

£1/£2 solidarity price

Issue 1066

28 November - 5 December 2019

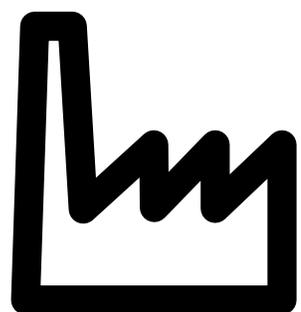


socialistparty.org.uk

the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

VOTE FOR



JOBS



HOMES



SERVICES

Tories out, Corbyn in Fight for socialist policies

**A tale of two manifestos:
Labour p4-5 and Tory p11**



University strikers take fight to bosses

Academic staff in the University and College Union (UCU) are striking at 60 universities for eight days until 4 December.

At Goldsmiths University, banners made by the strikers included the demands of the strike - 'strike for equal pay', 'strike for pensions', 'strike for your weekend', 'strike for job security'.

In Southampton, hundreds turned out to chant, "workload, overload!" and listen to speeches from striking UCU members. They included Socialist Party member Bea Gardner, from the UCU branch executive.

Ross Gibson, UCU member at Strathclyde, told us, "the average UCU member does over 13.5 hours of unpaid overtime per week". Anthony, at the University of Bradford, said staff are regularly working 50-hour weeks plus, to get the workload done.

Pension robbery

In Bristol, pension robbery and the precariousness of short-term contracts were repeatedly cited as reasons for the solid turnout. One striker in Newcastle told us how difficult it is to plan your life when you don't know how long your current contract will last.

Socialist Party members on strike with UCU said that to win, "we will need a strong union and leadership which can keep the pressure on university managers."

If the bosses don't immediately back down, the UCU should call more strike action in the New Year. And universities that didn't meet the Tory's anti-democratic 50% strike ballot turnout threshold should be re-balloted, so they can join in.

In Liverpool, management lied when they said students would be breaking the law if they joined picket lines. They even threatened international students that they risk jeopardising their visa if they refused to cross the picket line. But Socialist Students is building support for the UCU action among students.

The whole union movement should come to the aid of the UCU. In London, UCU invited postal workers in the Communication Workers Union (CWU), who had their right to strike blocked by the courts, to join their rally.

- See page 13 for UCU strike reports from across the country
- Turn to page 6 for the latest on the CWU dispute



the Socialist

formerly Militant

Issue 1066
28 November - 5 December 2019

DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

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

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

CONTACT US

editors@socialistparty.org.uk
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

DEADLINES

Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE SOCIALIST

for weekly working-class news, socialist analysis and fighting strategy
socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

E-sub direct debit just £2.50 a month
Paper sub £4.50, or £6.50 including
Socialism Today magazine

Socialism: the podcast
weekly on all podcast platforms

facebook.com/CWISocialistParty

SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International
socialistparty.org.uk
socialistworld.net



Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join

Help fund the fightback
DONATE TODAY
socialistparty.org.uk/donate

OUR TEAM

Editor of the Socialist
Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
Editorial staff
Dave Carr Scott Jones
James Ivens Ian Pattison
Circulation
Chris Newby
Editor of socialistparty.org.uk
Judy Beishon

ISSN 1366-9621
Registered as a newspaper
at the Post Office
Printed by Reach Printing Services
Published by Socialist Publications
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

Militant Issue 1: October 1964
The Socialist Issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

TORY ELECTION CAMPAIGN'S DIRTY TRICKS AND LIES

Tom Baldwin
Bristol Socialist Party

Tory dishonesty has been all over the news. The latest incident saw them attempt to mislead voters by rebranding one of their Twitter accounts as a fake fact-checking service for the duration of the ITV leaders' debate.

The name of the account was changed to 'factcheckUK' while the party logo was replaced with a neutral looking white tick on a purple background. The description said it was "fact checking Labour from CCHQ" - the little-known acronym for Conservative Campaign Headquarters. Several tweets began "FACT" but followed with pro-Tory claims.

Fact-checking services are usually provided by media outlets or other organisations, independent of political parties. The Tories impersonating such a service themselves was a clear attempt to deceive people.

Foreign secretary Dominic Raab has claimed that "no one gives a toss" about the incident but it has attracted criticism from many corners. These include Twitter itself which criticised "attempts to mislead people... seen during the UK election debate" and promised action if it happened again, although none was taken at the time.

The ruse may prove to have been an own goal for the Tories as it has drawn attention to a series of dirty tricks they have deployed



in this election, mainly in online campaigning.

They greeted Labour's manifesto launch with the website labourmanifesto.co.uk which is displayed in Labour colours but contains Tory material. They also targeted adverts at those searching for 'register to postal vote', prompting accusations that they were harvesting people's data. The website gave the misleading appearance that you could apply for a postal vote directly through it.

They doctored a video of Labour's shadow Brexit secretary to show him hesitating for several seconds after a question on Brexit, which was actually answered immediately. This move was even criticised by a Tory minister. These are signs of desperation from a party that can't be sure of its support after years of austerity and failure to deliver a Brexit which Boris Johnson said he would die in a ditch over.

The biggest deception of all is their claim that we can expect different from them in the future. They claimed to be building 40 new hospitals but it's been revealed that just 6 will be upgraded in the next five years. Scrutiny of their promises often shows them falling well short of the headlines. Even if delivered in full, they would not reverse the damaging cuts they have previously inflicted.

Dishonesty seems to come naturally to the Tory Party. It's no wonder that Johnson's claim in the leaders' debate that the "truth matters" was met with derisive laughter from the audience.

Resist attacks against free speech on campus - fight for democratic students' unions!

Socialist Students

At a time when a general election is taking place, and students are discussing how to fight for free education, affordable student housing, and a decent quality of life after university, serious attacks on democratic rights on campuses across the country are being perpetrated.

These include the outrageous scandal of the blanket banning at Bradford University of all political societies by the student union.

This is in addition to news that at Sussex University the student union has banned students and societies from either campaigning or canvassing on campus during the election period.

Meanwhile, at Southampton University, the student union has instructed societies that they will have to abide by a decision of the student union's annual general meeting on whether or not to support University and College Union (UCU) strikers, or face being derecognised as

official societies.

These represent nothing other than a blatant attack against the right to free speech and the rights of students to organise, campaign and protest on campus.

These attacks come at a time when the salaries of university vice-chancellors are at an all-time high - the average vice-chancellor pay rose by 3.5% last year, from £245,000 to £253,000, while nearly half of vice-chancellors were paid over £300,000!

At the same time, there is a huge fightback taking place in our society. University staff on campus are taking eight days of strike action between 25 November and 4 December against the bosses attacks on their pay, workload and pensions (see page 13).

Meanwhile, students on campuses, as well as in schools and colleges, and young workers also, are discussing what is the best way to kick out the Tories at this election, and what kind of policies and programme a Corbyn-led government

needs to adopt to end austerity once and for all, and fight for a future for young people.

These attacks against democratic rights are designed to undermine the efforts of staff striking back against austerity and marketisation on campus, as well as students looking to fight to end Tory rule. Socialist Students demands that all of these anti-democratic attacks banning students from campaigning on campus are immediately reversed.

We also demand and campaign for the transformation of student unions into organisations which fight for student rights, alongside the restoration of democracy within all student unions, including the re-establishment of regular, all-student general meetings, organised by the local student union.

Socialist Students rally and conference

■ Saturday 30 November at Bournbrook and Selly Oak Social Club, 13A Hubert Road, Birmingham B29 6DX.
■ See socialiststudents.org.uk



Northern Ireland: strike action by NHS workers over pay and workload

CWI reporter Northern Ireland

For the first time in the Royal College of Nursing's 103-year history, nurses have voted for strike action. They have been joined by Unison, and likely, the Nipsa and Unite unions which are now balloting for strike action.

Crisis in the health service regularly graces the front pages in the North of Ireland. The region's NHS was recently described as being on the "brink of collapse" by a Westminster committee. Waiting lists are the worst in the UK, and regularly exceed five years for routine operations. Even those with suspected cancer are left to wait weeks and even months for vital diagnostics.

Paradoxically, healthcare funding was the only budget protected in real terms by the Northern Ireland executive in the decade after the economic collapse of 2008.

So, for right-wing pundits, the crisis is explained by the near three-year absence of ministers, following the executive's collapse, to 'take the hard decisions' and close hospitals as per the 'Bengoa' strategy adopted by Sinn Féin. In the absence of these 'hard choices', they claim the entire health and social care system is unsustainable.

Yet the reality is precisely the

opposite. While health spending per head in Northern Ireland remains above the rest of the UK, it is inadequate to meet the high levels of post-traumatic stress, mental illness and disability here, and ring-fencing funding in real terms did not meet rapidly rising additional demand.

Key to the current crisis is the neoliberal structural changes adopted by the executive parties over the last 20 years: the internal market, scandalous private finance initiative contracts and widespread outsourcing of services to the private sector.

Most destructive, perhaps, was the failure to provide sufficient places for student nurses and doctors, and the critical decision to regionalise pay - leaving NHS workers here receiving thousands less a year than colleagues elsewhere.

Thousands of newly-qualified professionals have understandably taken job opportunities overseas, leaving a chronic staffing crisis and remaining staff massively overworked. The result has been the closure of wards, services further rationed and huge sums expended on private staff agencies - currently £640,000 a day.

The ballots for strike action were greeted with significant public support. Unison's rolling strike action commenced at Antrim hospital on 25 November with the unions iden-

tifying further strike dates in December, January and February.

Union leaderships must now propose a programme of escalating strikes to show angry members and the employer that they're serious about winning this fight. This is against a backdrop where the Labour Party has promised huge investment in the NHS and to boot out the privateers. The genie of militancy is likely to prove difficult for right-wing union bureaucrats to put back in the bottle.

Action by the four unions will be the biggest since the 2014 one-day public sector strike against the executive's austerity policies and represents another leap forward.

All workers must join in solidarity with the strikers to secure an end to private-sector waste and demand full pay equality. As Nye Bevan said, the NHS will remain for as long as there are those with the faith left to fight for it.

■ 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.

PRINCE ANDREW OUTRAGE EXPOSES ESTABLISHMENT

James Ivens

Prince Andrew's astonishing performance once more exposes the capitalist establishment's breezy disdain for the victims of abuse.

