

## Fight for jobs, pay and services

# Kick out the Tories: For a Corbyn-led government

Caroline Vincent, Leicester Socialist Party

["The Conservative Party has always been the true party of workers," claims Theresa May.](#) What a joke! Try telling that to the millions of workers living on poverty pay, in precarious employment.

Tell it to the [nurses who outrageously can't afford to feed themselves without help from food banks](#). Tell it to the public sector workers whose pay has been 'capped' (ie cut) for over a decade!

May will certainly encounter scepticism in promising to improve workers' rights, given the Conservative Party's record of attacking them.

[Jeremy Corbyn's Labour manifesto](#), by contrast, reveals a raft of strong measures to boost jobs, pay and workplace conditions. The banning of zero-hour contracts for instance, will mean more stable employment. Scrapping employment tribunal fees will address employer victimisation in workplaces.

Labour says the public sector pay cap will be lifted and the minimum wage will be raised to a living wage - at least £10 an hour by 2020. And the most effective way to maintain good rights at work is through a trade union, so a repeal of the [restrictive Trade Union Act](#) will be welcomed.

As socialists we recognise the limitations of some of these demands, like the delay in implementing the £10 an hour minimum wage, but overall it's a positive start.

## Enthusiasm

The public enthusiasm with which these policies has been greeted has prompted Theresa May to cynically mimic Corbyn's pro-worker stance. Her "new deal," however, offers very little to workers, and does not stand up to scrutiny.

A Tory commitment to increase the national living wage will only benefit the over 25's. The introduction of [statutory rights to unpaid leave for carers](#) will not be a financially viable option for many, and is an insulting alternative to investment in social care (from which billions of pounds has been cut).

May's promise to safeguard workers' rights is meaningless, as there is no plan to get rid of tribunal fees and scrap anti-union laws.

This blatant Tory opportunism will fool no one - except perhaps Trade Union Congress general secretary Frances O'Grady. Instead of embracing Corbyn's workers' charter and advocating more pro-worker measures, [O'Grady tweeted tacit support for May's hypocritical nonsense](#).

Come 8 June the choice that will benefit workers is clear - we must get the Tories out! A Corbyn-led government would be a huge step forward, which we then need to build on. It would provide an opportunity to workers, mobilising through their trade unions, to win better pay and conditions.

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## Tories out! Corbyn can win with socialist policies

## **Build a new workers' party**

## **Take the wealth off the 1%**

## **Tory austerity has brought us...**

- 10% real-terms cut in pay
- A [1% pay cap](#) for all public sector workers
- Up to 5 million struggling on [zero-hour contracts](#)
- 185,000 hospital bed days taken up in 2016 due to [malnutrition](#)
- [Around half a million forced to go to foodbanks](#), including nurses and other workers
- The (anti) [Trade Union Act](#)
- The [housing crisis](#) and spiralling homelessness
- The [bedroom tax](#)
- [Schools cuts, academisation, privatisation, and stressed-out kids](#)
- [Trebling student fees](#) (with the Lib Dems)
- [Racist and divisive rhetoric](#) and policies
- Threatening the very [future of the NHS](#)
- Privatising our public services
- [Cutting corporation tax](#)

**In other words, the Tories wreak chaos and destruction on our public services and living standards**

## **Jeremy Corbyn's [manifesto](#) includes...**

### **A 20-point plan on workers' rights, including:**

- Ban zero-hour contracts
- £10 an hour minimum wage by 2020
- End the public sector pay cap
- Reintroduce national pay bargaining
- Four new bank holidays
- Repeal the (anti) Trade Union Act
- Part-time, temp and agency workers to have the same rights as full-time, permanent and directly employed workers from day one of employment
- Clampdown on forced self-employment
- Ban unpaid internships

### **Support for health and social care, including:**

- £30 billion extra funding for the NHS
- Halt 'Sustainability and Transformation Plan' cuts and repeal the privatising Health and Social Care Act
- End health service privatisation and bring more services into a publicly provided NHS
- Reinstate student nurses' bursaries
- Integrate the NHS with social care, ensuring parity for mental health services
- £8 billion into social care
- End 15-minute care visits
- Increase carer's allowance benefits

### **A National Education Service, including:**

- 30 hours' free childcare a week

- Government-subsidised high-quality childcare places
- End the schools cuts - an extra £7 billion for schools
- Increase staffing levels, cap class sizes
- Introduce free school meals for all primary-age children
- Reintroduce Education Maintenance Allowance for 16 to 18-year-olds
- Abolish tuition fees and reintroduce maintenance grants

### **Starting to tackle the housing crisis, including:**

- Build a million homes, half of them council and housing association homes
- Introduce rent controls and longer tenancies
- Reverse abolition of housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-olds
- Scrap the bedroom tax

### **Investment in jobs and services, including:**

- Bring railways, energy, water and Royal Mail into public ownership
- End the expansion of 'driver only operation' on trains
- A ten-year national investment plan of £250 billion in the infrastructure, through a 'National Investment Bank'
- Immediate energy price cap
- Freeze travel fares
- Stop closures of Crown Post Offices
- Halt cuts to youth services and fire and rescue services
- Increase corporation tax, income tax on those earning above £80,000, and implement a 'Robin Hood tax' on financial transactions
- A 'fat cat tax' on excessive big business pay
- Guarantee no increase in taxes for 95% of the population

### **And more, including:**

- Votes at 16
- Guarantee the right of EU citizens to remain in the UK
- Scrap work capability and 'personal independence payment' assessments and increase disability benefit ESA
- Guarantee the pensions 'triple lock'
- End support for aggressive wars of intervention and back effective action to alleviate the refugee crisis
- End arms sales to Saudi Arabia
- Ban fracking

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## **Corbyn's manifesto: An important step in the right direction**

### **Mobilise to fight for socialist change**

Jeremy Corbyn has [launched his manifesto by declaring Labour is the "party for the many" while the Tories are the "party of the rich"](#).

The leaking of Labour's draft manifesto broke through the right-wing media's relentless assaults on Corbyn, and brought the policies into the light. Social media was alive with enthusiastic discussion. Labour went up in

the polls - [up to 32% in mid-week polls by Opinium and ORB, and 35% in a ComRes poll taken after the leak](#).

Socialist Party members [experienced more people wanting to stop and talk](#), take leaflets and buy our paper in the morning as people heard the news. We are confident the headline policies in the manifesto will inspire many.

A [million more people have registered to vote since the election was called](#). 42% of those registering are young. One reason for that will be a new generation reaching voting age. The introduction of individual voter registration meant that the number of school leavers on the register dropped by a quarter, at least some of whom are now registering.

It is also likely that they are registering in order to vote for Jeremy Corbyn's programme. Labour is significantly ahead of the Tories among the under-40s.

The right-wing press immediately went on the attack, naturally. The [Daily Mail screamed that Labour would take us back to the 1970s](#) - to which many responded, better than the 1870s with the Tories! Big business and their political representatives will move might and main to prevent a Corbyn victory.

Theresa May called the leaked manifesto "disastrous socialist policies". Ordinary working class people would be "appalled".

Actually the truth is the opposite. Polling showed overwhelming public support for Corbyn's policies. 52% support public ownership of railways, 50% of Royal Mail and 49% of energy. 71% back banning zero-hour contracts. 65% support higher taxes on those earning over £80,000. 54% support building more council homes.

## **Popular policies**

In reality the Tories and the rich they represent are terrified that these policies are very popular. Recent elections in [France](#), in [the US](#), and the [EU referendum](#), have been used by working class people to rebel against the wealthy capitalist establishment. That basic class anger goes further for many, seeking out a working class alternative. This has been shown in the huge support for Bernie Sanders in the US and Melenchon in France.

Polls currently show that while people support the policies, they are sceptical about Corbyn himself. This is hardly surprising considering the offensive launched on him every minute. Those around Corbyn complain about the attacks on him by the press, but do not sufficiently rebut those coming from the right of his own party. Unfortunately, over the last year Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message, which has twice swept him into the leadership of the Labour Party, has not been heard by the majority of the population. Endless attempts to compromise with the pro-capitalist Blairite wing of the Labour Party have, to put it mildly, muffled his voice. Scepticism also comes from a lack of faith in any politician to actually do what they promise.

But a bold campaign could overcome this. Corbyn and his trade union backers, like general secretary of the Unite union Len McCluskey, need to get out to mass rallies and workplaces, with fighting talk against the rich, the "rigged system". If they boldly argue for jobs, workers' rights, homes and services, they could defy the 'experts' and win.

