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Issue 1057

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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**



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ANOTHER BLOW FOR BORIS JOHNSON AND TORIES MUST GO GENERAL ELECTION NOW

Six defeats in parliament in six weeks. A 'majority' of minus 44. And now the highest court in the land has unanimously ruled that Johnson unlawfully prorogued parliament.

It's time for him and all the Tories to go. We need an immediate general election to kick them out and elect an anti-austerity, Corbyn-led government, with a clear socialist programme.

The Labour Party conference passed a whole number of policies, such as scrapping Universal Credit, that would help working-class people and start to undo some of the damage inflicted by ten years of Tory cuts (see page 5).

Combined with previous proposals to introduce a £10 minimum wage next year, build one million homes, increase spending on health and other public services, and take back into public ownership the utilities, the rail network, and Royal Mail, an election-winning programme is taking shape that can unite working-class people across the Brexit divide.

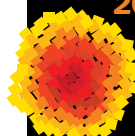
But Corbyn has to stand firm against the establishment and the Blairites in his own party who are

doing everything in their power to sabotage the prospect of a Corbyn-led government and the confidence this could give to working people to fight for socialist policies.

Huge pressure will continue to rain down on Corbyn to backtrack on radical policies, including his call for an EU exit deal that defends the interests of workers, consumers and the environment, and to 'unite' with pro-austerity politicians for 'the good of the country'. He must resist, and energetically campaign and mobilise working-class people on an anti-austerity platform.

■ **'Shut down the Tories' protest at Tory Party conference:**
29 September, 12-4pm, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15

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socialism2019.
net and
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more details

We say:

- General election now to kick out Johnson and the Tories
- No unity with austerity-supporting politicians
- For an anti-austerity, Corbyn-led government with socialist policies
- No to the bosses' EU
- For an EU exit deal that defends jobs and workers' interests

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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party supporters. We want you to write for the Socialist.

Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."

Karl Marx

Capitalist political crisis

CENTRAL TASK IS TO FORCE GENERAL ELECTION AND ELECT CORBYN-LED LABOUR GOVERNMENT ON SOCIALIST POLICIES



WHAT WE THINK

The Supreme Court ruling that Johnson's prorogation of parliament was unlawful has, for now, knocked the dramatic events preceding it at Labour Party conference off the top news spot. This swirling of events is the expression of the instability of capitalism in crisis.

There will be attempts to use these dramatic developments to cloud the central tasks of the working class today - removing Johnson and all the Tories and fighting for a general election to elect a Corbyn-led government on socialist policies. But that is exactly what is necessary.

The Labour conference debate on the party's position on Brexit was a defeat for those who wish to remove Jeremy Corbyn.

The vote is part of the ongoing civil war in the Labour Party. The civil war cannot end while the party remains two parties in one with the two sides ultimately representing opposing class interests.

While many rank-and-file trade unionists and Labour members who support a Remain position are motivated by genuine opposition to the 'Little Englander' nationalism of Boris Johnson and the Tory Brexiteers, the Blairite MPs and right-wing trade union leaders like Unison's Dave Prentis, who fought for Labour to adopt a Remain-in-all-circumstances position, ultimately represent the majority

interests of big business.

The bosses, the capitalist class, face a crisis of political representation due to the meltdown in the Tory Party, and are forced to consider whether they could wear a Labour government. They therefore are attempting, through their Blairite political representatives, to make the Labour Party as safe for them as possible, including on the EU.

Labour adopting an all-out Remain position would alienate millions of working-class people who voted Leave in the 2016 referendum in crisis.

Historically Corbyn opposed the EU bosses' club. But in a mistaken attempt at unity with the Blairites he supported Remain in the 2016 referendum.

This is the main contributing factor to workers and young people not seeing how a Remain position serves the bosses and is no substitute for working-class international solidarity with those fighting austerity, war and capitalism across Europe and internationally.

Confusion

Cutting through that confusion requires a socialist programme that shows how the interests of the 99% and the environment can be safeguarded.

The National Executive Committee position, which conference voted in favour of, is for a Corbyn-led government to negotiate a deal and then put it to a confirmatory referendum with the option to vote for Remain.

When the Remainer MPs argue it won't be easy to explain this on the doorsteps, this again shows their contempt for working-class people.



Corbyn must take action to transform the Labour Party into a mass socialist party that represents working-class interests and not the bosses

What they really fear is that Corbyn is an unreliable defender of capitalist interests.

However, Corbyn could have made the class lines a lot clearer by explicitly committing to fighting to remove the pro-boss EU rules such as restrictions on nationalisation and state aid. This would help to reveal the reality of the EU as a bosses' club.

As we have also explained previously, these talks should be transparent and accountable to the labour and trade union movement, and visible to workers here and across Europe. The impact of the EU pro-privatisation, pro-austerity, and anti-worker rules being challenged would be huge.

Standing ovation

Other aspects of the Labour conference will not have reassured the bosses that the party is safely moving in its direction.

Dave Ward, leader of the Communication Workers' Union (CWU), was given a standing ovation when he called for support for postal workers' balloting for strike action against bullying privatised Royal Mail.

The measures announced by John McDonnell, trailed by Corbyn at the TUC the week before, included a return to collective bargaining, steps towards a 32-hour week without loss of pay, outlawing zero-hour contracts, ending Universal Credit and scrapping the anti-trade union laws. These have the potential to start to cut through the Brexit fog and offer a glimpse of the alternative to austerity and the Tories.

However, McDonnell is not preparing the working class for the battle that will be necessary to achieve these measures. He has

argued that higher taxation will cover the spending costs.

But as Deutsche Bank's Oliver Harvey explained, "any market-unfriendly policies instigated during a Labour government" need only be "temporary." They do not plan to live with an anti-austerity government for long.

It is a mistake by McDonnell to give the impression that workers' interests can be served within the framework of capitalism.

The first step needed is to extend the commitment to nationalise the utilities and post to include the banks and major corporations that dominate the economy, in order to move towards a democratic socialist plan for the economy. Only that will put the interests of the 99% and the environment in front of those of capitalists seeking profit.

Also a mistake, is the continued talk of 'unity' with the Blairites. This does not help to clarify the way forward for the working class. When Tom Watson says he defends Labour as a 'broad church' he means he and his pro-austerity capitalist co-thinkers dominating the party to reflect the interests of the boss class.

The struggle against austerity needs a political voice to back up the struggles in the workplaces and the communities.

Corbyn must take action to transform the Labour Party into a mass socialist party that represents working-class interests and not the bosses.

That starts with deselection of the Blairites, returning the trade unions to their central role under the democratic control of the members and a socialist programme based on fighting for working-class power - not just a seat at the table.

Huge pressure is going to come on the labour movement and socialists to limit our demands and our programme. It is an indication of the enormity of the upheavals and social explosions that these events foreshadow, that the Financial Times was forced to ask on its front cover, 'does capitalism need to be re-set' as the inequality in society spirals.

Socialist change

But the attempts to make the working class pay for this crisis caused by the banks and the billionaires, which has resulted in rising inequality, will not be fixed through a 're-set' but socialist change.

Average chief executive pay in the FTSE 100 in 2017 was 145 times higher than that of the average worker, up from 47 times in 1998. The wealthiest 10% have 290 times more in total assets than the poorest tenth of the population.

The legacy of the financial crisis means annual real wages are over £1,000 lower than they were a decade ago with young workers especially impacted.

Following the Supreme Court's announcement that Johnson's suspension of Parliament was unlawful, Corbyn took to the stage to call for an election to elect a government that respects democracy, that respects the rule of law and brings power back to the people, not usurps it in the way Boris Johnson has done.

But Corbyn needs to follow this up with mobilising the trade unions and all those opposed to ongoing austerity to fight for an immediate general election.

Labour conference showed its support for the CWU. Corbyn



Corbyn needs to follow this up with mobilising the trade unions and all those opposed to ongoing austerity to fight for an immediate general election photo Paul Mattsson



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) which organises across the world. Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15 an hour. 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.

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.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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Nationalise Thomas Cook to save jobs and protect passengers

Steve Cawley
Cambridgeshire Socialist Party

Thousands of Thomas Cook workers and hundreds of thousands of its customers were devastated by the collapse of the firm on 23 September.

There have been numerous reports of workers, after having been sacked on the spot, making their way to hotels and airports, in their own time and at their own expense, to try to assist their former customers.

Many airports and towns in Britain will be affected by the closure, particularly the Manchester Airport area - 3,000 job losses - and 1,200 office jobs in Peterborough. The numbers of job losses could be 9,000 altogether.

The Tory government evidently have reverted to their normal policy of 'letting private companies go to the wall'. But whereas the boss of Thomas Cook has 'gone to the wall' with an £8 million salary earned (or at least given to him) over the past few years - most front-line staff

will be waiting for news of what, if anything at all, is left for them. Yet again, workers are classed as 'unsecured creditors' (end of the queue) in this situation.

Tory Shailesh Vara, the MP whose constituency includes the Thomas Cook HQ site at Lynchwood, Peterborough, expressed concern after the event much as he would for a lightning strike or any other 'act of God'. But of course the firm's collapse was precisely not the act of an angry god but was the result of the capitalist system aided by greed and incompetence by management.

