

## Labour right plotters must go

# Corbyn must launch struggle to kick out Blairites and fight for socialist policies

Another week, another desperate attempt by Theresa May to hold her party together and in power. The possibility of getting rid of this rotten Tory government and the misery it is inflicting on millions is clear.

This, however, is not the priority for the Blairite, pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party. Their priority continues to be acting in the interests of the capitalist class in trying to sabotage the prospect of a Corbyn-led government implementing policies in the interests of the working-class majority.

This has, yet again, been demonstrated by the frenzied attacks on Liverpool Wavertree Constituency Labour Party (CLP) for daring to threaten a motion of no confidence in their ultra-Blairite MP, Luciana Berger.

Deputy Labour leader Tom Watson demanded that Wavertree constituency be suspended. Yet he had nothing but praise for an MP who recently did not deny she might split to form a new pro-capitalist 'centre' party and who has publicly refused to say that a Corbyn-led government would be a good thing.

In order to disguise the real issues at stake, Watson joined capitalist journalists in accusing the local Labour Party of 'bullying' [linked to accusations of antisemitism](#). What he describes as bullying is no more than local Labour Party members attempting to make their MP democratically accountable.

The executive of the local Labour Party countered the smears against them, saying they were "simply adhering to party rules and doing our jobs" and that they had always stood in total "solidarity with Luciana as a victim of misogyny and of antisemitism - coming mostly from the far right. Our chair is himself Jewish and the suggestion that the CLP executive is in any way a party to bullying and antisemitism is a false and slanderous accusation."

The net result of this furore, unfortunately, has been the withdrawal of their no-confidence motion in Berger under the pressure of maintaining 'party unity'. However, it is absolutely clear that Berger and the Labour right are not interested in 'party unity' but only in damaging Corbyn-led Labour whether from inside or outside the party.

## Labour split?

Some - possibly including Berger - may even split to form a new party before a general election, but it is likely that others will remain inside the tent, attacking Corbyn from within. These saboteurs need to be deselected and replaced by socialists who will fight for policies in the interests of the working class, not the billionaires whose interests the Blairites act in.

Other constituencies - such as Enfield North - have passed no-confidence motions in their pro-capitalist Labour MPs. But these positive moves have only symbolic power. With a general election looming, it is well overdue that the Labour leadership begin the 'trigger ballot' process which allows local Labour Parties to select new candidates for a forthcoming general election.

This should be linked to a political campaign in support of Blairites being removed and socialist candidates being selected. If necessary, these left candidates should come from fighting elements across the labour and trade union movement, including socialist organisations like ours.

At the same time, it is vital that the Labour leadership makes a [clear call for Labour councils up and down the country to stop implementing Tory austerity](#). John McDonnell should pledge that, if councils make no more cuts, as chancellor he will reimburse all reserves and borrowing used in order to defend local services and jobs.

This is vital preparation for fighting an effective general election campaign. The 2017 snap election gave a glimpse of the enthusiasm that could be generated by a programme which puts forward policies to improve the lives of working-class people.

This could be built on in the next election, but only if Corbyn comes out fighting with a radical programme including abolishing Universal Credit and introducing decent benefits, reversing cuts to public services, immediately introducing a £10-an-hour minimum wage, and a programme of mass council-house building.

This should be combined with [nationalisation of the major corporations and banks, under democratic workers' control](#) - to take the levers of power out of the hands of the capitalist saboteurs. If, instead, Corbyn allows Tom Watson and his ilk control over the programme, there are no guarantees it will generate any enthusiasm at all.

This is also vital preparation for what would come beyond a general election. The capitalists would inevitably attempt to sabotage a Jeremy Corbyn-led government. The current make-up of the Parliamentary Labour Party would hand them a majority of Labour MPs ready and anxious to assist them in doing so.

The attempts to conciliate with the saboteurs must end. This approach must be urgently replaced by a [serious campaign to transform Labour](#) into a mass, democratic party of the working class. We need a federal party, where MPs are held to account - subject to mandatory reselection - and which includes all anti-austerity forces across the labour and trade union movement - including the Socialist Party.

---

## Universal Credit out - Tories out!

**Lindsey Morgan, Leicester West Socialist Party**

Universal Credit is a disaster for the working class. The difficult-by-design benefit replaces six separate benefits with a single payment, normally paid to a single payee.

A recent report produced by the Citizen's Advice Bureau showed that half of the people that are seeking help from them with Universal Credit claims are in rent arrears.

Six in ten people are taking out loans while they await their first payment. This is leaving claimants indebted and struggling to manage. One in six claimants still aren't receiving their first payment in full and on time.

The cumulative pressure of Universal Credit's sanctions regime - and the level of debt it puts people into - takes a heavy toll on the mental health and wellbeing of many.

Universal Credit is essentially a cut designed to take £12 billion off the budget. A survey conducted by the civil servants' union PCS found that 70% of frontline staff want it scrapped. The Socialist Party completely agrees.

Every claimant must complete a written contract with their 'work coach' called a 'claimant commitment'. Failure to stick to this contract can result in a sanction. This could be something as minor as being five minutes late for an appointment. Further infractions lengthen the sanction period to up to three years!

Many private landlords refuse to rent to claimants because they know they won't get paid on time. For too long, benefits have been used to subsidise the landlords who charge exorbitant rents and bosses who pay low wages.

I, and many others, live in fear of the government taking away the money my family needs to live. Every trip to the Jobcentre fills me with nausea and dread.

The anxiety of needing a foodbank to survive has never left me and my heart breaks when I read of another suicide due to lack of money and debt. Even Tory minister Amber Rudd has been forced to admit that Universal Credit claimants have been forced to use foodbanks.

Universal Credit needs to be [scrapped and replaced with a welfare system that doesn't punish people](#) for being low paid, disabled, or unemployed.

We need an end to sanctions. We need a £10-an-hour minimum wage now, as a step towards a genuine living wage, so people don't need to rely on in-work benefits to live.

We need a council house building programme. Labour councils should pledge to fight the effects of Tory benefit cuts. They should pledge now not to evict anyone due to Universal Credit arrears, for example. In the fifth-richest country in the world it is obscene that we have so much suicide and misery due to inequality and poverty.

The rollout of Universal Credit in stages looks to be a strategy by the government to make building a united struggle more difficult. They have learnt from [the battle against the Poll Tax!](#)

Jeremy Corbyn and the trade unions have a crucial role to play in building such a struggle. Corbyn should call on Labour councils to [set no-cuts budgets now](#) to resist Tory austerity and protect working-class people from the effects of Universal Credit. He should call mass protests to help force the weak Tories from power.

It is only through uniting and fighting together that we have any hope of defeating this attack on our class, of getting rid of the Tories, and ultimately achieving a socialist society.

- Editorial: [Labour right plotters must go - Corbyn should launch struggle to kick out the Blairites](#)
  - The fight for no-cuts budgets: [vote Socialist in Southampton](#), [save women's refuges in Newham](#)
- 

## Mass protest pressure wins light sentences for 'Stansted 15' deportation protesters

**Linda Taaffe, secretary, Waltham Forest Trade Union Council**

From early morning on Wednesday 6 February, hundreds of people, most of them young, but all of them in high spirits, crowded into the space outside Chelmsford Crown Court.

At 10am, [the 'Stansted 15' were to be brought before the judge for sentencing](#), having been found guilty last December for their action in March 2017.

They cut the wire into Stansted airport to delay a plane, paid for by the Home Office to take back 60 deportees - all in fear of their lives - to various countries in Africa.

They stopped the plane. They saved eleven people from unjust deportation. Then they faced jail themselves.

At the demo there were hours of speakers, singing and dancing. All kinds of organisations pledged support, including messages from trade unions like general union Unite, retail and distribution union Usdaw, food workers' union BFAWU, and the London, Eastern and South East region of the Trade Union Congress.

Waltham Forest in east London, where five of the Stansted 15 live, brought around 60 supporters in our solidarity coach. Eventually the result we'd hoped for, but were fearful of, came through.

Twelve community service orders and three suspended sentences! No prison. Victory - and well deserved. Celebrations all round!

Speaker after speaker had denounced the injustice meted out to refugees. Everyone saw refugees as their brothers and sisters who deserved to be treated like human beings and not animals.

Now these 15 brave protesters themselves had come slap-bang up against the cruel capitalist system. This time they have won, but there is an alarming strand in this saga.

## **Altered charges**

The Stansted 15 were initially charged with 'aggravated trespass' - which they had expected, so they were bracing themselves for an appropriate penalty.

However, four months after arrest the authorities changed this to a charge under the Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990 - introduced after Lockerbie.

In effect it is anti-terrorism legislation, and can end with life imprisonment! This act made it a crime to disrupt an airport.

So why this change? The lawyers were unable to ascertain any explanation. It just happened.

