

Manchester bombing: unite against terror, war and racism

Judy Beishon, Socialist Party executive committee

Young people out enjoying themselves were instead faced with one of the worst kinds of horror imaginable [on 22 May when a bomb was exploded](#) in the foyer of the 21,000-capacity Manchester Arena. Twenty two people were killed and at least 59 injured by this blast at the end of a concert by US singer Ariana Grande.

This atrocity, which the Socialist Party completely condemns, has echoes of [the Bataclan concert attack in Paris in November 2015](#). In both, ordinary people from all walks of life were indiscriminately slaughtered, especially the young.

Early reports suggested the perpetrator was a suicide bomber who died at the scene. It is the worst terrorist attack in Britain since 52 people were killed in [the July 2005 London bombings](#).

Manchester people [reacted quickly to aid those fleeing the scene](#), tweeting offers of beds and lifts home, and taxi drivers gave free rides. Their response of solidarity and help - together with that of the emergency and hospital workers - has nothing in common with the hypocritical reaction of Tory government ministers who profess sympathy and sorrow while they stand four-square behind policies that lay down the breeding ground for such atrocities.

[Terrorist attacks in European cities are becoming more frequent](#). In Britain, coming this time outside London, people throughout the country will now feel less safe. The reasons behind the attacks often appear to be multi-faceted and no two incidences are exactly the same. But a running feature has been links or ideological sympathy with the likes of Isis and anger at western imperialist interventions in the Middle East.

So as well as opposing reactionary organisations like Isis which support and perpetrate barbaric acts on ordinary people, it's essential to oppose imperialist wars and call for the immediate withdrawal of British military forces from the Middle East. We must also build unity of working people against scapegoating, racism and division, and argue for socialist ideas as the only alternative to this present system that can't and won't end poverty, war and terrorism.

Tories' inability to counter terrorism

Following the Manchester atrocity Theresa May will no doubt try to double and treble her 'strong and stable' posturing in order to appear as a firm 'anti-terrorist' law enforcer and boost her election prospects. However, there have been a number of rounds of [so-called anti-terror legislation](#) over the last two decades, and none of it is preventing new attacks such as [March's killings in Westminster](#) or this latest terrible event in Manchester - as the Socialist Party has repeatedly warned would be the case.

At the same time the Tories' unrelenting austerity drive is making people more vulnerable when attacks occur. After the Westminster attack we drew attention to the way in which cuts to the emergency services, hospitals and transport staff will inevitably reduce the speed of assistance for those needing urgent help.

[It has been reported](#) that eight hospitals in Greater Manchester have treated casualties of the bombing, while at the same time it's the case that some of [these hospitals are facing cuts](#) in which the loss of 24-hour emergency cover is being considered. The Manchester Arena attack, taking place in the late evening, exposes the potentially disastrous nature of such cuts, which the Tories want to push ahead with.

During the general election campaign so far the Tories' determination to continue with callous austerity measures has been clear and they met a major backlash to their plans to further penalise people who depend

on social care. Now, following the Manchester attack, their self-portrayal as the defenders of ordinary working people needs to be further exposed and rejected in all its guises.

Popularity of anti-war policies

The [2004 Madrid train bombings in Spain](#), in which 191 people died, took place during a general election campaign and the ruling Popular Party tried to use the atrocities to boost their election prospects. Their strategy backfired; mass anger was directed at them after they tried to blame Basque nationalists for the attacks. Rather, it became clear that the perpetrators were acting in sympathy with Al-Qaida, and the mood of revulsion towards the government and its pro-Iraq war position led to the Spanish Socialist Party winning that election.

While it was a particular blunder by the Popular Party that helped to fuel that outcome, in Britain's present general election campaign Jeremy Corbyn's anti-war stance can gain even more resonance and have a strong impact. Corbyn has long been a consistent opponent of intervention by Britain and other western capitalist powers in the Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria wars. These have caused mass devastation and loss of life and have [created the conditions for a horrific level of terrorist violence](#) in those countries and beyond.

We in the Socialist Party have also strongly opposed those wars and have consistently warned that it would be ordinary working people in the Middle East and worldwide who will pay the price of them, both financially and as a result of the escalating instability they have caused.

At the same time we condemn (as does Corbyn) the ideology and abhorrent methods of right-wing reactionary organisations like Isis and Al-Qaida that seek to build a highly repressive semi-feudal and capitalist caliphate, with no workers' democracy or basic rights.

It is the task of the working class in Iraq and Syria, through building trade unions, democratically-run non-sectarian defence bodies, etc, to lead a struggle against the likes of Isis, assisted by solidarity from workers internationally. The imperialist powers, on their part, [are intervening for their own prestige and influence](#) and in the interests of their top corporations.

This includes British imperialism, whether represented by the Tories or the Blairites before them. It was a fitting coincidence that the Guardian's 'morning briefing' following the Manchester Arena attack, after beginning on the bombing, immediately followed it with a second section on the "unprecedented support for the fossil fuel industry" in the Tory election manifesto. Oil industry bosses have promised over £390,000 to May's campaign as a result, it explained.

The general election on 8 June provides a much-needed opportunity to kick the Tories out and take forward [the struggle in the labour movement against the Blairites](#) by bringing Jeremy Corbyn in as prime minister. This would be [a very important step on the road towards ending the austerity](#), poverty and war inherent in capitalism, that underlies division, racism and terrorism.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 23 May 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

On 8 June

Corbyn in - Tories out

Corbyn can win with socialist policies

- Take the wealth off the 1%

Tom Baldwin

While Jeremy Corbyn has been speaking to thousands of ordinary people at mass rallies across the country, 'strong and stable' Theresa May has been running scared.

She's refused leaders' debates and is hiding in a bubble of handpicked supporters, avoiding the public.

A disastrous interview with the BBC's Andrew Neil may explain why.

[May floundered while trying to claim the Tories weren't making a u-turn on social care funding](#). They've been forced to concede a cap on what people will pay for care, just a few days after their manifesto implied unlimited costs for anyone with a home worth over £100,000. This hasty change to a hated policy, dubbed the 'dementia tax', follows a long list of u-turns made in office.

And now the Tories' complete inability to prevent terrorist attacks - as well as their [cuts to emergency services](#) putting people at more risk when such attacks take place - will be another key factor in the election.

The Tories think they will win and are trying to run down the clock before polling day. But this overconfidence is a mistake. The latest [opinion polls show Corbyn's Labour has surged](#), slashing the Tories' lead in half. This is on the back of a manifesto which promised popular policies of nationalisation of utilities, raising the minimum wage and taxing the wealthy.

This election is still to be won. [90,000 under-25s registered to vote on 21 May](#), just before the deadline, [joining another 700,000 who have registered](#) since the election was called. This generation solidly supports Corbyn and can upset pollsters' predictions about who will vote.

[Corbyn can still win the election if he maintains this momentum](#). He needs to make sure that the message of 'for the many, not the few' and the left-wing manifesto pledges are heard by everyone.

In many places that means campaigning over the heads of Blairite MPs who want to ignore policies and campaign only on their personal records. Corbyn should speak at well-organised mass rallies in every major city, with thousands of leaflets available at each so his supporters can spread the message directly.

Comparing pro-worker policies to Tory destruction of public services can overturn the poll lead and make calling this election one u-turn that May really regrets.

Corbyn's pledge: free education: May's plan: hike fees

João Félix, Cardiff University Socialist Students

In an announcement which will galvanise the support of millions of young people, [Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to immediately scrap university tuition fees for students](#).

Corbyn's team said it would write off those fees, benefitting 400,000 students this autumn. It also announced a Corbyn-led government would seek a deal so EU students in Britain and UK students abroad could benefit from the same arrangement.

This is a big step forward in the battle for free education. If implemented, it will have life-changing effects for hundreds of thousands of working class young people - put off going to university to avoid a lifetime of debt, [an average of £44,000 per graduate](#).

Corbyn should also pledge the scrapping of all existing tuition fee debt. It has risen to a staggering [£86 billion in total](#).

Corbyn has rightly accused the Tories of having "held students back for too long" [by trebling tuition fees](#) to a maximum of more than £9,000 a year.

His pledge reverses this rip-off measure for funding higher education, [introduced by Tony Blair](#), which the Socialist Party has long campaigned against.

Every part of the Labour Party, including Welsh Labour, should unequivocally back this manifesto pledge.

For years, education has been the victim of capitalism, treated not as a fundamental right but as a commodity to be exploited. This announcement is a milestone in our fight to change that.

