

Tories retreat: now drive them out!

Eleanor Donne

"There is no reverse gear when it comes to our education reforms" said Tory education secretary Nicky Morgan at the NASUWT teachers' union conference on 26 March.

However, the government appears to have not only found reverse but screeched into a full-on handbrake turn - announcing on the day after the local elections that it is abandoning forcing every state school to become an academy.

With the NUT teachers' union about to ballot for strike action and calling for joint campaigns and action with the junior doctors, the prospect of having to simultaneously take on take on both groups of workers may well have prompted the government's u-turn on academies.

There was also growing resentment among Tory county councils at the government's intention to remove schools' local accountability including parent governors, with one Oxfordshire county councillor complaining "they've all gone bonkers".

Cameron's government has been one of retreats - defeated in the House of Lords on extending Sunday trading hours, a backbench rebellion over refusing to accept unaccompanied child refugees, Osborne's reversal on tax credit cuts, and Iain Duncan Smith's resignation following a 'crisis of conscience' over cuts to disabled benefits.

They are deeply divided over the European Union referendum. They didn't do as well as they had hoped in the local elections in England (or Labour didn't do as badly). And they lost the London mayoral election to Labour following racist slurs in what Sayeeda Warsi, former Tory party chair, called "our appalling dog whistle campaign".

The junior doctors' determination to reject imposed and unfair new contracts has forced Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt to new talks. But they should not be left to fight alone - especially as they are fighting to defend our NHS.

We need to press home this advantage by campaigning for coordinated strike action - including a 24-hour general strike - to defend all our public services and to build a powerful anti-austerity movement. This could not only lead to more government u-turns on student nurse bursaries, housing benefit cuts, and more, but force the Tories to call an early general election.

No to the bosses' EU, yes to international solidarity

For an independent workers' voice

The debate on European Union (EU) membership has been reduced in the establishment media to a clash between different wings of the Tory party.

It's Cameron versus Boris, they say. Two old Etonians - with another ex-public schoolboy, Nigel

Farage, in the ring too.

But what about if you're outside the 1% elite? Struggling to get by on low wages, a zero-hour contract maybe, or facing soaring rents and underfunded public services? Who's campaigning for our interests in the debate?

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) - which includes the Socialist Party - is arguing for a leave vote in June's EU referendum.

We stand in the tradition of the late Bob Crow, leader of transport union RMT and co-founder of TUSC. He was well-known for his support for international workers' solidarity, while opposing the EU as a body that pushes anti-worker, pro-austerity policies.

TUSC's core policies include renationalising the railways, Royal Mail and other privatised public services, industries and utilities. We stand for defending the right to asylum and opposing racist immigration controls. And we want democratic public ownership of the banks and major companies.

None of these policies are compatible with EU treaties. So why should we give a vote of confidence to EU laws and institutions - which, as Greece has shown, will be used to try and block socialist policies?

TUSC stands for real internationalism. Many of our problems - from economic stagnation, endless wars, the appalling treatment of refugees, to planet-threatening global warming - can only be solved at an international level.

If society remains organised as it is today, divided into competing nations by the capitalist profit system which the EU helps maintain, the prospects for humanity will be bleak indeed.

But that's why we need a socialist Europe. Not the 'Employers' Union' that is the EU, with its austerity agenda.

Voting to leave on 23 June is a step towards defeating a weak and divided Tory government. This would aid the building of a movement that can unite workers across Europe to fight for a different world.

Read more about why workers should vote Leave at www.socialistcase4exit.eu

Teachers force Tory academies u-turn

James Kerr, National Union of Teachers rep (personal capacity)

Tory education secretary Nicky Morgan's zig-zag over academies is a testament to the campaign work spearheaded by the National Union of Teachers (NUT). But the threat to teachers' pay and conditions still stands.

Morgan boasted there was "no reverse gear" when it came to forced academisation of schools. On 6 May, that was proven to be incorrect. She announced that not all schools would immediately be forced to become academies.

This is a victory for the NUT. Undoubtedly the threat of industrial action in defence of teachers' pay and conditions was a key part of this.

It is also another sign of the weakness and division within the Tory party. Many MPs and council leaders, especially in the Tory shires, balked at the idea of 'their good and outstanding schools' being

taken away from them. This should be welcomed.

But Defence Secretary Michael Fallon told the BBC on 7 May that "it's not a u-turn on academies, that is still the aim. We want every school to be an academy in the next five years." The more astute Tory strategists see this only as a tactical retreat. They hope to sneak academies through one by one instead.

And the Department for Education has explained that regional education commissioners can still force individual schools or authorities into academy status. The criteria are 'underperformance', or a 'critical mass' of academised schools in the authority.

As NUT general secretary Christine Blower put it in the Huffington Post: "This is the third major education u-turn by government... in a month."

But she also rightly said that "the threat to state education in England has not gone away... The NUT's job will not be complete until we have finally lifted the threat to teachers' jobs, pay and conditions."

There is still no protection for teachers' pay and conditions, and our ballot for national strike action must continue. Let's press the advantage, build for a 'yes' vote to strike action, and force the Tories back.

What we are striking for

- National collective bargaining on pay and conditions in all schools and academies
- Pending a new collective bargaining structure, pay and all other terms and conditions no worse than in the 'School teachers' pay and conditions document' (STPCD) and 'Burgundy Book'
- Significant improvement in conditions, in particular a limit on class sizes: no more than 30 in the first instance
- Reduction in workloads, in particular through limitation on marking, data handling and planning
- Reintroduction of 'pay portability', the 'pay spine points', fixed pay scales - and ending the requirement for all pay progression to be performance related
- Significant improvement in measures to ensure teacher retention, including security of employment

TUSC announces '20-city tour': the socialist case against the EU

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has released the initial dates of a 20-city tour it is hosting in May and June under the heading 'The socialist case against the EU'.

Dave Nellist, the chair of TUSC, was a Labour MP until 1992. He was first elected to parliament in 1983 on a Labour Party manifesto that called for exit from the EU, then the European Economic Community.

Dave said: "The experiences of workers in countries like Greece make it even more clear than it was in 1983 that the EU is an 'Employers' Union', acting in the interests of big business against the working class.

"I campaigned in the past alongside labour movement leaders like Tony Benn and Bob Crow against the EU, and I'm proud that TUSC is carrying on that struggle today."

TUSC recently campaigned for the Electoral Commission not to give political authority and substantial

taxpayers' resources to the Tory and Ukip-dominated Leave organisations. The response to this confirmed the importance of conducting an independent working class socialist campaign for an exit vote.

We weren't able to convince the Electoral Commission. But the backing for our petition - and the media coverage by what the BBC called our "surprise bid" to be the official campaign - shows a socialist case against the EU can get a hearing.

Now, the TUSC national steering committee has agreed to organise a 20-city tour of TUSC-hosted meetings. There will be speakers from TUSC's constituent organisations - transport union RMT, the Socialist Party and the SWP.

Other trade unions and socialist groups that take a Leave position will join us.

The following dates have been agreed so far

- May 18: Derby
- May 19: Leicester
- May 25: Gateshead
- May 31: Bristol
- June 1: Birmingham
- June 2: Coventry and London
- June 7: Leeds, Salford and Southampton
- June 9: Cardiff
- June 14: Liverpool
- June 15: Warrington
- June 16: Stoke

Read more about why workers should vote to leave at www.socialistcase4exit.eu

After Hillsborough verdict...

Independent inquiry into Orgreave now!

Simon Carter

"It's time for a public inquiry into the policing of the miners' strike (1984-85), not just Orgreave and the role of the police, but also the role of politicians. We need to look at the wider context of the way the police were used and the agenda set for them by government."

Surprisingly this comment is from Sir Peter Fahy, former chief constable of Greater Manchester Police. Fahy says the politicisation of police under Thatcher created a culture of class hatred, as shown in the police response at the 1989 Hillsborough stadium disaster.

It was on 18 June 1984 when thousands of riot police, many on horseback, brutally attacked a mass picket of striking miners at the Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire. Orgreave was one of many police assaults on striking miners and mining communities during the year-long strike.

Hundreds of miners on that day were injured, some seriously. Many were arrested, and 95 charged with 'unlawful assembly'. The subsequent trial of these miners collapsed after six weeks because the police evidence was unreliable.

There is plentiful evidence of police assaulting striking miners, and subsequently perverting the course of justice and committing perjury. Despite this, the so-called Independent Police Complaints Commission said last year it would not pursue a criminal investigation into police actions "because of the passage of time".