[Theresa May called the general election](#) gambling, based on the opinion polls, that she would be able to increase the Tories' currently puny majority. But as the Socialist explained, hers is a very high-risk strategy.

[A video has gone viral](#) of one working class woman with a learning disability managing to break through the tight control and confront Theresa May about cuts to disability benefits. This speaks volumes about the real lives and views of working class people.

So the very policies May lambasts as "disastrous", she rehashes and offers up a 'Corbyn-lite' version, with pledges on council housing, 'workers' rights' and caps on energy prices. Corbyn is setting the agenda. The debate has been pushed to the left.

While the Tory press do their utmost to discredit him on defence, Corbyn's statement that a "bomb first, talk later" strategy has failed and is a "recipe for increasing, not reducing, threats and insecurity" will chime not only with young people but also the millions who opposed Tony Blair's war in Iraq and were turned off from voting Labour. Similarly, "no more hand-holding with Donald Trump" will also be popular with the hundreds of thousands mobilised against the racist, sexist billionaire.

Unfortunately, the manifesto shows that concessions have been made to the right of the party, in a vain hope at achieving unity. Many Corbyn supporters will be disappointed, for example, that the manifesto commits to renewing Trident. While the headline renationalisation of the railways is very popular, the small print shows that actually the rail companies will be renationalised as franchises expire. While the manifesto specifies a number of benefits that will be strengthened, and pledge to reform and redesign Universal Credit, there is not a general commitment to reverse cuts to social security.

Housing campaigners are disappointed that the manifesto does not commit to repeal the [2016 Housing and Planning Act](#). The original announcement by Corbyn that a Labour government would build a million homes, half of them council homes, has become half of them "council and housing association homes, for genuinely affordable rent or sale". The Socialist Party argues that we need a million council homes! Similarly, on rent controls, the manifesto promises to control rent rises, rather than set a cap on rent levels.

These are retreats made in the face of Blairite opposition. But the popularity of the policies, and the shift of the whole debate leftwards in response to them, shows that in reality there has never been a need to compromise with the Labour right.

The Socialist Party fully supports Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity stance. Since he was first elected as Labour leader we have done all we can to support the anti-austerity party in formation in its battle against the Blairite right of the Labour Party.

Representatives of the capitalist establishment exist inside the Labour Party as well as out. As last summer's coup attempt showed, the big majority of Labour MPs are desperate to ditch Corbyn. Contrary to their claims, this isn't because he is 'unelectable' but because they fear he might be elected.

[We argued for democratising the Labour Party](#), allowing the readmission of expelled socialists, and introducing mandatory reselection of MPs. If that had been done, the anti-austerity wing of the Labour Party would be in a much stronger position than they are today, where the Blairites are circling ready to pounce beyond the general election, whatever its outcome.

The Blairites dare to suggest that they hold the key to electoral success, yet they want to continue with the same old pro-austerity policies that have seen France's equivalent of Labour - the PS - reduced to 6% in the first round of the French presidential elections.

After seven years of Tory misery voters have no interest in voting for an 'austerity-lite' version of Tory policies, the negative consequences of which many remember from New Labour's time in office.

Disgracefully, an [unnamed right-wing source described the manifesto to the Mirror](#): "all it amounts to is a load of freebies for every special interest group. It's all concern for the 'feckless poor' and nothing for the hardworking majority."

Blairite MP [Ben Bradshaw in Exeter declared that he would have nothing to do with it](#), and would produce his own Exeter manifesto. This is no different from the big number of right-wing MPs who are giving out local leaflets with no mention of Corbyn or his policies. One example is Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy, who also claims on her leaflets that "I fought and won the battle for the Butterfields estate," when actually it was the brave fight of the tenants, backed by the Socialist Party, that led to victory. The likes of Wes Streeting and John Woodcock blatantly declare they couldn't support Jeremy Corbyn as prime minister.

Never before has it been clearer that this is two parties in one: a pro-capitalist Blairite party and a new anti-austerity party in formation.

In 2016 [Tony Blair declared that Corbyn becoming prime minister would be "a very dangerous experiment"](#) which he wouldn't be prepared to risk. No surprise then that he is now going all out to try and prevent it

happening - even suggesting that Labour voters consider supporting Liberal Democrats or Tories if they are 'pro-remain'.

The pro-capitalist wing will never give up attempts to strangle a new anti-austerity party. No more concessions should be made to them. We need a party that stands in the interests of the working class - not the billionaires!

## **Brexit**

A clear anti-austerity programme - in the interests of the working class - should also define Labour's approach to Brexit. Workers who voted for Brexit did so primarily because they were in revolt against all the misery they have suffered over the last decade. The Socialist Party has argued that Jeremy should make clear that he is fighting for a Brexit in the interests of the working and middle class majority.

The manifesto goes some way towards this - talking about prioritising jobs and living standards, protecting workers' rights and "every community" - but still makes concessions to the right wing by not spelling out a clear challenge to the role of the EU in enforcing austerity.

The manifesto argues for retention of "the benefits of the single market and the Customs Union" without spelling out a rejection of its neoliberal rules. While it talks a lot about preserving the workplace protections in EU law, it makes no mention of the EU regulations that have driven the race to the bottom, such as the 'posted workers directive', or that attempt to enforce privatisation. Correctly, the manifesto clearly opposes racism and defends the rights of EU migrants.

The policies in the manifesto could transform the lives of the majority of people - providing a living wage, affordable housing, decent public services and more. But a socialist, anti-austerity party would need to go further to solve all the problems faced by working class people.

For example, the plan on energy is actually to achieve government control of the distribution grids in stages over time, and to "support the creation of" publicly owned energy companies in each region, operating alongside private companies. However, continuing to operate in a profit-seeking market will make it impossible to control what happens to energy supply, prices, and sustainability. To ensure stability, genuine affordability, and to plan and invest in the rapid expansion of renewables, would require democratic nationalisation of the whole industry.

The economic plans in Corbyn's manifesto on investment represent a significantly bigger role by the state in the economy than has been posed for decades. Nonetheless, the proposals are extremely modest in terms of challenging private ownership of the main parts of the economy. The Labour manifestos in 1945, 1972 and 1983 included commitments to much more widespread nationalisation.

But it is such a departure compared with what has been on offer from the Blairite Labour Party and the Tories that it has the potential to shake everything up.

It is what the manifesto opens up that is so important, which is what the Tories and the Blairites fear so much. It says "it doesn't have to be like this". It opens the door to discussion about what society could be like.

The campaign in support of Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto means standing up against not only the Tories but also the representatives of capitalism inside the Labour Party, to continue to fight for a party that is capable of implementing this programme. And it means campaigning for an extension of socialist policies.

When the Tories and the capitalist media attack these policies as 'unaffordable', they mean that they might be detrimental to the gargantuan profits of the capitalist elite. There is no lack of money in Britain. [The richest thousand people in Britain own £658 billion - up £83 billion in one year!](#) Corbyn and McDonnell's tax measures aim to raise an extra £48.6 billion.

We support Jeremy Corbyn's plans to tax the rich and big corporations. For most of the 1970s, big corporations paid 52% of their profits in tax. But that percentage has been reduced step by step to 20% today. Even with their proposed increase, big business would still be paying the lowest level of corporation tax in the G7.

But we also recognise that the 'markets' - that is capitalism - will never meekly accept dramatically increased taxation and regulation, or piecemeal takeovers of private companies.

## **Rigged system**

The 'rigged system' that Jeremy Corbyn refers to is run by and for a tiny number of wealthy individuals and companies. Today a tiny group of people, in Britain and worldwide, own and control industry, science and technique, and harness them in order to maximise their own profits.

Globally [eight people own as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity](#); the greatest polarisation between rich and poor in human history. There are around 125 major corporations that completely dominate the economy. It is the tiny elite that own those companies and their hangers on who are the real establishment and are determined to try and stop Jeremy Corbyn coming to power.

The billionaires who are already squealing about Jeremy Corbyn's profligate policies will do all they can to sabotage their implementation if he is elected. Even the modest aims in this manifesto will eat into their profits too far for their liking. But mostly they are terrified that the expectations of working class people would be raised and would push Corbyn to go further than he currently intends.

This would include attempts to remove Corbyn from the premiership. But additionally, they would try to sabotage through measures like investment strikes, and removing their money from the banks. The [enormous pressure applied to the Syriza government in Greece](#) stands as a warning to any government that challenges the interests of the rich and big business.

This is why fighting for Corbyn's policies and more needs the workers' movement to mobilise mass active support. And it means being prepared to go further with socialist measures.

