

[Socialist Party](#) | [Print](#)

Editorial of the Socialist issue 996

Tories prepare for possible snap election

Corbyn needs to do the same by standing up to Blairite saboteurs

As the deadlock at the top of the Tory Party continues, Tory MPs are reported to be telling their constituency parties to prepare for another snap general election.

In one sense nothing has changed. The government - extremely weak and split down the middle over Brexit - has been on the verge of meltdown since the last snap election. The capitalist class, however, has preferred to keep May in office and hope that she can push the Brexiteer wing of her party towards a Brexit in their interests: one that is as close to EU membership as possible. They want, if at all possible, to avoid the alternative - a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government.

Nonetheless, they may be unable to avoid a snap election. May's latest wheeze to try and keep the show on the road despite her inability to get anything agreed by the cabinet, is to propose the whole of Britain effectively remains in the Customs Union beyond December 2020 when the 'transition period' ends; until something better turns up. It is not clear what attitude the institutions of the EU, never mind the other 27 EU countries, would take to this. With Italy, the third biggest country in the EU, on the verge of forming a right-populist, anti-EU government, the fear of concessions to May triggering a domino effect across the continent could stay the EU's hands.

The Remainder wing of the Tory Party could certainly live with this plan hoping it could, as the Financial Times put it, "be a politically expedient route to a permanent customs union". It is not clear, however, that the Brexiteers will do so. Walkouts from the cabinet from Johnson or others, designed to force May to resign, are obviously being considered either over this, or one of the many other Brexit crisis points that will arise between now and when the Withdrawal Treaty is scheduled to be agreed by the EU at the end of the October.

The capitalists are therefore preparing to try and make sure another general election, whenever it happens, has an outcome which, as far as possible, suits their interests. A central part of their approach is to step up their attempts to damage Corbyn, combined with trying to pressurise him to adopt a pro-big business approach to Brexit.

Antisemitism claims

The Blairite wing of the Labour Party is, inevitably, happy to oblige. Hence the sudden escalation of cynical false claims that Labour is riddled with antisemitism, completely ignoring the fact that even a cross-party parliamentary report found antisemitism no more prevalent in Labour than any other political party. Currently the Blairites are conducting their sabotage as part of the Labour Party but they are also considering splitting and founding a new party, perhaps together with 'Remainer' Tories, in order to try and prevent Corbyn winning an election.

It is therefore a serious, and potentially very dangerous, mistake for the Labour left to continue to retreat in the face of the right's attacks. The most recent surrender has been by Ken Livingstone, who has resigned from the Labour Party rather than fight for the lifting of his suspension. Clearly, he was under pressure to do so. Incredibly, the shadow attorney general and Corbyn supporter, Shami Chakrabarti, even declared before any hearing that there were 'no circumstances' under which Livingstone would not be expelled. This was a complete denial of the right to a fair hearing before judgement is reached (see 'Antisemitism, Israel-Palestine, and the left' in the current issue of Socialism Today).

Livingstone has justified his retreat by arguing he had become a distraction from winning a Jeremy-Corbyn led government. Corbyn also mistakenly welcomed it as the 'right decision'. Many Corbyn supporters will

sympathise with their reasoning, but it is fundamentally flawed. In reality, Livingstone's and the many other similar retreats by Labour lefts are only strengthening the Blairite saboteurs who are determined to prevent a Corbyn-led government coming to power and, above all, implementing radical policies.

Christine Shawcroft's resignation from the Labour Party national executive committee, for example, severely weakened the left majority won just months earlier. At the same time the Labour left's increasingly weak leadership is inevitably acting to demoralise those who hope that under Corbyn's leadership, Labour could become a party for the working class, with socialist policies.

Another example is the Lewisham East byelection, where an open Blairite - Janet Daby - has been selected. She has immediately tried to claim that the election result - in a safe Labour seat - will be a referendum on Britain remaining in the Single Market - with all of its anti-working class, pro-privatisation rules remaining intact. One of the candidates who might have defeated Daby, Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, head of equality at the PCS civil servants' trade union, was again pressurised to stand aside over alleged 'antisemitic' comments.

It is long overdue that these retreats cease. Len McCluskey, general secretary of Unite the Union, has correctly pointed out that Labour MPs who are campaigning on antisemitism are largely the same MPs who have been determined to defeat Corbyn from day one. Other Corbyn-supporting union leaders, including Mark Serwotka, general secretary of Phyll Opoku-Gyimah's union the PCS, should also make clear that they oppose this baseless witch-hunt, and that they favour measures to transform the Labour Party and to remove the Blairites from office, starting with the immediate introduction of mandatory reselection.

This needs to be linked to Corbyn going on a political offensive to campaign for, and build on, the anti-austerity programme he put forward in the snap general election, including the immediate introduction of a £10 an hour minimum wage, free education, rent controls and mass council house building.

It should also be linked to nationalisation of the banks and major monopolies under democratic workers' control. It is essential that Corbyn does not give in to the pressure from the capitalist class - via the Blairites - to accept the neoliberal rules associated with membership of the Single Market. Instead, Corbyn should develop his current stance, calling for an internationalist and anti-racist Brexit in the interests of the working class majority.

RMT affiliation debate

These issues will also feature in the debate currently taking place in the RMT transport workers' union on whether or not to affiliate to Labour as it is currently constituted. The RMT has long opposed the neoliberal EU Single Market and its associated directives on rail privatisation. It has also consistently supported Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, with donations to his leadership campaigns second only to Unite. On 30 May it will be holding a special general meeting to discuss whether to affiliate to the Labour Party, or to continue its current policy of supporting Jeremy Corbyn but maintaining its political independence.

The view of Socialist Party members in the RMT is that with the terms currently on offer, affiliation would be a mistake. The virtual destruction of union influence in the Labour Party, which has not as yet been reversed, would mean that handing the maximum £240,000 affiliation fee to the largely unreconstructed Labour Party machine would give the RMT less than 1% of the votes at Labour Party conference. This would, for example, give the RMT very little weight with which to counter the inevitable attempts of the Blairites to win a vote for supporting the Single Market at Labour Party conference.

Better to launch a campaign - involving affiliated and unaffiliated unions - to demand the restoration of trade union rights within the Labour Party as part of the struggle to democratise it and to urgently remove the saboteurs. This would be the best way to prepare for a Corbyn-led government.

Victory: how school strike beat 'academy' privatisers

School workers in Newham, east London, [stopped Avenue Primary School becoming a privately run 'academy'](#) earlier this month. It took 19 days of determined strike action, starting in November - and saved several other local schools along the way.

The Socialist spoke to Avenue teacher Louise Cuffaro, the Socialist Party member and newly elected National Education Union (NEU) branch secretary who led the borough's campaign.

Why did school workers come out on strike?

School workers are against academisation. They looked to the union to support them.

We discussed it at school level, developed a strategy; we had support from the NEU regional secretary [Socialist Party member Martin Powell-Davies].

We tried, before going on strike, to reach the governors, to say we wanted to put forward our reasons for being against academisation.

We weren't being listened to. We realised it wasn't an open and transparent situation. So we had to have something to bargain with.

We did that by explaining to the parents - but most importantly at Avenue by going immediately for an indicative ballot for strike action.

So it's important to ballot straight away?

Yes, because you need an indicative ballot, followed legally by a postal ballot to members' homes which takes a couple of weeks. If you win you have to give a couple of weeks' notice to the authorities that you're going to strike.

And the legal validity of the ballot only lasts for six months. So we actually had just taken another ballot just before they withdrew the academisation.

So they knew we had again reached the very difficult targets the law gives us. We had a 75% turnout [legal threshold is 50%]. We had something ridiculous like 95% in favour of carrying on the action if necessary [legal threshold is 40% of all members, abstentions count against - requiring 53% in this case].

How did you organise to get past these undemocratic obstructions?

Like a military operation. We discussed it at a union meeting. And then we explained that we wanted people to bring their ballot papers in - either already filled in, or come to the union meeting and fill them in. We wanted to check off people's names to know they'd actually voted.

We had four or five reps and active union members who religiously prompted people, "have you done it," ticked off their names when they said they'd voted.

Without doubt, there were some members who didn't feel confident. It's quite a difficult situation for young teachers at the moment who feel their careers are on the line, and training teachers worry management might not pass them so they can't fully qualify.

Some of them hadn't come out. But I can say from the turnout of voting that definitely people who didn't strike voted in favour.

I think that we started out with 25 or 28 union members maximum at Avenue, and because of the strike we've gone up to 76, 77.

What else made the strike successful?

The strike action has to be kept on. We went from one day, to two days pretty quickly, into three-day strikes. I don't think the authority, or the individual schools, took it seriously. They thought it'd go away.

But we made it clear we were serious. Several other schools in the borough were looking at academisation, and when their staff threatened to strike over it, they said 'we don't want an Avenue' and gave in.

Then when we had the three-day strikes we'd always make sure that we were informing the parents. We did many leaflets in multiple languages, which is something they didn't do over academisation at the school itself. [In 2011 the Department for Education found 66% of Newham school students have a first language other than English.]

We explained to them why we were against academisation, and the parents campaigned too. Their fight, of course, was the consultation - or the lack of.

They ended up taking this to judicial review. In the meantime, they understood that we had to strike. They wanted another consultation, and they wanted the management to withdraw from academisation.

How did the parents' campaign aid the struggle?

After we'd done 13 days of strike action, that's when another layer of parents - besides the parents that were already involved and had campaigned really hard over several months - were beginning to be worn out with the strike action.

The school was clearly willing to see the strike action carry on, no matter what it did to the children's education - completely in contrast to what they were saying, which was that we were damaging it.

Of course they were willing to go to academy status no matter what that did to the children's education as well, and it's no surprise that the evidence shows that privatisation isn't good for that.

