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# Victory! Health workers walk out against attack from new boss

Waltham Forest reporters

Health workers are ready to defend their rights! That was the unmistakable message from the 160 domestics who walked off the floor at the Royal London hospital in Whitechapel, part of Barts Trust, London, on Thursday 6 April.

Their new employer, the privateer vulture contractor Serco, thought it could set the tone for workplace relations by withdrawing the 15 minute paid morning tea-break on its first day. But Serco had another think coming! By 4.30pm Serco said it was going to 'consult' on the plan and would hold off. Workers will now need to organise to make this retreat permanent.

The backdrop to Serco's attempted onslaught is what the Telegraph [described as "onerous contracts that have been a drain on the company's profits"](#). It clearly thought this £600 million contract could boost its profits - especially by squeezing more out of the workers.

At Whipps (also part of the Barts NHS Trust) [Unite members won a fantastic victory ending zero-hours contracts and winning a 20% pay-rise](#) for low-paid workers bringing them up to the London living wage under contractors Carillion. Carillion was then dismissed and the contract given to Serco. Carillion had even interviewed workers but didn't proceed to selection stage when they got the news that they'd lost the business.

Serco now seem to be labouring under the impression that they can just roll back these gains. At Whipps this vicious profiteer is looking to make cuts to hours, pay and jobs.

But Unite the Union has been building on the victory at Whipps to show what's possible. Following the Whipps win (of £9.75 per hour, as much as £2 per hour increase for many) this was then fought for and won for all agency and bank workers indirectly employed by Serco in Barts, Mile End and Royal London hospitals who had in some cases been on minimum rates for six years. Also benefiting were workers on permanent contracts whose combined hourly rate and London weighting element was under £9.75.

Unite have been building across the Barts Trust, organising a pay campaign which given the pay freeze in the NHS is a big issue for all health workers. 500 new members have joined the union in the last months. The news that the nurses' union RCN is also considering a strike ballot over pay is a further indication of the readiness to fight among health workers.

Unite has submitted a 30p/hour pay claim to Serco from 1 April. The failed attack on the domestics' tea breaks was possibly an early test of whether workers and union would fight. Serco, while acknowledging the pay claim, have not as yet responded and the union branch is looking to ballot for strike action, subject to agreement at the upcoming branch meeting.

Following the fantastic communities-led 'Save our [NHS' march on 4 March](#), a massive TUC national demonstration to save the NHS - mobilised for by all trade unions and by the Labour leadership - would give confidence to all workers fighting for our NHS.

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**Meeting: Fight for pay, jobs and services! Fight to save the NHS!**

**Hospital workers and all others interested are welcome to come to an informal discussion in the Whitechapel Ideas cafe, across the road from the Royal London, at 6pm on Wednesday 12th April.**

**Discuss with Len Hockey, Unite union branch secretary at Whipps Cross hospital (personal capacity) and other Socialist Party members.**

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 8 April 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## **Hundreds march to save the NHS in Carlisle**

**Brent Kennedy, Carlisle Socialist Party**

The rally and demonstration in Carlisle called by Cumbria Health Campaigns Together on 8 April, against the Tory plan to privatise the NHS and particularly [against the closure of hospitals and services locally](#), was a great success.

A turnout of 700-800 in a small town like this is significant, especially as this was organised from below by the Socialist Party, the Unison health branch, local hospital campaigners and others.

This show of strength clearly encouraged the majority of locals who support our campaign, with drivers hooting and shoppers cheering us on. One shopkeeper rushed out to call on anyone not at work at the time to join the march.

### **TV coverage**

The regional TV news programmes carried footage of the rally and the two-page report in the local paper carried the headline: "The fight's not over to protect our NHS".

Our campaign stall at the rally was surrounded by shoppers queuing up to add their names to our petition, take leaflets and buy copies of the Socialist.

As our speaker at the rally said, we now need a winning strategy involving coordinated strike action, occupations and mass mobilisation of the public to save the NHS. A cheer went up when we called on the councillors who failed to veto ward and hospital closures on the Health Scrutiny Committee to resign or be removed by their parties.

How scandalous then, that these very same councillors who have betrayed us are being allowed to stand for re-election next month.

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## **Carlisle NHS privateers leave patients at risk**

**Dave Barton, Carlisle Socialist Party**

What kind of people would build a hospital children's ward with a firewall which stopped just above a false ceiling, allowing smoke and flames to spread? Or worse still, seal a duct in the special care baby unit with foam that was not fire-resistant? And keep these and other dangers hidden from the staff, patients and even management of the hospital?

Answer: The kind of people the Tories and Blairites want to hand the NHS over to if they can finish its privatisation. Welcome to Health Management Carlisle Ltd (HMC), the PFI company that owns the Cumberland Infirmary, [Tony Blair's flagship PFI hospital](#). Welcome to the outsourcing firm Interserve, which maintains the non-clinical services.

### **Faulty and defective**

A [report published by the Cumbria News & Star in 2016](#) revealed faulty fire doors, a defective fire alarm system, unfinished firewalls in several wards and stairwells and gaping holes in firewalls which would have allowed smoke to spread to the whole hospital.

After keeping this hidden for years, even when the dangers became known they didn't act until forced to. So dangerous was the building that the hospital trust itself had to train 127 fire wardens who patrol 24/7.

From 2002-15 we've had to pay £239 million in PFI payments so far. After 35 years we'll have paid an incredible £1,018 million. But we still won't own the hospital!

There's only one solution to this problem: rip up the contract and take this refuge of the sick into public ownership. Then we could spend the otherwise wasted £779 million on more staff and better safety.

## NHS SOS

- A House of Lords committee has said [working class people should live more healthily](#) to reduce strain on the NHS. Peers noted the impact of cuts, but also said "access to the NHS involves patient responsibilities as well as patient rights." It's easy to live healthily if - like a peer - you can earn [£300 a day](#) without having to work
- Hospitals will have to pay out [£80 billion due to parasitic 'private finance initiative'](#) (PFI) deals. This is over six times the £12.4 billion NHS trusts originally borrowed for new infrastructure. The Socialist says cancel the PFI debts. Meanwhile, NHS bosses are considering borrowing [£10 billion from hedge funds](#) to plug their funding gap

## School cuts can be beaten with a strategy to win

**James Kerr, Lewisham NUT (personal capacity)**

Our children's education is under the greatest threat for more than a generation and an equally powerful response is needed. In the next couple of months, as schools begin to confirm their budgets and timetables for next year, we will more clearly see the scale of proposed school cuts.

Unless defeated, they could amount to a £3 billion reduction by 2019-20, [as confirmed by the National Audit Office \(NAO\)](#).

As a London secondary school teacher, I have seen the importance of funding in improving educational practice and catering to many students' needs. The improvements in London schools over the last couple of decades can be credited to many sources but funding undoubtedly had a key role to play.

Take one scheme, ['The London Challenge'](#) - lauded by Ofsted (the government's schools' inspectorate) - which provided peer support for schools. It cost £80 million over its eight year lifetime up until 2008. Much of the good work done in that period will be undone by a funding reduction.

Of course there is money for some in education; Edexcel, one of the exam boards, [posted a £67 million profit in a 12 month period](#); and [the £395,000 basic salary of the chief executive officer of the Harris Federation](#) would make the eyes of most public sector workers water.

The Tories' mantra, wheeled out in robotic fashion, is that they've protected funding. However, the costs for schools and student numbers have risen, meaning there will be less money per pupil.

### Only words

When accused of breaking the Tory manifesto pledge to maintain per-pupil funding, [Theresa May's warm words became hot air](#): "What matters for all of us who are concerned about education in this country is that we ensure the quality of education provided for our children is a quality that enables them to get on in life and have a better future. That is what this government is about."