City hedge funds and speculators are also set to make over £200 million

out of the company's collapse. Sona Asset Management and XAIA Investment invested in derivatives that pay out when a company defaults.

The labour movement needs its own inquiry calling for the opening of the books to see where the money has gone and taking evidence from former Thomas Cook workers.

The trade unions representing workers have demanded the government step in. Thomas Cook was nationalised in 1948 along with the railways. It should be renationalised under democratic workers' control to save the jobs, along with British Airways and the rest of the transport system.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

September issue includes...

Brexit: stand firm against pro-austerity politicians

Prevent: 'Anti-terror' measure attacks democratic rights

Is Keynes back? The search for a way out of the crisis

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Far right pose increasing terrorism threat

photo Mary Finch



Tom Baldwin
Socialist Party national committee

The far right pose the fastest growing threat of terrorism in the UK. The shocking trend was revealed in a recent briefing by the Met assistant commissioner in charge of counter-terrorism.

The far right accounted for a quarter of all terrorism arrests last year. Since 2017 they have made up almost one third of terror plots with intent to kill, seven out of 22. Foiled plans included a machete attack on a gay pride event and the building of bombs intended to target mosques and a football match.

Sadly, not all attacks were stopped. In 2016 Labour MP Jo Cox was murdered by a white supremacist. The following year a supporter of Tommy Robinson killed one and injured 11 when he drove a van into worshippers outside the Finsbury Park mosque.

Some of these attacks have been inspired by openly neo-Nazi groups such as National Action. They were the first such group whose membership was made illegal.

However, police warned that the terror threat comes from across the far right. They cited the English Defence League and Football Lads' Alliance (FLA) as groups whose ideology can radicalise right-wing terrorists. Their protests have been marked by violence against ethnic minorities and prominent trade unionists.

The Met chief also called on politicians to be "very careful with their rhetoric". Anti-racist charities have pointed out how Boris Johnson's remarks about women wearing the

veil made being anti-Muslim seem acceptable and how such statements normalised far-right terror.

Hate crimes have risen in recent years. This type of rhetoric is not new. Capitalist politicians consistently try to divide the working class, particularly when they are in crisis.

We can't trust the capitalist state, including arms like the police, to defend us from right-wing violence. It exists primarily to protect the system and the interests of the bosses, and their powers can easily be turned against the left.

Government 'anti-radicalisation' schemes have included targeting those opposed to capitalism and a report they commissioned in July tried to equate a desire for revolution to political violence.

Workers must organise to defend themselves against the threat of the violence from the far right. This includes well stewarded, democratically organised counter-demonstrations to groups like the FLA.

We must also fight for fully funded services for mental health and the other social issues which can make people vulnerable to grooming by right-wing organisations.

Most importantly, we need to build the trade union and socialist movement to oppose austerity and provide a real alternative to a society that offers no future to so many. An alternative that can channel people's anger into a positive, collective struggle for change. This must oppose all divisions and build workers' unity to fight for all of our interests.



LABOUR VOTES TO ABOLISH ACADEMIES AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Martin Powell-Davies
National Education Union member

Angela Rayner, Shadow Education Secretary, announced at her party's conference that a Labour government will abolish tuition fees, provide free nursery education for all two to four year olds, cap the cost of school uniforms and end the hated Ofsted inspection regime.

These promises alone could help enthuse young voters, parents and school staff into campaigning to elect Jeremy Corbyn. But conference went further still.

Rayner had been far less clear about how Labour's promised 'National Education Service' would include private and academy schools. However, delegates voted for motions that called for a complete end to both of them!

The growth of academies was supported by both the Tories and Blair's 'New Labour'. It represented a conscious attempt to create a market of competing chains of schools, making it easier to slash education spending, especially on central services previously provided by local authorities, and to undermine national pay and conditions for school staff.

Nearly half of England's pupils now attend academy schools, run by a chaotic array of hundreds of different 'multi academy trusts'. Of course, they haven't improved education - only the bank balances of those who control them.

The evidence about the failings of the academy model has been growing, along with many vociferous local campaigns against them. Yet too many Labour councils have failed to oppose academisation.

Local authority control

The successful motion called for all publicly funded schools to be under the control of their local authority through "reformed, democratically accountable local education committees with stakeholder representation".

This could, if developed fully, allow genuine democratic control of schools through elected representatives of the local community, parents, trade unions and school students.

The motion stated that the committees must be "the default providers of services and appropriately funded". Reversal of education cuts will certainly be vital to allow all children and schools to thrive, supported through central services that can make sure all needs are met.

Labour conference also voted to remove private schools' phoney 'charitable status', to redistribute their wealth to state education institutions, and for a quota that would only allow universities to admit the same proportion of private school students as in the wider population. That's only 7% - but they make up around 40% of successful Oxbridge entrants.

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell march with teachers and junior doctors in 2016 photo Senan



Teachers at Avenue School in east London, led by Socialist Party member Louise Cuffaro, successfully battled academisation through strikes and a campaign involving parents in 2017-18 photo James Ivens



Britain's wealthy have never had to worry themselves about the pressures on state schools. For them, the existence of a separate system of elite private education has allowed them to buy schooling for their children providing far smaller class sizes and a wider curriculum than the increasingly narrow diet enforced on working-class youth.

As austerity bites, the proportion of pupils from state schools attending university has started to fall, particularly in the top 'Russell Group' institutions.

Of course, the wealthy will not allow any of their privileges, educational or otherwise, to simply be voted out of existence. However, the fact that Labour delegates supported the motion is a reflection of the huge anger against growing inequality in society, not just in education but in our workplaces and communities.

If Corbyn can convince workers that he understands that anger, and has a programme to address it, then the Tories can be thrown out of office.

■ As well as voting to abolish academies and private schools, Labour's conference passed several other progressive motions. These included scrapping Universal Credit, ending prescription charges, introducing free personal care for the elderly and implementing a four-day week within a decade.

All of these policies will be welcomed by working-class people. However, it will still be necessary to campaign to keep up the pressure to ensure that they are not watered down and actually appear in Labour's election manifesto. Right-wing MPs are already lining up to say they will ignore the conference vote on Brexit.

Shadow work and pension secretary Margaret Greenwood has said Labour will stop the "rollout" of Universal Credit. But what about the people already on it? We cannot allow the Tory tendency in the Labour Party to torpedo what are, in reality, quite modest proposals to undo some of the damage inflicted on working people after years of austerity.

SUPREME COURT RULING

The Supreme Court announced its judgement on Boris Johnson's prorogation of parliament as we were going to press.

The implications of this ruling will be developed in next week's issue of the Socialist and on our website at socialistparty.org.uk.



photo Arno Mikkor/CC

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Up to four million took part in 'Earth strike' protests across the planet on 20 September.

The movement reached every continent - even a group of researchers stationed in Antarctica took part.

Thousands of cities across 150 countries held protests, in some cases numbering hundreds of thousands.

Central London: 100,000 - a swirling mass of students and workers

Wave after wave after wave of people, mostly young, swept backwards and forwards along Millbank (near Parliament) and Victoria Tower Gardens, around Parliament Square, up Whitehall to Trafalgar Square, and back - not really a march, more of a swirling mass! From primary school children to university students and young workers, parents and pensioners.

Unite the Union members, including Bromley library strikers, joined the rally. At lunch time PCS union members joined in, some coming from picket lines at the 'BEIS' department and Foreign Office strikes, some from the big galleries and museums on the Southbank.

The organisers of the 'Earth strike' stage on Millbank say 100,000 took part - though protesters marched and stood and sat down and marched again all over the place, so numbers would be impossible to judge!

All around London, workers and young people took part in sizable local protests and lunchtime rallies - in Waltham Forest, Hackney, Southwark, Lambeth, Camden and many more. Socialist Party members had helped organise some and spoke at some.

Transport union RMT staged a protest at its HQ. PCS members at Canary Wharf did the same, and many more workplace-based protests took place.

Among the throng there were many young people who wanted to know what kind of 'system change' is necessary, and who were thinking about socialist ideas. There was enthusiasm for our proposals to nationalise the energy companies, but also to go further.

It is unfortunate that some of the self-appointed leaders of environmental campaigns wrongly declare this issue is 'non-political', which dampens real debate and discussion about what needs to be done. That's not the view of big numbers of those who participate though, who realise that ideas about what to do are essential!

We sold over 120 copies of the Socialist. Hundreds of people signed up to Socialist Students, and over 40 applied to find out about joining the Socialist Party. **Isai Priya and Paula Mitchell** **London Socialist Party**

Germany: 1.4m - decade best

Around 1.4 million joined the climate demonstrations in Germany - 250,000 in Berlin alone - in what may be Germany's biggest protest in over a decade. Members of Sol (Sozialistische Organisation Solidarität - the Socialist Party's sister party in Germany) sold up to 300 copies of their newspaper, Solidarität, on the day.

France: dynamic mobilisation

Gauche Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Left, the Socialist Party's sister party in France), reports: "The mobilisation was

London photos Paul Mattsson



dynamic, if smaller than in spring. In Rouen, Paris, Valencia... For many, fighting for the environment is as much an emergency as fighting Macron!"