Labour should follow this by pledging free education for all: scrapping former students' debts, and tuition fees for non-EU international students as well.

Students from outside the EU pay double in fees and struggle to study and live in the UK, especially with the racist, bureaucratic requirements of the Conservative government.

All students should be treated equally, regardless of which part of the globe they were born in.

This announcement could well be a turning point in the election. It would really improve the lives of working class people. And it shows that socialist policies are not just popular, but essential.

We say...

Back Corbyn's youth pledges

- Free university education
- Living grants for university students
- Reinstating 'education maintenance allowance' for 16 to 18-year-olds
- Votes at 16!
- Raising the minimum wage
- Reinstating housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-olds
- Ending unpaid internships

May's 'dementia tax' wobble vs Corbyn's extra funds for care

Alison Hill

The [Tories' so-called dementia tax](#) pledge and [threats to winter fuel payments](#) seem stupid measures to propose on the eve of a general election.

Theresa May appears to have ignored efforts from her own hapless defence and whacked the ball squarely into the back of her own net. And then tried to fish the ball back out and pretend it never went in!

If you need social care rather than just treatment on the NHS - if you're dying of Alzheimer's rather than cancer, for example - [the Tory manifesto says](#) you will be means-tested.

For homeowners, that will include the value of your house. If it's worth over £100,000 you'll have to pay for care yourself - and the government could take your home to do it.

As is the way with lurching policy changes, the details are not clear. What happens if someone is living with you, for example?

Outrage

Following outrage, May insisted that the policy actually promises a cap on the cost of social care. At the time of writing it is not clear whether she means instead of or as well as the dementia tax.

Either way the Tories can't be trusted, not least because [they went back on a 2015 promise to cap social care costs](#) within months of being elected.

The Tory toffs have made sure they will be well looked after. They have a comfy parliamentary pension and a few directorships each to pay the bills. And of course there's their care home - [the House of Lords](#).

Why should working and middle class people be able to own assets worth over £100,000, they ask. Why should we be a burden on the public purse by living longer, perhaps with chronic illness?

Health and social care should be publicly owned, fully funded and democratically run, not based on private companies making money by providing a limited service through the extreme exploitation of a low-paid workforce.

[Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto](#) would start to turn the table on the profit vultures, by making health trusts prefer NHS rather than private providers, as well as increasing funding for both the NHS and social care.

But to really pay for this, he will need to nationalise the banks, big pharmaceuticals and all the privatised bits of the NHS.

This would easily pay for a proper care system, integrated with the rest of the health service. Look at [the mega-profits made by the pharmaceutical industry](#) alone.

The Tories have shown what they think of us when we're too old or too sick to work.

Time to get rid of them and their rotten system.

Theresa 'Lunch Snatcher' May vs Jeremy 'free meals' Corbyn

Sofia Wiking, Leicester Socialist Party

Under [plans unveiled in the Tories' manifesto](#), free lunches for infant school students will be scrapped. They were introduced under the Con-Dem government to draw attention away from its package of school cuts.

These cuts have just got worse, to the point where [our schools are reaching breaking point](#) - and now this concession is being taken away as well.

May proposes replacing the lunches with free breakfasts, which are cheaper - but which parents can therefore more easily afford. Many parents prefer to eat breakfast at home with their kids anyway.

This will be [yet another way to disadvantage children](#) who are already from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Thatcher

The plans have earned Theresa May her latest nickname of "Lunch Snatcher" - yet another comparison between her and Margaret "Milk Snatcher" Thatcher.

When Thatcher stopped free milk in schools, what might seem a minor issue became an important fighting ground for [a working class fed up with the Tories](#). Then and now, we hardly need to grasp at straws to find unpopular Tory policies. Their manifesto goes after our weakest - children and the elderly.

A spokesperson from [the National Union of Teachers has commented](#) that "the benefits of a healthy and nutritious school lunch are well-documented, and for the four million children living in poverty - nine pupils in every class of 30 - this may well be their main meal of the day."

With record numbers using food banks, having free school meals could be a huge burden off a parent, not to mention the benefits it brings the child.

Jeremy Corbyn, on the other hand, has [pledged to extend free school meals to all primary school children](#) - junior as well as infant - to be paid for by taxing private schools. He has also promised more money for schools in general.

This is a step in the right direction. We need to fight for a Corbyn-led government, and a mass workers' party to defend and extend his programme. Kick out the Tories and the Blairites!

Work doesn't pay: Tory policies have meant another wages cut

Corbyn pledges higher minimum wage, end of public sector pay cap, ban on zero-hour contracts

Suzanne Beishon

While wages still sit £16 a week below their 2008 pre-recession peak, [government figures have shown](#) that the Tories have pushed pay 'growth' back below inflation.

The jelly legs of Theresa May's "strong and stable" government have again been exposed as wobbling.

With average earnings crawling up by 2.1% year on year - [although falling in real terms](#) - in the first three months of 2016, inflation of 2.3% has meant yet another real-terms cut in workers' meagre incomes.

The Trade Union Congress recently ranked Britain, one of the richest countries in the world, at 103rd on its global ranking of pay growth, with inflation undercutting any rises.

The Tories and their media baron friends have worked hard to paint the picture of May's party usurping Labour as the party for working people, but the reality is quite the opposite. Under the Tories it has been shown time and time again that work doesn't pay.

Nurses are being [forced to use food banks](#) as [nurses' union RCN threatens its first strike in history](#) over pay. And [two-thirds of children in poverty now come from working households](#). These are just two damning examples of the devastating consequences of prioritising the wealth of the elite.

In fact, by 2022, around 16 million will be living below the breadline, based on proportions in [a study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies](#). The Conservatives under May have leapfrogged Margaret Thatcher's poverty figures, including plunging almost a million more children into poverty than there were under the loathed milk snatcher.

Record employment levels mask [an underbelly of zero-hour contracts](#) and massaged figures. All this means that, for the first time in the post-war era, high employment hasn't seen significant wage increases.

The Tory manifesto maintains it will keep the public sector pay cap in place, while also promising to uphold their previous [pledge to cut corporation tax to 17% by 2020](#).

It's clear where their priorities lie. Not with the many. For the few.

Meanwhile, Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto has [promised to smash the pay cap and raise the minimum wage](#). Combined with his pledge to scrap zero-hour contracts, that could start to reverse the Tories' wage collapse.

Tory oil spoils v poisonous air

Six oil company bosses have [donated a total of £391,300](#) to the Tory party since Theresa May became prime minister.

"We will continue to support the industry and build on the unprecedented support already provided to the oil and gas sector" - [Conservative manifesto](#).

Meanwhile, [air pollution kills more people in Britain](#) than in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina or the US.

The World Health Organisation has found residents here are 64 times more likely to die from toxic air than in Sweden.

Single market = TTIP

[A top EU bureaucrat](#) has insisted any UK access to the single market must be on the lines of [the pro-privatisation 'Ceta' trade deal](#).

Ceta is Canada's version of [the secretive, dictatorial 'TTIP'](#) - a proposed free-trade treaty between the EU and US. TTIP and Ceta both reinforce privatisation drives and undermine trade union struggle.

Corbyn must reject the single market and fight for European solidarity based on the workers' movement, not the billionaires and bureaucrats.

Corbyn and Brexit: Why a socialist approach to the EU is the only way forward

Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary

As the general election draws nearer, and people become more aware of what Jeremy Corbyn stands for, [the gap between Tories and Labour in the opinion polls has started to close](#).

Jeremy Corbyn, armed with radical left policies, could win on 8 June. It would then take a bold socialist programme to defeat the far more formidable obstacle than the Tories: capitalism.

Clearly this is the best outcome for working class people in Britain, which the Socialist Party is doing all we can to bring into being. Nonetheless, many enthusiastic supporters of Corbyn are wondering why he is having to fight to catch up rather than soaring ahead in the polls given the Tories record and his popular policies.

[Since 2010 the wealth of the richest 1,000 people in Britain has doubled](#), while the rest of us have suffered austerity - surely Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity alternative should be on course for a landslide victory?

It is clear to all Corbyn supporters that he does not face a level playing field. The capitalist class are determined to defeat him and this has been reflected in the establishment media systematically setting out to discredit him.

Sabotage

But that will always be the case with all party leaders who represent a step forward for the working class. Despite the inevitable avalanche of hostility Jeremy Corbyn could now be in a much stronger position than he currently is.

