Doncaster pay win shows

STRIKES CAN GET RESULTS

We can save the NHS

Victory! Privatised NHS workers, organised in the Unison and GMB unions, have won a spectacular victory in their strike over pay.

After two days of industrial action, outsourcer Sodexo reached agreement with Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to pay the ‘Agenda for Change’ pay deal in full. Unison full-time organiser Sue Cookman said, “We need to agree some finer details with Sodexo later on... but I am delighted that an agreement has been reached.”

This victory shows what united trade union struggle can achieve. With the NHS at breaking point, and staff and patients paying the price of devastating cuts and privatisation, this example should act as a beacon to all those fighting to defend our health service.

The hospital catering workers on strike at Doncaster Royal Infirmary demonstrated their determination when they sang “no sausage, chips and beans (SCABs) today” on their picket lines covering all six gates at the hospital. This was in protest against Sodexo bringing in strike-breaking staff from elsewhere.

Around 80 to 90 members of Unison and GMB had called four weeks of three-day strikes which started on May Day. But in the end it only took 48 hours of solid, vibrant, noisy strike action and picketing to force Sodexo to pay up.

Kitchen and catering staff at Doncaster, Bassetlaw and Mexborough hospitals were TUPE (protected employment terms) transferred from the NHS to multinational Sodexo in January 2018. But Sodexo had refused to pay the first year of the three-year NHS pay award which started last April. The rise would have meant £2,000 a year to some of the lowest-paid staff in the hospital.

Sodexo can easily afford to pay. It made £65 million profit last year and paid out more than £5 million to its directors. As Unison regional officer Tony Pearson told the strikers’ rally on May Day: “Sodexo claims to be a global leader in quality of life services, but just not in your lives!”

Head chef and new Unison steward Laura explained how the strike came about: “I was schooled in the (1984–85) miners’ strike. I’ve worked here for 23 years and stepped forward when Sodexo refused to pay.

“There were only about 30 of us in the union then but I started joining colleagues up - saying if we let them get away with taking our pay rise, next they’ll come for our terms and conditions. We increased the union’s membership to 75 and, when we balloted, there was a 100% vote for strike action!”

“We need mass action to defend our NHS - with health service workers and their unions in the lead. In particular, determined and coordinated strike action by NHS staff can turn the tide on austerity policies. The Socialist Party fights to bring all privatised NHS services back in-house, to cancel ‘PFI’ private contract debts, and for a fully funded, democratically run, free health service - run for patients, not profit.”
What we think

The election results confirm this analysis. The fragmentation of politics that the Socialist Party warned about is writ large in these results. Two-thirds of voters who voted for smaller parties such as Ukip and the Greens in the years after fragmentation and growth in electoral support for them, as well as the projected share of the vote on a national level, as after last year’s election, have now been lost. As the two main political parties face a wipe out.

In 1995. They lost seats all over the country, equally in areas that the overall share of the vote of both the two main political parties. Neither have they been able to replace the old, to aim for an agreement with Labour in order to get a confidence - but only in Corbyn and the Labour leadership victory. The vote to leave the EU was a cry of working-class anger.
The recent meeting of Labour's national executive committee was held in London last week. The context of this meeting was shaped by the general election, the aftermath of which Labour has been unable to form a government. The meeting was characterised by a sense of frustration and a desire to move forward.

The meeting was overshadowed by the so-called ‘greenwash’ motion, which was tabled by the Blairites and passed by a large majority. The motion called for a “new, independent” body to oversee the network of superannuation funds. The superannuation fund’s general secretary, Mike Drackitt, said that private sector pensioners were being “denied a fair deal for all where private sector plans are shut down on the most lucrative routes” and that “there is a strong backing for the annual reviews of accountability.”

The meeting was also marked by a strong defence of the EU Single Market, with a number of speakers arguing that Labour should remain in the EU to protect workers’ rights.

