

[Socialist Party](#) | [Print](#)

# Blairites must go

## Mandatory reselection now

## Fight for a democratic, socialist Labour Party

Roger Bannister Liverpool and District Socialist Party

Ten years [after the financial crisis](#), when the greed and recklessness of the bankers and financiers brought the economy to the brink of collapse, the Labour Party is holding its annual conference in Liverpool.

Over the past decade the bosses and their politicians have subjected us to a relentless policy of austerity, featuring a massive reduction in public services, accompanying job losses, more privatisation, low pay and cuts in welfare.

More than half the child population of Britain's poorest areas, including parts of Birmingham, London and Manchester, now live in poverty, according to the End Child Poverty coalition. Meanwhile, workers have had our [ability to defend our living standards further restricted](#) by yet more draconian anti-trade union legislation.

So the surges in support for [Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity promises](#), with policies aimed at improving the lives of workers and young people, are no surprise. But nor are the attempts by the super-rich and their representatives to remove him. This is the backdrop to Labour conference.

The owners of big business and their Blairite representatives in Labour have conducted a major campaign against Corbyn.

They have attempted to replace him, orchestrated a spate of coordinated resignations from the shadow cabinet, held a vote of 'no confidence' by Labour MPs, made constant attacks on Corbyn's policies in the media... And lately, whipped up an [outrageous smear campaign](#) accusing Corbyn and his supporters of antisemitism.

The Blairites are hypocrites. They react hysterically to votes of no confidence from their own constituency parties. They rage at any suggestion they should be accountable to Labour's rank and file.

But to resolve Labour's civil war successfully, local parties must be enabled to oust the Blairite traitors through the [basic democratic process of mandatory reselection](#). The leadership of Momentum, having opposed this vital demand from the beginning, seems to have belatedly come round to supporting it.

## Reselection

Corbynista MP Chris Williamson has said a majority of conference delegates would too. Jeremy [Corbyn must boldly back mandatory reselection](#), and mobilise party members and the wider movement to fight to implement this and [other democratising measures](#) in Labour.

Labour must be restored as the party of workers, with a strong, democratic, collective voice for the trade unions, and socialists expelled or excluded from Labour permitted to join and organise.

Conference itself must be reinstated as the democratic ruling body of Labour. And it needs to endorse clear anti-austerity policies, linked to a socialist programme for replacing the rotten, corrupt system of capitalism with a system based on public ownership and planning, democratically controlled by the working class.

A democratic, socialist Labour Party, united with the trade unions, campaigning for a programme of this sort, could enthuse workers across the country, ensuring electoral victory for Labour - and a movement capable of

standing up to the bosses' sabotage.

- [The fight to transform Labour: correspondence between the Socialist Party and Labour Party](#)
  - [Momentum leadership blocks discussion of Liverpool council's victorious anti-cuts struggle](#)
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# The struggle to transform Labour

## Correspondence between Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe and Labour Party general secretary Jennie Formby

Below, we reprint correspondence between Jennie Formby, general secretary of the Labour Party, and Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary, on the Socialist Party's request to affiliate to Labour.

It is more than three years since Jeremy Corbyn was first elected Labour leader. Despite repeated attempts to remove him, he has been kept in place by the popularity of [his anti-austerity programme](#).

In response, the pro-capitalist wing of Labour keeps stepping up its attempts to undermine him. The capitalist class remains afraid that a Jeremy Corbyn-led government could raise the hopes of millions. They fear this would unleash a powerful movement to improve the lives of the working class majority which could threaten their rotten, profit-driven system. It is to prevent this that the Blairite MPs are moving might and main to defeat Corbyn.

The [options they are reported to be considering](#) include removing him, splitting and forming a new pro-capitalist party, or waiting for Labour to win a general election and then preventing him becoming prime minister.

From day one, [the Socialist Party has warned](#) that attempting to pacify the Blairite saboteurs won't work. Only turning the clock of history back to the days of pro-capitalist New Labour would satisfy them.

We understand that some Corbyn supporters, desperate for a Labour government, are fearful of deselecting the hated Blairites, because they worry it will push them to split and that this could damage Labour's chances in a general election. However, we think this view is mistaken. Inside or outside the Labour Party, these traitors are determined to damage Corbyn's chances up to a general election and beyond. If, after a general election, the majority of the parliamentary Labour Party is still pro-capitalist, it will act to prevent Corbyn implementing his programme.

By contrast, if they go it will leave Corbyn free to put a clear socialist programme in a general election. As [the snap election showed](#) last year, standing on an anti-austerity programme is popular. On that occasion, despite the bile from the right-wing press, Labour increased its vote by more than three million in the biggest increase in the vote for any party since 1945.

Imagine if we had Labour councils across the country that, instead of implementing Tory austerity, were [defying the government to defend and improve public services](#), including building large numbers of council houses. That would create real momentum towards a Labour general election victory. Instead, unfortunately, Labour councils are still dominated by pro-austerity councillors. It is this, and not [anti-austerity candidates standing against some of the worst cutters](#), which could potentially damage Corbyn's election chances.

Over recent decades, the [transformation of Labour into pro-capitalist New Labour](#) had left the working class majority with no mass political voice. Our class would be immeasurably stronger if it had not happened. The election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, however, was the first step to potentially transforming Labour into a mass workers' party. To finish the job requires [democratising the party](#), in order to be able to elect representatives at every level - from the council chamber to parliament - who are prepared to fight for an anti-austerity programme.

Over the next week, Labour Party conference will be hearing the report of the Democracy Review, which was set up at last year's conference to look at ways to democratise the party. We welcome any democratic step forward that is agreed at the conference, but what is needed is a root and branch transformation of Labour's structure. Alongside the immediate [reintroduction of mandatory reselection](#) of MPs, we need 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.

All those who have been expelled from the Labour Party for their socialist ideas [should be readmitted](#).

The Socialist Party also argues that all genuinely anti-austerity forces should be encouraged to affiliate to the Labour Party on the above basis, including ourselves.

When the Labour Party was founded it was a federation of different trade union and socialist organisations, coming together to fight for working-class political representation. A few remnants of this remain even today. Unsurprisingly, however, given the complete dominance of the pro-capitalist wing of Labour prior to Corbyn's election, there are few left-led political organisations under the Labour umbrella. The Socialist Party (then the Militant Tendency) was among the first to be expelled from the Labour Party, as the Blairites consolidated their grip on power. Today the leadership of some affiliated organisations - such as the right-wing Jewish Labour Movement - have been at the forefront of the campaign against Corbyn.

It is urgent that the Labour Party is transformed so it can bring together all those who want to fight in the interests of the working and middle class majority, and for the election of a Jeremy Corbyn-led government on a socialist programme. This means removing from office all those who are hell-bent on sabotaging that goal.

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**To: Jennie Formby, Labour Party general secretary**

**6 April 2018**

Dear Jennie,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Socialist Party (previously the Militant). We would like to meet with you to discuss the possibility of our becoming an affiliate of the Labour Party. From the beginning we have enthusiastically supported Jeremy Corbyn's election as leader of the Labour Party, which has offered the possibility of transforming Labour into a clear anti-austerity party, based on the trade unions and the working class. Clearly, your appointment as general secretary, replacing Iain McNicol, is an important step towards the renewal of the party along these lines.

Nonetheless, as is shown by the recently renewed, baseless attacks by Labour MPs on Jeremy Corbyn, Labour still remains two parties in one; with one section doing all it can to undermine the Labour leadership. Without doubt, if it is able to, this wing of the Labour Party would act to try and sabotage a democratically elected Labour government's attempts to implement radical policies.

As we are sure you will agree, measures to democratise Labour's structures are therefore urgent. We would argue this should include the readmittance of all those socialists, including ourselves, who were expelled in the past as the pro-capitalist wing of the party - epitomised by Tony Blair - consolidated its grip on power. Another aspect of democratising the party could be to restore the federal structure on which Labour was founded. Above all, this would mean full rights for the trade unions within the party, but it could also mean allowing other parties and organisations to affiliate, provided they had a clear anti-austerity programme.

As you will know remnants of this structure still exist today, particularly with the Cooperative Party. When we previously raised this example with Iain McNicol he recognised the comparison, but went on to dismiss it, saying the Cooperative's affiliation was "a historic link with a sister party agreed and endorsed by our annual conference." We see no reason that the party couldn't decide to make new links in the future, in order to strengthen the anti-austerity movement that has been inspired by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in solidarity,

**Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary**

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**Reply: 27 July 2018**

Dear Mr Taaffe,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Socialist Party requesting affiliation to the Labour Party.

The [Labour Party rules](#) about affiliation are very clear.

