of the far right.

The pro-cuts policies of the SPD and Green leaders will not undermine the mass base that the AfD currently has in Saxony.

The size of Monday's "we are more" concert showed the potential for mobilising young people. Its size enraged the far right.

Beatrix von Storch, vice chair of the AfD Bundestag members, angrily tweeted after the concert: "You are not more. You are Merkel's subjects, you are odious - and you dance on graves".

The challenge is to mobilise this potential for fighting back. Both Die Linke and the trade unions have a particular responsibility.

The key to reversing this situation is not only protests but primarily building a movement that builds defence against racist and fascist attacks, fights to win social improvements now and offers a real alternative to capitalism.

Such a genuinely socialist alternative would undermine the AfD's support and isolate the fascists.

Sozialistische Alternative points out that the last word in this battle against the right has not been said.

If the trade unions, Die Linke and social movements are mobilised in the fight against racism, presenting a real socialist alternative, supporting the peaceful coexistence of all working class people, then great things could be achieved.

The fight against racism must be linked to the struggle for more care workers, for better schools, for secure, well-paid work, and so on.

It is crucial to build on the common social interests of all working people regardless of skin colour, nationality or religious affiliation.

For example, tenants born in Germany can understand best that they have exactly the same interests as the family who fled Syria when they are engaged in a common struggle to end high rents.

This is the way to undermine the support the AfD currently has. Racism divides, which means it weakens us. Solidarity helps us to win.

But this also means that the trade unions and Die Linke must finally take an active part in the struggle against the far right.

Fighting racism in Britain

- [Tory and Blairite racism behind Windrush death](#)
- [united movement needed to defeat racism](#)

Shop workers hungry for £10 an hour now and an end to zero-hour contracts

'Adam Viteos', shop worker

I work as an assistant manager in a high street retail chain and one of the most regular complaints I get from my staff is that they are hungry.

Working on a four-hour contract, it is impossible for them to budget when they are only guaranteed such low hours each week.

Even lower management such as myself are only guaranteed 24 hours a week, with a real-terms pay cut waiting for us upon promotion as we lose our overtime rate. Full-time contracts are only given to store managers and deputy store managers.

Every member of staff regularly discusses with management about getting more hours. We recently had two people leave, both because they weren't getting enough hours.

Instead of raising everybody's hours, the company was quick to recruit two new people which has frustrated all of those who are crying out for more hours.

My company isn't alone, low and zero-hour contracts are rife throughout retail. The result of this is a huge rise in underemployment which is bringing with it a whole range of issues.

Stress, mental health issues and poverty are increasingly becoming the norm in my workplace. Things have become so desperate that we have started to organise communal meals to share the cost of food. It has built camaraderie among staff and we've begun to organise in a union.

Retail union Usdaw [voted at its annual conference](#) in April to build a campaign around the demand of a 16-hour minimum contract, except when the employee specifically requests less, coupled with a £10 an hour minimum wage.

This is something that members in my store have welcomed. But the campaign needs to be built if we're to rally the hundreds of thousands of retail workers to organise and push back against such conditions.

The anger bubbling away under the surface is a ticking time bomb. We're hungry for sustainable jobs and by the end of each month we're just plain hungry. We will not tolerate this forever.

We demand:

- The building of a serious campaign for £10 an hour now and to scrap zero-hour contracts
- Coordinated trade union action on pay
- Sustainable full-time jobs

Guards continue fight against driver-only operation following Merseyrail victory

[Guards on Merseyrail](#) have struck a blow against [driver-only operation](#). The workers in the RMT union have forced the company to commit to keeping guards on trains after a long-running series of strikes.

Inspired by this success, guards on other networks have continued their action to keep a guaranteed second, safety-critical member of staff on trains.

Bournemouth

The long-running [dispute on South Western Railway](#) continued on 31 August as RMT strikers escalated their action to a three-day strike.

In Bournemouth the strikers remained resolute. There was a determined mood to stay strong and united.

Morale among the strikers was still high. The guards said they were still getting a lot of support from rail passengers.

Guards are needed on all trains and it was emphatically stated that this is a line that cannot be crossed.

Pickets explained that negotiations have taken place on a number of occasions without arriving at any agreement. South Western Railway won the franchise from South West Trains in 2017.

One difference in the bids was the fact that only South West Trains included guards on the train. There is speculation that this is one of the reasons they lost the franchise.

There is a clause in the contract saying that, at the discretion of the secretary of state, the rail company can seek financial remuneration for losses incurred during industrial action.

