

Fight the Tory enemy

- End austerity
- Challenge racism
- Defend Corbyn
- Stand firm against the Blairites

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party executive committee

This Easter break there is one major news story that should dominate all the headlines. Holiday hunger.

How much horror for working class people and their kids is summed up in those two words? In the weeks when children are without school meals charities report that pressure on food banks doubles.

Why isn't this story on every front page, rather than false antisemitism claims? Why is it not at the top of the news? Why is the entirety of society not consumed with trying to urgently solve this problem?

Because we live in a society where pro-capitalist politicians act in the interests of the richest, defending a system of gross inequality whose [symptoms include hungry kids](#), homelessness and NHS crises. The 10% richest households own almost half the country's wealth while the poorest half of families own only 9%!

The term 'holiday hunger' was coined in the era of austerity to summarise the poverty inflicted on families by pro-capitalist politicians who bailed out banks saying there is no alternative. There is. Austerity means choosing capitalism, which can only exist by driving down living standards. Socialism would mean democratic planning of resources to improve everyone's life.

These and many other examples of the problems that beset working class and middle class families are the results of political decisions, of the Tory governments, and of the Blairites in government and Labour councils who have chosen not to use the power they hold to resist austerity and privatisation.

Instead our airwaves have been dominated by attacks on Jeremy Corbyn. Why? Because the popularity of his anti-austerity message shows that people have had enough. Because a swing to Labour at the local elections on 3 May is predicted. Because the Blairites who dominate the Parliamentary Labour Party and [the Labour councils fear for their future, having backed and implemented Tory austerity](#).

It is regrettable that Jeremy Corbyn has not yet acted decisively to clear these pro-capitalist class elements out of the Labour Party. Now they are attacking again, aided and abetted by the Tories and the capitalist press. Introducing the right to democratic mandatory reselection so the members can clear them out is an urgent part of [fighting for a working class and socialist Labour Party](#) that can give a political voice to the fight against austerity.

Socialist Party members and other campaigners are standing as anti-cuts candidates in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition against right-wing Labour councillors to help turn Jeremy's anti-austerity message into action.

The right-wing press has gone into overdrive in its [false claims of Jeremy Corbyn's antisemitism](#) and racism. The Sunday Times produced what it called a 'bombshell dossier' - it was more like a damp squib rolled in fake news and topped with a dollop of hypocrisy.

Murdoch's Sunday Times claimed to have spent two whole months on its 'investigation' trailing through Facebook groups to find 'evidence'. Searching groups that have 400,000 members, they found 2,000 "racist, antisemitic, misogynistic, violent and abusive messages".

How many were generated by porn spambots? While every single such message must be challenged, anyone who has spent time on Facebook will know that any discussion can have racists attempt to hijack the debate - but that cannot be taken as representative of all in the group.

The Socialist Party condemns antisemitism and all forms of racism and discrimination. Unlike Murdoch and the Tories, we, Jeremy Corbyn and the labour movement have a record of fighting racism.

Antisemitism is certainly prevalent on the far right, and it is socialists and trade unionists who are at the forefront of countering it, not the Tories or the Labour right.

In the 1990s our predecessor, Militant, was instrumental in [shutting down the headquarters of the racist and antisemitic British National Party](#).

The Tories represent the capitalist system, which is intrinsically unequal and racist. For example, this week it has been revealed that the Home Office is upping the pressure on desperate asylum seekers to return to the war and torture they are fleeing.

Unfortunately Jeremy Corbyn has not been aided by the heads of Momentum, the organisation supposedly set up to back him. Its leadership has produced a statement which gives legitimacy to the false claims.

Christine Shawcroft, one of Momentum's directors, resigned from Labour's national executive committee and allowed Blairite Eddie Izzard to take a seat, strengthening the right wing there.

These events are only a small indication of [the attacks that a Corbyn-led government would face](#). Instead of retreating, Jeremy should call for a mass demo against austerity and all forms of racism and to get the Tories out, with a plan with the trade unions to follow it with united strike action. The university workers in UCU have shown the way, and willingness to fight, that exists.

Corbyn should show his determination to stand firm by instructing Labour council candidates to commit to no more cuts or stand down now for emergency replacement by trade unionists, socialists and campaigners committed to defending working class families and young people. This would show up the lies for what they are and start to challenge austerity and its authors.

Gaza - protest is not terrorism!

- For an independent inquiry into the killings
- Solidarity with the Palestinian struggle
- Lift the siege, end Israeli occupation
- For a socialist solution to the national question

Walking in your own land is not generally considered a crime, but for two million Palestinians imprisoned in Gaza such action is viewed as a threat to the state of Israel by right-wing prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

His armed forces killed 18 Gazans and wounded over 1,500 on the Palestinian 'March of Return' walk to the Gaza/Israel border to mark Land Day (commemorating Palestinians killed on 30 March 1976 protesting against the expropriation of their land by Israel), and to demand the lifting of the current siege of Gaza by Israel and Egypt.

Most of the wounded were hit by live ammunition and others from rubber-coated bullets and tear gas grenades fired from circling drones. Hospitals in the Gaza Strip reported a shortage of blood units.

As usual, the propaganda machine of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and Israel's coalition government has blamed the border clash on "terrorism" orchestrated by Gaza's Islamist Hamas regime.

Yet film footage shows desperate and angry Palestinian civilians being shot as they fled the carnage, including 18-year-old Abd al-Fattah shot in the back of the head by an IDF sniper.

"The world must understand that [we live in a big prison](#), every citizen in Gaza feels it in his own flesh and wants to convey this message", one member of the organising committee told Haaretz newspaper.

"The march is for the sake of return, it is supposed to convey to the world a message: 'Enough with the siege, enough with the occupation'", he explained in response to Israel's claim that Hamas was forced to "hire" demonstrators for payment.

The protest rallies did not threaten the security of anyone. But the Israeli government propaganda machine typically turns the reality upside down and labels any Palestinian protest as "violent". In other words, daily military aggression and a siege that strangles two million people are not considered violent, but mass protest against their situation is!

Socialist Struggle Movement (the Socialist Party's sister organisation in Israel/Palestine) calls for protests against the incitement, oppression and massacre of unarmed demonstrators, and to express solidarity with the mass march against the background of the brutal siege imposed on Palestinians.

The incitement, demonisation and war against unarmed civilians by the IDF and Netanyahu's government is intended to deter Palestinians from fighting for their rights by drowning their protests in blood.

It is also intended to throw sand in the eyes of Jewish workers and young people and turn them against the Palestinians' struggle for a dignified life.

For Netanyahu in particular, the 'war on protest' provides another opportunity to ramp up security fears among the Israeli public in order to divert their attention from allegations of corruption against him, and his government's huge failures.

Moreover, the massacre of Palestinian demonstrators and the continuation of the siege and occupation of Palestinian territories not only removes any prospect for peace, but could also lead to a general escalation in violence in which Israeli civilians will also be harmed.

Therefore it is vital that Israeli workers and young people express their opposition and protest against the bloody policy of the Netanyahu government.

While Netanyahu's government is organising celebrations to mark Israel's 70th anniversary - and, in effect, mobilising nationalism - the rights of the Palestinian refugees and the rights of Palestinians in general continue to be trampled on daily.

Almost every week, Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip come to the fence with Israel, mostly seeking refuge from the deteriorating situation - even preferring to be imprisoned in Israel. At the same time, frequent demonstrations and confrontations are taking place along the Gaza Strip border.

The heavy military repression is aimed at thwarting the expansion of the protest movement which threatens the occupation regime. The further mobilisation of tens and even hundreds of thousands could really enable a mass protest outbreak through the siege fences of the Gaza Strip.

On 15 May, 'Nakba' Day - or 'catastrophe', marking the systematic destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages and the forceful uprooting of over 750,000 Palestinians in 1948 - the demonstrations are scheduled to peak in the 'One Million March'.

This scenario not only creates fear in the Israeli government fears but also within Hamas. It is concerned that an independent mass struggle will slip from its hands, and show that the Palestinian masses can do what the military power of Hamas is not really capable of: actually threaten the siege and occupation.

Socialists support the Palestinian protest, as part of the struggle against the occupation and for peace and socialist change.

This protest needs international solidarity. First and foremost among Israeli workers and young people who understand that Netanyahu's government of big business and Israeli settlements represents the deepest danger also to their own security.

But, while fighting now to end repression and win democratic and social demands, a broader alternative needs to be offered - a socialist alternative. One which would guarantee equal rights and living standards for Palestinians and Israelis beyond anything that is capable under capitalism.

- The full programme of Socialist Struggle Movement against the occupation and for Palestinian self-determination is [available on socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

Catalonia: new Francoist coup - general strike now!

The arrest of exiled former Catalan president Carles Puigdemont has reignited the Catalan independence struggle.

His arrest in Germany was on charges of 'sedition and rebellion' under a warrant issued by the Spanish state at the behest of right-wing People's Party (PP) prime minister, Mariano Rajoy.

This provoked renewed mass protests on the streets of Barcelona, which were subjected to police attacks.