Scotland: thousands - socialistism popular

Socialist Party Scotland was overwhelmed at their stalls in Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow as thousands struck and marched for the planet. Our petitions, papers and leaflets calling for 'socialist change, not climate change' and to nationalise the polluters were massively popular. Socialism was especially attractive.

Socialist Party Scotland

Belfast: 4,000 - biggest yet

Up to 4,000 attended the biggest climate strike that Northern Ireland has ever seen in a sunny Belfast city centre. Students staged an impactful visual display of resistance with a mass 'die-in' at the Corn Market, followed by a peaceful march through the High Street.

A rally at Belfast City Hall included school student speakers from all across

both Ireland and Britain. The atmosphere was one of defiance but also positivity and hope.

Jack Finn Kennedy **Swansea Socialist Party**

Bristol: thousands - school students look to French Revolution

Bristol saw its biggest climate demonstration yet with thousands of students and workers marching. One group of school students likened the changes needed today to the changes in the French Revolution.

Kyle Walker

Bristol North Socialist Party

Leeds: 300 - union Q&A huge success with youth

Around 300 attended the Leeds march and rally, with an increased number of trade union branch banners present. There were fiery speeches from bakers' union BFAWU president Ian Hodson and Corbynista Leeds East Labour MP Richard Burgon.

But we also heard from local campaigns, such as LS26 Homes, fighting



profiteering housing developers in Oulton on the outskirts of the city.

After the demonstration, Leeds Trade Union Council held a Q&A session on unions with Ian Hodson and local Unison activist and Socialist Party member Ben Mayor. It was a huge success, with 45 attending, predominantly young.

Leeds Socialist Party

Waltham Forest: 200 - more learning on strike than in class

The action in Waltham Forest, east London was a great success. We gathered at the town hall with a couple of hundred people, including parents with kids, workers, and some students with homemade placards.

A whole class with teachers from a local school were well applauded. Looked like there was more learning going on in this experience than many a lesson in school!

The news in early summer that students were calling trade unions to join in was music to our ears. In July, Waltham Forest Trade Union Council organised a

debate with Extinction Rebellion and a trade union speaker.

We produced 5,000 leaflets calling on workers and students to organise an event in their own workplace, college or school, and we sent a letter to union branch secretaries appealing to get their members involved.

On the day we gave out a leaflet urging all to join a union - potentially the most powerful organisations to bring about change. Everyone was very open.

Linda Taaffe

Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Southampton: hundreds - unions pressure uni on sustainability

Around 150 people attended a rally at the University of Southampton organised by the University and College Union (UCU) branch. It was great to see both staff and students out alongside campus union representatives and the National Shop Stewards Network.

The rally was called in solidarity with striking school students, but also to launch a cross-union environment cam-

paign at the university. There was a good mood among those in attendance, and a desire to see real commitment to bold steps in university management's new sustainability plan.

This is just the start. There are plans already afoot for future days of action and staff-student planning meetings to develop and take forward our demands.

Bea Gardner **Southampton UCU**

Several hundred people took part in Southampton. There were many young people there and it was good to see so many of them speak. From the 16-year-old full of anger about the climate crisis, to the five-year-old who wanted to save the animals.

Jane Ward

Southampton Socialist Party

Swansea: 500 - trade union council heads march

Around five hundred young people and trade unionists came together under the hot Swansea sun. Socialist Students provided a link between the event organisers and Swansea unions.

There were speakers from Socialist Students and the Socialist Party, as well as unions such as the PCS, Unite, BFAWU, and Unison. Alongside Swansea Trade Union Council, whose banner was at the head of the march, Socialist Students also provided the majority of stewards at the event to keep demonstrators safe.

The event culminated in a march from the centre of town to the council chambers. The vast majority of young people recognised the need for a far more rigorous approach than that offered by the mainstream apolitical spokespeople.

Charlie Wells

Swansea Socialist Students and Unite Community

Hackney: hundreds - unions mobilise support

Hundreds massed outside Hackney town hall in east London. There were school students, sixth form and college students, and this time they were joined by workers from across Hackney.

Several trade unions called for their members to support the protest, including the Hackney Council branch of Unison. Marvin Hay, joint branch secretary of Hackney Unison, spoke about the overwhelming role of big business in polluting the planet.

A speaker from Homerton Hospital Unison brought solidarity and stressed the importance of unions in the movement against climate change.

Socialist Party leaflets calling for Socialist change not climate change went down really well. Seven people asked for more information about joining the Socialist Party.

Chris Newby

Hackney Socialist Party

Sheffield: 3,000 - biggest since pension strike

It was the biggest protest in Sheffield since the 2011 public sector pensions strike rally, over 3,000. Solidarity with striking school students came from university workers, council staff, civil servants in the PCS union and many more.

Sheffield Socialist Party

Hull: 500

Matt Whale brought solidarity from Hull Trade Union Council and Hull Socialist Party to the youth strike, supported 500 youth and workers!



How can the climate strikes win? WHAT WE SAID

The 'system change' we need is socialism

Newsnight's coverage of the climate strikes included a discussion on what the movement's spontaneous slogan of "system change, not climate change" actually means. The camera panned to a Socialist Party member selling the Socialist newspaper (pictured left). We say the system change we need is socialism.

"System change" is widely understood to mean regulation of the existing capitalist-owned polluters. But this has failed for over two decades. "Socialist change" - ending capitalist ownership - is what's necessary.

Profit is the problem

Excerpts from a speech by Dave Reid, secretary of Socialist Party Wales, on the Cardiff youth strike.

Virtually all the politicians now say there's a "climate emergency." They all agree something has to be done. But why is nothing being done?

Why have they not put in place sustainable public transport systems that would allow people to leave their cars at home? Why have they not started transitioning to green energy using the technology available?

There is an 'invisible hand' that stops them from carrying out what the world needs. And that invisible hand is profit.

Because the politicians don't control the resources of this planet. 300 corporations control 80% of the resources of this planet. They are the ones who can decide, and all they're concerned about is profit.

And it's not just because they're evil, although some of them might be. It's because if one of them were to stand up and say 'OK we're not going to make a profit, we're going to go into green energy', they'd be fired. Because the system works that way.

We have to change the system. That means we should take over the resources and bring them into public ownership - we need to nationalise them.

If we take over these corporations we can plan the use of the world's resources democratically, in a sustainable way, so that we can achieve cheap public transport available to all, cheap green energy, and eradicate unnecessary plastics, but in a way that creates decently paid jobs.

That is why we call for socialist change to end climate change.

Unions have the power

Excerpts from a speech by Paul Couchman, secretary of the Surrey branch of public service union Unison (personal capacity), at the Guildford youth strike.

Today marks an important new step in the youth strike for climate movement, and sees the young people linking up with workers in protests and short stoppages across the country. This is so important, because of the potential power that workers have.

Just imagine. Coordinated strike action by workers can bring whole industries, cities, and even countries to a standstill. Trade unions have over six million members and vast resources - which can and should be used to mobilise their members to fight.

The TUC, which brings together all the unions, is supporting today's action with a call for a 30-minute lunchtime protest such as this one. But imagine if they called for a whole day's shutdown. Then the government and the big corporations would have to sit up and take note.

There's one more thing that you can do to get organised. Develop democratic structures to help you work out slogans and demands and maybe look at other issues, such as fair funding for schools, fighting against 'academies' and privatisation, school uniform, equality. Why not set up school students' unions in your schools?

Is climate change too urgent to fight for socialism?
SOCIALISM 2019
2-3 Nov, central London
socialism2019.net

CLIMATE STRIKERS SPEAK OUT

Protesters in central London spoke to the Socialist on 20 September

I'm just furious about this whole climate change thing and they're just not doing anything about it. So I came down here to, you know, try and help even a little bit.

Yvonne, 16, Spain and Venezuela

Climate change is caused by the top 1% and it affects the greater community, the greater society, it affects all of us. And everyone just needs to wake up and realise that and act on it if they can... I hope change can be accomplished.

Nicole, 20, south London

Yes, maybe people can make little changes for the climate change. But the main responsibility is not on the people, is not on the working class. It has to be brought on the big companies, on the

governments, and yes, on the financial system that just wants to make money out of anything, it doesn't matter about the earth, or about the lives of humanity.

Marta, Catalonia

Any disruption caused by climate change protesters is nothing compared to the disruption that rising sea levels are going to cause in the next 20 to 50 years.

Joe, south London

West Papua has been occupied, colonised by multinational corporations... They destroy our forests, our forest is where we are living, where we get our food... The private companies are destroying the entire working-class system, and also destroy our forest, which is second biggest after Amazon.

Sam, West Papua

HOUSING EMERGENCY - BOLD, SOCIALIST MEASURES NECESSARY

Labour's housing policies: a welcome beginning

Paul Kershaw
Chair, Unite the union housing workers' branch

Walking through the streets of Britain's cities, homeless people sleeping rough are hard to miss. Numbers on the streets are rising, and an estimated 235 homeless people died in the six months up to August this year. Shelter estimates that over 320,000 people are homeless.

Rough sleeping is on the rise, and meanwhile services for single homeless people and rough sleepers have been brutally slashed. Spending on single homeless people has more than halved since 2010, while rough sleeping has risen by at least 165% since 2010.

