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Editorial of the Socialist, issue 1016

## Crisis Tory Budget brings no relief from austerity

Philip Hammond attempted to give the impression that his budget on 29 October represented a major turning point for the economy and for Tory policy.

But the reality was clear to see - nothing of substance on offer for working class people, and a desperate government still divided at every level.

Theresa May's bizarre statement at Tory party conference that "austerity is over" was dialled back to Hammond pledging that it's "coming to an end".

In fact there has been no overall increase in spending on public services other than the NHS - and even that money is not enough to stop continuing real-terms cuts.

The disagreement between the prime minister and the chancellor over how much to promise spilled out before the budget was announced when Hammond indicated that the announcements were contingent on getting a Brexit deal agreed and a 'no-deal' scenario would require a "different approach".

Meanwhile May briefed journalists that all of the budget's commitments were fully funded regardless of Brexit negotiations.

In the actual budget speech Hammond again contradicted May by leaving open the possibility that the spring statement could become a "full fiscal event" if needed - ie an emergency budget in the case of no deal.

This is a further indication that May is desperate to bolster her incredibly weak and fragile support base, and recognises the threat her government faces as a result of mass anger building under the surface. Why else would a government so wedded to privatisation pledge to abolish Private Finance Initiative deals for future projects?

She also wanted to placate backbench Tory MPs feeling the pressure in their constituencies. This has particularly been the case in recent weeks over the chaos with Universal Credit.

The chancellor pledged to slightly slow its roll out and to increase by £1,000 the amount claimants can earn before suffering cuts to the benefit. But this won't end the suffering it's causing- we need to fight for Universal Credit to be scrapped, and with the government on the back foot, now is the time.

The huge anger that has been shown in several recent protests for increased funding for schools is clearly responsible for the £400 million extra announced.

But the Tories are incapable of disguising how cruel and out of touch they are. Hammond said the money would help schools "to buy the little extras that they need." In reality many schools cannot cover the costs of basic teaching resources and support staff. Besides which, this sop was dwarfed by the £1 billion extra given to defence.

The small-scale spending increases, while all extra funds are welcome, show no actual change of direction. £500 million extra was announced for the housing infrastructure fund, which funds infrastructure such as transport and schools to allow homes to be built. But that does nothing about the fact that nowhere near enough homes are being built and those that are are unaffordable for the vast majority.

Responding to the budget, a report by the Resolution Foundation has revealed that, far from aiding struggling families, Hammond's trumpeted tax cuts in fact primarily benefit the top 10% of earners, who stand to gain £410 a year. Meanwhile poorer families will have a paltry £30 more annually as a result.

## Labour's opposition

Corbyn rightly called this a "broken promises budget" and dispelled the lie that austerity is over. But there is an urgent need for him and the Labour left to outline a clear economic alternative - or some workers can be convinced that Hammond's budget is the best they can hope for.

The day before the budget, shadow chancellor John McDonnell was interviewed by the BBC's Andrew Marr. He returned to Labour's hugely popular manifesto commitments from the 2017 general election, and attacked Hammond's plans in advance.

But unfortunately he appeared to again be making the mistake of attempting to assure the capitalist class that a Labour government wouldn't go 'too far, too fast'.

He spoke of "beginning the process of reversing austerity" in a way that is "realistic and responsible". In answer to Marr's attacks on Labour's plans to nationalise the utilities, McDonnell's main defence was that these are "traditional business measures".

And when asked if a Corbyn government would reverse cuts to local government funding - such a major factor holding Labour's vote back in areas where Labour councils have implemented brutal cuts - he again only said they would 'begin' this process.

No amount of niceness or soft phrasing will make big business amenable to Corbyn and McDonnell's programme. Even Hammond has gone too far for some sections of the capitalist class! The Office for Budget Responsibility and Moody's ratings agency criticised the chancellor for spending all projected growth rather than using it to balance the budget.

The only answer is to present a fundamental socialist alternative. That means committing to halt all cuts at every level and to invest in the jobs, homes and services that people need.

It means being clear that nationalisation would be done by paying compensation to shareholders only on the basis of proven need.

It means pledging the nationalisation of not just a few key companies but the 100 or so that control the vast majority of wealth in society.

A Labour government could be swept to power at any time, given the weakness of the Tories and the mess they're in over Brexit. If that were to happen, attempts at sabotage by the capitalist class would be inevitable, and could only be defeated by socialist measures.

The capitalists' most reliable henchmen would be the Blairites inside Labour. Corbyn must deal with this now by a programme of measures to transform Labour through democratisation and kicking out the Blairite saboteurs.

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 30 October 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## Save Our Schools

### Build for national strike action

**James Kerr, National Education Union executive committee candidate and Lewisham teacher (personal capacity)**

An insultingly low figure: that's the reality of [Phillip Hammond's budget](#) announcement of £400 million in capital spending for schools.

Now we need to build for national strike action to force him to fill the funding gap. £2.5 billion has been cut from schools since 2015. This was a major factor in the Tories' loss of seats at the 2017 general election. Yet Hammond still described the budget's one-off payment patronisingly as being for the "little extras" schools need.

The tone was deliberately condescending. This government arrogantly believes that it can face down the education unions and wider movement on funding, based on how they have carried through their attacks on education in the last eight years.

We now need to show their cockiness is misplaced. An indicative online ballot of all National Education Union (NEU) members is due to start to consult us on whether we are prepared to take strike action to win the necessary money for schools.

We need to methodically build a resounding 'Yes' vote in that ballot on a massive turnout. Meetings need to take place in every school - in the ICT suite if possible so NEU members can fill out the ballot together. We must be discussing why it's so important to vote Yes.

We also need to give members confidence that the indicative ballot will be translated into a formal ballot for strike action as early in the New Year as possible. This will avoid the mistakes the leadership have made in the past, such as calling isolated one-day protest strikes in the summer term without a serious strategy to win.

If we take these steps, we have the chance to begin to undo the untold damage the Tories have done to education and to play a part in forcing them out of office.

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## Only a socialist alternative can end austerity

**Mark Best, East London Socialist Party**

This week's budget shows again the urgent need to kick out the Tories. The Chancellor Philip Hammond says "the era of austerity is finally coming to an end." But for people having to rely on food banks, young people working multiple jobs with low to zero hours, and those pushed into homelessness by cuts and the chaos of Universal Credit, the age of austerity goes on.

Even the leader of a Tory council in Walsall said "never, ever believe what you hear from central government. Austerity is not over."

As he, like Tory and Labour councillors across the country, is preparing to pass on the government's cuts at a local level, it's clear: austerity isn't over.

The Tories represent Britain's capitalist class. Low wages, unaffordably high rents and cuts to public services are all that capitalism has to offer for workers and young people. It's no wonder that people across the world are looking for an alternative.

A 72-page report recently produced by Trump's White House admitted that "socialism is making a comeback in American political discourse."

In the last couple of years we've seen the mass rallies held by Bernie Sanders and the historic election of Socialist Alternative member Kshama Sawant to Seattle City Council. We've seen the successful campaigns of self-proclaimed socialists Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Julia Salazar.

American capitalists are fearful that the 'pitchforks' are coming for them.

Capitalism is killing us and it's no wonder people are hungry for ideas on how to fight back. People are increasingly being drawn to socialism like a beacon.

If you want to discuss what is necessary to kick the Tories out, to debate how we can run society democratically for public need not private profit, and to find out what you can do to join the fight for a socialist world, then come to Socialism 2018 - a weekend of debate and discussion in central London on 10 and 11 November.

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# **Homelessness, Universal Credit misery, high rents, cramped flats, isolated estates...end the housing crisis now!**

**Connor Rosoman, Brighton Socialist Party**

Housing in Britain is in crisis. Bailiffs were called to a house in Hove on 26 October after the tenant - struggling to get by on Universal Credit - fell into rent arrears. I joined a local tenants' union which held a picket outside the house to prevent the evictions.