Puigdemont's arrest - along with the detentions of other former Catalan officials in exile elsewhere in Europe, together with those jailed former ministers - shows the continuing repression by the Spanish state of those in Catalonia seeking self-determination.

This repression was evident before and since the 1 October 2017 referendum and subsequent Catalonia elections on 21 December 2017, both of which returned majorities for independence.

The Socialist Party's sister section in the Spanish state stands four-square for a socialist independent Catalonia and against the reactionary Francoist constitution of 1978 which denies national self-determination.

Below are excerpts from a statement issued by Esquerra Revolucionària (CWI in Catalonia) on the latest developments.

- Free the political prisoners!
- For a Catalan republic of the workers and youth!

The authoritarian 'regime of 1978' (term used to describe the post-General Franco 'democratic' regime in Spain), its state apparatus and the parties which support it (the PP, Ciudadanos, and the Psoe leadership) have carried out a new coup against democratic rights and freedoms in Catalonia.

They have unleashed a repressive avalanche against the Catalan independence movement, reminiscent of that which the Franco dictatorship carried out against the "Republic and communism".

They have eliminated Catalan autonomy, arrested Catalan president Carles Puigdemont and are charging 25 pro-independence leaders, many who have already been jailed without trial or bail.

There is no doubt that the monarchist, Spanish nationalist bloc in power refuses to accept the results of the Catalan elections of 21 December and is willing to crush, at any cost, the pro-republic aspirations of the Catalan people. Catalonia is living under a Francoist state of emergency.

In response, a general strike must be called by the trade union movement and political left now to demand the immediate freedom of the political prisoners, the end of article 155 (suspending Catalan autonomy) and for a Catalan republic.

The workers and youth in the rest of the Spanish state also have a duty to support the Catalan people, uniting all our forces to bring down the Rajoy government.

Passion

The youth and working class of Catalonia have reacted with great energy to the provocations of the state and Judge Llarena (who is presiding over the case against the Catalan government leaders).

Immediately after the news of the imprisonment of Jodri Turull (the latest candidate proposed for the presidency of Catalonia) and others, hundreds of thousands of people went onto the streets following the call of the Committees for the Defence of the Republic (CDRs).

Despite the violence of the Mossos (Catalan police) who indiscriminately attacked the crowds, the demonstrators acted in an exemplary manner.

The slogans "free political prisoners!" and "general strike now!" rang out with irresistible passion.

It is clear that the PP government and state apparatus have decided to plough ahead with repressive measures, trying to definitively muzzle an entire people.

Rajoy, under intense pressure from the mass protests in defence of pensions and [the massive feminist strike on 8 March](#), is struggling more and more to control the discontent which threatens to turn into a new social explosion.

Moreover, with opinion polls predicting the worst possible outcome for the PP, he is prepared to resist at any cost the pressure from the PP's conservative rival Ciudadanos and its president, Albert Rivera.

His way of trying to avoid this pressure and recover electoral support is to deal new blows to the Catalan people, and play the Spanish-nationalist card to the full. However, this strategy can blow up in his face.

This judicial repression began with the state attorney general filing a complaint on 30 October. This characterised the [1 October referendum and the general strike which paralysed Catalonia on 3 October](#) as a "violent uprising", in order to justify bringing charges of "sedition and rebellion". In one fell swoop, the popular sovereignty of the Catalan people was suppressed.

Who was it that used arms and exercised violence in Catalonia? We all know the answer: the regime of 1978, its government and state, which sent over 10,000 police and military police to savagely beat the millions of people who peacefully exercised the right to vote.

This offensive is not only directed against Catalonia. The attacks on democratic rights and freedom of speech have also been extended to the rest of the Spanish state.

Meanwhile, fascist violence, violence against women - which has murdered hundreds, and the corruption of the PP and other establishment parties - has gone unpunished.

The leaders of CCOO and UGT (the two major trade unions) in Catalonia and throughout the Spanish state, by refusing to organise mobilisations to stop this authoritarian offensive, have given precious oxygen to the PP government and in practice endorsed the application of article 155.

Among the Catalan working class and in the rest of the state, there is a healthy and correct instinct that nothing good can come from the hand of the PP.

However, the current Spanish-nationalist campaign has managed to generate confusion. First of all because the [leaders of Psoe have participated in it, without exception, as well as many who in the past called themselves "communists"](#).

They include Paco Frutos the former general secretary of the Communist Party who has now become a pathetic Spanish-nationalist agitator.

The leadership of Izquierda Unida (IU - United Left) and Podemos (left populist party) have also defended a wrong position, which has fed the confusion and given space to the right wing.

Alberto Garzon (IU leader) has scandalously refused to recognise the existence of political prisoners, and referred to the mass movement as a "manoeuvre" by economic elites, precisely at the time when the Catalan capitalist class had joined hands with the Spanish bourgeoisie to crush the movement. Garzon's has been the antithesis of a revolutionary Marxist position.

Pablo Iglesias (Podemos leader) also refused to lead the movement for self-determination and the Catalan republic.

He blamed the Catalan people and their struggle for "waking up the spirit of fascism" and keeps insisting that there must be a deal with the state and PP to agree a "referendum".

Does Iglesias not realise that the current offensive by the state in itself represents a clear refusal to dialogue?

The leadership of Unidos Podemos (electoral alliance between Podemos and IU) must make a 180 degree turn and end the policy of abstaining in this battle.

Inviting aggression

It's no accident that these attacks take place following months when the leaders of the ERC and Junts per Catalunya (main pro-independence political groups) have suspended the struggle in the streets and focused on 'building bridges' with the PP and Spanish state.

After they [defeated the reactionary bloc in the 21 December elections](#), millions of people hoped they would present a clear plan to take Catalonia towards a republic, based on social mobilisation.

Instead, the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois politicians who lead these parties merely insisted that the proclamation of the Catalan republic was only "symbolic", that they accepted article 155, and that they should not provoke the state - all in the name of "recuperating the institutions".

In the class struggle, weakness always invites aggression. The Spanish and Catalan ruling classes are very conscious that what has taken place in Catalonia is a real revolutionary crisis.

So they tried to shut it down via courts and jailings, as well as calling the December elections to try to win a majority.

But the will and determination of the Catalan people are frustrating their plans. Instead they now turn back towards more brutal repression against the leaders of the independence movement.

They are going all out to crush the movement and send a message to the workers and youth of the rest of the Spanish state. But they have gone too far.

On the evening of 25 March, after hearing hundreds of thousands shouting for a general strike on the streets, the president of the Catalan parliament, Roger Torrent, called for the formation of a united front in defence of democracy.

He announced plans to speak with all the pro-independence parties, the left parties and the unions to plan a strong united response.

It is clear that, beyond his words, the call of Torrent, as well as the statements by the ERC leaders, have the objective of forming a new Catalan government to 'stabilise' the situation and end the struggle in the streets.

It is time for the motor of the movement for the national liberation of Catalonia - the masses in struggle, the youth and most advanced sections of the workers' movement - to take the leadership of the movement.

Of course we must build a united front in the CDRs, the CUP, the militant base of the ANC and Omnium (mass pro-independence campaigns), Catalunya en Comú (Catalan alliance of Podemos, IU and others) and of the entire fighting trade union movement, left organisations and social movements, to immediately call a 24-hour general strike in Catalonia, accompanied by mass mobilisations.

This general strike should unite all those in struggle against the PP government, from the movements of the feminists and pensioners to that of the students.

It should demand the freedom of the political prisoners, the ending of all court proceedings and article 155, and the fall of the Rajoy government.

A general strike should demand that CCOO and UGT, and Unidos Podemos support it in all parts of the Spanish state, organising mobilisations in support of the Catalan people and against the anti-democratic shift we are seeing in general.

Obviously, a general strike will be a decisive step. But afterwards the struggle will have to be extended, broadened and continued with new strikes and mobilisations until repression is defeated, the prisoners are freed, and all democratic rights of Catalonia are restored, including the implementation of the democratic decision of the Catalan people in favour of a republic.

Working class

Izquierda Revolucionaria also insists that the national liberation movement has a duty to win over the powerful Catalan working class as a whole, including those Spanish-speaking workers from outside of Catalonia.

The immense majority of these workers reject the corruption and cuts of the PP, and thousands joined the mobilisations on 1 and 3 October against repression.

However, many of them still look upon the independence 'process' with distrust because of the role played by the bourgeois leaders of PDeCat (right-wing nationalists) and the policies of cuts and privatisation which both they and ERC implemented in the Catalan government.

These sections of the Catalan working class can be won to the cause of a Catalan republic and play a decisive role in the struggle against the right and article 155.

However, for this to take place, they must see that this is a fight for a workers' republic, not one of bosses and the Catalan oligarchy.

If the struggle for a republic is combined with a programme of demands which gives a response to the concrete problems millions of us suffer every day and which breaks with the logic of capitalism and ensures labour and social rights and the future of youth, then we can neutralise Spanish-nationalist demagogy and defeat the fear campaign. This is the path to victory.

- [Read the full statement at socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

End the housing crisis! We can't wait till 2022!

Labour councils must act now

Paula Mitchell, secretary, London Socialist Party

Grenfell Tower stands as a terrible monument to a totally failed model of providing housing. The fire was the result not just of Tory austerity, but of [decades of cuts, privatisation, deregulation, relaxation of planning, and lack of democratic accountability](#).

