

Victory at Glenfield shows people power can save our NHS

Steve Score, chair, Save Glenfield Children's Heart Centre campaign

Celebrations were taking place in Leicester city centre on 30 November following an [outstanding victory](#) for the campaign to save congenital heart surgery at Glenfield Hospital.

A mood of relief and of jubilation spread from campaigners to people across the region. We hope this victory encourages campaigners across the country fighting to save the NHS.

Congenital heart surgery at the Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Trust in London, which had its own campaign, [has also been saved](#).

Closure of the Glenfield children's heart centre would have left the East Midlands as the only region in England without such a highly specialised unit.

Campaigners warned the result would be devastating for the families whose children's lives are saved by Glenfield. This affected me personally, as my son had open heart surgery there two years ago.

The campaign has involved thousands in a large number of demonstrations and meetings, [the biggest march having over 2,000 on it](#). 130,000 people signed a petition online and on paper.

We helped 7,500 people engage in a very tricky and complex 'consultation'. This is all despite the difficulty of congenital heart patients being a small minority in a very widespread population.

NHS England told the hospital trust 18 months ago that it wanted to end surgery. But the threat had actually been hanging over the centre for years.

[A previous attempt to close a number of units around the country](#) failed about four years ago following a judicial review and the government's 'Independent Reconfiguration Panel' advising the health secretary it had been badly thought out.

Bosses have been forced into a u-turn by a mass campaign that brought together a wide variety of people.

The success belongs to the determination and hard work of patients, families, staff and campaigners. All played their part.

Unusually for a local health service campaign, the enemy in this case wasn't the local trust or 'clinical commissioning group'.

NHS England was proposing the closure, and the trust opposed it. This meant some of us were standing alongside people we strongly disagreed with on other issues, such as other NHS cuts.

While it was crucial we had arguments to put forward, really the mass campaign to mobilise support was decisive.

NHS England's arguments were flawed from the start. The key argument was about the number of operations carried out by each surgeon per year.

These are incredibly complex, sometimes carried out on baby's hearts the size of a walnut. We believe the targets bosses wanted to set - 'standards' in the jargon of NHS England - of 125 operations per surgeon per year were arbitrary.

Some TV journalists inaccurately implied that Glenfield was somehow unsafe. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is "good" in all areas and "outstanding" in effectiveness [according to the Care Quality Commission](#).

The trust was able to show that even these targets could be met in a short period of time. But as correct as our arguments were, it was necessary to put mass pressure on NHS England and the politicians to make sure we won.

We are proud of the role that Socialist Party members played in this victory. Very soon after the threat was announced we [called a public meeting to discuss building a campaign](#).

We linked up with families and campaigners who had been [involved in the battle to save the centre in the past](#).

This included a local charity, Heart Link, which funds many of the facilities at Glenfield, made up of working class people whose own families were affected.

People worked incredibly hard getting the petitions signed and the consultation documents filled in. We reached out to staff and trade unions, and aimed to build widely in the community.

The Save Glenfield Children's Heart Centre campaign was set up. [Its first public meeting had 150 at it](#).

From there [we mobilised a demo of 1,500](#). We held a regular organising committee which was inclusive of people from different backgrounds.

Importantly we linked community campaigners with the trade union movement, getting backing from a series of local and regional trade union bodies. We even had Len McCluskey, leader of Unite the Union speak at [one of the demos](#).

We also organised a series of public meetings across the East Midlands to go through the complicated questionnaire NHS England wanted filling in [as part of its consultation](#).

We even held a day of action in 25 schools - pupils turned up wearing red, held assemblies, sent their support and made placards for a demonstration.

We already had plans to go to the next phase of the campaign if the NHS England board meeting on 30 November stuck to the proposals. But all the hard work paid off, and we won!

Although NHS England dropped its plan to close two of the congenital heart centres, Glenfield and the Brompton, unfortunately it didn't in the case of the third unit. This was in Manchester, where to our knowledge there was no real campaign.

In fact, the threat hanging over Manchester meant staff moving elsewhere to secure jobs, already resulting in collapse of the service.

This is an indication of the stupidity of the bureaucratic approach to these issues by NHS England.

If you think something is wrong, why not discuss it first? Why start with a threat of closure? If the same had happened at Glenfield and Brompton it would have immediately resulted in a disastrous crisis for the service nationally - not to mention a crisis in linked services such as paediatric intensive care.

It raises the need for genuine democratic control over the NHS, involving the workers and users of the NHS. NHS England is in fact a quango set up to deflect the blame from the government.

All through the campaign, NHS England said it was nothing to do with cuts. Eome in the trust accepted that.

Yet we made the point that at every meeting bosses would have discussed the £22 billion cuts they have been obliged to make by the government, along with 'rationalisation' to achieve them. Even the board meeting on 30 November discussed "efficiencies" two items before the congenital heart units review!

Above all we believe the victory of our campaign proves that if you fight you can win. Some battles are already being won.

In the East Midlands we have seen successes in the [Chatsworth ward campaign](#), for example.

But of course the war is far from over. These myriad local struggles need to be linked up, [which 'Health Campaigns Together' aims to do](#).

We need to unite the communities fighting for their local services with the trade unions representing workers in the NHS and beyond in a national fight to save our NHS.

Gill Smart, of the Heart Link Children's Charity which is made of local working class families and helps fund the centre, said:

"People power is fantastic. Without the people behind us we wouldn't have got this result, and I would like to thank everyone who took the time out to vote in the consultation and do the marches and everything. Because without their help we wouldn't have achieved this outcome."

Shirley Barnes, one of the main organisers of the campaign, said:

"This campaign entailed a massive amount of work by hundreds of people.

"Everyone who got their family and friends to sign the petition, or complete a consultation paper; every shop, hairdresser, pub, restaurant that had petitions for us.

"Volunteers that collected at various events, organisations that gave us free stands at various events, festivals etc. And we could not have done it without the support of some of the unions.

"The campaign committee was a very, very disparate group of people, parents, trade unionists, political activists etc, who would not have come together under any other circumstances, but who shared a great aim of saving a much-needed heart unit.

And it was this working together and using all their different skills and abilities that made this such a successful campaign. People power at its best!"

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 5 December 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Tyneside walk-in closures postponed after campaign and rally

An excellent Save Our NHS rally took place in North Shields town centre on 2 December. The [protest was called against the closure of two walk-in centres](#) in the area and the proposal to replace them with a single privatised centre.

Members of the public spoke about their experiences and the effects of NHS cuts. Campaigners also spoke at the rally including John Whalley, the secretary of Keep Our NHS Public North East and NHS campaigners from South Shields.

I spoke too from the Socialist Party, pointing out that [up to 250,000 people turned out for the national NHS demonstration on 4 March](#).

Imagine how massive a protest called by Jeremy Corbyn and the trade unions would be. 50 people bought copies of the Socialist newspaper.

Following the protest a clinical commissioning group meeting took place on 5 December which took the decision to postpone the closure of the walk-in centres until October 2018.

The original scheduled closure was October 2017 so [the campaign has managed to force a year's postponement](#).

But we need to use the extra time to continue to build the campaign to ensure the walk-in centres stay open.

John Hoare, Save Tyneside NHS campaign committee

- East Coast rescued from private failure AGAIN
- Biggest hike in fares for five years
- Transport workers under attack

Nationalise rail now

Steve Cawley, Peterborough Socialist Party

For the third time the government is having to save the East Coast Main Line railway from private sector failure. Virgin Trains will stop running the line [three years early](#), in 2020.

First Sea Containers Ltd, then National Express and now Richard Branson. But last time it was publicly owned, the line returned [over £1 billion](#) to the public coffers.

Shares in Stagecoach - which runs the line in partnership with Virgin - [jumped 13%](#) when the government made the franchise termination announcement. Future payments due to the government from the private operators will be cancelled.

Their profits don't just come from subsidy payments. Track access fees paid by train operators [actually fell](#) between 2004 and 2012, for example.

Transport union [RMT is balloting members](#) on the line for strike action over Virgin Trains' attacks on conditions and pay. Meanwhile, [rail bosses across the country want to cut costs and increase profits by extending 'driver-only operation'](#) - removing the guards' safety-critical function controlling train doors.

Many of us have witnessed or heard of accidents with doors trapping clothing or bags and trains starting to move off. This happened to my partner a few years back on a local Cambridgeshire train. She was lucky that other passengers shouted too, and the driver then stopped.

And rail fares are set for the [biggest hike](#) in five years - an average of 3.4% from 2 January, according to the Rail Delivery Group. This increase is well above [most commuters' stagnating wages](#).

Jeremy Corbyn has promised to bring the railways back into public ownership, which is very good. But passengers and rail workers can't just wait for the private franchises to run out, as Corbyn has floated.

The attacks are happening now. And apart from the possible extension of contracts into the dim and distant future, there's also the possibility that bosses may sell or spirit away assets in preparation.