Chapter 1, clause ii, part 5 (A) states:

"Political organisations not affiliated or associated under a national agreement with the party, having their own programme, principles and policy, or distinctive and separate propaganda, or possessing branches in the constituencies, or engaged in the promotion of parliamentary or local government candidates, or having allegiance to any political organisation situated abroad, shall be ineligible for affiliation to the Party."

As the Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition who stood candidates against the Labour Party in the May 2018 elections, it is ineligible for affiliation. Furthermore, it is not "associated under a national agreement with the party".

Yours sincerely,

**Jennie Formby, Labour Party general secretary**

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**To: Jennie Formby, Labour Party general secretary**

**23 August 2018**

Dear Jennie,

Thank you for your reply to my letter requesting Socialist Party affiliation to the Labour Party. You suggest that we cannot affiliate because we are not currently "associated under a national agreement with the party." However, the reason for our previous letter, and this one, is to ask to open discussions with you about such an agreement.

We think this is particularly urgent given the dramatic stepping up of the war against Jeremy Corbyn's leadership by the pro-capitalist Blairite wing of the Labour Party, backed to the hilt by the capitalist establishment and media. We see a very urgent need to organise and mobilise all those who support Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies into a mass campaign to democratise the Labour Party, allowing the hundreds of thousands who have been inspired by Jeremy's leadership to hold to account, and to deselect, the Blairite saboteurs.

These saboteurs have made clear that their priority is not the election of a Labour government but the removal of Jeremy Corbyn at any cost. We believe the Socialist Party can play a useful role in the campaign to transform Labour, and would therefore like to discuss affiliation.

The other issue you raise is that we cannot affiliate because, as you correctly point out, we are "part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition who stood candidates against the Labour Party in the May 2018 local elections". It is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)'s policy to support Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity programme and, for that reason, TUSC unanimously agreed, with the full support of the Socialist Party, not to stand any candidates in last year's snap general election, but instead to campaign for a Jeremy Corbyn-led government.

However, as you again point out, TUSC did stand candidates in the May 2018 local elections. We stood 111 candidates, with none standing against Jeremy Corbyn-supporting councillors but only against a few of the many Labour councillors who are unfortunately sabotaging Labour's anti-austerity message by implementing savage cuts at local level to public services and to local government workers' pay, terms and conditions.

We wrote to you, however, because our preference would be, rather than having to stand against pro-austerity Labour candidates, that we instead were able to be part of a campaign to democratise the party's structures and therefore to help transform it into an anti-austerity party at local as well as national level. We would like to discuss with you how this could be achieved.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in solidarity,

**Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary**

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**Reply: 29 August 2018**

Dear Peter,

Thanks for your further correspondence about the Socialist Party affiliating to the Labour Party under a national agreement.

Whilst the Socialist Party continues to stand candidates against the Labour Party as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, it will not be possible to enter into any agreement.

The leader of a political party is judged by their electoral success. Standing candidates against the Labour Party is damaging not only to local Labour Parties but also to Jeremy. You will therefore understand why there can be no discussions given that TUSC stood candidates against the Labour Party in May this year.

Yours sincerely,

**Jennie Formby, Labour Party general secretary**

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## **Momentum's 'The World Transformed' blocks discussion on Liverpool council struggle**

**Tony Mulhearn, Socialist Party member and Labour Liverpool city councillor 1984-87**

"Open to both conference delegates and the public, the festival will host hundreds of speakers, musicians and artists."

With this glittering intro, and with the venue being in Liverpool, we assumed our request for inclusion at Momentum's The World Transformed (TWT) [fringe event at Labour Party conference](#) would be a shoo-in.

We wrote to TWT suggesting the participation of the 'Liverpool 47' - the councillors who [defied Thatcher in the 1980s, refusing to pass on cuts](#) and making big advances for working class people in the city. We offered a comprehensive outline of the struggle, including display boards, videos and recorded interviews.

This was initially greeted with enthusiasm by the Liverpool TWT liaison officer who wrote that it was exactly what TWT was formed to showcase and who confirmed that she would recommend its inclusion to the national body.

However, we learned that bureaucratic Momentum leadership who control TWT had other ideas. The response was - sorry, no can do.

So, a period in the Liverpool class struggle recognised nationally and internationally as a seismic historical event in which 47 democratically elected councillors were removed from office for carrying out their electoral promises, is not important enough for TWT to include in its programme. I think labour movement activists will draw their own conclusions.

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## **Big drugs companies dodge £3 billion in tax - nationalise them to fund our health services**

**Beth Webster, nurse, Cardiff Socialist Party**

Big pharmaceutical companies may be dodging up to £3 billion in tax, contributing to crises in health systems worldwide, including our NHS.

A report released by Oxfam exposes the colossal tax avoidance of the world's biggest drug companies - Johnson and Johnson, Abbott, Merck, and [Pfizer](#) - between 2013 and 2015. These companies appear to be moving profits to tax havens.

This is particularly devastating for neocolonial countries, with companies infamously hiking prices and insisting on patents - actions which prevent treatment of diseases like malaria and [HIV/Aids](#) which cause millions of deaths each year. With our own NHS in deepening crisis, the UK has lost around £124 million in tax in the three years studied alone.

Buying drugs from these companies costs the NHS around £1 billion a year, a massive proportion of its £4.3 billion deficit. Essential medicines are often unavailable on the NHS due to their exorbitant cost. Until last year, breast [cancer drug](#) Palbociclib was unavailable as Pfizer wanted to charge around £140 a pill.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock was recently forced to criticise pharma-company Vertex's charge of £104,000 a person for a cystic fibrosis drug. Hancock only appealed to big businesses to pay a fair amount of tax as otherwise the market economy is "hard to defend".

The market economy, a system that prioritises private wealth over public health, cannot be defended. The Tories and other capitalist governments have no intention of genuinely challenging big pharma. They would rather raise taxes on ordinary people and slash health spending than challenge big business domination.

As Oxfam says, research and development of drugs should be driven by health need, not profit. But this would only be possible if the drug companies were taken out of the hands of the rich and [nationalised under democratic working class control and management](#).

They should then be integrated into fully funded, nationalised public health systems like the NHS, run by health workers and communities.

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## **250,000 families living in "non-decent" homes: end slum housing now!**

**Robert Cross, school worker, Coventry Socialist Party**

A quarter of a million families are bringing up children under the age of four in "non-decent" homes according to a recent report. This is shocking, but after ten years of [austerity following the financial crisis](#), it's

hardly surprising.

One in three homes in England at the lowest rents are "non-decent", and the number of those homes where children under four live has gone up by 75,000. "Non-decent" housing includes homes with broken heating, damp walls and even rat infestations.

Successive government attacks on working class people have led to rampant child poverty, slum housing, and landlords "getting away with murder" unimpeded by the law or by local councils - of any establishment party. This is perhaps unsurprising when many local councillors are landlords and letting agents themselves.

I work at a school in an area which has 36% child poverty, and many of our children are homeless.

They end up being sheltered in substandard accommodation owned by slumlords, or bed and breakfasts which are raking it in from vulnerable families because councils don't have proper homes to house people in.

The National Landlords Association responded to the study by saying "successive governments have failed the private rented sector". But it's tenants who've been failed by successive governments, because they haven't protected tenants from dodgy landlords!

We need [decent, affordable housing for all](#), and to get that we need a massive programme of council house building, and rent controls across the housing sector. No-one should be forced to live on the streets or in slum housing.

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## Bezos housing hypocrisy

Billionaire [Amazon boss Jeff Bezos](#) claims his new philanthropy fund will help the homeless. The richest man in the world has announced that he would give \$2 billion of his fortune to tackle homelessness in the US.

The same Jeff Bezos [fought to overturn the tax](#) proposed by Socialist Alternative city councillor Kshama Sawant on his corporate headquarters - which was supposed to fund affordable housing.

We say [nationalise Amazon and take Bezos's billions](#). That would pay for hundreds of thousands of homes - as well as a living wage for his workers.

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## Rail rip-off reversal

Rail firm Arriva Trains Wales has reversed a policy of charging customers 'commission' for returning lost property.

A backlash followed news that one passenger who lost their wallet was forced to pay £8.60 in commission - 10% of the cash found in his wallet - on top a £2 fee for returning the item.

Not content with [fleecing customers with extortionate ticket prices](#), rail firms also want any cash you have left in your wallet for the 'service' of returning lost property. Take the train companies back into public ownership to provide a decent, safe, affordable service for all.

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## What we saw

**Young Socialists out in Birmingham**

# South Africa: new workers' formations herald fightback against Ramaphosa's capitalist agenda

## Exclusive interviews with Workers and Socialist Party activists

The Workers and Socialist Party (Wasp) - South African section of the [Committee for a Workers' International](#), the world socialist organisation the Socialist Party is affiliated to - held a national committee meeting in Johannesburg at the beginning of September.