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Civil service union PCS’s ballot for strikes on pay closed on 29 April. With a 47.7% turnout - 59,452 votes - the ballot fell just short of the anti-democratic 50% threshold for legal strikes under the Tories’ anti-union laws. (Read more at socialistparty.org.uk, ‘Strike ballot: huge result must launch fightback’.)

The union’s annual conference meets 21-23 May, and will decide what next on the 2019 pay campaign, and the approach for 2020.

There was a 4:1 majority vote for strike action in the ballot, and turnouts above 50% in a number of the union’s departmental groups. This gives a firm basis for continuing the fight against the pay cap, and attacks on employment conditions, through coordinated group actions.

A letter from PCS and Socialist Party member Dave Lunn, reproduced below, anticipates many of the issues which the union’s conference pay debate will want to consider.

Like many reps, I was absolutely gutted that we missed the 50% legal threshold for an industrial ballot by such a small margin - 2%. But I am immensely proud of the hard work put in by reps, members and full-time officers.

What is clear is that our lay rep structure is key to the future success of our union.

In my branch, we had ordinary members leafletting alongside reps. They understand that being a union member is a bit like being a member of a gym. If you pay the membership you won’t get much out unless you get active.

Were it not for the Tories’ repressive and arbitrary 50% turnout threshold - something that, hypocritically, is not applied elsewhere either in politics or big business - the 78.9% for strikes and 91.3% for action short of strike would have won a huge mandate for taking the fight to the government.

Despite this, though, we cannot escape the fact that we have come up short in the ballot. This prevents us from legally taking the necessary action to force the government to the negotiating table on a national basis.

We need to balance recognising the achievements of reps with acknowledging that this is a serious setback. This is why it is important that we continue to campaign, but in doing so fully analyse and dissect what went well and what didn’t in this and the 2018 ballot.

It will simply not be good enough just to do the same again for a third time. We need to not only organise effectively, but also understand how we can mobilise the membership.

Members who did not vote will have done so for a variety of reasons - including, for example, that they didn’t believe in the strategy. It is these members who we need to get on-board if we are going to make real progress on pay.

This will require a rethink on how we consult with the wider membership if we really want to overcome whatever barriers we face. We will not get to the crux of why some members do not vote if we simply listen to the voices of those already convinced.

What will definitely not work is member-blaming or member-shaming, which will alienate and entrench those we have not yet convinced.

We also need a much broader debate on the way forward, with nothing ruled in or out. And importantly, this needs to be a much more open discussion, where those who put forward alternative strategies to win support for are not labelled ‘conservatives’ or ‘saboteurs’ out of hand.

We need the maximum unity if we are to make the necessary progress to break the threshold in future ballots. This should include considering linking campaigns on pay, jobs and office closures to get the biggest buy-in from members.

HM Land Registry group once again comfortably beat the legal threshold, improving on the 2018 strike ballot turnout. The reason we get such good turnouts is not just down to our excellent organisation, but because we don’t organise in isolation.

Organising

Instead, our organising, campaigning and bargaining is joined up. This allows us to take members with us, as they see tangible benefits in getting active and involved.

So there will be groups and departments where there has been a strong mandate for action. The national executive committee must work with these groups in an open way and look to launch coordinated pay claims across them. Thought should also be given to coordinating ballots for any group-specific action.

Alongside this, PCS must use the ante in our campaigning against the anti-trade union laws. Our general secretary currently holds a senior role in the Trade Union Congress, and must use this to build a coordinated campaign among the unions.

With our annual conference coming up very soon, there is a perfect opportunity to discuss all these issues and put through emergency motions at our mandating meetings. While this will be the first stage of building the fightback, there needs to be an ongoing dialogue over the coming months across all structures of our union, responding to political and industrial events, as we do not operate in a vacuum.

This is a temporary setback. But if we learn the lessons from our previous campaigns, listen to our members, and see debate and constructive challenge as a positive thing, then rather than an end to the campaign, the result can be a springboard to winning a ballot and delivering action capable of advancing the interests of members.

That is the fundamental reason I became a rep.