In the campaign to develop publicity, get across-the-board support, to spread the word and put massive pressure on the legal system not to hand out lengthy jail sentences to people whose only "crime" was human solidarity, uncovering the reasons for this inexplicable change had to be left on the back burner.

When Melanie Strickland, one of the 15, came to speak at Waltham Forest Trade Union Council, she was full of concern for the deportees with heart-rending stories. And of course for all the 15, especially for a few women defendants with young children.

We saw this attempt to intimidate protesters as significant. Charges are not changed by chance or accident. We believe it was done not only to punish the 15, but as a warning to others not to stand up to the bully capitalist state.

As the billionaire oligarchs pile up stacks of wealth and drive workers and the poor into ever-worsening conditions, their governments have step by step, introduced more surveillance and spying, more laws to squash and stymie protest.

## **Many reasons to protest**

After [ten years since the 2007-08 crash](#), workers and the poor have had their pockets systematically filched. The loss of our jobs and our services has gone to pay the rich back for the gigantic injection of cash they received into their banks to pay for their profligacy.

[Not only migrants](#), but all the working class is living in a permanent "hostile environment." With another crash on the horizon, with all kinds of problems like poverty wages and a terrible housing crisis, the capitalists are terrified of even the tiniest protest by groups of workers.

The rich and powerful cannot tolerate any challenge to their right to govern. They are putting measures in place that could be used to the full against the workers' movement at a future date.

This particular Aviation and Maritime Security Act is all about "intention to disrupt." It applies not only to airports but also to roll-on roll-off ferries, shipping, ports, freight and passengers.

So what if airport workers or seafarers went on strike? A strike in and of itself is an intention to disrupt par excellence! Could this be used against trade unions at a certain stage? It's a weapon in the arsenal of the bosses to be used when necessary.

Anti-trade union law has already been used against community protesters. [Anti-fracking campaigners were jailed](#) for jumping up onto lorries, but thankfully released on appeal after widespread pressure. They were the first environmental campaigners to be jailed since the 1930s.

The campaigners in Sheffield who stood in front of trees, destined to be cut down by a private council contractor which deemed them too costly to maintain, were [charged with "violence and intimidation" under anti-trade union laws!](#)

And of course, the biggest threat that hamstringing trade unions is that legislation introduced by Margaret Thatcher, left untouched by Tony Blair, and weaponised under David Cameron - who introduced the most draconian legal restrictions on unions in western Europe - all aiming to stop workers striking for decent pay and conditions.

In Waltham Forest, we had had our right to campaign seriously restricted on two occasions. The latest was when local council officers [refused to allow the 'Save Our Square' campaign to use a democratic 'official petition to the council'](#).

This was about the extremely unpopular decision of the planning committee to give the go-ahead for private developers to privatise and block out our town square with a 29-storey tower block - so-called 'regeneration'.

Meantime, the real criminals are getting away with murder. Those who cause tragedies like Grenfell Tower; who devise the 'Universal Credit' system that sends workers to food banks, or worse, to die on the streets; who get away with paying poverty wages; and who are allowed to charge sky-rocketing rents to struggling families and young people.

These criminals have a huge panoply of laws, plus personnel in the top ranks of the legal system, both to protect them and also to use against protesters.

So let's savour the win of the Stansted 15 in this moment. Well done deportation protesters! But let's prepare to win on the biggest scale ever, to change the system to a socialist society, where everyone would have secure material conditions - like a truly affordable home, a decent paying job, and a well-funded health service.

Such conditions would outlaw subjecting refugees to the current barbaric treatment they suffer - along with removing the profiteers who cause such havoc in everyone's lives!

## **The Socialist Party says:**

- Stopping deportations is not terrorism - overturn the convictions
- Trade union action to force a general election and repeal the anti-union laws
- For a mass programme of council house building and job creation - for jobs, homes and services for all
- For the right to asylum - scrap racist immigration laws, for democratic trade union control of the borders
- For the election and democratic control of judges by the working class, not the packing of the courts with the wealthy, unelected mates of big business
- Tories out, Corbyn in with socialist policies

---

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 7 February 2019 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

---

## **15 February youth strike for climate**

# **To end climate change we need to fight for socialist change!**

We face a climate catastrophe [if urgent action is not taken](#). The problem is we cannot trust any current governments to put the interests of the planet, future generations or the billions of people already suffering from climate chaos - water shortages, toxic air pollution, food scarcity and climate-related poverty - first.

They act primarily to defend the interests of the [bosses and the billionaires who are the source of the threat](#).

Since 1988, just 100 companies across the planet have been responsible for 71% of all emissions. Under capitalism, the highest goal is the pursuit of profit.

Globally, eight super-rich individuals own and control the same wealth as half the world's population. These obscene riches are the proceeds of merciless exploitation and ruthless environmental destruction.

A big part of our fight to save the planet is the fight to get the Tories - the defenders of the capitalist system - out and replacing them with an anti-austerity Corbyn government with socialist policies.

We welcome the call for a youth strike. We hope to participate in democratic discussion about what next. We believe mass collective action is what is required. And to achieve the change we need means building a powerful movement.

This requires linking up in action with the working-class majority - a potentially far more powerful force than the capitalist elite - around a socialist programme which puts people and the environment first.

We call for an immediate conversion to renewable energy, and guaranteed retraining and work for every job at risk, paid for by the energy companies.

The nationalisation of the energy companies alongside the banks and the rest of the major multinationals that dominate the economy under democratic workers' control and management is a vital step towards building a socialist future for the benefit of all.

- For urgent, massive investment into safe forms of renewable energy
- For renationalisation of privatised utilities and public transport under democratic workers' control. You can't control what you don't own!
- Step up research on green energy, waste reduction and energy saving
- Make the super-rich pay
- A democratic and socialist plan of production based on the needs of people and the environment
- See [Youth Strike 4Climate on Facebook](#) for walkouts in your area

---

## Marx memorial attack shows socialist ideas are on the rise

Vandals have attacked Karl Marx's grave in Highgate Cemetery, apparently with hammers. If Marx were still around, we think he'd see it as the Socialist Party does: a compliment.

It's evidence that the ideas of Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels - [the ideas of scientific socialism](#) - are once again a rising threat to the bosses and their politicians, a spectre haunting the bloody exploitation of capitalism.

The super-rich and their defenders have been hammering Marxist ideas for over a century and a half - to no avail. Because all they have to offer working-class and young people is austerity and misery.

Defacing a beautiful monument will not change that. Only the organised working class struggling to take economic and state power out of the hands of the billionaires and corporations will.

Whoever committed this destructive act, the real answer to poverty, division and despair is to build a new society based on public ownership and democratic socialist planning of resources. [As the man himself wrote](#): "Workers of all lands unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains."

---

# Them & us

## Subsidies for fossil fuel billionaires...

Despite the EU, G20 and various governments pledging to phase out subsidies to fossil fuel companies, the total given to coal, oil and gas across the EU remains the same as in 2008.

Britain leads the way according to a report from the European commission, doling out £10.5 billion in support of fossil fuels - over £3 billion more than it spends on renewable energy.

France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Ireland all also gave more to fossil fuels. And even countries that didn't - like Germany - still subsidised fossil fuels to the tune of billions of Euros.

## ...sea level rises for the billions

At the same time as fossil fuel companies rake in billions, climate change is already costing ordinary people around the world huge sums of money, as forest fires, landslides and other related disasters destroy homes and lives.

And the [threat from rising sea levels](#) is only getting worse.

The scale of ice loss has increased four-fold since 2003. A recent study has revealed that Greenland's ice is melting faster than previously thought, causing sea levels to rise.

Enormous glaciers are depositing ever bigger chunks of ice into the Atlantic. The ice Greenland lost between 2002 and 2016 was enough to raise the worldwide sea level by 0.03 inches annually. If all of Greenland's vast ice sheet, 3 kilometres thick in places, was to melt, global sea levels would rise by more than 20ft, drowning most coastal settlements.

---

# France: striking workers confront Macron as historic 'gilets jaunes' movement approaches 'Act XIV'

Clare Doyle, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

The 'gilets jaunes' (yellow vests) revolt in France, now in its fourth month, threatens the survival of President Emmanuel Macron, his government and his party.

It has inspired movements of discontented workers and young people far beyond its borders and has helped widen the fissures that already exist between the major European capitalist powers.

The 'high vis' movement is made up predominantly of people who felt they had become invisible - neglected, deserted, impoverished in today's France. Protesters' daily experiences are generally far from the pampered bourgeois lifestyle represented by Macron.

The movement encompasses views from across the political spectrum. It rapidly forced the 'president of the rich' and his dwindling band of cronies to reverse the plan for a tax increase on diesel fuel and pension 'reform'.

When the tens of thousands at the roundabouts and toll booths refused to disperse, [the government announced a programme of reforms costing €10 billion](#) - although to be taken from other budget expenditure! And still the movement goes on, and in some ways intensifies.