The company must be able to prove that they have been exhaustive in their efforts to resolve the dispute.

The question then arises that some of the talks at conciliation service Acas could be as a result of the rail companies wishing to fulfil this criteria, rather than properly seeking to resolve the dispute. If payments are made, the financial burden ends up falling on the taxpayer.

Jane Ward

Portsmouth

At Fratton station in Portsmouth, the mood of the guards was determined. News of the ending of the dispute on Merseyrail, which means guards will remain on trains, could be a confidence boost as RMT members are forced by Tory anti-trade union legislation to re-ballot after six months in dispute.

Management are refusing to talk, holding out until the ballot closes in the hope that the 50% turnout threshold needed for a successful Yes vote is not reached.

The guards are doing everything to make sure the 50% is beaten, forcing management back to the negotiating table.

The guards will be out again at Fratton station and across the South Western Railway network on 8 and 15 September.

Nick Doyle

Newcastle

Speaking to RMT members in Newcastle who took their 25th day of [strike action against driver-only operations](#) on 1 September, one of the strikers commented that Merseyrail deciding to keep guards on their trains has given the workers on Arriva Rail Northern "confidence that there are deals out there".

However, there was also a cautionary air, as Merseyrail has said it can only finance keeping guards on the trains by putting up fares and talk about 'conductors' productivity' (code for and conditions).

There was recognition on the picket line of the need to renationalise the railways, and all other public utilities.

The strikers are clearly geared up for a battle. One of them said: "This is an ongoing dispute, and we're all determined to see it through."

They have also had their confidence boosted by the amount of support they are receiving from passengers "who understand this is all about putting profit before safety".

The strike is set to continue every Saturday in September. Messages of support to: m.thompson@rmt.org.uk

Socialist Party Newcastle

Higher education ballot: vote Yes and strike for pay and equality!

Sam Morecroft, Sheffield UCU anti-casualisation officer (personal capacity)

The University and College Union (UCU) is in dispute with employers in higher education, something that will not surprise any of our members.

The results of marketisation and cutbacks which have decimated the sector over the last ten years can be seen everywhere in UK universities.

Since 2009, the real-terms value of our pay has fallen by [21%](#) against the Retail Price Index. Our sector has one of the worst gender pay gaps of any equivalent sector in the world at an average of [18.4%](#).

The use of super-exploitative casual contracts has exploded on our campuses, with over [72,000](#) workers in higher education employed casually. Excessive workloads are ruining our quality of life with higher education staff working an average of [two days](#) a week above our contracted hours, completely free. This is the reality of UK universities for workers.

That's why UCU and other campus unions have demanded a pay increase of 7.5% and action to tackle casualisation, the gender pay gap and excessive workloads.

However, in a show of complete intransigence, the University and College Employers Association [has refused](#) to improve its below inflation pay offer of 2%, or to take any action at all to address other issues.

The ballot opened on 30 August and will run until 19 October. It's vitally important that we secure a huge vote for action - not only to smash the Tory anti-union laws and secure the 50% turnout needed but also to signal to the employers that we will not allow any more attacks on our pay, terms and conditions.

Earlier this year the fantastic pensions struggle showed the power we can have when we organise and strike together - [we beat the employers' threats to scrap our defined benefit pensions](#).

That strike showed how much anger there is on campus at our working conditions, with even casualised workers with little hope of ever receiving a pension joining the strike in huge numbers.

This strike could be even bigger. This time workers in 167 institutions could be out on the pickets and Unison, which represents non-academic staff, is [also balloting](#) for strike action.

But the pensions dispute also showed weaknesses in our union. Our [conference this year was shut down by staff walkouts](#) orchestrated by general secretary Sally Hunt.

At our recall conference on 18 October, delegates will debate a motion of no confidence in Hunt, and she must defend her record and conduct.

However, we know from experience that fighting to defend our terms and conditions goes hand in hand with the fight for a democratic, campaigning union.

The priority for members must be to ensure the best possible ballot result and to begin to build for strike action on campus now.

The university sector currently holds cash reserves of [£44.27 billion](#) - roughly double the GDP of Iceland. The employers can afford to pay us decent wages and treat us like human beings.

Housing workers' walkout forces improved pay deal

Unite the Union members at Homes England and the Regulator of Social Housing have voted overwhelmingly to accept a revised set of options on pay [following industrial action in July](#) and a sustained campaign over the last few months.