But it was the next layer of parents who came forward and on the 14th day of strike action, and again on the 15th, occupied the office, demanding that the school come to agreement with the union.

The joint action between the parents and the staff is what, I think, ultimately brought them to the table. The local authority couldn't ignore that school and the governing body wouldn't speak to us.

We held a big open meeting for the parents at the end of April where the union could explain again why we were striking and they could air their frustrations. That meeting passed a resolution which supported the strike and demanded academisation be withdrawn, and that was unanimous.

But the crucial thing is the union group within a school needs to be organised and clear. The parents are very important, and our parents fought long and hard, but the parents can't substitute for the union group.

Once they're organised and understand the issues it's a joint campaign - but it's the strike which applies the decisive pressure.

What support did you get from your Labour councillors and MP?

I have to say the parents did put pressure on their local councillors. They did get them to draft a resolution against academisation. We had to firm it up a bit.

But we also decided to demonstrate when they presented that at the town hall to keep the pressure on. We organised an NEU march, with the parents, from Plashet Park [near the school] to the council on the night the motion was being heard.

Three parents and I went into the council chambers. There was an offshoot, a room with video links, so people on the demonstration could see and hear what was happening.

I feel convinced that affected whether [ousted Blairite] Robin Wales could carry on being the mayor. That forced Labour councillors to at least pay lip service to some kind of fight on something, after years of waving

through academisation at other schools and presiding over cuts, as they still do.

But while he was still in, it seemed he was using the undemocratic power he has as a directly elected mayor, behind the scenes, to ignore the position of the council. His replacement, Rokhsana Fiaz, did publicly back the campaign in the end. Now she must prove she really represents something different.

Local Socialist Party members helped keep the pressure on as well. On top of supporting every picket line, several members stood as TUSC candidates against Labour councillors who refused to back the campaign.

The parents did get [former minister under Blair] Stephen Timms, the MP, to a meeting early on. I think we knew far more about government policy on academisation than he did.

He said there was still forced academisation and tried to argue Avenue would have to become an academy anyway - which actually wasn't really true even when it was forced; it was still possible to fight.

He said every school had to become an academy by 2020. We appraised him that wasn't the case.

There was a legal challenge from the parents - what happened with that?

The legal challenge, as far as I know, is still carrying on. Their legal challenge was to the consultative process. They weren't consulted.

There was no consultation. The 'consultation' took place at the last minute; they'd been discussing it on the governors' board for two years. Nobody put to them at any point - except the union - the case against academisation. The council, at that point, was stating it had to be 'neutral'!

So there was nothing to look as if they were really consulting. That legal challenge was granted - permission to go to a judicial review in June/July.

And in the permission stage the judge was very clear, and defined what consultation is. From his comments you could tell he was concerned by the survey that had been carried out, where 132 parents voted against academisation; only four parents voted for it.

And the consultant who wrote the report advised the governing body that was a "significant minority" and they didn't need to take any notice of it - because there are about 620 parents, so you can see that a large number didn't vote. They were counting the non-voters as pro-academy!

And this legal challenge bought the strike some breathing space?

The day permission was granted we were on strike and we were at the court with them. And little did we all know, but that hearing was literally the day before the governing body intended to sign the final papers, the financial agreement.

So without that pause that the parents won by getting that judicial review... that was literally at the eleventh hour.

In principle whole thing was already agreed by the council, they agreed the transfer of land long before the pressure from parents and the strike forced them to state they were against it. That would have meant that, in spite of the councillors' resolution, on Sunday 1 April we would have been an academy.

Did the parallel strike at Cumberland School, a Newham secondary, fall foul of these hidden processes?

The shenanigans in the last few weeks - it was not transparent. The union was demanding to see papers because the school was insisting it had to go head, that there was an "order."

There is no 'order' until the final papers are signed. You can retract from it up to the final minute.

Despite members fighting bravely at Cumberland the management went ahead with it. But you have to say - this union group has grown in size, to over 100 members.

And on the day it was announced they had been academised they went into the meeting declaring they remained against academisation, they were a strong union, and were prepared to go on fighting for the rights of their members, their pay and conditions.

What's the next fight?

School staff are already under the cosh because of extreme workload and cuts to pay. The NEU nationally is going to ballot on that and school workers and parents will need to stay organised to win that fight, and where they're not organised they'll need to get organised.

And although we've had the victory of the governing body withdrawing the threat of imminent academisation, in the letter the head says "this time."

We know the crucial thing now is to press the re-elected Labour council to ratify their anti-academy policy and come out with clear statements for how they propose to support schools.

Ordinary people are getting more and more sussed. It's crucial that Labour councillors do what they've been voted for to do, what they promised us ahead of the election and what people understand from Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto.

Expectations are high. They can't just sit back and say they have no funds. They have to fight for funds.

Newham stands to lose over 1,000 teaching jobs under the government's new funding formula. Councils can license schools to run budget deficits within the law.

They can also use their reserves and borrowing to stop cuts throughout council budgets within the law. Of course, if they end up having to break the law to fight the cuts, the Socialist Party rightly says they shouldn't shy away from that either.

Rokhsana Fiaz replaced Robin Wales as Labour mayor on the promise that she represents a shift to the left. She and her council have a choice: fight alongside school staff and parents, or fight against us. They should set no-cuts budgets now and help build a fight to get the funding we need from the government.

The thing is, we have to carry on fighting. For everybody. And ultimately we'll want the schools that are already academies to come back under local authority control.

Threat to unity of PCS left

Support Chris Baugh's re-election as AGS

PCS members in both Left Unity and the wider union at all levels, will be shocked and disappointed that Janice Godrich intends to stand against a [fellow Socialist Party member Chris Baugh](#) for PCS Assistant General Secretary (AGS), with the encouragement and support of PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka.

This intention was declared on Janice's Facebook page on 16th May, with letters from herself and Mark Serwotka.

Chris has been the AGS since 2004 and has played a full part in the collective left leadership that has helped transform the union from the one led by a vicious right-wing leadership.

The Socialist Party has selected Chris Baugh to be our candidate in the Left Unity nomination process and we ask Janice to reconsider her decision and support Chris.

We have held a full democratic discussion in our ranks over six months, with Chris receiving overwhelming support from the party's National Committee and our members in PCS. No objection to this agreed decision was raised at our National Congress in March.

There is absolutely no justification for this divisive step that threatens a split on the left, which can only aid opponents in the union and the Tories and the Blairites outside.

This is particularly the case at a time when the left has been [re-elected at NEC and Group level](#) and is about to embark on a campaign to win a statutory strike ballot on pay.

Mark Serwotka has given his support to Janice against Chris, describing her history in the union's leadership and her rank and file roots.

But contrary to the impression given, in all the vital battles over four decades, as both an elected rank-and-file lay member and officer, Chris has also been at the centre of the struggle against the union's right-wing, and successive Tory and New Labour governments.

As a rank-and-file union member, Chris played a central role in forming, developing and building broad lefts in CPSA and then PCS as Left Unity.

This was essential in bringing together militant fighters across the left into a united force that could challenge the right wing.

Chris played a key role in working with Mark, Janice and many others such as fellow Socialist Party members John Macreadie and Terry Adams in mobilising members and branches to defeat the attempted coup by Reamsbottom and subsequently transforming the union.

Chris and the Socialist Party have always championed lay democracy and warned of the dangers of concentrating power in unelected officers, both in past struggles and today.

Chris has successfully stood for election three times as the AGS candidate for Left Unity. And as AGS and Treasurer, he has been to the fore in working with members and officers to ensure that PCS was able to face down the Tory threat to bankrupt the union through the removal of check-off.

Despite this and the effect on income as a result of brutal Tory cuts, PCS's finances have been protected for the challenges to come.

He has also been heavily involved in the many national, group and local disputes involving PCS members.

Mark states: "Above all we need a united senior full time leadership", and yet he has attacked Chris without publically explaining any differences on industrial or political issues.

This is wrong and totally unjustified and goes against the history and culture of Left Unity. This unnecessarily divisive step threatens the unity that has been hard-won and has made PCS such a focus of opposition to this brutal Tory government.

It is not too late for Janice to pull back and we urge her to do so. This assumes even more importance as the union prepares for a national pay ballot.

A Socialist Party statement

- [Click here for a previous interview with Chris Baugh](#)
-

Socialist Party PCS conference fringe meeting

Tories Out! Fight for socialist policies!

Lunchtime on Wednesday May 23rd 2018

Gresham Suite, Old Ship Hotel, Brighton

Speakers:

- Peter Taaffe, SP General Secretary
- Chris Baugh, PCS Assistant General Secretary (personal capacity)
- Chair: Marion Lloyd, PCS NEC & Left Unity chair (personal capacity)

Buffet & refreshments provided

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 17 May 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

PCS conference votes for strike action

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

At its conference in Brighton on 22 May the PCS civil servants' union voted decisively for a statutory strike ballot against the Tories 1% pay cap. The ballot date is not fixed but is expected to start in June.

The ballot will be in support of the 2018 pay claim of 5% or £1,200 a year and the restoration of centralised collective bargaining. The conference reflected the seriousness of the decision to address the huge challenge ahead for the union despite the legal barriers of the Tory anti-union legislation.

The underlying mood is one of optimism. After a decade of pay freezes and pay caps there is a determination to do something about pay this year. A Yes vote is achievable.

Socialist Party Scotland member Dave Semple said: "We need a sober discussion on how to mobilise our members to fight back. But the key question is are we ready for this fight? The answer is yes, absolutely yes."

Solid strike at Tesco Dagenham distribution centre forces pay talks

James Ivens, East London Socialist Party

Heavy security presence and a profusion of steel fencing didn't deter angry, vocal pickets [striking for decent pay at Tesco Dagenham distribution centre](#) on 17-18 May.

The 24-hour walkout has already forced management to agree to talks. The union has suspended the strike planned for 24 May as a result.