On 5 February, [hundreds of thousands of workers took to the streets](#) of Paris and other cities to back the demands of the movement against Macron, answering a call of the major trade union federation - the CGT - and others, to strike and demonstrate.

This marked a long overdue step forward. If it is followed up with further action, this workers' involvement can play a decisive role in winning the demands of the gilets jaunes movement.

Cecile Rimboud of Gauche Révolutionnaire writes: "It is the trade unions' role to launch an active and combative campaign in all workplaces and in the public services to fight now for wage increases, jobs and better conditions.

"Strikes are currently multiplying, and such a campaign could not only help link them all together - it would also encourage workers who are supportive of the gilets jaunes' movement and demands to actually enter the struggle themselves and be confident that they could win. The movement could thus spread and involve much broader layers of the working class."

## European rivalries

On the same day as the 'generalised' strike movement, Luigi di Maio, deputy prime minister of Italy, visited gilets jaunes protesters at a roundabout near Paris. He told reporters that he fully supported the movement. "The wind of change has crossed the Alps", he boasted, identifying the movement in France with [the early days of his populist Five Star Movement](#).

Macron responded angrily, recalling France's ambassador to Italy and describing relations between the 'oldest allies in the continent' and co-founders of the EU as the worst since 1945.

The French government is already impatient with Italy over continued delays to the €8.6 billion Lyon to Turin high speed rail track. But this latest 'spat' is blatantly linked to Di Maio's campaign to win back his own party's flagging support in Italy. It is also aimed at undermining the French president's campaign for a more integrated capitalist Europe.

Di Maio repeated the accusation levelled by his [rival and co-deputy prime minister](#) - Giuseppe Salvini of the far-right 'Lega' party - that France's continued exploitation of former colonies in Africa was behind the exodus of desperate asylum seekers to Europe.

Salvini has also called for the French people to "free themselves of a terrible president", supporting his far-right opponent, Marine Le Pen. Neither leader has much time for the pro-EU Macron.

National tensions in Europe are running high - not least because of declining economies across the continent. Italy has fallen into recession and France is unable to bring its joblessness below 9% (or 21% for young people).

It is the failure of the major economies to make any real recovery in the decade since the crash of 2008 and the crippling austerity policies that have been pursued by Europe's governments, which lie behind the rejection by voters of many older capitalist parties in favour of populist formations of both right and left.

Tensions have developed over the plight of thousands of immigrants fleeing nightmare situations in the Middle East, Africa and Asia within the ruling alliance in Italy and between Italy and France.

The Italian government last year [turned away hundreds of immigrants](#), demanding that France take a share. Macron's government tried to resist.

Already many immigrants have found their way to France. Without a government programme for house building, decent jobs and welfare for all, the far right of Marine Le Pen can gain ground.

Still, all the attempts by the Rassemblement National - the newly rebranded Front National - to shift the debate to so-called "immigration issues" in the gilets jaunes movement have so far failed. The gilets jaunes instinctively understand that their problems are caused by the rich and their servant Macron, not other poor people!

## **Nature of movement**

The European elections in May are already looming and the protests in France are by no means quelled. President Macron and his team have been travelling the country to conduct the so-called "Great Debate".

But it has fallen flat. Practically everything is on the table for discussion. But Macron stipulated in advance that one of the main demands of the mass protests was not up for discussion: the re-imposition of the wealth tax that he had removed.

And this is one of the main demands of the mass protests. Others include the building of 5 million houses and organising for France to leave the European Union ('Frexit').

"The Great Debate is just bla bla bla!" said placards on a gilets jaunes protest in Caen last weekend. At meeting after meeting complaints are heard about the lavish lifestyle of the president and his wife - who famously spends thousands of euros on shoes and had the Elysée Palace redecorated for half a million euros. "They should use paper plates when entertaining visiting heads of state instead of the €50,000 presidential dinner plates that have just been purchased!" shouted one pensioner in Cherbourg.

The glow that may have surrounded this self-styled Napoleon or Jupiter has definitely paled. His approval ratings, which fell below that of Francois Hollande at a similar stage of his last presidency, have recently crept back up to around 34%.

According to journalists, even this is due to a certain rallying of support among the better off layers in society. But his position is by no means secure.

Macron has managed to 'lose' a number of his ministers. He has seen the active membership of his party decline. In parliament last week, when a law to curtail the civil rights of demonstrators was presented, National Assembly members of his own party publicly dissented. An MP of the UDI centre party told parliament: "It's as if we're back under the (Nazi collaborationist) Vichy regime".

There is an unofficial permanent state of emergency at present in France. The police force's so-called defensive weapons - rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear-gas canisters - are responsible for the loss of no less than seventeen eyes and four hands so far in the present 'uprising', as many call it.

## **Political parties**

The majority of people in France still support the gilets jaunes in spite of all this. 13% would vote for specific candidates of the movement.

Some polls in the run-up to the European elections have shown Le Pen's party edging ahead of Macron's. It is also ahead of prominent left-wing figure [Jean-Luc Mélenchon's organisation France Insoumise](#) (France Unbowed). But, as Pauline Bock wrote in the Guardian newspaper on 29 January, among the gilets jaunes, "Le Pen-style anti-immigration rhetoric is not part of their anti-elite pitch".

Now, at least three lists of candidates for the European and local elections next year have emerged from within the gilets jaunes movement.

One of them is known as the Citizens Initiative Rally. A front of pensioners' trade union-associated organisations rails at Macron: "You have chosen to ignore the anger of all the victims of your policies. Policies which make inequalities rocket (explode), worsen tax injustice and deal a lasting blow to the economy of the country... Resign!!"

Some of the gilets jaunes activists have called for a referendum to get rid of the government. But, as John Lichfield wrote in the Observer newspaper on 2 February: "If the referendum asks marginal questions - like 'Should there be fewer French MPs?' - it would seem like a betrayal of [the promise of Macron's 'Great Debate'](#). If it asks explosive questions - 'Should Macron resign?' 'Should he push ahead with his state-shrinking reform programme?' the results could be catastrophic for him".

But, without a clear call for a socialist alternative, the present movement could be losing an historic opportunity for the working class of France to set an example to the rest of Europe.

France Insoumise should not just be applauding the movement, but campaigning to become the voice of the gilets jaunes, developing a programme of clearly socialist demands on the issues they feel so strongly about - including the nationalisation of the banking system and the ecological planning of production, which are popular demands among the gilets jaunes.

The movement is still politically diverse and is generally extremely tolerant of different points of view. There have been initiatives aimed at bringing together representatives from different gilets jaunes collectives like that in Commercy a couple of weeks ago. Many views were aired. But generally lacking is a clear lead to link up with militants in the unions and in the workplaces and to take up clearly anti-capitalist demands.

There are workers at the roundabouts and on the Saturday demonstrations - approaching 'Act XIV' this weekend. They have begun to appear with union banners, and the momentum for strike action may yet develop. The demands are universal, the anger is there, but Macron is still in the saddle.

Even the Financial Times wrote on 26 January of a "broad, anti-Macron, anti-establishment uprising... A mass movement has developed which is opposed to everything he stands for". The article went on to give the stark facts. "France's richest 1% remain by far the biggest winners from Emmanuel Macron's tax policies, even after the emergency measures passed (in December) to appease anti-government protesters... an average rise of 17.5% for the top 30,000".

Macron is a supreme representative of the rich and privileged - he and his 'magouilles' (shenanigans) against the whole of the working class and middle layers in society. But he is on the ropes.

Socialists have a mighty task to encourage the linking up of all the forces ranged against him including within the factories, depots, offices and colleges across the country as well as at the blockades and roundabouts.

## **What to do?**

[Gauche Revolutionnaire](#) (sister party of the Socialist Party - the CWI in France) proposes the sending of representatives elected by assemblies to region and countrywide gatherings at which a clear programme can be hammered out and representatives be democratically elected.

It is both a strength and a weakness of the movement that it does not have a clear, elected leadership. It is one of the reasons the movement is carrying on in the way that it is.

Egalité is the paper of Gauche Revolutionnaire. It takes up and develops the demands of the movement into a programme that exposes the inability of a government based on capitalism to satisfy the needs and demands of the majority - the working class and poor middle class who are at the centre of this struggle.

Egalité proposes demands like a €1,800 minimum wage, jobs and further education for all, prices controlled by democratically elected committees of consumers and workers, nationalisation of the banks and big companies under democratic workers' control and management.

To enable these demands to be implemented and to ensure the planned development and use of resources to protect the future of the planet, capitalism has to be eliminated.

The more the struggles against austerity and exploitation develop, the more this must become the conclusion drawn by the mass of workers and youth in society - at the roundabouts, on the trade union demonstrations, in the schools and universities and in the neglected and impoverished 'banlieus', or people's neighbourhoods.