However, when we think of "quality" any teacher will be able to regale you with stories of the impact of cuts; school counsellors replaced by online advice, families asked to make financial contributions to pay for resources; sports days cancelled or children with special educational needs left without support. A government-funded breakfast club programme has over [300 schools on its waiting list already because of the funding squeeze](#).

Many schools are already in deficit and redundancies have been announced, including at large academy trusts.

It will continue to fuel a huge teacher recruitment and retention crisis as workloads become unsustainable. One in ten teachers left the profession in a 12 month period and the pressure from cuts will add to the exodus.

And the stress of teaching under conditions of austerity has resulted in the suicide rate among primary school teachers in England being nearly twice as high as average.

Local campaigns are being built all over the country with the change to the National Funding Formula being a particular focal point. The government sells the new formula as a 'levelling of the playing field' but the reality is that 98% of schools will lose out with inner city schools hit hardest. There is no doubt that support needs to be provided for rural areas and seaside towns but why can't there be a levelling up of all schools?

## **National movement**

The change will compound the pressures on schools applied by a rise in national insurance and pension costs. These local campaigns need to be linked up into a national movement with the education trade unions at its core and a strategy combining parent and student protest with industrial action.

We cannot wait though, some schools are already plunged into dramatic battles to defend jobs and courses. [The NAO showed that 60% of secondary schools already had to spend more than their income in 2014-15](#). That position has only got worse.

[Forest Hill School in Lewisham](#) has a £1.3 million deficit and could see 15 redundancies this year alone. Staff have already taken three days of strike action with more planned for after the holiday. A school like Forest Hill will need serious governmental funding to protect the quality of education in the long term, but there is a role to play for the local council too.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was correct to recently highlight the National Health Service and education as key areas for Labour to campaign on.

His policy of all primary school children being eligible for a free school meal has been applauded by many. He must go further in mapping out a plan for education which will see cuts and privatisation reversed.

He can also act now to offer support for the campaigns of teachers, parents and students by exploring how Labour councils and mayors can use their positions as tribunes for these movements.

In Lewisham, south London, it is the Labour council which the campaign is focused on, to get them to honour their obligations to the school, including on redundancy payments and to explore all means to support what is still a local authority school.

Schools are legally allowed to run a licensed deficit, not enough on its own but a useful tool to buy time while there is a campaign for more money.

Neighbouring Greenwich council recently spread the deficit repayments for one of its schools from five to seven years. It won't stop all cuts but will relieve some pressure.

There is clearly money available when it suits political leaders. Some schools have had debts written-off by local authorities in the process of academy conversion. If money can be found to pave the way for privatisation, why not in protecting all schools?

Another area which the campaign movement must look at is the effect of rip-off Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes on the schools' budget.

Forest Hill School pays a staggering £1 million a year to the shareholders of its PFI contract. We ask: Should we pay for our children's education or to bloat shareholder profits?

## Scandal

An astonishing £209 billion will be spent on paying PFI debt across the public sector in the next 35 years, while government-imposed austerity continues. This is a scandal and cannot go unchallenged. Contracts should be renegotiated and ripped up, if necessary, to remove the boot from the neck of our schools.

There is no single blueprint for how this campaign develops and many avenues will be explored in building this movement. What we do know is that the education unions will play a key role.

The heroic [strikes of Derby and Durham teaching assistants](#) show a gritty resolve to resist attacks. The National Union of Teachers still has a live ballot for discontinuous national strike action which will run out in the summer. A strike in the summer term, combined with the building of a national demonstration, could complement the local action.

The embattled Tory government is vulnerable on school funding, with even some of their own council leaders sounding the alarm. However, they will not crumble of their own accord, it is necessary for us to drive the wedge in.

- No to all cuts - level funding up, not down
- Fund children's education, not PFI private profit
- Organise campaigns in every area uniting teachers, support staff, parents, students and the community
- Defend state education - for a fully funded, democratically run, genuinely comprehensive education system
- For a trade union-led national demonstration in defence of education
- End austerity - fight for a socialist society run in the interests of the 99%
- Join the march and rally for Forest Hill School on Saturday 22 April at Mountsfield Park, Catford at 11.30am, finishing at Mayow Park, Forest Hill, London, SE26

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## Cuts leave schools unable to meet basic needs

**Akila Kumar, Birmingham teacher**

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has [proposed to fund free school meals for all primary school children](#) by adding VAT tax on private education fees.

At a time when schools are facing severe cuts to their budgets, Corbyn's proposal is a welcome measure. It is an absolute disgrace that, due to cuts to benefits and the rise of in-work poverty, [some parents go hungry so that their children can have a decent meal](#).

But to solve the crisis in education, Corbyn needs to go even further. His proposal should be just one of many measures to increase the funding available to schools. The government's brutal cuts to education mean that primary schools will lose on average [£403 per pupil](#) and secondary schools will lose £554 per pupil by 2020.

It is no wonder that schools are struggling to fund basic resources for pupils: the school I work at cannot afford to replace basic classroom equipment.

Even more shocking, one primary school in Sussex has had to ask pupils to donate toilet roll and stationery, as it cannot afford to finance these items due to cuts. One in six state schools have sent letters to families asking for [contributions of £20 a month or more for around 1.4 million students](#).

Elsewhere, schools are considering closing early two days a week as they cannot afford enough teachers.

Government cuts have left schools unable to meet the basic needs of pupils. Meanwhile, the government continues to promote inequality through academies, free schools and grammar schools.

These should be abolished and replaced by a properly resourced state education system for all. No school should have to ask for handouts from parents because they cannot afford resources.

No parent should have to go hungry so that their child can eat. There is enough money in the hands of the super-rich to finance a decent state education for every pupil.

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## Wales: Labour right rattled by anti-cuts TUSC in Cardiff

**Ross Saunders, Cardiff West Socialist Party**

The 100% anti-cuts, socialist alternative presented by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has been welcomed on the doorstep by people who are desperate to see an end to austerity. But some figures on the Labour right are less enthusiastic that we're standing in the Welsh council elections.

We've been accused of splitting the 'left-wing' vote; of sexism - some of the Labour cutters we're standing against are women; of bullying - we sent a polite letter asking for a discussion about fighting cuts; and all sorts of other ridiculous charges.

### Blame

Don't blame TUSC for Labour's likely losses in May - or Corbyn either, as First Minister Carwyn Jones has tried to do. The fault belongs to Labour councillors who have backed Tory cuts.

Far from aiding the establishment parties, it will be TUSC that will be exposing their record.

The Liberals and Plaid Cymru - who ran Cardiff together only five years ago - slashed 1,000 jobs, closed care homes and schools, privatised home care for the elderly, and carried out many other brutal acts of vandalism to our public services.

But Labour won't be pointing that out, because they've backed their own cuts and privatisation programme. Cutting 1,600 jobs and £120 million of funding, and selling off leisure to notorious exploiters Greenwich Leisure Limited. So it will also be left to TUSC to fight to prevent Ukip from diverting the anger at austerity in a racist direction.

TUSC has been careful not to stand against councillors who backed Corbyn against the right-wing coup.

But despite standing down in six wards in Cardiff, we're launching the biggest socialist challenge in a generation - only the four main Welsh parties are standing more candidates. A third of Cardiff's population will get a chance to vote TUSC.

The reason we're standing is best summed up by a Labour councillor who asked us to stand down. He said: "We can protest, we can march, we can wave banners and flags, but if we are not a shield to the vulnerable and the dispossessed then we are not socialists."

Exactly. Protesting against the cuts isn't enough: we need socialist representatives who will stop making them.

# Doncaster: Socialist Steve's growing support

Alistair Tice, Yorkshire Socialist Party

It's been a great first week for Steve Williams' Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) [campaign for mayor](#).