Many tenants find themselves unable to live alone due to skyrocketing rent prices. Under new 'co-living' schemes in big cities, up to several hundred tenants are packed into massive apartment buildings with shared bathrooms, kitchens and other such facilities. Bedrooms are cramped, leaving people with little space to themselves.

The spread of small, overcrowded housing can have negative effects on physical and mental health, and such 'co-living' spaces are another step in this direction.

At the same time, many of those who can afford their own homes find themselves living on new housing developments built on the edges of towns without local facilities and with poor transport links.

This means many working-class families are forced to drive to reach, schools, doctors and shops. As a result of the increased traffic, families spend hours in the car just to reach essential services. Instead of these poorly designed neighbourhoods, we need quality, affordable housing and decent public transport.

## **Homelessness**

Meanwhile some have nowhere to live at all. Homelessness has seen a dramatic increase, with an estimated 4,751 people sleeping on the streets last year. This is a 15% increase since 2016 alone.

But councils have tried to sweep the problem under the rug - forcing rough sleepers out of the cities by using Public Service Protection Orders (PSPOs). Many homeless people have been denied legal aid in challenging councils that have used PSPOs in an attempt to criminalise homelessness.

Universal Credit has driven many people into rent arrears and - alongside precarious contracts and poverty wages - thousands of people in work cannot afford a home. We need to fight back against low pay, benefit cuts, rent hikes and poor-quality housing.

The Socialist Party campaigns for rent controls and we raise the demand that local councils fight back by using their extensive reserves and borrowing powers to set no-cuts, needs-based budgets.

With the Tories having lifted restrictions on borrowing to fund council house building, there is absolutely no excuse for Labour councils not to act. They should begin a massive programme of council-house building to provide all people with high-quality, affordable places to live.

This means building a mass campaign and demanding the funding needed from the government. Jeremy Corbyn should pledge now that any council which took such a road would see its funds restored on day one of a Labour government.

## Them & Us

- Monthly rents at one 'co-living' apartment block in Wembley, London start at £1,450 for a studio and £1,590 for a one-bedroom flat. They go up to £2,200 for a two-bed and £3,000 for a three-bed.
- A report by 'Transport for New Homes' has found that the scramble to build new homes is producing houses next to bypasses and link roads which are too far out of town for people to walk or cycle there, and which lack good local buses. At Great Western Park near Didcot in Oxfordshire, residents climb over a fence to get where they need to go because footpaths with neighbouring areas are so poor. At Castle Mead in Wiltshire, people wanting to use the shops, community centre or pub have to use an underpass after dark - or brave the lorries on a by-pass without a footpath. And at Prior's Hall Park near Corby in Northamptonshire, developers trumpeted the estate's closeness to the M1 for the commute to London - but seven years since the first section was completed, there's no shop or café on site.
- A Guardian investigation has found that a growing number of vulnerable homeless people are being fined, given criminal convictions and even imprisoned for begging and rough sleeping. Over 50 local authorities have Public Service Protection Orders in place prohibiting begging and 'loitering'.
- The number of families being moved out of London by councils has increased dramatically, rising by almost 50% in the first half of 2018. Councils have sent homeless households as far away as Glasgow, Newcastle and Cardiff in the last year. More than 1,200 households were sent out of the capital in the first six months of this year - a 46% rise in the number of out-of-London placements.
- Around 80% of people moved on to Universal Credit are in arrears before receiving the payment, which takes up to eight weeks to come through, meaning increasing numbers are finding it impossible to pay the rent - fuelling the homelessness crisis.

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## Philip Green scandal - bring him down like BHS

**Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Party executive committee**

Billionaire boss Philip Green has spent millions of pounds attempting to hide multiple allegations of sexual harassment, bullying and racism towards his employees.

As well as gagging orders and pay-offs, Green shelled out more than £700,000 obtaining a legal injunction designed to keep the story out of the media. The wall of silence was ended when the issue was raised by Labour peer Peter Hain in the House of Lords, who used parliamentary privilege in order to avoid falling foul of the legal injunction.

Green's response to the allegations hitting the headlines - including crassly brushing off his alleged behaviour as 'banter' - has only added weight to the claims of his accusers.

### Racist comments

Revoltingly, in an interview published on 28 September, he supposedly rebuts accusations that he made disgusting racist comments aimed at the Filipino workers who staff his \$150 million superyacht by saying: "My family's longest-serving Filipino employee has been with us 28 years."

It is no surprise to learn that Green is accused of bullying. Being prepared to trample on the lives of others is a prerequisite for making billions of pounds based on a business model relying on rock bottom wages, casual contracts and asset stripping.

Women and those from ethnic minorities are disproportionately likely to face low pay and work in casualised settings.

To believe that Green also holds bigoted attitudes towards many of those he relies on to generate profit takes no great leap of the imagination.

Tory and Blairite politicians are now either joining the chorus of condemnation against Green, or else are staying silent. But they've substantially changed their tune.

Back in 2010, David Cameron invited Philip Green to advise his government on 'efficiency' - the choice Tory euphemism for cuts.

## Fortune

Green made his fortune on the basis of buying ailing businesses at knock-down rates. His astonishing ability to cut 'costs' - otherwise known as jobs, wages, pensions and conditions - was cited as his principle qualification for this appointment.

The Con-Dems took Green on as an adviser at a time when his business portfolio included the retailer BHS. [This company was effectively stripped of assets by Green](#) before it was forced to close. Its workers were left high and dry. They not only lost their jobs, but found that he had left behind a gaping hole in the pension fund.

Green extracted hundreds of millions of pounds from the company. At the same time, it's estimated he avoided more than £160 million in UK tax. His wife - the legal owner of Green's Arcadia group - continues to officially reside in tax-haven Monaco.

And it's not just the Tories who've been chummy with Green. Tony Blair was among those who recommended he be knighted in 2006.

Green is not a just 'one rotten apple'. He is deeply enmeshed in the capitalist establishment.

And sexism and racism are part and parcel of the capitalist system - as scandals, including those revealed under the banner of #MeToo, are increasingly exposing.

## Investigation

Stripping Green of his knighthood, as many pro-capitalist politicians are now demanding, barely scratches the surface. He should face investigation, overseen by workers' representatives and trade unions, over all allegations of sexist and racist abuse, as well as on the huge payments made to try and silence accusations.

What's more, we demand the opening of the company's finances to full inspection by trade unions and the public. Regardless of his alleged personal conduct, Green's role in the collapse of BHS itself justifies the nationalisation of Green's 'assets', in the form of the giant Arcadia group.

This should be brought into public ownership, under democratic workers' control - with compensation paid to shareholders only on the basis of proven need. Only this measure would be sufficient to guarantee the protection of jobs and pensions for all the 22,000 workers it employs.

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# 60% of wildlife wiped out - urgent action needed to save planet

Scott Jones

Since 1970, 60% of mammals, birds, fish and reptiles have been wiped out due to deforestation, farming techniques and other human activity.

A report by leading scientists and the World Wildlife Fund warns that the annihilation of wildlife is now an emergency that threatens civilisation.

The news follows warnings that even limiting global warming to the current target of 2°C is not enough. Scientists are now insisting on the lower limit of 1.5°C - and saying we have just 12 years left to change course.

Unprecedented change is required if we want to have a planet to live on, cities and towns to live in, food to eat, water to drink and to secure the survival of wildlife and ecosystems which are vital to human life.

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, and into collective ownership, as part of a democratic plan for green production - can we truly meet the needs of all society, and avert catastrophe.

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## Glasgow's equal pay uprising shows power of working class

**Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland**

Around 8,500 working class women in Glasgow made history on 23-24 October when they took industrial action. As BBC news commented, it was "one of the biggest ever strikes in the UK on the issue of equal pay". In truth, it was more like an uprising, in which the power of the working class was clearly demonstrated.

Picket lines were set up across hundreds of primary schools, nurseries, cleaning depots and council buildings. You did not have to walk very far to find a picket line or hear one!

Later on, a colourful sea of 10,000 strikers, fellow trade unionists, and supporters, marched in a noisy and vibrant demo on the first strike day that shook the streets from Glasgow Green to George Square.

