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the Socialist

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LABOUR LEADERSHIP RACE

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CLIMATE CHANGE. POVERTY. WAR.

CAPITALISM MUST GO

FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
Socialist Party national organiser

If visitors from outer space had come to earth for Christmas, they would surely ask: who the hell is in charge here?

The fires in Australia have turned the sky blood red, the beaches black, and chased people, livestock and wildlife from their homes. Shell-shocked faces of evacuees, charred koala bears, and the courage of volunteer firefighters to carry on against the inferno are brutal evidence of the need for urgent change.

Then, on 3 January the world awoke to the drumbeat of escalating conflict following Trump's assassination of Qassem Suleimani (see p2-3), a key Iranian leader and

commander of the regime's 'Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force.

Undoubtedly any such visitors would be shocked to see, behind these events, a system of production that disregards the needs of billions of people and the environment while prioritising increasing the already gargantuan profits of a few.

Private ownership of production. Of water! Expenditure on weapons of mass destruction to defend those interests while war destroys millions of lives.

And then our visitors would surely question how it is that those in charge, the capitalist world leaders, have no alternative - in fact they extol nothing but a continuation of the present arrangements.

War and environmental crisis are not new - they are central features of 21st century capitalism, which remains in crisis. Our lives and our future are not safe in the hands of the capitalist rulers and their system.

So, in 2019, courageous and determined mass movements devel-

oped across the world, and protests against climate change were organised. They showed the potential force of the working class, youth and poor to organise to change society - to take charge to end the chaos of capitalism.

In 2020 we need to build these movements (see p8-10) - and democratic organisations of working people, youth and the poor, around a socialist programme to democratically plan production and society in the interests of all.

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

SULEIMANI'S ASSASSINATION - MIDDLE EAST THROWN INTO TURMOIL

Another year and yet another potential war due to Donald Trump's foreign policy of assassinating his administration's political opponents. And while his latest provocative act of vapourising Iran's general Qassim Suleimani and others on Iraq territory threatens to ignite a new conflict in a war-stricken Middle East, its consequences are likely to be felt throughout the world. **Robert Bechert** of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) analyses this major ratcheting-up of the US-Iran conflict and explains why a united movement of the working class against imperialism and the regional powers is the only long-term solution to war and poverty.



Suleimani being decorated by Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei photo Khamenei.ir/C3

Shockwaves went around the world, and outrage spread in the Middle East, when news broke of Trump's unilateral decision to assassinate Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds force and a key Iranian leader.

Suleimani had a legendary status, particularly among Shias in the Middle East, because of the key role he played in resisting Isis. He was a labourer's son who rose to lead the Quds Force but, at the same time, was instrumental in suppressing workers' and opposition movements. Among those killed alongside Suleimani was Abu Mahdi al-Muhndis, an important leader of the Shia militias that are now integrated into Iraqi military forces.

Suleimani was a key player in building Iran's regional position. His assassination will not go unanswered by the Iranian regime, although what it actually does may not be immediately clear.

It is widely seen as the most significant event in the Middle East since the 2003 US/British-led invasion of Iraq because of its potential impact. It represents an attempt to overturn one of that invasion's key results, the strengthening of Iran's regional power - something which the invasion's architects totally failed to foresee.

Trump's goal is to try to reverse Iran's position but, at the same time, avoid another ground war. However, these killings could further destabilise the whole region and lead to further wars.

War?

For a time, the words "Franz Ferdinand" and "World War Three" trended on Twitter, reflecting fears that this assassination could trigger a war in the same way that the 1914 Sarajevo killing did.

While a world war is not posed, more regional conflicts, which would heap more misery on the peoples of the Middle East and possibly further afield, are probable.

Trump's unilateral action shocked the US's allies. They were all kept completely in the dark, unlike at least two Republican US Senators who were told of the assassination decision a few days before. It bore all the hallmarks of a gangster ordering the 'taking out' of an opponent.

But the potential consequences of this are far wider and more destabilising than a gangland killing; this is the deep fear of many sections of the ruling classes in the US and elsewhere.

For the European powers this action is seen as a further step in Trump's assault on the previous policy of attempting to reach some kind of agreement with Iran, as was



While a world war is not posed, more regional conflicts, and further afield, are probable

his withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, and the imposition of sanctions.

In ordering this assassination, Trump is making a high-stakes gamble in an unstable region where most of the regimes are either currently facing opposition movements or fear that they will.

Motives

Obviously, this year's US presidential election was a factor in Trump's decision. The death of a US 'defence contractor' in Iraq was a trigger, along with the attempt of protesters to get into the US embassy in Baghdad. Trump did not want to risk a repeat of either the 1979-81 Tehran embassy hostage crisis that led to Jimmy Carter's 1980 election defeat or the 2012 killing of the US Ambassador to Libya.

Trump wanted to give a warning to the Iranian regime, and ordered,

in his own words, Suleimani's "termination". This was something two of his predecessors - George W Bush and Obama - considered but rejected because of fears of the repercussions.

There is also speculation that this is an attempt by Trump to divert attention away from his impending impeachment trial, similar to the bombing of Iraq that the then President Clinton ordered in 1998 just before the House of Representatives was due to vote on his impeachment.

Both within the US and among the other western imperialist powers, there are real fears that this action has not been thought through and will open up a Pandora's Box of retaliation, upheavals and war.

There is no objection to the assassination, as such, but as a New York Times editorial put it: "The real question to ask about the American drone attack that killed Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani was not whether it was justified, but whether it was wise."

Repercussions

Reflecting the fears of a section of the US ruling class that the situation could spiral into widespread conflicts, a former US deputy assistant secretary of defence for the Middle East, Andrew Exum, wrote: "This doesn't mean war, it will not lead to



The mass movements of recent months in North Africa and the Middle East show the potential force of the working class and poor to change society photo Armin Karami/CC

war, and it doesn't risk war. None of that. It is war!"

These serious doubts and disagreements within the ruling classes reflect the real situation on the ground. While it is not clear where it will lead, the possibility of destabilising conflicts has massively increased. Trump himself attempted to defuse these fears by claiming that Suleimani's assassination was to "stop a war", but there is no guarantee of that.

Immediately there will be repercussions in Iraq. The Iraqi government has been facing a renewed wave of mass protests since October and, after resigning last November, is now technically just a caretaker administration.

It immediately protested about the Baghdad airport assassinations - carried out without its prior knowledge or approval - and sought to rally popular support against this unilateral US action.

The Iraq parliament voted to expel US military forces from its territory, but that vote is subject to approval by the Iraqi government and the government is obliged to give the US one year to withdraw.

In his attempts to justify his decision, Trump opportunistically tried to exploit the military attempts to brutally suppress last year's protests in both Iraq and in Iran.

In Iran, the repression by the state, including the Revolutionary Guards, which Suleimani helped lead, played a role in suppressing the protests. However, in Iraq, the repression, led by forces associated with both Muhndis and Suleimani, did not succeed in crushing the protests.

Suleimani's key role in organising the counter-measures against the recent movements in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon means he had blood on his hands. Trump hopes this, and Muhndis' role in Iraq, will help limit anger at their assassination. This is especially so in Iraq, where

some of the targets of popular anger were Iranian institutions since the Iranian regime is seen as backing an unpopular government.

US's role

However, the appeal of Trump's hypocritical criticism could be limited by anger at the US's own regional role, including in Iran itself. Trump's repeated threat to destroy Iranian cultural sites will not win popular support.

Since the 2003 invasion there has also been bitter opposition in Iraq to US power. The likelihood is that, at least immediately, Iraqi anger will centre on the US rather than against Iran. Although, significantly, in recent days there have been Iraqi protests denouncing both Iran and the US as "occupiers".