The queen's son gave a disastrous interview to BBC Newsnight on his relationship with the late financier and convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein. Condescending. Inconsistent. Riddled with bizarre and unconvincing deflections meant to discredit his own accuser's claims.

But the only victims the Duke of York seemed to recognise were Epstein and himself! Of course, Epstein's years of predation on children were "unbecoming." And Andrew had "let the side down" by going to stay with him for four days when the truth got out. But after all, wasn't that just Andrew being "too honourable"?

What of the victims of Epstein's abuse? The witless prince says almost nothing on this. Instead, he lifts the veil on a tight-knit world of old boys' networks and drawing-room cover-ups.

Rape and sexual exploitation are a chronic disease in capitalist society. They afflict all walks of life, but arise from social systems built on inequality, and the oppression necessary to maintain a privileged elite in power.

Prince Andrew is a royal, so might as well have been raised on the moon. His incompetence in addressing the real world is plain. But that's not why he acts like he's above the law - it's because in some ways, he is.

Earlier paedophile-ring exposés have counted politicians, executives, police chiefs, judges, and other such grantees among their charges. There are no democratic routes to challenge the power of the vast majority in the capitalist establishment.

But from parliament to the media to the

judiciary and beyond, economic crisis has exposed every institution of British capitalism, like the rotting wooden pylons of a pier at low tide. The prince's outrageous conduct will add to the bosses' difficulties in finding mass support for their programme of misery and theft.

The Socialist Party campaigns against sexism and abuse in every form. Andrew and the rest must face investigation.

But we also fight for democratic, working-class control in all spheres of life, including policing, the media and the courts. Abolish the monarchy! For the election of judges! And nationalise the land, banks and big companies whose fat profits keep the royals and their super-rich chums out of reach!

Hong Kong elections

The election for district councils on 24 November in Hong Kong showed massive support for the fight against the Beijing-backed government of Carrie Lam. Nearly three million voters - 70% of the total registered - turned out to vote. Parties supporting the demands of the six month-long mass struggle on the streets went into control of 17 out of the 18 local representative bodies. Full analysis at socialistworld.net and in next week's issue.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world. Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

WORK AND INCOME

■ Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.
■ All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
■ An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
■ Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.

DONATE
socialistparty.org.uk/donate
to help fund the fightback

SUBSCRIBE
socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe
weekly newspaper: the Socialist
monthly magazine: Socialism Today
Socialism - the podcast: on all platforms
facebook.com/CWISocialistParty

■ 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!

Do you agree? Join the fightback!
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
or call **020 8988 8777**
or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**
to find out more today!



LABOUR'S MANIFESTO: FIGHT TO TRANSFORM HOPE INTO A SOCIALIST SOCIETY

Corbyn's manifesto offers a glimpse of jobs, homes and public services for the 99%, protection for our environment - and making the capitalist class pay. No wonder the boss class and their representatives in politics and the press attack it - they will do anything to prevent a Corbyn victory.

Since the 1980s, the top 0.1% have doubled the proportion of total wealth they own to around 10%! Corbyn's manifesto threatens their gargantuan profits. The Tory manifesto, on the other hand, shows that, in reality, they want to maintain inequality and defend the interests of the billionaires (see page 11).

But whatever happens in the election, the ideas raised in this manifesto will be part of the struggle to end austerity.

Young people facing an average of £54,000 student debt will be able to vote for free education. The five million people suffering zero-hour contracts will welcome the chance to vote for them to be banned. Young workers will welcome the rise in the minimum wage to £10 an hour with no exemptions - although the Socialist Party believes that to end in-work poverty, this needs to be raised to at least £12 an hour, as a step towards £15, with trade union struggle.

The housing market has led to crisis - one in three young men and one in five young women aged under 34 years old cannot afford to move out and start their own lives and families. 125,000 children are in homeless families. All those affected will welcome the commitments on mass council-house building and introducing rent control.

In a number of ways, this manifesto builds on the 2017 version. This time, council homes are defined by social rents linked to local incomes, not market rents. The 2017 commitment to rent control has been replaced with plans to implement caps.

The 2017 manifesto committed a Labour government to reforming and redesigning the brutal Tory Universal Credit. Around 80% of people moved onto Universal Credit get into rent arrears before they get their first housing benefit payment - a major factor in rising homelessness. In 2019 "Labour will scrap Universal Credit".

The manifesto takes steps towards addressing the urgency of climate crisis, with the welcome commitment to a million green jobs, with training, retraining and trade union conditions.

In the main, the emphasis on funding comes from taxing the rich. This is necessary - but not enough. The £83 billion in spending could be

more than covered by the estimated £100 billion plus lost each year in tax evasion and avoidance - mainly by the richest. But they go to enormous measures to hide their money.

To deal with the capitalist class's inability to meet our needs, solve our environment's problems and provide a future, the working class needs to take power out of their hands.

As in 2017, this manifesto makes very welcome steps forward on nationalisation - of rail, mail, utilities. While these remain modest compared to previous Labour manifestos, they go far beyond anything we've seen since Blair. This time the manifesto includes the provision of free, nationalised broadband.

But nationalisation doesn't go down well with the Financial Times (FT), a newspaper of the capitalist class, whose editorial wrote: "to extend nationalisation to the energy utilities, broadband and Royal Mail is an unwarranted interference which will shatter confidence and deter investment." What is unwarranted is running our public services for profit. Corbyn's commitment to "end and reverse privatisation in the NHS in the next parliament" poses a threat to the Tories' plan to aid those capitalists who wish to follow in the footsteps of Richard Branson, who has got almost £2 billion worth of NHS contracts since 2013.

Go further

However, it is necessary to go further still. To solve the problems faced by both people and the environment requires more than just removing the profit motive from key planks of the economy - welcome as that is; it means removing the grip of big business from society altogether. To coin a still-relevant phrase of the economic crisis, big business and the banking system are a "great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money".

Nationalisation of the top 150 companies that dominate the economy would provide the basis to begin democratically planning production, and the use of resources properly, without interference from the 0.1%.

Despite their warnings, professed fears, put-downs and sneers, big business knows these policies in the manifesto are popular and could propel Corbyn to Number Ten. That is why SSE, one of the Big Six energy companies, has already acted. SSE has moved its electricity distribution business to a Swiss holding company. The National Grid and water companies are taking similar



In a number of ways, this manifesto builds on the 2017 version



It is necessary to go further still, to solve the problems faced by both people and the environment



We need a mass movement to win the election and also a working-class-led movement and mass workers' party to fight for afterwards photos Paul Mattsson



Young people facing an average of £54,000 student debt will be able to vote for free education



Labour have pledged to nationalise mail, rail and the utilities

measures.

The £30 billion National Grid wants us to fear nationalisation. A statement from it said: "Labour's proposals for state ownership of National Grid would be highly detrimental to millions of ordinary people who either hold shares in the company or through their pension funds - which include several local authority pension funds".

Jeremy Corbyn should answer them as the Socialist Party does; no ordinary people will suffer from nationalisation because compensation will be paid on the basis of proven need. Elected committees, accountable to the working class, could make the call. These companies' actions show that a Corbyn government will have to act quickly to combine this with measures to introduce capital controls and control of foreign trade to combat a flight of capital from Britain.

The capitalist class therefore hopes - in vain - that a defeat for Corbyn will kill off these ideas, once and for all. Their real fear, though, is that workers' confidence and aspirations will be raised by a Corbyn-led government which, in turn, could be pushed to go further than it initially intended by encroaching upon the capitalists' profits - and control.

The FT claims that, "if Labour loses it will be because the leadership was too ideologically inflexible to compromise with voters". But should that happen, it will be for very different reasons.

Millions will vote for Corbyn's policies in the coming election - as they did in 2017 when the anti-austerity parts of the manifesto netted around 3.5 million extra votes for Labour. But there are others who remain sceptical or feel politics is not relevant to their lives. It is a huge mistake that these manifesto proposals have been excluded from most Labour candidates' local leaflets - as in 2017. Unfortunately, this includes candidates backed by Momentum.

An appeal to "vote Labour" alone, or even an appeal to oppose the Tories, is not enough. Workers have voted Labour for years in council elections only to see them carry out Tory cuts.

An important way Corbyn could have shown he meant business would have been to instruct Labour councils to reject austerity and put the working class and youth first (see also pages 8 and 9). He could have pledged to reimburse any Labour council which used its reserves and borrowing powers to provide bridging grants for Universal Credit claimants; to re-open youth services, Sure Starts and other cut services; to open genuinely democratic ballots on local regeneration schemes, and so on. In other words, show in action not words the difference a Corbyn-led, anti-austerity government would make.

It is established fact that press coverage of Corbyn is biased against him. Much of the barrage of smears and lies originates in the right wing of the Labour Party. Decisive action against the Blairites, starting with democratic mandatory re-selection, would have shown that he is ready to deal with the opponents of the working class wherever they exist, and help prepare Labour to

be transformed into a vehicle for fighting for working-class interests.

As a result of not acting decisively, the anti-austerity message that was so popular in the 2017 election has been muffled. What's more, the Blairites remain in position, ready to act in the interest of capitalism and against the 99% beyond the general election - to prevent the anti-austerity manifesto being realised.

Mass rallies need to be called now to get the manifesto's message out, and as a way of preparing to fight for these measures after - whatever the election brings. It is correct that the manifesto commits to restoring and expanding workers' rights, to funding renters' unions, to supporting campaigns such as the 'Wasp' women, Grenfell victims and the Truth About Zane. Part of undoing the impact of Blairism and Tory austerity is to restore the understanding that organised collective action is essential for the working class to win.

The legal and working rights that workers have won were won in the workplaces, communities and streets - and only then were they made law. It was women workers at Ford Dagenham, for example, who won solidarity from the trade union movement through their strike that forced the then Labour government to write equal pay into law.

To defend the right to strike, the labour and trade union movement needs to support the postal workers' union CWU, that has been effectively banned from striking by the courts, despite a 97% vote for strike action by 76% of its 110,000 membership. Active support from Jeremy Corbyn would show what being on the side of workers actually means.

It is not by accident that an FT editorial compared Corbyn's manifesto to that of Francois Mitterrand in 1981. He came to power on a radical manifesto, but was forced into retreat within 100 days by sabotage from the French and international capitalist classes. The lesson from this is that, as much as we need a mass movement now to win the election, we also need a working-class-led movement and mass workers' party to fight for these measures afterwards.

