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Issue 1059
10-16 October 2019



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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**



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pic Gage Skidmore/CC

CUTTING, LYING TORIES

Kick them out!

■ **General election now!**

■ **Corbyn can win with socialist policies**

Steve Score
Leicester Socialist Party

Boris Johnson, self-portrayed 'man of the people', has begun his election campaigning. At Tory party conference he announced policies that, on the face of it, would be very popular. One of these is to build "40 new hospitals" in ten years.

This is a lie. The £3 billion of investment the Tories have announced will in fact largely go to six hospital trusts.

"We are the party of the NHS" claims Johnson, echoing Margaret Thatcher's infamous "NHS safe in our hands". He says this is because the Tories are "the party of capitalism" and have "delivered growth that makes those investments possible."

Well working-class people haven't seen this 'growth' either in our living standards or in our services!

Under the Tories, and under capitalism, real spending on the NHS has been cut for years. We now have far fewer hospital beds per head of the population than virtually all other European countries.

The introduction of more 'capitalism' into the NHS, in the form of privatisation, 'the market mechanism' and private finance initiative by Tory and Blairite governments, has led to profiteers bleeding the NHS of money.

Hospitals across the country have been desperately waiting for investment to replace old and crumbling buildings. This money has dribbled out piecemeal from governments for years as hospital trusts wait for approval for their rebuilding plans. This is nothing new.

£3 billion nationally for infrastructure is not enough. The Health Foundation says that there is a backlog of £6 billion for repairs and maintenance alone. Dozens of hospitals have had investment plans cancelled or delayed for years by the government.

What's the point of new buildings anyway, if there are no staff to work in them? Staff shortages are a desperate problem, with 100,000 vacancies.

> Continued on page 5

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

BREXIT THEATRICALS CONTINUE - WORKING CLASS MUST FIGHT FOR ITS OWN INTERESTS

Socialist Party
WHAT WE THINK

As 'Brexit Day' on 31 October approaches, the roller coaster crisis for British capitalism intensifies. Spokespeople of big business - the majority of whom want to remain in the EU - are ramping up the warnings of a no-deal Brexit. The Institute for Fiscal Studies warns of the highest UK debt since the 1960s. The Financial Times highlights the warnings from the HMRC of an admin burden of £15 billion on British-EU trade, even before there are any tariffs.

"New deal or no deal - but no delay" is Tory prime minister Boris Johnson's brazen pledge. His ploy is that he stands 'with the people' against the "Remainer elite." As well as parliament and the courts at home, he is trying to blame the EU for the impasse. He hopes this would enable him to blame any failure to exit on 31 October on the EU and on his political opponents. In this way, he hopes to see off any threat from Nigel Farage's Brexit Party in a general election.

The divisions rife in the Tory party have come to the fore again with disquiet about the way talks are being presented to the British press, which EU president Donald Tusk has lambasted as a "stupid blame game". As nothing is predictable in this long-running farce, none of the possible outcomes can be ruled out. One of Johnson's several defeats in parliament was the passing of the 'Benn Act' which requires the prime minister to request an extension if there is no agreement reached by 19 October.

The Court of Sessions in Edinburgh has rejected an application for a court order to force Johnson to do this, because the judge concluded that his pledge to carry it out was "unequivocal".

Nonetheless, debate continues as to whether Johnson could challenge the Benn Act in court, or perhaps persuade one of the 27 other EU states to refuse to grant an extension, as the decision has to be unanimous.

It may be possible he could get a deal passed by parliament, with votes from the DUP, some right-wing pro-Brexit Labour MPs, and some returning Tory rebels. But a deal can only go to parliament if it has been agreed by the EU, and the

wrangling between EU leaders and Number 10 goes on.

Johnson's alternative deal is no real alternative, but the theatrics of putting it do serve the appearance of seeking Brexit by any means necessary. The pretence of Johnson's proposal is that it provides an alternative to the Irish backstop, which was the main sticking point in Theresa May's failed deal.

The backstop essentially meant that the UK would remain in close alignment with the EU single market and customs union until trade arrangements were agreed that would solve the problem of a border on the island of Ireland. Any loose arrangement is opposed by the EU because it would mean the potential for goods to enter and leave the EU, avoiding customs, via a porous border in Ireland.

But, in addition to economic impacts in Ireland of tariffs, paperwork and so on between north and south - the dairy industry in Northern Ireland, for example, says it faces a "doomsday scenario" - politically the notion of a border opens up enormous potential conflict.

Johnson's plan is for a new all-Ireland regulatory zone, and to leave Northern Ireland in the single market but not the customs union - a fudge with potentially two borders! The EU has rejected this 'deal' because of the border issue, and because of the effective veto given to the DUP in the promise that the NI executive could revoke the regulatory area.

It is a sign that the Tories recognise a deal is not likely that at the start of this week they stepped up their preparations for a general election.

Jeremy Corbyn

While this capitalist crisis explodes, Jeremy Corbyn has been leading cross-party talks "to prevent a damaging no-deal". This has included discussing an emergency motion to take control of House of Commons business.

It is reported that the 21 Tory rebel MPs who participate in these talks are not convinced, because they don't want Corbyn to lead an emergency government. The Lib Dems, scandalously given Jo Swinson's hostility to Corbyn, claim that "their total unwillingness to work with anyone else makes the Labour Party the biggest barrier to stopping no-deal".

It is still possible that the idea of a 'national unity' caretaker government, discussed by LibDems and remainer Tories as a way of both stopping Brexit and stopping Corbyn, could be proposed.

But it is an indication of the seriousness of the situation that sections



No to austerity and privatisation, whether from Boris, Blairites or Brussels!
photo Steve German

of the capitalists are even prepared to countenance a Corbyn government. A joint statement by the IFS and investment bank Citi says the economy could be 5% bigger under Labour than the Tories by 2022.

To a section of the capitalists, it might be better to allow a Corbyn government, contained by the Blairites in the Labour Party and under the pressure of big business to not implement anything too radical, than to allow a no-deal Brexit managed by a crisis-ridden Tory Party.

Some capitalists will be considering the potential mass rebellion that could develop against the Tories and the risk of that anger being harnessed by a Corbyn-led party to the left.

It should not be for the labour movement to choose between any anti-working-class alternatives. The working class is not responsible for getting capitalism out of its mess - we need to fight for our own independent interests.

Instead of turning to pro-austerity

forces, Corbyn should turn to the multi-millioned working class, young people whose lives are blighted daily by the reality of austerity and the profit-seeking system of capitalism, and struggling middle-class people too.

He should fight for a general election as soon as possible, and with the left trade union leaders, call mass action. Fight for an anti-austerity, socialist Brexit in the interests of working-class and young people to overcome the 'Brexit divide' and expose Johnson as an anti-working-class representative of the rich, the antithesis of a 'man of the people'.

A general election could be won, if fought boldly on clear socialist policies. Then it would be Corbyn going to negotiate with the EU, backed up by a mass movement, instead of Boris Johnson.

Negotiations in front of a mobilised working class, a challenge to the capitalist EU, would be enormously inspiring to workers across Europe, including in Ireland.

SYRIA: TRUMP GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO TURKEY TO ATTACK KURDS

Independent workers' alternative needed



Kurdish YPG fighters
photo KurdishStruggle/CC

Socialist Party
WHAT WE THINK

Donald Trump drew sharp criticism from high-level Republican Party figures after he gave the green light for Turkey to make a military attack against Kurdish areas in northern Syria.

On Sunday 6 October, the White House announced that US forces will be removed from near the Syrian border with Turkey. This allows a Turkish attack against Kurdish militias which control parts of northern Syria. These militias often led the fight against Isis and, until recently, were backed by the US.

Leading Republican, Mitch McConnell, rebuked Trump for making his deal with the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The Senate majority leader reflects sections of the US ruling class who are alarmed that Trump's actions will open the door to greater conflict, threatening US interests.

Erdogan plans to seize control of territory in northern Syria and to forcibly "resettle" millions of refugees who fled to Turkey during the civil war in Syria. This seizing control would threaten the lives of thousands of Kurds and other ethnic groups in northern Syria, as well as potentially creating thousands more refugees.

The Erdogan regime fears that the consolidation of a Kurdish state in northern Syria would encourage similar movements among the oppressed Kurds in Turkey. For decades, the Turkish army fought a bloody war against the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) inside the country.

Under fire from 'progressive' Democrats and hawkish Republicans alike for his decision, Trump tried to play on the deep anti-war mood in America and reverted to his earlier pledges to "bring our troops back home" now that "we defeated Isis".

Facing an overwhelming Turkish military foe, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces called on all Kurds to "defend our homeland" and declared Trump's actions "a stab in the back". But this is just the latest in a series of betrayals by imperialist and regional powers of the Kurds.

For decades, Kurdish nationalist movement leaders have sought alliances with imperialist powers and local capitalist regimes in their struggle to attain national and cultural rights across several countries, including Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

The Socialist previously warned that reliance on imperialism, such as Kurdish forces in northern Iraq backing the US-led invasion of 2003, and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) allowing itself to become an ally of the US in Syria dures the fight against Isis, would not lead to genuine self-determination for Kurds.

The US and other powers have, for many years, cynically used the Kurds' plight for their own selfish geo-strategic aims in the Middle

East. They have shown they are more than willing to sacrifice this oppressed nationality to further imperialist interests.

Last December, Trump announced the withdrawal of US troops from Syria but was checked after strong opposition from the Pentagon and a torrent of criticism from Republicans and Democrats. The US ruling class is split over foreign policy. The Democrats are no more 'progressive' on these issues than the various factions of the Republican Party. The two parties of big corporations only differ on how to further the interests of American imperialism.

Facing impeachment threats at home (see page 15) and dangerously deteriorating relations with Turkey, Trump has made a new deal with Erdogan in which Kurdish people will mainly pay the price. A Turkish army invasion and the imposition of mainly Syrian Arab refugees into Kurdish areas of northern Syria is a recipe for new bloody national and sectarian conflict.