The fundamental problem that Jeremy faces is that a large section of his own party is trying to sabotage him. Labour really is 'two parties in one' with the right-wing pro-capitalist section of it - including a majority of MPs - seeing Jeremy's defeat in a general election as a means to remove him as leader, and therefore a positive thing! Ultra-Blairite Peter Mandelson [even told The Times last September](#) that he prayed for an early general election in order to "end the Corbyn disaster."

Unfortunately, [the Labour left's strategy over the last 20 months has been to try vainly to compromise with the Blairite saboteurs](#), resulting in the muffling of Jeremy Corbyn's message prior to the general election campaign. As a result the general election campaign is the first time that millions of voters have heard what Jeremy stands for.

Now, in the course of a few weeks, there is a battle not only to get the word out but to show that Jeremy Corbyn's wing of Labour really is something different to the pro-capitalist, expenses swindling, privatising, warmongering New Labour, which lost five million votes over its time in office.

One of Jeremy's earliest concessions to the right wing was on the question of Brexit, [reluctantly agreeing to campaign for Remain](#). In doing so he was abandoning his own position on the issue.

During the first Labour leadership contest, [Corbyn said he had "mixed feelings" on the EU](#) and refused to rule out campaigning to leave. At one GMB union hustings he stated: "I would advocate a No [i.e. Leave] vote if we are going to get an imposition of free-market policies across Europe."

And prior to standing for the leadership he had repeatedly made clear that the EU attempts to impose free market policies across Europe. For example, [speaking against the Maastricht treaty in 1993 he stated](#): "It takes away from national parliaments the power to set economic policy and hands it over to an unelected set of bankers who will impose the economic policies of price stability, deflation and high unemployment."

Before the referendum Jeremy Corbyn's agreement to abandon his previous position probably seemed to many of his supporters to be a reasonable compromise. However, [as we warned at the time](#), it was a significant missed opportunity.

Seize the moment

In politics, above all in the class struggle, there is, [as Shakespeare put it](#), "a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries."

All is not bound in shallows and miseries here - there is in this general election campaign another opportunity to seize the moment and bring fortune to the majority which, with his election manifesto, Jeremy is attempting to do.

Nonetheless, the failure to put forward his own views on the EU during the referendum campaign, by fighting for an anti-racist, internationalist Brexit, was a major factor - [along with a majority of trade union leaders uncritically campaigning for Remain](#) - in why the right-wing nationalists were able to dominate the leadership of the exit campaign.

A referendum is a binary choice between yes and no, which means inevitably [there are many different motivations behind people voting on each side](#). Nonetheless, [the size of the working class vote for Leave represented - in essence - a revolt](#), a cry of rage, against the low pay, cuts in public services and insecure housing that have become the norm for the majority.

Some have tried to deny this but [the most detailed exit poll at the time of the referendum shows otherwise](#). It found that Remain voters were a majority only in the AB social group (professionals and managers), by 57% to 43%, while 64% of working class C2DE voters backed Leave. Two-thirds of council and housing

association tenants voted Leave, as well as a majority of the unemployed, and two-thirds of those retired on a state pension.

The official campaigns - both for Leave and Remain - [sounded a relentless drumbeat that this was a referendum on immigration](#), which inevitably had a certain effect. Nonetheless, it is not true that migration was the main issue for exit voters in the referendum. Nor is that the case now.

A recent opinion poll by Opinium, published [in part in the liberal Independent](#) and [in full in the right-wing Daily Express](#), asked people to rate out of ten the most important issues for them in the Brexit negotiations. The highest at 8.31 was "ensuring the UK's public services are well-funded" followed by "ensuring jobs are available in the UK" at 8.28.

"Reducing the number of people immigrating to the UK" scored 6.88 - so it was an issue, but was thirteenth out of the twenty-two issues listed, and only one place ahead of "ensuring that EU citizens already in the UK are able to stay" on 6.78 ([which Jeremy is correctly promising to guarantee](#)).

Socialist exit

Corbyn could have harnessed much of the anger and determination of leave voters had he campaigned for exit on a socialist basis, explaining that the EU is a neoliberal bosses' club that forbids nationalisation and systematically undermines workers' rights.

This could have been linked to [the need for a completely different confederation of Europe, based on socialism](#). Such an approach would have transformed the character of the whole referendum, winning many who voted remain because they were repelled by the 'little Englanders' of Ukip and the Tories.

Those workers who voted for Brexit did so in defiance of enormous pressure. [The big majority of the capitalist class](#), both in Britain [and internationally](#), favoured Remain.

The call to vote Remain in the EU came from all sides - from [Obama](#) to [Merkel](#) to the [leaders of all the major parties in Britain](#). Unlike the right of the Labour Party [who campaigned together with David Cameron](#), Jeremy Corbyn, to his credit, [refused to appear on platforms with Tories](#).

Nonetheless, he missed a chance to show to all the workers who withstood the pressure of the capitalist class and voted for Brexit that he was in their camp and not that of the capitalist establishment.

The result is the ludicrous situation that exists now. May is banking on being able to win a general election purely on the lie that she alone is able to effectively represent 'Britain's interests' in Brussels.

This is nonsense of course. She wants an increased majority because she knows full well that any Brexit deal she negotiates will lead to increased suffering for the working class and a major revolt against her government.

Jeremy Corbyn can cut across this by making clear he will fight for a Brexit in the interests of the working class majority. [Labour's manifesto](#) makes clear that there will be no worsening of workers' rights as a result of Brexit.

However, they should go further, making clear that the starting point of his 'Brexit negotiation policy' would be to implement policies in the interests of the working and middle class, [starting with his election manifesto](#), annulling every EU law that is an obstacle to doing so.

The manifesto also talks of "retaining the benefits of the single market and the customs union" but this is mistaken if it means accepting its neoliberal rules. Many working class communities know that - to the cost of industries such as car, steel making and shipbuilding - the capitalist single market doesn't act in the interests of workers but the multinationals, who want to protect their profits by manufacturing in the lowest-cost economies.

Working class

A Corbyn-led government should introduce an enabling declaration that all EU treaty provisions and regulations which go against policies that advance working class interests - like [the rules on state aid, nationalisation](#) or [the posted workers' directive](#) - would no longer apply and that any attempts by the EU institutions to legally enforce them would be annulled.

On every issue he should take a firm approach in the interests of the working class, both in Britain and internationally. He has made some positive statements along these lines, but they are not always clear enough to reach the mass of the population.

In the furore over how much Britain will have to pay to leave the EU, for example, when May was cynically posing as tough in her row with Juncker, [Corbyn only responded by mildly stating](#) that, "megaphone" negotiations would not work, and that talks instead be approached with "respect and sense."

Yet Juncker is the head of a European Commission which far from treating the peoples of Europe with "respect and sense" has intervened to [demand the government of Ireland does not abandon the hated water charges tax](#), and has acted to [drive the population of Greece into the dirt](#). Prior to that he was [prime minister of the notorious tax haven of Luxemburg](#) for 20 years!

The row between Juncker and May really was a scrap between a reptile and a crocodile, which Jeremy could have cut across much more effectively by making clear that a government he led would not pay a penny destined to subsidise the capitalist elites of Europe. It would be a different question, of course, when it came to assisting workers struggling against austerity in other European countries.

In just a few weeks of election campaigning, Jeremy Corbyn has already given a glimpse of how putting forward policies in the interests of the working class majority of society can transform politics. This is true even if the time proves too short for Jeremy to win on 8 June.

However, there is a real prospect of him doing so, which we have to fight remorselessly to achieve. Whatever the outcome of the general election, the capitalist saboteurs of Corbyn inside the Labour Party will continue to organise against him, terrified by the left ideas he is putting forward.

One axis around which they will organise - [possibly even breaking away to form a new party](#) - will be as defenders of the capitalist EU. It is not ruled out that they will be prepared to join forces, not just with the Liberal Democrats, but even the Osbornites to achieve their goal. An essential part of defeating them will be taking a clear socialist and internationalist position of opposition to the EU.

The media, May and the general election

Complain to the BBC over bias

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party national organiser

Theresa May [gambled on a snap election](#) to turn her weak position into a mandate to carry through a Brexit in the interests of the billionaire bosses and the bankers. She believed that her support in the establishment media, firmly in the grip of the undemocratic pro-capitalist and therefore anti-Corbyn forces, would provide a guaranteed platform for her [Lynton Crosby-inspired "strong and stable" mantra](#) with no questions asked. And for a while it appeared to be working.

But the Tory manifesto, especially their vicious 'dementia tax', penalising those who need more care in old age, makes it abundantly clear that they are still the Nasty Party. Tory MPs described it as a "turkey" on the doorsteps. By Monday Theresa May was making a messy retreat.