Delegates discussed key issues facing the working class; not least how to respond to the neoliberal attacks of the Ramaphosa ANC government.

Alec Thraves, from the Socialist Party's national committee, spoke to some of the 27 representatives in attendance about the key issues facing the South African working class.

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Has the support for the [new African National Congress \(ANC\) president, Cyril Ramaphosa](#), that the media has enthusiastically termed 'Ramaphoria', been sustained? Will the ANC retain its majority in the 2019 general election?

**Shaun Arendse, Wasp executive committee:**

'Ramaphoria' was a very limited phenomenon. In reality, it originated in the desperate hope of the capitalist class that the political and economic instability of the Zuma [the previous, corrupt president] years could be left behind.

This infected a section of the middle class, and the media played along, trying to talk up the economy, and heralding the start of a so-called new dawn for South Africa.

But, ultimately, the corruption of the Zuma years was a symptom of rotten South African capitalism, and not its underlying cause.

On the fundamentals, Ramaphosa is offering the same old neoliberal diet. The economy remains stagnant and there have been tens of thousands of job losses since he took office.

Ramaphosa may have come to power on Valentine's Day but there is no love, or even any real enthusiasm for him, among the working class - Ramaphoria has barely touched them.

Especially among organised workers and activists, Ramaphosa is viewed as an out-and-out big business politician.

He is also remembered as the 'butcher of Marikana', where, in 2012, as a shareholder of platinum mine Lonmin, and a senior ANC leader, he demanded the police minister identify a mineworkers' strike as a "criminal act" and take "concomitant action". The next day 34 mineworkers were gunned down at Marikana.

In Ramaphosa's first months as president, parliament passed new anti-trade union legislation, increasing the power of the courts and unelected commissioners over strikes, and introducing restrictive picketing rules and secret strike ballots.

Failure to comply can lead to trade unions being deregistered. There's no doubt that that bosses have got 'their man' in the job.

A general election must be called between May and August 2019. The move to replace Zuma ahead of these elections was in large part driven by the ANC leadership's fear that they could lose their majority in this

election with him at the helm.

In the 2016 local government elections the ANC's vote slid to just 54%. There is no doubt that the ANC will emerge from the 2019 elections as the biggest party but it is possible that they could lose their majority, posing a coalition government. Ramaphosa has not been the guarantee against this that many ANC politicians expected.

However, the dominant trend amongst the working class and poor is to abstain in elections. The left-populist Economic Freedom Fighters has been unable to significantly increase its support and the main opposition Democratic Alliance, with its roots in the white middle class, has been embroiled in damaging factional fights reinforcing its image as a 'white boys' club'.

However, there could be a certain swing back to the ANC from a section of the black middle class alienated by this and a section of the white middle class may be willing to vote for Ramaphosa the man, while remaining unenthusiastic about his party.

This, in the absence of a mass working class alternative, combined with low turnout, could see the ANC hold on to a slight majority.

There are already three major trade union federations in South Africa, Cosatu, Fedusa and Nactu, so is the recent formation of the South African Federation of Trade Unions (Saftu) just going to add further divisions?

**Lebo Phanyeko, national organiser of Saftu (personal capacity):**

The other three federations are led by South Africa's 'labour aristocracy', who are chaining the organised workers and frustrating them.

These so-called workers' leaders are determined to keep the status quo. Saftu's birth represents a new, fresh hope for organised workers.

I don't think workers will be more divided because they will and are joining Saftu as a new, fighting, socialist federation.

The last general strike, called by Saftu in April, saw workers from the other trade union federations join and participate in the strike despite the opposition of their leaders.

I believe that Saftu can, over time, unite the working class in South Africa where conditions, wages and retrenchments are worsening every day.

Saftu's key focus must be on the 76% of workers who don't belong to a union because the other federations just ignore them, so we must urgently recruit and organise them.

The 'Total Shutdown' demonstrations in August (Women's month in South Africa) mobilised thousands of women protesting against the widespread abuse, rape, violence and murder of women across South Africa. What role did Wasp play in this movement?

**Phemelo Motseoka and Ferron Pedro, Wasp women's group, Pretoria:**

Women in South Africa are paying a horrendous price for living in a brutalised, violent and poverty stricken society.

Horrifically, in a country of just 57 million, one woman is killed every four hours! Even more disturbing is the fact that 50% of these murders are committed by the women's partners.

The South African police service has reported the grotesque statistic that a rape takes place every 36 seconds across the country, and yet there is only a 4-8% conviction rate!

Our Wasp women's group wrote an article in preparation for the #TotalShutdown protests, explaining our position on the issue of violence against women, relating it to the struggles of the working class as a whole and presenting our specific demands.

Our women members attended the march in Pretoria and distributed 500 pamphlets and sold out of our magazine, Izwi.

The contacts we received were invited to our branch meeting where we discussed the struggle against women's oppression.

We will be collaborating with our comrades in the General Industrial and Workers' Union of South Africa (Giwusa) and organising some Wasp women's meetings where issues facing women can be discussed out with a socialist alternative on offer.

After [five years of dragging its feet](#), it appears that Numsa, South Africa's largest trade union, will be launching the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) in December. What is Wasp's approach to this development?

**Sheri Hamilton, Greater Eldorado Park United Civic Movement, Johannesburg:**

Our attitude towards the SRWP is that if it wants to play a role in filling the working class political vacuum then it should be open, democratic and built on the basis of a federal structure, which unfortunately is not the case at the moment.

We believe that the only way we can persuade other working class formations to unite under one banner in time for the 2019 general election is to adopt this approach.

However, there is still time over the next few months to implement the decision of a working class summit convened by Saftu and roll out provincial assemblies where a platform of essential demands can be agreed for a new workers' party.

For several months [Cape Town has faced a water shortage crisis](#) with severe restrictions put in place. What has been the reaction of city residents?

**Rose Lichtenstein, Wasp Cape Town branch:**

The water (mis)management crisis in Cape Town rightfully became a common-ground issue for all sections of the South African working class to organise around. Resistance came in all forms, some successful, others less so.

Some communities managed to completely block any installations of the dehumanising water management devices that the government have rolled out in their thousands, every week.

Petitions and protests have helped in the reduction of water charges. But these have been ineffective, so far, in bringing a much-needed revolutionary restructuring of the water supply system and its funding which residents identified were at the root cause of the crisis.

With dams now filling beyond expectations, some wealthier residents have fallen away from the struggle.

But Wasp has committed itself to building among the forces that continue to see no relief despite the rains and are continuing to build 'crisis committees' in their communities.

Currently we have a powerful force in the Water Crisis Coalition, which was formed at the peak of the drought last January, and we will continue to assist in the struggle for an accessible and affordable water supply in Cape Town.

What impact has the [#Outsourcing Must Fall \(#OMF\) movement](#) had since its formation?

**Mametlwe Sebei, president of Gwusa union (personal capacity):**

The hashtag #OMF mobilised thousands of outsourced workers across the country in the struggle to end their precarious working conditions and poverty wages.

The campaign was initiated by Wasp because none of the trade unions were taking up the fight against outsourcing.

The campaign organised workers into shopfloor committees that coordinated workers across different sectors, such as cleaners, secretaries, electricians, security guards, and so on - on a city-wide basis.

In Tshwane, where the campaign started, it won massive victories including at the University of Pretoria. Workers who were previously outsourced and employed on short-term contracts and poverty pay of R2,500 (£129) a month, were insourced with permanent contracts, increased benefits and a 300% wage increase over three years!

The #OMF, by winning over workers previously unorganised, has contributed to revitalising the organised labour movement.

Thousands of new members have joined Gwusa and the new left trade union federation Saftu to which the campaign is now affiliated.

[Service delivery protests](#) in the townships have reached their highest ever level, increasing from one protest every second day nationwide to three or four every single day! Why has there been such a dramatic increase?

**Executive member Mukhwevo, Ennerdale township community activist:**

South Africa has been experiencing service delivery protests for more than 20 years, since the dawn of our 'new era'.

These struggles are centred on housing, land and the lack of social service delivery in general.

In and around the Soweto townships the protests have skyrocketed to the level of a Gauteng Provincial shutdown in 2017.

This forced the government to succumb to the pressure. The citizens were demanding the presence of both spheres of government and for the national and local government representatives to answer to their demands.

In their responses, this combination of crooks just used the usual excuses which are always the obstacles to the provision of service deliveries.

And as usual, they promised to the people that within three months most of the matters they raised would be attended to.

However, to this day, nothing has ever happened and not a single matter has been attended to. So the service delivery struggle goes on.