Dagenham strikers want pay parity. Just seven miles down the A13, Tesco distribution workers at Thurrock are on £1.38 an hour more.

Around 50 strikers cheered and shouted on each of the shift-change picket lines at 10pm, 6am and 2pm. Some drivers refused to cross and joined the protests.

Socialist Party members got a friendly response supporting the picket lines. We ran two campaign stalls backing the strike in Dagenham too.

The picket lines are youthful and enthusiastic. Many strikers have not previously been active in their branch of the union, Usdaw. More are now talking about getting stuck in.

Workers who attended Usdaw's recent conference welcomed Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), supporting their picket line. Many delegates were angered by the [undemocratic manoeuvring of the outgoing right-wing president against NSSN affiliation](#).

Tesco has thrown money into this battle. On top of the guards and fences they have tried to bus in agency workers to cover each of the directly employed strikers.

Agency workers are organised in a different Usdaw branch. Some expressed frustration to us that they weren't included in the dispute.

But with all that strike-breaking cash, why not just meet the pay claim? This is Usdaw's first official strike in seven years. Management doesn't want retail and distribution workers making a habit of standing up for themselves.

But with Socialist Party member [Amy Murphy now president of the union](#), elected on a platform including backing industrial action, supermarket bosses' woes are just beginning.

- Dave McCrossen, one of the officials organising the strike was the Usdaw Broad Left candidate in the Usdaw deputy general secretary election and was elected on 22 May

Services disappearing from Harrogate

Iain Dalton, Socialist Party North Yorkshire organiser

Staff at Harrogate College were [back out on strike](#) for two further days on 17-18 May. This is part of action across the Hull College Group. Some Unison members have refused to cross the University and College Union (UCU) picket line, leading to the library service being shut on the second day of action.

College management made the ludicrous claim in the press that there will be no effect on provision. Yet there will be no full-time higher education courses, no staff in the library before midday, no security staff and whole departments such as art will have no staff left!

Student support was prominent again. Many signed the petition against the cuts.

Creative placards on the picket line said 'stop targeting hardworking staff' and 'what about the next generation?' And one simply contained the name of the cuts package - 'Fresh Start' - and a cartoonish turd!

There is a real threat of important services disappearing from Harrogate. Cut at the college, the threat to remove guards from Northern Rail (the bulk of services to Harrogate), and the proposed closure of the briary wing at Harrogate hospital.

College cutbacks are not just unique to Harrogate & Hull. UCU members in Leeds took part in a joint protest with other trade unionists over cutbacks there. They've also won ballots for strike action at Kirklees and Bradford colleges recently. Bradford UCU members are due to strike on 23 May.

The battles against cuts taking place across the further education sector need to be linked up, challenging the underfunding of the sector which is driving its current increasing commercialisation.

College staff caught between the devil and the deep blue sea

Unison member at Leeds City College

In November 2016 workers at the Vine, a specialist education service, were transferred from Leeds City Council into Leeds City College.

Vine was operating on a 'shoe-string' budget cut to the bone with little resources because of council cuts. The council wanted to cut further. The service provision and the staff were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Staff were sold the idea that we would move to Beeston, south Leeds, over a three-year period. There would be no detrimental change, and even better, resources would improve.

The reality is that the service did suffer further cuts, we didn't move to Beeston and we only had a stay of execution.

The college did not take a real look at the true cost and running of the service during the time it was within the council. They quickly became aware of the cost and the poor state of the building after the transfer.

Morale has been low among staff. The service has been downsized over the years, our building space has been cut in half, and the number of staff contracted. We have been dragged kicking and screaming further into the abyss.

The restructure at the college, that the unions wholly oppose, mean job losses. It will also result in a transfer of whatever remains of the Vine staff team into the college's terms and conditions, meaning real-terms pay cuts and inferior terms and conditions.

Instead of cuts by stealth, services need more investment in resources and staff. Services should have a future that our learners can enjoy and make progress and are well supported in their time with us. Cuts in funding force the commercialisation of colleges and a move away from the idea of universal free quality education for all.

We must unite together to oppose these austerity measures and fight to improve our pay, terms and conditions as well as defend jobs and fight for more education resources.

First ever strike at TGI Fridays

Workers at TGI Fridays restaurants in Milton Keynes and Covent Garden, London, were on strike for the first time ever on 18 May. Waiting staff could lose £250 a month in a dispute over tips and minimum wage abuses.

The Unite the Union members voted 100% on a 75% turnout to walk out. The strike will be the first in a series of 24-hour strikes over consecutive Fridays during the summer.

The company introduced a new tipping policy with only two days' notice, which would see money earned by the waiting staff redirected to top up the low wages of kitchen staff. This was driven by the need to stop the high turnover of kitchen staff.

There are further industrial action ballots at four more restaurants currently underway, and more planned.

Capitalism's Grenfell shame - Tories must go

Paul Kershaw, chair, Unite the Union housing workers' branch

The Grenfell inquiry has opened with heart-rending tributes to the people who perished from their loved ones.

A community has been devastated because of an entirely avoidable series of events, driven by profit.

The 'social' landlord and the council ignored and bullied residents who made remarkably clear fire safety warnings. The government sat on the necessary improvements to building regulations after the 2009 Lakanal House fire, pressing ahead with their profit-obsessed "bonfire of regulations."

And it now transpires that Celotex, the firm responsible for the combustible insulation around the tower, cheated safety tests by treating the material with additional fire retardant! BBC's Panorama reports that lawyers advise this could amount to corporate manslaughter.

In a scandalous reminder of the real impact of Theresa May's Blairite-backed "hostile environment" for migrants, some family members were unable to attend the inquiry's opening session because the Home Office has failed to issue visas!

Ministers wept crocodile tears about the treatment of the Windrush generation while the Home Office continued to drag its heels over Grenfell families.

For the survivors and community it is essential the truth comes out and the individuals who took the catastrophic decisions brought to justice. That is for the sake of the dead. But also so that Grenfell is never repeated.

There are 220 buildings with similar cladding across the country. Scarcely any residential towers have sprinklers. And numerous other risks, from insufficient fire doors to gaps in walls, are coming to light.

Eleven months after, little progress has been made. How many potential Grenfells remain?

This tragic fire has become a symbol of an unequal, deregulated society, driven by profit to the exclusion of all else. But the callous and incompetent response of a weak government has become a further scandal.

Not only was it left to the community to organise support for survivors in the immediate aftermath of the fire - but despite May's pledge that all would be rehoused within three weeks, families still languish in hotels eleven months on.

We have argued for an independent workers' and community inquiry to expose the truth and keep up the pressure.

The government has been pushed into adding two experts to the inquiry panel despite previously ruling this out. Campaigners and survivors had demanded this, trying to counterbalance retired judge Sir Martin Moore-Bick's record of backing social cleansing. The Tories must be pushed into more u-turns.

Jeremy Corbyn must renew the call made in the aftermath of the fire to requisition empty homes and find quality, permanent local housing for survivors.

Many social housing residents still feel fobbed off. The Socialist Party backs their rights to see full fire risk assessments and organise action if necessary.

We say: no safety, no rent!

Homeless charity colluding with Home Office to deport homeless!

Jack Jeffrey, homeless worker and Unite LE1111 branch member

Lawyers from the Public Interest Law Unit (PILU) have submitted a formal complaint against St Mungo's, one of the leading homelessness charities in the UK, for its work in colluding with the Home Office to illegally deport homeless EEA (European Economic Area) nationals.

As part of Theresa May's 'hostile environment' policy, the government had been arresting homeless EU migrants, placing them in detention and deporting them back to their country of origin on the spurious basis that if they were homeless they could not be exercising their EU treaty rights.

After this shameful practice was unearthed by a Corporate Watch report, a successful campaign was launched against this practice. This led to a judicial review, which in December 2017 declared the government's policy unlawful.

Since then a Freedom of Information request to Brent Council has emerged which reveals St Mungo's policy was to pass on the details of any EEA nationals who refused to be voluntarily 'reconnected' to their country of origin after 12 months to the Home Office.

This backs up the claims of the Corporate Watch report that not only did the Home Office act unlawfully, but it was with the collusion and support of homeless charities. These charities identified homeless EEA nationals for the Home Office to remove either through data sharing, or by allowing them to accompany the charity's outreach teams on shifts.

How did an organisation founded to support some of the most vulnerable in society come to act this way?

In the past charities and voluntary organisations were funded by donations or grants giving them freedom to act how they best saw fit.

However, following the financial crash in 2008 and the following years of austerity this has increasingly been replaced by income from government wishing to contract-out our services to cut costs.

As councils wishing to reduce the 'nuisance' of homelessness set high targets, often through payment by results contracts, the character of management in these organisations changes and they increasingly view their clients just as numbers.

Despite repeated warnings from St. Mungo's staff and the Unite LE1111 housing workers' branch that this policy was morally wrong and making vulnerable clients avoid outreach teams, it was this that led St Mungo's to carry on regardless.

Homeless persecuted

Following the scandal earlier this year when the Tory leader of Windsor council said he intended to move homeless people during the royal wedding event (later rescinded after a public backlash), it transpires that over 50 councils in England and Wales have slapped public space protection orders (PSPO) on homeless people, resulting in bans and fines.

According to the Guardian, one homeless man was fined £105 for breaching a PSPO after a child dropped a £2 coin into his sleeping bag!

Youthful enthusiasm to break with repression of past

Keishia Taylor, Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) and ROSA in Dublin

The historic referendum to repeal the eighth amendment to the Irish constitution, which equates to an almost complete ban on abortion, takes place on 25 May. Irish citizens will vote 'Yes' for a progressive future where the right to choose is finally recognised by Irish law, or 'No' for a society still in the shadow in the repressive, misogynist Catholic church.

