

## Editorial of the Socialist, issue 948

# Local election results must mean Corbyn campaign is stepped up

The [results of the 4 May county council and metro mayor elections](#) will have disappointed many supporters of Jeremy Corbyn. They must act to sound the alarm - Jeremy Corbyn can win this election but only with a bold, mass campaign. There is no room for hesitation or compromise - if the Tories are to be defeated on 8 June, a left programme for measures to improve living standards for working and middle class people must be got out to the majority.

Labour lost 383 council seats, while the Tories gained 563 and won four of the six 'metro mayor' positions. With the general election less than a month away, this is not a good result for Labour. However, behind the headlines of the Corbyn-hating press, these results are also not as good for the Tories as May would have hoped. Clearly, particularly given the low turnout in these elections, there is no direct correlation between them and a general election.

However, even if this result was simply repeated on 8 June it would give May a modest increase in the Tory majority - estimated at around 20 more seats - not the landslide that the capitalist media are predicting. Among the small minority of the electorate who voted, the main trend was a polarisation between the Tory and Labour vote. This was added to by the collapse of Ukup, which was left with only one council seat and its vote share reduced from 22% to less than 5% in four years. At the same time, the predicted Lib Dem surge didn't materialise. They lost 42 seats and even the unreliable projections of what these results may mean in the general election predict an increase of just three parliamentary seats for the Lib Dems (bringing them to a grand total of eleven).

## Brexit

Labour should have been able to gain in this situation. So why didn't they? May's nauseating repetition of her and the Tories being the "[strong and stable](#)" hands needed to carry out Brexit negotiations has clearly had an effect on a layer of people. Leading Tories are trying to emphasise the idea that they are ready and willing to do 'full battle' with the EU.

But not in the defence of workers' interests! May was a Remain campaigner in the EU referendum because she recognised [the importance of the EU for the interests of capitalism](#). Big business is hoping she will use an increased majority to implement as soft a Brexit as she can get away with within the context of the divided Tory party. What is certain is that any Brexit she and the Tories negotiate will be 100% opposed to the interests of the working class.

Unfortunately Corbyn's position on Brexit is not clear to the working class. This [stems from his mistaken decision](#) - under pressure from the Labour right, as well as some on the left - to back Remain during the referendum campaign, despite his historic position of left opposition to the neoliberal EU. Since the vote he has been quiet, giving the impression of trying to avoid the issue, aiding the Tories' portrayal of him as indecisive and weak.

This can still be overcome, but only by being clear, loud and unashamed in saying that a Corbyn-led government would carry through a [Brexit in the interests of the working class](#). A workers' Brexit would mean jobs, homes, services and decent pay for all as opposed to the Tories' Brexit, which will inevitably mean the rich continue to prosper and the rest suffer. It would also be an internationalist and anti-racist Brexit, defending the rights of EU citizens living in Britain.

Another big factor in these local election results was the policy of local politicians. Local areas have been devastated by cuts to council jobs, closures of libraries and children's centres, cuts to benefits and

privatisation of vital services and of council housing. Blairite Labour politicians have carried through such attacks and found themselves punished at the ballot box. Unfortunately, in a [vain attempt to compromise with Labour's pro-capitalist right](#), Jeremy Corbyn has not clearly [opposed local Labour cuts](#).

Despite this, Corbyn's policies are potentially enormously popular. As we have outlined in the last few issues of the Socialist, Corbyn has made very good policy statements on things like [increasing the minimum wage](#), [building council homes](#), lifting the public sector pay cap and so on. But, given the [sabotage by the right of his own party](#), as well as the press, this message will not get out to enough people if he plays by the rules of conventional electioneering.

## Rallies

Corbyn and McDonnell should call mass rallies in every town. Figures show there has been a [surge in voter registration by students](#), the majority of who support Jeremy Corbyn and his free education pledge. Corbyn should seize on this and call a speaking tour of universities. During the EU referendum campaign, a number of trade unions poured the full weight of their resources behind getting the Remain vote out from their members. Some union members were receiving almost a phone call every day telling them how to vote! Where is the same effort to back Corbyn now? The left trade union leaders should place themselves firmly at the head of the campaign to win workers over to Corbyn's programme.

There is no time to lose. The next four weeks must see the full weight of workers, trade unions, students, NHS activists, and all those fighting back, being thrown behind the effort to kick out the hated Tories and win a Corbyn-led government [on a socialist programme](#).

- See our [video response to the local election results here](#). This will also be a weekly feature during the general election campaign. Tune in at 1pm every Sunday on [the Socialist Party Facebook page](#)

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## Pay cap forces health workers to quit

# Tories wrecking our NHS: kick them out!

Does the NHS have a future if the Tories are reelected on 8 June? This has become a big talking point in the general election campaign but many low-paid NHS workers are not hanging around to find out.

An NHS body has warned "[lower-paid staff are leaving to stack shelves in supermarkets rather than carry on with the NHS](#)." Nurses have even been [forced to use foodbanks](#), that supermarkets collect for, to survive.

NHS Providers, which represents almost all of England's 240 NHS hospital, mental health and ambulance trusts, has warned the next government to abandon the 1% pay increase limit to NHS workers as health services are so understaffed that patient safety is at risk.

The Tories have held down NHS pay for seven years meaning, in reality, [pay cuts of 12%](#) for those who run our hospitals and health services. And if the Tories win they will continue to implement their ['slash and trash' STP plans](#) which would mean a further cut of £22 billion in funding for the NHS in England.

The future of the NHS, the most cherished victory by the working class in this country, is a massive reason among many why we need to kick out the Tories.

## Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn has [pledged that he would lift the NHS pay cap](#), which should be part of an overall plan for a renationalised, democratically run, fully funded NHS. This must involve fighting alongside workers and their health unions, like [nurses' union RCN which has taken potential steps toward strike action](#). And this plan for the NHS should be linked to [Corbyn's demand for a £10 an hour minimum wage](#) - for NHS staff, supermarket workers, and the millions of other low-paid workers in Britain.

This general election is the most important in a generation. The NHS is at breaking point. Everybody who uses and works in the NHS needs to come together in defence of it, to kick out the Tories, to support Corbyn's plan to smash the pay cap, and to fight for a socialist NHS.

Scott Jones

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## Corbyn pledges freeze on 'STP' health cuts and A&E closures

### We say

- Promise to scrap the cuts, not just pause them
- Cancel all 'PFI' debts and kick out the profiteers
- Nationalise big pharma and all NHS providers

**Mike Forster, Chair, Hands Off Huddersfield Royal Infirmary (personal capacity)**

Jon Ashworth, Labour's shadow health secretary, recently visited Batley in Yorkshire to announce that Labour will suspend both the 'STP' cuts programme and planned A&E closures across the country. They will then be subject to a 'review' to assess their impact.

In addition, Ashworth has pledged to "give the NHS the funding it needs," give NHS staff decent pay, and restore bursaries for student nurses.

These announcements are good, and go some way to addressing the chronic underfunding of the NHS. However, a clear pledge to scrap these cuts, not just pause them, would be better.

If the Tories win the election, the NHS faces a yearly funding gap of £22 billion by 2020. Inevitably this will lead to an escalation of cuts, closures, and privatisation.

Labour has not yet announced the exact funding allocation for the NHS, but activists from the campaign to save Huddersfield Royal Infirmary's A&E were present at the press conference to ensure they keep to their promises.

Under previous Labour governments, funding has been cut and privatisation pursued by Blairite ministers. However, if these commitments are kept to, and Corbyn campaigns hard on the NHS as a central issue, he could romp home against the Tories.

The future of our NHS hangs in the balance and we must step up our demands on Labour to publish a radical manifesto that can lead to real policy changes.

Our local campaign continues to go from strength to strength and many of us are now out in force with our own #VoteNHS manifesto.

This calls on all politicians to go further than Ashworth - by also demanding the scrapping of 'PFI' privatisation debts; full funding for social care; bringing the drug companies into public ownership; and kicking private agencies out of the NHS.

Corbyn must include these in his programme for the NHS to really point the way out. Time to save our health service - say no to cuts, closures and privatisation!

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## May's grammar school inequality exposed

# Corbyn pledges council powers to build schools and take over academies

## We say

- Nationalise the whole school system
- Expand funding and curriculum
- Scrap grammar schools

### James Kerr, teacher and NUT activist

Jeremy Corbyn has [pledged to give powers to councils to build schools and take over academies](#). This is a very good start, much needed to undo the dismantling of state education.

To save state education, he will need to go further and declare he will renationalise the entire system. This alone can enable provision to be properly and democratically planned to serve the needs of all students. It must also mean [expanding the curriculum on offer](#).

Corbyn should campaign boldly on his [good starting pledge to halt the £3 billion cuts to schools](#).

On top of this, he will need to kick the privateers out of the classroom. And while [stopping the present cuts is important](#), he needs also to pledge an [increase in school funding to bring down class sizes](#) and solve the teacher workload crisis.

While the question of funding dominates the minds of heads, teachers, students and parents in the general election, the Tories' grammar school policy has also been put under the microscope. Once again it proves to be a policy which discriminates against children from poorer backgrounds.

