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# No Ban, No Wall: Socialism not Trumpism

Donald Trump's outrageous [travel ban on people from seven Muslim countries](#) and halting the US's refugee programme, has unleashed a huge wave of protest both in the US and internationally.

Responding to live streaming on social media, thousands of people rushed to airports across the US in defence of detained refugees.

In Seattle, city councillor Kshama Sawant of Socialist Alternative (US cothinkers of the Socialist Party) addressed a [huge protest rally](#) under the platform banner: "Fight Trump and the billionaire class."

Kshama called for 100 days of resistance culminating in mass marches, civil disobedience and strike action on 1 May, international workers' day.

In New York the taxi drivers' union struck for an hour and declared: "We say no to this inhumane and unconstitutional ban."

[Tens of thousands, including Socialist Party members, protested across Britain](#) to condemn Trump and also rail against his new found ally, UK prime minister Theresa May.

Trump's executive order has nothing to do with making Americans safe from terrorism but has everything to do with satisfying his reactionary backers.

And by giving the green light to start building a 'wall' on the Mexican border, he is setting the stage for deportations of undocumented workers at a previously unseen pace.

He has begun to dismantle the minimal Obamacare health insurance and also made clear that environmental regulations are going to be shredded in the name of profit for US coal and oil producers and big business manufacturers.

People fear a man who has glorified sexual assault, incited racist violence and made billions of dollars off the backs of working people.

However, fear is not the only reaction to the new 'Predator in Chief'. Trump's inauguration was met with the biggest day of protest in US history, with the women's marches on 21 January mobilising over three million people into action.

Socialist Alternative says: "This movement must be continued, deepened and escalated to stop the right-wing agenda, including building a new party of the 99% to be an uncompromising force in fighting Trump's agenda."

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## Tide of opposition to Trump goes on

At a maximum of 48 hours' notice, rivers of people poured onto streets around Britain on 30 January to reject Trump's racism. This followed the ['women's marches' on 21 January when 100,000 demonstrated in London alone and thousands more elsewhere](#).

With the momentum building and increasing numbers angered by prime minister Theresa May cosying up to the bigoted president, more big protests are expected in coming days.

The 30 January demos were particularly against Trump's ban on people from seven Muslim countries entering the US and his planned wall on the border with Mexico.

These attempts to whip up division among working class people appear to be backfiring. Not only are they uniting millions internationally in opposition, but also - under pressure from the spontaneous movement - many establishment politicians have been forced to state that they disagree with Trump on his policies.

Live-streaming from the London protest, Socialist Students national organiser Claire Laker-Mansfield said: "There's a parallel being drawn with the policies Trump is implementing. Of course he's a more extreme, maverick representative of the 1% - a racist, a sexist, etc. But back home we have some of our own 'Trumps' as well. And May herself has been adopting nasty, divisive rhetoric around immigration, for example."

In the midst of the London crowd, Socialist Party member James Ivens reported: "Tens of thousands, mostly young women, demonstrating. Hundreds more streaming from Westminster station every minute, showing no sign of letting up. Clearly a deep-felt anger and understanding of the need to fight. Mood is soaring. It's like a festival. Occasional spontaneous outbursts of mass cheering in crowds so large they have no hope of hearing the platform."

Similar anecdotes could be repeated from dozens of other protests - of thousands in Liverpool, over 1,000 in Birmingham, [1,000 in Cardiff](#), 1,000 in York, 400 in Leicester, 100 in Coventry, 300 in Gloucestershire.

Socialist Party Scotland reports: "At least 15,000 in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen fighting back against racism and the billionaire bigot. Socialist Party Scotland took part in all these protests, distributing 3,000 of our leaflets and selling 125 copies of the Socialist [Scotland] newspaper."

There was enthusiasm on all the protests for the idea of organising the important layers who have been mobilised into a sustained movement against Trumpism and austerity.

There was also interest in the idea of a socialist alternative. Socialist Party members across England and Wales sold a total of 700 copies of the Socialist and met 100 people who want to join the Socialist Party or receive information about meetings.

**Sarah Wrack**

## Leeds

Around 3,000 people joined the demonstration in Leeds called after people saw thousands of Americans descend on airports across the US in opposition to Trump's '#MuslimBan' executive order which bans people from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the US for 90 days and refugees from those countries for longer periods.

Predominantly young people joined the march, many with their own placards and attending a demonstration for the first time. After rallying in Dortmund Square, we marched through town, filling Briggate as we passed through and ending in Victoria Gardens outside the art gallery and library. Many others passing by stopped to sign petitions, take leaflets and join the demonstration.

Chants of "Hey, Ho, Trump has got to go", "No ban, No wall, Trump must Fall" and others echoed through the demonstration.

Socialist Party member Iain Dalton was among the speakers and raised the need to put forward an alternative to Trump's attempt to divide working people. He called for taking the wealth off the 1%, including nationalising the banks and other sectors, and investing in jobs, homes and public services for all rather than diet of austerity we have been offered. He spoke of the need for a break from the two parties of big business in the US, and for a new party of the 99%.

Socialist Party members met many people interested in attending our events, with over 50 buying the Socialist. We ran out of our new 'Dump Trump' badges.

A further demonstration is planned on Saturday which we will be mobilising for, and helping to build a

movement in defence of the rights of workers, women, the LGBT community, migrants and others, that can help bring down Trump, and his allies in the UK.

## **Leeds Socialist Party members**

### **Birmingham**

Over 1,000 mainly young people flooded into Victoria Square at just 24 hours notice. Leaflets putting forward a socialist strategy to beat Trump were snatched out of the hands of Socialist Party members and many copies of the Socialist were sold.

**Nick Brook-Hart**

### **Coventry**

### **Hull**

Well over 100 ant-Trump protesters rallied at Queen Victoria Square in Hull on Monday night. Called at a day's notice via social media, a significant number of protesters had never been on a protest before. Typically, their response was: "We couldn't just sit there and do nothing".

Some of them were initially doubtful about the protest being "political", seeing Trump as just an odious individual. Socialist Party member Mick Whale, speaking from the platform, explained that Trump had come to power in the US precisely because traditional politicians had completely lost touch with ordinary working class people and that the key task was to learn from that.

In practice that means that if Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party doesn't put forward a clear socialist programme, then British Trumps – like Nigel Farage and Paul Nuttall of Ukip, will find an echo for their bigotry here.

**Paul Spooner, Hull Socialist Party**

### **Southampton**

### **Cheltenham**

300 people demonstrated in Cheltenham from 7pm to 9pm. Former Lib Dem MP Martin Horwood spoke to the crowd, as well as a Lib Dem councillor. However, we - the Socialist Party - were the only political party there with placards, papers or leaflets. The Lib Dems have a habit of parading their 'high morals' on occasions like this, so we are always quick to point out the role they played in the Con-Dem government.

Holding a Socialist Party placard I spoke shortly after Horwood. Among other things, I pointed out that people were protesting about the agenda of May, Ukip and attacks on the working class internationally as well as the racist immigration controls in the US. British governments have also forced through policies not dissimilar to Trump's. The US working class has seen living standards decline over four decades. We need to organise a fightback and this is happening in cities across the US and needs to happen here and be linked to movements across the world.

**Sue Powell**

### **Bristol**

Around 3,000 people poured onto College Green in Bristol on Monday night to protest Donald Trump's racist immigration policies. Organised at just two days notice the protest was a resounding 'no' to his border wall

and Muslim ban and to Theresa May's 'hand in hand' relationship with him.

Rivers of people quickly turned the green to mud. Speakers included Labour mayor Marvin Rees - before he returned to the Council House to put forward £100 million of cuts.

Socialist Party members were swamped by the sheer number of people arriving and wanting to find out more about how to defeat Trump and everything he stands for; all the leaflets we had were taken.

Tom Baldwin

## Edinburgh

## Nottingham

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 31 January 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## NHS nurse: why I'm joining the 4 March demo

# Fight for our health service!

Matt Whale, nurse

We're seeing almost daily headlines announcing the NHS is in crisis. From overstretched A&Es, to patients left on trolleys, to staff morale being at an all-time low - [our NHS is at breaking point](#).

The Tories' empty promises in 2010 that the NHS was 'safe in their hands' have been broken time and time again. A real time pay cut of 25% since 2010 has left some NHS staff relying on food banks. Our commitment to caring for our patients is continuously exploited. The jokes about nurses going whole shifts without time for a toilet break are becoming an increasing reality.

We're seeing mass privatisation of services - including those on the frontline. Proposed closures of hospitals, specialist services and A&Es are provoking thousands to go onto the streets in disgust.