Steve won the drawing of lots so his election address will appear first in the mayoral booklet that will be posted out to all 220,000 voters.

At the time of writing, [he is in the lead in a small online poll run by Doncaster Free Press](#).

More importantly, Steve is winning support on the ground.

Transport union RMT is a component of TUSC alongside the Socialist Party, and the local RMT rail branch is strongly backing Steve. TUSC backed the Northern Rail guards on their 8 April picket line before petitioning in the town centre to keep guards on the trains.

As chair of the local health workers' branch of public sector union Unison, Steve has the backing of [Care UK workers who three years ago took 90 days' strike action against pay cuts and the privatisation of the NHS](#).

Now the Doncaster NHS clinical commissioning group has announced more rationing of routine operations and procedures.

And this is before the 'sustainability and transformation plan' cuts are implemented.

## Enthusiasm

On the streets, there is no enthusiasm for the incumbent Labour mayor, Ros Jones. Members of the public have described her to us as a "nodding dog" who has "rolled over and carried out the Tory government cutbacks."

£106 million cuts over the last four years - closing residential homes, day care centres, libraries and leisure facilities.

There is a real feeling that Labour in Doncaster is not standing up for local people. Significantly, several Labour Party members have said that they will be voting for Steve.

But where Labour candidates back Jeremy Corbyn, like in Steve's own ward of Conisbrough, then TUSC is not standing candidates against them for the council seats.

With only five other mayoral candidates, TUSC is getting more media coverage than in the past.

Steve's even been invited to hustings at the Doncaster Chamber of Commerce conference. It will be interesting to see how TUSC's campaign to make Donny a £10 an hour minimum wage town goes down with 200 businesspeople!

At the same time, many smaller businesses are being clobbered by the big banks - including by their local branch closure plans. The Tories' national business rate revaluation privileges multinational companies like Amazon.

And Jeremy Corbyn has rightly attacked big businesses forcing smaller businesses under by paying invoices late. Public ownership of banks and big business under democratic workers' control and management could sort a lot out.

## Trump orders missile strikes against Shayrat air base

# Attacks ratchet-up Syrian conflict and fuel tensions between powers

Niall Mulholland, Committee for a Workers' International

US president Donald Trump's decision to launch missile attacks against the Shayrat air base in Syria ratcheted up the long running conflict there and dangerously fuelled tensions between the US and Russia and Iran, and also with North Korea and China. It will also significantly increase rivalries between Sunni and Shia-based regimes in the Middle East.

Trump [claimed that the tomahawk missiles attack was ordered "on the airfield in Syria from where the chemical attack was launched."](#) referring to Khan Sheikhun, where over 70 people died.

The appalling death of scores of civilians, including children, rightly led to revulsion and condemnation from working class people around the world. However the US, supported by other Western powers, cynically seized upon the terrible incident to try to strengthen their position in the Syrian conflict.

In the absence of an investigation into the reasons for the chemical deaths and without seeking a UN mandate, or even a mandate from the US Congress, Trump ordered the missile attacks against Syria.

### Welcomed

The US attacks were welcomed by European governments, as well as Turkey and Israel. The opposition Islamist Ahrar al-Sham militia in Syria [welcomed US "surgical strikes."](#)

Meanwhile Assad will use the US attacks to try to bolster his anti-imperialist credentials at home. Socialists give no support whatsoever to the Assad regime, which has shown no concern for the lives of innocent civilians during Syria's long and bloody civil war. Assad is a brutal dictator prepared to use ruthless means to stay in power.

However, as of yet, there is no hard evidence to say that the Assad regime was responsible for the death of civilians from chemicals.

Given that Assad, with crucial help from Putin and Iran, is winning the war, it appears counterproductive from his point of view to launch an indiscriminate chemical attack, fully aware that it would be a pretext for a possible US-led military attack. Moscow insisted that the Syrian air force hit a depot of chemical weapons produced by rebels fighting government forces.

At this stage, the only certainty about the latest events in Khan Sheikhun is that it killed scores of civilians, on top of the hundreds of thousands of other war-related deaths.

### Counter-revolution

This is fundamentally a result of the counter-revolution that unfolded in Syria following a genuine mass revolt against the rule of Assad in 2011, inspired by [revolutionary movements in Tunisia and Egypt](#).

In the absence of strong, united, working class organisations and a socialist leadership, sectarian and Islamic forces were able to step into the vacuum, aided by reactionary Gulf States and Turkey and by Western powers. This led to the degeneration of the mass revolt into a vicious, multi-faceted civil war.

It is unclear whether the US air strikes are a show of strength and limited action or if they presage a broader military intervention in Syria. The Shayrat airbase is an important staging post for Syrian and Russian military operations against the largely Islamic armed opposition and the US attacks will be a blow.

[Russia condemned the US air strikes](#) as an "act of aggression" and a "violation of international law" and suspended its channel for communicating military action in Syria with Washington, used to prevent accidental conflict.

These developments leave open the possibility of direct clashes between US-led and Russian military forces in Syria, with far-reaching consequences in the region and internationally.

Iran, which has militias fighting alongside Assad's troops, also strongly condemned US actions. Adding to the dangerous complications on the ground, Iranian forces are also in Iraq, nominally fighting alongside the US-backed Baghdad regime's troops against Isis.

Trump appeared to order the air attacks while in talks with the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, on his visit to the US, which will only serve to increase tensions with the Beijing regime.

## Shift

As the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the international organisation the Socialist Party is affiliated to) warned, the advent of Trump's administration marks a shift to more dangerous and unpredictable world relations.

In this situation, the working class and youth of the Middle East, the US and all over the world need a mass anti-war movement and the development of powerful working class parties, with bold socialist policies, to counter the war, terror and poverty of capitalism and imperialism.

- [Read full article online at socialistworld.net](#)
- Stop Trump's attacks on Syria - oppose all outside powers' interference in the region
- End war and terror in Syria, Iraq and the Middle East
- No to racism and scapegoating of immigrants and refugees
- For workers' unity and socialism

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**Socialist Alternative, cothinkers of the CWI in the US, add:**

Trump's response reeks of hypocrisy when his administration is also at this moment ramping up a bombing campaign against Isis in Syria and Iraq, leading to increasing civilian casualties including hundreds in one strike alone in Mosul.

US imperialism has also been supporting Saudi Arabia in its brutal campaign in Yemen against Houthi rebels which is leading to massive casualties, a collapsing economy and potential mass starvation. Trump's attack on Syria takes place at the same time he has acted to prevent any refugees fleeing the war-torn country from coming to the US...

While Trump claims that he was moved by the horrible images from Idlib, it is clear that the main purpose of this attack was to distract from his plummeting poll numbers and domestic troubles including the rejection of the Muslim ban by the courts after mass protests and more recently the failure to pass Trumpcare...

- [Read more at socialistalternative.org](#)

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# France: Groundswell of support for left candidate

## Old political elite discredited

**In the forthcoming French presidential election opinion polls show that left-wing candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon is closing the gap on the three frontrunners. Clare Doyle of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) reports on this wide-open contest.**

A deep discontent with the existing order is reflected in the dramatic rise in recent days in the popularity of left and socialist candidates. This includes widespread approval of the points made by car-worker Philippe Poutou in a candidates' debate on TV when he attacked the privileges of all the politicians of the establishment, including the Front National's Marine Le Pen.

There has been a doubling of the ratings for Jean-Luc Mélenchon of 'France Insoumise' (France Unbowed) with his strong campaign against austerity policies, [taking him to 17%](#) and possibly further.

The official candidate of the ruling so-called Socialist Party (PS), Benoît Hamon, is fighting a losing battle after years of his party's unpopular pro-business policies in government. He has now declared for Mélenchon in the second round!