The favoured options take a tiered approach and would significantly improve the amount awarded to those earning under £35,000, meaning the bulk of the rise will go to the lowest paid staff.

An overwhelming majority of 97% of members accepted the deal on a turnout of 78%.

The campaign also won a framework of protections for a new pay review. The agreed protections will ensure that jobs will be independently evaluated, no cuts will be made to staff salaries, and there is a time limit for giving pay rises to staff paid less than the agreed rate for the job.

One of the Unite representatives, Suzanne Muna, said: "The action we have taken and the involvement of our members at all stages has created a sustained pressure on our employer to favour the lowest-paid staff, which they have now done.

"These staff have suffered disproportionately from a decade of real-terms pay cuts. The campaign underlines the positive impact of collective action in all its forms and shows that we are never helpless.

"It doesn't end here though - our members will continue to fight for pay justice and I encourage all staff to join Unite and build even more power in our workplace!"

The proposal is now with the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government for approval.

- [Read more at housingworkers.org.uk](http://housingworkers.org.uk)

Liebherr Sunderland strike continues

Elaine Brunskill, Northern Socialist Party regional secretary

Members of general unions Unite and GMB working for Liebherr in Sunderland are [striking to improve their hourly rate of pay](#).

The strikers took [eight days of industrial action in August](#) and are walking out for eight more in early September.

For a number of years Liebherr, which is a global company, has promised to improve pay once the company is doing better.

So when workers saw Liebherr's boast of a record-breaking global turnover in 2017 of almost €10 billion, they felt the company should come good with their 'jam tomorrow' promises.

Managers have clearly been attempting to intimidate the workers on the picket line by taking photos of the strikers.

So strikers decided to have a bit of fun! They set up music through their megaphone. Once the managers (having again taken photos) began to walk away, the strikers played the theme tune from comedy duo Laurel and Hardy. One of the managers was livid!

The strikers are having a lot of success stopping deliveries to the company. This has included the postal worker and milkman, who both refused to cross the picket line.

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

Fight racism, fight capitalism!

For a united movement to demand jobs, homes and services for all

Isai Priya, Socialist Party black and Asian group

Socialist Students [organised protests and walkouts](#) during Donald Trump's state visit to Britain. We asked college and school students to write a reason why they hate Donald Trump on our placards. A majority wrote down that he is a racist.

More and more young people are getting involved in campaigns to fight against racism. Why does racism exist and how we can fight it?

Right-wing Tory and Blairite governments have increased the oppression of black and Asian workers. The Windrush scandal exposed their racist hostile environment policies.

Malcolm X said "you can't have capitalism without racism" - and the Socialist Party points out that the profit-driven system is the root cause of racism.

The ruling class uses it to divide and rule the working class, making it easier to exploit us.

Racism is a daily feature of life for millions of workers and young people in Britain. It is worsened by Tory and EU-led austerity.

We say that the fight against racism has to be closely linked to the fightback against austerity and cuts to our vital services.

We call for a £10 a hour minimum wage, abolishing tuition fees, building hundreds of thousands of council homes.

These policies could change the lives of millions of black and Asian youth along with the rest of the working class.

There is an urgent need for a united struggle of all workers against austerity and public sector cuts and to fight for jobs, homes and services.

Young people should [join the Socialist Party](#) and [Socialist Students](#) to build that movement. Join the fightback against racism and capitalism.

- [Fighting racist attacks in Germany](#)
 - [Tory and Blairite racism behind Windrush death](#)
-

Legal Costs Fund Appeal launched for former Derby TUSC election agent

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee has launched an appeal to help meet the legal costs of Chris Fernandez, the local election agent for eight TUSC candidates at the 2016 council elections in Derby, who earlier this year was imprisoned for 'electoral fraud'.

A full account of what was a politically motivated prosecution is [available on the TUSC website](#).

In essence, Chris was [judged guilty of misleading members of the public](#) on the electoral register into signing candidates' nomination papers in the 2016 local elections.

Chris categorically denied setting out to mislead anyone but, before the trial, was put under enormous pressure to admit to something he hadn't done and not contest the case. He was asked, in effect, to commit perjury and lie in court!

But now, scandalously, after serving four months in prison, he has been hit with a bill for £8,847 for exercising his right to protest his innocence.

Chris had applied for legal aid but, because he lost the case, he has to pay a contribution to the costs.