## Social mobility?

Theresa May and Education Secretary Justine Greening have argued that grammar schools can be a vehicle for social mobility. Yet a [recent survey of Kent grammars by Education Datalab](#) showed only 12% of students eligible for free school meals passed the 11-plus selection exam, compared with 30% of their better-off counterparts.

The exam boards have also conceded that the 11-plus can never be 'tutor-proof', enabling families to pay to prepare their children for the test.

[Any form of selection inevitably creates losers](#) and disrupts the landscape of educational provision for all students. It also flies in the face of years of educational advances, and a recognition by much of the profession that mixed-ability teaching in a comprehensive setting benefits all students, if properly funded.

However, this policy is not about serving the interests of the many, it is a policy born of austerity. With huge cuts to all schools, this is an attempt to appeal to a section of society on the basis that selection will insulate the chosen few from the worst effects of budget reductions.

This outlook already has [headteachers writing an open letter to Theresa May](#) warning her of the dangers of cuts, which could even see a [reduction in the school week](#).

An audacious programme for schools would inspire not only current voters, but a whole generation of young people who have a future worth fighting for.

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## Tories forced to publish useless plans on toxic air

# Corbyn must campaign on emergency measures to phase out diesels

Pete Dickenson, Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

The Tory government has finally come out with its [response to the toxic air crisis](#) - after being forced by legal action from environmental pressure group ClientEarth.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has estimated that 23,500 premature deaths a year are caused by pollution from nitrogen dioxide, mainly due to fumes from diesel engines. Emissions have been above the legal limits in almost 90% of urban areas since 2010.

The May government's proposals are vague and toothless, just a cynical attempt to avoid the subject while the election campaign is going on. The responsibility is put on local authorities to deal with the problem, but with no money to do it.

The Tories suggest councils should eliminate speed bumps as a way to cut down on the deadly gas, and only then consider anything that will cost a significant amount of money - even though, according to ClientEarth, the government has admitted this is the "largest environmental threat to public health" in the UK.

Millions of motorists were [persuaded to buy diesels as a 'green' option](#) by bogus engine pollution data put out by manufacturers, [most notoriously Volkswagen](#), in order to boost their profits.

Tony Blair was one of the first to push diesels as a green option because they emit slightly less of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming than petrol engines, although it was clear then that switching over would have a negligible impact on global warming.

The Tories' proposal raises the theoretical possibility of introducing 'clean air zones' and a scrappage scheme to phase out the most polluting vehicles. No details, timescales, scope or costings for these ideas are put forward - in other words, it is just hot air.

London mayor Sadiq Khan intends to introduce a clean air zone to deal with the crisis, based on the present central London congestion zone and charging arrangements.

However, his approach will not tackle the problem. It could even make it worse, as diesels avoid the central area by going into the densely populated neighbouring boroughs. And it will make the motorists who were conned into buying diesels pay for the scheme.

What is needed is emergency measures to phase out diesels as soon as possible. Included in these must be a scrappage scheme that will fully compensate present diesel owners.

At the same time, retrofitting public service and commercial vehicles with non-polluting engines must be massively stepped up. The car companies responsible for misleading the public must be made to pay for the scrappage scheme - not us.

Campaigning on a programme like this could enthuse thousands to vote for Corbyn to [save them from poisonous air](#).

More generally, as long as profit rules, the big vehicle corporations will always put the environment and public health low on their agenda. [Democratic public ownership of these multinationals](#) is vital to protect our health and the environment.

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## 1,000 super-rich own £658 billion!

- Stop the cuts
- Make the fat cats pay

Steve Score

We are living in an age of austerity, we're told. There's no money for public services says the Tory government; ['efficiency savings' \(cuts\) of a further £22 billion must be made in the NHS](#). Workers must continue to have their pay capped while real inflation goes up. Benefits must be cut; [foodbanks have had to give out ten million meals in a year](#).

This is our world. Yet it's not everyone's world. If you are one of the 1,000 richest people in Britain, then things are different.

The [Sunday Times Rich List 2017](#) has shown that in just one year they have seen their collective wealth rise by an incredible 14% to £658 billion. No pay freeze for them!

Britain is a tax haven for a large chunk of the world's super-rich - they are here because they can avoid paying tax. Steel boss Lakshmi Mittal, whose company has slashed jobs and workers' pensions, increased his personal wealth by £6 billion in just 12 months to over £13 billion.

The top Brit on the list is [26-year-old Hugh Grosvenor](#), who 'earned' his wealth last year when his dad, the Duke of Westminster, died and left him his estate.

## Jeremy Corbyn

We are told Jeremy Corbyn's promises like [building 500,000 council homes](#), [suspending cuts in the NHS](#), [ending pay freezes](#), [free education](#), a £10 an hour minimum wage and banning zero-hour contracts are unaffordable without a 'tax bombshell' for working people. Yet the wealth of these 1,000 people could pay for all of those things and a whole lot more!

Labour shadow chancellor John McDonnell is right to say that [no one earning less than £80,000 a year would pay more tax](#), but that the billionaires will. He is right to propose [reversing Tory cuts in capital gains tax and corporation tax](#), although he should commit Labour to substantially increase the rate of corporation tax beyond that too.

And he could go a lot further. The super-rich have numerous ways they can avoid paying tax. [We have to take control of their assets](#).

Bring the banks and the big companies that dominate the economy into public ownership so we can democratically decide how to use those resources for the whole of society, not just the tiny elite.

When Jeremy Corbyn attacks "greedy bosses, crooked bankers and tax-avoiding rich" he is right. If he can [get this message across to the millions](#) of people in Britain who are deciding how to vote, the election could be won. And we really could make the super-rich pay!

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## Corbyn promises to scrap all NHS hospital parking fees

Jeremy Corbyn has [promised to make parking at NHS hospitals free](#). He called the current charges "a tax on serious illnesses."

Health union Unison has also described nurses having to move cars between treating patients to avoid fines. Their wages have already fallen 12%. Parking can cost them £100 a month.

The Socialist says the parking pledge is great. It's one step towards an NHS that is really free for all at the point of use.

As the next step towards this, Corbyn should pledge to [scrap all prescription charges](#).

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# Corbyn would limit childrens' exposure to TV junk food ads

Jeremy Corbyn has also pledged to curtail the rights of big businesses to push unhealthy food on children.

A Corbyn-led government would [extend the current ban on junk food ads around kids' shows](#) to all telly before 9pm. Labour has claimed this would reduce children's exposure to them by 82%.

The Socialist backs plans to restrain big business's efforts to tell kids to eat junk. Corbyn should also campaign on [nationalising the big supermarket and restaurant chains](#).

Linked to democratic planning, this could help make sure healthy food is more widely available.

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## What we saw

Some permanent degenerative medical conditions "do get better," according to one Tory MP.

Richard Graham sits on parliament's work and pensions committee. A BBC journalist challenged him to explain why people with these permanent conditions face reassessment for their 'personal independence payment' (Pip) disability benefits. That was his explanation.

Amalia of the Socialist Party's disabled people and carers group comments. "This reminds me of [Theresa May's claim that there are 'complex reasons' people use food banks](#).

"Graham should know that his government is taking mobility cars away from people who they later cheer on at the Paralympics exactly because [Pip isn't working, but punishing](#), and because you need to prove you are not a liar throughout.

"Lots of money has been lost since abolition of the old 'disability living allowance' benefit, and the Tories are cutting £30 a week from 'employment and support allowance' benefits - about what former work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith was costing us in [expenses for his breakfast](#)!

"No wonder [the United Nations has found](#) that this government is violating disabled people's human rights."

- [Watch Richard Graham squirm here](#)
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## France: Macron will not solve economic and social crises

### Fightback and socialist policies vital

Emmanuel Macron is president of France after defeating Marine Le Pen of the far-right Front National (FN) [in the second-round election](#).

While many will breathe a sigh of relief that the FN was defeated - and pro-EU politicians see a threat to the European Union and the euro itself receding - Macron's election does not end the deep crisis and divisions in France.

He has a background in one of the biggest banking organisations in the world and, without even being a member of the PS ('Socialist' Party), was brought in by outgoing president Francois Hollande to pursue the harsh neoliberal policies which have created huge problems for France's workers and youth.

Macron can be faced with mass opposition on the streets as well as in the general election in June. As Leïla Messaoudi of Gauche Révolutionnaire (CWI in France) explains in the statement below, the seven million votes in the first round of the election for left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon reflect a huge potential for the ideas of socialism.

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The presidential election in France has demonstrated an historic rejection of the establishment parties. In the first round, the ruling 'Socialist' Party of president Hollande was wiped out and also the corrupt right-wing candidate, Fillon, of Sarkozy's Les Republicains.

The strength of the anger in society was clearly expressed in the seven million votes for [Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his programme of a complete break with austerity](#) and the worsening conditions of life and work.

But this vote was [not enough to block the road to Le Pen](#) and the FN. She was able to get into the second round and run against the clear nominee of the ruling classes, Macron.

## **Blank votes**

In the end, Macron was elected with 65.8% of votes cast against 34.2% for Le Pen. It might be thought that the capitalists have now got their puppet in power and he will pursue and step up their policies of austerity and repression against workers, youth, the unemployed and foreigners. But this is by no means guaranteed.