The latest unfolding tragedy facing the Kurds underlines the need for an internationalist, socialist approach to realise their national and cultural rights. This means rejecting the pro-capitalist Kurdish nationalist leaders, the regional capitalist regimes and the imperialist powers. It requires building an independent workers' alternative, capable of uniting the oppressed Kurds and the entire working class and poor of Syria, Turkey and the whole region, to resist capitalism and for genuine self-determination of all oppressed nationalities.



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. 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.

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- 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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ASDA WORKERS PROTEST CALLOUS BOSSES

Ryan Aldred
Secretary, Plymouth
and district general branch,
Usdaw shopworkers' union

Workers organised with the GMB union protested outside more than 75 Asda stores across the UK on Thursday 3 October. Bosses have said they will fire anyone who doesn't sign up to 'Contract 6' by 2 November.

This contract demands more flexibility from Asda workers while stripping them of overtime pay, slashing night shift pay, and cutting holiday entitlement and paid breaks. In short - work at the bosses' whim and get less for it.

In a particularly callous move, bosses at Asda have begun issuing leaflets with advice on how to find a new job to staff who have yet to sign up to these controversial contracts.

Some of these workers have as many as 35-40 years service with Asda and find these leaflets utterly galling. They're forced to choose between worse conditions or be out of a job before Christmas.

While slashing 5,000 jobs, Asda have reported profits rocketing by £92 million to almost £805 million according to the GMB. Clearly, cutting terms and conditions is a naked attempt to line the pockets of the shareholders by picking the pockets of workers.

Sarah Green, a rep protesting on Thursday said "they put us in roles we're not trained in. They've cut us

back to a skeleton crew, yet they still expect us to get everything done. Shelves often go empty because staff don't have time to restock them. Customers get angry and take out their frustrations on us which just adds to the stress of it all. A number of staff, including myself, have been off sick with stress."

Piling on the pressure, Asda bosses have even said staff will not be paid for any sick leave until they sign up to the new contracts.

Money

As one protesting worker remarked: "They can find money to put on extra security staff today while we're protesting, but they can't find money for workers who have been with the company for years and years."

They can also find £12 million to pay company directors, up 22% from £9.4 million last year. How did those poor directors make it through last year!

The GMB have called for another protest outside Asda's head office in Leeds on 16 October. But workers are looking for the union to take a more decisive lead. Many are willing the union to ballot for strike action.

The bosses have already taken the gloves off. The union needs to do the same if it's to snatch a victory from what could otherwise go down as a painful defeat for workers.

If money is the only thing these bosses understand, what better way to send them a message than by shutting down their stores with a serious programme of sustained strike action.



Protesting against Contract 6 in Glasgow
photo Socialist Party Scotland

CYNICAL TORIES' DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BILL NOT ENOUGH

Heather Rawling
Leicester Socialist Party



A paltry £34-43 million has been allocated to pay for the bill

How do you leave a violent partner? Well you need guts for a start, as many are attacked or even killed after leaving abusive relationships. 55% of women killed by their ex-partner in 2017 died within the first month of separation, and 87% in the first year (Femicide Census, 2018).

But for working-class women especially, it needs resources - initially somewhere to escape to, and then somewhere to call home. Money to buy clothes and furniture, as many women flee with nothing, childcare facilities, a minimum wage of £12 an hour or decent benefits without a punitive sanction system.

Many will also need counselling for themselves and their children to overcome the trauma.

The Tories have introduced a Domestic Abuse Bill which is currently having its second reading in parliament. They say that the purpose of the bill is to raise awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and

its impact on victims. They claim it will provide protection for domestic abuse victims and bring perpetrators to justice, and that the bill will 'seek to strengthen the support' provided by other statutory agencies.

There are some positive aspects to the bill, including broadening the statutory government definition of domestic abuse to include economic control and coercive behaviour. But, in reality, it is a cynical attempt to appear to be doing something about domestic violence while at the same time cutting back on the very services and support that women need to escape. A paltry £34-43 million has been allocated to pay for the bill

Since 2010, councils in England, Wales and Scotland have cut nearly £7 million from refuges alone. And the situation is getting worse: an estimated 21,084 referrals to all refuges in England were refused in 2017-18 because there was insufficient funding or no space for the victim.

Yet in the year ending March 2018, an estimated 2 million adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse. (1.3 million women and 695,000 men).

Councils have also slashed public services that would enable women to escape. Corbyn has promised a programme of council house building. Women's Lives Matter is fighting for resources and a reversal of the cuts. But they cannot do it alone.

Corbyn and the trade union leaders should be mobilising workers to defend public services, demand that Labour councils refuse to make cuts, and fight for a massive programme of council house building. With better provision, women would not be forced to endure domestic violence and abuse.



SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party
September issue includes...
Brexit: stand firm against pro-austerity politicians
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Is Keynes back? The search for a way out of the crisis



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NHS not safe in Tory hands

> Continued from front page

One of the trusts that will benefit from this investment is in my area, Leicestershire. Money for new buildings will be welcomed.

But Save Our NHS Leicestershire has been warning for a long time that the trust's plans, involving the closure of one of the three acute hospitals in Leicester, mean no real increase in the number of beds for decades to come despite an ageing and growing population.

This is when there are already nowhere near enough beds: Vital operations, including for cancer patients, are being cancelled.

The trust claims that the lack of beds doesn't matter because more patients will be cared for in the community. Yet community and social care is underfunded and in crisis!

We cannot trust Boris Johnson or the Tories with the NHS. The trade unions and Labour leadership need to build a campaign to force the Tories out.

Corbyn has promised to reverse the attacks on the NHS and to end privatisation. But he needs to go on the offensive to take that message out clearly to working-class people. A bold socialist stand is needed to cut across Johnson's claims to be the man of the people, when he has never been for anyone else except himself and his super-rich friends.

Capitalism means profits for the few at the expense of everyone else. Socialist policies are needed to save the NHS.

That means fully funding the NHS under democratic working-class control, paying decent wages to staff, reversing all privatisation, bringing the big pharmaceutical companies into public ownership and ending the health-damaging poverty and inequality that is endemic to capitalism.

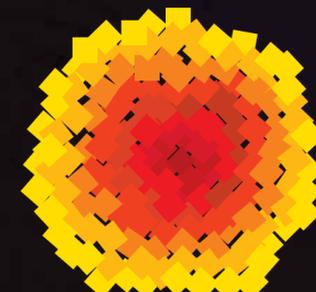
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Socialism 2019: why I'm going... and why you should too!

We asked people who have bought tickets for Socialism 2019 why they are coming. Their answers show how this festival of ideas taking place on 2 and 3 November is an unmissable event for everyone wanting to fight the bosses and the Tories and to defend working-class living standards. **Get tickets and info: www.socialism2019.net**
10% discount on tickets until 1 November

As a postal worker, a CWU member and branch secretary of Scotland No.2 branch of the CWU, I'm attending Socialism this year as it's a great place to meet fellow working-class people and hear socialist ideas about how society should be run. This could not come at a better time for us postal workers as we're facing the most anti-union management we have ever had.

Gary Clark, CWU branch secretary

I'm coming to Socialism 2019 because it is the best place to find clarity in such turbulent times about what is going on and what I can do about it. This is my 4th year and every year the things I discuss at Socialism end up being the things which sustain me politically for the year ahead, through all the ups and downs of whatever battles open up or capitalism throws at us.

Bea Gardner, student and climate activist

At a time when it seems the whole world has gone mad, it's a chance to get some clarity and re-charge the batteries for the struggles to come.

Mick Whale, chair, Hull Trade Union Council

The opportunity to spend a weekend meeting, discussing and enjoying time with like-minded socialists, trade unionists and comrades can't be missed. A must-attend every year.

Matt Whale, Unison nurse (personal capacity)

Socialism is a wonderful opportunity to develop your political understanding of a volatile capitalist world and to get strategies for the working-class fightback.

Lynda McEwan, Glasgow

The sessions are brilliant and it's great to meet activists from around the country and internationally.

Neil Bahn, Unison (personal capacity)

The debates and rally are inspiring, even for an old-time revolutionary like me. It brings together the cream of working-class activists and fighters who show the real strength of our movement.

Paul Spooner, Unite trade union member

Being at Socialism is a bit like being on an island of calm surrounded by storms of confusion when looking at the world today. I always feel refreshed and inspired afterwards.

Alison Hill, Waltham Forest

I'm coming to Socialism 2019 to further my knowledge on the past and present so I will have more confidence to take part in discussions, debates and campaigns.

Michelle Francis, student

I look forward to the event every year. I am spoiled for choice over which sessions to attend. You learn so much about socialism in just one weekend. And it's great to make new friends and meet up with old ones. I never tire of it.

Heather Rawling, Leicester

Socialism for me is an anchor in troubled, political waters. Our annual 'Socialism' never fails to move and motivate me. Can't recommend it highly enough!

Dave Nellist, former Militant Labour MP

I'm coming because we need socialist solutions as the cracks deepen in this brutal capitalist system.

Suz Muna, Unite executive

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Equity manifesto lays out anti-austerity model for arts

James Ivens

Equity arts policy and campaigns working party (personal capacity)

Performing arts union Equity has launched a manifesto for a big expansion of culture provision and jobs. It calls for a massive hike in public funding, higher wages, more public ownership, and greater input from artists and communities into what gets made.

'Performance for All' is a big step forward for the union. It goes beyond previous policy documents which have tended to react against cuts or particular problems in a given sector. For the first time, Equity has proposed a positive, coherent alternative model for the industry in general.

It calls for a two-thirds increase to national arts funding, from 0.3% of GDP to the European average of 0.5% of GDP. This could reverse the devastating cuts since 2010 and underwrite thousands of living wage jobs.

Minimum rates in theatres should rise to at least the national average wage, which was £550 a week in 2017. Equity's current minimum rates can be as low as £360 in commercial theatre and £435 in subsidised theatre. This would open up careers to many more working-class artists.