## Voicing rage

French capitalism, with all its apologists and representatives, offers no way out of stagnation, joblessness, cuts in welfare and authoritarian government. Mélenchon's campaign, is effectively voicing the rage of the workers and youth of France against the pampered, swindling elite who live in luxury while the majority face austerity and joblessness.

The appeal of this 65 year-old's talk of "a citizens' revolution", has seen his organisation grow to over 300,000 members. [His YouTube subscribers number 270,000.](#)

(more than all the other candidates put together) and his rallies draw crowds of tens of thousands. Up to 110,000 marched to the Bastille with him on 19 February - the day of the commemoration of the [1871 Paris Commune](#).

Although a former Trotskyist, Mélenchon does not talk, as the CWI does, of an alternative, socialist Europe. He also stops short of advocating the key measures necessary for dealing with the multinationals, the banks and the super-rich ie nationalisation of the banks and monopolies and democratic socialist planning. But his ideas and his enthusiasm are undoubtedly what makes him popular.

Behind the volatility and unpredictability of the election campaign is a tense social situation. The state of emergency, imposed after horrific terror attacks, is still in place. In March, new disturbances broke out in the deprived suburbs of Paris and elsewhere.

## "Bonfire of the elites"

There is no slowing down in the number of often small but bitter strikes breaking out - in response to attacks on wages and conditions, cuts in services or high-handed attitudes on the part of pampered bosses.

Before the first round of voting on 23 April, the far-right candidate, Marine le Pen, seems certain to get the highest vote. Most polls predict, however, that she will not muster enough additional votes to defeat whoever will run against her in the second round on 7 May. But nothing is ruled out!

France is experiencing "a bonfire of the elites", [as the Economist expressed it](#).

It is unprecedented since the time of President De Gaulle that no representative of the 'traditionally' governing left or right parties will be in the final two! The 'independent' Emmanuel Macron will benefit from disillusioned voters of both camps.

Macron, with a background in banking (Rothschild), favours deep austerity for the public sector and tax reductions for the business sector. He is a neoliberal through and through and, unlike Le Pen and Mélenchon, a staunch supporter of the EU and its institutions.

Le Pen has picked up support from workers and big layers of young people by policies that are seen by some to be anti-austerity and anti-establishment. To others, she is clearly racist and anti-immigrant in spite of her party shedding some of its pro-fascist past. She is pledged to take a vote on the EU within six months of coming to power.

The popularity of the current president, François Hollande, reached an historic low at one point and his party is hugely unpopular among workers.

Last year saw mass movements against its anti-worker labour law reform. After this election and the parliamentary contest that follows in June, the party itself could disintegrate.

## Austerity

The candidate of the Republicans, former prime minister Francois Fillon, also promotes austerity and deregulation, only on a larger scale than Macron. His star has faded the more revelations about his corrupt practices have come to light.

Gauche Révolutionnaire (GR) - the CWI in France - advocates voting for Mélenchon in the first round (and obviously in the second if he defies all the odds to be in the run-off!).

But socialists understand that in the second round, many workers and young people will vote, holding their noses, against Marine Le Pen. The most important task in the period after the election is to build a new mass socialist force from those who have campaigned and voted for left and socialist parties.

In 2002, parties to the left of the PS won nearly four million votes in the presidential campaign - nearly three million for Trotskyist candidates and nearly a million for the Communist Party. But the opportunity for Trotskyists to form a new party offering a clear working class and anti-capitalist programme was squandered.

The most urgent task of the hour in France, as in so many other countries across Europe, is to build a new socialist party of workers and youth.

The next few months will see huge changes in France's political landscape. As the world's political and economic crisis deepens, the legendary combativity of the French working class will light a beacon internationally and, drawing the correct political conclusions, can point a way forward along the road of socialist transformation.

- [Article can be read in full on socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)

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# Ireland: Bury the water charges

Neil Cafferky

"Minister, read the writing on the wall. It's over. You've lost. The 'sinister fringe' has won. Give it up. Scrap the (water) charges."

Simon Coveny, the Fine Gael Minister responsible for Water Charges in Ireland, endured a torrid time in the Dáil (Irish Parliament) on 6 April as Socialist Party member and Dublin South West TD (MP) Paul Murphy exposed his party's attempts to smuggle the iniquitous water charges in through the back door.

The debate in the Dáil followed on from an extraordinary intervention by the minister into the draft report from the parliamentary committee on water charges.

The final report was widely seen as a victory for the anti-water charges movement. Among the key recommendations of the report was the scrapping of water charges and a commitment to fund water use through general taxation.

In an eleventh hour intervention minister Coveny sought to overturn the recommendations. Once again the bogeyman of EU law was used. The report triggered a crisis in the Fine Gael minority government.

Fine Gael is being propped up by the largest opposition party Fianna Fáil. Despite Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil sharing the same pro-privatisation views on water, Fianna Fáil backed amendments from Paul Murphy that

reflected the demands of the anti-water charges movement. They did this out of fear for their own electoral base if they were seen to be too pro-water charges.

## Wounded

This provoked an enraged response from Fine Gael with angry insults being traded in the Dáil and on social media. This may not be the issue that collapses the minority government, but it is certainly mortally wounded.

Dublin saw a mass demonstration by the anti-water charges movement on 8 April. Thousands of people turned out in what many hoped would be a "last push" on water charges.

There is little complacency that full victory has been achieved. [One demonstrator told the Irish Times](#): "I don't trust these politicians, especially Fianna Fáil. But if they don't abolish the charges, well, we'll be back in our hundreds of thousands."

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## Support the Jobstown trial defendants

On 24 April the first adult trial of Jobstown anti-water charges protesters - which includes Paul Murphy - gets underway.

Formally, the trial is about the Irish state charging the peaceful protesters with 'false imprisonment' after the car carrying the then deputy prime minister, Joan Burton, was delayed by a sit-down protest in Jobstown, south west Dublin, in November 2014.

## Political vendetta

In reality, the trial is a political vendetta by the establishment to deter future mass protest movements. The ability of mass protest to disrupt cosy parliamentary procedure underlines what a thorn in the side radical socialist representatives like Paul have become for the establishment.

The latest manoeuvre of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) is an attempt to stack the jury.

The DPP is seeking to exclude from the jury anyone from Tallaght (where the protest occurred), anyone who has expressed an opinion on the water charges in public, including on social media, or anyone who is part of a campaigning organisation opposed to water charges!

This latter condition would exclude members of trade unions who have supported the Right2Water campaign such as Unite or the CPSU civil servants' union.

There can be no complacency that a jury could not possibly convict people for engaging in peaceful protest. The international solidarity campaign needs to continue right up to the trial and beyond.

- To assist the campaign in Britain contact [jobstownnotguiltygb@gmail.com](mailto:jobstownnotguiltygb@gmail.com)

## Protest in solidarity with Jobstown - Monday 24 April, 2pm

- Outside the Irish Embassy, London SW1X 7HR
  - Organised by the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers
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# Scrap the Tory 'rape clause' and all benefit attacks

'Joseph White', civil servants' union PCS member

[Changes to child tax credits and the 'Universal Credit' benefit system](#) will mean that people making a new claim from 6 April will have the number of children they can claim for capped at two. One exception to this is if the third child was born as a result of what the government calls "non-consensual conception."

However, in order to prove this was the case, there is an eight-page mandatory form that the victim will need to fill out.

[Dubbed the "rape clause,"](#) it will require the claimant not only to name the child the exception will apply to, but also have a "third-party professional" fill out part of the form.

This represents a new low for the government.

Disgracefully, the exemption will not apply to claimants who still live with their rapist - despite a British Crime Survey [finding that 45% of rapes happen within current relationships](#). Attacks can be extremely difficult for victims to disclose, let alone prove.