- For more detailed analysis and updates on South Africa, see [workerssocialistparty.co.za](http://workerssocialistparty.co.za)

## Catalonia: 'Diada' 2018 an immense show of strength for republic

# For a socialist Catalan republic of the working class and youth!

**Esquerra Revolucionària, CWI Catalonia**

This 11 September - 'La Diada', National Day of Catalonia - Barcelona's Avenida Diagonal thoroughfare overflowed with around two million people in an unprecedented mass mobilisation.

Once again, the people of Catalonia have seized the streets. To shout loud and clear their rejection of the repression of the Spanish state. To call for the [freeing of political prisoners](#) and return of those in exile. And to demand that the republic they voted for overwhelmingly on 1 October 2017 at last be realised.

This human tide in support of the Catalan republic contrasts with the resounding failure of events organised by the Spanish-nationalist Catalan Civil Society civic group and far-right Vox party, and the right-populist Ciudadanos party.

The pathetic images of Ciudadanos leaders - received by barely a hundred of their supporters in the city centre - sum up the failure of these reactionary Spanish-nationalist elements. They attempt to declare themselves the voice of the "silent majority" of Catalan society - but have been put in their place.

## Reformist left

The leaders of the reformist left must take note - the party chiefs of Podemos and Izquierda Unida (IU - United Left), the tops of the CCOO and UGT, the two biggest unions - and also the leaders of the Catalan-nationalist ERC party. The contrast between this tremendous show of force and the tiny capacity for mobilisation shown by the defenders of the post-Franco 'regime of '78' could not be more abysmal!

How is it possible to go on maintaining that "it would be stupid" or "it's not possible" to take the republic forward because Catalonia is divided 50/50 - like Joan Tardá, ERC deputy in the Spanish parliament, and Pere Aragonés, ERC vice-president of the Catalan government, recently have?

Faced with the impossibility of hiding the success of this Diada, the capitalist media - Spanish and Catalan - chose to recognise it. But they attempted to present it as just another day, minimising the numbers participating.

The leaders who spent months propagating the idea that it's not possible to realise the republic because "there is not sufficient strength" - the leaders of PDeCat, the main party of Catalan capitalism, its JxCat electoral alliance, and the ERC - have received an inarguable answer.

This massive mobilisation was even more significant when you take account of the fact that it came after a year of constant repression by the Spanish state apparatus.

This has included political trials; exceptional measures like ['article 155' of the constitution](#), which suspends the power of the Catalan government; and the refusal of the Spanish state's ex-social democratic PSOE party government to accept the right to self-determination for the people of Catalonia.

Most importantly of all, it came after three months of cold water being poured on the movement. The approach of rejecting participation in actions on Diada has also been adopted by Barcelona mayor Ada Colau, and the leaders of Catalunya en Comú, the Podemos-IU Catalan electoral alliance.

In unjustifiable declarations, Ada Colau and the leaders of Podemos said Diada reinforces 'unilateralism' and the division of Catalan society. In practice, they renounce the principle of the right of the Catalan people to decide their own future. This is a right which not so long ago they defended, and which won them mass support from the population.

This political turn brings them in line with the Spanish-nationalist parties of '155'. It has provoked surprise and revulsion among the vast majority of the workers and youth who voted for Colau and the local Barcelona en Comú electoral alliance including herself, Podemos and IU.

Their failure to support the liberation of the people of Catalonia with a consistent policy - linking the struggle for a Catalan republic with the fight against the capitalist regime of '78, and for workers' republics in the rest of the territories which make up the Spanish state - is a grave error that will cause great difficulties.

The mass force demonstrated on the streets collides ever more clearly with the tendency of certain political forces to seek to hold back the movement. These are the forces which look for agreements from above - agreements with a state and a government that refuse to negotiate anything other than the movement's surrender.

The dissatisfaction with this situation is shown by the proliferation of slogans on posters and stickers, like "make the republic now!" and "self-determination is not negotiated, it is exercised" and so on. It is also shown in the criticisms made by speakers from the pro-independence Catalan National Assembly civic group, the left-nationalist CUP party and others.

## **Opposed approaches**

This once again confirms that within the movement for Catalan national liberation there are two fundamentally opposed political approaches.

The first represents a small minority, but today it sets the pace and dominates in government. This approach [attempts to put a brake on the movement](#) and reach an agreement with the Spanish capitalists - which would mean shelving the Catalan republic.

Confronting this approach is the immense majority of workers, youth, and broad sections of the middle classes. They want to advance towards a republic of workers, youth, and the people, in order to see a solution to the current social problems, and a break with capitalism as well as the regime of '78.

For that to happen, the left needs to struggle for leadership in the movement for national liberation, on the basis of a socialist programme and fighting to sustain the mass mobilisations, to unite the majority of the Catalan working class.

In particular, this requires including those layers hit by the crisis of capitalism who reject the reactionary ideas of the PP, the main party of Spanish capitalism, and Ciudadanos - but who so far distrust the independence movement because of PDeCat and the Catalan right, from whom they have only received attacks and cuts.

Today, more than ever, it is essential to build a united front of the left to struggle for a socialist republic of the workers and youth - bringing together the CUP, the Committees for Defence of the Republic, combative trade unions, women's rights movements, students, and social movements - in order to carry the movement forward to victory.

- "The most massive social mobilisation since the general strike which paralysed Catalonia on 3 October 2017" - [read the full story at socialistworld.net](#)

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# **Mobilise mass student fightback**

## **Fight for education, Tories out now**

**Theo Sharieff, Socialist Students national chair**

The Tories - the politicians responsible for trebling students' tuition fees, decimating our public services, and presiding over a generation-defining housing crisis - are in chaos.

That they are the most hated government in recent memory is little surprise. They have run the futures of young people into the ground to protect the interests of the super-rich and their crisis-ridden capitalist system.

It was reported that, in 2017, the top chief executives got an 11% pay rise. While the wealth grows for the owners of big business, the economic crisis that they helped cause in the first place continues to viciously tear apart our lives as young people.

We are told that if we go to university, we have a chance of escaping the misery forced on our lives by capitalism. Yet [when we graduate with over £50,000 worth of debt](#), our suspicions are confirmed - there is no escaping this misery on the basis of the capitalist system.

All that awaits us are low-paid jobs, unaffordable housing, and lifelong levels of personal debt. What a damning indictment of this system that it is young people, along with working class people of all ages, who are thrown on the scrap heap in such a way.

No wonder thousands of students and young people flocked towards Jeremy Corbyn at last summer's general election. The youth surge for Corbyn proved that when young people are offered an alternative, they will support and fight for it.

Thousands voted for an end to austerity, for a programme of mass council house building, a £10 an hour minimum wage for young workers, the nationalisation of the railways and utilities - and, last but not least - for free education...

As students arrive and return to university this September, the crisis which gripped the Tory party during summer over the question of Brexit will also be continuing.

What will it take to get rid of this government once and for all? What can students and young people do to help achieve this? And how do we finish the job that we started in June 2017 by winning a Corbyn-led government? These are some of the questions that students will be thinking about and asking themselves as they begin university this September.

Many students who last year voted for free education, a fully funded NHS, for decent and affordable housing, and an end to austerity, will look to the crisis which currently grips the Tory party and see the fight for a new general election as the most immediate avenue to kicking it out of government and winning the programme outlined in Corbyn's 2017 manifesto.

But we can't simply wait for the Tories to collapse. Despite their weakness, they have so far managed to avoid another general election and cling to power. Students can play their own, active role - by organising demonstrations, protests and walkouts from lecture halls on their campuses, as well as mobilising for national student demonstrations.

A call by Jeremy Corbyn for mass protests, including by students, demanding an immediate general election, would threaten to trigger a mass movement that could sweep the Tories away.

The National Union of Students (NUS), which has around 600 local student unions affiliated to it, should also be throwing its weight behind such a movement. It should be mobilising for a huge national student demonstration this autumn: one demanding free education, the restoration of grants, and, most importantly, a general election now.

Such a mass mobilisation of students would be strengthened immeasurably if the NUS reached out to, campaigned alongside, and coordinated action with workers and trade unions.

## **NUS and Brexit**

Unfortunately, rather than mobilising students on this basis, NUS is instead focusing on building a student demonstration on 20 October [demanding a 'peoples' vote' on any potential Brexit deal](#), which it has called "the most important protest in our generation".

The NUS has even released a 'mobilisation guide' to help student union officers mobilise students for the day. Why not put out such a detailed plan for a demonstration to kick out the Tories? They are currently the ones negotiating the deal in the first place!

By mobilising under the banner of a second referendum on the EU, instead of fighting to kick out the Tories, the leaders of the NUS have missed a great opportunity to launch a movement which could see Corbyn elected to government and help secure an anti-racist, pro-working class Brexit deal in the interests of young and working class people.