Blank or spoilt ballot papers made up 12% of all the votes in the second round - a record. It has forced the media to publicise the figures of blank votes cast which are traditionally not announced. If we add abstentions - a huge 34% of voters - then 16 million out of the 47 million registered voters did not 'choose' either Le Pen or Macron.

This is a clear sign that Macron has a very weak base to govern from and that the months and years ahead will be very unstable.

Behind the percentages, the reality is even less glorious. Macron received 20.4 million votes and Le Pen 10.6 million.

In fact, despite the threat of Le Pen coming to power, Macron collected only 43.6% from the total number of registered voters. 43% of those who voted for Macron did so to block Le Pen while only 16% of them voted because of support for his programme.

Macron has a mission: to pursue and intensify the policies carried out by Sarkozy and Hollande for 15 years against public services, facilitate redundancies and [make the labour market more 'flexible'](#).

He already announced that he wants to eliminate 120,000 public service jobs over five years. And he will use the arsenal of anti-democratic procedures, enshrined in the constitution, to pass laws which are vital for the capitalists.

He wants to govern by decree, that is to say, to side-step parliament and discussions on projected laws. The first one, for June or July, is already on its way - more anti-worker changes to the country's labour law. This will be followed by ones on unemployment pay, social security, etc.

Opposition to such policies is massive and was demonstrated during the election period. But this anger and opposition must find a social and political expression that champions the interests of workers, young people and the majority of the population.

There is a risk that the FN will seek to capitalise more on the opposition to the bosses and divert it into the wrong channels using racism and all kinds of discrimination.

The leadership of the trade union federations cannot remain silent. They must organise and show our collective strength without waiting until the end of June.

For Le Pen and the FN, the election campaign was not that simple. They hoped to surf the widespread discontent and expected the biggest vote in the first round, but the campaign of Mélenchon ate deeply into their support.

Le Pen succeeded in getting 10.6 million votes in the second round, or 3.5 million more votes between the two rounds, probably among the reactionary right who had voted Fillon and for the chauvinist Dupont-Aignan.

## **Front National**

Now she wants to transform her party completely. But this has already created opposition within the FN itself, especially among the supporters of MP Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, who look unfavourably on a rapprochement with certain sectors of the traditional right.

The challenge for the FN is to capitalise on the anger that has built up but also to allow its leaders to build their own careers. The tensions will multiply, especially when the real opposition to Macron - from workers and young people - will be based on demands which contradict those of the Front National (by whatever name it becomes known).

The next national elections on 11 and 18 June are to choose members of the national assembly.

More than ever, it is necessary for workers, young people and those who live in the poorer areas of France to have an independent political expression to confront the parties which are running capitalism: Macron's movement 'En Marche!', the disintegrating 'Socialist' Party and the EELV (Ecologists who are already seeking an alliance with Macron's party), the Republicans and the FN.

In relation to Mélenchon's campaign, candidates are needed who stand for a break with austerity policies, and we can no longer accept agreements with parties that carry them out, such as the PS or some of EELV.

## **Anti-austerity candidates**

Candidates are needed who fight against redundancies, such as those at Whirlpool or Tati, who fight against the dismantling of public services, against the destruction of the environment, for increases in wages and pensions, for reductions of working hours and more jobs. Candidates who differentiate themselves from the corrupt and careerists by accepting only the average salary of a skilled worker.

We are in favour of having just one candidate per constituency around this programme. It should be possible to campaign for the same candidate, whether from Melenchon's 'France Insoumise' (FI) or from the French 'Communist' Party while maintaining their own freedom of expression if so desired.

An agreement should be reached, if not for a joint campaign, at least for the distribution of constituencies.

Faced with the policies being pursued on behalf of the bosses, the real left has a great responsibility and cannot relinquish the territory to the FN. We must follow up on the momentum triggered by the campaign around Mélenchon in the first round of the presidential election.

The Mélenchon vote brought hope to ordinary people and a progressive programme that takes on those who are really responsible for the crisis: the super-rich, the banks, the major shareholders.

We have to create a new mass political force capable of organising anger and resistance around an economic and social programme that identifies those who are really to blame: the capitalists and their representatives. Hundreds of thousands of Mélenchon voters want to carry on fighting on his programme.

What was lacking in the last two weeks of the campaign was having a more structured France Insoumise organisation, more capable of taking root as a combative movement against the pro-capitalist candidates.

We are for a mass political force of struggle, a democratic party bringing together workers, young people, and all those who have had enough of capitalism.

We must fight to put an end to the capitalist dictatorship by nationalising the commanding heights of the economy under the democratic control and management of the population.

A new force can be built with mass mobilisations and in discussing an anti-austerity programme, but also by defending democratic socialism as an alternative to capitalism and its dictatorship of profit.

With Mélenchon's vote and the 'France Insoumise' campaign, a big step has been taken in this direction. We can say that, from now on, the capitalists have a real opposition to face and that it will grow.

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## 4 May local elections

# TUSC's anti-cuts message finds positive response

## Election balance sheet

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood 78 council candidates and two mayoral candidates in last week's elections, [winning a total of 15,407 votes](#).

There had been a more extensive debate than previously within TUSC on [whether to contest the local elections this year](#).

Ever since [Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership victory in 2015](#) the TUSC national steering committee, which has the final say on approving election candidates, has been determined to support him against the Blairites and build the anti-austerity struggle that lay behind his success.

TUSC has still contested local elections against right-wing Labour councillors who oppose Jeremy Corbyn and who are carrying out Tory cuts. But since September 2015, local groups have been required to attempt a dialogue with the Labour candidates to find out their position before a decision is made to stand.

So what to do in 2017? The Conservative-dominated English councils with elections on 4 May were not the most favourable terrain. When these seats were last contested [in 2013 TUSC had a modest intervention](#). Was there a case not to stand at all this year?

These issues were debated throughout the autumn and at the TUSC conference in January. There a resolution was agreed, with five votes against, supporting candidates standing where they were "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".

This meant no TUSC candidate on 4 May contested seats in which the Labour candidate backed Jeremy Corbyn in last year's Labour leadership contest. There were also no TUSC candidates standing against Labour candidates who would vote for no cuts budgets in the council chamber.

The 2017 campaign was [more limited than in the 'Before Corbyn' years](#) - but still sending a message to politicians from any party that, if they vote for council cuts, they should not expect to be unchallenged at the ballot box.

## A May surprise

The TUSC campaign made a good start. A [recent report by the Association for Public Service Excellence](#) (APSE) found that just a quarter of local electors held central government responsible for declining council services.

TUSC's message that local councillors have a choice and that they [don't have to implement austerity](#), fitted in with working class people's expectations.

And it got support from some surprising places too. Responding to the revelations earlier this year of how the government had literally bought off opposition to its cuts from Surrey county council, [an article by Matthew Turner in the Independent](#) referenced TUSC's campaign document, '[Preparing a no-cuts people's budget](#)', as a model that could be pursued by Labour councils.

The idea of supporting Jeremy Corbyn but fighting against Blairite Labour backers of austerity could clearly find an audience in a local election campaign.

But then, on 18 April, [Theresa May made her surprise general election announcement](#). It was obvious that whatever the TUSC candidates did then this would cut across the council contests.

Driving the Tories out on 8 June and electing a Corbyn-led Labour government would clearly create the best conditions to defend local public services. While the pitch could be made that a TUSC vote in the council polls would be a declaration of support for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message, there would inevitably be a polarisation on national party lines.

And that's what happened. [In Doncaster both Labour and the Tories put on ten thousand votes](#) compared to their performance four years ago. In the Mersey metro-mayor contest Labour won comfortably in all six boroughs that constitute the Liverpool City Region but the Tories were second, even in Liverpool itself.

The Tory candidate, Tony Caldeira, had stood for mayor of Liverpool twice before, in 2012 and 2016. On both occasions he was outpolled by TUSC but, on the back of Theresa May's general election move, it really was a case of third time lucky!

But while [coming sixth overall, it was significant that TUSC was the fourth party in Knowsley, ahead of Ukip and the Greens, and outpolled Ukip in Liverpool](#) itself. This is the third time that TUSC has beaten Ukip in Britain's eighth biggest city - surely now there should be at least one BBC Question Time appearance for TUSC?

## What next?

After May's announcement [TUSC released a press statement](#) by the national chairperson, Dave Nellist, welcoming the chance to drive out the Tories. But this included the recognition that "a general election intervention is different to building a campaign against local Blairite councillors, and in a hastily called snap election especially so".

Now there is a new political situation which will potentially throw all 'established political facts' into question. That includes whether Jeremy Corbyn remains for long as leader of the Labour Party after 8 June - even if Labour wins - and what that would mean for working class political representation.

Including this year's elections, around 2,400 candidates have appeared on the ballot paper under the TUSC umbrella since its formation in 2010, polling over 360,000 votes. Whatever lies ahead, TUSC, and the model of an inclusive coalition it has provided, will be a player in the events to come.

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# Liverpool City Region mayor election - almost 8,000 votes for TUSC

Hugh Caffrey - TUSC election agent to Roger Bannister

Roger Bannister standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) [polled almost 8,000 first-preference votes](#) for the city region mayor covering Merseyside and Halton, and out-polled Ukip in Liverpool itself. Although uncounted, it appears we won a similar number of second-preference votes.