No one should be surprised that deaths of homeless people have risen by 24% over the last four years. According to the Greater London Authority's 'Combined Homelessness and Information Network' quarterly report, rough sleeping in London rose 31% compared to the same period last year. This is an emergency that directly relates to cuts in funding from local authorities.

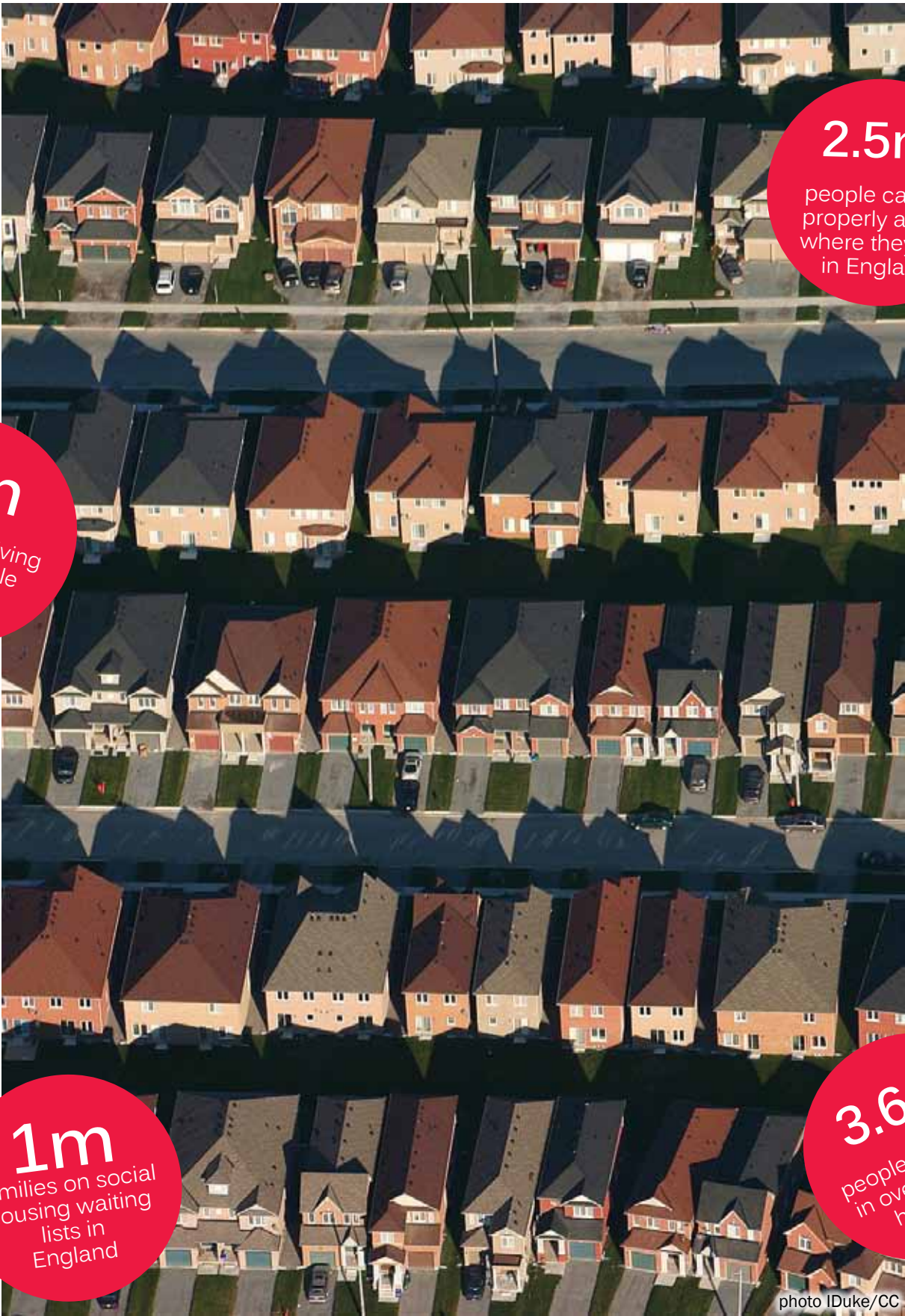
Drastic cuts to 'drop-in' provision and to the number of hostel beds make matters worse. Labour councils should take a stand against cuts and should fund lifesaving services by using reserves and borrowing powers while building a mass campaign demanding funding from government.

All these figures show just one visible aspect of a crisis that affects many more who live in fear of losing their home or live in inadequate or unaffordable housing.

Socialist housing policies

The housing crisis in Britain deeply impacts the working class and middle class. Housing policies could play a key role in winning the election for Labour if it is prepared to campaign boldly on a radical socialist programme. But Labour's Blairite shadow housing ministers have resisted such an approach.

If Labour gives a voice to the anger at the crisis and supports struggles



2.5m people cannot properly afford where they live in England

8m people are living in unsuitable housing in England

1m families on social housing waiting lists in England

3.6m people are living in overcrowded homes in England

happening now, it can make huge gains. But it will need to take the Blairite brakes off.

Jeremy Corbyn has rightly argued that there can be no solution to the housing crisis that does not begin with a mass programme of council house building. He points out that in the 1970s, a total of 350,000 homes were built in a year - while now the figure is below 200,000.

In the 1970s nearly half of these were council houses on truly affordable 'social rent'. Today hardly any newly built homes are council houses. The private sector has catastrophically failed; not enough homes are being built and they are not affordable.

Labour promises the biggest housebuilding programme for 30 years, but not the money to pay for it. The recent Shelter commission on housing - which even involved Tories - called for an annual spend of over £10 billion on social housing. The Labour Campaign for Council Housing calls for 100,000 council homes per year.

And while Jeremy Corbyn's general statements point the way, the detail in Labour's policy does not match up. Labour is committed to spending only £4 billion per year on new homes. That is what Labour was spending in government in 2008 - less in real terms, after inflation is considered.

And this is for 'affordable housing', not necessarily publicly owned, secure, truly affordable council housing with social rents.

'Affordable housing'

The Tories have reduced the term 'affordable housing' to meaningless Orwellian Newspeak. Housing at 80% of market rent counts as 'affordable' in the government's language, for example.

But rather than making a clean break from talk of affordable rents and focusing on social rent - the lower rent charged for council homes - Labour is talking about new categories of affordable housing such as 'living

rent', affordable home ownership.

Instead of councils being given a duty to build council housing, we are told they will be given a legal duty to promote 'affordable housing'. That means they would be able to fulfil their 'duty' without building a single council home.

While Labour's Blairite shadow housing minister John Healey resists a serious commitment to a mass council house building programme, even the Financial Times wrote in a recent editorial: "The fact is that private developers, left to their own devices, will not build enough to meet demand, when the greatest need is for affordable rented housing in urban areas."

"It is not in their interest to do so, since the result would be lower house prices and land values, eroding their profitability... There can be no resolution of the housing crisis without councils building on a large enough scale to significantly increase the available stock for the first time in a generation."

Labour has raised the idea of a new 'English Sovereign Land Trust' to help councils buy land more cheaply. Rather than trying to beat the market at its own game, the Socialist Party says that development land should be nationalised.

Labour has also raised the idea of creating a national infrastructure bank that could be used to support house building. We believe Labour should go much further: nationalising all the profiteering private banks and casino-capitalist finance houses which wrecked the economy, and consolidating them into a public 'people's bank' under democratic working-class control.

Labour councils should set no-cuts, needs budgets, drawing on reserves and borrowing powers to enable essential housebuilding and repair (see pages 10-11). They could also begin municipal programmes of mass council house building on that basis. Corbyn and McDonnell should pledge that upon taking power they will reimburse any debts incurred by councils taking this route.

Safe homes now

The terrible fire at Grenfell Tower illustrated the class divide in Britain and the neglect of social housing. The response to the fire has been no better.

A series of fires since Grenfell have highlighted a range of risks, but far too little has been done to ensure safety. For example, Inside Housing magazine has revealed that even now, six out of ten social housing blocks with Grenfell-style 'ACM' cladding have not had it removed.

Labour makes good criticisms of the government. But Labour councils should do the vital safety work now and bill the government, rather than waiting on an inadequate drip-feed from the Tories.

At the same time, housing association tenants and residents need a democratic voice. Housing associations must be made subject to 'freedom of information' requests, and required to publicise fire risk assessments.

For private renters, Labour promises controls on rent rises, more secure tenancies, landlord licensing and new consumer rights for renters.

Labour points out that renters are spending £9.6 billion a year on homes that even the government classes as 'non-decent'. Around a quarter of this is paid by housing benefit. This is a huge subsidy for substandard housing.

Yet some Labour councils have failed to prosecute any landlords for years. This reflects years of cuts. Councils should move now to use the powers they already have, including compulsory landlord registration, while fully funding housing departments to employ inspectors and advisors.

Private renting

And Labour's rent control proposals will be welcome to renters, but fall well short of the protections offered in the past before Margaret Thatcher deregulated renting. There is a big difference between controlling the rate at which landlords can jack up rent and ensuring that rents are set at a fair level.

In the past, tenants could take their rents to a tribunal to test whether the rent was fair. The tribunal could insist on lowering the rent. This system should be restored, under democratic control.

Labour also pledges to increase housing security by creating three-year tenancies. Before Thatcher's changes there were secure tenancies for private renters that gave permanent security.

