

## Coordinate the strikes to defeat the Tories

Normally a quiet month for the trade union movement, August has seen a whole number of industrial disputes raging on - and two prominent ones have registered wins.

The [Birmingham bin workers have forced management to retreat](#) after seven weeks of action while janitors in Glasgow, in a branch of public service union Unison led by Socialist Party members, [have won after almost two years of fighting](#).

Scandalously, in both cases the employers have been Labour councils, although perhaps unsurprisingly in Glasgow [they lost control in the May elections](#). This is a warning to the Blairite Labour councillors in the West Midlands and elsewhere when they continue to push through Tory cuts. [20 lost their seats in Durham](#) this year after a long [struggle by teaching assistants over proposed pay cuts of 23%](#). Jeremy Corbyn must call on Labour councils to stop passing on the cuts.

These victories will give a big boost of encouragement to the many other current struggles. On 3 August, hundreds of striking members of general union Unite in three separate London-based disputes - at Barts NHS Trust, the Bank of England and British Airways mixed fleet - [demonstrated together in a succession of protests](#).

The Birmingham bin workers have made contact with their counterparts in [Doncaster who have won a £1 an hour pay rise through the threat of strike action](#). Other Unite members are also taking [three weeks of strikes at Argos warehouses](#), while Manchester Mears housing workers are [reballoting after an indefinite strike](#).

There has been a definite pattern in many of the disputes. In Glasgow and Birmingham, workers who are directly employed by the councils were targeted for pay cuts as a direct result of the cuts. In Barts, Doncaster and Mears, it is outsourced workers in the NHS and the local authorities respectively who are fighting back against poverty pay.

Also, the mixed-fleet and Mears workers share the experience of those on new, inferior contracts being prepared to take action, and in the case of Mears, with the support of their colleagues on the original, better-paid terms. This shows that, even if after a few years, these newer, often younger workers realise that it's not enough to be 'grateful' for a job at any cost and, given a lead, will fight back.

The biggest connection of all is the fight against the squeeze in workers' living standards, in whatever form. This week, the gap between workers' pay and inflation widened even further.

The [CPI inflation rate of 2.6% is 0.5% higher than wage growth](#) although the original, higher and more accurate RPI rate is 3.6% - a massive 1.5% higher. And it is this rate, for example, that the rise in train fares that will come into force in January will be based on.

### Pay cap

Of course, [5.4 million public sector workers have seen their pay rises capped at 1%](#) for the seven years of Tory-led governments. No wonder that it has been estimated that if such wage restraint continues until the end of this decade, the average worker's real income will be at 2005 levels!

The anger [against the pay freeze has now even spread to the Royal College of Nursing](#), historically opposed to strike action but under pressure from its membership to act. Infamously, in the general election, [Theresa May was grilled about nurses having to go to foodbanks](#).

This is a [weak and divided Tory government](#), propped up by the DUP. The summer wave of strikes shows that there is a mood to fight, on condition that the unions give a lead. And workers can have their confidence

raised by the Tories' weakness.

We are now in the pre-TUC congress period. [The National Shop Stewards Network \(NSSN\) is again organising a rally](#) before the start of conference to put pressure on the union leaders to act to smash the wage freeze. The NSSN is calling for the public sector unions to coordinate strike ballots on pay to mount a mass offensive against the Tories, [who are revealing divisions on the pay cap](#).

Some [union leaders will point to the new Tory Trade Union Act as an insurmountable barrier](#) to national strike action. There is no doubt that it does represent a barrier, with undemocratic voting thresholds, from a government who couldn't win enough votes to get a simple majority!

But that means that there must be a dynamic campaign to win the ballots, not to retreat from the prospect of action. If this campaign is rooted in the possibility of mass joint action across the public sector, it can really raise the sights of public sector workers.

It could also reach out beyond them. Other disputes this summer range from civil service union [PCS fighting Department for Work and Pensions office closures](#), to transport union [RMT resisting driver-only trains](#), and now bakers' union BFAWU McDonald's workers planning strike action, on top of entertainment union [Bectu cinema workers fighting for the London Living Wage](#). Any big action in the public sector would attract their support.

The massive [N30 public sector pensions strike of two million workers in 2011 shook the Tories](#). It was halted by the right-wing union leaders and the TUC.

Similarly, [the developing pay battle in 2014 was allowed to peter out](#). These retreats emboldened Cameron and Osborne to roll out their vicious austerity offensive - the worst for 90 years. But that has created a feeling of outrage among workers.

Many of the union leaders are either unable or unwilling to see the real, potentially explosive mood that exists below the surface. But we are seeing on a daily basis, in a whole rash of disputes, that mood breaking out - and it was reflected in [the swing towards Corbyn's anti-austerity message in the general election](#).

Even some of the more far-sighted Tories and bosses are wary that this mood won't be contained by the anti-union laws. The unions cannot forever allow these laws to prevent action. Instead, they should be building towards a 24-hour general strike against Tory austerity.

Actually, there have been unintended consequences of the Trade Union Act. For example, one of its measures is to time out disputes after six months, forcing unions to rebalot. This has added to the trend of workers moving away from one-day strikes to escalating action as they conclude 'better to go for it from the start!'

The victories in Glasgow and Birmingham show what is possible but must be used as an example to build upon, to smash the Tory pay cap and inflict a decisive defeat on May's regime.

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- NSSN rally at the TUC congress: Sunday 10 September, 1pm, Arundel Suite, Holiday Inn, 137 King's Road, Brighton, BN1 2JF
  - Visit [shopstewards.net](#) for more info and a full line-up of speakers
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## **Glasgow jannies win famous victory against council cutters**

Glasgow janitors, after an industrial action campaign lasting almost two years, have won an inspiring victory.

The members of public service union Unison are employed by outsourcing 'arm's-length external organisation' Cordia for the council. They have won all their demands, including raises of over £1,000, a guarantee of one janitor per school, and extra jobs ([full details at socialistpartyscotland.org.uk](http://socialistpartyscotland.org.uk)).

This proves yet again that workers can win if they take determined action alongside a leadership like Glasgow City Unison which is prepared to fight.

Socialist Party Scotland and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition supported the janitors' action throughout. Well done, the Glasgow school janitors! You won #Justice4Jannies!

#### **The Unison branch reports:**

In [January 2016 Unison members began a boycott](#) of all heavy lifting, outside and dirty duties. In [March 2016 strike action began](#) and the [janitors took 67 strike days in blocks](#) of three, five and then ten days.

Mass meetings of all members took place on a regular basis with the janitors debating and voting on all key aspects of strategy and tactics. The branch's strike fund, and donations from across the trade union movement, supported the action.

The janitors engaged in numerous loud and colourful protests outside the city chambers and Cordia HQ, and in Glasgow city centre. They highlighted their case on social media, #Justice4Jannies, they organised a mop, brushes and pail march outside the city chambers, and they targeted the wards of key councillors.

They spoke at the Scottish Trade Union Congress conference in April 2016, led the Glasgow May Day march, demonstrated outside the Scottish parliament on two occasions, and organised a two-day, 25-mile fundraising walk.

The janitors also won the support of school parents' councils across the city, particularly after January 2017. The Labour council offered a wage rise but wanted to pay for it by cutting jobs through 'clustering' - meaning fewer janitors than schools. Parents began to organise protests during the Scottish local council elections campaign.

In late March, the Labour council withdrew its clustering proposal. The election campaign saw both the SNP and Green Party committed to one janitor per one school and to resolving the pay dispute.

The janitors welcomed these commitments, which are the basis on which the dispute has eventually been settled with [the new SNP administration](#) - but only after the threat of more action.

Unison has seen a 20% increase in membership, and new shop stewards, since the dispute started.

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## **Birmingham bin workers - fighting back wins!**

### **Victory for standing together and union organisation - but issues remain to be resolved**

#### **Birmingham Socialist Party members**

Following magnificent seven [weeks of action by Brum's bin workers](#) - members of Unite the Union - with high turnouts at picket lines, the increasingly determined workforce has forced a management retreat.

The strike has been suspended pending talks around other issues after the council gave up their attack on Grade 3 workers. It represents a defeat for bosses. A suspended union rep has also been reinstated.

Scandalously, the Labour council tried to make bin workers pay for the council's own gross mismanagement over the years and attacked, intimidated, lied about and tried to turn the public against them.

Little wonder most bin workers don't trust the councillors - who were backed up by the TV and press. Councillors used the language of Thatcher to claim bin workers were 'holding our city to ransom'. But who was holding who to ransom? The council demanding a 25% pay cut or lose your job, that's who!

They spent over £2million trying to organise a scab army to break the workers' dispute when it would have only cost £330,000 to settle the Grade 3 issue.

They implied "other services" were being put at risk by the strike. Yet the only threat to services in Birmingham is the council that is voting to cut them!

Clearly they are New Labour not Corbyn's Labour. They even lied by claiming they had gone to conciliation service Acas when in fact it was the union pushing for that for weeks.