In evidence presented to the House of Lords, the manager of the Glasgow Rape Crisis Centre said: "We have more than 30 years' worth of empirical evidence that tells us that the most dangerous time for a woman and her children is at the point of leaving an abuser. In the UK a woman is murdered every three days by a partner or ex-partner."

This latest attack on women compounds the threat posed by the housing benefit cap, which could close two-thirds of the already [insufficient number of women's refuges](#).

Women and children need material support to escape abusive relationships and live stable, independent lives. The Tories' rape clause punishes victims and will endanger lives for the sake of reducing the bosses' tax burden.

The Socialist Party says: scrap the rape clause. Reverse all benefit cuts and fund secure, genuinely affordable housing for all. You can't fight domestic violence without also fighting the cuts.

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## Thousands left with 50p for rent - cap rents, not benefits

Stephanie Hammond, Camden Socialist Party

Tory caps on housing benefits have left thousands of families with only 50p a week for rent.

A Panorama report found the cap - which limits benefits to £20,000 for most of Britain and £23,000 in London - affected nearly 70,000, and 7,585 people found themselves with just 50p each week to pay rent.

Others have been made homeless, and parents have been cut off from their children. A recent report from the Children's Society charity found that children often bear the brunt of the cuts.

Families crippled by poverty have to move often, frequently to temporary accommodation miles away from their schools.

This is in a climate of skyrocketing rents and flat wages around the country. The minimal amount of 'affordable housing' is anything but, with rents as high as 80% of market rates.

[Average rents in London stand at £1,246 a month](#), while Manchester faces a homelessness epidemic and a [population that's growing 15 times faster than homes are being built](#).

Landlords are charging exorbitant rent on properties not fit for purpose - cramped studio flats without windows, inadequate kitchens and bathrooms. Barnet council in northwest London is allowing a developer to build 'dog kennel' flats, 40% smaller than the average Travelodge room.

Tory and Blairite politicians make noise about tackling the housing crisis, but they are precisely the architects of it. The only solution can be the reversal of all welfare cuts; capping rents, not benefits; and a country-wide mass programme of council house building to provide homes for all.

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## 47,000 kids exposed to illegal toxic air

### Fight for publicly owned green energy and transport

Aaron Smith, Bristol South Socialist Party

Thousands of kids across Britain are having their living conditions worsened and lives potentially shortened as they are [exposed to illegal levels of air pollution](#).

Alongside carbon dioxide, methane and sulphur, the Guardian and Greenpeace have found there are dangerous levels of nitrogen dioxide around over 2,000 schools.

Although the worst of the pollution is in London, Birmingham and Manchester, smaller cities like Plymouth and Newcastle are affected almost as much.

The main culprit is diesel vehicles. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs estimates that of the 40,000 premature deaths from air pollution, 23,500 result from exposure to nitrogen dioxide.

This is partly due to the Blairites. In 2001, the New Labour government gave diesels breaks on vehicle tax to encourage consumers to buy them. Gordon Brown, then chancellor, apparently believed the diesel industry's claim to be 'cleaner' than petrol.

But this proved to be utter rubbish, as former [science minister Lord Drayson admitted](#) in 2015. And then the [Volkswagen emissions scandal](#) came out.

Our [health is at great risk](#), and the big business profiteers and their politicians can't be trusted to sort it out.

The Socialist Party fights for nationalisation of the energy and transport industries under democratic workers' control and management.

That would allow mass investment in public transport and infrastructure without the interference of the profit motive. Polluting cars could also be converted to cleaner fuels without punishing car owners.

Clean up our air and water!

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## Them & Us

### Champagne buttons

Hedge fund managers at a new office complex will have ['press for Champagne' buttons](#) installed at their desks.

The £100 million development in Soho, central London, will also have buttons for caviar and cocktails. A high-end restaurant downstairs will send up celebratory drinks on demand.

The Socialist looks forward to supermarkets installing 'press for tin of beans' buttons at [checkouts for staff on poverty pay](#). [Perhaps the foodbank out back](#) could run the service.

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## Tampon tax

Young women from low-income families have been skipping school because they cannot afford sanitary products.

[Police in Leeds](#) have found that periods are often a cause for truancy. The Tories' barbarous tampon tax will only have compounded the problem.

Meanwhile, some of the income from that very same tax has gone to an anti-abortion group. The government has granted £250,000 to the [anti-choice 'charity' Life](#) from newly added VAT on feminine hygiene products.

Sanitary protection is not 'non-essential'. Public funds should not go towards undermining a woman's right to choose. Scrap the tampon tax and fight for full abortion rights.

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## Solid strike across the rail network against unsafe driver-only operation

### Socialist Party reporters

Train strikes brought large parts of the country to a standstill on 8 April. Train guards in the RMT union struck against [driver-only operation \(DOO\)](#) on Merseyrail which affected the Grand National horse race, on Northern Rail and again on Southern Rail, days before the [franchise's boss doubled his pay](#).

Socialist Party members joined the picket lines. In Liverpool the strike was solid with reports of members of the drivers' union Aslef refusing to cross picket lines and RMT members unveiling a travelling billboard to explain the reasons for the strike to the public.

Pickets at Leeds train station told Socialist Party member Iain Dalton of the strong support from the public for their second strike against the implementation of DOO on the Northern Rail network. One commuter who had got a taxi rather than take a scab train came up to pickets to offer solidarity and take a leaflet.

Despite management attempts to paint this dispute as the RMT resisting 'modernisation', this is the same franchise that still has 'pacer' trains running that were meant to be temporary carriages back in the 1980s.

### Divided Tories

At another Northern Rail picket line in Newcastle William Jarrett visited Central Station where morale was high, and passers-by were friendly to pickets. RMT official Richie Veitch said what he thought of Labour-controlled Newcastle, Gateshead, and Durham councils announcing their concerns about DOO. He rightly bemoaned that they were the ones who voted for the government's DOO plan in the first place!

Newcastle catering branch rep and guard John Lauder said: "This government's too tied up with Brexit." He's right. The Tories are disunited and weak, suffering 'mission creep', and underestimated the resolve of RMT and rail users supporting defiance of unsafe rail conditions. A contribution was made to the picket supervisor for the strike fund on behalf of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN).

The NSSN also visited the Southern Rail picket line at Victoria Station in London along with Socialist Party members working as bus drivers who brought solidarity from their work mates and union Unite.

The campaign against DOO will continue with a [national protest called by the RMT](#) at 12 noon on 26 April at Old Palace Yard, outside Westminster before a rally at Westminster Central Hall.

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# PCS election: Vote Democracy Alliance

**Marion Lloyd, Left Unity chair and PCS NEC member (personal capacity)**

The ballot for the 2017 national executive committee (NEC) election of civil servants' union PCS opens on 20 April and closes 11 May.

The ballot of the PCS's almost 200,000-strong membership is significant because the left-led PCS is widely recognised as one of the most consistent, outspoken critics of the government's austerity programme. It is also seen as a leading exponent of action against government attacks.

PCS has been transformed into a fighting, campaigning and democratic union under the leadership of the Democracy Alliance - an alliance between Left Unity (which includes Socialist Party members) and the PCS Democrats.

The Democracy Alliance candidates are seeking re-election based on their leadership of the union and record in office:

- Opposition to the pay cap
- Opposition to the government's austerity programme
- Opposition to privatisation of public services and the government's office closure programme
- Defence of pensions and agreements giving protection against compulsory redundancies
- Organising campaigns and action to reject and defeat attacks on PCS members
- Working for public sector-wide campaigns and strike action against government attacks

Under the leadership of the Democracy Alliance, in the last year alone we have [stopped the privatisation of Land Registry](#), defended jobs and stopped [office closures in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#), forced concessions on the hated performance-management system, and [protected members in the National Gallery](#).