Labour should campaign to reverse all the damage done by Thatcher. It will be argued that this will reduce provision by the private rented sector - but if it will not provide secure homes, that is just another argument for more council housing.

Internationally there has been a rise in mass campaigns on housing issues in recent years, calling for rent control and re-nationalising privatised housing, and opposing evictions and gentrification. That reflects a wider move against neoliberal policies and the injustice and inequality of capitalism. Labour must break with the big business policies of the Blair years and base itself on radical socialist policies.

1.4m people are living in poor or substandard conditions in England

2,440 grand total number of council homes built since 2010 in England

1 in 6 number of new builds which are affordable to renters

216,000 long-term empty homes in England, +11,000 in a year

The fight for rent caps in Berlin



René Arnsburg
Sozialistische Organisation Solidarität (Sol - CWI Germany)

It is clear that rents are a primary social issue in Berlin. Wage 'increases' in recent decades have been so low they have meant a loss of real wages. But between 2009 and 2019 rents doubled in the city.

Berliners now spend up to 46% of their income on rent. Unfortunately, the 2015 rent control law did not stop rent hikes.

After the Berlin state elections in 2016, die Linke (the Left party) entered a coalition with the ex-social-democratic SPD and the Greens. It was clear it was entering an irreconcilable contradiction. For a long time the SPD has represented the interests of landlords and developers, and the Greens operate purely pro-capitalist politics.

Die Linke claims to be the party of the social movements, but has often acted against their interests. That has showed up most clearly in the discussion around rent control.

This summer, a draft bill from die Linke senator Katrin Lompscher proposed freezing rents for five years. The maximum rent was to be fixed at €7.97 per square metre, plus operating and heating costs - or or between €5.64 and €7.51 for older flats.

The current average price is around €7 per square metre. The law would have meant rent cuts for up to 1.5 million Berliners.

The real estate lobby and capitalist press let loose a storm. One headline was "The left is setting Berlin on fire." The share price of one of the largest real estate groups, Deutsche Wohnen, fell several percent.

The working class in the city was very enthusiastic about this measure. On 6 April, 40,000 people took to the streets to protest against excessively high rents and initiate the first stage of a campaign for the expropriation of big landlords. This was followed by a nationwide debate on the expropriation of real estate companies.

Die Linke had to choose between standing on the side of the mass of the population and withdrawing from government, or capitulating to the landlords and developers.

Initial legislation in June promised

some further controls on rent, but the bill for an actual cap on rents is not due till October. The united pressure of the capitalist media, the real estate owners - and die Linke's coalition partners, the Greens and SPD - has so far been successful.

By the end of August, a new draft of the rent cap bill raised the proposed cap to €9.80 per square metre - plus €1.50 if the flat has been renovated within the last 15 years. This will allow substantial rent hikes in poorer neighbourhoods.

Even this cap only applies for tenants who prove they spend more than 30% of gross income on rent - excluding sky-high utility bills. And the SPD and Greens have made clear they intend to dilute these controls even further.

The fight against high rents in Berlin is like a boxing match. The last round dealt with the question of expropriating all real estate companies that own more than 3,000 apartments in the city.

An alliance called 'Deutsche Wohnen und Co enteignen' (Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen and Co) formed to force a referendum for an expropriation law. Constitutionally, this is possible - if hundreds of thousands of signatures are collected in a multi-stage procedure.

In surveys, up to 60% of Berliners agreed with the demand. In Germany as a whole it was 40%. The Berlin-Brandenburg region of service workers' union Verdi supports the campaign.

The trade unions are central if the tenants' movement is to succeed. The aim must be to address the employees in the real estate companies who are also tenants. The question of low wages and high rents are directly related.

The alliance has called for a demonstration at the beginning of October under the slogan 'Cap correctly, then expropriate', and makes it clear that a rent cap alone will not solve the basic issues.

Even the nationalisation of real estate companies alone is not enough to ensure the interests of the majority. This requires that these companies be democratically controlled and managed by the employees and residents in order to finally end the housing shortage in the city.

STANDING UP FOR THE NEEDS OF WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE

Interview with socialist no-cuts councillor Tolga Aramaz

London's biggest regeneration project, Meridian Water in Enfield, is being opposed by a growing local campaign. As with regeneration projects around the country, once again a Labour council is handing publicly owned land to private property developers to build housing that will not meet the needs of local people. 'Meridian 4 Council Homes' is demanding 100% council housing.

The campaign is led by local Labour councillor Tolga Aramaz and Corbyn-supporting Labour members. They have decided to make a stand and fight for council housing and against Tory cuts being passed on by Enfield Labour council. They are planning a conference to discuss setting budgets based on local needs. This will be a conference of councillors, Labour Party members, trade unionists, local residents – anyone who wants to come together and fight the cuts.

Tolga was suspended from the Labour group for his stand, but this has not left him isolated. He is fighting alongside Labour Party members, local people and trade unionists, including Socialist Party members.

I was away from my duties for six months because of an accident I suffered in July 2018, so not on top of things as much as I wanted to be. When I got back I wanted to look at the detail of this 'flagship' council policy.

At first it sounded like a good project – affordable homes were mentioned, council homes were mentioned. So I thought it was positive, until I looked at the detail.

It's a project to build 10,000 homes, 725 in the first phase. I quickly understood it's not the project I imagined. For now, there is a commitment to 35% 'affordable'

and just 75 council-owned homes.

These are on Greater London Authority affordable rent. That is more affordable than what is normally meant by affordable rates. But it's not council rent, which is what people would expect so we can't really call them council homes.

All the rest are private homes for sale. In Enfield the median house price is £400,000. Intermediate 'affordable' levels means that these houses would be 80% of the market value, so £320,000. If someone were to get four times their income for a mortgage – and that's being nice – they would need an income of £80,000. 95% of this borough

doesn't earn that!

So who are these homes for then? On the website it's clear. It says this project is "to meet the needs of the city". So not to meet the needs of local people then! This is a gentrification project!

There are 4,500 families on Enfield's housing waiting list, on average waiting for 15 years. There are 3,400 in temporary accommodation. There's not even proper tracking of homelessness in the borough. Enfield council spends £300 million on housing benefit, over half of which goes to private landlords. So the council is subsidising the private sector, and building housing

that will be bought up by overseas investors.

We held a public meeting and about 100 people came and demanded 100% council housing. That's what we need.

The council held a meeting to explain Meridian Water to residents, and we went to speak to residents too. There was an indication of a shift in the number of council homes to 40-50% – though that was only an oral commitment, it's not in writing yet. I've been raising this issue as a councillor and been rejected. But when we initiate a campaign, it seems things can function in a different manner!

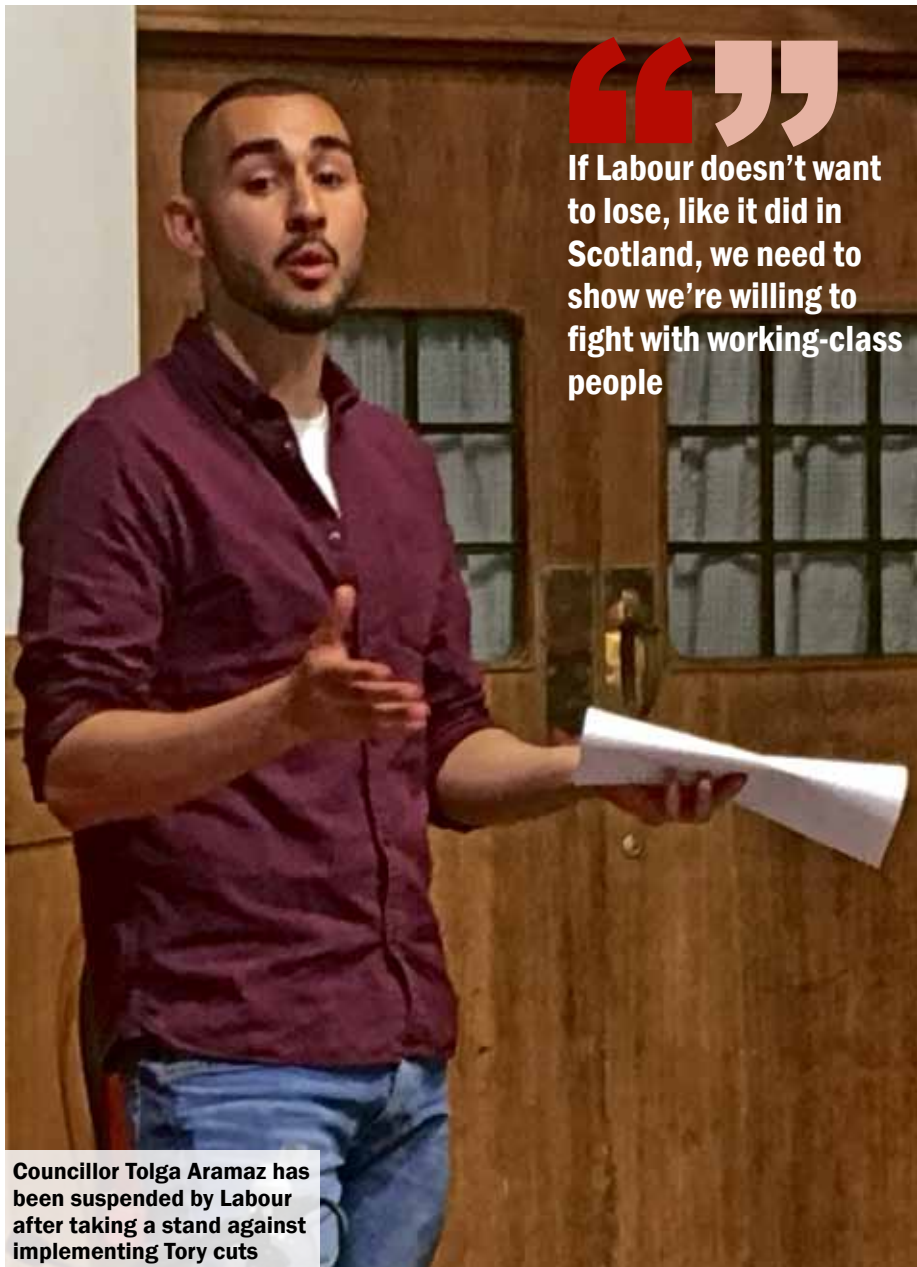
So we have to carry on campaigning. Leafleting, protesting, lobbying, marching, holding the councillors to account. I made a commitment to fight for 100% council housing, and if this doesn't happen we need to explain why. There's no feasibility study been done to see how we can maximise council homes in this project. If we need to borrow £100 million, £200 million, let's consider that.