The movement of the gilets jaunes is in some ways growing, but it is also radicalising. It has [awoken, on the part of millions, a deep will to revolt](#), and even to make a revolution. It has even inspired billions of oppressed people around the world.

They know what they are against. They have begun to express what they are for. The task of galvanising a movement that can truly change the old conditions and open the way to a new, socialist society worldwide has never been more urgent.

---

## **Lindsey oil refinery strike ten-year anniversary**

# **When militant action stopped the 'race to the bottom'**

## **Lessons for workers' struggles today**

**Keith Gibson, Lindsey strike committee member (2009) and Hull Socialist Party**

On the tenth anniversary of the Lindsey Oil refinery strike it's important to reflect on the momentous strike wave waged by 1,000 steel construction workers in opposition to the EU Posted Workers' Directive (PWD).

At the heart of this struggle lay the issue of protecting the NAECI\* agreement - the nationally agreed trade union right to standardised pay, terms and conditions. PWD workers are only entitled to 'minimum' labour standards, not NAECI standards.

In December 2008, [workers were notified that one-third of the jobs at Lindsey would be given to the Italian firm IREM](#) (an anti-union employer).

The PWD was, and still is, [heralded by the bosses to be a right to 'freedom of movement'](#) for all EU workers. Under this guise IREM brought Italian and Portuguese construction workers onto the job.

This 'freedom of movement' immediately set about segregating these overseas workers from their UK brothers.

Their living quarters? An isolated barge in Grimsby docks. Their work? A specified area at Lindsey refinery segregated from UK construction workers. The works bus - for overseas workers only - completed this worker segregation.

Suspicious of a breach in trade union-agreed NAECI pay was sought on many occasions and later confirmed.

The shop stewards called a meeting and advised the workforce to use the set grievance procedures. This was rejected and the workers took control.

A proposal for immediate strike action was overwhelmingly supported. Lindsey construction workers took unofficial strike action beginning on 29 January 2009.

The shop stewards stood down after having been overruled by the unofficial action. In this leadership vacuum IREM bosses continued to utilise the PWD in the hope of dividing the Lindsey workforce along 'nationality' lines in an attempt to weaken NAECI.

The capitalist press all sang in chorus. Labour prime minister Gordon Brown's infamous statement - "British jobs for British workers" - rang out on BBC news bulletins and via the pages of the capitalist press, in the hope of sowing division in the ranks of the Lindsey workforce.

Without any trade union resources to hand, a couple of strikers gave out posters brandishing Brown's statement.

On 2 February the newly formed Lindsey strike committee, including me, moved into action. The committee called for solidarity action on NAECI sites around the country on this same day, with over two dozen major construction sites walking out.

A whole [series of wildcat \(unofficial\) strikes spread](#) like a bolt of lightning throughout the country.

This 'spontaneous' strike wave, as described in the capitalist press, was in reality a collective workers' response from below: to strike in unity against IREM bosses' use of the EU's PWD legislation supported by its 27 capitalist heads of state.

The beginning of this leaderless unofficial strike had seen a few posters with the slogan 'British jobs for British workers'.

However, once the strike developed its own democratically elected strike committee, which pushed me forward as spokesman, things began to change.

The far-right BNP, now emboldened by Brown's nationalistic slogan and whipped up in the media, made the mistake of visiting the picket line. The construction workers didn't waste time in enforcing their eviction notice!

The Brown posters were rapidly replaced by posters and leaflets written in Italian appealing to our European brothers for unity via UK trade union membership, the right to a trade union interpreter, and the right to immediate protection under NAECI pay, terms and conditions.

Lindsey workers won their dispute and all their demands were met! Not one job loss occurred. Equal opportunities to work in the UK were secured via the 'worker strike committee formula' which agreed that: "For every UK worker employed on Lindsey an overseas worker would also be recruited".

Of the 198 construction jobs involved, 102 would go to local, previously unemployed construction workers - none of the migrant workers would lose their jobs for IREM.

Scandalously, the Socialist Workers' Party and some other left groups refused to support the struggle, falsely claiming that the Lindsey strikers were acting against migrant workers.

## **Organisation**

Each morning saw another leaflet produced by the Socialist Party explaining the issues - raising the demands which brought complete workers' unity against IREM bosses and the EU's PWD.

Each morning, alongside other members of the strike committee, I would address the workers and relay the solidarity messages pouring in from workers throughout Europe.

One message carried the invitation from the metal workers' union in Italy asking me to address a trade union workers' conference. To great applause of unity I addressed the conference later that summer.

Yet ten years on, the EU's PWD is still being utilised, still being fought, amid promises of its removal.

In 2016 Unite, echoed by Labour, said any employer recruiting from abroad must ensure the workforce is covered by a proper union or collective bargaining agreement.

Ten years on and the 28 capitalist heads of state, including the Tory May government, continue to implement their austerity and privatisation programme that is pauperising millions throughout the EU - to benefit corporate elites.

The Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party, which could well be in office after the next general election, needs to learn from the Lindsey dispute.

Have faith in the working class to fight back! It is no use appealing to pro-capitalist MPs within the confines of parliament to act benevolently.

Labour, like the Lindsey strikers, needs to mobilise a campaign from below with a leadership that has the bottle to go all the way.

As long as the capitalist elites privately own and control our industries, utilities, banks and financial services, working-class people will continue to come under attack.

Labour needs to rally the trade union movement in the workplaces, on the streets, within our communities, raising the demand for a general election now!

There is a desperate need to politically arm the workers' movement with a [Europe-wide socialist Brexit programme](#) - against the EU's PWD; for trade union rights, repeal of anti-union laws, and defence of migrant workers against its brutal austerity and privatisation that daily pauperises millions to benefit the billionaires!

A socialist Europe, run for and by workers, would act as a mighty beacon of unity for a socialist world that could quickly organise, construct and maintain societies utilising science and technology to meet all our human and environmental needs.

## Postscript

On 11 June 2009 hundreds of Lindsey contract workers [walked out on unofficial and 'illegal' strike action to stop 51 redundancies](#) being imposed by site owner Total (the French oil giant) without consultation or the opportunity to transfer to another contractor.

In an act of defiance, the sacked construction workers burned their dismissal letters outside the refinery.

An elected strike committee, which included Socialist Party members, took the lead in organising the struggle for reinstatement.

Total responded to the unofficial strike by dismissing 647 workers. This forced the hands of the GMB and Unite trade unions to make the strike official.

[After two weeks on strike, Total capitulated](#), withdrew the dismissals and rescinded the 51 redundancies. In addition, all workers were guaranteed a minimum four weeks work.

Once again, militant workers' action had paid off.

---

## Victory to Birmingham bin workers

### Deselect the Blairites!

Kristian Sucilla O'Sullivan, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

Birmingham City Council, also known as the 'Blairite City Council' by many local trade union activists, has been caught red-handed using blacklisting.

The council has targeted refuse and collection workers from Unite the Union who took [industrial action last year to save safety-critical 'grade three' roles](#) from being cut.

Unite has discovered that [the council made secret 'sweetheart payments'](#) - as described by Unite assistant general secretary Howard Beckett - as a 'reward' to refuse workers who did not participate in last year's strike. The recipients were primarily the minority section of staff in the GMB union, who received payments of £4,000 plus each!

This is a clear act of discrimination, sanctioning and, most disgustingly, a tactic of divide and rule.

It is an action clearly designed to weaken the collective force of the union taken by - let's not forget - a Labour council.

This is a Labour council that attempted to obtain a court injunction using Tory anti-union legislation. A Labour council which attempted to use a strikebreaking 'alternative workforce' against union members!

Despite all this, Unite members still offered an olive branch to this anti-worker council. The union stated that, if the council simply made payments of parity so that all bin workers were paid equally, all parties involved could move on and attempt to rebuild the decimated trust between this Labour council and the labour movement.

But Birmingham council was not in any mood to admit to its wrongdoings and make amends. Instead, it tried to shift the blame onto the bin workers, punishing staff by refusing holiday leave.

The council also tried to poison public opinion - attempting to turn the bin workers' own communities against them by utilising contacts in the local media to run hostile, anti-union headlines.

With the council refusing to cooperate with Unite's final peace deal of parity payments, bin workers have been forced to escalate their 'work to rule' action to a full-blown strike starting on 19 February.

## **Wider struggle**

The ordinary working-class and young people of Birmingham are behind the bin workers. We understand this is part of a wider fight to save our public services, as the already striking Birmingham home care workers know all too well.

This is a fight not just for workplace justice but against Tory austerity. It is a fight against all those councillors that do the Tories' dirty work - implementing cuts at local level - no matter the colour of their rosettes.

If these Labour councillors are not prepared to stand up for the working class then they should stand down.