A commitment to public ownership used to be on every Labour Party membership card, pre-Blair. We need to nationalise the whole rail network as a priority - with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. This need would not apply to billionaires and big companies, [whatever the European Court of Justice might say!](#)

- 14m in poverty in Britain
- May's social mobility team quits

End Tory war on poor, Laurel Fogarty

Laurel Fogarty

Just weeks after Chancellor [Phillip Hammond boasted](#) that Tory MPs had never had it so good, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has [published an explosive report](#) showing the rest of us are suffering through the first sustained rise in child and pensioner poverty for 20 years.

The report showed that 14 million people in the UK - over 20% of the population - are living below the poverty line, struggling to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table.

This figure includes four million children now living below the poverty line in households that cannot meet their basic needs. These children are less likely to do well at school and more likely to suffer from health problems [compared to their richer counterparts](#), pushing them into a cycle of poverty that spans generations.

Even for those in work, the report shows that insecure and poorly paid employment does not keep people out of poverty.

Despite Tory lies, eight million people in poverty live in families where at least one person is in work. One in eight workers - 3.7 million people - are living pay cheque to pay cheque, spending most of their income on extortionate rents.

The fight for an end to zero-hour contracts and for a real living wage is more crucial than ever. While workers make huge profits for the bosses, our families are falling into poverty.

Theresa May's desperate empty promise to [tackle society's "burning injustices"](#) is now embarrassing even Tory advisers. Her entire 'social mobility' team has quit over the government's lack of action

As the Tories forge ahead with [cuts to benefits alongside the disastrous Universal Credit programme](#), they are forcing millions more into poverty, debt and homelessness.

This cruel government has limped on for long enough. Its political agenda of austerity and privatisation has contributed to the deaths of [over 120,000](#) people.

The Tories - aided in many cases by the Blairites - have committed what the researchers who produced that figure have called "economic murder." They have forced children into poverty, the effects of which will follow these young people throughout their lives.

The power to bring this government to its knees lies with workers. We must fight for [coordinated strikes to bring down the Tories](#), and for democratic workers' control of the economy. Socialist policies can reverse the shameful rise in poverty shown in this report.

Rough sleeping crisis: make homes, not arrests

Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales

The [shocking death](#) of a homeless 32-year-old woman who was sleeping in Alexandra Park in Cardiff should have spurred the city council and Welsh government to emergency action to provide accommodation.

Instead the authorities are cracking down on homeless people themselves, in a clampdown called '[Operation Purple Ash](#)'. South Wales Police have started arresting homeless people.

Clearly the sight of dozens begging in the city centre is bad for business in the Christmas shopping season. There was a [similar campaign](#) to drive homeless people out of the city centre prior to the Champions League final in June.

Ironically, many of the [high street chains who the council and police are assisting by removing homeless people are well-known tax avoiders](#). So they are refusing to contribute to solving the problem of homelessness.

The clampdown has been accompanied by a media campaign [against beggars and homeless people](#) - implying [they are responsible](#) for their plight, not the failures of the state. When homeless people are invisible there is little concern about the problem in the media.

People with mental health or drug problems form a high proportion of those forced to live rough. However it is not mental health or drug problems that have increased homelessness, but lack of affordable housing coupled with cuts in housing benefits.

[Official figures](#) indicate an increase of 7% sleeping rough in Cardiff in the last year. But surrounding cities and towns report increases of 67 to 93% - which appear more accurate. The sharp rise is in large part caused by government welfare attacks.

Many rely on relatives and friends when they are made homeless and do not appear in any statistics. But an increasing number do not have people to fall back on and find themselves on the streets.

Socialist Party Wales demands immediate steps to solve the crisis:

- All homeless people must be guaranteed a roof over their head where they can sleep safely now
 - The Welsh government should legislate to allow councils to introduce rent caps
 - Ban letting agency fees
 - Start a [crash building programme of council houses](#)
 - Reverse cuts to social services to assist homeless people into permanent housing and employment
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Royal wedding exposes them-and-us visa system

Isai Priya, Refugee Rights Campaign

The royal engagement of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle exposes once again that the immigration system has one rule for the establishment and another for us.

With a few signatures, [Markle is to be fast-tracked](#) to becoming a British citizen. In effect she will have to make one trip to the Home Office, and then walk out with a British passport.

This means skipping the long, painful process of first applying overseas for a fiancée entry clearance visa. Then proving that the sponsor has annual income exceeding £18,600. Or saving more than [£62,500](#), which is held for six months.

Normal applicants then have to submit bundles of evidence proving they are a couple. The financial documentation must be in the specified format otherwise the visa application will be refused.

This process takes a minimum of three months for a decision. After which, if successful a six-month visa is issued. Then you have to make a further application after marriage to extend the visa, with all of the necessary specified supporting documents.

Upon approval, this spousal visa extension will only be valid for a time-limited 2.5-year period. Then you have to submit another extension application. And even that is not the end of the process.

Only after completing five years in the UK as the spouse of a British citizen are refugees and other applicants then eligible to apply to settle here permanently.

The Socialist Party fights for [jobs, homes and services for all](#), [for the right to asylum](#), and [against racist and anti-working class immigration laws](#).

If you're very wealthy you can buy your way in. But for ordinary people the long, complex process, with all the cost and documentation, means visa applications don't have many fairy-tale endings.

RBS to sack 1,000 ahead of sell-off: nationalise the banks

The Royal Bank of Scotland Group wants to close [259 branches](#) of subsidiaries RBS and NatWest. General union Unite says the cut could cost 1,000 jobs.

Meanwhile, Chancellor Philip Hammond is pressing ahead with sell-off plans. The group is 71% owned by the state after [Gordon Brown's 2008 bailout](#). At its current value, the taxpayer stands to [lose £26 billion](#) on the sale.

This is all wrong. The Socialist says: [nationalise the whole finance sector](#), with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.

That's the way to save those jobs. And then society can plan banks' resources democratically to meet the needs of all, not enrich owners and executives.

Branson sues NHS: kick out the profiteers

The NHS has [paid an unknown amount](#) to Richard Branson - for nothing. The multibillionaire sued six Surrey clinical commissioning groups after Virgin lost a bid to [outsource more NHS services](#).

Branson's net worth is about £4 billion, [Forbes estimates](#). NHS England, on the other hand, is [£4 billion in the hole according to its chief exec](#). You do the maths.

Editorial of the Socialist, issue 974

- Corbyn attacks banks
- Labour's poll lead narrow
- National demo called for May

Corbyn's Labour can defeat Tories with socialist programme

"If this Tory parody of a government is so shambolic, so chronically divided, so utterly directionless, then why no astronomical Labour lead in the polls?" [Owen Jones asked](#) in the Guardian on 29 November.

He then remembered that in April, when May triggered the snap general election - partially because she and the Blairites hoped and expected that Jeremy Corbyn's Labour was facing electoral oblivion - a small Labour lead would have been seen in a positive light.

Owen Jones was one of those on the left who drew pessimistic conclusions about Corbyn's fortunes. Just six weeks before May announced her intention to call an election, [Jones said](#) "an agreement should be struck where he can stand down."

In contrast to Jeremy's fair-weather friends, the Socialist Party was confident Labour could push the Tories close to defeat - or better still out of power altogether - providing Corbyn fought on the radical programme his

leadership campaign was based on in 2015. "If Corbyn fights on a clear socialist programme," [we wrote on the day the election was called](#), including "for a Brexit in the interests of the working and middle class - he could win the general election."

As we predicted, after [the launch of Labour's manifesto](#) - and particularly the announcement of policies such as the abolition of tuition fees, a £10 an hour minimum wage, and renationalisation of railways and utilities - the election was transformed.

In the recent BBC documentary 'Labour - the Summer that Changed Everything', when asked by the sitting Blairite Labour MP for Brentford and Isleworth if they were voting Labour, one voter replied "yes, two votes for Corbyn," summarising the mood of millions.

Crisis

The election result transformed the political situation, plunging the Tories into a crisis - or rather [exposing their huge divisions, especially on Brexit](#).

It should have been, and still can be, the foundation for Labour to push ahead in the polls. But to see the task as merely waiting for the next scheduled election in 2022 is a mistake.

It risks demobilising those like the young people who not only voted for Corbyn, but in many cases mobilised to get the vote out as well.

The need for a radical programme of socialist policies must be linked to the need to mobilise all those opposed to the Tories and their austerity offensive, including fighting for free education, which could organise tens of thousands of young people into an irresistible movement for the Tories to go.

It should also include resisting the government's and employers' attacks on living standards, [which have reached historic proportions](#).

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell should demand a meeting of the general council of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to discuss how they can support [coordinated strike action against the Tory public sector pay cap](#).

It is welcome that the [TUC has called](#) a national Saturday demonstration. But it should be earlier than the planned date of 12 May 2018, so that it can become a key organising tool of a collective union fightback on pay.

This could reach out to workers outside the public sector, some who have been involved in [the wave of strikes this year](#).

Actually, one of the dangers of the better than expected election result for Labour is that it has allowed some union leaders to justify passivity.

They hoped that Hammond's budget would end pay restraint, and will still now be prepared to wait for the Tories to implode.

But this is not certain. The establishment sees that a Corbyn-led labour government would not be a reliable tool for them, because it risks raising the expectations of the working class and big sections of the middle class.