Yet every time that the Tories get pulled closer to the edge of the cliff, and when it seems that they're at their weakest, the right wing of the parliamentary Labour Party launches a new round of attacks against Jeremy Corbyn.

While Blairite MP Jess Phillips tweets messages of support for Theresa May during the government crisis, other Blairite MPs simultaneously [slander Corbyn as an antisemite](#). Chuka Ummuna more recently raised the stakes when he branded Labour under Corbyn's leadership as "institutionally racist".

Why is this? Simply, they fear the election of a Corbyn government just as much as the Tories do. For students, the fight for free education, for rent controls and adequate housing, and a £10 an hour minimum wage must be a fight against these Blairites as well as the Tories. It was Blair and his cronies who introduced university fees in the first place!

## **Blairite saboteurs**

The Blairites will do anything to stop Corbyn and prevent his anti-austerity programme being carried out. This means that winning a Corbyn-led government, which is unified around a fighting programme for free education and against austerity, will not only mean kicking the Tories out of Downing Street but also the [Blairite saboteurs out of the Labour Party](#).

There is a risk, however, that the months of attacks against Corbyn by the Labour right could potentially leave some young people disillusioned, questioning how possible it is for Corbyn to win a general election in the face of such attacks.

But on the basis of a determined fightback against the pro-capitalist wing of Labour, and the democratic transformation of the party, the situation could very rapidly change.

If Corbyn campaigned at the next general election on a bold socialist programme, which included all of the policies in his 2017 manifesto but went further - calling for the cancellation of the student debt, and for the nationalisation of the banks and the major monopolies which dominate the economy - the surge of 2017 could be surpassed.

A Corbyn-led government that came to power on this basis would come under ferocious attack from the capitalist class and their political representatives, including the Blairites. That's why the fight will not stop there. It will be down to our own independent action as students and working people to win the anti-austerity policies in Corbyn's manifesto.

Socialist Students, a democratic and campaigning organisation with a presence on over 40 campuses nationwide, calls for the building of an almighty student movement which can exploit the government crisis and kick out the Tories out once and for all. Tories out - Corbyn in with socialist policies!

- Join Socialist Students: text 'join' plus you name and postcode to 07749 379 010 or visit [socialiststudents.org.uk/join](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)

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## **Socialist Students campaigns at Hull freshers fair**

Hull Socialist Students held a campaign stall on the first day of Hull University's freshers fair on 17 September, calling for the Tories to be kicked out and for socialist policies. 40 students signed up to join.

At our first meeting, 'what is socialism?' 12 people attended with others indicating they would attend future activities.

A meeting on Marxist economics was agreed for the following week with plans for campaigning activity to follow.

Ten copies of Socialist Students' magazine 'Megaphone' were sold with students delighted to see socialists campaigning at Hull University.

**Matt Whale**

- See next week's issue of the Socialist for more reports of freshers fair campaigning

## POA walkout over government failure to make prisons safe

On 14 September, members of the POA - the trade union for prison officers and secure psychiatric workers - took part in protests outside prisons around the country.

The Socialist spoke (below) to the POA's deputy general secretary, Joe Simpson, as the action was unfolding that morning.

Later the same day, POA members returned to work following a commitment from the prisons minister to instruct the employer to meet the union and agree a plan of action to address the concerns of the POA.

**On the action, how long did the protest last and what was the response like from POA members?**

The response was very good from POA members, we started getting our members out to protest at 6am by contacting all our branch officials. The response has been very good, and the action is still ongoing.

**There's been a longstanding ban on prison officers taking strike action. Have you had any threats of legal action from the government?**

Yes. We had a letter before our action saying that we are in breach of the court injunction of last year.

It said we've immediately got to repudiate the action and tell our members to go back to work. The general secretary Steve Gillan has turned around and said no.

This is a [health and safety matter](#). The government is not abiding by the health and safety at work act.

It is not keeping our members safe while working in jails. It is not even keeping prisoners safe while we are looking after them.

So Steve said no, and we have instructed our solicitors that we will go to court. We are waiting to find out when we are going to be in court.

**For readers of the Socialist who haven't all followed what's going on in the prison service, could you just explain why you felt it necessary to protest today and what it is that the prison service has failed to do to provide safe prisons?**

No problem. What we've done is engage with the employer and ministers in an attempt to resolve the issues.

But as usual they just pay lip service to the health and safety of our members. We've demanded that they provide safe prisons, meet our demands to provide personal protective equipment, reduce the levels of violence and overcrowding as set out by Lord Justice Woolf in his report on the riots of 1990.

Just to give you a snapshot, assaults have been increasing. Prison violence has been increasing since the government introduced its austerity measures and took nearly 9,000 prison officers out of the system.

The number of assaults in all our prisons in 2010 stood at 14,916. That's risen to 31,025 now, which equates to 85 a day. The figure's increased 16% in this year alone. It's up 108% since 2010.

Similarly, in 2010 the violence against our members numbered 3,027 incidents. Today, this figure stands at 9,003 - 24 assaults against our members every day. The number is up 25% since last year. Since 2007, it's up 197%.

Self-harm incidents have also rocketed. People are coming into prison with mental health issues. We haven't got the knowledge and experience to look after them as most of our members are not trained in mental health.

We are trying to keep them safe. But because of the staff cuts self-harm has gone up 77% since 2010. The number of self-harm incidents in 2010 was 24,964. They're now up to 46,859. That is unacceptable to our members, it really is.

What we've also said to the government is that we want a reduction in prisoner numbers. We want to bring an end to what we describe as institutionalised prison overcrowding.

We believe that's what's also breeding discontent in prisons with prisoners. If they had brought down overcrowding and made it a rule, like Lord Justice Woolf recommended, that it is against the law to overcrowd a prison and to lock two prisoners up in a cell meant for one, then we wouldn't be in the position that we are.

We've also said that we want a comprehensive, negotiated drug reduction strategy and violence reduction strategy in place.

#### **Following on from today's action what's the next step? What's the POA going to do next?**

We've told the prisons minister we want to speak to him. We've said we want a comprehensive drug-reduction strategy.

We also want a plan put in place to reduce violence. We want to talk to the minister about staffing prisons properly.

That's what we're after: a proper regime in each prison which fits with the staffing levels they've got. Instead of what they're currently trying to do with the staff that they've got, which is also breeding violence.

We're happy to talk to the minister, as we've always been happy to talk to him. But he needs to talk to us in a meaningful engagement so that we can sort this out.

And if this doesn't happen the NEC will be sitting round the table again, talking about what we can possibly do in the future. We would rule nothing in and nothing out.

#### **Is there anything you'd like to add?**

We're getting quite a lot of messages of support from comrades in the Socialist Party and everywhere else.

Our members are up for the fight. And the reason they're up for it is that they are pig sick - because they are living this life every single day.

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 14 September 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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# RMT strikers ready to up the ante over rail safety

Another round of [coordinated strike action](#) by the RMT transport workers' union against [driver-only operation \(DOO\)](#) - the removal of safety critical guards - on Arriva Rail North and South Western Railway took place on 15 September.

Socialist Party members joined picket lines in solidarity with the strikers. Here are their reports.

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## **Hugh Caffrey spoke to Darren Ireland, RMT regional organisers, and Michelle Rogers, candidat for RMT president.**

### **Daren Ireland**

"Since 2010 there's been a concerted attack by Conservative-led governments on our members in the rail industry.

"We have a secretary of state for transport (Chris Grayling) who is a hardline neoliberal, intent on introducing the McNulty report across the industry, and it's our members and the trade unions who are standing against that.

The 2011 McNulty 'Value for Money' report called for driver-only operation to be the preferred mode of operation on all services, and also for RPI-rate (the higher index of inflation) pay awards no longer to be the norm, and for new terms and conditions for new starters.

On Arriva Rail North we've got the employer and Grayling saying they want 50% of trains to be driver-only operation by 2020. We are determined to stop them from cutting staffing and safety.

The Arriva Rail North franchise is an absolute shambles. We've had six months of abject chaos across northern England, and yet Grayling is having luxury lunches with his big business mates. His loyalties are to champagne and caviar!"

### **Michelle Rodgers**

"Our members are resolute. On every Saturday strike the turnout is getting bigger, like the ballot on South West Railway where, on every return, the turnout increased.

We had 1,300 members on strike on Arriva Rail North at the start of the dispute, and we've got 1,300 now. There's no sign of any member giving up the fight for keeping our railways safe.

Crime is on the increase, the number of sexual assaults is increasing, and the only way to get that back down is a fully staffed, safe railway.