Andrew Neil, when interviewing Theresa May, asked if this was the first manifesto pledge to be broken before an election has even taken place. Can we hope for a more robust questioning of the Tories on the BBC and other establishment media? Don't hold your breath.

May has gambled this election on the narrative that she is a firm and strong pair of hands, but the U-turn shows that the manifesto is not worth the paper it's written on, and what's more she and the Tories are weak and unstable. But the establishment media have gone along with her story wholeheartedly, often just repeating these claims as fact.

Loughborough University has found [national newspapers to be overwhelmingly negative in their coverage of Labour](#).

Letters pages are the last thin hope for an alternative viewpoint. "We are not asking for eulogies of Corbyn, but for reporting that takes seriously the proposals contained in the manifesto," [wrote 67 media academics to the Guardian](#).

Another letter tried to expose the use of polls, [which discount the opinions of working class and young people](#), which are used to set the news agenda.

Manifesto

Meanwhile the Institute of Fiscal Studies is often quoted and presented as a neutral reliable bearer of truth. Who is it? It started, [according to the Guardian](#), when a tax consultant, an investment manager, a stockbroker and a banker came together in "collective disgruntlement at the introduction of corporation tax by James Callaghan" in 1965.

So, despite occasional criticisms of the capitalist politicians, this is not an organisation that can be relied on by the working class to defend our interests.

But [Corbyn's manifesto](#), which includes measures such as abolishing university fees, public ownership and [banning zero-hour contracts](#), is enormously popular. The [18 percentage point lead](#) May was betting on has been [cut in half in some polls](#), suspicions withstanding.

A hunger for an alternative to austerity, privatisation and inequality exists. Socialist Party members met people over the weekend reporting that they were switching from voting Tory to backing Corbyn. But this is not expressed on the BBC.

The real questions to be asked would be about how the Tories can claim they will create a strong and stable economy when the opposite is the case.

In reality growth is stagnant, wages are actually falling in real terms and a [£1.5 trillion consumer debt mountain](#) teeters unsteadily bearing down on us.

[The Tory claim to be a 'workers' party' is bunkum](#) but is not really challenged. A record [60% of the poor are in working families](#). The [Bank of England estimates](#) that the share of national income paid in wages is 53%, down from 65% in the 1980s with a five percentage point drop in the last decade.

The capitalist-owned media and the BBC will not pursue these questions. The answers would reinforce the growing understanding that we live in a "rigged system set up by the wealth extractors, for the wealth extractors" [as Jeremy Corbyn has correctly pointed out](#). However, this election is contributing to the correct understanding that the media is very much a part of that rigged system.

Democratic control

We need to campaign for a genuinely free media that is neither under big business control nor state control. In a socialist society the means of communication, publicly owned, should be open for everyone - with their parameters discussed and decided democratically, involving the widest possible number of people.

We cannot manage that before 8 June but why not take a few moments to let the BBC, supported by our licence fees, know how you feel about its bias. The complaints process is tedious and designed to put you off. The Socialist Party will post a model complaint on our website for use taking up specific examples of bias that can be used to assist online or phone complaints. Here are the details:

- Phone: 03700 100 222 (charged as 01/02 geographic numbers)
 - Visit: bbc.co.uk/complaints/complain-online
 - Subscribe to a newspaper which is 100% behind the working class: [the Socialist](#)
-

Anti-working class, billionaire press barons

- The Sun, Times, Sunday Times: Murdoch's News International. Multi-billionaire Rupert Murdoch (Forbes says \$12.1bn) led the attack on the print unions in Britain and strongly supported Thatcher's war on the miners
 - The Telegraph: The billionaire Barclay brothers (£7.2 billion according to this year's Sunday Times Rich List) bought the Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph and Spectator in June 2004 for £665 million
 - Trinity Mirror: Encompasses five national and over 160 regional newspapers, plus over 500 digital products. Six large investment companies own a majority of TM's shares.
 - Express newspapers: Owned by billionaire Richard Desmond
 - Daily Mail: Owner Viscount Rothermere has wealth of £930 million. He also owns regional newspapers
-

Wave after wave: 5,000 at 'rock festival' Corbyn rally in Hull

Alistair Tice, Yorkshire Socialist Party

They'd been queueing at the gates from 4pm, two hours early. They just kept coming. Wave after wave. So many young people, some still in school clothes.

Families with children. Nurses in uniform straight off shift. It was like a cross between a rock festival and a football match. Home-made placards and flags waving high.

5,000 came to hear Jeremy Corbyn speak in Hull on 22 June. This was the day that Theresa May made her "not a u-turn" on the 'dementia tax' and Corbyn announced he would scrap tuition fees from this September.

Not for 30 years has the dividing line been so clear in a general election, the real difference that a Corbyn-led government could make to ordinary people's lives. With the polls narrowing, there was real hope in the air that Corbyn could actually win.

Socialist Party members were overjoyed and overwhelmed at the numbers. We sold 194 copies of the Socialist, showing the real thirst for socialist ideas that Corbyn's campaign has inspired.

Things are changing: 20,000 sing for Corbyn at Wirral rock festival!

Dave Jones, Wirral Socialist Party

About 6,000 people descended on West Kirby, on the Wirral, to hear Jeremy Corbyn on 20 May. West Kirby is a traditionally Tory-voting area of the marginal West Wirral seat held by [Corbyn-supporter Margaret Greenwood](#), and has never seen such a gathering.

Following a passionate speech by Corbyn, there was a real sense that things are changing. His pro-worker policies are clearly finding an echo.

Later that evening Corbyn stopped off at a local music festival at Tranmere Rovers' football ground, to give [an impromptu speech before indie rockers The Libertines](#). A risk perhaps, as no one could be sure of the response.

But he left to the sound of 20,000 people singing "there's only one Jeremy Corbyn." On the day we sold 130 copies of the Socialist.

Socialist Students call on chicken May to debate Corbyn

Socialist Students called out the Tories and Theresa May for being chickens with a protest outside Conservative Central HQ in London on 17 May.

[May is refusing to debate Jeremy Corbyn in the snap general election she has called](#). Quite frankly it shows how unconfident the Tories are to go up against anti-austerity politics.

Not only are the Tories too chicken to debate on TV against Corbyn, but they have also once again refused calls to reduce the voting age to 16. Imagine being that scared of 16 and 17-year-olds!

There is a growing campaign of school and college students calling for votes at 16 and they also held a protest on 20 May in Trafalgar Square.

Helen Pattison, London Socialist Party youth organiser

Blairite warmonger misses chance to fight on Corbyn's popular policies

Nancy Taafe, Waltham Forest Socialist Party

The Walthamstow hustings on 17 May was a pretty dull and drab affair. The weather and level of debate were abysmal - the only saving grace was the surroundings, the beautiful 13th century St Mary's Church.

Socialist Party members brought leaflets explaining how the Tories could be kicked out and how [Corbyn can win with socialist policies](#). We were received well.

The Tories, Lib Dems, Labour and Greens were represented - although the Tory candidate never turned up, and it was left to her election agent to put her case.

All four spoke in platitudes, with references to claptrap like 'enabling, empowering and facilitating growth and self-improvement'. In short, no real difference or debate was obvious.

This was mainly down to the reluctance of our Blairite MP, Stella Creasy, to promote Corbyn's recently released anti-austerity manifesto. Her opening pitch made no reference to Jeremy Corbyn; that was left to us.

The church organisers flashed up the first question - what we hoped Walthamstow would look like in five years' time. I said: "Well, that depends who gets in.

"If May gets in, we could lose our hospital, we could lose up to 500 teachers from our schools and we will see more homelessness on our streets. If Corbyn gets in it will be a much more welcoming and attractive place." I got a round of applause at the mention of his Corbyn's name.

Tuition fees

One difference from when I stood as a candidate for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in 2015 was Creasy's willingness to champion the "idea" of abolishing tuition fees, something she never supported last time. This shows how Corbyn has pushed the debate to the left.

But shamefully, [Creasy still defended her decision to vote for bombing Syria](#) when asked a question on refugees.

This event could have been an excellent opportunity to discuss how we can fight for Corbyn's popular policies. Without that, the hustings felt perfunctory. Win or lose, an organised working class fightback is what is needed, not bland Blairite platitudes.

March of 5,000 against Tory plans to cut 1,000 Bristol teachers

Tom Baldwin, Bristol South Socialist Party

In Bristol, [schools are due to lose more than £32 million](#), the equivalent of 1,000 teachers. Tory spending plans will see [98% of all schools in England](#) worse off.