If they won't go willingly, they should face deselection as Labour candidates. They should be replaced with real working-class fighters, drawn from across the trade union and socialist movement - fighters prepared to [take a stand and support a no-cuts budget](#), ending all attacks on workers' rights.

Ultimately, if the same pro-cuts councillors are not removed and instead seek re-election, they should face an anti-cuts challenge at the ballot box.

Workers across Birmingham need councillors who are working-class fighters, prepared to take the battle to one of the weakest Tory governments of all time.

---

# **Heroic RMT guards beat back Northern rail in fight against dangerous driver-only operation**

## **A Northern rail guard**

After 47 days of solid and determined [industrial action in defence of rail safety and jobs](#), a significant breakthrough has occurred in the fight to guarantee a guard on every Northern rail train.

Northern guards were set to strike for the 48th time when news filtered through that Arriva Rail North, the Department for Transport and Transport for the North had agreed a number of concessions.

They confirmed that, for the duration of the current franchise, every train will run with a conductor on board in addition to the driver. In addition, where new or modified rolling stock is being introduced, every train will continue to run with a conductor. The specifics of the operational models and the 'modernised' conductor role will, however, need to be negotiated.

This was a significant shift from the position put just before Christmas, when Arriva Rail North was attempting to force the transport union RMT into a so-called 'independent inquiry' on driver-only operation (DOO) - supported by the Chambers of Commerce and a Tory mayor!

The rail minister has now confirmed government support for a conductor on every Arriva Rail North train, as well as funding to ensure this will result in contractual changes to the franchise agreement. The rotten requirement to run at least 50% of train mileage on the basis of DOO has been scrapped.

This important win has been achieved through the determination and resolve of train guards across the north. There was no slow trickle back to work. The picket lines remained solid.

The financial hit to big business in the urban areas of the north has been significant. The strikes have had a serious effect on the local economy. Despite being inconvenienced, the travelling public has been fully supportive of us in our fight.

Naturally, the instinct of union members is to remain suspicious about the employer's intentions, especially with the key words "safety-critical guard" absent from the agreement.

## **Guard guarantee**

The fact that the 'guard guarantee' only applies until the end of the franchise, and that we may face the same battles in a few years' time, is another concern.

There now needs to be a guarantee from the union negotiators that there will be no concessions agreed on pay, jobs or terms and conditions. Members' meetings should be organised to agree 'red lines' that shouldn't be crossed in the deal - and any proposed deal needs to be voted on by the membership.

Any erosion of our role and responsibilities will not be tolerated. The union's democratically agreed Train Crew Charter must be respected and upheld.

It is vital that guards retain door control and platform train interface responsibilities. The RMT has made it clear throughout the dispute that we would only negotiate on the 'conventional' or 'interim' operational models.

Our 'friends at the front' and drivers' union Aslef reps on Northern have repeatedly stated they will not touch the doors. Let the driver drive and the guard guard.

We've beaten back the rotten Tory government with that 'specialist in failure' Chris Grayling as transport secretary. He wanted to roll out DOO as the default operational model in order to increase profits for spivs and speculators, putting profit before safety.

Following the guards' victory, the German state-owned railway company Deutsche Bahn is looking to sell up its Arriva UK operations.

The begging bowl and bungs from the government can no longer prop up this basket case franchise. It's time to nationalise our railways and bring them under democratic workers' control and management to be run in the interests of the public not shareholders.

The RMT has now won concessions and agreements on Greater Anglia, [Scotrail](#) and [Merseyrail](#). Despite the Tory anti-trade union laws - guards on the South Western franchise have just delivered another whopping mandate to keep up the fight against DOO. RMT members aren't going silently into the night. When we fight we can win.

All 1,400 heroic Northern guards can hold their heads up high for having fought for and retained a safety-critical conductor on all Northern trains. A true inspiration to workers and our class - solidarity!

---

## Fight for a socialist-led PCS - fight to win the national pay campaign

The national executive committee (NEC) of the civil servants' union PCS has voted unanimously to ballot members for action on pay. The ballot will run 18 March to 29 April.

The vote will cover workers in the core civil service and any other groups of workers who have asked to be included. The key demand is a 10% pay rise, to start to undo a decade of austerity, and the return of civil service-wide pay bargaining.

Socialist Party members on the union's NEC supported the call to ballot. Like all reps, we will work tirelessly for a massive 'yes' vote, not just as a referendum on hated Tory austerity, but in order to produce an overwhelming mandate for strike action.

Taking determined action is the only way to defeat a government that will use any excuse to keep civil service pay rises well below inflation, refusing to ever seriously discuss pay with PCS.

The PCS leadership also agreed to a small, but significant, rise in subscriptions, to allocate to the union's strike fund. On top of more than £1 million already allocated, this will provide additional resources to use for longer-duration, targeted action in specific vulnerable areas. This will ramp up pressure on the government, supplementing all-member national strike action. Socialist Party members have stressed the need for both.

This ballot will overlap with national PCS elections, that will determine who sits on the NEC. This year, the post of assistant general secretary (AGS) is also up for election. The [left candidate for AGS is Socialist Party member Chris Baugh](#), a former union rep in Land Registry, who has been re-elected as AGS by members every five years since 2004.

While the next key task is winning the pay ballot and preparing for strike action, it will also be extremely important to have a fighting, socialist PCS leadership, and especially to re-elect Chris. The incoming union leadership, decided by these elections, will control the pay campaign strategy. It is crucial that Chris, a rep since 1976 and a key figure in all civil service-wide strike action since 1981, retains his elected AGS post.

Chris has stood each time as the left candidate, chosen by PCS Left Unity members. Left Unity brings together socialists of all parties and none in PCS, including the Socialist Party.

Despite opposition from PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka, Chris was chosen again by Left Unity members, in the same democratic process that for 20 years has ensured freedom to differ over strategy and tactics but unity around left candidates, to ensure the union's leadership is made up of socialist activists who don't ignore union conference policies or demobilise national campaigns.

Mark Serwotka's decision to ignore Left Unity process, potentially splitting the left, is a grave threat to the unity that union activists need to win the pay ballot. Serwotka, a Left Unity member, previously announced he would respect the results of the democratic Left Unity candidate selection process.

Mark has since totally changed his tune, [backing instead Lynn Henderson](#), a paid PCS official who has never been a PCS activist.

We call on all serious PCS activists, and all anti-austerity campaigners, to unite behind the pay campaign, sparing no effort to galvanise members to vote in the ballot. And to help re-elect Chris Baugh as AGS, alongside a Left Unity-led NEC, that will put the defeat of austerity - be it pay cuts, jobs losses, office closures or further threats to our pensions - at the top of the union's campaigning agenda.

---

## Palace strike

Workers at the beautiful Tower of London, Kensington Palace and Hampton Court were on strike on 6 February [against an attack on their pensions](#). PCS and GMB union members will do the same again on 16 and 21 February.

---

## Glasgow: nationalise the threatened 'Caley' railway depot

**Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland**

Over 200 skilled jobs are threatened by the possible closure of the St Rollox 'Caley' historic railway yard in Springburn, north east Glasgow.

Gemini Rail Services took over the Springburn site in August 2018.

But six months later, closure proposals were announced, with the company understood to want to centralise its maintenance services at a base in the south of England. The general union Unite and RMT transport union both dispute the company's claim that the depot is loss making.

Gemini has rejected costed proposals from the trade unions for work to continue at the site.

In response, Unite and the RMT have launched a public 'rally round the Caley' campaign.

Local Labour MP Paul Sweeney has rightly publicly backed the trade union's calls for nationalisation. The depot was part of nationalised British rail until 1995.

### Socialist Party Scotland says:

- Unite and the RMT should demand Gemini open the books and finances for all their sites, to trade union and workforce scrutiny. Fight all redundancies
- Build a mass trade union-led campaign to 'rally round the Caley' including labour movement mass demonstrations before the consultation period ends, mobilising the local community at the works, and at the Scottish Parliament
- Trade unions should organise mass meetings of the workforce to prepare for mass action to defend the works, including consideration of the tactic of occupation. Appeal to workers and trade unions on the sites in England for support
- The Scottish Government should nationalise the Caley", sack the Gemini and Abellio profiteers and bring Scotland's railway infrastructure into public ownership

- 
- [Read the full article at socialistpartyscotland.org.uk](http://socialistpartyscotland.org.uk)
- 

## Leicester college workers refuse to accept cut in terms and conditions

**Franklin O'Riordan, Leicester East Socialist Party**

"Management has attempted to appeal directly to staff rather than negotiating with elected workplace representatives. This has backfired. It has made more National Education Union (NEU) members all the more

determined to succeed."

This is what Leicester NEU officer Ian Leaver told Socialist Party members when more than 100 defiant workers from education unions NEU and NASUWT were on strike on a chilly morning on 6 February.

Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College in Leicester lowered staff terms and conditions when it merged with Regent College. Redundancy payments have been reduced and payment-protection periods shortened.

The picket lines covered all entrances across the two campuses. Workers are prepared to continue the fight and go further if demands are not met. Additional strikes are planned for 13-14 February, with three more dates after half-term in March.

---

## **Enfield: striking against academisation - fighting for a no-cuts budget**

**Paula Mitchell, London Socialist Party**

Big picket lines, lots of support from parents, lots of solidarity visits from other trade unionists - this has been the scene on each of the four days of strike action taken by National Education Union members at Galliards Primary School in Enfield, north London. They are fighting academisation.

At a public meeting on 7 February, Labour councillors, including the leader of the council, pledged their support for the strike and their opposition to academies. Enfield is an area where there has been ferment in the Labour Party recently. Enfield North Labour Party (a neighbouring parliamentary constituency in the same council area) [voted no confidence in ultra-Blairite MP Joan Ryan](#) and [passed a resolution for a no-cuts council budget](#).

A Socialist Party member suggested the councillors should take a vote in the council chamber against academies. They could call the school governors to account at a scrutiny committee, and they could use their powers to hold a parents' ballot.

This got applause - but the biggest applause was for the call to stop passing on Tory cuts. A councillor was the next to speak, and promised never to vote for cuts again! Strikers and parents talked about attending the council lobby on 27 February, to make sure councillors act on their promises to support them.

- Lobby the council - Wednesday 27 February, 5.30pm, Enfield Civic Centre, Silver St, Enfield EN1 3XA
- 

## **Workplace and union news in brief**

### **Victory confirmed in Glasgow pay strike**

Glasgow council workers in unions Unison and GMB gathered outside the City Chambers on 7 February to celebrate the signing of a [£500 million settlement](#).

A 48-hour strike, [in reality a working-class uprising](#), by 8,000 workers has brought an end to over a decade of equal pay injustice.

Brian Smith, Glasgow Unison branch secretary and Socialist Party Scotland member, said this represents "a huge transfer of wealth to working-class families" and "a seminal victory for the workforce."

- [See more at socialistpartyscotland.org.uk](http://socialistpartyscotland.org.uk)

---

## Bradford bus victimisation beaten

Bradford bus drivers in Unite had agreed to ballot for strike action against victimisation. But a former driver said on Facebook: "Solidarity works."

"Let me share the good news with you all. Shafi and Taj Salam, who were suspended last year in April, have won their appeals."

---

## Hackney union action against cuts and racism

- Unite the Union members in Hackney are taking action...

### School bus pay

Drivers and escorts on school buses have voted to strike over pay. They want to be compensated for working split shifts.

They lost these allowances when 'single status' pay deregulation was introduced. The Socialist Party warned this would mean cuts.

### Angry about racism? Get the sack

The Unite branch equalities officer, Natasha Johnson, has been sacked. Natasha correctly raised concerns about racism at the council's housing call centre.

In response, the council has dismissed Natasha on the basis that by making the accusation, Natasha has harassed the managers accused of racism!

There is no basis whatsoever for the allegations against Natasha, so the union is preparing a consultative ballot of members across Hackney council.

### Traffic wardens strike

Traffic wardens are balloting for strike action so their pay can rise above the London Living Wage of £10.55 an hour.

In Camden, the two-week strike of parking attendants in Unison was [boosted by a protest on 9 February](#).

---

## Tanker pilots strike

Pilots who guide huge oil tankers through Milford Haven Waterway in Wales will strike on 19 February against the imposition of less secure, less generous two-tier pensions. So far, Unite has implemented an overtime ban, already impacting ships.

---

## Irish nurses march

45,000 people marched through Dublin on 9 February in support of nurses and midwives, according to their union INMO.

Nurses in Ireland are striking for a 12% pay rise (see ['Historic strike of nurses in Ireland'](#)).

As we go to press, strike action has been halted while nursing unions consider recommendations from the Labour Court.

---

## Home care doorstep

Unison-organised home care workers in Birmingham, [striking against vicious pay cuts by the Blairite council](#), went door knocking in the Shard End ward of council leader Ian Ward.

They delivered leaflets on 9 February and asked voters to sign a letter to Ward protesting against the council's attacks on home care workers.

---

## Woolwich Ferry forced to strike again

31 Woolwich Ferry workers are balloting for strike action, from 14 February to 6 March, over pay, health and safety, and lack of staffing.

The employers have refused to grant the workers a 6% pay increase, imposed new duties, failed to deal with safety concerns, and the service lacks the adequate number of staff to operate.

In 2017, [the same workers were on strike over bullying and health and safety](#).

---

## Southampton: Labour plans £15m cuts - vote Socialist in Coxford by-election

**Sue Atkins, Socialist Party candidate, Southampton council Coxford ward by-election**

In Southampton, the Labour council is proposing £15 million cuts to services. They threaten 134 jobs and propose the closure of Glen Lee and Holcroft House, council-run care homes.

There is a crisis in our schools too. Southampton Council faces opposition from the local branches of general union Unite, public service union Unison, and the National Education Union (NEU).

At local schools in Coxford - Sinclair primary school has lost £58,800 - £301 per pupil - between 2012 and 2020.

Oasis Academy Lordshill has lost £343,900 - £566 per pupil - over the same period. That means larger class sizes, cutting subjects like art and music, and losing teaching assistants and admin staff.

Before Christmas, 100 parents, staff and supporters attended an NEU meeting at Valentine Primary School.

Like similar meetings around the city, there was a clear call for an immediate end to further cuts.

Instead of backing further cuts, Southampton Labour should set a legal, balanced, no-cuts budget using the council's reserves and borrowing powers.

We want our £136 million stolen by the government back, and the council must [link up with the unions to mobilise a fight](#) for it.

Reverse the cuts and give us back our council homes, our care homes, our day and respite services, our youth service, our council bus service, our home care service, the 1,000 jobs that have gone.

Such a stand would gain huge public support locally and beyond, and put enormous pressure on this weak and divided Tory government.

But right now, Southampton Council is increasingly isolated. There's not a lot of support out there for a council destroying our services.

And there will be consequences. If Labour councillors continue to claim that nothing can be done, they must expect to be challenged at the local elections on 2 May by those prepared to fight.

Furthermore, by doing the dirty work of the Tories, Labour councillors undermine Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity project, and risk failure in a general election.

That is why I am [standing in Southampton's Cxford ward by-election](#) on 14 March for the Socialist Party, appearing on the ballot paper as 'Socialist Alternative Putting People First'.

---

## **Newham: women's refuge funds halved - Labour must use the £500m reserves**

**Mary Finch, East London Socialist Party**

Newham's all-Labour council will decide which services will have their funding axed in its 2019-20 budget on 18 February.

Rokhsana Fiaz, the east London borough's new 'Corbynista' mayor, has 'consulted' the local community on what to prioritise.

She's pledged millions of pounds for care staff, youth services, and free meals for primary school children. These are all vital services which the Socialist Party has always fought to defend.

But where in her so-called "people's budget" is [the commitment to end cuts](#)?

Newham has the highest level of homelessness in England, according to homelessness charity Shelter. Workers have endured devastating poverty and attacks on pay and conditions in the past ten years.

While the Labour council selectively invests with one hand, it destroys public services with the other.

Council funding for women's refuges more than halved from 2010 to 2017 under the previous mayor, hated Blairite Robin Wales. In the same period, the number of domestic and sexual violence cases heard by Newham's 'Marac' safeguarding body has doubled!

Newham Council had £519 million in usable reserves at the time of its last financial statement in March. The 2017-18 budget set under Wales was at pains to stipulate that using this money was impossible because it's 'non-sustainable'.

But Labour councils are already running down reserves to deal with budgetary problems - while still making cuts.

If they mobilised local unions behind no-cuts budgets to demand more funding from central government, they could stop the cuts and replenish their reserves.

Labour's shadow chancellor John McDonnell should also pledge to underwrite all costs incurred by no-cuts council budgets.

This would encourage councils and make austerity unworkable - but councils can and must fight either way.

The Socialist Party has consistently fought for an immediate end to the cuts. We stood four no-cuts candidates against councillors who backed school privatisation in last year's council elections in Newham.

We call on Rokhsana Fiaz to set a real "people's budget" - one which uses reserves and borrowing to end austerity, and builds a campaign for funding to provide all the jobs, homes and services workers and young people desperately need.

---

## **Arrest Brigadier Fernando - defend the right to protest**

**Isai Priya, Tamil Solidarity**

Tamil Solidarity organised a protest outside Westminster Magistrates' Court on 1 February, demanding the immediate arrest of Brigadier Priyanka Fernando.

Fernando is [a war criminal who made a death threat](#) - a throat-slitting gesture - only feet away from peaceful protesters outside the Sri Lankan High Commission a year ago.