Only TUSC [highlighted the threat to the Merseyrail guards](#), RMT members who have taken repeated strike action against the Labour-run transport authority's "[driver-only operation](#)" plans. We received strong support from local RMT members.

Only TUSC showed that the city region mayor position could, despite its Tory-Blairite architects' intentions, be used to fight austerity, including closure of local facilities [like the Liverpool Women's Hospital](#).

In the hustings and in the radio and [TV media interviews](#), only Roger was able to propose a positive working-class alternative of a "people's Brexit for the 99%", against the pro-employer alternatives of Lib Dem 'remain' or Tory 'exit'.

This vindicates TUSC standing - none of these vital issues for working class and middle class people across the region would have been raised, let alone answered, in our absence.

The metro-mayor position has been foisted on a region which hasn't asked for it and doesn't want it. Turnout averaged 26% but was significantly below this in boroughs like Halton or St Helens, and turnout in working class areas across the region was clearly very small.

What saved the limited legitimacy of the position was undoubtedly May's calling of the snap general election, which turned out part of the major parties' core vote and cut across the vote for smaller parties like TUSC or the Greens. This also cut across the council byelections we contested in Liverpool Wavertree and Wirral Cloughton, but where TUSC's profile has been raised and renewed.

TUSC has broken new ground in this election, with our election address having reached households covering around 1.5 million people, and wide areas in which we have never stood before but where new supporters now want to get actively involved. Our campaigning activity hit the high streets of every borough and drew in our local election campaigns in Wavertree and Cloughton.

Set against that, the TUSC vote is modest, but it represents an important political investment for the future. And locally, it leaves newly elected Labour metro-mayor Steve Rotheram with some important questions to answer. TUSC will play its full part in continuing to support the Merseyrail guards, defend threatened public services, and fight back against austerity.

#### **Votes for City Region mayor - whole region:**

TUSC 7,881 (2.7%)

Get the Coppers off the Jury 729

Conservative 58,805

Lib Dems 19,751

Green 14,094

Women's Equality 4,287

Labour 171,167

UKIP 11,946

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# Tories win West Midlands mayor - the complete failure of the Labour right

Philip Taylor, Coventry Socialist Party

The Tories have [won the inaugural election](#) for the position of mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority. In a tight race, the Conservative candidate Andy Street received 238,628 to 234,862 for Sion Simon of the Labour Party.

It is important to understand what happened and the lessons that can be learnt in order to ensure this victory for the Tories is not built upon in June.

The loss for Labour is fuelling the narrative from the capitalist establishment, including the Labour right, that Jeremy Corbyn is a problem. The 'blame Corbyn' script had already been written.

But the campaign was wholly a creature of the right wing. Sion Simon is a careerist politician par excellence. A former minister in the Gordon Brown government and current member of the European Parliament for the West Midlands, he is the personification of everything ordinary people mistrust in politicians.

As an MP for Birmingham Erdington [he was caught](#) in the [MPs' expenses scandal](#), breaching parliamentary rules by renting his 'second home' in London from his sister, and was forced to repay about £20,000.

His election leaflets patronised working class voters with talk of building Spitfire aircraft and pictures of the cross of St George. There was little or no talk of Tory austerity or how to fight it. There was little or no mention of the sorts of [policies that won Jeremy the leadership](#) of the Labour Party.

Indeed, there was not even a mention of Jeremy Corbyn. Simon preferred to pose with numerous local councillors, most who have carried out massive cuts to local jobs, services and facilities. The right wing say Corbyn is a turn off for voters, but they say nothing about the effects of their councils in places like Coventry and Birmingham implementing Tory cuts!

The turnout for this election was 26.3%. There was a great deal of cynicism towards the combined authority and the position of mayor. The creation of the combined authority was promoted by then Tory chancellor George Osborne and supported by right-wing Labour councils in the region.

It was never about genuine devolution, more it is about devolving austerity. Unfortunately Labour in the West Midlands, rather than pointing this out for what it is, have gone along with the whole sham.

It is clear from this result that [the Labour right have nothing to offer in terms of winning elections](#).

- See [full article at coventrysocialists.com](http://coventrysocialists.com)

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## Labour hangs on in Wales despite cuts councillors

### Anti-Corbyn media confounded by poor showing for Tories

Dave Reid

The council elections in Wales were completely overshadowed by the impending general election which was called two weeks before. The mainstream media confidently predicted Labour losses in the local elections and a victory for Theresa May in the general election but the Tories have not been forgiven for the damage they have done to Welsh working class communities. So there was a powerful mood to keep the Tories out and [by and large Labour's vote held up](#), despite the record of Welsh Labour councils in cutting council services.

Labour held on in the cities but lost some seats in the valleys, not to the Tories, but to independent councillors. The Tories only won new seats in their traditional seats in Wales.

Given the media hype in support of the Tories, they actually did very poorly. In Swansea, Labour increased its majority and retained control of Cardiff and Newport councils. There were losses in Bridgend and in Blaenau Gwent, but in most areas not to the Tories who only regained Monmouthshire council which covers the poshest area of Wales. The Tory vote in Cardiff was up but mainly at the expense of the Lib Dems, not much from Labour.

The BBC's Laura Kuenssberg, one of Jeremy Corbyn's harshest critics, declared on Radio 4 that Labour can hardly be celebrating retaining council seats in Wales, "one of its heartlands". But the previous week she had confidently inferred that Wales would fall to the Tories while visiting Porthcawl as a part of Theresa May's entourage. In fact the Tories were unable even to win back many areas that they have held in the past.

## Support for Corbyn

The mood amongst young people to support Jeremy Corbyn undoubtedly mobilised thousands to vote for Labour councillors, even though most of the Labour councillors are opposed to Corbyn. In Cathays ward in Cardiff with the highest student population in Wales, Labour's vote was up by 83% with 700 more votes than in 2012! Ironically two of the councillors who benefited from this Corbyn surge backed the coup against him last year.

This year the Welsh Labour government has soft-pedalled cutting council funding, allowing Labour councils to soften cuts. This will not continue for the next four years if a Tory government is re-elected. Labour's gains in Swansea were partially down to the 'feel-good factor' generated by the [much-vaunted City Deal](#) and the prospect of a [tidal lagoon in Swansea Bay](#), both of which have been promoted by the local media.

Labour is now two parties in one, with most of the Welsh MPs and councillors more concerned with preventing Corbyn winning even if it means the Tories being returned to attack working people. Many workers will be wondering on which side is the arch-Blairite MP for Aberavon, Stephen Kinnock, who could not wait to [declare the local election results "disastrous"](#) and blame Jeremy Corbyn, before realising that the results were not so bad.

Kinnock then did a u-turn and [proclaimed the leadership of Welsh Labour's "fantastic first minister" Carwyn Jones responsible](#), neglecting to mention that it is in Carwyn's own Bridgend back yard that Labour lost!

Ukip's decline in Wales continues from the Assembly elections with its vote slipping towards the level of the Tories in the cities and towards independents in the valleys. Plaid made some modest gains but no big breakthrough.

## Anti-austerity alternative

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood 22 candidates in five councils to put forward an anti-austerity alternative to Labour councils that have been cutting services for the last five years. There was a very friendly response to TUSC's message on the doorsteps where TUSC stood.

Nevertheless after May had called the general election, for understandable reasons many voters who were considering voting for TUSC decided to get behind Labour to support Corbyn or to keep the Tories out. Despite the general election being called, TUSC received nearly 1,600 votes and over 9% of voters in Townhill in Swansea and Llannon in Carmarthenshire, with other creditable votes in Cardiff, Swansea, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Caerphilly.

These elections show the potential for Corbyn to overcome the hostile forces in the media and amongst Labour MPs. There is a lot of confusion over what Labour stands for but very little support for the Tories. If Corbyn's Labour reaches out over the heads of the Blairites and [fights on radical policies that can improve people's lives](#) he can regain votes in the valleys and the cities of Wales. A programme for a £10 an hour minimum wage, abolition of zero hour contracts, a fully funded NHS, an end to cuts and renationalisation, can win enthusiastic support. But the conservative tail of the Welsh Labour leaders must be shed.

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## Doncaster TUSC's campaigning against cuts goes on

Alistair Tice

The calling of the general election had a big impact on the Doncaster mayoral election result with [both Labour and the Tories increasing their votes by over 10,000](#) each compared with four years ago. The turnout was still low at 29% but those who did vote deserted smaller parties and independents to revert to the two main parliamentary parties.

That Socialist Party members initially felt disappointed at getting 1,531 first preference votes (2.4%) for [Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition \(TUSC\) candidate Steve Williams](#). But in the context of being squeezed by the two man parties, it was a measure of how good a response there had been to our campaign.

TUSC collected over 2,000 signatures demanding that Doncaster council does not sign up to the local [Sustainability and Transformation Plan](#) (STP) which will cut £140 million from the Doncaster and Bassetlaw Health and Social Care budget by 2020.

Nearly 1,000 signatures were collected to keep guards on trains in support of the RMT rail union's industrial action [against driver-only operation](#) on Northern Rail.

And hundreds signed up to make Donny a "£10 an hour town", backing Socialist Steve's pledge to scrap zero hours contracts and pay all council workers a minimum of £10 an hour and encourage private sector workers to join a union and 'fight for ten'.