Dave Lunn

Vice-president, PCS union HM Land Registry group (personal capacity)
April. By now, members should have union in the world, opened on 29 (UCU), the largest post-16 education the University and College Union the election for general secretary of Socialist Party members in UCU leadership! election: fight for a left Grady has been heavily involved in preference vote to Jo Grady, a local authority control. restoring 'Education Maintenance particular to fight for the future and member-led UCU for many years, McNeill has pledged in particular to fight for the future of further education, including restoring 'Education Maintenance Allowance' for students, and taking colleges back under democratic local authority control. We also, however, urge UCU members to give their second-preference vote to Jo Grady, a candidate who is also on the left. Grady has been heavily involved in ‘USS Briefs’, an important grassroots resource for UCU members, and has played a positive role in the ongoing ‘USS’ university pensions dispute. It is unfortunate that there are two left candidates in this election. If Matt Waddup is elected, it would be a setback for the union at a time when our membership is growing and we have had several important and successful disputes in both higher and further education. Waddup represents a continuation of the existing leadership of the union, which has favoured partnership with the employers over campaigning and fighting to defend post-16 education. We in the Socialist Party would have preferred to find a way of agreeing on one left candidate, perhaps by holding an open conference of the union’s left. However, because this is a ‘single-transferable vote’ election, and members have two votes, it will hopefully be possible to avoid Waddup winning - provided we use both votes to support both ‘Jos’.

UCU general secretary election: fight for a left leadership!

Socialist Party members in UCU The election for general secretary of the University and College Union (UCU), the largest post-16 education union in the world, opened on 29 April. By now, members should have received ballot papers for what is a crucial point in our union’s history. There are three candidates standing in these elections. Jo McNeill from the University of Liverpool, Jo Grady from the University of Sheffield, and Matt Waddup, a senior official from the union bureaucracy.

Socialist Party members in UCU would urge all members to vote number one for Jo McNeill, the candidate of the UCU Left, and to encourage others to do the same. McNeill is a longstanding left activist in the union. She has been a consistent voice for a fighting and member-led UCU for many years. McNeill has pledged in particular to fight for the future of further education, including restoring ‘Education Maintenance Allowance’ for students, and taking colleges back under democratic local authority control.

We also, however, urge UCU members to give their second-preference vote to Jo Grady, a candidate who is also on the left. Grady has been heavily involved in

Usdaw conference 2019

SHOP WORKERS DEMAND ACTION ON PAY, JOBS AND THE RIGHT

Socialist Party members in Usdaw

With almost a year since the departure of Blairite general secretary John Hannett, this year’s annual delegate meeting of retail and distribution union Usdaw - ongoing at the time of writing - feels different. In her address to delegates, Socialist Party member and Usdaw president Amy Murphy contrasted her approach with that of her predecessor. She joked he used to like going to McDonald’s during conference, whereas she only tended to go there to support McStrikers.

Similarly, the fraternal speaker from Blackpool Trade Union Council invited delegates to protest against far-right, racist Tommy Robinson’s visit to Blackpool in the Monday lunchtime of conference.

The call for this protest was made fantastic progress in recent years, in spite of the Tory anti-union laws. But we need to elect a left, fighting general secretary if we are to build a union that can defend post-16 education, and unite with other unions to boost this rotten Tory government out.

Annual general meeting on 4 May. Over 150 Usdaw delegates and visitors joined another hundred activists to march from outside the conference to where Robinson had been reportedly due to speak - with no sign of him once we arrived.

The conference itself has seen several debates so far. This includes support for an emergency motion, moved by Socialist Party member Scott Jones, on the union’s parliamentary group - which four of the Labour MPs who split into the right-wing ‘Independent Group’ came from.

Given their clear opposition to policies passed by Usdaw conference - including a £10-an-hour minimum wage, rail renationalisation, and so on - the motion demanded that Usdaw’s parliamentary group should only include those prepared to support the union’s policies.