Warning

Internationally these assassinations are also another warning to the working class and oppressed. Repeatedly the ruling classes speak about the need to obey the 'rule of law' when they move to limit and suppress opposition movements whether it be strikes or protests. But this does not apply to actions the ruling classes themselves take.

Historically the US, like other states, has carried out, or attempted, assassinations. In 1975, a US Senate committee investigated a series of clandestine CIA assassination attempts, including that of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo and of Cuba's Fidel Castro.

For a brief time this policy was halted. But what is new is that Suleimani was openly killed with a minimal attempt to justify it.

None of the US's allies have, so far, condemned the Trump administration for summarily executing opponents with no 'legal' justification, apart from the unproven claim that this was in "self-defence". Indeed, similar tactics are used by other governments around

the world, often under the claim of 'fighting terrorism' or 'crime'.

Future struggle

Mass repression was used in Sudan and Iraq, last year, to try to suppress mass movements. But in both cases they failed. The mass movements of recent months in North Africa and the Middle East show the potential force of the working class and poor to change society.

In Iraq and, especially, Lebanon, these non-sectarian movements sought to overcome religious and national differences in a unified struggle against the regimes and for real change. Now there is a danger that sectarian divisions could once again come to the fore, significantly most Sunni and Kurd members of the Iraqi parliament did not attend the vote on US troops remaining.

The challenge in each country is to build upon these struggles and create democratic organisations of working people, youth and the poor. Such organisations can both lead the struggle for change and also be the basis for a government that breaks the power of the ruling class and breaks with both imperialism and capitalism, thereby creating the basis for a genuinely socialist transformation of society.

Such is the situation in North Africa and the Middle East that this kind of development in any single country would have a rapid international impact. Today the struggle against imperialist interventions like Trump's assassinations and bombings needs to go hand-in-hand with helping to build the forces for socialist change as the only way to break out of the cycle of wars and repression and liberate the vast majority.

■ For updates on US-Iran conflict see socialistworld.net
■ Hundreds protest against Trump's warmongering - see page 4

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

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

■ Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

■ A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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Labour Party leadership contest

COMMITMENT TO SOCIALIST POLICIES AND DEMOCRATIC PARTY NEEDED

Socialist Party WHAT WE THINK

The nomination process for the Labour Party's leadership contests has begun, with the ballot to take place from 21 February to 2 April.

After doing its best over years to denigrate Jeremy Corbyn as leader, the capitalist media is now striving to influence the voting process, giving credence to candidates who will steer the party back towards the right.

Candidates from the right, on their part, however, have from the outset been trying to avoid any direct association with the legacy of Tony Blair, following the surge of support that took Corbyn to the leadership, which was inspired by Corbyn's anti-austerity, anti-war standpoint. Any of them winning would nonetheless return Labour to a path of declining membership and pro-big business policies, alienating and pushing away working-class and young people.

If a left-wing candidate is to pick up the mantle laid down by Corbyn and build on it, it's essential they don't retreat from any of his pledges on nationalisation, workers' rights, housing, abolition of student fees and all the other urgently needed steps in the manifesto he spearheaded.

It was not those policies that lost the election, rather it was other factors as explained in the Socialist's post-election supplement (see 'Stand firm for socialist policies to stop Tory attacks' at socialistparty.org.uk). In particular, compromises made with the party's right wing over Brexit and the continuation of cuts by Labour councils. Many of Labour's parliamentary candidates refused to even promote Corbyn's manifesto, rejecting it themselves and not wanting Corbyn to be boosted by it.

However, Labour, as a result of the attraction of Corbyn's policies, still has over half a million members, and according to a YouGov poll received the votes of over half of under-30s who voted in the general election. If the party is to continue to be attractive to young people, and at the same time win back the votes of

campaign in support of such a stand? Do they support mandatory reselection of parliamentary candidates, enabling local parties to democratically deselect Blairites?

These are among the questions that need to be asked when deciding nominations and voting recommendations. Labour, which under Corbyn has been 'two parties in one', will still need a thoroughgoing transformation, politically and organisationally, to become a party that can truly represent the working class against capitalism.

It is not primarily a question of the next leader's individual attributes or location, but of whether any will commit to socialist policies and be accountable to the rank and file of the party.

Solidifying and taking forward what Corbyn began requires a re-foundation of the party, drawing in trade unionists, anti-cuts campaigners and socialists from across the workers' movement, and mobilising a mass struggle against the attacks of the Tory government in preparation for replacing it.



Rebecca Long-Bailey, an ally of Corbyn



Clive Lewis, resigned from shadow cabinet to back the EU



Emily Thornberry, also served on Miliband's right-wing front bench



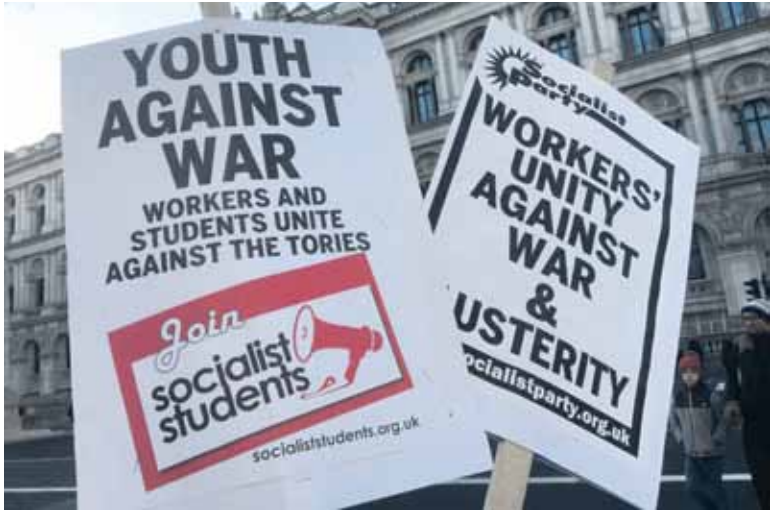
Keir Starmer, Blairite barrister and arch-remainer



Lisa Nandy, Blairite, part of right's 2016 leadership coup attempt



Jess Phillips, Blairite and vicious opponent of the left



Trump attacks Iran: London protest

We need workers' action against war and austerity



photos London Socialist Party

Nancy Taaffe
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Socialist Party members responded to the call to oppose Trump's drone strike on Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and the ratcheting up to war on Saturday 4 January.

The protest outside Downing Street, called at 24 hours' notice, rallied a crowd of several hundred. A number of young people - many have only known a cycle of war, terror and austerity - were prompted to participate. Socialist Party members gave our new year statement out (see pages 8-10).

Even though the rally was small, there was a willingness to discuss. I spoke to someone in Momentum who wanted to talk through what happened at the election.

Protesters took our "youth against war" and "workers' unity against war and austerity" placards, and 33 bought a copy of the Socialist. 12 people signed up to find out more about the Socialist Party.

Speakers included left Labour MPs John McDonnell and Richard Burgon. Steve Hedley, assistant general secretary of transport union RMT, spoke of the need to link the trade union struggle against the Tories with the anti-war struggle, and those fighting the theocratic

caste inside Iran to those fighting Trump in the US and Johnson here. Johnson didn't know about our protest, because unlike most of us he wasn't back at work. He was too busy hiding away, sunning himself on a Caribbean island.

He may have hidden his true politics from workers during the election. He may have hidden in a fridge to avoiding being questioned. But the capitalist crisis and the chaos it creates means Johnson and his kind can't hide forever.

The Socialist Party says:

- No to war in the Middle East
- For workers' action against war and austerity
- For an urgent meeting of the trade unions and all the anti-austerity forces to fight the Tories
- Kick the Blairites and warmongers out of Corbyn's Labour
- Withdraw all foreign forces from the Middle East
- Support the building of non-sectarian workers' struggles in Iran, Iraq and across the region
- Fight for governments that represent the workers and the poor
- For a socialist alternative to war and capitalism

> See article analysing fallout from the Iran assassination on pages 2-3

Jared Wood
RMT union national executive committee (personal capacity)

The Queen's Speech announced the new Tory government's intention to add yet more anti-union laws to Britain's statute books.

