

Editorial of the Socialist, issue 954

Step up the fight to kick out Tories and Blairites

It took them 18 days following the election, but the Tories and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) have managed to [agree a 'supply and confidence' deal](#) which will allow Theresa May to form a minority government. The announcement was a muted affair, reflecting that this is no great victory - quite the opposite. It is only a first step on a rocky (and perhaps not very long) road ahead for Theresa May and the Tories.

They are hamstrung on all major policy decisions. There remains no agreement within the Tories or between the government and the EU on the way forward for Brexit. And the threat of a mass movement, spurred on by the popularity of Jeremy Corbyn and his anti-austerity policies, continues to loom large - with the potential to bring down this weak and wobbly government.

The DUP will hope that the concessions they negotiated will win them favour among [their majority working class Protestant voters](#). Funding for Northern Ireland will be £1 billion more than planned and the Tories' plans to scrap the pensions triple lock and winter fuel payments are, as predicted, dead in the water. But these points can quickly be pushed into the background in the minds of working class people in Northern Ireland as austerity continues to bite and the DUP and other parties, from both sides of the sectarian divide, [continue to hold back advances on women's and LGBT+ rights](#), for example.

'Magic money tree'?

Immediately the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales called foul on the extra funding for Northern Ireland. In reality it shows that when the political will is there, money can be found - something that should give confidence to all anti-austerity campaigners. It also adds weight to [the call of the Socialist Party](#) and others, including several trade unions, for Labour councils to refuse to implement Tory cuts and lead campaigns to demand the necessary money from central government to fund local jobs and services - a demand that Jeremy Corbyn should now clearly come out in support of.

This would be a vital part of turning the enthusiasm for Corbyn's general election campaign into a party that can bring about the type of change outlined in his manifesto - a process which remains obstructed by the Blairites. The right wing of the party, [although having to tread carefully following Corbyn's success](#), remains absolutely opposed to Corbyn, his policies and the hundreds of thousands who have joined Labour to support them. They will manoeuvre in whatever way they can to prevent the new, anti-austerity layer from making an impact.

The executive of Enfield North constituency Labour Party, for example, [has decreed that there will be no election of delegates](#) to Labour Party conference this year - instead the right-wing leadership has selected a delegate who members can 'advise' how to vote. This is the area where local Labour MP Joan Ryan issued a letter to Labour voters during the election [stating that local people had more faith in Theresa May](#) than Jeremy Corbyn and that May would definitely win with an increased majority.

Democratise Labour

The task of removing Ryan and those like her, both MPs and councillors, is urgent to ensure that the saboteurs are not in position to undermine Corbyn and the left for a single other election. [Corbyn and all of his supporters should campaign for mandatory reselection contests](#) to allow members - as soon as they have joined - a democratic say in who their public representatives are.

They should also support throwing open the doors of the Labour Party to all those who support Corbyn's stand. That means [readmitting those who were expelled for standing up to the right wing](#) - either in support of

Corbyn or in battles against the Blairites' takeover in the past - and [allowing affiliation from all anti-austerity and socialist forces](#), including the Socialist Party.

These democratic changes should be put out for discussion among the whole Labour Party membership. Corbyn could call a referendum within the party on a new constitution to democratise the structures, backed up by a series of mass rallies on the type of party the movement needs. Such measures, combined with boldly leading campaigns to win [the policies in Corbyn's manifesto](#) now, could cement the Labour Party once again as one seen as of and for the majority of working class people.

Corbyn has already changed the terms of debate that had been set by neoliberal politicians of all parties for decades. The ideas of rejecting austerity, of there being a choice, of starting from the needs of ordinary people rather than the wants of big business, even of nationalisation and elements of socialism, are back on the agenda. This is an enormous step forward, which cannot be wasted.

[Scenes from this year's Glastonbury festival](#) should dispel once and for all the myth that people are apathetic. Tens of thousands rushed to hear Corbyn's speech; the 'oh Jeremy Corbyn' chant became the anthem of the weekend; queues of young people gleefully waited for him to pour them a pint. Drawn to the pledges of free education, scrapping zero-hour contracts, a £10 an hour minimum wage, investment in public services and so on, people have glimpsed what is possible.

It's clear that the desire to fight and win those demands is not going away post-election. The 'Tories out' demonstration on 1 July can be just the first step of a movement including further mass protests, strike action, student strikes and occupations. Armed with a mass workers' party that can be the political wing of such a movement, and with socialist ideas, this can begin to transform things in the interests of the majority.

After Grenfell - Join the fight for safe homes

Paula Mitchell, London Socialist Party

Grenfell two weeks on...

As survivors, local residents and workers struggle to come to terms with what happened at Grenfell and begin the fight for justice, so many more issues are raised. So too for residents of tower blocks around the country.

Rehouse survivors locally - take over empty property

Most immediately for survivors, of course, is dealing with the horrific trauma itself. This is made worse by the continuing failure of Kensington and Chelsea council, shoving some survivors from pillar to post, splitting up families and evicting them from hotels.

The fight to be rehoused locally goes on. [Over 150 households are in hotel rooms; 364 households are in emergency accommodation.](#)

There has been much talk in the press of [the offer of luxury housing to survivors](#). This is very far from requisitioning some of the [1,399 properties](#) deliberately left empty in the borough, largely owned by super-rich speculators.

In reality the homes on offer are already [designated as "affordable"](#) and without access to the luxury facilities - known colloquially as having "[poor doors](#)." In any case, they do not meet the number required.

Spend the £300 million council stash!

The belief that the Tories are not doing enough goes on, with [just £5 million](#) provided by the government.

It includes emergency payments of [£5,500 each](#), plus a [£1 million grant](#) to the Red Cross. [£500,000](#) has gone on hotel bills alone.

Compare that to [£1 billion to 'bribe' the DUP](#).

These paltry figures [are matched](#) by the [donations made](#) by ordinary people, and dwarfed by [the staggering £300 million in the coffers of the council](#).

The chief exec of the council [has been the sacrificial lamb](#). But we have to demand not just that council leaders resign, but that the £300 million is immediately used!

Local issues that need urgent action include the ongoing lack of heating and hot water for the blocks around Grenfell, which came from boilers in the basement of the tower.

And residents around the tower are still asking if their homes are safe from the destruction of the tower itself, given that nearby tube stations were closed for safety reasons. They have been left in their homes without information.

No cover-ups! Jail the killers

As the inquests begin, the torment of still not knowing how many and who are dead goes on, amid [widespread suspicion of facts being hidden](#).

Fear of a cover-up is much wider than that of course, as criminal prosecutions begin and the dreadful dealings start to be exposed. In the view of many, this was corporate murder.

It has come out that Arconic, the company that supplied the panels, had 'rules' that the polyethylene-filled cladding was not suitable for buildings over ten metres high. [Yet it knowingly sold them](#) to the contractor refurbishing Grenfell Tower.

Arconic said on 26 June that it was [discontinuing 'Reynobond PE' cladding](#), blaming "the inconsistency of building codes across the world."

This does not reflect that these death-trap panels [are banned in many countries](#) and in reality should never have been supplied for building at all.

Complex conflicts of interests are being revealed. [Two Shelter board members have resigned](#) following criticism over the housing charity's quiet response to Grenfell.

It turns out that ex-chairman Derek Myers is a former chief executive of Kensington and Chelsea council.

And ex-trustee Tony Rice is chair of Xerxes Equity, the sole owner of Omnis Exteriors - the company that sold the cladding used on the tower.

Residents rightly demand full disclosure: impound the council's documents, seize computers and remove shredders so that nothing can be destroyed.

In addition to the inquests, we demand an independent workers' inquiry, led by trade unions and residents, which would not cover up crimes and failings in the interests of protecting profit and the profiteers.

Fight for safety everywhere

The response of authority at all levels around the country seems to be an unholy mix of paralysis and panic, as clearly they fear a rebellion if they are exposed.

[The government has written to councils and housing associations](#) instructing immediate checks.