Central to the mobilisation was the tremendous fighting capacity of low-paid women workers, who made up 90% of the strikers.

Betrayed by the previous right-wing Labour council which presided over the pay inequality scandal for a decade - and the new Scottish National Party (SNP) council that promised a just resolution but has dragged its heels - working-class women had had enough.

The strike reflected their pent-up anger but also the experience of the last decade of vicious capitalist austerity. As a striking marcher said: "We want fairness. I'm a single parent, struggling to support my family on £800 a month".

After the pickets finished, a sea of strikers flooded Glasgow Green for the demonstration.

Bus drivers let strikers travel free to Glasgow Green. The 75 bus from Castlemilk was seated almost entirely by strikers singing and chanting their way to the demonstration.

There was mass support from the public. As the demonstration came into the city centre, shoppers applauded. This was despite a barrage of anti-strike propaganda by the council leading up to the strike.

Council management in Land and Environmental Services initially threatened to discipline any worker who did not work during the strike. But on the morning shift in a marvellous display of solidarity, all 600 refuse workers - almost all male - walked out in solidarity with the women picketing the depots.

Some social workers, and some in the Glasgow Life arms-length organisation, also refused to cross picket lines and took solidarity action.

## **SNP exposed**

The SNP falsely claimed that the trade unions are pawns of Scottish Labour, that the strike is only taking place due to Glasgow being a SNP council.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and Richard Leonard, Scottish Labour leader, did give welcome support to the strike. But they failed to denounce the previous Labour council's actions, which only lends weight to accusations of opportunism.

Glasgow City Unison countered the SNP's claim by citing its militant history of 12 strikes for fair pay against the pay scheme, mainly when Labour was in power.

The reason for this strike was the Court of Session judgement in August 2017 that ruled the Glasgow pay scheme unequal and unfair. The women gave the SNP a chance after the consultative ballot in the summer, but the council let them down in negotiations. Striking is the only way to press for a negotiated settlement.

SNP council leader Susan Aitken poured petrol on a fire by suggesting that the strikers did not "understand the reasons" they were taking action.

Disgracefully, council officers and "spokespersons" ran a scaremongering campaign targeting the home care strikers, publicly raising concerns that there would be fatalities and hounding the trade union over the issue of life and limb cover.

The SNP administration and council officers also tried divide and rule.

They called off negotiations with Unison and the GMB union as punishment for organising the strike. They would only negotiate with the Action 4 Equality lawyers and the non-striking Unite union. However, all the claimant organisations were united in rejecting this approach.

Socialist Party Scotland has played a crucial role in this dispute in the leadership of Glasgow City Unison - whose members made up 5,500 of the 8,500 strikers.

We have been building solidarity, including strike fund donations, over the last few weeks. We distributed thousands of our strike leaflets on the demonstrations and pickets.

Three Unison strikers - Ingrid, Denise and Lynne Marie - spoke inspirationally at our post-strike rally meeting, alongside Brian Smith, branch secretary of Glasgow Unison and member of Socialist Party Scotland, and Philip Stott, our national secretary.

## **Lessons**

We argued that the SNP, just like Labour before them, has no right to claim to be anti-austerity if they pass on Tory cuts, attack terms and conditions or refuse to implement equal pay schemes.

Labour was thrown out of power in Glasgow and the same could happen to the SNP. We raised the demand that the Scottish government and Glasgow City Council meet the cost of equal pay, estimated to be up to £1 billion, and set fighting, no-cuts budgets that defy Tory austerity.

We also highlighted this strike as an example of what can be achieved and that it should serve as a wake-up call to the trade union national leaders to call co-ordinated action against cuts and austerity.

A political consequence of this strike is that the illusions in the SNP, who were elected on anti-austerity promises and a commitment to fund equal pay, are being burnt away. Class struggle is exposing the real anti-working class character of the SNP leaders.

The first 48-hour strike has had a massive industrial and political effect on Glasgow and beyond. The unions would be fully justified in escalating the action. If they did this it would drive further political conclusions, by raising the need for a genuine anti-austerity mass party that fights on socialist policies.

It was fitting that this example of the power of the working class came just a few weeks before the 100th anniversary of the revolutionary events of 'Red Clydeside' in January 1919.

History is being re-made. And it is working class women and men, allied to fighting socialist policies, that will make it.

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## **Solidarity action for victimised teacher**

In a vindictive act, EIS teachers' union member Victoria Wainwright, a supply teacher, was told that she would never be able to work at her school again after taking solidarity action with the Glasgow strikers.

Victoria refused to cross the picket line. She told the Daily Record: "They said, 'The head teacher doesn't want you back - and, moving forward, you are going to find it very difficult to get a job in Glasgow.'

"To me, it sounded quite threatening and like I was being blacklisted."

Trade unionists must demand her reinstatement and the lifting of any blacklisting. An injury to one is an injury to all.

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On 27 October, 30,000 teachers and supporters marched in Glasgow as part of the pay campaign by the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) teaching union. The EIS is demanding a 10% rise - its members having suffered a 24% real cut in pay in the last decade.

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## **CWU conference: Sharpen up our act? Yes. But weaken our democracy? No**

### **Socialist Party in the CWU**

On 3 November a special conference of the Communications Workers Union (CWU) will take place to debate proposals for a redesign of the structure and finances of the union.

Like other unions the CWU has over recent years had to contend with the consequences of the breakup of the once publicly owned industry. It's has had to face the privatisation of Post Office, the break up and offshoring of telecom work, the rise of private courier companies and online shopping. These have all taken their toll on the union membership and activists have to deal with a new fragmented world of work.

As such it is perfectly legitimate that any union take stock of where it is, its strengths and weaknesses, and where it needs to direct its resources to make sure it is fit for purpose to defend and improve the lives of our members.

However, any review must at all times ensure that the core principles of democracy and lay member control of the union is defended, and that union resources and money are targeted to ensure that the union is in the best position to fight back against the employer as we did in the recent pension dispute.

It is of course right that in looking at the union's resources that all parts of the CWU are examined from buildings, to the numbers of full-time officials and branch reserves. It is also important that all sections of the union and all branches of the union have the resources and funds to carry out the work of representing and defending members.

However, the proposals to take 50% of the current branch reserves - nearly £3 million where branches have over £20,000 in their bank accounts - will be seen by many activists as a 'raid'. No one supports the idea of members' money being wasted or lying idle, but is that the case here?

Union branches have seen an ever increasing workload on a smaller layer of reps with fragmentation of the workforce and bullying management on the up. At the same time there is a growing struggle to secure adequate time off for reps.

This means that often these funds have to be used to ensure that branches can carry out their basic functions. There would be nothing to stop the union having a scheme which allowed for a higher retention of membership subs for branches with bigger geographical areas and or multiple employers.

No one would argue against the union looking to sharpen up its act in how it supports its members, and of course every branch has to be held to account with what it does or doesn't do. However, sections of the redesign report like "14 measures of success", "annual health checks" and the demand to "prepare bids" for additional resources all read like some employer's performance management scheme dreamt up by management consultants.

The CWU should remember that our activists are the life blood of the union. They give up their time for free and hold branches together on a shoe string budget. Talk of monitoring and "sanctions" against those who are deemed to fail sets the wrong tone.

We should be encouraging our reps not making them feel that they must sit some test. The best accountability of our reps locally, regionally and nationally is the right to regularly hold them to account and vote them out of office if they are not doing the job.

Branch officers and reps should be given support to be in a position to fulfil their roles and maintain healthy vibrant branches that are in touch with the members locally. Training is vital for all reps, and to lose the option of residential training would be a backward step.

The current proposals don't even make a financial case for closure. We haven't been given the current cost to run a residential training centre versus the 'advantage' of selling and having to hire venues. No decision should be made until this has been done.

Investment in organising and recruitment is the answer to gaining more members. And defending and improving the working lives of those currently employed in the communications sector, that are massively exploited with no representation. This is where the money should be spent.

One of the most worrying aspects of the proposals that must be opposed is the call to move to biennial conferences - every two years.