Just in case anyone retained any doubt as to the utter cynicism of Boris Johnson, he has presented further attacks on workers' rights as a protection of the right to work for workers who use Britain's railways to commute. It won't escape the notice of those commuters that rising fares, poor reliability, old and insufficient rolling stock and overcrowding will all be allowed to continue.

The chaos of the journey to work for millions every day will still be inflicted on passengers by a privatised rail network that sucks fare revenue and public subsidies out as profit. But don't worry, there will be a minimum service level on strike days.

You may wonder why the bosses could possibly need another anti-union law when the Communication Workers Union ballot can already be ruled illegal. Just before Christmas, 97% of postal workers voted to strike on a turnout of 75%, but still this wasn't good enough for the courts.

The new proposal in the Queen's Speech is directed specifically at the transport union RMT. It would compel workers in the rail sector to provide a minimum service level (yet to be specified) during strikes. This would effectively remove the right to strike from many individuals, who would be compelled to work during a legal strike.

Beacon

RMT has acted as a beacon for the trade union movement in recent years. While the leaderships of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and many individual unions have cowered behind the "dented shield" - waiting and waiting for a Labour government to come along and rescue them - RMT has fought a tenacious industrial battle to defend the role of guards on trains, resist cuts, and defend jobs, pay and conditions (see p12).

Any new minimum service levels will be used as another line of attack by the government and privatised rail industry against RMT.

Of course, implementing this new proposed legislation will be a great deal more difficult than announcing it. It could also lead to much longer strikes. If only half the workforce can strike on a given day, then they may decide to strike for twice as many days. The law could also be a spur to some workers taking unofficial action that is neither organised nor sanctioned by any particular union.

But the trade union movement cannot sit back and allow this legislation to pass into law. It carries an enormous threat to the ability of unions to take effective action in defence of members. The Spanish state already has similar laws, and when workers at Barcelona airport went on strike last year, the courts ordered them to maintain a 90% service!

RMT and the train drivers' union, Aslef, need to stand together against these proposals. General union Unite



John McDonnell speaking on the RMT/NSSN platform next to NSSN chair Rob Williams
photos Judy Beishon

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE



Richard Burgon speaking on the RMT/NSSN platform



Youth protesters



The RMT banner

also represents significant sections of rail workers, mainly in engineering functions; they too must be involved in resisting the new law.

It is also obvious that, should this law be established, then it will be broadened out to all essential public service workers, and then to the whole of the trade union movement. If rail unions have to ensure a minimum service level imposed by a court, then it is inconceivable that the same requirement would not be imposed on firefighters, NHS workers, teachers, civil servants and others.

The TUC should now immediately convene a conference of trade unions to organise a collective fight-back against the new proposals. This should include building towards



This should include building towards general strike action should the proposals be made law - rallies should be held in all major cities, and a national demo organised

general strike action should the proposals be made law. Rallies should be held in all major cities, and a national demo organised.

There will be scepticism from many workers that the TUC will carry out such a fight, given the record of the TUC on resisting previous anti-union laws. But we should not allow them to just continue in their capitulation.

An alliance of the willing is needed urgently. Those unions who are prepared to fight should collaborate to campaign for a real resistance within the TUC, but also to campaign and strike together whether the TUC acts or not.

There is no time to waste. We must not wait until minimum service levels become law to fight them.

RMT and NSSN protest against anti-union bill

Resisting the strike-breakers' charter

Trade union members from the transport union RMT, alongside the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN), Socialist Party members, and others demonstrated outside parliament (pictured left) on 19 December against attacks on the right to strike in the Queen's Speech.

The NSSN had moved its planned 1pm demonstration to instead start at 12.30pm, to coincide with the one called by the RMT, in order to have maximum unity and turnout.

The protest was joined by John McDonnell and others in Labour's parliamentary Campaign Group of left MPs, a number of whom addressed the protest, including John McDonnell, Ian Mearns, Diane Abbott and Richard Burgon. Their message was the need to rapidly move on from the general election result and turn to resisting the attacks of Johnson's Tory government.

RMT speakers included general secretary Mick Cash and assistant general secretary Steve Hedley. Mick Cash made it clear that the protest was just the beginning of the fight.

Speaking for the NSSN were its chair Rob Williams, who chaired the protest rally, and secretary Linda Taaffe, both of whom are Socialist Party members.

Rob stressed that no union should be left isolated and that joint action by the trade unions is needed, including a Saturday demonstration in London next year, which should be called by the Trade Union Congress.

Linda echoed this and pointed to the incredible mass NHS strike that took place in Northern Ireland the day before the protest, as proof of the willingness of workers to take action if they are given a lead. Johnson's plan is "a strike-breakers' charter" and must be defeated, she said.

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Trouble ahead for Johnson: Brexit is far from 'done'

Steve Score
Socialist Party national committee

In the general election Johnson got his majority in parliament to "get Brexit done." But those who voted for him because they wanted to finally finish the endless chaos and uncertainty surrounding Brexit will be disappointed.

While the EU Withdrawal Bill was passed just before Christmas and could be pushed into law by the deadline of 31 January, then begins the "transitional period" of real negotiations with the EU. During this period, which is set to end on 31 December this year, the UK is technically outside the EU but still complies with EU rules.

Johnson wants to legally ensure no extension of that date. But considering how long it took just to get the withdrawal agreement, getting a deal on trade and many complex other issues with the EU - leaving aside possibly negotiating deals with other countries outside the EU - is going to be extremely difficult. If no agreement is reached by the end of the year it could mean either

'no deal' is back on the agenda, or a government u-turn on extending the deadline.

While Johnson currently has a majority in parliament, the Tory party is just as divided as before over Brexit. The majority of the ruling class wants a Brexit deal that is as near as possible to remaining, but many Tory MPs do not.

Negotiations, or lack of progress on them, could again raise the prospect of splits in the Tories. Many issues could cause conflict inside the party - how the negotiations deal with the post-Brexit relationship with Northern Ireland, for example.

Withdrawal bill

The new version of the withdrawal bill removes some concessions that had to be made before Johnson got his majority. One heartless example is the removal of a pledge on the legal rights of refugee children to be reunited with families who are in the UK.

It is clear that Johnson does not want a Brexit that favours working-class people. The new bill removes pledges on workers' rights that had been in the previous one. In fact,

the previous pledge - against workers' rights "regressing" as a result of Brexit - was already far too vague.

Now the government is promising a new bill on workers' rights at some point in the future. But, combined with the threat of new anti-union laws effectively banning strikes in transport, there is no doubt that Johnson plans further attacks on the trade unions and workers' rights.

The bill also increases powers for judges to overturn past European Court of Justice (ECJ) rulings after Brexit. There are fears that any pro-worker rulings could be overturned.

Given the class nature of the top judges, and the recent example of blatant class bias in the decision to overturn the postal workers' strike ballot, they would certainly be unlikely to overturn any of the anti-trade-union rulings the ECJ has made.

The Socialist Party opposes the EU because its rules are designed to defend the profits and markets of big business, and puts forward a working-class and socialist Brexit as the alternative.

The only guarantees on workers' rights are those that are forced by mass trade union action. These rights have always only been won by struggle, and the trade unions need to prepare now for huge battles to defend rights and overturn anti-trade-union laws.

Workers' struggles and economic instability could also add to the uncertainty over Brexit negotiations and turmoil in the Tory party. One thing is sure - Brexit is far from "done".