It would mean nationalising the big banking and finance companies, with compensation to shareholders paid only on the basis of proven need. A crucial step towards solving the economic crisis would be to take into democratic public ownership the 125 or so big corporations that control around 80% of Britain's economy. Unlike nationalisations in the past, this time it should be based on popular democratic control involving workers, trade unions and the community.

This would provide the possibility of developing a democratic, socialist plan of production that could very quickly transform the lives of millions.

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# **TUSC confirms no candidates in June and full support for a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies**

**From a TUSC press release, 11.5.17**

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee has confirmed that TUSC will not be standing candidates in the general election.

TUSC, co-founded by the late Bob Crow in 2010, was the sixth-biggest party on the ballot paper in May 2015, with its general election and council candidates polling 118,125 votes. This time, however, TUSC will be working all out to try to get Jeremy Corbyn into Number Ten on 8th June.

The TUSC national chairperson Dave Nellist, a Labour MP from 1983 to 1992 and a former backbench colleague of Jeremy Corbyn, said:

"Ever since Jeremy launched his leadership bid in 2015 [TUSC has been determined to support him](#) against Tory and Blairite attacks and build the anti-austerity struggle that lay behind his success.

"This has meant that TUSC has been prepared to [contest local elections against right-wing Labour councillors](#) carrying out Tory cuts. No politician from whatever party should expect that they can carry through austerity policies without challenge at the ballot box.

"But this general election is different, giving working class people the opportunity to drive out the Tory government and, on this occasion, put a socialist in Number Ten. That's the job that we will concentrate on for the next four weeks.

## **Fighting the 'rigged system'**

"We know that getting 326 or more Labour MPs elected on June 8th wouldn't stop the Blairites continuing to plot against Jeremy. They did it last summer and, if they feel confident enough, they could do it again this summer. They don't support the socialist policies of taxing the rich and public ownership that are needed to overturn the 'rigged system' and they will do what they can to resist them.

"But defeating the Tory government would be seen as such a victory for Jeremy Corbyn it would inspire and give confidence to millions that a different society is possible.

"It would create the chance to build the mass support base that Jeremy will need against the capitalist establishment to implement his policies and we will work determinedly towards that end".

Paul Reilly, a national executive member of the 80,000-strong RMT transport workers' union, which is officially represented on the TUSC steering committee, said:

"Our union's policy is clear. We want a Corbyn-led Labour government carrying out policies of support for trade union and employment rights, the repeal of anti-union legislation, public ownership of the railways, and opposition to austerity, and in this election we need the maximum number of Labour MPs returned to have the chance to achieve that".

## **Overturing established political facts**

Dave Nellist concluded: "We are entering a period which will potentially throw all 'established political facts' into question. We shouldn't forget that if just 1,600 people had voted differently in 2015 the Tories would not have had an overall majority. The election outcome is not a foregone conclusion.

"Nor should we forget that last summer's vote to leave the EU was also a protest by many working class people against the establishment, unanticipated by 'political experts' and the media. TUSC campaigned for a leave vote and one of our contributions to the general election campaign will be to argue the case for a socialist Brexit that puts workers' interests above those of big business and city bankers.

"But the new fluidity of British politics also includes the question of whether Jeremy Corbyn will remain unchallenged as leader of the Labour Party after June 8th - even if the Tories are defeated - and what that would mean for working class political representation and TUSC's role.

"So TUSC will be fighting in the next few weeks for a Jeremy Corbyn-led government with socialist policies but also preparing for the new political situation that will present itself after June 8th".

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## **Suprise Corbyn rally in Morley**

With only a few hours notice hundreds turned up outside Morley leisure centre to hear Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn speak. Morley and Outwood is one of the most marginal constituencies in the country with Ed Balls narrowly losing the seat to the Tories in 2015.

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## **Free education, EMA, £10/hr, no zero-hours**

# **Corbyn's alternative for young people**

**Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Students national organiser**

Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto has been greeted with enormous enthusiasm by working class people but especially by young people.

Free education, a new EMA, an end to zero-hour contracts, a £10 an hour minimum wage and council house building: these are just some of the proposals that, if implemented, would go a long way towards transforming the lives of young people. No wonder some polls show Corbyn is around 20 points ahead among 18-24 year olds.

The manifesto represents a substantial break with the false 'choice' that has been presented by mainstream political parties at all the previous elections young people are able to remember. Instead of the uninspiring offer of 'Tory-proper v Tory-lite', we are instead being given an opportunity of a break with the failed politics of austerity - the chance to vote for an alternative.

But in order for the positive pledges outlined in the [manifesto](#) to be made a reality, young and working class people need to get organised. Corbyn should not only be calling on people to knock doors, but organising mass open-air rallies, advertised in advance so thousands of people can attend.

There should be huge meetings at schools, colleges and universities, and demonstrations to show support for policies like free education. That's why wherever we are present, Socialist Students is organising to do just that.

### **Seize the opportunity**

As young people, we need to seize this opportunity to help build and mobilise a mass movement - a movement that will not stop when the election results are announced on 9 June.

If Corbyn is elected, we will need to be organised to fight so that he can implement these policies and go further. That means he must be prepared to face down the Blairite saboteurs and win.

It means that we must be ready to fight for Corbyn to go beyond this good but still limited manifesto - not only abolishing tuition fees but writing off student debt and introducing universal living grants, for example.

Socialist Students has had a fantastic response to our ideas at colleges and universities. At one college in Waltham Forest, students voted overwhelmingly (96%) to back Jeremy Corbyn and his policies over Theresa May's fee hikes and austerity.

This gives an indication of the huge support that exists for left-wing policies. Now this support must be harnessed and galvanised into a mass movement to win socialist change.

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# Corbyn could re-win Scotland with a socialist approach to independence

Philip Stott, Socialist Party Scotland

Sympathy towards Jeremy Corbyn in Scotland, as elsewhere, is widespread, [including among those who voted Yes to independence in 2014](#).

For example, when BBC Question Time was held in Edinburgh the day after the Labour manifesto was leaked, the audience reflected a big interest and enthusiasm for the progressive policies it contains. But it also reflected the barriers to rebuilding working class support for Labour in Scotland given the mistaken approach to independence.

There is real potential for Corbyn to win significant numbers away from the Scottish National Party (SNP) if a genuine left and socialist position was taken on the national question, as well as on how to combat austerity. But mistakenly [the manifesto says](#):

"Labour opposes a second Scottish independence referendum and will campaign tirelessly to ensure that the desire to remain a part of the UK is respected."

Corbyn has rightly made clear that Labour would "never again" campaign alongside the Tories to oppose independence. The disastrous decision to unite with the Tories in the 'Better Together' No campaign in 2014 is the major factor - along with the Blairite counter-revolution inside the party - behind Labour's support plummeting in Scotland since then.

But he has also [recently said](#): "I think that independence would be catastrophic for many people in Scotland. It would lead to turbo-charged austerity... because there's a very low oil price and the high dependency on oil tax revenue."

To oppose outright the genuine democratic desires of a big section of working class and young people of Scotland who look to independence can only undermine support for Corbyn.

Socialists have a responsibility to separate out the genuine democratic desires of the working class who see in independence an escape route from poverty and austerity, from the pro-capitalist SNP leadership who defend capitalism and would seek to continue its policies in an independent Scotland.

The role of socialists in this situation is to support the desire for independence, while explaining the need to carry through a rupture with capitalism and to fight for socialist change.

## Uprising

Socialist Party Scotland described the 2014 indyref as an "electoral uprising against austerity". 1.6 million overwhelmingly working class and young people voted Yes to an independent state in the teeth of a ferocious campaign of opposition by the British and international ruling classes.

['Project Fear,' spearheaded by the Labour Party in Scotland](#), was the mobilisation of the billionaire-controlled media, big business and the political elite in a mass campaign of class hostility to the threat of the break-up of the British state.

The turnout was an unprecedented 85% - the largest participation in Scotland for any plebiscite or election since the introduction of universal suffrage.

It was a heroic attempt to find an escape route from unemployment and low pay, brutal poverty and cuts. No less was it a damning verdict on the political elite rightly held responsible for these crimes.

While the No side won by 55% to 45%, with the older generation and rural and middle class communities voting heavily against independence, it was in many ways a pyrrhic, empty victory that has not, as David Cameron claimed, "settled the question for a generation". Instead, as we explained at the time, the "winners become the losers and the losers the winners."