Conference also passed a composite motion on domestic abuse, incorporating an amendment spoken to by Socialist Party member Isai Priya. This demanded funding for domestic violence services for all who need them, called on Labour councils to use their reserves and borrowing powers to defend existing services, and for an incoming Labour government to pledge to restore any funds utilised for this.

Both of these motions passed unanimously.

Campaigning

The union’s ‘Time for Better Pay’ campaign, launched in the last year, has featured heavily. There have been a number of demands to extend the campaign, with motions passing such as including 16 to 17-year-olds in the £10 minimum wage demand.

Another motion called for broadening the campaign to develop a charter for workers’ terms and conditions. The mover called for it to include defending premium payments and paid breaks, considering whether £10 an hour is still sufficient as a minimum, and calling for more sustained action to win.

This included pointing to the recent Stop and Shop supermarket strike in New England, USA, which defeated some of the attacks retail bosses had sought to impose on workers.

There was a heated debate around the onslaught of attacks on retail workers - particularly the job cuts in Tesco. This, unfortunately, was not discussed directly to help formulate a strategy for fighting these attacks. Instead it found expression through a debate on restoring pay ballots within Tesco. Members have grievances on this issue, particularly in light of Tesco’s recent £2 billion profit announcement for the last year.

At the Socialist Party’s conference fringe meeting, we attracted a number of new attendees. We discussed our strategy to fight attacks on workers, including that Usdaw take a leaf from the GMB union’s recent protest outside Asda, and staging a campaign of protests to build support for industrial action if necessary.

Socialist Party members will be continuing to argue for the union to further develop a fighting strategy over the final two days of conference.

A full report will follow. Delegates and visitors have so far bought 86 copies of the Socialist - and counting.
The elections in the Spanish state will open a new era of polarization, struggle and upheaval (photo Libres y Combativas)

**Spanish Elections - New Upheavals underline need for a Revolutionary Socialist Alternative**

The elections in the Spanish state will open a new era of polarization, struggle and upheaval. The elections underline the need for a revolutionary socialist alternative.

In the election of 28 April 2019, the right and extreme right in regional and national elections were affirmed. Vox (Voice), a fascist party that won a majority in the legislature, is a reaction to the crisis of Spanish capitalism and to the political and popular demands for a new era of struggle and upheaval.

The elections have opened a new era of polarization, struggle and upheaval. The election of Vox, a fascist party, is a reaction to the crisis of Spanish capitalism and to the political and popular demands for a new era of struggle and upheaval.

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Leicester election campaigns

“We planted a marker for the future”

Leicester Socialist Party

“...we used every meeting to strongly encourage voting early. We took care not to use the meetings to promote an individual candidate. We tried to focus on the needs of the people in our community to build a campaign to get the message across to the electorate that there is an alternative.”

The local councillor and former SP candidate, Steve Armstrong, said: “We have planted a marker for the future.”

The Leicester and Walthamstow Socialist Party held a meeting in late May to discuss the results of the recent elections.

The party has decided to focus on the needs of the people in their community and build a campaign to get the message across to the electorate that there is an alternative.

On the campaign trail, Steve Armstrong, a former SP candidate, said: “We have planted a marker for the future.”

Walthamstow Socialist Party

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

Socialist Party offers fighting alternative

Socialist Party offers fighting alternative

The Socialist Party has launched a new campaign to counter the cuts proposed by the Labour government.

The party has also launched a new website, which includes a range of resources to help activists and members.

The Socialist Party is calling for a socialist alternative to the cuts proposed by the Labour government.

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Workers who operate London’s Woolwich Ferry, used by an estimated 2.6 million passengers a year, are to strike for ten days in a dispute over pay, safety, and staffing. The key issues are management’s refusal to grant a 6% pay increase for the year starting January 2019; imposition of new duties; failure to agree on a way forward for a new ferry contract; and fees have risen by 18%.

This follows similar moves in companies like Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Morrisons, which unfortunately have seen such changes go through and forces increased ‘flexibility’ on pay increase, takes away paid breaks and bank holiday working.