The future is one of either fight or be trampled. The mood is gathering among health workers to come down firmly on the side of fighting back. The inspirational struggle of the junior doctors has given confidence to others in the NHS.

The campaign against the pay freeze is now to be debated in parliament after an [online petition hit over 100,000 signatures](#). Despite the attacks from the right-wing media aiming to undermine faith in the NHS, working class people still see it as the jewel in the crown. And despite massive cuts, staff still deliver an overwhelmingly good quality of care.

The [national demonstration on 4 March](#) is vital. It's a chance to bring together the hundreds of local campaigns across the country into the national spotlight. It's a chance to show the government that we will fight for our health service.

I'll be marching to defend the NHS for the working class today and for future generations. I'll be marching because NHS workers deserve more than a continuous pay freeze and because the patients I and other NHS workers care for deserve better.

- Join the national It's Our NHS demonstration, 12 noon, 4 March, Tavistock Square, London
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# Revealed: super-rich shareholders cause of pension deficits

## Nationalise the banks and top corporations

Ross Saunders, Socialist Party Wales

Over half of Britain's richest firms could immediately wipe out the deficit in their pension schemes if they were willing to prioritise former workers over investors.

If firms in the FTSE 100, the largest businesses on the London Stock Exchange, chose not to pay dividends to investors - a common practice - 53 of them could wipe out their pensions deficit within two years, [according to accountancy firm JLT](#).

FTSE 100 companies paid out to investors five times what they spent on pension deficit reduction, [report accountants LCP](#).

In other words, the pensions deficit crisis is not the fault of workers who are 'inconveniently' (for the bosses) living longer. It's the fault of profit-hungry capitalists who leech funds out of companies that should go to the workers.

Pensions robbery is just another con trick in the repertoire of greedy capitalists, [as tax-avoiding BHS boss Phillip Green's shameful pension-gouging shows](#).

Workers at BHS have been stiffed to the tune of £350 million by the billionaire, who was knighted by David Cameron's government.

And steelmakers Tata, whose UK operations were part of the FTSE 100 as 'Corus', are [currently trying to pressure workers into accepting big cuts to their pension scheme](#), with plant closures threatened if they don't comply.

It's true that some of the stock market is owned by pension funds. But UK pension funds own only 3% of UK share value, and overseas pension funds own under 6%. Trusts, corporations and individual capitalists, plus some small investors, own about 82%, [based on 2014 Office for National Statistics data](#).

[Financial services giant PwC estimates](#) that, in total, UK companies have underfunded '[defined benefit pension schemes](#)' by a staggering £710 billion.

That figure has been pumped up by low interest rates and other stimulus measures that first Labour and then Tory governments implemented, vainly trying to repair the economic chaos of crisis-ridden capitalism.

The money to reward workers with a poverty-free retirement exists. We should nationalise the FTSE 100, with compensation only on the basis of proven need, and put it into the hands of working class people, to democratically plan how wealth is spread out. Then we can guarantee the jobs and pensions we need.

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# Babies in poverty are twice as likely to die

Laurel Fogarty, new mum

Poor children in the UK are more than twice as likely to die while babies compared to their richer counterparts, particularly in their first month of life.

The growing gap between rich and poor is severely affecting the health of young children. This is especially severe for the one in five kids living below the poverty line, according to [a new report from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#).

Many of the causes of these infant deaths are preventable. Greed at the top of society, and the political will that supports it, are causing unnecessary deaths.

As Tory cuts continue to attack the most vulnerable, the most deprived children get sicker, suffering from asthma, diabetes, and mental health problems most severely.

An economic system that puts super-wealth above child health, that willingly allows babies to die of preventable illness, and looks the other way as children suffer from swingeing, politically motivated cuts, cannot be allowed to continue.

We must fight to end the Tory and Blairite austerity that directly increases child deaths. Jeremy Corbyn must call on councils to refuse to pass on these lethal cuts, and stop retreating in the face of Blairite opposition.

But as long as the super-rich 1% remain in power, they will continue to put their wealth above our children's lives.

[We need a £10 an hour minimum wage](#) and the reversal of all cuts and sell-offs. Take the wealth off the 1% to achieve it.

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## Energy bill hikes con: nationalise them now!

Nancy Taaffe, Waltham Forest Socialist Party

[Howlers are magical red letters which appear in the children's stories of Harry Potter](#). When the characters open these letters they get screamed at by the letter in mid-air.

If any letter howls at you, "I need to be nationalised!" as you open it, it's the dreaded energy bill which arrives on the doormat at the end of a cold, cruel winter.

Energy giant EDF, for example, [will raise electricity prices by 8.4% this March](#). And regulator Ofgem says dual fuel prices rose 15% last year.

Any suppliers which hike their prices are pulling a fast one. Ofgem says they bought most of their gas and electricity 18 months ago, but in light of all the media stories of rising prices and the falling pound, they thought, 'what the hell, we'll cash in.'

Some intend to charge based on the price of energy sold today, not at the cost they bought it for 18 months ago. Of course, they bleat on about 'internal costs' and 'hostile climates', but essentially they see an opportunity to maximise profits. They take a rap over the knuckles from the regulator, at most pay a paltry fine, and carry on.

When energy was first privatised we were told that our ability to switcheroo and shop around would regulate the market. No such thing has happened.

In truth it's a cartel with rampant price fixing, small companies going bust and being swallowed up by the big six, with a regulator about as useful as a chocolate teapot.

Energy is like water: it's essential for human life. It needs to be nationalised, democratically planned, with all incentives for profit removed. The Socialist Party fights for a socialist society, so the working class can all truly own and plan resources for everyone.

# Blairite stitch-up in Stoke Central byelection

Andy Bentley, Stoke Socialist Party

Gareth Snell, architect of council cuts by Newcastle-under-Lyme borough council, former bag-carrier for Tristram Hunt and backer of the right-wing's Owen Smith in the second Labour leadership election has effectively been bureaucratically maneuvered into becoming the Labour candidate in the [Stoke Central byelection](#).

At the back end of 2016, Stoke Central Labour Party members made their support clear for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies to lead a fightback against the Tories' endless cuts, closures and privatisation. In the second Labour leadership election, 40 of them voted for Jeremy Corbyn with just four voting for Owen Smith.

Despite this, the right wing, still controlling the party apparatus, rushed through their purging of all known Corbyn supporters from the byelection candidates' list at the first opportunity. This included at least two local Labour councillors who had openly backed Corbyn and who were both well known across the city.

The first priority for the Blairite right wing in Stoke Central was to make sure that no supporter of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies would get the chance to be elected as a Labour MP in the area. For them, the threat posed by Ukip is secondary.

If any Labour Party members were in any doubt that these right-wing supporters of Tory-light austerity will stop at nothing to purge the Labour Party of Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and their anti-austerity policies and supporters then this is yet another clear example.

## Tory-light policies

Support for Labour has significantly dropped nationwide from a highpoint when Tony Blair's government was first elected in 1997. In Stoke-on-Trent Central that fall has been dramatic.

In the 1997 general election, [Labour's vote in Stoke Central was 26,662 but has since decreased in all five general elections down to 12,220 in 2015](#). That's 66.25% of the vote in 1997 down to just 39.3% in 2015.

This was primarily because Blair and Gordon Brown's right-wing dominated Labour governments carried out Tory-light policies. Locally, this included over 1,000 NHS job losses [carried out by Labour's health minister Patricia Hewitt at the University Hospital of North Staffs in 2006](#). The anger and opposition of a 5,000-strong march of mainly NHS workers against these plans, with Stoke Socialist Party playing a key role in organising the march, was completely ignored by the Labour government.

Even their much heralded new hospital (today's Royal Stoke University Hospital), with 300 fewer beds than before, was built with a PFI contract which means taxpayers are now paying construction company Laing O'Rourke five times more over 30 years than it cost to build.

In the same period, Stoke-on-Trent's Labour-controlled city council, under Labour governments, carried out millions of pounds worth of cuts to council jobs and services. This led to the closure of swimming pools, libraries, care homes, etc, and cuts to children's centres and many other much-needed services.

To add insult to injury the Labour council borrowed £55 million to build a new council HQ that was not needed.

These are the concrete reasons why, over this period, a massive accumulated anger has developed against Labour locally. Ukip came second to Labour in the 2015 general election by tapping into this anger and now poses a threat to Labour in the Stoke Central byelection.