The [treatment of the survivors and community since](#) is further proof, if it were needed, that council services run on the private business austerity model fails people's most basic needs.

The housing crisis is everywhere, but it is at its sharpest in London. 'Social cleansing', 'gentrification', 'the London clearances' - call it what you will, 100,000 households have been forced out by high rents, impossible house prices, and the regeneration policies of councils.

London tenants pay 72% of wages on rent! Just 24% of new homes completed in 2015-16 in London were "affordable".

Government-defined 'affordable' housing is actually unaffordable to the vast majority of working class people.

New buildings go up but only the highest paid and millionaire speculators can buy them - and leave them empty to keep the value high.

In fact 5% of all homes in London are empty. Meanwhile the number of street homeless has tripled.

Regeneration

Regeneration of council or housing association homes means working class people's homes are taken over by greedy property developers and replaced by luxury accommodation, with the original tenants having little right of return.

Blairite mayor Sadiq Khan's London Plan aims to build 66,000 new homes a year in town centres and transport hubs. But this will often mean handing public space to private companies.

It entails high-density development - great looming tower blocks of expensive flats, with only a small proportion "affordable". The loss of public space includes grass and trees, libraries and youth centres.

Labour councils see the [Tories' plan to end the central government grant](#) in 2020. Councils will then be self-funded from council tax, business rates and other income.

Rather than put up a fight, they seek to maximise their income from selling land and property, and enticing well-off residents.

Jeremy Corbyn shook up the debate on housing when he declared that there must be an end to this social cleansing.

He said there should be [residents' votes on any regeneration schemes](#), and that, where it took place, all existing tenants should be guaranteed homes on the same terms as before. He said empty homes should be requisitioned to house the homeless.

Social cleansing

Jeremy Corbyn should instruct Labour councils to immediately stop all projects that involve social cleansing, and carry out ballots on any regeneration projects.

London's Labour councils have enough reserves to build 80,000 council houses now. They should do that, on lifetime tenancies and social rents. They should take over empty properties for council housing.

They could register private landlords, in order to ensure decent standards, and tackle overcrowding. They should bring in rent controls that cap the level of private rents, establishing democratic rent tribunals.

The issue of fire safety applies everywhere there are blocks - not just on the crucial issue of removing cladding, which still remains, but also retrofitting sprinklers and other fire safety measures such as effective fire doors.

It is an outrage that the Tories are refusing funds, but Labour councils shouldn't wait. They should carry out fire safety checks and make the results public, do the work and send the bill to central government.

Councils could ensure decent pay, conditions, and safety for all housing and construction workers, including stopping the use of blacklisting firms and enforcing collective agreements.

Councils could begin to transform the situation - if they have the will to stand and fight.

Use your vote to deselect monster block Blairites in 3 May local elections

Nancy Taaffe, Waltham Forest Socialist Party and chair, Save Our Square

The [campaign to defeat the proposed 'monster block' in Walthamstow](#), east London, is a clear example that the Labour Party is indeed - as the Socialist Party has described it - two parties in one.

On the one side you have the people who oppose this development. Stall holders in the market, shop keepers, parents of children who use the children's playground, and the people who love the trees.

Alongside Labour Party members - virtually every Labour Party ward has passed a motion of opposition and now so has the general management committee of the local Labour Party.

Councillors

On the other side you have the right-wing Blairite councillors. And that's about it. It's hard to find anyone who actually supports these plans.

The line has been drawn. Quite literally, a group of artists chalked out the land we are set to lose to illustrate the land grab.

And why such a swell of opposition to these plans? There is the loss of land and space and skyline. But the biggest objection by far is the lack of affordability of the 500 units which will be built.

With 47% of the borough being classified as earning on or below the London Living Wage, and with two bedroom flats in this new development expected to start at £350,000, it's clear to everyone that these homes are not for us. The scheme epitomises social cleansing.

The campaign has used every tool in the box to try and stop this development. The council received nearly a thousand letters of objection prior to the planning meeting.

500 people turned up to lobby the planning committee. 150 people came a to Save Our Square public meeting.

[600 rallied in the square.](#) Hundreds wrote to Sadiq Khan, London's Blairite mayor, urging him to block these plans.

After exhausting every avenue it's become obvious that the Blairite politicians in London are not going to help us stop this development.

Not the councillors, not the mayor and not the Blairite MP, Stella Creasy, who has refused to openly oppose the plans.

Failure to deselect these Blairites leaves people asking, 'how should we vote at the 3 May local elections to stop these plans?' The newly elected council will be asked to rubber stamp these plans. So how the public votes will definitely have an impact.

So far all the Blairite politicians have shown to everyone involved in the campaign, and those watching it unfold, that they do not oppose this scheme.

TUSC

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing 18 candidates across the borough on an anti-austerity and pro-Corbyn platform.

We're standing two candidates in High Street ward, where this development is planned. Claire Coghill, leader of the council, is a sitting councillor in this ward - the monster block is her baby.

TUSC is not standing against Corbynistas, or those Labour candidates who have publicly pledged their opposition to the blocks.

We are arguing that as the Blairite councillors have not been replaced from within the Labour Party, the working class is left with no alternative but to deselect them from without.

We are urging people to stop these plans and usher in an anti-austerity fightback in Waltham Forest.

Vote TUSC on 3 May.

Corbyn council will be put to the test

Nick Auvache, North London Socialist Party

Haringey looks set to be the first Corbynite council after the May local elections. This is eagerly anticipated and Haringey may be featured heavily in the media in the run-up to election day itself.

This will be a real test for those who are hoping that it could represent a turning point. Services have been slashed and workers sacked over a period of years.

However, when the hated Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) 'regeneration' and privatisation scheme was recently delivered a [series of near-fatal blows](#), confidence grew that change was possible.

Claire Kober, the Blairite council leader, was the main driver of this vicious piece of social cleansing. Her unpopular policy has forced her to not stand for re-election.

Many old [pro-HDV Labour candidates have been deselected](#), which could pave the way for a left council, and this presents great [opportunities to implement a no-cuts budget](#).

However, some Blairites remain and it is important that they are not given one inch.

In the Seven Sisters ward where Kober was a councillor, three right-wing pro-HDV councillors are standing for Labour.

This is why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has taken the decision to stand a team of candidates in that ward.

TUSC in Haringey believes that it will be the only political force in the Seven Sisters ward to fight on the policies that Jeremy Corbyn represents.

We are campaigning alongside those in the Labour Party who are fighting against the ghost of Blair.

We will set out a clear socialist programme and use the elections to explain how we can defeat austerity in Haringey and make no cuts whatsoever.

Retail crunch: even giants not immune as 21,000 jobs disappear

- Fight for living wages and public ownership

Iain Dalton, vice-chair, Usdaw Leeds private trades branch (personal capacity)

Almost every week it seems another retail chain is closing stores. 21,000 retail jobs have gone in the first three months of the year according to the Press Association.

Toys R Us went into liquidation at the end of February, with electronics store Maplin going into administration just hours later. In March, Italian restaurant Prezzo announced it was closing a third of its locations. Fashion retailer New Look has announced closures of 60 locations, just over a tenth of its stores.

The growth of online shopping is a factor, with 77% of people buying at least one item online in 2017 according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). But only around 18% of sales in 2018 are expected to come via the internet, so 'bricks and mortar' stores still remain dominant.

New Look's recovery plan also includes rent reductions and new lease terms on a further 393 locations, the vast majority of its shops. This is a result of high commercial rental prices, much like those in the private housing sector.

Around a decade ago, companies such as Boots, Tesco and others sold their properties to asset management companies who leased stores back to them, many of them on 'upwards-only' rent review terms.

This has led to an overheating of the retail property market, especially in central London, combined with companies increasingly stuck with large, warehouse-type shops rented in better times.

This is compounded by the delayed revaluation of business rates charged by councils, based on rental prices. So those stores paying over the odds in rent continue to do the same with rates even after renegotiating.

The result is [the widespread closures we are seeing now](#), with whole town centres beginning to look like ghost towns. In towns like Burslem in Stoke-on-Trent, Dewsbury in West Yorkshire, and Newport in South Wales, around 30% of shop front retail space is vacant, according to the Local Data Company.

But underlying all of this is that people simply don't have the money to spend! This is the result of year-on-year pay freezes for many workers, or below-inflation pay 'increases' if we're very lucky.

Overall consumer spending went down last year for the first time in five years, according to Visa. Retail specifically increased, but growth slowed to just 1.9%, the lowest since 2013 says the ONS.

A very poor Christmas saw retail sales fall 1.4% in December compared to November, and then only 'recover' by a pitiful 1.6% in January compared to 1.5% in 2017.

A recovery in the retail sector requires a recovery in the pockets of ordinary workers. Unless the trade union movement [leads a fightback on pay](#), expect the squeeze to continue. And only democratic public ownership and socialist planning can guarantee workers safety from market forces.

Right-wing Vote Leave campaign may have broken spending laws

- Fight for a socialist, internationalist Brexit

Mark Best, Hackney Socialist Party

Senior members of the right-wing Vote Leave campaign may have broken election law, allegedly breaching spending limits by donating money to another organisation they campaigned with.