The biggest public funder of the arts is local government. The manifesto calls on councils to stop passing on Westminster's cuts, and explains how local authorities can set legal no-cuts budgets using reserves and borrowing powers while campaigning for funding.

However, the call is only for local authorities to "consider" no-cuts budgets "where appropriate." Some local councillors and Labour Party members on the union's staff and ruling council did find the prospect of standing up to central government unnerving.

But now is the time for bold action! The Tories are in no position to say no to serious campaigns for spending! Equity branches fighting local government cuts, like the campaign to save the Old Vic in Bristol, could build on the manifesto by

passing motions for real commitments to no-cuts budgets.

Regional funding bodies with advisory boards of residents and practitioners should replace the opaque, elitist national arts councils. Combined with cheap rehearsal and performance facilities in every town, this could give communities a say in their own cultural lives.

Scrapping the suffocating system of testing and league tables in schools is essential. Schools must be allowed to balance academic, vocational and creative subjects, not churn out maths and English rote-learning. In higher education, fully funded scrapping of tuition and audition fees is necessary.

In broadcast media, expanding the publicly owned and funded filmmaking sector is the only proven way to increase domestic movie production. The document even gives a favourable mention to the notion of nationalising the banks to pay for it all.

The union must now encourage campaigns to win these policies, including talking to members about industrial action when appropriate. And Jeremy Corbyn should adopt them as the starting point for Labour's arts programme, as he did with the South East Region Trade Union Congress arts document in 2017.

Vote to remove Equity's anti-campaigning rule

Equity is balloting members on changes to the union's rules, including removing important restrictions on campaigning activity.

The first question asks members to change rule 3 from "a non-party political and non-sectarian union" to "independent of any political party or religious faith." The courts used the old wording to impede Equity campaigning against apartheid, and the union has been overcautious in campaign actions since.

Equity's ruling council is right to recommend this change. It is important all members check their post or emails, and get their vote in by 12pm on 31 October - voting yes on question 1.

Unison's retired members reflect growing anger

Unison's retired members conference met in Southport from 1-2 October, and the debates reflected the growing anger of older people.

The proposals to scrap free television licences for over-75s, to extend the point at which the winter fuel allowance can be claimed, and to subject the state retirement pension to national insurance contributions were all roundly condemned.

Several speakers pointed out that pensioner poverty in the UK is a major problem already, and that these measures will make it worse. For the second successive

year the conference voted against participation in the 'Helpforce' volunteer scheme in the NHS. This was after the leadership had reintroduced an amended version onto the agenda, which was unfortunately endorsed by Unison's health service group leadership.

But delegates were adamant that they were not prepared to back the idea of Unison's retired members becoming an unpaid NHS workforce, and overwhelmingly rejected the proposal.

Roger Bannister

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VOTE YES TO ROYAL MAIL STRIKE ACTION TO TAKE ON THE BULLYING BOSSES



photo Paul Mattsson

Gary Clark
CWU branch secretary

On 15 October the Communication Workers Union (CWU) will announce the ballot result for industrial action over management plans to end Royal Mail group as a real public service. All indications point to a yes vote as big if not better than the 89% yes vote two years ago.

Over several years there has been a number of national disputes, but this is clearly different. It looks like

management, under the new CEO Rico Back, is preparing for a bitter dispute but at the same time the membership is clearly supporting the CWU.

The last dispute which resulted in the 'four pillars' national agreement, was resolved following a massive yes vote, without any industrial action. But the signs are it won't be the same this time around.

Rico Back has come into the role of CEO with a golden hello of £6 million and a package of around £2.7 million a year. His role is clear,

to break the strength of the CWU. This is a result of the sell off of Royal Mail and the push towards maximum profit and the rundown of the service.

The issues over the four pillars agreement are only the tip of the iceberg. Royal Mail has announced a five-year plan to remove all parcels above shoe box size from most delivery offices and bypass mail centres. In a stroke this will cost 20,000 jobs. What's more, it clearly states that Royal Mail will no longer be a letters company.

Also Rico has refused to support the CWU in maintaining the 'universal service obligation' which ensures every household in the UK gets a six-days-a-week service. If this was to go, that would mean another 20,000 jobs lost. So in total, a third of the entire workforce. This is clearly to maximise profit in a privatised company to keep the hedge funds happy.

We have already seen a huge amount of unofficial action, unit by unit, mainly over the bullying culture within Royal Mail, and an increase in disciplinary action against CWU reps and officials.

After the ballot result is announced we must plan for the fight of our lives. This clearly won't be resolved by short-term action. But it is very likely to be a bitter dispute, where we will need the support of the whole trade union movement. Support groups should be set up around the whole country in preparation for this battle ahead.

Birmingham HS2 protest against bosses' attacks on trade union organisation

Kristian O'Sullivan
Birmingham North Socialist Party

Unite the Union organised a protest outside the regional headquarters of HS2 in Birmingham on 7 October.

This was because the two main sub-contractors of HS2 in the West Midlands - Skanska and Balfour - went back on a trade union agreement to ensure that the £55 billion rail project allowed facility time for union activity and reps being free and able to speak to their membership about workplace issues and collective bargaining.

HS2 and its subcontractors have not kept to this agreement and are now actively preventing union reps from speaking to their membership and HS2 workers, whether it be in the canteens or anywhere on site. There is a real culture of fear and bullying.

Unite has already had to step in to ensure workers receive the correct holidays and that critical accident and death benefits are paid. And there is the recurring issue of

workers losing up to £100 a week of overtime payments due to payroll faults that have become synonymous with these type of dodgy umbrella companies!

Birmingham Socialist Party members and National Shop Stewards Network activists were greeted warmly by the protesters who were Unite members and officials.

We brought solidarity and helped hand out leaflets with lots of support from the general public and affected workers.

We say that if these issues are not addressed by the employers quickly, then Unite should look to a more militant industrial strategy and begin the process of membership balloting for strike action.

The Socialist Party demands the renationalisation of the entire rail service under democratic control and management by workers and service users, to kick out all vulture profiteers and to end the race to bottom culture that is this for-profit capitalist system.

Victory to HS2 workers!



photo Lenny Shail

Socialist Party members in PCS

More than nine months of action, including three months on indefinite strike, have paid off for PCS civil servants' union members employed by caterers Aramark.

The PCS members who work in the government's BEIS department have voted for a deal to end their dispute, which includes the London Living Wage, double the number of sick days on full pay and at least three days more annual leave.

This is a massive victory for the strikers. The sacrifice and determination they have shown has won the admiration and respect of members throughout the union.

PCS national executive committee member Marion Lloyd, who is standing to become a candidate in the general secretary election, applauded these brave workers. "As BEIS group president I want to pay tribute to members, a low-paid, diverse group of fighters, as well as the branch. Now to secure a settlement for the members in ISS as well. This dispute shows that the potential for our union is massive - now we must end the scandal of outsourcing and bring all of the workers and the services they provide back in-house."

Striker Joshua said: "We have voted for the deal offered to us. We won £10.55 an hour and the terms and conditions we demanded. It shows that action works."

Striker Novlette told the Socialist: "Our hard work pays off. Thanks for your support."

The gains won through this dispute are a first in Whitehall. Other workers in outsourced employment will be inspired to seek similar improvements to their conditions and will gain the confidence to take the necessary action.

While this is a fantastic and well-



Sainsbury's strikers win

Sainsbury's workers who took two 24-hour strikes at Waltham Point distribution centre have forced the bosses to concede on the main issue of the dispute - a massive reduction in sickness pay from 26 weeks to just two.

Usdaw shop workers' union members walked out on 27 June and 25 July, with a third strike at the end of September called off after the company backed down. Dozens joined the picket lines and were supported by Socialist Party members including Usdaw president Amy Murphy and Usdaw members from other stores and companies.

This strike is an example of the fightback needed to defend pay, terms and conditions across retail and push back the supermarket bosses. And it shows workers can win!

BEIS: OUTSOURCED CATERERS' INDEFINITE STRIKE VICTORY



A BEIS picket line with Marion Lloyd (left) photo Paula Mitchell

'Rebuilding a fighting left in PCS: Marion Lloyd for general secretary' at
SOCIALISM 2019
2-3 Nov, central London
socialism2019.net

deserved achievement for our members in BEIS and Aramark, the ISS dispute, which covers other outsourced staff, continues.

Similarly, PCS members employed by Interserve at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have just concluded a five-day strike over pay, conditions and union recognition.

The BEIS dispute was won by members being prepared to stand

and fight and with the magnificent support from other union members.

Support Marion Lloyd for general secretary with your vote at your branch nomination meeting. If you have any questions or would like to invite Marion to speak, contact Marion4GenSec@gmail.com

Facebook 'Marion Lloyd for PCS General Secretary'
Twitter @marion4gs

Vote for socialist fighter Jared Wood in RMT elections

Socialist Party member Jared Wood is standing for the RMT transport union's national executive committee in the London transport region. He is standing on a programme of:

■ Fair pay for London Underground workers

■ A four-day working week

■ Fighting Transport for London cuts

Jared says: "My record shows that I can unite grades and members involved in different disputes and develop an industrial strategy to put maximum pressure on employers and win our demands."

"I will ensure that we do everything possible to defend jobs, pay and conditions through negotiations. But where this cannot be done, I will talk with reps and members to devise a fighting campaign of strike action and other actions to win our demands."

"If elected, I will initiate a widespread fight against the government and London Mayor to restore our

funding and reverse cuts. I am a member of the Socialist Party and I am committed to RMT's socialist aims. This includes opposing all cuts and privatisation.

"I will continue RMT's support for a Corbyn-led Labour government with policies that include repealing anti-union laws and renationalisation of rail. I will oppose our union giving money to any politician who does not share RMT's principles."

"I will make myself available to reps and members. I will strive with reps and activists for equality for all in the workplace and to defend members under attack from management. I believe that giving effective support to our network of local reps and activists is an essential part of representing members at NEC level."