In just five weeks, TUSC supporters conducted 30 public campaign activities resulting in 492 copies of the Socialist paper being sold and £695 being collected in donations. We were the only party to hold any public meetings, with 50 attending our eve of election rally with guest speaker TUSC national chairperson Dave Nellist (former Militant Labour MP).

Incumbent Labour mayor Ros Jones got just over 50% of the votes but there was no enthusiasm for her or Doncaster Labour after four years of carrying out [over £100 million of Tory cuts](#) which has decimated social care, neighbourhood services and youth services. No enthusiasm except at the Chamber of Commerce where [Ros's mantra of Team Doncaster](#) "growing the economy" was well received.

But here on the estates and streets of Doncaster, there are still no signs of 'trickle down' as absolute wages have fallen over the last five years and food banks and homelessness have increased. TUSC will continue to campaign to get the Tories out, for a Corbyn government and a socialist council to build on the support gained in this campaign in which our five council candidates received over 1,000 votes plus TUSC-supporting Independent Karen Mundin got 374.

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## Tube strike at London Bridge over unfair dismissal

Tube workers at London Bridge station walked out at 10pm on 7 May and took to picket lines the morning after in protest at the sacking of a member of staff and the disciplining of two others.

The 24-hour strike by RMT members was in response to an incident in which a fare-dodger was violent towards staff. Two staff who intervened in the incident were disciplined by London Underground while another worker, who first approached the passenger to ask to see their ticket, was accused by bosses of provoking an incident and lost his job.

The RMT says the fare-dodger assaulted two members of staff, pushing a pregnant tube worker in the stomach and punching another twice. The staff member who was punched has since been sacked. On the picket line management ripped down an RMT flag and had to be interviewed by the police because of their antics.

The RMT will ballot all its tube station members and is calling on London Underground and Mayor of London Sadiq Khan to intervene to overturn the decisions.

**Socialist Party reporters**

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## **After the Unite elections - now turn outwards!**

**Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser**

The [Unite general secretary and executive elections represent a defeat of the right-wing Blairite forces](#) both inside the union and Labour. They must now be used as a platform to strengthen the left in Unite.

In addition, over the next month with his renewed mandate, [Len McCluskey should put himself alongside Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell](#) in spearheading Labour's anti-austerity and pro-worker programme to take on Theresa May and the Tories. He should approach other leaders of unions, whether affiliated to Labour or not, to take [Jeremy's "Workers' Charter"](#) into the workplaces in a mass campaign over the heads of the Tory media, including organising rallies in towns and cities, to show workers the difference a Corbyn-led government would make to them and their families.

The Socialist Party [supported Len's candidacy and campaigned for him to be re-elected](#) in an energetic campaign that we believe had an effect. We argued that the Blairites and the capitalist establishment saw the Unite vote as the third Labour leadership election contest and were using all the means at their disposal - [from the Financial Times to the Sun](#) - to try to ensure a victory for the right-wing challenge from Gerard Coyne. Had they succeeded, Unite would have moved dramatically to the right, making it much harder for Unite members to take action in defence of their interests. Coyne's victory would also have been used to move against Jeremy Corbyn.

### **Warning on dividing the left**

We warned Ian Allinson and the [SWP who supported him](#) that to stand in this particular election unnecessarily risked splitting the left vote and potentially would allow Gerard Coyne to win. This is what nearly happened and Ian Allinson and the SWP would have borne the responsibility for a defeat for the left.

Yet nowhere does Ian Allinson acknowledge this. Incredibly and without embarrassment, in an email to supporters, he says: "The announcement of Labour's 20-point plan to transform the workplace shows how right we are to back Jeremy Corbyn." However, a Coyne victory would have weakened Jeremy's leadership, even possibly opening the door to a late challenge in the opening few days of the General Election. It would have certainly emboldened the Blairites who are daily attacking and undermining Corbyn and McDonnell. As [the Financial Times wrote in January](#) as nominations opened, "If Mr McCluskey is replaced, the dynamics of the whole labour movement would shift".

While welcome, the election results do pose important questions for the left in the union. Learning the lessons of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership elections, we argued that Len should have launched a mass campaign of meetings and rallies.

## Executive Council elections

The Socialist Party is part of United Left (UL) and four of our members stood on a fighting socialist programme on the UL slate for Unite's Executive Council. Suzanne Muna from the Unite LE/1111 housing workers' branch was re-elected on a strengthened mandate. The other SP candidates all stood for the first time. Jamie Coccozza, Kevin Bennett and Jimmy Tyson did very well but fell short of being elected, with Jimmy by only 38 votes.

United Left has lost some seats although it has retained a majority on the Executive. We believe that in particular, they should reach out to the new Executive members who identify with the construction rank and file who led [the struggle against the Besna contract and blacklisting](#) and voted to recommend Len. But the reduction in UL seats and the lower general secretary voting turnout does raise important issues for United Left and the union in general.

## A visible, fighting union

United Left must turn outwards to the many fighting Unite reps and members who are increasingly being forced to take action to defend their jobs, pay and pensions [such as the BMW and AWE workers](#). It should have a more visible presence in the union in between elections and should think about public meetings open to Unite members in this post-union election period. These must be on a fighting programme that reflects the more militant stance that Unite has taken under Len McCluskey and now has to be extended. While UL correctly supports Len, it must develop its own programme to further democratise the union by campaigning for measures such as elections of more senior officers and annual conferences.

This is a volatile period for the labour and trade union movement, which reflects the deep insecurity that faces workers. Theresa May's brazenly [hypocritical attempt to style the Tories as the 'workers' party'](#) is a recognition of her and the bosses' fear about the massive anger that is building up in the workplaces.

But that increasingly precarious character of work is itself a challenge to the unions. The tremendous struggles that have opened up of a new generation from [the Deliveroo workers](#) to Unite's own [striking mixed fleet cabin crew](#) show the potential. The defeat of Coyne opens the door to really build Unite into a mass militant union that can take on the employers and their political representatives.

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# Workers fight back against race to the bottom!

Nick Chaffey, Socialist Party Southern region secretary

Many strikes and protests are taking place in the run up to the general election.

On 16 and 18 May, [BMW car workers will strike](#) at Cowley in Oxford, Hams Hall, and Swindon, [plus Rolls Royce workers in Goodwood](#), over attacks to their pensions.

On 18 May they will be joined by [striking workers at the Atomic Weapons Establishment](#) (AWE) also fighting to defend their pensions, and RMT seafarers protesting in Poole over the [exploitation of migrant labour on Condor ferries](#).

All these workers are fighting employers who have been given the green light by this Tory government [and the European Union](#) to break contractual pension agreements and domestic trade union rights. Truly, a system "[rigged for the rich](#)," as Jeremy Corbyn declared at the launch of his election campaign.

BMW workers are furious that a company making record sales of the Mini and Rolls Royce, stacking up billions in profit, is now seeking to strip its workforce of pension entitlements by up to 20%. This is the first strike at Rolls Royce in living memory.

On the first day of the strike at Cowley over 1,400 turned up to picket lines. The first strike at Rolls Royce saw hundreds of workers mass at the front gates to 'welcome' BMW board members visiting from Germany.

At AWE, the guarantees given to trade unions when privatisation was driven through by the Tories are lying in shreds.

Private contractors are allowed to maximize their profits and shareholder dividends by stealing the pensions of workers of over 40 years' service and the young workers who are starting on the job.

At Condor Ferries, using the EU Posted Workers Directive, migrant workers are employed under the terms of their country of origin, not Britain, and are paid under £3 an hour.

In every case, workers are forced to fight against a government-sponsored attack that gives the green light to employers to maximize their profits by attacking the pay, terms and conditions of workers.

These struggles are the tip of an iceberg of exploitation that has seen workers' pay driven down by 20% on average under seven bleak years of Tory austerity. May and the Tories are also seeking to further restrict effective trade unionism with yet more draconian legislation.

Jeremy Corbyn has given a commitment to [abolish the latest anti-trade union legislation](#) and [raise the minimum wage](#) to £10 an hour.

In the face of continued attacks on pensions, Corbyn should make it clear that corporations have no free rein to reward shareholders while slashing the pensions of their workers.

Rather than facing a race to the bottom of ever lower wages and pensions, we should raise the alternative of socialist nationalisation and democratic planning. This can ensure production is for need, not profit, and workers receive decent wages and pensions.

Successive Tory governments have stood firmly on the side of the bosses. These strikes and protests show workers have no choice but to fightback. A mass trade union demonstration against Tory austerity could be decisive in deciding the outcome of the election.

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## Royal Mail walkout over suspension of union reps

By a Royal Mail worker and Socialist Party member

Communication Workers Union (CWU) members took unofficial industrial action across nine Royal Mail offices on Monday.

Workers in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, part of the Eastern 6 branch of the CWU, walked out in defence of two union representatives who have been suspended over allegations of unauthorised overtime.

It is believed that Royal Mail bosses have taken advantage of an opportunity to target senior representatives and have suspended the workers without following nationally agreed procedures.

The suspensions are well timed for the bosses, with a national dispute around pensions and employment terms and conditions brewing.

CWU members working in Royal Mail are to be [balloted for national strike action soon](#) unless Royal Mail backs down over its plans to move to a less generous pensions scheme.