That decision amounted to a whitewash of the role of South Yorkshire Police, and indeed the Tory government. Thatcher's aim was to crush the strike by the National Union of Mineworkers, in order to break organised workers' resistance to pit closures and privatisation.

Violence

The violence perpetrated by South Yorkshire police at Orgreave, which has gone unpunished, was one in a string of disgraceful and potentially criminal actions. These include the Hillsborough football stadium tragedy in 1989, with 96 dead. And covering up the child sex abuse scandal in Rotherham between 2007 and 2010.

In a further development, Hayley Court, a former media specialist for South Yorkshire police, says she was pressured to "spin" coverage of the Hillsborough inquests in favour of the police.

Dave Jones, the new interim head of South Yorkshire Police - after the suspension of David Crompton following the Hillsborough inquest verdict that police unlawfully killed 96 victims - has offered Orgreave justice campaigners "a hearing".

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign has long fought for a full and independent public inquiry into the 'Battle of Orgreave'. The Socialist Party backs this campaign.

Blair played matchmaker between Saudi oil barons and Chinese dictators

Former prime minister Tony Blair played matchmaker with the Chinese dictatorship for Saudi royalty's oil concerns.

According to a Guardian exposé, the blood-soaked Middle East 'peace envoy' earned £41,000 a month plus commission from the arrangement. There was some suggestion this could have been against financial regulations.

According to the arcane rules of high finance, Blair is not "authorised" to broker deals, but only to "open doors". In the end, the Financial Services Authority found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Legal or no, the figurehead of Labour's Toryisation made more per month from it than most workers do per year. And legal or no, Blair's wars in the Middle East laid the groundwork for his influence with oil producers.

What we saw

The director of hit historical drama Wolf Hall slammed Tory attacks on the BBC with his Bafta acceptance speech. Peter Kosminsky said government cuts would "eviscerate" the Beeb and Channel 4.

Kosminsky also compared Tory threats to the state broadcaster's independence to "those bastions of

democracy Russia and North Korea".

He received a standing ovation for his remarks.

The Federation of Entertainment Unions, including performers' union Equity, technicians' union Bectu and the National Union of Journalists, has proposed an 'alternative white paper'. However, union leaders have yet to link their 'Love It or Lose It' BBC campaign to effective industrial action.

Them & Us

Toy story

Royal sprog Princess Charlotte has received a golden rattle for her first birthday. Rubies, diamonds and sapphires pick out a Union Jack on the 18-karat, £30,000 white gold 'toy'.

It's a gift from a firm in the United States. The Socialist seems to recall that nation fighting a revolutionary war to be rid of the establishment Charlotte involuntarily represents.

But these days, the monarchy is a tool of the same establishment interests which control the US: capitalism. Small wonder that super-rich Chinese 'Communist' dictator Xi Jinping also paid tribute - in his case, with silk figurines.

Even by the government's own massaged statistics, 2.3 million UK children were living in relative poverty last June. In the same month, anti-monarchy group Republic estimated that royalty costs the taxpayer £334 million a year.

That's enough for £145 of birthday and Christmas presents for every child in the UK in poverty. Of course, food bank-reliant parents will likely want to feed them first.

Khan you believe it?

A disused garage in west London has sold for £466,000.

That's £182,000 more than the average UK house price. The Hammersmith home-to-be even brought in £58,000 more than the London average.

Perhaps the capital's new Labour mayor will take effective action to end our spiralling housing crisis? If form's anything to go by, the answer can only be no.

Sadiq Khan, the staunchly anti-Corbyn Blairite former minister, took almost £30,000 in donations from two parasite landlords.

£10,000 came from a Mancunian firm which magistrates fined £14,000 for breaching tenant safety rules. And £19,900 came from a south London developer which campaigns against landlord licensing.

Khan's promise to "name and shame" some 'rogue' landlords is all very well. But we need rent control and council homes. £29,900 says Khan disagrees.

The letter the Guardian wouldn't print

John Mann's Israel hypocrisy

In response to John Mann's outrageous attacks on the left as anti-Semitic, Socialist Party executive committee member Clive Heemskerk wrote to the Guardian. The Guardian declined to print his letter. Hardly a surprise, given its editorial opposition to Corbyn's anti-austerity message. The Socialist publishes the full letter below.

That the serious issue of anti-Semitism is being used as a proxy charge against Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party is confirmed for me by the high profile role of John Mann MP.

As a Militant supporter in the early 1980s, I sat on the national committee of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) alongside Mann.

He was a leading figure in an anti-Militant organisation known as Clause Four and, for two years, the chair of NOLS (1983-84).

Within NOLS, Militant was falsely attacked by the Clause Four group for 'not supporting the Palestinians' because we stood for the right of two states - Israel and Palestine - to exist side by side, which we argued would be possible on a socialist basis.

The Clause Four-led NOLS, on the other hand, argued that the national rights of Israelis must be subsumed into a single, capitalist state - a 'secular, democratic state in the whole of Palestine'.

Ferocious

I remember being ferociously attacked in NOLS meetings for refusing to give the demanded 'unconditional support' to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Militant instead criticised the PLO as being unable to make an internationalist class appeal to Israeli workers, essential to defeat the Israeli ruling class, not least because at that time the PLO refused to recognise the right of Israel to exist.

John Mann's apostasy on Israel-Palestine is not surprising. I assume he has also thrown out the 'Tony Benn for Deputy' badge that NOLS produced for the 1981 Labour Party deputy leadership contest.

But nobody should have any doubt that Jeremy Corbyn is his and his fellow Blairites' real target. The left, inside and outside the Labour Party, needs to fight back hard.

Photographic review: Estate

Council estate exhibition shows the full picture

Bill Mullins

Photographer Robert Clayton's exhibition 'Estate' is a valuable reminder of what it meant to live in a council estate, and how Thatcherism continues to ravage this.

The estate he chose to photograph in 1991 happened to be where I was living at the time: Lion's Farm estate, Oldbury, in the Black Country.

His photographs - "without caricature, without attitude and without exaggeration" - capture the time. A time between "Thatcherism and the smiley Thatcherism of New Labour."

Jonathan Meades, the well-known architectural critic, describes it as when the 'post-war consensus' on the need for public housing was beginning to break down.

Thatcher and poll tax

Two of the many photos feature graffiti saying "pay no poll tax". I was chair of the local anti-poll tax union. I did not know at the time that Clayton was taking these photographs, but am grateful he did. Too often the history books leave working class struggles unmentioned.

Meades comments in an accompanying film that Lions Farm was not a "green and pleasant land" - but neither was it a "dystopian slum". Thatcher's 'right to buy' policy was to speed up this process.

Establishment political parties abandoned responsibility for public housing. They began wholesale 'regeneration' of estates into private homes, or just abandoned them altogether.

This often meant knocking down high-rise blocks. Lions Farm had nine. The council decanted six, and allowed them to crumble before knocking them down.

Meades says that Right to Buy created two tiers of public housing. Buyers snapped up houses and low-rise flats, while councils allowed high-rise blocks to deteriorate.

He further comments that Clayton's photos show an estate which was common to many others. Not yet completely neglected, but indeed on the cusp. It could have gone either way.

The photos of the high rises are not taken in the 'heroic tradition' as so often done in modern architecture - as standalone buildings - but are seen as part of the whole picture.

I would recommend Estate to anybody involved in the many campaigns to defend social housing from the ravages of the developers, and to end the housing crisis.

'Estate' by Robert Clayton: 8 April to 29 May 2016. Four Corners, 121 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London, E2 OQN. 11am to 6pm Tuesday to Saturday: free entry.

Film review: Eddie the Eagle

Tribute to working class Olympic spirit

Amalia

"Eddie the Eagle" is based on the story of real-life British ski athlete Michael Edwards. He was the first to represent Great Britain in ski jumping, doing so at the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, Canada.

It's a touching, feel-good movie; an inspirational film about a man giving his maximum.

Eddie was a self-funded, working class underdog. He narrowly missed out on joining Britain's downhill skiing team, so switched to jumping.

His lack of ability in this discipline was matched only by his determination. The media saw Eddie as a

joke, but to many he exemplified the Olympic spirit of perseverance.

And Eddie wasn't just a media laughing stock. Which school you went to seriously affected how welcome you'd be in the Olympics team.

It's quite telling that after the 1988 winter Olympics, rules changed, making it a lot harder for people without adequate access to funding, training and equipment - working class people - to participate.

You have to be placed in the top ranks of previous international events, not just selected by your country's team. This arbitrary condition leaves poorer athletes - and poorer nations - out of the Olympics.