From a relative high of 41 MPs elected in 2010, Labour's vote collapsed by the time of the 2015 Westminster election, returning only a single MP. It was wiped out across Glasgow and Clydeside, the historic crucible of the Scottish labour movement.

## **Council cuts**

[In May's local elections](#) Labour lost 133 councillors - one third of their total - as their share of the vote plummeted from 31% to 20%, paying the price for right-wing Labour councils implementing vicious Tory austerity.

Mistakenly, Jeremy Corbyn has not opposed Labour councils making these cuts. The Tories, as they did in the 2016 Scottish Parliament election, pushed Labour into third place.

In truth, the SNP leadership has been allowed to go unchallenged for too long by Labour's nonsensical approach that has effectively handed over big sections of the working class to pro-capitalist nationalism by refusing to fight for the democratic rights of the Scottish people.

Support for the SNP is, however, also falling. Current opinion polls show Nicola Sturgeon's party is on 40%, down from the 50% they won in 2015. This is a result of a widespread mood among sections of pro-independence working class people that the SNP has failed to deliver on its anti-austerity rhetoric. Yet so far Labour has been incapable of capitalising on this.

As a minimum Corbyn should, as he has done previously, make clear that he will support the right to a second referendum on independence. And that he'll demand Labour MPs at Westminster vote in favour of a section 30 order to allow a "legally-binding" referendum to take place.

Jeremy can, as we have done, stand implacably for the unity of the working class and its organisations across Britain while advocating an independent socialist Scotland. This approach is summed up through the slogan of 'a voluntary, democratic socialist confederation of Scotland with England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist Europe'.

## **Build an alternative**

Corbyn and his supporters in Scotland could initiate a democratic conference of the labour movement, open to all trade union, anti-austerity and socialist forces to discuss a class approach towards the national question and how to confront austerity. This could lay the basis for the effective re-launching of a fighting, socialist alternative in Scotland.

A mass, working class left of this type could win huge support and effectively challenge the pro-capitalist, cuts programme of the SNP. Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour left need to urgently act to begin adopting such a policy for Scotland.

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# **One in three borrow for rent, Corbyn pledges housing revolution**

Nancy Taaffe, Waltham Forest Socialist Party

[One in three people have borrowed money just to pay the rent](#) - some from family and friends; others with interest and fee-charging overdrafts, credit cards and payday loans.

The figures from housing charity Shelter reveal that of nearly 1.6 million private tenants on low incomes, around 511,000 had borrowed for rent during the past year.

And phenomena like this are not only applicable to London.

A recent Radio 4 PM programme followed the plight of two young Liverpudlians as they struggled to find a place to set up home and start their life together. It found a pattern of financiers, billionaires and oligarchs snapping up new builds and empty properties for investment, while young couples struggle to find a home they can afford.

The super-rich see Britain's inflated property market as a safe store for funds. On top of this, the head of the National Crime Agency believes organised criminals use the London property market [to launder money](#).

## **Hoarding and speculation**

This hoarding of empty homes by the bosses - whether gangster or legit - is coupled with decades of council house sell-offs and the abolition of rent control. The knock-on is shortage and speculation on such a scale that housing costs now bear no resemblance to reality.

But while we live through housing horror stories, we have also watched the publication of Jeremy Corbyn's election manifesto. It goes some way in attempting to right the housing wrongs of the past. Compared to what exists now, it could represent the start of a housing revolution.

[Labour's manifesto includes the following promises:](#)

- Ramping up construction of council and housing association homes to reach 100,000 a year by the end of the next parliament
- Ending the Tory ban on long-term council tenancies
- Capping private rent rises at inflation
- Making three-year tenancies "the norm" for private renters
- Reinstating housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-olds
- Consulting on new rules against 'rabbit hutch' homes
- Giving leaseholders "security from rip-off ground rents"

The Socialist Party supports these first steps in trying to take charge of housing policy and plan it for human need. We will be out campaigning for this programme to win - and for Corbyn to push it further.

For a start, we call for nationalising land, the finance sector and the big construction firms - under democratic working class control and with compensation only on the basis of proven need. This is necessary to free up the money supply and end property speculation.

We will wholeheartedly campaign for a Corbyn-led government. But if the worst happens on 9 June, we have no intention of rolling over and allowing a whole generation to be locked out.

As the [Butterfields tenants](#) and then the [One Housing tenants have shown in east London](#), when tenants organise and fight, we can beat the landlords.

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# **Tories escape election fraud charges**

## **Corbyn should attack May's hypocrisy**

Ryan Aldred, Plymouth Socialist Party

[Up to 30 Tories, including up to 20 MPs](#), have escaped prosecution for not declaring extra money spent on election campaigning. But the scandal highlights that the Conservative Party offers anything but the "strong

and stable leadership" Theresa May keeps droning on about.

With a membership that is both falling and aging, the Tories have resorted to flooding elections with money and not declaring the true cost of their campaign expenses to cover for their lack of social base.

On the other hand, new members and supporters have flooded into the Labour Party since Jeremy Corbyn's leadership wins and anti-austerity pledges.

Channel 4 News and the Electoral Commission have established that, for example, [the Tories did not declare at least £22,000 of 'battle bus' activists' hotel bills in 2014's Clacton-on-Sea byelection](#). This would have taken them around £8,000 over the legal spending limit for a single constituency.

The Tories' approach in this and the other 2014 byelections - now past the time limit for investigation and prosecution - apparently became the model for their 2015 campaign in 80 marginal constituencies.

There is a separate budget limit for national party campaigning in the year before a general election. But the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) believes battle bus activists were involved in local rather than national campaign work, at least some of the time. And over £63,000 of their expenses didn't appear on the national books either.

So the issue is not whether or not incomplete election expense returns were made. The issue is that the CPS would have to prove local candidates or election agents knowingly submitted false returns to hide their breach of local spending limits.

The CPS claims it can't make a case because local Tories could have been misled by their national office about where expenses were being recorded. And Tory HQ claims the funds missing from the national return to be simple "human error" - a human error that just so happens to have taken place as a pattern across key marginals.

Would any such "human error" by Corbyn's campaign get the same generous benefit of the doubt?

Despite the unwillingness of the state to make an example of capitalism's preferred party, Jeremy Corbyn should make an example of the Tories - by highlighting not only their hypocrisy in relation to false expenses, but the hypocrisy of their entire campaign.

They are not, as they claim, the party for "hard-working people," but for the super-rich. By boldly championing socialist policies, Corbyn could sweep the Tories from power.

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## **NHS cyberattack: budget cuts and spy agency to blame**

### **Corbyn's £30bn extra for NHS would improve security**

### **Nationalising big pharma and private providers would also boost funds**

Stephanie Hammond, Camden Socialist Party

A 'ransomware' virus brought havoc to NHS trusts starting on 12 May, causing A&E departments to only treat life-threatening emergencies, doctors to turn patients away from surgeries, and cancelling of operations.

The virus, called WannaCry, quickly spread throughout Europe and the world. It was based on malicious code [leaked from the United States' National Security Agency](#), which is responsible for communication tapping.

WannaCry demands that the user of an infected system pay up to \$600 in the digital currency 'bitcoin' to regain access to files.

US software company Citrix, which provides some NHS computer services, [last year noted that the majority of NHS England trusts were running Microsoft Windows XP](#). This is an old version of the Windows operating system that Microsoft officially stopped supporting in 2014.

Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt allowed the ending of a customised contract that would have continued support for Windows XP, and so put NHS systems at risk. Last year, the latest follow-up to the Caldicott Report on NHS information security provided ample warning that it was wide open to attack.

After days of silence, Hunt appeared on Sky News to comment. But he offered nothing except assertions that this could have happened to any organisation - completely ignoring his role in stripping the NHS of funding.

A poll conducted by ORB International for the Independent in the wake of the attacks found three in four people thought the NHS is in bad condition, including the majority of Tory voters.

Corbyn's Labour has pointed the finger at cuts to the infrastructure budget of the NHS to fill gaps elsewhere, and pledged £10 billion in extra spending, including to overhaul IT systems.

## **Privatisation**

This follows years of privatisation and defunding, much of it started by Blair's Labour, and intensified under the Conservatives. It should be little surprise that Hunt made such a disastrous blunder when he has literally written the book on the wholesale privatisation of the NHS.

The Tories and Labour's anti-Corbyn right wing agree on their commitment to renewing the multibillion-pound Trident nuclear 'deterrent'.

Meanwhile workers in Britain face real dangers in their daily lives. For a start, through the stripping of hard-won rights to healthcare - let alone the consequent danger of cyberattack from organised criminals.