Around 5,000 people took to the streets of Bristol to oppose these devastating education cuts on 20 May. The demonstration, organised by the National Union of Teachers, brought in people from across the local area.

Pupils, parents and teachers alike were chanting: "No ifs, no buts, no education cuts!" Anger towards Tory cuts is rising as some schools in the area are now sending out letters [warning what the impact will be](#).

Increasing class sizes, shortening the school day, cutting subjects from the curriculum, cutting support for children with additional needs, and firing teachers and other staff. They are all being considered to cover the huge shortfall schools will face.

This government is willing to damage the future of a whole generation of children just to pay for tax cuts for their super-rich friends. It's no wonder that most people at the protest saw the need to kick the Tories out of power in order to protect education.

The Socialist Party's message was very well received on the demonstration. We sold over 100 copies of the Socialist newspaper.

Labour council's threat to children's care centre

Fight for legal no-cuts budgets

Paul Gerrard, Chair, Salford Against the Cuts

The campaign is on to save the Grange, the only residential home for disabled children in Salford. Parents of children in the home have petitioned and lobbied the council, and have now called a protest meeting for 27 May.

[Four years ago there was another battle over the Grange](#). At the time it was a valued respite centre for disabled children, and the Labour council wanted to transfer the children to an adult facility.

The council argued at the time that several disabled children were being treated in expensive private facilities outside Salford and that bringing them back into the city would be beneficial.

Parents in [the 'Save the Grange' campaign](#), with the full support of the Salford branch of public service union Unison, and [the 'Salford Against the Cuts' campaign](#), argued to keep the facility as it was. However the then Mayor, Ian Stewart, bulldozed the decision through, disparaging parents as a 'rent-a-crowd'!

Now, four years later, the council is standing on its head and saying the children currently in the Grange will have to go into expensive private provision, most probably outside Salford. The number of children currently in the home is small, but there is demand from parents to place their children there.

The new mayor, Paul Dennett, is a declared supporter of Jeremy Corbyn. Despite this, [the council under his leadership has passed on £16 million of Tory cuts](#) in the latest budget. But he is clearly reluctant to make this particular cut, estimated to save £300,000.

Parents, Unison and Salford Against the Cuts lobbied the council at the budget meeting in February, and new facts came to light. Paul Dennett promised to look at the issue again.

At the 2017 May Day rally, parents again lobbied the mayor - and MP Rebecca Long-Bailey, one of the few Labour MPs who has consistently supported Jeremy Corbyn.

[Greater Manchester metro-mayor Andy Burnham](#) even had a photo opportunity with Grange parents as part of his election campaign. He said that "to move children out of the borough is unacceptable."

Now, however, there is to be a 'consultation' on closure.

While recognising the strength of [his commitment to opposing Tory-imposed austerity](#), we are disappointed that [Jeremy Corbyn hasn't taken a firmer line against local government cuts](#) by Labour councils.

The Socialist Party has argued for [legal no-cuts budgets](#), and a joint campaign by Labour councils and trade unions to win back resources. Salford City Council - like other Labour councils - has wrongly chosen a different road.

Socialist Party members hope to see Corbyn enter 10 Downing Street on 9 June. Yet his promise to deliver for the most vulnerable is undermined when Labour councils cut vital services for those very people.

Labour must oppose austerity in all its forms. We call on Paul Dennett and Salford City Council not to close the Grange.

- 'Save the Grange' protest meeting: 27 May at 10.30am, Swinton Moorside Cricket Club, Deansway, Salford M27 0WH

Fresh faces and the fight in Labour

Elaine Brunskill, Secretary, Socialist Party Northern region

Twenty people came along to our public meeting in Newcastle, five attending for the first time, and two expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party.

We were fortunate to have Vicki Yarrow, a Durham teaching assistant (TA), speaking too. Vicki gave a moving report of how TAs have been impacted by attacks from Durham's Labour county council, but also an inspirational account of how [Durham TAs have stood together and fought like lions](#).

Vicki also made the distinction between the Blairite-controlled council which has attacked them, and Corbyn who has supported them.

Ken Douglas of the Socialist Party executive committee gave an account of how [Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies are striking a chord with young people and workers](#). This is despite the treacherous backstabbing of the Blairites, and the incessant attacks from the right-wing media.

At the meeting we raised £85 for our fighting fund, supplemented by an additional £35 from people who were unable to attend.

Argos: aggressive bosses met by determined strike

1,400 Unite members at regional warehouses across the UK are out on strike for two weeks. Proving that the Trade Union Act will not stop workers exercising the right to strike, 85% voted for strike action with a 73% turnout. The company's attempt to get an injunction against the union was thrown out by the High Court on technicalities.

The company ([bought in November for £1.4 billion by Sainsbury's](#) - slogan: "Living better for less") is pursuing an aggressive line against its workers. The plan that sparked this action involves transferring 500 workers from the Argos facility at Magna Park, Lutterworth to the logistics firm Wincanton, 25 miles away in Kettering, which would undermine the union's ability to take legal strike action across the company, and threatens terms and conditions for the workers involved. It also points the way for further contracting out of jobs as a strategy for the company to further reduce labour costs.

Dave Murray

Lutterworth

When Socialist Party members from Leicester visited the picket line at the huge Argos warehouse in Magna Park, Lutterworth, we were greeted with dozens of red Unite the Union flags and a union gazebo. For the two-week strike they are maintaining a busy 24-hour picket line; you could sense the solidarity and strength of the workers.

Paresh Patel, Unite regional coordinating officer, said:

"The support shown by the workforce has been superb and everyone is in good spirits. There is 100% solidarity. Argos are transferring the workforce of 500 at Magna Park to another company - Wincanton in Kettering, 25 miles away. We are disappointed with Argos' stance around the payment of redundancy. The union wants to talk but Argos are not prepared to. This is why there is action here at Magna Park and across the five centres in the national forum."

Terms and conditions in a transfer are meant to be guaranteed under TUPE regulations. But Unite's website points out: "Argos has refused to give guarantees at all its distribution sites that workers' terms and conditions will be safeguarded in the future" and "members have concerns about being offered alternative employment on potentially inferior terms, if they are unwilling to travel to a new site."

Workers fear a "contracting out culture" and have asked for "guarantees about terms and conditions and voluntary redundancy if a site moves and they cannot transfer." Last year [Socialist Party members supported picket lines at the same site when they took strike action over the transfer of drivers](#) to Eddie Stobarts.

One picket told me that it would cost him and many of the workers thousands of pounds a year extra to get to work if they were transferred. Doesn't that have the same effect as a pay cut?

The management, having failed to block the strike by legal action once, could try again.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 19 May 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Human rights workers strike in support of sacked union members

Socialist Party reporters

PCS members at the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) HQ in London are on strike as part of a month of national rolling action. They were in a confident mood at the start of a week-long strike.

Unlike some picket lines where there's a lot of passing traffic and pedestrians, this one is a bit tucked out of the way. But there's a building site right next to the picket line. One builder told strikers: "We read about you in the Metro - sacked by email! That's disgusting, especially from the Human Rights Commission!"

One striker told the Socialist: "The commission was going through a restructure and part of that involved cuts to save money. When the restructure began they wanted savings of £658,000 but at the same time created three new management posts on over £600,000 a year.

["On the picket line in February, nine union members were sacked by email"](#). They were given one day's notice and banned from entering the office. It's shocking given the commission is supposed to be concerned about human rights. They originally wanted to reduce the headcount by 28. Lots left voluntarily and now there are 48 vacancies, yet the commission is refusing to reinstate union members!

"We want them to lift the office ban, put some real effort in to redeploy people, and give them effective support to find alternative employment elsewhere if they can't get jobs here. So we're now taking four weeks of action, one week in each office round the country. Glasgow last week, London this week, then Cardiff, then Manchester."

Strikers commented that it is good that [defending the EHRC is in Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto](#) and hope that if he wins they will stop this attack. But they are prepared to fight on in any case.

Window workers walk out after seeing through contract changes

Sean Brogan and Alex Moore

Unite members in Paignton, South Devon, are on a rolling series of two-day strikes. They work for Sierra Windows (part of the Epwin Group which has window fabricating factories in Telford, Tamworth, Cardiff and Newton Abbot).

Bosses are trying to impose a four-day, 12-hour shift, which will mean loss of overtime and disruption to their lives. One picket reckons it will mean £1,000 a year less in wages. And this is a workforce who haven't received a pay increase since 2008.