Effectively imposing Gareth Snell at the expense of local Corbyn supporters has made the task of defeating Ukip more difficult. In 2014, as Labour leader of Newcastle-under-Lyme borough council, he lost his seat to

Ukip after carrying out cuts to jobs and services! After regaining his seat in a byelection last year, he claimed that 'it had nothing to do with Corbyn'!

## **Transform 'rigged system'**

Just a few weeks ago Jeremy Corbyn said: "The people who run Britain have been taking our country for a ride ... They've rigged the economy and business rules to line the pockets of their friends ... Labour under my leadership stands for a complete break with this rigged system".

A byelection campaign fully supporting that promise to change the rigged system, where the richest eight people own more than half the world's population and the voice of working people is never heard, could have ensured a defeat for Ukip and turned the fire onto this weak, divided Tory government.

A Labour candidate supporting Jeremy's anti-austerity policies could have achieved this by fighting the byelection on the renationalisation of the railways and post office, a £10 an hour minimum wage, free education, a fight against council cuts, an end to zero-hour contracts, repeal of the anti-trade union laws and saving our NHS by getting rid of the privateers and re-establishing a fully funded and publicly owned NHS.

However this type of campaign won't be on offer in this byelection and the lessons from that have to be learnt. Instead Labour's right wing are sticking with the failed policies and candidates of the past.

Stoke Socialist Party is campaigning to build the 4th March national demonstration in London to save our NHS and we support Jeremy Corbyn's pledge made in August 2016 to 'renationalise' our NHS, cancel PFI contracts and guarantee bursaries for nurses.

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 26 January 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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# **Greater Manchester metro mayor: how will you fight cuts?**

**Becci Heagney and Matt Kilsby, Salford Socialist Party**

Andy Burnham, Blairite MP for Leigh, has been selected as the Labour Party candidate for Greater Manchester metropolitan mayor. The new position is part of an undemocratic devolution of powers - and austerity.

'Devo Manc' will mean six of the ten hospitals will be downgraded - a potential step to their closure.

The promised £300 million pot of money to build houses can only be used to loan to private developers. 'Education area reviews' mean the closure and merger of colleges.

This atrocious deal was cooked up between [George Osborne, Tory chancellor at the time, and the ten Greater Manchester council leaders, nine who are Labour.](#)

## **Programme**

Burnham has promised to continue to pay student nurse bursaries, donate 15% of his salary to tackling homelessness, oppose fracking, and build council housing.

The Socialist Party supports these pledges as a step in the right direction. But, we ask Burnham, how are these to be implemented?

For example, much of the money for housing has already been allocated to the likes of Peel Holdings for luxury flats. Health and social care faces upwards of a £1 billion shortfall after massive cuts through the 'sustainability and transformation plans'.

## Struggle

Burnham's pledges could be implemented. However, they would require the mobilisation of local communities and trade unions into a mass campaign to force the government to provide the funds, as well as changing parts of the 'devo' deal itself.

Burnham is not prepared to wage such a struggle.

Workers and community activists need to put the maximum amount of pressure on Burnham and push for genuine anti-austerity policies.

Blairite councillors will try to block a metro mayor trying to reverse privatisation and fight for more money for local services, highlighting the need to build a mass campaign of ordinary people across the region.

Greater Manchester supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) - an electoral alliance including transport union RMT and the Socialist Party - can't consider fielding a candidate in this election, due to being priced out. The deposit alone is £5,000, with thousands extra needed for a page in the official electoral booklet sent to every house in the area.

However, we will not be silent during the election or afterwards. We will continue to campaign for socialist measures to fight austerity in Greater Manchester.

We call on workers and residents locally to join with us in defending public services, and for genuine devolution and democracy in our region.

- 'Devo Manc' con details, Andy Burnham's right-wing record - read the full article at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

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## Millwall victory

Millwall FC's ground in south London, the Den, along with many local residents, no longer faces eviction.

Growing public opposition to Blairite Lewisham council's relationship with property developers Renewal has stymied the attack. Labour mayor Sir Steve Bullock has cancelled the '[compulsory purchase order](#)' Renewal needed.

[Bullock is a director of the Surrey Canal Sports Foundation](#), a charity funded by Renewal to push forward the 'redevelopment'.

Renewal itself is registered in a tax haven, was founded by a former Labour mayor of Lewisham, and is run by a former Lewisham council officer.

The pro-capitalist, undemocratic politics of Labour's right-wing machine are a perfect breeding ground for dodgy practices like these.

The Millwall campaign shows again the need for the Corbyn movement to break with the Blairites.

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## Article 50 bill heading to parliament

# Establishment papers over Brexit chasms

## Corbyn's Labour must fight for a socialist, internationalist Brexit

Six months on from the referendum and Brexit remains a nightmare for the capitalist establishment in Britain, from which they can find no escape. Exit from the EU is not in the interests of British capitalists, and the majority of them remain desperate to find a way to remain, or as close to as they can get.

However, that is extremely difficult to achieve. Despite the pro-capitalist and nationalist character of the official Brexit campaigns - and the absence of a mass socialist, internationalist one - [the working class vote for Brexit on 23 June was still, at base, an elemental revolt](#) against the long years of wage restraint, job losses, public sector cuts and growing inequality. Any premature attempt by the capitalist class to 'step back' Brexit could lead to a new and bigger revolt against establishment betrayal.

So we have instead seen a drip, drip campaign of trying to blame austerity and economic difficulties on those who voted for Brexit. Not surprisingly, given that austerity and economic crisis have been the norm for almost a decade, so far this has cut no ice with the majority.

### Single market

The latest YouGov poll puts support for leaving the EU single market at 57% and for leaving the European Customs Union at 56%. While that could change in the future it nonetheless indicates deep disillusionment with the capitalist establishment and an enormous accumulation of anger at endless austerity.

At the same time the super-rich 1% has no political party that it can rely on to act in its interests. While the capitalist media is inevitably focusing all its attention on the divisions in the Labour Party, desperate to undermine Jeremy Corbyn, [the Tories are just as split](#).

They may have papered over the cracks for long enough for Theresa May to force her two paragraph bill through parliament, thereby triggering Article 50, but in the long negotiations ahead, the chasm between the two wings of the Tory Party is bound to open wider than ever before, with even a split being posed. As a result, the pro-remain capitalists are forced to rely on an alliance of politicians from all parties - including former Tory chancellor George Osborne, and leading Labour right-wingers such as Hilary Benn, and even a disinterred Tony Blair!

This is a factor lying behind the latest moves against Jeremy Corbyn. The representatives of the capitalist class, which dominate the parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour Party machine, remain desperate to undermine and defeat Jeremy Corbyn and the anti-austerity surge that has twice seen him elected leader. Compromise and retreat will never stop them, only a determined campaign to transform Labour into an anti-austerity party, deselecting the Blairites in the process, will lead to a successful outcome.

The latest attacks on Jeremy Corbyn have come over his attempt to impose a three line whip on Labour MPs to vote in favour of the government's bill triggering Article 50. Corbyn is arguing for various amendments to the bill - including guaranteeing the rights of EU citizens resident in Britain, safeguarding existing workers' rights, and pledging that parliament will have the opportunity to discuss and debate the results of the negotiations with the EU. So far two anti-Corbyn MPs have resigned from the shadow cabinet over the issue.

Jeremy Corbyn is correctly anxious that Labour is not seen to block the triggering of Article 50 after a majority voted for Brexit. He is put at a serious disadvantage, however, by his previous concessions to the Labour right.

Despite his historic opposition to the EU as a neoliberal capitalist project, one of his first retreats was in agreeing to campaign, albeit reluctantly, in favour of remain. This meant that the left, internationalist case for exit was not heard by the majority of the population, and Corbyn lost an important opportunity to raise the confidence and consciousness of the working class and to demonstrate he represented a break with the pro-capitalist leaders of New Labour. This has had consequences.

Many of those who have joined Labour to back Corbyn have only heard the right-wing, nationalist arguments against the EU put by Ukip, Boris Johnson and their ilk. They therefore cannot easily understand why he is insisting MPs vote for Article 50. And of course they rightly question why he has been able to stand firmer on this than on the bombing of Syria or the condemnation of Tony Blair.

Without doubt, one factor in Corbyn's stance on Article 50 is that a section of the Labour right are going along with him. Anxious not to undermine their own careers by losing votes in Brexit-majority constituencies, they are prepared to vote for May's bill.

However, this does not preclude them - if they sense a chance to finish Corbyn off over this issue - changing their stance. This very temporary 'common approach' is papering over an even bigger chasm than the one that exists in the Tory Party. The right-wing Labour MPs are acting in the interests of a different class - the capitalist class!