The national delegate conference is our parliament. It is the one time in the year that we get to set the policy and strategy of the union, call our leaders to account.

Yes it can be difficult for people to get to, and it costs money. We have to address these concerns, but to cut it is not the answer.

The leadership say not to worry, they will introduce additional "policy forums". Even if you put aside that they will cost time and money, they are not binding democratic conference decisions and can be ignored and interpreted by the leadership.

The report ironically makes the argument for the union to be upping its intervention into the Labour Party, but fails to recognise that Jeremy Corbyn himself has been struggling to ditch the the undemocratic policy forums that were used by the Blairites to ignore the unions and Labour Party members.

The pensions' dispute shows that the union is at its best and strongest when it is a fighting and campaigning union for its members. The best way of winning new members and activists is not some clever management tool but is delivering for our members on the ground in defence of their jobs pay and conditions.

# Welsh college staff set to strike on pay and workload

College lecturers in Wales have voted by an overwhelming majority to strike, busting the undemocratic Tory strike threshold. The employers, Colegau Cymru, refuse to recognise the all-Wales ballot. They demand the union divide up the dispute college by college, despite Colegau Cymru negotiating for all colleges collectively.

We've witnessed ten years of barbaric educational vandalism by the Tories. 91% of University and College Union (UCU) members voted for an improved pay offer on a 52% turnout. 54% voted in the workload ballot, 90% backing strike action.

Intensifying workload, job cuts, and a decade of real-terms pay reductions (approximately 20%) are lowering staff morale. Some of our members even seek charity support as they face financial difficulties.

The Education Support Partnership claimed requests for grants were up 40%. Our 7.5% pay claim goes some way to recompensing these losses.

A UCU Wales survey showed members are working 50, 60 and 70-hour weeks, but getting paid for 37. Lecturers are literally working two days for free.

UCU Coleg y Cymoedd members hope that Colegau Cymru agree to the workers' demands.

Clare Gibbs, UCU Coleg y Cymoedd (personal capacity)

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## UCU: General secretary censured but anti-union laws frustrate strike ballot

Sam Morecroft, UCU Yorks and Humber regional executive (personal capacity)

June's University and College Union (UCU) [congress was shut down when staff walked out](#) in response to motions criticising the general secretary Sally Hunt. The annual democratic congress reconvened on 18 October.

The [reconvened congress](#) was largely to debate these motions, calling for a vote of no confidence in the general secretary and a vote to censure her. Both stemmed from this year's pension dispute.

While the 14-day strike staved off an attempt to decimate our pensions, the stitch-up by the general secretary and full-time officials to end the strikes has angered members.

Sally Hunt could not attend the congress. She recently announced that she has been suffering with multiple sclerosis for some time, and has been forced to take medical leave. Socialist Party members in UCU send solidarity to Sally at this difficult time.

Exeter UCU delegates withdrew the no confidence motion, explaining the reasons behind it but acknowledging it wasn't appropriate to hear in light of the general secretary's health. The King's College London UCU motion - calling for censure of the general secretary for her conduct during the strike - was overwhelmingly passed.

While Sally Hunt is absent, her duties will be performed by a senior unelected official. Two emergency motions were tabled which called for the congress to send greetings to Sally Hunt, to ensure members retain control of our disputes, and address the leadership's democratic legitimacy during this absence.

They were ruled out of order. This was challenged and delegates won the vote to hear them but fell 17 votes short of the two thirds majority needed to overrule the congress business committee.

The ballot results for higher education pay and equality and further education pay have been released. They represent a huge achievement.

The higher education turnout was the largest for the UCU ever on pay - 42%. Nearly 70% voted for strike action. But the vast majority of institutions failed to reach the Tories' arbitrary and undemocratic 50% turnout threshold.

In further education only four colleges reached the threshold. In higher education my own Sheffield branch narrowly reached 50% with six other universities. If there's to be national industrial action we will need to rebalot.

Our union must reflect, and return to organising. The anger over pay, casualisation, workload and the gender pay gap will only grow.

This has been a year of building our union, with successful local disputes and the incredible 14-day pension strike. The Tories' anti-union laws have frustrated us for now. But we are determined to smash their undemocratic thresholds and to fight to defend post-16 education from austerity.

## **Driving London's buses - a laser in the eye and a boot up the bum!**

**A London bus driver and Unite union member**

Why are drivers involved in road traffic incidents often tired? Transport for London (TfL) could ask the real bus experts - the drivers!

We're under pressure from the intensity of work and long hours. For example, drivers working five-and-a-half hours continuously before having a legal 30-minute break.

The bosses' solution to driver tiredness isn't shorter hours. They want to introduce a camera where a laser points at the driver's eyes to detect tiredness and the seat vibrates to wake the driver up. A laser in the eye and a boot up the bum!

TfL and Mayor Sadiq Khan have plans to eliminate injuries and deaths on the bus network by 2030. Unfortunately, the private bus companies which operate routes are only interested in profits.

Last year a report by the London Assembly into bus safety said: "TfL's mantra 'safety is our top priority' appears not to be the reality. Instead, TfL encourages bus operators to make punctuality their top priority."

Some bus companies have "remote sign-on" plans. Instead of the bus depot, the driver starts from the changeover point. That means not being aware of any notices such as diversions, not being able to discuss with colleagues or station staff, and travelling in their own time in order to maximise driving time.

We should be consulted on any changes to our terms and conditions. In fact, there should be democratic workers' control of our employment conditions. It's no surprise that these attacks are taking place as the Tory government removes funding to TfL - which Khan is allowing to go through.

Tom Kearney - a bus crash survivor now campaigning for safety along with bus drivers - was correct that it's not a technology issue but an issue of lack of toilets, long hours, failed air conditioning in bus cabs and the way the employers treat bus drivers.

Safety will always be compromised until Unite's policy of public ownership is implemented.

# PCS Left Unity election: ballot opens

PCS civil service union Assistant General Secretary (AGS) Chris Baugh, elected three times since 2004, has won at least eight nomination meetings in his campaign to be the Left Unity AGS candidate for a fourth term.

Left Unity regional group meetings have now met and agreed their nominations. Voting will take place during November. Socialist Party member Chris Baugh is opposed, in a divisive move, by Janice Godrich, current PCS president, with support from PCS General Secretary Mark Serwotka.

The move to replace Chris has led to a potentially damaging campaign within Left Unity. Chris, along with other Socialist Party members, is being opposed by the newly formed Socialist View including the Socialist Workers' Party.

It is clear they want to remove the voice of the Socialist Party in PCS. Their slates are divisive and do not follow in the best traditions of the left, which reflect all strands of opinion in Left Unity.

For the Left Unity national committee their slate challenges positions held by Socialist Party members Marion Lloyd (current Left Unity chair) and Dave Semple (current editor). This slate also removes two women activists from small government departments.

Their national executive committee (NEC) slate, if successful, will remove Socialist Party members Marion Lloyd, Katrine Williams and Dave Semple. In contrast, the Chris4AGS campaign has put forward a limited slate, leaving places for those currently on the Left Unity national committee and the NEC, including Socialist View supporters.

The election campaign has brought to the surface political differences. The Chris4AGS campaign, which is supported by the Socialist Party and many independent socialists across the union, has united around a programme which sets out a fighting strategy to take the union forward.

On pay, we support a full democratic discussion to determine the next steps and to agree future industrial strategy - one which maximises the potential of reaching and exceeding the Tory-imposed ballot threshold.

This discussion should include, for example, linking pay with jobs and conditions, an aggregate ballot, and an organising strategy to build the union. This contrasts with the 'more of the same' approach by Socialist View supporters.

Rather than unconditional support for Labour, the Chris4AGS campaign stands for the continued political independence of PCS while working with Labour to ensure it implements the promises it has given the union. The Chris4AGS campaign stands for lay power and increased democracy, including extending the election of full-time officers.

We stand for an open, democratic and inclusive Left Unity - a rank-and-file organisation which fights for and supports a left leadership, but retains sufficient independence to hold the leadership accountable.

We are seeking support in the Left Unity ballot - which closes on 23 November - for the candidates listed below.

