

Mobilise for a mass movement after 8 June

The [closing of the opinion polls](#), even after the [horrific Manchester bombing](#), has confounded all wings of the capitalist establishment. The Blairites in Labour are a key part of this coalition and they are just as terrified of the prospect of Jeremy Corbyn being declared prime minister on 9 June.

The Socialist Party has been an active participant in the campaign to elect a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government, elected on [his manifesto that gives a real choice to voters](#) for the first time - from one of the main parties - in decades. But the Labour right has seen its role as consciously making the party look divided. [John Woodcock has made this clear](#): "I will not countenance ever voting to make Jeremy Corbyn Britain's prime minister."

This was said when that prospect seemed remote. But in two weeks, the Tory lead has been slashed from [22 points](#) to at least one poll showing just a [five-point gap](#). That raises the possibility, even if the trend freezes there, of a hung parliament, which would be a defeat for May and the capitalist establishment. Many Tory MPs would then see the calling of the election as having unnecessarily threatened their careers three years early.

Social crisis

The Tories and the Blairites cannot comprehend why Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto has made such a difference to the election. The social crisis that has affected the majority in society, including an ever-increasing layer of the middle-class, is not part of their privileged experience. Corbyn's policies give workers hope of ending the 'lost decade' where [the average worker will be earning less in 2021 than they did when the financial crisis struck](#) in 2007 while housing costs have soared and inflation is rising.

Ordinary people can now see the difference the policies would make in their pocket. If Corbyn wins and delivers on his commitments, [tuition fees will be scrapped from September](#) and a [£10 an hour minimum wage](#) will be implemented. Millions of public sector workers will see the 1% pay cap lifted. Many workers in the NHS could pocket a pay increase of up to £50 a month purely from [the scrapping of car parking charges in hospitals](#). The renationalisation of the railways poses cheaper fares and an improved service for millions of commuters, many of them in Tory constituencies.

The Socialist Party welcomes Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto, although it does not offer the full socialist programme necessary to transform society. It is a mistake that these policies, which Corbyn won huge support for in his leadership campaigns, haven't been made official party policy until this manifesto. It would have cut across much of the doubts about his leadership. But he and his team have had [the strategy of too often trying and failing to appease the Blairites](#) and losing time to get his policies out.

Corbyn victory

The capitalist establishment fears a Corbyn victory because of his policies, but even more because of the expectations it could unleash. Jeremy's promise is to renationalise each rail operator when the franchise expires. But would rail workers and commuters be happy to wait years for this date to arrive? If the steelworks in Port Talbot is again threatened by its owner Tata, there would be huge pressure to [immediately take it into public ownership](#). In the same vein, council workers would expect Labour councils to immediately stop cuts. The Socialist Party will certainly be in the forefront of demanding this.

No wonder that the Tory media has stepped up its attack on the Labour leadership as the election nears its end. The Manchester bombing has given the opportunity to attempt to skirt around [the disastrous May u-turn on the 'dementia tax'](#), which risked her campaign unravelling just hours before the terrorist attack. Ex-Murdoch editor [Andrew Neil mentioned the IRA nine times](#) in his half-hour grilling of Corbyn.

Notwithstanding Corbyn's incorrect position on the conflict in Northern Ireland, he made it clear that [he opposed terrorism](#) from all sides there and elsewhere. We have always argued that [workers' unity is necessary to cut across terrorism](#).

Jeremy Corbyn must continue to go on the offensive and step it up. Like us, he was prominent in the mass campaign against the imperialist wars and occupations in [Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#), while May voted [with Blair](#). Ordinary people know that these conflicts and many others have alienated many and made some vulnerable to be recruited to the blind alley of terrorism.

Corbyn is accused of speaking to IRA leaders. So did Thatcher and Blair. But they, along with Cameron and May, have at different times [supported Pinochet](#) and many other brutal dictators - [including those in Saudi Arabia](#), who they sell billions of pounds worth of arms to.

At the end of his interview with Neil, Jeremy correctly pointed to his manifesto as giving voters a real choice. It is the only way to undermine [the media onslaught](#) that will only ratchet up as 8 June nears.

When May tries to act tough on security, he should counter by saying that her government of inequality, austerity and war is totally unable to keep people safe. She is [putting 'soldiers on the streets'](#) but we've long grown used to the scandal of homeless and hungry ex-squaddies in many town and city centres - casualties of imperialist adventures abroad and slashed public services and housing at home.

This campaign has at last given radical policies a mass audience. The ideas of public ownership, free education and a restored NHS, among others, are proving incredibly popular. Whatever the result, there should be no going back. Jeremy must stand firm against any attempt by the Blairites to use a defeat to topple him and take the party back to the right. But as Woodcock's comments show, they will be just as determined to act against him if he wins outright or becomes the biggest party in a hung parliament.

The Labour right will be acting in concert with the Tories and Lib Dems to try and prevent a Corbyn-led government. Mass pressure would have to be mobilised through demonstrations and even strikes to ensure that it is his programme that is implemented. In 2010, there were ten days before Cameron walked into Downing Street to lead [the Con-Dem coalition with Nick Clegg](#). The labour and trade union movement would have to act to ensure that a political vacuum couldn't be created. It couldn't be ruled out that under the direction of the establishment, [the Queen calls for](#) a Labour government led by the likes of Keir Starmer or Yvette Cooper.

Trade union action

At the conference of the PCS civil servants' union, its general secretary Mark Serwotka stated that the Trade Union Congress has organised a meeting of public sector unions on 14 June to discuss resurrecting the public sector pay campaign. Correctly, Mark called for that to be a 'council of war' in the event of a Tory victory to prepare seriously for coordinated strike action. But the meeting should also be utilised in the case of a Labour victory. For example, if there is any attempt to derail a Corbyn government, whether from inside or outside Labour, the meeting has to call immediate action to ensure the implementation of the policies that challenge the pro-market consensus of the last 38 years, from Thatcher and Blair to Cameron and May.

Whatever the outcome, all those who support Jeremy's campaign must [prepare for the struggle to come](#). The Tories and the media have the illusion that a May victory would bring in social peace. This is echoed by the pessimism of some on the left. But on the contrary, the volatility of the election campaign is a reflection of the instability to come. Almost unheard of, [there have](#) been [significant strikes](#) during [the election](#). A new Tory government could provoke an explosive movement as workers and young people are forced to fight. But such a movement would also be necessary if Corbyn wins.

And the battle within Labour between the 'two parties' must be brought to its conclusion. To carry that out effectively, [Jeremy must open up Labour to all socialist fighters](#), such as the Socialist Party, to help remove the Blairite pro-capitalist agents from the party.

With a week to go, all is still to play for. [Jeremy is leading among young people](#) because they see his manifesto commitments of the scrapping of tuition fees, a £10 minimum wage and ending of zero-hour

contracts as making a massive difference to their lives. In the remaining days, he should especially campaign boldly for these policies in order to get their vote out, which could make all the difference.

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Is Labour's manifesto 'costed'?

How can Corbyn's programme be implemented?

Alistair Tice, Socialist Party Yorkshire

Theresa May-hem attacks Jeremy Corbyn for his "[nonsensical economic... mismanagement](#)." This is a bit rich after Tory work and pensions secretary Damian Green admitted: "[Our manifesto is not un-costed, we just haven't costed it yet](#)"! Seven-times Tory treasury secretary David Gauke failed to say how they would fund the NHS!

But if the Tories get back in again, millions of pensioners will know the cost of the 'dementia tax', cuts in winter fuel allowance and the removal of the pensions 'triple lock' guarantee. [900,000 children](#) from poorer families will know the cost of [stopping free school dinners](#). And students will know the cost of [thousands more pounds of debt](#) due to tuition fee hikes.

Despite the human cost of the Tory "[manifesto of chaos](#)," Labour started the general election campaign up to [39 points behind in the polls on economic competence](#). Theresa May has posed the choice as her or Jeremy Corbyn and co who "[want to take us back to the economic chaos of the past](#)." Launching a new election poster, Tory chancellor Philip Hammond claimed there is a £58 billion black hole in Labour's manifesto. The [Daily Mail headlined](#) "Corbyn's class war manifesto would take tax burden to SEVENTY-YEAR [their capitals] high."

So it was politically necessary for Labour to show where the money will come from. And [the manifesto costings](#) do show that the money is there. Labour's public spending plans of an extra £48.6 billion a year would fund [significant reforms and popular policies](#) such as the abolition of university fees, universal childcare, NHS investment, free school dinners, restoration of the education maintenance allowance and scrapping the bedroom tax.

Taxes

These would be paid for in the main by [reversing the Tory cuts to corporation tax](#), income tax rises on the top 5% of earners, a 'fat-cat' tax on excessive pay, clamping down on tax avoidance and a 'Robin Hood' tax on City transactions. Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has made clear that no-one earning less than £80,000 a year will face any tax or National Insurance increases or VAT rises.

These modest tax increases on the rich and corporations' profits are predicted to bring in an extra £52.5 billion a year which would be more than enough to cover Labour's proposed spending promises. What scares the Tories and the capitalists is that Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies reverse the neoliberal consensus between the main parties that has existed for the last 20 years. In exposing the huge inequality in society they point the finger at the greedy bankers and bosses who are really responsible for the economic crisis.

Because, [as the recent Sunday Times 2017 Rich List showed](#), there are vast amounts of wealth in Britain - but it's all with the top 1%. There are now 134 billionaires based in Britain. The richest 1,000 individuals and families have a total wealth of £658 billion, up by 14% on last year.

Many of the biggest companies like Google, Starbucks and Amazon [don't even pay the very low taxes that they are supposed to](#). In Tax Research economist Richard Murphy's [most recent report for PCS](#), the union

which represents tax office staff, he estimates a £122 billion "tax gap" for 2013-14. This shortfall on the taxes that should be collected is made up of £85 billion illegal tax evasion, £19 billion tax avoidance and £18 billion uncollected taxes.

HM Revenue and Customs staffing levels [have nearly halved](#) in the last ten years making it even easier for big business and the super-rich to avoid paying taxes. And even when they are caught, they negotiate [sweetheart deals worth a fraction of what they owe](#). So it is welcome that the Labour manifesto promises more powers and staff to pursue companies and individuals who avoid tax.