We're in this for the long haul. We know it's hurting Arriva Rail North. I've had driver-managers [who are working extra hours to break the strike] come up to me saying: 'Are you trying to ruin my marriage?! If we have to up the ante, then we'll go for Fridays, Saturdays and Mondays.

It's time Arriva negotiated seriously, but as far as I'm concerned the only deal is one that keeps a second safety-critical person on every train.

That's the only way to keep a safe rail system but which Grayling and his ilk don't seem to be interested in."

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## **Newcastle - 'It's about keeping passengers safe'**

### **Elaine Brunskill**

On 15 September RMT members were on their 27th day of strike action against DOO.

One of the strikers told the Socialist: "I've been a conductor for around eleven years, and I know what would have happened if I hadn't been on the train."

He had intervened, "when women have been attacked on the train, when someone jumped in front of a train, also when kids have been on the track - I've had to physically get them off."

The guard on the train is essential in the ability to look out for passengers who are less able. "Whether that's helping someone elderly with their luggage, helping someone disabled getting on and off the train, or simply helping someone who doesn't travel regularly who needs a bit of advice about their journey."

"This isn't a strike about our pay. We're striking for the ability to keep passengers safe."

- Messages of support to: [m.thompson@rmt.org.uk](mailto:m.thompson@rmt.org.uk)

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## Pompey strikers determined to win

**Chris Pickett, Portsmouth Unison local government branch secretary (personal capacity)**

Taking their tenth day of strike action in the current dispute with South Western Railway (SWR), pickets at Fratton, Portsmouth, were buoyed up by the excellent re-ballot result, the support of local trade unionists, and the regular visit from Sean Hoyle, Portsmouth RMT member and union national president.

The 88% vote in favour of strike action on a 71% turnout sends a strong message to SWR management that RMT members are determined to win.

SWR management struggled to run trains, despite £250 bonuses on offer and management putting scabs up in hotels and running them around in taxis.

Portsmouth Trade Union Council sent a delegation to the picket line and presented a donation of £100. Local council workers in Unison and civil servants in PCS also gave solidarity.

We have launched an appeal to raise money for the RMT hardship fund through the National Shop Stewards Network to ensure further action can be sustained.

Every trade unionist and their family use the railways, the RMT are fighting for our safety and theirs - it's a fight every trade unionist must support.

Pickets were pleased to see the coverage of their fight in the Socialist alongside reports from the other disputes on Merseyrail and Northern.

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## University pay ballot: vote yes for strike action!

**Unison higher education member**

The vast majority of union members at virtually all universities across the UK are being [balloted for strike action over pay](#).

Members of the two largest campus unions, UCU and Unison, are being asked to reject the "final" offer of 2% or £425, since it falls far short of inflation and does nothing to address the real-term cuts in pay which lecturers, administrators, technicians, caretakers and cleaners have put up with for over a decade.

These national, coordinated ballots represent a real opportunity to show vice-chancellors that higher education workers, alongside students, have had enough.

Changes to university funding have created current and future impoverishment for a generation of young people, while universities at all levels are increasingly having to compete with each other for students, often in races to build the shiniest new buildings (see Leicester UCU article below).

This creeping marketisation is pushing universities to outsource services, dismantle pension schemes and exploit an increasingly casualised workforce. Vice-chancellors, meanwhile, are busy enriching themselves and their mates.

## Success

UCU is building on its [dramatic success in the universities' pension battle](#), which taught many activists valuable lessons about how a dispute can be fought.

Unison is balloting on an aggregate basis, which means that a turnout of at least 50% is required across all the members balloted to allow legal strike action.

This approach represents a massive risk, particularly given the mixed strength of Unison's activist base across university branches and the obstacles placed in the way of activists by Tory anti-trade union legislation.

However, getting the vote out is possible if branches make a concerted effort to explain the issues to members.

Unison nationally needs to put resources and effort into delivering the turnout along with a confident yes vote, building on the support of students for workers fighting back.

In turn, we need to show that organised higher education workers support an end to tuition fees and stand for a fully funded and free education system at all levels.

Building unity between students and higher education workers, as shown by the UCU pensions dispute, is key to winning this battle.

- UCU and Unison's ballots close on 19 and 25 October respectively

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# Birmingham home carers' protest demo

Sam Witts, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

"Are you Tories in disguise?" was just one of the many chants directed at Birmingham's Blairite council on 15 September at what was another fantastic rally for the [striking home care workers](#).

Their action is due to the Labour council imposing new contracts that slash their hours and pay.

The appalling treatment of the bin workers last summer by the right-wing Labour council, is still fresh in the memory (see '[Birmingham bin workers win!](#)').

A host of rousing speeches given by care workers, service users and supporters hammered home the importance of a genuine anti-austerity strategy, not just nationally, but also locally, to what is a vital service to the people of the city.

Because of our active role in the home care dispute, attending early morning picket-lines every week, many Socialist Party members were invited onto the platform - including Rob Williams, who sent solidarity from the National Shop Stewards Network, Unite member Kris O'Sullivan, and PCS member Bill Murray.

After these inspiring and fighting speeches, the care workers led an incredibly lively march through the city centre blowing whistles, chanting, giving out leaflets, raising strike funds and gathering support for their bravery in their frontline battle against austerity.

Birmingham Socialist Party would like to send its ongoing solidarity to the care workers and we will continue to support them in any way we can - victory to the Brum home care workers!

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## York health workers say no to privatisation

**Nigel Smith, York Socialist Party**

Unite members working at York NHS trust have voted by a massive majority (92.6% on a 57% turnout) to strike against the trust's plan to transfer them to a 'limited liability company' (LLC) - a step toward privatisation.

A rolling campaign of action across the trust - which covers York, Selby, Scarborough, Bridlington, and Malton hospitals - is currently under discussion, with initial strike dates set for 27 and 28 of September.

A similar move to outsource the workforce at Mid Yorkshire NHS trust [was stopped in its tracks](#) after Unison members there voted for strike action.

Management, who want to steamroller through the LLC by 1 October, have refused to engage union reps in any meaningful dialogue, instead citing 'commercial confidentiality'.

The trust's intransigence has, however, not cowed union members. Mal Richardson, Unite shop steward and Socialist Party member, commented: "If they discipline me, I'll be on the picket line.

"If they bully me, I'll still be on the picket line. And if they sack me, I will come back to haunt them."

Socialist Party members have for several months been involved in leading resistance to the LLC, helping to initiate a steering group, along with union reps and other activists, and organising a street petition of over 3,000 signatures.

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## Liverpool airport workers demand decent pay

Over 80 workers - members of the GMB union - are taking strike action at Liverpool's John Lennon airport, as the employer insists on holding wage rises to below the rate of inflation.

These workers provide essential services like aviation rescue and fire-fighting; the control room; engineering and driver operations; and airport bird control.

Liverpool Airport Limited (LAL) seems to want a trial of strength with the union by offering a, below inflation, 2% pay rise.

The GMB dropped its claim from 3.6% to a 3% rise, but LAL instead offered a one-off payment of £150 and 2.25%.

Workers responded with a huge vote for action and more strikes will take place on 19 and 26 September, with eight further dates to be named in October.

Strikes are from 7am to 7pm and we urge all local trade unionists and socialists to visit the strikers and wish them well.

**Liverpool Socialist Party**

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# Leicester UCU fights redundancies

University and College Union (UCU) members at the University of Leicester are set to take three weeks of strike action.

The dispute is over university managers' plans to sack staff in a cost-cutting exercise.

Since the planned redundancies were announced by vice-chancellor Paul Boyle in May, management's justification for the cuts has shifted.

But, at its root, Professor Boyle and his 'University Leadership Team' want to take the university in a new direction.

They want to borrow money in order to build new infrastructure and reduce staff costs to make the institution more attractive to financial investors.

The UCU, which represents many of the affected workers, opposes this 'vision' of a hollowed out university and has resolved to oppose all compulsory redundancies.

Leicester UCU balloted its members during August. Of the 55% who voted - a high turnout, given the timing of the ballot, and comfortably above the new legal threshold of 50% - 63% voted in favour of strike action and 78% for action short of a strike.

According to Leicester UCU's co-chair, Dr Sarah Seaton, "It doesn't make sense. A university is made by people - by lecturers and researchers, by librarians and IT specialists, cleaners and cooks, time-tablers and technicians.

"Why get rid of your most important resource? We don't want to strike - we are still paying for the last one - and we are keen to work towards a resolution, but we will strike, if necessary."

The strike is due to start on 24 September - the week when both new and returning students will arrive at the university - and will continue for three weeks, with workers striking for four days in each week.

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## Join our Socialist sales drive for issue 1011

**Chris Newby, the Socialist sales organiser**

Throughout the summer, Socialist Party members have continued to build on the excellent [sales drive for issue 1000](#) with tremendous sales across England and Wales.