The militant, youthful feminist movement fighting for repeal is breaking with the repression of the past. At every turn, the political establishment has opposed abortion rights, and tone-policed and smeared the pro-choice movement.

They tried to avoid holding a referendum at all. Then they attempted to water down pro-choice demands to permit abortion only in the 'hard cases' like fatal foetal abnormalities and rape.

'ROSA - Socialist Feminist Movement', an organisation in which Socialist Party activists including Ruth Coppinger TD (member of parliament) play a leading role, has been extremely significant in putting forward an uncompromising pro-choice position.

We have brought to the fore the issue of safe medical abortion pills, proving that abortion happens daily, despite the ban. This pulled the referendum towards the issue of the right to choose.

Youthful energy and excitement for a Yes vote is the dominant mood, particularly in Dublin. There is huge support for repeal among young people, women, LGBT+ and working class people.

However, the most backward of anti-choicers, sensing their control of women slip, are exposing their aggressive side. The latest polls suggest a victory for the pro-choice campaign over the sexist abortion ban, but we cannot be complacent and will be campaigning until the polls close.

Winning abortion rights would be a huge victory. It would deal a significant blow to the conservative, repressive church and capitalist establishment, and be a step towards a complete separation of church and state.

New Ebola threat: UN and drug companies drag their feet

Jon Dale, secretary, Unite EM/NG32 Notts NHS branch (personal capacity)

A new outbreak of Ebola has begun in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In 2014-16 some 28,000 people were infected in West Africa. 11,600 of them died. Have governments and corporations learnt lessons from their shameful negligence last time?

This new outbreak is still small and could be halted. From 4 April to 17 May 2018, 45 cases and 25 deaths were reported. Most were in the remote Bikoro region, but cases have now occurred in Mbandaka, a city of 1.2 million, 150 kilometres away. This dispersal is "a game-changer" according to the World Health Organisation's Deputy Director-General.

If it takes hold in cities it will be grim. Mbandaka is a major river transport hub. Kinshasa (population 11 million) could then be at risk. Neighbouring countries would be affected and cases would appear in Europe, America and elsewhere.

Crowded housing, lack of sanitation, poor public health education and inadequate medical services help spread the virus.

Infrared thermometers are being used at Mbandaka docks to identify travellers with a fever. "But we don't have enough of the thermometers, so people are crowding up and getting annoyed," said one official.

Response fund

After the 2014 outbreak the United Nations set up an Ebola Response Fund, which they calculated needed \$988 million. By October 2017 it had received just \$166 million.

The World Health Organisation has appealed for \$26 million to fight this new outbreak. In just 45 minutes USA, British and French air forces fired \$50 million worth of weapons over Syria in April!

Towards the end of the West African outbreak a vaccine was developed and trialled. Results were encouraging although it has still not yet completed full testing. Merck and Johnson and Johnson, two US giant pharmaceutical companies, have been developing vaccines. But urgency shown during the West African outbreak subsided afterwards.

Early research on vaccines is often conducted in government-funded laboratories. But a major pharmaceutical company is usually needed to fund expensive trials. If there is little or no prospect of profits these companies are not interested. Poor people in Africa are not considered a worthwhile investment.

8,000 doses of Merck's unlicensed vaccine have now been sent to DRC. However, it needs to be stored around -80°C and electricity supplies are unreliable.

It is too early to predict the outcome of this latest Ebola outbreak. What is clear is that big business and politicians who serve it cannot protect the health of the world's population.

Government continues to back failed private rail model

An Aslef union member

The companies running the East Coast Main Line (ECML) rail franchise from London to Scotland - Virgin and Stagecoach - are to lose it because they "got their sums wrong" according to Chris Grayling, the transport secretary. So now rail workers and passengers can only hope the current and prospective rail employers can count. This is setting the bar pretty high for rail bosses!

It's not the first time that private operators have walked away from the East Coast franchise, but the third! Two previous private operators failed to generate enough profit and the line was run as a publicly owned concern for a time, returning £1 billion in revenues to the exchequer.

Yet Grayling ploughs on with the failed private rail model. He plans to temporarily place ECML in public hands again pending another franchise battle. But will there be a battle? There were only two bids for the recent West Midlands franchise. It costs private firms millions of pounds just to meet legal requirements and submit a detailed bid.

There also seems to be inbuilt resistance to coordination with other operators or even Network Rail.

Workers on ECML complained in a survey conducted by the RMT transport union of the same problems, only worse, as on other franchises. "Staff morale rock bottom due to bad management"... "too many managers with no railway knowledge"... "by far the worst company to manage ECML"... are some of the workers' comments published by the RMT. The survey also found that 90% want public ownership.

Prospects for railworkers and passengers can improve on the basis of eliminating the so-called profit motive and returning the industry to public ownership with democratic control by workers and users along with planned and consistent investment in the infrastructure, the fleet and the workforce.

Privatised chaos

'Monday Mayhem' was the RMT transport union's description as commuters in the south east faced a chaotic start to the working week following the introduction of new timetables by privately owned (but publicly subsidised) rail companies. Not content with axing safety-critical guards on their trains, and ramping up fares,

profit-driven companies like GTR are accused of blatantly cutting train numbers and increasing journey times and overcrowding, while outrageously claiming the new timetables will 'improve services'. Nationalise rail now!

Support refugees rights

A recent Refugee Action report (bit.ly/2GFCD1y188/) reveals how those who flee persecution or war are systematically mistreated by the Home Office, notorious for implementing Theresa May's "hostile environment" for migrants.

Lawanya of Refugee Rights campaign said: "Many refugees who have already undergone torture in their home country, are facing mental pressure and depression because of this asylum process. Having escaped hell, they are then forced to undergo detention, impoverishment and even homelessness... their lives are left in limbo."

Mathan from Sri Lanka, was detained for three months and asked to work for £1 an hour in the detention centre.

Lawanya herself was detained on her wedding day so that she and her husband were forced to exchange rings at the detention centre.

Refugee Rights demands:

- Immigrants who have been tortured should not be detained and detainees should be compensated. Shut down the detention centres
 - Refugees should be allowed to work and study
 - Access to free healthcare services
 - Refugees should not be treated as criminals
 - More at refugeerightscampaign.org
-

France '68: week four

May 1968: 'Communist' leaders hand power back to defeated bosses

Ian Pattison

By Friday 24 May 1968, ten million workers were on strike. The greatest general strike in history. On the same day, the president of France, General Charles de Gaulle, tried to address the nation. Nobody saw it. It was a victim of the TV workers' strike.

It was only heard on radio - with the permission of the striking radio workers. It satisfied no one.

Even Gaullists joined the call for de Gaulle's resignation and the Constitutional Council was warned it could expect to receive it.

That night's storming of the barricades by state forces saw the worst violence yet. But the workers and students stood firm, shoulder to shoulder on the barricades.

Trade union leaders went into talks with the government on Saturday 25 May. The union leaders were desperate to end the strike they couldn't control. Eventually, the bosses agreed to substantial pay rises, shorter

hours, longer holidays.

Georges Séguy, general secretary of the 'Communist'-led union federation, the CGT, took the 'deal' to the Renault car plant at Billancourt - an enormous stronghold for the CGT. Within minutes he was booed.

Factory after factory rejected the offer. As Clare Doyle writes in 'France 1968: Month of Revolution', workers "wanted more than better wages. The transformation of their lives was within sight."

On Monday 27 May, in Paris's Charléty Stadium, 50,000 crammed into a mass meeting organised by the students' union. Scandalously, the Communist Party had told people to stay away!

But there was no clear programme put forward to sweep away capitalism and de Gaulle and transfer power to the democratic workers', students' and peasants' committees across France.

By Wednesday 29 May, London's Evening Standard was saying of de Gaulle that "all the constitutional weapons which he himself forged to protect his regime in just such a crisis are now so many pieces of paper, even the weapon of the referendum is useless..."

"The strikes have acquired an exclusively political character aimed at overthrowing the regime... in no circumstances will even the most generous offers be accepted."

De Gaulle's referendum on vague promises of "participation" will not take place. No printers will print it. The Constitutional Council - in normal times ultra-loyal to the establishment - declares it unconstitutional. That night, half a million join a CGT protest.

A general strike poses the question of power. Who will take it? If the revolution doesn't, doubt will set in, and the old order will come back.

A cabinet meeting due to take place that day never did. De Gaulle had disappeared. Years later, the prime minister at the time, Georges Pompidou, said: "In reality, the general suffered a crisis of morale. Thinking the game was up, he had chosen to retire. Arriving in Baden-Baden, he was ready to stay a long time."

He met with the 70,000-strong French army stationed in Germany and demanded its loyalty. The commander, General Jacques Massu, promised it - even though many of his soldiers had other ideas.

De Gaulle then spoke to the nation on Thursday 30 May, now confident enough to dissolve parliament and call elections for June. A million pro-Gaullist demonstrators marched through Paris after the speech, as troops manoeuvred around the capital.

In Britain, the Economist had understood the strength of the working class movement and the general strike. "In electoral terms the two big demonstrations carried almost equal weight, but at a time of social upheaval, it was those who could paralyse the economy who carried the most."

Revolution

In this series of articles, we've discussed Lenin's four conditions for revolution. The first three possibly reached a higher level in France than anywhere in history so far. The ruling class was split.

The middle classes were no longer a base of support for capitalism. Many middle class people had been won over and even joined the strike.

The working class was willing to go the distance and take control.

A mass workers' party with a leadership willing to take the revolution through to a successful conclusion - the fourth and most important condition for a successful revolution - was missing in France.

But the Standard was right to say on 29 May that "the situation today can be summed up in a few words - it is a revolutionary situation of an almost textbook kind."

The police and army, capitalism's last line of defence, were wavering. There was talk of a police strike on 23 May. There was a mutiny on the aircraft carrier Clemenceau at the end of the month.