But will this be enough? Labour's figures calculate getting in only an extra £6.5 billion from tax avoidance, only a fraction of the "tax gap". [In the manifesto](#), they say that they have built nearly £4 billion 'headroom' into their calculations to allow for "additional behavioural change and uncertainty". What this means is that John McDonnell knows that the 1% will do everything they can to not pay higher taxes, including off-shoring of companies to tax havens abroad.

Blair government

When Tony Blair was New Labour prime minister, he always argued against taxing the rich because they wouldn't pay it (apart from the fact that they were all his friends and he's become one of them).

Blair shared [the economic theory of supply-side economist Arthur Laffer](#) who argued that at a certain point higher taxes lead to reduced revenue due to 'behavioural change' such as tax avoidance. This is what the capitalist economists and Tory press are now screaming about Jeremy Corbyn's modest tax increases on the rich - [that they won't pay them, so Labour's budget will be £20-30 billion short](#). According to them, the rich should pay less taxes to encourage them to pay at all - while the poor who can't afford to pay the bedroom tax or council tax are dragged through court and threatened with jail!

But it's not just behavioural change that a Corbyn-McDonnell government would face. The capitalists and money markets would resort to a new 'project fear' of economic threats and sabotage. This would not be new for Labour governments.

Harold Wilson, a Labour prime minister in the 1960s and 70s, [revealed in his memoirs](#) that in 1965 Lord Cromer, the governor of the Bank of England, demanded severe cuts in public spending and fundamental changes in Labour's election promises. In 1976, the currency markets led [a run on the value of the pound](#) which led Labour chancellor Denis Healey to [agree public spending cuts in return for an IMF loan](#). In both cases, Wilson and Healey acquiesced to the capitalist threats and carried out orthodox capitalist policies, a forerunner to Thatcherism.

How will Corbyn and McDonnell be able to resist the enormous political and economic pressure they will come under to compromise their anti-austerity policies? This would come not just from the Tory press and media, but the entire capitalist class and state machine, and from the Blairite representatives of capitalism within the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Only two years ago, we saw how the left-wing Syriza government of Alexis Tsipras in Greece [capitulated in the face of the Troika's "fiscal waterboarding"](#) and has ended up carrying out huge spending cuts, undermining its working class support.

The Socialist Party advocates [radical measures to resist the inevitable capitalist sabotage](#). The big banks and major financial institutions should be nationalised, consolidated into a national 'people's bank' and their assets put at the disposal of public investment, as well as providing cheap mortgages to homeowners and loans to small businesses.

Assets of the super-rich

More than that, a socialist government would freeze the assets of the super-rich and biggest companies to stop them taking their loot out of the country. This has even been done by capitalist governments when it suits them. For example, after the Western imperialist-friendly dictators in North Africa were overthrown in the

Arab Spring in 2011, the Swiss government ordered its banks and financial institutions to [freeze \\$1 billion of assets](#) of Mubarak, Ben Ali and Gaddafi.

Workers and the trade unions in the finance sector, alongside the wider workers' movement, should be given the powers to oversee financial transactions to prevent tax evasion and avoidance, off-shoring and hiding of accounts. This has happened before as well.

When reactionary army officers attempted a coup [in Portugal a year after the 1974 revolution, bank workers occupied the banks](#) and physically prevented the bosses from removing incriminating documents or transferring funds abroad. They forced the government to nationalise the banks and then the insurance companies.

Through nationalisation of the banks and workers' control of the financial institutions, controls could be placed on financial transactions to prevent flights of capital as has taken place in Greece and is always threatened by capitalists faced with radical economic policies.

Such measures, by opening the capitalist accounts to democratic scrutiny, would enable a Corbyn-led government to show exactly what is possible, far beyond the set amount of money that Tory and Blairite governments tell us is available.

One area where Labour's manifesto policies are not costed is their proposal for renationalisation of utilities. John McDonnell has proposed a [£250 billion capital borrowing programme](#), a 'national transformation fund,' for the buyout - compensation and bond-for-shares swap - to fund taking rail, mail, water and the national grid back into public ownership, as well as other infrastructure developments.

Asked to specify the cost of the nationalisations, Jeremy Corbyn answered: "[We don't know what the share price would be at the time we do it.](#)" This strongly implies that in the case of Royal Mail, the water companies and the national grid, all shareholders would be fully compensated at the then market price.

Past Labour governments' state-capitalist nationalisations paid generous compensation to the former owners, which saddled those state industries with enormous debts from the start. The more money a Labour government has to raise from bonds and the money markets, the more they are at the mercy of the financial speculators.

While it is not a principle whether compensation is paid or not, the Socialist Party advocates that it should only be paid in the case of proven need.

In other words, not a penny to the fat-cats who have fleeced taxpayers' money for years, but protection for any small shareholders or workers' pensions funds which are financially dependent on their dividends.

Renationalisation

It's true that renationalising the rail companies will be cheap because Labour is proposing to take lines back into public ownership as each private contract expires. But that means that after five years of a Labour government 12 of the current 23 train operating companies of franchised passenger services would still be in private hands, one until 2030!

Likewise, Labour's energy industry proposals of nationalising the electricity and transmission networks and setting up regional public energy companies will still leave the ['big six' energy multinationals](#) in private hands.

The danger is that, while proposing welcome and popular re-nationalisation policies, Labour's "[radical and responsible](#)" manifesto - in its efforts to be 'fiscally responsible' - ends up being half-way measures that will still leave these industries at the mercy of the private sector and the money markets.

The only way to make sure that the economy does not face an investment strike, stock market and currency speculation, or even more direct acts of capitalist destabilisation and sabotage, would be for a socialist government to not only nationalise the banks and public utilities, but to take all the biggest corporations into public ownership.

With the [FTSE 100 top companies accounting for 81% of market capitalisation](#), nationalising just those would allow a socialist government to begin to manage the economy in a planned way under democratic workers' control and management - that really would be "for the many, not the few."

Politics has been shaken up

After 8 June: build the socialist fightback

Steve Score

For years the vast majority of us have suffered cuts in our living standards. Cuts in pay, jobs, homes, services.

We are angry that the super-rich, who are responsible for the economic crisis, have made themselves richer while we have been hammered. A [14% rise in the wealth of the top 1,000 people in Britain](#) happened in the last year alone.

For too long there has been no mass alternative for working class people. Labour had been transformed by the pro-big business Blairites.

The Socialist Party has long advocated the [creation of a mass working class party with socialist policies](#). That is why we are part of [the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition](#) alongside transport workers' union RMT and other socialists.

But [when Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of Labour](#), it opened up the possibility of achieving that at least partly through the Labour Party. Many people saw this.

We have [fully backed Jeremy Corbyn](#) in the general election campaign. [His policies](#) - such as a £10 an hour minimum wage, ending zero-hour contracts, spending more on public services, greater public ownership of privatised services, and free education - have proved hugely popular.

Alternative

Corbyn's campaign showed millions that [an alternative to the austerity consensus is possible](#). Discussions on what makes an effective socialist programme have opened up.

Whatever the result of the general election, politics has been shaken up. But after the election the fight goes on!

If Corbyn wins, it will raise the hopes of millions that we can at last change things.

But that desire for change will be up against the massive opposition of big business and the capitalist establishment - [including EU bosses](#). Just look at the way the media treated Corbyn.

He will also be working in the teeth of opposition from the Blairite wing of Labour, which will do its best to sabotage Corbyn's programme.

A mass movement will need to be built from below to counter this. [The Labour Party will have to be transformed](#), allowing members the right to choose their MPs and decide policies. The discussion on how to carry through socialist ideas will need to be continued.

If May wins, it will be the opposite of a "strong and stable" government.

The Tories will try to push through further attacks on working class living standards. But [their u-turns during and before the election campaign](#) show their weakness. Resistance in workplaces, in communities and on the streets will be built, and can stop them in their tracks.

Whatever the result, more than ever we will need to build the struggle for a clear socialist alternative.

The Socialist Party has been fighting for the strategy the workers' movement needs at every step. We'll continue to do so.

[That's why it's time to join.](#)

Bank holiday flight disruption

BA workers warned bosses of tech failure danger

Thousands of British Airways (BA) passengers [suffered cancelled flights over the bank holiday period due to a catastrophic computer outage.](#) General union GMB, which organises BA IT workers, has been warning the company of this danger for months. The Socialist spoke to GMB shop stewards at Heathrow Airport about the incident.

What happened?

BA had a major power outage about 7.30am on 27 May. Systems should have had a backup power source, but for whatever reason that didn't kick in in the way it was expected. So the power outage lasted for longer than expected.

This results in the corrupting of databases. Mainframes don't appreciate being turned off, they're not designed for that. It's not like a PC at home where turning it off and on again is the normal solution to any bug.

Mainframes work with data in real time, managing masses of data almost instantaneously. Therefore interruptions of power cause huge problems. Data gets lost or corrupted or put in different places.

And a lot of computing is magnetic - poles are created through the use of electricity. So if the power goes down, you drop a lot of information.

Why did it take so long to fix?

In the past, that would have been resolved by as soon as you got the problem, you'd get 15 or 20 of the most likely people from the department in a room to brainstorm the problem.

What BA has done in allowing up to 600 very skilled IT workers to be made redundant in the last 18 months - and their work outsourced to cheaper third parties in south Asia - is that you've lost 600 people's experience and knowledge from the airline.

So problems in the past would be resolved by people with the knowledge and experience saying "oh, I remember how we resolved that in 2002", or "that problem is very like what happened in 2005", and so on.

It's that reservoir of knowledge of how the systems interconnect, how to recover from database corruption, how to recover from other problems with the systems. And when you don't have that knowledge you've literally got people staring at blank screens with no idea what to do.

Why did BA get rid of these vital workers?

What's crucial to this is that Alex Cruz, when he came into BA as chief executive, decided to deliberately take a greater risk. It was an equation where they were prepared to swap risk for cost.

That's why we're in this position. They pushed the risk side of the equation in order to reduce the cost side. Their aim was to save €91 million in the running cost by January 2019.

So they've lost all their 'savings' in less than a day's outage. God knows where they're going to end up in terms of the final cost, in terms of compensation and reputation. The final bill is likely to be far greater than any savings they were hoping to make.

We pointed this out to them constantly, at every negotiation. We were trying to save jobs at each point.

So is outsourcing the only problem?