Silver spoon

7% of this country's population is privately educated. Despite that, 37% of 2012 Team GB medallists were privately educated.

The Tories and those on top might blame comprehensive schools. But working class people are well aware that cuts and privatisation exclude them from trying out sports, and accessing training.

The 2012 Olympics in Stratford came with the promise of more sporting facilities in east London. On the one hand, these were built. But on the other hand, big chunks were subsequently sold at a loss to privateers.

Eddie's exclusion from future Olympic Games shows how money-driven big sporting events currently are. Not winning but taking part just doesn't cut it.

The film explains that Olympic committees are not adequately funded by governments, and rely on sponsorship. Sponsors demand record-breaking athletes. However, its narration stops just before Eddie is excluded by the financial elite.

Pierre de Coubertin, considered the father of the modern Olympic Games, said "the most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part... the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle."

The Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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

End witch-hunts

This is an open letter to Momentum in the wake of the latest attacks on Labour's left wing.

Labour's suspension of Momentum steering group member Jacqueline Walker is clearly an attack on the anti-austerity policies that Jeremy Corbyn represents. Subsequently, the working class and the left must be mobilised to defend Jacqueline, and demand that her unfounded suspension from the Labour Party is rescinded.

Witch hunts by the right-wing pro-capitalists within the labour and trade union movement are not a new development nationally or locally. Indeed, three members of Folkestone and Hythe Labour Party - myself included - were expelled in 1991.

This was due to the successful campaign against Thatcher's infamous 'poll tax' that we, supporters of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party), led both nationally and across Kent.

Our crime, as Militant supporters, as far as the right wing was concerned, was that we were better organised than it was.

So they used the bureaucracy to expel us. Some on the left kept their heads down and said nothing to defend us during that period.

However, the recent election of Jeremy Corbyn should give us the new and welcome opportunity to build a mass, working class, anti-austerity party.

It is clear that the Labour Party has become two parties pulling in opposite directions. The recent council, regional and mayoral elections indicate that a slow coup is developing against Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

Experience has shown that for us to be successful in fighting off the Blairites and in building a mass, anti-austerity movement which would in turn cut across nascent racism, there must be unity on the left, inside and outside the Labour Party. The campaign to rescind the suspension of Jacqueline Walker offers us the opportunity to begin to build such a movement, without exclusion of socialists.

I would like to propose that we organise a public meeting in the area covered by South East Kent Momentum. We could invite Jacqueline and others on the left - including Momentum, the Socialist Party and left Greens - to speak in particular in defence of Jacqueline, and in general on the anti-austerity policies that Jeremy Corbyn represents.

Eric Segal, East Kent Socialist Party

Khan bus-ted

I am a bus driver. I live in a south London council flat. Like Sadiq Khan's dad, reputedly. The new mayor recalls his family's humble roots. Let's see if he remembers his promises to London's workers.

Why does he bang on about his modest background? Because voters don't trust career politicians wedded to austerity.

Sadiq's already using his position to attack Jeremy Corbyn. We need leaders who are rooted genuinely in the working class, not politicians with selective memories.

Andy Beadle, Lewisham, south London

Leicester lessons

It felt like the whole world's media was in Leicester on 2 May, waiting to see if Leicester City FC was going to win the Premier League. Everyone loves a rags-to-riches story - the underdog winning against all odds.

For those bearing the brunt of austerity, this is especially true. It gives hope - maybe false hope, but who cares; we can dream. It has temporarily lifted the burdens of everyday struggles from people's lives.

There are lessons we can take from this amazing triumph. Teamwork is better than eleven individuals playing for themselves, and good leadership is vital.

Unfortunately, Labour-led Leicester City Council represents none of those things.

Money will come into Leicester on the back of winning the Premier League, but it will be big business that will benefit. I doubt the people of Leicester will go from rags to riches on that basis.

The workers' movement in Leicester, across Britain and around the world needs to get rid of the capitalists and their politicians to write our own historic triumph.

Heather Rawling, Leicester (Newcastle United supporter)

Israel fail

At a time when some on the left seem to be falling into the trap of calling all Israelis 'Zionists' and exploiters, it seems they could learn from some recent journalistic research.

In Israel, 45,000 people who survived the Nazi genocide live below the poverty line. In 2014, one in five was forced to choose between medicine and food.

Holocaust survivors who arrived in Israel before 1953 the Israeli state provides for - but if it was after that, date they go to the 'Claims Conference', based in New York. This has, since World War Two, been tasked with distributing tens of billions of dollars from Germany to survivors all over the world.

(Sources: Mirror 21 April, Channel 4's 'Unreported World' 22 April)

Peter Skerrett, Coventry

Brum bailiffs

I'm a subscriber to your paper but not a Socialist Party member. I stood for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in Hall Green, Birmingham.

Many people say we shouldn't stand against Labour candidates. This letter from my council (see pic) shows why we should.

As an unemployed Brummie, I was more than prepared to pay at the unemployed rate - but no. First they sent me letters for the full amount, and then they set this lot on me. I've been getting these for two years now.

Birmingham is a Labour-run council, and as long as they behave like Tories I think we have every right to stand against them.

David Wright, Birmingham

Elections showed anger and fragmentation

Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary

Running up to the May elections the Labour Party right wing - with the full backing of the capitalist class - set out to damage their own party's chances in order to achieve what is, for them, a greater goal: undermining Jeremy Corbyn.

The anti-Semitism uproar - initially relating to comments made by Naz Shah when Ed Miliband was leader - was a cynical attempt to try to prepare the ground for a coup against Corbyn, hoping that the local election results would then provide further ammunition.

Right-wing predictions

Widespread predictions were made by Blairite MPs and in the right-wing media - now included in which is the Guardian - that Labour was on course to lose 100 or more council seats because of the supposed unpopularity of opposing austerity. That didn't happen.

In Scotland Labour suffered a resounding defeat. That was partly inevitable given the hatred of Scottish workers for the role Labour played in the Scottish independence referendum, acting as the voice of big business's Project Fear campaign.

However good Jeremy Corbyn's approach to Scotland, he would not have been able to quickly overcome workers' view of Labour as 'red Tories'.

Unfortunately, Jeremy Corbyn has not taken a clear position of supporting the right of self-determination for Scotland which would have begun to win some credit back for Labour among the Scottish working class. Of course, had he adopted the pro-austerity 'red Tory' approach demanded by the Blairites - who are now blaming Corbyn for the result - Labour would have fared even worse in Scotland than it did.

But in England Labour maintained the same number of councils and only had a net loss of 18 seats, while slightly increasing its share of the vote from the general election. Far from a mass exodus from Labour in the south of England, Labour retained control of key councils including Southampton and Exeter. Significantly, it won the mayors of Bristol and London - the sixth biggest city and the capital - with clear majorities.

The racist campaign by the Tories in London backfired and London is now the first city in Europe with a Muslim mayor, while Bristol - a city built on slavery - now has the first mayor in Europe of African-Caribbean descent.

Labour won the two parliamentary byelections in Sheffield Brightside and Ogmore, with an increased majority in the former. That inconvenient fact may have temporarily stayed the hands of Corbyn's enemies.

Tom Watson, deputy leader of the Labour Party, openly appealed on Radio 4 to Labour MPs to "have patience" - suggesting not that they should support Jeremy Corbyn, but that they couldn't move against him yet given the election results and the size of his mandate.

That has not prevented, however, an escalation in the civil war in the Labour Party. Endless successions of Labour MPs are touring the TV studios to explain why - even though their dire predictions did not materialise - this was still a truly terrible election result for Labour.

Leading the charge has been the newly elected London mayor Sadiq Khan who, as we predicted, is setting out his new position as a platform against Jeremy Corbyn. Unfortunately, the leadership of Momentum, which purports to organise Jeremy Corbyn's supporters, has spent recent weeks uncritically mobilising in support of Sadiq Khan, without even warning its membership about the role that he - a man who has said he wants more billionaires in London - was clearly set to play.

Corbynistas

The pro-Corbyn wing of the party has not as yet fought back like it should against the blows being rained down on it, but has vainly attempted to paper over the gaping chasm.

Left MP Clive Lewis has appealed to Corbyn to "compromise, reach out", including on policy questions. As if events of the last weeks don't prove conclusively that there is no compromise that could successfully pacify the Blairites.

For the right of the Labour Party - and behind them the 1%, the capitalist class - are desperate to once again make their party safe for big business. That means routing the nascent anti-austerity movement that thrust Jeremy Corbyn into power.

Don't retreat

The only way to defeat the right is not to retreat but to continue to build that movement around a clear pro-working class programme.