There were sales at big events: 373 sold on the [massive anti-Trump demo](#) in London, over 200 sold at the [Durham Miners' Gala](#) and 170 sold at the [Tolpuddle Martyrs rally](#) in Dorset.

Many more copies of the Socialist were sold on picket lines and demos in support of striking workers, such as the [Birmingham home care strikers](#); [South Western Railway and Arriva Rail North](#) workers.

This is on top of all the tremendous campaigning Socialist Party members carry out week in, week out, such as opposing social cleansing, defending the NHS, fighting the far right and defending local jobs and services.

Our members are doing a tremendous job getting the Socialist newspaper into the hands of as many people as possible.

We want to make sure that we finish this sales quarter with as big a flourish as possible by linking up with our Fighting Fund 'collectathon' and aiming to sell 500 extra copies of issue 1011.

Many of our members will be involved in stalls at university freshers' fairs and colleges. These will be good opportunities to increase our sales, particularly if we set a target for the week.

Can you organise extra activities in your area such as a midweek campaign stall, workplace or station sale? Can you run your Saturday stall for an hour longer? Every copy of the Socialist that we sell will help us smash through the sales drive target for this quarter and boost our finances.

Do you want to become a seller of the Socialist? You don't have to be a member. Contact us to arrange a supply of papers on a sale or return basis.

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## March to save threatened Liverpool Women's Hospital

### Liverpool Socialist Party

The much-loved [Liverpool Women's Hospital is still earmarked for closure](#), under the false flag of 'moving' it to the new Royal.

The big-wigs orchestrating this move were forced to admit that they don't have the money to build a hospital on the new Royal site.

The 'move' means closure, and is part of the crisis created by cuts, privatisation and marketisation in our NHS.

Nearly £1 billion is supposed to be cut from NHS services in Merseyside and Cheshire over the next few years, predominantly by shutting hospitals and 'moving' services to others.

We are opposed to all of these cutbacks and closures which will be bad for patients, present and future, and bad for staff.

The new Royal was being built by Carillion as part of a private finance initiative contract which guaranteed huge profits to the private companies at the expense of a smaller hospital and other cuts.

Labour politicians pushing this scheme claimed it was the 'only show in town'. Of course it wasn't, it could have been built in-house far better for far less.

Campaigners from Keep Our NHS Public were attacked by these Blairites who bear the blame for the disaster zone that is the new Royal site.

[Carillion's collapse](#) means no building work is being done. It can't be continued by the public sector without undoing the outsourcing mess - which is what should happen.

All private finance initiative schemes and pro-market measures should be cancelled, and all outsourced contracts be brought back in-house, with no compensation given to fat cats.

Join the march for the Women's Hospital: Saturday 22 September, assemble 12 noon outside the hospital at Grove Street/Upper Parliament Street.

### We say:

- Our NHS should be brought into democratic public ownership, together with related industries such as pharmaceuticals
  - [Fair pay for NHS staff, reopen pay talks!](#)
  - Renationalise the NHS as part of a democratic socialist plan for health and social care!
-

# Socialists and campaigners protest Leicester NHS cuts

Andrew Walton, Leicester Socialist Party

Leicester Socialist Party, as part of Save Our NHS Leicestershire, is protesting against [plans to cut intensive care beds](#) at the general hospital.

Across the country, the sell-off of NHS land has increased dramatically. 718 sites have been deemed "surplus to requirement", compared to 418 two years ago.

As services are cut, hospitals are selling off land to private developers to make ends meet.

These one-off payments are not going to be adequate to ensure our NHS is funded properly. Costs in the NHS are rising far more quickly than any funding 'increases' the Tories might try and boast about.

The biggest financial problem facing the NHS is 'private finance initiatives' which, give private companies the opportunity to take over the running of hospitals.

Cleaning and catering were sold off first, resulting in an increase in superbugs as private companies cut corners.

NHS privatisation has gathered pace since, with the introduction of the Tories' Health and Social Care Act, selling off NHS services to "any willing provider".

In Leicestershire, plans for local NHS services over the next five years include the "reconfiguration of Leicester city hospitals from three to two acute sites". What does this mean for Leicester General Hospital and why are intensive care beds being targeted as part of the cuts?

The loss of intensive care beds will be the first step toward downgrading the general hospital as an acute hospital, with other services, such as renal and urology, also removed.

Leicestershire NHS Trust is going ahead with these cuts, without even the pretence of a public consultation, such is the pressure they are under to cut services.

The threat is part of a wider process of privatisation, underfunding, and cuts which has affected every part of the NHS over the last forty years.

We welcome Jeremy Corbyn's announcement that he would end private companies being awarded contracts. The Socialist Party would go further.

We say the health unions urgently need to mobilise their members to protect our NHS, and we would renationalise the NHS, with no compensation for fat cats.

- Come to our 'save our NHS' public meeting - Saturday 29 September at 2pm, Hansom Hall, Leicester Adult Education Centre, LE1 6QL

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## Hundreds of Newcastle United fans attend Mike Ashley Out meeting

Hundreds of Newcastle United football fans attended a public meeting hosted by the Magpie group (a coalition of Newcastle fan groups, individuals and supporters) in Newcastle on 5 September to discuss the way forward in the [continued Mike Ashley Out campaign](#).

The mood in the meeting was positive, with a wide range of strategies being discussed.

In the short term the group agreed to send representatives to the Sports Direct national shareholders annual general meeting on 12 September as well as to hold continued protests outside the Sports Direct club shop at St James' Park.

Longer term the group reaffirmed its support for the Football Supporters' Federation position of fan ownership as the desirable model for the future of football, as well as to continue and intensify the pressure on Mike Ashley.

Local Socialist Party members will continue to offer any support we can to football fans and workers battling against big business in football.

**Ryan Holmes, Newcastle Socialist Party and Newcastle United season ticket holder**

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## Huddersfield Socialist Party opposes racist EDL

Protesters joined a call to action by Huddersfield Socialist Party to oppose a demonstration by the far-right English Defence League (EDL) on 5 September at the town's magistrates' court, where 31 predominantly Asian Muslim defendants faced charges of sexual crimes against young women and girls.

Sexual crime is a vile stain on our society and we stand in solidarity with all victims everywhere. It's clear that [sexual abuse can occur wherever conditions allow for it](#) - in schools, churches, football clubs, the entertainment industry and so on.

But instead of offering any genuine solutions to this complex issue, the EDL offers only [racist scapegoating of one section of the community](#).

The importance of our counter-protest was shown by the abusive shouting of the dozen or so EDL members present, and their ostentatious videoing of everyone and everything - particularly of any Asian people who happened to be passing by.

Although unpleasant, no serious incidents occurred. Our presence, slightly outnumbering the support of the EDL, meant that they were not given free rein with the national media covering these trials.

We welcome the support we received on the day from the working class people of Huddersfield, as well as Labour supporters, Greens and anarchists, who supported this action alongside members of the Socialist Party.

We need a serious labour and trade union movement mobilisation against the far right. Huddersfield Socialist Party intends to continue to play its part in building a mass movement to challenge racism wherever it manifests.

**Huddersfield Socialist Party**

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## Lewisham: binning the rates rise

Lewisham and Southwark Socialist Party members called a protest on 15 September alongside Catford Against Social Cleansing.

We were protesting against [Lewisham council raising business rates in the area](#) by £6,000. It is clear they are trying to drive local businesses out, and are preparing to bring in big corporates, as has happened with so many other gentrification schemes in London.

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## **Non-fiction - Striking Back: the untold story of an anti-apartheid striker**

# **How Irish strikers fought apartheid - and establishment anti-apartheid leadership**

**Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party**

Many books on trade union history are written by those at the very top of the movement. They can often present a picture of the movement that fits with the outlook generated by their high salaries and the corridors of power they walk (see 'Memoirs of a Careerist' at [socialismtoday.org](http://socialismtoday.org)).

This is not one of those books. Instead, Mary Manning captures the real experience of working class activists who - through taking part in struggle - can be propelled to the front, with all the excitement, doubts, hesitations and new experiences that can bring.

Manning's story really starts with the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union (IDATU) adopting a policy of boycotting the handling of South African goods in the 1980s, in solidarity with workers over there fighting apartheid.

Far too often, conferences in the trade union movement can adopt policy which is very good on paper, but never gets implemented in practice. This, undoubtedly, was the intent of the majority of the IDATU leadership, which Manning describes as "conservative."

However, the union's general secretary, John Mitchell, was part of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, and duly issued a circular to members instructing them not to handle South African goods. Manning worked in the flagship Dublin branch of Dunnes Stores, which took a hardline position, insisting on selling South African goods.