Epwin Group sees itself as 'progressive' and 'forward looking' but the workers see it differently. One picket described the offer as "gross exploitation, more hours for less money" - indeed, it takes working people back to the battle for the eight-hour day.

There is a suspicion that management has picked on this factory as it is unionised. Strikers are being financially supported by Unite. A private transport company is being used to supply agency drivers - regular drivers are being sent away as far as Scotland so as to not appear at the picket line during strike days.

A turning point may be when DG Glass of Newton Abbot ballot in the coming days. The Epwin Group uses different names for its operations.

Trade unionists and Socialist Party members were welcomed on the picket line and banners in support came from Exeter TUC and Torbay and District TUC.

Third strike against driver-only operated trains suspended but dispute continues

An RMT member

The [third coordinated strike action](#) involving 2,000 workers on Southern, Northern and Merseyrail against driver-only operation (DOO) scheduled for 30 May has been suspended following [the bombing in Manchester on 22 May](#).

Mick Cash, RMT general secretary, said: "The heightened safety and security alerts on our transport services, mean the RMT's executive has taken the decision to suspend the strike action." But the dispute is ongoing.

The issue, which has been [long-running on Southern](#) and linked to [the victimisation of a guard on Merseyrail](#), was [joined by Northern guards](#) because Arriva Rail North has rejected attempts to resolve the dispute over driver-controlled trains due to come into service in 2020.

The battle on Southern continues [despite attempts by bosses, the government, the TUC and even the leaders of drivers' union Aslef](#). Aslef members [have rejected two offers](#) in support of RMT guards fighting to keep the vital position.

[Guards play a whole number of safety-critical roles on trains](#), especially in emergency situations. With rail companies receiving massive public subsidies, rail workers and passengers are entitled to two members of staff on trains.

The [last strike on 8 April was completely solid](#) and brought large parts of the country to a standstill. Then one striker said: "If we don't fight back the company will get rid of hundreds of guards and walk all over the remaining employees! We say no to DOO!"

Jeremy Corbyn has said the idea of running trains with just the driver "was a daft idea" and that a Labour-government would back the retention of guards on trains as part of the renationalisation of the railways. He would be welcome on RMT picket lines on 30 May!

Manchester: housing association maintenance workers plan strikes every week

Becci Heagney

"One Manchester - my arse" read the banner which 150 angry maintenance workers marched behind on the first day of their strike action. One Manchester is a housing association that has a contract with private company Mears - the employer of the striking workers - for the provision of out-of-hours (10pm – 8am) emergency repairs for some of its properties.

At one time the maintenance workers were employed by the council, but they were privatised. Now, as Unite members employed by Mears, they are on strike against pay disparity and attacks on working conditions. It has emerged that workers doing the same job are being paid wildly different amounts.

Mears is trying to introduce a "productivity procedure" which the workers have slammed as a "sackers' charter". One of the workers spoke to the *Socialist* about how there are tens of thousands of empty properties in the city which they could be put to work on to help solve the housing crisis. Instead private companies are raking in the profit.

There was a very determined mood on the protest. Many of the workers were on strike for the first time. Mears had been trying to break the strike by writing specifically to younger workers to try to stop them from taking action, but it didn't work.

At the rally outside Manchester Town Hall, one union rep talked about his colleague who had contracted a life-threatening disease from working with asbestos and had his pay docked when he had to go to hospital to get his diagnosis - he had been refused time off. It served as a reminder of why these workers were taking action to defend working conditions in a potentially dangerous job.

They were calling on Manchester city council to step in to resolve the dispute. Strikes are planned for three days a week until the dispute is resolved.

This report was amended on 18.5.17 to make it clear that in the references in the original to "the company", the company being referred to was Mears, the employer of the striking workers; and to include a mention of the nature of the contract between Mears and the One Manchester housing association.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 17 May 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in *The Socialist*.

PCS DWP conference 2017

Dave Semple, PCS DWP conference delegate (personal capacity)

The annual conference for PCS members working in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) met on 22 and 23 of May. Across all of the key issues - pay, office closures, staffing, working conditions, welfare - the message that rang out loud and clear was one of total opposition to the Tory government, something echoed by PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka in his guest speech.

"Victory for the Tories in June would be a disaster for PCS members" he declared.

On pay, conference debated the key question of what to do about the 17% of members who opted out of [the four-year 'employee deal' pay agreement, voted for overwhelmingly by PCS members](#). 83% of staff opted in to a deal that saw them break the Tory 1% pay cap, but the other 17% were left with 0.25% for each year of the deal.

Left Unity, the broad Left in PCS, led the charge to build a campaign to win more for these and all the other staff - such as higher grades - excluded from the deal.

Conference heard reports from across all parts of DWP. Particularly on office closures, conference united behind [the first site to vote for industrial action - Eastern Avenue Jobcentre, Sheffield](#). Speaker after speaker rose to list the impact of office closures on their community.

Squalid accusations that the union's group executive committee had engaged in secret negotiations to the detriment of members were defeated by the majority of reps who had seen the unstinting efforts to support marches, demonstrations, lobbies and other activities, to fight the closure proposals.

On welfare, conference condemned [the changes to PIP](#), which will see discrimination against those with mental health issues. The changes to the tax credits element of Universal Credit were equally abhorred.

PCS members in the DWP renewed their commitment to fight publicly, politically and industrially against Tory cuts and for a united campaign across unions to beat austerity.

Workplace news in brief

Cleaners strike

Low paid cleaners at the London School of Economics (LSE) are taking strike action every Wednesday. Members of the United Voices union, these mostly migrant workers are mounting loud and bold pickets to demand decent pay. On 17 May they marched up to Senate House, part of the University of London (UoL), to join security staff also striking. The march was noisy and bravely stopped rush-hour traffic in central London. It attracted a lot of attention, not least because marchers carried gazebos as well as banners to keep us all sheltered from the rain!

- [Donate to the LSE strikers here](#)
- Support the UoL strikers by writing to UoL chief operating officer Chris Cobb to protest his handling of the security officers at chris.cobb@london.ac.uk

Paula Mitchell, London Socialist Party

BMW pensions

National Shop Stewards' Network supporters once again travelled from Bristol and Gloucestershire on 16 May to bring support and solidarity to BMW workers at the Mini plant in Swindon.

Workers at the German car manufacturer, represented by Unite the Union, were taking another day of strike action as part of [a series of planned stoppages in defence of existing pension rights](#), which are under attack by the company.

Negotiations are ongoing and the striking workers seemed in a determined mood and reported that the strike was still solidly supported.

Matt Carey, Bristol South Socialist Party

Crossrail dispute

Hundreds of workers on the Crossrail project in London 'cabined up' on 22 May in [dispute over the victimisation of their reps](#) by the on-site employment agency which refuses to even recognise the elected Unite stewards and safety rep.

The action at the Holborn and Mile End sites spread to Canning Town. The main contractor on all affected sites is a consortium including the blacklisting firm Skanska.

Hackney schools

Staff and parent campaigners took part in a joint lobby of a Stoke Newington School governors meeting on 20 May. One staff member said that the current proposals of cutting jobs and wages would not work and made no sense. They would cause long-term damage to the schools' future educational development as many staff left behind after these cuts would be likely to leave if the proposals in their current form were implemented. The current consultation document could cause up to 20 staff to lose their jobs and there would be significant wage cuts.

Campaigner Louise James said: "As parents we feel strongly about the impact of these cuts. We do not want the members of our staff to suffer cuts in pay, increased hours and worse terms and conditions. These cuts all have consequences."

Brian Debus, Hackney Socialist Party

National Shop Stewards Network conference

The 11th annual [National Shop Stewards Network \(NSSN\) conference](#) will be on Saturday 1 July 2017 from 11am in Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

It is open to all trade union and anti-cuts campaigners.

Speakers include: Len McCluskey, Unite general secretary (invited), Ronnie Draper, BFAWU general secretary, Steve Gillan, POA general secretary, Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary, Sean Hoyle, RMT President, Linda Taaffe, NSSN national secretary, Rob Williams, NSSN national chair.

- [See shopstewards.net](#) for more information and updates
-

Trump regime faces deepening crisis

Working class political alternative needed to drive him out

Tom Crean Socialist Alternative (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party)

President Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey has led to a spiralling political crisis in Washington. The [sharp divisions in the political establishment and within the state apparatus](#) have become even sharper due to Trump's authoritarian actions.

