

Dancing distractions, Brexit boos, Johnson leadership bids

Tories' crisis conference - Corbyn must fight for general election

The Tories are afraid. They are afraid of what lies immediately ahead in the Brexit negotiations. They are afraid that their party will be torn apart by the process. They are afraid of a general election and the potential for another surge in support for Jeremy Corbyn that could bring him to power.

Most of all, they are afraid of the mass discontent that exists within society after a decade of austerity. This is discontent which they already know can be expressed in elections and referendums, which they fear can explode on the streets and in the workplaces, and which they understand (if only faintly) is fuelling enormous questioning of the capitalist system - laying the basis for the development of mass support for socialist ideas.

Theresa May's speech at this year's Tory party conference began with one of the world's most embarrassing attempts at distraction. [Abba's Dancing Queen](#) was supposed to push her party's war with itself, particularly Boris Johnson's continued campaign to oust her and take the top job, off the front pages and into the back of people's minds.

But the 'meat' of May's speech also underlined her fragility and fear. The promise that austerity will end if - an almighty if - Britain obtains what the capitalist class would consider a 'good' deal from the EU, was an attempt to respond to the yearning for an alternative.

Austerity

The announcement rings hollow. May's supposed end of austerity does not involve undoing what she sickeningly termed the "last eight years of progress". In other words, even if her pledge were actually enacted, it would only mean a continuation of the current misery.

May should try talking about the end of austerity to a family losing £200 a month because of universal credit - an issue touched on in [Them and Us in this issue](#) of the Socialist.

She should tell it to those suffering the impact of local government cuts. Because, while the prime minister used her conference speech to talk about the supposed end of austerity, new figures detailing her chancellor's devastating planned cuts to local government were emerging. He means to take another £1.3 billion from council services in the next twelve months.

Disgracefully, many of these cuts are set to be implemented by Blairite-run Labour councils. Jeremy Corbyn should respond to this news with a bold demand on all Labour councillors to stand up to this avalanche and refuse to implement another penny's worth of cuts.

May's promise to 'end austerity', while hollow, in a sense makes this even more imperative. Labour must prove it offers more than fine words about ending cuts, especially when the Tories appear to echo these words themselves.

In a similar way, May's pledge to lift the cap on local councils borrowing money to build homes should also act as a spur to action for Labour councillors. They should immediately draw up plans to use reserves and all available borrowing powers to begin a mass programme of council-house building based on meeting the needs of the population.

Corbyn should pledge that any council which takes such measures would see its funding fully restored on day one of a Labour government.

Brexit

Looming large over the whole Tory conference was the dark storm cloud of Brexit. In a leadership-bid-style speech, Johnson called on May to "chuck Chequers". The prime minister reportedly faced boos from the party's National Conservative Convention - the body representing the volunteer officers who run local Tory associations - when she addressed them to make the case for the plan.

But even before she arrived at the conference, [the Chequers plan, in its original form](#), was all but dead. In particular, the harsh rebuke May received from European leaders when they met in Salzburg had rendered this particular attempt at a compromise null and void. Now, the EU has upped the ante by drawing up tough contingency measures that it threatens will be brought in in the event of a no-deal Brexit. If enacted, these would mean huge disruption, including flight cancellations and what would likely be very serious hold ups at UK ports.

From the point of view of the capitalist class, both in Britain and Europe, by far the most desirable outcome would be the agreement of a Norway-style model or soft Brexit. Britain would continue its membership of the Single Market and Customs Union - [including accepting all its neoliberal rules](#) - continuing to hand over billions of pounds to the EU for the privilege.

In a hint that May might, in her desperation, attempt to pass such a deal by looking to Labour's right-wing majority in parliament for support, her speech included an almost nostalgic tribute to the party's Blairite past:

"We all remember what the Labour Party used to be... Today, when I look across at the opposition benches, I can still see that Labour Party... Their faces stare blankly out from the rows behind, while another party occupies prime position: the Jeremy Corbyn Party."

Here, May exposed the truth. The Socialist Party's description of Labour as 'two parties in one' is no exaggeration. Elsewhere in this issue, we respond to the news that [super-rich 'investors' are already taking money out of the country](#), citing not the uncertainty of Brexit, but the threat of a Corbyn-led government as their primary motivation.

The Tory party conference demonstrated yet again the utter fragility of May's government. The threat by the Democratic Unionist Party to 'pull the plug' should any proposal for a customs border along the Irish Sea be agreed, has added to the uncertainty.

Corbyn, along with the trade union movement, should be calling for mass action - including protests, strikes and demonstrations - demanding a general election now.

And he and John McDonnell must make it clear that it will not be possible for a Corbyn-led Labour government to win the support of the capitalist class, along with its Blairite representatives, except on the basis of wholesale capitulation to the 'logic' of the capitalist system.

Opposite this editorial in our print edition, [our article details the environmental catastrophe facing humanity](#) on the basis of the continuation of capitalism.

Perhaps more starkly than anything, this underlines the need for Corbyn to urgently mobilise his supporters to kick the representatives of this crisis-ridden system out of Labour. It underlines the need to boldly make the case for socialist change.

The Tory party is right to be fearful. Enormous anger exists in society. There is huge hunger for an alternative. Now, the task facing Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union movement is to bring that anger and that hunger out from under the surface - to mobilise a mass working-class force capable of fighting to bring down the Tories and to transform society along socialist lines.

Tories and Blairites defend capitalism

Fight the right

Fight for socialism

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialism 2018 organiser

Mass protests and upheavals are coming in Britain. That might seem like a somewhat audacious statement given the surface calm. It might appear that the mass movements of other times and other places are not on the agenda here. But they are.

After ten years of capitalist crisis - and the heart-breaking homelessness, poverty pay and service annihilation that accompany it - socialist ideas are making a comeback.

This was evidenced by the support for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto. It has been shown by the way in which, against enormous obstacles, Uber drivers have organised strike action (pictured above). These are the heat lightning flashes in anticipation of storms to come.

But Jeremy Corbyn is hamstrung by the Blairites, the 'Backstabbing Tendency', who are doing everything they can to limit Labour's appeal and who are preparing to threaten, in the future, an anti-austerity Labour government.

Socialism 2018

The Socialist Party is hosting a major festival of political discussion and debate - needed by all of us who want to build resistance to the Tories and the Blairites and to win for the working class.

Socialism 2018 will not only reflect mass indignation at austerity but the protests and struggles already taking place against it and the ideas that can help turn that anger into a mass force.

If you are a billionaire or a banker or a boss of a multinational, this might be something you can afford to pass on. If not, get yourself there.

The keynote speakers will include, among others, Peter Taaffe, the former editor of the Militant - predecessor of the Socialist. Militant and the working class defeated Thatcher, not once, but twice.

First Liverpool city council built 5,000 homes and created jobs in the teeth of Tory austerity. Secondly the 18-million-strong movement of mass non-payment destroyed the poll tax and ultimately saw Thatcher removed from power.

These events demonstrate the enormous potential power of the working class to win.

At Socialism 2018, we will chart a way forward for working-class people and youth desperately looking for an alternative.

We are preparing for the coming events by offering up a programme and a way forward for the battle, not only against capitalism but for socialism in the 21st century.

Come to Socialism 2018

A weekend of discussion and debate on socialist ideas to change the world. 10 and 11 November. Central London.

- socialism2018.net

12 years to halt irreversible climate disaster. Capitalism's time is up. Only socialism can save us all.

Theo Sharieff, Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Real and immediate horrors face humanity even if the world limits global warming to the current target of 2°C. Scientists are now insisting on the lower limit of 1.5°C - and saying we have just 12 years left to change course.

The Paris climate accord's top 2°C limit could increase the population exposed to water shortages by 50%, escalate food scarcity, and throw hundreds of millions more people into climate-related poverty.

This isn't even to mention the wider environmental damage posed. Hitting the 2°C temperature makes it twice as likely that pollinating insects would lose half their habitat. Meanwhile, 99% of coral would die.

And this is if we hit 2°C. But on the current course, we are headed towards a 3°C increase.

Some delegates to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reportedly wept and held each other while agreeing the report.

The question facing the world working class, and especially young people, is this: does capitalism have the capability to produce the "unprecedented shift" the report's authors urge in such a short space of time?

Billions of people are watching capitalism's inability to fix even the basic issues facing humanity in the here and now, such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment and war - and rightly concluding it doesn't.