This isn't the first time that the business has used the conduct code to target representatives ahead of local and national disputes.

CWU general secretary, Dave Ward, tweeted: "Offices across MK/LU postcode have walked out this morning in support of @CWUnews reps under attack. Solidarity and full support #TheCWU".

The [willingness to walk out](#) undoubtedly shows the underlying anger felt by members towards the approach taken by management since privatisation, ruthlessly searching for profits for wealthy shareholders.

The Socialist Party calls for the immediate nationalisation of the telecommunications industry, returning it to a public service run under democratic working class control and management for the benefit of the many and not the few.

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## Good debate and response at radiographers' union conference

**Delia Hazrati, Society of Radiographers southeast region vice chair and conference delegate (personal capacity)**

This year's annual delegate conference of the Society of Radiographers was held in Leeds from 23 to 25 April.

Socialist Party radiographer delegates held a stall outside the conference, sold a dozen copies of the Socialist and had petitions against the introduction of [NHS 'sustainability and transformation plans'](#).

There was a good response from delegates and members of the public. There were good debates in the conference itself on 'the right to protest', employment tribunal fees and non-gender specific uniforms.

A motion to [scrap tribunal fees](#) in line with TUC policy was unfortunately lost and was oddly not supported by the leadership. A fantastic motion from a young delegate on climate change was passed calling for the [removal of the profit-driven economic system to stop environmental disaster](#). It demanded rapid conversion to renewables, nationalisation of the energy generating and transport systems, and an integrated environmental plan of production based on democratic public ownership of the economy.

An emergency motion to not accept the [NHS pay review body's derisory 1% pay rise](#) was won on the floor but defeated in a card vote.

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## US: women ice hockey players' strike threat wins living wage

**Suzanne Wrack**

On 15 March, a group of women in the US announced [a strike that became headline news across the country](#).

This was no ordinary strike threat. No ordinary workplace. Feeling their talks for equal pay were going nowhere, the US women's national hockey team played their strongest hand.

Just one week before the World Championships in Michigan, the title holders - and tournament favourites - pledged not to show up to the tournament they have never won on home ice.

Demanding a living wage and the same perks provided to the men's national team - the women were flown economy while the men flew business class; men were able to take guests to competitions free of charge; women had to bunk together - they faced a hardened response from USA Hockey, the sport's governing body.

USA Hockey embarked on a scab recruitment attempt. From targeting players as young as 16 to trying to coax others out of retirement, they did all they could to undermine the strike.

## **Support**

Yet they hadn't banked on the outpouring of support that would follow. It was no surprise to the players, however, who knew the strong bond of solidarity between women athletes would hold firm.

The men's team hinted at a strike themselves if the women's demands weren't met. Unions from the National Hockey League, National [American] Football League, National Basketball League and Major League Baseball spoke out in favour of the action, united in sporting respect. Sixteen US senators voiced their support.

After gruelling ten-hour talks, and just three days before the tournament and the strike were due to start, agreement was reached. But despite USA Hockey's statements, this was far from a compromise.

Until the dispute was resolved, USA Hockey only paid the women players for training leading into the Olympics - \$6,000 for a six-month period.

The new four-year deal will instead see the women earn about \$70,000 a year, with the chance for that to rise above \$100,000 if they scoop Olympic gold.

All the women will receive a base salary of \$4,000 a month before any bonuses. On top of that they will now receive the same \$50 daily allowance as the men, who were taking home 210% more than the women.

And the governing body has committed to establishing a committee aimed at improving the marketing of women's hockey, and promised to address the woefully inadequate fundraising for girls' youth teams - a vital protection of the future of women's hockey by the sport's top stars.

## **Winner**

Team captain Meghan Duggan said: "Our sport is the big winner today. We stood up for what we thought was right and USA Hockey's leadership listened. In the end, both sides came together.

"I'm proud of my teammates and can't thank everyone who supported us enough. It's time now to turn the page. We can't wait to play in the World Championship later this week in front of our fans as we try and defend our gold medal."

Forward Hilary Knight, one of the strike's leading figures, added: "The negotiation process took a toll. But we knew there would be a bond that would be unbreakable.

"We set a historic landmark for the next generation. [What we wanted was] to build off that, to come in with momentum, and then win our next world championship."

Ten days later, Knight exhilaratingly scored the extra-time goal that saw the US beat arch-rivals Canada to win the World Championship.

It may have been the fourth time in a row the US has beaten Canada to the World title, and the first time at home. But it was the coupling with the political win that made this victory mean more than any that have come before.

Two days before that historic win, the [US women's national football team reached agreement with US Soccer](#) that - while full details weren't disclosed - saw similar demands met.

After an even longer-running dispute that saw the right to strike denied by a district judge last year, a four-year deal was signed that is said to include: increased pay - the New York Times has said base pay will be boosted by 30%; increased bonuses; improvement in travel and hotel benefits; a daily allowance equal to the men's team; financial support for pregnant players and those adopting; and, crucially, some control of licensing and sponsorship.

## Equality

Some argue against pay equality for sportswomen on the basis that women's sport generates less income. This is well and truly put to bed by the success of the US women's national soccer team (as well as the financial discrepancies faced by legends like Serena Williams).

In 2015, the US women's team won the World Cup and generated \$20 million more than the men's, who finished 15th in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. The women earned four times less in the process.

In addition, the women's World Cup final against Japan was the most watched soccer game - men's or women's - in US history, with 25.4 million tuning in.

And this growth is continuing. While the men's team is expected to run at a deficit in 2017, a budget report from the US Soccer Federation projects that the women will bring in \$17 million, including a \$5 million surplus.

The issue isn't going away with these penned deals either. Five players on the women's team - Hope Solo, Alex Morgan, Megan Rapinoe, Carli Lloyd and Becky Sauerbrunn - have an outstanding complaint against US Soccer before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which has yet to be resolved.

And despite the profile of the national hockey team's action, the University of North Dakota recently announced the cutting of their women's hockey team effective immediately.

While serial misogynist Trump sits in the White House signing away international financial aid for abortion rights groups, and women protest draconian abortion restrictions in states across the country, these sportswomen are playing a vital role in showing just how powerful strike action and organised struggle can be in the fight for equality.

No doubt sportswomen will continue to use their strength to fight back, and will be emboldened to take action by the successes of the hockey and soccer teams' fight for sporting financial equality. Hopefully women workers will be similarly inspired in the workplace too.

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## Featured letter: disabled workers want our voices heard, not charity

James Collett, Socialist Party disabled people and carers group

I'd like to thank John Gillman and the editors of the Socialist for making an [audio version of the paper available at socialistparty.org.uk](#).

This is an essential step forward in our paper's mission to give a collective voice to the working class, and to bring the real news to everyone who is ignored, isolated, slandered and oppressed by capitalism and the big business-controlled mainstream media.

Disabled workers [do not want charity](#); we do not want the patronage of royals and rich celebrities: we want our voices to be heard in society, and for society to be changed by the power of our collective strength.

It is the profit-driven system that disables us, that values people according to their ability to function like machines for the enrichment of the big bankers and industrialists. And it is that same system which attempts to divide working class people by blaming minorities for the crisis in our public services - really caused by cuts and privatisation.

Malcolm X said: "You can't have capitalism without racism," and the same is true of discrimination against disabled people.

To fight prejudice we must fight the rigged system in whose interest prejudice works. To do that we must be organised as a class, with not one person excluded from participating in the struggle for a socialist society which will allow everyone to fulfil his or her potential, not as a machine or commodity but as a human being.

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## Foreign aid corruption: capitalism to blame

**James Sutherland, Bolton Socialist Party**

To justify calls to reduce the foreign aid budget, parts of the capitalist establishment have pointed to [the corruption that permeates the business of aid](#).

They're not wrong. Adam Smith International, one of Britain's largest foreign aid contractors, has seen [four senior executives resign](#) over questions of ethical integrity. And the Independent Commission for Aid Impact has euphemistically suggested that UK aid in Libya could cause "[unintended harm](#)" to vulnerable migrants.

Some voices on the right say that reducing Britain's contributions - supposedly for the global poor - will somehow solve issues of corruption. Of course, it won't. Corrupt politicians and executives will simply take a bigger cut.

Before Cameron bombed Libya, its '[Great Man-Made River](#)' provided 6.5 million cubic metres of clean water across the Sahara Desert to nearly six million people. Today 30% of the country lacks access to fresh water.

The response of the Conservative government has been to provide [£10.4 million in funding for Libyan refugee camps](#) - condemned globally as feeding grounds for human traffickers - without any analysis of the human rights impact of such a project.

Libya's GDP is [a third of what it was in 2008](#). Workers have been made to pay for lucrative reconstruction contracts in a country we were also billed to destroy.

The truth is that while famine kills in Somalia, parliament funnels money into [organisations which advocate free-market capitalism](#) - and sell it to the public as 'aid'.

[Capitalism cannot fix the poverty it creates](#) in its drive for profits. In order to make a meaningful difference to workers and poor in other countries as well as our own, we need to take the economy out of the hands of the super-rich, and build a socialist system based on collective ownership, democratic planning, shared prosperity and humanity.

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## Why I joined: raising the ideas of socialism

**Ethan White**

I first classified myself as a Marxist when I was 13. I didn't fully [understand what that meant](#) at the time but I had been learning about different ideas of how and why society functions the way it does in sociology class at school. Marxism really resonated with me as I had been raised in a working class household.