Working class activists should not be left to face these pressures alone, which is why the TUSC steering committee has agreed to launch a Chris Fernandez Legal Costs Fund Appeal.

Donations, which will go to Chris from the TUSC national account, can be made through PayPal on the TUSC website at tusc.org.uk/donate.

Please use the 'Add special instructions' button to say that the donation is for the Legal Costs Fund Appeal.

Alternatively, cheques payable to TUSC can be sent to TUSC, 17 Colebert House, Colebert Avenue, London E1 4JP, again with a note saying it is for the Legal Costs Fund Appeal.

Birmingham Socialist sales success

Séamus Smyth, Birmingham South East Socialist Party

The sales drive for the [1000th issue of the Socialist](#) encouraged our members to go out onto the streets every week to sell the paper and talk to the people in our community.

Many members of the public are showing great support and we recently sold over 100 papers at Moor Street train station alone.

It shows that working class people are enraged with the failures of the Blairite Birmingham Labour council and its attacks on public housing, the NHS and, most recently, [home care workers](#).

The people of Birmingham want change. The Socialist is the paper that informs on the struggles and battles won by the working class throughout the country.

We show people the relevant articles in the Socialist which explain the need to fight for socialism.

We will continue to hold more paper sales on a weekly basis outside train stations, coach stops and busy streets.

And we will continue to encourage working class people to use the potential power they have to change society so that it works for them.

Obituary: Stan Herschel

A towering figure in the labour movement

Socialist Party members in the Northern region were saddened to hear that our comrade and friend Stan Herschel has passed away.

Many knew Stan for his humorous and insightful comments on social media. However, first and foremost we will remember Stan as a class fighter of the highest order.

Prior to his early retirement due to ill health Stan was the RMT union's regional organiser. Comrades have spoken of the wealth of experience he had as a militant trade union organiser - including his role in a determined strike of deep sea divers, who won a massive pay increase of around 50%.

Stan was always eager to assist workers in struggle. This included invaluable advice given at National Shop Steward Network meetings to strikers from [the Tyneside Safety Glass \(TSG\) dispute](#).

Strikers were so impressed by his advice that they asked for his speaking notes - which offered systematic advice on how to take on the bosses. TSG Unite members also send their condolences.

Stan was an enthusiastic proponent of sharing his knowledge with the next generation. This included speaking to students at Northumbria university.

Stan joined the Socialist Party around a decade ago during the battle to [stop the privatisation of the Tyne and Wear metro](#) system. While other trade union leaders in the region paid lip service to the campaign, Stan, with the backing of Bob Crow and the RMT nationally, was at the forefront of this battle.

Socialist Party members were extremely impressed by Stan and he was clearly impressed by us. Even after his retirement we used to meet up with Stan for coffees. He always had his finger on the pulse of what was happening within the RMT and the wider labour movement. Also, he was always prepared to listen - an invaluable skill.

Alongside being a towering figure in the labour and trade union movement, Stan was devoted to his family. He often spoke of his wife Pat, his mam, his son and daughter Stan and Liz, and his grandchildren. We send them all our condolences.

Some may say that Stan's form of militant trade unionism is from a bygone era; we think this is the music of the future. And what a legacy he leaves!

Elaine Brunskill and Norman Hall

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 4 September 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

A day in the life of a carer: "I am having trouble feeding my children on my wages"

A domiciliary carer

As I go to bed, I look at my rota. It says I have a 7am start time. Taking this for granted, I set my alarm for 5.30am.

I get a text at 10.43pm saying my rota has changed and I am starting half an hour earlier. I don't read the text until I wake up and, consequently, I have half the time to sort myself out this morning.

Luckily, I've prepared a packed lunch the night before using the kids' dinner leftovers. I shower, get dressed, take my meds and, after calming my three-year-old down because he doesn't like me going to work, I don't have time for breakfast and have no money to buy it anyway.

My first call is to a former medical professional who is now severely disabled. On arrival, I discover that, despite the continence underwear and special bedsheet, they are lying in soaking wet bedclothes. My colleague arrives as the call requires two of us.

We strip the client down and hoist them onto the commode chair so that we can wash them effectively. Having given them a few minutes to open their bowels, one of us has to clean up the commode and wipe the client's bottom.

While one of us gives them a shower, the other strips the bed and replaces the bedding. Then it's time to dry and dress the client. Using the hoist again, they are taken to the bed and then helped onto the wheelchair.

Already the sweat is running off of us. Despite the heatwave, some clients still have their central heating switched onto maximum.