That means transforming the Labour Party by restoring the central role of the trade unions and opening it up on a democratic federal basis to campaigners and socialists, to discuss and debate the production of a socialist programme and how to see it through against the capitalist attacks, which will increase a million-fold should Corbyn be elected. That is how we can transform hope into reality - a socialist reality.

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, plus socialistparty.org.uk



CWU'S RIGHT TO DEFEND MEMBERS IS ON THE LINE

■ Solidarity from South West NEU

Following my request to support a motion in solidarity with the CWU, the South West regional council of the National Education Union (NEU) invited Kevin Beazer (CWU regional secretary) to speak at our meeting on 16 November.

Unfortunately Kevin was held up on the M5 but I put in a few words on his behalf and our regional council circulated the solidarity motion to all South West districts. At my district in Plymouth I spoke to the motion and we agreed unanimously to donate £100 to the Plymouth CWU strike fund should the strike go ahead.

Kevin from the CWU will have another chance to address a meeting of NEU South West secretaries on 3 December where he will update us on the legal ruling against the CWU and how their union will be responding.

Alex Moore
NEU South West regional council member (personal capacity)

■ 'Their fight is a fight for all trade unionists'

On a day off from work I visited the Debden delivery office, Essex, to give a message of solidarity to the CWU.

I got there about 8.15am and asked for the CWU rep who I expected to be out on delivery, but a fellow worker went off to get him.

I introduced myself and handed over the trade union council and Socialist Party support leaflets I'd brought along, and asked if he'd had a union members' meeting earlier this morning? "We're about to have it now upstairs in the canteen," he says. He then calls his divisional full-time CWU official to ask if it's OK if I come along. He says yes.

The divisional officer gave his report, and the mood among members was upbeat. I then gave my message of solidarity, emphasising the potential power of the trade union movement and why their fight is a fight all trade unionists must support.

I also recounted the successful Whipps Cross Hospital strikes of low-paid, outsourced workers I helped organise, and pointed to the improvements in working conditions the CWU has won since I was a rep for the posties' union in the 1980s. I received a round of applause from the meeting and we all filed out of canteen then for a group photo in the yard. What a start to a day off work!

Len Hockey
Unite union branch secretary (personal capacity)

Rob Williams
Socialist Party industrial organiser

The Communications Workers Union (CWU) is back in court on 28 November to appeal the earlier High Court's scandalous decision to stop the CWU taking national strike action, despite winning its strike ballot with an incredible 97% yes vote on a 76% turnout.

The union should call a mass protest of posties and appeal for support from all trade unionists. This dispute, and indeed the very right of the CWU to be able to organise and defend its members, is on the line.

Now, Boris Johnson is threatening to go even further than his Tory predecessors - Thatcher, Major and Cameron - by wanting to bring in new anti-union legislation.

Jeremy Corbyn needs to go the extra mile in showing he's on the side of postal workers. It would have had a huge impact if he was outside the High Court with CWU leaders and reps.

He should appeal directly to the 110,000 CWU posties and their families and the many other workers who are furious about the strike ban. Corbyn needs to shout from the rooftops that he will repeal all Tory anti-union laws.

The CWU's 'National Gate Meeting Day' on 22 November sent a strong message to Royal Mail management and the Tories that a boss-supporting High Court judge can't stop the anger of posties.

Thousands of postal workers stood by their gates or met in canteens, rest areas and offices to hear updates as the union looked to respond to the court ruling.

This ruling completely exposes the class bias of the judiciary which has acted to prevent a strike in the run-up to Christmas and during the general election when postal workers have greater leverage to pursue their legitimate claims against Royal Mail.

It also reveals that Boris Johnson is no



photo Naomi Byron

'anti-establishment' politician. No wonder he is in favour of the judgement when last Monday it was announced that Royal Mail has given a record £68 million payout to its shareholders.

A strike now would bring all these issues to the fore and enable Jeremy Corbyn the opportunity to drive home his policy of renationalising Royal Mail. They've got the money, yet they still want to renege on the 'Four Pillars' agreement - which established employment, standard of living and retirement security, and a shorter working week.

Corbyn's manifesto policy on Royal Mail would be a big step forward for postal workers. But it would be a mistake to give any impression of relying on the general election.

Friday's gate meetings were an important step by the union. But they did show how much needs

to be done at this crucial time for the CWU. The turnout was impressive at many depots, but we need to ensure all Royal Mail workplaces are covered.

Clear, fighting strategy

Socialist Party members in CWU in Royal Mail have warned that a clear fighting strategy has to be discussed and agreed, so that a vacuum isn't created that raises the danger that the dispute drifts.

We think that a national reps meeting should debate planning well-organised action in the near future, alongside a possible re-ballot. It is not an either/or situation. Such action should be prepared on a national scale, perhaps around another national gate meeting day, where workers refuse to go back to work. Or a London protest outside Royal Mail HQ, where an appeal could go out to other trade unions to support. This would give a focus to the fight, and deal with any dangers of CWU members watching on passively while an appeal goes forward. It would also be a concrete demand to go to the TUC for support.

Already the University and College Union, whose members are currently on an eight-day strike (see page 12), has invited CWU members to join its London protest on 29 November. The retail workers union, Usdaw, whose national president is Socialist Party member Amy Murphy, has already sent a solidarity message.

The best way to get a response from the Trade Union Congress and the other unions is to organise concrete action rather than just a general appeal.

Posties need such a clear strategy. While they are angry about the court ruling, they may be unsure how to overcome such a barrier.

Postal workers have a proud record of localised walkouts to defend members and reps. National action needs to be considered, but it is a big step up and needs to be prepared for. The gate meetings showed again postal workers' potential power, if CWU leaders give members the confidence that the union has a clear way forward.

South Western Railway strike: "We're up for the fight"

On the eve of a month-long walkout by train crews on South Western Railway, **Geoff Kite**, SWR guard and RMT transport union executive council member, addressed a recent Southampton Socialist Party 'Tories out' election rally. The RMT is resisting attempts by SWR to axe the vital safety-critical role of train guards and move to driver-only operations.

"Most accidents happen during the dispatch of trains", Geoff explained. "I could tell you of hundreds of incidents, passengers trapped in doors and dogs left on platforms. We want to keep the guard on the train because that is the safest way to run our railways. Our members have taken 42 days of strike action and are up for the fight."

"The company has said this is not a political issue, but it has now written to every prospective parliamentary candidate promoting the company lie that they have 'guaranteed a guard'.

"If that was the case we wouldn't be on strike. We have written from

the RMT to make our case.

"Politically, where we are, is to back Labour's call to renationalise the railways and the manifesto pledge to guarantee a second safety-critical person on every train.

"We are preparing to take 27 days of strike action through December, though not on election day. This will be the longest strike in national rail history. We have set up a hardship fund for our members and ask trade unions to support us.

"Recently we have recruited another 100 guards to the RMT, taking our membership density to over 90%. We are strong."



Geoff Kite explaining the vital safety-critical role of guards photo Nick Chaffey

PCS union ballot closes 12 December

Marion Lloyd for general secretary

Marion's commitment

"Our union can do better. We need a fresh approach and new ideas to win on pay, jobs and office closures. I can provide this leadership together with experience and a proven record. I am not in this for the money, I will stay on my current wage. I will give back to the union the difference and publish full details."



Marion has been active in the union all her working life.

She has worked in different government departments, big and small, and the private sector.

She is president of the PCS union's BEIS (Business Energy and Industrial Strategy) Group and for 20 years been a member of the union national executive committee.

Marion has combined working with union activities and bringing up a family. She knows how difficult this can be and is passionate about equality for all, both in the workplace and the union.

Marion is an experienced negotiator and has led successful campaigns, including fighting to keep her own office open in Sheffield, saving 200 jobs.

As general secretary she will:

- **Unite opposition to office closures,**

increased workloads and job cuts - ensuring that no group of members will be left to fight alone.

- **Develop a fighting campaign to increase pay, defend our pensions and improve working conditions.**

- **Reverse the decline in membership and increase local and branch resources.**
- **Elect full-time officers accountable to members.**

In the general election, Marion is campaigning to get the Tories out and for a Corbyn-led government on an anti-austerity, socialist programme in the interests of workers and their families.

Beyond the election we need to maintain an independent political voice for PCS as part of building a fighting union to defend our members' interests whoever is in government.

Sixth-form college strikes

'Sticking two fingers up at the Tories'

Tessa Warrington
Leicester Socialist Party

Socialist Party members in Leicester gave support to striking National Education Union members at Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I sixth-form College. It was one of 33 colleges nationally taking strike action on 20 November for fair pay, decent working conditions and employment terms.

The dispute is set against the background of a massive funding crisis facing sixth-form colleges as a result of government cuts amounting to 22% in real terms since 2010.

One striker said: "At this point we have just had enough, we can't not fight. We all want to stick two fingers up at the Tories."

Cars honked support while workers from

the neighbouring University of Leicester stopped to chat with the strikers.

Both University and College Union members at the university and fellow college workers in the NASUWT union exclaimed at the lack of coordinated action between their respective union leaderships, especially as the UCU was striking the following week (see page 13).

One picket felt as if negotiations had come to a standstill with the general election. "There isn't really a functioning government right now so we feel like no one is listening to us."

But like McDonald's, university, railway and Royal Mail workers, who are either planning or taking action, the time to coordinate to apply maximum pressure has never been better. That would really force any incoming government to take workers' demands seriously!

■ Bradford libraries and museums workers out to win

As the strike by Unite union members in Bradford Council's libraries, museums and galleries service reached its ninth day, the strike hit a new milestone by successfully picketing out Cartwright Hall museum.

While the strike has closed most of the city's libraries when all-out action has taken place, this was the first time the strike had closed a museum, with other workers refusing to cross the picket line.

Public support for the strike was reflected in the teas and coffees brought to strikers by supporters, while volunteers from a library which the council had previously closed also joined the picket line.

These volunteers are under no illusion that they could provide the same service that fully trained librarians could, seeing their volunteering as the only alternative to the library remaining closed. But they also relied on expertise from the remaining council library staff and were fearful of the impacts further cuts across the council would have on them.