Testing of cladding has started around the country. So far [100% of the 95 blocks tested have failed cladding tests](#). Tests are being extended to the cladding on schools, hospitals and government buildings. We demand

private landlords carry out checks too.

Damningly, every block tested so far has failed on some fire safety requirement. The government must commit to funding, and councils mustn't wait - do the work now and demand the government underwrites it!

No safety - no rent!

But of course it's not just about testing cladding. Where safety checks are happening, they reveal broken and missing fire doors, gas problems, and inadequate fire alarm systems and escape routes - aside from the fact that [only 1% of blocks have sprinklers](#).

How do we know if an estate is safe? Tenant organisation is vital - trade unions should help build joint action.

No to council "drop-ins" to dissipate people's concerns over tea and biscuits - we demand full accountability and public debate.

[We suggest that residents organise](#) to demand immediate fire safety checks and for all information regarding materials and checks to be made public on landlords' websites.

If this is not forthcoming, we need to fight - including being prepared to withhold the rent.

If it is really necessary to rehouse residents temporarily while emergency work is done, alternative accommodation must be suitable to the needs of residents. Many are older, or have young children, or pets.

Demolition, regeneration and social cleansing

Some people, understandably including some directly affected by the Grenfell disaster, want tower blocks demolished.

But we have to be wary of those calls being backed by property speculators who see an opportunity.

David Cameron famously wanted to [demolish 100 estates](#). The [experience of 'regeneration' is usually social cleansing](#).

Land is handed over to the private sector, existing tenants and leaseholders are shunted out with little right of return, and working class areas become gentrified. Grenfell-area residents have rightly demanded that the land remains in public hands.

In the 1980s, the socialist city council of Liverpool led by supporters of Militant (now the Socialist Party), [in defying Tory cuts, democratically asked residents what they wanted](#).

On their wishes, and only on their wishes, the council demolished tower blocks to build council houses.

As an absolute minimum there should be a moratorium on all regeneration until safety is assured and open to public scrutiny, and until residents have the right to vote.

Capitalism kills

This terrible tale of profit before working class lives is an indictment of all the policies of privatisation, cuts and deregulation pursued by Tory and New Labour administrations at national and local level.

All those right-wing Blairites who gleefully pursued the policies of their Tory masters - of sell-offs of housing, privatisation of public land, demolition and regeneration leading to social cleansing, replacement of council control with 'arm's-length management organisations' - should hang their heads in shame.

Any councillors not prepared to stand up to Tory cuts should step aside for those who will.

The tragedy exposes the effects of privatisation and savage cuts to health and safety, research, and of course to fire and health services.

Deregulation of housing included reduced rules for housing associations, and the relaxation of planning rules.

Current legislation does not demand annual fire risk assessments. In parliament, Theresa May [claimed the government had acted on the recommendations](#) following the fatal Lakanal House tower block fire in 2009. But building regulations have, in fact, not been reviewed.

We demand a million new council homes, under democratic control. No demolition or regeneration that leads to privatisation or social cleansing - we demand a residents' vote.

We demand rent controls that cap the level of rents. We demand the end of the bedroom tax, benefit cap and 'universal credit'. Scrap the Housing and Planning Act.

[A socialist housing plan](#) would include nationalising the banks, land and building companies under democratic working class control.

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

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- [Camden evacuation - residents expose risks - Blairites duck responsibility](#)
- [Grenfell fire compounded by overcrowding: build more council homes now](#)
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Camden evacuation - residents expose fire risks - Blairites duck responsibility

Action needed now to secure adequate rehousing

Bob Labi, Camden Socialist Party

It took tower block residents expressing their fears and complaints at a public meeting called after the Grenfell horror to get Camden council to order fire checks on five tower blocks on the Chalcot estate in north London. Within 24 hours the fire brigade declared four out of the five blocks unsafe, mainly due to issues with gas pipes and fire doors, and [an immediate evacuation was ordered](#) on Friday night.

This confirmed the longstanding fears and complaints of many residents who, at last Thursday's meeting, had demanded to know who at the council had signed off the 2006-2009 work to refurbish the tower blocks.

The Labour council, while mobilising staff to help residents and bringing in contractors to immediately begin repair work, could not answer residents' many questions of what will happen to them. While the council said "we're encouraging all residents to stay with friends and family if they can, otherwise we'll provide accommodation", many residents felt left in the lurch.

The local council, led by Blairite Labour councillors, sought to sidestep the questions of who is responsible for this crisis and why it was not discovered before.

Council doesn't resist cuts

Recently the Camden Labour councillors elected unopposed a new leader [who previously worked for the so-called "Faith Foundation"](#) that Tony Blair set up after he resigned as Prime Minister. In the few weeks since the general election Camden council has continued on its course of cuts. Days after the election it voted to [close four day-care centres and raise £3.8 million by introducing charges](#) for 800 people receiving home care and a £5 a journey charge for the vulnerable people who need to be taken to the borough's one surviving day-care centre.

When Boris Johnson, then mayor of London, personally ordered [the closing of Belsize fire station](#) one street away from the Chalcot estate, tower block residents were prominent in the local opposition. While the Labour Party then opposed the closure, once it went through in 2014 they dropped the case.

So unwilling are the Camden Blairites to do anything that could be seen as challenging capitalism, they agreed, six days after the Grenfell fire and three days before the Chalcot evacuation, to [give the new owners of the Belsize fire station planning permission](#) to turn it into 16 luxury and two "affordable" flats.

The idea of rejecting this planning application and calling for the renationalisation of the building so that it could once again be a fire station does not seem to have entered the pro-capitalist Labour councillors' heads. Indeed this planning application was agreed without any discussion.

Occupy, compulsory purchase, requisition

The local Labour MP is in this pro-capitalist mould. Speaking while the evacuation was underway, she made no mention of Jeremy Corbyn's call last Sunday to occupy, compulsory purchase, or requisition empty properties to provide alternative accommodation for the homeless and displaced.

But this is not surprising as in the election some, but not all, of her canvassers went door to door explaining that she did not support Corbyn. This approach led to her being described at a borough-wide meeting of Camden Labour Party members last week as trying to appear as an "independent" rather than a Labour candidate.

The Grenfell tragedy and the growing scandal of Chalcot and the rising number of tower blocks being discovered to be dangerous is a grim testament to both capitalism and the ruling class's gangsterism and contempt for the 'rest'.

The story behind the building of the Chalcot blocks is an illustration of capitalism providing good housing for the rich and more basic housing for the working class, even though today, after the selling off of council housing, the blocks' residents are now a mixture of council tenants, private owners and private tenants.

Four of the blocks were built in the mid-1960s as part of speculative redevelopment which involved knocking down existing, basically good, housing in a wide area to allow the building of luxury town houses and the tower blocks. The developers were so pleased, they named one of the private roads they built after a local Conservative councillor.

Grenfell murders

The growing scandal that the Grenfell murders have exposed shows [the absolutely critical need for working people to come together to act](#), to demand immediately local rehousing and the meeting of all financial costs

this evacuation will bring to the residents. As Corbyn has indicated, action must be immediately taken to seize control of and put the displaced, poorly housed and homeless into properties being held empty for speculation or simply as "investment assets".

Trade unions should help the residents build joint action to demand that housing faults are rapidly repaired, for democratic control of social housing and for a crash housing programme to provide low rent, high quality social housing.

To achieve these things an active movement must be built to fight for these demands, and to fight at next year's local elections to replace the Blairite Labour councillors with councillors prepared to fight the cuts - councillors who stand for real improvements as part of a struggle to replace this society fundamentally run by and for the rich.

Update added on 27th June:

There is increasing anger as the full scale of the Chalcot estate's internal defects becomes known, something which has been exposed only because of residents' anger. Now it appears that [at least 1,000 fire doors](#) were missing when the Fire Brigade inspected the buildings on 23 June.

It seems that in 2004 the then Labour controlled council initially included fire doors in the specifications for the estate's refurbishment. [But this requirement was later removed](#), presumably to cut costs, before the £66 million, PFI financed, works were carried out between 2006 and 2009. While Camden council was run by a LibDem/Tory coalition between 2006 and 2010, it seems that the refurbishment contract was agreed by a Labour administration.