The public's refusal to turn on the bin workers surprised the council and media. Most Birmingham people now have direct experience of the constant attacks, cuts and speed ups that modern management use. So their sympathy was with the bin workers. They too have had enough.

A union that fights for its members wins support. Over 60 new members in waste have been recruited to Unite during the dispute.

## **Other issues**

Some issues, like work patterns, are yet to be hammered out. One Lifford lane worker said that their priority in any negotiations were to get rid of a manager who bullied a street cleaner wagon driver in front of the pickets, to keep the Grade 3 jobs and stop the £4,000 to £5,000 a year pay cut.

We must seek to get all agency workers, many who supported the strike, on permanent contracts. One said: "I'm on the agency contract, we get £8.50 an hour. The public think we get great money. Its hard work out in the rain and cold, I'd like to see the councillors do a shift."

[Birmingham council claimed](#) they wanted to "modernise the service in line with best national practice". That meant moving from a four to a five day service in Birmingham. Funny, they're [modernising the Doncaster service](#) from five to four day working!

It's any old excuse as the same old failed managers and same old failed policies are recirculated around the country. But there's one common factor - the workers pay for it with fewer jobs, low pay and more sweated hours.

## **Council**

Birmingham council has attacked workers, blamed them, used scabs and bullying. They can't be trusted - they could be back for more. The Labour Party here isn't fit for purpose and must be changed. One lad spoke for many: "I'm Labour, I've voted Labour all my life, but never again, not after this." The Blairites must go.

South East Birmingham Socialist Party members took £100 that was collected at their recent public meeting to the Tyseley picket line. Presenting it, Bill Murray said: "Bin workers have drawn a line in the sand that enough is enough. No more attacks on workers to make them pay for a problem they have not created."

A clear warning has been sent to government, councils and profiteers who demand ever more cuts to jobs and pay to bail out bankers - expecting workers to live on 'chocolate buttons' - we've had enough.

A bin worker said: "I know this sounds mad but I love my job. I've been here 16 years. Don't get me wrong I don't enjoy getting up at five, working in all weather, but it's the team, they're such great lads." The bin workers are, and they deserve what looks like a victory. They have struck a blow for all workers in this city. What bosses wanted to enforce on them, they would have tried to enforce across the council and ultimately it would had an effect on all employment in Birmingham.

As negotiations continue, the workers' watchword will be "vigilance".

- The next Socialist Party meeting to discuss the dispute: Monday 21 August at 7.30pm in the upstairs room, Wellington Pub, Bennetts Hill, Birmingham city centre. All welcome
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# Hundreds evacuated after Labour council dismisses cracks in tower blocks

## Fight for safe homes for all

Bill Mullins, Southwark Socialist Party

Hundreds of [tower block residents have been decanted by Southwark Council](#) in south London over serious safety concerns the Labour administration initially dismissed.

As [reported in the Socialist last month](#), a meeting took place organised by the Southwark Group of Tenants' Organisations on 17 July on behalf of residents on the Ledbury estate. We questioned the head of regeneration in Southwark, Councillor Mark Williams, about the massive cracks that had been in the blocks for over 20 years.

He indicated at the meeting that there was nothing wrong. Later on when I confronted him, he implied the concern over the issue was all down to a bunch of troublemakers.

Now the council has been forced to evacuate hundreds of residents from four blocks after a report by Arnold Tarling, a structural engineer who had also [foreseen the dangers of cladding](#) like that used on [Grenfell Tower](#).

Tarling said the gas installations in the block represent a massive safety hazard. The Guardian reports him saying of the council "you have to question their competence." This goes back to the infamous [Ronan Point disaster](#) in east London in 1968.

A block built the same way as Ledbury - bolting concrete panels together - partially collapsed after a gas explosion, killing four. The investigation after Ronan Point said blocks built this way must either be reinforced or not have gas.

Decanted residents will want full access to all available information immediately.

If it is not possible to make the blocks safe, the council must provide quality, permanent homes in the borough without delay.

If it is possible, the council must start full repair and upgrade work - with no profiteers' corner-cutting - without delay. Residents must be given proper temporary accommodation, or a suitable permanent alternative if they prefer.

Southwark has [reserves of over £187 million](#) which it can use for this work now. And its eventual income from 'S106' payments - from private developers in lieu of their legal obligation to build 'affordable' homes - is [due to total around £300 million](#).

There can be no excuses about austerity. Start today and send the bill to Westminster.

- In the aftermath of Grenfell, the Socialist Party has argued for residents to organise to pressure landlords for action - including withholding rent if necessary. For tips on organising and campaign resources, see '[Justice for Grenfell and safety for all](#)'
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# Amazon tax halves as revenues soar - nationalise now!

Laurel Fogarty

Tech giant Amazon [paid 50% less tax in the UK this year](#) compared to last year despite the company's turnover rising by 54%.

Amazon and other large multinational companies exploit loopholes in out-of-date tax law to pay lower corporation tax.

They avoid paying their fair share, costing billions in tax revenue worldwide, including in developing countries.

The rising value of Amazon stock, that made Amazon founder Jeff Bezos the world's richest man this year, also meant it owed less tax! The firm deducted the increased value of shares paid to staff from its taxable revenue. It also records most of its UK profits [in the tax haven of Luxembourg](#).

For seven years, Tory-led governments have claimed the coffers are empty. They have said the money to fund the NHS, social care, libraries, to end the disgraceful public sector pay cap, simply is not there.

The tax loopholes exploited by companies like Amazon and Google throw this lie into sharp relief. It is the political will to take the stolen wealth back from super-rich corporations and individuals that is missing, not the revenue.

A Corbyn-led government promises to crack down on tax avoidance according to Labour's election manifesto. The Socialist Party supports this.

But a genuine socialist government would also take the commanding heights of the economy - the banks and top corporations - [into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management](#).

Large corporations controlling the economy could have their production democratically planned for the benefit of the majority, not for the profit of a few.

Jobs, education, healthcare, and housing that should be afforded to every person would not be subject to the whims of a profit-seeking economy, enabled by a callous Tory government.

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## RMT and the Labour Party affiliation debate

Jared Wood, RMT Neasden

The [RMT transport workers' union annual conference \(AGM\), held in June](#), recognised the magnificent victory of Jeremy Corbyn in becoming leader of the Labour Party and vowed to continue supporting Jeremy and his allies to transform Labour into a fighting, socialist party of struggle. There was unanimous agreement that the victory of Corbyn raises the possibility of RMT once again affiliating to the Labour Party.

But the discussion and decision of the RMT AGM also recognised that the structures of the Labour Party remain, at this time, in the hands of the right wing. Delegates were opposed to RMT dedicating its political fund to the support of MPs, councillors and mayors who vote for austerity cuts and privatisation, especially those who have direct authority over our members' terms and conditions on Merseyrail, Rail North and London Underground.

The decision of the Welsh Labour government to privatise metro services in south Wales, taken since the RMT AGM, has further highlighted the contradiction RMT would face in funding a party that is carrying out

attacks on our own members.

The issue of Labour affiliation is also complicated by the hostility of many workers, including RMT members, to Labour in Scotland.

RMT has a close and long-standing relationship with Jeremy and John McDonnell, as demonstrated by both the leader and shadow chancellor attending the RMT AGM. Ian Mearns (MP for Gateshead), coordinator of the RMT parliamentary group, also attended and spoke.

In a fringe meeting, John McDonnell thanked RMT for being the first trade union to make funds available for Jeremy's leadership election campaign. This relationship has been developed while RMT has maintained an independent political position.

Recognising this, one of the concerns raised at the AGM in relation to any future affiliation, was the potential loss of RMT's ability to fund Jeremy and John's fight to transform the party if our political fund has been dedicated to the central Labour Party machine.

The RMT AGM therefore agreed to begin a process of discussion, both with the members of our union and with the Labour Party to establish on what basis, if any, RMT may want to affiliate to the party.

The resolution below has been passed by the Neasden RMT branch since the AGM and will be discussed at a forthcoming London transport regional council (LTRC) meeting. The resolution seeks to identify some of the key questions that were raised in the AGM discussion and that members will need answers to, in order to [consider RMT's formal relationship with Labour](#).

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## **Resolution from Neasden RMT branch to London transport regional council of the RMT**

This branch/LTRC notes the decision of the 2017 RMT AGM to conduct a consultation regarding our union's relationship with the Labour Party.

We endorse the position set out in the resolutions from the National Executive Committee (NEC) on political strategy and the resolution on political strategy submitted by Neasden branch that formed part of the discussion at the AGM.

In keeping with the AGM decision reached, we urge the NEC and general secretary to ensure that discussion with Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and other relevant representatives of the Labour Party are conducted in good time to inform branches and regions of our union during the forthcoming consultation.