The right are prepared to support curbs on migration, not least - as many of them proved in office - refusing asylum to refugees fleeing war and disaster. Let's remember that they include the same MPs who were demanding Cameron made more anti-migrant statements in order to try and swing the referendum campaign for remain!

## Big business

At the same time, however, they mainly support the EU single market which is an agreement between the different capitalist classes of Europe to create the largest possible market in order to maximise their ability to exploit the working classes of Europe. The single market is based on the 'four freedoms' of the free movement of goods, services, capital and labour.

It is about freedom for big business to exploit us rather than real freedom however, as the refugees risking their lives trying to enter Fortress Europe can testify. The tools which the single market provides to allow big business to use 'free movement' to increase exploitation include measures like the Posted Workers' Directive, which allows employers to hire workers in one country, on that country's terms and conditions, and then send them to work in another country where unions have negotiated better pay and conditions.

It is vital that Corbyn does not give into the pressure that will undoubtedly come from the Labour right to support a deal which is in the interests of big business rather than the working class majority. Instead he needs to campaign clearly for [a workers' Brexit which is socialist and internationalist around a programme to defend and improve the lives of the majority](#). This must include a £10 an hour minimum wage, mass council house building, and democratic nationalisation of key industries.

It should be combined with trenchantly campaigning against racism and defending the rights of migrants and refugees, including the rights of all EU citizens currently in Britain who wish to remain being able to do so with full rights. It should also be combined, as Len McCluskey, general secretary of general union Unite has raised, with a demand that employers should have to be covered by a proper trade union agreement or by sectoral collective bargaining before they can recruit labour abroad.

This is arguing for an increase in democratic workers' control over hiring, and a decrease in the control of big business. Such a campaign would bring Jeremy Corbyn into sharp conflict with the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party, but would win widespread support among working class people.

An opportunity exists to create a mass workers' party - with a left and internationalist programme - which would transform the political situation. It will not be achieved, however, on the basis of further compromise with the Blairites, but only by adopting a clear stance for the transformation of the Labour Party.

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# Government attack on DWP job centres and offices

**Katrine Williams , PCS DWP group vice president**

As part of the Tory offensive against the public sector, the chancellor has announced a 20% reduction in Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) offices, and more jobcentres to share sites in local authority premises, to deliver 30% savings on estates costs. This fits in with the approaching end of the contract with the company which owns the DWP estate.

At the beginning of December 2016, there was [an announcement of the closure of half the jobcentres in Glasgow](#). This was met by immediate anger and opposition from PCS members, politicians and claimant-support organisations.

The campaign has continuously been in the news from day one and the ferocity of the opposition has rocked the government.

This stopped DWP in its tracks until 26 January when the announcement was made about the future of over 700 offices in DWP.

## Headlines

Behind the headlines of the closure of 78 jobcentres, which will damage the ability of the public to access our services, there is also a huge list of office closures.

But there is a wider attack on jobs in some of the most deprived communities. For example, [over 1,000 jobs are being proposed to move out of the South Wales valleys](#) into two sites in Cardiff. We see proposals like this up and down the country in communities which desperately need jobs.

PCS DWP president Fran Heathcote said: "PCS in the DWP has a proud record of defending members. Our successful [campaign to prevent compulsory redundancies in 2012](#) has stopped any being announced since, but these announcements pose a serious threat to our members and to the services we deliver. We will fight them with every means at our disposal, including the use of industrial action, after full consultation with regions and branches has taken place. Our executive meets on 16 February to consider all feedback."

We have seven weeks to involve everyone in our communities in campaigning to defeat these proposals.

We had a great start in Glasgow and our members and reps are up for the fight. We appeal to fellow trade unionists and community groups to get stuck in alongside us. Politicians who have seen the campaigning in Glasgow are also lining up to support us.

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# Vote for Left Unity in the PCS elections

**Marion Lloyd, PCS Left Unity chair and PCS group president for BIS (personal capacity)**

In December 2016 I was elected chair of PCS Left Unity, which is a rank-and-file organisation that brings together left activists in the union. It is open and democratically run. The Socialist Party has consistently recognised the importance of working with other left groups and independents, which is why we have always argued for the right to disagree on policy issues while standing for maximum unity in elections.

Left Unity is one of the biggest and most successful groups of its kind in the trade union movement, with a record of 15 years of election victories and a paid-up membership of up to 1,000 activists and growing all the time.

PCS is a strong, democratic and fighting union; its leadership is at the forefront of political campaigning against austerity and has backed this with action.

[We have defeated government attempts to destroy our effectiveness by destroying 'check-off'](#) - the method by which we collected our subs. Also, we should not forget the government departments where Left Unity group members are active in defending members and challenging austerity.

Our immediate challenge is to win the 2017 elections. Left Unity, together with PCS Democrats, are putting forward a 'Democracy Alliance' slate in April/May 2017. We then have PCS annual conference where we expect Left Unity policies to set the scene for the union's work in the next period.

These include campaigns to challenge the government's freeze on pay, opposition to job cuts and office closures, and how the union should intervene politically to take forward our anti-austerity policies.

Many of these challenges that we face are the same as those faced by the memberships of other unions. We should develop stronger links with other union left groups and explore the possibility of joint initiatives such as the TUC Broad Left.

PCS Left Unity called a big public meeting in early 2012, addressed by our general secretary Mark Serwotka and president Janice Godrich, in order to attempt to take forward the [public sector pensions dispute in 2011](#). This is a good example of what's possible.

Despite the union having had a left leadership for so long, a strong active Left Unity is still vital. We have never taken for granted our leadership position in the union. And we recognise that we need to be continuously accountable for our actions, not just to the PCS membership but to Left Unity members who put us up for election, work for us to be elected and sustain us in office.

- See the slate in full at [leftunity.org.uk](http://leftunity.org.uk)

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## Trade Union Act: Strategy needed to defeat anti-union laws and lead the fightback

**The Tories have confirmed that their anti-union laws, including new undemocratic industrial action ballot thresholds, will come into force on 1 March. John McNally, Socialist Party member and national vice-president of the civil servants' union PCS (personal capacity) looks at how the Trade Union Congress (TUC) reacted to the trade union laws and what comes next.**

Certain areas of the NHS have been declared a humanitarian disaster. [There is an attempt to smash the RMT trade union on Southern Rail](#). There are zero-hour contracts, attacks on terms and conditions in the civil service, the wholesale destruction of public services and continued pay freezes for NHS and public sector workers. There are plenty of issues to mobilise workers.

So it is little wonder that workers are asking the question: what is the TUC actually for? That is a question for some union leaderships too - those who accept the status quo, who see no alternative to austerity and are tied into the idea of concession bargaining.

[The full-scale privatisation of the NHS is on the cards](#) and there has not been one day of generalised action to stop that. A national NHS demonstration has been called by the rank and file on 4 March while the biggest health union, Unison, has told its London activists not to discuss it.

As for the Trade Union Act itself, the TUC barely lifted a finger to stop the bill becoming law. For example, they organised a rally at Westminster but didn't book enough seats, meaning hundreds of trade unionists never managed to get into the hall.

The campaign was centred on 'I heart unions'- type propaganda instead of explaining to trade union members the implications of the new trade union laws, not just about human rights but in relation to pay, terms and conditions.

[This is in contrast to what happened in the 1970s when Tory prime minister Ted Heath tried to implement his own trade union bill](#) which was met with mass resistance, including a TUC-organised special conference, national days of unofficial action and a national demonstration of 250,000 workers. The bill was defeated.

Now we need to make the RMT motion at TUC conference in 2016 a reality. It called on the TUC "to convene an urgent conference of affiliates to provide a practical forum, including workshops, as to how to best coordinate our legal and industrial response to the act."

## **Battle**

As this says, we can't just accept the act and do nothing about it. We need to continue the battle to get the anti-trade union laws scrapped. We need an industrial and political strategy because where struggles are taking place they are individual instead of coordinated struggles.

It's a lack of action and lack of strategy that gives the current, weak Tory government the confidence to press forward.

The TUC should be coordinating the anger and struggles taking place across the country instead of stepping back and giving the Tories a free hand.

There is mass discontent at the present time, industrially and also seen in the protests taking place against Donald Trump, and the TUC and individual unions have a responsibility to take a lead in organising this discontent.

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# **Victory: removed Royal Mail workers reinstated**

**Carl Harper, Peterborough Socialist Party and CWU delivery representative (personal capacity)**

Members of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) Eastern 5 branch are celebrating a victory over Royal Mail in a battle over trade union solidarity.