This view will be strengthened by [Jeremy Corbyn's comments](#) on banks "like Morgan Stanley (who) say we're a threat, they're right..."

"These are the same speculators and gamblers who crashed our economy in 2008 and then we had to bail them out. Their greed plunged the world into crisis and we are still paying the price."

These were in response to Graham Secker, Morgan Stanley's chief European equity strategist, [who wrote to clients](#) last month: "We could see the biggest shake-up in the political backdrop since the seventies. This is

much more scary from an equity perspective than Brexit."

This gives a glimpse of [how the financiers would try to sabotage a Jeremy Corbyn-led government](#). The solution is to take the power out of their hands by nationalising the major banks and corporations under democratic workers' control and management.

Owen Jones points to sections of the working class who have yet to be convinced by Corbyn. This includes many pensioners, who the Tories [won a majority among](#) in June.

But bold socialist policies to end the crises in the NHS and social care, along with rises in old-age pensions, can help win this section over.

This radical approach changed the June election, and that was a race Corbyn wasn't even expected to be a challenge in.

He must resist any pressure to moderate his manifesto for the next challenge where Labour may be favourite to win.

But to win over older people and other unconvinced sections of the working class, it is vital Corbyn and McDonnell do not send out mixed messages.

Being anti-austerity also means [Labour councils not implementing savage Tory cuts](#), which tend to impact on the oldest and youngest in society.

As [the Birmingham bin workers](#) and [Derby](#) and [Durham TAs](#) showed, working class voters can have their view of a Corbyn-led Labour Party affected when Blairite councillors pass on the cuts, reinforcing the idea that all politicians are all talk but no action.

It is also [crucial that Corbyn fights for a workers' Brexit](#), and not become associated with any perception he is part of establishment-led backsliding.

It is Corbyn, not Farage, who should be leading the charge against the Brexit 'divorce bill'. May's [offer of £50 billion](#) has exposed her election stance as a self-styled 'tough negotiator' - and both wings of the Tories negotiate only in the interests of big business and the capitalist class.

This bill is based on liabilities that were not agreed by workers, young people or pensioners - but by a succession of neoliberal, pro-market Tory and New Labour prime ministers from Thatcher to Blair and Cameron.

Jeremy Corbyn should use his international anti-austerity authority to appeal to workers' and socialist organisations and parties to tear up the EU bosses' club rules and help establish a new collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis.

The Labour leadership should demand that instead of £50 billion going to the EU, it should be spent on abolishing tuition fees, funding the NHS and raising public sector pay.

This class approach would immediately cut through the fog and confusion over the EU and expose the real business motivation of all the Tories on both sides of their division.

Democracy

But part of this strategy must be a determination to inflict a decisive defeat on the Blairites. Following its autumn conference, Labour launched a 'democracy review'.

Corbyn should campaign for [mandatory reselection of MPs to be reestablished](#), along with [restoring rights for trade unions](#), and [opening up Labour as a federal party for all socialists](#) and anti-austerity campaigners. Timidity is not the answer.

- Bring forward the national TUC demonstration, as part of a real strategy to build confidence for strike ballots on pay. Coordinate national strike action against Tory austerity
 - Mandatory reselection to allow Labour Party members a democratic say in who their elected representatives are - kick out the Blairites!
 - Open up the Labour Party. Restore the rights of the trade unions within Labour. Readmit the socialists, with the right to organise in an inclusive federation
 - No more cuts budgets from Labour councils! Let the Tories dare to take on councils protecting our local services
 - No 'divorce payments' for Brexit. Working class people should not pay a penny towards 'commitments' to the EU made not by us but by capitalist politicians
 - No support for the EU Single Market and Customs Union rules - like those on state aid or the posted workers' directives - that go against the interests of the working class
 - Fight for a socialist Brexit. For a Europe-wide campaign of socialists and workers' organisations to use the Brexit talks to tear up the EU bosses' club rules. For a new collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis
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Haringey Labour council: Blairites deselected

In recent days representatives of Labour's right wing have been fulminating about developments in Haringey Labour Party.

Former Labour Party deputy leader [Roy Hattersley even compared the pro-Corbyn Momentum group to the Militant Tendency](#) in the 1980s (now the Socialist Party).

Hattersley demanded similar action is taken against Momentum to [the witch-hunt he and others conducted against Militant](#).

Unfortunately, the approach of the leadership of Momentum has been to declare that the right wing of the party has largely been won over to Corbyn's policies, despite all evidence to the contrary. This alone shows the difference between Momentum and the Militant.

Roy Hattersley admits that Militant was better organised. That organisation flowed from a clear understanding of the role played by the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party and the need for the Labour Party membership and trade union movement to deselected them in favour of candidates who stood for the interests of the working class.

Fortunately, Labour Party members in Haringey have not followed the advice of Momentum's leadership, as one of them reports below.

[The Times](#) and [Evening Standard](#) have carried articles covering recent developments in Haringey Labour Party, screaming about a "purge of moderate councillors" and a takeover by "the Hard Left".

By "moderate councillors" they mean councillors who have [cut services](#), laid off hundreds of staff, and [threatened to evict thousands of council tenants from their homes](#).

But what these papers object to is ordinary members getting organised, holding their representatives to account and using their democratic right to replace these individuals.

The Labour council in Haringey has been implementing [a programme of brutal cuts and privatisation since 2014](#).

But [the main focus over the last year has been the Haringey Development Vehicle](#) (HDV), a £2 billion privatisation of social housing, which would lead to the demolition and 'regeneration' of housing estates.

This plan has been [opposed by the vast majority of Labour Party members](#), by the local Labour Party general committee meetings, and by a Labour Party conference resolution.

'Social cleansing'

[Jeremy Corbyn's conference speech attacked this kind of regeneration](#) as "forced gentrification and social cleansing, as private developers move in and tenants and leaseholders are moved out".

But the right wing leadership of Haringey Labour Group said that they would press on with HDV regardless, and [have threatened to discipline the minority of councillors who opposed it](#).

This has spurred the left in Haringey Labour Party to get organised.

Momentum's leader John Lansman [has pronounced](#) that there is now no opposition to Corbyn from the right.

But HDV opponents decided to ignore this advice and organised to democratically deselect Blairite, pro-austerity candidates. This was [the approach put forward by Socialist Party members](#).

Labour Party rules require a 'trigger ballot' before a selection takes place. This gives the incumbent a massive advantage, as challengers do not have access to membership data until a trigger ballot occurs, and only have a few days to campaign between the trigger ballot and the selection meeting.

The right wing relies on an inactive membership. But in key wards, left activists have visited and phoned Labour Party members, convincing them to come to meetings and vote for anti-HDV candidates.

Some ward selection meetings have had more than 100 members voting. In the past many of these meetings would have had barely a dozen present.

Many right-wing councillors were not prepared to defend their record before rank-and-file Labour Party members and once 'triggered', withdrew from the contest, citing 'factionalism' and a 'poisonous, angry and cynical atmosphere' in Labour meetings. But selection meetings have been held in an amicable and fraternal manner.

At the time of writing, 40 anti-HDV council candidates have been selected and only seven pro-HDV candidates have managed to hold onto their seats.

Mixed 'left' slate

The press describe the left slate as "hard left". But several of them have voted for HDV in the past, and opposed Corbyn.

One was [previously employed](#) by Terrapin, a lobbyist for the HDV, while serving as the council Labour group's chief whip!

Together with a legal challenge, these reselections put the future of HDV in jeopardy. But the old councillors remain in office for another six months until the May 2018 elections and could use this time to sign contracts, which would potentially bind future councils for decades to come.

Jeremy Corbyn should announce that the old, discredited Haringey council leadership has no mandate to sign these deals, and that a future Labour government will retroactively annul them without compensation.

In May 2018, Haringey is likely to be the first Labour council in Britain with a Momentum/Corbynite majority. This will be a chance to test out the policies of Corbyn supporters in power.

HDV is the most extreme example of the austerity programme that was embraced by the right wing council leadership.

Social services were privatised, day care centres were shut and hundreds of council workers were laid off.

Right-wing councillors claim that there is no alternative to cuts due to the depth of Tory cuts to central government funding for local government.

But they also say that there was no alternative to HDV. Yet Haringey has [over £36 million](#) in housing revenue account reserves.

Weak Tory government

The last general election produced a vastly weakened Tory government, which has already been forced to [make concessions](#) on a [number of issues](#).

This government could fall within months and be replaced by a Corbyn-led government committed to increasing local government funding.

So newly elected councillors should not only stop the HDV, but also stop cutting council services in Haringey and bring privatised services back in-house.

The Evening Standard warned that what happened in Haringey will be replicated in town halls across the UK and perhaps in Westminster (ie through reselection of Labour MPs).

The hysterical reaction from the right wing of the Labour Party and its supporters in the establishment media shows their fear that the Labour Party rank and file across the country will get organised and deselect right wing Labour councillors who have been carrying out Tory policies.

Unfortunately this is not the case on a national basis. In many areas the same old cutters are being reselected.

