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# the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**



## Editorial

■ Sinister moves against Corbyn can be beaten by clear socialist policies >p2-3



50 years since the Stonewall riots >p8-9



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# SAME OLD MILLIONAIRE TORIES

## FIGHT TO KICK THEM OUT

**Elaine Brunskill**  
Socialist Party national committee

**Neither Boris Johnson nor Jeremy Hunt offers a decent future for workers, young people and others facing hardship. Does this mean we should be despondent? Absolutely not!**

The Tory party, once regarded as the most successful capitalist party in the world, is now a party riven

by divisions over Brexit and many other issues.

They are on the cusp of tearing themselves apart. Regardless of whether it is Johnson or Hunt who is elected Tory leader, neither can unite the deepening opposing views within their party on how best to defend the interests of capitalism.

Johnson is favoured by the Tory membership, which overwhelmingly has a small-business mentality. Neoliberal capitalism, the banks and big businesses that the Tory party exists to represent, may not want Hunt, but prefer him to Johnson.

Both candidates are key figures in the nasty party, presiding over austerity in the years following the 2007-08 economic crash.

The government's own figures on

child poverty make grim reading. Around four million children live in poverty. Seven in ten of these children come from working families!

Universal Credit continues to force claimants into debt. Low-paid, casual work and zero-hour contracts are now the norm for millions of workers, young and old. Welcome to 21st century Britain.

Against this backdrop of grinding poverty the two Tory hopefuls have set out their policies. Showing their fear of huge stockpiled anger against austerity, each has promised small increases in public funding, while also promising to maintain the 'discipline' of cutting them!

Eton-educated Johnson, who acts the court jester in a desperate attempt to detract from his brutal anti-working class attacks, is offering tax cuts for the super-rich and

corporations. Charterhouse-educated Hunt has suggested he would copy Donald Trump's tax cuts - again for the rich.

Hunt has promised to scrap student debt - but only for entrepreneurs. What about the nurses, teachers, engineers and many other workers who make a valuable contribution to society rather than profit?

Furthermore, Hunt refuses to rule out voting to toughen abortion law, thereby threatening women's right to choose. Johnson too is notorious for his divisive, bigoted rhetoric.

Amid all this it is clear we need a general election. The fear of a Corbyn-led government among the ruling capitalist class is palpable.

How dare well-heeled senior civil servants, cossetted mandarins who

are supposed to be 'non-partisan' but in reality defend capitalism, question whether Corbyn is up to the job?

This latest attack is all about the enthusiasm an anti-austerity government would awaken in the working class, not the man himself. It needs a robust response, not just from Corbyn, but from the wider labour and trade union movement (see editorial p2-3).

Workers need a mass party of our own with socialist policies. We must fight to make Labour into that.

Put pressure on the trade union leaders to call for a mass demo to build towards coordinated strike action to bring the government down. Only through such battles can we begin to see the lives of working-class people transformed.



# SINISTER MOVES AGAINST CORBYN CAN BE BEATEN BY CLEAR SOCIALIST POLICIES



## What we think

And then there were two. The Tories are entering the final stage of their leadership contest, with the choice between Johnson, the want-to-be British Trump and Hunt, the NHS wrecker. Given this crisis, once again it is no accident that new attacks are directed at Jeremy Corbyn. It has become a well-rehearsed practice - if the Tories are in trouble, news stories emerge about Corbyn, usually initiated by the Blairites at the behest of the capitalist establishment.

The latest claims over the weekend from 'anonymous' senior civil servants, are that he is not physically or mentally well enough to be prime minister. This comes on the back of 160 Labour Party peers and MPs signing a letter opposing the party's national executive committee decision to end left-wing MP Chris Williamson's suspension from Labour over false claims of antisemitism, many calling for Corbyn to withdraw the parliamentary whip from Williamson.

Both these incidents should set the alarm bells off and must put all those who support Jeremy Corbyn's leadership on a war-footing. It is clear that the Blairites are marshalling their forces, not necessarily for an immediate move but to prepare the ground to try again to force Corbyn out and restore Labour as a pliant tool in the hands of big business.

The allegations from 'senior civil servants' is a reminder of how far down the sinister road of dirty tricks the upper echelons of society will go in order to maintain the status quo when they believe that their class interests are at stake. In November 2015, just two months after Corbyn's election as Labour leader, the head of the armed forces General Sir Nicholas Houghton publicly criticised him.

It is an echo of the underhand measures that were used against Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson in the 1970s, which included smear campaigns allegedly initiated by MI5 and even coup plots. That was a period of intense class struggle as the post-war boom ended. Labour was propelled into power after waves of strike action against the employers and the Tory government of Heath.

The ruling class then were concerned that given the intensity of the class divide, Labour may not be able to control workers and act in their interests. The forerunners of the Socialist Party, the Militant Tendency, was a key Marxist element in the struggle to push Labour left at this stage.

Similarly now, the establishment are wary of a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government. The 'Corbyn surge' that developed at the 2017 general election because of the Labour manifesto, the most radical for decades - of renationalisation, abolishing tuition fees, £10-an-hour minimum wage - has reinforced their view that such a government would be an unreliable tool for them. They fear the effect that a Corbyn administration could have on the working-class, raising their horizons and pushing such a government further to the left. They will reflect that in these circumstances, closures such as Swindon Honda and Ford Bridgend as well as the insolvency at British Steel would be met with workers' demands that these plants would be nationalised by Labour.

The Blairites, led by Tom Watson share the ruling class's view of Corbyn and act as their agents inside Labour. They see the case of Chris Williamson and particularly Brexit as opportunities to challenge Corbyn. They want to test his resolve, which unfortunately has often been lacking. The Blairites are well aware that a new pre-



photo Steve German

# We're moving! Socialist Party secures new offices - help fund our step forward

Ken Douglas  
Socialist Party national treasurer

We are very pleased to announce that the Socialist Party has found new premises! After renting our old premises for nearly 20 years we have bought our new building which will be a big asset for our party.

All our members and supporters who have made big sacrifices to donate to our Building Fund can feel very proud that they have enabled us to secure our national centre for the foreseeable future. We will also be able to bring the printshop over as well; so for the first time since the 1990s having all our operations in one building.

In addition to the purchase price of the building and all the costs associated with that, there are also the costs associated with moving and fitting out the building. For instance installing all the cabling and power points will cost over £10,000; moving the press will cost around £4,000.

There are still over £25,000 in outstanding pledges to the Building Fund waiting to be paid and we would ask that these are redeemed as soon as possible. We would also appeal to all our members to make a further donation if they can to help with all these costs. Do you want to buy a brick in the new centre for £20, or several, or a small wall?

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate) (put "building fund" in comments)
- Donate with your card over the phone by calling 020 8988 8777
- Or make a cheque payable to "Socialist Party" and send it to Building Fund, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



photo James Ivens

## The Socialist's publication schedule

The Socialist newspaper is now moving from its standard weekly schedule to its fortnightly summer schedule. This is to accommodate the office move, related technical changes, and other summer events.

This issue of the Socialist, 1049, will run from Thursday 4 July until Wednesday 17 July.

During the following transition, there may be temporary interruptions to our communication and production. We thank all readers and sellers of the Socialist in advance for your patience and assistance.

We will return to our regular weekly schedule soon.  
**The editors**

general election period of trigger ballots for all Labour MPs has opened up. The Socialist Party has campaigned for the re-introduction of mandatory reselection and successfully won the position in general union Unite's policy conference. This has not been agreed by Labour. However, the rule change that was passed at the 2018 Labour Party conference has made the 'trigger' process for reselection contests easier to enact. A sign of the Labour right's concern is that Tom Watson's 'Future Britain Group' organised a recent seminar to help incumbent MPs to avoid being deselected.

It is therefore a scandal that Momentum leader Jon Lansman has supported the moves against Chris Williamson. Similarly, it is a serious mistake for others on the left, including John McDonnell if as reported he is pushing for Labour to take a Remain position. As union leaders such as Len McCluskey, Unite, and Dave Ward, Communication Workers Union, have argued, the most important 'Peoples Vote' is a general election to get rid of all the Tories, which Corbyn and the unions must mobilise their members to fight for.

If Jeremy Corbyn and the union leaders openly campaigned for an election on a socialist manifesto it would offer the chance to unite workers on both sides of the Brexit divide. Policies on public ownership of Royal Mail and the railways and if extended to the likes of British

Steel would come up against the neo-liberal rules of the EU and expose its anti-worker character.

This was revealed by pro-Remain economist Martin Wolf in the Financial Times: "It is correct that if the UK left the EU completely, it could abandon an active competition policy and waste large amounts of money in propping up failed companies. Why it should view either as attractive is a mystery." ('The Brexit delusion of taking back control' March 26 2019). Tell that to 4,000 steelworkers facing the sack in Scunthorpe on just statutory redundancy of a maximum of £15,000! With this approach, Corbyn could totally transform the perception many workers have of him and cut the ground from underneath the Blairites and their big business backers.

The class lines are being drawn. Even before an election, the Blairites are intent on destabilising Corbyn's leadership. Behind them stand the Tories and the whole capitalist establishment, including the heads of the civil services and armed forces, the media and the judiciary. Their intervention is a warning of how they will try to frustrate a democratically elected left government.