There are reports that repeated safety reviews, most recently in December 2015, called for the installation of fire doors in the Chalcot blocks at an estimated cost of £800,000. The sole [Green Party Camden councillor commented](#) that "Camden has not yet published these risk assessment documents despite requests since last week. If the serious risks that have led to the evacuation are in them I, along with thousands of residents, will be wanting answers as to why they weren't put right."

This developing scandal can become a test case for the Labour Party. Will councillors who have been involved in blocking the implementation of safety measures be allowed to stand again as Labour candidates in next May's council elections?

At the same time there are also increasing calls for the reopening of the closed local fire station. Reflecting this pressure, and wanting to appear to be doing something, the local Labour MP on 26 June [asked, in the House of Commons](#), the government to "support the re-opening" of the fire station. However she did not propose any concrete steps to secure this goal, something that could start with calling on the local Labour council to reverse its 20 June agreement to the station's redevelopment into luxury flats.

More and more the Grenfell disaster and the growing building scandal are becoming a deadly symbol of the effects of austerity and also the failures of both Conservative and Blairite Labour councils. Lessons can and must be drawn from this as part of building an active movement that defends the interests of and fights for working people.

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

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Grenfell fire compounded by overcrowding: build more council homes now

'Derek Acer', London housing worker and Socialist Party member

Estimates are that between 400 and 600 people lived in Grenfell Tower.

But it had [80 two-bedroom flats and 40 one-bedroom flats](#). That's just 200 bedrooms in total.

There is an intense housing crisis in London. Wages have not kept up with rising rents. Housing benefit has been reduced. The benefit cap has made London housing completely unaffordable to 30,000 households.

For people who have lost their homes the choice is particularly stark. There are almost 2,000 households in Kensington and Chelsea which the council has accepted as homeless.

London councils have been dispersing homeless households to temporary accommodation at great distances from London.

A project based at Kensington town hall has been relocating families to the west Midlands on a permanent basis.

Given such an impossible situation, many homeless households go to stay with family and friends so they can maintain employment, education and social networks.

But one consequence is that blocks like Grenfell Tower can become severely overcrowded.

The Socialist Party demands a genuine democratic inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire. This should include housing management issues. However, this alone does not go far enough.

There should also be an inquiry into homelessness across London. Homeless households should not be exiled from their local community.

Jeremy Corbyn has been spot-on in demanding that [empty private accommodation locally should be requisitioned](#) to house households from the tower. This is the right immediate response - but wider issues also need to be addressed.

When Thatcher brought in 'right to buy', properties were privatised one at a time.

New Labour then ramped up 'large-scale voluntary transfer' whereby whole estates - even the entire housing stock in individual council areas - were transferred to unaccountable social landlords.

There was a target of moving [200,000 properties each year](#) out of the public sector.

Tenants groups across London should come together to demand an immediate programme to meet housing need. A first step should be stopping the Greater London Authority and borough councils from selling public land to private developers.

Safe new public housing should be built with genuinely affordable rents and democratic control of housing management.

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Reports: organising to fight for safe homes after Grenfell

Socialist Party members have been organising safety campaigns up and down the country.

West London

West London Socialist Party's campaign work on Grenfell, in our branch area, again received a friendly response. Increased sales of the Socialist, petition signatures, good donations to our fighting fund by people who had already given generously to help the Grenfell residents directly.

In the 1960s in the same area, the action of private landlords provoked big protests. Landlords were typified by Peter Rachman, who sent teams of thugs with dogs to force tenants out and push the rent up for the next tenants.

We had to set up barbed wire around their flats and organise all-night picket patrols to protect them. We have to ensure tenants' struggles are not forgotten this time.

Keith Dickinson, West London Socialist Party

I was with Socialist Party members local to Grenfell Tower on 17 June at Portobello Road Market campaigning for justice for Grenfell ([see some of our demands](#)). We were thanked, people gave us thumbs up, and our campaign stall was regularly mobbed. As well as angry passers-by grabbing leaflets, over 30 people bought copies of the Socialist.

Ian Pattison Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Coventry

Here in Coventry, WM Housing has revealed that just two of its 24 tower blocks have a sprinkler system installed - with only another two scheduled for installation.

Living in one of their tower blocks myself I noticed they quickly put up fire safety notices a couple of days after the Grenfell fire. Socialist Party members in Coventry are working towards a local housing safety campaign, initially with a petition and a plan for a public meeting.

James Clement, Coventry West Socialist Party

- [Read more on the Coventry Socialist Party website](#)

South London

We started an initiative called 'Ashmole ASAP' on 26 June, calling for improvements to make the two tower blocks on the Ashmole estate in Oval, south London - including my own home - 'As Safe As Possible, As Soon As Possible'.

We're using the slogan "we deserve the right to sleep safe at night." Letters signed by tenants asking for communal alarms, sprinklers and fire brigade safety checks, among other things, will go to our housing association Metropolitan, and Lambeth borough council - with further action to follow.

Steve Nally, Lambeth Socialist Party

Cardiff

Cardiff West Socialist Party has begun building a campaign with residents in two tower blocks in the Butetown docks area. None of the blocks have sprinklers. As well as a campaign stall and leaflets, we organised a street meeting outside the block. Residents attended and raised safety concerns.

We have also organised a benefit concert for Grenfell at the Gwdihw Café Bar, 7 July at 7.30pm. We expect up to 250 there and lots of funds to be raised in solidarity with all those touched by the disaster.

Rich Edwards, Cardiff East Socialist Party

Socialist Party members and supporters of the Young Socialists campaign protested against the Tory and Blairite policies which gave rise to Grenfell on 21 June. 30 people turned up at short notice, including nine new faces.

We had people of all ages coming up to us and thanking us. They were proud we were refusing to let Grenfell be brushed under the carpet.

John Williams, Cardiff East Socialist Party

East London

East London Socialist Party is proposing to the One Housing Tenants' Action Group in West Ham to jointly visit Ferrier Point tower block in Canning Town. The block has cladding made and fitted by the same company as Grenfell Tower.

The [One Housing Tenants' Action Group recently defeated plans by their housing association to hike rent by 40%](#). They are planning to link up with other residents' associations fighting for lower rents and safer homes.

Scott Jones, East London Socialist Party

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Council union responds to Grenfell

Council workers in Kensington have been on the front line of dealing with the aftermath of the Grenfell fire. Sonya Howard, secretary of the Kensington and Chelsea branch of public service union Unison, wrote about the situation for the union's conference bulletin. The Socialist prints an edited version of Sonya's article here with her permission.

There are no words to describe the shock and utter horror felt by Kensington and Chelsea Unison branch at the loss of life at Grenfell Tower.

From day one following the fire, our members were on the ground arranging accommodation for those victims, unloading lorries and distributing items.

Some allegations regarding council workers' response have meant frontline staff in the relief effort have been put in the firing line.

There are some problems with information trickling down to officers on the ground. But our members have stated they will not house victims out of the borough.

It is clear that [the policies of austerity, cuts, privatisation](#) and the use of subcontractors on the cheap have all played their part in the disaster.

Justice for victims is required and those who are truly responsible should be held to account. Unison has been supporting our members and the branch.

Our community is broken, but we will mend it. My love and solidarity is with the victims, their families, friends and the whole community.

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Police accused of killing cover-up

Simon Carter, East London Socialist Party

Anger over the death in police custody of another young black man erupted onto the streets of Newham in east London last Sunday, 25 June. Protesters demonstrated in Stratford and later outside Forest Gate police station demanding justice over [the death of 25-year-old Edir Frederico Da Costa](#), who had been arrested in Newham ten days earlier. Clashes between some protesters and police later took place.

Police accounts of Da Costa's death, and an Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) release of a preliminary postmortem denying police brutality, has reportedly not convinced family members. Protesters suspected another police cover up.

In 2015 the IPCC had its reports clearing the police of unlawfully killing black men Olaseni Lewis and [Sean Rigg](#) overturned. The then home secretary Theresa May was compelled to launch an investigation following a spike in the number of deaths in police custody.