At the time, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) - the anti-austerity electoral alliance including transport union RMT and the Socialist Party - [called on the Electoral Commission to use its legal power not to designate an official campaign](#), rather than hand state funding to reactionaries. This position was also officially backed by civil service union PCS.

TUSC made the point that socialists and trade unionists campaigning for a working class, socialist Brexit represented the real opposition to the capitalists and establishment politicians who dominated the Remain camp.

And the RMT, for example, with over 80,000 members, dwarfed the few nationalist politicians, business owners and journalists who backed the right-wing Brexit position of a tiny minority of capitalists.

But the Electoral Commission rejected TUSC's appeal. Instead it declared Vote Leave the official campaign, awarding it a £600,000 grant, free postage worth £13 million, TV and radio time for referendum broadcasts, and the use of meeting facilities free of charge.

So it was Vote Leave which went up against big business's 'Britain Stronger in Europe' campaign. This cemented the tone we saw in the referendum, with both official campaigns competing to demonstrate who was tougher on migrants, in or out.

The case for an internationalist, socialist Brexit wasn't heard by a mass audience. Nonetheless, [class anger against the capitalist establishment was the main driver of the Leave vote](#).

The allegations against Vote Leave emphasise that in Brexit, as in all things, workers have nothing in common with the bosses and their politicians. We need to keep fighting for an independent, pro-worker Brexit, and a new collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist and internationalist basis.

- A full account of TUSC's principled socialist Leave campaign, which made no compromises with the reactionary leavers, is [available at the TUSC website](#)
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20 years since the Good Friday Agreement

Northern Ireland: peace process on the brink

Niall Mulholland, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

April 2018 marks the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in Belfast. This was the formal ending of the 'Troubles', the euphemism for decades of sectarian upheaval and armed conflict that wracked the north of Ireland.

Key figures involved in the negotiations that produced the GFA, such as Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams, the Ulster Unionist Party's David Trimble, former US president Bill Clinton and former prime minister Tony Blair, are due to congregate in Belfast to celebrate the 'model peace process'. But given that Northern Ireland's power-sharing executive remains collapsed, the festivities will be conducted with some embarrassment and even despair.

[Months of deadlock between the former governing parties](#), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein, underlines the fact that the agreement never lived up to its billing as bringing long-term peace, stability and prosperity to Northern Ireland. Twenty years since its implementation, the GFA stands on the brink, with its definitive breakdown potentially on the cards.

The establishment's narrative is that the 1998 agreement brought to an end a seemingly irrational tribal war. However, when the Northern Ireland civil rights' movement exploded onto the scene 50 years ago, it attracted not just mass support from Catholics but also initially layers of Protestant youth.

Socialist leadership

With a determined socialist leadership, the possibility existed of fundamental change. But as sectarian bigots and nationalist and unionist political parties attempted to sow divisions among workers and to derail the movement, the labour and trade union leaders failed to present a class alternative.

Due to anger at brutal state repression and deep frustration at the failure of 'politics' to end discrimination and poverty, many working class Catholic youth turned to the Official and Provisional IRA in the early 1970s.

From the start, the Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) and its predecessor Militant [argued that the republican armed campaigns would prove counterproductive](#), dividing the working class further and failing to defeat the might of the British state while providing it with the justification to increase repression.

At the same time, Loyalist paramilitaries carried out indiscriminate, deadly attacks against innocent Catholics.

In conditions of daily bombings and shootings, heavy state repression and polarisation, those, like Militant, advocating for the unions to resist sectarianism and repression, to organise the defence of working class communities and to build a workers' political alternative, often seemed like lone voices.

Nevertheless, Catholic and Protestant workers remained united in shared workplaces and in the unions. Not one strike was broken by sectarianism, despite the best efforts of bigots on both sides.

By the 1980s [the IRA's campaign had run out of momentum](#). While the British state could not defeat the IRA, it was able to contain the Provisional IRA's campaign with military means and intelligence.

During the 1990s many on the left were also disorientated by the developing 'peace process' in Ireland and the role of Sinn Fein. The Gerry Adams/Martin McGuinness leadership wanted to cut a 'power-sharing' deal in the North, without achieving their long-stated goal of immediate British withdrawal and a united Ireland. In the 20 years since, they have accommodated themselves to administering capitalist austerity in the power-sharing executive.

All sides had to make significant compromises to reach a deal. Prisoner releases, [paramilitary arms 'decommissioning'](#) and British 'demilitarisation' were just some of the highly contentious issues that took years to carry out.

The GFA also enshrined the ending of institutionalised discrimination - a process already underway largely as a result of working class Catholics' implacable opposition to a return to any form of Unionist misrule.

Capitalist status quo

But it was Sinn Fein that gave most ground leading up to the signing of the GFA in 1998. The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe sped up the process of movements like the ANC in South Africa, PLO in Palestine and the IRA coming to terms with the capitalist status quo.

In the North, after two decades of conflict, and apparent military stalemate, there was also 'war weariness' on all sides. Between 1969 and 1998, some 3,289 people were killed as a result of the conflict - the equivalent ratio of victims to population in Britain would have seen 100,000 people killed.

The Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 - whose main provisions were very similar to that of the GFA - had proved unpalatable to the "extremes" (Ian Paisley's DUP and loyalist groups, whose 'Ulster stoppage' brought Sunningdale crashing down, and the Provisional IRA who denounced it as a "partitionist" sell-out). But 25 further years of sectarian deadlock, paramilitary campaigns and state repression, as well as rejection of violence by the working class, forced an agreement.

Establishment politicians perpetuate the myth that 'peace' in the 1990s was achieved largely from above. But the yearning for an end to the conflict was expressed most forcibly and consistently from below. This was indicated by the Socialist Party's slogan, 'No going back!' which caught the imagination of many working class people.

As paramilitary organisations moved towards shaky ceasefires, many thousands of Catholic and Protestant workers went on protests - often initiated by Militant/Socialist Party supporters in trades councils and unions - against a slide back to sectarian conflict. And the party's initiative, Youth Against Sectarianism, rallied thousands of school students from both sides of the divide across the North.

We pointed out that the peace process and GFA would not bring about lasting peace and prosperity, as many claimed. It institutionalised sectarianism, including with the stipulation that Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) officially state they are 'nationalist' or 'unionist' or 'other'.

Nevertheless, the Socialist Party called for a critical 'yes' vote during the referendum held on the GFA, North and South. Relative peace would, at least, give the working class a much better opportunity to develop class politics.

From the start, the institutions created by GFA were beset by instability and crisis. Events on the ground, such as disputes over parades, threatened to bring down the power-sharing executive. After a suspension of the assembly, a new deal, the St Andrews Agreement, was painfully put together to restore power-sharing in May 2007.

Rather than bringing the two communities together, the institutionalisation of sectarianism led to the opposite extremes of the political spectrum, the DUP and Sinn Fein, supplanting the 'moderate' nationalist and unionist parties.

The decade of power-sharing rule of these two parties saw an intensification of the policies of privatisation, education cuts, health cuts and a failed attempt to impose water charges. While content to work together carrying out Tory government austerity cuts, the DUP and Sinn Fein conducted sectarian mud-slinging against one another on outstanding Troubles-related issues. This also served the useful purpose of averting attention away from their unpopular policies and to bolster their sectarian support.

For many of their voters, however, the power-sharing relationship produced no 'peace dividend'. Over 25% of children live in poverty, public services are slashed, miles of 'peace walls' still divide Catholic and Protestant working class communities, and basic rights, such as same-sex marriage and a woman's right to choose (which both Sinn Fein and the DUP oppose) are denied.

'Cash for ash'

Scandals and sleaze surrounded the executive. The DUP leadership was embroiled in the [Renewable Heat Incentive 'cash for ash' scandal](#) that could squander up to £700 million of public money for the benefit of their big businesses friends. Sinn Fein was slow to take up this scandal and it was only widespread anger among Catholics that forced the party to call time on power sharing.

Since the collapse of the executive, new factors, such as Brexit, have destabilised the situation further. [All the parties oppose a return to a 'hard border'](#). Not only would it most likely lead to economic dislocation but it would present a powerful propaganda weapon to republican dissidents.

The Tory government advocates a free trade deal with the EU or a 'high tech customs system' that does not require a hard border. Quite how this can work, with over 200 border crossings, remains to be seen.

Theresa May acquiesced to the EU demand for a 'backstop' arrangement which would somehow keep Northern Ireland in the Customs Union if no other option can be found. Although what the backstop entails is left purposefully ambiguous. The DUP, supported by the pro-Brexit faction of the Tory party, would fiercely oppose any 'exceptionalism' for Northern Ireland.

In this fraught atmosphere, Sinn Fein campaigns for a 'border poll'. Gerry Adams blithely comments, "the Good Friday Agreement... allows for Irish reunification in the context of a democratic vote: 50% plus one."

Lurking behind the concrete issues of controversy in the current crisis are factors and changes of greater magnitude and impact, such as the demographic shift taking place, with Catholics set to become a majority in Northern Ireland in the near future. This threatens one of the pillars - an in-built Protestant majority - of the state's very foundation, underlining the instability and fragility of the GFA.