But the organised working-class is still potentially the most powerful force in society, providing they are mobilised behind a socialist programme that can replace diseased capitalism and offer a way forward for the majority in society.

A WEEKEND OF DISCUSSION & DEBATE ON SOCIALIST IDEAS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

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020 8988 8777 editors@socialistparty.org.uk @socialistpaper

Editor: Sarah Sachs-Eldridge  
Workplace: Scott Jones

News: Ian Pattison  
Opinion: James Ivens

Campaigns: Dave Carr  
Sales: Chris Newby

Photographer: Paul Mattsson  
Website: Judy Beishon



## Privatised water scandal

# NATIONALISATION IS THE ANSWER TO SOUTHERN WATER COVER UP

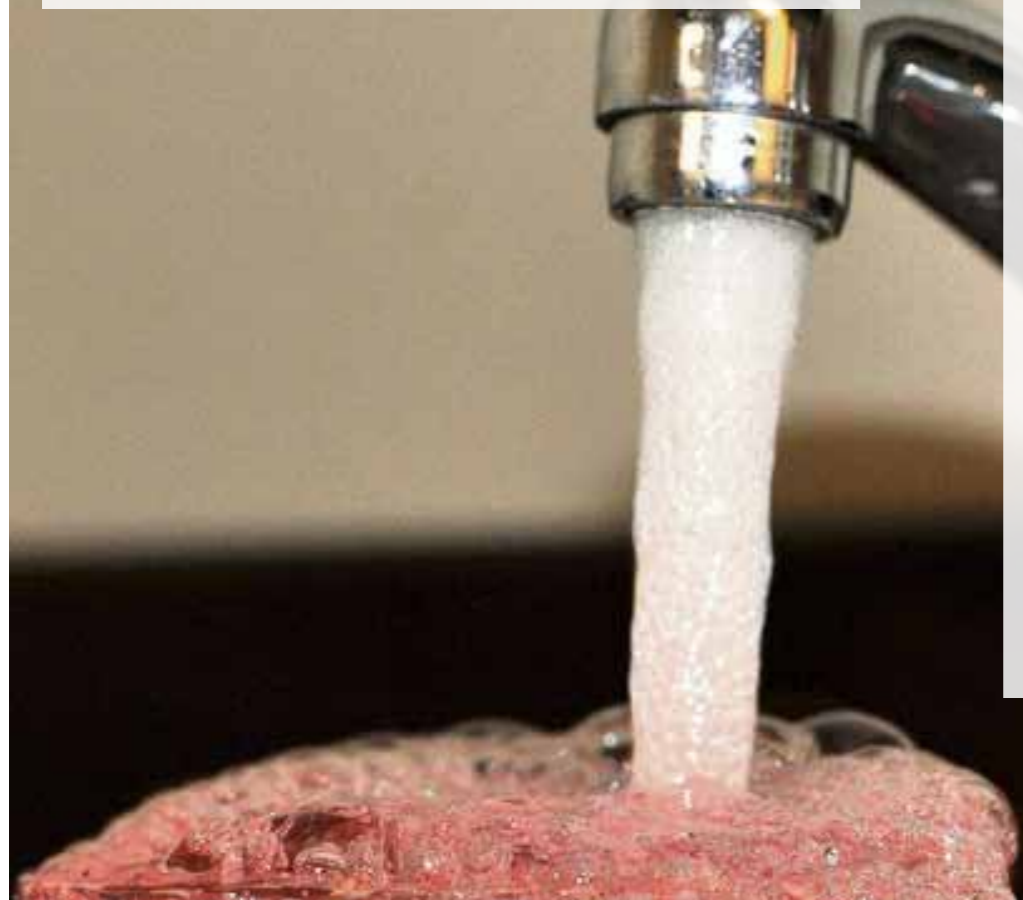


photo USAF/John Turner/CC

**Daniel Gilmore**  
Newcastle Socialist Party

An investigation into Southern Water by the industry regulator Ofwat has demanded that the company pay a £126 million penalty package, the largest it has ever imposed. The Environment Agency is now also looking into pressing criminal charges.

Southern Water serves around two million properties across Kent,

Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Each household will only get a pathetic £61 rebate, spread over five years.

Southern Water and its senior managers attempted a cover-up. They manipulated wastewater samples to deceive investigators and the public.

Ofwat chief executive Rachel Fletcher commented that "the company was being run with scant regard for its responsibilities to society and the environment".

Ofwat's report found that South-

ern Water had caused a number of wastewater spills. There were regular failures at sewage treatment sites through lack of investment and maintenance.

These fines are meagre when compared to the profits that the company has managed to wring out of their customers. Since 2007, Southern Water has paid out more than £300 million worth of dividends to its shareholders on the back of lies and chronic mismanagement

The company made £155 million

in profit in 2018 alone. Matthew Wright, the chief executive of Southern Water at the time, received more than £5 million overall for his role in the deceit.

This incident is not isolated to Southern Water. Just nine private companies control the country's water industry

Last year, Thames Water was penalised £120 million by Ofwat for failing to reach its targets for controlling leaks. In January, Northumbrian Water was fined £500,000 after supplying water deemed "unfit for

human consumption."

It is clear that the current capitalist system is endangering public safety as well as our ecosystem. We demand the nationalisation of the water industry as well as all other utilities, democratically controlled and managed by the workers in those sectors.

Any compensation should only be paid on proven need, with no more of our cash going towards the big shareholders whose greed and incompetence has put us all at risk in the pursuit of profit.

## Even social-care bosses say cuts have gone too far

# FUND NEEDED SERVICES NOW

**Eric Segal**  
East Kent Socialist Party

Jeremy Hunt, in a masterful understatement, said: "I think, having been responsible for health and social care, that some of the cuts in social care did go too far."

Social care is the day-to-day support given to people who need extra help because of old age, disability or other health conditions.

Since the financial crash there have been £7.7 billion cuts to adult social-care budgets. And a further £700 million of cuts are planned this year.

What does this mean in practice? Social care for people with HIV in Kent was cut in 2014 leaving victims of this devastating disease without any social support.

### Failing people

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Care has commented on the government's record in social care: "The system is not only failing financially, it is failing people." Homecare closures have increased by 113% and impacted 7,019 people in 2018-19.

Two thirds of adult-social-services directors think the cuts can't be met this year nor do they think they can continue to meet statutory duties. Since 2010, the grants councils in England receive from central government have been cut by half, and their overall spending power by just under a third.

Spending on adult social care had already fallen by 10% by 2013. As a result, councils have been spending a growing proportion of their budgets on social care.

Local authorities spent 34% of their budget for public services on adult social care in 2009-10. By 2017-18, this was 41%.

According to the Times newspaper, local authorities control budgets totalling £114 billion, and last year were sitting on £21 billion of non-ring fenced reserves.

Councils have the power to fight

back against cuts.

History shows us that socialist-led Labour councils, like Liverpool in the 1980s, together with the trade unions have the power to stop cuts through mass campaigns against austerity.

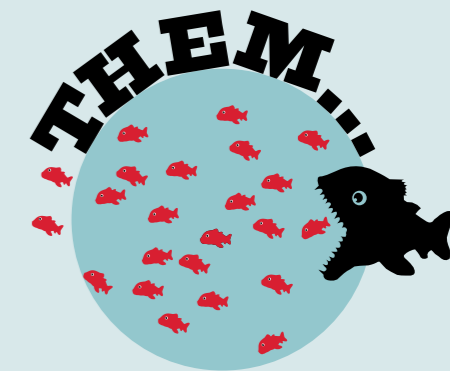
Councils should refuse to make cuts. Instead they should use

reserves and borrowing powers to give them time to build a mass campaign to win the stolen money back.

Together with a Corbyn-led Labour government armed with socialist policies to begin the process of rebuilding our welfare state and the services we need.



photo WorldSkills UK/CC



### Royal eviction

The Crown Estate, a property portfolio owned by the Queen, has been evicting people. It wanted to sell the properties for profit.

Since 2014, she's made £1.1 billion in property sales. Over 100 tenants were evicted 2014-18.

And there have been 100 complaints about the state of her stock since 2017. She even received £250,000 paid via housing benefit.

Following the Barking fire in east London, the Socialist Party said the private owners have lost the right to own the properties, they should be confiscated. It's the same for Her Majesty.

We need rent control to cap rents. The construction companies and massive landlords should have their resources nationalised under the democratic control of the working class, so everyone can be given somewhere cheap and suitable to live.

### Plane parody

Network Rail told its staff in Wales to fly because it was cheaper. One MP said it was

"beyond parody."

Making public transport more expensive doesn't help workers or the environment. Like transport union RMT, the Socialist Party supports rail renationalisation.

### Council cuts

One in three councils believe they will be unable to provide statutory services in three years, according to the Local Government Association, the body that represents local authorities. Two thirds think they'll run out of money for these vital services later.

By next year, 60p out of every £1 councils receive from central government will have been lost since 2010.

But councils have huge power - they should use their massive reserves and borrowing powers to refuse to pass on Tory cuts. If Jeremy Corbyn made this call he'd win mass support.

The local government committees of trade unions Unison and Unite already back this. However, if councillors are unwilling to stand up for communities, they should stand aside for working-class fighters who will.

# Gig-economy exploitation doubles

## Unions must fight for decent rights at work

**Ted Mooney**  
Liverpool Socialist Party

The 'gig economy', formerly known as 'casual labour' - and much beloved of the dock employers for hundreds of years worldwide, is on the rise. Tony Blair famously called it "the flexible workforce".