It isn't just about them closing down the IT department and shipping support out to south Asia. They've also been bringing in workers from south Asia on 'tier two' visas to displace workers already at Heathrow.

You're only supposed to use tier two visas because you can't get the skills from within the national economy. The skills are here. They're deliberately making BA IT workers redundant and replacing them with people on tier two visas.

Why is BA using tier two visas?

On average, BA IT workers are on roughly £40,000 a year. Workers on tier two visas - they could be earning a quarter of that. The bosses are relying on the super-exploitation of some of the workforce to undercut conditions for the rest.

It's a lie, Theresa May and the Conservative Party always talking about investing in high-skilled jobs. They allow multinationals and FTSE 100 companies to do what they like and ignore the law.

The GMB has written twice - long letters, chapter and verse - to the Home Office on this issue. The Home Office just says 'BA knows what it's doing, we trust big companies'. We've drawn a blank.

Has there been any political support?

Richard Burgon, he's a pro-Corbyn Labour MP in Leeds - he was very supportive, he got it. John McDonnell was down at a mass meeting we held last year, and Chris Newby and Rob Williams from the Socialist Party were there too.

We had a march. We've been anticipating this for quite some time.

Has the EU had any impact on this?

The [lies from the Labour right, who've eulogised about staying part of the EU to safeguard workers' rights](#), are nonsense.

Being within the EU has not stopped well-paid IT jobs in Britain going in their tens if not hundreds of thousands to south Asia, where wages and conditions for those workers are far worse.

We have struggled to stop this from within our industry because of the anti-trade union laws, which the EU also did nothing to stop. The laws in Britain and the EU are so weak in terms of protecting jobs that BA has been allowed to do whatever it likes.

We thought making people redundant only to replace them with workers paid less than you is technically illegal. However, apparently you can make people redundant on the basis that it's more cost efficient for the owners to replace them with cheaper labour.

This has all been achieved within the EU, aided by legislation from the parliaments in Westminster and Brussels, safeguarded by the European Court of Justice.

How could a Corbyn-led government address this?

We're happy to be working side by side with anybody from anywhere in the world - as long as it's on the same terms and conditions, and the same rates of pay.

Jeremy Corbyn's manifesto promises to "[ensure that any employer wishing to recruit labour from abroad does not undercut workers at home](#)" - because it causes divisions when one workforce is used against another." We agree with that.

But it also commits to "[retaining the benefits of the single market and customs union](#)", which come with all sorts of rules and regulations designed to help company owners push down pay and conditions. So this is a contradiction. He'll have to stand up to the EU and not accept their rules.

Any government that does write new laws can be faced with clever companies navigating their way around them. So fundamentally this also has to be about workplace organisation. Jobs, pay, terms and conditions - ultimately, these must also be defended in the workplace by the workers themselves.

Corbyn's manifesto includes a lot of measures which would facilitate better workplace organising. That's a good start. The leadership of the unions needs to match it with determination to lead effective action.

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Families to have £15,000 debt by 2020 - trade union action needed

John Williams, Cardiff East Socialist Party

The average family will be around £15,000 in debt by 2020, [says the Trade Union Congress](#).

[Over 95%](#) of working-age people in Britain are in work. How come so many are in poverty and debt?

I remember as a young child, both my parents who were in full-time work, and had child benefit for their three children. They were forced to get loans and put themselves in debt continually.

The irony of loans, of course, is that they push poorer people into even more poverty, and make the richest even richer. In my childhood, it got to the point where my parents were too ashamed to answer the door to debt collectors. We were like prisoners in our own home.

A growing number of families across Britain have had to use overdrafts, pay-day loans and credit cards just to make ends meet. How is it that in the fifth wealthiest country in the world [our wages have fallen at a rate comparable to Greece](#)?

Jeremy Corbyn is right to say that it's a "[rigged economy](#)" that the Conservatives defend. Giving tax breaks to big corporations and the super-rich, selling off public services and subsidising private companies to take them over.

Us in the Socialist Party [welcome Corbyn's promised reform](#). A higher minimum wage, forcing the richest to pay more to fund a stronger welfare state, and his workers' charter to give us more power at work.

Whether he wins the election or not, the trade unions will need to take action to make good on all this. A Corbyn-led government would be an important step forward.

But only a collective fightback led by the organised working class can ensure that all of us can lead richer lives - for the many, not the few.

Tories and Blairites in pockets of big business: kick them out!

Tanis Belsham-Wray, Leeds Socialist Party

Are you a boss of an oil company? Make sure the Tories have your best interests at heart and donate. Six of the Tories' largest donors have taken up this smashing offer.

Labour counted their declared donations - [they have given over £390,000 since Teresa May became prime minister](#).

For the effect, look at the Tory party's 2017 manifesto. A promise to give "unprecedented support" to North Sea oil and gas, with a particular focus on fracking.

Bosses and billionaires [gave the Tories £1.6 million](#) in their second week of campaigning. They will be looked after too.

By comparison, in renewable energy the government has been told to "stop dithering" by Labour's shadow business secretary Clive Lewis. And he has a point.

According to [the Hendry Review](#) we can power up to 20% of the UK's energy just from tidal power. In fact, eight of the 20 locations identified as ideal for tidal power are in the UK.

And the Blairites attacking Corbyn have a similar track record. As the Socialist reported back in 2001, all the major privatised energy companies donated to New Labour to push their agendas.

The Socialist Party supports Corbyn's pledge for more public ownership of utility companies, and investment in [300,000 jobs](#) in renewable energy.

But the only way to bring these policies to light is to [kick out the Blairites](#), regardless of the result on the 9 June. We need a party that represents the 99% instead of big business.

Struggle can beat Tories' outlandish 7% cuts to schools

James Kerr, teacher and NUT union activist

The [Conservatives' manifesto](#) pledges a slashing of school budgets unseen in generations.

No wonder [Theresa May was laughed at and heckled](#) during the live TV debate when she attacked Labour's sums on school funding.

Even [the free-market Institute for Fiscal Studies produced a damning assessment](#): "Taking account of forecast growth in pupil [numbers], this equates to a real-terms cut in spending per pupil of 2.8% between 2017-18 and 2021-22.

"Adding this to past cuts makes for a total real-terms cut to per-pupil spending of around 7% over the six years between 2015-16 and 2021-22."

With the vast majority of school spending going on staff, this means fewer teachers and teaching assistants with class sizes set to rise. Already [over 500,000 children are taught in classes over 30](#), the maximum recommended by the National Union of Teachers.

This has a huge impact on the quality of education children experience - but will also inevitably force more teachers out of the profession. More teachers are having to be pragmatic about their choices.

I spoke to one teacher last week who has resigned from his extra responsibility as a head of year because the pressures of that role on top of his teaching duties were becoming unbearable. He can make more money doing a few hours of tutoring on the side.

We will see an exodus of good teachers and a skills shortage if things continue as they are.

May [had the audacity to say](#) she wanted more children taught in 'good' and 'outstanding' Ofsted schools. Home Secretary Amber Rudd, in the wake of the Manchester attack, said she wanted schools to do more to tackle 'radicalisation'.

All these grand election promises - delivered with fewer resources and a worn-out profession? Teachers are renowned for liking mugs, not being them.

We need to kick the Tories out on 8 June, but also gear up for a mass campaign to defend education if they win. Recent [events on funding across the country](#) show the basis for a broad-based campaign. But [the education unions will need to provide the cutting edge](#) to that in the form of industrial action.

It promises to be a long hot summer either way.

Fighting Tory cuts to the schools budget

In many parts of England, education workers, parents and students have united in protest over their opposition to the Tory government slashing spending on schools. Below, the Socialist carries brief reports on several protest events held recently ([more on fighting the schools cuts here](#)).

Jeremy Corbyn has pledged

- Labour will create a unified National Education Service (NES) for England to move towards cradle-to-grave learning that is free at the point of use
 - And will make sure schools are properly resourced by [reversing the Conservatives' cuts](#) and ensuring that all schools have the resources they need
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Carlisle - fund education, squeeze the super-rich

Brent Kennedy, Carlisle Socialist Party

Hundreds of parents, children and teachers protested against government education cuts at a rally in Carlisle city centre on 21 May. It was organised from below at short notice when some headteachers alerted parents to the desperate effects of the planned £3 billion cuts on class sizes as schools are forced to sack teachers and teaching assistants.

All the candidates standing in the general election were given an opportunity to speak to the crowd. Carlisle's sitting Tory MP bottled out as usual.

A Socialist Party speaker called for an increase in funding to pay for a fully free education system. Student fees should be scrapped and loans replaced with a grant, EMA and adult education courses restored.

How can we afford this? By tackling the [£122 billion taxes unpaid each year](#) by big business and the super-rich. And if they still try to get round it then we need to nationalise the banks and close down the tax havens. He finished with a call for a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government carrying out socialist policies.

Meanwhile, a team of socialists collected signatures on a petition against school cuts at the only stall, sold copies of the Socialist, handed out the only leaflet on the issue and held our party banner and placards high - a contribution thankfully received by the crowd and passers-by.

Parents and teachers unite against cuts

Josh Asker, Southampton Socialist Party

Hundreds of parents and their children marched through Southampton on 27 May. They were joined by teaching assistants, teachers, school governors and headteachers from across the city.

Called by '[Fair Funding for All Schools](#)', the protest united the forces of parents with the major education unions.

Parents spoke passionately about the need for quality education and their appreciation for the work of school staff. Parents have also responded enthusiastically to a defiant group of headteachers in the city who are setting deficit budgets, unwilling to make redundancies and steadfastly ensuring that students' needs are met.

This stand from headteachers is an excellent example to Southampton Labour councillors, including council leader and parliamentary candidate Simon Letts who spoke from the platform. He was clearly forced to the left after a Socialist Party member's introduction as "teaching assistant and socialist" was met with enthusiastic cheers.

Events are politicising thousands of people, demonstrated by the numbers of parents putting themselves forwards to speak from the platform for the first time to denounce the Tories and the cuts.

Big rallies in Hackney

Brian Debus, Hackney Socialist Party

As part of the national fair funding education campaign, hundreds of children, parents, teachers, and support staff marched from dozens of schools across Hackney to at least seven different parks for rallies and picnics on 26 May.

In Clissold Park alone ten schools marched there to be greeted by ecstatic cheering from those already present when they arrived. At its peak there were probably 500 gathered in the park with a multitude of homemade placards.