As I said at the public meeting, socialism is cheaper! We can borrow to build council homes, and save the money we spend on housing benefit and temporary accommodation – they will pay for themselves.

No cuts commitment

This is linked to making a stand on the cuts. When you get elected you run on a manifesto, and you make promises to people. I promised I'd be a socialist. I promised I'd meet the needs of the working-class and deprived people in Enfield.

All other Labour councillors should do the same. Labour should be a socialist party. Some people say it's a party with socialists in it. But I



Councillor Tolga Aramaz has been suspended by Labour after taking a stand against implementing Tory cuts

think it's a socialist party with a lot of non-socialists in it. The membership card says it's a democratic socialist party, it shouldn't be open to debate. But unfortunately, the drag to the right has been successful for a long time.

I've lived in Enfield all my life. I share a 6m-square bedroom with my 16-year old sister. We've been on the council housing list so long and we can't get rehoused. I've gone through years of poverty, I'm a working-class person, I know what it's like at the bottom of the economic chain.

Edmonton, the ward I represent, is the 11th most deprived ward for children in the UK. Four in ten children are in poverty. £50m has been cut from our schools. Knife



If Labour doesn't want to lose, like it did in Scotland, we need to show we're willing to fight with working-class people

sacking people or go bankrupt just like Northamptonshire Council – and that is a Tory council.

There's a groundswell of feeling against the cuts. Right now, the Tories are saying austerity, the Lib-Dems are saying austerity-lite and Labour's message seems to be we can manage austerity. Labour councils are seen to implement the cuts and will be blamed.

We have to campaign to bring the Tories down. But we can't hold our breath and wait for a Labour government, we need a plan B. We need to create a People's Budget by not implementing any cuts and meeting the needs of the borough.

We could do this by trying to cover the cost through reserves and closing the deficit with any loans.

While this is happening, we need a conference among Labour councillors to share ideas on what could be done and also mount a campaign to bring this government down. Having the fight would make it more likely we get a Labour government.

Liverpool struggle

A lot of people in the Labour Party always mention to me what Liverpool council did back in the 1980s and how terrible it was as there was very little support for them from the party nationally at the time.*

This is not what I am necessarily suggesting we do, but the only thing Liverpool council was trying to do was to meet local needs. There is no point demonising them, as because of their stand people still vote Labour today in Liverpool.

If Labour doesn't want to lose, like it did in Scotland, we need to show we're willing to fight with working-class people

In Enfield, among activists, we will be looking into organising a conference for residents and anyone else who is interested in meeting the needs of the borough and generating an alternative People's Budget.

*Labour council led by Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party, which refused to make cuts, mobilised working people in the city, winning more funding from the Thatcher government which it used to build 5,000 houses and flats, cancel cuts and redundancies planned by the outgoing council, build six new nursery schools and expand council services and jobs.



photo London SP

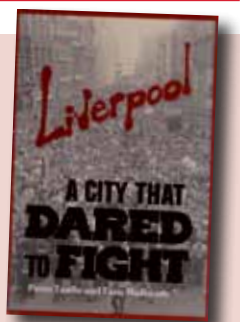


Militant-led Liverpool socialist council built a successful mass campaign against Tory cuts photo P Traynor

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Liverpool - A city that dared to fight
by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn

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Debating No cuts budget one of the discussions at SOCIALISM 2019 2-3 Nov, central London socialism2019.net

The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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



photo Henry Lawford/CC

Dentists: Private v NHS

I recently attended my six-monthly dental appointment. After a preliminary check my dentist suggested a filling may be necessary. As I was squeamish about paying £40 for a filling I expressed my reluctance – he carried out a more thorough investigation and confirmed its necessity so it went ahead.

Since my last filling, which was some time ago, it seemed to me there had been an upgrade in his equipment. Afterwards I commented "more new technology?"

"No" he replied, "there has been no new technology in the 30 years of my NHS dental practice. It's all been in the private sector". I sensed his frustration.

So there we have it – lots of technological progress in dentistry but unaffordable for the NHS.

John Merrell
Leicester

Behemoth

There is little worth watching on TV. Except tucked away on Film4 late at night was Behemoth, a documentary by Zhao Liang produced in 2015. It features the Chinese-controlled mining industry in Mongolia and its impact on the landscape, environment and the workforce.

In search of iron and coal, the first thing that hits is the scale. Explosives and massive machines rip the earth, enormous lorries move the material, hillsides collapse, more explosions, plumes of dust, smoke and rock. A smoking landscape, no grass anywhere, the only

noise the machines. It seems like siege warfare against the earth.

For a few moments a child runs through tall grass, a horseman rides across the screen, then back to smoke and fire. The furnace is full of noise, heat and dust, and danger. Eyes blink constantly, sweat drips from the chin.

A man in a vehicle cab wears a mask, scores of lorries queue, there is dust and dirt. The voiceover refers to "the agony of toil" as workers wield pickaxes like weapons. A lift descends several levels, to the bottom, there is water, drilling, workers without masks.

The new landscape of waste is bleak. Then to the people, some in small dormitory-like huts, beds looking more like a shelf. Some in small cabins. Before anything else the workers must scrub themselves clean, then eat in silence, there seems to be nothing to say about this life.

The wandering figure who seems to narrate the story at last comes to a city, new very high-rise blocks of flats, new roads, but no people, one of the ghost cities of China, developments without any purpose and of no benefit to anyone.

Pete McNally
Worcester

Who was John Maclean?

John Maclean was born in Pollokshaws and lived all his life in Glasgow. His father was a potter who died when John was only nine. His mother then worked as a weaver, kept a shop and took in lodgers to make ends meet and to ensure that John got an education.

Maclean was all too well aware of the

sacrifices she had made on his behalf. He would indeed finish school and go on to train as a teacher at the Free Church College. He also attended evening classes and got an MA in political economy at Glasgow University.

Maclean had been brought up in the Calvinist Original Secessionist Church. He later jettisoned religion, declared himself an atheist and joined the Marxist-inclined Social Democratic Federation (SDF). He ran economics classes, addressed street corner meetings and helped form the Scottish Labour College.

World War One was approaching however. Maclean was appalled by the jingoism – including that of the SDF leader HM Hyndman – and opposed the hostilities from the outset. He denounced it most vehemently as a greedy struggle for markets by imperialist powers and was soon in trouble with the authorities as a result.

In the end he would be arrested and sentenced six times – and lose his teaching job with the Govan School Board as well!

What he did welcome by contrast was the Bolshevik revolution. The Bolsheviks made him their consul in Scotland and an honorary president of the First Congress of Soviets.

And he continued to fight on, agitating for an independent Scotland through his Scottish Workers' Republican Party.

The cumulative effects of repeated periods of imprisonment – often in harsh conditions – had taken their toll however. Maclean died of pneumonia at the end of 1923.

We remember him however as a brave, principled socialist and as an inspiration in the struggles that go on today!

Alan Stewart
Wakefield, Yorkshire

1919 - Red Flag over the Clyde



The pamphlet is available for £3 from Socialist Party Scotland.

Contact 0792 734 2060 or

info@socialistpartyscotland.org.uk

Greetings message

East London Socialist Party members Juliette Fogelman and Ian Pattison would like to announce the birth of their Romford baby Cooper, born 17th September weighing 8lbs 3oz. Juliette's pregnancy has further demonstrated to the couple the need to fight for the NHS. Juliette and Ian would like to see a socialist world free from poverty, prejudice and climate change for when Cooper grows up. You can meet the latest arrival at Socialism 2019.

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

PCS national executive committee bypasses members on backing Labour candidates

Socialist Party members in PCS.

Last week's decision by the leadership of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union to recommend to members in England and Wales that they vote for all Labour candidates without qualification in a future general election could prove to be a damaging mistake, coming hard on the heels of further moves against Jeremy Corbyn by the right-wing Blairites at this week's Labour Party conference.