The unexplained death of Frederico Da Costa has again highlighted the unaccountability of police and also the targeting by police of young black men.

Since 1990 [over 1,500 people have died in custody and other police incidents, of which over 10%](#) have been black and minority ethnic. Some research suggests even higher figures.

In 2011 [the shooting dead of Mark Duggan by police in north London sparked widespread rioting](#) for several days across several cities in England.

[Democratic control - through elected local authority police committees](#), with control over resources, discipline, training and day-to-day policy - is necessary to ensure public accountability of the police.

NHS secret cuts plans exposed

'Harriet Ryman', NHS nurse

A [document leaked to the Guardian](#) has revealed that cuts and austerity are not over following the general election. NHS England and other bosses on six-figure salaries are secretly meeting with the government behind closed doors to plan an unprecedented attack on some of London's' world-renowned teaching hospitals. Great Ormond Street and University College London are in the firing line for cuts.

NHS England (which manages the NHS budget) is urging NHS trusts across four north London boroughs to 'think the unthinkable' in a drive to implement a 'capped expenditure process' which is code for brutal cuts. Ten affected hospital trusts are expected to make cuts in the next few months in order to plug a £183 million funding shortfall.

What this will mean for 1.44 million users who will end up locked out of accessing NHS care, is pain, suffering and premature death.

The cuts will tie in with the Tories' ideological agenda of eroding the fundamental human right to free healthcare by forcing desperate people to consider taking out private health insurance to get necessary care.

Unaccountable bureaucrats in NHS England and NHS Improvement (which oversees trusts and outside providers) recognise that their proposed cuts will be unpopular and difficult to explain. Therefore there will be no public consultation or full and frank public debate.

The Royal College of Surgeons correctly points out that the cuts will have a "devastating" impact on patients and will cost more in the long run.

Health workers know that timely intervention is a key principle in recovery. People who are suffering conditions that might quickly have been rectified to the benefit of that person and wider society will have to wait longer for treatments, worsening the prognosis and increasing the chances they will suffer severe and enduring disability.

[These cuts are not inevitable and can be stopped](#). The trade union movement must seek to unite and lead all 'save our NHS' campaigns to effectively resist these life-threatening cuts.

The NHS trade unions would get mass public support if they planned and coordinated a bold, united programme of militant action in order to defend a healthcare system that is still renowned for excellence and efficiency in spite of decades of assaults on it by the private sector.

Barclays finally charged for having their hands in the till

Neil Stonelake, Caerphilly Socialist Party

After an investigation of six years, and over nine years following the events concerned, [the Serious Fraud Office \(SFO\) has finally decided to bring charges against Barclays](#) bank.

Four of its former senior managers face prosecution for serious breaches of financial regulations during [the banking crisis of 2008](#).

The allegations centre on loans taken from Qatari investors - and subsequently hidden in the books. Apparently these were used to prop up the bank when it was threatened with part-nationalisation at the same time as Lloyds TSB and the Royal Bank of Scotland.

The executives don't even think they have done anything wrong.

Readers of the Socialist will not be surprised to learn that senior officers in banking have acted in ways alleged to be systematically and blatantly corrupt. Any crackdown is to be welcomed, even at this late stage.

Nevertheless, it all comes too little and too late. The SFO has always been [the sort of watchdog](#) that [big business likes](#): slow and ponderous with very few teeth.

The fact is that even throwing some of the executives into prison would do no more than paper over the cracks in the fundamentally exploitative system of capitalism.

Gordon Brown [took action to save the banks](#) in 2008-09. He [nationalised the debt instead of the whole banks](#) - and, we would add, missed out the commanding heights of the economy too.

Now everybody owes as a result of the bankers' incompetence and greed.

What Barclays is alleged to have run is a money carousel. Capitalists in Qatar fund the banks to stay privately owned, while they get a return on their investment after the state has sorted out capitalism's latest mess at massive public expense.

And the whole affair probably wouldn't have come to light if [Qatar hadn't blotted its copy book](#) with the other petrodollar merchants.

Advocates of creating a 'national investment bank' [without taking the other major finance institutions into public ownership](#) should reflect on how easy Barclays' actions were to commit.

Students 'skirt' school uniform issue!

George Jenkins, college student

In the current political climate, school uniforms may be a seemingly trivial topic. However, the recent heatwave left many school children suffering during exam season.

While some schools in leafier areas rolled out the summer uniform of polo shirts and shorts, others didn't - partly because of parents struggling with the cost of two uniforms a year for each child.

A strict policy of wearing school uniform and the disproportionate consequences which can follow disobedience, has been harmful to students learning. In Exeter, some male students [protested their school's 'no shorts' policy by wearing skirts](#), causing rules on the matter to be reconsidered.

But elsewhere the experience of school students was not so charming - many felt they had to wait around after school hours to avoid the three o'clock heat.

The punishment of such small acts of defiance, like altering uniform, contributes to an attitude that pushes many young people away from a good education and creates an atmosphere that prepares young people for conforming to rigid hierarchy at work too.

To improve our education system, schools need to become more lenient in regard to uniform as part of an effort to develop a more cooperative and a more beneficial learning environment.

Decisions on uniform policy should be made democratically by students, teachers and parents.

Homelessness soars - Corbyn offers housing revolution

Nancy Taaffe, Waltham Forest Socialist Party

The housing crisis has fast become the issue that defines all that is wrong in Tory Britain.

[At Glastonbury](#) Jeremy Corbyn asked the crowd: "[Is it right that there are people with nowhere to sleep at night?](#)" To which the crowd roared back: "No!"

Yet people do live on the streets. Thousands. And it's becoming normalised.

In supposedly "gentrified" Walthamstow, a homeless man started to sleep on the street corner opposite my house with his plastic bags all around him. Someone gave him a chair he was there so long.

Now he has a coffee table and a plate and cup. I sometimes see him coming back from the pub with his toothbrush in his hand. People now say hello in the morning when they're taking kids to school and going to work. His homelessness has become normalised. It's like people have come to accept that he lives there, on the street, in that corner.

This is how shanty towns are made. And normalised.

A recent report said the number of [families in temporary accommodation has soared by 61%](#) since the Tories came to power in 2010.

Of the 77,240 households in temporary accommodation, almost a third were placed outside of their own council area, and 90% of those who had been moved were from London.

Corbyn's [bold call for state acquisition of empty properties](#) in Kensington and Chelsea and the buying up by the Corporation of London of homes at Kensington Row to temporarily house survivors shows that these homes were always available. That one act alone shows we don't have a housing shortage in this country.

We have a housing speculation problem. Those homes were bought within a week. This is a small glimpse of the resources available when the ruling class is under pressure.

Mass requisitioning of empty homes to house those in bed and breakfast accommodation and those on the streets is entirely possible. Homelessness is unnecessary and it can literally be solved overnight. It just requires the political will.

We [don't want any more tragedies](#) for this policy to be enacted. A socialist government would take empty properties; renovate the old ones; and plan towns and cities for public need, not private greed.

Benefit cap defeat for government

Karen Seymour, Mansfield Socialist Party

A [court challenge was won](#) on 22 June against the enforcement of the benefit cap for people with children under two years old. This is set at £23,000 in London and £20,000 outside the capital.

The ruling was made in response to a judicial review brought by four lone parent families - shockingly including two who had been made homeless due to domestic violence. To avoid the cap, they had to be able to work at least 16 hours a week. Because they could not, the cap was enforced.

What is forgotten here is that the cap amount includes housing benefit which goes to the landlord of your property. It is not money that can be used for day-to-day expenses!

Even the high court judge said the cap was causing real misery to these families, and it served no real purpose!

Not surprisingly, the government intends to appeal, and insists that the cap incentivises work. That's doublespeak for: "We want to punish you because you are unemployed!" The Victorians had the same attitude to those who were unfortunate enough to have no work.

This is yet another example of the war that is being waged against working class people by those who seek to govern us. It is not a measure that saves the government a huge amount of money, but it is designed to make life just that little bit more difficult - to wear us down so that we will not fight back.