Given the savage cuts to library services across the district over the past decade, it's no wonder that there is such support, which has also been reflected in stalls run by Socialist Party members in the city centre.

The next round of action, due to start on 2 December, will see a full week of strikes, bringing the total number of strike days up to 14.

Please continue to send messages of support and donations FAO Mark Martin to Winwaed House, 64-66 Crossgates Road, Leeds, LS15 7NN, cheques payable to Unite the Union.

Bradford Socialist Party members

■ Hackney SEND strikes after Labour council reneges on deal

On 25 November, drivers and passenger escorts employed by Hackney 'SEND' Travel Assistance Service started their first day of their latest five-day strike. These Unite union members were joined by other trade unionists and supporters at their lively protest outside their depot.

The dispute was reignited after council bosses reneged on a previously agreed settlement.

The workers originally called off their strike in the long-running dispute over payments for working split shifts on 9 October. But the council is now insisting that the staff use contractual leave days for the training days agreed as part of the settlement.

The workers are extremely determined to win this dispute. It is clear that this dispute is worrying Labour-controlled Hackney council, as every day there is a strike the head of education is down at the depot!

Chris Newby
Hackney Socialist Party

■ Support Westex strikers

"They made £5 million last year and the managers got big bonuses and large company cars, so where's the reward for us?" a striking Unite member at Westex Carpets told me on the picket line on 22 November.

Workers at Westex Carpets in Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire, are taking indefinite strike action after rejecting a 2.2% pay rise offer, which was then withdrawn by management.

For a long time the company was a family-run firm, but went through a management buyout around a decade ago and has recently been purchased by Victoria Carpets Group.

While the company has made over £5 million in pre-tax profits in both the last two years, some of the workers would be paid less than the minimum wage without earning production bonuses, and these have been eroded year-on-year as the minimum wage has increased.

Picketing is being organised by Unite union members across all three shifts at the plant, including a well-supported night shift picket.

Send messages of support to kelvin.mawer@unitetheunion.org.

■ Health strikes push back privatisation

Porters, cleaners and security staff employed by Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust were celebrating a victory after the trust backed down from its privatisation plans.

The Union union members had taken three weeks' strike action in the summer against plans to move them into a 'wholly owned subsidiary' company. The trust was left in no doubt that, had they decided to go ahead, they would have been faced with more strike action by workers who were determined to fight for their status as direct NHS employees.

The strike proved beyond all doubt the NHS workers are prepared to fight for their jobs, terms and conditions and that striking gets results!

The announcement came during the general election campaign in which the choices are clear - a vote for the Tory and Brexit Party privateers, or Corbyn's Labour Party which is committed to ending the privatisation of NHS jobs and services.

NHS workers, such as us in Mid Yorkshire and at Bradford who have won the battle to remain in the NHS, are looking to Labour to end the threat of privatisation and bring all outsourced staff back into the NHS.

Adrian O'Malley
Unite health service group executive Yorkshire and Humber side (personal capacity)

■ Northern Rail workers demand a living wage

RMT union members have been campaigning at stations across the north of England, culminating in a protest outside the headquarters of Northern Rail in Leeds.

They are fighting for the Living Wage Foundation's rate of £9 an hour (now £9.30 an hour) for gateline (ticket barrier) staff employed by Carlisle Security Services on the Arriva Rail North contract.

Carlisle has made £2-3 million in profit every year since its contract with Arriva started, while Arriva Rail North made £12.7 million in pre-tax profit in 2018. Meanwhile, 58% of Carlisle gateline staff say they are struggling to make ends meet in an RMT survey.

When Arriva won the contract to run the Northern franchise it pledged to 'use all reasonable endeavours' to ensure any contracting companies it used paid the Living Wage Foundation rates. RMT members branded the company 'hypocrites' as they leafleted the public.

The RMT is calling for people to sign the online petition at bit.ly/cssslivewage

Iain Dalton
Leeds Socialist Party

Get all the latest union news...

[nationalshopstewardsnetwork](http://nationalshopstewardsnetwork.org)

NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

END COUNCIL CUTS NOW,

Nick Chaffey
 Socialist Party national committee

Tory austerity has meant a decade of attacks on the working class. Nowhere has this been felt more sharply than local councils. As the 12 December general election approaches, a bold call by Jeremy Corbyn for Labour councils to immediately halt council cuts would show the possible difference a Corbyn-led anti-austerity government would make compared to previous Tory, Lib Dem and Labour governments in this century.

In particular, Tory government cuts since 2010 have been brutal, impacting on young and old alike, decimating vital services and council jobs, leaving council workers overworked and underpaid.

At the same time household council tax bills have risen, leaving workers paying more for less services. With the slashing of council tax support, forcing the poorest to pay more, court summons for council tax arrears are rising fast.

Combined with the hated 'Bedroom Tax', benefit cuts through the introduction of Universal Credit, along with a chronic housing shortage, rising market and 'social' rents, increasing homelessness, and over one million using food banks, and so on, working-class communities have been thrown back to the poverty levels associated with the 1930s. This cost of living crisis is stoking enormous anger.

Bankrupt

Some councils are on the verge of bankruptcy despite making swingeing spending cuts. Tory-run Northamptonshire was the first, but others are reaching the edge.

Scandalously many of the biggest councils carrying out most of the cuts are Labour controlled, led by right-wing opponents of Jeremy Corbyn. This vast bureaucracy of Blairite councillors - many of whom campaigned for Corbyn's removal in 2016 - are dutifully carrying out the Tories' dirty work.

Right now cuts are being made by Labour councils; and jobs lost mean lives ruined. Local councils are also preparing new cuts budgets for 2020.

This has left a deep scepticism in working-class communities towards Labour, fed up with years of broken promises and betrayal.

Jeremy Corbyn's promise of an end to austerity has the potential to enthuse millions as the election in 2017 showed. He has made positive announcements about restoring council funding to schools, social care and youth services - amounting to £25 billion additional money. He has announced an intention to restart council house building - a

good beginning of 100,000 a year by 2024. And an extra £1.1 billion funding to tackle homelessness.

They will certainly be welcomed by many. But how much more so if he was to come out clearly and say, "Enough is enough. Stop the cuts. Use your reserves and borrowing powers. We will reimburse you on 13 December." Action speaks louder than words.

Whatever the outcome of the election, the battle to restore council jobs and services to meet the needs of working class communities will continue.

Union policy

The current policy of council workers' unions - Unison, Unite and GMB - is to oppose cuts and campaign for councils to use reserves and borrowing powers to protect jobs and services as the means to fight for full government funding. That policy needs to be urgently put into action.

This will require building militant, fighting, democratic trade unions that act in the interest of their members.

The council cuts crisis will be a battleground of an anti-austerity Corbyn government. The capitalist class will mobilise all its forces to block reforms in the interests of working-class people that encroach on its profits and show an alternative to the capitalist crisis.

Even if Corbyn gains a majority of MPs in the election based on support for his anti-austerity manifesto, the Blairite MPs will be part of the capitalists' campaign that seeks to block a radical Corbyn manifesto going through parliament, and will undoubtedly be assisted by Blairite councillors.

The Socialist Party has repeatedly outlined the need for the 'Corbyn insurgency' to take on the historical task of transforming Labour into a mass workers' party. Measures needed include: replacing the Blairites with fighting socialist MPs and councillors, restoring the party's federal, democratic structures, placing the trade unions at the centre of the party, and readmitting all expelled socialists, including the Socialist Party.

It is clear that the task of replacing these 'pink Tory' cutters with fighting, socialist councillors is still to be done. That task cannot be put off forever, events will demand it.

In the meantime, while the Socialist Party gives its support to a Corbyn-led anti-austerity government carrying out policies in the interest of working people, where Blairite Labour councillors continue to cut, we will continue to ensure there are anti-cuts candidates in local council elections, fighting for the 'Liverpool road' (see opposite), to ensure the services are there to meet the needs of our communities.



Tory government cuts since 2010 have been brutal, impacting on young and old alike, decimating vital services and council jobs



Up to 500,000 people demonstrated against cuts organised by the Trade Union Congress on 26 March 2011 photo Paul Mattsson

A decade of devastation

- Government cuts to the Revenue Support Grant total £16 billion. Councils have lost 60p in every £1 (Local Government Association 2019), with over 220,000 council jobs cut, 25%, in England alone (LGC Sept 2018)
- As jobs and funding have been cut, services for young people have collapsed. 760 youth centres shut. 1,000 children's centres shut
- In social care, 1.4 million people aged 65 plus don't receive the care and support they need with essential living activities, relying on unpaid carers. 627,000 people - nearly 900 a day - had been refused social care since March 2017
- Council tax bills have more than doubled since 1997 - from £688 to £1,591 for average band D. In 2018, there was over £3 billion of outstanding council tax debt (excluding fees). An estimated 2.2 million households were behind with their council tax in 2017-18 out of 24.2 million that are liable to pay council tax
- In 2017-18, 305 people were given prison sentences, with a further 6,278 given suspended sentences, for failing to pay their council tax
- Housing crisis estimates put over 1 million households on housing waiting lists
- Schools cuts mean schools are in deficit, with cuts to teachers and teaching assistant staff. This has led to over 1 million children in class sizes of over 30, damaging the life chances for working class children

TO END TORY AUSTERITY!

A decade of fighting back

There has been a fightback, despite the depth of the crisis, and the woeful role of Blairite councillors and the unwillingness of their allies in the tops of the trade unions to mobilise national resistance by council workers and working-class communities.

Resistance to cuts at a local level has been widespread. The fight to save libraries, children's and youth centres, swimming pools, and care homes, has been endless.

As the initial round of cuts were imposed a small but heroic number of councillors refused to vote for cuts in Southampton, Hull, Warrington and Leicester. And with the help of the Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - an anti-cuts electoral alliance established by the RMT transport union and the Socialist Party in 2010), these rebels called for 'no cuts' budgets.

No cuts budgets

This was before the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in 2015. What a different situation would we be in, if his election had been used as a platform to build a united campaign of Labour councils to stop council cuts?

By using reserves and borrowing powers to set no-cuts budgets, councils could then mobilise mass campaigns of council workers, their trade unions and the community, demanding the Tory-led govern-

ment restore council funding.