Corbyn could greatly speed up the democratisation process [if he calls on all Labour councils to stop the cuts now](#) and pledges that an incoming Labour government would underwrite any debt.

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Fighting sexism, violence and capitalism - an international struggle

The international executive of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI, the international organisation that the Socialist Party is part of) took place from 27 November to 2 December in Belgium.

A prominent part of the discussions throughout the week was struggles of women across the world and the CWI's role in these. Here, the Socialist speaks to CWI members from four countries.

Drafts of [documents discussed](#) at the event can be seen at [socialistworld.net](#) and next week's Socialist will include an extract of the political statements agreed.

Carla, Mexico: "to end this oppression we have to transform society"

In Mexico there is a strong crisis of human rights, and an economic crisis which also encourages social backwardness.

It has immediate consequences on the oppression of women and all vulnerable groups. The hardening of the crisis sees all social problems like sexism sharpened.

There's an incorporation of women into the workforce, which has given them some independence and broken some isolation from the home.

It's also true that at the same time this increases the burden on women because they are still doing all the work at home, as well as going to work.

Lots of women are also abused by their partners. Every day seven women are killed, most by their husbands.

There are terrible cases like the women workers in Juarez, a town with a huge female murder rate, showing the women who are incorporated into the workforce also suffer sexual violence.

We also have the situation in Mexico City, where there's much corruption, drug trafficking and human trafficking.

It's the state with the highest number of murders of women in Mexico. In the last period it's been particularly bad and that has led to an awakening, combined with the entry of women into the workforce, increasing social consciousness on the issue and on the possibility to protest.

There's been lots of expressions of the movement, many radical ones, with anti-capitalist demands that also understand the need to struggle side-by-side with working class men. There are some who don't agree that that is the correct position.

We have to have clarity that gender oppression comes from the social system, from class society and capitalism. To end this oppression, we have to struggle to transform society, for socialism.

But on the other hand, that doesn't mean we don't struggle for immediate improvements for women's conditions, including against sexism within the workers' movement and organisations.

We've set up the feminist platform Libres y Combativas which has had a lot of success, especially in schools.

A lot of young women are very conscious of the political situation and want to organise themselves to struggle.

We've only had a few months of this platform but we have already had a lot of success and we hope to keep contributing to this struggle.

- See [Facebook 'Libres y Combativas Mx'](#)

Emily, Belgium: "women earn 20-25% less"

If you are unemployed and you live with your partner, you only get half of the unemployment benefit. Women earn 20-25% less than men.

Most women work part-time because the jobs that lots of women work in don't exist full time, and also because there aren't enough public services for childcare, care of sick and disabled people, etc.

For young women another big issue is the use of women's bodies in advertising. They see how at the same time that society merchandises women's bodies, if they wear a small skirt they can be harassed for it.

There have been some protests, though it's not yet a big movement in Belgium. There's a lot on social media and in discussion all the time in schools, universities and workplaces.

Protests have been bigger than previous years. We organised a protest on 8 March which was the biggest in lots of years, with 600 students.

An annual protest for abortion rights is usually a few hundred people but this year was 2-3,000.

Trump has also been important. He came to Brussels on 25 May and there was a protest of 10,000. There were many issues taken up - racism, environmental issues, but women's issues were probably the most prominent.

We said oppose Trump's politics and the politicians in Belgium who represent the same, and oppose the division he tries to make within the working class.

ROSA stands for resistance against oppression, sexism and austerity. [We started the campaign nine months ago](#). The question we raise is, who does sexism profit? Is it men, or is it capitalism?

Women's struggles from the past managed to win some sexual liberation. But that was taken back to use women's bodies as merchandise in advertising, pornography, etc.

The system also uses gender stereotypes to be able to make cutbacks. They say 'women are so good at home, they should be at home more to help the kids, so we don't need to provide childcare'.

Or that women have natural 'people skills' and you don't have to give money for natural skills - so to some extent ideas like that are part of justifying the low wages in health and education.

Our main message is about the economic situation of women. Changing that is key to change sexism.

- See [campagnerosa.be](#) and [Facebook 'Campagne ROSA'](#)

Laura, Ireland: "it's about breaking with the repression of the past"

There's a [crucial struggle happening against the existence of the Eighth Amendment](#), which is the constitutional abortion ban.

This is a hangover from the fact that the state in Ireland has been entwined with the Catholic church from its creation, leading to huge crimes against women and children.

The working class and poor have been the worst affected - for example [the Magdalene Laundries, which was literally the slavery of poor women](#).

It's a defining struggle, as it's seen as being about breaking with the repression of the past and putting a marker down for what kind of society young people, women and working class people want and desire.

Five years ago, [Savita Halappanavar, an Indian woman living and working in Ireland, died](#) as a result of the Eighth Amendment.

She died in agony during a miscarriage, having repeatedly requested an abortion, which could have been lifesaving for her.

She was not allowed to get one because of the existence of a foetal heartbeat. A new movement exploded in that context.

Two very important things happened this year. International Women's Day was an explosion of young people onto the streets.

The city centre of Dublin was blocked for hours on end. There was a youthful 10,000-strong march to parliament with a very radical mood.

And the government set up a Citizens' Assembly on the Eighth, selecting 100 people randomly. [They tried to set it up in a way that it would recommend only a very limited change](#).

But [the Citizens Assembly listened to the facts and came up with a pro-choice proposal](#). Now there's a [Dáil committee to make proposals flowing from that](#), which TD (MP) and Socialist Party member Ruth Coppinger has been on.

But unfortunately, many other spokespeople in the abortion rights movement are only really calling for repealing the Eighth Amendment.

Repeal alone doesn't mean pro-choice legislation. It could be a lost opportunity. Young people are saying 'I want bodily autonomy, I want equality, I want secular laws.'

Unfortunately some don't recognise how much things have changed and don't have confidence in the fact that the majority, [over 60%](#) according to a recent poll, support abortion on request.

Whatever happens, if we get a referendum on repeal next year, there will be an incredible participation and a social revolt.

Five years ago, ROSA was established as a socialist feminist movement. This is very attractive to young people who see a world of environmental crisis caused by corporate profiteering, the refugee crisis, huge attacks on living standards of working class people in Ireland and globally.

They don't want to see freedom for elite women and not for women of colour, trans women, poor and working class women - they want to see everyone free.

The Socialist Party playing a role in building a strong anti-capitalist pole in the women and LGBT+ movement has been an important contribution, with ROSA now a broad socialist-feminist force of hundreds of mainly young supporters and activists.

- See rosa.ie and [Facebook 'ROSA - for reproductive rights, against oppression, sexism and austerity'](#)

Jane, Brazil: "12 women are killed every day"

We're seeing the worst social and economic crisis in Brazil in its history, which impacts on women in a more brutal way.

Women, especially black and working class women, have suffered from the cuts to health and education and also the increase of violence in recent years.

Every day 12 women are killed - one of the highest rates of women's murder in Latin America. And every day ten women are gang raped.

There are elements of barbarism. Women suffered an attack from parliament - a law to eliminate the possibility of abortion for women who have pregnancy resulting from rape.

The response has been very interesting, very quick. After that law we achieved three days of big protests - 10,000 women protesting in São Paulo and others in all the state capitals.

These were organised by the feminist campaign which we participate in, called the Left Feminist Front - and then others responded to that as well.

The leader of the national parliament has been forced to say that they don't want this law to pass. So there's huge opposition in the street and everywhere. It's possible the movement can defeat this law.

The CWI has had a big role in the major cities. We are at the front of the organisation of these demonstrations in São Paulo for example - a city of 16 million people - and we were the main force that organised the big women's protests.

We demand the end of this attack and we link it to other problems. We're building a demand for the law that can legislate for abortion and ban the criminalisation of abortion.

We link it to the other social struggles - to the fight against labour reform and pension reform and against the cuts. We clearly demand a working class feminism.

'It doesn't have to be like this: women and the struggle for socialism' by Christine Thomas

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Demonstrations by uni students and staff greet Bath vice-chancellor resignation

Tom Baldwin, South West Socialist Party organiser

"Students and workers, unite and fight!" was chanted by hundreds of students as they marched around Bath University campus.

Before the demonstration even gathered, the joint campaign of students and staff had already won a significant victory.

Glynis Breakwell, the country's highest paid university vice-chancellor, [announced her resignation](#) on 28 November.

She had [attracted anger for her £468,000 pay packet](#) which saw her earn more than the lowest paid university worker's annual salary in just 12 days.

She also had a [rent-free house](#) paid for by the university. But not content with that, she had agreed to an £18,000 pay rise this year while most university staff have faced a 1% pay cap for years.

She had also [claimed £20,000](#) in expenses, including £2 for a packet of biscuits, leading to chants of "books not biscuits".

While the lively protest was celebrating 'Glexit', for the demonstrating students and the staff joining them it was too little, too late.

Her resignation deal will see her being paid up until February 2019, pocketing another £600,000 from the uni.

This was about more than just one person. High executive pay reflects the marketisation of universities, making them more about business than education.