PCS is a democratic union. Its leadership is elected annually and the union's policies are agreed by the PCS annual conference.

The union has faced a series of unparalleled and vindictive attacks from the government which have included the withdrawal of facility time from union reps, and the [removal of check-off](#) in a failed attempt to bankrupt the union.

The union has withstood these attacks, and its Democracy Alliance leadership will not be deflected from doing what is necessary to protect members' interests and more generally defend the interests of working people.

Nor will PCS be silenced or persuaded into inactivity by the proposition that we should lay low and wait for a Labour government.

The election and re-election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party is hugely welcome. But there is strong resistance from the right wing in the Labour Party to his leadership and policies, so all our hopes cannot rest on Labour. Also we still have to face the Tories from now until 2020 or whenever the next general election is.

The Democracy Alliance NEC is opposed, in these elections, by an alliance of ultra-lefts. Their published differences with the current leadership of the union are not of sufficient significance to justify them standing against us in these elections. We should be uniting to defeat the government.

The ongoing fight against the pay cap, office closures - [mainly in the Department for Work and Pensions](#) and HM Revenue and Customs - and job cuts is set to be the major immediate issue facing the union. The scale of the challenges PCS faces is huge. A strong, determined leadership is crucial.

It is vital that Democracy Alliance is returned to lead the union and defend members' interests. We call on members to vote for Democracy Alliance candidates. And we call on all socialists and activists who are serious about fighting back against the Tory austerity programme to join PCS Left Unity.

## Democracy Alliance slate

### President

- Janice Godrich

### Vice-presidents

- Paula Brown
- Fran Heathcote
- Zita Holbourne
- Kevin McHugh

### National Executive Committee

- Ian Albert
- Mark Baker
- Clive Bryant
- Martin Cavanagh
- Harvey Crane
- Alan Dunne
- Mary Ferguson
- Angela Grant
- Jackie Green
- Sam Hall
- Austin Harvey
- John Jamieson
- Mark Leopard
- Neil License
- Marion Lloyd
- Dominic McFadden
- John McNally
- John Maguire
- Lorna Merry
- Chris Morrison
- Marianne Owens
- Clara Paillard
- Ian Pope
- Alison Roder
- Candy Udwin
- Karen Watts
- Hector Wesley
- Katrine Williams
- Paul Williams
- See [leftunity.org.uk](http://leftunity.org.uk) for more
- Your postal ballot paper must be posted by 9 May. If you have not received your ballot paper by 27 April, contact your PCS rep

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## Car workers strike at BMW in defence of pensions

**Nick Chaffey, Southern Socialist Party secretary**

By a huge 93%, car workers at BMW, producing the Mini and Rolls-Royce, have voted to strike for eight days in defence of their final salary pension scheme. Despite massing [profits of £5.89 billion](#), in a time of growing economic and political uncertainty, employers are looking to defend their profits at the expense of workers.

This is the first ever strike at BMW in the UK but comes after years of growing volatility following the great recession of 2007-8. The unfolding crisis in the car industry saw mass layoffs, including [850 BMW agency workers at Cowley in 2009](#), sacked with one hour's notice.

Now workers stand to lose up to £160,000 of their retirement income as BMW plans to close the final salary pension scheme on 31 May. The strikes will take place at Oxford, Swindon, Hams Hall in Warwickshire and Goodwood near Chichester.

These strikes take place alongside similar pension strikes and disputes in the private sector. Currently [workers at the Atomic Weapons Establishment](#) are taking a further eight days of strike action in defence of their pension scheme.

The recent deal at steelmaker Tata saw workers [forced to accept attacks on their pensions to 'save' jobs](#) in this age of austerity.

At the same time the government is continuing attacks on workers by raising the age of retirement. This strike at BMW represents an important stand by car workers unprepared to pay the price for an economic crisis they did not cause.

There is an urgent need to bring together all the attacks workers are facing on pensions, pay, jobs and benefits in a campaign of coordinated strike action that could force an early general election and an end to Tory austerity!

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## Derby teaching assistants accept offer to end pay dispute

**Ian Hunter, Derby Socialist Party**

Following negotiations and a ballot of Unison members the Derby teaching assistants' dispute ended on 5 April. The members voted nine-to-one to accept the offer from Derby council.

The turnout for the ballot was 38%. A three-part deal has been struck between the council, schools and teaching support staff.

The teaching assistants have been in dispute with the Labour council since last summer following changes in contracts which resulted in severe cuts (up to 25%) in pay and movement to term-time working. Over the past nine months there has been a huge escalation by the workers and their supporters with a series of demonstrations and strikes steadily increasing from one-day to five-day actions and [lastly an indefinite walkout](#).

The three-point deal includes:

- Reintroduction of "flexible 52-week contracts for school support staff", to be negotiated and in place for 1 September.
- A one-off compensation payment for wages lost following contract changes from the 'Fair Pay' review. According to councillor Baggy Shankar the council will make £1.5 million available (a slight increase on last year's offer), but the highest amount anyone will receive will be limited to £2,750.

- Council, Unison and schools will work on a 'project' looking at the structures of schools, the role of teaching assistants, and possible changes. This is thought likely to only affect special schools, but may affect job titles, grading, and pay.

The council has said that the £1.5 million compensation package will not mean cuts in other areas. Derby council has already announced cuts of £14 million for this year.

While forcing concessions, the deal will be regarded by some as disappointing and unsatisfactory, particularly the derisory compensation payment and lack of job security.

The long struggle against Derby council has been a huge learning experience for the teaching assistants in many ways, and the solidarity they have shown will be tested in coming months during negotiations on the flexible 52-week year.

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## PCS protest

50 PCS members walked out of the DWP administrative site at Annesley, Nottinghamshire for a lunchtime protest on 7 April. The site is threatened with closure, putting 130 jobs at risk. As PCS rep Dani Harvey explained, three quarters of these workers are women and many are part-time. They can't just relocate to another DWP site miles away when they have children to take to and from school, sometimes at short notice. Many have partners who work away already so they have extra care responsibilities. A PCS member told the Socialist: "If this is how the DWP treats its own workers, what message does it give unemployed people who are looking for work?" Eight other administrative sites and many smaller Jobcentres around the country are also threatened with closure, but the mood of those at the protest was determination to fight to defend their jobs.

**Jon Dale, Mansfield Socialist Party**

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## Arts unions agree joint campaign work

Artists and culture workers have backed calls for no-cuts council budgets, and cross-union campaigns against poverty pay and under-representation of oppressed groups.

The third annual '[Show Culture Some Love](#)' conference took place in London on 25 March. It brought together activists from across entertainment and culture unions.

A report on a library occupation in Bristol ended by demanding Labour councils stop making Tory cuts, and use reserves and borrowing instead. Library campaigner Alan Gibbons, speaking from the platform, then supported this demand.

Performers' union Equity, the Musicians' Union and the Writers' Guild discussed coordinating their campaigns against "vulture culture" bosses' low-paid and unpaid work. Trade unionists also discussed culture sector demands for the Brexit process, and fighting library and museum closures.

Other workshops proposed demands aimed at increasing representation of women, black and minority ethnic people, disabled people and LGBT+ people in the arts.

**James Ivens, Equity member**

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## Livingstone, Labour and anti-Semitism

**Bob Labi**

The continuing battle over Ken Livingstone's Labour Party membership has shown how the issue of anti-Semitism has become an important part of the party's internal struggle. With Jeremy Corbyn appearing to retreat under the pressure this could be an important turning point.

For some time, part of the anti-Corbyn campaign has been regular allegations, mostly made by the Labour right wing, that there is growing anti-Semitism within the Party, especially among Corbyn supporters, and that Corbyn has failed to act decisively against it.