Donald [Trump's withdrawal of the US from the Paris accord](#) only adds weight to these fears. But Trump isn't the beginning or end of the climate problem.

Capitalism is a system which only keeps moving by prioritising profits for the owners and plunderers of the world's resources - the capitalist class. Everything else is a distraction.

Since 1988, just 100 big corporations have been responsible for 71% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. This shows why none of the politicians or parties that defend capitalism have the answers we desperately need.

Unprecedented change is required, urgently, if we want to have a planet to live on, cities and towns to live in, food to eat and water to drink by the end of this century.

This change can only be achieved by socialist transformation on an international scale, through the mass action of those who most need it: the working class and young people.

[Only on the basis of a socialist world](#) - where the planet's resources are taken out of the hands of those driving climate change, the capitalists, into collective ownership, as part of a democratic plan for green production - can we truly meet the needs of all society, and avert catastrophe.

8,000 Glasgow workers plan historic mass strike for equal pay

A historic [mass strike for equal pay](#) by 8,000 council workers in Glasgow, 90% of whom are women, will take place on 23 and 24 October. The action is organised by local government unions Unison and GMB.

The strike will include home care workers, cleaners, caterers, learning support workers, child development officers, school administration staff and janitors.

It is expected to shut down primary schools, nurseries and cultural buildings across the city, as well as suspending normal service to 6,000 care clients.

For 12 years, council workers have been underpaid by a scheme that was supposed to end inequality - the 'Workforce Benefits and Pay Review' (WBPR).

The Court of Session, Scotland's highest civil court, has ruled twice that WBPR is unequal.

Successive Blairite Labour and now Scottish National Party (SNP) council administrations have failed to give these low-paid workers what they are owed. Strike ballots smashed the Tories' anti-union thresholds with 90% votes for action.

Socialist Party Scotland members play a leading role in the socialist-led Glasgow City Unison branch. We offer full support to the strikers.

Denise, Norah and Isabelle are Unison members and home care workers. They spoke to Matt Dobson from Socialist Party Scotland.

Denise: "For ten months, and after 21 meetings with the trade unions and [joint union and legal campaign] Action 4 Equality, the council now say they haven't even looked at our proposals for comparators for job roles.

"It's insulting. The council have agreed nothing, offered nothing, they just want meetings about meetings. There is righteous anger among members. Enough is enough!

"We gave them a chance after they publicly committed to real negotiations and participation from claimants in the summer after the massive vote for action in our consultative ballot. They blew it. They now have a massive strike in response.

"They are out to sell us short and save money, instead of for real justice. They have tried to hang on to WBPR when especially the shift allowances are discriminatory."

Norah spoke about the replacement of the previous unequal pay scheme in 2006: "We have learned very bitter lessons from that experience. We were offered small amounts near Christmas, way below what we were owed.

Cynically exploited

"Some women took it just to give something to their families. Their desperation was cynically exploited.

"Never again with this. We are all absolutely determined to get the full amount we are owed. If they think they can use Christmas again, they are mistaken.

"The council need to understand we are serious about this action and we have mass support. A woman came to me the other day in TK Maxx after seeing the uniform. 'Good on you, and all the best,' she said. Our clients, who we care for, want to come to the pickets and demonstrations."

Denise, Norah and Isabelle also spoke of the pride in their union and the intense atmosphere of fightback building up to the strike.

Hundreds of new members have joined. Ballot and strike strategy meetings, with hundreds of members attending, have been electric and have built the mood.

Equal pay has become a lightning rod for all the anger on workplace issues Unison is taking up, like workload. "Last year the red alert during the snow storms saw our frontline staff out risking their safety getting to people's homes."

Isabelle: "The physical strain of home care work is massive. Under this pay scheme, the overtime isn't worthwhile. I've ended up worse off with more work!"

Another key issue strikers are fighting on is how pensions will be factored in. Other councils have made pay-outs without pensions included.

Norah: "We are fighting for this because it has impacted that much on folks' lives. We have [equal pay] claimants who are now 70, who because of this have been struggling for years, who haven't been able to enjoy a pension.

"Women have died in this city waiting on equal pay. It's beyond a disgrace! And still they delay with the money."

Home care workers are incensed that senior council officers and the SNP administration have publicly said a home care strike for equal pay is unjustified as it puts vulnerable people in danger.

These councillors and managers have no clue about the demands of the job, and how difficult it is to survive on low pay. This strike has been provoked by their inaction.

Glasgow workers reading about the [strike of Birmingham council home care workers](#) in the Socialist sent full solidarity to those workers.

The cost of implementing equal pay compensation, and a new fair and equal pay evaluation scheme going forward, could be over £500 million.

Glasgow City Unison has consistently demanded that this must not be paid for by cuts to any services or selling assets that benefit the public.

The council must use its borrowing powers and campaign for financial assistance from the Scottish and Westminster governments.

Norah, Denise and Isabelle had a final message: "We say we will not be made to feel guilty by this council.

"They have robbed us and seem to be still trying to cut down on what we are owed. It's our money that we worked and sacrificed for.

"We say to everyone around the country and in the city: picket with us, join the demonstrations, donate to the strike fund. We are fighting also for young people, for future council workers.

"What do we want? Equal pay! When do we want it? Now!"

Trade union branches should send solidarity:

- Messages of support to enquiries@glasgowcityunison.co.uk
- Social media posts and photos should use #EqualPayGlasgowNow
- Strike fund donations to 60-83-01, 20275789, c/o Drew Rigden, treasurer, Glasgow City Unison

Read more at socialistpartyscotland.org.uk:

- Full interview: ["Women have died in this city waiting on equal pay. It's beyond a disgrace"](#)
 - [The mask slips as SNP-led council goes to war with equal pay strikers](#)
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Super-rich flee to Monaco to evade Corbyn - take the wealth off the 1%!

Connor Rosoman, Brighton Socialist Party

Britain's super-rich are running scared at the very prospect of a Corbyn government. The country's very wealthiest are already moving their trusts and setting up offshore accounts in tax havens like Monaco and Luxembourg.

Some are even making plans to flee the country, according to a report in their mouthpiece, the Financial Times, on 5 October.

The super-rich are terrified of the thought that a Corbyn-led government will embolden workers to come for their profits.

The Tories have faithfully served the capitalist class by cutting taxes for the rich and selling off public assets.

For millions of working people though, this has meant cuts to services and poverty pay, alongside rising housing and living costs. Many tenants, myself included, spend most of our income on rent alone.

But the movements that have sprung up behind Jeremy Corbyn and his promise of real change show that workers and young people have had enough of Tory and Blairite rule.

With May's shambolic Brexit negotiations, there is a real possibility of another general election on the horizon - and of a Corbyn-led Labour government coming to power. The billionaires find this even more worrying than leaving the neoliberal EU.

It is the workers who produce all the wealth in society. But capitalists line their pockets with what we produce.

Without the workers, the rich would have nothing. They would rather the profits they steal from us sustain their opulent lifestyle of gigantic mansions and [gold taps in their bathrooms](#) than fund public services.

And they will not give this wealth up so easily. All this is just a glimpse of what would happen if an anti-austerity government tried to challenge them for their ill-gotten gains.

John McDonnell has previously [given a muddled response](#) on the issue, saying "I don't think there will be" a run on the pound - massive reduction in currency value - in the event of Corbyn-led Labour government. The FT report is further proof that such an event is to be expected.

But what is [the socialist answer to this](#)? To prevent wealth flooding out of the country, a socialist government would have to nationalise the banks and top corporations under democratic workers' control and management.

It would also have to implement capital controls - limits on money coming into and out of the country.

These measures would need to be immediate to take economic power out of the hands of the capitalist class. Only democratic, socialist planning of the economy can answer the threat of economic sabotage.

Workers in UK do £1.2trn of unpaid housework and care each year

Lindsey Morgan, Leicester West Socialist Party

Exhausted and exploited workers are doing an increasing amount of unpaid household work.

The amount of unpaid domestic labour has grown every year from 2005 to 2016, according to the Office for National Statistics. It equates to about £18,932 per person on average - £1.24 trillion a year, almost half the UK economy's annual product!

This shows the incredible scale of the reliance of the bosses on workers' unpaid labour in order to maintain the workforce.

This labour is essential to sustain society as the bosses strip away the social safety net and increasingly place the burden on the individual.

Women

Women, who are more likely to be trapped in low-paid work, are also having to spend more and more time caring for children and adults.

Capitalism's inherent sexism means we still do the majority of unpaid domestic work. Men do 16 hours a week on average, compared to women's 26 hours.