It is spreading like terminal cancer in Britain. The Trade Union Congress (TUC) has reported a University of Hertfordshire survey that shows the number of employees earning their living this way has doubled since 2016 to 4.7 million people.

Most of these are young workers. One in ten workers are employed in the gig economy, three years ago it was one in 20.

The benefits of casual labour for employers is that they don't have to guarantee minimum working hours, wages, pensions and even national insurance - as workers could be classified as self-employed. There is no sickness benefit or holiday pay either.

For workers - desperate for employment to feed their families and pay the bills - there is often no option other than to take such employment.

The main culprits are not only Uber or Deliveroo, but agency workers suffer too. Men and women are employed to satisfy occasional needs of established workplaces or provide services such as cleaning.

They endure gig-economy terms and conditions, for four or five

years, with a promise of a 'proper' job, providing they keep their nose clean. A discrete way of saying, no trade union activities here.

Also, many earn small fees for delivering parcels for home-shopping companies. They are paid only by the parcel they successfully deliver.

They have to return if no one is available to accept the delivery. They receive nothing for the fuel for their car.

Many workers take this type of employment to supplement their income from other, poorly paid jobs. Private-hire taxi drivers are employed to deliver goods for Amazon, between dropping off passengers.

The media, the Tories, some right-wing Labour MPs and the bosses hail this system as a welcome development, pointing out that

many employees welcome it. Some workers welcome flexible working because they see no alternative because wages are so low. They need extra income.

Some have no pension to fall back on and a Zurich UK study found more pensioners working in the gig economy.

It is good news that the TUC is highlighting this archaic development. But, what are they going to do

about it?

The unions should demand the right to full-time contracts and equal employment conditions. The main force capable of ending this system is the workers themselves.

What is needed is a trade union mobilisation. Workplaces should be leafleted, followed by union recruitment meetings. And industrial action to enforce the issue, if necessary.



**Join the fightback!**  
**Join the Socialists!**

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## WHAT WE SAW

Times journalist James Kirkup asked this: "Why aren't the wannabe PMs talking about in-work poverty?" on 26 June. The Tories aren't, but the Socialist is.

We carried an article on the same day 'Union action can tackle 58% working poverty rate'.

Liverpool Socialist Party member Roger Bannister said: "The Institute for Fiscal Studies points to a sharp rise in [working] poverty, now in excess of eight million households, representing a majority, 58%, of all people in poverty in the UK."

"Two of the most important factors behind this situation are higher housing costs and lower earnings growth.

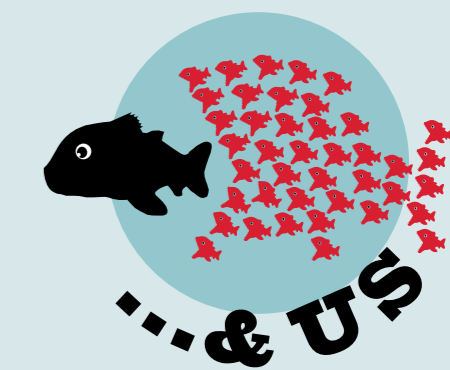
"The labour movement must tackle increasing working poverty head on, with the trade unions campaigning to recruit poorer workers, to lead campaigns including industrial action, to take them out of low pay.

"The human misery of poverty is a



product of capitalism, which clearly exists to satisfy human greed via

massive profits, rather than to meet human need."



Have you got news for the fishes? Email [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)

## Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

July-August issue includes...

- What lies behind the huge land grab?
- Brexit: Capitalism's dilemma, three years on



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## London Arriva bus drivers vote for strike action over bullying and workload

Andy Beadle  
Former bus driver

London bus drivers have had enough! In a consultative ballot of Unite the Union members at Arriva, drivers voted overwhelmingly for industrial action.

The concern is "failure to adhere to policies and procedures and the erosion of terms and conditions without proper consultation." Basically management bullying.

Arriva operates about a fifth of London buses. Across 15 garages, drivers have voted 1,854 to 69 to back the strike.

Like other workers, many are in debt and feel obliged to work on their rest days. Drivers work five days and get two rest days each week from Saturday to Friday. Most shifts either start very early, finish very late or they are long 'middles'.

Especially in the long summer holiday period, garages have a shortage of workers and rely on overtime to cover the work. Occasionally, you see the supervisor behind the counter tearing their hair out trying to cajole a driver: "Can you do me a favour? Will you work a rest day for me?"

Drivers sometimes need a change of rest day from their rota for personal or family reasons. Most

garages, most of the time, are not particularly helpful. Some drivers requesting rest day swaps are being refused an exchange unless they agree to work a rest day. This profit-before-safety approach is just one of many bullying ways so widespread on London buses.

Ironically, Transport for London (TfL) is about to publish findings on safety concerns over the long hours culture in the industry. Without union strength, TfL could easily turn a blind eye to this or resolve it to workers' detriment in other ways.

Anti-union laws mean there are several hoops to jump through before the Arriva ballot translates into action. But this welcome news has got others asking, "why not in our garage, too?" An Arriva strike could be the spark for wider action.



## CONSTRUCTION WORKERS PROTEST IN DEFENCE OF UNION RIGHTS AND AGAINST ANTI-WORKER EU



Steel construction workers protest Siemens photo Keith Gibson

Keith Gibson and Janet Gibson  
Hull Socialist Party

70 steel construction workers from Humberstone and Yorkshire gathered outside Siemens' Turbine Factory, in Waterside, Lincoln on 28 June, to protest in defence of their trade union-agreed 'national agreement

for the engineering construction industry' (NAECI).

Siemens will be the major contractor responsible for overseeing the subcontractor companies who will build the new 'combined-cycle gas turbine' at Keadby power station near Scunthorpe. The Keadby project will be a NAECI site, so why the protest?

The Lindsey oil refinery strikes in 2009 (see 'When militant action stopped the race to the bottom' at socialistparty.org.uk) successfully placed overseas steel construction workers under the protection of NAECI which guarantees national pay rates, terms and conditions.

The Lindsey strike also secured a new section of NAECI enforcing a 'contractual' right to equal opportunities.

Yet ten years on, these workers are still having to monitor, protest or strike against construction companies who utilise the EU's 'posted workers' directive' under the guise of 'freedom of movement' to employ overseas workers on the cheap.

This in turn has seen construction bosses breach the equal opportunity rights of UK construction workers. Little wonder the majority of steel construction workers understand the need to leave the EU bosses' club!

I addressed the protest, as a member of the Socialist Party and GMB union, voicing construction workers' anger at breaches in equal opportunities, against blacklisting, the circumventing of NAECI and the need for democratic accountability of trade union officials.

I proposed that the next step should be to lobby parliament in defence of NAECI against the EU's posted workers' directive. This was put to the vote and overwhelmingly passed.

I outlined the need for a workers' socialist Brexit and explained the need for international worker solidarity against construction companies attempting to override NAECI and workers' rights.

## STEPS FORWARD AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES AT UNITE RULES CONFERENCE

Kevin Parslow  
Delegate, Unite union rules conference (personal capacity)

General union Unite's 2019 rules conference made some important steps forward but missed opportunities to develop member participation. It also passed amendments that could be dangerous to the left in the future.

Unite's retired and community members were both promised democratic regional and national structures.

The union's executive council has been forced, due to the opposition of its youth committees, to reverse its previous decision to limit the age of participation in the youth structures from 30 to 27. After it was changed in 2018, there had been a halving in the number of activists.

This reflects that many young workers don't get active in their union until their late 20s. However,

contributions from young members showed that in hospitality and other sectors, some young workers are taking on representative roles even in their teens.

A proposal from Unite LE/1228 Waltham Forest Council branch, supported by Socialist Party members, for an annual branch delegate-based policy conference, fell when an executive council statement was carried.

This recognised the need to increase attendance at policy conference, and to look at the structure of all the union's conferences. But it halved the current attendance at future rules conferences as these were 'inward looking' and 'technical'.

A union's rules cannot be divorced from its industrial and political strategy as they reflect its attitude to action.

The passing of a rules amendment to raise the threshold for nominations for candidates seeking to become general secretary of the

union were a step back. Previously, 50 nominations from at least two regions were necessary. Now, 5% of branches (currently over 3,000) in at least three regions will be required. This could be used against left candidates in the future if the right were to ever gain control of the union.

The danger of identity politics in the labour movement was revealed in the equalities debate. A delegate who raised serious questions about the effect of a rule amendment that could exclude some other groups from what will become the 'black and Asian ethnic minorities committee' was verbally attacked from the speakers' rostrum.

Rulebooks and laws cannot erase racism in a trade union or society as a whole. Only fighting policies against racism and austerity can begin to eliminate the divisions in organisations of the working class.

These policies were present at the Socialist Party meeting, introduced by party executive committee member Rob Williams. Attended by a number of delegates, including a Honda Swindon worker, the need for Unite to be at the head of movements fighting plant closures and redundancies was emphasised as part of the struggle for socialist change.

Like Socialist Party on Facebook

## Angry Usdaw members strike at Sainsbury's distribution centre over sick pay cut

Scott Jones  
Chair, Usdaw East London C026 branch (personal capacity)

Dozens of members of shop workers' union Usdaw picketed Sainsbury's Waltham Point distribution centre in Essex for most of their 24-hour strike against changes to sickness policy.