The move to uncritical support for Labour candidates was pushed by general secretary Mark Serwotka, on the grounds that there could be a general election before the end of the year.

Socialist Party members on the NEC and some independent supporters of the Broad Left Network opposed the decision as precipitous, taken without knowing the content of Labour's manifesto, and without waiting for the completion of a national consultation on the union's political strategy that had been agreed by the Annual Delegate Conference in May.

Socialist Party members in PCS support the election of a Corbyn government. What we do not support, and do not believe the union's members or activists would support, is the use of union resources to

support Blairites such as Tom Watson, Stephen Kinnock or Wes Streeting, who have done everything possible to undermine Corbyn and his anti-austerity policies.

We pushed for rigorous scrutiny of the record of any candidates that union branches sought to formally endorse at the next election, which would have been in marked contrast to what happened at the last general election in 2017.

Endorsements

Then, in moves that were not well publicised at the time, the union backed Labour MPs such as Luciana Berger along with other pro-austerity candidates who would be quite happy to stick the knife into trade union rights, or into public sector pay and pensions.

Luciana Berger has since resigned from Labour and joined the Lib-Dems, whose role in the Con-Dem coalition, attacking our union, is still in the memory of members and reps.

The Blairites are continually striving to push Corbyn away from the anti-austerity platform he was elected on and towards the political 'centre' (in reality towards the centre-right favoured by arch-privatiser Tony Blair).

Our union has always said that we are not politically neutral, because we fight austerity, we fight for jobs, for universal social security nets, for the tax loopholes exploited by the



PCS union members are continuing their strike action for pay justice and to be brought back in-house at the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy government department (top) and at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (above) - see socialistparty.org.uk Photos London SP

billionaires to be closed - and for well-paid jobs for our members, to implement this pro-worker agenda. But we are politically independent.

That independence has been cast away in favour of wholesale endorsement of Labour in England and Wales, which has been done without levying a single demand or a single condition on any of the hundreds of parliamentary candidates we will now potentially be supporting.

The civil service faces more of what we have had for the last decade. Job losses, office closures, and pay that is not keeping up with inflation. Pensions that we are pay-

ing more for, working longer for and getting less from. Redundancy rights being attacked to make it easier to sack us and close offices, leaving whole communities without accessible public services. We are also likely to face a situation where EU nationals who have civil service jobs face some form of attack.

Fightback

Fighting against all that should be our focus, including supporting candidates who back our members and our union policies.

Supporting candidates just because they are Labour is going to lead to division among our mem-

bers and political incoherence, as we back people who are openly campaigning against Corbyn's anti-austerity ideas on the doorstep.

At a time when the unity of the union is so vital, as we build for our third national pay ballot and attempt to shatter the 50% threshold imposed by the anti-union laws, this is a mistake which must be opposed.



#Marion 4GS

Marion Lloyd is standing as a candidate for general secretary of PCS in the union's forthcoming election. She needs at least 15 nominations to get on the ballot paper. Marion is a member of the Socialist Party. Her campaign launch statement can be found on socialistparty.org.uk - 'Fighting PCS general-secretary needed - Marion Lloyd: Why I am standing'. Please share and support her nomination #Marion4GS

■ **Facebook - Marion Lloyd for PCS general secretary**

■ **View the 'nominate Marion now' video on** <https://youtu.be/hECRZUC0yWQ>

Bromley library strikers - fighting on to save our libraries

Greenwich Leisure Limited, which has a contract to run public libraries in Bromley, will be meeting with the Unite union to discuss what is the longest running indefinite strike in the country.

We are now at a crucial stage in the campaign. The employers have been expecting the strike to collapse, but they could not have been more wrong. The strike is solid - largely due to the determination of the strikers but also because of the generous donations from trade union branches and individuals.

This is a vitally important dispute within local government - at the heart of it is the impact of privatisation. A union win in Bromley could lead to a domino effect, with the call for in-sourcing of services becoming louder and louder.

We are therefore making a further financial appeal to trade unions to support the strikers. Cheques can be made payable to Onay Kasab and forwarded to 33-37 Moreland St, London, EC1V 8BB and messages of support via onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org



photo London SP

Asda protests

GMB union members at 12 Asda stores around Britain staged protests on 16 September against the imposition of new, rotten terms and conditions known as 'Contract 6'. This was the third protest in a series of rolling protests organised by the trade union.

Under the new 'flexible' working arrangements workers can have their hours changed and be moved to a different department with just weeks' notice. Workers will also lose all their paid breaks

and be forced to work bank holidays.

Asda bosses told workers who have refused to sign the new contract that they'll lose their sick pay, and are threatening to sack any employee who doesn't comply by the 2 November deadline.

The key question is how can Contract 6 be stopped? Petitions and the public support of many MPs have so far failed to shift Asda. What will make the retail giant take notice is if the union urgently organises an industrial action ballot and campaigns among the membership for strike action.



Keith Gibson explaining to trade unionists how the strikes at Lindsey Oil Refinery successfully defeated the bosses' attempts to undermine union terms and conditions in 2009 photos Paul Mattsson

CWU reps determined to stop Royal Mail bosses' attacks

Steve Wootton
CWU and Bristol South
Socialist Party



Bullying managers are currently attempting to get postal workers to deliver more items than what is humanly acceptable...

Over 70 Communication Workers Union (CWU) members - workplace and divisional reps from South Wales and south west England - recently met to discuss the plans that the Royal Mail board has to drive a coach and horses through the 'Four Pillars' agreement.

That agreement was achieved last year following lengthy industrial unrest within the postal industry. It won union members a 35-hour week and pension protection. It was seen as the blueprint for the future by both parties. Fast forward to today, and Royal Mail clearly has the breaking of the agreement in its sights.

Terry Pullinger, CWU deputy general secretary postal, along with regional and local officials, outlined why the union is so determined to deliver a massive yes vote for industrial action to defend the agreement.

Royal Mail wants to split off Parcelforce into a separate company, with the workforce Tupe'd*

across. The CWU estimates this will eventually lead to 20,000 job losses.

Under the pressure of CWU campaigning and lobbying, the union has the support of Corbyn's Labour Party for postal renationalisation. In stark contrast, the new Royal Mail board has as its model the casualised gig economy.

While the CWU has been holding very successful and supported gate and workplace meetings across both urban and rural workplaces, the management has been saying to the workforce that they don't know why the CWU is opposing its plans.

It is against this backdrop that the

Hull construction workers strike against blacklisting

Workers building a wood chip acetylation (processing) plant in Hull walked off the job in defence of trade union agreements and against blacklisting on 24 September.

The 'Tricoya Trinity Project' at Saltend Chemicals Park is subject to the 'National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry' (NAECI) trade union terms, also known as the 'Blue Book'. The NAECI and local union agreements say bosses must employ two senior shop stewards on the job, one each from general unions Unite and GMB.

But construction firm Fabricon is refusing to abide by the agreements. The Socialist spoke to plater and Socialist Party member **Keith Gibson**, who bosses have refused to employ as senior steward for the GMB.

"We've gone through the NAECI grievance procedures for several months to try to get Fabricon to take on two senior stewards. I'm a plater, and I've been put forward as the senior steward by the GMB, and Paul Tattersfield, an electrician, was put forward by Unite.

The company has used several excuses. One was that the job was not going to be as big as they expected. Initially, the job was to have 121 workers; now it's just 60. But nowhere in the Blue Book does it give a numerical figure - the agreement is simply to employ two senior stewards.

They've even gone down the road of making a 'compromise' proposal to the unions, of taking two workers on in their respective trades and then letting them decide between themselves who is the senior steward.

But this breaches both the Naeci and the local agreement. And taking on a plater and electrician that way would breach equal opportunities too.

Another excuse was that they weren't employing any platers so couldn't take me on. The straw that broke the camel's back was that I heard on the grapevine they're taking on five platers and starting a night shift this week! So the reason they've not taken me on is clearly that I've been blacklisted.

Riding roughshod

The company's line was that there would be a meeting about this on 7 October with officials from both unions. But what they should have done if they're increasing the workforce is speak to the unions first about hours and manning levels.