Ballot Papers will be posted to your home address on 21 October 2019.
Search JaredWood4NEC on Facebook for full programme and more details

Attacks on Caerphilly waste management workers while council boss pockets £1m



photo Dave Reid

Sasha O'Neil
Caerphilly Socialist Party

Unison and GMB trade union banners brightened the rain outside Caerphilly council offices on 3 October. The air rang with chants as waste management workers and their supporters demanded fair pay for themselves and five unfairly sacked workmates.

The council has been using cameras - installed on waste collection vehicles for insurance purposes - to spy on the workforce and gather evidence to build a case against the bin workers.

The workers have always gone home when they finish their rounds - be that late or early. That's custom and practice. The five bin workers have been sacked for carrying out their duties as they have always done - under the direction of management. Many more are under investigation.

The workforce says that the spying is a clear violation of their GDPR data protection law rights. Even without the new GDPR rules, trade unions have long successfully challenged such practices.

A bin worker told the Socialist: "Most of these boys have been under investigation since November. Some of them have been suspended since then. The council has given no reason. If we're doing something wrong, we haven't been given the chance to correct it."

"Management knew what was going on. They're still letting people go home when the work is finished."

Another worker explained that the council has a hidden agenda: "They're flooding the department with agency workers and asking the workforce to train them to take their jobs off them."

"They're trying to replace as many people as possible with agency staff.

Then they'll say our department is too expensive - and they'll have an excuse to contract the service out."

"Barbara Jones, the interim Labour leader of the council, said when she came into post as deputy that she wasn't afraid to contract out any service. And that's her plan."

"This is just the beginning. If they get away with contracting out waste management, they'll go onto highways, park services. Where will it end?"

Barbara Jones has just replaced David Poole, who resigned in September over claims of financial misconduct. Workers don't want to let Jones carry on where Poole left off.

Bin workers were supported by council workers from a number of other departments, by union officials, Socialist Party members and by Caerphilly Trade Union Council.

They are prepared to put up a determined fight to win reinstatement for the sacked workers and make the council shelve their plans to contract out services.

The bin workers were protesting outside a council meeting that was considering the case of Anthony O'Sullivan, the council chief executive, who had been caught trying to slip a 20% pay-rise for himself and other executives through a council committee. The scandal was only dealt with in 2013 when council workers, whose pay had been frozen, walked out in protest.

O'Sullivan had been suspended on gardening leave for six years and was receiving full pay amounting to £1 million! He was eventually sacked for gross misconduct but the kid glove treatment he received contrasted starkly with the summary sackings of Caerphilly's bin workers.

Caerphilly Socialist Party is calling for a trade union and community public enquiry into the running of Caerphilly council.

Lincolnshire health visitors strike

Lincolnshire health visitors are being balloted for further strike action with the county council trying to 'divide and rule' over future job roles.

The Unite members have taken 32 days of strike action since July. They are losing over £2,000 a year after being transferred from the NHS to the council two years

ago. The council has provocatively divided the health visitor role into two separate jobs, but all health visitors have the same specialist nurse training.

This is a tawdry 'divide and rule' manoeuvre from a council with a surplus of £188million for 2018-19 - that found the money to pay off their former chief executive with £292,000 for a mere six month's work!

CORBYN PROMISES 'POWER IN THE HANDS OF WORKERS' - HOW CAN LABOUR DO IT?

Glenn Kelly
Socialist Party industrial organiser

While the government and the employers are busy gloating at the 'record numbers' of workers in employment, the figures hide a harsh reality for millions. The truth is that many of the new jobs are low-paid, precarious jobs, leaving workers worried where the next hour's work is coming from.

A recent survey by the Office for National Statistics showed that workers are more worried about losing their jobs today than at any time in the last five years. New research by the Trade Union Congress (TUC), representing all Britain's unions, shows insecure work is now endemic in the UK economy. "Insecure work" now accounts for 10% of all jobs in every nation and region of the UK.

The state's own minimum wage advisory body, the Low Pay Commission, itself produced a report on "one-sided flexibility." This showed that 40% of UK workers said their hours can vary from week to week, and 17% are given no more than a day's notice when shifts are cancelled.

It's far from just being jobs in the so-called gig economy. The TUC survey showed that 20% of the insecure jobs were in roles such as kitchen assistants and security, 17% were in caring and leisure - and even 19% were in skilled trades.

Not surprising, then, that union delegates cheered Jeremy Corbyn at this year's recent TUC conference when he said Labour would "put power in the hands of workers" and not the "born-to-rule establishment." He announced that under a Labour government there would be a ministry of employment rights and a workers' protection agency.

No sooner had he spoken than the Tory press and the bosses' union, the Confederation of British Industry, were foaming at the mouth. They warned employers would be trampled on by 'bully boy' unions, and it was back to the 'bad old days' of the 1970s.

Corbyn and John McDonnell's 20-point charter for workers' rights in 2017 (see 'Jeremy Corbyn's workers' charter' at socialistparty.org.uk) was another step in the right direction. Labour has also pledged to raise the minimum wage to £10 next year - including for 16-year-olds, abolishing the youth exemption.

All this would be a welcome relief from the brutal reality of the workplace after a decade of the Tories, and previous New Labour governments.

However, it poses a question. Are a ministry of employment, improved legal rights, workers on boards of directors, and workers' shares in private companies really enough to deliver us from the evils of the "born-to-rule" brigade?

After all, the minimum wage has been a legal right since 1999. But this didn't stop employers illegally paying under the minimum wage to 440,000 workers in April this year alone. While firms remain under capitalist control, only democratic, combative trade unions can force employers to comply with minimum rates - and go beyond them to real living wages.

Corbyn's workers' charter would go a long way to helping achieve this, including by scrapping anti-union laws. But workers also need fighting rank-and-file union leaderships, which the Socialist Party campaigns for.

And Corbyn's pledge to introduce sectoral collective bargaining will be much welcomed too. Currently, just 15% of the private sector and 59% of the public sector have workers' pay and conditions negotiated by trade unions. Labour promises councils of worker and employer representatives to negotiate agreements, with minimum terms, conditions and standards for the whole of a particular sector.

Workers' control

However, none of this is a guarantee of improving workers' lot, let alone putting workers in control.

There are collective bargaining rights in the car industry, for instance. But it didn't stop the likes of Ford after the 2007-08 crash demanding the unions and workers agree to pay cuts, 'short-term working' and even layoffs, or else they would shut the plants and move elsewhere.

In local government nearly two million workers are covered by collective agreements. But this has not stopped the employers driving down the living standards of council workers to the point where wages have fallen by 20%. It hasn't stopped nearly a million jobs being cut. Nor has it stopped large-scale privatisation of services.

I recall well when I was a Union union rep at Bromley Council how happy the chief executive was to 'talk' to the unions about how we could 'work together' to 'manage' the budget and 'save' £13 million. I had to remind him it was like asking turkeys how they would like to be dispatched at Christmas!

The union leaders must take the responsibility for failing to lead a fight against all these attacks. But in the case of local government, a Labour administration would also need to

restore the £7 billion stolen from councils since 2010, outlaw privatisation of public services, and bring all privatised services back in-house.

Corbyn and McDonnell have made good statements pointing in this direction. They must get all this in the manifesto and mobilise workers and unions to fight for it, or we could end up back in the same place we are now.

Having a worker on the board of directors, or up to 10% of company shares with a maximum of £500 in dividends, wouldn't put control of industry in the hands of those that work in it. Firms would still be owned by the capitalists, and controlled by a majority pro-capitalist board.

In Germany and Sweden such schemes already exist. In fact, the employers use them to tie workers and unions closer to the 'company interests' - maximising profits - and so partially neutralise them. This is also the case in companies like John Lewis.

Truly putting "power in the hands of workers" means taking companies off the capitalists into public ownership, and removing all the old executives and bureaucrats to be replaced wholesale by elected representatives of the workforce, service users, and a socialist government. It also requires genuinely independent trade unions.

Corbyn and McDonnell's solutions to tackle the "born-to-rule establishment" give the impression that the problems with capitalism are not systemic, but a result of a few rogue bosses gone wrong, who with a bit of regulation and balance can be tamed to act in the interest of workers and society as a whole.

This was reinforced when the Sunday Times asked McDonnell this July if he wanted to end capitalism. He answered: "It's evolving anyway, it's a system I think will evolve out of existence."

This is dangerously naïve. The boss class controls enormous financial resources and unaccountable power in the state. They will not simply allow their profits and privilege to be gradually taken from them.

It is good that Labour has committed to expanding public ownership in rail and utilities. But to leave it there - McDonnell told the Sunday Times that "this is the limit of our ambition when it comes to nationalisation" - is wrong.

Labour should be talking about bringing the commanding heights of the economy into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management. Then the economy could be democratically planned and run to meet the needs of all people, rather than simply what will generate the most profit for a few.



Skidelsky Report on working hours LABOUR AND THE FIGHT FOR A SHORTER WORKING WEEK

Elaine Brunskill
Socialist Party national committee

Labour conference has resolved the next Labour government should reduce the average full-time working week to four days (32 hours) - without loss of pay - within a decade. This will be welcomed by workers.

The policy is based on the findings of a report, 'How to achieve shorter working hours', commissioned by Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell.

Alongside hostile working practices such as zero-hour contracts and casualisation, which force workers to scuffle around to find enough work to make ends meet, another section of workers is forced to work incredibly long hours.

In the UK, the average full-time worker puts in 42.5 hours a week. This is among the highest in the EU. A recent study by University College London found that a quarter of teachers in England work more than 60 hours a week - despite successive governments pledging to cut their workload.

Polls conducted by the Trade Union Congress have found that after pay and stress, long hours are workers' biggest concern. Even the Financial Times concedes that "more Britons long for shorter working hours."

Alongside fighting for demands such as a decent minimum wage, full trade union rights, and scrapping the anti-union laws, for many years the Socialist Party has fought for a maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay as a start in reducing working time. So, do we think this report can deliver?