Speakers addressing the demonstration explained how the out-of-touch vice chancellor was a lightning rod for anger on fees, cuts and high rents.

Results of a survey were announced that showed 87% of students had no confidence in the vice chancellor and 86% had no confidence in the whole university governance.

Around 100 students entered a university building, occupying it until the vice chancellor had left a few hours later.

While university bosses may have hoped Breakwell's resignation would mark an end to the saga, they have now been forced to concede they will listen to the campaign's demand and look at further changes.

Socialist Students is calling for the protests to be spread. Since 2011 the pay of 44 university vice chancellors has increased by [over 20%](#).

- [See socialiststudents.org.uk for more](http://socialiststudents.org.uk)
-

Liverpool John Moores Uni landslide for Socialist Students

LJMU Socialist Students

Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) [Socialist Students](#) member David Hitchmough topped the poll for National Union of Students (NUS) conference delegates, winning 121 first preference votes ahead of two-dozen other candidates.

David says: "It's fantastic to be elected as NUS delegate for the second time! To achieve the highest number of votes this year, a year which has seen the largest number of votes cast overall and 24 candidates running, is a big achievement and shows that students are connecting with socialism.

"We distributed hundreds of leaflets, put up dozens of posters, and were in this election as throughout the year, the only actively campaigning group on campus."

We had hoped the newly formed Labour Students society at LJMU would support David, as they portray themselves as Corbyn supporters.

We were willing to run a broader 'left' campaign alongside others, and when David proposed this to a meeting of Labour society members this was agreed.

However, a Blairite clique within the society then stood a candidate against us anyway, and when manifestos were published another two candidates also declared themselves to be Labour Party members. The left in the Labour society should draw the appropriate conclusions.

Our leaflet outlined our demands: "Education should be free. All students should receive grants which are sufficient to live on.

"Students should not suffer crippling debts! I stand for a democratic campaigning student union, which fights for all students.

"I stand for affordable rents for all students, including caps on what halls and landlords can charge.

"I support Jeremy Corbyn and I want to see him as prime minister. Elect me to support Jeremy Corbyn at NUS conference."

LJMU Socialist Students will continue to campaign on these policies, and step up our campaign stalls and recruitment.

Next term we will be taking initiatives in the run-up to NUS conference and the policies David will be putting forward.

We urge everyone who voted for David to get actively involved in the society and help us build a strong socialist force across the campuses.

TUSC conference to debate 2018 elections

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is holding its 2018 national conference on 10 February.

The main session will be under the heading: 'Building support for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-cuts policies in the 2018 local elections'.

This will include the controversial question of whether or not socialist anti-austerity candidates should stand next May.

The [current position of TUSC remains as it has been since September 2015](#), when a new and welcome political situation was opened up by Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership election victory.

His defeat of the Blairites on an anti-austerity message completely changed things compared to the first five years of TUSC's existence, when Labour was essentially just a 'Tory-lite' party.

Responding to the new situation TUSC's policy since then has been to not field candidates in local elections against Labour councillors who are willing to vote against cuts in the council chamber.

Politicians of whatever party who support austerity, however, are another matter and TUSC has been prepared to contest local elections against right-wing Labour councillors carrying out Tory cuts. But should that be reviewed for next year's poll?

The conference will be an opportunity for all TUSC supporters to debate this matter out.

To inform the debate the TUSC steering committee is conducting a [survey on how far local Labour councillors are preparing to back Jeremy's anti-cuts position](#) in the 2018-19 council budget-setting process and, in those councils where they are taking place, next year's elections.

The survey covers questions on Labour councillors' budget proposals for 2018-19, what manifesto pledges local Labour parties will campaign on, and whether or not right-wing Blairite councillors are being replaced by Jeremy Corbyn supporters.

A full report will be published for the conference but some [preliminary results are now available on the TUSC website](#).

The conference will close with an open forum session on 'TUSC and the Brexit negotiations', following [the TUSC campaign in the EU referendum for a Leave vote](#), dealing with the issues that are posed.

Plans to launch no-cuts campaign at Kirklees College

As Tory funding [cuts to education take a large bite out of schools and colleges up and down the country](#), Kirklees College in Huddersfield is the latest to run into financial difficulty.

A 'financial notice to improve' [was issued](#) to the college on 7 November by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, after it assessed the college as having "inadequate financial health".

This requires the college leaders to create a financial recovery plan and meet with government officials on a monthly basis.

While the college has not yet said whether any jobs will be under threat, this is likely, as education cuts have destroyed wages and jobs for teachers, teaching assistants and tutors throughout the country.

This shows the contempt that the bosses have for the hard-working staff in schools and campuses.

Huddersfield Socialist Party will be running mid-week campaign stalls at the college in the run up to Christmas to inform students of what is happening.

We will be forming a student group to get a meeting with the principal, Marie Gilluley, to demand that the financial recovery plans are made available to students.

Many students are now worrying whether their course will continue to be taught, and staff are worried about their jobs.

The college is looking to sell off its assets, with its Highfields building [already on the market](#) at £1.25 million.

However, it is also looking to acquire two more sites in Dewsbury and build a new campus, so any sale from this asset will be dwarfed by the expansion costs.

Kirklees College is one of the largest colleges in the country, with over 20,000 students and 1,200 staff.

With the likely culls to jobs and courses offered, this could change in the future. Only a sustained and organised campaign, led by students and staff, will be able to battle any cuts imposed on the college.

Matt Hirst, Huddersfield Socialist Party

Coventry Socialist sales hit 1,000

On 1 December our weekly [Socialist newspaper sale](#) in Coventry managed to pass 1,000 sales since we started in May 2016.

Since then, as well as bringing in money for the paper, we've met a whole host of new people keen to hear more about us, and have even recruited a new member who we met on the sale! We have also built up plenty of regulars, who know what time and place we'll be selling the Socialist and always make a beeline to us to buy the paper.

It hasn't taken a massive amount of effort - we do the sale for just one hour a week on a Friday after work, and always go for a quick drink in a cafe afterwards - and we've had great results from it.

This could be replicated across other branches and regions.

James Clement, Coventry West Socialist Party

Waltham Forest Universal Credit protest

Demonstrators assembled outside Tory MP Iain Duncan Smith's office in Chingford on 2 December to protest the [planned rollout of the Universal Credit benefits system](#) in Waltham Forest next year.

Organised by Unite Community, the civil servants' union PCS, and Waltham Forest Trades Council, around 30 protesters were joined at the lively demonstration by members of Disabled People Against Cuts (Dpac).

During his time as the work and pensions secretary, Duncan Smith devised the spiteful system, which has [already left families in rent arrears and without much needed benefit money](#) at Christmas time.

Protesters later marched to Chingford Mount to join a protest organised by Dpac against Duncan Smith's role in cutting the benefits and services available to disabled workers and youth.

Theo Sharieff, Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Court maintains injunction against fracking protesters

Anti-fracking protesters received a blow recently when Mr Justice Morgan ruled that [an injunction obtained against protesters by Ineos Shale](#) should continue.

Two environmental campaigners who opposed the order, Joe Boyd and Joe Corre, argued it was "unprecedented" and "draconian" and should be dismissed.

The judge did, however, remove a clause in the original order which would have prevented 'harassment' of Ineos staff and contractors.

Anyone breaking the injunction will be considered in contempt of court and liable to a prison sentence or having their assets seized by the court.

This includes any attempt by protesters to disrupt in any way work being carried out by Ineos or any of its contractors.

The case has been seen as a test of rights to protest and is regarded as important because it may encourage other companies to take similar action against opponents of their activities.

[Ineos is an anti-trade union company](#) with a shocking health and safety record. It is currently seismic testing in south Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

It now appears that planning decisions in these areas could be removed from local government and replaced with a government-appointed planning inspector.

Recent [freedom of information requests](#) have shown that Ineos, which also has licences to frack in large areas of north Yorkshire, and fracking company Third Energy have had talks with north Yorkshire police to discuss their plans and share information on protesters. This simply highlights the close links between the police and fracking companies.

John Sibbald, Wakefield and Pontefract Socialist Party

Theatre: We Are the Lions, Mr Manager

Dramatic retelling of Grunwick strike hits all the right notes

Bill Mullins, Southwark Socialist Party

This marvellous little play about [Jayaben Desai, leader of the famous Grunwick strike](#), hits all the right notes in its retelling of one of the most important struggles in the turbulent 1970s.

[Neil Gore's script works to traditional agitprop methods](#) of bringing the events to life, but never loses anything of the dramatic and emotional battle led by Jayaben throughout the strike.

[Grunwick was a defining strike](#). It encapsulated much of the 1970s' struggles by the working class against the employers' offensive.

What was special about it was that the bosses of the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in north London had deliberately set out to only employ mainly Asian women workers. They thought they could push them

around more and so super-exploit their labour.

It was the courage of Jayaben and others that brought about a battle by these low-paid workers. They took strike action in response to the inhuman conditions imposed on them by George Ward, the owner of the factory.

Medhavi Patel's Jayaben is excellent. So is Neil's portrayal of a whole host of characters - particularly Jack Dromey, who was then on the left and secretary of Brent trade union council.