Two members working in Peterborough mail centre were removed from the workplace and were facing disciplinary action after they had submitted a statement of support for another member who has been controversially dismissed.

Members of all the postal grades in Peterborough - including delivery, processing, and distribution - correctly saw this spiteful, retrospective action as an attack on the fundamentals of trade unionism - solidarity between members.

A proposition calling for industrial action up to and including a strike was passed by the branch and endorsed in principle by the CWU postal executive committee.

## **Withdrawal**

Following a series of well attended meetings across all of the functions, the company agreed to reinstate the members and withdraw all disciplinary charges.

The company was clearly pushed back by the preparedness of members at Royal Mail to take solidarity strike action.

The company is looking to impose its cost-saving business model following privatisation. In addition to attacking union solidarity, this includes changes to members' pensions - effectively stealing thousands of pounds from our deferred wages.

The solidarity shown by members gives a clear indication to both the company and CWU of a readiness to fight for our jobs and terms and conditions at both local and national level.

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# Successful and solid one-day strike at ABMU Health Board

Alec Thraves, Swansea Socialist Party

Hospital Sterilisation and Disinfection Unit (HSDU) workers at Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University (ABMU) Health Board, covering Swansea, Neath/Port Talbot and Bridgend have been forced into taking strike action in an effort to bring their pay banding up to the equivalent of other HSDU workers in Health Boards across Wales.

As the lengthy name of their unit suggests, we would all be in a lot of trouble without the skill and dedicated work of these vital NHS staff who decontaminate operating theatres, wards, clinics and A&E departments as well as preparing surgical equipment to the highest standard of cleanliness.

As one striker at Morriston hospital in Swansea explained:

"We have to clean, sterilise and reassemble surgical equipment that has been contaminated with bits of bone, brain and grizzle. This is a skilled and difficult job but we are just taken for granted by management".

These workers are obviously highly skilled technicians but are still working to job descriptions that were written in 2004. Recognising the specialist expertise and competence required for this job other Health Boards in Wales have upgraded their HSDU technicians from band 2 up to band 3 which is still only an increase of starting pay from £8.25 an hour to £8.49.

Little wonder that after almost two years of unsuccessful negotiations with management there was a 79% turnout and a 96% vote for strike action by these Unison members.

The determined mood on the picket lines today should be a warning to management that unless these workers are brought in line with the banding of their counterparts across Wales then another 24-hour strike will take place next Wednesday.

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 25 January 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## Workplace news in brief

### Ferry fight

Unite and GMB members working on the Woolwich Ferry in east London took strike action on 27 January - the first day of a rolling strike that will take place [every Friday until the campaign is won](#). The final straw for the workers was when they heard that a woman working in the office said she was being sexually harassed by a manager on a daily basis. This worker made a formal complaint, yet the employer, Briggs Marine, has not taken action.

This is not the first time that the Socialist Party-led Greenwich Unite branch has taken action against such allegations. The branch previously organised a successful strike campaign among social workers which defended a worker being bullied and harassed.

The ferry workers' anger grew when the employers ignored serious health and safety concerns, including poor maintenance of firefighting equipment and storm valves. The day after the strike a worker collapsed after being instructed to work in an area where fumes were escaping.

The union is appealing for funds - cheques can be made payable to Greenwich Unite and posted to Unite, 33-37 Moreland St, London EC1V 8BB.

**Greenwich Unite members**

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## **Tube strike**

The tube network is in torment. London Underground cuts have left the transport system woefully understaffed. Instead of hiring more, Central Line drivers based in north east London are being sent to the rest of the line. Some face a tortuous four-hour commute. Over 90% of those who voted, voted to strike. Far more drivers voted than when the Central Line was last individually balloted. Only one person had crossed the picket line at Hainault depot. The striking workers were confident and upbeat. It's an all-out war by Transport for London. The Socialist Party was there to show support. The pickets we met thought all the different grades could go on strike, "even the managers".

[Further strike dates by station staff on the whole of London Underground](#) have been announced for 6pm on 5 February until 9.59am on 6 February and after 10am on 7 February until 12.59am on 8 February.

**Ian Pattison**

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## **KCL poverty pay**

Members of Socialist Students and the Socialist Party attended a freezing cold picket line of King's College London (KCL) cleaners on 27 January.

KCL sadly isn't the first 'elite' institution to be pulled up for paying poverty wages to its cleaners. London School of Economics (which is just round the corner from KCL) has recently been hit by cleaners protesting against trade union victimisation and University College London Unison members have been battling for a number of years around issues of low wages and the treatment of staff.

All of these strikes are significant. Cleaners are traditionally some of the worst treated, often hired through agencies and on zero-hour contracts. It can be difficult to organise in these conditions. Also many of the cleaners are migrant workers, super-exploited by big business.

Edward Barnes, vice chancellor of KCL, was paid £458,000 in 2016. The huge disparity between his pay and the measly 1% pay rise of lecturers and poverty pay of cleaners, reeks of snobbery. Unison cleaners at King's are striking to demand the cleaning contractor Servest be removed and cleaners brought back in house.

**Helen Pattison**

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## **TUSC: To stand or not to stand?**

### **The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition debates election plans**

The [Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition \(TUSC\)](#) met in conference on 28 January to discuss how it should operate in a political context shaped by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party. The conference included a debate on whether or not to stand candidates in the 2017 local elections, overwhelmingly agreeing a motion (see below) for the national steering committee to proceed with processing candidate applications.

**Socialist Party executive committee member and TUSC national election agent, Clive Heemskerck, reports.**

TUSC warmly welcomed Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership election triumphs in September 2015 and again last year, with the constituent parts of the coalition contributing to his victories.

Paul Reilly, RMT transport union executive member, in the opening address to the conference, pointed out that the 80,000-strong transport union was the second-biggest donor to Jeremy's leadership campaigns, behind only the 1.4 million-member Unite union.

Significantly, as a politically independent union, the RMT was able to contribute more than the Labour-affiliated rail unions, Aslef and TSSA, whose £100,000-plus annual affiliation fees actually help to finance the anti-Corbyn, right wing-controlled Labour apparatus.

The RMT will back Jeremy Corbyn, said Paul, but will also keep to its annual delegate general meeting decision to continue supporting individual candidates in elections, TUSC or Labour, who "support the union's key policies. We back candidates that back us."

## **Two parties in one**

All the conference speakers started from a determination not to undermine Jeremy Corbyn's leadership or the anti-austerity struggle that lay behind his victories. On the contrary there was agreement that building the struggle is the only way that his leadership can be sustained against the Labour right wing.

But the right are particularly entrenched among Labour's elected representatives, in parliament and the council chambers. So what should be done when the 'Labour' candidate on the ballot paper is a jobs and services-cutting, anti-Corbyn, right-winger?

There are, for example, 210 Labour councillors up for election in May who were among the 1,000 councillors who signed the open letter in support of Owen Smith in last summer's leadership coup against Jeremy Corbyn. Where it is possible to stand a TUSC candidate against them in May, should they really be given a free run?

Hannah Sell, moving the successful resolution on behalf of the Socialist Party, said that the key was to recognise that Labour was "two parties in one".

There are those inspired by Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message, particularly the thousands of new joiners, who would respond to a clear call to transform the Labour Party from Blair's 'New Labour' into a real socialist anti-austerity workers' party.

On the other hand there remains the right wing, representing the interests of the capitalist establishment who benefitted so much from Blairism, who will fight to the end to prevent this. Where the right stand as councillors, implementing draconian cuts to local public services, a ballot box challenge would strengthen the struggle against them not undermine it.

This wasn't accepted by Charlie Kimber, speaking for the third TUSC constituent organisation, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), who opposed the resolution. Standing candidates at this time in England and Wales - "Scotland is different" - would only "weld together" Corbyn supporters with the right wing and it was necessary instead to allow events to develop to drive "the two trends apart".

## **Passive?**

Another SWP member, Simon Hester, speaking from the floor, appealed to the conference to "have patience" and not "jump the gun" by standing candidates this year.

This wasn't a call for "passivity", argued the SWP speakers. "All of us here spend more of our time campaigning, supporting strikes, and organising demonstrations than we do running election campaigns," said Charlie Kimber.

But as the Swansea RMT branch secretary Owen Herbert said from the floor, "campaigning is vital but working class people want to have a say at the ballot box as well." If they are not represented by Labour - and they won't be by the right wing who still dominate the Welsh Labour Party - they will look elsewhere, including to Ukip. "Show me a socialist Labour Party and I'll affiliate to it. But TUSC must carry on standing candidates until we have a Labour Party that can really represent us."