Some do not open windows either. This is one such client. I leave the house once they are comfortable in the lounge with breakfast and drinks.

My second visit is a single person call and is pretty much the same but without the hoist. This person can shift from chair to chair but has little mobility.

They are also elderly and showing signs of dementia. Many have no family locally. For some clients, carers may be the only person they see all day long.

They have little interaction with the outside world and most are grateful for the time you give them.

Difficult

Some people are resistant to needing care and struggle to accept they are no longer capable. These people can be especially difficult to help. Sometimes you get verbal abuse, sometimes physical resistance.

Often you get all the unsavoury tasks without the more joyful ones. You get to change incontinence pads and soiled pants.

You get to wash soiled hoist slings and change soiled beds. You get pooped on and spat on, but you don't get to go to the birthday parties, so to speak.

Calls often include toileting, hoisting, dressing, washing, domestic duties, meeting with nurses, applying creams, handing out medication, keeping very stringent records, carrying out constant risk assessments, and much more.

Days are mentally draining. I have walked in to find people having strokes in the lounge, having fallen out of bed and bumped their heads and unable to get up. Twice, I have walked in and found someone had died in their sleep.

Once, someone had died on the floor. This is distressing and it never gets easier. There is no real psychological support or training for carers who witness the horrors of strokes, heart attacks and dead bodies.

We may be the only person in the house. We have to press a call button and, if the client can afford to subscribe to the call service, explain everything through a little wall-mounted speaker box. Then there's the wait for paramedics.

With the NHS as cash starved as it is, sometimes you wait a good while for help - all the time feeling guilty about being late to everybody else on your call sheet, as well as dealing with the upsetting situation that has unfolded in front of you.

For all this, most care companies pay £8 to £10 an hour. Often, having a higher rate on paper can actually mean you take home a smaller wage.

This is because the higher hourly rate is only available if you accept a zero-hour contract. Take the company I work for as an example.

I am contracted from 7am until 2pm, but this changes at the drop of a hat, as described. Most days I work until 2.30pm anyway.

Pay

My contract stipulates £8 an hour. If I accepted a zero-hour contract I would be eligible for up to £11 an hour.

But these contracts mean you're not always called into work, which means no money. It also means no holiday pay, sick pay, or guarantee of being able to pay some of your bills and feed your family.

In terms of turnover, like nursing, this sector has workers who see this as a vocation. Fewer see this work as a career.

Nonetheless, lots of agencies are advertising constantly because many leave the sector after a couple of years through injury or because of mental stress.

There is only so much neglect or trauma that one person can witness before it becomes demoralising and depression sets in.

I will not be in this sector long because I am having trouble feeding my children on these wages.

I have had to use foodbanks and I am working full time! It's horrendously shameful that I am working full time and cannot afford to live.

I worry if my car breaks down I will not have enough money to repair it and then I will be unable to work.

The care sector, like the NHS, is hugely undervalued and workers are not paid in line with the duties they have to perform.

It doesn't have to be like this and it must change. Care workers have taken strike action such as [Care UK workers](#) and recently [workers in Birmingham](#), for better pay and working conditions. This gives me confidence.

The whole care 'industry' must be brought into public ownership, fully funded, and run under the democratic control and management of workers, service users and the wider community.

The Socialist Party says:

- Reverse all council cuts and sell-offs and bring services back in-house
- Commit to new central funding for social care and council services
- A £10 an hour minimum wage without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage and scrap zero-hour contracts
- Proper enhanced pay rates for care workers on nights and other unsociable hours
- Care companies who fail to pay these rates to have their contracts stopped immediately, with all work and staff transferring to the local authority
- Nationalise the banks and top corporations under democratic control - with compensation paid to shareholders only on the basis of proven need - to pay for these and other measures

The Socialist inbox

Do you have something to say?

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

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

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

Unions work

On a city centre Socialist newspaper sale last week, a young man approached me to buy a paper. I gave him a leaflet for the National Shop Stewards Network rally at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in September too, explaining that the TUC represented all the unions.

He asked if that included Usdaw the shop workers' union, and I was pleasantly surprised that he knew about them.

He explained that he worked in a small shop, with only half a dozen workers, and that he'd been pushed around by his boss, so he had joined the union.

The union told him his treatment was illegal and offered to visit. "Someone called Michelle came in and shouted at him [the boss].

"Since then he's terrified of me and the union. If he asks me to do something, and I'm busy doing something else and I point that out, he says 'it's OK, no worries!'"