Northern Catholics have long held valid national aspirations and, of course, have a right to decide their future. But Sinn Fein's crude 'majoritarianism' will not deliver the peaceful, stable, prosperous united Ireland they yearn for.

Sinn Fein dismisses genuine Protestant working class fears of becoming second-class citizens in a capitalist united Ireland and the fierce reaction to moves towards it.

Dublin-based commentator Fintan O'Toole argued in the Irish Times that it cannot be assumed that southerners, who must also hold a referendum to decide the border, will vote "...for a form of unity that merely creates an angry and alienated Protestant minority within a bitterly contested new state".

Two decades on, the Good Friday Agreement's institutions are suspended and its provisions, based on the assumption of endless sectarianism, only aggravate divisions. In many ways, we see a continuation of the Troubles "by other means", like the sharply contentious question of implementing an Irish Language Act.

And the GFA has not brought universal peace and justice. Low-level paramilitary attacks and punishment beatings continue in many deprived areas, as does British state repression.

The DUP's leader, Arlene Foster, calls for a period of direct rule from London. This is strongly opposed by nationalists, especially as her party props up the Tories. They call for a period of 'joint direct rule' between London and Dublin, which, in turn, is vehemently opposed by Unionists.

It is more likely that the current situation, a 'light' form of direct rule, will continue for some time before the British and Irish governments attempt another deal, a St Andrews Agreement Mark 2.

None of this resembles the peace, stability and prosperity promised 20 years ago. An absence of a deal opens up a dangerous vacuum on the ground. And any restored power-sharing executive will only be on the basis of unprincipled fudges on many issues, preparing the way for more instability and crisis.

United working class

Only a united working class struggle, with socialist policies, can show a way out of austerity, poverty, injustice, and sectarian divisions.

Genuine 'power-sharing' from a socialist perspective entails working class people, Catholic and Protestant, coming together to democratically agree on new arrangements. A socialist society, based on people's needs, would see the ending of all coercion against either of the communities, overcoming historic fears and distrust.

This is the power-sharing solution - the basis for a new, socialist Ireland - that the workers' movement should take up in Ireland and Britain, linking it to a voluntary, equal socialist federation of these islands and Europe.

UCU strike: reject the deal - keep the action on

Sam Morecroft, Sheffield branch delegate (personal capacity)

On 28 March, delegates from striking University and College Union (UCU) branches met to be [consulted on a new deal, put forward by Universities UK \(UUK\)](#) to resolve the pensions dispute. The deal, which includes maintaining the current pension scheme for a year and setting up a joint working group comprised of both UUK and UCU representatives to look at how the fund is valued, is a huge step forward from UUK's decision on 23 January to announce plans to completely scrap defined benefit.

It is a testament to the power of UCU members' sustained industrial action that the employers have been pushed this far, and demonstrates beyond doubt that [the Trade Union Act is not an insurmountable barrier](#) to national industrial action.

However, while the UCU Higher Education Committee met following the branch consultation and voted by a narrow margin (10-8 with one abstention) to ballot members on the strike, this decision did not reflect the feedback from branches at the consultation. Overwhelmingly, while there was a real sense that the latest offer demonstrated genuine progress, the majority of branches favoured a 'revise and resubmit' position, asking for more detail and discussion of the offer before it was put to the membership.

There are many valid questions around what the offer means - not least what will happen after April 2019 which was originally when the employers wanted to impose 100% defined contribution pensions in any case. There is a lack of clarity around what power the joint working group will have to challenge the methodology used to claim that the USS fund is in deficit and to re-evaluate the scheme collectively, as well as what UUK themselves have committed to. And worryingly there seem to be preconditions to this evaluation based on the employers notion of "affordability" - why should we tie ourselves in to further negotiations that come with strings attached?

In the branch consultation, an undated letter was produced from UUK CEO Alistair Jarvis claiming that UUK "did not intend" to revert to their proposal for 100% DC pensions in the future. This was used by Sally Hunt, UCU general secretary, as evidence that this was not simply an attempt to buy time by the employers and UUK would approach negotiations in good faith. However, many delegates expressed frustration at this last minute evidence, and asked how they could possibly know what their members would want to happen when they had no way of discussing the full details of the offer beforehand. Some even suggested it was meaningless.

In reality, this consultation of branches has been rushed, and there is a feeling among many members that it has been railroaded through by the full time officials of the union. The offer from UUK came out just a few days before the branch consultation and was sent out to members before elected negotiators had any chance to discuss the proposal and respond. Many branches were unable to call meetings of members in time and relied on hastily thrown together electronic surveys which threw up a host of different responses. The consultation, which lasted around three hours, was highly pressurised and as the time constraints became more apparent, delegates were asked to express their branches position in three sentences or less!

Even worse, while the chair noted in the meeting that many branches favoured a revise and resubmit position, when a delegate requested an indicative vote be taken on this, the Chair refused the request and stated that HEC representatives had heard the views of the branches. HEC members were then told that a majority of branches wanted to ballot the membership on this - a complete untruth and a disgraceful tactic used by full time officials who clearly want to fudge a solution to the dispute as quickly as possible! With little or no time for discussion, the HEC then voted on completely factional lines, with the 'Independent Broad Left' (IBL), the right-wing faction which supports Sally Hunt, voting to support a paper put forward by the full time officials calling for an immediate ballot of members, the UCU Left voting against, and the one unaligned HEC member abstaining. As a result of this the HEC was told that all other motions submitted by HEC representatives fell without discussion or vote as the paper overrode these. Members will be balloted immediately after the Easter Bank Holiday, again giving no real chance for branches to discuss the offer before the ballot begins.

Put simply, this was a stitch up by Sally Hunt and the full time officials. Members will understandably want to know why. The reality is that Hunt and the IBL favour a form of 'partnership' unionism based on compromise with the employers rather than industrial action. The scale of this attack and members' anger forced them into supporting strikes, but as soon as a compromise deal became available they were keen to accept, despite the fact that all the momentum in the dispute was with the union and further concessions could have been extracted.

Furthermore, while this dispute is between UUK and UCU, the significance of it is felt well beyond the employers and the union. The strike has taken on a life of its own and has felt like the beginnings of a mass movement against marketisation, privatisation and austerity in education. It has re-ignited the student movement, acting as the spark for the [largest local student mobilisations since 2010 and over 20 campus occupations](#) have taken place since the strike began. It is not an exaggeration to say that if this movement were to continue to develop it could act as a catalyst for an eruption of strikes which could bring down the weak and divided Tory government.

Indeed, the Tories have been remarkably silent on the USS dispute, preferring to avoid drawing attention to one of the biggest strikes in recent history. But behind the scenes Universities Minister Sam Gyimah has been applying pressure to accept the compromise deal, clearly afraid of what might happen to his government if the dispute continues. That may partially explain why the leadership are so desperate to get this offer out to a ballot of members in a bid to end the strike, even though we don't yet know enough about what UUK's offer means. But it's still a mistake - we have leverage right now and should be using that to maximum effect

When the previous offer came out in the middle of the strike, [branches were quick to mobilise against it and spoke as one in their rejection of it](#), with mass meetings up and down the country and a protest outside UCU HQ sending a clear message of #NoCapitulation. However, this time there was no demo outside the UCU offices and the message was much less clear - while most could be broadly described as revise and resubmit there was not a clear unanimous message from members. This made it easier for the leadership to claim that no clear position came from the consultation and to push for a ballot.

Unfortunately, UCU Left confused the situation further by raising a demand for a #NoDetriment clause, arguing the strikes should stay on until UUK agreed that whatever the findings of the joint group there would be no cut in pension benefits or increased contributions for our members. This was an understandable position but a confused one - even if UUK had been forced to offer such a clause through further action it would likely not have meant anything. Worse, at the branch consultation Sally Hunt seized upon the #NoDetriment demand, which only a minority of branches were in fact calling for, stating (probably not incorrectly) that we would have to strike for much longer to achieve such a thing. This had the effect of further dividing and confusing the delegates in the room, with some openly criticising the demand.

That's frustrating, but it also shows the desperate need for an organised broad left network in the union which is rooted in the membership and able to provide a strategy throughout industrial struggles - sadly UCU Left exists mainly in London and is not yet able to do this. In the absence of more established rank and file organisation in UCU Twitter has become an important platform for communicating between members branches - ironic since many academics are forced to sign up to Twitter by management to promote their research. But now members are learning that Twitter cannot substitute for 'real life' discussions of strategy and strong rank and file organisation.

What is now being offered by UUK is a huge step forward from their attempt to completely scrap Defined Benefit. But at the same time there are huge questions over what the offer means and at worst it is possible this is just a stalling tactic by the employers that will allow them to regroup and come again to attack our pensions. We have taken huge steps forward together and pushed the bosses back - but we need to reject this deal and keep the action on until UUK provide further guarantees on what this joint working group really means and what they intend for our pensions after April 2019. Vote no, keep the action on!