## UKIP

The danger is that leaving a vacuum 'welds together' working class voters, angry at their local Labour council's cuts, with other political forces - Ukip, the Greens, and even reviving the Liberal Democrats. This was a theme of several speakers from the floor.

It was recognised that TUSC couldn't fill the vacuum, even partially, in every electoral contest - in a parliamentary by-election for example, where national factors would dominate. The motion was not saying, 'stand everywhere'. But working class voters can easily distinguish between Jeremy Corbyn and a local right-wing councillor cutting libraries, children's centres, bin collections and other vital local services. So why give up one of our campaign tools - the threat of a ballot box challenge?

PCS vice-president John McNally, who sits on the TUSC steering committee in a personal capacity, agreed that the political context in Scotland was different, with Labour still in crisis. Working class support for the Scottish National Party (SNP) is beginning to erode. It is therefore right to support the aim set by the autonomously organised Scottish TUSC to stand as widely as they can in this year's Scottish council elections.

"Scotland is a different country", he said, turning to Charlie Kimber, "but not a different planet. Council workers, like the Durham teaching assistants facing pay cuts from a Labour council, need political representation as much as council workers facing cuts in Glasgow or Dundee do."

Other points of contention came up in the debate. RMT and Socialist Party member Jared Wood asked the question, "what worries Jeremy Corbyn the most? Is it TUSC candidates getting votes for socialist anti-austerity policies against Labour right-wingers in some council seats?"

"Or is it Len McCluskey losing the [Unite general secretary election](#) to the right-wing candidate Gerard Coyne, who will then move to unseat Corbyn? Isn't that the election the SWP should be more 'tactical' about, if they want to defend Jeremy Corbyn, and not back an alternative left candidate against Len McCluskey as they are doing?"

## Len McCluskey

While not hiding our differences with Len McCluskey the Socialist Party is supporting him in the Unite election. As Rob Williams told the conference, "the Unite election is not a 'referendum' on Corbyn," as the SWP claimed the council elections were. "If Coyne wins it will be a coup against Corbyn, and we know whose side we are on."

In his reply Charlie Kimber referred back to a Socialist Party statement that had been submitted to the TUSC national steering committee last autumn, calling on TUSC to "make no further preparations for contesting the May 2017 elections in England and Wales pending discussions with Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters on the new possibilities opening up following his re-election victory." What has really changed since then to reverse that position, he asked?

But things have moved on, responded Hannah Sell, since the Socialist Party circulated its statement to the steering committee, the day after Jeremy Corbyn's re-election (see ['#CorbynWins: New tasks for TUSC'](#))

## Socialism

The momentum generated by his second victory, which could have been built on to decisively defeat the right and transform the Labour Party, has been dissipated. While there could be another Corbyn wave in the future, it is clear that the 'new possibilities' the statement referred to have not been seized.

Jeremy Corbyn is attempting the impossible, said the RMT national president, Sean Hoyle, summing up. "He can't keep his socialist principles intact and the Labour Party intact at the same time. The vast majority of the parliamentary Labour Party and the councillors who back them are not socialists and shouldn't be left unchallenged by socialists, including at the ballot box."

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## TUSC and the 2017 elections

**The following motion was agreed by the conference, with five votes against:**

This conference re-affirms the support that TUSC has given to Jeremy Corbyn against Labour's Blairite right-wing, from his initial leadership election victory in September 2015 and during his re-election campaign in 2016.

We recognise that his leadership of the Labour Party has opened up the political situation compared to the first five years of TUSC's existence and that his defeat by the Labour right-wing would be a serious blow for the working class movement.

[TUSC was set-up in 2010](#), co-founded by the late Bob Crow, to enable trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists to stand candidates under a common anti-austerity and socialist banner, with an agreed minimum platform of core policies.

Establishing an electoral coalition of this character, involving a mix of constituent organisations and individuals, was conceived as a step towards solving the vacuum of working class political representation that had existed since the triumph of 'New Labour'.

### Jeremy Corbyn

Clearly Jeremy Corbyn's leadership victory, potentially a terminal defeat of New Labour, required TUSC to re-calibrate its electoral activity and conference supports the steps taken by the steering committee to do so.

In the May 2016 local elections, for example, no TUSC candidates were even considered to be run without local TUSC groups seeking a dialogue with the sitting Labour councillor or prospective candidate on the critical issue of their preparedness to resist cuts to local council jobs and services.

Conference calls on the steering committee to continue with this approach for the 2017 elections.

We recognise that this will be more challenging in the 33 English county councils and unitary authorities with elections in May, only six of which have Labour-led administrations.

### Wales & Scotland

That is not the case, however, in Wales - where right-wing Labour is the dominant force in local government - or Scotland, in a different political context and with councillors elected under a proportional representation system in multi-member wards.

The preference vote system used in mayoral elections also makes it easier for TUSC candidacies to be supportive of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message while making sure that the Tories do not make electoral headway.

Notwithstanding the differences between the various contests taking place in May, conference calls on the steering committee to ensure that, for whichever elections candidate applications are received, TUSC's electoral interventions are part of a serious campaign against cuts to local public services and will strengthen the battle against the right wing in the Labour Party and the unions.

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# Support your newspaper - help us get May Day greetings!

James Ivens, May Day greetings campaign organiser

Help the Socialist get May Day greetings this year. Because to puncture Trump, and end the billionaires' world austerity barrage, workers and young people need solidarity and socialist ideas.

And May Day greetings help fund the newspaper which exists to spread them.

Which paper has been alone on the left in [arguing for an open, uncompromising fight with the Labour right?](#) Who runs [detailed reports from socialists fighting Trumpism in the US?](#) Where can you read about the practical programme needed to win a [socialist Brexit?](#)

The Socialist. We support and broadcast the strikes and community campaigns the establishment press smears or ignores. Paper sales - and the annual cash boost from May Day greetings - mean we can.

Greetings are also a celebration of the class solidarity the Socialist helps to amplify. Groups of workers, trade union bodies, campaigns and student societies all express international solidarity through May Day greetings.

## How can you help with this?

Workers can talk to colleagues about sending a group greeting to the Socialist. We have a petition sheet you can use.

Trade union activists should consider proposing motions for their branch, committee or sector meeting agendas where possible. We have a model motion.

University students can move that their societies send greetings. School and college students get a special deal: we will place a greeting for whatever you can raise from a whip-round.

Socialist Party regions have targets for greetings for the first time this year. Members can ask about helping to organise their branch or region's drive.

- For May Day resources - and if you have any questions or suggestions - you can get in touch with me. Email [jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk). You can see prices and send greetings at [socialistparty.org.uk/mayday](http://socialistparty.org.uk/mayday).

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## Why I joined: "Things have to change"

Katie Hopkins, Cornwall Socialist Party

I look around at prices going up for everything and can't understand how we can sustain this way of life for even the next ten years!

I live in Cornwall and I don't own my own home. I have to move all the time and I've already had to move out of my hometown to be able to afford the ever growing rents. I have been on benefits even when working and I have seen my rent go up while housing benefit has stayed flat.

Even working 46 hours a week for above minimum wage, my benefits were still half of my income. This isn't okay. My rent is more than a mortgage. But I can't get one because I can't save. To me housing should not be a privilege, but a right.

I'm worried about everything. Our rights at work, everything. I recently started a new job. I signed a contract for a year's work but was asked to leave after nine months. I had no problems at work and was told I did my job well. One day I expressed to my manager that work was quiet and maybe I could reduce my hours a little. The next day I was asked to leave.

I had no money coming in. I had a contract. I never realised that until you've been working for a company for two years you have few rights. Since then I've heard stories of companies using this as part of their day-to-day practice. Taking advantage of the four weeks' notice period or getting rid of people just before they reach the two year line.

Things have to change, that's why I have [joined the Socialist Party](#).

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## Newham council challenged over £1.8 million cut to workers' pay

Scott Jones, East London Socialist Party

One Newham council worker could lose £6,000 and lose his home if [the £1.8 million cut to workers' wages](#) goes ahead. The all-Labour council, led by mayor Sir Robin Wales who earns £81,000 a year, had a whopping £161 million in general reserves in 2015-16.

Bin workers, some of the 1,300 affected, [lobbied a full council meeting over the attack on 30 January](#). The lobby, initiated by Unite and Socialist Party members on Newham Trades Council, was joined by NHS campaigners lobbying the council over STPs, RMT transport union members, Momentum supporters and a suspended councillor!