I told him one of our Socialist Party members, Amy Murphy, has been elected president of Usdaw, and that the Socialist Party had a newsletter for the union - the Activist. He gave me his email and I've sent him the links.

I was really heartened to hear a young worker who'd found that being in a union works.

Paul Gerrard, Salford

Workers' rights

Some might have thought abusers of workers' rights were left behind in the late 19th and early 20th century.

But as Cilla would say, "surprise surprise," they're alive and kicking here. While most ears and eyes are on Brexit and Trump, our dearly loved bosses are throwing thousands out of work here in Britain.

Not satisfied with making loads of money at our expense, bosses and governments continue to erode any protection workers have in the workplace.

They want to give our public services away and sell everything not nailed down, while presenting workers in Britain as cheap and amenable commodities.

This will lead to more maltreatment of workers. Already, workers can be summarily dismissed with almost no legal protection at any time before they reach the two-year full employment rights milestone.

It's an open invitation to all despotic bosses to treat workers according to their whims. It's an open invitation for bosses to say what they want, do what they want, whenever they want, knowing there will likely be no comeback because a worker has less than two years' service.

Trade unions should stand up and lead from the front because there's an avalanche of anger coming.

'Rebel with a Cause', Rotherham

Other people's labour

The following appeared in the Financial Times.

"Shareholder rebellions over high executive pay at the UK's largest companies have doubled this year, with companies from AstraZeneca to BT and Shell suffering big protest votes at their annual meetings.

"High pay has risen up the agenda for investors in the face of sustained public anger and criticism from politicians over big payouts for corporate bosses... the number of pay resolutions at FTSE 100 companies where at least 20 per cent of votes were against management was 18 by the end of July, compared with nine during the same period in 2017, according to a public register that tracks shareholder rebellions."

With the shareholders of our biggest companies making such an effective job of sharing out the fruits of other people's labour I wonder if us socialists can't all just take it easy and put our feet up!

Jared Wood, Aylesbury

GDPR data laws: Punishing workers for human mistakes

Willie Clarke

It is nearly three months since the EU's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) came into force and my fear that many workers will be disciplined and sacked for making ordinary mistakes with no malice is beginning to be borne out.

I have made a couple of mistakes - emailing an internal document with no confidential information to a customer, sending something else to the wrong customer which bounced back because I had typed the email address incorrectly and leaving a voicemail on the wrong phone number.

While these acts were careless, they in no way compromised anyone's privacy. In fact, I doubt whether a person would ring a company to say that they had been left a voicemail meant for somebody else if there hadn't been the hysteria prior to GDPR's introduction.

The law seems to make no distinction between the genuine mistakes that I have just described and selling people's data without permission. This has got many employers running scared.

My employer made reference to the eye-watering fines that can be levied rather than the invasion of customer privacy.

In practice, the courts would make a distinction. I doubt my employer would be bankrupted by my actions if they ever came to court.

The 'information campaign' that preceded the introduction of the legislation deliberately exaggerated the effects of breaches of the act and, of course, that kind of thinking helps the capitalists.

Personal data under capitalism has become a commodity in the same way as sugar or bananas and therefore is regulated.

I wouldn't be surprised if the legal profession were lobbying for such legislation in the anticipation of a few lucrative and high-profile court cases.

The publicity from the Information Commissioner's Office accepts that the vast majority of transgressions will be the result of common distractions and lack of concentration.

They will give away no information, not make anyone more liable to being blackmailed or lead to anyone's relationship breaking down.

Yet many employers will take decisions on what was highly unlikely to happen rather than the real effects of individual acts of carelessness.

The majority of cases of loss of personal data have been caused by managers and those in senior roles.

Managers are far more likely to have contacts interested in buying confidential information and are much more likely to have access to such data in the first place.

Every company that has been in the embarrassing position of 'losing' personal data is still trading.

It really is hypocritical of capitalist governments to pass laws supposedly defending the right to privacy while stepping up [the surveillance state often targeting left-wing activists](#) and trade unionists as 'the enemy within'.

It is doubtful whether this legislation would have had the same reach if there had been a bold and combative trade union movement prepared to take on the bosses.

GDPR should be abolished and replaced with legislation that genuinely protects our privacy without punishing workers for making human mistakes.

Audio version of this document

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

What the Socialist Party stands for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people.

The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Public services

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.

- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

Mass workers' party

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites!

Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class

control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.

- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
 - No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!
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