And last Thursday's elections in no way demonstrated that anti-austerity ideas are unpopular. On the contrary, anger at the misery this government is inflicting on the majority is growing.

It was not by any means, however, channelled exclusively in the direction of Labour. Instead it was fragmented.

While many voted Labour, others' view of that party - which has implemented pro-big business policies in power and at local level for decades - had not changed.

Some refused to vote Labour because - while Jeremy Corbyn has correctly opposed austerity, saying it is a political choice - local Labour councillors and the Labour-led Welsh Assembly have passed on savage government cuts to local public services.

Right-wing Labour councillors and Assembly Members who lost their seats are trying to lay the blame at Corbyn's door. But they did not stand on Corbyn's policies, they stood on a pro-austerity programme.

That is why some voters showed their opposition by voting for what they saw as anti-cuts parties, whether that was Plaid Cymru in Wales, the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland, the Greens, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), or even in a distorted way for Ukip.

Plaid Cymru's leader Leanne Wood succeeded in defeating Labour in the Rhondda, a traditional Labour stronghold. Her party also increased its share of the vote, making it the second party in the Welsh Assembly.

Charlotte Church will not have been alone in voting for Plaid Cymru while continuing to support Jeremy Corbyn, because she recognised that the leadership of Labour in Wales is not anti-austerity.

In Scotland the SNP won 46.5% of the vote for the Scottish Parliament, an increase of 1% from four years ago. It had a small fall in its number of seats only because of the vagaries of the electoral system.

The Greens had a net loss of four councillors in England but increased their vote in many areas,

overtaking the Liberal Democrats to become the fourth party in terms of vote share. In Scotland they increased their MSPs from two to six and in the London mayoral contest they scored their highest ever share of the vote.

TUSC

Similarly they doubled their vote for the Liverpool mayor to 10,609. Combined with the creditable 4,950 votes for TUSC's candidate Roger Bannister, this meant that 15% of voters in Liverpool consciously chose to vote for candidates that they perceived as being to the left of Labour and more anti-austerity.

Even the votes for Ukip, which won 10% of the votes in council elections across England and came second in both parliamentary byelections, primarily reflect anger and disillusionment with establishment politicians.

Unfortunately, all of those parties, with the exception of TUSC, have implemented cuts when in power at local or national level.

TUSC, in which the Socialist Party participates, was alone in standing 100% opposed to austerity and cuts in public services, which are destroying local government. That is why the Birmingham Post called TUSC "arguably the fiercest defenders of local government itself".

Despite limited resources and a boycott by the national media, it was vital that TUSC stood candidates, in order to offer a socialist and working class alternative to austerity.

TUSC is a coalition of socialists, trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners - including the transport workers' union, the RMT. It stands in elections in order to oppose cuts and give workers a voice at the ballot box.

We wrote to Labour candidates before the elections urging them to take a clear anti-cuts stand and pledged not to stand against those who did so. However, where Labour candidates voted for cuts - from library closures to bedroom tax evictions - we were prepared to stand against them.

The 58 Labour-led councils that had elections hold over £4.5 billion in general reserves. Pooling these would mean that no Labour council would have to make a single cut this year. They could use the resulting breathing space to build a mass anti-austerity movement capable of defeating a weak and increasingly divided Tory government.

In the coming weeks the EU referendum campaign will dominate the political agenda. Historically Jeremy Corbyn has correctly opposed the EU as an undemocratic club acting in the interests of the bankers and big business.

If he had stood by that position it would have transformed the EU referendum campaign - which is currently dominated by right-wing big business politicians on both sides. Unfortunately, under huge pressure from the Labour right and the capitalist class, Jeremy Corbyn retreated on this issue.

Nonetheless, the Tories remain split down the middle over Europe. Already they have been made to retreat on a whole number of issues, including now on the forced academisation of schools.

In the aftermath of the referendum Cameron, and potentially the Tory Party, could be ejected from power. A powerful, united movement could bring a halt to austerity and force the Tories to call a general election.

Building such a movement requires united strike action - building towards a 24-hour general strike - but it also requires creating a clear anti-austerity political alternative.

Two parties

Jeremy Corbyn's landslide election as Labour leader showed the potential for creating a mass anti-capitalist party. Unfortunately, however, the majority of Labour MPs and councillors remain pro-capitalist and pro-austerity.

Labour is two parties in one: a pro-capitalist party and a potential workers' party.

To defeat the right means starting to mobilise the currently fragmented anti-austerity mood into a mass, democratic movement. This will not succeed if it remains trapped within the current undemocratic structure of the Labour Party, vainly trying to compromise with 'the 4.5%' - the Blairite representatives of big business in the Labour Party.

Instead it means building an open, democratic movement - organised on federal lines - that brings together all of those who have been inspired by Jeremy Corbyn and want to see a determined anti-capitalist party.

TUSC election campaigns show opposition to cuts

Elections took place on 5 May for the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Greater London Authority (Mayor and Assembly), and for 124 local authorities in England, including mayoral elections in Bristol, Liverpool and Salford.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood six candidates for constituency seats in the Scottish parliament, three regional lists for the Welsh assembly, candidates for the mayors of Liverpool and Bristol, and 310 local council candidates.

These later comprised of 302 candidates contesting seats in 52 authorities with scheduled elections in May, five candidates standing in byelections in councils without full elections this year, and three TUSC candidates contesting parish council seats.

We won a total of 43,309 votes, with 59 candidates gaining over 5% and TUSC polling over 1,000 votes in ten councils.

Across the 289 wards contested by TUSC in the scheduled council elections, 13% of the total, the mean average vote for TUSC candidates was 3.4%.

TUSC council candidates polled over 1,000 votes in ten councils, led by Sheffield with 3,109 votes, Coventry (3,108), Bristol (2,827 votes for candidates in 16 wards), Liverpool (2,292 votes in 17 wards), Warrington (1,719), Knowsley (1,644), Southampton (1,060), Wakefield (1,044), Salford (1,037) and Plymouth (1,033).

Across the 289 wards contested by TUSC in the scheduled council elections, 13% percent of the total, the mean average vote for TUSC candidates was 3.4%.

See www.tusc.org.uk for full results and analysis

Over 1,700 votes for TUSC in Warrington

Hugh Caffrey

Following a tremendous campaign with huge support from local residents, TUSC Councillor Kevin Bennett missed out on re-election in Fairfield and Howley by a narrow margin. Polling 921 votes, Kevin was behind the third-placed Labour candidate in the three-seat ward by only 76 votes.

Dozens of residents have already contacted Kevin and TUSC with congratulations on an outstanding campaign, especially in Fairfield and Howley, but also in wards across the town.

We secured a very creditable 360 in nearby Poulton South coming second; 138 votes in Great Sankey South; 129 in Bewsey-Whitecross where the Labour Party was going all-out to win; 88 in Latchford West; and 83 in Latchford East. And our votes compare well with the opposition parties already represented on the council.

Labour looked terrified in the weeks, days and hours running up to the Fairfield and Howley result being announced. Right up to the last minute at the count, it looked like it could go either way and Labour Party members privately confessed that their figures showed us pipping them to the seat.

In the event, it went the other way. But Kevin and TUSC supporters are rightly proud of a fighting, socialist campaign, rooted in the best traditions of the working class movement, against Blairite opponents offering only the worst traditions of Blairism.

Kevin Bennett said:

"It has been a privilege to serve the people of Fairfield and Howley as their TUSC councillor. I will continue to campaign to help the most vulnerable in Warrington who are hit hardest by the Tory-Labour cuts from the council and government.

Instead of the anti-austerity policies of Jeremy Corbyn, Warrington Labour will continue with the politics of Tony Blair, slashing our public services and failing our residents, especially the most vulnerable.

The campaign to save our school crossing patrols and the YMCA will continue. I will be working with my TUSC colleagues to re-launch Warrington Against Cuts, to bring together everyone determined to defend our public services and those who rely on and provide them. There is no longer an anti-cuts voice in the council chamber, therefore we will build it up within our communities and our workplaces. 921 votes is a strong start to build from!"

TUSC is the real anti-establishment party and this was clear throughout the campaign from the reaction of the local establishment! From nomination papers knocked back on the flimsiest of excuses, to Labour's smears overlooked by the authorities, to demands that we pack up our polling day stall "or we'll take it down for you", it was clear that the ruling party was using every advantage of power that it could.

School crossing patrols throughout the town will have their funding withdrawn this year. TUSC distributed 5,000 leaflets throughout the ward explaining this, launching a 'Save Our Lollipops' campaign, and urging residents to display a poster in their window pledging support for the campaign and to vote for Kevin.