By "stockpiling" these cyber-weapons, [as Microsoft's chief lawyer put it](#), the US and its allies have let the genie out of the bottle and placed workers everywhere in very real danger.

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## **31,000 more kids at risk of abuse or neglect**

### **Corbyn's £8bn for a 'National Care Service' would start to reverse this**

### **Public ownership of care and resistance to council cuts also needed**

**Laurel Fogarty**

[Over 31,400 more children](#) were at risk of neglect or abuse in 2015-16 compared to 2010-11, according to a parliamentary report by the National Children's Bureau.

Budgets dedicated to protecting these vulnerable children have been brutally slashed by successive Tory governments leaving a deepening crisis in child social care.

Researchers have predicted that the social care budget will have a deficit of [nearly £2 billion](#) by 2020 leaving more and more children in immediate danger. Almost 90% of directors of children's services are finding it near impossible to protect the children in their care.

The true scope of this problem is impossible to know. The number of children living in extreme poverty or at risk of abuse is becoming more difficult to calculate.

As council budgets are slashed the thresholds for children being given extra support are rising. A child that might have been supported in 2010 may not be helped in 2017. This is particularly acute for disabled children.

While the Tories have insisted that spending on crisis care has increased in recent years, this statistic covers up an ugly truth - councils have been forced to increase spending on crisis care at the expense of effective early interventions such as Sure Start, because the needs of children are growing so rapidly.

## **Time bomb**

This has created a ticking time bomb in social care as the foundations of early intervention are shattered.

Labour's manifesto pledges moves towards a "National Care Service." A government led by Jeremy Corbyn would fund local authorities to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable children and adults, and end poverty pay for overworked care staff.

It promises to increase social care funding [by £8 billion over the likely life of the next parliament](#), pulling social care back from the brink of complete collapse and allowing councils to fund important preventative programmes.

However, Corbyn must also instruct Labour councillors to defy Tory brutality and refuse to pass cuts budgets if the Tories return to government on 9 June.

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# **PCS election: Increased majority for Democracy Alliance**

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

PCS reps and activists will be gathering in Brighton on 23 May at this year's annual delegates conference, which takes place in the middle of the general election campaign.

The PCS Democracy Alliance (Left Unity and PCS Democrats) has secured an increased majority in the 2017 PCS elections. When the ballot closed on 11 May 34 Democracy Alliance candidates had been elected.

## **Reelected**

A number of Socialist Party members were elected to the executive committee this year - Janice Godrich for the fifteenth time as president and Fran Heathcote, newly elected as vice president. Mark Baker, Marion Lloyd, John McNally, Katrine Williams were also elected. Unfortunately Chris Morrison lost out by a handful of votes.

[Left Unity is the rank-and-file organisation within PCS](#) which puts forward socialist ideas and stands for an independent and democratic union with a fighting leadership. This leadership is faced with a huge challenge over the next 12 months.

But it remains confident about meeting these challenges and continuing to defend jobs, services and conditions, fighting in the best interests of our members and wherever possible linking up with other unions.

Left Unity believes the general election is an opportunity to kick out the Tories. Left Unity would welcome the election of a Corbyn-led government on an anti-austerity programme. No doubt these themes will be discussed at conference.

- Socialist Party PCS annual delegates meeting public meeting: 'How Corbyn could win with socialist policies'. At end of conference Tuesday 23 May in Gresham Suite, Old Ship Hotel. Speakers: Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary, and Terry Adams ex-CPSA/PCS official (a friend and comrade of John Macreadie who was victim of Thatcher's state surveillance). Chair: Janice Godrich PCS president (personal capacity)
  - Official PCS National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) fringe meeting: 'Fighting back under the Trade Union Act': lunchtime Wednesday 24 May in Syndicate 1 room at the Brighton Centre. Speakers: Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary, Fran Heathcote, PCS department for work and pensions president and newly elected national vice-president, and Rob Williams, NSSN national chair. Chair: Katrine Williams, PCS Wales chair
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## Support Corbyn's call to renationalise Royal Mail

Carl Harper, CWU member (personal capacity)

Privatising Royal Mail was a privatisation too far for Margaret Thatcher. So how did it come to pass that 499 years of public ownership [ended in 2015 with the remaining 30% of shares being floated on the London Stock Exchange](#), following the majority being sold two years earlier?

The [Postal Services Act 2011](#), which paved the way for privatisation, was introduced by the Tory and Lib Dem Coalition.

The government claimed that selling off the public service would raise the necessary funds through private capital to 'modernise' the business. Then chancellor George Osborne had committed to public sector spending cuts to meet his deficit-reduction targets, meaning that any necessary investment certainly wouldn't be provided by the state. The government rushed through a £3.3 billion firesale.

The 'creation' of a million private sector jobs in 'rebalancing the economy' which the government regularly boasted about, undoubtedly included the 170,000 Royal Mail employees who were shifted from the public to the private sector virtually overnight.

### Opposition

As a Communication Workers Union (CWU) activist I remember being surprised and frustrated at how the union leadership was seemingly caught flat-footed by the sale. Only a "consultative ballot" was held, finding 96% of workers were opposed to the sale, joining 70% of the public. But not a single day of strike action was held to fight it.

The sale grossly defrauded the public. Royal Mail was valued at up to £10 billion by American bank JP Morgan - three times the eventual float figure. CitiBank valued it at £7.3 billion and Deutsche Bank between £6.4 and £6.9 billion.

The government decided to float the company on a share price of 330p. Within a week the share price had broken the 500p mark, an increase of nearly 50%, making the market valuation a whopping £1.7 billion higher than the government's sale price. The public has continued to be robbed of billions of pounds.

I'm therefore obviously delighted with [Jeremy Corbyn's announcement that his Labour government would renationalise Royal Mail](#). The case is strong, has the support of the majority of the public and with the correct programme of development could prove to be hugely beneficial in the first steps towards a genuinely modernised telecommunications and postal industry. Royal Mail has always been, and will continue to be, profitable in public ownership.

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## CWU walkout wins large concessions

**By a Royal Mail worker**

Communication Workers Union (CWU) members across nine Royal Mail Delivery offices who took strike action in defence of two representatives, returned to work yesterday (Tuesday) having won large concessions from the business.

Royal Mail had suspended the two representatives for allegedly claiming unauthorised overtime (see article: [Royal Mail walkout over suspension of union reps](#)).

In the face of the militant action taken by members, and with mail centre workers also refusing to cross the picket lines, Royal Mail lifted the suspensions and an interim agreement was reached whereby the correct disciplinary procedures will be followed.

As we stated at the time of the suspensions, Royal Mail bosses tried to take advantage of an opportunity to target senior representatives and suspended the workers without following nationally agreed procedures.

They were caught out though by a preparedness of the members to fight due to the approach taken by management since privatisation, ruthlessly searching for profits for wealthy shareholders.

CWU regional secretary Paul Moffat supported this view, stating: "We see it [the suspensions] as an attack on our two senior reps...The members are up for a dust up at the moment - Royal Mail are attacking everything."

The solidarity shown by CWU members is a clear indication to CWU HQ that a national dispute over pensions and employment terms and conditions would be supported. It also acts as a inspiration to other workers that solidarity action can get results.

[The National Shop Stewards Network \(NSSN\) conference on 1st July](#) will provide workers with an opportunity to coordinate the struggle right across the trade union movement.

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 10 May 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## **Blackpool deserves better - anti-austerity rally**

A lively all-day public meeting saw 'Blackpool deserves better' launched on 13 May. The meeting was organised by Blackpool trade union council and the BFAWU bakers' union around an anti-austerity theme after seeing the town devastated by cuts and racked by zero-hour contracts and low pay.

In a powerful speech, BFAWU president Ian Hodson, from Blackpool himself, put the demand for a minimum wage of £10 an hour, with no age exemptions, centre stage and welcomed its inclusion in Jeremy Corbyn's election manifesto. This was echoed at the end in a strong speech from Salford Labour MP Rebecca Long-Bailey and emphasised by a McDonald's worker.

Another leading trade unionist, originating from the local area, PCS assistant general secretary Chris Baugh, recounted the devastating public sector cuts. But Chris reminded the audience of the mass November 2011 pensions strike that, if continued and escalated, could have inflicted a defeat on the Tories.

Rob Williams from the National Shop Stewards Network said that there were major disputes breaking out all the time that showed the combativity of workers, such as the Royal Mail workers [who walked out in support of victimised reps](#).