Soldiers formed committees to stop the army being used against the strike. The committee of a regiment near Strasbourg distributed a leaflet promising it "will never shoot on workers."

If it hadn't been for the betrayal of the workers' leaders, the ruling class could not have used its state forces to help put down the revolution.

Once the moment for taking power had passed, there was brutal police violence. Throughout June they forced strikers back to work. There were deportations of foreign students and other migrants and victimisation of trade unionists.

Demoralised workers started to go back in. But despite the lack of a lead, some held out.

Five million were still on strike one week after the election was called. Two million two weeks after. One million were still striking during the elections, 23 and 30 June. And some stayed out into July.

Elections

The electoral system was undemocratic, weighted against the left. Communist Party deputies, on average, needed five times the vote of the Gaullists to win each seat. And millions of students, young workers and migrants had no vote.

And the 'Communists' campaigned on 'law and order' in the election. They refused to call for public ownership, democratic workers' control, or anything that would have given the striking workers what they wanted.

So the Communist Party actually managed to lose votes compared to the previous election. The Gaullists gained!

Instead of helping to revive these rigged establishment structures, the Communist Party could have called for all power to the democratic committees thrown up by the strike.

Instead, it told workers only to negotiate the best deals possible. The CGT even agreed catch-up deals for productivity lost during the strike!

The Communist Party of France was motivated by trying to protect the bureaucratic clique at the top of the Soviet Union from a movement that would spread democratic socialism around the world. The Soviet Union didn't even give an opinion on the May struggle until 5 June!

The societies governed by Stalinist dictatorships were already suffocating from the lack of workers' democracy. A successful democratic socialist revolution in an advanced capitalist country like France would have spread like wildfire. It was as much a threat to Stalinism as to capitalism.

But we can nonetheless take great hope from the events of May 1968. A revolution on our doorstep. The Socialist Party and Committee for a Workers' International campaign for a revolutionary leadership that is ready to fight to the end.

Further reading

- For an overview, ['France 1968: when workers were on the brink of taking power'](#) - and the previous weeks' commentaries - visit socialistparty.org.uk
- 'France 1968: Month of Revolution' by Clare Doyle - £7.50 from leftbooks.co.uk - or free with a Direct Debit subscription to the Socialist at socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe
- Socialism Today: May '68 special 40th anniversary edition, issue 118 (May 2008): socialismtoday.org

Gaza protests

Yes to the struggle to lift the siege

- In Jerusalem the US embassy was inaugurated in a messianic ceremony; in the Gaza Strip, 60 demonstrators were shot dead
- Netanyahu declared: "A great day for peace"

By the secretariat of Socialist Struggle Movement, Israel-Palestine

(First published in Hebrew on 16 May 2018)

While in Jerusalem a messianic inauguration ceremony was held for the American embassy, in the Gaza Strip, the day of the embassy's transfer was the deadliest day since the war in 2014.

The Netanyahu government, hand-in-hand with a despicable incitement campaign, sent an army to drown in blood the mass protest of residents who are suppressed under the brutal siege imposed on them for over a decade.

About 60 demonstrators were shot dead in one day, adding to the dozens slain previously in demonstrations in recent weeks.

Among those killed were youths aged 14-16, and an eight-month-old baby who died after massive exposure to the tear gas.

The massacre of the demonstrators - in the service of perpetuating the siege and oppression of the Palestinian workers and poor - did not prevent Netanyahu from declaring "a great day for peace"!

The provocative transfer of the American embassy underscores the backwind that the Trump government is providing for the continued trampling of the rights of the Palestinians, including to their own state and a capital in Jerusalem as well - rights that the US ambassador to Israel, hardline rightist David Friedman, explicitly denies.

The same administration, which provided full backing for the massacre, will continue to recite cynical slogans about peace and promote the "Deal of the Century", based on continued support for the Israeli occupation and the denial of Palestinian rights.

As if raising the flame of the conflict is not 'enough', the US's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement will further increase the national tensions in the region, and its consequences can be very destructive, including a real danger of war.

Protest is not terrorism!

Socialist Struggle Movement has made it clear over the past few weeks that contrary to the propaganda of the Israeli establishment, which fostered security hysteria and labelled the protest movement a "terrorist incident", this is a just and important civil protest, which should receive solidarity also from Israeli workers.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) [condemned the killing](#) and wounding of demonstrators by the Netanyahu government, as well as the transfer of the embassy led by Trump.

It is the responsibility of the heads of the workers' organisations in Israel to adopt a position in such a spirit, so to help point out a solution for the workers on both sides of the national divide.

The protest of the "Great March of Return" is the most significant protest to date against the siege.

The mobilisation of tens of thousands to demonstrate in the struggle for their lives is a source of hope.

On the day of the transfer of the embassy, the Gaza Strip was shut down and some 50,000 demonstrators were reported - a figure which is equivalent to demonstrations of about 200,000 people in Israel, according to the size of the population.

Weeks of demonstrations of thousands and tens of thousands resulted in zero Israelis injured or dead, compared with about 110 Palestinians killed and about 10,000 injured in the Gaza Strip, mostly by live ammunition.

These dry figures alone ridicule the cries of the Israeli establishment of "violence" and the alleged danger posed by those demonstrations, and illustrate who faces the large and organised violence - a one-sided war against demonstrators, including sniper fire and tanks.

Desperate actions by individuals or groups, such as the number of arson incidents by "arson kites" or the damaging of gas pipes at the entrance to the Gaza Strip, caused minor damage, but they are first and foremost the result of the terrible distress forced daily with an arrogant thuggery by the Israeli capitalist government.

Hamis activity?

Due to the blockade, the residents of the Gaza Strip face four hours of electricity a day, a lack of drinkable water, the collapse of infrastructures, a rate of unemployment of the highest in the world, severe restriction on freedom of movement, prevention of medical treatment, and the shooting of fishermen, farmers and demonstrators. Against this background, there have even been reports of a jump in suicide incidents.

Yes, the right-wing leaderships of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority contribute to worsening the situation, each in its own way, but the main control over the Gaza Strip remains in the hands of the Israeli right-wing rule.

This, in cooperation with its Egyptian counterpart, enforces the blockade as a policy of collective punishment against about two million people, half of them under the age of 18, in a long and failed attempt to force a change in the political leadership.

The Israeli establishment jumps, as if it finds a big booty, on Hamas' claim that 50 of those killed in recent weeks were allegedly from its ranks, as if the political identification of the casualties changes the fact that these were unarmed demonstrators, not endangering anyone, who were shot to death with live ammunition.

Similarly, the military's claim that 24 of those killed on 14 May had allegedly a past "background" of "hostile terrorist activity", was completely irrelevant.

These are demagogic excuses - the army fired with no distinction related to the political identity or the past of the wounded and the dead.

It should be noted that while it appears that Hamas was involved and to some extent influenced the demonstrations, not only were the demonstrations themselves justified as stated, evidently they were widely supported and mobilised mass participation from all political streams as well as from residents unaffiliated politically.

There are also [critical voices](#) from among the protest activists on the role played by Hamas. Hamas itself does not tend to offer at all a path of mass struggle, but it certainly tried to exploit the development of the protest to mobilise public sympathy it has lost due to its failure to offer an effective strategy for a way out from the crisis in the Gaza Strip.

The residents of the Gaza Strip, and only them, should have the right to choose their leaders democratically, and the possibility to replace failed leaderships that do not serve them.

The Netanyahu government prefers a military confrontation

The real threat posed by the protest on the agenda was not "the extermination of Israel", as Netanyahu incited - he himself knows how ridiculous this argument is with the balance of power between the thousands of

demonstrators and the strongest military force in the Middle East.

The real threat for the Israeli establishment was the sheer heroic daring of masses of Palestinians - women and men, young and old - to insist on disturbing the order of intolerable oppression and poverty imposed on them, and to demand change.

As part of the regime propaganda, there's a recycling of the claim that attempts by demonstrators to break through the huge prison fence practically justify execution - not even demonstration dispersal means or arrests, but execution.

This claim sides with the right of the Israeli right-wing regime to continue to enforce the siege on the Gaza Strip's poor by all necessary means, including killings.

Socialists sweepingly reject such a siding with the actions of the capitalist government, and support the right of the residents of the Gaza Strip to protest, to struggle, to organise and also to defend themselves against military aggression.

If the right wing rule does not want to see masses breaking through the siege fences, no one is preventing it from lifting the siege and allowing freedom of movement for residents and goods in an arranged manner through the crossings.

The real threat, which the Netanyahu government worked to thwart via murderous repression, was the expansion of a mass popular struggle, that could have forced the Israeli right-wing regime to withdraw from the siege policy and was capable of marking the way for the Palestinians in general to build an effective struggle to change the situation on the ground.

It is to be hoped that despite the barbaric repression of the demonstrators in the Gaza Strip, the protest there will succeed in renewing from below on a large scale with the demand for change.

However, the Netanyahu government prefers a round of military confrontation with Hamas over mass popular protest.

It therefore sent fighter jets to bomb in the Strip in response to several attempts by demonstrators to break through the fence of the world's largest prison, and threatened to renew the policy of assassinations against Hamas leaders.

In its actions to protect the siege and occupation, the Netanyahu regime increases the danger of another round of bloody war.

The right-wing government also continues to reject repeated proposals for conflict de-escalation, and for rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip - such arrangements have been on the table for years, and could have prevented the horrific rounds of war that sowed bereavement and destruction in a monstrous scale in the Strip, and which have also included rocket fire and attacks on Israeli civilians.

Socialist Struggle Movement continues to warn that the number one security threat for Israeli workers is Netanyahu's 'Capital and Settlements' government, and its destructive nationalistic-messianic agenda, with the cooperation of Netanyahu's imitators - Lapid and Gabbai - of the "opposition".