Both Neil and Medhavi act their hearts out with real compassion. They bring the whole period vividly to life during the couple of hours they are onstage.

Director Louise Townsend's production makes imaginative use of limited props, such as wheeling on a factory fence which portrays the pickets themselves. Footage played in the background makes up for the small size of the cast.

At one stage, Jayaben calls on the first row of the audience to join her on stage to take part in the events of the mass picket of 11 July 1977.

The play also brings out the diabolical nature of the Grunwick bosses and their right-wing supporters in the shadowy 'National Association for Freedom'.

But importantly, it features the massive support of workers throughout the country for the struggle. This includes the heroic role of postal workers at the local depot - who refused to allow sacks of mail containing processed film to go back to customers.

What was heart-breaking, though, was the cowardly role of the trade union leaders.

There was the right-wing leadership of Apex, the union the strikers joined (now part of general union GMB) and the invidious role of Trade Union Congress leaders. Throughout the strike, in the background, they tried to undermine it - because it was embarrassing to the Labour government.

Neil often accompanies his presence onstage with musical renderings - socialist songs from the time, and his own creations as well.

The name of the play - "We Are the Lions, Mr Manager" - refers to Jayaben's confrontation with the manager "Mr Jack." She responded to his slur that the factory was like a zoo with "in the zoo, Mr Jack, there are many animals.

"Some are monkeys you can dance on your fingers, and some are lions. We are the lions, Mr Jack, and we will eat you."

We Are the Lions, Mr Manager is touring the country into 2018. Visit townsendproductions.org.uk for details.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 30 November 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Documentary: Labour - the Summer that Changed Everything

Blairite horror and Labour's divisions graphically exposed

Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales

Until the [recently renewed attacks on Momentum](#), it all appeared to be sweetness and light in Labour.

The daily Blairite attacks on Corbyn have receded. Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell seem to believe the parliamentary Labour Party is behind them.

But David Modell's fly-on-the-wall documentary following four Labour candidates through the general election campaign should act as a reminder of just how deep-seated Blairite opposition to Corbyn is.

During the campaign, they all expect Corbyn-led Labour to get hammered, and Theresa May to achieve an unassailable position. Some fervently hope she succeeds.

One of the most dramatic TV moments this year was [the 8 June exit poll](#) that correctly predicted gains for Labour and losses for the Tories. This is the documentary's climax.

In particular, Stephen Kinnock - MP for Aberafon and latest product of the millionaire Kinnock dynasty - looks aghast.

His eyes are frozen in horror and amazement as the implications of this huge moral victory for Corbyn sink in.

You need to remind yourself that he is not a Tory, but a Labour MP. And that he has been re-elected - with an increased majority courtesy of the Corbyn surge. The narrator gets it right. "He is thinking that the Corbyn-free future he has been dreaming of might never actually come."

The shock and disappointment in Kinnock's eyes as he learns Labour has not been hammered is the most eloquent description of how Labour remains two parties in one.

Kinnock's party, New Labour, wanted the Tories to win so Corbynista Labour could be defeated.

But the film also shows how the right wing has got over the shock and regrouped. In the immediate aftermath many of the Corbyn backstabbers have recovered their poise and publicly turned into Corbyn back-slappers.

Tom Watson, alleged author of [the 'Project Anaconda' strategy](#) - to squeeze the life out of Corbyn's leadership - wraps his arms around a surprised Jeremy Corbyn in an apparently joyous hug.

But that hug is a metaphor for the right wing trying to wrap Corbyn up for now, and prepare to strike late.

At Labour Party conference, left-wing journalist Owen Jones - who made prophecies of doom if Corbyn continued as leader - is back on the stage at [Momentum's 'World Transformed' event](#).

Unfortunately the Momentum leadership, and Corbyn's advisors, have apparently been seduced by the parliamentary Labour Party's sham surrender.

Corbyn's supporters must press home their advantage to demand democratic rights including mandatory reselection of Labour MPs.

This excellent documentary did, however, miss some important issues. It never showed, for example, the turning point in the election, which was [the launch of the radical manifesto that marked a break from the old politics as usual](#).

Until then, the press campaign, unanswered up to that point, had an effect in turning some working class supporters against Corbyn.

Nevertheless, it demonstrates the chasm between Corbyn's supporters and most Labour MPs, exposing the utopian idea that the Blairites can ever be won over to supporting Corbyn or his policies.

- 'Labour - the Summer that Changed Everything' is [available on BBC iPlayer](#)
-

Comment: Socialism and truth about Zane

Kye Gbangbola, Truth About Zane campaign

I was invited to speak at [Socialism 2017](#) with Chris Baugh, assistant general secretary of civil servants' union PCS, at a forum called 'Environmental crisis: a working class issue'. It was chaired by Paul Couchman who we know as secretary of Surrey Save our Services.

As a first-timer at the annual Socialism event I was looking forward to the array of learning and interaction on offer.

There was plenty of refreshments, stalls selling books and lots of friendly faces to chat with.

It was quickly apparent that the people here had a different role to those I have observed at other events.

All who enter do so as equals, empowered to speak and share their views of the topic. This dynamic enables maximum participation and involvement, and provides good feedback to the speakers.

Most of the seats in the meeting space were taken. There were even a few people stood at the back.

Our house had become infused with hydrogen cyanide gas, according to the fire brigade 'hazmat' team, [which we believe came from flood water](#) passing through a secret landfill next door. This resulted in seven-year-old Zane Gbangbola's death.

80% of the British population lives within 2km of landfill [according to a 2001 study](#) published in the British Medical Journal.

Many people were ambulated to hospital. I was in cardiac arrest and am now paralysed. Had Zane's mother Nicole Gbangbola not raised the alarm many more in the area could have died.

The incident was escalated to the government's emergency 'Cobra' committee. The area was evacuated for several weeks.

We couldn't live in our home for over a year. It had to be protected by gas-proof membranes, ventilation and alarms.

Astonishingly the Environment Agency and local council protected their own properties from the risk of migrating landfill gases killing occupants four years before!

We have the deepest praise for the bravery and honesty of the fire brigade. The coroner [blamed Zane's death on carbon monoxide](#), which the fire brigade did not detect in our all-electric home. Other authorities seemed to close ranks to protect their reputation.

Chris Baugh offered his deepest and heartfelt condolences. All in the room could not help but be visibly moved by what had happened, and angered by the injustice.

The environment is a working class issue. Although all classes are in this, workers are affected most. The revolution begins with the abuse of the many by the few.

The loss of a child is the cruellest thing that can happen to any family. Our beautiful son's death has left us empty and broken.

We have endured the most astounding catalogue of abuse from authorities, but still we fight for justice.

If you think Zane deserves truth and justice please sign and share our petition for a public inquiry. If we reach 100,000 signatures parliament has to consider debating it.

- [Sign and share the petition here](#)

The Socialist Inbox

Featured letter: housing safety

Terrifying fire in my block underlines need for sprinklers

After the Grenfell disaster, landlords, the government and councils still refuse to install sprinklers.

The Socialist Party [campaigns for sprinklers in all tower blocks](#) now. We say: no safety, no rent. On 20 November a [fire broke out in a tower block in Newcastle](#). Diane Tait was there.

I've had two hours' sleep. Last night was the most frightening of my life.

My mam went live on Facebook saying there was a fire in her block, Cruddas Park House, and she didn't know what to do.

My six-year-old daughter was with her, on the 16th floor with the corridor full of thick smoke.

She wet her draught excluder to try to seal the door. The fire was on the 14th floor.

People who were able got out and went down the stairs. Many just had to wait in their flats and hope for the best, mobility problems stopping them from leaving.

I waited on the ground floor, just terrified. You could smell smoke down there and people were being treated for smoke inhalation.

The fire was put out but this could have been so much worse. Some smoke alarms went off but lots of people outside said their floors were full of smoke and no fire alarms were going off. Firefighters on the ground agreed that these blocks need sprinklers.

What about next time? What if it's worse?

Those people can't get out and there aren't enough firefighters to evacuate even a fraction of the people in those blocks.

We still don't know what the insulation is made of either because 'Your Homes Newcastle' won't publish the results. I'm tired of fighting. When will they just do the right thing?

Standing down there waiting to hear that the fire was out and my mam and little girl were safe was just unimaginable.

Doctors devastated

I recently logged on to my local GP's website to book an appointment. To my surprise I found a [very honest account](#) of the devastating cuts to the NHS which have left my local surgery in crisis.

The open letter, drafted by the lead GP, stated "the effects of political and economic problems in recent years, especially the recession, have been impossible to avoid, though we have tried, and have had a huge impact on our NHS.

"There has been a constant reduction in our finances and resources, combined with an increase in demand and expectation, which has placed an unbearable workload and pressure on general practice. We are simply no longer able to provide the service that we used to.

"At Bath Lodge Practice, we have lost funding, staff, and high morale. Our recent Care Quality Commission inspection and review found us to be lacking in a number of areas.

To date, all of the previous doctors, including our long-serving partners, have now left the practice. Their departure reflects the alarming shortage of GPs across the country."