We need to show them we know their game and we won't take any more. The ruling class is terrified of our power and strength when united. Let's use it to bring an end to the benefit cap, benefit cuts and all austerity.

Labour under [Jeremy Corbyn's leadership could deliver real improvements](#) to workers' living standards. Let's kick out the weak and divided Tories and get Corbyn in as soon as possible.

Tories may have broken election laws... again

Ryan Aldred, Plymouth Socialist Party

It's been revealed that the Tories may have broken electoral laws with the use of so-called 'market research' company Blue Telecoms.

It has been [reported by both Channel 4 News and the Guardian](#) that Blue Telecoms used a script in the run up to polling day which appeared to canvass for support in a number of marginal constituencies rather than

simply conducting market research.

Also, earlier in the campaign Channel 4 News reported that Blue Telecoms staff were claiming to be calling from 'Axe Research', a company which doesn't appear to exist. This would be a violation of the Data Protection Act.

This comes just weeks after [it was confirmed that the Tories had overspent on their 2015 election expenses](#). On that occasion the Tories escaped without charge as the Crown Prosecution Service would not be able to decisively prove whether or not the overspend was down to "human error" as claimed by the Tories.

Whether Blue Telecoms did or did not act illegally, this latest scandal draws attention to the fact that the Tories are having to rely on market research companies as part of their election strategy.

This suggests they lack a genuine support base and party activists to carry out an election campaign which would come close to matching the people-powered campaign conducted by Jeremy Corbyn.

This scandal is yet another problem for [an already beleaguered minority government](#) which has shown itself to be anything but strong and stable, which will only further fuel the growing calls for Theresa May to resign.

What We Saw

Fanatical right-wing gutter rag the [Daily Mail ran a piece on Socialist Party London organiser Paul Callanan](#) on 21 June. Its print headline: "They are the lowest of the low."

The "full-time far-left agitator" stands accused of... writing to unions and campaign groups. Paul had invited them to [a protest against the Queen's Speech](#) and the Tory minority government.

He wrote "we would like for you to join us and make it a real show of strength. Please also mobilise, bring banners and make as much noise as possible."

Responding to the article, [Paul tweeted](#): "The 'Lowest of the low' eh? Coming from the Daily Mail that really is quite the compliment"!

Liverpool's 1983-87 socialist council - power to the people!

Following the Grenfell Tower fire disaster, columnist Simon Jenkins in the Guardian attacked the policy of building residential tower blocks. [In the article he says](#): "When in the 1980s Liverpool's Militant movement asked Everton's inhabitants what should be done with their towers, the reply was pull them down and give us back the streets. It was done."

This acknowledgement of the then Militant-led socialist council - democratically responding to the needs of the city's working class - hints at [what was achieved in the teeth of opposition from the Thatcher-led Tory government and right-wing in the Labour Party](#).

Former Liverpool city councillor and Socialist Party member Tony Mulhearn, in an earlier interview with the Socialist, explains those achievements, how they were won and the lessons for today's anti-austerity movement.

What were the biggest achievements of the council?

We built 5,000 houses and flats - gardens back and front in many cases. We demolished some of the worst housing in Western Europe. We then cancelled all monetary cuts and redundancies planned by the outgoing council. We built six new nursery schools. We expanded council services.

We had apprenticeships for council jobs. At one stage we had something like 16,000 workers engaged in council projects. So in effect we translated socialism into the language of jobs, the language of houses, the language of nursery schools.

When the council was elected [big cuts were being made to council budgets by the Tory government](#). How did you avoid making them?

Between 1979 and 1983 the Tories had slashed £120 million from Liverpool City Council's budget. In addition to that the outgoing local Tory-Liberal administration had left unallocated cuts of £10 million and was making 2,000 redundancies.

We had the choice of either saying there's nothing we can do and implementing the cuts or to fight back. We [chose not to implement the cuts](#) and instead to set a 'needs budget', and we launched a fighting campaign.

So, we were in the position that councillors are in today, but we took an entirely different stance.

Militant supporters were not actually a majority on the council - how did your ideas get carried through?

In those days the local Labour party determined policy. Militant and its predecessors had conducted a campaign over decades inside Liverpool Labour Party for the adoption of socialist policies. And that's what the District Labour Party (DLP) did, it adopted socialist policies.

And in those days when the party had determined the policy, the councillors had to carry it out. So the DLP concretised what was contained in Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution (its socialist commitment - scrapped by Blair in 1995) in relation to housing, jobs and services - all of which the council then implemented.

How did the councillors link up with trade unions and working class people in the city?

The DLP was a fine, democratic organisation. It was made up of trade unions, women's committees, the Young Socialists, party branches and constituency parties, the Co-ops - all had delegates to the DLP. And that was the spring board we used to reach out to wider sections of the working class.

On that basis we were able to mobilise tens of thousands at the demonstrations. And on three occasions 30,000 council workers took strike action to defend the policies of the council.

So this notion peddled by the right wing in the Labour Party, [like former Labour leader Neil Kinnock](#), and supported by the capitalist press, that it was some kind of tiny group which had captured control of the council, was nonsense.

We couldn't have achieved what we did without mass support from the labour movement and wider working class communities.

How did the right wing respond to your success?

They generated a [campaign of hysteria in the capitalist press](#).

Thatcher's minister Norman Tebbit used his position in parliament to demand of Kinnock - 'what was Labour going to do about the Liverpool extremists?' Bowing to this pressure Kinnock launched a savage attack on Liverpool at the 1985 Labour Party conference.

Shortly after, Labour's right wing suspended the DLP, this was preceded by the unelected District Auditor's decision to fine and remove the 47 fighting Labour councillors from office.

Kinnock then proceeded to conduct the most horrendous witch-hunt against not only Militant supporters but also any lefts who supported building houses and creating jobs.

Nonetheless the socialist legacy of that movement continues in Liverpool to this day.

Liverpool - A city that dared to fight

by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn

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Trump and the fossil fuel corporations - a lethal combination for the planet

Pete Mason

On 1 June 2017 the world's TV cameras broadcast live, as President Donald Trump announced that [the United States will withdraw from the Paris agreement](#). Lengthy applause and whoops of delight arose from the audience gathered on the White House Rose Garden lawn.

Yet in reality the Paris agreement, drawn up in 2015 by the United Nations, is [a feeble attempt to mitigate the effects of climate change](#) on the world.

Trump's spoilt schoolboy pout appeared on news channels globally - he was going to 'make America great again', this time at the expense of the earth's climate. He championed the greed of the US fossil-fuel industry capitalists at the expense of every other nation on earth. Meanwhile, our planet warms, ice sheets melt and seas rise.

Trump then said he intended to "begin negotiations to re-enter either the Paris Accord or a really entirely new transaction" - an empty promise from a president who has tweeted climate change scepticism 115 times. The Vox media website immediately reproduced every tweet.

A Bloomberg news correspondent noted that the withdrawal from the Paris agreement will help foil legal challenges as the Trump administration eviscerates the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Scientists fought back to challenge the anti-science president. "Factcheck shows Trump's climate speech was full of misleading statements," [Scientific American headlined](#) the following day.

Climate change denial

Trump avoided giving explicit support to the thin soup of climate change denial with its floating lumps of fake news. Where was the ideological offensive against the science of climate change itself? Why no fake claims about growing glaciers, robust arctic and Antarctic ice sheets? Or talk of storms on the surface of the sun heating the earth?

The evidence of manmade global warming is so overwhelming that perhaps Trump's advisers warned against courting ridicule (see below - 'Climate change: the evidence is in'). Even his daughter, Ivanka Trump, assistant

to the president and now a fully signed up member of the US oligarchy, [was said to have argued against withdrawal](#) from the Paris agreement!

The Paris framework agreement allows each nation complete freedom to decide its own terms, financial or otherwise. So how is it remotely meaningful for Trump to talk about "negotiations to re-enter" the Paris agreement? Or to claim a "\$3 trillion" cost to the United States by 2040?