BT can afford more - reject pensions offer

Socialist Party members in CWU

BT has spent £2.7 billion servicing its pension deficit since 2013 - a third of its market value. In the same period it has handed nearly £5 billion to shareholders.

So it sticks in the craw when BT comes to members of the BT pension scheme and says it can no longer afford to fund the deficit.

No wonder then that when BT proposed during the pension consultation that members in the pension scheme would have to pay more for less, there was so much opposition that the Communication Workers Union (CWU) was able to use this as leverage to extract more concessions from the employer.

For retirement saving scheme members, BT will now increase the employer contribution. For those leaving the pension scheme and joining the proposed hybrid scheme, BT will pay transitional payments for ten years. All welcome.

Concession

The concession for enhanced payments recognising those members who may be considering retirement is to be supported. Again, welcome.

But, the truth is that for all the talk of these concessions, it's hard not to feel that the CWU could have won more. This is the sum of concession based bargaining where [first the final salary](#), [then the career average](#) and now [the BT pension scheme in its current form](#) have been lost.

In its place is a proposed hybrid scheme that may not be comparable or have as its target the same terms and conditions as what currently exists.

And the new scheme would be linked to the lower CPI inflation model, not the higher RPI, leaving any scheme more exposed to inflation and periods of rising costs.

So CWU members will see a further reduction in their terms and conditions again. And there is no guarantee that even the defined benefit element of the hybrid scheme would not be attacked in the future if BT was to decide it was "unaffordable". BT has, after all, got form.

CWU should have pressed for an industrial action ballot to defend all pensions and used the mandate to extract further concessions like a fully funded and unified BT pension scheme for all employees.

But why not also go further, to pressure BT to reduce share dividends to the major shareholders and use the savings from this campaign to reduce the pension deficit?

Privatisation

It's clear that, as in other utilities and services, the privatised telecoms model is driving this on relentlessly. The CWU must demand Corbyn-led Labour supports CWU policy and commits to renationalising BT to stop the race to the bottom.

It was only the tremendous strike ballot result by our members that forced Royal Mail into concessions that also included a pay rise of over 12% over three years and a reduction in the working week by two hours. We have to fight now.

Only the threat of industrial action will force the employer back - as we are currently seeing happening in the universities because of the University and College Union strike.

Bromley library workers walk out over 'insulting' pay offer

Workers at all 14 of Bromley's libraries started indefinite strike action on 28 March over a "paltry and insulting" pay offer.

The strike by the 36 workers comes after the breakdown of pay talks between Unite the Union and [Greenwich Leisure Ltd \(GLL\)](#), [which runs the library service](#) on behalf of Bromley council.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: "This is the best response to the Tory anti-trade union laws, a 100% yes vote which smashes the threshold target for turnout but even more importantly says that we will stay out until we win.

"GLL are the worst kind of employer. Appalling terms and conditions, harsh financial penalties for sickness absence and a history of using zero-hour contracts. Unite members are out to win this dispute and will do all that we can to use it to highlight that social enterprise organisations are not a soft option to privatisation."

A Unite member

Teachers vote to ballot for strike to win 5% raise

Members of the National Education Union (NEU) have voted to ballot for strike action over pay [at their conference in Brighton](#) on 31 March. The NEU is demanding a 5% pay rise. Socialist Party member and NEU executive committee member Jane Nellist said the NEU needs a "coherent and determined campaign that must involve industrial action".

"The government is weak and is refusing to halt the huge haemorrhaging of teachers and they have failed to meet their own targets on recruitment."

Members of the NASUWT teaching union have also voted in favour of rolling industrial action if the government fails to improve teachers' pay.

- Full report of the NEU conference to follow
-

RMT strikes in Newcastle and London

Northern Rail

In Newcastle train guards on Northern Rail took their 17th day of strike action on 29 March.

The strike is in [opposition to plans to axe guards in favour of driver-only operation](#), which would threaten passenger safety in order to maximise profits.

One of the strikers underlined how they were, "absolutely going to keep up the pressure." He went on to explain that the guards haven't taken strike action lightly, "but the withdrawal of labour is the only tool at our disposal."

All of the strikers felt the mood of the strike was swinging in their favour. One highlighted how their public support was impacting local MPs who were clearly listening to passengers who want guards on the trains.

Social media has also played an important role in the support they are gaining: "On Twitter and Facebook people are backing us - we can't be silenced."

Elaine Brunskill

DLR

RMT members [working on the Docklands Light Railway](#) (DLR) in east London took strike action for two days on 28-29 March in defence of their terms and conditions.

There was a strong picket at Poplar DLR station where Brian, one of the strikers said: "We are not on strike to gain anything but to defend what we already have.

"For example they have introduced a roster programme which has increased our hours by over five a year without any respective pay rise.

"And at the same time they are trying to run down departments to bring in contractors through the back door".

More strike action is expected to coincide with the London marathon on 22 April.

Amalia

May Day! The Socialist needs you! Final deadline 11 April!

Ryan Aldred, Socialist Party South West

What have [Hinkley nuclear plant construction workers](#), millions of [feminist demonstrators in the Spanish state](#), and young [gun violence protesters in the US](#) all got in common? All of their struggles have recently been supported by the Socialist!

The capitalist media does its best to blot out the real experiences of workers, whether it be small victories gained in individual workplaces or the international events which can involve millions taking collective action.

The Socialist is proud to report on these issues, give a voice to the labour movement, and tie together the local, national and international struggles of workers.

May Day, or International Workers' Day, is an important celebration of solidarity and workers' struggles across the world.

You can help make sure this May Day is celebrated prominently in the pages of the Socialist by getting in May Day greetings for our special issue of the paper.

The tradition of May Day stems from the [battles of workers in the US](#) for an eight-hour day without loss of pay in the 19th century.

With the prevalence of zero-hour and low-hour contracts on the one hand, and long hours with unpaid overtime on the other, it's clear these issues haven't gone away.

That's why it's important the Socialist continues to celebrate victories and [provide the analysis needed to succeed](#) in the struggle for socialism.

By organising in your workplace, your community groups, in your trade unions and student societies, you can send in a contribution and help keep the Socialist and international solidarity going.

- If you have any questions or need resources, email jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk
- See prices and send greetings at socialistparty.org.uk/mayday
- The deadline for greetings is 5pm on Wednesday 11 April, so act now!

Lend your voice to the international celebration of May Day in the pages of the Socialist. [Let's make 2018 our biggest May Day edition yet!](#)

National Union of Students conference 2018

Students protest as NUS restricts debate

Theo Sharieff, national chair, Socialist Students

The annual conference of the National Union of Students (NUS) met in Glasgow from 27 to 29 March in the midst of an almighty fightback on university campuses.

But thanks to the actions of the right-wing NUS leadership and bureaucracy, the conference was notably devoid of any serious political discussion on what many students understand to be [the most important issues facing the movement](#).

Conference this year was smaller compared to previous years. Delegates only cast 691 votes in the presidential election, [redelivering Blairite Shakira Martin to the union's presidency](#).

Socialist Students made a fantastic and bold intervention at the conference, arguing for a fighting and socialist leadership of the NUS.

We ran a candidate in the national executive council (NEC) elections. A Socialist Students delegate also submitted a motion demanding the leadership mobilise members for a national demonstration for free education.

Unfortunately, however, that motion - and many other crucial discussions, such as on the recent [University and College Union pension strikes](#) - weren't heard, thanks to bureaucratic restrictions on delegates' rights to discuss.

On the second day of conference, the right-wing bureaucracy, acting through the chair, cut the discussion on the [struggle for abortion rights in Northern Ireland](#).

Around 150 delegates spontaneously occupied the stage to express their outrage at the official procedures of conference as determined by the right wing.

Solidarity

Socialist Students participated in and gave full support to the occupation, with a Socialist Students delegate from Belfast speaking to the crowd.

On the last day, we organised a protest in solidarity with [the student movement in Catalonia](#).

Socialist Students used the opportunity to allow delegates from Northern Ireland to explain why they'd protested.

We put out a call to any other students angry at the lack of real leadership from the NEC, encouraging them to speak.

The student movement needs this kind of democratic, combative approach if it is to become a serious factor in the struggle against cuts and privatisation in education, and effective in supporting the workers' movement in the fight for socialist change.

- Full report on the 2018 NUS conference in a future issue of the Socialist
-

Leeds NHS delays staff privatisation plan - but keep on fighting

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust decided on 29 March to delay becoming the fifth in Yorkshire to move support staff to a trust-owned private company.

It is as a result of the growing opposition to these companies being established across the country that Leeds, the biggest trust in Yorkshire, has delayed its proposals and attempted to offer some sweeteners to existing staff.

NHS trusts in Barnsley, Airedale, Harrogate and recently York have all established '[special purpose vehicles](#)' or '[wholly owned subsidiaries](#)', effectively private companies owned by the trust.

They plan to transfer staff including estates, facilities, domestic, cleaning, portering and others into them.

While 'Tupe' legislation would protect staff conditions initially, moving out of direct employment leaves staff more open to future attacks. The trust has offered some additional guarantees on this front.

But these only extend to current staff. The new company, like in Keighley, would undoubtedly seek to 'save' money by employing new starters on worse pay, conditions and pensions.