The Socialist Party fights for [free childcare for workers](#) for a start, as well as reversing all cuts to health and social care.

That would lessen some of this burden and enable many women to achieve their ambitions.

I was the carer of my partner up until his death. It took a huge toll on my mental health trying to juggle caring for him, looking after our child, doing the housework, managing my mental health, and managing finances.

I asked for support and was told there wasn't a care package social services could put in place for us as, in their words, I was "coping well." I wasn't, and needed support.

The isolation that doing all this work caused was significant as I felt I couldn't leave him. If I could even have got some respite care for him, that would have had a huge impact on my energy levels and my ability to look after myself and my family. But this was denied to me.

How many others have been denied the vital care and support they need? We fight for socialism so that everyone who needs support gets it.

Services cut

Austerity has forced us to become increasingly self-reliant - at the expense of social interaction and support. It is clear that as services are drastically cut, workers are doing this ourselves - without any extra time or money.

Some capitalist economists claim the figures hide a higher standard of living because we now do more online! But more domestic labour has obviously not resulted in a higher standard of living.

As well as fighting the cuts which force more of these tasks on us, the Socialist Party fights for a shorter working week and higher pay.

Then workers could have free and healthy relationships with our families, without exhausting ourselves to support the billionaire bosses.

Workers' action wins Amazon pay rise - but stingy Bezos tries to claw it back

Nationalise Amazon! £10 an hour now!

Kris O'Sullivan, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

Buzz buzz buzz - "END STILL TIME." That's the alert Amazon warehouse workers receive when they spend too much time not moving - resting from hard manual work.

But now, collective workers' action has forced [billionaire boss Jeff Bezos](#) to concede pay rises - £9.50 an hour in the UK and \$15 in the US.

There have been horror stories of workers contracting gallstones as they are too scared to go for a toilet break, or working till they pass out due to lack of ventilation. In my home city of Birmingham, 115 ambulances have been called out to the Amazon warehouse in the past three years!

It's understandable if you think this is something straight out of a Black Mirror episode. But it's now common practice across Amazon and the logistics sector.

Alongside poverty pay, insecure hours, and terrible health and safety standards, workers have said enough is enough! Across the world they have been organising collectively - striking in Spain and Italy, and joining unions in the US and UK.

This rising threat is what squeezed the raise out of Bezos. But the capitalist press says it's simply due to kindly Amazon 'listening to its critics'. What drivel and lies!

Jeff Bezos - the richest man on the face of the planet, who is spending \$42 million on building a '10,000-year clock' inside a mountain in Texas - doesn't care about critics. He cares only about his profits.

That's why it's only now, when workers have flexed their industrial muscles and hurt these profits, that we see better pay.

However, tight-fisted Bezos has done it by robbing Peter to pay Paul - ending monthly bonuses and stock awards, and attacking agency workers' conditions.

This shows that workers struggle can win a better deal for today, but the capitalists will always seek to take it back tomorrow.

That's why the Socialist Party says workers should call the shots to truly protect and secure all of our futures.

This can only happen under a radically different system, where industry is collectively owned and democratically planned: the system of socialism.

Them & Us

Them...

- Misogynist Brett Kavanaugh is now a US Supreme Court judge - despite facing multiple allegations of sexual assault, and crying, screaming and extolling the virtues of beer in the job interview. All it takes is a private school and Yale education, and a [career attacking women and workers](#) from the bench.
- Sprucing up your front room this autumn? How about a black-and-white chair covered with an unpublished avant-garde line drawing by graphic artist Max Huber? Just £3,750.
- With at least 4,000 bosses now worth over \$20 million, personal wealth in India is on course to exceed Switzerland and Hong Kong by 2022, says Boston Consulting Group. 732 million people in India don't even have a toilet, according to WaterAid.

... & us

- Families will lose out on £200 a month due to 'universal credit' welfare 'reforms', according to a Tory cabinet briefing. Labour shadow chancellor John McDonnell has at last said that "pause and fix" is not enough. [Scrap universal credit!](#)
 - Before the 2007-08 Great Recession, real wages doubled every 29 years on average. Now they'll take 97 years to double, says the Resolution Foundation.
 - A minimum of 449 homeless people died last year while on the streets, sofa surfing, or in emergency accommodation, says the Bureau of Investigative Journalism.
 - Greece's death rate soared by 17.6% in the six years following crucifying EU-enforced austerity in 2010, writes Larry Elliott in the Guardian.
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Fight racism: fight for jobs, homes and services for all

April Ashley , Socialist Party black and Asian group and Unison NEC black women members' representative (personal capacity)

It is now over 50 years since the Race Relations Act was passed in 1967. However, racism has not been ended in Britain - far from it. But smashing racism is what we fight for.

Today, racism at work, racist attacks, racist immigration laws, deportations and police racism, are facts of life for millions of workers and young people.

The years of austerity and decades of neoliberal policies of cuts and privatisation, pursued by both Tory-led and Blairite New Labour governments, have resulted in a housing crisis, low pay, zero-hour contracts and crumbling public services.

They have meant a devastating decrease in living standards for most working class and middle class people. Black and Asian people are at the sharp end of this too.

With young black people dying on the streets in knife attacks, many justifiably fear for the future for young black people in Britain.

The situation for refugees is getting worse and anti-Muslim prejudice continues to be whipped up.

The [Windrush scandal and the Tories' 'hostile environment' policy](#) toward migrant workers expose how the Tories represent the capitalist system - which is intrinsically unequal and racist. The richest 10% of households own almost half the country's wealth while the poorest half of families own only 9%!

The Grenfell tower disaster is a sharp reminder that austerity and capitalism sacrifice the lives of working class people in the drive to maximise profit.

Fundamentally, the capitalist system uses division on all levels to try and prevent a common struggle by the working class against the exploitation of this profit-driven system.

The [false claims of antisemitism against Jeremy Corbyn](#) are another attempt to prevent an anti-austerity government coming to power.

The Socialist Party agrees with US black revolutionary Malcolm X that you can't have capitalism without racism.

That's why we need to build united working class struggle against discrimination and oppression. But this must also be tied to the fight for a socialist alternative to provide jobs, homes, higher pay and services for all.

We live in a society where pro-capitalist politicians act in the interests of the richest, defending a system of gross inequality whose symptoms include hungry kids, homelessness and NHS crises.

Trump's election, right-wing populist gains in Europe and the Brexit vote fuel fears that the far right is on the rise. The dangers are real enough.

The Football Lads Alliance (FLA) and Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA) organised a demonstration of up to 15,000 to demand the release from prison of ex-English Defence League leader 'Tommy Robinson'.

However, we have also seen the [monster demonstration, of over 250,000 people](#), against Trump when he visited Britain as people sought to actively oppose the racism and misogyny that he represents. This dwarfs the FLA demonstration.

Their attempt to rebuild a far right street movement raises the need for a serious debate throughout the labour movement about the role trade unions and working class communities can play in building a movement for jobs, homes and services - not racism.

The Socialist Party has successfully campaigned for a strategy of mobilising local communities and trade unions, with effective stewarding to keep people safe in order to counter organisations of the far right. It cannot be left to the police to protect demonstrators.

The police have been used to kettle, snatch, beat and intimidate student and anti-racist demonstrators.

Crucially, [we call for the building of an anti-racist workers' movement](#) that fights for jobs, for council homes, for pay, benefits and decent public services.

For example, in the [2017 Barts hospitals strike of cleaners and porters](#) in east London, Socialist Party members played a leading role in uniting migrant workers alongside British workers in a militant trade union action against privateer employer Serco.

The far right can be defeated by a mass campaign. It is essential that a workers', anti-racist, anti-austerity movement is built, and that trade unions and Jeremy Corbyn do all they can to lead that.

25 years since 50,000 marched against the far-right threat

On 16 October 1993, over 50,000 people took part in a mass protest demanding that the headquarters of the far-right British National Party (BNP), then based in Welling, be shut down. Youth against Racism in Europe (YRE), which was led by supporters of Militant - the Socialist Party's predecessor - played a central role in these events. To mark the anniversary, here we carry edited extracts from chapter 51 of '[The Rise of Militant](#)' by Peter Taaffe, outlining the history of the struggle against the BNP in this year. It is a history which is rich in lessons for fighting the far right today.

The [murder of Stephen Lawrence](#) in April 1993 in south-east London was the fourth such racist murder in the area in three years. This was the area where the fascist BNP had its headquarters.