Among us were victims of [the war which ended in 2009](#). Fernando was a commander in the forces responsible for the disappearance or murder of over 100,000 Tamils, including by throat slitting.

On 4 February 2018, Tamil Solidarity organised a protest on Sri Lankan independence day. We wanted to expose the hypocrisy of the government celebrating independence while at the same time continuing attacks on workers, minorities including Tamils, and oppressed people in Sri Lanka.

It was during this protest that the then defence attaché made the threat in a bid to silence us. A video of the incident went viral, with more than 76,000 views on the Tamil Solidarity YouTube channel.

Tamil Solidarity activists filed a complaint with the local police. A case was taken up against the brigadier which resulted in Westminster magistrates issuing an arrest warrant, without bail, on 25 January.

However, the warrant was then withdrawn due to pressure from the UK Foreign Office. The reason given is that the brigadier has "diplomatic immunity."

The case has now been reopened, and Socialist Party member Paul Heron, a lawyer and supporter of Tamil Solidarity, is arguing the case for the arrest of Fernando.

Tamil Solidarity demands the release of all political prisoners in Sri Lanka. Also an end to bosses and their politicians in Britain using their court system to protect war criminals.

Socialist Party members took part in the 1 February protest, and highlighted that the actions of Fernando and the withdrawal of the arrest warrant are part of overall attacks on the right to protest.

The fight for democratic rights is linked to the fight against the Tory government and the capitalist system it defends.

The case has been adjourned until 1 March, and Tamil Solidarity and Socialist Party members will be protesting again outside the court - join us.

- Protest: Friday 1 March at 10am, Westminster Magistrates' Court, 181 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5BR
-

# Why I joined: "why is their life so different from mine?"

Sasha Zhukov, Reading Socialist Party

Well, I guess it all starts from when I was growing up in care in Glasgow.

I had always seen what wealthy people have, and what went through my mind was: why can't we have this for everyone? Why do some people have more than others, and why is their life so different from mine?

By my late teens I just saw the world as being unfair, and 'justice' being dished out by the rich ones who think they're better than the rest of us. I became a member of an anti-fascist group.

It was when I was in college for the second time, to study animal care, that a good friend of mine mentioned that what I was saying was the same as Karl Marx. I asked her, "who the bloody hell is he?"

She told me to [read the Communist Manifesto](#), so I did. It turns out I had been thinking a lot of what Marx was saying all those years ago.

When I left Scotland, I saw myself as a Marxist, someone who keeps seeking truth in the world. I moved to Reading.

But I went to ground, and felt I was lost - until, at Reading Pride, I was given a flyer for the Socialist Party.

I looked into it. This was a way of expressing my ideas about everyone getting a fair hand in life. I was welcomed by the Reading branch with open arms, and was fascinated by my first meeting of the party.

Now I stand on campaign stalls with my new comrades, to fight the austerity of this blood-hungry government.

It was a new way to fight for me, someone who had been accustomed only to force, to letting fur fly. So thank you for taking the time to read this story from a Glasgow boy.

- [Join at socialistparty.org.uk/join](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join)

---

## New pamphlet: 1919 - Red Flag over the Clyde

**Pamphlet launch to celebrate centenary:**

- With author Jim Cameron

**Thursday 7th February, 7pm, Piper Whiskey Bar, room upstairs, 57 Cochrane St, George Square, Glasgow, G1 1HL**

**Organised by Socialist Party Scotland. A Glasgow Equal Pay striker will also speak at the meeting.**

---

On Friday 31st January 1919, tens of thousands of workers gathered in Glasgow's George Square as their struggle for a 40 hour working week came to a climax.

In response to this massive display of strength and solidarity, and in anticipation of the workers' reaction to the final refusal of the bosses to accede to their demands, the authorities, acting on behalf of the bosses, mobilised thousands of police in an attempt to cower the workers and beat them into submission.

What followed was a full frontal confrontation between the organised working class and the state. The police charged the crowd with bayonets drawn and the workers, in response, uprooted the palings around the square and used them as weapons to defend themselves.

This event was to become known as "The Battle of George Square", and passed into working class folklore. Eventually the government authorised military force against the workers and that evening there were troops and tanks on the streets of Glasgow.

To commemorate the momentous events of Red Clydeside and to draw out some of the key lessons for today, Socialist Party Scotland has produced a new pamphlet: 1919 - Red Flag over the Clyde.

Authored by Jim Cameron, and reworked and extended from his pamphlet of the same name for Scottish Militant Labour in 1993, this is a contribution to the seismic events that shook Glasgow and the west of Scotland from 1914 to 1919.

A section of the pamphlet is dedicated to the ideas and struggles of the outstanding Scottish Marxist John Maclean, who played a decisive role in the Red Clydeside movement.

- The pamphlet is available for £3 from Socialist Party Scotland.
- Contact 0792 734 2060, [info@socialistpartyscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@socialistpartyscotland.org.uk) , for more info and to buy the pamphlet.

---

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 6 February 2019 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in *The Socialist*.

---

## Celebrating Robert Burns 1759-1796

### A revolutionary poet

**Brent Kennedy, Carlisle Socialist Party**

For the seventh year running Carlisle Socialist Party held a very successful and enjoyable Alternative Burns Night.

To get 30 people at a socialist cultural event in January in such a small town would be good, but over 60 people, including music lovers and much of the local left, came together for a really great night of songs, poems, music and politics lasting five hours!

Local band "Now and Again" played traditional Scottish and Irish jigs and reels, Nikki from Langholm went through decades of pop and John from Dumfries sang "The socialist ABC".

Members of the audience sang "Green grow the rushes-o", "Parcel of rogues in a nation" or recited "To a mouse" (which is not about Burns making a mouse homeless but about his fear of imminent eviction and destitution) and a poem penned by a survivor of the 1819 Peterloo massacre.

The Barton family performed a miracle of feeding everyone either haggis, neeps and tatties, or two veggie options, or this year also vegan.

It's safe to say that the speech about the life of Burns, the "Immortal Memory" address, was not the orthodox kind. It busted the myths spread after his death in a deliberate character assassination paid for by the Tory Home Secretary.

Burns was an active revolutionary democrat who opposed bigotry, racism and slavery, an enemy of the Hanoverian monarchy, a patriot to the people and an internationalist who supported the American and French revolutions. That's why the secret police drove him to his death.

Afterwards a "friend" burned a quarter of his writings and the literary establishment and state first vilified him and later sanitised and sentimentalised him.

For 200 years they suppressed his authorship of revolutionary poems published anonymously attacking the Tory Pitt dictatorship, which was fighting the French Revolution and the "swinish multitude" in France and in Britain.

After hearing this the whole audience sang his anthem of class struggle, ending in:

*"For a' that, an a' that,*

*It's coming yet for a' that,*

*That man to man, the world o'er,*

*Shall brothers be for a' that."*

As a low paid public-sector worker, Burns used his little money to buy four cannon for the [French revolutionaries](#). We'll use the Fighting Fund money from this night to help fund the Socialist Party.

---

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 6 February 2019 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

---

## **Housing campaign Shac backs strikes and calls for fire assessments**

**Paul Kershaw, chair, Unite the Union housing workers' branch**

On a freezing wet evening, an impressive range of tenant and resident activists met at a Social Housing Action Campaign (Shac) open meeting in London on 29 January.

Shac stems from an initiative by the Unite union's housing workers' branch. The meeting took a report of a dispute in which workers at housing association Peabody took encouragement from the support of resident groups in achieving a 100% vote for strike action and winning their dispute.

In a wide-ranging discussion on housing policy, there was general agreement that Jeremy Corbyn's aspirations to support mass council house building and tenant rights mark an important and welcome turn away from Blairite housing policy. But this needs to be turned into specific policies and action.

There were reports of recent Shac activities including a successful 'Alternative Housing Awards' and a protest at the London Assembly meeting which questioned housing association bosses.

The chief executives failed to impress. The boss of housing association Catalyst said he had derecognised unions in order to listen to his staff! Staff said their repairs were bad because of staff shortages - so why is he squeezing pay, terms and conditions?

Catalyst had also not shared fire risk assessments with residents, despite been widely urged to do this in the wake of [the Grenfell disaster](#) - because residents would apparently not be capable of understanding them!

On the day of the meeting, the government information commissioner made a request to extend her powers, partly because of housing associations' failure in this area.

The [Shac website](#) includes material for residents seeking to obtain fire risk assessments for their homes.

---

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 5 February 2019 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

---

## 300 turn out for Corbyn in Nottingham marginal

**Reece Lawton, Nottingham Socialist Party**

300 people attended a Broxtowe Labour Party meeting in Nottingham with Jeremy Corbyn on 31 January. Labour's Greg Marshall is seeking to unseat Tory MP Anna Soubry in the next general election.