As these went up in windows across the ward, Labour appeared panic-stricken. Less than two days before Warrington went to the polls, an anonymous 'council spokesperson' claimed in the local media

that the service was safe 'for the foreseeable future'. This of course could only help the Labour candidates' claim that TUSC was exaggerating the cuts, as we heard that at least one of our Labour opponents was doing while badmouthing Kevin on any doorstep he wasn't swiftly ejected from!

We responded by leafleting the main schools in the ward with a response explaining "The TRUTH about the crossing patrol cuts", in response to which one parent said that when she saw the council's claims she just automatically assumed Labour was "lying again".

TUSC out-campaigned Labour at every stage. The most active sections of the electorate in Fairfield and Howley rallied to TUSC and continue to do so even after the result.

Greens took votes

When we approached the Greens on whether they would withdraw in Fairfield and Howley on the basis that Warrington TUSC would reciprocate in their target seats, the Greens responded that Kevin's ward was the only ward in Warrington that they would not withdraw from!

The Greens had no campaign, no intention to win the seat, but with the media profile their party has nationally, they polled 344 votes. Had even a quarter of their votes gone to TUSC instead, Kevin would have held his seat.

Kevin has been a trade unionist for decades and is currently a member of Unite the Union, elected to its regional committee. Unite's policy - and private promises from certain leading Unite figures - is to support anti-austerity councillors, including those such as Kevin who have been driven out of neoliberal New Labour.

Unite's regional committee met during the electoral period and decided to not circulate to Unite members the official position of Unite's local government national committee - which is to call on councillors to oppose cuts and fight austerity in a manner similar to that which Kevin and TUSC are doing.

The only winners from this shameful lack of support for one of the union's own members in a key public position are the Blairite cutters and their Tory bosses in Number 10.

Warrington Labour will now repay the electorate not with the policies of Corbyn, but the policies of Liz Kendall and Tony Blair. Services for the old and the young, the homeless and the ill, and for entire communities such as waste disposal, face devastation. Kevin and Warrington TUSC will stand in the first rank of those fighting to defend residents from this onslaught.

On that basis we remain confident of winning more support in the local communities, workplaces and the polling booths in the future.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 10 May 2016 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Scotland: SNP wins but new openings for socialist alternative emerge

Socialist Party Scotland

The SNP won the Scottish parliamentary elections on 5 May, although they lost their overall majority

and will govern as a minority administration at Holyrood with 63 MSPs.

In a catastrophe for Scottish Labour, the Tories were second on 31 seats, pushing Labour into third on 24. The Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) saw its vote increase in the six seats we contested.

Turnout at 55% was down significantly compared to the "electoral uprisings" against austerity and the political establishment witnessed in 2014 and 2015.

An increasing mood of disappointment in the actions of the SNP in power; their implementation of Tory austerity and the lack of a viable national left alternative has led to an increasing alienation in many working-class areas.

The decision by Nicola Sturgeon to pose holding the front page of the Scottish Sun after the paper endorsed a vote for the SNP, just a few days after the Hillsborough inquests, caused great anger.

There has been much made in the media of the gains made by the Tories in Scotland in doubling their number of MSPs from 15 to 31. A key factor in the Tory gains was their ability to attract No (to independence) voters - including some of what is left of Labour's support - as "the best option".

Labour, in contrast, saw its vote fall even further from the disastrous calamity of the 2015 near wipe-out when losing 40 of their 41 Westminster seats.

Scottish Labour is still paying the price for its role in Project Fear and years of Blairite policies that combined to shatter its base of support among the working class. Nor is there any sign of a significant left emerging in Scottish Labour.

One new Labour member who joined in the wake of Corbyn's victory described feeling physically ill after attending their first Labour meeting in Glasgow because it was so right-wing.

Scottish TUSC contested six constituency seats and all were members of Socialist Party Scotland. The total TUSC vote was 3,540, an average of 590 votes per candidate. This compares well with the 184 per candidate in 2015, a more than trebling of the vote.

Our top vote was 909 for Brian Smith in Glasgow Cathcart. TUSC polled 2,047 votes in the three Glasgow seats.

The clarity of TUSC's platform; no support for the SNP and Labour in their implementation of austerity, for socialist policies to tackle the economic crisis and for the building of a new political movement for the 99%, was well received.

For a longer version see www.socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

Wales: no change and all change

Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales

On the surface there has not been a huge change in the political complexion of the Welsh government - Welsh Labour lost just one seat and will be able to hold on as a minority government with the opposition split between three parties. But under the surface the election showed how much things have changed in Welsh politics.

Welsh Labour held on to most of its seats but this masked a growing discontent with the Carwyn Jones

government. Its share of the vote fell by nearly a fifth from 2011. In the absence of a mass socialist opposition it was Ukip, hiding its right-wing ideas, and to a lesser extent Plaid, who benefited from this disillusionment.

A Corbyn-type campaign opposing the Tory cuts could have enthused working class people to support Labour, but Carwyn Jones has made clear his opposition to the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, so it is business as usual in Wales.

One obvious change is the election for the first time of seven Ukip assembly members. All were elected in the proportional representation ballots of the election in the party lists. Ukip mounted an expensive corporate-funded campaign with lots of glossy leaflets and billboards and hardly mentioned immigration (apart from one xenophobic outburst by a candidate). Instead its slogans were 'Save Our Steel' and 'Save Our NHS', appealing to disillusioned traditional Labour voters.

Its biggest votes came in the ex-mining communities in the South Wales valleys where Labour used to get 70% of the vote. Disillusionment with Labour has been exploited by Ukip and it came second in four constituencies. Where Plaid Cymru positioned itself as a left alternative to Labour, they gained. Plaid won a significant victory in the Rhondda and in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent pushed Ukip into third place.

2,040 votes

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition stood on the three regional lists for South Wales and gained 2,040 votes, despite no media coverage. Our vote was undoubtedly hit by a layer of Labour supporters who supported TUSC's message but were concerned that a drop in Labour's vote would be used to attack Corbyn.

But TUSC candidates won all the debates that they participated in, exposing Ukip and putting a clear anti-austerity message. Candidates won the most applause in the hustings, being closer to the position of Corbyn supporters than the candidates they had come to support.

Northern Ireland elections: positive moves against sectarian politics

Daniel Waldron, Socialist Party (CWI Ireland)

The campaign in the run-up to the Northern Ireland Assembly election was a dull and uneventful affair. The result has brought little over-all change. Yet there were significant signs that the growing alienation from sectarianism, austerity and backward social policies is beginning to find a positive expression, with left forces taking important steps forward.

Other than the usual sectarian squabbling, the five main parties which have until now made up the Assembly Executive are fundamentally united when it comes to austerity and neoliberal economics.

Their policies have left one in five people in poverty, created mass youth unemployment, maintained sectarian division and denied LGBT equality and a woman's right to choose.

In the new Assembly, the forces of unionism and nationalism will continue to dominate, with the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin returned as the two largest parties.

However, the percentage vote share of all five main parties fell compared to 2011. The Green Party -

non-sectarian, socially liberal and critical of austerity - took a step forward, tripling its vote and doubling its number of representatives to two.

People Before Profit (PBP) also won its first two Assembly seats. Young councillor Gerry Carroll topped the poll in Sinn Féin's West Belfast heartland with 23% of the vote, while veteran campaigner Eamonn McCann overcame the odds to take a seat in the Foyle constituency.

The PBP is connected to campaigns against cuts, raises the demand for socialist change and describes itself as 'neither Orange nor Green'.

This development shows significant numbers of workers and young people in these constituencies are rejecting the status quo in favour of a left alternative.

For the first time, the main parties in the Assembly will be challenged by anti-austerity ideas. People Before Profit's victories will stimulate debate about the alternative to austerity and sectarianism and give confidence to many that it is possible to win change.

However, as well as opportunities, there are potential pitfalls ahead. PBP - initiated by the Socialist Workers Party - is largely based in and orientated towards Catholic working class communities, which is often reflected in its language and the positions it takes on contentious issues such as parades.

If the opportunity to build a new, socialist force which can break the stranglehold of sectarianism is to be seized, it is an essential pre-requisite that we unite Protestant and Catholic working class people and genuinely advocate independent working class and anti-sectarian positions on the difficult questions which divide our communities.

Alternative

The Socialist Party worked with other trade unionists and activists to lay down a marker for the kind of genuinely cross-community left which is needed by launching Labour Alternative.

The aim was to appeal to young people attracted to the politics of Jeremy Corbyn and to begin rebuilding Northern Ireland's historic anti-sectarian, labour tradition.