Stephen's murder in Eltham - he was stabbed twice: once through the shoulder and then through the heart - was completely unprovoked.

In 1992, 16-year-old Rohit Duggal was stabbed to death by a gang of white youths in the same road where Stephen Lawrence was killed. Between August 1990, and May 1991, 863 incidents of racist attacks and harassment were reported to the Greenwich Action Committee against Racist Attacks. YRE demanded the closure of the BNP's 'bookshop' - effectively its headquarters.

This demand was aimed in particular at the Tory Bexley council which had refused to accede to the pressure that had been exerted against it prior to Stephen Lawrence's murder. YRE initiated the call for a mass

demonstration on 8 May.

The 8 May demonstration was the largest anti-racist mobilisation for a decade - more than 8,000 marched. Significantly, it mobilised a wide layer of black youth who marched together with white workers and youth. The police assaulted the demonstrators, attempting to create the impression of a riotous, uncontrolled 'mob'.

The demonstration was, however, very well disciplined and effectively stewarded by the YRE. It was this which prevented serious injuries, possibly including death, being inflicted by the police.

The Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) refused to participate in a joint demonstration in Welling, preferring to march on the same day, totally ineffectively, through central London. The Anti-Nazi League, controlled by the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), also refused to join in a united non-sectarian demonstration.

They held a demonstration one week after the massive and successful 8 May demonstration. It attracted no more than 2,000 people.

An unprecedented degree of pressure had been exerted on councillors, but Bexley's Tory council remained unmoved. To discuss the next steps, all the anti-racist organisations - the YRE, ARA, the ANL, together with organisations like the Indian Workers' Association (IWA) - had been brought together under the banner of the Stephen Lawrence family to discuss the next stage of the campaign.

At the first meeting of this committee, the YRE representatives proposed a national unity demo to pass the BNP headquarters on 16 October. In response to this ARA representatives proposed a march through central London instead, which was later supported by the ANL representative.

The YRE had no intention of organising a demo in competition to one organised by the ARA and Stephen Lawrence's family. In the interests of unity, the YRE proposed organising a Bexley demo at a later date to avoid conflict with ARA's central London initiative. This was despite the fact that the YRE believed that a demonstration through central London would be seen as missing the target. However, at the campaign's next meeting, the ANL did a complete somersault.

Without any discussion or consultation, their representatives announced they would be marching to the BNP HQ on 16 October. Leaflets and posters had been produced and transport already booked. The YRE argued for unity. They asked ARA to reconsider, and met with the ANL and tried to persuade them to change the date of their demo. Both groups refused to change their minds. We declared:

"Faced with the flat refusal to reorganise their demo on a later date and given that the key task is to close down the BNP, Militant Labour believes anti-racists and anti-fascists should mobilise for a mass turnout on the Bexley demo."

In September, the BNP secured a by-election victory in the Millwall ward in Tower Hamlets. This acted like a crack of thunder to waken youth and workers into action.

The victory of the BNP resulted from years of neglect by right-wing Labour in the area.

Racism had then been fuelled by the scandalous actions of the Liberal-dominated Tower Hamlets council, which had blatantly issued racist leaflets as a means of holding on to control in the area.

Council workers immediately walked out when the BNP victory was announced. Two hundred out of a total staff of 600 attended an emergency meeting convened by stewards the day after the election result.

Brick Lane

Phil Maxwell, a Tower Hamlets Labour councillor, called for a complete boycott of Derek Beackon, the new BNP councillor. The election results also galvanised the YRE into organising the youth against BNP paper sellers in Brick Lane. On Sunday 19 September, 100 YRE members occupied the space in Bethnal Green Road where the BNP usually sold. At about 9am some six or seven fascists turned up and started baiting the anti-fascists. They waved a Union Jack and shouted fascist chants.

The police protected the Nazis, letting them take photos of anti-Nazis. The fascists attempted to provoke a confrontation. After about an hour 200-300 anti-fascists from the YRE, the ANL and other local people assembled. Then the so-called 'toughs' of fascist group Combat 18 ran for their lives as the anti-fascists and anti-racists tore through the police lines to get at them.

The victory in Brick Lane gave a further spur to the campaign against the BNP. Over 1,000 demonstrators turned up on 26 September and the BNP never arrived in Brick Lane for their usual paper sale.

It was subsequently revealed that 50 Nazis were arrested on the way to the sale. The fact that the police intervened in this way was itself a reflection of the highly successful campaign launched by the anti-racists and anti-fascists.

Further demos

On 3 October, a 3,000 strong anti-racist anti-fascist demonstration, with a large and very vocal contingent from the local Asian community, marched through London's East End. The demonstration had been initiated by Youth Connection, representing Asian young people.

All of this culminated, on 16 October, in the magnificent anti-racist demonstration of 50,000 which streamed through the streets of Welling in a determined attempt to shut down the Nazi headquarters. This action ranks alongside some of the great anti-fascist, anti-racist demonstrations of the past such as Cable Street, the march through Deptford in the 1970s and the earlier 8 May demonstration.

The demonstration was called under the banner of 'unity', symbolising unified action by the main anti-racist, anti-fascist organisations. But as the 50,000 demonstrators were assembling, the outline of future trouble was symbolised by the horses and riot police who lined the hills.

There had been intense discussion about the route between the organisers of the demonstration and the police in the days leading up to the demo. The YRE members in the meetings of stewards and the organising committee beforehand had warned that the police were likely to wade in. Therefore, measures had to be taken to safeguard the demonstration.

The YRE argued for proper stewarding, with organised and identifiable stewards and for a system of communications so that stewards could be in radio contact. The ANL and SWP leaders ridiculed this idea as a "Dad's Army" tactic. Incredibly, they even argued that the stewards' bibs and walkie-talkies looked militaristic and "intimidating".

Police

In opposition to police armed to the teeth, with riot shields and on horses, they argued for a sit-down protest! But for the enormous courage of the stewards, led by the YRE and joined by ordinary demonstrators and some courageous rank-and-file members of the SWP and ANL, disaster could have followed the predictable police attack.

The police's tactics in the run-up to the demonstration were quite simple: 'Predict trouble in advance and we'll get away with anything on the day.'

As the march continued to the junction of Upper Wickham Lane and Lodge Hill, the marchers were confronted with an amazing situation. Every road was blocked by police, riot police with shields and batons.

No attempt was made to direct the march up Lodge Hill (the police's preferred route). Instead, horses and police lined up facing the demo across the entrance to Lodge Hill. The road to the BNP bunker was full of riot police but unlike every other road there were no barriers.

It was clear that this was because the riot police on horseback would be able to charge the demonstrators without having to move steel barriers. As the demonstration halted, riot police charged into the crowd. One steward from Glasgow commented:

"I came face to face with the police and many of them had ripped off the identification numbers on their arms. I soon saw why. The police charged the demonstration and many people were crushed up against the railings. People were running in panic away from the blows of the police.

"They just waded in. We were pulling people out and passing them on to safety. Some of them were really close to asphyxiation - our stewards saved lives. While all this was going on, the police were still charging, batoning people, climbing over bodies to get to the people behind us."

It was clear the police were following the script written by their Tory masters whose aim was to simply portray the march as "violent left-wing fascists".

Eventually, YRE chief stewards managed to negotiate with the chief of the riot police to withdraw his troops 30-40 yards away to stop any more conflict.

All the stewards then linked arms to ensure the demo was defended. Many ANL members worked hand in hand with YRE stewards. Julie Waterson, the demo's chief steward, was on the front line with YRE stewards until she got batoned by the police. But there were no ANL leaders to be seen after this.

Only the heroism of the stewards, with the YRE giving the main lead, women as well as men, made it possible through tight organisational discipline to stop the police from going on a full-scale rampage. At the end of the demonstration, when the marchers were dispersed, the police, particularly the riot police, attacked in a cowardly fashion from behind.

Lessons

Many lessons were learnt on that day. It was clear that Militant and YRE members were the only ones who had any serious idea of how to steward such demos.

Nevertheless in the wake of the demonstration Militant called for a "united front of all anti-racist organisations with the trade union and labour movement involved." At the same time we argued that anti-fascist activity needed to be linked with a programme on jobs, homes, education, and so on.

The 16 October demonstration represented a turning point. It brought out into the public domain the real character of the BNP and prepared the ground for the discrediting and subsequent defeat of Beackon in 1994 and the successful closure of the BNP's HQ in July 1995.