In the course of these discussions RMT should seek a response to the following points that were raised by delegates in the AGM discussion:

- Can RMT maintain an independent political position in Scotland if we affiliate in England and Wales?
- Will Labour local councillors be instructed to vote against further cuts to local services and privatisation of services? Is the Labour Party leadership prepared to support the position that councillors should vote against all austerity cuts?
- Will Labour councillors on the Rail North and Merseyrail authorities block the extension of driver-only operation?
- Will RMT be required to support London mayor Sadiq Khan, who is cutting billions from TfL's budget, as a result of affiliating to Labour?
- What rights within the structures of the Labour Party will RMT be granted in return for affiliation?
- Will RMT be free to choose its own delegates to Labour Party bodies irrespective of whether individuals have been accepted for membership of the Labour Party?
- What will be the cost of affiliating all or part of our membership? What will be the effect of affiliating part of the membership rather than the whole membership on RMT's rights to representation within the Labour Party structures?

- What is the Labour leadership's strategy for transforming the Parliamentary Labour Party and Labour Party structures to the socialist position of the leadership?
- What changes would need to be made to the RMT rulebook in order to facilitate affiliation to Labour?

In the light of responses on all of these issues, branches and regions will be better placed to make an assessment on the balance of advantages and disadvantages of affiliation to Labour.

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**See also:**

- [The left unions and the Labour Party affiliation debate](#)
  - [The role of the RMT in changing Labour](#)
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## Defiant Barts NHS workers fight to stop Serco sabotage

**Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser**

The latest [Barts hospital workers' strike](#) on 18 August was a defiant message to employer Serco that its underhand and dishonest tactics wouldn't succeed in defeating the low-paid workers who were on their 24th day of action.

At the talks with general union Unite on 11 August, Serco said it would be tabling an improved offer for workers and their union to consider. But absolutely nothing has been forthcoming.

This was a blatant attempt to confuse and demoralise workers on top of their illegal strike-breaking use of agency workers. But these parasitic privateers can be defeated.

It's now clear that Serco wants to break the strike at all costs. Disgracefully, Barts NHS Trust is standing aside from low-paid workers who keep the hospitals clinically clean and feed and transport patients.

The union had no alternative but to go ahead with the planned strike action to send a clear message to Serco and Barts that they will not get away with their cynical ploy. Late on 17 August, Serco wrote asking Unite to call off the further five days of action with the promise of talks. Correctly, this was refused with nothing concrete on the table.

However, at picket line meetings addressed by Unite branch secretary and Socialist Party member Len Hockey and Unite London and Eastern regional secretary Pete Kavanagh, members voted to suspend this latest action to allow for negotiations.

But notice of further strikes to start on 4 September has been issued in case Serco once again goes back on its commitments. As we go to print, Unite is still waiting for a date for these talks.

### Shaken

The company has been shaken by the tremendous action already taken. We've seen loud and well attended picket lines that have been supported by patients and fellow trade unionists.

Financial donations have come in from across the country, many from workers who are fighting against the pay cap when prices continue to rise and squeeze incomes. This solidarity needs to be stepped up. But also the action within the hospitals needs to continue to be strengthened.

At the picket line meetings, strikers were enthused by an update on the numbers on strike and the impact they are having. They were also bolstered by reports of workers winning famous victories against employers just



as determined as Serco.

The [successful Birmingham bin workers](#), also organised by Unite, and [the victorious Glasgow janitors in public service union Unison](#), show it is possible for workers to fight and win.

We've already seen the [fantastic 15 July demonstration](#) that saw up to 1,000 workers and supporters march to Mile End Hospital from the Royal London Hospital. On [3 August, hundreds of strikers from three Unite disputes](#) - Barts, British Airways (see left) and the Bank of England - came together on a day of protest.

Perhaps its now time to demonstrate outside Serco's HQ at 80 Victoria Street in Westminster? Such a protest could get huge support from the wider union movement.

The whole labour and trade union movement needs to put pressure on Barts Trust to intervene, starting with the other unions in the trust. We need to continue to call on local Labour councillors to exercise their statutory right to intervene on health scrutiny committees with the trust management.

Similarly, national and local Labour MPs must take the trust to task on how these workers can be treated like this.

The behaviour of Serco shows once and for all that these private contractors should be kicked out of the NHS - and all other public services - and the workers brought back in-house and directly employed by the NHS.

Serco wants to give workers the impression that they can't win - but strong, united action can defeat the bosses.

- Send messages of support to [len.hockey@unitetheunion.org](mailto:len.hockey@unitetheunion.org)
  - Donations to Unite LE/7384L, sort code 60-83-01, account number 20344885
  - Protest to Serco, send an email to [generalenquiries@serco.com](mailto:generalenquiries@serco.com) and [sign the online petition](#)
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## Three-week Argos distribution strike

**Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party**

Workers at four [Argos distribution centres](#) across the country, including Castleford in Yorkshire, are taking three weeks of strike action to defend jobs and terms and conditions in the wake of [Sainsbury's buying out Argos last year](#).

The action has been prompted by the company's decision to close their Magna Park site and transfer workers to Kettering, around 30 miles away.

Workers are concerned that further reorganisation could be coming in distribution and are seeking agreement about reasonable distances workers could expect to be redeployed.

Support is strong among the 100-plus permanent workers at Castleford. Despite management attempts to get workers from a neighbouring DHL-run Argos warehouse to cover the strike, workers at that site, members of retail union Usdaw, have refused.

In a retail distribution sector which increasingly is dominated by contractors such as Wincanton, DHL, Eddie Stobart and others, defence of in-house distribution networks, where the actual employer can be more directly held to account, is vital.

A victory is important to send a message to those in the distribution sector that workers will not be pushed around and ensure that distribution contractors are organised on the same terms and conditions as in-house staff, or brought back in-house.

- Please send messages of support to [paulaur.good@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:paulaur.good@blueyonder.co.uk)

- Strike fund donations should be made payable to Unite the Union and sent to Paula Hutchinson, 37 Camden Road, Airedale, Castleford WF10 3LY
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## BA poverty pay dispute enters new phase of action

**Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser**

On their 74th day of strike action, a bus-full of British Airways (BA) mixed-fleet cabin crew organised by general union Unite, and their supporters, circled first Heathrow Airport and then the streets of Richmond.

Noisily filling the top deck of an open-top bus with banners and flags in hand, they set about making everyone aware of their incredible struggle against poverty pay.

Many of them are on a [miserly basic salary of £12,000](#). They have maintained their fight despite BA attacking their bonus payments and travel concessions which are necessities because of their low-paid contracts. The firm has even [hired Qatari Airways to scab](#). Yet the workers have shown tremendous courage in fighting on.

Their present action, which has continued through August, ends at the end of the month. BA has contacted the union promising talks but the workers are determined to continue to fight if negotiations come to nothing.

One worker told the Socialist: "The 'topless' (open-top) bus ride was brilliant and made loads of people aware of the strike and what we're on strike for, including hundreds of passengers at the airport at one of the busiest times of year.

"We're [being paid well below what we should be](#) paid. British Airways say we're being paid between £21,000 and £27,000. But most of us have never been paid £21,000, some of us are only on £12,000 a year."

- Donate to the hardship fund at account name 'Mixed Fleet Branch', sort code 60-83-01, account number 20376387, reference 'MFU'
  - Or make cheques out to 'Mixed Fleet Branch' and post with messages of support to Unite the Union, 99 New Road, Harlington UB3 5BQ
  - Send messages of protest to BA CEO Alex Cruz: [alex.cruz@ba.com](mailto:alex.cruz@ba.com)
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## McDonald's workers vote to walk out in historic strike

**Scott Jones**

McDonald's workers balloted at Crayford, south east London, and Cambridge stores have voted by an incredible 95.7% in favour of strike action. The workers, members of bakers' union BFAWU, have now named 4 September as the first strike day.

Ian Hodson, BFAWU president, told the Socialist: "Workers have found themselves living on low wages with no guarantee of hours.

"This has been viewed by some as punishment for joining a union, and has seen employees struggle to meet their rent payments, while some have even lost their homes.

"McDonald's has had countless opportunities to resolve grievances by offering workers a fair wage and acceptable working conditions. This is a call for change.

"Already, just by voting to strike and organising in the union, the workers have gained an impressive shift from McDonald's - who have stated only now after the strike vote that by the end of 2017 they will implement the twice-promised offer of a guaranteed-hours contract to every UK McDonald's worker.

"We want this signed off, but it is a major victory for some 80,000 workers at McDonald's and shows what getting organised, joining a union and taking action can do."

Please donate to the strike fund at [fastfoodrights.wordpress.com](http://fastfoodrights.wordpress.com), send messages of support, and join the #McStrike events and picket lines:

- On Saturday 2 September, BFAWU is holding a protest at McDonald's HQ in East Finchley, north London
- On the day of the strike, Monday 4 September, workers at the Cambridge site will picket from 6-7am, while workers at the Crayford site will picket from 6-7.30am
- The strikers and their supporters will then come together outside parliament at 10.30am for a rally

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## Doncaster bin workers say: Sack Suez, stop rubbish cuts!