Asda workers protest against attacks on paid breaks and bank holiday working

GMB union reps and activists from across the country came to protest outside Asda House in Leeds against the company’s proposals to forcibly move what staff remain on other contracts onto ‘Contract 6’.

Contract 6, while giving a slight pay increase, takes away paid breaks and forces increased ‘flexibility’ on staff, including working more bank holidays.

This follows similar moves in companies like Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Morrisons, which unfortunately have seen such changes go through with little organised opposition. Given the protest was only organised with a few days’ notice, the turnout of around 150 was impressive, with support from staff working in the various Asda buildings around the headquarters.

Clearly Asda management hadn’t prepared for the numbers attending. However, if this forced transfer is to be stopped, this protest cannot be the end.

The union should call mass meetings of Asda workers across different regions to map out a strategy for an ongoing campaign, including to prepare for strike action if necessary.

Iain Dalton
Leeds Socialist Party

Hull dinner ladies protest against loss of week’s pay from outsource

A walkout protest by school catering staff at Winifred Holtby School in Hull took place on 29 April, against outsourcing firm ISS’s planned delay to wage payment. (See also ‘Arriva Rail North cleaners fight bosses’ punitive pay arrears’ at socialistsparty.org.uk.)

Two other schools, Tweendykes and Kingwood, also took part. After joining the Winifred Holtby protest, I was told by one dinner lady that they face a week’s loss in pay, from a four-day delay due to changes in their payment schedule.

The offer of a loan from ISS will see future wages docked from pay packets if accepted. And any acceptance of a loan could be perceived as legal acceptance of the change in the contract.

Horns hooted, and residents and friends stopped to ask about the protest. GMB union placards and flags greeted a surge of secondary students leaving school. Some approached a GMB official, asking “what can we do to help?”

We say that school meals must be taken back in-house, under democratic local authority control. In fact, the whole education system should be fully in the public sector, under the democratic control and management of school staff, students and the working class.

The dinner ladies have given school students their first experience of trade union action. Jeremy Corbyn and the union leaders should follow their example, and call mass action now against school cuts and outsourcing, for a £10-an-hour minimum wage - and a general election now.

Janet Gibson
Hull Socialist Party

Radiographers’ union slams professional costs at conference

The Society of Radiographers held its annual delegate conference in Leeds on 28-30 April. Socialist Party delegates leafleted the event, and have set up a group for activists in the union.

There were debates for two days on all aspects of radiographers’ life and workplace issues. This included student bursaries, and the recent hiking of registration fees by our clinical regulator, the Health and Care Professions Council. Registration is compulsory for practitioners, and fees have risen by 18%.

The tale of a student who faced a £20,000 debt for his degree, and was forced to stay on at the university for another year to earn the extra money needed to pay his fees, was a recurring theme.

The legend Mike Jackson - founder of ‘Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners’, which organised LGBT+ solidarity for the National Union of Miners workers during the 1984-85 strike - attended to introduce the film which portrays that campaign. Pride.

Jackson spoke the next day at the conference, and gave his support to Jeremy Corbyn and socialism as the only way forward.

Deila Hazrati
Society of Radiographers
conference delegate (personal capacity)

Newham gas workers to strike against pay and safety attacks

In October, Newham’s Labour council promised a “closer working relationship” with general union Unite, and said it “values its staff and the unions they are members of.”

But on 3 May, 40 of the east London borough’s housing maintenance workers had to protest outside their workplace - the Bridge Road depot in Stratford - against pay cuts and other issues.

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Housing repair and refuse workers are also balloting for strikes. Unite estimates bin workers could lose up to £20,000 each.

East London Socialist Party calls on Newham’s Labour council to immediately agree to the union’s demands and stop all these attacks.

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Unite will have to do the same now. We back the striking workers 100%.

Janet Gibson
Hull Socialist Party

GMB union reps and activists from across the country came to protest outside Asda House in Leeds against the company’s proposals to forcibly move what staff remain on other contracts onto ‘Contract 6’.

Contract 6, while giving a slight pay increase, takes away paid breaks and forces increased ‘flexibility’ on staff, including working more bank holidays.