The Paris agreement does not even make a ruling on limiting coal production, the "single greatest threat to our climate," [according to environmental group Greenpeace](#).

The fake news of Trump's announcement was based on concealing these facts. "China will be allowed to build hundreds of additional coal plants. So we can't build the plants, but they can," the president said. Fake. "This agreement is less about the climate and more about other countries gaining a financial advantage over the United States." Fake. "I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris." Pittsburgh voted for Hillary Clinton, [the mayor of Pittsburgh protested!](#)

But beneath the fake news of the oligarch's rhetoric, his attacks on China and India reveal some important truths. It is precisely the capitalist competition between the USA and other nations - China in particular but also India, Brazil and Russia - which prevented the Paris agreement from taking on any flesh. (See below: 'Can free market capitalism save the planet?')

The deeply flawed Paris agreement is nothing but "a fraud, a fudge without action, just promises" according to James Hansen, 'father of climate change awareness' and head of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

Fuelled by opposition to Trump and his pro-fossil fuels and environmental deregulation policies, 'March for Science' demonstrations were held worldwide on Earth Day, 22 April. Organisers claimed more than 600 satellite marches took place globally. Thousands gathered in London, many protesting against a trend "among politicians for discrediting scientific research" [the BBC reported](#).

Climate change: the evidence is in

The ice is melting in our warming planet. Arctic sea ice expands in winter but on 7 March this year it [reached its lowest maximum extent](#) in the 38-year satellite record. The previous summer's September low shared second place in the lowest ice extent, and this year could be record breaking. At the current rate - if it does not accelerate - there will be no arctic ice in September 60 years from now.

The shrinking arctic ice affects the UK's climate because it causes wild swings in the polar jet stream. The UK has been pounded by severe storms and in the US, deadly summer heatwaves and torrential floods have been linked to the distorted polar jet stream. The earth's agriculture relies on a stable climate - global warming is destroying crops around the world, leading to forced migrations and conflict.

The Antarctic will not disappear so quickly as the arctic ice, but it is here (and on Greenland) that the melting land-based ice is raising sea levels. The day before Trump's announcement, scientists announced that a rift in [the Larsen C ice shelf](#) now stretches 193km.

When it breaks off, any day now, it will create one of the largest icebergs ever seen. It would stretch from Cardiff to Tenby - almost the entire south Wales coast line - and would reach 50km inland at its widest. Once it goes, the rest of the ice shelf will likely follow, as have Larsen A and B before it.

While the floating iceberg won't raise sea levels, the collapsing ice shelf allows the Antarctic glaciers to more freely flow into the sea, raising it in the next few centuries or so by 60 meters, greater than the height of Nelson's column.

Global warming science is not and has never been genuinely in question. Yet this is the future Donald Trump is bequeathing our children.

Can free-market capitalism save the planet?

As far back as 1946, leading oil companies in the USA created a Smoke and Fumes Committee which backed scientific research - but only in order to "prevent environmental regulations they deemed hasty, costly, and unnecessary," [the Centre for International Environmental Law \(CIEL\) discovered](#).

The CIEL, which published an expose into oil industry disinformation last year, is investigating whether ExxonMobil engaged in a cover-up to mislead the public, reports Joe Romm of Climate Progress.

In 1957 ExxonMobil published a paper showing evidence of global warming due to CO2 emissions. Yet, in subsequent decades, in a twist of Frankenstein monster proportions, Exxon has spent more than \$30 million on think tanks that promote climate denial, according to Greenpeace.

Trump [appointed former Exxon chief Rex Tillerson](#) as US secretary of state. Throughout his speech, Trump argues that the Paris agreement is an "agreement that disadvantages the United States, to the exclusive benefit of other countries." For United States, read 'US capitalism'.

Is it possible that the world's capitalist leaders can negotiate to avoid climate change? Can we have faith in the 'invisible hand of the free market'? The short answer is no. Capitalism generates a flea market of climate scepticism. It is cheaper to individual companies - and capitalist countries - to let 'someone else' pick up the cost of a destroyed environment.

The result is that the world's population faces frequent extreme weather events, severe disruption to food production, forced migration of millions, increasing civil conflict and wars.

Socialist planning - as long as it is genuine democratic planning at every level, not top-down dictates from unelected bureaucrats - is far cheaper and more efficient than the anarchy of the capitalist market.

It is a refusal to recognise these elementary facts that hobbles the United Nations and the Paris agreement. Public protest can force environmental regulation, only to be undone by a Trump election.

[Only public ownership and socialist planning](#), which always assesses long-term environmental impacts when looking at production costs, will provide a long term solution.

Socialist solution

While Theresa May [refused to add her signature](#) to a protest letter to Trump signed by other EU leaders with more electoral acumen, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn confirmed he would have signed.

In 2015, while welcoming the Paris agreement, [Corbyn stated clearly](#) that "it seems likely that the targets and mechanisms will not go far enough", placing greater emphasis on government intervention and public investment to solve the issues of climate change. This is a clear step in the right direction and is very welcome.

Unfortunately for the planet, Corbyn didn't win the general election, but [should the weak and unstable government of Theresa May collapse](#), he should adopt a more forthright position on the immediate nationalisation of the entire energy industry (which is supported by majority of the electorate), with compensation given only on the basis of proven need.

Public ownership and a plan of production, particularly of the energy and transport system, is the only way to end this dirty, polluting system of capitalism, and plan and fund the necessary defences against rising sea levels.

But in the drive for greater public ownership, a Corbyn-led government will inevitably come up against the obstructionism and intransigence of big business. Corbyn must be prepared to respond with his own brand of determination and intransigence and [replace the robber barons of the FTSE 100](#) with democratically elected representatives of the workers, in a plan of production that will overcome the systemic failures of capitalism.

The fundamental drawback of the Paris agreement is that it is completely voluntary. If Trump hadn't pulled out of it his administration could have simply ignored its commitments without fear of legally binding

sanctions

Even if all the commitments made in Paris are fulfilled, [global temperatures will probably still rise](#) by a disastrous 3°C

[2016 was the hottest year globally](#) - the third successive hottest year in a row - since recorded records began in 1880, and the warmest for 115,000 years. Concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the main driver of global warming, [has gone over 400 parts per million](#) (ppm) - the highest level in 4 million years. When it reaches 450 ppm there will be a real danger that a tipping point will be reached and uncontrollable global warming will set in

Jobstown Not Guilty - verdict imminent

As we go to press the verdict is expected in the Jobstown trial in Ireland. Six protesters - including Paul Murphy, a TD (MP) and member of the Socialist Party's sister party - face charges of false imprisonment. The maximum sentence in the event of a guilty verdict is life in prison. The charges relate to a sit-down protest which delayed the car of then deputy prime minister Joan Burton in 2014. More can be read about the case in '[Defend the right to protest - stop this political vendetta!](#)' and [other articles](#). We will also post the result once it is known and any subsequent call for solidarity action.

Trade unions must organise mass movement to kick out the Tories

Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser

The general election result has not only [confounded the Tories and the Blairites](#) but also many trade union leaders.

It has been reported that, at the beginning of the campaign, Trade Union Congress (TUC) general secretary Frances O'Grady expected Labour to be "where the Tories were in 1997", on the receiving end of a landslide defeat.

Incredibly, [she tweeted](#): "Promising set of commitments from the Conservative Party pledge to expand workers' rights". This implies she was looking to build a partnership with an expected strengthened Theresa May government.

Many of the union leaders have completely misread the political and social situation and drew only pessimistic conclusions. They have a one-sided analysis of record low [union membership](#) and [strike figures](#) and don't see below the surface the raging anger against Tory austerity and the management offensive in the workplace.

Walkouts

Just in the last month or so, Royal Mail workers in four different areas covering 12 offices have [walked out](#) in [unofficial action](#) against the victimisation of the their Communication Workers Union reps.

Of course, the right-wing union leaders conveniently forget the role that they have played in opening the door to the massive cuts offensive.