Elsewhere, important industrial battles have taken place, with council workers fighting back. Key victories have been won showing what is possible by the Birmingham bin workers (2017-18) and home care workers (2018-19), the Glasgow equal pay strike (2018), and Southampton council strike in 2010-11, and teachers at Valentine primary school in Southampton this year.

If council union leaders had mobilised their huge 'army' of members in national strike action, council cuts could have been halted.

These struggles, especially in Birmingham against a right-wing Blairite council, exposed the need for a different approach. Unite assistant general secretary Howard Beckett got significant support for his criticism of Birmingham Blairite councillors when he told them: "If you act like Tories, we'll treat you like Tories."

By calling for an immediate freeze on council cuts, Corbyn would distinguish himself from these 'pink Tories' and mark a decisive turning point in the election.

Calling for support from council trade unions to back his call to freeze cuts would help in mobilising the kind of election campaign that is needed to bury the scepticism about a Corbyn-led government and inspire confidence that real change is coming.



The Liverpool socialist council enjoyed mass support for its fighting stand photo paul Traynor

Corbyn must take the 'Liverpool road'

In the 1980s a major battle took place against the Thatcher governments' attack on local council spending. While a united campaign of over 20 Labour councils mobilised to oppose cuts, it was the Militant-led Liverpool Labour council (Militant was the forerunner of the Socialist Party) that showed the road needed for victory.

With the backing of a mighty mass movement of council workers, including strike action, their trade unions and working-class communities - mobilised through the then democratic structures of the Labour Party - it refused to carry out Thatcher's cuts.

This meant the council won an extra £60 million from the government to carry out its programme; building over 5,000 new council homes, leisure centres, nurseries, a

city park and creating thousands of jobs and apprenticeships.

This fighting strategy remains the only way to end the decade of austerity. Labour currently controls over 120 councils with a combined spending greater than 16 EU countries' government budgets!

As TUSC outlined in October 2018: "The Labour-led councils control combined budgets of £78.83 billion, and hold around £9.33 billion in general fund reserves, £1.91 billion in housing reserves, and £2.97 billion useable capital receipts reserves."

If Corbyn was to mobilise this force under the banner - "Stop council cuts now!" - it would demonstrate to millions of workers, in deeds not just words, that he is determined to end austerity.



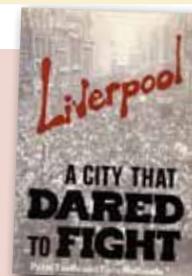
If council union leaders had mobilised their huge 'army' of members in national strike action, council cuts could have been halted



Birmingham bin workers showing solidarity with striking home carers photo Corinthia Ward

Liverpool: A city that dared to fight

by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn



£12 including postage

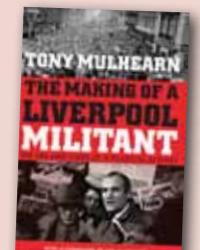
LEFT BOOKS

The bookshop of the Socialist Party

New and second-hand books and pamphlets



leftbooks.co.uk
 020 8988 8789
 PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



The Making of a Liverpool Militant - the life and times of a political activist by Tony Mulhearn

£12 including postage

Special offer - buy both titles for **£20** including postage



By using reserves and borrowing powers to set no-cuts budgets, councils could then mobilise mass campaigns

Readers' opinion

Minimum wage debate: what should we be demanding?

The Socialist is running a debate. How can we end low pay and what minimum wage level should we be fighting for? In this issue, readers share their thoughts. If you've got a view, email editors@socialistparty.org.uk. You can read what's been written so far at socialistparty.org.uk



Could a nationalised taxi service work?

Chris Parry
Bristol taxi driver

Clive Walder raises the idea of a publicly owned/nationalised taxi industry, as part of an integrated publicly owned transport system. (See 'In my working life we could afford homes and holidays' at socialistparty.org.uk).

It sounds like a big stretch. But, as a taxi driver, the more I think about it - it's doable, worth fighting for and a lot better than the 'dog eat dog' race to the bottom we have now.

Of course, it would have to be truly democratic workers' control and management at every level. Who knows how to organise the work better than the drivers and workers in the industry?

Otherwise it wouldn't really work. A nationalised taxi service would have to be far superior to the situation we have today.

We could have a decent standard of living without having to be on the road 24/7 - employment rights, sick pay, holidays and a pension. This may not seem like that much, but it's a far cry from the situation we face today.

We'd be able to cut out all the bosses, whether they're multinationals, national or local fat cats - we all know them - so we'd have far more money for decent wages, to invest in the industry, or whatever else was democratically agreed. Taxis could then be made as green as you like, with fares being heavily subsidised or even free.

There are many sectional interests in the taxi industry - hackney carriages, private hire of all kinds - but the lesson we'd all learn is that unity is strength. We can prove that we are not a bunch of 'dodgy spivs', how drivers are often painted, but part of the social glue. Public ownership of cabs would allow us to develop our role in aiding mobility, particularly for the elderly and less able.

There you go! Good idea Clive! Any other taxi workers who may read this should write in with your ideas.

£12 or £15

In the session debating the minimum wage at Socialism 2019, I asked who thought we should call for £12 an hour or for £15. Nearly everyone indicated for £15. Afterwards, some of those who indicated £12 suggested they were more persuaded towards £15, although not committed yet.

I was definitely for '£15 now' before I wrote the Socialist's recent centre-page article (see 'Minimum wage debate: how can we end the scandal of low pay?' at socialistparty.org.uk).

But the discussion made me think that perhaps what our updated 'What We Stand For' column (see page 3) says - £12 now as a step toward £15 - is probably right at the moment. That said, agitating around one national figure is best, and that would have to be £15.

Alistair Tice
Yorkshire Socialist Party

Too low just as counter-productive as too high

Alistair Tice's speech on a £15 minimum wage at Socialism 2019 was well-researched and thought provoking.

One point I'd not considered was that, in certain circumstances, setting a minimum wage goal too low can be just as counter-productive as setting it too high.

David Hofman
West London Socialist Party

To hear more about what happened at Socialism 2019, go to socialistparty.org.uk



THE PRIVATE SECTOR WILL NEVER PROVIDE BROADBAND TO EVERY HOME, NATIONALISATION WILL

Clive Walder
Former BT employee

I was really interested in your article on nationalising broadband. (See 'Broadband: privatisation has failed to deliver' at socialistparty.org.uk).

When I worked for BT, their internal email communications were peppered with references to needing 'matching funding' to provide broadband in unprofitable areas. From guess where? The government!

The fact that only 6% of the population in Britain have broadband cables leading directly to their home illustrates their penny pinching approach. The private sector will never provide broadband to every home, because they exist to make profit not to make people's lives easier.

Denied

Without public sector investment, there is a real danger of people in sparsely populated rural areas being denied goods, services and even jobs as the world becomes ever more wired up and broadband becomes the delivery method of choice for information and engaging with the wider world.

The tech giants talk as if broadband is new technology, but it isn't. Its potential was discovered as far back as the 1970s.

The Post Office Engineering Union - forerunner to the telecoms section of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) - passed policy



calling for the nationwide rollout of broadband to allow remote medical diagnosis and examination and home-based education for the housebound in 1981! This never happened because it wasn't profitable.

Before Boris Johnson labels Jeremy Corbyn's policy of renationalising BT 'a crazy communist plot', he should read his history books.

A Tory government nationalised the infant telephone network in 1912. They saw no prospect of

private companies at the time making the necessary investment to develop the network.

Billions of pounds of public funding created a successful and profitable company that was attractive to privateers.

The history of the relationship between the private sector and technology proves beyond doubt that they can never realise the full benefits of our vast technological potential. Only a publicly led, planned telecoms industry will.

Plymouth Blairites use Tory policies to side with anti-tenant landlords

Rob Rooney
Cornwall Socialist Party

Labour's manifesto (see pages 4 and 5) seems to have struck a chord with working-class people. It gives us hope that austerity may be coming to an end.

But this poster, pinned up at the children's social work HQ for Plymouth Council, shows Tory philosophy dictates the actions of Labour-run local authorities.

Plymouth is run by a tight-knit cabal of Labour right-wing career politicians. This poster says they have no qualms about hounding tenants.

The idea of fighting the bedroom tax, benefit cap, two-children benefit cut-off, harassment of sick and

disabled people with 'fitness to work' tests, Universal Credit or actually building council houses is foreign to these class traitors.

Social workers employed by Plymouth Council are clearly expected to destroy any relationship they have with families in need by reporting 'suspected fraud'!

Nothing could demonstrate more clearly that the stance towards struggling families is informed by old, cruel, self-serving, divide-and-rule ideas - 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, or that poverty is the sufferer's fault or a 'lifestyle choice'.

If a Corbyn-led government is elected, the rotten right-wing in Plymouth Labour Party will have to be removed before people feel any benefit.



This poster, aimed at hounding tenants, was pinned up at the children's social work HQ of Plymouth's Blairite Labour council

The Tories' strategy for trying to win the general election appears to be to muzzle the whole front bench, above all Boris Johnson; the only thing they are allowed to utter is the pledge to "get Brexit done".

The Tory manifesto launch, smuggled in on a Sunday to ensure the minimum possible impact, was a continuation of the same approach. Traditionally, election manifestos are an attempt to promise voters jam tomorrow, even when - as with the Tories - up until now, only gruel has been served.

Not this manifesto, however! Despite claiming that the era of austerity is over, new spending pledges were minuscule to the point of being invisible. For every £1 the Tories pledged to spend by the end of the next parliament, Labour has pledged £28.

Johnson had promised the manifesto would contain a solution to the social care crisis, but no proposal was made. Nor did Johnson's claim that the national insurance threshold would be raised to £12,500 cutting workers' tax by £500 per year come to anything; instead it will inch up to £9,500, saving about £85 a year.

Such was its stinginess, that even the few pledges it contained turned out to be less generous in reality. The Tories promised to abolish hospital car-parking charges for example - but only for staff on night shift and the terminally ill. So NHS trusts will still be able to make a fortune from NHS workers on the day shift and patients who are only seriously ill!

Lies

One of the only larger-scale proposals included in the manifesto - 50,000 new nurses - was also quickly shown to be less than it appeared. The 50,000 included 18,500 who already work in the NHS but who the government intended to convince not to leave.