Shell pays £0 corporation tax, and plans huge hike in fossil output

Nationalise the energy companies!



photo CEphoto, Uwe Aranas/CC

Michael Johnson
Leeds Socialist Party

Faced with increasing scrutiny worldwide, oil giant Shell has revealed it paid no UK corporation tax in 2018. This is despite Shell also earning nearly £557 million in pre-tax profits in the UK over that year, with global pre-tax profits being \$35.6 billion.

This has come about due to Shell receiving huge tax refunds for decommissioning its North Sea oil platforms. To help balance the expenses of plugging and abandoning their (highly profitable) oil wells and removing their equipment, the government lets energy companies deduct costs from their taxable profits or claim back tax they had previously paid!

Shell also reported that more than two-fifths of its profits in the UK come from joint ventures overseas, and so claims to have paid tax on these in other countries. The firm's tax arrangements including dodging taxes via offshore trusts, and even moving its headquarters from London to The Hague, where it has also failed to pay corporation tax.

And despite claims that Shell would be using its profits to invest in becoming world's biggest clean energy company, this has failed to

materialise. Instead, Shell plans to increase its fossil fuel output by 38% this decade, according to analysts at Rystad Energy!

Past Tory governments have promised to 'get tough' on tax avoidance, but unsurprisingly this hasn't been delivered. Instead, despite massive profits, it has fallen on the general public to cover the costs of decommissioning.

The National Audit Office has warned this could cost taxpayers £24 billion as reserves in the North Sea run dry. Indeed, Stuart McWilliam, campaign manager at Global Witness, said "the fact that Shell and other major oil companies are regularly getting huge tax rebates, despite making vast profits, is a feature that is now baked into the UK oil and gas tax system."

So profiteers like Shell use up natural resources, pollute the planet, make massive money gains, then stick us with the bill - all while refusing to pay any tax! We need nationalisation.

All of the oil and energy companies should be brought into public ownership. They should be run under democratic workers' control and management, as part of a socialist plan of green energy production. Only then we could guarantee an efficient, affordable, ecological service.

photo EU2017EE Estonian Presidency/CC



Ignore the hype - austerity goes on: organise to resist it

It's not just the Socialist that is challenging Johnson's claims that he will end austerity and grow the economy. According to the director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, winning the election was "the easy bit."

Writing in the Financial Times the day after the election, he says: "With the economy stagnating, public services struggling after nearly a decade of austerity... there will not be much scope for generosity."

He goes on to state that "an end to austerity... does not mean spending

will rise to anything like previous levels. It just means that no further cuts are planned. Outside health, spending on public services will still be something like 15% down on 2010."

He finishes by saying: "What would really blow the fiscal framework out of the water, though, would be an economic slowdown - perhaps precipitated by Brexit or just because we are due one..."

"Dealing with a recession now, after years of disappointing growth, a decade of stagnating earnings, debt

at twice its previous level and public services struggling after the deepest and most prolonged period of cuts in modern history, would challenge any government."

So there we have it.

More proof that we have to organise now to resist the onslaught of attacks that are coming our way from this Tory government that, just like the others, will do everything in its power to make working-class people pay the price of an economic and political system that is rotten to the core.

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The Socialist Inbox

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Get up, stand up, don't give up the fight!

This week's Socialist Inbox is given over to readers' comments in the hours and days following December's general election and its likely implications.



photo Pete Mason

■ Build trade unions fit for purpose

Labour's electoral catastrophe was entirely predictable. A party founded to represent the political views of the working class, that abandons that role in the most important political decision of the age, in this case Brexit, cannot expect to retain working-class support in an election.

We expected the opposition of the Blairites, but the short-sighted, pro-remain position of Labour 'lefts' was no less damaging to Labour. Their inability to understand the true, pro-capitalist, anti-working class nature of the EU is tragic; and when Corbyn allowed himself to be manoeuvred into this position, the anger of the working class was palpable in Labour's heartlands.

But for the working class a pendulum swings between two planes, the political and the industrial. Defeated on one plane, they move to action on the other. The trade unions will soon be the main field of struggle, as the Tories capitalise on their success by attacks on workers' rights and living standards.

Attention now falls on the trade unions, sluggish, ill-led in many cases; with a few exceptions, dominated by right-wing, non-militant leaderships.

This situation must be challenged and changed. Relentless war must be waged on faint-hearted union leaders. Challenge, oppose and replace them. Above all, organise workers to resist the attacks. Build a trade union movement fit for the momentous tasks ahead.

Let the Tories know that they have won the election, but not the attack on the working class.

Roger Bannister
Liverpool

■ Labour's appeasement failure

Now that the dust has settled on the general election, a sober analysis is required. The Brexit Party standing down in the marginals allowed the Tories in.

Farage even bragged about keeping Corbyn and Labour out.

Also, Corbyn's limited left-wing programme probably wasn't even heard by most constituents because pseudo-Labour MPs kept it off their election material. Some of them even called upon their constituents not to vote for Labour. Absolutely appalling.

Corbyn was his own worst enemy. He tried to appease everyone and

appeased no one. He should have come down on the side of Leave. By not doing so he left the field open to Johnson. He wasn't assertive enough with enemies both inside and outside the Labour Party.

The Blairites blame him and the left for defeat; they've been saying that since the 1980s. They ought to look at their own Tory-lite politicians before they blame the left.

Thatcher said her greatest achievement was Tony Blair and New Labour. They governed with Tory-lite policies and started the privatisation of our NHS. No wonder workers abandoned them or abstained. No real alternative to austerity.

The class struggle continues.

Bill Buchanan
Nottingham

■ Don't blame the working class

Corbyn's Manifesto was a good start - but needed to be campaigned for over many months, not a few weeks. Certainly don't blame the working class, blame years of Labour councils passing on cuts, years of Blairite backstabbing (and they will now go all out to steal Labour back).

But also it's down to misunderstanding the bitterness of workers - who voted for Brexit to put two fingers up to the establishment. Instead of Labour explaining clearly that they will fight for a different kind of Brexit - for jobs, services, ie the nationalisation the EU opposes - Labour seemed to be, at best, fudging it, at worst, backing the neoliberal EU.

Martin Powell-Davies
Cumbria

■ France will come to Britain

There will be many understandably feeling devastated, angry and even frightened by what the next five years of a Tory majority government will mean.

Parallels are being made with the dark days of Thatcher but this is a mistake in my view. Let us not forget this was a Tory party forced into an election in which it had to promise the biggest spending on the health service and education; a party which had to say austerity was over.

What can look like a dark day today can very soon become a very angry one tomorrow. Look what happened to Macron in France who threatened to wipe away a generation of workers' rights.

Within months he faced the yellow vest movement and a general strike. And look what happened to Bolsonaro in Brazil: elected on a right-wing, anti-worker programme, but within months was faced with massive general strike.

Our job now is to organise on the streets and in the workplaces to demand an end to austerity.

Now is the time to begin that fight.

Glenn Kelly
Brighton

■ Stand up and fight back

I am 81 and doubtful that I will see another Labour government. However, I am not pessimistic because fighting for socialism is not just a parliamentary thing.

Look at the upheavals in France, the demos in Italy, Lebanon, Iraq, Brazil, and so on. This rotten Tory government will be a government of crisis. It will be incapable of retaining working-class Brexit voters in the north on a permanent basis.

No matter what the Tories say they are the 1% we are the 99%, when we mobilise we can take them down. I say to the Trade Union Congress get up off your knees and fight; I say to Labour councillors fight and defend your communities; I say to Labour reject the siren voices urging you to move to the right.

The world is in turmoil. Only socialism can resolve the contradictions of a failing capitalist system. Let's make 2020 the year that we began the fight back, the year we rejected the evil dogma of capitalism.

Terry Pearce
Bracknell

■ Labour council cuts

The more the election debate goes on, the more irritated I am by people who are stony silent on what Labour councillors did in Labour areas and the repercussions of implementing Tory austerity for ten years.