They've ridden roughshod over that part of the agreement too. They want to hold the meeting late so they can say to us they're fully manned

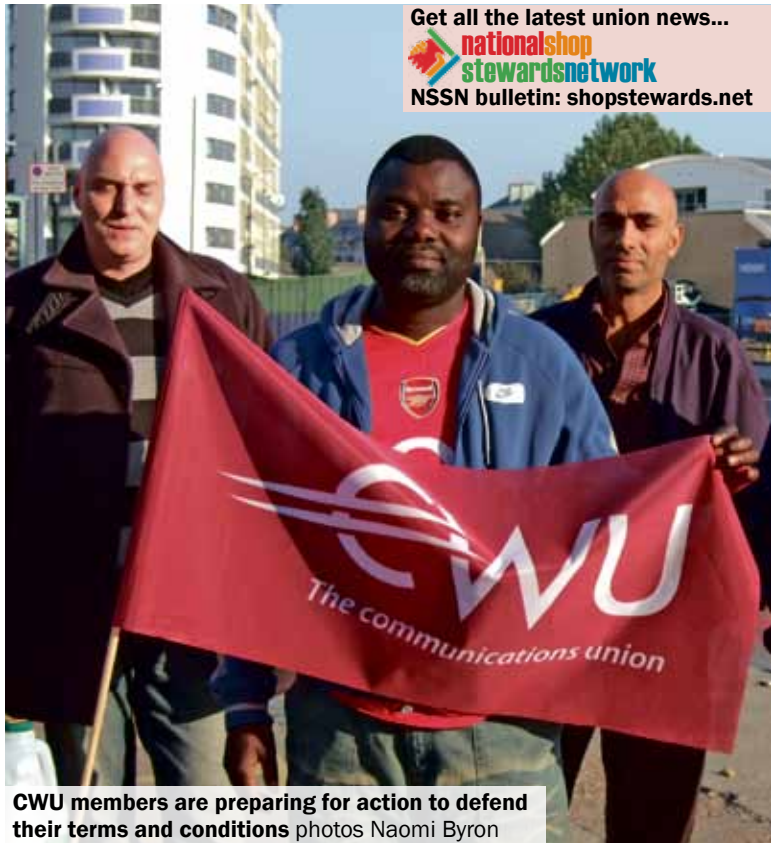
up and can't take on another plater! It's blatant blacklisting.

It's now all come to a head. I went down to see the 60 lads working on the site this morning (24 September). I explained to them we've tried everything through the official procedures to bring the company to book.

I appealed to them to take some form of action - not in defence of me, but in defence of the union agreement. If we're in breach, they're on at the union straight away! If we don't stand up against the bosses' breaches now, it will go onto the next job.

They took a vote. It was overwhelming in favour of strike action. The lads say this has been coming for a long time. So they've walked off the job. Six Hull Socialist Party members and trade unionists came down to support the picket line.

■ **For the latest on this developing struggle see** socialistparty.org.uk



CWU members are preparing for action to defend their terms and conditions photos Naomi Byron

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Drone attacks on Saudi Arabia

Tensions in Middle East ratcheted up another notch

Judy Beishon

Socialist Party executive committee

The drone missile attacks on two oil installations in Saudi Arabia on 14 September threw more incendiary material into the volatility and instability of the Middle East. The world's biggest crude oil processing plant was hit, immediately disabling over half of Saudi crude output - equivalent to about 5% of the global supply.

US president Donald Trump immediately blamed Iran for being behind the attacks, as did the Saudi regime.

The drone attacks came as a massive shock to the elites in the Gulf states and others across the globe, as it brought home how vulnerable their energy supply and economies are to disruption arising from such sudden, unexpected attacks.

Certainly, it seemed unanticipated by the Saudi regime. This, the biggest arms purchaser in the world, didn't have the necessary defences at the ready to stop the destructive attack, despite the fact that it was carried out by fairly low-tech missiles.

The Saudi authorities were able to release reserve supplies of crude to temporarily make up the export shortfall, but the infrastructure damage was severe and will take time to fully repair.

Humiliated

As well as an economic shock, this was a major humiliation for the Saudi monarchy - and the more so because it didn't dare make any immediate military response.

It has already, over years, used a massive amount of hi-tech weaponry to ferociously bombard Houthi civilians and armed opponents in Yemen, the latter claiming responsibility for the attack.

But it feared triggering an escalation that could draw in Iran, the country it was blaming for the attack, potentially leading to other infrastructure being hit and risking the outbreak of a wider regional war.

However, this week at the UN general assembly Saudi representatives are seeking support from other countries for some kind of action against Iran, without having evidence that Iran - an ally of the Houthis - was directly involved in the attacks.

Saudi Arabia's superpower ally, the US, has held back from a military response too, as it also did in June when one of its surveillance drones was brought down by Iran.

Trump made bellicose remarks, but has been heeding the advice of advisors who have urged caution, fearing yet another intervention failure in the region and the possible unleashing of a regional war.



Donald Trump and Boris Johnson rallied round the murderous Saudi regime, which continues to prosecute a brutal war in Yemen photo Alisdare Hickson/CC



Any further significant disruption to oil exports from the Gulf region could tip the already slowing world economy fast into recession

Holding back militarily has been made easier for Trump after having sacked earlier in September US national security advisor John Bolton, who had pushed for harder action against Iran.

Instead, Trump decided just to send extra US troops and missile shield equipment to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE); he needed to at least be seen to be doing something. And UK prime minister Boris Johnson has refused to rule out sending British forces.

US secretary of state Mike Pompeo hastily visited Saudi Arabia and the UAE, stressing that Trump wanted a "peaceful resolution". Part of this resolution, though, is more sanctions on Iran which will further devastate its economy and the health and wellbeing of the population.

So, for now, it's a military

'stalemate' but one in which more clashes are likely. As well as the hit on a US drone in June, there were several explosions on oil tankers in the Gulf area in May and June.

US military bases and ships in the region are vulnerable to attack, as are oil-carrying vessels in the Strait of Hormuz which runs between Iran and Oman. Over a fifth of world oil and a quarter of liquefied natural gas pass through a bottleneck of just a few kilometres of navigable water in that strait.

Any further significant disruption to oil exports from the Gulf region could tip the already slowing world economy fast into recession.

Also, part of Trump's calculations will be that although the US has become self-sufficient in oil due to its shale industry, sustained damage to global supplies would sent the oil price rocketing and increase the cost of fuel at US petrol stations.

Meanwhile the terrible war in Yemen goes on. A possible trigger for the attacks on the Saudi oil plants was the worst yet Saudi air force attack on Yemen on 31 August, which killed 156 civilians.

The Houthis claimed to have fired the missiles on the Saudi oil plants from inside Saudi Arabia itself. This could have been the case, maybe with help from the heavily oppressed minority Shia population in the east of Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi regime has been unable

to achieve a victory so far in Yemen despite its far superior military resources. To add to its problems the international coalition it assembled for the onslaught is gradually falling apart: Morocco has withdrawn from it and the UAE has largely done so too.

This is part of the shifting balances and alliances of the ruling classes in the region, in competition over trade, influence, prestige and connections with the world imperialist powers.

Power struggle

The Iranian regime gained in influence across the region as a result of the failed interventions of the US and other western capitalist governments in Iraq and Syria.

It wants to maintain and build on that position but at the same time is facing a deepening economic crisis made worse by US-led sanctions - inflation has risen to 40%, making it an increasing struggle for most Iranian people to make ends meet.

An outbreak of protests in Egypt over the last week, defying heavy repression to demand the resignation of president al-Sisi, is a strong reminder to the elites across the region of what they fear most.

None of them are able to satisfy the basic needs of working people and the poor, including in Iran and increasingly in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states. It's only a matter of time before protests again spread across the region as they did on a massive scale in some countries in 2011.

As part of building such mass movements it is crucial that working-class based, democratic organisations are created which must be independent of pro-capitalist representatives. Capitalism has proved over and over again its rottenness. The movements will need to turn to socialist ideas to chart the way forward.



CLIMATE CRISIS: SOCIALIST GREEN NEW DEAL NEEDED



photo Paul Mattsson

Josh Asker
Southampton Socialist Party

On 20 September four million young people and workers around the world took to the streets to strike and protest against climate change (see reports pages 6-7). A few days later Greta Thunberg berated the “empty words” of the world’s leaders at the UN climate summit who are “failing” young people.

A report from investment data company Arabesque S-Ray has revealed that 80% of the biggest 200 companies globally are unlikely to meet targets set out in the Paris Climate agreement of limiting rising

temperatures to 1.5°C by 2050. 30% of them don’t even disclose what their greenhouse emissions are.

Addressing the environmental crisis was placed at the top of the agenda for this year’s Labour Party conference, with 128 motions calling for a Green New Deal.

The Green New Deal refers to the New Deal, a programme of state-backed investment in 1930s USA implemented in order to respond to the crisis of the Great Depression. Its popularity shows the growing understanding that the investment needed to develop green technology is not going to come from the capitalists.

Billions of pounds that have been pumped into the bank accounts of big business since the start of the

economic crisis - with the aim of stimulating investment - still sit there, uninvested. They will only invest when they think that a profit can be made.

A Green New Deal and a large-scale programme of state-backed investment could start to bypass the role of the parasitic capitalists. But to remove the parasites completely requires wealth and industry to be taken into public ownership and under democratic workers’ control. This includes the nationalisation of the banks. Workers should not be the ones to pay for an environmental crisis caused by the bosses.

Capitalism’s chaotic market is incapable of the planning required to coordinate the steps needed to solve climate change. Workers and

the trade unions have a central role to play in developing this plan. There has been debate in the run-up to the Labour conference about the details of the motion, including concerns from the GMB union which represents some workers in the energy industry.

A plan to stop emissions should go hand in hand with campaigns to save workers’ jobs in the steel industry, at Honda in Swindon, at Ford Bridgend and at Harland and Wolf in Belfast.

The transformation of these industries should harness the expertise of this highly skilled workforce and ensure an expansion of well-paid jobs, in publicly owned, environmentally friendly industries, with workers in their trade unions

deciding how they are run.

A Labour government carrying out the Green New Deal would be a big step in the right direction towards addressing the climate crisis. But it must be funded by the wealth currently hoarded by the super-rich, and new green industries must be publicly owned and run democratically by workers and the trade unions.

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