### Angry

To build support for the lobby Socialist Party members, on behalf of Newham Trades Council, leafletted workplaces and were invited into the canteen of one depot to leave leaflets. We spoke to workers who are understandably very angry about the cuts to their holiday, overtime and maternity pay. Their union Unite should be commended for [taking a stand on the issue](#) after GMB and Unison shamefully signed up to the deal.

Newham's 60 Labour councillors could vote against austerity, like Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to - and propose a strategy to fight back, like the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Newham residents and workers deserve councillors willing to oppose austerity. If those currently in are not willing, they should step aside for others who are. One Unite member told us he'd rather stand as a councillor for TUSC than Labour.

If the council refuses to listen, a serious campaign including strikes from Unite and the other council unions could defeat the onslaught.

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## Leicester: libraries fightback

Mike Barker, Leicester Socialist Party

Like other Labour-controlled local authorities, Leicester City Council is in the process of doing the Tories' bidding by destroying our city's public services.

But people are fighting back to save our libraries. In late 2016 a vibrant community campaign stopped the threatened closure of the city's second busiest library, and evidently the taste of victory has inspired others to

fight back.

Following a recent 100-strong protest, later in the week around 150 people packed a community centre to stop the imminent closure of another local library.

"This Labour council are not strong enough to stand up and say 'we are Labour and we won't make any cuts!'" said one campaigner. Another person argued that the mayor, as a former teacher, should be "embarrassed and ashamed for even trying to close a single library."

With other libraries across the city in the process of coming under review for cuts, we now have the belated support of a couple of pro-Corbyn councillors.

But with so many other services under attack (like welfare and youth services), it is critical that as many people as possible demand that no cuts be made at all.

In Leicester one obvious way in which our council can prevent further cuts is by drawing upon the £142 million they have in their general reserves!

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## Bristol: Angry meeting discusses tasing of race relations man

Roger Thomas, Bristol North Socialist Party

Around 200 people crammed into a meeting in St Pauls, Bristol, on 28 January to discuss the horrendous [tasing of a police race relations group member Judah Adunbi](#).

There was a feeling of anger at what had happened and a desire to achieve justice for Judah but it didn't stop there. Speaker after speaker from the floor talked of personal experiences of injustice and that enough was enough. Action needs to be taken to ensure this stops now.

A campaign has been formed by the community, and Avon and Somerset police are in the spotlight. Further meetings and events are set to be arranged to highlight the case and the racist policing. The elected police commissioner, Sue Mountstevens, sat silently throughout the meeting, declining the opportunity to comment.

Bristol mayor Marvin Rees spoke to highlight the racial nature of the problem but declined to indicate how £101 million of cuts to council services are likely to make things better.

This when a recent report from the Roundtree Foundation indicates that Bristol is one of the most unequal cities, with the BME population trailing behind in job opportunities, health, and social access.

- Socialist Party pamphlet: Fight racism, fight for socialism. A collection of articles from the Socialist. £2 or 10 for £10. Available from [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

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## Cumbria care home beds under threat

Cumbria county council has again published long discredited assertions to justify its attack on our care home system which will get rid of the majority of beds.

They must have hired a PR firm to give Cumbrians the false, glossy impression that they have initiated a big step forward. In fact they have been forced to build two new homes because it is now a statutory requirement. Of course the Socialist Party welcomes these improvements, but we are outraged that the council hides the fact that they are taking away most of the beds needed by the elderly and disabled.

They promise us that existing staff and residents will transfer to the new buildings. In fact staff have already been cut and many of the residents won't be with us in two years.

Their figures of current occupancy levels of 50% to 72% are part of a breathtakingly dishonest piece of propaganda to make us think there is a lack of demand. The truth is they are refusing new admissions, winding staff levels down and turning people away.

This spin has been answered in [Socialist Party leaflets, articles and the covering letter of our 1,300 strong petition](#), and Labour members have confronted the council with the truth that this is just putting a gloss on implementing Tory spending cuts. If Labour truthfully alerted local people to the horror facing old people and their families, and mobilised them to fight off the Tory attacks, we would support them. But if they let the Tories off the hook they will pay the price.

**Brent Kennedy, Carlisle Socialist Party**

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## Wallasey Labour 'dispute' escalates

The situation in Wallasey Constituency Labour Party (CLP) has continued to escalate.

Labour Party members around the country were contacted by party officials to take part in Labour's day of action for the NHS. This included Wallasey CLP, [which has been suspended since July 2016](#).

They were informed that their suspension was to be extended until March at least, with no explanation, but members were asked to leaflet and campaign on the day!

It also emerged that the vice-chair of Wallasey CLP is subject to investigation by Labour's Blairite-dominated National Executive Committee's (NEC) shadowy compliance unit for objecting to the one-sidedness and several proven lies in the report issued last autumn.

In essence he is being investigated for investigating the investigation. Such is the world of the Blairites - if you can't control it, then ban or suspend it.

We support mandatory reselection. If the Labour right think their way is the only way then let their constituents and party members decide. The Labour NEC has rigged the candidate selections for the forthcoming elections in Copeland and Stoke Central, picking anti-Brexit, anti-Corbyn candidates.

Should they lose, they will use this as 'evidence' that Corbyn is unelectable.

We need to give voters an alternative to the Tories and Ukip. We need an alternative to the Tory-lite policies of the Labour right. We need a workers' party.

**Leon Wheddon, Wirral Socialist Party**

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## Socialist Students: conference Saturday and Sunday, 11-12 February 2017

Socialist Students conference is now less than two weeks away. This promises to be a hugely exciting event. Socialist Students will be hosting Monica Caballero - the deputy general secretary of the Sindicato de Estudiantes (student union in Spain) and a leader of the [mass movement against education attacks in Spain](#). The Sunday morning session will include a debate with Conservative Future. Throughout the weekend the discussions will feature the following themes as well as many more:

- The fight against racism and 'Trumpism'
  - The HE Bill and defending education
  - Can there be a 'Brexit' in the interests of the 99%?
  - 100 years since the Russian revolution
  - The struggle against cuts in schools and colleges
  - Building Socialist Students
  - For more information and to register visit [socialiststudents.org.uk/events](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/events)
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## End poverty pay now... Get organised!

Adam Viteos

Over Christmas I worked gruelling hours in the retail sector, sometimes up to seven hours without any breaks. I did not dare refuse or complain as I was on a four-hour contract and I knew that I'd be put at the bottom of the list if a shift came up at short notice.

Despite my constant availability and inconsistency of hours - some weeks working only eight hours, others up to 36 - I was still paid little enough to be eligible to continue receiving a top up from Universal Credit throughout the months leading up to Christmas.

I often have to work from morning to late afternoon with no break. Lunch is completely out of the question and so I constantly feel tired. Yet I always seem to feel on edge when I'm not working. I feel like my life revolves around waiting for the phone to ring for my next shift or worrying when I don't get the call about how I'm going to make my rent or feed myself.

I'm angry and my co-workers, while sharing my anger, are completely demoralised and have no confidence in organising.

I've decided to do something with my anger and am attending my first Usdaw (retail union) branch meeting next week. I hope to find other people who face the same situation because I know that if I dare organise anything on my own I'll suddenly find myself on my contracted four hours and no more.

I hope that with others in my union facing similar disgraceful circumstances, we can start organising in each other's workplaces so that we're not victimised at work for daring to make a stand.

We desperately need an end to zero-hour and low-hour contracts unless specifically requested by the workers; an end to poverty wages, and the introduction of a £10 an hour minimum wage now, as a step towards a real living wage.

The Socialist Party fights for these demands and I am sure other members of my union will be as keen to organise and fight on these issues because these insecure jobs are completely unsustainable and need to be stopped.

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## UK textile workers on £3 an hour!

Mary Jackson

The Guardian and BBC news have exposed [garment manufacturers in Leicester employing thousands of workers on £3 an hour](#), less than half the minimum wage.

How is this possible? Paying the minimum wage is a legal requirement. Why aren't the employers facing prison?

The report says that some workers are being paid 'in the hand', no wage slips, no proof of income, no employment protection, and I'm guessing no health and safety.

The Guardian talks of bullying, threats, arbitrary humiliation, denial of toilet breaks, and theft of maternity pay. This is unacceptable. If the newspapers and TV can find out the truth and expose it then why has there been no action?

In 2015, [37 firms were fined a total of £51,000 for paying less than the minimum wage](#). Not even £1,500 each. Well it's a bargain for the employers. They'd stolen £177,000 from their workforce and got a tiny slap on the wrist.