This follows similar moves in companies like Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Morrisons, which unfortunately have seen such changes go through with little organised opposition. Given the protest was only organised with a few days’ notice, the turnout of around 150 was impressive, with support from staff working in the various Asda buildings around the headquarters.

Clearly Asda management hadn’t prepared for the numbers attending. However, if this forced transfer is to be stopped, this protest cannot be the end.

The union should call mass meetings of Asda workers across different regions to map out a strategy for an ongoing campaign, including to prepare for strike action if necessary.

Iain Dalton
Leeds Socialist Party

A walkout protest by school catering staff at Winifred Holtby School in Hull took place on 29 April, against outsourcing firm ISS’s planned delay to wage payment. (See also ‘Arriva Rail North cleaners fight bosses’ punitive pay arrears’ at socialistsparty.org.uk.)

Two other schools, Tweendykes and Kingwood, also took part. After joining the Winifred Holtby protest, I was told by one dinner lady that they face a week’s loss in pay, from a four-day delay due to changes in their payment schedule.

The offer of a loan from ISS will see future wages docked from pay packets if accepted. And any acceptance of a loan could be perceived as legal acceptance of the change in the contract.

Horns hooted, and residents and friends stopped to ask about the protest. GMB union placards and flags greeted a surge of secondary students leaving school. Some approached a GMB official, asking “what can we do to help?”

We say that school meals must be taken back in-house, under democratic local authority control. In fact, the whole education system should be fully in the public sector, under the democratic control and management of school staff, students and the working class.

The dinner ladies have given school students their first experience of trade union action. Jeremy Corbyn and the union leaders should follow their example, and call mass action now against school cuts and outsourcing, for a £10-an-hour minimum wage - and a general election now.

Janet Gibson
Hull Socialist Party

The Society of Radiographers held its annual delegate conference in Leeds on 28-30 April. Socialist Party delegates leafleted the event, and have set up a group for activists in the union.

There were debates for two days on all aspects of radiographers’ life and workplace issues. This included student bursaries, and the recent hiking of registration fees by our clinical regulator, the Health and Care Professions Council. Registration is compulsory for practitioners, and fees have risen by 18%.

The legend Mike Jackson - founder of ‘Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners’, which organised LGBT+ solidarity for the National Union of Miners workers during the 1984-85 strike - attended to introduce the film which portrays that campaign. Pride.

Jackson spoke the next day at the conference, and gave his support to Jeremy Corbyn and socialism as the only way forward.

Deila Hazrati
Society of Radiographers
conference delegate (personal capacity)

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Janet Gibson
Hull Socialist Party
Fiction: The Friends of Harry Perkins
Sequel to A Very British Coup - workers’ struggle, not bosses’ EU and media, is route to socialism

Michael Morgan
Coventry East Socialist Party

Chris Mullin, the former Labour MP, released a sequel to his highly acclaimed novel, A Very British Coup, in March. That novel was a scathing work of fiction in which the left-wing Labour MP Harry Perkins was swept into parliament and subsequently became prime minister.

Perkins won an election on the platform of abolishing Trident nuclear weapons, getting rid of US military bases in Britain, and a raft of socialist policies - doesn’t sound bad, right?

A Very British Coup then illustrated the depths to which the capitalist establishment and media would go in order to prevent socialist policies in parliament challenging the profit system, ending with a coup organised by the capitalist class.

This is based in fact. Ending capitalism cannot occur through the parliamentary chamber alone. A mass movement of the working class, including strike action and the mass movement of the working class, can achieve this.

It is a shame, then, that ‘The Friends of Harry Perkins’ is so un-critical of the neoliberal European Union, which surely would play a large role in opposing socialist change in Britain. It has done so across the continent, most visibly in Greece.

The anti-austerity Syriza government capitulated to the EU’s demands for austerity and privatisation in exchange for a bailout. Instead, Syriza could have led the way for Europe’s working class by refusing to capitulate, leaving the EU, and mobilising the unions behind socialist nationalisation and economic planning.