However, none of this would have been possible without the determined action and leadership provided by organisations like the YRE which, avoiding the sectarian pitfalls of the ANL and SWP, sought to build the widest possible movement of youth and workers against the racist and fascist threat.

University and College Union recall congress

We need democratic, rank-and-file leadership to win national UCU disputes

Socialist Party members in UCU

For the first time in its history, the University and College Union (UCU) is holding a recall congress, on 18 October, due to the shutdown of our democratic annual congress in May.

This was a [direct result of a staff walkout](#) to prevent congress hearing two branch motions which were critical of UCU general secretary Sally Hunt.

Unfortunately it has just been announced that Sally Hunt has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and that her doctor has advised her to take a period of leave. Socialist Party members in UCU wish her well at this difficult time, and hope her leave has a positive effect on her health.

However, we must also make clear that it is the democratic right of UCU members to hold our elected representatives to account. Understandably, members were enraged by the general secretary's behaviour during the pensions strike in the pre-1992 universities.

We [wrote at the time](#) that the 'consultation' of branches "was a stitch-up by Sally Hunt and the full-time officials." We stand by that assessment.

The shutdown of congress only exacerbated that. The general secretary could have prevented it by appealing to staff not to exercise their right to walk out, and instead defending her record to delegates.

The branch of general union Unite which organises UCU staff has confirmed there will be no further walkouts at our recall congress. As we go to press, because of Sally Hunt's absence, it is not clear whether recall congress will hear the critical motions.

In the meantime, congress has huge achievements to celebrate. 17,000 new members have joined UCU. We have seen the [beginnings of a fightback in further education](#). And, of course, we had the magnificent 14-day [pensions strike](#), the first national strike in the shadow of the Tories' latest anti-democratic Trade Union Act.

But congress is also preparing for huge national struggles. In higher education, [we are balloting for industrial action](#) to reverse falling pay and force action on casualisation, workload and the gender pay gap. In further education we are also balloting for industrial action on pay.

Both of these ballots close on 19 October, the day after recall congress. These are massive disputes for our union, and for the whole education sector, that we must win.

The best way to do that is to put our members in democratic control of our disputes at this recall congress.

This year, the union elected a 'national dispute committee' to provide rank-and-file oversight of the ongoing pensions dispute. That committee should be expanded to include representatives of post-1992 universities and lead the national pay and equality dispute.

A similar body should be constituted in further education to lead the pay struggle there.

Unfortunately, it has been suggested that while the general secretary is on medical leave, her duties will again be performed by unelected senior union officials.

Unlike many other unions, UCU has no elected deputy or assistant general secretary who constitutionally could fill in. Going forward, this situation shows the need for a rule change to introduce election of full-time officials, in particular a deputy general secretary.

However, in this emergency situation, why shouldn't congress elect an acting general secretary from among the delegates, to provide democratic and accountable leadership while Sally Hunt is absent?

Our best weapon is our members and the fantastic willingness to fight back they have shown. Through united struggle, we can defend our pay and conditions, and the future of post-16 education.

In further and higher education, we face horrific casualisation, victimisation of union reps, redundancies, falling pay, sexist employment practices, attacks on international staff and students, and swingeing cuts and privatisation. These are all a result of the policies of successive Tory and Blairite governments.

Empowering our members by building a fighting, democratic, rank-and-file-controlled UCU is key to winning victories in the struggles ahead.

First coordinated catering and courier strike whets workers' appetite for action

Workers at several branches of McDonald's, Wetherspoon and TGI Fridays have struck together, joined by couriers for Uber Eats and other gig economy workers.

The '[Fast Food Shutdown](#)' on 4 October - #FFS410 - was called by five trade unions: BFAWU, Unite, IWW, IWGB and GMB. Here we carry reports of some of the actions.

London

The Socialist spoke to TGI Fridays worker Lauren at the central strike rally:

Striking together with workers at McDonald's, Uber Eats and bar staff taking action for the first time at Wetherspoon is brilliant. It gives us confidence and shows the power that we have when we strike together.

We are striking over the removal of tips, but just like our McDonald's, Wetherspools, Deliveroo and Uber Eats comrades, we are fighting for a real living wage and an end to unfair age-restricted rates of pay.

By going on strike we believe that we can win. McStrikers forced McDonald's to give them a pay rise after they first took strike action, and our action in TGI Fridays has forced the Tories to attack employers for stealing tips.

But we won't stop until we see real action to halt bosses doing this and force them to pay us proper wages and recognise our trade unions. And I strongly encourage every waiter, bartender, delivery driver, chef and cleaner to take a stand and join a union.

Brighton

At midnight, workers at the Post and Telegraph pub in Brighton walked out of work, greeted by an enthusiastic crowd of young trade unionists. They were soon joined by staff at the Bright Helm, another Wetherspoon-owned pub in town.

After travelling to a demonstration in London alongside workers from McDonald's and TGI Fridays, the Wetherspoon strikers returned to Brighton for a rally before separating into pickets outside each pub. The Post and Telegraph was forced to close early as a result.

Most young workers are struggling to get by, stuck in low-paying jobs and precarious contracts. In Brighton, the minimum wage is far below what is needed to live on, with some of the highest rents outside London.

But now many are fighting back, with unions such as BFAWU supporting them. Young workers should build on the lessons of these strikes and plan our own coordinated actions to [win real change in conditions](#).

Connor Rosoman, Brighton Socialist Party

Manchester

Over 50 trade unionists, students and supporters attended a protest rally organised by Manchester Socialist Students outside McDonald's at Piccadilly in the city centre.

The protest was very well received by members of the public, who stopped to take leaflets and showed support for the primarily young workers. Older generations also understand the challenges faced by young workers, with many saying they do not understand how young people are supposed to 'get on in life' these days.

After speeches from young workers, students, the Socialist Party and the trade union council, we marched to TGI Fridays, where there were further speeches from students who had only recently got involved with Socialist Students. Again this action gained support from groups of onlookers.

Yazmin Magaby, Manchester Socialist Party

Another first: pub strike victory in south London!

Bill Mullins, Lewisham and Southwark Socialist Party

Striking workers at the Ivy House pub in Nunhead, south London, have won all their demands after three days of stoppage. Lewisham and Southwark Socialist Party heard from one of the strikers at our branch meeting.

The strike achieved reinstatement of four sacked workers, recognition of their trade union BFAWU, and fixed minimum hours to replace zero-hour contracts. It also forced bosses to introduce a proper appeals procedure for future disciplinaries, and an elected staff representative on the management board.

At one stage, bosses called the police to try to take keys off the undermanager who was supporting strikers on the picket line. But when strikers pointed out the property had to have a designated keyholder, and that was the undermanager, the police backed off and said it was "a civil matter."

The pub - as its signboard outside proudly says - is "community owned." But that did not stop bosses sacking four workers - with no notice, because they were on zero hours.

This was a deliberate attempt to prevent trade union recognition. Workers had been trying for a number of years to get official status for their union, but had been rebuffed continually.

The picket line on 30 September was widely supported, including by the Socialist Party. Many had spent the previous night making their own banners which they draped over the front of the pub.

All the time the pub was unable to function, despite attempts to bring in strike-breaking labour. Supporters told pickets they had been offered jobs but refused when they found out about the strike.

The 'offers' by management throughout the three days were continually rejected by workers. Management was forced to negotiate with a delegation of the strikers and supporters throughout 30 September, the last day of the strike, and on into 2 October.

This strike has many lessons. But it was the presence of politicised workers, including a Socialist Party member, who had worked away behind the scenes for a long time, which helped other workers gain the confidence to stand up and fight.

Cable makers strike against real-terms pay cut

Declan Clune, Southampton Socialist Party

At midnight on 26 September, staff at cable manufacturer Prysmian in Eastleigh downed tools. The 24-hour strike was the first of four.

After years of below-inflation pay 'rises', Prysmian bosses produced another derisory pay rise offer of 2%. Even the conservative 'CPI' inflation rate currently stands at 2.7%

General union Unite balloted members for action to get a better deal. The result was 83% backing strikes, and 96% backing industrial action short of strike.

Historically, this industry was a huge employer and very important for the local economy. Many worked for tyre maker Pirelli, which sold off its cable division in 2005, renamed Prysmian.

I spoke to strikers who had been employed from that time - some had 40 years' experience! They have seen a move from full-time, permanent staff to casual, agency workers. Typical divide-and-rule tactics that result in poorer working conditions.