It wasn't until the end of my first year of college when I was 16 that I decided to [read the Communist Manifesto](#). After reading it and researching the history of socialism I wondered how socialist ideas were being upheld and defended in the UK. I found a number of parties and organisations with different left-wing ideologies.

I knew I wanted to join a socialist party but I now had the issue of which one. I eventually chose to [join the Socialist Party](#) because it is the party that is currently doing the most work to raise the idea of socialism.

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## Theatre review: Fracked! Political satire skewers frackers

Ruthie McNally, Worcester Socialist Party

The political play 'Fracked!' [is touring nationally](#) and well worth going to see. Although billed as a black comedy, and there certainly were laughs throughout the play, it was so much more political than I was expecting - written by Alistair Beaton, a political satirist.

It begins when an energy company wants to start drilling for shale gas - [a process called 'hydraulic fracturing' or 'fracking'](#) - in a village. One of the residents shoots to internet stardom through her speech against a panel member at a meeting proposing it, when she calls him corrupt.

The two lead actors are Anne Reid (Coronation Street) and James Bolam (The Likely Lads) - there are younger actors too! - and all are very good.

What starts as someone believing in the democratic processes of voting and occasionally writing letters to the press and signing petitions becomes so much more. In the end, the only way to fight the developers is by taking direct action. Also shown up are corrupt local councillors.

What I found most impressive was the fact that it was so up to date - the actors must be learning new lines daily - the news headlines were included in many references. That is not something I have seen before on stage.

While maybe a bit too much of the 'nasty' PR company is used to make it appear that actually the energy company bosses are OK guys, it is an interesting and topical play, and puts forward good environmental arguments against the use of fracking for our future energy sources.

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## The Socialist inbox

### Do you have something to say?

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

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

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

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## Union manifesto

The Tories must be kicked out! Theresa May and her corporate benefactors are literally devouring our NHS, our education system, and the future of all our essential local services.

May is ramping up longstanding attacks on workers and their unions that, unfortunately, were already being carried out with much gusto by the Tories' toxic predecessors, New Labour.

But now the trade union movement has everything to fight for: that is, if we want a Labour [government that will defend and extend the rights of the 99%](#) instead of the super-rich 1%.

With the general election just weeks away, it is more important than ever that Leicester's branch of public service union Unison helps coordinate local political action to encourage the national Labour Party to commit to a radical anti-austerity manifesto.

If union leaders choose to take a back seat at this critical moment, the Blairites will no doubt take this as a signal that public support for anti-austerity demands are unpopular, which will give them more leeway in weakening their party's electoral manifesto.

A weak and uninspiring manifesto would be a nightmare for the people of Britain, and could easily prevent a Labour government coming to power.

When Unison's local government service group conference met last June, union delegates from across the country democratically decided that the union's policy position on matters of campaigning was to fight against public service cuts.

Conference delegates also agreed to call upon the local government service group executive to "resist further cuts to local government funding," and [call upon Labour councils "to pool reserves across local authorities" to prevent further cuts.](#)

All of these pressing concerns are certainly fulfilled by the innovative ["no cuts" campaign that was initiated by Unison Leicester City](#) in February this year.

Moreover, support for launching a broad campaign that raises these issues within Leicester and the Labour Party has received support from other trade unionists in the city.

There couldn't be a better time for Leicester's trade union movement to act in unison in raising Unison members' demands.

The lives of tens of millions of people are at stake. A Labour government could potentially come to power on 8 June, but this will be much more likely if trade unions push Corbyn to adopt a bold socialist programme that can fire up the public's imagination and ignite the collective fightback against Tory and New Labour austerity!

Mike Barker, Leicester

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## May's phoney war

In a desperate ploy to divert attention from her monstrous policies and consistent failure to answer a straight question, Theresa May has resorted to jingoism by mounting a verbal attack on the EU bureaucrats who until recently she adored.

Aping her idol Thatcher, she substitutes Jean-Claude Juncker for Galtieri, the Argentinean dictator of 1983, and makes the assertion that after the general election the overriding issue will be Brexit.

The overriding issue is not the phoney blather about Brexit. [In or out of the EU, the fight to defend the working class from the excesses of capitalism is the overriding issue.](#)

Jeremy Corbyn is at his best when he goes for May's jugular. Never mind the mantra 'it's fully costed' used by failed past Labour leaders. We start from the premise: what does the working class need for a decent life?

The answer is the policies which propelled Jeremy to the leadership. The money is there in the banks, offshore tax havens and unpaid taxes. A determined Corbyn-led government can get the resources.

Let's take a leaf from the [French campaigning activity of Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#): mass rallies all over the country to proclaim the demise of Toryism and superiority of socialism. Then we can win.

**Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool**

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## Labour voter

So Theresa May has called a snap general election, which is very commendable of her, seeing as most of the country never had a choice in her being prime minister in the first place.

Talk about the tale of the emperor's new clothes.

It looks like May's main reason for going to the polls is that Labour is eating itself alive from the inside. Bookies have made her 1/6 on favourite to win, and most of Britain's press will do its underhanded, twisting, one-sided coverage of the election.

Then we have the Labour has-beens such as the [millionaire Neil Kinnock](#), [Gordon Brown the pension thief](#), [Ed Millipede who wanted to rebuild Stonehenge](#) - they have never won a general election but have the audacity to try and undermine a left Labour leader.

Then there's Blair, [warmongering](#), [lying](#), [millionaire Blair](#). He's been well rewarded, as have others, for selling the working class down the river.

Whether Jeremy Corbyn's vision of what the Labour Party should be and do wins this election or not, with a left leader, and a left candidate in my constituency, it will be the first time in decades I will not be holding my nose when voting Labour.

**Rebel with a Cause, Rotherham**

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## Tories out

This government of the rich has to be removed in the June election.

They have presided over a massive transfer of wealth from the working people of this country to their paymasters in big business, in the form of corporation tax cuts and their abject failure to recover the billions of unpaid taxes from the multinationals.

Corbyn's reforms will be welcomed by millions of people who have seen their living standards plummet under this government, and the previous coalition with the Lib Dems - but also, one has to say, the Blair and Brown governments.

The millions who have suffered are looking for an alternative to austerity and if Corbyn sticks to policies that will improve the lives of the majority then he can win.

There are many issues that need to be resolved but it all boils down to the need to put the interests of the majority before the greed of the few. The Tories will always look after the few at the expense of the many.

**Frank Bowen, Liverpool**

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# Campaign launch: "rip-off bosses and greedy bankers - enough is enough!"

Becci Heagney

"[An upgraded economy run for the many, not the few](#)," was the promise from Jeremy Corbyn at Labour's official general election campaign launch in Manchester on 9 May. Hundreds cheered and applauded, with multiple standing ovations as the Labour leader set out what a victory on 8 June would mean.

Also promised, and repeated on giant posters around the room, were [public ownership of rail](#), a [fully funded NHS](#), [stronger rights at work](#) and decent [homes for all](#). The manifesto will be launched on 15 May and should set out how these promises will be achieved.

Wansbeck MP and general election campaign coordinator Ian Lavery opened the launch by stating boldly that Labour will ban zero-hour contracts and that the manifesto aims to "excite young people".

Actor Julie Hesmondhalgh spoke to give her support to Corbyn and said that she has never felt so "excited and exhilarated" that the Labour Party is finally in line with her "deeply held socialist policies".

Corbyn came out fighting against the Tories. He spoke against NHS privatisation and said Labour would fight for a "jobs-first Brexit". He concluded by warning a "reckoning" for those who caused the economic crisis: "I say to tax cheats, rip-off bosses and greedy bankers - enough is enough!"

The response, both inside to Corbyn and outside where many bought a copy of the Socialist newspaper or took a leaflet, shows that these policies are popular and it is by getting out this message to working class people across the country that Corbyn can win the general election.

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## Overflowing Corbyn rally in Leicester

Sofia Wiking, Leicester Socialist Party

On 6 May Jeremy Corbyn held a rally in Leicester. Labour had booked a large meeting room at the Tigers Stadium, holding 800 people. The room was packed full, with people standing at the back.

Outside, people who didn't get in started chanting: "Let us in! Let us in!" Inside, the anticipation was high, and people started clapping prematurely, taking several minutes to accept Corbyn had not yet arrived.

The meeting was only advertised through Labour members and held indoors. A bigger outdoor rally would definitely have been possible and could have reached more people, as well as providing a clearer contrast to the May campaign, to which [neither journalists nor the public are being invited](#).

Corbyn's speech focused on how the economy is "rigged in favour of the rich," and how he wants to "draw a line" under the privatisations of public services, including the vast amount taken from the NHS.

Corbyn also made references to concrete Labour policies such as the [£10 an hour minimum wage and ending zero-hour contracts](#), which got a massive cheer from the audience.

These are excellent points, but more is needed on how this can be achieved. While we do need to collect taxes from big corporations, he also needs to be explicit about the need to renationalise all the privatised industries, from transport to energy.

One highpoint was when Corbyn said that we are socialists and internationalists, and it is crucial for labour movements to link up across borders. This got a huge cheer from the audience.