Virtually all Labour members went along with the idea that there was nothing they could do. Even if they

opposed cuts many of them didn't participate in the anti-cuts community campaigns and instead bought into the idea that all we had to do was wait for a Labour government.

And what did that mean? It meant a drastic deterioration in our livelihoods and the services we used.

The Socialist Party has fought as many campaigns as we possibly could, and are responsible for some victories. But we were/are fighting with one arm behind our back because we constantly came up against Blairites who viciously defend neoliberalism.

Corbynistas were sympathetic to these community campaigns but not present, many were wary of being associated with local campaigns directed against a Labour council.

Nancy Taaffe
Walthamstow

■ Union leaders - no more excuses

'Wait for a Corbyn-led labour government for workers' rights', and so on. These words have been spoken daily from some of our trade union leaders over the last few years.

Those at the sharp end of trade unionism have fed back: 'why should we wait for a Corbyn-led government while these attacks are happening every day to our members?' Unfortunately, this fell on deaf ears.

We now face one of the most brutal governments for generations. The trade union movement was born out of the need to take action in defending and gaining workers' rights. We've waited but we cannot wait any more.

This government will not be a government for working-class people.

We need to make the streets ours, see the whites of the bosses' eyes when we say no more. We've had enough of waiting, it's time to take what's rightfully ours; our future depends on it.

Rebel with a cause, Rotherham

■ Join the socialists

The key to these election results is that

it's still the situation that we don't have a mass socialist party of the working class. Labour is two parties in one and Corbyn's compromises to keep it together (on Brexit and the national question in Scotland) undermined his anti-austerity policies.

Johnson will have plenty of hurdles to overcome - not least is the further negotiations with the EU, but also things such as the issue of a new Scottish independence referendum. I doubt he will satisfy the aspirations of workers in any of the seats the Tories win tonight.

We're in an increasingly unstable world, with the capitalist system increasingly unable to offer working class people a future.

We need to pick ourselves up, and get ready for the new struggles to come. If you're not in a trade union, join one! If you agree with the ideas of the Socialist Party, join us!

Iain Dalton
Leeds

■ Rise up against the Tories

Insurrection is the word you must use frequently in your articles.

Writing as a disabled person on benefits - three years from receiving the state pension - I know that we have a Tory government for the next five years. I also know that in the last nine years of austerity, the Tories have used the Department for Work and Pensions to attack my very existence because they have deemed me a scrounger.

Despite the election result I cannot merely sit and wait to be attacked by Universal Credit, constant reviews and other schemes the Tories may choose to implement due to their large parliamentary majority.

If every person who voted Labour were to rebel, using every means available to them, we would soon get them out.

I urge the Socialist Party to offer a lead to all those who confess socialism as their creed, and that includes the Labour Party.

Adrian B Rimington
Chesterfield

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

2020: CLASS STRUGGLES AND CAPITALIST INSTABILITY WILL INTENSIFY

Today's developing mass movements of workers and youth in many countries against the 'establishment' and capitalism will spread around the world this year writes, Socialist Party general secretary, **Peter Taaffe**.

On a world scale, 2019 ended in the tumultuous manner in which it began and unfolded. It finished with the shallow electoral 'triumph' of Boris Johnson's Tories.

Kevin Maguire of the Daily Mirror emphasised this when he pointed out that "an unfair electoral system favours Tories when they gained one MP for every 38,265 votes nationally, while Labour needed 50,717."

He showed that "Johnson won by raising the Tory vote a measly 1.2% because Labour lost in a 7.9% plummet. Corbyn's 32.2% share is still higher than Gordon Brown's 29% in 2010 and Ed Miliband's 30% in 2015."



Boris Johnson photo F&C Office/CC

The victory of Boris Johnson's Tory party means that there will inevitably be bitter class conflict.

"Today they are ringing the bells, but tomorrow they will be wringing their hands," wrote Johnson's 18th-century predecessor as Prime Minister, Robert Walpole. Even before Johnson assumed power capitalist commentators, like Peter Osborne, warned of his systematic deceit, as a journalist, MP and minister in Tory governments.

The consensus among capitalist journalists was that this adventurer lies as he breathes! His crass insensitivity means that he will blunder into conflicts with those who were allegedly his 'friends' and supporters on 12 December.

The day before the election, in order to avoid answering awkward questions on the scandalous state of the NHS, he fled into a cold-room of a dairy - evoking the headlines in the kept capitalist press that even for

Johnson this was a "fridge too far".

Nevertheless, he clawed his way back to power with the colossal assistance of the media, and particularly of lying journalists in the BBC like Andrew Neil, the creature and past editor of the scurrilous Sunday Times. There he did the bidding of the odious press tycoon Rupert Murdoch in the mass sacking of workers at Wapping.

We should never forget that this 'hired gun of Murdoch' vilified Liverpool workers over Hillsborough. Emily Maitlis and Laura Kuenssberg from the BBC also showed scandalous bias in their 'interview/interrogation' of Labour spokespersons.

Unfortunately, however, Labour's and Jeremy Corbyn's 'neutral' position on Brexit allowed Johnson and the Tories to seduce significant sections of former Labour voters to support their worst enemies, the Tories. Even Johnson, immediately after the election results, recognised the fragile nature of this when he stated that many Labour voters had "lent their votes" to him to "get Brexit done".

However, if the Socialist Party's position had been adopted on opposition to the capitalist EU ie Brexit on a class and socialist programme, then it would have been possible for the radical features of Labour's manifesto to cut through and win a majority.

Unstable Tory government

Nevertheless, Johnson's government is inherently unstable. It will be a government of crisis because the capitalist system, upon which it rests, has never really recovered from the crisis of 2007-09, which was the biggest collapse of the productive forces for 80 years.

There is the beginning of stock market falls and a general slowing down, particularly in Britain.

The level of poverty is indicated by the fact that mortality rates in parts of Britain, such as Blackpool, Manchester and Hull is higher than in parts of Turkey, Slovenia and Romania.

The economy is flat lining - dropping to a crawl, with the current account deficit at £92 billion, 4.3% of GDP (2018). 70% of young people believe that owning a home will be near impossible for them.

That is why capitalists in the election campaign did everything possible to malign and distort Jeremy Corbyn's position and particularly Labour's manifesto on such crucial issues as a mass council housebuilding programme and cancellation of tuition fees, although they should have gone further and also called for the cancellation of student debt.

Capitalist commentators such as Andrew Rawnsley of the Observer,



Workers in one country after another... have risen in the past year against dictatorships - veiled and otherwise - or against threats to democratic rights



After decades of repression in Chile, just a tiny increase in fares on public transport acted as the straw that broke the camel's back photo CWI

dripping in bile and poison, blamed Jeremy Corbyn in advance of the election for any defeat that Labour was to suffer. Michael Heseltine, Andrew Neil, et al, also railed against Corbyn personally, and particularly his radical policies on nationalisation and council housing.

However, an indication of the authoritarian, anti-working class and right-wing character of this government is the threat by Johnson in the public transport sector to make strikes illegal under his government unless they agree to provide a continuation of 'minimum services'.

This is in effect statutory strikebreaking. The TUC and individual unions themselves must meet any such threat with plans for

unified strike action involving the whole of the movement.

Global protests

However, Britain is not alone in suffering the heavy hand of capitalist state repression. Workers in one country after another throughout the world have risen in the past year against dictatorships - veiled and otherwise - or against threats to democratic rights.

Look also at the splendid movement in the Middle East and in the Maghreb. Algeria, geographically the biggest country in Africa, had overthrown French imperialism through revolution in the 1950s and 60s but had subsequently degenerated at the top into an ossified autocratic clique.

A mass movement, particularly young people, has demonstrated for democratic rights and improvements in living standards.

They have been followed by a magnificent uprising in Iraq, which in the past was mired in sectarian division and blighted by terrorism.