This charge has been repeated again and again by an alliance of the Labour right wing, the Tories, the mass media and their supporters among Jewish leaders and spokespeople as part of an orchestrated and cynical campaign to use any means to undermine Corbyn.

Naturally this campaign strengthens fears among Jews that anti-Semitism is increasing, something reinforced by recent jihadist terror attacks.

The long history of persecution of Jews - above all the Nazis' Holocaust, but also the legacy of oppression in other countries, such as Tsarist Russia - has left a brutal mark and fear of oppression.

English history is not exempt from this, with murderous attacks on Jews in the Middle Ages being followed by their legal exclusion from England between 1290 and 1656.

**Israel-Palestine**

The plight of the Palestinians following the 1948 establishment of Israel and especially the occupation and steady colonisation of the West Bank following the 1967 Israeli-Arab war, has enormously embittered relations between Israelis and Palestinians, both Muslim and Christian.

It has also strengthened hostility towards Jews in general among significant numbers of Muslims worldwide.

Along with a recent rise in anti-Semitic incidents, this has increased fears of attack among some Jews internationally - fears which are being exploited in this campaign against Corbyn.

The Socialist Party stands opposed to all forms of racism, anti-Semitism and oppression of working people.

In the Middle East the Socialist Party, along with its worldwide co-thinkers in the Committee for a Workers' International, has always argued for a socialist solution in the interests of all working people, the poor and oppressed in that region.

The Socialist Party's forerunners agreed with Trotsky's warnings in the 1930s that the setting up of a specifically Jewish state on territory already lived in by non-Jews would produce a trap for the Jews who moved there.

This was why they opposed the creation of Israel and the policy, most crudely expressed by the so-called 'Revisionist' Zionist leaders, of driving the Palestinians out of Palestine. Subsequently, however, we recognised that over decades since 1948 an Israeli nation had developed.

This meant that, while constantly fighting for the full rights of Palestinians, the social and national questions facing the newly formed Israeli working class would also have to be addressed by socialists.

But this has not been the position of much of the left inside the Labour Party which, in general, has not argued for socialist solutions.

Instead there is support for proposals based on the continuation of capitalism which do not resolve the national and social questions facing both Palestinians and Israelis nor, at the same time, answer the fears of most Israelis.

Ken Livingstone, while generally on the left, has never had a coherent, socialist, rounded out programme or orientation to building a working class movement.

More recently just before his Labour Party disciplinary hearing Livingstone tried to mollify the right by [outrageously attacking the Socialist Party](#), saying on BBC radio that we were "a bizarre little sect" that was "virulently bad on issues like the equality of women, racism and homophobia."

Indeed our sticking to a clear programme was one of his objections to the policies of the Socialist Party and its forerunner, Militant.

While he often cooperated with Militant supporters during the 1970s and early 1980s, he started to back away as the crunch approached in the mid-1980s battle of Labour-led councils with the Thatcher government.

Livingstone, unlike [the Militant-led Liverpool city council](#), was not prepared to actually confront, rather than merely argue with, Thatcher.

Militant's call for steadfast opposition by Labour councils was one reason why he worked from 1984 to remove Militant supporters from positions within the leadership of the Labour Party in London. His zigzags continued for years, with him generally moving rightwards.

One of the most shameful episodes was in June 2004 when Livingstone, then the London mayor, [urged RMT members not take part in an official strike and instead cross their own union's picket lines](#); an action that led Bob Crow, the late RMT leader, to publically call him a "scab".

Nevertheless Livingstone continued to be widely seen as broadly on the left and, in this respect, remained a target for the right.

Unfortunately Livingstone's lack of socialist theory and programme has repeatedly made it easier for the ruling class and Labour right wing to find and exploit easy targets in his positions and then utilise them in more generalised criticisms of the left.

## Collaboration

This has again been seen once in the controversy that started with his April 2016 radio interview when [he tried to answer the developing campaign to link Corbyn supporters with anti-Semitism](#).

In that interview Livingstone said "When Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews."

As is often the case Livingstone's exact details were wrong, eg Hitler did not win either of Germany's two elections in 1932, he did not explicitly "support" Zionism and Israel did not exist then. Livingstone's approach gave the right a weapon to use.

But he could not be accused of being a "Nazi apologist" as right-wing Labour MP John Mann did when he ambushed Livingstone in front of TV cameras, an example of Mann's loudmouth phrase mongering.

Mann is not neutral, he is a seasoned fighter for the Labour right wing; he demanded in the middle of the 2015 Labour leadership election that the contest should be halted because it was "totally out of control".

As Professor Stephen Rose argued in a letter to the Guardian "Ken Livingstone may be tactless and self-indulgent, but the facts of the collaboration between the Zionist leadership and the Nazis are well established" (6 April, 2017).

Recent confirmation of this is contained in Final Solution, the 2016 book written by the late David Cesarani, the historical adviser to the British government's Holocaust Commission.

Cesarani explains how, in the early days of their rule, the Nazis supported the Zionists against what they called the "assimilationist camp", meaning those Jews who wanted to continue living in Germany.

He quotes a 1934 Gestapo report that "the efforts of the Gestapo are orientating to promoting Zionism as much as possible and lending support to further emigration... In place of a rushed and poorly prepared emigration in 1933, we now have well-regulated emigration whose sole destination is Palestine" (page 96).

This policy was actually formally agreed with part of the Zionist movement in the 1933 Ha'avara agreement which also led to supporters of this deal arguing against the international boycott of German goods that had started after the Nazis came to power.

Cesarani's history has added weight because, as he was also the author of the Jewish Chronicle newspaper's official history, he can hardly be called an anti-Semite.

Indeed, when he died in 2015 the Board of Deputies of British Jews said: "He was a giant in his field, producing ground-breaking work on Jewish history and the Holocaust."

This did not prevent the Board of Deputies' pro-capitalist leaders joining in the attack on Livingstone condemning Labour's failure to expel him on the basis of his "[shameless, disgraceful and tendentious attempts to link Zionism to Nazism](#)" (4 April, 2017).

Of course the Nazis were duplicitous gangsters. They did not support the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, as an official statement made clear in 1937. But this did not prevent them having policy zigzags, including later the murderous turn to mass annihilation of Jews along with Romani and others.

The Socialist Party does not always agree with Livingstone but that does not mean joining in this campaign, led by the Labour right, to exploit his weaknesses in order to fight more generally against the left within Labour and undermine Corbyn.

## Zionism

But to effectively reply to this campaign a clear, socialist answer is needed, otherwise there is the danger that opposition to Zionism is equated with anti-Semitism.

Shamefully one small left group, the AWL, has put forward seeming 'left' arguments to justify the Labour right wing-led campaign against Livingstone.

When this issue first broke out last year their founder wrote: "Whatever their motives, those who cry out against Livingstone's vicious nonsense about Hitler supporting Zionism and wanting to send Jews to Israel in 1932 (he said Israel, not Palestine) are right to do so..."

"The Labour leadership had a right to suspend Livingstone and open an investigation, and they were right to exercise it. The alternative would have been to show themselves numb, indifferent, or collusive to anti-semitism and the anti-semites" ("[Livingstone, Labour and Anti-Semitism](#)", 4 May, 2016).

This article ends with the justification that, on the left, "the dividing line is between those who want to change and reform Israel, and have an independent Palestinian state side by side with Israel - and those who deny Israel's right to exist at all, who see Israel as an illegitimate political formation, a mistake, a crime of history that must be undone by the elimination of the whole Israeli polity. Everything anti-semitic specific to the left is rooted in that divide."

As we have argued before, the AWL believes the ongoing crisis in Israel/Palestine can be solved without ending capitalism simply through the creation of two states on a capitalist basis.