Our three candidates and our activists were drawn from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds and campaigned actively in both communities.

Our combative approach in demanding LGBT equality, women's right to choose and our clear anti-austerity, socialist message (with posters asking that people "Don't vote for dinosaurs!") caught the imagination of many young people.

We got messages from dozens of people saying they had turned out to vote for the first time ever for Labour Alternative.

Our candidates won between 515 and 871 votes, almost 2,000 in total. In each constituency, we registered the largest vote for socialist, labour movement candidates in decades.

In two of the constituencies, these votes were won despite major campaigns by the Greens, where they were fighting for seats.

In South Belfast, Sean Burns beat everyone except the Executive parties and the Greens. These results are a solid basis upon which to build an anti-sectarian, left force in these areas and across Northern Ireland.

Courtney Robinson in East Belfast was the youngest candidate in the election at 18 years old. Our

oldest candidate - Conor Sheridan in East Antrim - was just 24. Labour Alternative got little media attention, but one commentator referred to our candidates' "raw energy and passion", another to their "wide-eyed optimism"

CWI

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

www.socialistworld.net

Over 1,800 votes for TUSC candidate in Bristol

Bristol's mayoral election saw the TUSC vote rise by over 450 from 2012 to 1,876 first preference votes.

This election showed a thirst for change. Labour's Marvin Rees thrashed 'independent' incumbent George Ferguson as people turned their back on three and a half years of arrogance and austerity.

Given the swing to Labour, increasing our vote was impressive.

It remains to be seen whether a new mayor will mean the change of direction that is badly needed. The challenge is on for Labour to reverse the cuts made by the previous mayor.

Unfortunately that was not offered by Marvin Rees during the election - he said we have to "pick our battles" when asked if he would pass on further Tory cuts of over £70 million.

TUSC got a great response to our policies of opposing austerity with a no-cuts, needs-based budget and a mass anti-cuts campaign to challenge the Tory government.

The potential for such a campaign is there.

Campaigning has won victories in Bristol recently, reversing closure plans for six libraries and virtually all public toilets.

During the election TUSC campaigners spoke to people on doorsteps and stalls, put out thousands of leaflets, spoke at several hustings and appeared in all the local media.

We had to work harder than the establishment candidates, lacking their money.

Campaigning does not stop and start with elections for TUSC and the Socialist Party. We'll continue to stand alongside working class people across the city to defend our living standards, jobs and services.

Tom Baldwin, Bristol TUSC mayoral candidate

Third anti-cuts councillor elected in

Southampton

As results were announced some relieved faces underlined the fear Labour councillors had of losing control in Southampton after four years of carrying out Tory cuts and their vote falling by over 6%.

The results give a glimpse of different trends that the establishment and Blairites in the Labour Party would like to gloss over in their haste to bury Corbyn. Notably it was the fall in Tory votes by 6% that saved Labour, underlining the unpopularity of endless austerity.

Debate rages over whether the Corbyn factor was positive or negative. Indications are that it was positive in some areas with Labour winning in Portswood for the first time in 35 years despite no campaigning and not putting out a leaflet.

Questions will also be asked of the campaign waged by Unite and Unison local council branches. Having carried a one-page ad in the local paper asking questions of candidates as to how council jobs and services could be protected in fear of a Tory victory, activists were sent out to Coxford, where local anti-cuts candidates Keith Morrell and Don Thomas have been re-elected with big majorities in the last two years, to campaign for Labour.

Despite this, underlining the support Keith and Don have built in Coxford in opposing cuts and defending council services, anti-cuts candidate Tammy Thomas was elected with 45% of the vote and Labour nearly 500 votes behind.

Nick Chaffey

TUSC increases vote in Coventry by 25%

In Coventry TUSC won 3,108 votes across the city increasing the vote by 25% from the last set of comparable local elections in 2014. The highest vote was for TUSC national chair Dave Nellist in St Michaels ward where TUSC received almost 20%. Are you one of the 3,108? To discuss the outcome of the elections and how to build the fight against austerity Coventry Socialist Party are holding public meeting on Thursday 12 May at 7.30pm at Methodist Central Hall, Coventry city centre.

Fourth place for TUSC in Liverpool

The TUSC candidate for the mayor of Liverpool, Unison national executive member Roger Bannister, polled 4,950 votes, a 5.1% share, over 1,400 votes ahead of the Tories. Roger had already beaten Ukip - despite an almost daily presence in the establishment media to boost them, they were unable to find a candidate for mayor in Britain's eighth biggest city.

Seven out of ten electors did not bother to vote, so the mayor received the support of just 15% of the electorate - hardly a ringing endorsement of his endless austerity policies. The mayor's electoral base is nurtured by a largely uncritical media, commendations from the establishment and those who still harbour the illusion that Labour councillors will protect the poor, the elderly and those least able to defend themselves. Little wonder that the missing voters are not inspired to turn out.

TUSC will build on these results and remains determined to fight Tory austerity and unremittingly challenge those councillors who continue to vote for cuts.

Blacklisted workers win millions in legal victory

Blacklisted workers have won millions of pounds in compensation after a long-running legal battle finally ended in victory.

Dave Smith, secretary of the Blacklist Support Group commented: "Despite all of the denials and attempts to cover up their secret conspiracy, the largest multinationals in the construction sector have been forced to pay out millions in compensation. Make no mistake, the High Court action is a historic victory for the trade union movement against the vicious face of free market capitalism.

The blacklist firms might have hoped that by buying their way out of a show trial, that the scandal that has disgraced an entire industry will go away: it won't. Blacklisting is a human rights conspiracy against trade unionism by big business and shady anti-democratic political policing units within the British state.

These fat cats and their friends in the police took food off of our children's table, causing years of family hardship. We take this personally.

A few quid and a mealy mouthed apology is a long way from justice. We intend to continue our fight to expose those who orchestrated and colluded with blacklisting. In any civilized society, the wretches would be in jail by now."

The total figure for compensation paid out by the blacklisting firms is estimated at £50 million with an additional £200 million worth of legal costs. The defendants were: Balfour Beatty, Carillion, Costain, Kier, Laing O'Rourke, Sir Robert McAlpine, Skanska UK and VINCI.

Government blinks first in junior doctors' dispute

The Tories appear to have blinked first in the junior doctors' struggle. The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, representing the upper echelons of the medical profession, had appealed for talks between the BMA and the government to end the long-running dispute over a new contract for junior doctors.

On the morning of 5 May, Tory Health Minister Jeremy Hunt was clear that it was too late to stop his imposition of the new contract but just hours later softened that position to temporarily suspending it. Five days of talks started on 9 May.

This should be seen as a significant moment that can give junior doctors confidence that they can defeat the Tories' plans. Undoubtedly, Hunt believed that the escalation of the action to include the withdrawal of emergency cover would backfire on the BMA.

In the run-up to the strike, a 'government source' tried to break public support and intimidate the union by accusing them of trying to "topple the government". But these attempts hardened the strikers, bringing the full support of other health workers, fellow trade unionists and the public.

In Brighton at 8am on the first strike day, 600 marched with the junior doctors, bolstered by many delegates from the Unison health conference. That evening, over 5,000 marched on a joint BMA-NUT demonstration in London, where PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka announced his union's NEC had voted to call on the TUC general council to organise a national day of action in support of the

junior doctors. Scandalously, that call was rejected.

It must be made clear to Hunt that failure to withdraw imposition will mean that the struggle goes to a new level. As well as setting out another course of stoppages, the junior doctors' committee should immediately contact the TUC making it clear that junior doctors agree with PCS's call for a day of action.

The Tories are clearly in the corner and any retreat from Hunt will be seen as not only a famous victory for the BMA and the junior doctors, but a massive blow against the government. It will raise the confidence of millions of workers but only by maintaining a fighting stance can the pressure be built on the Tories.

Trade Union Bill becomes law

Come to the NSSN conference on 2 July

Rob Williams, National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN)

The Tory Trade Union Bill has completed its journey through the parliamentary process to become law.

Disgracefully, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) has not organised a single national demonstration against the bill. Its one lobby of Parliament last November saw hundreds of union members refused access to the venue in Westminster because the TUC had only booked half the seats, such was their pessimism about how many would turn up!

Fortunately, because the FBU had their fire engine outside, I was able to speak to what became an open-air rally. It was the only way the NSSN was going to get on a platform that day! I raised the necessity for the TUC and the unions to connect together the fight against Tory austerity with the fight against Cameron's anti-union plans.