Workers are attempting to throw off this legacy and reach out for class unity, jobs and democratic rights, as the Socialist predicted they would even in the darkest days of sectarian conflict and division.

At the end of June 2009, we wrote: "Only a socialist and class solution can offer a real long-term solution to the Iraqi people. The germs of this have been marvellously displayed in the solidarity between Shias and Sunni in the midst of the bloodletting and carnage in Iraq of the past fortnight. The democratic and socialist forces, although small, and particularly of



We are in such an underlying explosive and integrated world that seemingly small events in one country can trigger continental and even worldwide movements

the working class, should mobilise for a programme which has the present attempts at unifying the Shias and Sunnis as its starting point" (the Socialist, 26 June 2009).



Jeremy Corbyn photo Paul Mattsson

It has been the Iraqi militias close to Iran that have attempted to bloodily repress the movements in the country. The Shia dissident cleric Muqtada al-Sadr opposes the Iranian government's interference in Iraq. The Shia in Iraq increasingly look to their own power, rather than leverage outside. As one Iraqi worker commented, previously the spectre of the chaos and suffering in Syria silenced our protests but not now!

We can look forward to the emergence of a non-sectarian workers' movement which could be the key that unlocks a mass movement to change society in a socialist direction.

This in turn has helped to push the mass movements in neighbouring Shia Iran with which it shares a 900-mile border. Struggles over the last two years have shown the rebirth of the workers' organisations in Iran and now it has experienced the biggest mass movements of opposition, and consequently of strike action, to increases in living costs through rises in taxes and the price of petrol.

New generation

The participation of a new generation of young people has terrified the mullahs who still rule the roost. 200,000 workers and youth have been involved in demonstrations, with an estimated 700 banks torched as outraged workers and youth react to deteriorating living standards.

This year Sudan faced similar upheavals, as has Lebanon in the biggest movement of opposition to the government for at least 14 years, since the previous 'cedar revolution'. Consequently, Lebanese flags flew on the skyline and in protests rather than those of the sectarian militias.

The magnificent movement in Hong

Kong is also a precursor to coming upheavals in Asia, and above all in China. The radicalisation of Hong Kong has been most noticeable in the under-18s. Many, if not the majority, of the Hong Kong students, engaged in battle with Carrie Lam, the stooge of the Chinese regime. Many carried their will on their person in case of death from the brutal repression.

Despite the brutality meted out to them, even because of this, they inspired the whole of Hong Kong in its mighty display of opposition to Lam and her puppet-master Xi in Beijing. Their radicalisation and hardening led to a break with the traditional caution of the student movement, which in turn led to the mass revolt reflected in the landslide result of the municipal elections in Hong Kong. Things will never be the same again in Hong Kong or China.

The battle for universal suffrage is one which could lead the mass movement to demand a revolutionary constituent assembly in Hong Kong - linked to an uprising of workers and youth, with the election of delegates to a series of committees to coordinate the struggle. It is vital - as is undoubtedly taking place now - that steps should be taken to organise the outline of a mass movement in China in opposition to the present rotten regime.

It is impossible to keep a people of one billion in chains forever. Hong Kong will have inspired those in Taiwan who are looking for independence, as too with the Uighurs in Xinjiang but also linking up with their co-workers and youth in Hong Kong and China.

Catalyst for struggle

We are in such an underlying explosive and integrated world that seemingly small events in one country can trigger continental and even worldwide movements, as the example of Chile and Latin America demonstrates. Therefore the events of Hong Kong will find a path, maybe with some delay, to influence the youth and the working class of China itself.

This applies to Europe - east as well as west - as it does to the rest of the world. Growth of the world economy at 3% is the lowest since the global recession. Eastern Europe threw off the impediment of 'communism' - in reality top-down Stalinism - thereby hoping to climb the ladder of 'endless progress'.

Latvia lost 27% of its population, mostly to the capitalist west, as it went in search of economic salvation. Some countries, like Poland, the Czech Republic and Lithuania, are probably better off than 30 years ago, largely because of inward investment from the west, but this can disappear if it serves the interests of foreign capital.

Poland, with big inward investment, has seen its economy

continued over page...

2020: Class struggles and capitalist instability will intensify



In Lebanon there is the biggest movement of opposition to the government for at least 14 years, since the previous 'cedar revolution'. Consequently, Lebanese flags have flown on the skyline and in protests rather than those of the sectarian militias photo Shahan Books/CC

...continued from previous page
triple in size over the past three decades with no recession since 1992. It is second only to Australia in managing to escape recession in this period. However, according to one economic expert, in Russia, Ukraine and Bulgaria more than "half the population are worse off".

Moreover, Eastern Europe is now returning almost to the situation that existed in the interwar period, with right-wing demagogues resting upon precarious economic foundations, which necessitate 'strong' right-wing populist governments. This will in turn provoke mass oppositional movements, as we see in Hungary with prime minister Viktor Orbán losing control of Budapest and other cities.

Western Europe

In Western Europe a new period of organic instability has opened up that is already triggering mass opposition like the colossal movement in France in defence of pension rights, which Macron is attempting to snatch away from working people.

A warning of what was to come had been indicated by the gilets jaunes (yellow vests) movement which has developed over the last year. Macron has met with a chorus of disapproval from the masses for proposals to extend the working life beyond 62 and effectively cutting early retirement.

The fury of the French workers was summed up in the colossal one million-strong demonstrations embracing all sections of the working class: railway workers, teachers, air traffic controllers, and many others, who have marched through the streets, chanting that the "streets will always be ours".

A recent opinion poll indicated that 89% of the people thought that they were living through a social crisis and 67% said they felt Macron didn't understand those social dif-

ficulties. In other words the government, particularly Macron, was out of touch and could therefore, like his presidential predecessors, provoke a massive social collision - shades of the battle in 1995 which defeated the Juppé plan and even of the mass general strike of 1968?

Moreover, this situation is likely to get worse as the EU suffers from the global trade slowdown, the economic problems arising from Britain's exit from the EU and Germany's industrial recession. This will add to the disruption caused by the US-China trade conflict.

At the same time Italy faces a drawn-out crisis from the rise of the political fortunes of the populist far-right Lega (the League). It is no longer in government with the Five-Star Movement, which enhanced the fortunes of the Lega's leader Matteo Salvini through its coalition with him.

Nevertheless he seems to be riding high and dominates the Italian political scene: "The far right is near the peak of its popularity right now" (Opinion, FT, 24 November 2019), standing at 34% for La Lega and 10% for its allies in the 'Brothers of Italy'.

However, the 'Sardine' movement, with tens of thousands of people squashing into squares all over Italy against the Lega and its racist agenda are an anticipation of future movements by Italian workers with their powerful class traditions and history that will stir into action against Salvini and bankrupt Italian capitalism.

German capitalism, the economic powerhouse of Europe, is stagnating and has started to decline, with its three most important sectors - cars, mechanical engineering and chemicals - in "economic difficulties" and announcing job cuts. Unemployment is rising in regions with a high concentration of industry.

On the political front the coalition of the social democrats (SPD) as the



**One thing is certain:
revolts of the peoples
of the world will
continue so long
as this system is
allowed to exercise
its dominance**

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junior partner to the hapless ruling party the Christian Democrats, which has lasted for six years, is fraying at the edges. Support for the SPD has plummeted to a catastrophic 14% in opinion polls with big pressure from the base to break with the coalition.

A new 'political' arrangement involving some kind of national agreement between the SPD, die Linke (Left party) and the Greens seems to be on the cards at a certain stage. However, the need for a clear socialist message through a genuine mass workers' party to politically arm the mighty German working class for the big class battles is ever more necessary in the upheavals which impend.

There are similar developments in northern Europe. Finland, in a possible harbinger of events in other Nordic countries, faces choppy economic seas.