On 19 July 1984, watched hawkishly by managers, Manning was the first staff member to refuse to sell South African goods - in this case, two grapefruits.

Threatened with dismissal, her shop steward called the rest of the staff out of the store. At first 25 joined them on the picket line, but hesitant about the action, just ten strikers ended up staying out.

Manning captures the highs and lows of the dispute. These include meeting and gaining support and publicity from Desmond Tutu, then just a bishop, on his way to collect the Nobel peace prize. And later, an invite from him to visit South Africa, where the Dunnes strikers weren't even allowed to leave the airport.

Eventually, the dispute was ended by the Irish government banning the import of South African goods - the first ban by a western government.

Manning praises those who stuck with the strike through thick and thin. This includes local IDATU organiser Brendan Archibold. Also South African exile and supporter of Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party, Nimrod Sejake, who she repeatedly refers to as a guiding figure for the strikers.

Mention is also given to "a few kind supporters from Labour Youth, particularly Kevin McLoughlin," who is now secretary of Socialist Party Ireland.

Although many people offered their support throughout the course of the dispute, several key figures did not stay the course. One of these was John Mitchell, under pressure from the IDATU executive committee. But perhaps initially more devastating to the strikers was the betrayal of Kader Asmal, the head of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Manning explains the differing approach: "What separates us, the Dunnes Stores strikers, from Kader Asmal was how we viewed the change process. Kader was an influential, well-respected and educated man who firmly held the belief that change could only come from the top down.

"And why not? He ran among the highest intellectual and political circles in the country where everything was discuss first, act later.

"But this was completely at odds with what we had learnt... that people power was the only real driver of change. Kader's thinking was entirely at odds with the whole movement we had started, a grassroots movement.

"This movement was not led by affluent men, well-educated lecturers or powerful politicians, the type of groups Kader would have wanted to endorse the strike; instead it was led by us, a predominantly female group of working class citizens, supported largely by the general working class public, left-wing politicians and a South African freedom fighter.

"What made our movement so inspiring to some were the exact same reasons that caused embarrassment for Kader Asmal."

The strikers had to fight against the weight of the whole Irish establishment, including the Catholic church. Some moving chapters discuss how the reactionary policies pushed through establishment politicians by the church impacted the lives of Irish women, including Manning's mother.

Manning makes a point of saying she has never joined a political party. But she does draw out many of the same lessons Marxists would from this struggle, and for that reason this book is well worth reading.

- 'Striking Back: the untold story of an anti-apartheid striker' special orders available at [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

## The Socialist inbox

Letters to the Socialist's editors.

### Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk), or if you're not online, to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD.

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.

### "Call off the dogs"

How low can the Blairites go? The latest comments by Chuka Umunna - calling Labour Party members "dogs" for campaigning against right-wing MPs - are the politics of the gutter.

He is no socialist. Addressing the right-wing 'Progress' organisation he said Jeremy Corbyn should "call off the dogs."

His insults remind me of Eric Hammond - right-wing leader of the EETPU union, now part of Unite - at Labour Party conference in 1984. He attacked the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers, calling them "donkeys."

He refused to call out power station workers to support them, saying striking miners were "lions led by donkeys"! The riposte of Ron Todd - leader of the T&G union, now also part of Unite - was "well, I am an animal lover, and I prefer donkeys to jackals!"

Labour Party members' riposte to Umunna should be: we'd rather be dogs than jackals!

Umunna reminds me of that famous soul song by the O'Jays: "They smile in your face, All the time they wanna take your place, The backstabbers, backstabbers."

Umunna should go and form his Social Democratic Party mark two and see how far he gets. Right over a cliff, I reckon.

It's about time Jeremy Corbyn put aside his Zen approach to the Blairites and got more combative. [He can make a start by supporting mandatory reselection of MPs.](#)

#### **Chris Fernandez, Derby**

On 8 September, George Galloway and Ken Livingstone visited Liverpool as part of their anti-witch-hunt speaking tour. On discovering that the Socialist Party's Tony Mulhearn, anti-cuts Liverpool Labour councillor from 1983 to 1987, was interested in attending, Galloway arranged for him to speak from the stage.

The event was in the spectacular concert room of St George's Hall which holds 500 people. The capacity crowd was enthusiastically in support of Jeremy Corbyn.

Galloway's contribution heaped praise on Corbyn and condemned Blair and his acolytes. He agreed with the view held by the Socialist Party - and the overwhelming majority of Labour members and the wider public - that the charges of antisemitism are a smear strategy by an unholy alliance of anti-socialist forces which will not rest until Corbyn is removed as leader.

Livingstone's contribution was similar but unfortunately had more of a 'broad church' attitude towards the Blairites.

It was striking that all the most radical points were greeted with the loudest applause.

Galloway introduced Tony as "a comrade who was part of the leadership which fought Thatcher and refused to carry out Tory cuts." Tony spoke with great effect, calling on Corbyn to stop apologising and call out the smear campaign for what it is: a capitalist coalition of cant and hypocrisy.

This was greeted with an immediate ovation, as was his call for mandatory reselection to make Labour MPs democratically accountable.

Tony called on Galloway and Livingstone to support the application of the Socialist Party to be allowed to affiliate to Labour with full democratic rights. He said: "If it's good enough for the Co-operative Party and Progress, then it's good enough for us." Both nodded, and all of these calls were met with cheers and clapping.

The enthusiasm for socialist change and mandatory reselection revealed the chasm between the national Momentum leadership's conciliating approach towards the right, and the mass of the labour movement. That enthusiasm should be built on.

#### **Dave Walsh, Liverpool**

The right-wing Labour MPs hope to ditch Jeremy Corbyn without the inconvenience of a leadership election.

They made a song and dance about the refusal of Labour's national executive committee (NEC) to adopt all the examples tacked on to one establishment organisation's definition of antisemitism. When the NEC retreated by adopting all the examples, they continued with their offensive!

By denouncing Labour as "institutionally racist," Chuka Umunna has burnt his boats. It is clear his future lies with Tony Blair's fictitious 'moderate' party.

I don't know if Tony Blair is thought of as a 'moderate' in Iraq, or as a mass-murdering war criminal. It is clear that Chuka Umunna thinks he would be better off with Blair, with the trademark austerity, privatisation and war of Blairism, than with the Labour Party membership he calls "dogs."

We will just have to manage without him.

**Derek McMillan, Durrington, Sussex**

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## Next recession due

Let the guessing game begin! It's [ten years since the Great Recession](#) - the trigger then was the subprime mortgage scandal. What will be next?

The Telegraph is spreading the rumour that these mortgages are back. There is fear about that, because those who study capitalism know another recession is due - even when the world economy has not yet recovered from 2008.

There are so many potential candidates to begin the collapse, and many more desperately trying to predict the recession so as to make a profit from it.

How about the massive debt - higher than ten years ago? Then there is the developing trade war between the USA and China; then the financial crisis in Italy, which follows Turkey and Argentina. The very structure of the world financial system is another potential trigger in a world dominated by finance.

There is one guarantee: that the masses will pay for such a crash. The super-rich have recouped their losses from the Great Recession on the backs of the workers through austerity - it's the socialists' job to stop them. Educate, agitate and organise!

**Sean Brogan, Teignmouth, Devon**

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## NHS across generations

I, for one, benefited from the reforms brought in by Aneurin Bevan's 1946 National Health Service Act. [The NHS became a reality in 1948.](#)

The Tories voted over and over to stop Labour introducing this 'revolutionary' system. Even many GPs and consultants opposed what they perceived as a 'communist' plot against free choice. The NHS nevertheless became a reality.

Let us not forget that in the grim days prior to the war, poor people often relied on home-made 'herbal remedies' and used 'The Home Doctor's Book' to address illness. They were too poor to call for a doctor.

The 'Baby Boomer' generation - of which I was one - obtained free healthcare and medicine. The elderly and the young benefited greatly. For most of us it has increased health prospects and longevity.

My generation is now being accused, indirectly, of living too long! Let us be clear, we have 'paid in' to the health service. If everyone paid in through taxes - including the super-rich - we could continue to run it.

The survival of the NHS is essential. We must all pull together to fight for it. If we don't, future generations will not and should not forgive us.

In the post-war years, people wanted change. This is why Attlee's Labour government came to power. He was the first prime minister to form a Labour government with a Commons majority.

Young people today face a legion of problems. Not least the lack of affordable housing, secure jobs, student loans - and insecure employment made worse by agency work, short-term contracts and zero-hour contracts.

They, above all, should be fighting to preserve what my generation and their forefathers struggled for after two world wars, to make Britain into "a land fit for heroes."

Peter Asquith-Cowen, Kingston-upon-Hull, Yorkshire

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## Audio version of this document

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

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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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## Audio version of this document

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