Alistair Tice

Doncaster bin workers (members of Unite the Union) employed by multinational private contractor Suez, were set to begin the first of two lots of five days of strike action on Wednesday 23 August.

The Unite members voted 89% for strike action after Suez only offered a 2% pay rise but conditional on the removal of guaranteed overtime which means most workers won't get any pay rise.

But a day before the strike was set to begin, it was called off following a new offer of a £1 an hour pay rise.

Suez, who have just had their waste recycling and recovery contract extended by eight years by Doncaster's Labour council, have announced that they will halve the workforce by October, making over 100 redundancies. Unite is holding another industrial action ballot against these job losses.

Because of the job cuts, Suez are proposing a big cut in refuse services; household collections will be reduced from five to four days a week, medical waste and licensed asbestos removal is being ended and green waste removal reduced. The [union has warned](#) of the "Threat of dirty Donny as Suez crisis deepens."

Unite members took strike action last year against management bullying and victimisation. Suez know that this strike will be solid so now they are trying to recruit scabs. Aim Recruit Ltd, who already supply Suez with agency workers, have been caught advertising for Loaders immediately available: "This work is to cover industrial action and the workers will need to cross a picket line."

It's bad enough that Doncaster Labour council privatised waste management services, even worse that it's extended the contract of a job and service cutting multinational that is hiring strike-breaking scabs! This should be the final straw. Socialists and trade unionists in Doncaster are demanding that the council sack Suez and bring the contract back 'in house'.

*This article was updated on 22.8.17*

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# PCS: strikes to defend jobcentres

## Walkout to save Whitley Bay office

Two days of strike action took place on 17 and 18 August organised by the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), that represents staff in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), against the closure of the Whitley Bay Jobcentre.

One of 78 set to close, the plan is to merge facilities which will result in the inconvenient relocation of staff and clients to North Shields. This jobcentre is also the last of its kind that offers drop-in appointments for vulnerable customers.

These ill-thought-out plans are part of a much larger [nationwide shake-up](#) taking place, much like the nightmarish NHS 'sustainability and transformation plan' cuts, but for the civil service.

The strike action followed a demonstration on 12 August where DWP staff, alongside over 100 campaigners, marched and rallied at the jobcentre.

Those involved described how the closure will have a devastating impact upon the most vulnerable members of the community.

PCS DWP president Fran Heathcote has urged the government to enter into a genuine consultation over this issue: "It's not about how it affects a couple of civil servants. It's about taking away services vital to the local community."

North Tyneside council had offered to let jobcentre staff use one of its own offices in Whitley Bay, but the government has refused.

The action struck a chord in the local community to such a degree that a local shop turned up on the picket line with bags of hot pies.

Locals and service users readily accepted flyers, signed the petitions and honked their horns in support as they drove by.

**North Tyneside Socialist Party**

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## Sheffield: Eastern Avenue strike

Having already taken [eleven days of strike action against the planned closure of their jobcentre](#), 50 staff, members of PCS at Sheffield's Eastern Avenue office, are now on strike for a fortnight (14-27 August). Their determined action is to keep a local jobcentre open to serve the local community. With 800 job losses nationally now confirmed by the DWP, more offices like Whitley Bay (see above) are balloting for industrial action and PCS will continue to campaign to defeat these closure and redundancy plans.

**Alistair Tice, Sheffield Socialist Party**

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## Striking to save Hoylake jobcentre

**From a PCS union press release**

PCS members at Hoylake jobcentre on the Wirral will be taking strike action on Friday 25 August in an attempt to save the office which closes the same day.

The closure of Hoylake jobcentre from 25 August comes as part of the DWP's nationwide office closure programme. There are over 100 offices at risk of closure altogether, many by March 2018, with over 800 members of staff at risk of redundancy.

The jobcentre in Hoylake has been an important part of the local community for over 20 years, providing an important service to those claiming benefits and seeking employment. Although a small office, with only seven staff working there, those who use the service are now deeply worried at what it means for them.

- [Read more at the PCS website](#)
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## US: neo-Nazi violence reawakens resistance

### Mass demonstrations and a left alternative needed to fight the right

This is a statement from Socialist Alternative, the Socialist Party's co-thinkers in the United States. You can also [read the statement at Socialist Alternative's website](#).

The [vicious white nationalist violence in Charlottesville](#) and across the country this weekend has acted as a collective wake-up call. A powerful left challenge must be built against racist violence, vigilante intimidation, and bigoted government policies. Leaders like Bernie Sanders, alongside the unions, civil rights, immigrant, socialist, and other progressive organisations must step up to coordinate mass protests in every city to isolate and drive back far-right forces. These protests should be linked to a clear anti-Trump, anti-corporate programme to unite the vast majority of working people against racism and bigotry.

#### The far-right threat

'Alt-right', white nationalist, and neo-Nazi groups have organised increasingly bold, racist demonstrations since Trump's election. While still small, the size and confidence of neo-Nazi and white nationalist groups are growing. The hundreds of white nationalists who descended on Charlottesville, Virginia, this past weekend for the "Unite the Right" convergence clearly aimed to launch their movement onto a higher plane.

With the brutal murder of Heather Heyer by neo-Nazi motorist James Fields during these events still fresh in the headlines on Saturday, [Trump got on national television to condemn the violence and hatred "on many sides."](#) His failure to specifically condemn the white nationalist and neo-Nazi groups drew immediate outrage from millions, while [at least one alt-right website welcomed Trump's remarks as "really, really good."](#)

The sweeping public outcry against this display of violence and bigotry in Charlottesville demonstrates the real balance of forces in US society against the far right. Spontaneous mass protests are erupting in cities across the country. Alongside a plan for nationally coordinated mass protests, wherever necessary the left needs to pull together democratic community/labour defence coalitions to physically defend our movement and communities against attack.

What is increasingly clear, however, is that anti-racist protests alone are not enough to cut across the growth of nationalism and racism in society. To push back against the rise of white nationalism, or to build an effective resistance against Trump, requires a conscious political strategy to isolate the far right.

#### Addressing the roots of Trumpism

While most Republican leaders attempt to distance themselves from alt-right groups, in reality their coded bigotry and racist government policies have encouraged the growth of racist and reactionary ideas. Decades of business-backed bipartisan "tough-on-crime" policies, whipping up Islamophobia under the guise of "anti-terrorism," and escalating deportations of immigrant workers have created a racist climate that white nationalist forces can take advantage of.

At root, the rise of far-right, reactionary and neo-fascist forces can only be understood as an international phenomenon, a result of the deep crisis of global capitalism. Capitalist governments everywhere have overseen a dramatic rise in inequality, with islands of extreme wealth surrounded by a fast-growing sea of poverty, economic insecurity, and social disintegration. With their system in crisis, and faced with the threat of a working class resistance, a section of the ruling class is resorting to racism, nationalism, and bigotry to divide and conquer.

At the same time, [the failure of the left and labour movement to offer a bold, working class political alternative has allowed the rise of right-populist figures like Trump](#). In the last election, Trump appeared as the only "anti-establishment" alternative to the rule of Wall Street and the corrupted political elite after Bernie Sanders' left-populist campaign was blocked by the Democratic Party establishment. This allowed Trump to demagogically appeal to millions of white working and middle class voters who face falling living standards and are furious at the corrupt out-of-touch political establishment.

It was this political and social context that allowed Trump to get an echo for his cynical appeals to nationalist pride, his scapegoating of immigrants, his naked misogyny, and his pledge to "drain the swamp" in Washington.

## **Left alternative needed**

If the root cause of Trumpism is the crisis of capitalism, any effective movement to fight the right must link a strong opposition to racism and bigotry with an equally bold programme to end poverty, unemployment, housing insecurity, and the chronic underfunding of education, infrastructure, and social services - paid for by taxes on the rich. In short, cutting across support for Trump and alt-right groups will require building a mass movement which can provide a clear left-wing political alternative.

The potential for this is already visible in [the broad support for Bernie Sanders](#), especially in "red states" that voted heavily for Trump. The self-identified democratic socialist has emerged as the most popular politician in America and is the most prominent voice opposing Trump. Bernie's popularity is rooted in his call for "[a political revolution against the billionaire class](#)," his demands for "Medicare for all," free college education, a massive jobs programme paid for by taxes on the rich, and his attacks on not just Republicans but also on the Democratic Party's corporate-sponsored establishment.

Unfortunately, Sanders has failed to combine his radical programme with [the need for a new, mass working class political party](#), a vital step to unite the growing Trump resistance into a coherent mass movement.

## **Mass protests and community defence coalitions**

The Unite the Right marches in Charlottesville have outraged millions of working people who are looking for an effective way to fight back. Understandably, the vicious violence of neo-Nazis has created growing sympathy among a section of activists to physically respond, with the popular chant "any time, any place, punch a Nazi in the face" heard on demonstrations across the country.