Our slates leave places to be filled by other incumbent Left Unity national committee and PCS NEC members. We stand for unity within the left around a programme to fight to defend PCS members, resist Tory attacks and oppose austerity.

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## PCS elections

### Nomination for Left Unity candidate for AGS: Chris Baugh

## **Nominations for Left Unity slate for the PCS national executive committee:**

- President: Marion Lloyd
- Vice-President: Katrine Williams
- NEC: Clive Bryant, Alan Dennis, Steve Thorley, Kris Hendry, Rhea James, John Jamieson, Tahir Latif, Marion Lloyd, Kenny McKay, Dave Semple, Hector Wesley, Katrine Williams, Harvey Crane

## **PCS Left Unity national committee**

- Chair: Marion Lloyd
- Treasurer: Alan Dennis
- Equal opportunities officer: Kris Hendry
- Editor: Dave Semple
- Young members' officer: Sarah Spencer
- Scrutineers: Sian Ruddock
- Committee members: Clara Paillard, Bobby Young

**Follow our campaign on Facebook - [Re-elect Chris Baugh AGS](#)**

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# **National Gallery reps endorse Chris Baugh**

We are PCS union reps at the National Gallery. We include our branch executive positions but are writing in a personal capacity.

Chris Baugh has been an outstanding source of support to the branch for many years.

Chris was at the forefront of opposition to the privatisation of visitor services in 2015 and after a lengthy industrial dispute led negotiations that secured a robust back-to-work agreement protecting existing terms and conditions for members.

Naturally those conditions are constantly under renewed attack by the employer and again Chris has been a valuable source of advice, expertise, support and encouragement throughout. Members greatly value Chris's active involvement in our branch campaigns and the support he has consistently offered.

We are not getting involved in internal politics. All we know is that experience has taught us that when the going gets tough, this branch can rely on Chris.

We have no hesitation in recommending support for Chris Baugh's re-election as PCS assistant general secretary and urge all Left Unity members to support him.

**Graham Eve (branch secretary), Colin Eeles (branch chair), Lynn Boothman (health and safety officer), Ian Hall (equalities officer), Patrick Sofela (rep)**

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# **Precarious workers march against gig economy**

**Paula Mitchell**

A brightly coloured and noisy protest of precarious workers marched and danced its way round central London this morning (Tuesday 30th October).

Starting at Transport for London HQ they marched to the Royal Courts of Justice, demanding workers' rights and an end to the gig economy.

The heart of the protest was against Uber, at the Court of Appeal, trying to avoid giving holiday pay, sick pay and other rights to their drivers.

Uber drivers organised by the small independent union IWGB were joined by deliveroo cyclists, and newly-organised foster carers and game workers. These workers demanded payment by the hour.

Representatives also took part from general union GMB and the bakers' union, and the protest was addressed by Dave Ward general secretary of the CWU communication workers' union.

The next leg of the protest was to join outsourced security workers at Senate House, University of London, fighting for decent pay and against privatisation.

#### **Helen Pattison reports from Senate House:**

Outside Senate House, trade unionists, campaigners and students continued to protest against low pay and outsourcing of cleaners.

Then we marched round to the office of TDL, a medical couriers service. Placards said: "TDL, you're taking the piss". These workers report that they do 52 hour weeks and barely break even.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 30 October 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

## **Peterloo: "If the people were to rise and smite their enemies, was not this the time?" Samuel Bamford, demonstrator**

#### **Hugh Caffrey, Socialist Party national committee**

Manchester was England's second largest and the world's first industrial city by the early nineteenth century. The industrial revolution had swelled the population, including that of neighbouring Salford, to hundreds of thousands of people by 1819.

But Manchester continued to be run like a mediaeval market town - without even the corrupt trappings of limited parliamentary 'democracy' which existed elsewhere.

The main demands of the radical reform movement which grew at this time were for the right to vote for all men (rather than just the rich), annual parliamentary elections, and the introduction of secret ballots.

Under the unreformed system, 152 parliamentary seats had less than 100 voters. Old Sarum constituency in Wiltshire, for example, had seven voters and two MPs. Meanwhile Manchester, with its huge population, had none!

The huge demonstration in St Peters Field on 16 August 1819 was the high point of the working-class part of the radical reform movement, which was demanding democratic rights. For the working-class people who joined the movement, these rights were seen as a means to an end: a better standard of living.

On this day, over 60,000 people gathered on St Peter's Field in central Manchester. This enormous figure was equivalent to half the adult population of Manchester and Salford.

Thousands assembled from dawn, marching into the local town centres, where they assembled into groups of 100. Prominent among the marchers were female reformers, who had their own contingent from Royton. Sashes, cotton dresses, and the 'cap of liberty' were widely worn.

One establishment commentator viewed this organisation of working-class women as "more menacing to the established institutions than the education of the lower orders."

## Peaceful

This was a peaceful and unarmed demonstration. Protesters carried banners and had musical bands. In the words of the request made by leading radical campaigner Henry Hunt, they were "armed with no other weapon than that of a self-approving conscience."

By contrast, the local authorities had mobilised 1,500 soldiers from yeoman divisions of Cheshire and Manchester & Salford. These were part-time volunteer soldiers, mounted on horseback and armed with swords. They were owners of small businesses, right-wing supporters of 'King and Church', violently opposed to any improvement in the lot of the masses.

Manchester's ruling 'magistrates' committee' was terrified at the well-organised demonstration. They read the Riot Act and ordered the arrest of Henry Hunt and others on the platform, a typical tactic for breaking up mass demonstrations.

The special constables refused to do so without support from the troops. This support was immediately ordered and the yeomanry, many of them drunk, attacked the crowd, hacking and slashing at people and trampling them beneath horses' hooves.

The 15th Hussars regiment was sent in to strengthen the onslaught and people fleeing were attacked by two infantry regiments as well as an artillery regiment.

Around 15 demonstrators were killed there and then. Over 600 were injured on the day. The largest group were about 250 people trampled beneath charging horses.

The war against Napoleon had culminated in the particularly bloody battle of Waterloo four years earlier, widely known at the time for its huge casualties. The slaughter at St Peter's Field was soon called 'Peter Loo', drawing the comparison with 1815. Within a week, the name 'Peterloo Massacre' had been coined.

From the 1790s, radical and trade union organisations and ideas developed. The French revolution had huge support. It's estimated that a quarter of English workers would rather have fought for France than Britain in the Napoleonic wars which followed it.

## Workers' movement

The nascent workers' movement of the 1790s was crushed as Britain became a military dictatorship, with martial law, executions, floggings, and transportation - deportation to the colonies to work as forced labour.

The Combination Acts banned trade unions, strikes, collections of money, or oaths of support to workers' or radical societies. 'Church and King' mobs mobilised right-wing supporters in violent attacks on radicals and union activists.

The rural population was devastated by legalised land grabs. Landowners were given the right to build walls around 'their' land and to evict the current users, who were driven into the cities ready for super-exploitation by industrialists armed with new technology.

The Black Dwarf, a radical paper, wrote at the time that the worker is "locked up in factories eight storeys high, with no rest till the engines stop and he rushes home to get refreshed for the next day".

Children over seven worked twelve or fifteen hours a day in factories. The average life expectancy of a Manchester labourer was 17 years. These years were spent living in slums, with no water, no sanitation, epidemics of disease, widespread pollution, and very high child mortality rates.

Periodic strikes and riots alternated with periods of repression. The 'reform' and 'radical' movements of the time involved several sections of society: the new capitalists of industry, the more progressive section of the

middle classes, the mass of the actual working class, and the poorest.

The capitalist class was increasingly divided between old and new capitalists. The latter were criminalised for demanding for the vote. Elite reformers founded the Hampden Club in London in 1811. Prominent reformer Major Cartwright toured northern industrial districts in 1812 and 1813, encouraging the development of popular reform societies.

The old capitalists were split among themselves over free trade or protectionism. This led to the introduction of the Corn Law in 1815 which propped up the price of grain on the domestic market, benefitting rich grain farmers. Grain prices more than doubled in 18 months.