Speaking soon after [the local election results](#), Corbyn recognised that they were a disappointment, showed there is a long way to go, and that we have to fight even harder to win in June. He said that we face a huge challenge, but that this could be the chance of a lifetime to change Britain.

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## Hundreds rally for Corbyn in Leamington

With little to no notice around 500 people gathered outside Leamington Town Hall on 8 May to hear Jeremy Corbyn speak. For an hour beforehand school, college and university students and workers streamed out from their lunch breaks on hearing the word that Corbyn was coming.

Such was the support for Corbyn that the road across the hall had to be temporarily closed in order to accommodate the ever-growing numbers!

Socialist Party members were inundated with interest in our papers and leaflets. The rally was built purely through word of mouth and social media. It gives a glimpse of what could be possible if Jeremy and [all those that support him organised and built properly for huge mass rallies](#).

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## One Housing tenants force housing association back

- 40% rent up! Can't pay, will stay
- Tenants refuse to pay outrageous 40% rent increase.

### One Housing Tenants Action Group press release

One Housing Group (OHG) has backed away from [imposing 40% rises on "key worker" tenants](#) in Newham. The climb down came in an email sent to Truus Jansen, chair of the One Housing Group Tenants Association from Robert Marcantoni, an Assistant Director of OHG on 5 May. The email states OHG's intention to "put on hold" rent rises and changes in tenancy agreements "pending further discussions with residents".

The tenants' association said the proposed rent rises were imposed without proper consultation, would cause serious financial hardship and possibly push tenants out of the borough where they work as teachers, social workers and in the NHS.

Ms Jansen said: "We're delighted OHG has agreed to remove this threat, for now. It's testament to tenants sticking together and refusing to be pushed around. We look forward to meeting with OHG to discuss a sensible way forward. But we'll continue to organise. We will not accept rent rises that push tenants into poverty or out of Newham."

OHG announced the exorbitant rent rises on 1 April. Their heavyhanded action drew immediate [anger and criticism from tenants, trade unionists](#) and politicians.

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## Jobstown Not Guilty trial round-up

The trial of Jobstown protesters is an [attack on the right to protest](#), but it is also an attack on the working class communities of Tallaght, Dublin. Prosecutors wanted to ban anyone from Tallaght and anyone [opposed to](#)

[water charges](#) on social media from the jury. In her evidence, Joan Burton stated that she feared for her life. What exactly is she saying about the people of Jobstown? So on 6 May, hundreds marched in Tallaght in solidarity with the defendants.

In the trial itself the defence questioned Burton about video evidence taken from her phone where she tells her assistant Karen O'Connell to go on social media and say "that children were roaming the streets with no one minding them." After being asked several times if she meant what she said - and after avoiding answering the question - the judge instructed her to answer the question, and she finally admits that it was her suggestion. The defence asked: "Weren't you trying to paint a picture of the people there as uncaring, to smear them, and isn't it your default position to say whatever you think will gain you an advantage at that moment? Weren't you strategising in the back of that car?"

Under questioning from the defence O'Connell recounted that she herself had been involved in [the 'Shell to Sea' protests](#) in the past - including sit-down protests that blocked trucks and where people were arrested. These were, she claimed, "very different" to the Jobstown protest.

- To back the campaign, and for resources, including model motions and email updates, contact [jobstownnotguiltygb@gmail.com](mailto:jobstownnotguiltygb@gmail.com)

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## Yorkshire meeting in solidarity with the Jobstown Not Guilty campaign

**Matthew Hirst, Huddersfield Socialist Party**

On 4 May people from across Yorkshire came together for a regional meeting to discuss [the background of the Jobstown trial](#) and the impact that the verdicts could have, on Ireland and beyond. Governments across the globe are looking for any ways to subdue and silence the 99% as they continue to implement austerity cuts.

Pat Lawlor, Socialist Party Ireland member, gave a fantastic speech on the conditions that face Jobstown families (61% of families in the area are classed as low paid and struggling to make ends meet), and the implementation of the water charges.

The struggle against them was akin to [the imposition of the Poll Tax](#), with Gardai (police) accompanying [water meter installers](#) to essentially force families to let the meters be installed. He also spoke of how then [deputy prime minister Joan Burton](#)'s government was imposing cut after cut, mainly aimed at low income families.

The meeting then opened to the floor, with questions and debates on the current trial, how the effects could have widespread consequences on the right to protest, and whether Joan Burton was actually "scared for her life" as 50 Gardai were protecting her from a [peaceful sit-down protest](#)!

Overall, people at the meeting came out feeling inspired to take up the mantle to fight for our right to protest, and a collection raised over £200.

- [Read the latest from the trial here](#)

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## Socialists tell free marketeers "the pitchforks are coming" in Durham debate

Northern Socialist Party members

Students at the Durham Union debated the proposition 'this house believes free market capitalism is the way forward' on 5 May. Elaine Brunskill, representing the Socialist Party, clearly gave students supporting the motion a cold shiver down their capitalist spines.

These students bristled with contempt when Elaine told them they should heed the warnings from their own [strategists of capitalism who have commented that the "pitchforks are coming!"](#)

Arguing in favour of the proposition was the Tory, Graham Brady, chairman of the '[1922 Committee](#)', and economist Vicky Pryce. Brady spent half his allotted time reliving his days as a student at Durham University - clearly the old boys' network is alive and kicking.

Both speakers attempted to square the circle by arguing that any problems arising out of capitalism were due to it not being a fully free market, but also argued more regulations needed to be put in place! Neither were able to justify the bank bailouts - which under a completely free market would have had banks going into liquidation.

They both argued along the lines that across the world capitalism had lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty. Neither had anything to say about the [brutal conditions facing workers on zero-hour contracts](#) facing "too much week at the end of the money", or against the ["hell on earth" facing an increasing number of people in the under-developed world](#).

Elaine ended by passionately saying: "If capitalism can't provide a decent future for working-class and young people, then we can't afford capitalism."

The audience was dominated by young men and women who see privilege as a birthright. Maybe for the first time they were confronted by the prospect of impending class struggle. Their motion was carried, but a substantial minority voted against it.

Immediately after the debate three students approached our speaker to tell us our arguments were brilliant.

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## **Packed Walthamstow Socialist Party meeting discusses the general election**

**Ian Pattison, Waltham Forest Socialist Party**

Waltham Forest Socialist Party had our biggest meeting of 2017 so far. 31 people from across the anti-austerity movement crammed into our meeting room in Walthamstow. It was an opportunity to hear what socialists are doing in the general election. Working class fighters, desperate to see the back of the Tories and urging Jeremy Corbyn on, lifted the room.

Jeremy Corbyn's policies are hugely popular. But you won't hear about them from most Labour MPs. One of the local MPs, Blairite Stella Creasy, has sent a leaflet to every house in the constituency. Creasy claims responsibility for the victory of the [successful campaign of the Butterfields tenants to stay in their homes](#). It's no surprise that the Socialist Party, that played a key role, isn't mentioned. But the biggest omission is the tenants themselves!

Sarah Wrack, editor of the Socialist and a local member, kicked off the discussion. Claire, one of a dozen teaching assistants who lost their jobs through conniving council cuts followed her, appealing for support for their campaign.

Len, an NHS worker, angrily condemned health cuts. But he also inspired the meeting with news of a recent [unofficial walkout and victory by domestic staff](#) at the Royal London hospital who won back their tea break just hours after it was removed.

Paula said she was worried about staying in her home if Tory cuts continue, while paying for her kids' university education. But she also said that could all change if Jeremy Corbyn wins and implements his programme.

Linda Taaffe, secretary of Waltham Forest trades union council, told the meeting about how they initiated the Waltham Forest Housing Action Network which is campaigning in Newham at the moment with One Housing tenants who face shocking rent rises. Linda reported that [those tenants were on the verge of victory](#).

Three Tamil Solidarity members addressed the meeting, talking about the [Refugee Rights campaign](#). Kevin, the local Unite branch secretary, stressed that the trade union movement needed to 'step up'. Real trade union action to improve people's lives demonstrates genuine solidarity against racism.

Nancy said that whether Corbyn wins or loses, we need to fight back. She appealed for people to [join the Socialist Party](#) while we campaign for that both during and after the election.

The Socialist Party is campaigning on the streets during the election for the socialist policies that we think can help Corbyn to kick out the Tories. Our next meetings will continue the discussion: On 11th May, How can we fight education cuts?); and 18th May , Is Jeremy Corbyn's programme possible?.

£94.52 was raised in the financial appeal and three new people expressed interest in joining the Socialist Party.

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## Sutton Coldfield socialist campaign stall

**Clive Walder, Birmingham Central Socialist Party**

Birmingham Central Socialist Party branch held its first ever campaign stall in the uncharted territory of 'Royal' Sutton Coldfield. We didn't quite know what response we would get in this area where Tory votes are usually weighed rather than counted.

Apart from a couple of hostile comments from obvious Tories it actually turned out to be one of the best stalls we've done for a long time. There was a genuine desire on the part of the public to engage with us.

Many people were [worried about the future of the NHS](#) and didn't trust Theresa May to save it. We also gave out leaflets supporting Jeremy Corbyn's socialist policies.

In all kinds of towns people are worried about what the Tories have done to their public services and socialist ideas can get a good echo.

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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25438>