One reason for this 'non-manifesto' was the painful memory of Theresa May's unpopular 2017 manifesto. This was a factor - alongside Corbyn's radical manifesto - in her losing her majority.

The Tories have another - more fundamental - reason for their absence of policies, however. The party is completely divided, splitting before our eyes, and is anxious to disguise this during the election.

Nonetheless, the manifesto makes it clear that a future Tory government would be united in its need to continue attacking the rights and living conditions of the working class. Universal Credit, with all its accompanying misery would remain, as would the brutal 'hostile environment' for migrant workers.

The outrageous anti-democratic court ruling to block the Communications Workers' Union (CWU) strike has already given a glimpse of the further attacks on trade union rights we should expect if the Tories are reelected. This was hammered home in the manifesto; in response to the ongoing heroic struggle by the transport workers' union, the RMT, against driver-only-operated trains, the Tory manifesto proposes to make it illegal for train workers' strikes to stop more than a certain number of trains running.



photo Arno Mikkor/EU2017EE/CC

TORIES LAUNCH 'NON-MANIFESTO'



Socialist Party campaigning to get the Tories out and Corbyn in with socialist policies photo East London Socialist Party

Feature ★ 11

The Tory manifesto drives home the need to get them out of office on 12 December. Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto could propel him into Downing Street (see pages 4 and 5).

That is what the Socialist Party is campaigning for. Clearly, however, it is not excluded that attempts by the capitalist class to prevent Corbyn's election - backed to the hilt by the Blairite wing of Labour - could still succeed.

If Corbyn does not win, the primary reason for it will be the failure of Corbyn and his supporters to transform Labour into a workers' party - trying, instead, to mistakenly compromise with the backstabbing Blairites.

It would be a big mistake, however, to imagine that a Johnson government, even if he managed to scrape a majority, would be in a strong position to attack the working class. That, of course, would be his intention. But he would be heading an extremely divided and weak government that has blithely promised to "get Brexit done", and will find the reality of doing so protracted and complicated.

Johnson is not trusted by the majority of the capitalist class. They see in his manifesto pledge not to extend the Brexit transition period beyond December 2020 the danger of a chaotic crash out of the EU. Of course, in the event - under huge pressure from the capitalist elite - he might then retreat, disillusioning the Brexiters who voted for him.

But the process is likely to be chaotic, and to take place against the background of a new economic crisis. Johnson's authority could be even more rapidly eroded than John Major's was after the Black Wednesday crash of September 1992, following his general election victory in April.

Tory splits

Further splits in the Tory Party would also be posed. Although a phalanx of pro-remain Tories have been ejected from the party, there are still likely to be over one hundred of them on the back benches post general election.

The working-class vote for Brexit was - at base - a revolt against the misery suffered by millions over decades. Whatever happens on 12 December, that anger will find new outlets. Chile - albeit in a different form - will come to Britain.

The Tories themselves are aware of the social explosions that are looming. That is why, despite the paucity of policies in their manifesto, they have already promised to increase public spending dramatically. Chancellor Sajid Javid is promising to spend £13.4 billion on capital expenditure in 2020-21 and £20 billion a year for the following years.

Pledges on day-to-day public spending have also rocketed. Threatened by Corbyn winning the election, the Tories have been forced - as yet in words - to abandon austerity.

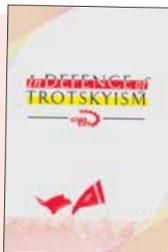
This will anger the millions who have suffered Tory austerity, and were told it was necessary to see homelessness rocket and children driven into poverty. It also gives a glimpse of the potential power of the working class, if it were organised in a mass party, armed with a socialist programme.

Workplace/campaigns

In Defence of Trotskyism

New book! Identity politics, trade unions, national liberation, policy and organisation, and more - how does Marxism apply today?

- Out now from Socialist Books
- £10 cover price, £8 bulk rate
- Get from socialistbooks.co.uk, or search Amazon to order the e-book



LEFT BOOKS

Buy a historical biography for Christmas!

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Karl Marx Francis When
431 pages £14.99</p> <p>A Revolutionary Life: Engels John Green
343 pages £10</p> <p>Trotsky on Lenin
383 pages £19.99</p> <p>My Life Leon Trotsky
599 pages £25</p> <p>Che Guevara: Symbol of Struggle
Tony Saunios
90 pages £5</p> <p>The Autobiography of Malcolm X
512 pages £9.99</p> | <p>Rosa Luxemburg Paul Frolich
329 pages £17.99</p> <p>Red Rosa: Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg Kate Evans
217 pages £11.99</p> <p>Wilhelm Liebknecht and German Social Democracy: Documentary History edited William A Pelz
463 pages £27.99</p> <p> Notebook of an Agitator - James P Cannon - from Wobblies to Korean War
490 pages £21</p> <p>Heroes of the Russian Revolution: Lives of Eight Bolsheviks
48 pages, large format £3</p> |
|--|---|

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Karl Marx Franz Mehring
575 pages £27.99</p> <p>Leninism under Lenin Marcel Liebman
477 pages £16.95</p> <p>Life and Death of Leon Trotsky
Victor Serge and Natalia Trotsky
327 pages £15.99</p> <p>From Lenin to Stalin Victor Serge
216 pages, £15</p> <p>The Prophet: Life of Trotsky
Isaac Deutscher
Three volumes in one, 1,638 pages £30</p> <p>The Case of Leon Trotsky:
Dewy Commission Testimony
837 pages £25</p> <p>Portraits, Political and Personal
Leon Trotsky
280 pages £19</p> <p>Political Profiles Leon Trotsky
171 pages £4.95</p> | <p>Keir Hardie - Serfdom to Socialism
edited John Callow
176 pages £13</p> <p>The Rebel Girl Elizabeth Gurley Flynn
351 pages £12.95</p> <p>Che: A Graphic Biography
Spain Rodriguez
106 pages, large format £9.99</p> <p>Zapata: Ideology of a Peasant Revolutionary Robert Millon
163 pages £8.99</p> <p>Maurice Bishop: Grenada Revolution
intro S Clark and A Hutchinson
510 pages £19</p> |
|--|---|

Order now, and browse our full catalogue, at leftbooks.co.uk
Or phone 020 8988 8789
Or send cheques or postal orders payable to Left Books to PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT - printed catalogue list also available from this address
Add 10% for postage and packing

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	October - December 2019	Deadline 3 January
Northern	750	1,734	100%	231%
Eastern	1,200	2,580	100%	215%
South West	1,800	3,352	100%	186%
South East	750	1,179	100%	157%
Wales	2,300	2,819	100%	123%
West Midlands	2,600	3,019	100%	116%
East Midlands	1,850	2,100	100%	113%
Southern	1,600	1,722	100%	108%
North West	2,100	2,067	100%	98%
London	6,100	4,879	100%	80%
Yorkshire	3,300	1,495	100%	45%
Other	5,650	13,117	100%	232%
TOTAL	30,000	40,062	100%	134%

University and College Union strikes

“THIS IS EXPLOITATION”

Leicester

Strikers at the University of Leicester amassed at all entrances with drums, whistles, placards and leaflets. No regard was given to the anti-trade union laws restricting pickets to six people. One worker said: “Didn’t know, don’t care”.

Dozens were discussing the action and talking with passing students and non-academic staff. Honks of support came from almost every third vehicle. The mood was exuberant

An admin worker and Unite the Union member came to say that her office had set up a strike-support campaign, and they brought regular hot drinks and supplies out to the strikers.

Tessa Warrington
Leicester Socialist Party

Southampton

“I have lost belief in the capitalist project.”

“When I asked for a review of my work, I was offered a return to last year’s. I reminded them that that was the workload that led to my ill health and time off work.”

From senior staff to part-time PhD teachers the story was the same - an endless drive to deliver more with less.

Pickets surrounded the campus from 8am and stayed in the rain until the rally finished at midday. Socialist Students were warmly greeted everywhere they went.

Socialist Party member Bea Gardner from the UCU branch executive brought a message of solidarity from students who had voted to back the strike. That brought another loud cheer from the strikers.

Nick Chaffey
Southampton Socialist Party

Newcastle

This is a young, militant workforce, who are prepared to fight to ensure decent pension rights.

One of the strikers at Newcastle University, Geoff Poole, told us: “There’s still a residual memory of our last strike, which was only 18 months ago. So it has been easier than I thought to get back into the swing of things.”

Strikers explained how the strike had been called off 18 months ago in good faith. Back then UCU members had felt it was a sensible approach for both sides to take advice from an independent panel regarding changes to their pension. However, university bosses are ignoring the main recommendations and want to impose a flawed scheme.

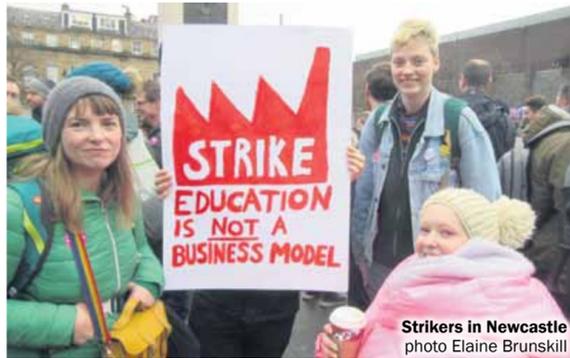
But, there was a very upbeat mood. The UCU leaflet explained how much they love their jobs, and are so proud of their students. Unfortunately love doesn’t pay the bills!

Elaine Brunskill
Newcastle Socialist Party

Bristol

There were nearly 20 picket lines at Bristol University!

In the run up to the last strike, the branch grew by 40%. That hasn’t been repeated, as most of those new members have been retained. But over 100 new members still joined the branch this strike.



Strikers in Newcastle photo Elaine Brunskill



Student solidarity in Cardiff photo Cardiff Socialist Students

The mood was more hardened than the joyous atmosphere last year. There’s still some frustration, but it doesn’t seem to have caused any cynicism or undermined this strike in any way.

300 were on the rally and march. UCU leaders made plain that further action will inevitably follow, if the employers do not resolve members’ grievances.

The vice-chancellor and other senior managers visited the pickets and joined the march. But people weren’t buying the gesture of friendship. The uni could do a lot more on fixed-term contracts, workload and the gender pay gap.