In the face of this danger, a struggle should be built, on both sides of the national divide, and an alternative of socialist change should be put forward in order to offer a way out of the path of deterioration to the abyss lead by Netanyahu, Trump and their partners.

Socialist Struggle Movement demands:

- End shooting at demonstrators! Stop the trigger-happy policy! Enough with the incitement, protest is not terrorism!
- The establishment of an independent commission of inquiry - to include Israeli, Palestinian and international representatives from independent organisations of workers, community and human rights -

to investigate the killing of demonstrators. Prosecute the chain of those responsible, including the political echelon.

- Joining of the workers' organisations in Israel to workers' organisations around the world in condemning the killing of demonstrators and the continuation of the siege and occupation, and in supporting the struggle for peace.
- Solidarity with the residents' protest. Yes to joint demonstrations by Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians, against the siege, occupation, poverty, inequality and the Netanyahu government of Capital and Settlements. Yes to the struggle for peace and social justice!
- Yes to the expansion of the popular protest, yes to mass struggle of the Palestinians for national and social liberation. The establishment of democratic action committees to assist in organising protests and defending the demonstrations.
- Enough with the "Conflict Management" policy. Stop the siege on the residents of the Gaza Strip, enough with the occupation. Enough with the imposing of poverty and distress, enough with the dispossessions, an end to the national oppression of the Palestinian people.
- End the negation of the right to self-determination - yes to an independent, democratic, socialist and equal Palestinian state, with its capital in East Jerusalem, alongside a democratic and socialist Israel that will ensure true equality of rights for all.
- A just solution for the Palestinian refugees. Recognition of the historical injustice of the Nakba - the destruction of hundreds of communities and the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of residents - and recognition of the right of the refugees who wish so to return, while ensuring a life of welfare and equality for all residents.
- A struggle for regional peace. Solidarity with the struggles in the Middle East and the rest of the world against corrupt elites, oppression and poverty. Yes to equality for all nationalities, to democracy and to socialist change.

Tax Amazon movement wins in Seattle

Keely Mullen and Calvin Priest, Socialist Alternative USA

On 14 May, Seattle City Council passed a historic tax on Amazon and other big corporations to fund permanently affordable, publicly owned housing. The driving force behind this victory was the strength of our #TaxAmazon movement.

Under the leadership of Socialist Alternative council member Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative, housing activists, and Democratic Socialists of America, our movement put this issue on the table last autumn when we occupied city hall overnight and brought our fight into the November city council budget hearings.

In the week before the final vote, big business and their purchased politicians like Mayor Jenny Durkan, worked furiously to water down the legislation and fill it with corporate loopholes. Durkan put forward a counter-proposal that cut the proposed \$75 million tax to \$40 million a year with the majority going to temporary services, which will include inhumane homeless sweeps rather than building permanently affordable housing.

Due to the strength of our Tax Amazon movement, her proposal was voted down by the city council finance committee. Over the weekend however, while the movement was in the streets fighting for \$75 million with no corporate loopholes, the rest of the city council was working out a deal with the mayor and big business.

While the deal they worked out is only marginally better than the Bezos-Durkan deal with \$48 million in new revenue as opposed to the proposed \$75 million, it is a \$48 million a year transfer of wealth from the hands of big business to working people that would never have been won without the fight we mounted.

Threats

As with the \$15 minimum wage, what we won was based on the strength of our movement, our ability to continue to mobilise broad public support, and our ability to politically defeat the arguments of big business.

Amazon fought viciously against this tax in its entirety and we have now wrested tens of millions from Bezos' hands to fund affordable housing.

In the lead up to the final vote, Amazon sent an extortionary threat to Seattle workers. Amazon threatened to halt construction in Seattle if this tax was passed, holding over 7,000 construction jobs hostage!

It made no immediate financial sense for Amazon to halt construction on this project part-way through, and this tax doesn't even come close to making a dent in the massive profits they make in Seattle. It was a shameful act of bullying by the billionaire class and a blatant attempt to divide Seattle workers.

Amazon's share of the tax would have been pocket change to CEO Jeff Bezos, the richest man on earth. This extortion was an attempt to maintain an iron grip over local political policy by flexing the muscles of their massive capital and weight in the Seattle economy.

It was also a message aimed at intimidating workers in other cities around the country where Amazon has offices and fulfilment centres.

As socialists, we are not naive about Amazon's enormous power or the number of jobs it holds sway over, but we completely reject capitalism's 'race to the bottom' which seeks to pit housing against jobs, city against city, and worker against worker. This is standard for a system that places profit and the wealth of a few over the needs of the vast majority of society.

Jeff Bezos' wealth sits on top of the shoulders of tens of thousands of Amazon employees, and it's those employees who create its wealth.

We need a fundamentally different society - a socialist society - where rather than bending to corporate extortion, we would take big corporations like Amazon into democratic public ownership and run them by workers instead.

Trendsetting victories by socialists like a tax on Amazon or the passage of a \$15 minimum wage are critical first steps, but our movements cannot stop there.

Social housing

Capitalism is incapable of providing quality affordable housing for all, and we need to fight for an alternative to the broken private housing market and for rent control. We need a massive expansion of tens of thousands of units of publicly owned and run social housing.

We can also ensure all money generated through rents is invested straight back into maintaining and expanding publicly owned housing instead of being funnelled upwards into profits.

Finally, we can mandate that the housing be built with 100% union labour with priority hire given to local construction firms, ensuring the maximum benefit for Seattle workers.

The victory our movement has won in Seattle has the potential to spread around the country.

By building a determined, unapologetic movement we have won one of the most progressive big business taxes in the country. The leadership of Socialist Alternative and Kshama Sawant in this movement cannot be overstated.

By basing ourselves on the power of working people to disrupt business as usual, we forced the entire business and political establishment in Seattle to capitulate to our movement.

Now we have to continue the fight; not only for immediate gains in the present, but for an alternative to the bankrupt system of capitalism. A future where nobody is allowed to die alone on the street, nobody is forced to choose between homelessness and an abusive partner, and nobody is forced out of the city where they work.

Stop Trump! Build for 13 July student walkouts

Theo Sharieff, Socialist Students national chair

The world was rocked on 18 May by yet another school shooting in the USA. This time it was in Santa Fe, Texas, when eight students and two teachers were killed. It is the 22nd school shooting this year in America, and brings the number of overall mass shootings to 101, which have left dozens more dead across the country.

In response to the horrific violence, young people across the US have taken to the streets to protect their lives and fight for their future. The March for Our Lives protest on 24 March was unprecedented - one of the single biggest days of protest in US history. With hundreds of thousands protesting in Washington DC, as well as tens of thousands in other major cities across the country, there were a total of 800 protests around US and internationally.

Young people and students have drawn the conclusion that their own independent mass action is the only thing they can rely on in the fight for change.

President Donald Trump reacted to the killings by saying that he and his administration were "determined to do everything in their power" to protect students.

But only two weeks previously, Trump addressed his friends at a National Rifle Association (NRA) meeting in Atlanta. He reassured the meeting that "your Second Amendment rights [the right to carry guns] are under siege, but they will never, ever be under siege as long as I'm your president" - a clear reference to the March for Our Lives and others. It's clear that links to and funding from the NRA is what matters most to Trump, not the lives of young Americans.

Protests

When Trump visits Britain on 13 July, we need to launch our own unprecedented day of struggle to let him know that he and his pro-capitalist, racist and sexist ideas are not wanted.

So in the run up to 13 July the Young Socialists, supported in many areas by Socialist Students and the Socialist Party, will be building for protest walkouts of young people from their schools and colleges.

Young Socialists will be producing 'I pledge to walkout on 13 July' sheets, for students to sign up classmates and spread the word about the walkout. We'll be helping our young members and supporters to launch planning committees in schools and colleges for those wanting to organise their classmates.

- Join the Socialist Students event on Facebook: 'Walk-out against Trump!' - [facebook.com/events/374744106374762](https://www.facebook.com/events/374744106374762)

Student leaders claim one million on the streets against Brexit - fight for a workers' exit

Claire Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Party youth organiser

One hundred and twenty student union officers - who have so far failed to lift a finger in the fight against tuition fees and cuts, or to support striking lecturers during the recent University and College Union dispute - have made national headlines with the claim that "over one million students demand a people's vote on the Brexit deal".

Building a movement to fight to get the Tories out, and to demand socialist policies - free education, a real living wage and nationalisation, for example - ought to be the top priority of student unions around the

country.

It ought to be the top priority for the leaders of the Young Labour and Labour Students organisations, especially when you consider the many thousands of young people who have joined Labour, inspired by the prospect of an anti-austerity alternative under Corbyn.

But cut as they are from an old, Blairite cloth, many of the leaders of these organisations have other priorities. Chief among these is undermining Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and, linked to that, keeping the UK in the capitalist, austerity-loving, European Union.

The figure one million was reached on the spurious basis of adding up the memberships of the student unions these officers come from. There have been no democratic votes on any of these campuses to support this approach.

At the same time, the right-wing chairs of both Labour Students and Young Labour have written to Jeremy Corbyn demanding the Labour Party adopts a policy of fighting for a 'people's vote' on any Brexit deal. In the case of the Young Labour chair this has led to a direct rebuke from the organisation's more left-wing national committee.

It is true that many young and working class people are rightly fearful of the potential consequences of a Tory Brexit deal, which would surely seek to prioritise the interests of big business and the rich at the expense of ordinary people.

As the Socialist Party has consistently pointed out, the real question is not 'hard versus soft' Brexit but will it be a workers' Brexit or a bosses' Brexit?

By far the most effective way to oppose a bosses' Brexit is to demand and fight for a general election. This could potentially offer much more than a take-it-or-leave-it vote on a Tory deal.