A local parent on the platform talked about how she grew up in Hackney and how the poor-quality schools had been turned into some of the best schools. But all that progress was now under threat from funding cuts.

If I had a vote...

"I'm only 16, so I don't get a vote. But I know what I would do if I had one, I would use it to vote out the Tories", said Lily, a student, at a fair funding picnic in Wanstead, east London.

Her speech had an electrifying effect. Teachers congratulated her on bringing the voice of school and college students to the event.

Other speakers included teachers, parents and local campaigners fighting for funding of education services. Despite the Tory government decimating school funding, it's clear that communities aren't going to take the attack lying down. Unionised teachers and angry parents are gearing up for a fight.

1,000 join march in Tower Hamlets

On 24 May 'The Big School Assembly' took place in Mile End Park in Tower Hamlets, east London. The park was soon filled with over 1,000 people demonstrating with determination against Tory government school cuts and wanting a change!

It was a fantastic demonstration of our local community's collective strength. If these cuts go ahead, [Tower Hamlets schools will lose approximately £33 million](#) funding by 2019 - £908 per pupil and 891 teachers, according to the NUT.

Teachers from the local schools, alongside students and parents, marched into the park. They carried homemade signs and placards with slogans against school cuts and quite a few against Theresa May and the Tories.

Similar protests were called in other parts of the country too. This highlights the need for coordinated action. It also raises the necessity of the trade unions playing a central role in facilitating this.

A national demonstration similar to the one in defence of our NHS on 4 March could be equally successful and fill all campaigners with confidence to continue and escalate action in order to stop the Tories making these cuts.

Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

Hundreds protest in Waltham Forest

Kevin Parslow Waltham Forest Socialist Party

500 parents and primary school children marched from schools to Walthamstow Town Square on 26 May to protest against the threat of losing 500 teaching staff in Waltham Forest, north east London.

This is despite, as the local National Union of Teachers branch pointed out, [the council having £70 million in reserves](#).

There was a determined and angry mood, which even induced [right-wing Labour MP and candidate Stella Creasy](#) to lead the chanting of "No ifs! No buts! No education cuts!"

Come 9 June, parents, students and education workers will see if Creasy will still be cheering the campaign, but they and the trade unions must organise to fight back against the threat to education in the borough.

South Africa: burning anger - socialists fighting for new mass workers' party

Alec Thraves reports from Pretoria

The constant smoke from wood fires, as township residents attempt to keep warm from the freezing winter nights in their flimsy tin shacks, is just one of the reasons for the night-time smog surrounding Johannesburg.

The other reason is the flames of class struggle that are burning across the townships of South Africa in protest at the failure of [the corrupt African National Congress \(ANC\) government](#) to address the grinding

poverty and inequality that not only still exists - post-apartheid - but is actually widening.

Community protests around the lack of progress in building new homes to replace the thousands of informal settlements, and the lack of basic service delivery such as access to water, electricity and refuse collections, have taken place regularly in black townships since the ANC government came to power in 1994.

But the latest protests have become more violent and are spreading to townships of communities historically classified as 'coloured' by the apartheid regime (including those of mixed-race descent), such as Eldorado Park (Eldo's), which is adjacent to Soweto in Johannesburg.

The roads of Eldo's still bear the marks of the violent protests that took place earlier this month which left residents prisoners in their own community.

Burning road blocks on the highway and main arteries in and out of Eldo's prevented any movement, allowing looters to raid and burn down stores, warehouses and petrol stations.

The media initially claimed these protests were a result of alleged discrimination against the coloured community of Eldo's over the preference given to neighbouring black townships in the building and allocation of housing.

The shortage of housing remains a massive problem with some two-bedroom flats in Eldo's accommodating 27 occupants. However, such conditions are not unique to Eldo's but are also prevalent in many black townships as local [Workers and Socialist Party \(Wasp - CWI South Africa\)](#) members pointed out in a community meeting following the protests.

According to residents, it was not just the housing issues that sparked the protests but the acute social problems in the township, especially the rise in drug and alcohol abuse and the increasing violent attacks on women which the police ignore. This was grotesquely confirmed a few days later when a woman was shot dead in a botched carjacking.

Resistance

Our Wasp members who are residents in Eldo's are playing an important role in organising community action, with concrete demands that can offer a real alternative and undermine the criminal element who have used the justifiable anger of the community to further their own agenda.

As well as convening future action meetings to pressure local, regional and national politicians, steps are also being taken to link up with other townships across Johannesburg. The ultimate aim is to [establish a national federation of community campaigns](#), armed with a socialist programme to deliver the homes and services so desperately needed.

The increased levels of violence, the blocking and burning of tyres on roads and the burning down of buildings are starting to become more common as 'normal protests' are ignored by the authorities who only seem to respond when the flames of anger are burning high.

Unless counteracted with united action under a socialist programme this tendency could develop further, even in the trade union struggle.

An [#OutsourcingMustFall](#) (OMF) strike meeting in Pretoria recently voted for strike action, protesting over management at the Twashane University of Technology (TUT) renegeing on its promises of full-time contracts for outsourced workers.

Led by Wasp and OMF activists, thousands of unorganised workers are being organised into the trade union movement - including the TUT workers, who won significant victories which management now wants to claw back.

The leadership has led a determined campaign to defeat such attacks but the dangers of an angry and frustrated workforce were shown when one of the affected workers asked who was bringing the tyres to the picket line!

This comment, dismissed by the leadership and members, nevertheless shows the urgent need for a political alternative to the bankrupt ANC.

The recent launch of the South African Federation of Trade Unions (Saftu) - a new trade union federation [following a split in the Cosatu federation](#) with supporters of Jacob Zuma (the country's president) - has the potential to assist in the creation of a new mass workers' party.

This is despite attempts by the Numsa (metalworkers' union) dominated leadership of Saftu to make the new federation 'politically independent but not apolitical' after the experience of the ANC-dominated Cosatu.

Support

However, when a leading Wasp member (as a delegate from OMF), addressed the launch conference demanding that Saftu urgently proceed in creating a new mass workers' party in preparation for the 2019 general election, he was loudly and enthusiastically applauded by the vast majority of rank-and-file delegates - particularly those from Numsa.

All these issues were discussed and debated at the recent Wasp national committee - where delegates from Eastern Cape, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Limpopo, Johannesburg and Pretoria grappled with the strategy and tactics necessary to intervene in the mighty class battles taking place and the building of Wasp across the country.

Despite the enormous amount of work on the shoulders of the leadership of Wasp, its international outlook and approach was to the fore in all discussions. In particular its awareness and support for [the 'Jobstown Not Guilty' campaign in Ireland](#) - sending solidarity under the banner of 'Protest is not a Crime (even in South Africa)!'.

PCS conference: Confident delegates back fighting strategy and Jeremy Corbyn

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

PCS conference took place in the middle of the general election and delegates voted for motions that mean PCS will do all it can to work for a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell was due to address conference but had to give apologies because of [the Manchester bombing](#).

PCS national president reelected for a 16th term and Socialist Party member Janice Godrich opened conference by condemning the attack and giving PCS's condolences and support to those affected. PCS would also stand against any attempt to whip up division.

Socialist Party member Katrine Williams set out the nuanced approach in relation to the general election and speech after speech echoed the call for a vote for a Corbyn-led government.

The conference in Brighton was one of confidence and defiance. This was demonstrated at the outset as [strikers from the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) (EHRC) were welcomed with a standing ovation for their heroic battle against an employer who sacked them by email.

Fighting programme

Delegates voted for policies which arm our union with a strong, fighting agenda to tackle the challenges we face. This includes a strategy to fight the government estates programme, a programme designed to cut jobs,

close offices, reduce services and turn huge areas of society into nothing more than ghost towns. A strategy to build co-ordinated action to defeat the 1% pay cap and a strategy to protect jobs were also agreed.

The entire mood was one of hope and confidence which was reflected in the attendance and contributions at the left meetings.

[PCS Left Unity](#) met in all major departmental groups; attendance was high and contributions were enthusiastic. A huge attendance at the national Left Unity meeting heard Mark Serwotka, Carmel Gates from PCS' sister union in Northern Ireland Nipsa, and a striker from EHRC.

At a well-attended official National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) fringe meeting chaired by Katrine Williams, delegates heard from PCS assistant general secretary Chris Baugh, PCS DWP president and newly elected national vice-president Fran Heathcote and NSSN chair Rob Williams.

The Socialist Party public meeting chaired by Janice Godrich heard from Terry Adams on the linked issues of [state surveillance, John Macreadie, and the growth of Militant](#). In conference itself Mark Sewotka moved the national executive motion on the state surveillance of CPSA. He said that John Macreadie had been targeted because he was part of the Militant Tendency as were others such as Chris Baugh who was part of a vicious Sun article.

Peter Taaffe explained that the Socialist Party is calling for [support for a Corbyn-led government](#). Carmel Gates gave an update on the Jobstown Not Guilty trial. A motion in support was passed by unanimously after being moved by Dave Semple. The meeting raised over £700.

The fact that the conference was so well attended despite the attacks on facility time, with most delegates having to take leave, demonstrates the confidence activists and members have in their union.

- [Read a report from the PCS DWP group conference here](#)

Certification officer confirms that Unison did break the rules in general secretary election

Roger Bannister, Unison general secretary election candidate 2015

Following the reelection of right-wing incumbent general secretary Dave Prentis in December 2015, three of the candidates who opposed him - myself, Unison local government head Heather Wakefield, John Burgess - Greater London NEC member Jon Rogers, and others [complained to the certification officer about rule breaking by the pro-Prentis camp](#) during the election.

The [certification officer](#) is a government official that maintains a register of trade unions and employers' organisations, and has certain powers to enforce the upholding of the rules of a trade union.

While the complaints were varied, [the most important one was common to all applicants](#) - that a staff meeting called by the regional secretary of Greater London in order to tell staff to campaign for Prentis breached the rule that forbids the use of Unison resources, including staff time, to campaign for any candidate in the election. This complaint was upheld.

A similar complaint about the misuse of another staff meeting in London was partially upheld, on the basis that the Greater London regional secretary told her subordinate staff that Prentis was the only credible candidate.