I managed to get my way through to the meeting's trade union roundtable discussion, to put forward the demand for trade union rights in the gig economy - and the repealing of all anti-union laws, rather than just the latest one as put forward in Labour's last manifesto.

This met with unanimous approval, and was communicated to Jeremy Corbyn himself when he had a brief chat with the table. At the end, Corbyn gave a speech.

He had met May about Brexit on 30 January because parliament had taken 'no deal' off the table. He said he told her he wanted a customs union, access to markets, and rights for EU migrants.

Despite references to a general election, there was no talk of how to bring one about. The Socialist Party says Corbyn and the unions should force one by calling mass action.

The meeting was friendly, and we sold 19 copies of the Socialist.

---

## Liverpool: 200 march to commemorate Robert Tressell

**Neill Dunne, Liverpool Socialist Party**

Around 200 people marched in Liverpool in memory of Robert Noonan - better known by his pen name Tressell - on the anniversary of his death, Sunday 3 February.

The event in remembrance of the celebrated author of '[The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists](#)' was organised by the Robert Tressell Memorial group and Walton Constituency Labour Party.

The march began at Noonan Close and went passed Walton Jail, up to the main entrance of the Rice Lane City Farm where Tressell is buried.

Born in Dublin 1870, he moved to London where he wrote one of the most famous working-class novels in history, known around the world.

It depicts the conditions of painters, decorators and workmen in Edwardian England, and the discussions they had on the job regarding [the class exploitation we still clearly face](#).

Noonan died in Liverpool on 3 February 1911 at the age of 41. He died broke, and was buried in a pauper's grave along with 12 others.

The cemetery is now also a farm and has visitors from far afield, making the pilgrimage to see the grave of the famous workers' author Robert Tressell.

Corbynista MP Dan Carden said a few words, followed by local activists with a rendition of the world socialist anthem, the Internationale.

---

# 'Spot' conference opposes authoritarianism in Turkey

London Socialist Party members participated in the annual 'Solidarity with the People of Turkey' conference, standing against growing authoritarianism in Turkey.

Chris Baugh, assistant general secretary of civil service union PCS and Socialist Party member, spoke in the workers' rights session.

**London Socialist Party**

---

## Film: 'Green Book' by Peter Farrelly

# A timely reminder of racism in the USA

**Clare Wilkins, Nottingham Socialist Party**

The film has been called a buddy/road trip film in the tradition of 'Driving Miss Daisy'. But it is much more than that and yet, perhaps, less than it could be. Still I highly recommend it.

Based on a true story, Italian-American bouncer, Tony ("Tony Lip") Valulonga (played by Viggo Mortensen) is hired by African-American pianist Dr Don Shirley (Mahershala Ali) to drive him on a tour of America's Deep South with two other musicians in his trio in the early 1960s. A white man employed by a black man in America's Deep South; what could go wrong?

The Green Book of the film title is taken from 'The Negro Travellers Green Book,' published by Harlem mailman Victor Hugo Green from 1936 to 1966.

This was during [the era of the Jim Crow laws](#), which enforced racial segregation in the American south until 1965 and the civil rights movement. The guide was to services and places relatively friendly to black people.

Tony is given a copy by Dr Shirley's record company. His wife, Dolores, asks him if it is for "travelling while black" - referencing a spate of white people calling the police on blacks doing ordinary things in public in recent years.

Don Shirley was a classical and jazz pianist and composer. His mum, who was born in Jamaica, taught him to play the spinet when he was two and they used to busk in New York.

He was 'discovered' and was the first black student at the Leningrad Conservatory of Music. He was feted as a performer by liberal white Americans, including John and Bobby Kennedy.

Don decided to tour the south because of segregation but seems to have had little idea about the lives of black working-class southerners.

The film deals with a number of incidents of segregation and the Jim Crow laws, which are upsetting, but these do not dominate the film. I'm sure that the trip must have had more incidents.

Viggo Mortensen says that the aim was to make a film that pointed out the realities of the history of racism in America but also a film that a range of people would go to see.

Don is not able to stay in the hotels he plays in or eat in their restaurants. In the end he refuses to play his final concert because he is not allowed to eat in the hotel restaurant.

On the whole it is an uplifting film about how getting to know someone can help stop individual prejudice. Tony is an employee and all the other employees he encounters are black people employed by white people. The film shows that they have a lot in common underneath.

When Don gets beaten up in a bar and Tony is angry, Don says: "If I went to a bar in your neighbourhood, would it be any different?", pointing out that racism is pervasive in America.

The film is a timely reminder of racism in the USA before the civil rights movement and how much was achieved by that struggle - as well as how far we still have to go.

In the era of Trumpism, some have said that the Green Book should be revived. But what is needed is not a guide to safely living as a black person in racist America, but working-class struggle to end racism and the capitalist system which perpetuates it.

---

## **Non-fiction: 'This is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of a Junior Doctor' by Adam Kay**

### **Comedy and tragedy judiciously mixed**

I think this is like several works of 'flash fiction' in one book (except that it is non-fiction) and the diary format enables the writer to do that.

The anecdotes elicit a range of responses. Some of them will cause you to piss yourself laughing (incontinence pads are available).

Others will make you think about the ridiculous hours junior hospital doctors are working and wonder whether this is good for patient safety (it would seem not). The argument that 'it was ever thus' gets short shrift.

There are stories which will simply make you wince on behalf of the patients and some that are heart-breaking as well.

I enjoyed reading this book and I will not be giving any spoilers. I would just suggest that Adam Kay doesn't become an advertising copywriter for Jack Daniels or a bodyguard for Jeremy Hunt.

Adam Kay defends the NHS against the privatisers and he does it in a witty and engaging way.

**Derek McMillan, Brighton Socialist Party**

---

## **The Socialist inbox**

Letters to the Socialist's editors.

### **Do you have something to say?**

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

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

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

---

## **Tory fake news**

Britain's leading apologist for the government's divisive 'anti-terrorist' Prevent strategy, Will Baldet, once again showed his contempt for democracy when he recently mangled the truth on Channel 4's evening news programme.

Mr Baldet chose to misrepresent the truth, in order to belittle the validity of two democratic votes that had led to both education workers and students opposing the Prevent strategy.

Baldet said: "The NUT (National Union of Teachers - now the National Education Union) had to redo their votes, recount their votes because it was so close.

"The NUS (National Union of Students) did not even vote, they just passed the motion because they ran out of time..."

So, let's set a few matters straight. First of all, in 2016, the NUT did undertake a democratic vote at its national conference, and did decide to oppose the Prevent strategy.

There was, however, no recount. Baldet was probably thinking of a similar vote that was passed by the University and College Union (UCU) at its 2016 annual conference.

In that instance there was a recount, but exactly what is Baldet implying? Does he think that for a democratic decision to be meaningful it has to be backed by a super-majority of delegates? This is complete nonsense.

A vote was taken, and a motion was passed in the best traditions of trade union democracy.

Baldet then added that the NUS "did not even vote" when it came to opposing the Prevent strategy. But to date, neither he nor any of his friends in government has presented any public evidence that backs up this strange claim. This is because he is wrong.

**Mike Barker, Leicester**

---

## **Private failure...**

In the privatised railways, failure is absolutely thriving. Punctuality is at its lowest level in 13 years, and 2017-18 saw the first annual fall in passenger numbers in eight years.

The decline in passenger numbers has led to a decline in the net premiums paid by the privateers to the government, dropping from £700 million in 2016-17 to £400 million in 2017-18.

Moreover, last year the government paid these companies £3.8 billion in direct support - a rise of 8% in 12 months!

An analysis by the Times confirmed over 35,000 train services were cancelled last year due to the lack of available crew, a fivefold increase in six years.

Mick Whelan, leader of the train drivers' union Aslef, stated: "These figures show just how bad some of the services would have been if Aslef members hadn't gone above and beyond by working overtime".

Apart from his members having to work excessive shift patterns, what an opportunity - an overtime ban - thrown away by the Aslef leadership which could have provided vital support to the RMT union's safety campaign to retain guards on trains!

**John Merrell, Leicester**

---

## **...Public misery**

The busy Gospel Oak to Barking railway line in north east London is a byword for commuter misery.

Passengers are literally hard-pressed; having to squeeze into two-carriage diesel trains running four an hour - down from five after the private leasing company took two trains back.

The line was meant to have introduced last spring new four-carriage overhead electric trains but the manufacturer Bombardier has failed to deliver on time due to 'software problems'. Drivers have yet to start training.

Meanwhile the leasing company is set to withdraw all its trains by April 2019, which will collapse the entire line.

Transport for London, which took over running the line in 2005, has no idea when the electric trains will be introduced and now is scrambling around for trains to plug the gap.

Yet another example of the utter failure of rail privatisation which ensures that there is no integrated rail network but only travelling misery.

**Simon Carter, East 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**

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

---

---

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/28691>