If Jeremy Corbyn was prepared to face down the right, including organising his supporters to take on those Blairites who remain in place in structures such as Labour Students, he could present working class people with a genuine alternative at the ballot box.

If the leadership of student unions and the National Union of Students applied themselves to the task of organising resistance to Tory rule with the same vigour and determination that they have shown in seeking to undermine Corbyn, the current political situation in Britain could potentially be a very different one.

Socialist Students will continue to organise all those forces willing to mobilise to fight cuts and fees and will be fighting to build mass student walkouts to coincide with Trump's visit - linking this with the demand to kick out the Tories.

Let's sell 1,000 extra copies of issue 1000!

Ian Pattison, the Socialist editorial team

The Socialist will reach a milestone next month. The 1,000th issue of our paper.

In that time we've consistently supported workers' struggles and community campaigns. From the enormous movement against Tony Blair's invasion of Iraq in 2003, to the public sector strikes and demos in 2011 and the battle to save the NHS today.

We put forward a socialist alternative to the world financial crash of 2008 and the decade of crisis and austerity that has followed since. Eleven years of economic crisis, almost a decade of Tory austerity and huge enthusiasm for Jeremy Corbyn mean that today the need for a socialist paper has never been clearer since the launch of the Socialist in 1997.

Can you help us mark this milestone? On Saturday 23 June we are having a drive for 1,000 extra sales of issue 1000. Can your branch involve extra people, keep the campaign stall going for longer than usual or have more activities in more places?

You don't have to be a member of the Socialist Party to sell the Socialist. One person recently donated to our building fund to aid our search for new premises before we face eviction.

She encouraged her Twitter followers and Facebook friends to do the same, because "round near me they have been instrumental in saving a women's refuge and hospital wards, organising demos and standing up to Tory austerity".

Can you or your branch sell 20-30 copies more than usual of that issue? Can you add some extra sales throughout the week of the 1,000th issue - try the local college, bus and rail stations and workplaces.

If those paper sales go well, can you keep them going beyond issue 1000? And don't forget to ask for the solidarity price of £2 - every extra pound helps us sustain a socialist paper which is an independent voice for the working class.

And to help the Socialist and get it delivered to your door each week, why not subscribe?

If you take out a direct debit subscription, you get to choose from a range of free books. While we're celebrating the anniversary of the May 1968 revolutionary events in France this includes 'May 1968: Month of Revolution' by Clare Doyle.

Leicester socialists fight poverty-paying sweatshops

Charles Wheeler, Leicester Socialist Party

The full effects of Tory policies, both economic and social, are being felt in Leicester, as sweatshop conditions and shocking illegal levels of pay persist in 2018. And the "hostile environment" migration policy means it's harder than ever for workers to fight back.

A recent Financial Times article shed new light on an issue Leicester Socialist Party has been campaigning on for years, with workers in some of the city's clothing and textile factories revealing they are paid as little as £3.50 an hour.

£5 is considered a 'top wage', despite being well below the minimum wage of £7.83, and even further below the living wage of £8.75. With wages across the country lagging behind inflation, illegal poverty wages are doing further damage to already-precarious living standards.

Bosses are getting away with these illegal levels of pay by dangling the fear of deportation over workers' heads thanks to the Tories' "hostile environment" policy. The Tories' policy traps them in a poverty cycle where wages can continue to be driven down.

There has been no appetite among the political establishment to tackle the issue, either. The Tories' contemptuous labelling of their minimum wage as a 'living wage' shows their attitude towards fair pay, and neither their rhetoric nor policy has shown any intent to enforce it.

Notably, HMRC's 'minimum wage enforcement team' has been devastated by cuts in recent years - leaving bosses able to operate illegally without fear of reprimand. And what little additional funding the Tories have been shamed into giving is still woefully inadequate.

This is what we mean when we call the Tories 'the bosses' party' - their policies always conspire in the favour of the powerful at the expense of the vulnerable.

Leicester Socialist Party continues to campaign on the issue, but more is needed to overcome this localised cycle of poverty.

We say unions must intervene and offer workers the structure and support to fight for fair wages and conditions. No more racist and divisive Tory rhetoric stifling workers' rights!

Sheffield Pride organisers defeated in attempt to ban politics

Michael Johnson, Yorkshire Socialist Party

Organisers of Sheffield Pride have sparked criticism of the event after calling Pride a "celebration, not a protest." Organisers informed attendees that political groups would not be allowed on the march, placards and banners would be checked beforehand in case they cause offense, and attendees should wear bright clothes.

LGBT+ people were quick to point to the origins of Pride as a political protest and the need for Pride events to take up the struggles facing LGBT+ people today - locally in the face of austerity and international issues.

Faced with this backlash the Pride organisers have started to back down from their guidelines after initially threatening legal action against "those who have created all this drama." However this issue underlines the growing divide between the 'leadership' of the LGBT+ organisations and the needs of LGBT+ people themselves.

The Socialist Party sees the vital need for Pride to be part of a fighting movement as well as a celebration will be taking part in Pride events across the country putting forward socialist ideas against capitalist prejudice and big business exploitation, and for LGBT+ liberation.

40 attend Socialist Party housing campaign launch in Windsor

Reading Socialist Party

There was a successful launch of our new housing campaign in Windsor on 15 May. The meeting was attended by 40 people, with speakers and lively discussion from the floor.

We kicked off our anti-housing crisis petition at the meeting and discussed the best way forward for our campaign. Although the meeting was held in Windsor our campaign covers Windsor, Reading, Slough, Bracknell, Ascot and other local areas.

Housing and homelessness are massive issues for many people in our area - highlighted by the attacks on homeless people because of the Royal wedding - mainly as a result of Tory austerity, low pay, lack of council housing and unaffordable private housing for many people young and old.

We call for support for our campaign from people in this area, let us fight the housing crisis and offer a better future to all those in housing need.

30 years on from Section 28: the legacy of fighting LGBT+ attacks must continue

Michael Johnson

On 24 May 1988 Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was enacted in England, Scotland and Wales by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. Its introduction would have a major impact, especially on young LGBT+ people, and spark major protests, with tens of thousands taking to the streets.

Section 28 stated that a local authority "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship."

The 1980s had been an incredibly turbulent time for LGBT+ struggle. Following the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK in 1967 and in the aftermath of the US Stonewall Riots, LGBT+ issues had become more prominent.

LGBT+ campaigning groups across the world were growing and staging Pride events to highlight the fight for LGBT+ rights.

This increased visibility and political assertiveness met with reaction from the right-wing media and political establishment, which deliberately blamed the growing Aids crisis on homosexuality. Gay men in particular were viewed as a threat to public health.

From 1986 on the Conservative Party made efforts to ban local councils from "promoting homosexuality". Thatcher denounced local education authorities for teaching schoolchildren that they had "an inalienable right to be gay".

In 1988 this anti-gay propaganda culminated in Section 28 - part of an act that also introduced compulsory tendering of council services (privatisation) to ensure they are "competitive", thereby attacking public sector jobs and services.

Section 28 was faced by protests even before it formally came into law. In high profile acts of direct action the night before the legislation was passed, lesbian activists abseiled into parliament and invaded the studios of the BBC's Six O'clock News while it was on the air.

More than 20,000 people marched against Section 28 in Manchester with similar protests happening across the country. While these protests weren't able to stop Section 28 at the time, they ensured pressure was put on local councils to ensure funding for LGBT+ services was still possible (frequently using Aids awareness as a loophole).

Section 28 served to galvanise LGBT+ people in England, Wales and Scotland, was the origin of a number of significant LGBT+ organisations such as Stonewall and energised numerous campaigns against discrimination and prejudice.

However Section 28 would, at the same time, have an extremely negative effect on LGBT+ people, especially teachers and young people.

It is frequently brought up, especially by Tories trying to diminish the negative impact of Section 28, that no one was ever formally prosecuted under the legislation and so it couldn't have been that bad or was even a failure.

In reality, due to the vagueness of Section 28 along with the homophobic rhetoric and moralising from politicians, very few people knew how "promotion of homosexuality" was being defined.

Was it saying being LGBT+ was okay? Was it acknowledging homosexuality existed? Was it being an out LGBT+ person yourself?

The lack of clarity would lead to scores of LGBT+ teachers being forced back into, or staying, in the closet due to fears and pressure from senior management, governors and even the press about being openly LGBT+.

Fear of prosecution would lead to teachers and public employees feeling unable to even address bullying of LGBT+ people in case this would be viewed as "promotion of homosexuality".

And as a result of this many young LGBT+ people would suffer an epidemic of name calling, at best, with many experiencing physical attacks for their sexuality as well. Most LGBT+ students would hear about their sexuality for the first time in relation to HIV/Aids and reading about being LGBT+ in terms of life expectancy.

Today, young LGBT+ people are more likely to experience mental health problems and are twice as likely to self-harm or attempt suicide. We must be clear that this is the legacy of Section 28, Thatcher and the Tories.

Section 28 was repealed under the Blair New Labour government in 2003 after years of campaigning and fighting. However, this repeal failed to take any steps to undo the damage of Section 28 in practice.

15 years later teachers and students are still fighting for sex education that positively includes LGBT+ issues.

Section 28 was a vicious piece of legislation that is still being felt today. And due to this it was a pivotal moment for LGBT+ people, bringing them and their supporters together with new confidence.

This would serve to push through many steps forward beyond repealing Section 28.

While a direct attack like Section 28 is unlikely today due to this confidence, we know that the policies of austerity by governments and local councils have no less of an impact on LGBT+ workers and young people.

It's vital then that we not just remember the fight against Section 28 but continue its legacy of mass action in the streets, community groups and trade unions; fighting not just against individual attacks but for a socialist change in society that means equality and genuine liberation for all.

How 'Prevent' training fosters racist paranoia

'Robert Cross', National Education Union member

Recently work required me to complete online 'Prevent' training, supposed to help those who work with young people spot signs of "radicalisation."