The ruling by the assistant certification officer Judge Mary Stacey, is in places damning of Unison. Comments like "the collusion of the Greater London regional management team and other staff members was deeply concerning", "the demonisation of Ms Wakefield", "the attempted humiliation of Mr Rogers", indicate that the true nature of the Unison bureaucracy was understood.

Despite this, it is unfortunate that the certification officer did not see fit to order Unison to rerun the election, largely on the basis of insufficient evidence that the problem went beyond the Greater London region.

[Unison activists should read this ruling](#), and prepare to raise the important issues in it at Unison's forthcoming conference, ensuring in the process that it is properly understood by delegates, in the face of [a spin campaign by the bureaucracy](#) to make it look like a positive outcome for them!

Gains for left in Unison national executive election

Socialist Party members in Unison

The outcome of the Unison national executive council (NEC) elections is significant. At the time of the general secretary election in 2015 [the Socialist Party recognised the significance of the split in the bureaucracy and a split in a wing of former supporters of Dave Prentis](#), Unison general secretary. We proposed seeking one candidate to try and defeat Prentis.

[The outcome of that election further confirmed this](#) as, for the first time, Prentis failed to secure over 50% of the vote.

It was off the back of this that we took the initiative to reach out to other candidates to see if we could gather all anti-Prentis forces, leading to the launch of Unison Action at last year's Unison conference. We set ourselves a first target of pulling together a wider left slate and had 47 candidates standing under the Unison Action banner.

In the NEC elections, for the first time, the Prentis camp has not won a majority of the NEC seats (30 out of 67).

Unison Action increased the left's vote to 29 seats. The Socialist Party increased our numbers on the NEC to seven.

It is clear from the positive response that many left activists are very enthused by the election result. It shows it's not all about numbers but the perception of an organisation that's achieved success at its first outing and will only help it to grow if it adopts a fighting and democratic programme.

Shortened GMB conference to hear pro-Corbyn and anti-austerity motions

Kim Hendry, GMB union PCS branch, GMB conference delegate (personal capacity)

GMB annual congress starts on 4 June, in Plymouth.

Thanks to Theresa May, it will be a rushed affair, finishing two days early to allow delegates from the Labour-affiliated union to return home to get the vote out for Corbyn.

Lay delegates will now hear a huge range of motions, with very limited debate - speakers will only be allowed where there is opposition - on GMB organisation, UK employment and economic policy, Labour Party, racism and fascism, the EU and Brexit, the NHS, housing and other social policy issues, and international issues.

There are a number of fairly militant motions, some of which contain demands overlapping with Socialist Party policies.

The Labour Party motions are generally pro-Corbyn, with several [criticising last year's mass suspensions](#). Calls include [mandatory reselection of MPs](#) at each election, opening up the Labour Party to wider support and ending the witch-hunts.

Numerous motions oppose [the Tories' savage NHS sustainability and transformation plans \(STPs\)](#) - demands include affiliating to the Health Campaigns Together group, national industrial action and working with other unions.

A couple of anti-austerity motions from Scotland urge GMB local government branches to mobilise against the cuts at local level. However, this is primarily [an attack on the SNP-run Scottish government](#) and councils - no motions similarly criticise Labour councils in England and Wales. The motion I moved successfully last year, [demanding GMB calls on Labour councils not to impose Tory cuts](#), has been ignored.

As you'd expect, there's a huge number of motions on the implications of Brexit for British and migrant workers - and delegates are currently awaiting a special leadership report which will be debated at congress. There are also progressive motions about fighting fascism and Islamophobia and protecting the rights of migrant and EU workers.

Strike action to save Sheffield Jobcentre

Alistair Tice, Sheffield Socialist Party

Government workers sometimes get a hard time because [they have to carry out Tory policies that hurt benefit claimants](#) and welfare recipients.

But in Sheffield, the [staff at the Eastern Avenue Jobcentre who are PCS civil servants' union members, are taking strike action](#), not just to save their own jobs, but to keep a local office open and to continue providing a service in one of the poorest areas of the city.

If this office closes, then thousands of service users will face the hassle, time and expense of travelling into the city centre with increased risk of benefit sanctions for lateness or non-attendance.

48 PCS members voted 92% in favour of strike action with turnouts exceeding the new legal threshold required by the Tories' latest anti-trade union laws. The first one-day strike will be on 2 June. And at a very well attended dinnertime car park meeting, members voted for a further one-week strike from 12 June.

This industrial action follows a sustained campaign carried out by the office reps and members and the Sheffield PCS DWP branch, linking up with Unite Community, and with the support of the Socialist Party, Disabled People Against Cuts, and other labour and trade union activists.

The campaign also has the full support of the PCS DWP group executive.

Since the proposed closure announcement in January, the campaign has organised several protests outside the office, a film showing of '[I, Daniel Blake](#)' in the local community, sent reps to the PCS lobby of parliament, and got supportive motions carried at Sheffield trade union council and Sheffield city council.

- Please send messages of support to PCS branch sec Tom Bishell at tombishell@yahoo.co.uk
 - Make a one-off donation or set up a standing order to the branch hardship fund (560009, 22371214, PCS Hardship fund (DWP Sheffield))
-

Union stops finance for anti-Corbyn Labour MP

Clive Walder, CWU union, Birmingham, Black Country and Worcester branch (personal capacity)

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has withdrawn campaign funding from [the right-wing Labour MP for Birmingham Yardley, Jess Phillips](#).

Phillips has made a number of outspoken criticisms of the Labour left and Jeremy Corbyn in particular. Most famously she said of Corbyn: "[I won't knife you in the back, I will knife you in the front.](#)"

The CWU donated more than £8,000 to her campaign at the last election. Despite Labour only gaining that seat at the last election, and despite it being a seat that could be lost to the Lib Dems, the union has decided that enough is enough.

Regional Secretary Kate Hudson said that Phillips' outbursts "contradict the positive message that the CWU are communicating to our members" and "now is not the time to be publicly relaying unconstructive messages, especially messages that may discourage our members to vote Labour."

Trade unionists and socialists should be encouraged that a major union which has been vocally backing Corbyn is prepared to confront right-wing Labour MPs in this way.

Manchester housing workers' strike solid

The three-day a week [strike by housing maintenance workers in Manchester](#) is continuing. Workers expect a long battle, one for which they are prepared.

Pickets are rightly outraged at the huge disparities - £5,000, £6,000 even £7,000 - in the pay of workers doing exactly the same work in the same city. Petty penny-pinching, such as demanding that workers pay for damaged screens on the hand-held electronic PDAs which direct them to their jobs, only adds insult to injury.

Management are using sub-contractors on strike days, and the use of PDAs make this form of strike-breaking easier, but it's costing employer Mears a fortune.

The dispute has arisen from decisions by the Labour council to outsource housing maintenance - at a time when many councils are considering bringing it back in house.

Colin Pitt, Unite steward, is a Labour Party member but is severely critical of Manchester's Labour administration: "We have sat down on two occasions with the council's deputy leader who was made aware in no uncertain terms where the dispute would end up. He did not even respond to our last meeting and six weeks later simply handed the contract to the company we're in dispute with."

Mears workers have seen too much of the cosy relationship between Labour councillors on inflated allowances and housing association chiefs on six-figure salaries. The Blairite councillors in Manchester town hall jumped on the 'Northern Powerhouse' bandwagon, [despite George Osborne's cuts and privatisation agenda](#). Jeremy Corbyn's campaign has much to attract workers but the actions of Labour councillors are making it harder, not easier, to win.

Paul Gerrard, Salford Socialist Party

Bully bosses' zero-hour backdown

What does it feel like to feel worthless at work? Well it goes like this. You work very hard, undergo extensive training, gain additional educational qualifications in your spare time and go the extra mile every day as a learning support worker to support your students.

Then one day along come comfortable, senior managers who say that your job - with sick pay, holiday payments, a pension and half decent working conditions - is now only worth a zero-hour contract.

Your pay may not be brilliant but at least you have some basic security and you think your job is worthwhile. Wrong. It is not because they now value you as worth less than them. They even have the gall to say that imposing zero-hour contracts is fraught with moral and ethical dilemmas for them.

I spoke with our GMB union rep about the threat of zero-hour contracts. He met with management and was told that there are no proposals at present, there's nothing on the table and nothing in writing and that the contracts of all staff presently employed there are secure and will continue as normal. It's clear they have backed down as soon as they were approached by the union. It's also come to light that the agency the management was suggesting be used, Randwick, has just been ditched by the college we are merging with as 'not fit for purpose'.

The Socialist Party [fights to scrap zero-hour contracts](#), and guarantee full-time hours and permanent jobs for all who want them. We back [Jeremy Corbyn's pledge to abolish zero-hours](#) if elected on 8 June.

A learning support worker, south London

National Shop Stewards Network conference 2017

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
-

Fight the Tory cuts and changes that take mental health back to Bedlam

The Tories' manifesto pledges changes to the Mental Health Act to "tackle unnecessary detention". NHS mental health nurse 'Harriet Ryman' responds.

Mental illness has always been present in society but what has differed throughout the ages is how sufferers were treated.

In '[The History of Madness](#)' Michel Foucault describes how in the 14th century the 'lunatic' was banished to the outskirts of towns. In 1815 a House of Commons report revealed that the Bethlem hospital "showed its lunatics every Sunday for one penny" and it received up to 96,000 visitors each year.

Thankfully these barbaric practices have long since been kicked into the dustbin of history. Understanding of mental illness is slowly increasing and the development of treatments, changes in the law and the '[recovery model](#)' devised by pioneering researchers Boardman, Slade et al guides mental health professionals towards enabling those with mental illness to manage their conditions themselves and live full lives as valued members of society.

Most mental health workers would concede that [the system is far from perfect](#). But there can be no denying that advances have been made in the care and treatment of those suffering from mental illness. However, cuts to services are the biggest threat in rolling back the advances that have been made.

The [Mental Health Act 1983](#) was brought into being with the specific notion of protecting the dignity and safety of those whose mental health relapse causes them to pose a risk to themselves or others.

No mental health professional would wish to admit someone to hospital against their will, but there are occasions when such an admission - or 'sectioning' - can literally be a life-saving measure.

The public duty to provide access to appropriate treatment and care is a mainstay of the act. In other words a person cannot be sectioned unless a hospital bed is identified and there is a plan in place to provide care and treatment.