By contrast, the government refused to protect wages: it condemned unions, rejected petitions for a minimum wage, and repealed existing regulations on wages and apprenticeships.

From 1811-16 the widespread 'Luddite' workers' movement developed, opposing the use of new technology to cut pay or jobs. The government used huge military force to put this down with widespread executions and transportations.

In 1815-16 there were widespread strikes, demonstrations and riots. Workers' resistance to this huge crisis led them to look for political ideas in publications written by middle-class reformers, particularly Cobbett's Political Register. Riots dropped off, replaced by a mass movement with political ideas.

A petition to parliament signed by 500,000 people was ignored by the government at the start of 1817. The government intended to repeat the 1790s by breaking the movement with massive repression. The national reform leaders failed to react adequately, and the national organisation was broken up.

Manchester increasingly came to the fore as the area with the largest and best-organised mass movement. After repressing the March 1817 'Blanketeers' demonstration, the Manchester authorities decided to set up the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry (MSY), in case the troops were insufficient to put down a larger demonstration.

On 9 June hundreds of Derbyshire workers joined the 'Pentrich Uprising', believing they were part of a national insurrection. Tragically they were isolated and arrested before they got far. Three of the leaders were hanged and beheaded, others were imprisoned or transported for life. The underlying mood remained explosive with mass cotton workers' and miners' strikes across Lancashire and Cheshire a year later.

The reform movement was led by middle-class people. But, particularly in and around Manchester, it sank deep working-class roots. In June 1819, a conference of delegates from 28 northern towns met in Oldham and called for the "formation of Union Societies in every town and village... and also the frequent holding of public and district meetings."

Union Societies spread across Lancashire. Under the name 'Political Protestants', they developed across Yorkshire. They went on to grow in other manufacturing areas hit by 'General Distress' - particularly in the west midlands and north east.

The movement paid special attention to Irish migrants, other sections of the poorest workers, and women. The first of the female reform societies was established on 18 June in Blackburn, where women were a significant part of local workforce.

## **"Universal Suffrage"**

These gave a space to working-class women to organise themselves and discuss their own demands as well as their common struggles with working-class men. A banner at a reform meeting in Leigh on 11 August proclaimed "No Corn Laws, Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage".

"Peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must," was a slogan widely used in the radical reform movement. On the hills around Manchester, ex-soldiers organised secret night-time drilling as working-class people prepared to confront the state. Tragically, Henry Hunt called on the movement to stop "playing at soldiers" and not be provoked "to commit any breach of the peace".

Events were developing in a revolutionary direction. Successive demonstrations built morale and were part of a conscious strategy towards a national convention and a national uprising.

Mass organisation was proving more powerful than previous 'conspiracies' and Lord Liverpool's government feared losing control and encouraging a burgeoning working-class movement if they conceded anything.

The backlash against Peterloo mobilised the working-class movement and provoked middle-class 'public opinion' into sharper criticism of the government, which was unnerved by these developments. Mass meetings were held across the West Riding - neighbouring parts of east Lancashire and west Yorkshire - and night-time drilling continued.

The intended next steps in the north west were coordinated mass meetings on 1 and 8 November 1819. However, the middle-class limitations of radical reform movement leaders then became sharply apparent. Looking to more passive appeals to public opinion - rather than escalating a mass movement - they called off the demonstrations.

This caused huge confusion in the movement, at which the government then struck. Its spies caused havoc and aided the isolation and arrests of key militants, with Peterloo leaders put on trial.

New laws in November and December banned armed drilling and collection of arms, enabled easier prosecution of radicals, attacked the radical press, and effectively banned radical public meetings and working-class demonstrations. Struggle continued in the 1820s, but at a lower level, in the workplaces.

The working-class was defeated in 1819. Within 12 months, Lancashire activists had concluded that Hunt should have made a stand the previous year. Timing is the art of politics and never more so than in a revolutionary period.

Above all, the idea of an independent workers' movement separate from all sections of the capitalist establishment had taken firm hold. These hard-learned lessons prepared for Chartism, the world's first national workers' movement 20 years later, and remain essential for the movement today.

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## Review: Peterloo pamphlet

"The sun looked down through a sultry and motionless air...over the whole field were strewn caps, bonnets, shawl and shoes, and other parts of male and female dress, trampled, torn and bloody."

As the bicentenary of the Peterloo massacre approaches, the publication of this pamphlet by the North West Socialist Party is extremely timely. In six short, crisp chapters, mostly newly written for this publication, the authors set the massacre in the context of the class struggle of the time, as few conventional authors do.

The pamphlet offers a comprehensive analysis of the situation facing working people in the early 1800s: the halving of weavers' wages, a doubling of grain prices between 1816 and 1817, food riots, the driving of impoverished agricultural labourers into the cities, and so on.

All this was against a background of acute state repression. The workers combine in unions. They strike, rise up and explore every possible tactic. The nascent working class is excluded from the franchise. Rotten boroughs have almost as many MPs as electors. Swelling cities like Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham are totally unrepresented in parliament.

Workers demand the right to vote, yet also strain against private property, the monarchy and the state. With rare exceptions, they are abandoned and disappointed by middle-class radicals. With increasing self-confidence they prepare the ground for what the pamphlet calls 'the world's first national workers' movement': Chartism.

- The pamphlet is £2 or bulk orders of ten can be bought for £14. Contact Hugh Caffrey at [manc\\_sfe@hotmail.com](mailto:manc_sfe@hotmail.com) or 07769 611 320.

# **Bolsonaro - a threat to workers and all oppressed people**

## **Left must build a powerful socialist alternative**

**Andre Ferrari , Liberty, Socialism and Revolution (LSR - CWI Brazil)**

The victory of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil's second round presidential election by a 10% margin over the Workers' Party (PT) candidate Fernando Haddad, represents a setback for the Brazilian working class and opens a new chapter in Brazil. It will also embolden the far right in other Latin American countries.

Bolsonaro is a far-right populist from a military background. He has defended the former military regime, defended the use of torture, and adopted an anti-poor, racist, misogynist and homophobic stance both during the election campaign and before it.

At his last election rally he spoke of the need to "eliminate the opposition and socialism and communism".

In the run-up to the elections the military police entered over 20 universities following electoral judges' ruling against "anti-fascist" groups. This decision was later overturned by other sectors of the judiciary. However, it illustrates the extremely repressive nature the new government of Bolsonaro will have.

## **Threats**

At one PT rally, a car drew up and a gunman got out shooting one person. At the Bolsonaro celebrations his supporters brandished pistols firing them into the air. In Niteroi a district of Rio de Janeiro, military armoured cars took to the streets to celebrate Bolsonaro's victory.

In São Paulo, in front of the house of a newly elected radical left PSOL (Socialism and Liberty Party) congress member who is trans, a trans person was shot dead in a clearly politically motivated attack.

Bolsanaro had previously proclaimed: "Yes, I'm homophobic - and very proud of it."

This victory poses a threat and challenge to the workers' movement and the left. In the final stages of the campaign a growing mood of resistance was developing, reflected in massive anti-Bolsonaro protests in Rio and other cities.

PSOL and the MTST homeless workers' movement have correctly taken the initiative to call protests. A new layer of workers and young people far more critical of the PT from the left is emerging.

The victory of Bolsonaro is a product of the failure of the 'left' governments when in power. The PT was involved in corruption along with all the capitalist parties in Brazil.

It introduced pro-capitalist polices and failed to enact socialist ones. Brazil was plunged into its deepest recession for a century. The social consequences of this, an horrific rise in urban violence, were used in a demagogic manner by Bolsonaro. Nearly 70,000 people were killed in Brazil in the last year.

Bolsonaro also used the crisis in Venezuela to attack the left. The failure of the Chavista-led governments to break with capitalism has resulted in a social catastrophe which is now being used by capitalist politicians and governments worldwide to attack 'socialism'.