The solid strike was called by the warehouse workers who are angry at a proposed reduction in sick pay from 26 weeks to just two weeks!

The picket line was joined throughout the day by Socialist Party members including Usdaw president Amy Murphy. Usdaw members from branches in East London, Bishop's Stortford and others also brought solidarity.

Workers were buoyed by taking strike action. Turnout in the ballot was 67% with 73% voting in favour. And there was a good mood on the picket line which brought many of the site's 380 workers together as they talked about other issues such as workload, bullying and pay.

One worker told the Socialist: "We've walked out today over the ridiculous attack on our attendance policy, but it could have been for a whole number of things that we have had a gutful of. But this strike is a great start."

There was also anger at the current government and both Tory leadership candidates, especially Boris Johnson, and their record on the NHS and austerity cuts. All agreed there should be a general election.

This is the second distribution strike organised by Usdaw in the greater London area in as many years as Dagenham Tesco workers walked out in May 2018 for better pay.

The Socialist Party stands in solidarity with those striking back against these attacks and for better pay.

Management doesn't want retail and distribution workers making a habit of standing up for themselves, but the increased fightback shows the effect Amy Murphy, who was elected with support for industrial action one of her main policies, has had as president.



Ushaw members picket Sainsbury's Waltham Point, and are joined by president Amy Murphy (inset, left) photos Usdaw Activist

## Socialists in PCS union launch new group to fight general secretary election

Socialist Party members in PCS

A new group has been formed within civil service union PCS's Left Unity grouping. The Broad Left Network is a campaign for a fighting, democratic union made up of socialists and supporters of PCS Left Unity.

The election campaign for the assistant general secretary of PCS raised issues that remain central to the future of our union.

The majority of the Left Unity national committee failed to actively campaign for the election of the candidate chosen by Left Unity members. Some even campaigned for a rival candidate who was not in Left Unity.

This led to the loss of the election and a victory for a political opponent. We cannot rely on these members to respect the decision of Left Unity members in the general secretary election if their preferred candidate is not successful.

The Broad Left Network stands for: A campaign to restore lay democracy and control and to strengthen the democratic accountability of the union to its lay structures.

- For a national campaign to defend jobs, pay, conditions and services. Co-ordinating action and campaigns on issues such as pensions, compensation scheme, jobs and office closures.
- For organising and fighting for PCS recognition across all private companies delivering work that should be done by permanent civil servants.
- For a return to national bargaining across the civil service.
- For an independent political voice for PCS.
- For a Jeremy Corbyn-led government that increases pay, stops the cuts and office closures, restores national bargaining, renationalises privatised services, introduces better rights at work, and scraps and replaces Universal Credit with a fair social security system.

### General secretary election

At PCS conference in May, leaflets supporting current general secretary Mark Serwotka's election campaign were distributed by some Left Unity national committee members. At that time no Left Unity procedure for deciding its candidate had taken place or been proposed. Many Left

Unity activists were outraged by this blatant attempt to pre-empt a Left Unity democratic decision.

The majority on the Left Unity national committee, organised in the 'Socialist View' group, has now made arrangements to hold an election to decide its general secretary candidate.

Left Unity rules require candidates to give a signed undertaking to recommend and campaign for whoever wins the nomination. However, the majority on the national committee are refusing to implement the rules.

The Broad Left Network is proposing to nominate Marion Lloyd. Marion is a leading activist within the union, a PCS national executive committee member and president of the PCS group in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Serwotka and his supporters in Left Unity claim concerns about the under-representation of women in the union. They line up behind the slogan of 'Step Aside Brother' - a top-down, artificial process. But even within the limitations of this approach their commitment is shown to be a complete sham.

At the June national executive committee Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd was removed from the union's key lay body - the policy and resources committee.

At the Midlands regional committee in June they challenged Sian Ruddock for the chair position with a male Socialist Workers Party member.

At the Department for Work and Pensions committee meeting in June they removed Rachel Heemskerk from the PCS trade union-side team, resulting in an all-male delegation.

We consistently campaign for the removal of all barriers to the involvement of women in PCS and the labour movement generally. But we don't agree with mathematical formulae and other bureaucratic approaches.

The Broad Left Network aims to build support for our demands and to campaign for candidates who share these views, and to build a fighting, democratic broad left and to challenge the control exercised by the union officialdom and its echoes in the lay structures.

See the full statement and get in touch at pcsbln.wordpress.com

## Birmingham teachers strike for safe working environment

Bob Severn  
Birmingham South East Socialist Party

NASUWT teaching union members at Starbank School (Hob Moor Road site) in Birmingham took the first of two days' strike action on 27 June over the school's policies to deal with student behaviour.

Some students have been reported to carry knives and threaten staff. There is violence in the classroom and playground, including a weekly 'Thursday fight'. Staff have been physically harmed. For example, one teacher has been punched in the face, and another threatened with a weapon attack last year by a student who is still allowed to attend.

National Education Union members could join the second day of action in July. The teachers want a safe working environment for staff and students.

While negotiations have introduced some new school policies, they have not resulted in practical measures that address poor behaviour and support classroom teachers.

Paul Nesbitt, NASUWT West Midlands executive member, said: "The lack of effective action by the employer means we have been left with little choice but to call this strike action."

nationalshop stewardsnetwork

2019 NSSN conference

Saturday 6 July, 11am - 4.30pm

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

Confirmed speakers:  
Mick Cash, RMT general secretary; Sharon Graham, Unite executive officer; Ronnie Draper, BFAWU general secretary; Amy Murphy, Usdaw president; Dave Ward, CWU, Lyn Marie O'Hara, Glasgow Union shop steward; and Paddy Brennan, Honda Unite convenor shopstewards.net



**Michael Johnson**  
Socialist Party LGBT+ group

**P**ride events around the world this year are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, widely seen as the birth of modern LGBT+ rights movements.

The original pride marches following the riots were political protest marches. Today, big business has taken them over to advance the cause of private profit, and at a safe historic distance capitalism 'celebrates' Stonewall in a hypocritical effort to attract the 'pink pound'.

While 50 years of struggle since Stonewall have won positive changes in laws and attitudes, today, a mass, working-class movement to end LG-BTphobia - and the capitalist system which sustains it - is still needed.

There had been movements in the struggle for LGBT+ rights prior to the riots. The campaign to decriminalise homosexuality in the UK won some victories in 1967. In the United States, there was work by groups like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis.

The Mattachine Society was founded by communists and trade union activists, one of the earliest "gay rights" organisations in the US. It had been involved in campaigns challenging homophobic policing and workplace firings.

However, by the time of the Stonewall riots it had largely become focussed on avoiding confrontation and "assimilating" into the official institutions of capitalist society. This saw its support decline in the lead-up to the riots.

This was at a time of collective struggles like the US civil rights, Black Panther and anti-war movements, and also more individualistic phenomena like 1960s 'counterculture'. In other parts of the world, there were national liberation struggles and events like the revolutionary general strike in France in May 1968.

There was an atmosphere of resistance to the status quo, but with many different ideas about how to achieve liberation, sometimes confused and contradictory. Meanwhile, repression and harassment of LGBT+ people were widespread.

The Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street was one of several New York bars run by the mob due to legal prohibition of gay clubs. It was the only such bar where dancing was allowed.

This was its main draw since reopening as a gay bar, along with its location in New York's bohemian Greenwich Village. It was especially popular with younger LGBT+ people.

Police raids on gay bars were frequent, once a month on average for each bar. Bar managements usually knew beforehand due to police tip-offs, and raids occurred early enough in the evening that business could commence after the police had finished.

During a typical raid, police turned on the lights, lined up the customers, and checked their identification cards. Those without ID or dressed in full drag were arrested; others were allowed to leave.

On Saturday 28 June 1969, the Stonewall Inn was raided as normal. However, that night, the raid did not go as planned.



Fed-up patrons refused to present their identification or have their gender 'verified'. The police decided to take everyone present to the police station, after separating customers wearing drag in a room in the back of the bar.

Patrons who had not been arrested were released, but they did not quickly leave as they would usually have done. Instead, a crowd began to grow and watch outside the bar. Within minutes, over a hundred people had gathered.

As officers escorted customers to police wagons, one arrested woman shouted to bystanders: "Why don't you guys do something?" An officer attacked her while forcing her into the back of the car, the outraged crowd went berserk, and the riot began.

They pelted the police with coins, 'paying off' the cops just as bar owners had to if they wanted to avoid raids. The crowd continued to grow.

One participant described it as "just kind of like everything over the years had come to a head... Everyone in the crowd felt that we were never going to go back. It was like the last straw."

"It was time to reclaim something that had always been taken from us... It was total outrage, anger, sorrow... We felt that we had freedom at last, or freedom to at least show that we demanded freedom... The bottom line was, we weren't going to go away. And we didn't."

By 4am, the police had regrouped and nearly cleared the streets. However, this was not the end of the fight. Graffiti quickly appeared on the walls of the Stonewall Inn, with slogans declaring "drag power", "they invaded our rights", "support gay power", and "legalise gay bars."

The next night, rioting again engulfed Christopher Street. Thousands had gathered in front of the Stonewall, and street battling raged until 4am for the second night running.