Moreover, the proposals include plans to seek outside work to generate income for the trust. This desperate move is the result of year-on-year 'efficiency savings' - cuts to you and me - which even the local chief executive has stated are "not sustainable."

These proposals will further break up the NHS. Trust bosses have been at pains to say this measure "is not about privatisation" dubbing it "an alternative to traditional outsourcing"!

But establishing a private company separate to the NHS is precisely a step towards privatisation, regardless of the fact that the trust board will control it initially.

TUSC challenge

Labour MPs in Leeds have written to the trust - although only Richard Burgon, Corbynista MP for East Leeds, submitted questions to the board. But Leeds Labour councillors seem to have raised no challenge so far.

However, through the council's health scrutiny committee, they could play an important role in challenging the plans.

Candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) - the anti-austerity electoral alliance including transport union RMT and the Socialist Party - pledge to use these powers if elected.

Socialist Party members in Leeds collected several hundred signatures opposing the proposal. I handed these in as TUSC candidate for the ward containing St James's Hospital.

In the course of our campaign in the local elections we plan on collecting hundreds more.

Both Unison and Unite union reps at the board meeting, as well as local campaign group Keep Our NHS Public, challenged the proposals.

There are plans to ballot staff in both unions for industrial action if a private company is established.

The decision to defer buys time to build opposition. But staff must remain fully prepared to escalate the campaign if these proposals are to be defeated.

Bristol and Bath students join detained asylum seekers' protest

- Close Yarl's Wood! End detention! Grant the right to work!

Robert Alexander, Bristol North Socialist Party

Just outside a sleepy Bedfordshire village lies Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre. Bristol and Bath Socialist Students organised a coach of students, socialists and ex-detainees to join protests at [the racist and inhumane system Yarl's Wood epitomises](#).

Detainees are mainly women and families who have escaped repression or war in their native countries.

They have not committed any crimes, but are locked up without sentence until the state grants asylum. Britain is the only EU country which does not have a limit on detention length.

They protest through collective non-cooperation [and hunger strikes](#), and solidarity actions are important to help them keep up their strength.

Detainees waved back after protesters chanted, drummed and kicked on the metal fences. The mood became more solemn as current detainees spoke and led chanting from within via loudspeaker.

Their actions have rippled out to Westminster, with parliament now conducting another inquiry into detention.

We must pressure parliament's Home Affairs Select Committee to listen to the voices of refugees over the private corporations, such as Serco, Capita and G4S, that profit from their incarceration.

Socialists Students demands the [closure of detention centres](#). Those seeking asylum must have the right to work and education so they can take part in society rather than living in limbo.

We demand a £10-an-hour minimum wage without exemptions - and jobs for all, workers already here as well as migrants.

The Refugee Rights campaign encourages refugees to join trade unions as part of the fight for jobs and decent pay and conditions.

Sheffield tree fellings paused as bully Labour council feels pressure

Axe PFI, not trees!

Mark James, Unite Community secretary, South Yorkshire (personal capacity)

This week the 9,000 supporters of the Sheffield Trees Action Group (STAG) were celebrating the latest pause in the escalating battle over the future of the city's street trees.

For four years, campaigners have fought against the council's [£2.2 billion Private Finance Initiative 'Streets Ahead' contract](#) which has seen the Amey corporation cutting down healthy street trees because it's cheaper than maintaining the trees and repairing the pavements.

On the BBC's Daily Politics show, a BBC journalist suggested that the Labour council leader Julie Dore had finally caved in to the significant political pressure piling on her from all directions and was finally willing to open meaningful negotiations. However within a few hours, campaigners were left with a bitter taste in their mouths when a Sheffield City Council press release suggested that the fellings had been stopped because a review was being undertaken of how to fell the trees given the 'dangerous tactics' of some protesters.

As the Yorkshire Post suggested, this was Sheffield City Council having dug itself into a hole and it was simply solving its crisis by continuing to dig.

The campaign had shifted dramatically in the autumn when [the case against Alison Teal, a local Green councillor](#), who was alleged to have breached the terms of a High Court injunction not to go inside the felling 'exclusion' zone, collapsed. Campaigners realised that the stakes were getting higher and this made people even more determined to resist the cuts!

Direct Action against the fellings escalated, campaigners patrolled the streets against so-called 'vampire arbs' who were attempting to fell trees in the middle of the night, including the felling of trees decorated with lights to fundraise for a local hospice.

And the 'No Stump City' group started to lobby Labour Party meetings arguing 'Axe PFI, not trees', building pressure on the council leadership from grassroots Labour members to stop the fellings.

Ward and constituency Labour branches started to pass a motion critical of the Labour group, and now the Trades Council has as well.

In January the fellings were paused after the so-called 'Battle of Meersbrook Park Road' which was sufficiently alarming for the local Labour MP Louise Haigh to see that the fellings and the policing around them were "unsustainable". Despite this, the fellings were restarted a month later with renewed vigour.

With protesters being faced with 30 security guards (Amey's hired muscle) and 30 members of South Yorkshire Police, tensions inevitably rose, stoked by the rhetoric coming from the council.

A number of protesters were hospitalised and there were some [increasingly bizarre and alarming arrests](#). These included a woman who seems to have been playing a sparkly pink recorder, a trainee vicar with a tambourine and everyone's favourite: a woman who played a toy trumpet into a policeman's ear.

Call for talks

Unsurprisingly local MPs had had enough, calling for talks to start, mediated by a shadow cabinet minister.

Anger rose when it was suggested in a part of the contract revealed in a Freedom of Information request that far from the target of 6,000 street trees to be felled, the number might be as high as 17,500 (half of all the street trees in the city). A figure that the council sort to rebuff by suggesting that it was a cushion against an unforeseen 'catastrophe'.

But no-one was convinced and tensions heightened accordingly as trust diminished even further.

Yet, at the time of writing, nothing has happened. Sheffield council seems to have retreated into its bunker. Whether it is genuinely worried about the upcoming local elections is a mute point but the leadership of Julie Dore is looking increasingly tenuous.

What started as a local campaign to save trees and protect the environment in a heavily polluted city has come to be part of the general fight against austerity and privatisation.

Perhaps more tellingly it has raised the debate about how to respond to Labour councils implementing Tory cuts and not challenging neoliberalism.

In London that has played out over housing, in Sheffield, the 'steel' and 'outdoor' city, where housing is still relatively cheap, it has played out over trees.

Sheffield council claims that it has no choice but to honour the contract and continue to fell the trees. It claims that it cannot afford to take the contract in house or pay for the extra engineering solutions to save the trees because that would eat into statutory provision like the social care budget.

Yet local residents are finding it difficult to see where the council is actually fighting any cuts. In fact, Amey workers themselves are currently balloting for industrial action against cuts to jobs, terms and conditions.

So we are left with the feeling that rather than fight the cuts, Sheffield council would rather continue to cut jobs and trees.

Walthamstow 'Save our Square' campaigners have linked up with the STAG campaign in Sheffield. [For the latest info from the Walthamstow campaign click here.](#)

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 29 March 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

London tenants and workers protest against social housing auction

Outside the upmarket Marriott hotel, council tenants, private renters and residents of Notting Hill Genesis housing association protested against an auction by estate agent Savills - including Notting Hill Genesis homes.

One tenant said over the megaphone that his house has no market value "because I'm living in it!" A Socialist Party member spoke about how difficult it is to be young and renting in London, and how [council and social homes need to be saved and built for the next generation, not sold off](#).

Housing workers organised in Unite the Union's LE/1111 branch also protested. Branch chair and Socialist Party member [Paul Kershaw said](#) "the same housing associations that derecognise unions and cut staffing are also alienating residents and anyone concerned at the deepening housing crisis."

Helen Pattison, East London Socialist Party

Obituary: Lorraine Dardis (1965-2018)

Lynn Walsh

Lorraine Dardis, a founding member of our US co-thinkers, now known as Socialist Alternative, has tragically died, aged only 53. She conducted a determined struggle against a malignant, aggressive brain tumour, but was eventually defeated.

She died peacefully on 22 March. Even for those who have long been aware of her illness, including her parents, her death has come as a profound shock.

Lorraine had outstanding abilities and there is much, much more she wanted to accomplish. She was a wonderful person, a true friend to many comrades and friends. She had the extraordinary gift of connecting with people in a few minutes - sometimes becoming a life-long friend.

At the same time, Lorraine was a steely class fighter who never believed in giving up. She will be deeply missed - but never forgotten.

Internationalist

Lorraine developed an internationalist outlook from an early age. Her father, from a working-class family in Newark, New Jersey, was in the army. The family regularly moved from one base to another across the US and West Germany. Her mother is from France.

Lorraine's entry into anti-capitalist politics came through the international peace movement. She dropped out of studies at Boston University to visit the women's peace camps at Greenham Common and Faslane nuclear bases in the UK. Later, Lorraine travelled round Europe, meeting people in Ireland, France, Netherlands

and Germany.

On returning to Boston, she worked various low-paid jobs. She was involved in some of the struggles of a militant local branch of the United Autoworkers union which organised a variety of workplaces. In one of the jobs Lorraine met Jeff and Martha, who were working to establish a US organisation that would work with the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI).