The report's author, cross-bench peer Lord Skidelsky, starts by setting out that it is "politically independent." This is not reassuring!

'Independence' generally translates to accepting the capitalist status quo, or at best tinkering around the edges and offering workers a few more crumbs from the bosses' table. In reality, workers need 'biased' reports - biased towards them!

This raises the question of who should be commissioned to write such reports. Surely McDonnell's first port of call should have been the trade unions whose members suffer the consequences of long hours.

It is the trade unions, and most importantly their members, who best understand the need for a proper work/life balance, and must set out plans for how this could be achieved.

Trade union involvement would also test out the union leadership. If members were unhappy with the findings they would be able to raise that within their union.

However, Skidelsky's report does raise important issues. For example, the fight for a shorter working week is not a new one.

The report highlights that in industrialised countries, working hours over the last 150 years have almost halved. Of course, the Socialist Party would add that the shorter working week wasn't handed to workers on a plate - it was hard fought for.

Reversing trends

The advent of Thatcherism in Britain, part of capitalism rolling out neoliberal policies worldwide, meant that in the 1980s the trend towards a shorter working week was reversed. This refuted the idea that over generations capitalism can slowly but steadily improve the lives of workers.

Skidelsky points out that in the 1930s, the liberal economist John Maynard Keynes had prophesied that by today the industrialised countries would be approaching a working week of just 15 hours! In reality, any hard-won reforms that are achieved by workers will always be reined back in by greedy bosses and the capitalist system.

The fight for any reform must always be linked to the need for the socialist transformation of society. Only by ending profit as the economy's driving force, by taking the banks and big companies into public ownership under democratic working-class control,

could the benefits of new technology and productivity go towards workers' hours and wages rather than riches for the billionaires.

Lord Skidelsky's document suggests a future Labour government could push forward a shorter working week by having the public sector pave the way.

It says this would include ensuring all state jobs cut weeks to 35 hours within the next decade. And any outsourcing contracts would only go to companies which guarantee to reduce hours while protecting pay and conditions.

But a decade is a long time, and there's a danger that as time goes on the deadline gets pushed further and further back. Also, most workers would not be touched by the private contracts rule, and many of those who would want to see outsourced public jobs coming back into the public domain anyway.

The Socialist Party says we need more immediate and more concrete plans, including ensuring from the onset that workers in the whole private sector are covered. Hopefully these issues will be clarified in Labour's manifesto. However, even a hint of a four-day working week could have an electrifying impact.

Any incoming Corbyn-led government would from the onset be pushed in a socialist direction by workers who have had their sights raised. Socialist ideas could become contagious.

Asda workers facing a company who want to force pernicious contracts on them, factory workers forced to work long hours to get a half-decent wage, teachers facing ever-increasing workloads, young workers facing a lifetime of zero-hour contracts and casual work practices, all oppressed workers would feel the wind in their sails.

Lord Skidelsky's report may be woefully inadequate. But under a Corbyn-led Labour government, it could act as a spark to ignite workers into fighting for much more far-reaching, socialist policies.



Labour should be talking about bringing the commanding heights of the economy into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management

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Book review

SHE SAID: BREAKING THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT STORY THAT HELPED IGNITE A MOVEMENT

Christine Thomas

On 5 October two years ago, the #MeToo movement exploded - first on social media, then spreading to protests on the streets and in workplaces - becoming a global phenomenon.

The catalyst for millions of women sharing their experiences of sexual harassment online was the publication of a meticulously researched article in the New York Times exposing decades of allegations of sexual abuse against the Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein.

She Said is written by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, the two investigative journalists behind the article which 'broke the dam wall' and gave confidence to so many women around the world to tell their stories.

This is not a book about the #MeToo phenomenon. Nor is it just a book about Harvey Weinstein. And it doesn't merely repeat the already widely available information about the abuse which more than 80 women accused the media mogul of committing, dating back as far as the 1970s.

Instead, the book recounts in quite a gripping way how the journalists pieced together all the evidence - the first-hand accounts by the women, as well as financial and legal documents, and other material.

Power and money

She Said is about power and money, and the abuse of both. It reveals a pattern of behaviour, reported by actresses and employees, of how Weinstein used his position of authority and control to sexually coerce and harass.

It also reveals the lengths to which he was prepared to go to use his vast wealth to smear and silence his accusers, and to convince others in his companies, as well as lawyers (some claiming to be feminists) and security firms, to enable and cover up the numerous allegations of sexual assault.

Weinstein was eventually fired from his position, his corporation went bankrupt, and he is now awaiting criminal trial for two charges of rape and sexual assault.

Trump, on the other hand, remains in office, despite the many allegations of sexual misconduct against him (which Twohey helped expose) and the release of the 'Pussygate' tapes, one year before the New York Times exposé of Weinstein, in which the President boasted of using his fame to grope women.

And almost exactly 12 months after the Kantor and Twohey investigation was published, US politicians dismissed compelling testimony by Christine Blasey Ford



Worldwide walkout of 20,000 Google workers against sexual misconduct



Harvey Weinstein photo Georges Biard/CC

'Violence against women, harassment and #MeToo - what do Marxists say' at SOCIALISM 2019 2-3 Nov, central London socialism2019.net



photo Paul Mattsson

about an alleged high school sexual attack on her by Supreme Court judge nominee Brett Kavanaugh, who was subsequently confirmed in office. Two chapters in the book are turned over to how these events unfolded. However, they are less riveting because the two journalists were not directly involved in the same way as they had been with the Weinstein revelations.

Organising to fight harassment

#MeToo lifted the lid on the extent of sexual harassment throughout society. High-profile abusers included rich and famous celebrities in the world of entertainment, but also politicians, businessmen and academics. As more women opened up publicly about their experiences, others gained the confidence to speak out about what had happened to them.

Kantor and Twohey explain how #BelieveWomen became a widely tweeted and diffuse slogan. But they also stress the necessity of journalism that scrutinises, verifies, checks and questions facts. This is an important point. While women who speak out against sexual abuse should always be listened to sympathetically, alleged abusers should not be tried by social media alone.

If due process is not seen to be carried out, that only serves to fuel the backlash, unleashed by the likes of Trump, with talks of a 'witch-hunt' against men and things 'going too far'. This is extremely divisive and can cut across the united movement that needs to be built in the workplaces to combat sexual harassment.

While Hollywood actresses such as Ashley Judd, Rose McGowan and Gwyneth Paltrow clearly feature prominently in She Said, we do also hear from junior employees in Weinstein's companies, as well as McDonald's worker Kim Lawson. As Kantor and Twohey point out, after their article was published women from all walks of life posted #MeToo stories on social media.

Jodi Kantor also wrote articles in the New York Times about the experiences of low-paid women workers "they had watched the actors speak up and felt connected to the experiences of those distant celebrity figures. But they felt unclear about whether they had any avenue for addressing the problem".

That avenue became clearer when, in September 2018, workers at McDonald's walked out for one day across ten states in the US because complaints of sexual harassment had not been seriously dealt with. Following their lead, 20,000 Google workers staged a global walkout to protest that nothing had been done about company executives accused of sexual misconduct. The workers demands related to sexual harassment were also linked to pay discrimination and inequality.

Working-class women cannot rely on newspaper exposés or expensive lawyers to fight harassment in the workplace. Instead, they need to build collective strength together with working-class men, as both the McDonald's and Google workers did. This is necessary in order to fight for adequate harassment

procedures to be put in place, as well as to fashion the tools (trade unions in the workplace, students' unions on campus) to ensure that those procedures are actually adhered to.

One weakness of the book is its failure to look beyond the internal corporate structures of the Weinstein companies. Corporations do not exist in a bubble, but are connected to structures and ideology in wider society. The power disparity in the workplace underlying sexual abuse reflects the gender and class inequalities of capitalism more generally.

Centuries-old ideas about gender dominance and subordination, power and control - at the root of sexual abuse and violence against women - are, in turn, perpetuated by those inequalities. These have to be eradicated at source in order to end sexual harassment and abuse in the workplaces and in society more generally.

In terms of how it is written, some reviewers have called She Said the feminist equivalent of All the President's Men. This was the book in which Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein revealed how they uncovered the Watergate political scandal in the early 1970s.

In fact, the similarities go beyond style. Watergate was the catalyst that led to the resignation of US President Richard Nixon in 1974. But it has to be seen against the backdrop of a huge ferment in society, particularly around the war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement.

Kantor and Twohey's article triggered a global phenomenon, connecting with the accumulated rage of millions of women against sexual abuse, gender violence, sexism and gender inequality. And that explosion of anger is also the product of the economic, political and social turmoil unleashed by the most serious global economic crisis of capitalism since the Great Depression. As such, it is the precursor of future mass struggles that will call in to question the capitalist system itself and the inequality and oppression which flows from it.

■ **She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement** by Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, Penguin Press

It doesn't have to be like this: Women and the struggle for socialism by Christine Thomas



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Tony Mulhearn 1939-2019: A courageous leader of the Liverpool working-class movement and a lifelong member of Militant and the Socialist Party

Peter Taaffe Socialist Party general secretary

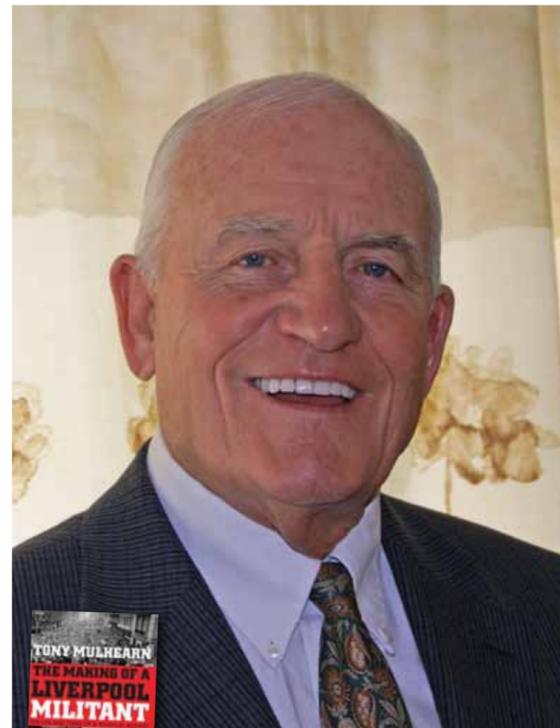
We are sad to inform our readers, members of the Socialist Party and the broader labour movement of the death at 80 of Tony Mulhearn, a titan, a courageous leader of the working-class movement in Liverpool and Merseyside, as well as a lifelong proud member of Militant, now the Socialist Party.