Tens of millions - who completely oppose Trump's racist, misogynist, anti-working class agenda, which has no democratic mandate - have had enough and simply want him gone.

There is a lot of talk in the liberal media about parallels with Watergate (the scandal which forced President Nixon to resign). And indeed, the accounts of Trump's dinner with Comey, where the president allegedly demanded the FBI head's "loyalty" and Trump's Twitter threat after firing him, where Trump said that Comey better hope there are no "tapes" of their discussion, certainly sound like echoes from the Nixon-era.

Now it appears Comey kept detailed notes about all his discussions with Trump. The Washington Post and the New York Times report that these notes include Trump's demand that Comey stop investigating Michael Flynn, the former general and national security adviser who was forced to resign in February after lying about his contacts with the Russian regime.

Technically, Trump has the authority to fire the head of the FBI but what is becoming clearer is that this was part of a ham-fisted attempt to quash the FBI investigation into Trump's campaign ties with the Russian

government. This is otherwise known as an 'obstruction of justice'. If Trump did make tapes, and they corroborate Comey's notes, then he will be severely damaged.

Establishment

As the White House descended even further into crisis, the acting attorney general, Rod Rosenstein, appointed a special counsel, former FBI director Robert Mueller, with wide powers to investigate the Russia links, as well as other matters that "may arise directly from the investigation."

This ensures that the political crisis will last for months but it also means the establishment have placed a check on Trump.

The congressional Republican leadership, who up until now have loudly defended Trump, went suddenly quiet before quickly welcoming the appointment of the special counsel. Some of his Republican critics have become bolder, with Senator John McCain saying that Trump's scandals have reached "Watergate scale."

From the start of this administration we pointed out that, in addition to a thoroughly reactionary agenda, Trump harboured real authoritarian tendencies.

He clearly admires "strongmen" like Putin, Turkish president Erdogan, or Philippines' president Duterte.

He has already targeted the State Department, the Environmental Protection Agency and even the National Parks Service (which published photos of his inauguration that did not show the "record-breaking" crowds he claimed). [Both he](#) and [his henchman Stephen Bannon](#) (currently side-lined) called the media the "enemy of the people."

But even though Trump's attacks on his opponents in the state apparatus have been almost as incompetent as the roll-out of the Muslim travel ban or his pursuit of a 1,000 mile wall on the Mexican border, they still must be taken seriously.

Socialists absolutely oppose these attempts to concentrate more power in the already hyper-powerful "imperial presidency." We are for the maximum democratic reforms to limit and control the capitalist state apparatus.

We are against authoritarian government secrecy from both this right-wing administration and the repressive security state. We demand that the government, and the big businesses that control it, open their books for working people to have all the information necessary to draw conclusions about the crimes of the rich and powerful.

This does not mean, however, that we harbour any illusions in the capitalist state apparatus in general, or the FBI in particular, as 'guardians of democracy'.

While Trump's authoritarian streak is no joke, it is frankly a bit laughable to see the Democrats and the New York Times busily defending Comey's honour when they spent most of the past few months absurdly trying to lay the blame for Trump's victory on Comey (and the Russians, of course).

The liberal elite and increasing numbers of Republican leaders are very worried that if Trump is not stopped he will continue to greatly undermine the credibility of US imperialism.

As socialists, we do not care about the credibility of this rotten system but, like millions of others, we want this dangerous regime, which has targeted immigrants, women, poor people, people of colour, and the working class, brought down.

And we should be very clear that democratic rights, including the right to protest and freedom of the press, are on the target list of Trump and his vicious Attorney General, Jeff Sessions.

But while we want Trump and his agenda out of office, it will take a mass movement and greater revelations to force impeachment (legal removal of the president) proceedings.

The ruling class will look for every other avenue, including persuading Trump to leave of his own accord, however unlikely that may seem. This is because of the massive political damage to their interests that would be caused by an impeachment trial.

Another important element in the situation, of course, is Trump's electoral base. Up until now Trump's support remained at around 40% - the lowest for a new president in the history of polling, but still enough to keep most House Republicans in line.

A lot of Trump's working class and middle class supporters see the Russia accusations and the furore over Comey as a liberal witch-hunt, although obstruction of justice might be another matter. What is more immediately degrading his support are anti-working class attacks like 'Trumpcare'.

But what would lead to a serious collapse in support is if Trump voters concluded that his promises on jobs were a fraud. Many will be willing to wait a while longer before drawing this conclusion because, tragically, they do not see any other credible political alternative. [This is certainly not coming from the corporate-controlled Democrats.](#)

Russia

Of course, it cannot be excluded possible major revelations or more serious self-inflicted damage leading to an implosion of the Trump regime in the relatively near future. But the White House may limp out of this phase of crisis and resume its 'normal' pattern of lurching from crisis to crisis for an extended period.

During and since the presidential election, the Democrats have focused on Trump as a dupe or agent of Putin.

We are completely opposed to the dictatorial and reactionary Russian regime and we agree people should know the truth about Trump's ties (and his taxes), but we have in no way supported the Democrats' crude attempts to whip up nationalism around this question. The focus of our opposition is Trump's reactionary agenda and his threats to stage an authoritarian power grab.

While sections of the ruling class are, for now, increasingly moving against Trump to try and protect the overall interests of their system, the biggest mistake for working people and the left would be to rely on them to force Trump out.

All evidence points to the timidity and cowardice of the Democratic Party leadership in opposing Trump. Their pro-capitalist agenda has greatly undermined their popular appeal and stops them from mobilising the maximum public opposition by fighting for Medicare for all, taxing the rich, free higher education, public works programmes to create millions of good paying union jobs, etc.

We can defeat Trumpcare by [building a powerful mass movement now](#), including building huge rallies across the country. In turn, this could lay the basis for more widespread workplace action, including strikes starting with healthcare workers, and building for a 'million person march' in Washington, DC ending with a mass occupation. Yet the Democratic Party leaders, and their billionaire backers, are utterly opposed to such an approach.

The most important task is for working people, and all those oppressed by capitalism, to build our own independent organisations and movements based on our own social class interests. This is the most effective guarantee against Trump and the best way to check his attacks.

We need to make this a summer of struggle.

- [Read the full article on socialistalternative.org](#)

International news in brief

Short stories from other sections and co-thinkers of the Committee for a Workers' International, the global socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to.

Russia: defiance in fight for LGBT+ rights

Socialist Alternative (CWI Russia) member Igor Yassin said: "We are writing this update for you from a police van in which we are being kept. We were just detained as we tried to deliver 400,000 signature petition [supporting gay men in Chechnya](#)".

Sweden: a community unites against violence and unemployment

1,000 people, marched following the fatal shooting of a teacher in Gothenburg, led by the victim's family. He was the brother of a Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna (RS - CWI Sweden) member. RS helped mobilise the teachers' union and the tenants' union to join the demonstration. RS member Kristofer Lundberg said: "48 representatives from 42 workplaces, community organisations, trade unions and our party met to discuss how we will work together in this situation to defend safety in our areas and fight unemployment, lack of housing, defend welfare and so on. We will now meet on a regular basis."

Video: Socialist councillor on the role of police in Ireland

[Watch this video](#) to hear Michael O'Brien's take on what the Gardai (police) do in Irish society today. Michael is a Solidarity councillor and Socialist Party Ireland member. His comments are particularly important while we're in the middle of [the unjust Jobstown trial](#). Michael said the Gardai "prioritise policing of austerity and maintenance of the status quo above policing crime".

The sequel to Peter Taaffe's 'The Rise of Militant'

'From Militant to the Socialist Party' - new book now available

This general election campaign will see a choice for those opposed to Tory austerity.

The battle within Labour rages over Tony Blair's legacy and those seeking to continue it, and supporters of Corbyn who want to see working class political representation.

In this battle, the influence of Militant has been a touchstone, showing how it is possible for working class people to organise and win.

'From Militant to the Socialist Party' covers developments from the New Labour takeover to the first rumblings of the world economic crisis of 2007-8, and is the sequel to 'The Rise of Militant'.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Stalinist regimes, capitalism's representatives proclaimed "the end of history." But the struggles of workers and young people continued.

From the Liverpool dockers' strike to the mass movements against the invasion of Iraq, From Militant to the Socialist Party charts the fightback, and highlights the lessons of these movements for today.

As Blair and New Labour implemented neoliberal attacks, the fight for working class political representation is a fundamental battle charted out here. As right-wing trade union leaders preached 'partnership' with the

bosses, trade union militants showed that a fighting strategy was possible.