And the final insult, the fine and repaying the money they'd stolen will be tax deductible!

The trade unions need to get actively involved. Unionise the workers, expose the shops that are selling these clothes and call for a boycott. This exploitation must be ended.

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## Slave labour at Sports Direct

**Karen Seymour**

The news that two brothers were jailed at Nottingham Crown Court for trafficking vulnerable people to work [at Sports Direct in Shirebrook, Derbyshire](#), will have shocked and angered many.

The 18 victims were targeted precisely because they needed money badly, one needing to fund treatment for his desperately ill mother back in Poland.

The men were told of jobs in the UK which could pay £300 a week. In reality, they were given a fraction of this, for working long hours, with the traffickers pocketing the rest.

They were also promised decent accommodation. What they actually got was a chronically overcrowded, dirty flat in a shared house with others.

It's probably true that Mike Ashley, the boss of Sports Direct, didn't know about this trafficking. However, he's made billions from the exploitation of his workforce through practices such as the use of zero-hour contracts and paying less than the minimum wage.

The Socialist Party campaigns to end exploitative, Dickensian working conditions and practices. We demand an end to zero-hour contracts. All workers must have trade union rates of pay, full employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.

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## Build 100 days of resistance to Trump's agenda!

**Bryan Koulouris, Socialist Alternative, US**

One of the most reactionary, bigoted and predatory administrations in modern history has taken office. The Trump presidency, from the vicious tweets to the bizarre press conferences to the reactionary cabinet picks and executive orders, has millions of people understandably feeling they are in an unfolding nightmare.

Trump's policies can be defeated, but it will take determined resistance, mass civil disobedience and disruption of 'business as usual' to win.

'Business as usual' is the system that's resulted in only eight people now having more wealth than 3.7 billion people - half the world's population. 'Business as usual', under Democrats as well as Republicans, is perpetual

climate destruction, war, income inequality, racism and sexism. Business as usual helped open the door to Trump's populist demagoguery.

Trump formally scrapped the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal that the Obama administration constructed to push back against China's growing economic power. We certainly do not mourn the end of this anti-worker, anti-environment pact. But Trump's alternative seems to be to threaten a trade war with China.

Contrary to administration claims, tariffs will not bring manufacturing jobs back in large numbers. A trade war is more likely to push the world economy into recession.

## What choice?

Under capitalism we face the terrible 'choice' between destructive corporate globalisation and protectionist trade wars.

To stop the right-wing onslaught, we need to instead focus on mobilising from below with 100 days of resistance to Trump's agenda.

We need to base our movement on the needs of working people and not limit our demands to what the Democratic Party leadership will accept.

We can build the biggest possible protests by calling for popular measures like defending and extending reproductive rights, ending deportations of immigrants and establishing improved Medicare for all. We need to keep fighting for a \$15 minimum wage, tuition-free college and an end to mass incarceration.

We need unity and solidarity of all people actively opposing Trump to stop his attacks. Women facing cuts to Planned Parenthood, which provides reproductive health services, should be backed up by everyone who is standing against Trump; the same goes for immigrants and anyone else in this predator's crosshairs. Unions, community groups, women's organisations, Black Lives Matter activists and socialists should all mobilise together with clear demands and decisive action.

Socialist Alternative thinks that we need a new party of the 99% to be an uncompromising force in fighting Trump's agenda. The Democratic Party leadership helped pave the way for Trump's victory, and their politicians are overwhelmingly controlled by the corporate elites.

Mainstream Democrats didn't stop Bush's agenda, and they haven't delivered on their promises to combat racism and sexism or improve the lives of working people. This is why some working people were seduced by Trump's pro-worker demagoguery, something which will be undermined by experience.

Trump is the embodiment of predatory capitalism, and while successfully fighting his agenda, working people can lay the basis for a world without exploitation, poverty and discrimination. Join us in the fight for socialism! We have a world to win!

- Read full article on [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

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## Tamil Nadu mass protests against state repression

Isai Priya, Tamil Solidarity

In December 2016 it was reported that India had surpassed Britain to become the sixth largest economy in the world. However, India is one of the most unequal countries with the richest 1% holding 58% of overall wealth. For the poorest and those suffering oppression, life in India is brutal.

The current prime minister, Narendra Modi, leader of the [right-wing Hindu nationalist BJP](#), has implemented many policies with the aim of whipping up Hindu nationalist sentiments in the hope of securing its fast-diminishing vote base.

The government recently attempted to introduce a ban on eating cow meat which led to attacks on oppressed-caste people who get labelled as 'beef eaters'. Cows are considered sacred to Hinduism.

Fascistic forces such as the 'RSS', that is linked to the BJP, use issues such as this in the hope of building their support base. They have been trying to use similar tactics in many states. But in Tamil Nadu, where the BJP has miniscule support with only one narrowly elected MP, various such attempts have failed in the past.

## **Anger**

In Tamil Nadu many issues have caused anger, particularly among young workers in the cities. These include how the BJP-dominated nearby Karnataka state blocked the Kaveri river water supply to Tamil Nadu, and the recent demonetisation mayhem throughout India.

The anger burst out when the Tamil New Year holiday, Pongal Day, was taken away and the Jallikattu (bull taming) tradition, which is associated with the Tamil New Year, was banned.

Tamil New Year celebrations include a four-day festival which marks the winter harvest. The tradition of cooking harvested rice on the first day has survived to this day.

However, celebrating cows and bulls on the second day had become ceremonial. Only a few villages maintain the tradition of Jallikattu.

Though the Tamil New Year is celebrated largely by Hindus, recently its character has been changing as something celebrated by all Tamils and is seen as part of the Tamil identity.

A ban took place following a successful court case brought forward by Peta, a well-known animal rights organisation. This ban is seen as a direct attack on the Tamil-speaking people and gave rise to a mass eruption of anger.

What made this eruption the largest since the 1960s is its character in defence of Tamil identity. Although some of the most visible slogans centred on Jallikattu, it is in general linked to Tamil aspirations for national rights. The majority who took part in the protests are city workers who had never been to Jallikattu or will ever take it up.

Placards such as "save our farmers" and chants against the state and central government politicians and parties were a common feature. It was clear that protesters wanted to inflict a blow against the Modi-led government.

The protest quickly spread across the world in places where big Tamil populations live. The spontaneous uprising in Tamil Nadu of tens of thousands of students and young workers has gained the support of and inspired many.

However the protest that was largely mobilised by social media lacked leadership and direction. No attempt has been made to put forward a coordinated set of demands and clear tactics.

Some argued for an organised approach and the need to prepare for future challenges, including possible attacks by the state.

## **Attack**

The movement forced the government to give some concessions. They have now temporarily removed the ban.

But rather than calming things down, the situation became more explosive. This response is correctly seen by many as political and directly aimed at Modi's central government.

The state and the media immediately began a propaganda campaign against the youth and students labelling them "terrorists", "traitors", and "anti-Indian infiltrators". This was followed by a brutal attack by the Tamil Nadu police.

Although this attack caused riots on the streets, videos are now emerging which clearly show the police themselves setting fire to the public properties to vilify students and young workers. Many young people have now been detained and many more, including children, were injured.

Tamil Solidarity supports the right to assemble and protest. We also demand that all those arrested be immediately released and adequate medical and other facilities are made available to the victims of the brutal police attack. There should also be a public inquiry into the actions of the police.

There was a real sense of unity which will not go away easily; rather it can fuel the struggle to come.

- This article can be read in full at [tamilsolidarity.org](http://tamilsolidarity.org)
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## **Bangladesh: 'Hartal' protest against destructive power plant**

**Pete Mason**

A half-day hartal, or general stoppage, took place in Bangladesh on 26 January. It was part of an ongoing campaign of protests against the Rampal coal-fired power plant project which threatens the livelihoods of 50 million rural poor in this country.

The Rampal power station project will potentially destroy the world heritage Sundarbans mangrove forests with devastating consequences for the region.

In the capital, Dhaka, police attacked demonstrators - including reportedly ordering a bus driver to plough into protesters. Campaign organisers (National Committee to Protect Oil-Gas-Mineral Resources, Power and Ports) responded to this assault by calling for demonstrations on 28 January and a countrywide sit-in on 25 February. It will also hold a mass rally in Khulna on 11 March.

Bangladesh is a country with a militant tradition of struggle. Last December, tens of thousands of garment workers in Dhaka came out in a week-long strike. They were demanding a minimum monthly wage of 15,000 taka (£158) - a 300% increase on the current minimum wage.

- See full article on [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)
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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/24363>