Appeasement
The sequel sets itself in 2025, in a post-Brexit Britain where ‘the Armageddon that some had prophesised had not occurred, but neither had the economic miracle proposed by Brexiteers.

Harry Perkins has died. Fred Thompson, a left-wing journalist from the first novel, is selected as the Labour candidate in his former seat. Thompson wins, and through a string of events mirroring Jeremy Corbyn’s rise, becomes the leader of the Labour Party.

However, Thompson differs to Perkins in many ways. In his bid for leadership, he argues the party should “abandon some... cherished shibboleths” to gain power.

This is where Blairite spin doctor Alistair Campbell’s glowing quote should “abandon some... cherished shibboleths” begins to make sense.

The novel goes so far that Thompson meets with the character Sir Peregrine Craddock, who organised the coup in the first novel. Craddock wields enormous power in the media, and Thompson gains his support in exchange for Labour supporting Trident.

This expresses the long-held utopian notion of some reformist leaders in Labour, that by appeasing the capitalists enough you can convince them to hand power to you. But the more you capitulate, the less power you have - and only total capitulation will satisfy the bosses.

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The novel is especially concerned with the rise of far-right groups. It is dedicated to the murdered Labour MP Jo Cox. Themes within the novel imply that media normalisation of the far right, and sensationalist rhetoric on immigration during the EU referendum, caused the terror attack that took Cox’s life.

These are important factors. But it nominalises the material effect that capitalism and austerity have in driving some people to false alternatives and brutality.

The novel features a stereotypical skinhead who physically threatens Thompson. It does not go into his background, or explore why he might have become so alienated by society. He is presented as a two-dimensional thug.

This is why approaches to far-right extremism which limit themselves to pushing for media reform and regulation miss the point. To tackle the root cause of the rise of the far right, the trade union and Labour leaders must fight for the end of austerity and capitalism.

This means organising mass protests and building towards the threat of strike action, demanding jobs, homes and services for all, and a general election to end the Tory government which has pursued these anti-worker policies.

TV: Line of Duty
Twists and turns as organised crime meets police corruption

Derek McMillan

The TV series ‘Line of Duty’ is a work of fiction. Consequently, undercover police officers are not targeting trade unions and environmental campaigns.

Instead, they are involved in the rather more hazardous activity of infiltrating ‘OGCs’. That is one of many acronyms in the series, and stands for ‘organised crime gangs’.

The series is full of unexpected twists and turns which keep viewers on the edge of their seats. This review does not contain spoilers.

The show addresses the issue of how far an undercover officer has to act like a criminal in order to infiltrate a gang. They would be spotted and probably killed if they failed to join in with robberies. But what about killing other police officers to gain credibility?

Adrian Dunbar plays police boss Ted Hastings, and leaves the viewer wondering what is going on behind his bluff exterior. Martin Compston plays subordinate Steve Arnott, whose apparent abduction is one of many shockers in the series. Vicky McLure plays fellow detective Kate Fleming, whose struggle to succeed in a sexist environment is a theme.

Stephen Graham plays undercover-cop-gone-native John Corbett, alongside Rochenda Sandall as crime boss Lisa McQueen. The organised criminals are portrayed as a business venture - gangster capitalism, in fact.

Interesting as the series is, it should be a matter of concern that the only unit pursuing police corruption is a fictitious one. Corrupt senior police officers routinely retire on fat pensions. People die in custody with no questions asked.

Perhaps the truest line in the series is spoken by police lawyer Gill Bigelow (Polly Walker): “Sometimes we have a non-exclusive relationship with the truth.”

Parliament’s home affairs committee commented on the former Independent Police Complaints Commission that it was “woefully under-equipped and hamstrung in achieving its original objectives. It has neither the powers nor the resources that it needs to get to the truth when the integrity of the police is in doubt”.

It’s a far cry from ‘Dixon of Dock Green’, and I hope no one is fooled into thinking the police have the issue of corruption in hand. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Instead of letting the state mark its own homework, the Socialist Party calls for democratic working class control of police policy and staffing, and independent, trade union-led inquiries into police misconduct.