While appealing to a genuine sentiment, unfortunately, such an approach risks isolating anti-racist activists, cutting across our ability to build the mass involvement and support we need to win. Our power to defeat Trump and alt-right forces lies in the real potential to mobilise the majority of society against them. If progressive leaders like Sanders - alongside civil rights groups, socialists, and labour organisations - energetically built for coordinated, mass, peaceful demonstrations, hundreds of thousands - possibly millions - could be brought into the streets in a decisive show of force against bigotry and racism.

At the same time, bitter experience has made clear that [the police cannot be relied on to defend our movements](#), much less to defend the black, brown, and immigrant communities targeted for racist intimidation and violence. We must begin to rely on our own collective strength and self-organisation to defend one another. Wherever necessary, the anti-Trump movement should organise democratic community/labour coalitions to steward and defend our demonstrations and come to the aid of threatened communities.

Since Trump's first hours in office, [Socialist Alternative has been at the forefront of building the resistance](#) to his racist, sexist, big business agenda. At every stage, we have aimed to link the movement against Trump and his far-right backers to a strategy and programme that can unite working people into a multiracial mass movement. Our central message is that to effectively fight the right, we cannot limit our message to simply saying "no."

Instead, we must link today's defensive struggles to a programme and strategy to challenge corporate control of society and to end the economic and social insecurity that is the soil from which racism, nationalism, and bigotry grow.

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This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 15 August 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

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## Lewisham 1977: When socialists and workers defeated the far-right National Front

Roger Shrives, Lewisham Socialist Party

The tragic [murder of anti-racist protester Heather Heyer by a white supremacist at a far right rally in Charlottesville](#), Virginia, brought back memories to me of another attempted far right march, in London.

40 years ago almost to the day before Charlottesville, on 13 August 1977, the fascist National Front aimed to march through my home borough, Lewisham. Many workers in the borough came from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds. Racist attacks had been growing.

The whole labour movement was under attack as fascism wanted to destroy workers' rights and democracy. Local black youth, trade unionists and socialists aimed to stop the fascists - and succeeded.

### Recession

The [right-wing Labour government of 1974-79 failed to tackle the first post-war capitalist recession](#) with bold socialist policies. During 1975 and 1976, wages had plummeted faster than in practically any post-war year.

National Front propaganda made much of this and some working class people voted National Front (and its split-off the National Party) in a council ward election in Deptford in 1976. It was largely through an active campaign, led by the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS), with its Militant (forerunner of the Socialist) leadership, that a fascist victory was averted.

Facing the National Front threat in 1977 Labour's right wing, assorted bishops and Communist Party figures in the 'All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism' (ALCARAF) campaign wanted to avoid directly confronting the fascists and organised a protest miles from the march.

The LPYS nationally and other lefts voted to stop the fascists, following [the example of Cable Street in east London where local workers stopped Mosley's fascists](#) marching in 1936. When ALCARAF told counter-demonstrators not to go to New Cross to confront the fascists, many marchers saw this advice as splitting the movement and joined the New Cross protest.

4,000 police (armed with riot shields for the first time outside Northern Ireland) were mobilised to help the fascists carry out their march. Protesters' fears about violent confrontation were greatly lessened by good stewarding and good organisation, linking arms and acting together against the National Front and the police horses, batons and riot shields.

As Militant (19 August 1977) said, the LPYS contingent "were the most disciplined section of the counter-demonstration. Positioned where the police charge began, it set a shining example of how to exercise effective

anti-fascist action."

The police charge tried to crush the counter-demonstrators but a barrage of bottles, bricks and other materials was thrown at the fascists when they appeared. The National Front were humiliated - reduced from a swaggering triumphalist march to a dejected gaggle. Many National Front activists did not even try to march.

## Foiled

Despite the failure of the trade unions' and Labour Party leadership to mobilise their forces, a few thousand protesters had foiled the plans of the National Front and the police. It gave confidence to young black people and to the LPYS to hold mass anti-racist meetings in cities like Birmingham.

[The far right still exists](#) on both sides of the Atlantic and it must be fought. But as Militant commented after the 13 August counter-demo: "Ultimately the labour movement will be able to counter racism and fascism only if it is seen to be fighting to change the rotten conditions on which it spawns, by fighting for jobs, decent wages, more and better houses, better education and health services and for a socialist planned economy that would make these things possible for all."

Four decades later, that is still true.

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# Opposing the National Front in Grantham

Tom Barker, East Midlands Socialist Party

When it was announced that the racist National Front (NF) planned to descend on the small market town of Grantham, Lincolnshire, on 19 August, counter-demonstrators were given just one-day's notice to organise. Yet in spite of this, the far-right group were massively outnumbered. Even with a national mobilisation, they could only muster around 30 supporters!

The National Front, which remains a [shadow of its former 1970s self](#), clearly intended to use this event to build on [recent developments in the US](#) - at one point unveiling a Confederate flag - and to recruit and spread racist lies.

But in Grantham, the hometown of the hated former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, they were isolated and got no visible support from the general public.

Although the National Front was outnumbered, the counter-demonstration was not large enough to shut down the march altogether. This enabled the police, who were extremely heavy-handed with the anti-fascists, to clear a path for the NF to march through the town centre.

The counter-protest followed quickly behind, and was greeted approvingly by shoppers and workers - many clapped and cheered as we marched.

But the trade union movement needs to be prepared to respond to far-right mobilisations at short notice. With a larger turnout, the National Front could have been stopped in their tracks and sent packing!

Socialist Party members gave out leaflets about Charlottesville, which explained the need to undercut racism by offering working class people an alternative, to fight together for better living conditions, and to oppose cuts and build socialist ideas.

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## Charlottesville solidarity



With only a day's notice, around 100 people gathered outside the US embassy in London on 15 August to stand in solidarity with [Charlottesville anti-fascist demonstrators](#) - one of who, Heather Heyer, was murdered by a neo-Nazi. Speakers from across the trade union movement contributed. A number of people in the crowd were from the US and were shocked at recent events there. Seeing solidarity being organised around the world was really impressive. Socialist Party members and our placards were prominent on the vigil. One passer-by gave £10 for a copy of the Socialist

**Helen Pattison**

- There has been outrage on the streets of US cities following the murderous neo-Nazi violence in Charlottesville and Trump's refusal to condemn it. This included a [huge, 40,000-strong counterprotest against the 'alt-right' in Boston](#), showing the real balance of forces.
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## **The Single Market: a neoliberal tool of the bosses**

### **Fight for a socialist Brexit**

**Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary**

Theresa May's four-week holiday is drawing to a close. She is returning to an autumn of watching her party tear itself apart over the EU. Following her humiliating general election campaign she is really is a '[dead prime minister walking](#)'; powerless to be more than a passive bystander in the Tories' civil war.

According to the capitalist media the only Brexit choices on offer are [the 'hard' or 'soft' visions offered by the two wings of the Tory Party](#). Unfortunately, many leaders of the workers' movement, [including the leadership of the TUC](#), also paint the issue in the same terms: supporting the 'soft Brexit' wing.

None of the variants of Brexit on offer from the Tory Party, however, are in the interests of working and middle class people.

### **Reactionaries**

The right-wing nationalist 'hard Brexiteers' represent the view of a small minority of the British capitalist class, if even that. They are full of utopian dreams of a return to the days when Britain was the world's biggest imperialist power, and of resentment at their nation's inexorable decline.

Their growing dominance in the Tory party, exacerbated by the collapse of a section of Ukip into their ranks, means that the Tories can no longer be relied on by the capitalist class to act in their interests. The idea, however remote, that the ultra-reactionary toff and 'MP for the eighteenth century' [Jacob Rees-Mogg could become leader of the Tory Party](#) sums up the dire state it is in.

It is clear that the nationalist 'little Englander' Tories offer no way forward, but nor does the 'George Osborne' wing. It is criminal to suggest, [as Polly Toynbee has in the pages of the Guardian](#), that we should be looking to the likes of Osborne, responsible as chancellor for inflicting the worst austerity since World War Two, for a Brexit in the interests of the majority.

Osborne and his ilk [represent the view of the majority of the capitalist class in Britain](#), which would prefer no Brexit, and are fighting for as 'soft' a Brexit as possible.

They aim to remain within the single market and the customs union, if not in name at least in substance.

They are driven by what is in the best interests of their system. In essence [the EU is an agreement between the different capitalist classes of Europe in order to create the largest possible market](#).

The different national capitalist classes within it remain in competition with each other but cooperate in order to maximise their profits.

For the weaker economies of Europe - [above all Greece](#) - it has meant virtual neocolonial exploitation by the stronger powers.

Inevitably, since the start of the global economic crisis in 2009, there has been a rise in national tensions within the EU which will, at a certain stage, lead to a fracturing of the Euro and major crisis within the EU. Nonetheless, the majority of Britain's capitalists think they can make fatter profits inside the EU than outside.