Chris also spoke about the other major theme of the day, the need to invest in jobs using green technology. This is a massive issue in the area as the Tories have allowed fracking to go ahead despite continuing mass opposition. PCS is launching a pamphlet by Chris at its annual conference on the need for 'green' jobs.

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# Unison must back Corbyn's pledge to abolish zero-hour contracts with action

William Jarrett, Unison member (personal capacity)

[Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to abolish zero-hour contracts if elected on 8 June](#). And last year, Unison northern region co-convenor [Nicky Ramanandi joined in the condemnations of Blairite North East Labour local authorities' use of casual labour](#).

But in contradictory fashion, Unison's machinery has continued providing unswerving political cover and support for these right-wing and anti-Corbyn Labour groups which permit zero-hours exploitation. This puts the Unison leadership at odds with the Labour leader and Unison members who support him.

In a [Unison press release in March, general secretary Dave Prentis said: "Councils must stop ignoring the use of zero-hours."](#) Many councils deny using them altogether, citing their use of 'casual' contracts - the only difference being that staff are not forced to take shifts.

All the most contentious elements of zero-hours work remain. One North East council is even using a 'Task Rabbit'-style system, sending email alerts of work available over a period of whole weeks, available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Contrast Unison's soft-spoken and 'words of advice' to Labour councils with Unite's long public campaign against zero-hour contracts and casual work, which I and other Unison members have proudly collaborated on.

As Unison conference approaches, and in the wake of TUC figures confirming over one million people are now employed in these awful circumstances, Unison must get tough. Talk is cheap and completely inadequate, especially now that zero-hours council staff are being frozen out of the local government pension scheme.

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## Workplace news in brief

### Fujitsu fight

Fujitsu workers are continuing their ongoing battle against offshoring, job cuts, attacks on pensions and unequal pay with further strike action. This has included protests outside of events Fujitsu Services Ltd has had a high profile at.

Strikers are angry given that these cutbacks come at the same time as Fujitsu's latest accounts show it made £85.6 million profits in the UK but paid 0% tax on this with one director alone receiving £1.5 million.

The series of strikes so far was added to on 11-12 May when workers across the country held protests outside Marks and Spencers stores, one of the major clients of Fujitsu.

In Leeds, strikers were joined by activists from Unite Community, the Socialist Party and others to leaflet customers. Managers and security staff were spotted reading the leaflets and then on the phone - presumably ringing those higher up about the issue, showing that the action was having its intended effect.

The dispute is still ongoing. More information can be found at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk) as well as the strikers' website: [ouruniontest.wordpress.com](http://ouruniontest.wordpress.com)

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

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## Blacklisted

Frank Morris, a member of Unite's executive council, is holding a one-man protest picket outside missile manufacturer MBDA in Stevenage. Frank spoke to the Socialist:

"It's been very good so far. People have been supporting me.

"After being out of work for four months, I got a start with W Portsmouth. Then after they found out I was a union activist, I was escorted off site and dismissed.

I was working in Enfield at Chase Farm Hospital but MBDA are the main customer of the company so I decided to stage my protest here in Stevenage.

"The MBDA management have called the police many times, I've had every rank of officer from PC to inspector. After the inspector came along and said what I was doing was perfectly legal, and went in to tell the management that, I've not had any trouble.

"I just want a job, I am not after money and I want to work. I am here for the long haul and will continue my protest until I get some justice.

Other trade unionists should support me, they could be affected by blacklisting. If these companies in the supply chain can get away with it, it won't be long before the main customer companies start using blacklisting as well."

Steve Glennon, Stevenage Socialist Party

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## RCN result

Members of the RCN nursing union have given a clear message to the government about pay. It was announced at the RCN conference that 52,000 members working in the NHS had taken part in an indicative poll which measured members' appetite for industrial action. The results of the three-week poll revealed 91% of members would take industrial action short of strike, with 78% saying they were prepared to strike. The unprecedented results show a real appetite for industrial action from RCN members for the first time ever.

Conference passed an emergency resolution calling for a summer of planned protest activity, followed by an industrial action ballot, should the next UK government fail to end the policy of pay restraint.

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## Voter registration

# Socialist ideas are energising young people

Cardiff Socialist Party members

[A third of a million voters have 'disappeared' from the electoral register in Wales](#), thanks to the shameful attempt by Tory and Liberal politicians to disenfranchise the working class, and young people in particular.

The Con-Dem government of Cameron and Clegg made it harder for voters to register [in 2014 when they brought in individual electoral registration](#). In the following three years, the number of under-25s registered to vote fell by 25%!

But the manoeuvres of establishment politicians won't prevent the youth from finding an alternative to the sick capitalist system these politicians support. After the snap general election was called, [100,000 young people registered to vote - in just three days!](#)

Cardiff Socialist Party, Cardiff University Socialist Students and Cardiff and Vale College Socialist Students have been playing their part, participating in a voter registration push.

Stalls outside of both campuses clearly arguing for Corbyn's programme and the policies elucidated in his manifesto - such as a £10 an hour minimum wage, the building of social housing and the abolition of tuition fees - have done a great job of engaging students and young workers.

## **Rigged**

Scores of young voters have been registered through this initiative alone, with many more indicating support for socialist policies to transform a rigged economy and unfair society into an economy and society that works for the benefit of all and not just a wealthy elite.

Socialist ideas are energising young voters. On 8 June there is an opportunity to defeat May's government of corruption and austerity and begin the process of transforming society.

A joint meeting (details below) is being held by Socialist Students and young workers in the city to bring together those who want to fight for Corbyn's programme and to make June the end of May!

We know that policies like those backed by Corbyn won't be made into a reality unless we mobilise on the streets and in our communities to fight for them.

Get involved with the process of finding and registering Corbyn supporters between now and the election - the deadline is 22 May - through your local Socialist Party or Socialist Students branch.

Corbyn can win with socialist policies. Join the fight for socialism, equality and justice!

- Cardiff Socialist Students meeting - Friday 19 May, 7.30pm, Cardiff Uni Students' Union, Park Place, CF10 3QN

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## **General election finance appeal**

# **Fund the fight against the Tories**

**Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer**

We are appealing to all readers of the Socialist for a donation to help us with the costs of producing our election leaflets, posters and other material.

Socialist Party members are out campaigning in support of Jeremy Corbyn's key demands: including the renationalisation of the railways and Royal Mail, more money for the NHS and the abolition of tuition fees and zero-hour contracts.

## **Blairites**

In Stoke, Labour Party members commented on how good our leaflets were and took them to give out to friends. Some even said that we're doing a better job at promoting Corbyn's policies than the Labour Party!

Of course that's not news to us. We know that the majority of right-wing Blairite MPs, who also control the party machine, would rather Corbyn lose this election.

The daily onslaught against him from the capitalist establishment, from Labour grandees like Mandelson and Blair, underlines the importance of us campaigning on the streets, with rallies and protests, and with material that can reach workers and young people to convince them that we can kick the Tories out and end austerity.

Finance is vital to ensure our ideas reach as wide an audience as possible and this election is a great opportunity to build support for socialist ideas and show how a socialist programme to gain control over the economy and the wealth that is produced could change our lives.

We have spent over £5,000 so far on leaflets, posters and a four-page manifesto that shows both what's necessary to achieve Corbyn's programme and the need to take it much further.

We are also spending money on equipment to produce [weekly Facebook broadcasts](#).

Whatever the result on 8 June we will continue to do what is necessary to help build a movement that can achieve that transformation.

We haven't got the Tories' millionaire backers and press barons and we have no rich funders. We depend solely on support and donations from ordinary people.

Can you help us? You can donate via our website [www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate) or telephone 020 8988 8777

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## **Packed meeting sets out socialist policies needed to defeat the Tories**

**Lenny Shail, Coventry Socialist Party**

At short notice 60 people packed in to hear Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary, speak in Coventry on 10 May.

The meeting discussed the socialist policies needed to defeat the Tories and the role socialists can play in that battle.

A fantastic speech from Hannah touched on the weakness of the Tories and crisis among the capitalist establishment, not only in Britain but across the world.

Hannah attacked the Labour right wing and their tactics of sabotage against Jeremy Corbyn and his radical left policies.

Like much of the country Coventry has Labour MPs and a Labour council who either spend more time attacking Corbyn than the Tories or just don't mention him. Not one election leaflet in the city has even mentioned Corbyn yet - nor his socialist policies!

Members and supporters of the Socialist Party will continue to campaign in force, drumming up support for Corbyn's anti-austerity policies and the socialist policies we need to defeat the Tories up to 8 June and after!