This situation is all too familiar to us. But it does take a lot for any organisation to admit openly it is unable to provide adequate services.

Last year [the British Red Cross declared a "humanitarian crisis"](#) in our hospitals due to pressure on NHS services. ['Black alerts', which mean hospitals cannot guarantee patient safety, were a familiar state](#) throughout that winter. This year, NHS bosses have [already stated](#) it could be the worst ever.

With winter quickly approaching, who will suffer due to austerity this year? Who can take the slack? Who is going to step in and defend our NHS?

We cannot wait. Our services are in dire need of funds and resources right now.

Rebecca Gardner, Southampton

Tax tricksters

So, tax 'evasion' is illegal, but tax 'avoidance' and other evasive measures are legal.

Well, that would be the case. It's their kind who implement the rules and regulations. These greedy, grasping, parasitic companies and individuals who want to take, take, take, and put nothing back.

A Corbyn-led Labour government [must take that wealth into public ownership](#). After all it's the working public who creates that wealth.

Why should people take cuts and austerity while this lot pilfer wealth from the country?

Bill Buchanan, Nottingham

PCS Left Unity celebrates 40th anniversary at annual conference

Socialist Party members continue to play a key role

Socialist Party member in PCS

Set up 40 years ago, PCS Left Unity remains the best example of a trade union united front. The core of the most active reps in the union are members of Left Unity.

On the back of the [tremendous national consultative ballot on pay](#), the conference agreed an emergency motion committing Left Unity members to make links with left groupings in other trade unions to build unity and joint campaigns on pay.

Further, the conference agreed [the need to apply pressure on other unions](#) to meet with each other to coordinate campaigns and action.

PCS is currently playing a key role in progressing this agenda within the 'public sector liaison committee'.

Unfortunately the Socialist Workers Party was arguing for another motion calling for the union to immediately look to ballot as soon as possible in the new year to 'help put pressure on the government'.

This reckless position won no support from delegates who understood the need to get behind a serious strategy put forward by Socialist Party members.

The motion sets out steps on building up the head of steam required to break the cap and fight for extra investment in pay to begin to reverse the effects of years of pay restraint on working class people.

Strikes

The conference also heard about the number of disputes taking place across the union over the course of the year.

There was strike action by members in the Department for Transport taking place 4 and 5 December and a number of job centres took strike action this year against office closures.

A solidarity message was sent to a transgender worker sacked by the V&A museum after it failed to protect against transphobic abuse.

Despite job losses and cuts to facility time, the conference was well attended with left-wing trade unionists from across the union.

Around a third of attendees were Socialist Party members, including guest speaker Chris Baugh, assistant general secretary.

Also Janice Godrich, president, John McNally, national executive committee member, and Fran Heathcote, vice president, spoke in the debate on pay. Many other people from the Socialist Party spoke at the conference.

Other debates included the need for an independent public enquiry into state interference, exposed in cabinet papers released last year [showing the scale of their involvement in blocking the election of Militant \(later Socialist Party\) supporter John Macreadie](#) as general secretary of the union in 1986.

PCS Left Unity also reaffirmed its support for extending the election of senior full time officers in the union, to look at extending elections further and for the implementation of existing PCS policy on elections of full time officials.

In closing the conference, Left Unity national chair and Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd sent delegates away feeling positive and determined that 2018 will see massive gains for our class.

PCS will continue to play a key role in building the movement necessary to defeat the government and bring about socialist change.

Brutal rail privateer Abellio takes over Midlands rail services

'Tom Woodcock', London Midland RMT member

London Midland will vanish from the face of the earth at 1.59am on 10 December.

My train operating company is being taken over by a consortium of companies headed by Abellio which is the foreign arm of the Dutch state railway. Abellio also runs Scotrail, Greater Anglia and Merseyrail.

What has been known as London Midland will be split into two new identities: 'West Midlands Trains' and 'London Northwestern'.

Millions of pounds have been spent by both Govia, the outgoing owner, and Abellio in bidding for the franchise and millions will be spent by the state subsidising the operation going forward.

Abellio will of course be taking its cut and will send profits back to the Netherlands. [75%](#) of Britain's rail operators are foreign owned today.

All of our trains will be repainted with new livery, stations will get new signage with a new logo and staff will be given new uniforms.

We have been instructed to remove all posters, stationery, umbrellas, mousemats and even London Midland branded mugs from kitchens.

There is an atmosphere of trepidation caused by the transition, which is not helped by the woeful lack of information provided to staff regarding their future employment.

We have already been told that some work currently done by our customer relations team in Birmingham will be transferred to a site in Scotland from day one of the new franchise. All grades and departments should be prepared for attack by the new owners.

Abellio has gained a brutal reputation from its stewardship of [Scotrail](#), [Merseyrail](#) and [Greater Anglia](#).

At all three companies workers have taken strike action against the firm's attempts to force through driver-only operation to get rid of guards.

London Midland has so far utterly failed to engage with its recognised trade unions in any meaningful way and unions are now threatening legal action for failure to comply with TUPE regulations such as allowing reps to meet and consult members during work time. We are being kept in the dark and we are angry about it.

Abellio need to know that we are ready for a fight. As far as we are concerned they are just another bunch of spivs on the railway gravy-train who are fundamentally no different to the last bunch.

We are ready to fight to defend our jobs and conditions, for safety and against driver only operation.

The RMT has been here since long before this group of bandits and we will still be here when they've gone.

School staff strike against privatisation

Helen Pattison, East London Socialist Party

Outside Avenue Primary School parents and the community stood with striking school staff against becoming an academy on 29 November.

The group filled the pavement and at its peak around 80 people were outside the school.

A group of students whose classes were closed came to the picket line with their parents and led us all in chanting: "Shame on the head teacher", "shame on the deputies" and "shame on the governors".

The local [members of the National Education Union](#) have done an amazing job. They have recruited new members during the campaign against academies.

But most importantly they have discussed with parents that academy status won't improve the school.

One parent reported that she was told by a member of management it will make the school like Eton if they turn it into an academy.

But the staff and anti-academies campaign is clear, there is no extra money on offer but pay of head teachers and management would likely rise.

We will continue to back the campaign as we fight academies in Newham.

Driving examiners walkout hits first day of new test

Iain Dalton, West Yorkshire Socialist Party organiser

PCS members at Wakefield Driving Test Centre began two days of strike action on 4 December [against attacks on their terms and conditions of work as part of a national dispute](#).

While much of the [media coverage](#) has focused on the strike being on the first day of the new driving test, most of the pickets' anger was focused around the 'flexible' working arrangements management are attempting to impose on them.

This includes being able to deploy staff to anywhere they choose without notice. On top of this, the time taken by staff to travel to these deployments is to be done on their own time! This also means that staff travelling to such deployments wouldn't be covered by the civil service 'injury benefits scheme'.

There are other issues such as test schedules facing staff, and also the removal of premium payments for working voluntarily beyond their contracted Monday to Friday hours, similar to attacks taking place in the retail and other sectors.

Despite this being the first strike for some pickets, they were well equipped with a gazebo, bacon butties and hot drinks.

Pickets were buoyed by the news that there were no tests booked in at the site on the first day of the strike - the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency offering for the first time in an industrial dispute to allow those booked in to cancel or rearrange for another day.

BT pensions review - oppose the attacks on the pension schemes

Socialist Party members in the CWU

A 60-day consultation is taking place to make changes to [several BT pension schemes](#). The company proposes that, for managers, the defined-benefit BT pensions scheme is closed to future benefits and they revert to the 'money purchase BT retirement savings scheme'.

The proposal for team members is they pay more in for less when they retire and that pension rises no longer keep up with the retail price index (RPI).

Instead, this is to be reduced to the lower consumer prices index (CPI). Or these two schemes could close.

Furthermore, in a cut to workers' deferred pay, those benefits already built up or for retired workers will have their income cut to the lower CPI measure.

In a further twist, the company proposes that they revert to the legal minimum rise allowed in law for increases to keep pace with the cost of living, 2.5%.

And the lump sum for service would be removed after April 2018.

Clearly, the proposal that managers as a group see their access closed is an attempt to divide the workforce.

This must be opposed and joint campaigning by trade unions the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) and Prospect should be initiated.

Correctly, the CWU is advising members to reject all the options presented by the company. The union points out that BT made [over £7.5 billion](#) in profit last year and paid out more than [£1 billion](#) in dividends to shareholders.

Branch meetings are now being planned as part of the campaign of opposition.

Socialists in the CWU demand:

- The CWU telecoms campaign is coordinated with the CWU postal workers campaign. For a joint post and telecoms campaign to defend pensions
- The CWU telecoms campaign coordinate action with the managers' union Prospect. No separate deals
- That the money purchase BT retirement savings scheme is incorporated into the defined benefit BT pensions scheme
- The privatisation of Royal Mail and telecoms has led to major shareholders sucking the lifeblood out of both companies at the expense of the workforce. It is CWU policy that both Royal Mail and BT should be renationalised

Arriva bus strikers stand firm

Ste Armstrong, Warrington Socialist Party

Drivers and engineers in Rucorn [continue to stand firmly together](#) in support of their claim for a fair pay deal from employer Arriva.