Tom Baldwin and Robin Clapp
Bristol Socialist Party

Goldsmiths, London

Banners made by the strikers expressed the frustration that they are forced to strike again. One read: “What the F-UUK AGAIN”. UUK being the employer. Universities UK.

Goldsmiths Socialist Students went round the cafes and library before the strike to build support among students. Three more students signed up to Socialist Students on the picket line.

Paula Mitchell
London Socialist Party

Cardiff

Members of the Cardiff branches of the Socialist Party, along with members of the Socialist Students society, joined university workers on the picket lines at Cardiff University.

The feeling of determination that resulted in the decisive yes votes for strike action on pensions (79%) and pay and

■ For strike reports from Glasgow, Bradford, Leeds, Queen Mary, UCL and more, go to socialistparty.org.uk

Brighton anti-academy campaign steps up

Bill North
Brighton Socialist Party

Over 100 parents, children, trade unionists and other supporters from the local community were on the picket line outside Moulsecomb Primary School, Brighton on 21 November.

Members of the NEU and GMB unions had voted to take strike action as part of the campaign against the head’s plans to force the school to become an academy. The entire staff, governors, local residents and Brighton and Hove Council are also opposed to this ‘forced academisation’.

At the end of the picket, and with the school securely closed for the day, protesters marched to a local hall for a ‘family fun day’ organised by parents. It was also an opportunity for the ‘fun’ of planning the next stage of the campaign!

Faced with this level of opposition, two academy trusts have already given up attempting to take over the school. A third, the New Horizons Academy Trust, seems



photo Hands Off Moulsecomb Primary School

to think that if it waits long enough the campaign will run out of steam. If that’s what they believe then they are in for a rude awakening!

The strike follows directly on from two days of lively school gate demonstrations by parents protesting visits by the academy trust - but the campaign is not limited to the school grounds.

Recently, campaigners waved banners and gave out leaflets outside a car-parts depot where a New Horizons trustee works as sales director. One of the placards read: “Kids are not car parts! We won’t let a car salesman run our school!”

■ ‘Like’ the campaign Facebook page - [Hands Off Moulsecomb Primary School](http://HandsOffMoulsecombPrimarySchool) - for further details

Posties withdraw goodwill from cruel bosses

Mayola Demmenie
Basingstoke Socialist Party

A postie spoke to a Basingstoke Socialist Party public meeting about the dispute in Royal Mail, and the consequences if we don’t fight, on Wednesday 20 November. We met with around ten people, of which most were local postal workers.

The Communication Workers Union rep told us about management’s bullying culture - and that since the High Court deemed the union’s strike ballot illegal, the goodwill has gone. More and more workers who never used to take their breaks and always did overtime now don’t want to do that anymore, and have

started to take their breaks. When the discussion opened up, we heard more stories - of three dismissals in a week, for example. People have had enough.

Not only could 40,000 postal workers lose their job, but the public will lose a community service. The rep told us how one postie up north knocked on the door of a regular customer to hear the lady call her in.

Turned out this lady had cancer and just needed a chat. If new Royal Mail boss Rico Back gets his way, this lady won’t have anyone to talk to. Yodel and Amazon drivers can’t get to know their customers like that.

Letters could cost £3 to send, with no guarantee of being delivered next day. Again the elderly and

vulnerable will be hit hardest, as NHS appointment letters might sometimes arrive weeks later.

It was clear that the workers see collective action is needed, along with solidarity from workers in other sectors.

Local Socialist Party member and long-standing trade unionist Mick Butler had opened the meeting by calling for unity of all workers to fight collectively against low pay, long hours and bullying management.

It is vital to fight together for a Corbyn government in this election - and if he wins fight even harder to get the manifesto implemented, because the capitalist establishment will do whatever it takes to undermine and destroy it.

Help fund the fightback: sponsor my marathon

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

Paul Couchman
Staines Socialist Party

In 2015 I had a major heart attack. It is fair to say that the NHS and their dedicated staff saved my life.

Although I have been a member of the Socialist Party (and the Militant before it) for nearly 40 years, I saw this scary event as a wake-up call to redouble my efforts to build the party and to improve my health.

Since then I have lost a third of my body weight and taken up regular exercise, doing a park run most weekends. I have decided to enter a marathon next year - five years since

my heart attack - and what better cause could there be than the Socialist Party fighting fund?

Friends, family and comrades can either donate on the Socialist Party website stating it’s to support my run, make a donation via your local Socialist Party branch, or visit my Just Giving page.

I will update everyone after I have completed the run in May next year. I am hoping to raise £1,000.

■ Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate and add the note ‘Paul Couchman marathon’
■ Or visit justgiving.com/crowdfunding/paul-couchman-marathon



Gateshead

On Tyneside, Corbyn’s election manifesto has begun to filter through. We’ve been saying, for what seems like forever, that the mood against Corbyn can change, and this is clearly beginning to happen.

People we spoke to like that Corbyn has pledged to scrap Universal Credit, build council houses, and renationalise the NHS. They told us to look out for Corbyn’s 60-second video clip explaining his headline policies. Many wanted to know more about his policies. What was he saying about the anti-union laws? Did we think he would keep his promises?

We spoke to an ex-soldier now working for the NHS. After serving in Afghanistan he’d ended up on the streets of London for seven months. Initially he was uncertain what to do in the election, but was very responsive to our analysis and the need for change - particularly on council housing.

Because of heavy rain we were only out for just under an hour, but even as we were packing up people were coming up to talk to us. We sold eight copies of the Socialist. We could have sold more, but many people were on or over the edge of poverty.

With socialist policies it’s beginning to feel that Corbyn can win.

Elaine Brunskill

Leyton

Less people were hostile to the election and all that it represents in the last few days in Leyton, east London. It’s neutered the opposition to Corbyn.

More people engaged with us, and among a layer the manifesto is filtering through. We sold 16 copies of the Socialist, and met at least one person interested in joining the Socialist Party.

Dispassionate responses could signify a deep, silent mood that will sullenly come out on 12 December and vote for Corbyn’s manifesto - but saying ‘now you must prove it to us’. It doesn’t yet feel the same as 2017, when the novelty of a pro-worker manifesto itself inspired a layer to believe in it.

This could change. It could morph into wild enthusiasm; anything could happen. It’s stirring, but not shaken up yet, on the mean streets of Leyton.

Nancy Taaffe

Southampton

The Labour Party manifesto says “it’s time for real change,” and this was reflected in discussions at Southampton Socialist Party’s stall on 23 November. We also definitely saw a distinct thaw in the hostility from those opposed to Corbyn.

We met people who were keen to talk about the anti-austerity policies in the manifesto. This was having a positive effect on many of them.

It resulted in a possible Tory voter saying they needed to reconsider, and they left with a copy of the Socialist newspaper. An undecided voter was persuaded to be a definite for Corbyn. And someone who said they were a socialist but had been inactive for years wanted to hear more at one of our meetings.

Jane Ward

Swansea

Swansea was wet and windy yet again on 23 November, which inevitably had an impact, but we sold 21 copies of the Socialist. Younger people we meet are more positive about the manifesto pledges on

the minimum wage, scrapping zero-hour contracts and abolishing tuition fees, as well as the commitments on housing and rent controls.

However, there is still a widespread mood of indifference towards politicians and ‘a plague on all your houses’. A minority are vocally abusive towards both Johnson and Corbyn. The experience of the main parties’ manoeuvres against Brexit is always in the background.

We haven’t yet felt the mood of excitement and enthusiasm which was around after Labour’s 2017 manifesto leak. But that can still change in the last weeks.

Alec Thraves

Leeds

We sold six copies of the Socialist in an hour in Leeds on 23 November, campaigning in support of the postal workers, renationalising Royal Mail, and defending the right to strike.

Many of those stopping were unaware that the recent strike had been blocked by an unelected judge. They backed the posties and signed our petition in support of the CWU. One postal worker stopped at the stall and told us he wanted a Jeremy Corbyn government and “everything renationalised.”

The mood was mixed in regard to the election, with a number of conversations about the recent TV debates.

One person who was hostile to Corbyn told us they were supporting Boris Johnson on the basis he was “funny” and wanted to “invest in the NHS and the police.” They were shocked when we highlighted Johnson’s record of cuts to public services.

Michael Docherty

Stratford

Jeremy Corbyn’s most far-reaching anti-austerity manifesto has started to have some effect. In Stratford, east London, people normally keep their heads down.

But we sold six copies of the Socialist on 23 November, and met three people who wanted to find out about getting involved with the Socialist Party. People liked our explanation of how and why Corbyn must go further to get his policies implemented.

However, because Corbyn has appeared quiet and indecisive until the manifesto, right-wing propaganda about terrorism and antisemitism resonated among some workers, especially the most downtrodden.

Ian Pattison

Lewisham

In Lewisham, south London, there was lots of support for Corbyn on 23 November. We sold 16 copies of the Socialist.

Zara, a young mother with a child, said: “Corbyn knows what he is doing. He is up against the elite who run things. I am scared to death with what they are doing to the NHS. My kids need decent schools.”

Bill Mullins

Liverpool

Liverpool Socialist Party campaigned on the NHS on 23 November, particularly focusing on threats to the local women’s hospital and walk-in centres. Many were keen to sign the petition, voicing concerns at the current run-down state of the NHS, and worries about its wholesale privatisation should the Tories win the general election.

The Labour Party had just launched its election manifesto. This was raised in conversation by a few people who visited the stall. Generally supportive, although “where’s the money coming from?” was a question put by a couple of people. We sold several copies of the Socialist, and received over £30 in donations.

Roger Bannister



Workers' Day protest in Iran in 2018 photo Armin Kararami/CC

REGIME'S FUEL PRICE RISE SPARKS MASSIVE PROTESTS ACROSS IRAN

Robert Bechert
Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

Iran has been shaken by a new nationwide wave of anger and protests after a sudden overnight government announcement that imposed a 50% fuel price rise on the cost of fuel.

This measure - accompanied by a reduction from 250 litres to 60 litres per vehicle per month, in the amount sold at a lower price - was a spark that ignited a fire. Sometimes literally so, as banks and other buildings were attacked by angry protesters.

The night-time announcement of the price hike provoked immediate protests around the country with demonstrations, attempts to block traffic and attacks on official buildings.

State-backed news media reported 88,000 participating in protests in 100 cities and towns, during which 100 banks and 57 shops were set on fire or plundered. In Isfahan alone, 69 banks were torched.