The Finnish prime minister, a social democrat, has been forced to step down because of his 'mis-handling' of a postal strike! He did not support the postal workers but his coalition partners in a capitalist party accused him of interfering too much in the labour market!

The explosive situation in the US will be crucial for international developments in 2020. Trump has faced a deep-going crisis, and is threatened with impeachment proceedings, although it is far from certain that this will be successful in any trial in the Republican-dominated Senate.

The presidential election in 2020 will also be extremely polarised. It remains uncertain who will secure the Democratic nomination. Although Bernie Sanders has won support, the emergence of Warren and Biden has made it more complicated than in 2016.

However, growing class polarisation within the US will mean developments there will be crucial for the world situation.

In 2019 capitalism, and those who seek to manage and control this system, demonstrated beyond any doubt the incapacity and impossibility of doing this in the interests of the majority throughout the world.

Capitalism is now more unequal than ever - with Britain one of the most unequal societies in the world - and is a system dominated by a billionaire plutocratic elite which has become less and less answerable to the peoples of the world.

Capitalist system

And one thing is certain: revolts of the peoples of the world will continue so long as this system is allowed to exercise its dominance: "The world's tolerance for income inequality and billionaires is declining sharply everywhere," said Alberto Ramos of Goldman Sachs. These understated words indicate looming mass class opposition to this system.

Because of its failure to come forward with solutions to destructive and terrible climate change, as environmental activist Greta Thunberg has indicated, we have experienced in recent years the hottest decade on record. Only a planned economy can begin to solve this problem, which is only possible on the basis of socialism and democracy.

And yet new theoreticians and darlings of capitalism, like Branko Milanovic, have produced weighty books which seek to convince us that the capitalist system is the 'sole' way forward for humanity.

However, as we have demonstrated, this analysis is completely faulty as it has proposed no real lasting solutions (see the new issue of Socialism Today, February 2020).

Capitalism as a system is an absolute barrier to the further progress of humankind. The real alternative to this is socialism, organised on a democratic basis. 2020 will see big steps forward to realise this goal.

NORTHERN RAIL FRANCHISE IN QUESTION: NATIONALISE THE RAILWAYS!

Sally Griffiths
 Manchester and Salford
 Socialist Party

The Tories' announcement that they are likely to revoke Northern Rail's franchise referred to Northern's service being "completely unacceptable." That's true.

However, it is not just workers in the north who are suffering under the privatised 'service'. It's a Britain-wide issue.

Transport should be a public service, but the Tories and New Labour have made it a commodity. The Tories started it; New Labour completed it; the European Union assisted both with its privatising rail directives.

Passengers and workers face overcrowding, delays, fare increases, safety compromises and ticket complexity hidden behind the facade of 'customer choice'. Choice? One operator monopolises each route! When standing on a platform, often with no ticket office, we have no choice.

Fares have risen twice as fast as wages since 2009. As a proportion of



wages, they are now five times what passengers in the rest of Europe pay on average. European state-owned companies run many of Britain's private franchises, and dividends from these operations are reinvested into their own country's transport systems.

In 2001, Britain's privatised track owner Railtrack paid £137 million in dividends, funded by government subsidies. The same year, Railtrack went into administration, and the government had to renationalise it the next year, after the shareholders had made off with their millions.

East Coast Main Line

Conversely, the East Coast Main Line went into public ownership in 2009, and was then a success - with 94% customer satisfaction, and returning £1 billion to the Treasury. It was the most effective franchise in Britain, taking only 1% of the line's income in subsidy compared with the average of a staggering 32%.

Rail freight charges have put trucks back on the road, increasing pollution and congestion. Since privatisation we have seen virtually no further electrification of the system. And removing the costs of fragmen-

tation, owners' dividends, and private borrowing, could allow a big increase in service and reduction in fares.

Andy Burnham, the Blairite mayor of Greater Manchester, has stated the Greater Manchester Combined Authority will bid to be operator of Northern Rail. It's possible that could keep the private profiteers out. But unless the combined authority is prepared to defy the government and fight for sufficient investment in the service, it would end up being blamed for shortcomings.

British Rail was far from perfect. On nationalisation, like in the coal industry, the original bosses stayed in place, and the required investment wasn't given. A recent report concluded "If British Rail had received the same funds (as the current franchise operators) we would have a gold-plated British Rail."

A publicly owned rail industry should instead be run under democratic workers' control and management. Control by workers and passengers could guarantee enough staffing, training and infrastructure with the political will to make our transport systems operate for people and the environment.

Children need intensive care? We don't care!

Ella Foley Doyle
 Birmingham North Socialist Party

This is the practical attitude of this Tory government, which has overseen a project of vicious NHS cuts - to the point where hospitals in England are struggling to provide beds to young children in desperate need of intensive care.

Working-class people already have first-hand experience of how austerity has driven down our NHS to the level of a postcode lottery.

Now the Guardian has revealed that children in critical condition have to be rushed around different parts of England, sometimes dozens of miles away from their home, in circumstances where every minute counts. This truly represents our NHS at breaking point!

Health ministers can't even use their classic excuse of a 'harsh winter'. The end of 2019 was much milder. But staff working in paediatric intensive care units have felt a tremendous increased pressure on their day-to-day tasks due to shoe-string budgets, with one specialist in London describing it as "dangerous and rotten for the families."

This all derives from the truly dangerous and rotten system that is capitalism. In its pursuit of lining the back pockets of vulture billionaires and millionaires, it doesn't just enable a situation like this. It even desires it, in order to give more false justification for the



bosses' 'solution' of yet more privatisation and outsourcing.

This dangerous lack of intensive-care beds for children, compounded by bare-bones paediatric funding and the general crisis in the health service, sends out a strong message to workers of what we can expect. Our NHS and public services, run by the capitalists, undervalued and under attack.

We in the Socialist Party fight daily

against every cut to the health service. We call for the immediate full funding of all NHS services, not just the insufficient and double-counted increase promised by Johnson. We also fight for all privatisation to be reversed, and for our public services to be run under democratic workers' control and management.

End the postcode lottery! From cradle to grave, all should receive the medical treatment they need.

International wave of revolt continues ■ General strike in India

As we go to press, a general strike is set to rock India on 8 January.

The right-wing Modi government's new citizenship laws attacking religious minorities, following years of repression and attacks on the living standards of workers and the poor, have caused an explosion of anger.

New Socialist Alternative, the

Socialist Party's sister party in India, says the masses don't have to wait for parliament to deliver for them. Struggle committees can be built - in workplaces, universities, etc - and can come together to form a powerful base to decide the future of the society...

■ Read the full article at socialistworld.net



■ General strike in France

The day after India, another national strike is due in France. In the run-up to the 9 January day of action, transport workers have sustained the longest national strike since the revolutionary general strike of 1968.

Ahead of the last all-sector national strikes in December, Gauche Révolutionnaire, the Socialist Party's sister party in

France, said a single day of strike action will not be enough.

"We know we have to build the general strike... We need a party that defends the interests of workers, youth and the majority of the population and supports the current struggles while campaigning to end capitalism..."

■ Read the full article at socialistworld.net

TORY MINIMUM WAGE HIKE NOT ENOUGH: £12 NOW AS A STEP TO £15!



McDonald's strikers in London in 2019 called for a £15-an-hour minimum wage photo Paul Mattsson



Berkay Kartav
North London Socialist Party

Ignoring the realities of living in austerity Britain, the Tory government has announced that the National 'Living Wage' will increase by 51p to £8.72 an hour in April. Every improvement is welcome, of course.

The Eton-educated millionaire Boris Johnson said that "for too long, people haven't seen the pay rises they deserve." But for millions of workers who receive poverty wages and struggle to pay their rent and bills, is this all they actually deserve?