Lorraine was more than ready for such an organisation. In fact, she complained they had not involved her sooner. For the rest of her active political life, she devoted her considerable talents to building Socialist Alternative and the CWI.

Lorraine joined the organisation in 1985, a year before the founding conference. When Labor Militant was launched, she helped edit the paper. She was an intrepid paper-seller. Later she worked full-time for the party in Chicago and Boston.

Joining our organisation at that time was an enormous step. There were no more than about 40 members (with four or five branches) in a vast country. The political climate was not favourable. [Ronald Reagan had been elected president in 1981](#), implementing ultra-free-market policies and launching an offensive against the unions.

Lorraine was inspired by our socialist aims, and her commitment and enthusiasm inspired others. She recently wrote: "Having already come across a range of political groups with different approaches and principles, I was attracted to [what was to become] Socialist Alternative for two main reasons: Its support for creating a genuine democratically-run and grassroots-controlled socialist society internationally; and its member-based, democratic, and anti-bureaucratic structure and functioning."

Lorraine passionately believed that Marxists should be in the forefront of the fight for real equality for women and fight for socialist policies to protect the natural environment.

While she could not be active in recent years, she was overjoyed by the [successes of Socialist Alternative in Seattle](#) and [Minneapolis](#). She felt the growth of the membership and of Socialist Alternative's broad influence vindicated the undramatic, pioneering work of the 1980s and 1990s.

Condolences that have already poured in testify to Lorraine's extraordinary qualities. Tenacious in defence of political objectives, she was at the same time a very sociable, unusually sympathetic person, very loyal to her many friends. She had a joyful sense of humour. No one who met her will forget her.

Served in January 2014 with a terminal diagnosis of 12 to 18 months, Lorraine was determined to fight the malignant brain tumour (Glioblastoma multiforma). She was told that it was treatable but incurable. Her strategy was to hold out until a cure was found. "I'm a fighter," she said: "I won't give in."

Fighter

Radiotherapy, chemo, and Lorraine's determination kept the tumour at bay for three years. Then it began to grow again, while successive rounds of chemo became less and less effective. She still refused to give up the struggle. Only in the last few days did she admit to me: "I may not make it". No one could have fought harder or longer.

I have done my best to be objective, but I must declare a personal interest. For over 20 years Lorraine and I have been together. In 2000 she moved to London so we could live together. She was my best friend, trusted comrade, wise counsellor, my inspiration, the love of my life.

- Lorraine's funeral will be at Eltham Crematorium (Falcon Wood) at 1pm on Wednesday 18 April, followed by a reception nearby.
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The Socialist inbox

Do you have something to say?

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

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

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

Plastic pollution

Before the 2012 London Olympic Games, US comedian Rich Hall remarked on the condition of the River Lea Navigation (canal) which runs alongside the main stadium (now home to West Ham FC). He said: "You can't kayak there, but you can develop your camera film in it!"

Yes, factory chemical waste and discarded shopping trolleys didn't make it a great place for anglers.

But after millions of pounds of public money was spent cleaning up the site we now hear from Manchester University researchers that our canals and rivers are filled with microplastic waste - the worst plastic-polluted waterways in the world.

Isn't capitalism wonderful!

Simon Carter, east London

Solidarity with Chris

Chris Fernandez was TUSC agent in the 2016 Derby City Council elections. He was given an unjustified and vindictive sentence of 15 months' imprisonment after being found guilty of 'electoral fraud'.

I would just like to thank everyone for their messages of support. I received 50 posters, A4 size, with the message 'Solidarity with Chris - Socialist Party' (see photo below).

What brought a lump to my throat was the messages on the back of those posters which were held up by members of your party at your conference!

I received a letter from my Polish father-in-law, a retired professor of law, which my wife translated and sent to me in English: "As a lawyer, I am ashamed of this type of case in the Crown judicial system. It rather reminds me of the jurisdiction in Stalinist Russia.

"Good job that I don't have to teach students anymore and lecture them about the cradle of modern democracy, which according to textbooks is supposed to be England. Because the example of your sentence proves that this is complete fiction.

"I think that your experience will not change your ideological views and that you will remain the same tough mountain man from Asturias. Take care of yourself, from a tough mountain man from the Tatra mountains."

Asturias in Spain is where my father came from, a place called Mieres near Oviedo. My dad fought against Franco and escaped to France.

Am now in full-time education which gets me out of my cell. I get paid £10 a week. Am putting that aside towards your building fund. I know it's not much, but I hope it will help.

Yours in solidarity,

Chris Fernandez, Nottingham Prison, number: A5447ED, wing: E4-07

Corbyn witch-hunt

Wild accusations, alternative facts, special prosecutors - the Salem witch trials of 1692 had it all. Sound familiar?

Witch-hunts from Salem to McCarthy have been deployed by powerful people who ruthlessly exploit fear and prejudice to demonise their adversaries.

The current antisemitism hysteria, generated by a toxic mix of Tories, Blairites, and right-wing self-styled representatives of the 'Jewish community' - cheered on and encouraged by a feral media - meets all the classical traits of the witch-hunt.

The latest shock, horror headline is 'Sir David Garrard ditches Labour over antisemitism.'

Garrard exemplifies the forces being mobilised to undermine Corbyn. A follower of Tony Blair, he was listed by the Sunday Times Rich List with a fortune in excess of £100 million.

Following the discovery of a loan to Labour in the course of the 'cash for honours' political scandal, Garrard withdrew his nomination for a peerage.

When Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party, he immediately called for the loan to be repaid.

The truism that 'no ruling group ever leaves the scene without a struggle, and that means a struggle with no holds barred' is confirmed.

Individuals who may criticise Israel should not be sacrificed in the hope that this will assuage the appetite of the beast - it will never be satisfied until Corbynism is buried.

Labour's response should be to call out the lies for what they are, intensify the campaign against austerity and promote the socialist alternative to the brutal anti-working class policies of the Tories.

McCarthy and the Salem witch-hunters were eventually exposed as charlatans. The current onslaught will suffer the same fate.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool

TUC and bosses' EU

On 24-25 March I was among a number of trade unionists in Harrogate for the Trade Union Congress regional annual general meeting.

Among the various panels was one discussing the question of Brexit which did little to develop the way forward for working class people, but consisted of a national TUC officer and Labour MEP pointing out the obvious deficiencies of the Tory buffoons negotiating with the EU.

However, the TUC officer's comments were very revealing. To them, the only options on offer in the Brexit debate were a choice between "continental capitalism and British capitalism".

When it was pointed out that maybe what we should have is something other than capitalism, such as a socialist society, she responded that it wasn't realistic, that we live in a capitalist society and all we can do is "tame it, smooth it out around the edges"!

In reality, such right-wing reformists have no vision of a different way of organising society, and therefore their desperation drives them into collaboration with the pro-EU multinational bosses.

The same TUC officer also [defended the Single Market](#) on the basis that "in practice it delivers jobs".

It leaves them clinging to as much as possible of the bosses club that is the EU, despite its method of 'protecting jobs' being driving down wages and living conditions as much as possible to protect profits.

It's up to real socialists to point out that instead of tying ourselves to the interests of the bosses and their profits, we should be taking that wealth off them through bringing into democratic public ownership the key sectors of the economy.

Given that [the EU's neoliberal rules bar such a path](#), we need to cast it into the dustbin of history and appeal to workers across Europe to do the same and join us in a voluntary socialist federation of the continent.

Iain Dalton, Leeds

Cuts and pay rises

Labour's shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry MP was in Huddersfield recently putting in a good word for Kirklees Labour councillors who have just proposed a swingeing cuts budget.

She told the Huddersfield Examiner: "Understandably communities are angry at the local councillors who they see and they're angry at them. But it's really not their responsibility, it's central government."

It must be tough for Labour councillors doing the Tories' dirty work. But they are not so traumatised that they forgot to vote themselves a 2% pay rise out of the 6% increase in council tax they've imposed.

Kirklees people deserve better than this. That's why the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is fielding two candidates in the May council elections to challenge Labour's austerity regime and fight to protect services, not councillors' allowances.

Paul Dennett, Huddersfield

Boris v Russia

[War with Russia?](#) Napoleon couldn't do it. Hitler couldn't do it but don't worry we've got Boris Johnson. I don't know if he frightens the Russians but by God he frightens me.

The buffoonery of the foreign secretary is a signal of a much deeper malaise in the Tory party and by that token in British capitalism.

The divisions over Europe have so far prevented May sacking Johnson and time and again she has had to cope with the consequences of having a loose cannon on deck.

His most recent fulminations about Russia and the BBC's disgraceful attack on Jeremy Corbyn - after he drew attention to the amount of dirty money the Tories in general and Johnson in particular have acquired from Russian 'businessmen' in the McMafia mould - have made Johnson an even bigger embarrassment to the government, if possible.

Labour could capitalise on this if there were fewer quislings in the parliamentary party. It should encourage socialists to push for the removal of this ramshackle government.

Audio version of this document

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

What the Socialist Party stands for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people.

The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Public services

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

Mass workers' party

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites!

Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.

- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
 - A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
 - No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!
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Audio version of this document

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