Further protests and riots occurred against the local newspaper, Village Voice, after it ran reports of the riots which described them as the "forces of faggotry" and "Sunday fag follies." One witness to these remarked: "The word is out... The fags have had it with oppression."

#### Wave of political struggle

The riots themselves were an outburst of stored-up anger. The real change started to happen because they were also a watershed moment in the public visibility of LGBT+ repression and conflict, and a wave of organisation and political struggle followed.

The Gay Liberation Front was quickly formed, directly challenging politicians, the police and media on LGBTphobia on a regular basis. This was followed by the Gay Activists Alliance. It sought to focus on LGBT+ rights as a single issue, in contrast to the wider struggles the Gay Liberation Front tried to connect with.

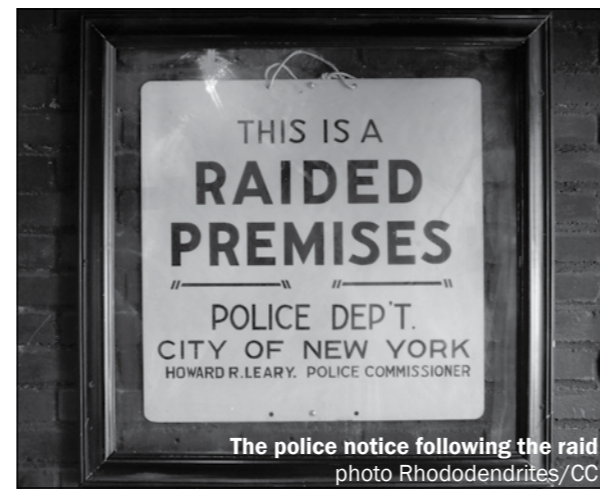
Increased militant activism in the fight for LGBT+ rights wasn't only occurring in New York. Frank Kameny, a leading organiser of the Mattachine Society, estimated that prior to Stonewall there were around 50 to 60 LGBT+ rights groups in the US. A year after Stonewall there were "at least 1,500."

These groups and other activists organised the Christopher Street Liberation Day parade on the first

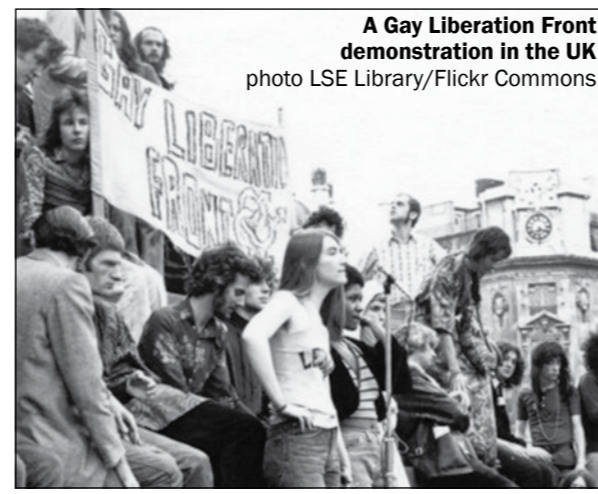


Police repression at the Stonewall Inn, June 1969

# STONEWALL RIOTS' LEGACY SHOWS NEED FOR SOCIALIST STRUGGLE TO WIN LGBT+ LIBERATION



The police notice following the raid photo Rhododendrites/CC



A Gay Liberation Front demonstration in the UK photo LSE Library/Flickr Commons



anniversary of the Stonewall riots. Another year later, these parades would spread across the US and internationally, the basis of today's pride events.

These early marches were a far cry from the corporatised prides of today. They had radical demands and liberation to the fore. Activist Marsha P Johnson, who had taken part in the riots, explained she joined the marches as "I want my gay rights now!"

While the Stonewall riots were not the start of the fight for LGBT+ rights, they played a major role in sparking the steps forward in US organisation and struggle in the ensuing years, from challenges to anti-LGBT+ legislation to the battle against the Aids crisis and recent successes such as marriage equality.

Stonewall sparked similar steps forward around the world, including the spread of pride events, with now over 100 occurring across the UK. And also activism like the development of a sister Gay Liberation Front group which played a similar role in Britain.

Britain's 1984-85 miners' strike was also crucial in linking the organised working class and LGBT+ rights movement. Groups like Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners joined the struggle against a common enemy, the Tory government and its big business paymasters. This was part of the process of the trade union movement taking up the struggle against LGBT+ oppression more seriously.

#### LGBT+ struggle today

Last year, a British government survey of LGBT+ people found two-thirds are afraid of holding a same-sex partner's hand in public, or being open about their sexuality, for fear of a negative reaction.

More than a quarter of young LGBT+ people in education have experienced verbal harassment, insults or being forcibly outed. Nearly all LGBT+ people experiencing harassment do not report it, citing reasons like "it happens all the time" and the feeling that nothing would change if they did.

A new report from the Trade Union Congress has found that 68% of LGBT+ people have faced sexual harassment at work. Of these, two in three did not report the harassment they faced to their employers. Furthermore, a quarter of those who didn't report chose not to for fear of being outed.

Homophobia and transphobia are rooted in society based on class. Capitalism defends the interests of super-rich big business owners at the expense of ordinary people who create the goods and services that make the owners' profits. The system has a vested interest in fostering division and prejudice to maintain the privilege of the ruling elite.

When in crisis like today, capitalism threatens even the gains won through struggle in the past. Pro-capitalist politicians try to whip up bigotry to distract from the real enemy, the capitalist class.

And austerity, trying to make ordinary people pay for the bosses' economic crisis, hits groups already discriminated against under capitalism hardest. The housing crisis, cuts to homelessness services and shelters, cuts to NHS funding, and many other austerity attacks affect all working-



**These early marches were a far cry from the corporatised prides of today - they had radical demands and liberation to the fore... capitalism has a vested interest in fostering division and prejudice**

class people, and are hitting LGBT+ people extra sharply.

So defeating austerity and LGBT+ oppression requires rebuilding working-class struggle against capitalism. By joining in the struggle alongside workers and young people, and fighting for a socialist alternative, we can win!

A socialist society, based on public ownership and democratic working-class control of society's resources, would be run by the majority, for the majority. By planning to provide for all instead of competing to enriching the bosses, the conditions of inequality and scarcity which sustain prejudice would begin to evaporate, and personal relationships could be freed from the restrictions imposed by class-based society.

In building such a movement, political pride events are as important as ever. Taking the arguments for LGBT+ liberation into the trade unions and workplaces, onto the campuses and estates, and connecting them to the struggle for socialist policies, we could rally support behind the call for genuine liberation of the working class and all oppressed people.

Since 2010 we've seen large numbers of LGBT+ services close due to lack of funding. LGBT+ people are disproportionately more likely to experience mental health problems or homelessness; all areas where we are seeing huge cuts.

We need to link up with workers to fight back against these cuts, and the housing crisis, poverty pay, precarious work, and attacks on our terms and conditions faced across the country.

The Tories - the party of big business - are in crisis. In the last three years two prime ministers have been forced to resign. The splits over Brexit have been laid bare by the shenanigans in parliament over May's deal. Central for all of us fighting against oppression and austerity is a campaign for a general election to get the Tories out!

But the fight for a Jeremy Corbyn-led government with socialist policies also means fighting to remove the representatives of capitalism in the Labour party - the Blairites who pass on the cuts and attack Corbyn's anti-austerity platform - and to transform Labour into a mass workers' party.

At pride this year, we should not just celebrate the memory of the Stonewall riots, but continue their legacy of organising for militant action. Not just at once a year pride events, but in our trade unions and community groups; fighting not just against individual attacks, but for a change in society, for socialism, that means genuine liberation for all.





# Coventry says no to congestion charge

Dave Nellist  
Coventry Socialist Party

Coventry's Labour council has spent two years drawing up a plan to tackle nitrogen dioxide hotspots in two parts of the city.

This plan includes laudable attempts to promote the use of electric vehicles and create more cycle routes, but less-welcome traffic-management proposals to redirect vehicles through side streets to reduce concentrations on main roads. Overall the cost would be £83 million.

The government, however, rejected the scheme and instructed the council to bring in a chargeable 'clean air zone' - a congestion charge - instead. This would be at the highest level, class D, and could charge cars up to £12.50 a day.

52,000 people work in the proposed zone, which also covers 80,000 residents in some of the poorest parts of the city. The council admits the charge would "disproportionately fall on disadvantaged social groups

that have non-compliant vehicles and for who affordability is an issue."

In other words, it's a tax on those who can't afford new, cleaner cars! We are being punished by taxation when what is really needed is a serious attempt to improve the environment through public investment and better public transport, which could more quickly reduce people's reliance on older vehicles.

Deteriorating air quality from vehicle emissions of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter is causing 40,000 premature deaths a year, according to the Royal College of Physicians. Associated carbon dioxide emissions worsen climate change.

Everyone agrees with the urgent need to tackle these problems. The question is how quickly can that be achieved, and who should pay?

The government has identified 22 cities where nitrogen dioxide emissions from traffic will exceed legal limits by 2020 and has instructed local councils to come up with plans to combat the problem. Many involve charges.

# For public investment in clean transport, not punishment taxes

So, not for the first time, the Tories are talking green while dumping the responsibility onto local councils and the cost onto ordinary working people.