The act cannot be applied to anyone unless three highly trained and experienced mental health professionals agree, and the least restrictive option, like treatment in the community, is always considered where this is safe to do so.

All sectioned patients have the right of appeal and to legal representation. Social services currently have a legal duty to provide money for community care to any patient who has been detained.

While the Mental Health Act has its flaws, Theresa May's claim that unnecessary detentions take place is ignorant and ill-founded.

Strict criteria are applied by highly skilled professionals before a person can be subjected to mental health legislation and it is insulting to psychiatrists and mental health professionals to suggest that they are not carrying out their functions correctly.

It is important to highlight that the rise in detentions is occurring against the backdrop of swingeing austerity policies which are placing more pressure on the health and wellbeing of people than ever before.

The suggestions that 'funding the Samaritans' and 'talking to children in schools' will somehow replace the current legislation underpinning the care and treatment of the seriously mentally ill, highlights that the Tory party is not competent to meddle with the Mental Health Act.

Tory claims

The discrimination that the Tories claim they are concerned about is a feature of capitalist society itself and does not just occur in the mental health system.

Tory party cash perks for big business while cutting vital public services ensure that the richest in society are always treated more favourably than workers. The redistribution of wealth and resources in society would go a long way towards tackling the discrimination that May speaks of.

Although [mental illness can strike anyone](#) from any class, those of us who work within mental health services note that the majority of our patients comprise the poorest in society and that poverty and lack of access to basic decent resources perpetuate mental ill health and lead to repeated admissions to hospital.

The Tories have no plans to address the poverty and material hardship that impede recovery from mental illness. In fact, the rates of mental illness and other social ills are likely to increase under a government delivering policies that widen inequality in society.

The need for service users, carers and trade unionists working in mental health services to unite against the Tories is more pressing than ever.

No one should be fooled into believing that Tory plans to meddle with the Mental Health Act are progressive. These plans will only be utilised to support and accelerate the drive to slash and burn services for the mentally ill.

We should be in no doubt that if mental health legislation is eroded, the legal duty of the state to provide funding, care and treatment for seriously mentally ill people will be eroded also.

If someone suffering from mental illness is lucky enough to have a carer, this person will be left carrying the sole responsibility to treat and contain the risks inherent in mental health crises.

In the absence of a carer, the police or prison cell will become the method of choice to contain the person suffering a relapse of their mental condition.

Mental health workers are united with service users and carers in seeking genuine progressive changes within the mental health system. We must fight together to stop the Tory cuts and privatisation that risk driving mental health provision back to the dark days of Bedlam.

Don't wait! Join the Socialist Party to transform society

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party national organiser

Whatever happens on 8 June, we need the biggest socialist voice possible to continue the fight to transform society.

Theresa May's snap general election might just bite back! It has [opened the door to some very dangerous ideas](#) - dangerous, that is, to the Tories and the capitalist class of billionaire bankers and bosses whose interests they represent.

Corbyn's manifesto has kindled and rekindled excitement that some of the basic but essential foundations of a society capable of meeting our needs - free education, public ownership, trade union rights, council housing - are possible.

Of course not everyone is excited about the prospect of ending foodbank Britain. The [Tory-dominated press and media](#), the Tories themselves and the Tories within the Labour Party aka the Blairites (who, although largely quiet at the moment, are hoping to kick Corbyn out) will do all they can to block these ideas from becoming a reality.

The Socialist Party has a proven record of mobilising working class and young people to fight in defence of rights and living standards - from the 18 million-strong [movement that defeated Thatcher and her poll tax](#), to [the struggle in Liverpool that won money from Thatcher](#) to build 5,000 council homes, to the east London families who [declared they would not budge from Butterfields and defeated a rip-off landlord's](#) plans to evict them.

By joining the Socialist Party you are joining the most determined and effective socialist organisation in the country. Our branches meet every week for inclusive and democratic political discussion and to organise our forces to work with campaigns, trade unions and activists in our communities.

We act collectively to bring confidence in the potential power of the working class when organised to all the movements we participate in - and that is how we can win.

[Don't wait - join us!](#)

Electric atmosphere at Jeremy Corbyn rally in Glasgow

Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland

More than 1,200 people packed into the Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow to hear Jeremy Corbyn speak at a rally over the bank holiday weekend.

The turnout was the largest at a Corbyn rally in Scotland since his election as Labour leader. A broad section of Labour activists from all over the country were in attendance, plus other young people and workers enthused by [the radical left policies in Corbyn's manifesto](#).

The event was a Scottish Labour campaign rally but Socialist Party Scotland spoke to a number of people who are not Labour members and were involved in [the 2014 independence campaign](#).

Some had supported the Scottish National Party (SNP) previously and feel pulled towards Corbyn as they are interested in socialist ideas and energised by his left programme. Nevertheless, this layer do disagree with, or at least are sceptical towards, Corbyn's position on the question of independence.

The rally had an intensely electric atmosphere. There was a sense of urgency about getting rid of the Tories. The need to support Jeremy as a principled fighter against the establishment was vocalised by many attendees.

There was also a euphoric feeling among some Labour activists that such a large rally had taken place in Glasgow, a city where the SNP has made big electoral gains recently.

Christopher Rimicans, the 18-year-old Labour candidate for North Ayrshire and Arran, got huge applause when he began his speech by saying: "I am a socialist". Christopher also made a call for a publicly owned rail network, an end to privatisation and profiteering, and taxation of the wealthy 1% in society.

Massive applause

Corbyn got massive applause when he said: "This is a historic opportunity to build the kind of society that transfers wealth and power to the many. [We have committed to paying people a real living wage of £10 an hour](#); a policy that I know will benefit nearly half a million people in Scotland.

"We have vowed to ban zero-hours contracts; which will benefit nearly 60,000 Scottish workers who currently don't know how much they will earn from one week to the next. That insecurity, it's got to stop."

Corbyn rightly attacked the SNP government for failing to use their financial powers to fight austerity and tax the rich. However as highlighted in Socialist Party Scotland's material, Labour in councils in Scotland have implemented Tory cuts too.

Corbyn got loud cheers from sections of the audience when he attacked Nicola Sturgeon who is "more interested in another independence referendum than opposing austerity or standing up against the Tories".

But it jarred with some. Many [working class and young people who are generally sympathetic to Corbyn in Scotland still see independence as a possible way out of austerity](#) and support the democratic right to a second referendum.

Socialist Party Scotland intervened with our new issue of the Socialist newspaper, leaflets and our socialist general election manifesto.

We received a very warm reception to our position of supporting Corbyn winning the election on socialist policies. We sold 55 copies of the Socialist and got details from young people who want more information on the party.

Why I joined: "To fight for an end to tuition fees and cuts"

Rebecca Storey, Newcastle Socialist Party

I joined the Socialist Party after being attracted to a campaign stall near my university campus with a petition against tuition fees. As someone who was new to politics it was intriguing to see [a party fighting against the never-ending fee hikes and cuts to student loans and grants](#).

After attending a few meetings and witnessing the analysis of the failing capitalist system I decided to attend [the Socialism event in London in November 2016](#) - that was a real turning point for me. To witness and be a part of discussions about Trump's rise to power, the ongoing crisis in Syria and Black Lives Matter movement was unbelievably riveting and eye opening. For me, being in a room full of like-minded people who genuinely represent and put the interests of the many before the profits of a few was utterly motivating and inspiring.

The current system we are a part of is failing us; it promotes endless austerity measures and increases the gap between the wealthy and the poor. This party recognises the need for social change, and looks at the root problem straight in the eye. We unapologetically say no to poverty, racism, and terror and we aim to unite workers and organise a mass movement.

This is not an easy fight. As history tells us, acquiring social change is never easy, but in order to create change you have to be the change!

So to anyone reading this, I encourage you to [subscribe to the Socialist](#), read our analysis of events and [get in touch!](#)

Manchester socialists campaigning against war, racism, terrorism and austerity

Following [the horrific Manchester bombing on 22 May](#), Socialist Party members in the city have been campaigning against terrorism, war, racism and austerity and continuing our general election campaigning.

Jack Metcalf at the Socialist Party's campaign stall on 27 May said:

We're doing our regular stall in Market Street, campaigning against war, racism, terrorism and austerity.

We've been having a really good response today, people are still reeling a bit from the attacks but people are coming together in solidarity and are looking towards the future, looking towards the election and looking towards solutions so we can end this cycle of violence.

Looking towards funding our policing, funding our NHS and the vital services that are threatened with closure which were heavily used during the attack to a point that they wouldn't be able to do so again after the cuts which have been promised.

We've had a really good response from people. We had a bunch of lads really enthusiastically telling us what they thought of Theresa May, so much so that they nearly knocked our stall over!

In general we've had a really warm response, people really looking towards anti-austerity politics. £10 an hour, trade union rights, the NHS and renationalisation are all back on the agenda. It's what people are talking about and they're really pleased to see us saying it.

This comment featured on the Socialist Party's weekly elections Facebook broadcast on 28 May. See [the Socialist Party's Facebook page](#) to watch this and other broadcasts.

Socialist Party hosts pro-Corbyn rally in Southampton

The Socialist Party hosted so far the only pro-Corbyn election rally in Southampton following a protest against education cuts on 27 May.

Here it was discussed exactly what measures Corbyn needs to take to win and [then to put his manifesto into action](#).

Speakers included Mick Tosh, RMT Wessex regional organiser, Sarah Wrack, editor of the Socialist, and local Socialist Party activist Josh Asker.

It was made clear that Corbyn needs to harness the enthusiastic movement that he has around him beyond the election.

[Whatever the outcome, the lid cannot be put back on his manifesto](#) and the struggles against austerity, including against school cuts, need a socialist solution.

Student occupation at Chelsea College of Arts

University management rethinks restructure

Marianne Murray, Chelsea College of Arts student

On 24 May, a meeting of students was held at Chelsea College of Arts to discuss a plan of action to oppose a 'restructure' of University of the Arts London (UAL) colleges at Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon (CCW).

Faced with huge cuts to workshops, courses and staff, we decided to occupy a space at Chelsea. Ten people from across CCW, the Arts Students Union, UAL and other students acting in solidarity, secured the space and occupied overnight.

The following day we were met with hostility and aggression by security staff, who would not allow fellow students to pass us food. Security physically blocked students from entering the occupation, grabbing one student.