He was also an intelligent and astute leader of trade unionists, an implacable opponent of the bosses, determined to defend all workers' living standards, particularly opposing right-wing trade union leaders.

He is perhaps better known as a mass leader of Militant as well as the Liverpool District Labour Party (DLP) during its epic struggle with the Thatcher Tory government in the 1980s.

He was chairperson of the DLP for many years, with attendances at the monthly meetings of the DLP climbing to 700 - the biggest of any section of the Merseyside labour movement. The right wing of the Labour Party considered the DLP, which implacably opposed them and their programme of council cuts, to be a small "unrepresentative caucus".

Like other supporters of Militant he was hounded and eventually expelled from the Labour Party by Neil Kinnock and his right-wing cronies for the 'crime' of standing up for and



The making of a Liverpool militant by Tony Mulhearn £10 from Left Books (see below)

Film review: Joker

SYMPATHISING WITH A MONSTER CREATED BY TODAY'S INCENDIARY CONDITIONS

The most striking thing about this film is how gritty and believable it is. Based on the origin story of one of the most iconic comic book villains of all time, and situated in Gotham City, a carbon copy of New York City, this film is set in the 80s.

However, it echoes the incendiary economic and political situation of today. Tension and frustration build among working-class people against their conditions portrayed in the movie.

Poor-quality housing, rising crime, poverty, cuts to mental health services, uncompromising bosses and increasing civil unrest are abound and help shape the Joker's character. What makes the movie so compelling is that it holds up a mirror to the realities of austerity faced by the viewer.

A perfect storm develops. Cut off from psychiatric help due to cut

services, mixed with the instability of precarious working conditions.

This is topped off with an incident, subject to the cruelty and entitlement of what effectively represents the capitalist class, causing Arthur Fleck (Joker) to snap. An act of extreme violence against those representing big business strikes a chord and sets off a movement.

At times the Joker not only comes across as sympathetic but often relatable. What makes Joaquin Phoenix's Joker so terrifying is that he isn't overblown and cartoonish but realistic and entirely plausible.

We can relate because it is very clear that the capitalist system is laid bare, shown for all of its failings, a stark contrast between the haves and have nots. Where that relatability ends is in the action the Joker takes to strike back against the

system, manifested in part due to his developing psychosis.

We the audience empathise because we too want to strike out against a system that is so utterly broken. Where that empathy ends is seeing that action being translated into what can only be described as terrorism through the actions of the Joker.

At the end of the movie we're left with an uneasy feeling of both sympathising with the tragic creation of the Joker, while being horrified at the monster that's created out of the monstrous conditions which we also inhabit.

Joker reflects the rotten system we live in and serves as a stark warning to the kind of ideas that might flourish if we allow that system to continue. It's certainly worth a watch.

Ryan Aldred Plymouth Socialist Party

defending the marvellous Liverpool working class. Without those like Tony and many other working-class heroes, in the ranks of Militant, and on a wider level in the broad labour movement, the colossal achievements of the Liverpool City Council - of a mass council house building programme, new schools and parks, etc - would not have been possible.

Tony Mulhearn's achievements - together with the immortal 47 councillors, who stood firm against Thatcher and the right-wing sell-outs in the labour movement itself, like Neil Kinnock - would not have been possible without mass support from the working class, endorsed in every election while they were in power.

Like generations of workers before him, Tony was vilified and attacked by the bosses and their representatives, victimised and forced at one time to hunt for any kind of job to keep the wolf from the door, for standing up for his class.

This only acted to deepen and consolidate the respect and love that Tony generated, not just in his steadfast family, but in the ranks of Militant and among working people in general.

We send our condolences to Tony's family and will carry a much fuller tribute to Tony and recognition of his and Militant's achievements in Merseyside in next week's paper. He remained firm to the end in his support for the Socialist Party, and for socialism in Britain and around the world.





Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

Newcastle Corbyn rally

Newcastle's rally with Jeremy Corbyn had the feeling of an illegal rave. First we heard a rumour that Corbyn was coming - then we were told we could apply for tickets but the venue details wouldn't be given out until 24 hours before the event.

In the end it was virtually standing room only at Newcastle's City Hall on 6 October. The queue to get into the venue wrapped right around the venue - with another queue to get into that queue. Clearly Corbyn can still pull in big audiences.

We sold all 70 copies of the Socialist newspaper we had with us, and I spotted people inside the venue reading our paper as they waited for the rally to begin.

Corbyn spoke well, but MPs Ian Lavery and Laura Pidcock were also applauded - especially when, unlike Corbyn, they mentioned socialism.

Gateshead

Our slogans of 'Tories out now' and 'No to the bosses' EU - for a workers' Brexit' were well received on our 5 October campaign stall in Gateshead.

It's always good to be in working-class town centres to get a feel for what the mood is. There's a definite hatred of the Tories - Boris's bubble is deflating - but still a lot of uncertainty over Corbyn.

We had some really good discussions. In the main people agree with Corbyn's policies, but are uncertain he has the backbone to carry them out.

Elaine Brunskill

Hoxton

We ran a campaign stall and Socialist newspaper sale in Hoxton, east London, supporting postal workers balloting for strikes, and demanding the renationalisation of Royal Mail.

The mother of a postal worker took some of our leaflets for her son's depot. She said he'll definitely be voting yes in the strike ballot.

A young woman who works for a City law firm said she'd definitely sign any petition to do with trade unions. She told us she was a Fabian, but the current situation has pushed her to think a more radical solution is needed.

Chris Newby

Barnsley

The mood was very mixed in Barnsley on 5 October. Some hate Boris and the Tories - one rightly told us "he's a charlatan!" Others, in what once was a solid Labour ex-mining town, are hostile to Corbyn and have no trust in Labour.

Our slogans were to save our NHS from Tory cuts and privatisation, scrap Universal Credit, and kick out the Tories. We got more public engagement, for and against, than in recent stalls elsewhere.

We sold 20 copies of the Socialist. Special mention to Theo, Karen and Shaun's grandson: "Buy a Socialist paper, only two left!"

Alistair Tice



'THE LITTLE PEOPLE CAN WIN' - LEEDS TENANTS PUSH BACK DEMOLITION

Iain Dalton
Leeds Socialist Party

After over two years of campaigning, the residents of Woodsworth Drive and Sugar Hill Close in Leeds have had plans to demolish their homes voted down unanimously by Leeds City Council's planning committee.

The LS26 Save Our Homes campaign fought their landlord, Pemberstone, which sought to replace their homes with 'luxury' housing for sale.

Fifty lobbied the meeting on 3 October. Despite Labour leading the council and planning committee, it took immense pressure for a tenants' representative to be allowed to address the meeting.

But relentless campaigning, including demonstrations, meetings, and extensive local and national media coverage, forced the council to reject demolition.

As leading campaigner Cindy Readman told us: "We're very surprised it was a unanimous decision, as beforehand we didn't have any indication. We started to feel more confident as the meeting went along, but never expected it to be unanimous."

"We do believe Pemberstone will appeal this decision, but we also



believe the planning committee were trying to make it as watertight as possible. We hope they take on the recommendation that the houses are refurbished.

LS26 Save Our Homes campaigners lobbying the Leeds Council planning committee photo Iain Dalton

"What I would say to other tenants facing this situation is don't give up, the little people can win, we've proved it. Get organised and don't be afraid to ask for help."

HUGE OPPOSITION TO BARRY REHAB WARD CLOSURE

Beth Webster
Cardiff West Socialist Party

"That was challenging and uncomfortable" - the Cardiff and Vale Health Board chief executive's closing remark at a public engagement meeting on NHS cuts in Barry, South Wales.

The health board proposes moving care out of acute hospitals and into the community by replacing rehabilitation wards like the Sam Davies with a 48-hour short-stay ward, and then discharging patients to further community care.

But with the chronic shortage of community services, people will inevitably bounce back into acute hospital beds, also already under immense pressure.

After an hour's presentation from the health board, which one attendee described as "like being sold a timeshare," attendees had to revolt to force an open discussion and allow the full extent of opposition to be heard.

There was widespread anger at the health board's whitewashing of bed cuts as an 'improvement' to elderly people's services. One of the senior clinicians supporting the

plan attempted to justify bed cuts by saying that "having beds creates demand!"

Also highlighted at the meeting was the shocking treatment of the Sam Davies staff: the health boards have scarcely engaged with them or their union, Unison. The health board has said only that workers are "likely" to find jobs at other hospitals, despite the distance on infrequent and expensive public transport.

Sam Davies staff, with support from Unison, have launched a petition, signed by around 10,000 people so far. There was a march and rally in Barry on 5 October.

As said in the meeting, the health board should be fighting for more funding from the Welsh Government to improve services rather than close them.

That health board executives on six-figure salaries can tell communities like Barry they can no longer afford vital NHS services and staff is an absolute disgrace.

Nothing highlights more clearly the necessity of health workers and communities running the NHS under public ownership and democratic control - and the support a health union-led campaign to reverse NHS cuts would have across Wales.