It is ludicrous to claim, [as the Blairite Labour MP Chuka Umunna has](#), that the single market is, "uniquely, a framework of rules that protects people from the worst excesses of globalisation and unfettered capitalism." It certainly doesn't protect those fleeing war in the Middle East and largely kept outside of the borders of 'Fortress Europe'; horrendously [often left to drown in the Mediterranean](#).

But nor does it protect those already inside the EU's borders from the 'worst excesses' of capitalism. On the contrary, the institutions of the EU have inflicted terrible hardship on the workers of Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and elsewhere.

The pro-EU majority of the capitalist class currently has no party they can rely on to act in their interests. Instead there are politicians in all the major parties, not least the right wing of Labour, collaborating together to try and defend the interests of the capitalist elite.

[According to the Financial Times](#), before parliament shut for the summer they came together in a meeting in the office of Blairite MP Chuka Umunna. Also present were Anna Soubry from the Tories, Stephen Gethins from the SNP, Jonathan Edwards from Plaid Cymru and Jo Swinson from the Liberal Democrats.

This alliance is not only about Brexit. It is also part of a conscious attempt to undermine Corbyn and help to prevent something that the capitalist elite fear even more than a 'hard Brexit' - a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government. Also over the summer [rumours have abounded](#) of a new supposedly 'centrist' party being formed for the same reasons. This may not seem to be posed immediately, but is inherent in the situation.

It is naïve for shadow chancellor John McDonnell to suggest, [as he appeared to in the Guardian on 19 August](#), that it is no longer necessary to push for urgent constitutional changes to democratise the Labour Party because, "the nature of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) has changed".

Measures like [mandatory reselection](#), [restoring trade union rights within Labour](#) and [readmittance of expelled socialists](#) are more urgently needed than ever. Unfortunately, the majority of the PLP remain pro-capitalist and opposed to Jeremy Corbyn, even if his popularity means that some of them are currently holding back from saying so openly. Instead they are mobilising against him on the issue of a 'soft' Brexit.

It is urgent that Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and the workers' movement launch a major campaign - not for a 'hard' or 'soft' Brexit - but for [an internationalist Brexit that is in the interests of the working and middle class](#), both in Britain and across Europe. Otherwise it is inevitable that the different wings of the capitalist class will succeed in confusing and dividing working class people.

Our starting point is the diametrical opposite of the starting point for all sides of the Tory Party: we have to support what benefits working class people and cements their unity, and to implacably oppose that which undermines it.

## **Capitalist 'freedom'**

What attitude does that mean taking to the single market? The single market finally [came into being in 1993](#), following negotiations that began with the [1986 Single European Act](#); something that [Maggie Thatcher claimed credit for initiating](#)!

From the beginning it has been based on the so-called 'four freedoms', the free movement of goods, services, capital and labour. It is policed by [the European Commission](#) (made up of one representative from each EU state), which takes infringements of market rules before the [European Court of Justice](#) (ECJ). From its

inception it has aimed to drive through [neoliberal, anti-working class measures](#) in order to maximise the profits of the capitalist elite.

The single market compels the privatisation of public services, prohibits nationalisation, and makes it easier for employers to exploit workers in numerous ways. Jeremy Corbyn was right, therefore, to say shortly after the June general election that [Brexit should not mean remaining part of the single market](#). Nor should it mean remaining part of the customs union which means handing the right to negotiate trade deals to the European Commission alone.

In his Guardian article John McDonnell expressed it as: "The bottom line for me, is the new relationship we have with Europe should be designed on the basis that we can implement our manifesto."

This is not a bad starting point. A Corbyn-led government should pledge to enter the negotiations declaring that all EU laws which hindered this would immediately be annulled. This is not a question of fighting for British 'sovereignty', [as Labour's shadow trade secretary Barry Gardiner unfortunately put it](#) when correctly arguing to leave the single market, but fighting in the interests of the working class not just in Britain but across Europe.

There are, of course, aspects of EU law - such as various environmental and health and safety protections - which the workers' movement should have no objection to keeping other than a desire to strengthen them.

And no one wants to see what the 'soft' Brexiteers paint as inevitable outside the single market - economic crisis, job losses and price increases. On the basis of a Tory 'hard' Brexit, all of that would be posed - but nor does continuing as part of the crisis-ridden EU offer a way forward for working class people in Britain.

## **Socialist measures**

A socialist Brexit, by contrast, could be the start of building a society that was able to provide everyone with the prerequisites for a decent life: a high-quality secure home, a good job, free education, a top class NHS, a living pension and more.

In doing so it would act as a beacon for workers' and young people across Europe to take the same road, opening the path not only to mass opposition to the EU bosses' club but also to a democratic socialist confederation of Europe.

A starting point for a workers' Brexit would be to implement the demands at the end of this article, all of which would require a complete break with the single market.

At the same time, doing so would inspire the 450 million workers remaining in the single market to fight for similar demands in their own countries. It would also terrify the capitalist class, not just in Britain but globally, who would see their rotten profit-driven system under threat from a mass movement for a new democratic, socialist society.

Without doubt the world's ruling elites would do all they could to sabotage the implementation of Jeremy Corbyn's programme, including attempting to use the rules of the single market if Britain remained inside it.

But, provided a determined mass movement was mobilised in support of the government's programme, they would not be able to succeed. The retreat of the Syriza government in Greece over fighting austerity was not pre-ordained. If the government had shown the courage of the Greek people and refused to capitulate to the capitalists and their EU institutions, the outcome could have been very different.

However, to effectively prevent the attempted sabotage of the capitalist class - inside or outside the EU - will pose the question of taking socialist measures in order to remove control of the economy and finance system from the tiny unelected minority who currently hold it in their hands. Pleading with the City of London "to stabilise the markets before we get into government", [as John McDonnell suggests to the Guardian](#), will never prevent the financial markets trying to attack a government which threatens their obscene profits.

Nor will it work to beg multinational corporations to stay in Britain if they think they can make a bigger profit by moving to a country with cheaper labour.

Instead, socialist measures - bringing into democratic public ownership the 125 or so big corporations and banks that control around 80% of Britain's economy - would be posed. This would provide the possibility of developing a democratic, socialist plan of production that could very quickly transform the lives of millions.

For workers continuing to suffer brutal capitalist austerity in Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland - indeed to workers everywhere - it would act to show a way forward to a new, socialist world.

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- Not a penny to be paid in a 'divorce bill' to subsidise the capitalist elites of Europe
  - Ban zero-hour contracts. £10 an hour minimum wage for all
  - Abolition of all anti-trade union legislation. For the right of all workers to freely organise and when necessary strike, in defence of their and other workers' interests
  - No 'race to the bottom'! The 'rate for the job' for all workers. For democratic trade union control over hiring new workers
  - For the right of all EU workers currently in Britain to remain with full rights, and to demand the same for UK workers in other EU countries
  - Immediate scrapping of all rules demanding 'competitive tendering', limiting state aid and opposing nationalisation. This would remove the legal obstacles to councils bringing all local services back 'in house'. It would enable the immediate renationalisation of all privatised public services such as rail, energy and water. It would remove the obstacles to renationalising the NHS, throwing out the private multinational companies that are bleeding it dry
  - For a socialist society run in the interests of the millionaires not the billionaires. Bring the 125 major corporations and banks that dominate the economy into democratic public ownership
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## Come to Socialism 2017

Socialism 2017 takes place on 11 and 12 November. It is a weekend of discussion and debate with a choice of over 40 workshops and rallies.

Keynote speakers include Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe, author of *From Militant to the Socialist Party*; Corbynista MP Ian Mearns; Seattle socialist Kshama Sawant who led the US's first [successful battle for a \\$15 an hour minimum wage](#); Irish socialist MP Paul Murphy fresh from [an attempt to criminalise him for effective protesting](#); and Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary and regular contributor to the Socialist Party's monthly magazine *Socialism Today*.

There will be time during every workshop for everyone to have a say, to raise questions, propose points of difference, or expand on aspects of the discussion.

We welcome this as discussion and debate brings clarification for all our understanding of the complex world we live in, the lessons from past struggles and the programme we need to fight for socialism today.

At Socialism 2017 we will discuss [the Russian Revolution 100 years ago](#). 1917 provides a powerful example of how it is possible for the working class and poor to take their destiny into their own hands and transform the world.

We will be discussing the impact of the revolution and why the Soviet Union degenerated into dictatorship. But Socialism 2017 will not be a history lesson! It is focused on the burning questions our movements face.

Socialism 2017 will bring together working class fighters, trade unionists and youth and student activists, anti-cuts campaigners, those who want to find out about socialism and Marxism, and people who want to change the world, for a weekend of discussion and debate on the alternative to capitalist crisis.

How can we get rid of the Tories? When will police and institutional racism end? Will a Jeremy Corbyn government be undermined by the Blairites? Can workers fight low pay? What about the trade union leaders who don't want to fight?

What happened to the socialist movement in Venezuela? How can we prevent Trump from delivering World War III? What really happened in the 1917 Russian Revolution?