The decision of the leadership of the TUC, and the Unison and GMB unions, to effectively [end the 2011 public sector pension struggle just weeks after the two-million strong 'N30' strike](#), gave Cameron and Osborne confidence to crank up the attacks. The growing [joint pay dispute in 2014](#) was also allowed to peter out.

But some signs were far more visible. A big number of the [45% who voted for Scottish independence in 2014 did so for anti-austerity](#) reasons.

Even the pro-EU Labour shadow minister Keir Starmer recognised the anti-establishment element that was part of the Brexit vote. And, of course, Jeremy Corbyn's [election as Labour leader](#) and his [re-election last summer](#) was a reflection of this mood.

Starmer made his comments at a fringe meeting at Unison conference, where [the overwhelming mood of delegates was one of huge support for Corbyn](#) and 'the Tories are on the ropes, one last heave can get rid of them'. It's clear that the new, more favourable balance of forces that has resulted from a weakened Tory administration has given some workers a boost of confidence and a feeling of 'now it's our turn'.

And now workers will be asking: "If the Tories can find £1 billion from their 'magic money tree' to do a deal with the DUP, why can't we have a pay rise or why can't the cuts be stopped?"

Even the TUC has been forced to recognise this mood, especially against the catastrophic decline in living standards from seven years of Tory pay restraint, and has called a ['Britain still needs a pay rise'](#) rally in central London on 17 July.

We welcome this initiative if it launches a serious struggle, although we think the TUC and the unions should have played the central role in the 1 July demonstration, rather than [sub-contracting out to the People's Assembly](#). In any case, union leaders who speak at the demonstration should use the platform to build for the pay rally and the industrial action that will be necessary against the Tories.

The TUC rally and 1 July demo have to be used to launch a mass campaign in the public sector to break the 1% pay cap. Even the RCN nurses' union, which has been historically opposed to strikes, [has voted in an indicative ballot](#) for action on pay.

91% of members would take industrial action short of strike, with [78% saying they were prepared to strike](#). The RCN now says that unless the Tories end pay restraint, it will ballot for strike action.

No doubt some unions will argue that [the Trade Union Act](#), with its higher undemocratic voting thresholds, makes national strike action impossible. We certainly don't underestimate its effects but a serious mass campaign is the only way to get the vote out. Although ultimately, even some of the more far-sighted Tories recognise that anti-union laws can't always contain workers' anger.

While we don't take defying these laws lightly, it will be posed at a certain stage and would leave the government powerless.

Private sector

There is also the potential to reach out to workers in the private sector who are also under the cosh on pay and pensions. This year has seen [workers in BMW](#) and the [Atomic Weapons Establishment](#) on strike to defend their final salary pensions.

Although, in some public sector unions, pay may not be the most important issue at the moment. The [teaching unions are facing down the funding crisis in schools](#), while many health workers see the [£22 billion NHS cuts through 'sustainability and transformation plans'](#) as the priority.

And any campaign has to incorporate these threats. Similarly in other sectors, workers have taken action against [office closures](#) in the [civil service](#) and to [stop driver-only operation on the trains](#).

But pay can often act as a lightning rod for all the many other grievances that have resulted from the cuts.

In the week after the 1 July demonstration, [Unite members at British Airways](#) and in [the Barts Health Trust will be on strike](#). Both involve low-paid workers who have been pushed over the edge by grinding poverty.

The election result reflected the huge turmoil in society but most of all a desire to throw off the chains of austerity. The prospect of a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government that workers will hope totally changes

their lives [could be just months away](#).

But that mood has to be mobilised in a serious mass movement to push the Tories out.

Unison conference: confident delegates take control, give Corbyn 'rapturous' welcome

Glenn Kelly, Socialist Party industrial department

Unison's 2017 conference was the first big trade union conference after the general election. It didn't take long to see the lift in confidence the result had given.

Delegates broke out in spontaneous cheers when it was announced that Jeremy Corbyn would be addressing the end of conference.

The first debate on smashing the pay cap and for a £10 an hour minimum wage was electric, with so many Socialist Party members speaking, it started to feel that you were at a Socialist Party meeting!

Such was the mood the leadership was compelled to say it "would break the pay cap in the next 12 months." However, many delegates have heard this before and remain sceptical that, without a clear strategy, they were going to do it.

Cliff edge

In his conference speech [Unison general secretary Dave Prentis](#) tried to wrap himself in Corbyn's red flag, saying that he and the leadership had always backed him and the union "effectively wrote the Labour manifesto".

As delegate after delegate cheered [Corbyn's victory that had pushed May to the cliff edge](#), they now demand that the union help push her over, by supporting the demo on the 1 July and preparing for strike action.

As the conference went on and delegates took control, Prentis and his supporters looked increasingly glum. Like Theresa May, they looked like the team who had won but lost.

Compare that to the upbeat mood of the 400 delegates at the Unison Action fringe meeting (the new left organisation initiated by the Socialist Party) celebrating that [we had won 29 of the national executive committee seats](#) and now were ready to organise to win the union for the members.

Socialist Party delegates played a key role at the conference and our ideas were warmly welcomed. This was reflected in the fact that we sold 238 copies of the Socialist, 20 non-party members attended our fringe meeting where £1,400 was raised for the fighting fund, and two delegates agreed to join.

The conference ended with Corbyn addressing delegates to a rapturous standing ovation. When asked by a young delegate why 16-year-olds should be denied the £10 an hour minimum wage if they were doing the same job - Labour's manifesto promises it for over-18s only - Corbyn responded: "That's a fair point, I agree, 16-year-olds don't eat any less so they should get the same."

Having addressed 2,000 delegates in the conference hall, hundreds of young people from Brighton then organised an impromptu rally outside to greet Corbyn, where he then stayed and addressed them. When he climbed into a car it had to crawl slowly along the road with supporters following him lining the streets singing "oh Jeremy Corbyn".

Refuse workers strike against bullying bosses

Clive Walder, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

Birmingham council [refuse workers represented by Unite have voted to strike](#) on 30 June followed by a series of two-hour stoppages commencing at 6am on 3, 11, 19 and 27 July and 4 August over a bullying culture among management and a threat to make 122 workers (20% of the workforce) redundant.

There will also be an overtime ban with workers adhering to their contracted hours, plus returning to depots for all lunch and tea breaks, also starting on 30 June.

The Labour council claims that this is necessary due to budget cuts - it is expected that the overspend will be £11.9 million as opposed to the £9.7 million originally predicted. The workers think that the bullying from management is designed to force workers to resign without redundancy pay. 90% voted to strike and 93% voted for action short of a strike.

At the same time as wanting to make these workers redundant, the council has been replacing permanent workers with agency staff. It is clear that the intention is to create a more insecure workforce.

Even before making these workers redundant it wasn't unheard of for refuse collections to not take place on the scheduled day. The union has offered to have conciliation service Acas mediate in this but has said that workers are prepared to fight on the streets, in the media, and in the courts if necessary.

"What do we want? Pay parity. When do we want it? 11 years ago!"

[Striking Mears workers in Manchester](#) holding a protest outside Northwards housing association offices on 23 June chanting "what do we want? Pay parity. When do we want it? Eleven years ago!"

Mears employees earn up to £6,000 less than workers on the other side of the city. Unite the Union is looking to step up the dispute, regularising strike pay and moving to involve other Mears staff who maintain the council's own premises, including the iconic Gothic town hall.

Organise the 'youthquake'!

Young Socialists - Generation Socialist

On 8 June, young people helped generate [an earthquake in British politics](#). We massed at rallies, queued at polling stations, organised our friends and turned out in our thousands for campaign days.

We showed the establishment that far from responding with apathy, when given the chance to vote for an alternative - for the politics of hope - young people will not be found wanting in energy, enthusiasm and determination.

Free education, an end to zero-hour contracts, a £10 an hour minimum wage, nationalisation, house building, votes at 16. These were [just a few of the socialist policies](#) that helped generate such a tidal wave of support for Corbyn. It should be no surprise that more than two thirds of young voters backed him.

Theresa May has emerged from this election without a shred of legitimacy. 'Strong and stable' has morphed into weak and chaotic. She has absolutely no mandate for her government of the 1%.