MEGAPHONE
The magazine of Socialist Students 2019 issue includes...
The fight for free education in 2019
Where next for the struggle against climate change?
NUS reforms: we need a national, fighting students' union
leftbooks.co.uk/2019megaphone and at freshers' fairs - £1

York freshers success
The University of York freshers fair revealed an enthusiastic response to Socialist ideas. Queues of students lined up to hear about our chance to take down the Tories and fight for workers' control of society.
Ten people came to our meeting on 6 October. In the coming weeks and months there is huge potential for us to expand from the two universities and the college. Watch this space!
Lewis Whittaker

Join the student fightback: join...
socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8761
or text your name and school, college or uni to 07749 379 010

Help fund the fightback DONATE TODAY
visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or call 020 8988 8777
or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

BEST WAY TO FIGHT BACK? JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY



Moments in history like this make us question what we can do to influence things. As individuals, ordinary people have little power against the immense force of world events.

But when, together, we discuss and fight for a clear set of ideas, working-class and young people can have huge clout.

The Socialist Party fights for socialism. For taking the power out of the hands of the rotten, irrational and exploitative elite. For planning

society democratically to provide for all.
This October is a special recruitment month for the Socialist Party. If you're looking for a way to fight back, join us. There's no better way to help or to learn than to get stuck in.

For our recruitment month, we've reprinted our pamphlet 'The Case for Socialism - Why you should join the Socialist Party', and a leaflet outlining our record in struggle. Contact your local Socialist Party organiser or our national office if you want any of this material - or to join!



Danny Foxcroft
Grimsby Socialist Party

It started when I became a member of the GMB union on my very first day of work in the construction industry. Being around this sort of working camaraderie helped me learn about how effective collective action can be in fighting against the negatives of capitalism.

I was also educated by the older generation. They would spend countless hours on jobs teaching me how combating issues as a collective can

Why I joined the Socialist Party

I WAS LOOKING FOR A CLEAR LEFT ALTERNATIVE TO THE BIG ISSUES

a clear left alternative to the big issues in society today. For example, I'd like a Brexit which improves the lives of working-class people, not the wealthiest.

After speaking to different people I was working with, somebody put me in touch with the local Socialist Party, and I was invited to attend a meeting.

This meeting was taking place in the function room above a local pub. So I went along, pint in hand, and within five minutes of sitting at that table, I knew that I'd found what I was looking for.

Nancy Taaffe
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

WALTHAM FOREST: MOBILISATION NEEDED TO DEFEND ABORTION RIGHTS



Blocking anti-abortion demonstrators with the local trade union council banner photo Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Trade unionists, community campaigners and members of the Socialist Party protested against anti-abortion activists holding up huge images of foetuses in the Walthamstow square on 5 October.

It's appalling that the local MP Stella Creasy, who has campaigned in parliament for abortion rights in Northern Ireland, has been subjected to a campaign of intimidation and harassment by 'pro-life' organisation 'CBRUK'.

However, we in the Socialist Party believe it was unfortunate the local community was not mobilised in a peaceful protest against their publicly announced threat to reappear in the square.

This struggle is all our struggle. We should have had a community show of strength against them. If they come again there should be even more of us. The right to have abortions has been a hard-fought battle over 40 years and it's a right we should all defend rigorously.

As well as the right to abortion, we say women should have a real choice as to when and whether to have a child. They should be free to choose to have an abortion, but also

free to choose to have children without being restricted by being poor and working-class.

Like I said to one of these pro-lifers: "You only pretend to care for life from nought to nine months. Where were you these last 30 years when we've been in this square campaigning to stop maternity services from being cut, or doctors' surgeries closing?"

Where were you when nurseries were closed and privatised? When school dinners were threatened with privatisation? Where were you when the libraries closed? Where have you been to stop school cuts or the cuts to post-16 education?"

We in the Socialist Party joined the counter-protest after we had just finished campaigning in the square for the 27,000 flats being proposed in Waltham Forest to be council homes and not private flats. As I said to someone from CBRUK: "All these issues affect women's choices, and I've not seen you here campaigning on them, ever!"

This issue is not just about one woman MP - it's about all women, and particularly working-class women whose choices are taken away by poverty every day of their lives in capitalist society. A socialist society would mean all women having choices, free from the pressures of economics or backward social ideas.

SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST
The weekly Marxist analysis podcast from the Socialist Party
Listen and subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Overcast, and all major podcast platforms, as well as socialistparty.org.uk

Chinese revolution of 1944-49

On 1 October 1949 the leader of the Stalinist Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Mao Zedong, declared the formation of the People's Republic of China. 70 years on, the regime and China's dictatorial president Xi Jinping, standing on the same spot in Tiananmen Square, saluted a massive parade of military power. In a series of three articles the Socialist explains how the 1949 revolution came about, what developments subsequently occurred under Mao's regime (1949-76), and what the situation is today in China. In the first article, **Lenny Shail** examines how the failed workers' revolution of 1925-27 shaped the CCP and the 1949 revolution.



The People's Liberation Army enters Peking (Beijing) in 1949

'THE SECOND GREATEST EVENT IN HUMAN HISTORY'

As far as Marxists are concerned, the Chinese revolution of 1944-49 was the second greatest event in human history, following the 1917 October revolution in Russia, led by the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky.

It was against a backdrop of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary events, world wars, and capitalist crisis in the first half of the 20th century that helped create the conditions in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could take power, just 28 years after it was founded.

500 million Chinese workers and peasants, kept at the level of pack animals by landlordism and capitalism, their country dismembered into imperialist 'spheres of influence', shook off these chains and stepped onto the scene of world history.

The CCP did not come to power on the back of a working-class movement. With its Stalinist outlook and methods it initially stood for a limited agenda to establish a 'new democracy', while keeping a capitalist economy. But almost despite itself, the CCP was thrown forward by one of the mightiest revolutionary waves in world history.

Mao Zedong was the leader of the Red Army and CCP that presided over the 'third' revolution of 1944-49. He was in his own words, a "Stalinist", and built a regime that mirrored the existing bureaucratically controlled Stalinist Soviet Union at the

time - not a democratic workers' state along the lines of Russia in 1917 (before Stalin's bureaucratic terror campaigns against workers' democracy).

However, despite the bureaucratic weight and subsequent horrors of the regime, like Stalinist Russia it was relatively progressive. This was because landlordism and capitalism were eliminated and the beginnings of a planned economy were put into place, although power was in the hands of a one-party, totalitarian regime.

The first Chinese revolution took place in 1911. The collapsing Manchu dynasty was replaced by a republic, which two years later became a military dictatorship.

Russian revolution

The 1917 Russian revolution inspired mass struggle and radicalisation internationally and helped create the new Communist International (Comintern).

In China, the May Fourth Movement of 1919, involving mainly students, attacked imperialist interests and ancient traditions. In 1921, the CCP was founded against this backdrop.

Another radicalising factor was the widespread disappointment with the outcome of the 1911 revolution. All major issues - land reform, imperialism, the unification of China (historically the 'democratic' tasks of capitalist revolutions) - remained unresolved. But the

increasing development of a working class in the cities saw the arrival of a new leading force in the struggle.

However, the period after the Russian revolution saw defeats of working-class socialist revolutions internationally, particularly in Germany. The economic underdevelopment of Russia - reinforced by the ravages of World War One and imperialist military interventions after the revolution - left the revolution isolated and the small revolutionary working class exhausted.

These conditions allowed a bureaucratic regime, embodied by party secretary Stalin, to slowly consolidate control both in the Communist Party and state. The bureaucracy formally defended the revolution, but increasingly put its own comforts and privileges before the interests of the international revolution.

This was in sharp contrast to Trotsky, who co-led the 1917 revolution with Lenin. Trotsky organised the Left Opposition of the Russian Communist Party, and defended Marxism and workers' democracy in the debates and struggles over developments in the Soviet Union and internationally.

The Chinese revolution of 1925-

27, saw the sharp political differences between Stalin's clique and Trotsky's left opposition tested in a gigantic struggle by the Chinese masses. The position in China, in many ways a more favourable position than existed even in Russia in October 1917, meant a successful revolution was entirely possible.

The revolution of 1925-27, led by the working class, gathered in the urban centres of Shanghai, Guangdong, Wuhan, and elsewhere and pounded at Chinese and imperialist landlordism and capitalism in the workers and poor people's quest for a new society.

Zigzag policies

However, a major obstacle standing in the way of a successful revolution was the zigzag conservative policies pursued by Stalin and the degenerated Comintern leaders. In the 1917 Russian revolution - Trotsky's theory of the 'permanent revolution' was brilliantly confirmed by a revolutionary working class, which consolidated the 'democratic tasks' of the February revolution by carrying through the socialist revolution in October. In contrast, in China Stalin's regime stood for an alliance of the working class and the exploited peasantry with the so-called 'national capitalists' in a 'bloc of four classes'.

It argued that the leading role in the revolution belonged to the pro-nationalist party, the Kuomintang (KMT), representing China's

'progressive' capitalists. Stalin's aims - expressed in the 'theory' of 'socialism in one country' - was to justify the bureaucracy, consolidating its position in Russia rather than spread the revolution to other countries.

On Stalin's instructions the CCP merged its forces into the KMT. The leader of the KMT, Chiang Kai-shek, was even invited to Comintern meetings, and in 1926 Mao Zedong from the CCP was elected as an alternate member of the KMT's executive committee. Despite these mistaken tactics, as the working class moved into struggle, the CCP grew quickly (from 300 members in 1923 to 58,000 in 1927).

Trotsky, with the experience of the Russian revolution, argued that China's weak capitalists couldn't carry out any of the needed reforms - the democratic tasks of the revolution - and indeed were rightly fearful of the revolutionary working class. Only the latter, with the support of the peasants, could take power. This would not in itself create the conditions for socialism, but like Russia, could give a huge inspiration internationally for further workers' revolutions to develop the conditions for socialism globally.

Trotsky's advice to the CCP was to fight for an independent workers' leadership of the struggle. Instead the party became totally subservient to the KMT. In March 1926, KMT forces massacred striking workers in Canton

and established a military dictatorship. But the news of this atrocity was suppressed within the Comintern - the KMT had earlier that month become a 'sympathising section' of the Comintern!