## **'Third round'**

Brazil's outgoing billionaire, neoliberal president Michel Temer (who in 2016 ousted former PT president Dilma Rousseff in a parliamentary coup), following Bolsonaro's victory is now reintroducing his previously defeated attack on pensions. This and other anti-working class measures will give the left the opportunity to begin to build a fighting socialist alternative.

Brazil's 'third round' will be fought on the streets. The workers and left organisations need to be drawn together to begin a fightback. This means defending democratic rights and repelling all attacks on working people and the oppressed. The need, in the short term, to form self-defence committees against threats and attacks from the far right is urgent. LSR is fighting now to build the resistance to Bolsonaro and to fight for a more powerful socialist alternative.

- See also, '[Polarisation, risks and resistance in Brazilian elections](http://socialistparty.org.uk)' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

## Second round votes

- Jair Bolsonaro - 55.1%
- Fernando Haddad - 44.9%
- 105 million valid votes
- 8.6 million invalid votes
- 2.5 million blank votes

# Parliamentary coup in Sri Lanka

## Workers and oppressed must fight both rotten capitalist camps

Siritunga Jayasuriya, United Socialist Party (CWI Sri Lanka)

Sri Lanka is experiencing a dramatic constitutional crisis - an unprecedented parliamentary coup.

It has seen the president - Maithripala Sirisena - break his coalition with Ranil Wickramasinghe, suspend parliament, and appoint the former dictator-president Mahinda Rajapaksa to take the prime ministership.

The United Socialist Party held its biennial conference just two weeks prior to this development. In our perspectives document, unanimously adopted, we wrote in the first paragraph: "The Sri Lankan capitalist class is faced with a serious crisis. This 'Yahapalana' ('good governance') government can be termed the weakest since so-called independence from British rule 70 years ago."

It continued: "The crisis in the government was evident when President Sirisena and former President Mahinda Rajapaksa - the two opposition political leaders - conspired to have a 'no confidence' motion passed against PM Wickremasinghe... [They] wanted Ranil Wickremasinghe ousted from the premiership.

"But Ranil was able to win the confidence of parliament, defeating the no-confidence motion, and thus he temporarily gained stability. But that did not resolve the crisis in government".

The conclusion of the document emphasised that the social atmosphere we live in today is one of a society where a small vibration could lead to dramatic change.

The legality of this action by President Sirisena can be debated. But more importantly this move was conducted in a completely conspiratorial manner.

This kind of parliamentary coup is new to Sri Lankan politics but we have seen many of a similar nature in the South Asian region - in Pakistan and the Maldives, for example.

This constitutional coup is designed to give time to Rajapaksa to buy MPs over to his side by using his powers as a prime minister. Most MPs have no policies but are there simply for the money and the perks. Some have already started crossing over to Rajapaksa's side.

Rajapaksa and Wickramasinghe are each claiming that they have a majority in the parliament and will be able to get the necessary 113 MPs on their side. This is going to be a real test for both Rajapaksa and Wickramasinghe when parliament meets on 16 November.

If, for argument's sake, Rajapaksa cannot get a majority then this can lead to a very volatile and unstable situation. He will mobilise his supporters onto the streets and that can lead to a semi-civil-war situation between the two forces.

## **Power**

This is obviously going to be the last chance for Rajapaksa and it can boomerang against him as well. So it would be wrong to underestimate Rajapaksa: he will do everything possible to consolidate his power.

Already his supporters have forcibly taken over the many key government institutions, like all the state media, and attacked people opposing him. One person was killed inside the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation.

There can be more incidents between now and 16 November. It cannot be ruled out that some MPs will be arrested, including Wickramasinghe, if Rajapaksa and Sirisena feel that they cannot obtain a majority in parliament.

On the other hand, there are campaigns which have started for the release of all the Sri Lankan Army "war heroes" who are in custody for their murderous actions during the recent civil war, and the release of the imprisoned ultra-reactionary Buddhist monk, Gannasara. This is an indication of the nature of a future government under Rajapaksa.

In this crucial situation, socialists have to appeal to all the trade unions and working people, to take an independent stand against both rotten capitalist camps. They must advance demands on key social, economic and political issues faced by the working class the poor, and all the oppressed peoples, including the Tamils.

Clearly, there is no way out for the poor masses in Sri Lanka within the bankrupt capitalist system. There is a great need to fight to build a broad mass working-class party to prepare a long term strategy to establish a workers' government.

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

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# **Call to arms by Southampton council unions**

**Keith Morrell, independent councillor, Southampton City Council**

Unite and Unison unions representing Southampton City Council staff have declared that they will oppose and campaign against budget cuts announced by the Labour administration.

The unions have branded as "callous and shoddy" the proposed closure of two council-run residential care homes, the replacement of Sure Start staff by volunteers and the outsourcing of looked-after children's services. These and other cuts will result in 123 staff losing their jobs.

These latest cuts come after eight years of attacks on public services in the city and the loss of over 1,000 jobs. For the last seven of those years the council has been controlled by Labour! Labour councillors should make a stand against these cuts or face being replaced by councillors who will.

Encouraged by this new determination of the trade unions, the families of adults with severe learning difficulties are now calling on Unite and Unison to support their on-going campaign to re-open full-time the

Kentish Road Respite Centre, an earlier victim of budget cuts.

Kentish Road campaigners Lisa Stead and Amanda Guest, the mothers of two young people with severe learning difficulties, said: "We welcome this stand by Unite and Unison and pledge our full support. We know from the support we've had from the people of Southampton that this action by the unions will get enormous support from a city sick of austerity."

To kick off the campaign, Unite Community Southampton Area is organising a demonstration for 10.00am on Saturday, 3 November, outside the Solent Spark Building on East Park Terrace in Southampton (SO14 0YN), where the Labour Party's South East Regional Conference will be taking place. Unite Community has urged residents of the city and surrounding area to attend and show their solidarity.

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## **Campaign building to save Scarborough and district hospitals**

**Nigel Smith, York Socialist Party**

The campaign against York NHS Trust transferring non-medical staff into a 'wholly owned subsidiary' - a step towards privatisation - has exploded into a mass campaign to save the Scarborough and district hospitals from cuts.

A management consultancy company has been brought in to advise the trust on a review of acute services. People in Scarborough fear this will result in only one thing: cuts to the services at Scarborough Hospital and to the other trust hospitals in Whitby, Bridlington and Filey. The hospitals in Selby and Malton could also be affected.

An online petition against cuts to services has already secured almost 24,000 supporters and there are over 12,000 members of the Facebook group. This is extraordinary in a town with a population of less than 62,000.

Hundreds of citizens have already attended so-called consultation meetings, putting the hospital management on the back foot. The trust claims that it has no firm proposals to cut, but similar promises made in other trusts turned out to be false.

York NHS Trust has already proved to be opaque and divisive in setting up a wholly owned subsidiary and people know this.

A two-day strike against the setting up of this company has already taken place. More industrial action looks inevitable.

The first Save Scarborough and District Hospitals planning meeting has taken place. I was invited to as chair of the steering group fighting privatisation plans across the trust.

Mike Forster from the successful Hands off Huddersfield Royal Infirmary campaign and Socialist Party member sent greetings and gave advice to the group.

There is a determination to put an end to the erosion of NHS services across the region, a determination that can stop these attacks.

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## **The Socialist sales successes in Leeds**

**Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party**

Starting with issue 1000 of the Socialist, Socialist Party members in Leeds have been selling the newspaper every week outside the new Leeds City Council building in the city centre. Each Friday morning, we're there selling to various workers, some of who buy each week. Others will buy the Socialist more occasionally, or if the cover story piques their interest.

Since starting the sale, we've now sold over 100 copies of the Socialist, with sales varying from sometimes just a couple of papers to selling 15 one week.

Among our readers are shop stewards who regularly buy the Socialist, one of who has, since reading it, felt inspired to become more active in their union and become a senior rep. But we also meet others passing the front of the office who have bought the paper, including Leeds Beckett university students.

Since the universities started back we've also restarted our paper sale prior to Socialist Students meetings at Leeds University. Last week we sold eight copies.