What do we do about media bias? After Grenfell, how can we end the scandal of private profiteering? Can we win the right to free education?

If these are the questions you are asking then, a) you are not alone, and b) Socialism 2017 is the event for you.

It will be the political event of the year, celebrating the anniversary of the 1917 Russian Revolution, hearing from workers and socialists in struggle around the world

- To find out more, buy tickets and book accommodation, transport, creche places, disability support, etc, for the weekend, please phone us on 020 8988 8777 or visit [socialism 2017.net](http://socialism2017.net)

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## Chatsworth ward patients and campaigners demand answers

### Mansfield Socialist Party

A highly charged and unusual meeting took place 16 August on [Chatsworth rehabilitation unit at Mansfield Community Hospital](#). 40 people crowded into the ward day room, including patients (one in bed, six in wheelchairs), family members, former patients and many staff.

Facing them were the chief executive of the clinical commissioning group (CCG), the medical director of Sherwood Forest NHS trust and four other senior CCG and trust directors.

The CCG and trust asked to meet with #WeAreAllChatsworth as support for the campaign rapidly grows. They faced a grilling from every corner of the room.

'What will happen to me if the unit closed? Why haven't the trust and CCG worked this out before announcing closure? Where will patients with MS, Parkinson's, brain injuries and similar long-term conditions be treated, with no suitable NHS facilities nearby?'

None of these points were answered. The panel was forced to confront the patients' and families' refusal to lie down quietly and workers' passionate defence of their patients.

Ward leader Tom Hunt asked why the trust didn't hang on. Instead of making cuts, another government could be in power soon with more money for the NHS.

Chairing the meeting, Socialist Party Jon Dale asked for assurance that no staff members would face disciplinary action for participating in the campaign. If any such action were taken, he assured the trust, Chatsworth would turn from a local into a national issue.

- Join our Save Chatsworth demonstration on 2 September. Assemble 11am at Mansfield Community Hospital followed by a rally at 12noon at Butter Cross Square
- Messages of support to: [weareallchatsworth17@gmail.com](mailto:weareallchatsworth17@gmail.com)

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## Vital Derby women's services under threat - campaign calls on council to step in

Save Derby Women's Centre campaign

Derby Women's Centre has existed since 1978 and has been supporting women throughout Derby and Derbyshire who are at the most vulnerable point in their lives. The main aim of the centre is to reduce the devastating impact of mental health issues and domestic violence but it offers many other vital services.

The centre has survived with funding through charitable grants, donations and fundraising efforts. Last May the centre's most substantial grant came to an end and the centre is now under threat. The Labour-led council was approached for a loan but refused to help.

The centre is currently supporting approximately 60 women and three men through counselling, with a further 60 on the waiting list. On average the centre takes five referrals a week. It has now suspended any further referrals as a result of [funding issues](#). This will have a devastating impact on the most vulnerable and at-risk women in the community. In addition to those seeking counselling, the centre supports an average of 50 women through other services.

"How they have changed my life is beyond measure. The reason I feel so passionately about them is not only what they have done for me, but how I have seen women turn their lives around and come back to life, discovering their confidence and self-esteem again". These are the words of one of the women using the centre. Many other users have said that the centre saves lives.

Women using the centre have set up a campaign to win the funding to continue to fully fund all the services currently provided. Derby Socialist Party was approached and asked for support in the campaign and have discussed several ideas to this end.

Derby Labour council [has millions in reserves](#). These may also be used on a short-term temporary basis for other purposes provided the funding is replaced in future years. Derby Women's Centre needs £80,000 annually. The money is there for these vital service to ensure the life changing and lifesaving work that Derby Women's Centre offers is fully funded.

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

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## Hull youth festival builds trade union movement and internationalism

**Matt Whale, Hull Socialist Party**

An event aimed at challenging oppression through collective action was held on 19 August. Organised by Hull and District trade union council, [the first 'collective youth festival' was primarily aimed at developing the next generation of trade unionists](#) to continue the fight against the bosses. It attracted between 1,500 and 2,000 people.

The event was sponsored by individual trade union branches in Hull. Local bands and artists played the event for free, giving up their time and equipment.

Speakers from numerous unions detailed the importance of unions and of young people taking up the mantle to protect our public services and fight for a better future. Newly elected Labour MP Emma Hardy read out a message of solidarity from Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn to the festival.

One of the key themes running throughout was that of internationalism. The festival was also privileged to have two international speakers.

Laura Garcia, a member of the Spanish students' union, detailed its role in [fighting back against the Spanish government's](#) plan to attack education and young people in Spain. To huge support from the crowds, Laura finished her barnstorming speech calling for youth to organise against this dreadful system.

Danny Byrne spoke about the attacks on democratic rights in Ireland and the importance of international support for the [Jobstown Not Guilty campaign to defend the right to protest](#). Special thanks were given to Hull trade union council and Hull Unite for their donations to the solidarity campaign.

Socialist Party members played a key role in the organisation of the festival, with members from Sheffield and Leeds coming along to help out. Our material was well received, with interest in the newly set up Hull Young Socialists.

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## West Midlands Young Socialists fight for free education on results day

West Midlands [Young Socialists](#) hit the streets on A-level results day on 17 August to further the fight for free education as thousands of young people found out which university they will go to in September. The introduction of university tuition fees by New Labour, paving the way for the [Tory-Lib Dem coalition to triple fees to £9,000](#) a year, has left those of us who want to get a degree with [a lifetime of crippling debt](#).

Jeremy Corbyn's election [pledge to abolish tuition fees](#), with the bold promise that this would be fast-tracked to come into effect from September, was one of the most attractive and popular offers in Labour's manifesto. It shows the potential to build a campaign among young people to defeat fees, take on austerity and fight for socialist change!

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## NHS campaign receives Labour Party backing

William Jarrett, North Tyneside Socialist Party

Save North Tyneside NHS is a campaign of local residents, service users, healthcare professionals, and trade unionists to prevent the local clinical commissioning group's (CCG) [proposed closures of three NHS walk-in centres](#). It was initiated by Socialist Party members and National Shop Stewards Network supporters in November of 2016.

It holds campaign stalls in town centres, where we have so far gathered over 3,000 signatures on our petition. Contrast this with the CCG's paltry return of just over 700 from its shoddy consultation. The campaign also took a strong position against sustainability and transformation plans (STPs).

On 14 August members of the campaign active in Labour, Unite the Union and the Socialist Party met with North Tyneside constituency MP and shadow cabinet member Mary Glendon, to discuss the proposed closures and STPs.

We shared our strategies and requested Labour bring its official resources to the campaign. We agreed to jointly promote an October meeting in Wallsend's Battle Hill community, which Mary would chair.

It was also revealed that the CCG has delayed the proposed 1 September closure date for the walk-ins, setting a new decision deadline of February 2018. This is more evidence of the growing pressure applied by the campaign.

On 19 August Socialist Party members of the campaign were back in action in North Shields town centre, to update the public with developments. The stall generated an additional 200 signatures, and raised £74.25 from sales of the Socialist and donations to the Socialist Party's fighting fund.

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## Review - 1919: Britain's year of revolution

# Mutinies and strikes: when Bolshevism threatened British bosses

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

Like countries across Europe, Britain was not immune to the impact of [the 1917 Russian revolution](#).

In '1919: Britain's year of revolution', Simon Webb argues the attempts of the British government to fight the new Bolshevik-led Soviet government set off discontent that swept through even the forces of the state itself.

When the police struck in 1918, Liberal prime minister David Lloyd George famously said "the country was nearer to Bolshevism that day than at any time since."

Lloyd George's wartime coalition had been reelected on a promise of speedy demobilisation of conscripts. When soldiers found they were instead to be shipped to France or Russia, they were outraged.

On 3 January 1919, 2,000 soldiers took over the port of Folkestone and announced no military ships would be allowed to sail, posting pickets at the dockyards and railway stations. On 6 January a London-based unit commandeered lorries and blockaded Downing Street when they found out they would be one of the last to be demobilised.

Strikes of soldiers and sailors also took place in Southampton, Calais and elsewhere, often with the result that troops were speedily demobilised. Around events to mark the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, a mayor's banquet in Luton ended with the storming and gutting by fire of the town hall.

## Strike wave

Industrial disputes took place in 1919, including a railway strike, a general strike in Glasgow and another police strike. The government sent gunships up the Mersey. The spectre of a general strike called by [the 'triple alliance' - miners, railway workers and transport workers](#) - hung in the air.

Race riots also broke out. Underlying this seems to have been unemployment faced by discharged soldiers, whose jobs had gone to migrant workers during the war.

Webb describes a special conference of ministers in February 1920: "We must be very clear about what was happening here. The coalition government of Lloyd George was talking of arming one section of the population to fight against another; in short, preparing for civil war. It is in this context that the recruitment of the so-called 'Citizen Guards' in October 1919 must be seen."