This would show the whole union movement and the wider working class that the Tories recognise the potential power of the unions - still with over six million members - as the major barrier to their cuts, if they are mobilised in mass demonstrations and coordinated strike action. The heroic struggle of the junior doctors only emphasises how broad layers in society could be united in a movement against this weak, divided and damaged government.

Instead of such a mass campaign, the TUC's opposition has been reduced to lobbying the House of Lords. They celebrate the pruning of some aspects of the bill. But the utterly undemocratic voting thresholds (which, if applied to local elections would mean that hardly a councillor would have been elected) are still enshrined in it, as are measures to victimise lead pickets.

The NSSN calls for an emergency TUC congress to discuss how the Act can be resisted. This is what happened when previous Tory prime minister Heath brought in the Industrial Relations Act in 1971 and was subsequently defeated after a whole series of strikes. Such a congress, which should be opened to thousands of shop stewards and union reps, should be a 'council of war' that takes inspiration from the junior doctors, as well as teachers who are balloting for strikes against forced academies, and many others.

It's a disgrace that on the very day that marked the 90th anniversary of the 1926 general strike, the Tories have been able to bring in the most serious attack on unions for three decades with hardly a squeak from the TUC or most union leaders.

But the NSSN, along with thousands of union activists, will be fighting for mass action to defeat the Tories. This will be a major theme of the annual NSSN conference - our tenth - on 2 July. Join our fight.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 6 May 2016 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in *The Socialist*.

Prison officers walk out over health and safety

Over 50 workers at Wormwood Scrubs prison walked out over health and safety issues on 6 May. The Prison Officers' Association (POA) said the move comes after recent assaults on staff, and said the jail was "flooded with drugs, mobile phones and weapons".

Michael Rolfe, NEC member for London and South East region of the POA spoke to the Socialist: "Staff had an emergency branch meeting following a spate of incidents within the prison and general concerns of safety.

"At that meeting the staff determined that they should withdraw labour and seek assurances from the governor to try and ratify their position and their concerns. The members are very much behind their local POA committee.

"Nationally there's been a massive spike in staff assaults and figures were revealed last week that showed another significant upturn in staff assaults, violence, prisoner self-harm, and prisoner-on-prisoner violence. The whole system seems to be imploding in on itself."

Also Matt Clarke, chair of the POA branch at Wormwood Scrubs, thanked Socialist Party members for attending the picket line to offer solidarity: "I would like to pass on unequivocal thanks and appreciation to the Socialist Party.

"The brave staff made an exceptional personal sacrifice in an attempt to ensure safer working conditions. With the threat of a High Court injunction looming and management not recognising our concerns, the situation looked bleak but the staff stood firm.

"Due to pressure from the wider trade union movement and public support, the injunction never came. Shortly before 9pm an agreement had been reached between both parties which saw the immediate concerns of staff addressed and urgent talks arranged to discuss further ongoing issues.

"I would like to thank every trade unionist, Socialist Party member, the NSSN and of course the wider POA who contacted us with messages of solidarity and support. We could not have done it without you."

Clearly there is much that managers need to address as news broke on 8 May of two officers being seriously assaulted and hospitalised at Wormwood Scrubs and on 9 May there was another walk out at Holme House prison in Stockton-on-Tees.

Potential new steel bosses refuse to take on pensions

It is becoming increasingly clear from the different bids to take over (or be virtually given) all or part of Tata Steel's UK operations, that none of the potential buyers will take on the £15 billion pension scheme. This includes Excalibur who are proposing 1,000 extra job cuts.

It is likely that any buyer will make pensions a 'red-line' issue in negotiations with Tata and the UK government. This is because the steelworkers still retain a final-salary defined-benefits (DB) pension.

DB pensions have been an historical gain for workers such as those in Tata and other well-organised union workplaces in the private and public sector because the pension risk is on the employer as the pension on retirement is based on a workers' salary (usually the best year in the last ten) and years' worked.

Risk

In inferior pension types such as defined contribution schemes, the risk is on the workers as they build up a pension fund through weekly or monthly payments out of their wages by themselves and the employer.

Companies have been trying to close DB schemes altogether or at least to new starters.

In fact, this actually nearly caused a strike in Tata Steel UK last year, which had the effect of getting the company to reduce the deficit to under £500 million.

As BHS workers are finding out at the moment, the tactic used by companies is to put the business into administration with the pension liabilities going into the government-run Pension Protection Fund (PPF).

Ford Visteon

Ex-Ford workers who had been spun-off by the company to Visteon, including hundreds in Swansea, saw their pensions go into the PPF when it went into administration in 2009.

But the pensioners won £28 million compensation from Ford after a struggle lasting five years. The position of the unions should be, 'how can we trust a buyer with our jobs and communities if they won't take on our pensions?'

You can't take over heavy industry and invest in it for the long-term on the cheap. The pensions issue is yet another argument for all of Tata Steel's UK operations to be nationalised 100% on a permanent basis.

Workplace news in brief

UCU uni strike

Members of lecturers' union UCU in higher education will walk out for two days on 25 and 26 May over pay.

Staff will also begin working to contract from 25 May, which means they will refuse to work overtime, set additional work or undertake any voluntary duties like covering timetabled classes for absent colleagues. If no agreement is reached in the coming weeks, members have agreed to target further strike action in June and July, and are considering additional action in August to coincide with the

release of A-level results.

The union is also beginning preparations for a boycott of the setting and marking of students' work, to begin in the autumn if an acceptable offer has still not been made. The dispute has arisen following a pay offer of 1.1% from the employer body, the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA), which the union has described as 'an insult'.

UCU said universities could afford to pay more and that the latest offer does little to address the real terms pay cut of 14.5% suffered by higher education staff since 2009. The squeeze on staff salaries comes at a time when pay and benefits for university leaders have increased, on average, by 3%, with the average pay and pensions package for vice-chancellors standing at over £270,000.

Topshop trouble

The United Voices of the World (UVW), who mainly organise low-paid cleaners, many of them migrant workers, have been running a campaign in Topshop for the living wage. Two members have been sacked in the process. As a result, the union has called a national day of protest on 14 May.

The centrepiece will be a protest outside the flagship Oxford Street, London store from 5pm. The two Topshop cleaners have also been subjected to gross acts of bullying and victimisation for having merely joined a union and led the campaign for a living wage.

To top it off Topshop boss Philip Green has just made £600 million on the back of robbing 20,000 BHS workers of their pensions, and making 11,000 workers redundant. Join the protest on Oxford Street and look out for protests organised at other stores around the country.

See www.facebook.com/events/1322096334470799 for more

Let kids be kids: children 'strike' against Sats tests

Samantha Lane

As a parent whose child is in the foundation stage at school, and with another who is starting this September, it is important to me that we take action against Sats tests now.

The Sats are a measurement of the school and not for the benefit of the children. Teacher assessments of the students' progress are important to inform them of how to help the children develop but the Sat tests are not required.

I am also a teacher of psychology and am acutely aware of the psychological impact this current government's regime for testing is having on children's mental health.

Some of my friends' children have been very upset and worried about the tests. This should not be happening at primary school, they have enough of this to come in the future.

Therefore I believe it is important that we campaign against them. Head teachers have recently agreed they are not fit for purpose and action needs to be taken.

Teachers also believe this, and now with the backing of parents this gives the schools confidence to

take actions such as not publishing the results and a possible boycott.

Along with thousands of other children, my daughter went on strike on 3 May, she had a lovely day with her father at the museum, sketching art work and reading in the park in the sunshine. She was aware she was on strike and why, and this in itself is a valuable lesson in standing up for what you believe in.

I am not aware of any other children on strike from my daughter's school, so the continued campaign by Let Kids Be Kids to make parents more aware is important. We must continue to show our support to schools in their endeavour to make education appropriate for children.

The government is supposedly trying to drive up standards but the current year two standards are inappropriate for children six or seven years old. All they are actually doing is putting children off enjoying their education and creating unnecessary anxiety in such young children.

What way forward for Tamil rights?

Come to 4 June Solidarity Day

Keerthikan Thennavan, Tamil Solidarity joint national secretary

On 30 April and 4 May, the Tamil Solidarity campaign took part in lengthy TV debates and phone-ins, alongside numerous Tamil organisations, journalists and activists. Set up by IBC Tamil TV the discussions are being aired in four parts and will be viewed by hundreds of thousands of Tamils internationally.

They reflect the intense discussions taking place about how to take the struggle for Tamil rights forward. And this comes at an important time, as Sri Lankan president Maithripala Sirisena comes to Britain for a summit on corruption - presumably ignoring the record of his own government!