And only through workers’ struggle for socialism, where wealth and the state are controlled democratically by the working class, can we eradicate organised crime, and police repression in defence of profit.
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Send your news, views and criticism in no more than 150 words to: Submit via email: socialistspirit@socialistparty.org.uk or put it on our online, Socialists In Box, P.O. Box 24907, London EC1V 1TD (50p)

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Socialist
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15 May 2019

Northern Ireland

Water bosses plan to undermine nationalisation
No compensation for fat cats!

I was recently summoned to lunch with the boss of the Water Services Commission to discuss the ‘Back the Tag’ campaign for re-nationalisation and better wages and conditions for the council workers.

This was a staggering 2.4 billion litres of water lost in 2022-23 by only one water company, it is estimated that the water industry as a whole loses well over 10 billion litres a year.

The trade union’s demand that two out of three water bosses receive pensions worth twice the average state pension and that they meet their pensions through the rates.

This is not full nationalisation, it would be a triumph for the people to express a demand for a democratic control of the utilities and services.

The council wants to use the land for a new community building, with offices for community organisations and other public services.

An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards the setting of state pensions.

No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and scarring the health service.

Meetings and events
Reading Socialist Party
May 24th, 6pm, Alan Garnham Centre, 285-287 London Road, Reading, RG1 3EP. Phone 07960 693 509.

Tony Davison
CRS, Beverley

Call for an immediate 50% increase in the rate support grant to councils, which is paid to local authorities to meet the cost of maternity, sick pay, council tax support and other local support.

Salaries and pensions
The play is set entirely to verse and music, and the spirit in your belly. When the fogger en
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Protests against climate change and capitalism's degradation of our environment have been growing. Now the world's leading scientists warn that human society is in jeopardy from the accelerating decline of Earth's natural 'life-support systems'.

The Socialist Party argues that the profit-driven internal logic of the capitalist system will indeed push the planet to breaking point. That's why the only real solution to climate change is systemic, socialist change. The new inquest into the tragic death of a nine-year-old in London, which was linked to pollution levels, should underline the urgency of this.

Parliament has now agreed to view climate change as an emergency, with Corbyn correctly stating that individual lifestyle changes won't be enough to tackle the impending environmental catastrophe.

To truly tackle climate change, we would have to see a massive redistribution of wealth and power in our society. A recent report by the Committee on Climate Change has argued that it will be possible for the UK to go ‘carbon neutral’ by 2050. But this target won’t be reached while production remains organised in the interests of profit - not people and planet.

Fundamentally, you can’t control what you don’t own. Going carbon neutral would really require democratic planning of the economy - something only possible on the basis of public ownership of the big monopolies which currently dominate, starting with the nationalisation of the energy companies under democratic workers' control and management. In fact, the 2050 target might even be possible sooner if the economy were taken under workers' control, with socialist planning used to create a more equal and sustainable society.

In a socialist system, we could tackle the housing crisis by building high-quality, genuinely affordable council homes that run efficiently on renewable energy. We could utilise recent technology to revolutionise public transport, making it free. This could massively reduce the number of cars on the road.

By taking control of our society's wealth, instead of giving tax cuts to the richest, we could invest in research into green technology and energy. Under capitalism, the short-term profits of the rich will always take priority over the long-term needs of workers and the environment.

The climate crisis is a global issue. Trump's state visit here is planned from 3-5 June. The US president’s climate scepticism is no accident. He is backed by the fossil fuel industry, which has spent decades funding and promoting climate change denial.

That's why young people and workers, building on the recent youth climate strikes, need to build for mass action to protest against Trump and capitalism this summer. Capitalist politicians - including Trump and May - hold no solutions in stopping climate change. In fact they are a central part of the problem.

Only working-class people can really do this - by seizing the wealth currently concentrated in the hands of the super-rich few - and using it to build a new society based on solidarity and sustainability: socialism.