We were unable to exit the room to use facilities and re-enter the occupation, as more and more security staff were brought in and a metal barrier was placed around the door.

Despite being unable to let more people in to occupy, we received huge support from those outside - including anonymous messages of support from workers at UAL and banner drops orchestrated by fellow students.

The planned restructure was first brought to our attention in a recent video sent out to students by Pro-Vice Chancellor David Crow outlining his 'vision' for the three colleges. Most worryingly he stated that my university, Chelsea, will be about 'international markets'.

The video gives a glossy, corporate insight into the plans to change the universities without student or staff knowledge or input.

Eight fine art research staff have been made redundant, and university management has been emailing all staff offering 'voluntary redundancies'.

This has created an atmosphere of fear among staff, who are scared to speak against the cuts for fear of losing their jobs. Many are on rolling contracts, effectively zero-hour contracts, with little job security. Still more staff have been left in the dark about the changes.

Due to the difficult conditions of the occupation, we decided to end 24 hours after we started with a statement, after speaking to management and securing a two-week extension to the decision to cut any jobs.

We will continue to take direct action against these cuts as well as negotiating to save jobs and facilities for all future students and staff.

North Bristol: angry march in defence of the NHS

Roger Thomas, North Bristol Socialist Party

On Saturday 27 May, hundreds gathered at Horfield Common in Bristol North West, a marginal seat held by the Tories, close to Southmead Hospital, to demonstrate [in defence of the National Health Service](#). A short rally was followed by a march down Gloucester Road.

A real mood of anger at the Tories and a determination to kick them out was boosted by the constant honking of cars and the greetings of local shoppers - many of who joined in.

Chanting and singing, marchers snaked their way through this crowded local shopping area to rally at St Andrews Park where radical film director Ken Loach spoke of the founding principles of the NHS.

A junior doctor spelt out the [devastating effect of cuts on NHS services](#) and the real threat if the Tories are returned - with privatisation set to sweep away the last vestiges of the health service.

No one was left with any doubt about the need to kick out May and her stooges and the crucial importance of Corbyn's message of support for public services and for the hard-pressed workers who keep the services going.

Book launch meeting: showing the Socialist Party's active participation in events past and present

Helen Pattison, London Socialist Party youth and student organiser

Over 100 people gathered in central London for the launch of [Peter Taaffe's new book, *From Militant to the Socialist Party*](#). Attendees commented while they got their books signed by the author how timely the book was with the general election just weeks away. The book covers developments from the [New Labour takeover of the Labour Party](#) to the run-up to the world economic crisis of 2007-08, and is the sequel to [The Rise of Militant](#).

Guest speakers from [Teen Voice UK](#), a group of school students campaigning for votes at 16 and from [One Housing Group Tenants Association, who are fighting a 40% rent rise](#), got huge rounds of applause and both thanked Socialist Party members for our support in their campaigns.

A number of striking workers wanted to speak at the meeting but had to instead send messages of solidarity. The chair, London Socialist Party secretary Paula Mitchell, commented on the anger of working class people in London, from the [Picturehouse cinema workers fighting for the living wage](#) to the [Equality and Human Rights Commission PCS union members who saw eight members sacked via email](#).

There was also a message from a member of [the London Bridge Three, who were dismissed after coming to the aid of a pregnant colleague](#) and RMT member who was assaulted at work by a member of the public. Management haven't tried to find the perpetrator and instead have victimised staff who came to the woman's aid.

Over £1,600 was raised in a Fighting Fund appeal and copies of the new book were snapped up.

Closing the meeting Peter appealed for people to [buy and read the book](#), which tracks the Socialist Party's active participation in events. It will spark debate about where the forces able to challenge and change society will come from and how a socialist world can be achieved.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 27 May 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Women and austerity - scrap the 'rape clause'

Amy Cousens, Leeds Socialist Party

The austerity measures implemented since 2010 [have disproportionately affected women](#).

Specialist [services for victims and survivors of sexual and domestic violence have been decimated](#), cutting off lifelines for many. Now, as a supposed protection against their vicious benefit cuts, [the Tories have implemented a 'rape clause'](#).

This is an exception allowing benefits to be claimed for more than two children if the third is a product of rape - [but only if the woman can 'prove' this is the case](#). This policy amplifies a culture which places blame and suspicion onto victims.

Tackling violence against women must include fully funding services that both support victims and survivors and work on preventative educational measures. It should mean a mass programme to build affordable social housing, decent wages and a universal benefit system so that those experiencing violence can be economically independent and more able to leave violent relationships.

In Yorkshire, Socialist Party members have been organising with others under the banner of 'Women's Lives Matter'. More than 50 activists have been involved during the election campaign, particularly focussing on the Tory rape clause.

Corbyn has said a government under his leadership would repeal the rape clause. We have asked all Corbyn-supporting MPs to make statements and to attend our demonstration on 2 June. Get involved - [#scrapthetoryrapeclause](#)

June 1917: when workers in Britain first tried to form soviets

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

When people think of the year 1917 and the 'soviets' - democratic councils of workers and soldiers - they are inevitably drawn towards [the magnificent events of the Russian revolution](#).

Less known is that the labour movement in Britain also gathered that year attempting to establish its own 'councils of workers' and soldiers' deputies'.

On 3 June 1917, 1,150 delegates gathered in Leeds to discuss the lessons of [the February revolution which overthrew the tsar](#) in Russia.

Included on the convention platform was future Labour prime minister Ramsay MacDonald on the one hand, and on the other radicals who would play important roles in the as yet unfounded Communist Party such as Tom Mann and Willie Gallacher.

It was far from the first labour movement event in Britain to hail the revolution. Workers welcomed the fall of the tsar, the despotic ruler of Russia, and sought to press their own demands for democracy and civil liberties across Europe.

Similarly welcomed was the declaration of the new soviet government after the second revolution in October for a "peace without annexations or indemnities, on the basis of the self-determination of peoples," bringing an end to the First World War.

The revolution was the theme of many of the traditional May Day demonstrations. 70,000 marched in Glasgow and 50,000 in London on such themes.

Leeds itself had its own May Day demonstration on these lines, and also hosted the conference of the Independent Labour Party, whose discussions had centred on this event.

That the gathering was taking place at all terrified the authorities. They sought to cancel the hotel bookings of the delegates, and forced them to move from their original venue in the town to the Coliseum (now the O2 Academy).

The centrepiece demand - for the formation of workers' councils - was the most controversial, and in all likelihood the one that the authorities feared the most. Yet this did not come to fruition.

District conferences, which the convention had called for, found venues cancelled, meetings banned and other obstacles. The provisional committee elected by the convention was not up to the task set for it of building this movement.

As Bertrand Russell commented, it "was a wonderful occasion, but a little disappointing from the point of view of practical outcomes. Snowden and MacDonald and Anderson are not the right men - they have not the sense for swift dramatic action."

Yet this was not the end of the story. 'Councils of action' were later formed against British support for the reactionary 'Whites' attacking the Russian revolution.

This included the famed 'blacking' of the SS Jolly George - dockers refusing to load it - because it was taking weapons to Poland to arm the Whites.

[Such organisations rose again in Britain's 1926 general strike.](#) In parts of the country, they began to form a rival government to the Tories. Disgracefully, the leaders of the Trade Union Congress scuppered that movement.

But 'soviets' or 'councils of action' remain a key weapon of the workers' movement when it enters into the struggle for power with the capitalists.

Heroic socialist fighters who sang as ship went down - new memorial

Friends of Ciudad de Barcelona

'Solidarity Park' is a new community memorial project in Catalonia about the sinking of the ocean liner 'Ciudad de Barcelona' on 30 May 1937 [during the Spanish Civil War](#).

The ship was carrying over 300 'International Brigade' combatants - socialists who had volunteered to fight General Franco's fascists.

Rob MacDonald, a member of [the Socialist Party's sister party in the Spanish state](#), is the project's leading artist. "Hearing that these brigadistas sang the Internationale as they drowned, especially one with the same

name as me, was stunning.

"I knew then we needed a memorial to tell their story. It's common to blame immigrants, refugees and foreigners for today's problems - that is so dangerous!

"The new generation must learn what happened with the brigadistas and what they stood for."

Karin Ingram is the niece of brigadista Robert Macdonald. "I am very proud of my uncle who died on the ship that day, and what he stood for. It's brilliant the way the artist is developing this memorial in a participatory way to bring people together again locally and internationally."

The memorial is a participatory community project, involving secondary school students and the local community in designing and creating it. It also aims to explain the history of the civil war, which continues to be contentious in Spain.

- [Interview with sculptor Rob MacDonald](#) giving more detail on the history and art
 - [See more and help fund the project](#)
 - [More about the sinking of the Ciudad de Barcelona](#)
 - To support the project, contact: ciudadbcn37@gmail.com
-

Corbyn's policies could help fight unhappiness for LGBT+ people

Michael Johnson, Socialist Party LGBT+ group

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Britain are reporting lower personal wellbeing than straight people [in all areas measured by the Office for National Statistics](#).

The annual population survey shows LGB people have lower feelings of happiness, life satisfaction and things they are doing in their life being worthwhile, along with significantly higher feelings of anxiety.

These findings should come as no surprise. [LGBT+ people are still experiencing oppression](#) and the impacts of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in their daily lives. This includes bullying and harassment in school or at work, and problems with access to healthcare.

The situation is certainly not helped by the Tories' and Blairites' agenda of cuts and privatisation. Services important to LGBT+ people - [such as HIV services](#) - are being slashed. Housing becomes harder to find. Jobs and wages are constantly under attack.

Jeremy Corbyn's proposals to start reversing cuts and privatisation and tackling the housing crisis could make a huge difference to LGBT+ people.

These findings show that - as important as legal protections and reforms are for LGBT+ rights - they are not enough to end inequality on their own. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in society must be fought with united action in LGBT+ communities.

But we must also fight alongside the working class as a whole to ensure everyone has access to a real living wage, secure jobs or benefits, decent housing, free healthcare, and all other vital services. Only this can ensure that LGBT+ people - and everyone else - can improve their personal wellbeing.

Obituary: Rhodri Morgan 1939-2017, architect of the 'Welsh Labour' brand

The [death at 77 of Rhodri Morgan](#), the ex-first minister of Wales, has been met with shock and not a little sadness amongst working people in Wales. 'Rhodri' was affectionately known, simply by his first name, as the affable and eccentric first minister who led the development of the Welsh Assembly, and effectively the first Welsh government.