The Reuters news agency reported: "Hundreds of young and working-class Iranians expressed their anger at squeezed living standards, state corruption and a deepening gap between rich and poor".

Desperate to stop the protests growing in size and scope, the regime used brutal repression while shutting down the public internet and international online

communications.

Amnesty International has said that it has reliable information that 106 people have been killed during these protests, overwhelmingly protesters. Unofficial reports say over 200 have been killed and 3,000 injured.

Alongside repression, the authoritarian regime sought to defuse opposition. Iran's vice-president for budget affairs stated: "The president insists that all extra income should be paid back to people".

Extra monthly state handouts for the poorest 60 million out of Iran's 82 million people were announced. The first part of the compensation payments, ranging from \$13 to \$48 a month, was rapidly paid into the bank accounts of the poorest 60 million.

But, although this fuel price rise was explained as a switch in government subsidies rather than an attempt to increase revenue, it still provoked an immediate response.

US sanctions

Trump's re-imposition of sanctions has hit the Iranian economy hard. While there is talk of some recent stabilisation, the economy is still contracting. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is forecasting a 9.5% drop in Iran's GDP (total economic output) for 2019, while the World Bank is slightly less gloomy, seeing a 8.7% drop. While inflation has fallen from 52.1% in May to 28.3%, last month, this is due to a combination of a currency stabilisa-

tion and the declining economy.

Unemployment has also fallen to 10.5%, but this is partly because the Iranian regime has followed many other governments in claiming anyone who works an hour a week or more is not unemployed. But among youth the official rate is still 26%. During this month's protests, a common chant was: "We are unemployed! We have no future!"

The protests' geographical spread was wider than the wave of workers' demonstrations and strikes that developed in November 2017 and which continued into early 2018.

The workers' movement which began two years ago was, however, extremely significant because it represented a new stage in the building of workers' organisations. This struck fear into the hearts of both wings of the regime, the 'hardliners' and the 'moderate-reformists'.

As the CWI wrote at the time: "A new revolutionary tide is rising in Iran. Although the bulk of this new wave is the people who were born after the revolution, the 1979 revolution's glorious days still inspires the current generation."

"Iranian workers have been to the fore of the protests that started in November 2017. Significantly, many of the demands that have arisen are not just economic and social but are political, including the right to form independent workers' organisations, for renationalisation of privatised companies and for some form of workers' control."

The regime's response, especially

as the 2017-18 movement ebbed, was repression, which has been continuing.

In the recent months before the fuel protests there have been both strikes and other workers' protests over different issues, including wage levels, non-payment of wages, victimisation, and the right to form independent trade unions. At the same time, more trade union and other activists have been sentenced to jail terms, some of which have been accompanied by floggings.

But this repression did not prevent this latest upsurge. Iran is simmering and could once again quickly boil over. The Financial Times has spoken of Iran's "increasingly restless population" and the "sense of injustice and disillusionment" in the country.

There is popular scepticism towards the regime and anger against corruption and a willingness to struggle. This combination is, once again, deepening the divisions and conflict between the different wings of the regime that manoeuvre against each other and, in the run-up to next February's parliamentary elections, accuse the other of corruption.

Initially, some 'hardliners' called for the fuel price increase to be reversed as part of their opposition to President Rouhani.

However, they stepped back after Iran's 'Supreme Leader' Ayatollah Khamenei, obviously fearful of the speed and intensity of the protests, stated his support for the increase.

The utterly hypocritical Trump administration's declarations of support for the latest protests are a crude attempt to profit from these protests.

But while they may not have had an immediate effect, it is an example of how imperialism will try to intervene in order to prevent any popular movement in Iran moving towards an anti-capitalist and socialist position.

The fact that within the rising workers' movement in Iran the questions of renationalisation and workers' control are starting to be discussed, creates concern for all the ruling classes, particularly those in the Middle East.

Workers' movement

It is against this background that it is necessary to strengthen the independent workers' organisations and to build links between the workers' organisations and the wider layers of unorganised workers, including the unemployed and the poor.

While it appears that the latest protests have come to an end, it is clear that new struggles will break out. This is why it is important to draw a balance sheet of the experiences of struggle and revolution in Iran and internationally.

Socialists argue that such a balance would include demands for the coming period, how the struggle can be organised, and the importance of the workers' movement not being drawn into coalition with capitalist forces.

Such steps, linked to a call to build an independent workers' party and the drawing of socialist conclusions, are the basis not just for success in the inevitable future struggles in Iran but also in laying the basis to achieve the fundamental task of bringing to power a government of genuine representatives of workers and poor.

Such a bold socialist government could sweep away the corrupt capitalist system and begin the socialist reconstruction of the country that would be an inspiration in the Middle East and wider afield.

Sri Lanka: Presidential election sees return of dictatorial Rajapaksa clan

TU Senan
Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

The extremely polarised presidential election in Sri Lanka on 16 November has resulted in victory for Gotabaya Rajapaksa of the Sri Lanka People's Front (SLFP).

As defence minister under the dictatorial president, his brother Mahinda Rajapaksa, Gotabaya ordered the bloody genocide at the end of the country's civil war in 2009.

Rajapaksa won over 52% of the votes (6,924,255) in comparison to his opponent, Sajith Premadasa of the United National Party (UNP), who won just under 42% (5,564,239). Votes for all the other main candidates fell sharply. The candidate of the so-called left, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), came third but their previous vote was nearly halved to just over 3% (418,553).

The turnout of 83.72% is historically high for Sri Lanka, and the highest anywhere in South Asia.

The voting pattern shows how Sri Lanka stands sharply divided along ethnic lines. The vote for Gotabaya Rajapaksa in the Sinhala-dominated southern districts was very high. The majority in most of the Tamil-speaking districts was for the opposition.

The Tamil-speaking Hill Country voters defied the call for support for Gotabaya made by the CWC Ceylon Workers' Congress which claims to represent them. Instead they voted against Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The anti-Rajapaksa vote in these areas was even higher than in the 2015 presidential election that saw

the temporary end of the Rajapaksa's rule.

In 2015, all the minorities' rejection of dictatorial rule, along with the division that existed inside the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party), resulted in unexpected defeat for the then president, Mahinda Rajapaksa. However, this time, the increase in the vote in the south made sure that this was not repeated.

In a statement released soon after the election result, Mahinda Rajapaksa actually thanked voters for "decisively defeating the 2015-style attempt made to once again purloin the mandate of the people through backroom deals with various chauvinistic, ethnic and religious groupings organised around narrow political agendas".

This is a direct attack on the Tamil and Muslim leaders who turned against the Rajapaksa and tried to make a deal with the UNP to defeat them.

The terrorist bombings that took place at Easter, earlier this year, was also used by the Rajapaksa clan to fan the flames of Sinhala nationalism. The ruling capitalist UNP-led privatisations and the International Monetary Fund-led economic policies have also seen a deterioration in living conditions for many people.

'Strong leader'

In this chaos, Gotabaya presented himself as a 'strong' leader who will sort out the 'terrorist' and other problems, once again. The return of the Rajapaksa family is, however, seen as a return to a dictatorial period - a continuation of where they left off in 2015.

Already announcements are be-



New president Gotabaya Rajapaksa is notorious for his bloody ending of the civil war in 2009 photo Jorge Cardoso/CC



Rajapaksa will not be able to deliver on the empty promises of improving conditions for all workers and poor

able reception that the USP got during the election campaign.

The working-class policies that Sirtunga popularised during the election campaign are more needed than ever. Creating a mass organisation or even a platform to bring together all those who are in struggle and demanding democratic and economic rights, is essential to strengthen the fightback.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa will not be able to deliver on the empty promises of improving conditions for all workers and poor. He is likely to continue with the privatisation and IMF-led policies, just like the previous president.

Declining economic growth and emerging geo-political tensions will see the conditions that the masses face deteriorate even further. There is an urgent need to build the fightback. Trade unions, socialists and all activists should come forward to make sure that happens.

See socialistworld.net for a fuller analysis

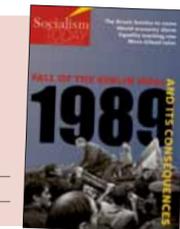
SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party
November 2019 Berlin Wall special issue includes...

- 1989: the collapse of Stalinism and its consequences
- Brexit: stand firm against capitalist politicians
- Is Keynes back? Desperate search for way out of crisis

visit socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe or call 020 8988 8777

Direct debit £3 a month, or £6.50 including the Socialist newspaper





TRUMP AND TORIES ARE A THREAT TO ENVIRONMENT

Socialist change to end climate change

Theo Sharieff
Socialist Students
national organiser

Donald Trump is yet again visiting Britain, on 3 December, to conduct a meeting with representatives of Nato in London. And once again he will be met by protests.

Trump's last two visits to Britain have been met with lively protests, and in the summer of 2018 over 250,000 people flooded the streets

of London to protest against the political ideas which Trump represents - an openly racist, sexist, and ultimately anti-working class president who ruthlessly stands in the interests of the billionaire class in the US.

Trump is also an out-and-out climate change denier, and in 2017 announced the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris climate agreement.

He did this to help boost the profits of a big section of the American capitalist class, despite the agreements' very limited measures against

climate change, including the fact that the targets set out by the agreement are completely voluntary!

The capitalist class, in its endless pursuit of bigger and bigger profits, is in a constant battle against the protections workers and young people have won in defence of the environment - protections which would restrict the rights of big business to plunder the planets resources and burn fossil fuels.

Trump's visit this year falls in the middle of the general election. He will no doubt be keen to emphasise the 'special relationship' he and

Boris Johnson both share during his visit.

Johnson and Trump are two sides of the same coin - they both stand up for the interests of big business, putting profits and privatisation ahead of not only the environment, but also ahead of our living standards, access to affordable housing, free education, public services, and our futures.

In Britain, we have an opportunity at this election to kick out Johnson and the rest of the Tories, and elect a Corbyn-led government - which would reflect the interests of

the working class and young people.

Defeating Johnson would represent a huge blow for Trump and the rest of the billionaire class internationally. On 3 December, let Trump know he and his political ideas aren't welcome in Britain.

And on 12 December let's channel that anger to kick out the Tories and fight for a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies!

ISSN 1366-9621