It isn't true that people aren't interested in buying a socialist newspaper. What is the case is that less people carry cash, with about one or two copies on each sale being sold via our card reader.

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## **Film review: The plan that came from the bottom up**

# **'Lucas Plan' film tells story of workers who set out alternative to job losses by creating socially useful products and technology**

**Bill Mullins, Lewisham and Southwark Socialist Party**

'The plan that came from the bottom up' is a new film about [the 'Lucas Plan'](#), developed by shop stewards at Lucas Aerospace in the Midlands in 1976, to make socially useful products rather than armaments used to kill people.

In the 1970s, under a Labour government, the first wave of what became the wholesale deindustrialisation of Britain swept hundreds of thousands of jobs away forever.

As the film makes clear, this wasn't the normal result of booms and slumps - which bring periodic unemployment. This was 'structural unemployment'.

Lucas Aerospace had a dozen different factories mainly in the Birmingham area. Its workers faced the prospect of their jobs becoming increasingly deskilled and lost as automation took over.

The shop stewards' committee representing 18,000 workers approached the Labour government for help.

The industry minister at the time was Tony Benn, a leading figure in the Labour left, and he is seen in the film a number of times standing shoulder to shoulder with various groups of workers around the country from different industries.

Benn told the Lucas shop stewards that many other sectors facing closures and redundancies were asking for government aid and, as the film implies, they were also asking for the Labour government to nationalise them.

He suggested to the shop stewards that they come up with a plan that would help him argue their case to the Labour cabinet. That is where the film starts.

## **Nationalisation**

From the beginning, it is clear that it was the normal thing to do at the time - in the face of threats to jobs - for the workers of various industries to ask for nationalisation.

The film features a series of interesting shots of the struggles of workers throughout the 1970s, which give an indication of the volatile atmosphere at the time.

It includes footage from the 'work-in' at the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971, and from strikes and occupations across the whole of the manufacturing sector, many of which have been forgotten in time.

In my view it would be of enormous benefit to the new generation if these films were made widely available in short segments. The film is 212 minutes long. No doubt the makers could reduce the time to more manageable proportions.

But aside from that the film is tremendously uplifting. It allows the main actors, the Lucas shop stewards themselves, to tell their story.

Former Labour MP Dave Nellist, who features in the film, says: "In one scene about the shipbuilders' occupation a worker says 'economics shouldn't control men, men should control economics'. That's what the Lucas Shop Stewards Combine tried to do.

"Instead of submitting to redundancies, or to a continual deskilling and fragmentation of their work, they tried to take control of how they worked, what they designed and what they built. To take over that power of management's 'right' to manage".

Brian Salisbury, one of the original Lucas shop stewards, says he started out as an ordinary shop steward representing members on the normal things like wages and health and safety but had to rethink how they could make the work that they do more useful to society.

## **The 'Plan'**

They involved all their members in coming up with the Lucas Plan, which included an astounding 129 separate products that could be made for socially useful purposes using the existing machinery and workforce.

They were possibly the first to come up with the idea of a hybrid car using a petrol engine to charge the battery which in turn drove the car.

They proposed using the existing heat exchanges made by Lucas for military aircraft to instead heat blocks of flats.

They conceived of the first known wind turbines to develop electricity using the existing components made for military purposes.

There were other outstanding products. These included a railroad bus that could run on concrete rail which would be more suitable for the developing world. All these ideas they put to the management but were completely ignored. But the Lucas Plan was heard in the wider labour movement.

As one of the workers said in a question and answer session afterwards: "We wanted workers to have as much power as shareholders".

But Dave Nellist comments: "Unfortunately, that was the problem. Shareholders collectively own a company, and can therefore set its direction. The workers at Lucas never collectively owned their company - for that it would have had to be nationalised."

All in all a film definitely worth seeing.

- Released October 2018, see [theplandocumentary.com](http://theplandocumentary.com) for more details and screening information

# The Socialist inbox

## 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.

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## Benefit system failure

I was petitioning against Universal Credit on a campaign stall recently when an oldish bloke comes over - casually dressed, not scruffy, one arm on a crutch and carrying a plastic bag on the other. He signs the petition. When he comes to the address column he writes: NFA through UC. I ask him what he means - 'No Fixed Abode through Universal Credit'.

Homeless, he spent the night in a bus shelter. The bag he is carrying contains all his possessions - his sleeping bag was stolen in the night. He tells me his life story. He's 65 years old (looks older), went to grammar school, was in the army and the navy.

He tells me he's counted 50 jobs he's done in his life, such as Kelloggs in Trafford Park, engineering, working with chemicals. He's always worked. He's got his fifth interview for Universal Credit coming up. He thanks us for what we're doing, shakes hands and leaves.

The benefits system in this country has utterly and completely failed this man. How many more like him? How many more will there be if this despicable government continues?

**Paul Gerrard, Salford**

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## Double standards

I read Jon Dale's article in the Socialist (see 'Blood transfusion scandal: put the profit system in the dock' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)) which references "Labour's right-wing minister of health, David Owen (who later split to form the Social Democratic Party)" and asked the Socialist Party members who sell me the Socialist newspaper to update Jon.

They said I should let everyone know. It's my understanding that David Owen quietly re-joined the Labour Party and was permitted to vote in the first leadership election which Jeremy Corbyn won. Many of us on the left were not permitted to vote in that election because of our involvements in other parties. Something that has also been applied to the Socialist Party.

**Anne, Nottingham**

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## Sugar doughnuts

Lord Alan Sugar's theatre of cruelty known as 'The Apprentice' has returned to the screens in another series. In the third episode the teams were set up to fail by being given the task of creating doughnuts for a high class

market, when none of them knew a doughnut from their elbow. They had to learn to produce doughnuts without any training. The results reflected this lack of expertise.

On display also were two styles of management. One has a project manager who gives orders and the sole contribution of the team is to fulfil the project manager's dream. This is Lord Sugar's preferred method and only works if the project manager is infallible.

The flaw is obvious. When Lord Sugar was appointed 'Enterprise Tsar' by Tony Blair his fallibility was all too clear. Questioned about the banking crisis his famous on-screen response was "oh God".

Contestant Tom Bunday on the other hand, had a style of management which involved getting his team onside and consulting them about the task. He praised people who achieved instead of denouncing them as "a bloody disgrace" if they made a mistake.

Since the premise of the show is that team members stab each other in the back this attracted criticism from his own team members who insisted he was "not taking decisions." And Lord Sugar made it perfectly clear that capitalism does not work like that.

So although the premise of the show is nonsensical it does provide some interesting insights into the capitalists of yesterday and tomorrow. As a lesson in making doughnuts, however, it falls down somewhat.

**Derek McMillan, Worthing, Sussex**

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## **Laid off**

How much of my life have I spent looking for jobs? They talk of a shortage in construction, I get a gateman role and get laid off four days into a one-year contract and replaced by someone unskilled, but cheaper. The trend is that as every year goes by, it's a pound an hour less than the previous year. Sod this!

**Mike, Southampton**

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## **People's Vote peril**

The People's Vote movement may feel vindicated by the hundreds of thousands of people who took to the streets of London on 20 October.

But in 2016, 17.4million people, including many of Britain's most downtrodden, joined a collective electoral protest against the status-quo. Do Remainers, who claim to oppose the rise of the populist right, really not understand the risks of disenfranchising these people?

I am not speaking here to the elite - the Anna Soubry's or the Chuka Umunnas of the world. But to the many, particularly young people, who see the break-up of the EU in terms of their own sense of internationalism and solidarity with others across the trading bloc. Many who will not be aware of Jeremy Corbyn and the left's historic and principled opposition to the EU.

Recent reports show that 14 million people in Britain now live below the poverty line.

This is not a result of the Brexit vote, but of decades of neoliberal capitalist policies which have savaged the living conditions of Britain's working and middle classes.

Decades when you couldn't get a piece of paper between the policies of the two main political parties.

For much of the population, 2016 was the first time in a generation that they felt their vote would achieve something. Overturn this at everyone's peril!

Tom Barker, Leicester

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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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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/28193>