"This company is brutal," were the words of one picket describing management's approach to workers. "We held talks with management, and we were positive a fair deal was possible and a deal struck."

Unfortunately, the bosses ended that consultation by refusing to improve on their real-terms pay cut offer, leading to this strike. Workers struck again on 3 October, with a strike and demonstration planned for 10 October, and another strike on 17 October.

Strike raises pay at Liverpool airport

Hugh Caffrey, North West Socialist Party

Striking workers at Liverpool's John Lennon Airport who run essential safety-related services have settled for an improved pay offer.

Management had [refused to meet the workers' demand](#) for a pay rise of at least 3%, and offered just 2.2% plus a £100 one-off lump sum. The bosses' revised offer is a two-year deal, worth 2.2% and £250 for the current financial year - which we understand equates to 3% in total - and then another rise in April of 3% proper.

This is a climb-down by the employer. GMB [union members have shown they won't be pushed around](#) by management, with a large and lively presence of pickets at the front of the airport on every strike day.

Eddie Parker, regional organiser for the GMB, said: "The increase achieved by the membership was only proposed because of the ten days of strike action taken, and the intention to take a further 15 days in October.

"It appears that the days of fair and transparent negotiations are being replaced by companies making unreasonable proposals, and expecting members to be grateful for the crumbs offered.

"GMB members have shown that by showing solidarity and keeping the principles of the trade union movement, aspirations can be achieved."

South Western rail guards hit 18 strike days

Workers at South Western Railway struck for 48 hours on 5 October - their 17th and 18th strike days - in transport union RMT's ongoing battle to maintain the safety-critical role of the guard.

A recent report by the British Transport Police showed a 47% increase in violent assaults and 167% increase in sexual offences on trains.

Facing such hard facts, it is vital the [strike against 'driver-only operation'](#) is seen as a fight of all trade unionists to secure safe travel for all workers and our families.

Polarisation, risks and resistance in Brazilian elections

Brazil's most polarised and unpredictable election campaign in recent history has ushered in a new era for the country.

The far-right candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, an ex-army captain who defends the military dictatorship and its methods of torture and extermination of the left, leads in the first round with 46% of the vote. He came within a short distance of winning an outright victory.

This development poses a clear threat to the working class and will pose new challenges for the workers' movement.

Between 42% and 46% of the electorate say they wouldn't vote for him under any circumstances and a significant level of abstention took place.

In the election the traditional parties of the ruling class saw a collapse in their support.

Although the radical left Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSOL) candidate, Guilleme Boulos, fell to just under 1%, PSOL made significant advances. The number of federal deputies rose from six to eleven.

In São Paulo it increased its number of federal deputies from one to four. PSOL's campaign has involved thousands of supporters of social movements.

But it suffered from the enormous pressure for lesser-evilism to defeat Bolsonaro. The fear of Bolsonaro's victory has tended to outweigh the enormous sympathy which exists for the PSOL candidates.

His electoral growth has served as a provocation for big sections of the population repelled by his right-wing, anti-working-class policies and his misogynistic, racist, anti-LGBT+ rhetoric.

His rejection ratings are 52% among women compared to 38% among men. Already, 'anti-Bolsonaro' committees have been formed in many areas.

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in all the state capital cities and thousands more in other municipalities on 29 September.

It is estimated that overall one million people, a majority women, youth and workers, took to the streets under the slogan of #EleNão (#NotHim).

Bolsonaro's social base is mainly made up of older men from the middle classes and richer strata of society, concentrated in south and south eastern Brazil, where there is a bigger middle class.

Rejection of Bolsonaro is very high among women and the poorest - 55% of those who make less than double the minimum wage - and in the north east, where he is rejected by 61%.

Bolsonaro was stabbed in his stomach when he was campaigning on 6 September. The commotion generated by this attack helped him.

His capitalist opponents had to hold back their attacks and criticisms. And he used it as an alibi to not participate in debates with other candidates.

During this campaign Bolsonaro has adopted more explicit neoliberalism, distancing himself from 'strong-state nationalism' which was typical of a section of the Brazilian military, including during the 1964-1985 dictatorship.

Despite being a candidate backed by the rich, a reactionary, and a defender of deeply anti-people measures, Bolsonaro is still seen by a wide section of the population as anti-system and outside the establishment. Despite being an MP for 28 years, he has built an image of

being outside the games of the professional politicians, big business and establishment media.

He links the "left" with corruption. He adds to this an image of someone who will confront the problem of 'security' with an iron fist.

He uses the issues of corruption and violence, two real problems, to capture the electoral support of the middle class and some sections of the poor who are more and more filled with fear and hatred.

The sentiment of opposition to the system has predominantly so far been captured by the right wing - mostly due to the limits and slow pace of building a new radical anti-capitalist and socialist left.

The opposition to Bolsonaro is still dominated by the Workers' Party (PT - the former ruling party of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff), characterised by the defence of class collaboration and institutional actions which are not differentiated from the rotten political system.

The PT emerged as the largest block in the Chamber of Deputies with 57 MPs. The PT's Presidential candidate, Fernando Haddad, finished second.

The sharp decline of the PT, following corruption scandals and convictions, has been stalled and reversed among some voters.

The main reason for this turnaround is the total disaster of the right-wing Temer government.

Temer [overthrew Dilma in a 2016 coup-style impeachment manoeuvre](#) and has applied a tough programme of cuts and attacks to social rights during a deep recession.

The PT responded to the 2016 coup by prioritising negotiation among the elite to recompose its support in Congress and other institutions.

They were facing popular opposition to the austerity imposed by Dilma. This has been their approach in the struggle against impeachment and in the 'Fora Temer' (Temer Out) movement.

The PT tries to convince the ruling class that Bolsonaro is too risky. The Brazilian capitalist class did everything it could to establish a trustworthy candidate - one more organically linked to the ruling class with a clear neoliberal programme.

However, they failed in this project. Geraldo Alckmin - candidate for the Social Democratic Party, the main party of the Brazilian capitalists - got less than 5% support.

Despite the conciliationist line of the PT, polarisation is becoming extreme. Fighting Bolsonaro, who has a real chance of winning, will become the priority for millions.

These people will become politicised and ever-greater numbers will understand the limits of the PT - opening up greater opportunities for the socialist left, which is not soaked in class collaboration, to make big gains.

Should Bolsonaro win, his government will go onto the offensive and introduce far more repressive measures.

It will represent a turning point in Brazil and throughout Latin America. A movement to fight this repression needs to be built including with the formation of self-defence committees.

As a warning to the left in other countries, the right wing in this campaign used [the disaster of Venezuela](#), which it argued is the consequence of socialist policies. In reality it is the consequence of a failure to break with capitalism.

The threat of a Bolsonaro government means that in the second round, LSR is fighting for a vote against Bolsonaro and for a movement to be built to prepare a struggle against such a right-wing, repressive

government.

Brazil is passing through a period of extreme instability and volatility. Sudden changes can occur. The revolutionary socialist left, and LSR in particular, must prepare for the great battles which are approaching.

USA: #CancelKavanaugh

Socialist Alternative (CWI co-thinkers in the USA) helped to call dozens of protests across the US before and after [deeply sexist and anti-working-class Republican Brett Kavanaugh](#) was brought onto the Supreme Court, the country's highest judicial body.

Socialist Alternative member Juliet DePaula, who organised the New York rally, appeared on local TV: "If Kavanaugh gets confirmed tomorrow our movement doesn't end. We need to keep fighting." See [socialistworld.net](#) for more.

Mexico: socialists violently attacked by gangs - urgent solidarity needed

Izquierda Revolucionaria (IR - CWI Mexico) members in the 'Colegio de Bachilleres 2' school have been attacked.

The culprits? A 'porril' group (fascistic, terroristic gangs in universities) known as the Cancheros.

One IR member was hit and another chased. IR organises campaigns against the impunity with which porriles act on campus - robbing and intimidating workers, teachers and students.

IR says: "We were able to neutralise this attack through our action... but we are conscious that these groups will not just retreat unless they are confronted with organised struggle.

"Therefore we ask for support and solidarity messages, including via videos and photos, so the authorities who promote the porriles hear loud and clear that an injury to one is an injury to all!"

#FueraPorrosDeLasEscuelas #FueraPorrosDeBachilleres

Ireland: 10,000 march for homes in Dublin

Mick Barry, Socialist Party Ireland member and Solidarity TD (MP), said: "Inspired by the successful campaigns for marriage equality, repeal of the anti-abortion laws and abortion rights, young people from the 'locked-out generation' are [turning their attention to housing](#).