Coventry Socialist Party has started a petition against the scheme which has over 6,500 signatures. The petition opposes government imposition of a congestion charge in Coventry. We call instead for determined action to improve air quality, protect people's health and tackle climate change. The best solution would be free public transport in the city, using environmentally friendly vehicles, with proper public investment and planning of rail and bus services in the public interest not for private profit.

There are 120 cities around the world with free public transport - joined a few weeks ago by Luxembourg. If the government is serious about this being a national problem, let's have a national strategy, not punishment for those who struggle to afford change. For example, nationalisation of Ford's

Bridgend engine plant could develop it into a centre of excellence for clean vehicles.

The Labour council says it's against a charge, but in June it accepted £4.5 million from the Tory government to begin preparations.

Labour says if the charge comes in it would be at a lower rate of £8 a day. But buried in its documents it admits that over ten years the cost to residents and workers would be £147 million - in costs of upgrading, and charges paid. That's just under £15 million a year!

The council has conducted no serious public consultation. It's almost as if they hope this will slip through unnoticed.

Over the next few weeks Socialist Party members will be out on public stalls, organising leafleting of the affected area, and visiting trade unions and community organisations. We will build support for a socialist alternative to pollution based on clean, cheap and frequent public transport, and public investment into clean vehicles to make them affordable to all.



Campaigning against the congestion charge in Coventry photo Coventry Socialist Party

# TV: Years and Years Engaging family drama pushes confused, reactionary message

The Lyons family in Years and Years: excellent cast, poor commentary photo BBC



Ian Pattison  
East London Socialist Party

The six-part political and family drama Years and Years follows one family from the present day over 15 years.

Creator Russell T Davies also made *Queer as Folk* and relaunched *Doctor Who*. He uses his latest show to comment on today's political issues by turning them up to 'eleven' on the dial.

The cast is excellent. And the family dynamic is compelling. It does a good job of engaging the audience in a relatively entertaining wider story.

In good science fiction like *Charlie Brooker's Black Mirror*, an aspect of advanced technology is thrown into the plot to create extreme circumstances in order to better explore how people interact with one another.

But in *Years and Years*, Davies just marvels at his own made-up technology as if it's prophetic, or in itself is the centre of the plot. It isn't, and it shouldn't be.

However, fundamentally this is a TV show that sets out to explore populism. Any political art that increases people's real understanding of an issue has done a good job, at least in part. *Years and Years* does not do that.

It does show normal people being politicised by capitalism's political and economic crisis. That is where the positive political contribution ends.

Like any establishment commentary on the current political situation,

recognition of the impact of austerity is absent. With the exception of migrant characters, austerity does not exist, and the main cast aren't affected by it.

Only one of the characters' homes resembles the living conditions of most working-class people. One character does lose her job, then her food-truck business. But it never affects her materially.

Another character constantly complains that her house is falling apart and she can't afford to fix it. But there are no consequences. One character has to use "all my life savings" - £10,000 - for an eye operation. But then it's forgotten in a shrug of the shoulders.

Of course an analysis of the current situation that ignores the economic crisis, class inequality and austerity will misunderstand what is happening.

A Ukip-style party wins a general election. But it doesn't make the electoral breakthrough on an issue that readers of the Socialist might predict - living standards or immigration. Instead there's mass hysteria over mobile technology.

One scene is with the family inside a voting booth. It's something we never normally get to see. But the characters don't vote how they've been portrayed; their nonsensical choices are not explained, just played up for effect.

Davies also has plenty of silly pops at the left. In Spain, a "centre-left government has been replaced by a far-left government." (Presumably the ex-social democratic party PSOE has been replaced by the new

wealth by a tiny number of rich individuals, based on weakening production and productivity, stemming from capitalism's insatiable drive for profit.

One character gives a speech that the late 1990s and early 2000s were perfect. Where things "peaked." But inequality was rising under Tony Blair's policies of privatisation, selective cutbacks and war.

And the message of the final episode is that if only the working class knew the 'truth' things would change. But *Years and Years* is wrong that the working class is ignorant. Of course we can see what's happening.

There was a lot of working-class anger against millionaire Boris Johnson among striking members of retail union Usdaw at the Sainsbury's distribution centre in Waltham Abbey on 27 June, for example.

The propaganda of the capitalist class doesn't match up to the reality of working-class living standards. Millions ignored the media and establishment politicians to elect Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in 2015, vote Leave in 2016, and back Corbyn's anti-austerity election manifesto in 2017.

In the show's defence, that could be seen as slightly more progressive than the false argument that ordinary people do know what's going on but are too 'lazy' to change. But don't worry - that reactionary message is present in *Years and Years* too.

The current political and economic crisis is blamed on cheap commodities, consumerism and automation. That's not the real cause - it's the accumulation of massive

wealth by a tiny number of rich individuals, based on weakening production and productivity, stemming from capitalism's insatiable drive for profit.

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terrorist victims in Christchurch without reading the accompanying text" (a "Labour source" reported by the Times).

This apparently claimed Theresa May had a "Zionist slave masters' agenda." Forbes apologised for her mistake, but Jewish groups demanded Labour disown her. Labour did not.

At the election count, Nigel Farage suddenly appeared, a sure sign the Brexit Party were expecting to win - and then before the announcement of the result, Farage just as suddenly disappeared!

Labour won by 683 votes, slightly more than in 2017 on a reduced turnout. But Labour's share of the vote was 31% - the lowest winning share in a by-election since 1918.

Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message will have won some votes, especially in the context of the local council being Tory-controlled. Throughout the campaign, Labour had by far the most troops on the ground, culminating in 500 activists on election day. Impressive though that may be, it is the message that matters more.

Labour's 31% share was 17 percentage points lower than in 2017 when Jeremy Corbyn's game-changer manifesto appeared promising an end to austerity.

So Peterborough was a welcome Labour victory, but nevertheless another 'wake-up call': a socialist programme is needed to guarantee an anti-austerity Corbyn victory at the next general election.

John Merrell  
Leicester

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.

# Lancashire Stagecoach drivers strike for 50p raise

Tom Costello

Around 150 drivers and supporters gathered at Preston bus station in Lancashire on Tuesday 25 June for the ninth day of strike action against Stagecoach. This was matched by a similar picket at the Chorley depot.

As of now, drivers in Preston and Chorley can receive up to £2 an hour less than those in other areas of the north west. Years of unequal pay and stagnant wages have left drivers with no option but to fight for a 50p-an-hour pay rise.

So far, the company has offered a measly 3p an hour, over three years. As Unite branch secretary Peter Winstanley put it: "Stagecoach sees us as being only worth a penny per year."

Needless to say, the drivers were not impressed, and came out of talks more determined to win their demands than ever, with the support of staff in Preston's other bus franchise.

Stagecoach management has tried to appear confident, shipping in teams of scab drivers from across the country to be paid much higher

One of the picket lines on 25 June photo Tom Costello



wages, bribed in cash and housed in luxury all-inclusive hotels. Strikers have heard reports of commuters suffering as a result of the company's actions - the scabs are failing to take on passengers at every stop!

The Preston and Chorley bus drivers have drawn the support of the wider trade union movement. Dave Beale, chair of the Unite Community Lancashire branch, said: "It's disgraceful the way the drivers have been treated by Stagecoach. But the strikers are a brilliant example of how to fight and they have 100% support from my branch."

The drivers are prepared to continue their strike action until Stagecoach meets their demands. They

- Send messages of support to [gary.campion@stagecoachbus.com](mailto:gary.campion@stagecoachbus.com)
- Donations to Peter Winstanley, Stagecoach Preston, Preston Bus Station, Preston, Lancashire PR1 1YU
- Make cheques out to "Unite Branch 6/91"
- Please notify [david.beale03@gmail.com](mailto:david.beale03@gmail.com) of any donations you send



## The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in no more than 150 words to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk) - or if you're not online, Socialist Inbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

## Peterborough wake-up call

The public's growing disenchantment with the two main parties has meant by-elections have often resulted in a 'wake-up call' expressed by a protest vote for a one-issue party coming from 'nowhere'. The recent EU parliament elections certainly punished the two main parties and nothing had happened since to indicate a change in the public mood.

There was little to no press coverage during the election campaign, which usually suggests Labour is expected to hold on. However, on election day, 6 June, the national press woke up, with reports under headlines such as "Brexit Party set to win by-election" (the Times).

Not surprising, perhaps, because in the EU election the Brexit Party had received 16,000 votes, twice as large as its nearest rival, Labour, with the Tories woefully in fourth.

The press also reported the Labour candidate Lisa Forbes, a local Unite union activist, had been accused of antisemitism because she had 'liked' a Facebook video "about showing solidarity with the

Although Peterborough was a (marginal) Labour seat, it was previously held by the Tories (2005-17); seen as 'middle England'; voted 60% Leave in 2016; and its local MP had been publicly removed by a recall election following her criminal conviction. For these reasons at the time the by-election was announced the Tories were the bookies' favourite to regain the seat.



# Angry Barking residents protest outside sales office

**Pete Mason**  
Chair, Barking Reach Residents Association and East London Socialist Party

On Saturday 29 June property sales offices at Barking Riverside, London - the site of the recent horrendous fire that consumed 20 flats in just a few minutes - were closed due to a well-attended residents' and supporters' protest.

The protest - covered by media outlets LBC and ITV London - was proposed by Samuel Garside House residents the week before.