18 May also marks the anniversary of the end of the war in Sri Lanka - the slaughter of tens of thousands of Tamil civilians and the imprisonment of hundreds of thousands in concentration camps. Despite Sirisena's promises, and David Cameron's grandstanding at a Commonwealth meeting in 2013, there have been no moves towards a genuine investigation into war crimes.

Unfortunately, the establishment Tamil organisations seem to have lost sight of the need to build a strong, grassroots movement. The British Tamils Forum, for instance, is now closely linked with the Tories - even though their deep cuts to social and public services hit the vast majority of Tamils in Britain.

In Sri Lanka, the Tamil National Alliance, although part of the official 'opposition', works with the government. Yet under Sirisena no progress has been made on the right of Tamil self-determination. He is pushing through a neoliberal offensive, attacking the rights and living standards of workers and poor throughout Sri Lanka.

Tamil Solidarity, on the other hand, has always campaigned to link up the struggle for Tamil rights with the workers' movement and with campaigns of other oppressed people. And our message went down very well in the TV debate, especially with the phone-in audience.

We are holding a 'Solidarity Day' on Saturday 4 June at 12pm at the Unite the Union office at 128 Theobald's Road, London, WC1X 8TN.

Tamil Solidarity has organised a debate on the way forward for the Tamil movement. We will also be bringing together activists from Kurdish, Kashmiri and Bangladeshi groups ending in a rally with speakers from trade unions in Britain, the junior doctors' dispute and many others.

So we encourage all Socialist Party members and supporters to come along to a great day of solidarity!

See www.tamilsolidarity.org for more

Save Paignton Hospital campaign launched

Alex Moore, Exeter and Torbay Socialist Party

Paignton Community Hospital is being closed with a rumoured loss of 100 beds. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has made no clear promise to replace these beds and services in the community. The only clear fact in their report is that the CCG is cutting £16 million from its 2016/17 budget.

So, over 70 people met on 4 May to launch a Save Paignton Hospital campaign. The CCG is promising a 12-week consultation period, but it's only a scam. During the meeting a worker at the hospital showed me a photo of the hospital with a 'for sale' notice on it in a local estate agents!

This should not surprise anyone. The CCGs were brought in on April Fool's Day three years ago to replace the Primary Care Trusts as part of the Con-Dem government's Health and Social Care Act which ended government's duty to provide free healthcare.

Their role is to bring about the piecemeal privatisation of the NHS by putting contracts out for private tender and making cuts.

Workers

More ominously, the local Unison rep who was leading talks declined to even register a dispute with management. This means that unless the GMB decides to act independently, there will be no attempt to save jobs at the hospital. Workers at the meeting feared that staff will simply begin to look for work elsewhere and the hospital would have to close anyway due to shortages.

Despite these difficulties the campaign is going ahead and good links have been established with the 'Torbay three towns against poverty and cuts' group. Joint campaign stalls will be run and signatures collected and Save Paignton Hospital will be invited to lead the Torbay three towns march on 25 June.

May Day demo says: no cuts to childrens' centres!

Chesterfield Socialist Party

"No ifs, no buts, no children's centre cuts" was the rallying cry at the largest Chesterfield May Day demonstration for many years on 2 May. Shoppers applauded the most vibrant section of the demonstration - local children's centre workers themselves - as they proudly carried a huge Unison campaign banner and Chesterfield Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition placards.

Local anti-academies campaigners also received an excellent reception as well as those junior doctors able to march.

The increased turnout is not insignificant. Socialist Party members in north east Derbyshire have reported an increasing mood of defiance over recent months, based mainly on the struggles of the junior doctors. Most noticeable were the number of women involved and the average age of marchers being much lower than normal.

Derbyshire's children's centres - 32 of which are under threat of closure from the Labour-controlled council - are staffed mostly by women, with up to 200 of them facing the sack.

50,000

In recent weeks, many of these have been out on the streets leafleting and collecting signatures against the closures. Local government union Unison estimates up to 50,000 people have signed their petition.

Dave Gorton, area organiser for Derbyshire Unison told the Socialist: "There is no support for these closures and, with county council elections next year, I'm surprised the Labour administration is continuing with its extremely unpopular plans".

The Socialist Party calls for the council to abandon these cuts, along with others, and use reserves for the next year to 'plug the gap'. In the meantime, the council should unite with the unions, community groups and anti-austerity campaigners to build a joint campaign to secure more funding from the weak Tory government. Simply making the cuts the Tories tell them to is helping no one.

The May Day festivities included an EU referendum meeting where Socialist Party member Karen Seymour shared a platform with Arthur Scargill, over 50 copies of the Socialist were sold and well over £100 raised for the fighting fund.

Support for junior doctors at campaign stalls

Carlisle

People were queued up to sign our petition to stop NHS privatisation and defend the junior doctors against attacks by Jeremy Hunt in Carlisle on 30 April.

Recent revelations in the Cumberland News about the state of the local infirmary highlight the seriousness of the problem. Staff are overworked, and the number of beds available inadequate.

This is not the fault of the workers, but is rather due to management failures, PFI debts and chronic underfunding from central government. Trusts all over the country are experiencing similar problems.

It's SOS time for the NHS. Hunt's new contract would make already overstretched doctors work dangerously long hours, leading to demoralisation in a profession where it is increasingly difficult to recruit. Many doctors would seek employment overseas or leave the profession entirely if the contract were imposed on them.

It is also part of a wider attack on NHS staff, preparing the ground for complete privatisation. Contracts awarded to the private sector rose by 500% in 2015, largely to for-profit groups.

We support the doctors 100% in their fight to protect patient care and defend our National Health Service against a government hell bent on destroying it

Robert Charlesworth, Carlisle Socialist Party

Leicester

In Leicester we hold a 'super stall' once a month from 11am until 3pm.

On 30 April we sold 62 copies of the Socialist and raised £96 fighting fund, campaigning on the junior doctors' dispute for which there was great support and the headline 'bring down the Tories' was also popular.

Heather Rawling, Leicester Socialist Party

Greek general strike: more needed to defeat austerity

Public transport was brought to a halt on 6 May as Greek workers began a 48-hour general strike against austerity.

The Greek TUCs in the private and public sectors called the strike in protest against the Syriza-led government voting for another tranche of austerity measures as part of the 'Troika'-imposed (European Central Bank, EU and International Monetary Fund) bailout package.

These measures will further impoverish workers and pensioners already suffering years of devastating cuts in living standards. Social security contributions will rise, as will income tax. Top-up pensions for low-income earners will be phased out.

But while the economic screws have been tightened on Greece, differences have emerged between the IMF and the EU leaders over the political risks of imposing such severe austerity, given Greece's inability to repay the 'debt'.

Labour minister George Katrougalos complained that successive bailouts since 2010 have shrunk the country's national wealth by 25%.

But some of this decline has taken place under 'left wing' Syriza's watch - despite being elected in January 2015 on an anti-austerity agenda and despite voters explicitly rejecting Troika bailout demands in a July 2015 referendum.

Workers have staged numerous general strikes against cuts and to defend living standards. But this tenacity has not been matched by the leaders of labour organisations who have called token general strikes instead of organising a serious struggle against capitalism and for a socialist political alternative.

Xekinima (CWI Greece) has consistently campaigned within the trade unions and wider working class for such an alternative strategy.

Analysis and updates on www.socialistworld.net

CWI

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which

the Socialist Party is affiliated.

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.

www.socialistworld.net

How to trump Donald

Donald Trump, the sleazy, racist, reactionary billionaire, has all but secured the Republican Party presidential nomination in the US. His arch rivals Cruz and Kasich conceded defeat following the most recent primary contests.

However, the Republican establishment fears a humiliating party defeat if Trump stands against Hillary Clinton, the Democratic front runner. It has, so far, failed to manoeuvre a supposedly more electable candidate.

However, this outcome is far from certain. Clinton, as the establishment candidate, could be beaten by the 'outsider' Trump, such is the public mistrust in her.

Some opinion polls conclude that Clinton's rival - 'democratic socialist' Bernie Sanders, with his message of 'a political revolution against the billionaire class' - would be better placed to defeat Trump and any other Republican candidate. This finding undermines the argument to back Clinton as 'the lesser evil'.

As Socialist Alternative (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) has continually explained, the rigged primaries and the use of 'super delegates' to ensure Clinton's succession will not mean the mass support for Sanders (as shown in the huge election rallies and in the 'open' primaries) automatically transferring to her Wall Street-backed campaign in the presidential election.

See www.socialistalternative.org and www.socialistworld.net for further analysis and comment

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/22777>