More significantly he was the pioneer of the 'Welsh Labour' project, creating the brand that [claimed to put "clear red water" between the Labour Party in Wales and 'New Labour'](#) led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown at Westminster.

Welsh Labour is now busily [distancing itself from Corbyn's Labour](#) in London, even in the middle of a UK general election. But Welsh Labour is Rhodri's most enduring legacy, and reflects his political ideas. The affection with which Rhodri Morgan is regarded is as much about the political conjuncture he governed in as his somewhat eccentric public persona.

He was famous for his witty and left-field wisecracks. He replied to BBC interviewer Jeremy Paxman - when asked if he was standing for first minister of Wales - "[Do one-legged ducks swim in a circle?](#)" A saying he claimed to have picked up from a miner in Merthyr.

More benign conditions

But much more significant were the conditions in which he led the Welsh government. Rhodri operated in a period before austerity, when public services were relatively well-funded and some small reforms could be delivered by a social-democratic government without a major battle.

However, he had also begun to deliver cuts to public services.

Rhodri was the Labour MP for Cardiff West when Welsh devolution was narrowly agreed in a referendum in 1997. Following the resignation of Ron Davies, then-prime minister Blair passed over Rhodri for the roles of secretary of state for Wales and leader of the Welsh Labour Party - in favour of the out-and-out Blairite Alun Michael.

Blair's antipathy to Rhodri has led some commentators to regard Rhodri as a 'left'. But really he was not, except by the standards of Blairite New Labour - the evangelists of market competition and privatisation of public services.

Rhodri, along with the bulk of Labour MPs, had happily gone along with Blair's 'modernisation' of the Labour Party, which had transformed it into a pliant tool of capitalism. He was never a member of [Labour's 'Socialist Campaign Group'](#), led by Tony Benn, with its diminishing band of socialist MPs including Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell.

But he still retained some social-democratic ideas, and an acute understanding of the unpopularity of Blairite ideas in the rock-solid working class areas of South Wales. So Blair and Brown regarded Rhodri as an unreliable agent of New Labour, and preferred to parachute in a reluctant Alun Michael as the first Welsh Labour leader and likely inaugural first minister of Wales.

Resistance was growing to Blairism. In the 1999 elections to the first Welsh Assembly, a huge swathe of Labour voters stayed at home or looked for an alternative. Plaid Cymru was the main beneficiary, portraying itself in South Wales as a left alternative to New Labour.

The Rhondda constituency, which had boasted the biggest Labour majority in the UK, fell to Plaid - along with Llanelli, Islwyn, and even Rhondda Cynon Taff council. The personification of New Labour's unpopularity in Wales, Alun Michael could only form a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats.

Feeling the ground shifting under their feet, a majority of Labour assembly members moved against Michael, and he was forced to resign in favour of Rhodri Morgan in early 2000.

Changes

Having been installed as first minister, Morgan steered the government away from the pro-privatisation model being implemented by New Labour in Westminster.

The hugely wasteful 'private finance initiative' for funding public service building construction and maintenance was eventually put on the back burner. Sats and school league tables were abolished. 'Academy' schools and 'foundation' hospitals were never adopted in Wales.

Rhodri boasted of the "clear red water" between Welsh Labour and New Labour.

But this was no socialist model being implemented in Wales. Blair, having been forced to accept Morgan as first minister, was quite prepared to allow him a free hand in Wales - so long as he did not attack the New Labour project in England, or implement nationalisation or clear socialist policies.

Some NHS services were put out to tender. The fire service was cut. And Morgan was silent on the Iraq War that Blair was preparing, with US president George W Bush, to unleash on the Middle East.

Welsh Labour MPs trooped loyally through the Westminster divisions to vote for war, privatisation and tuition fees on behalf of Blair and Brown.

Nevertheless, it was possible to devote some resources to public services because the capitalist economy was still booming. As the Socialist Party explained at the time, it was a boom fuelled by expanding credit and could not last - but almost universally, the capitalist class and its politicians believed it was everlasting.

In this seemingly endless boom, public spending was increasing and there was scope for some progressive reforms.

In education, the Welsh Assembly paid Welsh students' tuition fees - the same fees that Welsh Labour MPs had helped the Blair government to impose. The assembly also brought in 'Foundation Phase' education for three to seven-year-olds, a progressive system based on learning how to learn through play, rather than formal learning of facts by rote. This was Morgan's proudest achievement.

It was in this period under his leadership that the concept of Welsh Labour as distinct from New Labour developed. Welsh Labour was based on more of a social-democratic model than privatisation-mad New Labour. But like other social-democratic parties around the world, it has succumbed to pro-business policies and accepts the bosses' limits on the scope of public services.

Welsh Labour reflected the pressure of working class people in Wales to oppose privatisation. But Welsh Government services were still being outsourced and local council services privatised. The 'Designed for Life' hospital closure programme provoked widespread opposition, with Socialist Party members to the fore. As [Socialist Party Wales explained in 2010](#), the "clear red water" was getting very murky.

Prior to the 2007 elections, Morgan claimed to be promoting "21st century socialism - a Welsh recipe," but the voters were not fooled. Labour lost seats, and Morgan was forced to form the 'One Wales' coalition government with Plaid Cymru. This actually moved some policies to the left, including committing not to privatise NHS services, and killing off Designed for Life.

Retirement

Rhodri announced his retirement as First Minister in 2007 on his 70th birthday. It was to prove a fortuitous time for him to retire. Just beginning was a world financial crisis that ushered in the new period of austerity and enormous cuts to public services in Wales.

His successor, Carwyn Jones, has continued the Welsh Labour model and dutifully carried out the cuts demanded by the Tories in Westminster. The NHS is struggling to cope, and many council services have closed or privatised.

Many of the progressive educational reforms have been undermined by subsequent Welsh Labour ministers, through devolving resources to individual schools, combined with new school league tables, new tests - and above all, cuts.

Welsh Labour has proved a willing accomplice to New Labour, not a reluctant hostage. The Welsh Labour leadership has conspired with the right wing in the Parliamentary Labour Party and the party bureaucracy to undermine Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. [Morgan even opposed Corbyn's election as leader.](#)

In the 2017 general election campaign, [the Welsh Labour leadership has been promoting its own agenda as opposed to Corbyn's.](#) This includes, in one of the five Welsh Labour pledges, the promise - or threat - to "continue to give the NHS and social care services the money they need." Continue? Welsh Labour has cut millions from the NHS budget in Wales! Unfortunately, it has been given cover in doing this by Corbyn's praise for the Welsh Labour government.

So Rhodri Morgan will be missed by many in Wales - an affable symbol of a bygone age, when Welsh Labour appeared to many to offer something different to Blairism.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 24 May 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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.

Our time

8 June 2017 will be a time to finally deliver our verdict on those who have made us pay with our jobs, pensions, terms and conditions, and public services, as our reward for bailing out the few greedy bankers who gambled, lost and still came out smelling of roses.

Let's make May pay for her gamble. It's our time to make a difference by voting for Corbyn on 8 June 2017.

'Rebel with a Cause', Rotherham

Manchester answers

As we were finishing a successful campaign stall in defence of the NHS and opposing terror and war in Morley, near Leeds, Socialist Party members were approached by a woman and her daughter.

As our conversation went on, we found out they had both been at [the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester that fateful Monday](#), in close proximity to where the bomb had gone off. Both were fortunately unscathed, though shaken.

Her daughter hadn't wanted to leave the house that morning, but she was determined for them to return to normal life, otherwise "the terrorists get what they want."

But she also wanted to inform herself about what was going on around the world that could bring things to this state of affairs. She agreed with us about the disastrous military interventions in the Middle East and north Africa which had destabilised those regions, commenting: "They've only caused more misery. Why can't we just have world peace?"

She was also reassured by how ordinary people and the emergency services had responded to help people - and opposed the Tory cutbacks, signing our petition [against the 'STP' health plans and their further cuts](#).

Theresa May is trying to look 'prime ministerial' in response to the atrocity in Manchester. However, many people are seeing through the cracks in her "strong and stable" facade and are searching out real answers to the problems they face rather than empty phrases.

Iain Dalton, Leeds

Clarke v Corbyn

BBC flagship programme Newsnight revealed its anti-Corbyn desperation by giving free marketeer and Iraq-war defender Blairite former home secretary [Charles Clarke a platform to attack Jeremy Corbyn over his so-called politicising of the Manchester tragedy](#).

How they tracked Clarke down remains a mystery as he is the invisible man of British politics, but the use of taxpayers' resources is unlimited when it comes to attacking JC. This is precisely the time when serious analysis is required to identify why and how such a dehumanised monster has inflicted such horror on innocents.

Naturally, Blairite Labour MPs, Lib Dem Farron and the Tories have joined in the condemnation of JC. They fear their role in reckless Middle East interventions and their protection of the brutal regime of Saudi Arabia which nurtures terrorism will be exposed.

They will become more desperate as the polls show the gap narrowing between Corbyn and May.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool

Dementia tax

I am a volunteer minibus driver for Age UK once or twice a week. I pick up local elderly people and take them to a day care centre where they are looked after for the day.

Most of them have carers at home, often their own relatives, but also many of them require the local council to send in professional carers at least twice a day. This of course costs money, as well as the council paying some of the costs of the day centre.

Already, with the council cutting its social care budget, many of those who used to get support no longer do.

So what are the Tories proposing?

The [Tory proposals on social care](#) will most affect older people (and the not so old) who own their own home and need a professional carer to help them with dressing, bathing and eating.

For example, there are four or five times as many needing care in the home as there are in care homes.

At the moment the cost of care at home is calculated by the level of the service user's savings - anything over £23,000, and nothing else. So when they die their home can be passed on to the children intact, an important proviso when you consider the housing crisis affecting many people.

Those who are in care homes full-time have different arrangements.

But the Tories are proposing instead to say that the costs of care for those in their own homes will now be taken out of the sale of their home after they are dead, and the most the relatives will get is £100,000 of the sale value - hardly enough to buy a dog kennel in the current housing market.

May hoped that this wouldn't be noticed by the majority of those affected. But it is not working. It is one of the reasons why Corbyn's Labour is narrowing the gap in the polls.

Bill Mullins, Southwark, south London

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25580>