We waited for a response to our demands for the removal of the flammable material, mainly wood, that decks the estate, as well as housing the displaced residents in decent accommodation, but heard nothing.

The managing agent and the builder also closed the normally supervised access to the partially burnt out flats for the whole weekend, preventing residents from getting urgent things like passports for travel.

Residents felt that this was a vindictive act and it further stoked huge anger at the landlords and builders responsible for this predicted and preventable fire.

The fire spread through untreated wood on decorative balconies which acted precisely like the cladding on the Grenfell Tower block. We want displaced residents, one of whom is a civil engineer, to be involved in the design of the new, non-flammable ones.

## Conflict of interests

Landlords Barking Riverside Ltd (BRL) promised the appointment of a fire engineer and architect to review the cladding on the entire estate, and managing agents Residential Management Group (RMG) are carrying out high level fire safety inspections in Samuel Garside House and around the part of the estate they own. But RMG has appointed a company that is a "wholly owned subsidiary of RMG" - as the managing director himself informed the residents association!



Residents and supporters succeeded in closing the sales office photo Ian Pattison

Residents want both BRL and RMG to appoint a fire safety expert which we trust, who is prepared to speak out in criticism of the construction practices of the builders.

The denial of this, in the view of residents, is deeply suspicious, suggests an ongoing desire

to cut corners, and many residents still fear that SGH is fundamentally unsafe.

Meanwhile a team of lawyers acting for the residents have demanded that the council carry out a thorough inspection of the structure and fire safety of the building.

# Tamil Solidarity Day

## Linking up oppressed people's struggles

**Ketheswaran Sritharan**  
Tamil Solidarity

This year's Solidarity Day meeting took place on 29 June in London.

Solidarity Day is an opportunity to bring together the struggles of oppressed communities, trade unions and students and build the fightback against all oppression.

The event consisted of two sessions and the audience fully participated in the debates and discussions.

The first session was on the current situation in Sri Lanka, the recent repression of the Sri Lankan government of the Muslim community and how to build a fightback. The second focused on the rights of minorities and the role of trade unions.

Speakers from Refugee Rights, Ethir Media, a Sri Lankan Muslim independent journalist and the Sri Lankan Front Line Socialist Party spoke about the recent political and social situation in Sri Lanka.

The session highlighted that the promised 'peace dividend' following the end of the civil war in 2009 - a brutal genocidal slaughter of 146,000 innocent people - hasn't materialised.

The Sri Lankan government is in political crisis and in order to

survive and maintain power is stirring up tensions along communal lines and has unleashed anti-migrant racist propaganda. Both the ruling parties are preparing for the presidential election that is scheduled to take place later in the year.

The second session included speakers from Unite and Unison unions, Socialist Students and the national chair of Tamil Solidarity. They focused on the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK; 'slave labour' in detention centres; how government cuts are affecting young people in minority communities; and the increase in racial attacks and racism affecting Black and Asian workers.

This session showed how trade unions needed to take a stand against racism and austerity, to stop the scapegoating of migrant workers for the economic problems; the power of collective action, and encouraging people to join a union.

See [tamilsolidarity.org](http://tamilsolidarity.org)



photo Kel Kethes



Part of the large protest outside the threatened college photos Nick Hart

# STOURBRIDGE: KEEP OUR COLLEGE!

**Nick Hart**  
Wolverhampton and Black Country Socialist Party

On 29 June, around 400 education workers, parents and supporters marched through Stourbridge to protest against the looming closure of the town's further education college.

Part of the Birmingham Metropolitan group of colleges, senior management hope to save £2.5 million a year out of a total £58.5 million turnover by closing the college. That's despite having spent £5 million on refurbishing the

campus just four years ago! 1,000 students have been told they can transfer to nearby colleges in Dudley and Halesowen. However, with several students having to travel from as far away as Worcester, this won't be practical for all. And that's not to mention what will happen to the 200 staff employed at the Stourbridge site!

Since 2009, college funding has been cut by 30% nationally. College heads who want to make 'inspiration', 'achievement' and 'learning' more than empty buzzwords above the front door, should set budgets with the resources needed to deliver quality education by decently

paid staff, and work with the education unions to campaign for proper funding for further education from central government.



# LABOUR/LIB DEM COALITION CUTS CARE HOME BEDS



Socialist Party members spoil the county council's celebration photos Robert Charlesworth

**Brent Kennedy**  
Carlisle Socialist Party

A hastily organised protest by Carlisle Socialist Party spoiled a self-congratulatory publicity event by the Labour/Lib Dem coalition running Cumbria county council.

They had invited the media to celebrate the official opening of a new care home without mentioning that it had only 60 beds to replace the 120 beds lost when they closed down three other homes in the city.

Despite us presenting a petition from 1,500 people opposing these cuts to the cabinet two years ago, they didn't inform us of the opening, but we still got our message out on the front page of the local paper and on the regional TV news.

Across the county the coalition has cut the number of residential places for elderly and vulnerable

people from 257 to just 120. They have also presented the improved en-suite facilities in the new home as their 'trail-blazing initiative', rather than having to catch up with national standards of the Care Quality Commission.

The responsible cabinet member told us that demand for places had fallen. But families had told us how they had been refused places, and staff at another home told us how it had been deliberately run down to become left "half empty".

The cabinet member also claimed that it didn't matter if capacity was cut because they work in partnership with the private sector - in other words, this is privatisation and outsourcing. The previous portfolio holder was Labour, this replacement is a Lib-Dem, but as she herself said "what difference does it make?"

Instead of telling local people the truth - that these cuts are a



In effect they are acting as a cover for the Tories...

consequence of Tory government austerity and mobilising for a general election - they have presented this regression as progress. In effect they are acting as a cover for the Tories, minimising how damaging they are and reducing the chances of electing a Corbyn government which could stop the cuts.

We are now demanding two additional care homes in Carlisle and west Cumbria to restore the previous provision, and for more and better trained, better paid carers for longer home visits.

# A question of on-campus democracy

**Charlotte Vale**  
Lincoln Socialist Students

At their last meeting as members of the University of Lincoln Student Union's Board of Trustees, the elected executive committee members put a motion through removing the student union from the National Union of Students (NUS), effective from 31 December.

While Lincoln Socialist Students oppose the recent rotten NUS

reforms - stripping the union of its internal democracy - we believe that the student movement can achieve more united nationally, rather than atomised across different campuses.

## National fightback

Many students who want to fight against fees, austerity, and the Tories will have genuine questions about whether the NUS is fit for purpose to lead a national fightback against the government offensive. Regardless of whether the rotten re-

forms render the NUS a dead organisation, students desperately need a fighting national organisation that fights for students' rights.

We ask our student union to recollect its previous attempts to leave the NUS and demand a referendum on this issue. They said and call an emergency general student meeting to discuss the task of building the democratic and fighting national students' union we need, as well as a review of our student union's internal democracy.

# Sell the Socialist and take out an e-subscription

**Chris Newby**  
The Socialist national sales organiser

Socialist Party members play an important role - in some cases leading them - in local and national fightbacks against Tory austerity and in trade union strikes.

In all our campaigning work the Socialist is an essential tool in putting forward the key demands to advance and win these struggles.

This positive role of the Socialist is often reflected in the sales of the newspaper. Socialist Party members in Bridgend and Cardiff sold 46 in one weekend campaigning against the threatened closure of the Ford plant.

At one strike meeting of cleaners, catering workers and security guards employed by Mitie at Sellafield, Cumbria our members sold 19 copies, and over two demonstrations in London in support of the Sudanese revolution we sold 52 copies of the Socialist.

Also 57 were sold at meetings and campaign stalls in Barking in

the week following the devastating fire at the flats in Barking Riverside. Added to this is the tremendous 203 copies bought by delegates at the recent Unison union conference.

And now, the Socialist is also available in an e-reader format. For a monthly subscription of only £2.50 readers can get the e-paper every Wednesday in a format that is suitable for iphones and ipads, android phones and tablets and for Kindle devices.

It also means a big saving on postage costs for the Socialist Party. Would you consider changing your Socialist subscription to an e-subscription?

Of course, it's vital that all our members still take sufficient supplies of the Socialist to sell on their local campaign activities and at workplaces, colleges and universities, as well as to friends, neighbours, and work colleagues.

Socialist Party members can get supplies of the Socialist from their local branch meetings. However, if you are unable to get to a local meeting we will still post copies of the Socialist to you to boost our sales.

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## Birmingham uni workers strike against terms and conditions attacks

Union members working in catering, cleaning and security held a well-supported one-day strike at the University of Birmingham on 28 June. They were protesting against the removal of premium payments for weekend and anti-social hours and reduction of holiday entitlement by a week.

They also expect some staff to commence collecting work materials in their own time instead of the university's as is currently the case. In addition, they re-

fuse to become a Living Wage employer unlike many other universities.

There were well attended and lively picket lines at several entrances and a mood of defiance over the university's intentions. The vice chancellor, who is currently on a basic salary of £447,000 a year plus an £80,000 bonus and other perks, has demanded a real terms pay cut for his lowest paid workers.

**Birmingham South West Socialist Party members**



## Istanbul Mayoral election rerun

# New opportunity to build working-class fightback after voters punish Erdogan

Berkay Kartav

Voters in Istanbul on 23 June struck a big blow to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the authoritarian leader of Turkey, amid a deepening economic crisis. This is the first time in Erdogan's 17-year rule that his right-wing capitalist party, AKP, has been defeated in an election.