"The Socialist Party and Solidarity demand 100,000 units of public housing are built over the next five years, and will strive to build a strong socialist left to challenge the rule of the capitalist market at the root of this crisis." See the [full version of Mick Barry's comments at socialistworld.net](#)

Liverpool 47 plaque: "Better to break the law, than break the poor"

Dave Walsh, Liverpool and District Socialist Party

On 22 September the Casa club in Liverpool, which grew out of the titanic 1995-98 dockers' struggle to defend jobs, hosted an historic occasion.

A plaque was unveiled dedicated to [the achievements of the 'Liverpool 47'](#) - the socialist Labour councillors who defied Thatcher in the 1980s.

The councillors built thousands of houses, created jobs, built sports centres, opened nursery classes and successfully fought to win resources back from the government.

Militant supporters (forerunner of the Socialist Party) played a leading role on the council and in the wider struggle.

Several hundred people were present at the unveiling. The meeting included trade union activists, family members of the 47 (children and grandchildren), Socialist Party and Labour Party members (past and present). They all embraced and applauded the stand of the 47.

For refusing to implement the cuts demanded by the Tory government the 47 paid the price. They were fined £106,000 and banned from office by an unelected district auditor - whose decision was upheld by five law lords.

On appeal, punitive legal costs of £242,000 were imposed. The 47 were saved, not only by the generosity of Liverpool people, but also by donations from all corners of the country.

Emblazoned on the plaque is the slogan: "Better to break the law than break the poor" - first adopted by the Poplar Labour councillors in 1921 who were jailed for refusing to cut payments to the poor.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey spoke about the tremendous struggle waged against Thatcherism by the 47 and their magnificent achievements in the city: "Building beautiful semidetached council houses with front and back gardens and building twice as many as all other local authorities put together."

Actor Ricky Tomlinson was present to identify with the 47 and celebrated screen writer Jimmy McGovern unveiled the plaque - initiated by Terry White and funded by people in Liverpool.

Witch-hunt

Tony Mulhearn, Socialist Party member and former president of the Liverpool District Labour Party, and one of the leaders of the struggle, spoke with passion.

To loud applause, he dedicated the meeting to his wife Maureen and the wives and partners of the 47 family support group.

He described the witch-hunt, which had been unleashed by former Labour leader Neil Kinnock and which was similar in its lies and malevolence to the poisonous charges of antisemitism and bullying made by the Blairites against Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters.

But, he noted, the tide of history has turned. Reference to [Dawn Butler's praise of the 47](#), which the Blairites condemned, was greeted with loud applause.

Tony explained that the 47 translated socialism into the language of housing, jobs, services, sports centres, nursery schools and new parks. And because they delivered on their promises, their vote went up each year.

He said the lessons from that period should be taken up by Corbyn and McDonnell. Instead of pleading with the Blairites to get on board, they should instead [trust the mass of the party and empower them to remove this 'fifth column'](#).

Tony emphasised that the 47 were removed by Thatcher's District Auditor, not by voters. By contrast, Kinnock led the Labour Party to two of the worst general election defeats since 1931 and kept the Tories in power for another ten years!

Tony explained that the 47 linked the council struggle with the imperative of transforming society from capitalism to socialism, as any gains made by working people would be clawed back as long as the capitalists retained control of the levers of power.

Tony received a standing ovation from the packed house for his inspiring speech.

Palestinian solidarity: "We are not victims. We are freedom fighters."

Paul Taylor, Coventry West Socialist Party

"It is true that suffering is high. But we are not victims. We are freedom fighters."

These were the words of 17-year-old [Ahed Tamimi, the young Palestinian arrested and imprisoned by the Israeli military](#) who rose to worldwide prominence as a symbol of resistance against oppression and occupation.

Ahed spoke via Skype to a recent, enthusiastic meeting in Coventry, organised around the issue of the treatment of Palestinian child prisoners.

She explained how she had suffered verbal and sexual harassment at the hands of the authorities in an effort to break her.

She urged the meeting to "keep up the solidarity and to put pressure on the government to end the occupation".

Ahed, along with all Palestinians resisting the occupation, are an inspiration to millions around the world.

It is important that ordinary people here in the UK show solidarity with the Palestinian masses. Capitalist governments around the world, along with the EU and United Nations, are part of the problem not the solution to the national conflict. Only the solidarity of working class people can be relied upon.

The continuation of capitalism in the region means war, instability and oppression. We support the fight to build a socialist movement across Israel-Palestine with our sister organisation - Socialist Struggle Movement.

Mass struggle can put an end to racism, insecurity and the nightmare of occupation. Socialism would guarantee the right to self-determination of all national groups, as part of a voluntary, socialist confederation of the Middle East.

- [Review: Ahed Tamimi - worldwide symbol of self-esteem in face of oppression](#)
-

Leicestershire: stop the cuts to our hospital services

Tom Barker, secretary, Save Our NHS Leicestershire (personal capacity)

Ninety people gathered for a public meeting on Saturday called by Save Our NHS Leicestershire to [oppose plans to remove, without consultation, intensive care beds](#) from Leicester general hospital.

The removal of the beds will be the first step towards downgrading the hospital. Local NHS bosses deny this, even though their Sustainability and Transformation Plan clearly lays out the 'need' to move from three to two acute hospitals in Leicester in the near future.

The meeting was united in demanding a full public consultation. The NHS has suffered cuts over many years, but the trust claims its proposals are not to do with a reduction in services.

If true, let them prove it in a full discussion with the public in a clear and transparent consultation.

Save Huddersfield Royal Infirmary - the fight goes on

[Hands Off Huddersfield Royal Infirmary](#) (HRI) staged its fifth major local protest on 6 October. Although not as big as previous demonstrations, around 150-200 turned out to show their ongoing support.

Many people wrongly assumed the hospital has already been saved so it was harder to secure a larger turnout.

However, hundreds of onlookers pledged their support when they heard [the fight for all hospital services still has to be won](#).

Before the demo, we were addressed by Ruth Milsom from the Sheffield NHS Campaign. She told us that they had saved their walk-in centre after a hard-fought campaign similar to ours.

Likewise, we heard from the wonderful Chorley campaign that, after 130 weeks, is still fighting!

The demo itself snaked through the town centre and was met with applause and great generosity from everyone looking on.

Mike Forster, chair of Hands Off HRI, called for continued support. He said the legal challenge is still very much alive but now we need practical support from MPs and councillors who must stand up and be counted in this final stage of the fight.

Finance - a crucial component of socialist campaigns

Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer

Socialist Party members and supporters raised £27,483 in the July to September fighting fund quarter.

A magnificent £6,000 was collected in the final week alone, as members held fund-raisers, extra street stalls, donated tax rebates and lottery wins to try and get us over the target.

[Theresa May might feel like dancing](#) but our members are out every day, fighting the brutal cuts carried out by her government of millionaires.

The fighting fund is critical to our ability to produce all the materials - the many leaflets, posters, pamphlets, etc - that underpin our campaigns.

We rely on the support of ordinary people and the self-sacrifice of our members; like Aaron Bailey, Huddersfield branch, who has donated £190 from a tax rebate; Steve Cawley £180 from a lottery scratch card win; a member from Teesside who donated £100 back pay and Kate Jones from Swansea who donated her first week's pension.

Our members also raised big amounts from parties, social events and festivals.

Salford branch raised over £100 with a quiz night, Liverpool branch raised £100 with a soul night, Southampton branch raised £93 with a curry evening and £60 was raised at a North London BBQ.

Sheffield South branch raised over £200 at their local festival, Exeter branch over £100 at the Tolpuddle Festival, Nick Chaffey over £365 for the Southern region with a sponsored triathlon and the Leicester branches over £100 selling cakes, tote bags and t-shirts.

Let's smash the target in the final quarter of the year to match the record amounts raised over the last two years and maintain our finances. We can assure that by building for a big finance appeal at Socialism 2018.

You can help us to build support for socialist ideas by making a donation to the fighting fund - socialistparty.org.uk/donate and by taking out a subscription to the Socialist - socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

Lifting the lid on the murky world of the 'Big Four' accountancy firms

Even a report by the accounting regulator, the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), recently suggested Britain's big accountancy firms should be banned from earning lucrative consultancy fees at businesses they audit, or broken up entirely. This follows a series of scandals that have rocked the sector. Here, **Andy Beadle** looks at the murky world of accounting, and below, a **former Big Four 'partner'** lifts the lid on the accountancy firms.