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## **Israel/Palestine**

### **Palestinian prisoners on mass hunger strike protest**

**Shahar Ben-Horin , Socialist Struggle Movement (CWI Israel/Palestine)**

The Strike of Freedom and Honour is the name given to an indefinite mass hunger strike of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, which started on Palestinian Prisoner Day, 17 April.

The prisoners are demanding the ending of discrimination on national grounds in prison and arbitrary detention without charge or trial ('administrative arrests'). The prisoners' protest is also against medical neglect, solitary confinement, violation of rights to visits, prohibition of telephone calls and denial of the right to academic studies.

Every week sees dozens of military raids on homes of residents throughout the West Bank. Residents are removed from their beds in the middle of the night as a matter of routine.

According to Israeli Prison Service (IPS) figures, at the end of April more than 6,100 Palestinian prisoners classified as 'security prisoners', including nearly 500 administrative detainees, were held in Israeli jails. 300 of the prisoners are minors, according to the Palestinian prisoners' rights association A-Dameer (The Conscience).

## **Criminalised**

Aside from the security prisoners held by the IPS, hundreds of Palestinians are held after being criminalised by the [occupation authorities](#) as 'illegal stayers', usually after seeking work in Israel; and dozens more Palestinians are held in military and police facilities before being transferred to the IPS.

Since October 2015 some 10,000 Palestinians have been arrested by the Israeli authorities, about a third of them under 18.

Israeli regime propaganda seeks to systematically mark all Palestinian security prisoners as murderers. Even if this was true - and it is not - criminal murderers get better incarceration conditions.

However, the sweeping indictment is intended to silence public criticism and torpedo discussion on the reality of the occupation. Many of the prisoners were imprisoned for the sole fact of their involvement in a political struggle against the occupation and the national oppression of the Palestinians.

In contrast, Ami Popper, a Jewish security prisoner who slaughtered seven Palestinian workers on nationalist grounds, is entitled to holidays from prison, regular phone calls with relatives and even a place of work outside the prison.

Palestinian security prisoners are not entitled to any of these. Since 2011, they have been deprived of the right to study at the Open University, because they are not Jewish.

This follows a cynical measure of collective punishment imposed as a means of exerting pressure on Hamas (the right-wing Islamist Palestinian organisation that controls Gaza) to release the captured Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit.

The policy remained in place even after the prisoner exchange deal that was eventually conducted in the same year.

The prisoners' main demand is for public telephones to be installed in their prison wings so that they can talk to their relatives. Not only does such an arrangement exist in the criminal wings, but also the most famous Jewish security prisoner, [Yigal Amir \(who assassinated Israeli prime minister Rabin in 1995\)](#), is allowed to talk to his family by telephone. Palestinians are forbidden from doing so.

The current action is the largest hunger strike since 2012, when about 1,500 prisoners went on hunger strike for nearly a month and achieved some improvement in conditions.

## **Release**

A series of hunger strikes by administrative detainees managed to bring about the release of detainees without an indictment, which only proved the claim that they were arbitrarily detained and refuted the claim of their alleged danger.

But the Israeli establishment continues to view hunger strikes among Palestinian prisoners as a threat.

The forced-feeding law approved by the Knesset (Israel's parliament) in 2015 is designed to help the state subdue hunger strikes.

The Israeli Medical Association (doctors' trade union), as part of the policy of the World Medical Association, issued a vocal criticism against the law and ordered doctors not to cooperate with it. The lack of collaborationist doctors who would agree to break the hunger strike has now led Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's officials to consider flying doctors in from abroad to do so.

Most of the hunger strikers are identified with Fatah (the biggest faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation). Additionally, hundreds more prisoners identified with Hamas and PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) are taking part.

The most prominent leader of the current strike is [Marwan Barghouti, one of 13 Palestinian MPs \(members of the Palestinian Legislative Council\)](#) imprisoned by Israel and considered the most popular Palestinian leader today - sometimes called the 'Palestinian Nelson Mandela'.

Barghouti, who was one of the leaders of the militias affiliated with Fatah - the Tanzim and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades - survived an assassination attempt in 2001 ("targeted prevention") by the Israeli military.

He was arrested during a military raid on Ramallah the following year and convicted in a civil court for responsibility for approving terrorist actions against civilians on both sides of the Green Line (the political border between Israel and the occupied territories), in which five people were murdered. Barghouti denied the allegations, gave up legal defence as a protest against the trial, and claimed he was opposed to harming innocent people.

It should be emphasised that the socialist left opposes the use of terrorist methods in struggles. Contrary to the propaganda of the Israeli establishment, not every person who wages an armed struggle against the occupation is a terrorist.

And isn't Netanyahu responsible for issuing instructions for actions, such as the bombing of highly populated areas in the Gaza Strip, in which many Palestinian civilians died?

Barghouti's popularity is a cause for concern for the Israeli establishment. While Palestinian Authority President Abbas continues to maintain full arrangements with the occupation regime, Barghouti corresponds with the public rage against the Palestinian president, who is reaching the end of his road.

Barghouti attacks Abbas's authoritarian rule, explains that the negotiations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority's diplomatic campaign on the international level have failed, and demands that the Palestinian Authority ends the 'security coordination'.

In recent years he has called for a new popular intifada. His challenge to Abbas' leadership is also the reason why, despite coming first in the election in December to the Fatah central committee, Abbas refused to appoint him to the position of deputy chairman of the Fatah movement.

Abbas has paid lip service in support of the hunger strike, but has no interest in it. He does not want Barghouti to profit politically from the hunger strike or the development of a popular protest movement around it - at the time when he puts his trust in Donald Trump and wants to show he has control on the ground in the Palestinian Authority enclaves.

Many thousands took part in protest marches held on Prisoner Day throughout the West Bank, particularly in Ramallah, Hebron and Bethlehem.

## **Repression**

The protests in the West Bank are facing military repression, which could worsen later. During the first two weeks of the hunger strike, the highest number of Palestinians injured by Israeli forces in the West Bank since the beginning of 2017 was recorded, with 191 injured, including 45 minors (OCHA figures).

Solidarity demonstrations have been held in several countries around the world, and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), of which the Histadrut (Israeli trade union organisation) is affiliated, published a solidarity statement.

As usual, the Israeli government and the tops of IPS declare they have no intention to negotiate with the prisoners.

Nevertheless, according to reports, negotiations between the prisoners and the IPS took place during the weeks leading up to the strike, and if the strike intensifies, they will probably be renewed.

More protest actions, of Palestinians and Israelis, to support the hunger strike represent a potential threat to Netanyahu's fanatical right-wing government.

Israeli demonstrators must stand alongside Palestinian demonstrators. And the Israeli Medical Association is, on this issue, an example to other trade unions.

It is necessary to rebel against draconian legislation and attacks by the right-wing government. The prisoners' protests should help to build a stronger movement against the occupation and perpetuation of the national conflict, against the war on workers and poor, and for peace, equality and socialist change.

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## Brazil: General strike against Temer regime

On 28 April, the Brazilian working class gave a clear sign of its strength and ability to mobilise.

A 24-hour general strike was called, as a unified action by all the trade union centres of the country, against the pension and labour reforms of the illegitimate government of right-wing president Michel Temer.

Liberdade, Socialismo e Revolução (LSR - CWI in Brazil) demands that a follow up 48-hour general strike be called now and be organised from below.

- Full report see [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)
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## Barcelona May Days 1937 - a civil war within a civil war

**This month marks the 80th anniversary of the 'May Days' in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War in 1937. Below is a reply to [an article in the Observer on 7 May](#) (both this and a shorter version were unpublished) by Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe.**

Professor Paul Preston's attack on George Orwell and the veracity of the latter's account of the Barcelona events of 1937, '[Homage to Catalonia](#)' ([Observer 7 May](#)), is a scandalous distortion of events and cannot be left unanswered.

Orwell's was a relatively accurate account of the attempts of the POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unity) to defend and extend the gains of the Spanish Revolution against the capitalist-Stalinist counter-revolution being waged [within the civil war](#).

True, the POUM committed a big error in entering the Catalan government, sacrificing its class independence. But the 'Popular Front' government's attempt to take the Barcelona telephone exchange (Telefonica) - a symbol of workers' control - in May 1937 met with mass resistance.

The government's attempt to take over the telephone exchange, led to Barcelona workers arming themselves and building barricades. Very quickly, the whole of Barcelona was in their hands.