But the Socialist Party and the Socialist Struggle Movement, our co-thinkers in Israel/Palestine itself, say a "combined call for both nationalities to have the right to their own states on a socialist basis, with full rights for any minorities within them, is central.

"On the one hand, it is a clear rejection of the coercion of either Palestinians or Israelis. At the same time, it argues for the overthrowing of capitalism that would open up the road to raising the living standards of all.

"Moreover, while it cannot be ruled out that a common struggle of Palestinians and Israelis could lead to the creation of one state carrying through a socialist transformation, to get there it would be first necessary to recognise the rights of the two peoples" ("[Anti-Semitism, Labour and Momentum](#)", [Socialism Today, Issue 203, November 2016](#)).

With such an approach it would be possible both to answer the arguments that the left ignores the Israeli working class and poor and to argue against illusions that this conflict can be resolved on the basis of capitalism.

Unfortunately the combination of Livingstone's weak and false programme alongside his flippancy has given ammunition to the right.

Nevertheless this attempt to smear the left as 'anti-Semitic' must be resisted, but it can only be done successfully with clear socialist ideas and a determination to build the movements of working people that are necessary to put them into effect.

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## Excellent Socialist Party trade union meeting

**Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser**

An excellent meeting of over 100 Socialist Party trade union members took place in London on 8 April. It was a real show of strength of the presence and impact of the Socialist Party in the unions.

We have 19 members on union executives and candidates standing in current key union elections, including in Unison, PCS and Unite as well as many others who are reps, shop stewards or working in trades councils.

### Mood

The meeting took place five-and-a-half weeks after the Tories' new anti-union law, the Trade Union Act, was introduced. A main theme of the day was how the new undemocratic industrial action ballot thresholds would affect workers' capacity to fight.

The [consultative ballot on pay by the Royal College of Nurses](#) shows that the massive anger and frustration that exists among workers won't be constrained by these laws. The strike wave developing in Ireland, where the union leaders have been in partnership with the government and the employers, shows how the volatile mood can break through. The anger is building in Britain against the cuts in health and education as well as the continuing pay freeze.

There are already a whole raft of strikes taking place. We've seen important struggles such as the teaching assistants in Derby and Durham and the [strikes against driver-only operation](#) being imposed by train companies. An Aslef member reported on the tremendous rejection by the union's drivers of their leadership's brokered deal on Southern Rail for the second time.

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## Last quarter's fighting fund target smashed, now make our voice heard in elections

**Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer**

Socialist Party members throughout England and Wales are out campaigning in support of Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates standing in local and mayoral elections.

We are appealing to all readers and supporters of the Socialist to make a donation to help support those candidates.

Although the majority of councillors are not standing for re-election this year, we believe it is still vital that there is an electoral challenge to the Tories' cuts, which amount to a demolition of local authority services. Jeremy Corbyn has said that he is opposed to austerity but Labour councillors should be organising now to fight these cuts instead of meekly carrying them out.

We say that these cuts can be fought and defeated. Labour councillors should refuse to pass on the cuts and instead launch a campaign in defence of jobs and services, which is what all TUSC candidates pledge to do. Far from there being no money for services, the NHS, housing and jobs, there is plenty.

The richest thousand people in Britain have doubled their wealth since the financial crisis in 2008. [A recent Oxfam report](#) highlighted the massive profits being made by the rate-rigging banks which they are salting away in off-shore tax havens, while we are still paying for the economic crisis caused by the greed of those same bankers.

## **Mersey metro-mayor**

But to make our voice heard we need your help!

We depend solely on the support of ordinary people - the Socialist Party has no rich backers. [Standing in the Merseyside metro-mayor election](#) for instance costs £5,000 for the deposit and £3,000 for the booklet which goes to every household, costs which the Socialist Party, as part of TUSC, has to make a contribution to. Then there are the leaflets and other material that we are producing.

Please help us build support for the fightback against austerity and for a socialist alternative. Can you donate £5, £10, £50 or £100 or more? We can guarantee that every penny will be used in the fight for socialism.

Socialist Party members beat last year's record for the amount of fighting fund raised in the January to March quarter of the year.

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# **Action against cuts at Solent University**

**Josh Asker, Southampton Socialist Party**

Management at Solent University is rattled and failing to cover up its plans for extensive cuts and redundancies. Already staff in the UCU and Unison unions have voted 92% in favour of 'no confidence' in the vice-chancellor, who is paid £300,000 a year.

After Socialist Students put up posters on 3 April organising a meeting against cuts and redundancies, the fuse was lit. Within 24-hours the local news was reporting the university's plans. Two days later, 15 students attended Solent University's first meeting hosted by Socialist Students planning how students can fight back.

The meeting resolved to immediately send support to university staff, seek to have a no-confidence referendum of the student union and to arrange a lobby of the vice-chancellor demanding an end to the planned cuts.

The crisis at Solent University is symptomatic of the crisis in higher education. Tory cuts and changes to funding have been exacerbated by a management hell bent on eking every ounce of possible revenue out of each student. At Solent this means 20% budget cuts, up to 200 redundancies, cuts to accessibility funds and the resulting potential course closures.

Students aren't prepared to let this happen. They will fight alongside staff for a fully-funded university education run in the interests of students and workers.

## Police officers face misconduct charges over attack on 'freedom ride'

Four police officers and one police community support officer are to face misconduct hearings relating to the 'freedom ride' protest by pensioners and disabled people on 23 June 2014. One of these officers, who had given a statement saying protesters were like "a pack of rabid dogs", is to face a hearing for gross misconduct.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) has concluded that his statement included inflammatory language and was unsupported by footage of the events.

On the day, while we listened to speeches on a platform at Sheffield station, transport police had waded in and arrested two pensioners who were later charged with obstructing police and travelling without a ticket. One of the pensioners was pushed along the platform, as protesters tried to help him.

Another was jumped by five transport police who pressed his head downwards as they pushed him along, bent double. Protesters supported by crutches and sticks were pushed over by police, and a blind woman was pushed onto a wheelchair user. Five went to hospital.

Several protesters complained to the IPCC. Nearly three years on, the IPCC has directed British Transport Police to carry out these hearings into misconduct.

The matters to be looked at in the police officers' hearings include the protesters' allegation that unlawful force, amounting to assault, was used. They are to be held in May and June this year.

**Sharon Milsom, Sheffield North Socialist Party**

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## Newham socialists attend 'I, Daniel Blake' film night

Newham Community Cinema held a showing of [Ken Loach's film 'I, Daniel Blake'](#) on 8 April. On behalf of East London Socialist Party branch I was asked to introduce the film which is the story of Daniel and Katie showing the reality and experiences of ordinary people under capitalism in Britain today.

It was also very fitting to see the movie shown in Newham, a borough that has seen hundreds of families forced out of London. Although many have fought back too - [the E15 mums](#) and most recently [One Housing keyworker residents](#). It was a great opportunity to speak to people concerned by the attacks on housing, the benefit system and disabled people, and meet people in the community we may not usually meet.

If you have a local community cinema, you should defiantly suggest they show 'I, Daniel Blake' and offer to introduce it, to explain why some of the issues the characters face make people look to socialist ideas.

**Helen Pattison, East London Socialist Party**

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## KCL housing 'wall of shame'

King's College London Socialist Students held a 'wall of shame' at the university about the terrible conditions faced by students both in halls of residence and renting privately in London.

One student said their flat was infested with mice and another's is infested with silverfish. A whole floor of one building had to be moved because of bed bugs last year.

Private tenants complained they either couldn't afford to move out or struggled to pay the rent. One brick on our wall said: "Tiny rooms! #PrisonCellOnABudget".

Another student's fire alarm was broken and the landlord had refused to fix it. Socialist Students will be using the testimonials collected from students to put pressure on the student union and the university to take students' housing problems seriously.

**KCL Socialist Students**

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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25267>