The murky world of accounting is not easy to follow but it certainly reveals a lot about big business.

Before Labour Party conference, shadow chancellor John McDonnell said that Labour has radical plans to overhaul the auditing industry. He warned that the "cartel" - the 'Big Four' accounting firms that dominate - could be broken up.

Drastic change is certainly necessary. But will Labour's plans go far enough?

External auditing of all firms is a statutory requirement in company law. The law is supposed to protect shareholders' investments.

It is meant to be a check on the executives shareholders employ to run the business. The auditors are supposedly on the shareholders' side.

Often in big companies there is a conflict between shareholders who own the wealth and high-salaried executives. Though not always. Frequently they are the same people.

It is a long-term issue but has been particularly revealed in a swathe of recent incidents.

As well as auditing, accountancy firms make even more money as consultants, giving handy advice to executives. Accounting firms are not required to be open about the consulting work they provide for companies.

Incidentally, at the same time as advising governments on tax reform, accountants are also advising multinational clients on how best to arrange their affairs to avoid taxes. Tax avoidance is legal tax dodging. Consultants can also show their clients how to present accounts so that executives maximise their bonuses.

Having effectively written the company reports for their client as consultants, they then look over them as auditors. Aren't these guys practically marking their own homework?

Should workers care about which bunch of parasites is fleecing us? Maybe. But auditors' behaviour has wider consequences. For example, when retailer BHS collapsed in 2016 it left a huge pension deficit and the loss of

11,000 jobs. The FRC - the UK's accounting regulator - said auditor PricewaterhouseCoopers' (PwC) "conduct had fallen significantly short."

Now, two associations representing individual shareholders have said the FRC is "too close" to the large audit firms. They have called for wider representation on the FRC. From their point of view, you can see why. Thirty-four current or former Big Four partners sit on the board and committees of the FRC!

The Big Four are Deloitte, EY, KPMG and PwC. Of the top 350 UK companies, around 98% have their books vetted by one of the Big Four. In the US, that figure is 99% of the biggest 500.

They are coming under increasing scrutiny following reporting irregularities at Carillion, Tesco and BT as well as General Electric in the US.

UK [construction giant Carillion collapsed in January](#) with liabilities of nearly £7 billion. This involved 43,000 jobs (including 19,000 in the UK), 27,000 pensioners and 30,000 suppliers. It was the second largest construction firm and the largest ever trading liquidation in the country. Concerns about Carillion's debt position were raised in 2015.

In May, a parliamentary inquiry said Carillion's collapse was "a story of recklessness, hubris and greed, its business model was a relentless dash for cash" and accused directors of misrepresenting the financial realities of the business. The report's recommendations included regulatory reforms and a possible break-up of the Big Four, who were all involved.

This shows the alarm bells ringing for the capitalist class. The perception abounds of systemic corruption. People see the Big Four helping executives to cook the books to deceive their workers, the tax office, their own shareholders and the public. In March, independent regulators identified serious problems globally in 40% of audits. The same month Stephen Haddill, £500,000 a year chief executive of the FRC, called for an inquiry into whether the Big Four should be broken up.

In April the government announced a 'root and branch' review of the FRC led by Sir John Kingman, chairman of insurer Legal and General and a former Treasury official.

But a real 'root and branch' transformation would be based on the understanding that the pursuit of 'free markets' is a myth.

The Big Four should be brought into public ownership, along with the banks. Compensation should be paid only in cases of proven need. Instead of millionaires and billionaires in charge we need control and management by democratically elected workers' representatives. We need a workers' government with a socialist programme.

A former 'Big Four' partner lifts the lid on global accounting firms

The Big Four are 'partnerships', meaning that they are owned by the senior managers (the partners). The remuneration received by the partners is eye-wateringly high, often millions of pounds, with early retirement and huge pensions the norm. While fabulous rewards are available to the partners, the way the firms function is to ruthlessly drive junior staff to make huge personal sacrifices, working extremely long hours making personal life almost non-existent.

This 'business model' is sustained because of the glittering prize (partnership) for those juniors who do not fall by the way-side (and there are many casualties). It creates a cut-throat competitiveness among staff.

These firms have regularly been exposed in scandals. Most recently, KPMG has been disgraced in South Africa through its ties with the Gupta family business and, in the US, three partners have been charged with fraud relating to audits. KPMG are not alone and the list of scandals is long and shocking.

The vast majority of major corporations globally employ one of the Big Four as auditors and another as tax or business advisers. These roles rotate over time but the near monopoly and the scandals have been a constant.

Worse, city-led 'corporate governance reviews' (usually advised by the Big Four) reinforce the city's rules requiring businesses to employ these auditors and advisors.

It is a well-oiled machine for extracting money that should be used to provide services and investment in the real economy. The parasitic self-serving 'business and financial services' sector provides an example of the waste of resources under capitalism. Some of the best technical brains are hired by these firms, for example at graduate recruitment fairs. However their talents are often wasted as they are directed towards projects and activities that maximise profits rather than serve the needs of society.

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, 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.

Street fighting

I heard shouting while walking through Leicester city centre late on a Sunday afternoon and went to investigate. Turns out it was a row over a yard of pavement outside McDonald's. Homeless people were arguing over the best pitch. This is what Tory Britain has reduced people to.

Arguing over the best place to beg. The need for socialism to distribute the wealth in favour of the many not the few is clear.

Heather Rawling, Leicester

Varoufakis wrong on far right

For anyone who still thinks that Yanis Varoufakis, ex-finance minister of Greece, has something new or unique to offer to the debate on the rise of the far right across Europe and how the left should respond, last week's interview on BBC Hard Talk should finally put the issue to bed.

Discussing how to beat back the movement of nationalists, Varoufakis said: "Some of us created the Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25), which seeks to bring together not just the left, but also liberals, even progressive conservatives - those of us who are eager to agree on a believable, credible progressive agenda for Europe... We created DiEM25 because we do not believe that the left has what it takes at the moment."

The idea that socialists should cooperate with 'liberal' capitalists, whose policies provide the material basis for the growth of the far right, in order to defeat the threat of far right, is madness!

This bizarre position flows from his long-held belief that the left 'remains squarely defeated'. This is despite the fact that he was the finance minister of a country convulsed by general strikes, and crying out for

leadership which [Syriza - his former party - failed to provide](#). In his recent book 'Adults in the Room', the heroic struggles of the Greek working class were, at best, a footnote. In 500 pages they get barely a mention!

Tom Barker, Leicester

Unis and GDPR

Willie Clarke's opinion piece on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) - see '[GDPR data laws: Punishing workers for human mistakes](#)' - made some interesting observations on how this legislation fails to distinguish between genuine mistakes and deliberate misuse of data for commercial gain, as well as the sense of panic instilled into workers about any mistakes being made.

In universities, GDPR has been interpreted in different ways, with student unions having differing policies to each other. But a common feature is increased centralisation of control over student societies. This isn't a new trend. Room bookings require lengthy waits before being approved. Cash can't be paid to societies for students to go to meetings, instead they have to join via the student union website. And guest speakers need to be notified at least three weeks in advance so that they can be vetted.

At one of the universities in Leeds societies aren't allowed to have sign-up sheets on which other people's details remain visible. At another, you are allowed to leave them visible, so long as the sheet is returned to the student union at the end of the freshers fair for the union to later send you the details.

Measures to stop the commercial exploitation of data are welcome, but all the petty details above will do is stop people receiving information about a student group they wanted to find out more about. That such basic actions necessary for democratic organisations like student societies to communicate with members, or promote meetings are made more difficult is not a welcome development.

What drives the commercial misuse of data is the profit motive. This will only be overcome by removing the incentive for individuals and businesses to exploit their access (legal or illegal) to such data. Ultimately, this means organising society on the basis of meeting the needs of people.

Iain Dalton, Leeds

Rail safety

Private [rail companies are only interested in profit and not the safety of their passengers](#). By removing the guard from their sardine-tin trains, they save money on the wage bill. But what they also do is put the lives of passengers at serious risk.

What happens when a driver is taken ill during a journey? With the guard onboard they can make contact and get help. No guard equals no help in a serious emergency.

Clive T Hughes, London

Audio version of this document

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

What the Socialist Party stands for

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

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

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

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

Our demands include:

Public services

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

Work and income

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

Environment

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

Rights

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

- For the right to vote at 16.

Mass workers' party

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

Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

Audio version of this document

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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/28053>