35,000 CCP members were killed in 1927, allowing the KMT, financed and armed by imperialism, to form a government.

The Comintern didn't recognise defeat in China until 1928 and only then pointing the blame at the CCP leaders, mainly Chen Duxiu - who had opposed the merger with the KMT and later became a co-thinker and supporter of Trotsky and the Left Opposition.

The remaining CCP leaders from then on turned their backs on the cities and the working class. Their entire emphasis was now on the peasantry and the countryside. Only in words was any alliance of workers and peasants factored. The building of a peasant army - the Red Army - became the priority over class struggle against capitalism. By 1930, only 1.6% of the party membership were workers compared to 58% in 1927.

Stalinism

The CCP, however, still maintained the key trends of Stalinism: nationalism, a 'two-stages' theory of revolution, 'popular fronts' ie alliances with capitalist parties, and a regime of bureaucratic centralism inside the party.

Until the CCP won power at the conclusion of the civil war with the KMT in 1949, the peasantry remained the key focus and majority of the party. This period saw the increasing bureaucratisation of the party, the replacement of internal debate and democracy by a regime of commands and purges, and the cult of personality around Mao - all mirrored from Stalin's methods of rule.

The Russian revolution degenerated in isolation after the failure of revolutions internationally. The Chinese revolution of 1949 was bureaucratically deformed from the outset. It never was a democratic workers' state.

Nonetheless, the driving out of capitalism and imperialism and the introduction of a planned economy, despite the repression and bureaucracy, allowed huge social and economic gains for the Chinese masses - giving a glimpse of what would have been possible under genuine democratic workers' control.

■ **The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution** by Harold Isaacs, £21 (the definitive Marxist account of the 1925-27 revolution)

■ **Leon Trotsky on China** - £26

■ **The Third International after Lenin** - by Leon Trotsky, £5.95

■ **Prophets Unarmed, Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution** - £49

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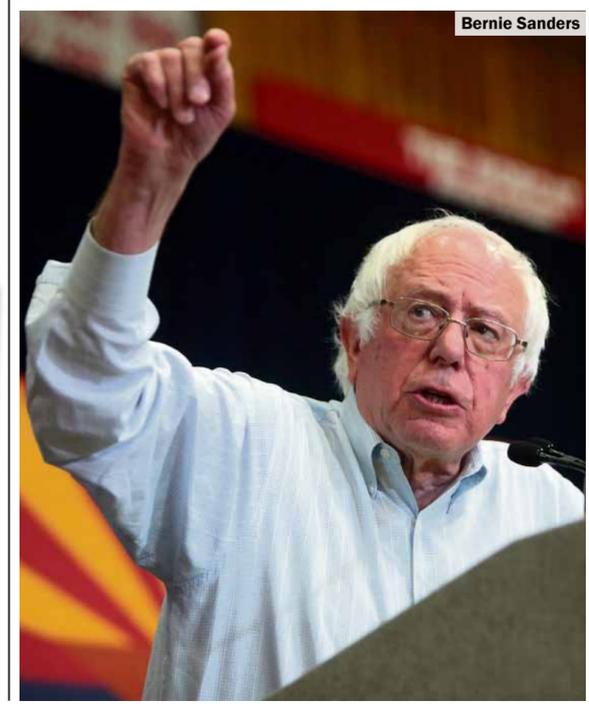
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Trump, impeachment and the need for an independent workers' party



New Right - are the right populists a prelude to fascism? one of the discussions at **SOCIALISM 2019** 2-3 Nov, central London socialism2019.net

Brexit in context: Trump, trade and tariffs one of the discussions at **SOCIALISM 2019** 2-3 Nov, central London socialism2019.net



Dave Reid
Socialist Party national committee

Nancy Pelosi, the Democrat speaker of the House of Representatives, has announced the beginning of an impeachment process against President Trump.

If the House of Representatives impeaches him, he will face a trial in the Senate. In theory he could be removed from office.

This would require a two-thirds majority in the Senate, which the Republicans control. Nevertheless, the impeachment process could be a blow to Trump's presidency and re-election campaign.

The Democrats' main accusation against Trump is that he attempted to withhold US military aid to Ukraine, as a bargaining lever with the Ukrainian president, in order to rake up corruption allegations against Hunter Biden, son of the Democrat presidential candidate Joe Biden. It is against US law to work with a foreign power to further an election campaign.

Two whistle-blowers from a US intelligence service claim that they have evidence of a phone call Trump made to the Ukrainian president explicitly demanding that action be taken.

The majority of working people in the US would welcome seeing the back of the 'Predator in Chief'. Trump's right-wing populist presidency has ramped up attacks on the rights of women, minority groups, and workers.

Tax cuts for the rich

He has carried out pro-big-business measures, like tax cuts for the super rich and removing regulation protecting workers, consumers and the environment. He has fired the first shots in trade wars, especially with China.

Most capitalists welcome his tax cuts for them, and sections support the trade protection measures against China. But for the majority of the US capitalist class, he is a very unreliable representative of their interests. Large sections of the establishment would prefer a safer pair of hands.

He's a maverick populist who threatens the stability of their system. His attacks on workers, women's and immigrant's rights, and encouragement of far-right and even fascist groups, threatens a backlash, causing further instability and damage to capitalist profits and interests.

Trade wars undermine economic growth and big business access to free trade. And all the foreign policy strategists of American imperialism oppose the announced withdrawal of troops from Syria (see page 3).

Trump has clashed with the leadership of state institutions like the military, FBI and CIA. They don't want to be used for Trump's own purposes or adventures. It is likely that the whistle-blowers are working with the approval of senior intelligence officials.

The impeachment threat is an early shot in the 2020 presidential election campaign. The Democratic primaries begin next month to select their candidate.

Bernie Sanders made a huge impact in the 2016 primaries, by stand-

ing as a self-described socialist on a programme of pro-working-class reforms.

But he faced insuperable barriers because he stood within the capitalist-controlled Democratic Party. Democrat party bosses engineered the process to ensure that Hillary Clinton got the party's nomination.

The Committee for a Workers' International called for Bernie to stand as an independent socialist in the presidential election. That could have acted as the launch pad for an independent workers' party to compete with the two main capitalist parties.

This is not a rerun of 2016. Rival Democrat candidates have learnt their lesson from Sanders' popularity then. All pose as radical alternatives to Trump. Even Joe Biden, the establishment's choice, presents himself as the workers' candidate and appears to distance himself from his big business backers.

There is an openness to socialist ideas in society, which represents a significant potential for the development of an independent workers' party in opposition to the two parties of big business. But there is a danger that this potential will be absorbed into the Democrat machine or turned into demoralisation.

Even before Sanders suffered a minor heart attack, throwing his campaign into question, he had already been overtaken by Elizabeth Warren. Warren, an open supporter of capitalism, has stolen some of his clothes - supporting Medicare for all in words, for example.

Sanders needs to clearly distinguish himself now from these establishment Democrats, launching the call for an independent workers' party and breaking from the Democratic Party.

Serious dangers

The impeachment campaign by the Democrat leaders in Congress holds serious dangers for them. The perception that the ruling class is conspiring against Trump could strengthen his image as the victim of an establishment stitch-up.

His approval rating strengthened after the impeachment announcement. And the exposure of Hunter Biden's shady dealings in Ukraine could reinforce Joe Biden's image as part of the corrupt capitalist establishment.

If the Democrats select an establishment candidate then Trump could still win. There is still huge dissatisfaction with the status quo. Trump could use populist rhetoric and the perception that 'the swamp' is conspiring to defeat the 'rebel'. But there could also be a big surge to the 'lesser evilism' of 'anything but Trump'.

Sanders has been capable of rallying huge support for a radical alternative. But workers in the USA cannot rely on a sole individual.

He must cut loose now from the Democrats and move towards the establishment of an independent workers' party with clear policies including public ownership.

The first step in that direction would be to call a convention of all of his supporters. Such a strategy could win over workers who have voted for Trump as well as the new young layer searching for socialist ideas.

SOCIALISM

THE ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALIST AUSTERITY, LOW PAY AND CRISIS



The Case for Socialism
Available from
leftbooks.co.uk



photo Paul Mattsson

Mark Best
Socialist Party
membership organiser

Capitalism means chaos for the majority of us, while the bosses get rich off the work we do.

The future offered to young people today is austerity, low pay and crises the world over - senseless war and destruction, climate catastrophe and hidden and open conflicts between the major powers.

On the climate strikes, school students have widely called for “system

change not climate change”. People are questioning whether capitalism has a future.

What is the alternative to capitalism? What is necessary to change the system? Who can we rely on? And with what tactics?

We think that the ideas of the Socialist Party - based on the experiences of many, young and old, fighting over decades against the bosses - can answer these questions.

Wealth and technology exist in society to provide for us all. But that wealth is in the wrong hands.

By taking into democratic public ownership the banks and big corporations, we could plan what we want to produce in society, based on the

decisions of working-class people, instead of relying on the chaos of profit.

We would be able to put research and development into technologies that would enable us to shift away from fossil fuels and polluting industries.

Socialism would use massively expanded production, offered by automation, to reduce the working week and free ourselves for creative endeavours and leisure.

The only alternative to capitalism is a socialist society across the world. So how do we get there?

Workers, who produce the wealth in society, have the power. The power to take on the bosses and run so-

ciety for ourselves. Through collective struggle we can put their rotten system to bed.

To get involved in this vital struggle, you need to join the Socialists. We fight for every reform we can wrestle out the hands of the bosses and the socialist transformation of society.

If you want to see an end to the huge inequality that exists under capitalism, the best thing you can do is join the Socialist Party.

- See ‘Best way to fight back? Join the Socialist Party’ on page 13
- socialistparty.org.uk/join
- Text JOIN with your name and postcode to 07761 818 206
- Search ‘Socialist Party’ on Facebook
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