The pickets at Beechwood were upbeat when they spoke to Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters paying their weekly solidarity visit.

Socialist Party leaflets and copies of the Socialist were warmly received by the workers, who are grateful for the support, but would like to see more from across the wider labour movement.

All Unite and GMB branches in the region, from all sectors, could issue statements of support for the strike.

The rally for safety on 4 December and the lobby of the council's transport committee in Liverpool on 7 December are vital.

A unified workforce, committed to passenger safety and job security, fair pay for all and a publicly owned transport system, run for public convenience not private profit, will not be bullied into backing down. Victory to the Arriva strikers!

Irish capitalist state: rotten to the core

Build a powerful socialist challenge

Irish deputy prime minister Frances Fitzgerald has resigned over her role in the police whistleblower scandal, thereby preventing the collapse of the Fine Gael minority government. In 2015, when minister for justice, Fitzgerald was forced to admit in parliament the existence of Operation Mizen - a police surveillance team [targeting anti-water charge protesters](#)

Cillian Gillespie, Socialist Party Ireland

At the end of November, the Fine Gael minority government in Ireland came close to collapse following further revelations about the machinations and web of intrigue surrounding the scandal of Garda (police) whistleblower Maurice McCabe.

More information has come out of the attempts by the institutions of the Irish state to smear and discredit him.

As well as bringing Ireland to the brink of the unprecedented situation of having an election in the week running up to Christmas, these events have brought about the resignation of Tánaiste (deputy prime minister) Frances Fitzgerald and have drastically weakened the position and authority of Taoiseach (prime minister) Leo Varadkar.

As pressure mounts on Fianna Fáil, which is propping up his administration, there is a real likelihood of a general election taking place early in the New Year.

Varadkar had assumed power in June of this year and it had appeared that his minority government in the months running up to this controversy had been strengthened.

Under the premiership of his predecessor, Enda Kenny, Fine Gael had been defeated in its attempts to introduce water charges (due to mass civil disobedience) and the ongoing whistleblower scandal itself was undermining its position.

Since 2014, this scandal has resulted in the resignation of a minister for justice, Alan Shatter, and two Garda commissioners, Martin Callinan and Noirin O'Sullivan, along with resignations of senior officials in the Department of Justice.

In 2012, Maurice McCabe publicly exposed a series of wrongdoings and malpractices within Ireland's police force, including the quashing of 'penalty points' (a series of penalties against those guilty of traffic offences that can ultimately lead to the suspension of drivers) by the Gardaí. In the last few days it has been revealed that a person caught speeding at 240 km an hour had his points cancelled!

Having publicly exposed this scandal, the establishment went on the offensive against McCabe and fellow whistleblower John Wilson.

In October 2013, Alan Shatter accused McCabe of refusing to cooperate in an internal Garda investigation surrounding the penalty points. The following January, testifying in front of a parliamentary inquiry Martin Callinan said his actions, and those of John Wilson, were "disgusting".

In February of this year, it was revealed that Tusla, the state's child protection agency, had (unbeknown to McCabe) opened up a file on McCabe including serious (and fabricated) allegations that he had sexually abused the daughter of a fellow Garda.

The Garda in question was a colleague of his who he had made a complaint about resulting in the latter being disciplined.

An investigation by the director of public prosecution had cleared McCabe of any wrongdoing when these allegations were initially made in 2006.

Uncovered

Further revelations last month meant that the issues surrounding this scandal blew up again. On 9 November, an email sent to then minister for justice, Frances Fitzgerald from her private secretary on 15 May 2015 was uncovered.

It showed that the latter told Fitzgerald about the Gardaí's "legal strategy" in the O'Higgins commission of inquiry - set up in February 2015 to investigate the issue of the widespread practice of penalty points being written off by Gardaí.

Fundamentally this "strategy" amounted to the legal team of the Gardaí in the inquiry bringing into play the malicious allegations of child abuse against McCabe and that he was simply motivated by malice in making allegations against fellow Gardaí.

Further emails outlining the Gardaí's line of argument were sent to Fitzgerald two months later at the beginning of July.

Ultimately she was aware of the smear campaign being conducted by Noirín O'Sullivan's Gardaí, yet consistently defended her in public right up until O'Sullivan stood down in September of this year.

It has also surfaced that in May 2015 O'Sullivan was in contact with senior officials in the Department of Justice where she explained what line of argument Gardaí would use in the O'Higgins tribunal.

In reality a 'permanent government' in the form of senior civil servants were colluding with the top echelons of Ireland's police force to discredit and undermine McCabe.

It is illustrative of the deeply undemocratic practices and rotten core at the heart of the capitalist state.

The Department of Justice, one of its key institutions, has proven itself to be a corrupt cesspit that is implicated in the McCabe scandal.

For them and for the representatives of the ruling class in Ireland, he had defied the status quo and had to pay the price as a result.

Such a draconian approach was shown in the Jobstown trials when anti-water charges protesters, including Solidarity TD (MP) and councillors and Socialist Party members Paul Murphy, Kieran Mahon and Mick Murphy, were charged with "false imprisonment" for protesting against then Tánaiste Joan Burton in November 2014.

Leo Varadkar defended Frances Fitzgerald right up until the eleventh hour, arguing there was no need for her to resign.

He displayed a hardnosed arrogance that has become characteristic of his neoliberal right-wing government.

This has been shown by the callous contempt and indifference it has displayed to the growing housing crisis that has tragically resulted in the recent deaths of two homeless people in Dublin.

The blatant inequality within Irish society, as shown by the housing crisis and the outrageous practices of Ireland's state institutions, cannot be divorced.

They are by-products of a rigged capitalist system that defends the interests of the powerful and super-rich.

The Socialist Party and Solidarity will continue our task to build a powerful socialist left to challenge this rotten economic and political status quo.

- See also '[Jobstown trials, political policing and the role of the state](#)' by Paul Murphy TD on socialistparty.ie

Mobilise to stop bigoted billionaire Donald Trump's state visit to Britain

Berkay Kartav

On 29 November US president Donald Trump, known for his racist and chauvinist views, [shared three tweets](#) posted by Jayda Fransen, the deputy leader of the notorious far-right group Britain First.

These posts blatantly attacked Muslim communities in Western countries. The footage shared by Fransen falsely associates violence with Muslims.

Not only were the content of the videos misleading and manipulative, but by retweeting the posts of Britain First, Trump has given a platform to a racist group to articulate their corrupt and loathsome sentiments.

Despite being a fringe group, Britain First does actively target Muslims through social media and in the streets.

But Trump's retweets are no surprise. Last January, he signed an order banning the entrance of people from six Muslim-majority countries ([now upheld](#) by the US Supreme Court). This prompted [mass anti-Trump protests both in USA and Britain](#).

These posts, which fuel hatred, are part of a perpetual and systematic campaign to divert the interests of working class people.

The intention is to blame the increasing social and economic deprivation suffered by the majority onto minority groups, and thereby cause division within the working class.

Therefore, socialists must reiterate that the austerity and misery experienced by the majority is caused by the policies of capitalist governments and profit-hungry big corporations.

Scandalously, Theresa May [has invited](#) Trump to Britain. A state visit by a president who endorses and gives a platform to a blatantly Islamophobic far-right group will be a massive assault on Muslim communities in this country.

Spreading racial and ethnic hatred is unacceptable and [Trump's visit must be met with mass opposition in Britain](#). Trade unionists and socialists must play a key role in building such opposition.

Trump's tax plan: Robin Hood in reverse

When Donald Trump is not retweeting racist videos, or reportedly obstructing justice over his former national security adviser's lies, or threatening to start world war three, he's doing what he does best - making a stack of cash for himself!

Republicans in the Senate have pushed through a hastily redrafted tax bill that will slash taxes on US corporations and the wealth of the super-rich - at the expense of working and middle class living standards and public services.

Trump's tax plan, apart from adding an estimated \$1.2 trillion to the federal deficit, will cut taxes mainly on big business and the wealthiest individuals by between \$1.4 and \$2.4 trillion. An estimated two-thirds of the tax cuts will go to the richest 1%.

US corporations claim that the current 35% federal tax rate makes them 'uncompetitive'. But tax loopholes mean the real rate for these giant companies is around 22%.

Under Trump's plan it will drop to just 20%. This is at a time when US corporate profits are at an historic high.

Further, [according to DCReport.org](#), "the top tax rate on partnerships and limited liability companies [also known as pass-through entities] would fall from 39.6% to 25%. Trump has more than 500 such businesses."

As Socialist Alternative (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) says: "We need to fight for a socialist society in which the top banks and corporations are taken into public ownership under direct democratic control of workers, consumers and broader public."

"Only then can we guarantee that these massive profits currently shielded from the treasuries of capitalist governments, are used for full public investment in jobs and social services."

- [See 'The Trump tax plan - Robin Hood in reverse' on socialistalternative.org.uk](http://socialistalternative.org.uk)
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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/26587>