Over the last month, [the horrific events at Grenfell Tower](#) have revealed even more clearly the grotesque callousness of the Tories and the capitalist system they represent.

Now, by [joining up with reactionary, sectarian DUP MPs](#), May is attempting to cling to power in order to save the capitalist establishment from a Corbyn-led government that would threaten its interests.

But this will be a coalition of chaos. It can be stopped. And young people can play an important part in this. This means being organised to take on the Tories. It means being out on the streets. It means having mass rallies, demonstrations, walkouts and occupations to continue to fight for free education, £10 an hour and more.

But it also means getting organised to fight for socialist ideas, for a real alternative. That includes not only the fight against Theresa May and her government, [but also the Blairites and the saboteurs](#) who, until just a few days ago, were claiming Corbyn's left politics were unpopular and would render Labour unelectable.

In a similar way to [the Bernie Sanders campaign in America](#), this election has shown that our generation is discovering socialist ideas afresh. It has expressed the huge appetite that exists for change. But now we need to be organised.

That's why members of Socialist Students, Youth Fight for Jobs and the Socialist Party have decided to launch 'Young Socialists' or 'Generation Socialist'.

We want to bring together the young people who've been at the heart of the movement to support Corbyn and who are eager to learn about and fight for socialist ideas. Join us and help us to continue the fightback today.

- Get involved - text 'YS' plus your name and postcode to 07540 189 052
- Join the 'red block' on the 1 July demo - Outside Starbucks: 1-2 Langham Place, Marylebone, London W1B 3DE

Cardiff: youth and workers unite in solidarity with Grenfell

Local youth, workers and activists in Cardiff have been spurred into action by [the horrifying and avoidable fire in Grenfell Tower](#) in a stirring show of working-class solidarity.

The fire has been the primary topic of conversation with members of the public on campaign stalls, so the newly formed Cardiff Young Socialists organised a rally on 21 June on Queen Street to protest the horrible neglect and greed which had led to such a disaster. The rally was well attended with over 30 there and dozens more stopping to sign the petition and discuss the tragedy.

Cardiff Young Socialists has organised a benefit concert for those who have suffered as a result of Grenfell for 7 July at Gwdihw in Cardiff at 7.30pm. Up to 250 attendees are expected so it promises to be a raucous night with lots of funds raised in solidarity with all those touched by the disaster.

Cardiff Young Socialists' first public meeting will be on the Monday after the gig at 7.30pm, 10 July at I'm Little Man Cafe, Bridge Street, Cardiff.

Richard Edwards, Cardiff Young Socialists

Recent research suggests that [Jeremy Corbyn had over 60% of the youth vote](#) in the general election. What this shows is the optimism and enthusiasm coming from young people.

This is why members of the Socialist Party and Socialist Students have set up Young Socialists.

At the kick-off of Young Socialists in Wales on the 21 June it was a really encouraging sight to see nine new faces turn up 30 minutes before the protest, eager to get involved and help in whatever way they could. When the protest was big enough, one of them gave a heart-warming speech about how capitalism creates the conditions of suffering around the UK and across the world.

We had people of all ages coming up to us and thanking us individually for what we're doing. We even had young kids on bikes asking questions about what we were doing. We gave out hundreds of leaflets - and no doubt got the message out! And even better, the new faces gave us their contact details and are eager to get involved further.

John Williams, Cardiff Young Socialists

Corbyn inspires at Glastonbury

Thousands of people piled into Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage on Saturday to hear Jeremy Corbyn deliver his anti-austerity message. As the crowds eagerly waited, the now-famous chant began to spread gradually throughout the audience, finding a climax when he finally took to the stage.

Corbyn delivered an excellent speech in which he railed against the ugliest excesses of today's capitalist world. He publicly addressed the reactionary bigot Donald Trump and the miserable conditions that workers face in Britain today, at the hands of a ruling class that will stop at nothing to protect its exploitative interests.

He also addressed the devastation caused by imperialist wars and stressed the importance of understanding the root causes of them - including the never ending need for natural resources that this economic system breeds. After this, he rounded his speech off with [an inspiring quote from the Romantic poet Percy Shelly](#):

"Rise like lions after slumber

In unvanquishable number

Shake your chains to earth like dew

Which in sleep had fallen on you

Ye are many - they are few".

Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party is faced with numerous challenges. He is still burdened by [the right wing of the Parliamentary Labour Party sabotaging his leadership](#) at any chance that they can get. And, unfortunately, the bureaucracy is still in the hands of the pro-capitalist right.

But at this moment, nobody could feel anything but hope for the future of socialist politics. A truly inspiring thing to witness. Corbyn's leadership has put socialism back on the agenda, and it is events like this that prove that.

Tom Costello, Lancashire Socialist Party

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 26 June 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Why I joined the Socialist Party

To join the struggle to save the NHS

Tom Hunt, Mansfield Socialist Party

I am an NHS nurse and have been for over 37 years.

Despite the blood, sweat, and poverty I can say hand on heart I love my job just as much now as when I started.

I have seen the service eroded under both Tory and Labour governments. My mother was a nurse and that generation fought for what we have today and I joined [the struggle to save this wonderful legacy](#).

I firmly believe that a democratic mass workers' movement is the only way we're going to save this service. However, I understand that this cannot be done in isolation and in fact all our services and things we hold dear can only be carried forward by the removal of the capitalist system.

I've not been in the Socialist Party for that long, about a year and a bit. I've been to meetings and helped out with Socialist Party campaign stalls. And my education has begun. My new year's resolution was to [educate myself on the Russian revolution](#) with it being its centenary.

From Militant to the Socialist Party - what you thought

"Well I have finished it! I have completed reading the marvellous book From Militant to the Socialist Party. What an absolutely brilliant read, remembering some of the events I was involved in.

"From Militant to the Socialist Party is a lesson on building a Marxist socialist organisation on the one hand and continuing to raise the ideas of socialism in the wider working class movement on the other. I recommend all Corbynistas read this biography of a socialist tendency that has developed a powerful base in the British workers' movement over the past 53 years.

"Also read the first volume in this trilogy, called The Rise of Militant, to understand that the building of socialist ideas cannot be relied on enthusiasm alone, but needs concrete socialist policies and organisation to defeat British, European and world capitalism."

Jimmy Haddow

"I have just finished reading Peter Taaffe's brilliant and stimulating book From Militant to the Socialist Party. At times, I was deeply moved, as Peter carefully and lucidly took me through his fascinating and knowledgeable experiences.

As a new member of the Socialist Party, many of my questions were answered and the book confirmed my feelings of despair and disillusionment with New Labour and its politicians.

I was very happy to have my decision to [join the Socialist Party](#) confirmed. I recommend that all new members of the Socialist Party read this book.

The style, print and short chapters all helped me to read and understand very clearly the political beliefs and progress of the Socialist Party in relation other political parties and international socialism. My hope for a brighter future is restored."

Mary Rodwell

- [From Militant to the Socialist Party by Peter Taaffe, £15 from leftbooks.co.uk](#)
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Pentrich Rebellion 200 years on

Karen Seymour, Mansfield Socialist Party

On 25 July 40 people gathered in the village hall in Pentrich, Derbyshire, to mark [the 200th anniversary of the Pentrich Rebellion](#). The excellent meeting, organised by Mansfield Socialist Party members, was followed by a choice of walks to discover more of the village's remarkable history.

We were honoured to be joined by a relative of one of the hanged rebels, Isaac Ludlam. She, in turn, spoke about how proud she was to be a descendent of his.

Agent provocateurs

The 200 or so workers who marched to Nottingham in 1817 were determined to bring down Lord Liverpool's Tory government and improve their own poverty-stricken lives. Agent provocateurs and light dragoons, however, made sure that fate by hanging, imprisonment or transportation was assured.

200 years later, the ruling class is terrified of the huge power and strength of the working class when it is united. [This weak, split and in-fighting Tory government can and must be brought down](#).

A Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn [could deliver immediate improvements](#) in people's living standards, and show what could potentially be achieved in a socialist society, which is the ultimate goal.

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25729>