Turkey initially held local elections on the 31 March. Although Erdogan's party AKP led the polls countrywide, its defeat in cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, the two biggest economic hubs of Turkey, was a humiliation.

Having been defeated by a small margin of 13,000 votes in Istanbul, Erdogan's party made groundless allegations that the opposition had cheated. By exerting immense pressure on the election board, the AKP succeeded in annulling the Istanbul mayoral election, without providing any substantial evidence to prove its claim.

The reason why Istanbul is so important for the AKP is because the city constitutes nearly a third of Turkey's GDP (total economic output). Erdogan, himself Mayor of Istanbul in the 1990s, once said "whoever wins Istanbul, wins Turkey."



The trade unions have organised demos to protect workers' rights photo M Cleverly

Party (CHP). This time the margin was not 13,000; it was a landslide victory of 800,000 more votes than the AKP! Once the results were announced, hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets to celebrate.

The support of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) - the left pro-Kurdish party - to Imamoglu was decisive in this victory. Despite the last-minute effort of Erdogan to convince Kurdish people living in Istanbul to vote for the AKP, Kurdish workers punished Erdogan for inducing poverty and war in Kurdistan.

### Economic Crisis

The root cause of this defeat for Erdogan is the economic crisis and the ensuing mass anger.

The economic crisis was triggered last summer when the Turkish Lira rapidly depreciated after political tensions between the US and Turkey.

As Turkish companies and banks borrowed cheap credit to finance their investments, the falling price of the Lira made it increasingly difficult for debtors to pay their dollar-denominated loans back, causing a debt and currency crisis.

The rerun Istanbul elections ended with the victory of businessman Ekrem Imamoglu, the candidate of self-proclaimed 'Kemalist' social-democratic Republican People's

As a result, the prices of goods, such as food and electricity, rapidly increased, and by December 2018 official inflation reached 25%.

Many businesses that struggled with the crisis either went bankrupt or saw it as an opportunity to dismiss workers, leading to the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs. The number of unemployed rose by 1.33 million to 4.54 million in just under a year.

### Working-class anger

The defeat of the AKP in the mayoral elections in cities such as Istanbul and other industrial heartlands reflects working-class anger at deteriorating living standards.

The decision to rerun the mayoral election in Istanbul further frustrated many working-class people who expressed their grievance about the government spending money once again on an election instead of dealing with the crisis.

In fact, many working-class neighbourhoods in Istanbul that previously supported Erdogan swung to the opposition on 23 June.

However important this victory is to boost the confidence of the opposition against the one-man rule of Erdogan, the left should not carry illusions into believing that Erdogan will retreat. Without a struggle led

by the working class, neither Erdogan nor the capitalist system he hinges on will be defeated.

The constitutional change in 2017 gave President Erdogan supreme powers, and through decrees he can execute important decisions - in practice, without the consent of parliament. He maintains a firm grip on the state bureaucracy and media.

### No difference

Rather than challenging Erdogan, the main opposition party CHP says they are willing to work with Erdogan to solve the economic crisis. But the CHP is a pro-big business party and it offers no solutions in favour of the working class. In terms of managing the economy, there is no difference between the two parties.

Workers should take matters into their own hands. Already, some are taking strike action to demand an increase in their salaries, given the soaring rates of inflation. Trade unions have also organised several demonstrations over the course of the year to protect workers' rights and to put demands on the AKP.

In a period where there will be more vicious attacks on workers' living standards, it is urgent for the left in Turkey to create a working-class alternative.

Trade unions, the socialist left and the HDP must build a mass, working-class fightback to defend the wages, jobs and rights of all workers.



Erdogan suffered an humiliating defeat photo kremlin.ru/CC

Such a movement should be armed with a socialist programme, to not only topple Erdogan's anti-democratic regime but also to create a society based on working-class ownership and control of the commanding heights of the economy.



Paramedics, nurses, and more recently auxiliary health workers, have taken industrial action photo Heggyhomolit/CC

## IRISH HEALTH WORKERS' ANGER BOILS OVER INTO STRIKE ACTION

Ciarán McKenna

Siptu Education Sector and Section Organiser, Dublin City University (personal capacity)

On 24 June over 10,000 workers in the Irish health service took strike action, ignoring Taoiseach (prime minister) Leo Varadkar's last minute plea to call it off. This was the first day in a campaign of escalating strike action.

All are members of Siptu, the largest union in Ireland, and are in the support grades - healthcare assistants, kitchen staff, porters, chefs - in public hospitals and healthcare facilities.

The key issue is the refusal of the health bosses to implement an agreed job evaluation scheme for these workers. But the strike has much wider political significance. It is the third major strike action by health workers so far this year, as workers' anger increases in the face of the ongoing collapse of the public system.

In January and February 40,000 nurses and midwives struck over their abysmal and deteriorating conditions, as well as poor pay. This resulted in a very poor deal being agreed which did not fundamentally address the causes of the strike.

Paramedics, members of the National Ambulance Service Representative Association (Nasra - a branch of the Psychiatric Nurses Association), with the support and assistance of the Socialist Party, have been engaged for months in industrial action as they fight to gain recognition from the Health Service Executive.

The latter union is one of the few unions who remain outside of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), a body which has acted over

the years as a permanent obstacle to workers taking militant action in defence of their interests.

The major problem is that every three years or so a 'deal' is struck between the public sector unions, through the ICTU, and the state, to regulate pay and conditions for public servants.

Since 2008 these deals have involved massive concessions by workers in terms of pay cuts, the deterioration of employment conditions and hugely increased workloads due to ongoing staff shortages.

Disgracefully, the deal struck in 2013 included some of the most authoritarian anti-worker legislation ever passed in Ireland.

The latest agreement reached in 2017 - the Public Sector Stability Agreement - is the first to engage in modest pay restoration. In reality, restoring pay back to where it was in 2008!

### Privatisation

During the austerity years workers in the health services redoubled their efforts to keep the health system functioning despite massive cuts in state funding. Right wing governments have a clear agenda to underfund the system as a prelude to privatisation.

Although we do not have a national health service in Ireland, workers and the trade union movement nonetheless have a deep commitment to a public health system and the principle of free care.

The capitalist establishment in Ireland, however, are intent on privatising the public system by stealth. Part of this

agenda is the systematic degradation of conditions for workers in the system.

There is an ongoing crisis in retention of doctors and consultants, this replicates the crisis in the retention of nursing staff.

Support staff have over the years taken on a huge amount of additional work and the job evaluation process was meant to ensure that this increase in work was matched by increases in pay. The health bosses, backed by a Thatcherite Fine Gael government, have decided to try to fight the workers on this.

It is clear what the bosses' endgame is: to outsource trade union jobs in the support grades and farm out support functions to the private sector. Outsourcing is the key establishment tactic in the privatisation agenda. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Opposing outsourcing in all circumstances must be supported by all trade unions and socialists. We offer full support to the Siptu support workers in their struggle.



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. www.socialistworld.net



### What we stand 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.

#### ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled 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 and 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.

#### 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. Scrap zero-hour contracts.
- 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.
- Scrap Universal Credit. 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.

#### 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!



Join the fightback!  
Join the Socialists!

socialistparty.org.uk/join 020 8988 8777

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# SICK OF YOUR BOSS?

# JOIN A UNION!

# Fight for socialism



photo Senan

 **nationalshop**  
**stewardsnetwork**

## NSSN conference 2019

All welcome: Saturday 6 July, 11am - 4.30pm

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

£6 registration - pay on the day, or make a cheque out to National Shop Stewards Network and post to NSSN, PO Box 54498, London E10 9DE

Register in advance by emailing [info@shopstewards.net](mailto:info@shopstewards.net)  
[shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

## Jeremy Davidson

Unite union and  
Hull Socialist Party member

**M**y current employer has not given its workforce a pay rise in over three years. The health and safety regulations are breached on a daily basis.

And employees often get bullied by the incompetent management which chooses to blame the workers instead of taking responsibility for its countless mistakes.

But when we come together, workers can change those things. Collective protest, and strikes if necessary, can force employers to improve our conditions. This is the potential power of a union.

As a young worker in a small, non-unionised workplace, it is easy to become isolated and feel detached from the trade union movement. Yet so many workers today face similar circumstances.

We are employed in precarious working environments with no union recognition: in the hospitality sector, small businesses, and other workplaces of every type across the country. It can be easy to forget that people of all ages face the same struggles on a daily basis.

## NSSN

This is why the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference (see box) is so important for me. It allows me to meet other activists who have similar situations. It lets me interact and share experiences, ideas and strategies regarding workplace organisation with others from across the country.

The NSSN aims to bring together the very people on the front lines of industrial struggle, across different sectors and unions, and be able to cooperate and coordinate with one another.

If you are a young worker like myself, whether in a union or not, and looking for ideas on how to take on the bosses, there is no better place to find out more than the NSSN.

And by building a coordinated fightback among organised workers, we can go further. We can use the power of joint strikes and mobilisations to push out the Tory government, fight for socialist policies, and begin a movement to put working-class people in control of society instead of the capitalists.

■ Get all the latest union news with the NSSN bulletin - sign up at [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

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