This book is not written from the sidelines, but by an active participant. From Militant to the Socialist Party offers unique insight into how Marxists organised, and the programme and strategy put forward at key stages of the struggle. The crucial discussions and debate among socialists at the time are drawn out here, to provide key lessons for those who want to build a force for socialist ideas today.

The author, Peter Taaffe, is the former editor of the Militant newspaper, and the general secretary of the Socialist Party. He was a founding member of the Committee for a Workers' International, which now organises in 45 countries, on every continent.

As well as playing an active role in the struggles charted here, Peter is the author of several books, including 'The Rise of Militant', 'Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight', 'Cuba: Socialism and Democracy', and 'Marxism in Today's World'.

From Militant to the Socialist Party

[£15 from leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

Or call 020 8988 8789; write to PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

Please make any cheques payable to 'Socialist Books'

- [Watch the launch on Facebook](#)
- 'Tories Out' London public meeting and launch: 25 May at 7.30pm, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EP

Film review: A Moving Image

Gentrification, class and race in Brixton film

Helen Pattison, East London Socialist Party

'[A Moving Image](#)' is a stirring film looking at [gentrification in Brixton, south London](#). It tracks a young woman, Nina, moving back to a fast-changing Brixton.

Old cafes are closing and being replaced by unaffordable coffee shops. The lead characters, who were equally proud of and embarrassed by the area in their youth, watch an influx of richer people buying property and [local people being forced out by the bullying Labour council](#) and rising rents.

At the Q&A after the show were director Shola Amoo, lead actor Tanya Fear, and representatives from [the Focus E15 single mums' housing campaign](#) and the Socialist Party.

Amoo said the film aimed to tackle the micro-impact of gentrification, such as mental health and the breakdown of communities. The macro-impact was raised by the Socialist Party: housing policies such as Thatcher's 'right to buy', the removal of rent caps, the lack of council house building and 'regeneration' of estates which have forced people out of the area.

Amoo explained that he and the film's producer, Rienkje Attoh, both had complicated relationships with gentrification being from the area. They were wondering if they were part of the problem.

For example, Nina lives in a grand empty building as a "property guardian," a post where people pay slightly lower rents as live-in guards on vacant properties. The film then follows Nina making a film about gentrification.

But not everyone is as excited about her project as she expects.

She's accused of being part of the problem, and that her project isn't a solution to the genuine experiences of people living in Brixton. Accepting this, she uses her media connections to raise money for a local social housing campaign.

Class and race are important themes in the film. Characters discuss how the working class is being forced out of the area and how its predominantly Afro-Caribbean community is being dismantled. Nina looks into [local history](#) such as [the Brixton riots](#) to help her understand why the community in Brixton was so important to people there.

A Moving Image is well worth a watch and will defiantly spark debate about regeneration versus gentrification, as well as housing policy, class and race.

Capitalist journal's warning to the bosses: Marx was right, watch out!

Norman Hall, South Tyne and Wear Socialist Party

For a second, I thought I had picked up 'Socialism Today' by mistake. There in the Economist, an authoritative journal of the bosses, was the heading: "The Labour leadership is right - Karl Marx has a lot to teach today's politicians."

The 13 May article lists some of the points where Marx was correct in his analysis of capitalism. It concedes that "much of what Marx said seems to become more relevant by the day."

There's the greed of the bosses: "In 1980 the bosses of the biggest list firms earned 25 times more than a typical employee. In 2006 they earned 130 times more." The term "earned" is highly questionable.

"Marx predicted that capitalism would become more concentrated as it advanced. The number of listed companies has declined at a time when profits are close to their highest levels ever." Here they also expose the lie that there is a shortage of money in society.

And, among many other points: "Marx was also right that capitalism would be increasingly dominated by finance, which would become increasingly reckless and crisis-prone."

The reason for the appearance of the article is to warn the capitalist class. Consequently the tone changes.

It calls (in vain) for an end to excesses: "End the CEO salary racket" and "close the revolving door between politics and business."

It warns against going too far in driving down living standards: "Average wages are still below their level before the financial crisis" and "the rise of the Uber economy threatens to turn millions of people into casual workers who eat only what they can kill."

It hails the past "genius of the British system... reform in order to prevent social breakdown." But even the creation of the NHS in 1947 was part of a 'genius' system to prevent revolutionary upheavals from an angry, organised working class after World War Two.

"As Trotsky once put it, 'You may not be interested in the dialectic, but the dialectic is interested in you!'" So "the best way to save yourself from being Marx's next victim is to start taking him seriously."

Its final analysis is that "the problem with Marx is not that his analysis is nonsensical... but that his solution was far worse than the disease." From the viewpoint of the parasitic capitalist class this is certainly true, but for the rest of humanity it is the great lie.

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.

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.

Costings claptrap

Tories say £45 billion of Corbyn's spending plans are uncoded. That's an improvement on what we've got at the moment. The Tories are currently running a £69 billion annual budget deficit.

Ian Pattison, Leytonstone, east London

Sermon on the May

In the Bible there is a story about five loaves and two fishes. I think Theresa May has adapted this a little. She wants to get five years and then give us two fingers.

An Aslef member, Worcestershire

NHS election?

The election on 8 June is an election on whether we want a public or private NHS, not about Brexit. The Tories want to take our minds off of their vicious cuts. They want a US-style health service - that is, private. If you can't afford healthcare, go to the back of the queue.

The 'private finance initiative' robs the NHS of hundreds of millions of pounds, as do the pharmaceutical companies with their expensive medications. Virgin group is also getting its hands onto our NHS.

These greedy grasping parasitic leeches ought to be thrown out of our NHS. The pharmaceutical companies should be brought into democratic public ownership and integrated into the health service.

The same goes for care homes. £500-plus a week is obscene. A Corbyn-led government will implement things for the needy majority not the greedy minority.

What they are doing to the NHS is shameful and abhorrent. Nobody knows when they might need the NHS so it's worth fighting for.

It's true the Blair government started the privatisation programme, but a Corbyn government will reverse it. I appeal to all those who wish to protect our beloved NHS to vote for him in order to preserve it. To lose it is unthinkable.

Bill Buchanan, Nottingham

Energy exigency

Labour spokespeople should stop debating semantics over the Tories' claim that the Tory proposal to cap energy prices is different to Ed Miliband's pledge.

There is only one way to end the obscene spectacle of not only private firms and other governments owning companies previously nationalised and using the profits they rip off to subsidise prices in their own countries, but also the never-ending escalation of prices and company profits for which they blame the consumers for not 'shopping around.'

This is an open goal for Jeremy Corbyn: to declare that the next Labour government will take back into public ownership the entire energy industry. Poll after poll indicates that the majority support this course of action.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool

Hot Hunt's Hotcourses

Very irritating news on the way to the office on Monday morning (8 May) was in City AM, one of the freebee Tory rags for London.

"Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt got a £1 million dividend from his education business before it was sold off earlier in the year. [Hunt owned a 48% stake in 'Hotcourses'](#), which was sold to 'IPD Education' in January. On top of the dividend, the £35 million sale handed Hunt almost £17 million."

Why would these Tory money-grubbers bother to invest in wealth-creating industries when they can make millions from the desire of working class families for education and extract it from our meagre pockets?

This is the man who has presided over the continuing privatisation of the NHS, and restrictions on wages of the workers who provide the services. How many ministers and other Tories have their grubby fingers in this pie and our other social services? Get them out now!

Keith Dickinson, Shepherd's Bush, west London

Belts and bumps

"Just tighten your belt a little more while we gift billions to the super-rich." This demand for austerity is something that we have grown used to hearing from our politicians.

Corbyn's policies give us hope that we can loosen our belts - an opportunity that comes as a shock to many. For too long, only fat-cat business elites have enjoyed the luxury of undoing their belts. Can we really afford to loosen ours too?

The short answer is: yes! Corbyn has already pledged not to increase the tax burdens on the poorest 95% of the British population, and says he will "take on the social scourge of tax avoidance... and close down tax loopholes."

As far as the super-rich are concerned, everyone else must tighten their belts - including pregnant mothers. This has led to the intolerable situation whereby unlawful maternity and pregnancy discrimination is growing worse by the day.

In 2015 alone, [54,000 pregnant women and new mothers were forced out of their jobs](#) (double the number of ten years ago). This is why a Corbyn-led government would, for a start, act firmly to get rid of costly unfair employment tribunal fees which literally price people out of justice.

Corbyn's popular proposals are bringing hope to many and fear to the few.

Mike Barker, Leicester

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25519>