The children I work with are in primary school and have severe learning difficulties, making them unlikely "targets" for "radicalisation." But the training seems to have more to do with encouraging suspicion than enabling educators to protect young people in their care.

I was aware of the controversy surrounding Prevent. Many groups including [the Socialist Party have attacked it as racist](#). But I was still shocked.

They say they "want this training to be inspiring." The children I teach inspire me every day with their resilience through adversity - not training designed to make me suspect them.

You're warned that "it is likely that you would notice many signs of radicalisation as part of your day to day job." What can possibly be intended here except to make people who work with young people into paranoid state informers?

They then ask "what does terrorism look like to you?" letting you choose two pictures from six (above). One shows two young black boys being approached by older men; another shows someone using the internet; another someone holding a leaflet. You're told "all of these images could be representing terrorism"!

Bizarrely, if you select the image of graffiti saying "heil Hitler" (below) you're only told it "might represent the actions of someone taking on board such ideologies." Why else would you spray paint Nazi slogans?

Agenda

As the training continues the agenda becomes clearer and clearer.

"Radicalisers" are said to "feed" young people "ideologies that go against our shared values." What are these "shared values"? Socialist "ideologies" go against capitalist "values."

"Radicalisers" and "targets" are presented repeatedly as black or Asian, far more than white. A voiceover says "of course, there's no single profile of a terrorist." So why are you repeatedly shown the same "profile"?

You then have to choose a video which is most relevant to you. One option is an Asian teenage woman, the other a white teenage man. I watched both.

Both contained concerning messages - particularly the one featuring the young woman, Farah. During Farah's "radicalisation", "concerns" you are expected to flag up include using the internet, criticising the media, handing out literature and attending meetings!

Farah describes that literature as attacking aid not going where it should and innocent people being maimed and killed. How can anyone look at the actions of western imperialism in the Middle East and not share the same concerns?

Imperialist war is one of the main horrors pushing some young people towards "radical" ideas - whether those ideas are the perceived radicalism but ultimate dead end of terrorism, or the genuinely radical ideas of socialism.

You can also watch the "radicalisation" of a young white man into the far right. The training seems to downplay it by comparison, pointing to legitimate factors like his personal life and concerns about employment opportunities.

He is told simply that "he is in control of his own future." Unfortunately this isn't really true for any of us under capitalism. Heavy-handed state intervention certainly won't win over angry young people attracted to reactionary "radical" movements, nor will platitudes like this.

Police

We are encouraged to refer suspect students to 'Channel', "a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism." This may sound positive. But they make clear that all referrals - even where no further action is taken - are passed onto the police!

The video also rightly emphasises the role of local services - the same services being decimated by austerity. Because of cuts, social workers often can't visit schools when young people disclose domestic abuse - how can they pick up the Channel workload as well?

Throughout the whole training, only one genuine education worker features. This is Adam Whitlock, an RE teacher in London, his school's "primary contact for concerns relating to extremism."

Whitlock is a Tory activist who has given an interview to the hard-right US news site the Daily Signal about his work in "counter-extremism." [He is clearly not representative of most teachers.](#) It's concerning someone with his views is so heavily involved in Prevent training.

We have seen how the state infiltrates left and workers' organisations, including the Socialist Party, to try to undermine them. The ongoing Mitting Inquiry into undercover policing is trying to whitewash it.

Prevent training does for example show a protester holding a placard (above), but does not explicitly target left groups right now. But clearly Prevent can and will be used against socialists and trade unionists. In fact, one university has already used Prevent-related bureaucracy to stop a Socialist Party member speaking at a student meeting.

Socialists oppose the racist paranoia of Prevent. We fight to win over young people and workers to the fight for a socialist world, without war and terror.

Marxism has always opposed the dead end of individual terrorism. But persecution by the capitalist state provides no alternative to the problems which drive some young people towards it.

Ads won't fix it: fight mental health cuts as well as stigma

Mary Finch, East London Socialist Party

Capitalist society has caused a mental health crisis of gargantuan proportions. One in four people in Britain will experience a mental health problem in their life, but only one in eight sufferers are receiving treatment, according to Mind.

It's especially bad for young people who are bearing the brunt of austerity and the economic crisis. The pressure is mounting to get an education, find a good job, move away from home, while the opportunities to actually do so are being destroyed.

Young people have been left without a future. We're struggling to deal with the pressure of low pay, insecure work and housing, and a gutted education system which prioritises performance in exams over actual learning.

It's no surprise, then, that anxiety and depression are on the rise. And less common - and often more serious - conditions are exacerbated more and more by the stress of living through capitalist crisis.

The Tory answer? Spend potentially millions of pounds of public money on advertising to tell people how to manage their mental illness. The 2018 Government Communication Plan includes a campaign on "the skills to prevent everyday problems escalating into more serious issues."

People with mental health problems don't struggle with "everyday problems" in the way healthy people do. I have suffered from depression for seven years, and sometimes, just getting out of bed can take as much effort as running a marathon.

And the problems some mentally ill people deal with aren't "everyday" at all. A schizophrenic experiencing a break with reality can't get by with help from a condescending ad campaign.

Invest

The money the Tories want to spend on ads is a sop. That money and much more besides needs to be invested into public services that can actually help sufferers of mental illness.

We desperately need comprehensive therapy services which offer more common treatments like cognitive behavioural therapy, but also specialist services for those with conditions which are rare or more difficult to treat.

We need outreach services for those who are suffering or suspect they're suffering from mental illness so they feel able to reach out for help. We need to ensure that when they do, adequate services are there to support them.

People are increasingly talking more openly about mental health and encouraging others to do so. These positive discussions about fighting stigma have to be linked to fighting cuts.

After all, the Liberal Democrats, Blairites and Tories are happy to throw around buzzwords about reducing stigma - while failing to mention they're starving the NHS of funds!

We can't wait for a Corbyn-led anti-austerity government. Councils must use their reserves and borrowing powers to stop cuts now, restore all local public services, and fight to get the money back from central government.

Documentary: Mass Trespass

We can learn about struggle from the mass trespass of Kinder Scout

Val Binney

The story of the mass trespass by hundreds of young working people from Manchester and Sheffield on Kinder Scout, to establish the 'right to roam', is remembered with pride.

But younger generations enjoying the freedoms of the Peak District and other green areas of the countryside may have little knowledge of how hard-won these rights were. A new short film, 'Mass Trespass' by WellRedFilms, released for the 86th anniversary of the mass trespass in April 1932, helps set this right.

Succinctly it tells the story of the mass action led by a group of ramblers, including Benny Rothman, a Young Communist from Manchester. It shows wonderful old footage from the mass trespass itself and discusses its significance with local environmentalists today, including some relatives of the original trespassers.

One narrator describes how young people working long hours in the factories of the surrounding cities longed to get out onto the green hills of the Peak District. But they were largely prohibited from venturing on private land, maintained by wealthy landowners for the short grouse-shooting season each year.

Protesters

The video shows how Benny Rothman stepped up to the plate. In the presence of police he urged the 400 protesters to set off for the top of Kinder, breaking the law.

Once they reached private land higher up, gamekeepers were waiting to block their way. The police joined in and scuffles ensued. Six of the leaders, including Benny, were arrested and charged with affray.

The trial of Benny Rothman and the others is convincingly re-enacted in the video in black and white, giving a sense of the arrogance of the ruling

class and landowners of the time. Rothman's court speech defending himself is the highlight of the video.

Their sentence, four months in prison, generated mass publicity. This contributed to the creation of the Peak District National Park, England's first, and later the establishment of the right to roam.

The film makes the point that we can never be complacent about the rights won by the mass trespass and its aftermath. Benny's son, Harry, says that if his father and friends were alive today they would be campaigning against fracking below our green spaces and joining the fight for clean air and against other threats to our environment.

Mass Trespass urges us to get out there and fight for the kind of world we want, making the story highly relevant today.

- Watch Mass Trespass at vimeo.com/267620124

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.

Witch-hunt unconvincing

Keith Fairclough in his attack on the Liverpool Echo's letters page rejects the notion that the artificial hysteria about alleged antisemitism is a conspiracy designed to not only undermine Jeremy Corbyn, but to bury the socialist alternative to the present carnage in social provision.

He seems blind to the fact that this campaign is led by the Tories and their media, right-wing Blairite MPs, and a gaggle of lords headed by a former chief executive of the Tory party; along with a plethora of financiers, hedge fund managers and property magnates, claiming to represent the Jewish community, all weighing in with mostly unsubstantiated claims of antisemitism in the Labour Party.

Their campaign, like previous witch-hunts - from the Spanish Inquisition's through Salem and McCarthyism to the expulsion of Militant - is based on innuendo, guilt by association, and conflating the appalling actions of isolated thugs with the mass membership of the Labour Party.

The object of the exercise is to sow doubt among Jeremy's millions of anti-austerity supporters who find hope in the anti-austerity, anti-war, pro-NHS policies he espouses against the interests of the capitalist class.

We can expect the hysteria to increase in volume the closer we get to any coming elections. But I'm confident the majority of a discerning public will see through this charade.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool

Private police force

A private police force currently operating in Mayfair, Belgravia and Kensington (not the bit where Grenfell Tower was) is going to widen its area of operations.

Currently it appears to specialise in investigating fraud and cybercrime. It says that operatives have even started a murder investigation.

For a fee of between £100 and £200 a month they provide a five-minute response, and state their service is becoming popular because of the effects of cuts in police budgets on responding to crimes.

There are serious worries with such developments. Who controls them? Who are they accountable to?

It also means we are witnessing even more of the rich getting preferential access to justice. I do suspect they won't be venturing into knife crime hotspots though.

Clive Walder, Birmingham

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!

Audio version of this document

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

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/27405>