Anthony Beevor, a capitalist historian but more honest than Preston, wrote: "The anarchists had an overwhelming numerical majority, holding almost 90% of Barcelona and its suburbs."

He added: "These overwhelming advantages were not used because the CNT-FAI knew that further fighting would lead to a full civil war within the civil war, in which they would be cast as traitors, even if the nationalists were unable to take advantage of the situation."

## Counter-revolution

Yet a "civil war within the civil war" was already taking place through the onslaught of the counter-revolution against the gains of the working class. Such processes unfold in all revolutions, which see shifts to the left leading to attempts at counter-revolution and to a further movement forward of the revolution.

This was a classic case where a small but determined revolutionary party like the POUM could have won over the masses. But, instead of openly campaigning for a militant, conscious policy of resistance and for the completion of the revolution, the POUM leaders went for diplomacy behind the scenes with the CNT leaders. This gave the initiative to the counter-revolution, which denounced the POUM and the anarchist organisation, Friends of Durruti, as 'agents provocateurs'.

Cheered on and organised by the Stalinists, the counter-revolution crushed the movement in Barcelona and effectively liquidated the Spanish revolution. All the horrors of Stalinist barbarity were now unleashed in the secret prisons, the use of torture, the assassination of the POUM leaders Nin and Andrade, and the similar deaths of anarchists and other workers, which Preston concedes.

The Barcelona events represented the high point of the revolution. The 'civil war' afterwards took on a purely military character. Accordingly, the masses became increasingly indifferent to its outcome.

Rather than follow the distortions of Professor Preston, it would be better if those interested in the Spanish Revolution read the works of Leon Trotsky ([The Spanish Revolution, 1931-37](#)) and Felix Morrow ([Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain](#)).

- [The Spanish Revolution 1931-37, a Socialist Party pamphlet featuring articles by Peter Taaffe and Leon Trotsky is available from leftbooks.co.uk for £1](#)

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## Theatre review: Ocho

# The story of workers from Hull who fought in the Spanish Civil War

Archbishop Sentamu Academy

[Ocho](#) tells the story of eight men from Hull who went to fight in the [Spanish Civil War](#). Jane Thornton is a Bafta-winning playwright who has worked with local historians and relatives of the eight men to weave together this fascinating tale, not only of the men but of the wives they left behind.

Beginning in Hull in 1936 and set against the background of the depression, the play evokes memories of picnics in East Park, the tannery, the docks and the joy of washing day!

Facing the challenge of unemployment and the rise of fascism, James Bentley and Robert Wardle decide to take a train from Paragon Station in Hull and travel to London, through France and over the Pyrenees on foot to fight with the [International Brigades](#) in Spain.

They leave behind their wives, Kitty and Maggie, and three small children, who despite the struggles of the time, remain optimistic and hopeful for their husbands' return.

With specially composed songs by Dave Rotheray of the Beautiful South, Ocho is performed by the Spotlight Ensemble from Archbishop Sentamu Academy in Hull.

With ever-increasing cuts to the arts and severe lack of support from the government at a time when young people need it most to help deal with academic pressures and self-belief, pursuing a career in the arts can seem unachievable for young people from a disadvantaged area. The Spotlight scholarship programme was set up at Archbishop Sentamu School in September 2016 to encourage gifted and talented pupils in the performing arts.

Having worked with John Godber and Jane Thornton on projects in the past, the school approached them to help with an idea to launch the scholarship programme. They had been told the story of the eight men by musician Gary Hammond (drummer with the Beautiful South) who was seeking a platform to honour them and their achievements.

The two ideas came together and Jane set about writing a play that would give the students an opportunity to work with professionals on all areas of the production and the chance to perform not just in school but in professional spaces across the city.

## **Barcelona**

Through his connections as a fellow at Liverpool John Moore University, John Godber was able to organise taking the play to the Institute of the Arts in Barcelona. 18 pupils will travel out to Spain on 10 July and as well as performing, they will enjoy cultural tours of Barcelona and areas relevant to the Spanish Civil War.

There is a small plaque in the Guildhall in Hull that commemorates the bravery of the eight men who went to Spain. The Hull International Brigades Memorial Group is currently fundraising in order to build a permanent memorial in the city.

## **Ocho will be performed at:**

- Archbishop Sentamu School, Hull, 27-30 June
- Kardomah Theatre, Hull, 4 July
- Howden Shire Hall, Goole, 5 July
- East Riding Theatre, Beverley, 6 July
- Institute of the Arts, Sitges, Barcelona, 11 July

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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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## **Property fat cats**

The radical waves from Jeremy Corbyn's election campaign seem to have accidentally lapped over into the Guardian (motto 'we are the Corbyn haters'). [A Guardian article on 10 May](#) takes a look at the individuals and organisations who have made it big in capitalist Britain.

Journalist Alice Martin analyses that 'fatcatometer', the Sunday Times Rich List 2017. As the Socialist [commented in issue 948, the list showed how the total wealth of the richest thousand had risen by 14% to no less than £658 billion in the last year!](#)

But who are these millionaires and billionaires? Martin says that 26 of the top hundred list property ownership - land, bricks and concrete - as a major source of their wealth. In Britain, which capitalism has largely de-industrialised, only six of them listed industry, seven retail. Even finance and investment trailed behind on ten fat cats.

There are 164 property moguls in the top 1,000. The value of such property in the UK is now more than £5 trillion, estimated to be almost 60% of the country's entire wealth. Even from a capitalist viewpoint, this has all the sustainability of bubble gum.

Workers' wages are being slashed so that the ruling class, that depends on profit - the unpaid labour of the working class - can live lives of luxury. Meanwhile housing is in deep crisis with homes only available at huge and upwardly spiralling costs.

This is intolerable. Obviously we fight for decent housing and to tax the super-rich but the anti-democratic stranglehold of the property giants must be ended.

If a Corbyn government is elected, its problems will be huge unless it takes the top 150 companies, the banking and finance system and property companies into public ownership. We need a democratic socialist plan of production based on people's needs not on the profits of property magnates.

**Roger Shrives, Lewisham, south London**

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## **Foodbanks**

There are complex reasons why

People go to foodbanks,

It's really not as simple

As you may foolishly think!

The foodbank's located nearer

Than your local supermarket,

Which means many people

Avoid the risk of sore feet!

Some prefer the restricted variety

The foodbank conveniently offers,

Saves being bewildered

By unnecessary choice!

The foodbank is really handy

When you're out and about in town

And you seem to have forgotten

Your wallet or your purse!  
The foodbank's great at avoiding  
Workplace conflict over low pay,  
Now there's no need to bother  
Your greedy boss for a raise!  
Foodbanks can take the sting  
Out of cruel benefit sanctions,  
Making life on the dole  
So much more bearable!  
And when you fancy being  
Humiliated, reminded you are poor,  
The foodbank's there just for you,  
Your convenient pauper store.  
There are complex reasons why  
People go to foodbanks,  
But simple reasons why  
We must end capitalism!

**Jim Horton, London**

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## **Clean Aire**

Aire Valley Against Incineration (AVAI) group held a public meeting on 25 April 2017 in Keighley, west Yorkshire. This was to give an update on their efforts to stop the toxic 'clean fuel' waste incinerator planned for Keighley, in the pretty but polluted residential River Aire valley in West Yorkshire. Bradford Socialist Part have been active in this campaign - attending a march, petitioning and writing letters of complaint to the local authority.

There was widespread criticism in the audience against the local Conservative MP Kris Hopkins who is in favour of the incinerator.

AVAI told us that that the next step in protesting the construction of the incinerator would be to seek a judicial review as the communities and local government minister, Sajid Javid refused to stop the Bradford council planning approval.

AVAI are planning events to raise funds as the cost of hiring a barrister is expensive. Donations are being sought through the group's [Facebook page: 'Aire Valley Against Incineration'](#).

**Nick Bradshaw, Bradford**

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## **Junk mail**

I have received a letter from Theresa May urging me to vote Tory in the general election. It looks like this is being sent to presumably non-Tory voters in marginal constituencies. In it, she says that the opinion polls got the 2015 general election and EU referendum results wrong and in effect contradicts the press predictions of a guaranteed huge Tory majority!

She also said that well paid jobs, affordable housing and a strong NHS can only be guaranteed by her brand of Brexit negotiations. It is patently obvious that large sections of the population haven't had these things for years. May is saying that if she gets Brexit right we will get all of these things. Yet she was a Remain supporter! The Tories don't give a monkey's about well paid jobs, affordable housing and a strong NHS.

**Clive Walder, Birmingham**

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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25487>