But for some, even these actions didn't go far enough. Webb reveals not one but two coup plots orchestrated by leading figures in the armed forces and the then secretary of state for war, Winston Churchill.

One of the strengths of the book is that it doesn't indulge in the crude denunciations of revolutionary movements as 'conspiracies' and 'undemocratic'. Instead Webb discusses how workers and soldiers formed their own elected bodies, the soviets.

"In effect, the taking of the Winter Palace was merely a symbolic act by the new power; the actual revolution had already taken place when ordinary men and women lost faith in the government and refused to support it."

Although Webb's sympathy does seem to lie with the powers that be and restoring 'order' to Britain, that doesn't mean he is unsympathetic to the problems facing ordinary people.

Ultimately, he sees 1919 as a revolutionary aberration, a period of unrest that returned to normal, calm times. But such a conclusion isn't merited by the historical record.



There was further unrest in the armed forces in the interwar period, most famously the naval mutiny at Invergordon in 1931. [The 1926 general strike](#), which Webb dismisses, saw 'councils of action' in the North East controlling the movement of supplies.

Where 1919 may have been a turning point was in the abject betrayal by the tops of the trade unions, repeated in 1926 and on other occasions.

Famously the leaders of the triple alliance met Lloyd George in February 1919, where he told them a general strike would raise the question of taking power. Miners' leader Bob Smillie said that after that they knew they were beaten.

Instead of prosecuting the struggle to the end, to reorganise society on a socialist basis, these leaders capitulated to the logic of the profit system. The real tragedy of 1919 is there was no revolutionary party that could draw the necessary conclusions and lead a struggle for them.

The book does suffer from several typos, and repetition of points made in previous chapters. Nevertheless, it is a fantastic insight into the tumult that existed as the British ruling class pushed back against the unrest which [World War One and the Russian revolution had unleashed](#).

- Available from [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

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## The Socialist inbox

### Do you have something to say?

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

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

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

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### Labour's poverty pay for sleep-in carers

Good to see the [piece in issue 958 of the Socialist](#) by Katie re the scandal of poverty pay for sleep-in care workers.

It's a disgusting fact that not only Tory councils have sold off these services that provide support to our most vulnerable citizens - Labour councils are just as guilty. The selling off of quality in-house services for vulnerable adults is a total disgrace and Labour should be ashamed.

I'm glad the Socialist Party has highlighted this. I have worked in local government for 30 years and feel angry and ashamed this is happening.

As a Unite shop steward for a very active, fighting-back branch, I am proud that we fought to keep my service in-house. But I know we have to be on the watch all the time to see what future threats may come from a Labour council implementing Tory cuts and Tory philosophy.

Thanks for raising this in the paper.

**Daniel Cohen, Greenwich Socialist Party**

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## Private practice

I spent a few hours standing on the picket line with [striking Serco staff at Barts Health NHS Trust](#). The porters and cleaners at Bart's Hospital were getting cars and vans to honk support.

But after a while I noticed none of the vehicles going into the hospital were NHS vehicles. They were all private companies, from eCourier Medical to ERS Medical. They were dropping off patients, medicine and supplies.

It was eye-opening how far privatisation has gone in the NHS.

**Helen Pattison, Leytonstone**

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## Dust devils

Just back from what seemed to be a regular building inspection of my tower block. The staff present spent more time reviewing cleanliness than fire safety. In particular, dust.

In fact, if I hadn't been there, the ever-open fire doors to utility cupboards and the ongoing shortage of fluorescent strips in the stairwells would probably not have been noted. I know this because these problems have been evident for some time without being rectified and have been flagged up previously by me and others.

[It's like fire safety is a secondary matter](#) and dust takes precedence. I don't think the housing officer was happy with my presence and fiercely defended Metropolitan Housing when I raised the matter of the ever-open fire doors.

At one stage it was like talking to some very old Stalinist defending [the Soviet invasion of Hungary](#). The line must be defended at all costs! Forwards to a dust-free future!

**Steve Nally, Oval, south London**

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## Aviation avarice

Recently, on passing through Birmingham Airport, I noticed a number of staff wearing high-visibility jackets with "great volunteer" on their backs.

On enquiring, it appears the airport has taken on a number of "staff" on a volunteer basis to cope with the summer rush. These volunteers receive no pay whatsoever. They are meagrely offered discounted meals and transport costs.

Considering the airport achieved a [profit of £25 million in 2015-16](#), and clearly these are jobs that are needed, it is astonishing they are using people in this way. It seems they are not even prepared to offer minimum wage.

I sincerely hope this is not a new trend or we will all be doing voluntary work before long to ensure the bosses reach their profit targets.

**Mark Andrews, Birmingham**

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## Field fail

Right-wing Labour MP [Frank Field has been in the news again](#), using the situation in Venezuela to try and undermine Corbyn and his leadership. This former [friend of Thatcher](#) would seemingly rather have a Tory government than a Corbyn-led one.

This is the same Frank Field, MP for Birkenhead, who told us, the Birkenhead Land Registry branch of civil service union PCS, that there was no point fighting privatisation as we couldn't win.

Well, [we ignored him, campaigned, got members active](#), and defeated privatisation.

This month, as a direct result of that victory, we secured 366 permanent jobs across Land Registry offices, approximately 30 of those in Birkenhead. Conversely, had we been privatised, there was a real chance our office would have been closed under restructuring plans.

It really shows the value of fighting and campaigning and exposes the political bankruptcy of Field.

Time for Labour to kick out treacherous Blairites like Field and develop a full programme of fighting, socialist policies.

**Dave Lunn, Wirral**

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## Knowsley neglect

Polly Toynbee's [Guardian column said](#) Knowsley "has been savaged by Tory cuts."

This is an important point to raise. However, the main underlying issues aren't raised by Toynbee, who supports the Blairite wing of the Labour Party.

Knowsley has been hit hard, perhaps hardest - but everywhere has. The borough is [one of only three in the country to not offer A-levels](#), the other two being the bankers' City of London and the tiny Scilly Isles! This loss of A-level provision is down to financial decisions: cutbacks.

Eight years ago, there were about a dozen institutions offering further education - with £159 million pumped in via PFI. The result today is complete academisation of the area's schools.

I'm assuming Toynbee's assertion that the borough loves right-wing Knowsley MP George Howarth is born out of voting figures. But that couldn't be further from the views of the residents who step into my taxi!

After taking on Tory governments for decades, the postwar revolt in the Mersey area against Tory decision-makers has been passed down from generation to generation.

Howarth is an MP who does virtually zero campaigning and votes to bomb Syria while doing nothing to relieve frustrations. The vote for Howarth is not because he works for us, it's because the Tories don't, so the borough votes Labour.

The higher vote at this year's general election was in spite of Howarth. It was instead for Corbyn's anti-austerity programme, as working class people will hope these mean a return to some of Labour's more left-wing policies of the past, including the fighting, socialist campaigning embodied by [the Militant-led Liverpool City Council of the 1980s](#).

**Neill Dunne, Knowsley**

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## Tories trounced

On 3 August in a [council byelection in Marine ward](#), Beccy Cooper, with 1,032 votes - 47.4% - became the first Labour representative on Worthing Borough Council for more than 40 years.

The Conservative runner-up got 846 votes - 38.8%. The byelection was prompted by a Conservative standing down because of ill health, and Labour's share of the vote soared by 27.9 points.

The ward is in a leafy area, not an obvious Labour target. Labour's efforts had been concentrated in Central Worthing in the local elections and general election. But much has been made of the changing demographic of the town as young people have moved there, forced out of Brighton and Hove by astronomical housing costs.

Coupled with the same-day [capture in Thanet, east Kent, of a seat in Margate Central](#) ward with 454 votes - 57.5%, +23.7 points - from Ukip, -25.2 points, it fuels the thought that few places should now be regarded as out of bounds for Corbyn-led Labour.

**Andy Barber, Brighton**

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## **Fully automated capitalism?**

Silicon Valley: the road to Armageddon or utopia? The future is violent revolt or harmonious use of artificial intelligence (AI) depending on who you speak to - as revealed by the BBC's 'Secrets of Silicon Valley'.

AI can be used to diagnose disease from a CT scan in a fraction of a second. Uber can drive impoverished taxi drivers to suicide. Airbnb claims to help people earn money while they travel abroad, with catastrophic effects on working class rents in Barcelona.

The industrial revolution was nothing compared to what is coming, says one tech genius whose software could partially replace doctors. Another idealistic techie predicts a life of leisure for the masses who will be paid a decent income for not working while new technology will create the necessary wealth to fund it.

But the key question is the ownership of these wonders. It is certain that dystopia awaits us if they remain in private hands.

Ultimately, [on the basis of capitalism, the rule of the market will apply to AI](#): deliver the highest rewards to shareholders, and if that means dispensing with millions of workers' labour then so be it. This programme provided further evidence that socialism cannot be postponed much longer.

**Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool**

- 'Secrets of Silicon Valley' is [available until 9 September on BBC iPlayer](#)
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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/26013>