The fact is that while the richest in society have more than doubled their wealth, real wages for the majority have either fallen or stagnated over the last ten to 15 years. Rising living costs, cuts to in-work benefits, and insecure contracts have swept a further 500,000 workers into poverty over the last five years, reaching four million in total. There is a rising tide of in-work poverty.

A 6.2% increase, albeit above the inflation rate for one year, does not make up for the 'lost decade' (longer, in reality) of real-term wage cuts.

The £8.72 rate does not apply to under-25s or apprentices, who can receive even lower pay. And it still falls far below the 'Minimum Income Standard' proposed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which measures what the public thinks a household needs for a basic decent standard of life.

£10 an hour

Even Jeremy Corbyn's pledge to raise the national minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemption - which workers would rightly have met with a sigh of relief - is no longer enough to cover rising living costs.

In this respect, the McDonald's strikers in London who called for a real living wage of £15 an hour set an example of what we should do to end low pay. But desperate to defend its fat profits, the capitalist class and its representatives in Westminster will do all they can to prevent a real living minimum of £15 an hour.

The Tories' attack on workers' rights, including the right to strike, and the court injunction on postal workers, all show that the workers' movement needs to step up the fight for decent pay and working conditions we deserve - not what the Tories think we deserve.

Coordinated trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the national minimum wage to £12 an hour with no exemptions, as a step towards a real living wage of £15 an hour, could bring this bosses' government to its knees and win big concessions on pay.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
editors@socialistparty.org.uk

West Midlands RMT guards jobs saved

RMT transport union members at West Midlands Trains have scored a victory over bosses in a dispute over scrapping guards on trains. After only three days of solid strike action before Christmas, management buckled and agreed to preserve the guards' role with responsibility for opening train doors being transferred to drivers.

With no changes to pay and conditions attached, the offer was accepted by a nearly two to one majority. While many guards were prepared to fight on in defence of their role and to prevent any loss in responsibilities this is without doubt a victory as

the company had originally intended to completely strip away the guards' safety responsibilities.

The growing numbers of drivers refusing to cross the guards' picket lines played an important part in forcing the company to capitulate so early.

However with West Midlands Trains' parent company now under fire for its appalling service performance it might not be long until battle lines are redrawn as a new franchise holder decides to attack staff in the pursuit of shareholder profits.

Tom Woodcock
RMT member

All we want for Christmas is a no-strings pay rise

Norman Hall
South Tyne and Wearside Socialist Party

RMT union drivers on the Tyne and Wear metro took the drastic step of holding a 48-hour strike on the Friday and Saturday before Christmas.

Socialist Party members joined the well-attended 5am picket on 20 December. We spoke with RMT shop steward and 'super picket' (picket supervisor) Chris Mongan, who has been part of the negotiations. Chris told us:

"The management are claiming they have made an offer of a 15% pay rise, but no formal offer has been made".

However, it's not the money aspect of the negotiations that is the cause of the strike. It's the conditions attached by the bosses, Nexus, or rather the conditions they expect the drivers to give up, that's the main issue. Chris told us:

"Nexus wants us to give maximum

flexibility over our rest days. They could be changed or cancelled at short notice to provide cover for the likes of special events, introduction of new rolling stock, etc.

"This would destroy any work/life balance and make it impossible to plan ahead for holidays, childcare, etc. Whatever increase we get and more would be swallowed up by increased childcare costs alone."

The anger and determination of the drivers is shown by the fact that the vote for strike action was 100%.

RMT regional organiser, Micky Thompson, in the local press, stated: "Do you think I'm mad enough to reject a 15% pay increase on behalf of my members? This is not a pay award, it is self-financed scheme in which our terms and conditions are being traded to generate a return."

The Socialist Party offers full support to the RMT drivers on the metro and other RMT members taking action in disputes around the country at this time.

South Western Railway



RMT members on South Western Railway, on strike throughout December, continued with solid picket lines over Christmas and the New Year. The union now has to reballot due to the Tory anti-union laws but will continue the fight in 2020 photo Rob Williams

Carmarthenshire Council concedes to striking winter gritters' demands

Mark Evans
Unison Carmarthenshire branch secretary

Plaid Cymru-led Carmarthenshire Council has backed down in the face of determined industrial action by winter gritters. One of the placards produced by the workers' Unison union branch for the picket lines summed it up when it said: "Dashing through the snow, with a 1,000k to go. Don't you think it fitting, we are paid for winter gritting?"

Originally the employer, when talks started, wanted winter gritting to be contractual and employees only paid their hourly rate. The latest offer made by management on 19 December after two days of strike action offers a substantial retainer and meets virtually all our members' demands.

We can't give further details until our members get it first. Despite Plaid Cymru councillors' claims to the contrary, the industrial action organised by GMB and Unison unions and supported by Unite was the result of the council making an insulting 'final offer' - ending the talks and refusing to go to conciliation service Acas. As a result all three unions balloted our members

and all three passed the threshold with Unison hitting 100% in favour of strike action and action short of strike action.

When the council became aware of the ballot results another final offer of £105-a-week retainer was made. This was not sufficient to prevent industrial action although we did agree to conciliation talks at Acas.

The pickets that were organised at all four council depots in Carmarthenshire were well attended (about a third of the workforce turned out) in atrocious weather. Intimidation from management didn't work and the employer was forced to make another 'final offer' at the talks before making yet another improved offer and conceding most of our demands.

We think our members will vote to accept this offer and it is down to their action that the council has capitulated. Also very important was that all three unions GMB, Unison and Unite worked together to win this important victory.

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Anti-academy strikes in Newham, east London

Ian Pattison
East London Socialist Party

Members of the National Education Union (NEU) at St Angela's and St Michael's Catholic schools in Newham, east London, were on strike on 11 December against being forced into becoming privately run academies.

There's no evidence that academies improve schools. And they have been used to worsen terms and conditions for education workers.

The striking workers had a meeting with a wealth of experience in the room, including joint Newham NEU branch secretary and Socialist Party member Louise Cuffaro. Louise helped lead the campaign that blocked the academisation of Avenue primary school in 2018.

Parents' support was hugely important at Avenue. But it was strike action by staff that made the difference. They balloted for action as soon as they caught wind of academisation.

Socialist Party member Niall Mulholland addressed the 11 December striking teachers' meeting. He described how he helped lead a parents' campaign

in support of striking teachers at Stratford Academy, also in Newham, in 2012. That strike beat 33% pay cuts.

Louise pointed out that previous teachers' and parents' action pressurised Newham's Labour council to oppose academisation. The council should immediately intervene to help stop academisation.

The diocese must withdraw its attempt to force schools into joining the multi-academy trust and the schools' governors must abandon the academisation drive. If they don't, five more days of strikes are planned.

Join the fightback
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WHAT NEXT AFTER THE GENERAL ELECTION, FOR PCS AND THE LEFT

Marion Lloyd
PCS BEIS group president and national executive committee member (personal capacity)

Preparing the PCS civil servants' union to withstand the attacks of the new Tory government is urgent. Equally important is the role our union can play in ensuring the whole trade union movement responds to the coming attacks.

Johnson has spoken of being a "one-nation conservative" but in the same breath launched an attack on the right of rail workers to strike.

This, combined with the recent brutal anti-democratic court rulings against the postal workers' union, the CWU, shows the real face of Johnson's Tory government.

If the trade union movement fights with a strategy that unites workers across unions then Johnson's attacks can be defeated. In 1987 Margaret Thatcher had a majority of 147. Within 12 months the campaign of mass non-payment against the poll tax began and led to her resignation just a few years later.

Today's Tory party is bitterly divided, and Johnson was only able to win by linking Brexit with promises to invest in health, housing and education and falsely claiming he is standing up for 'the people'.

The road to Brexit is fraught with dangers for big business and the Tories. It is entirely possible that this will cause huge political problems for the government. If arrangements for a capitalist Brexit trash the economy, all the other promises on taxes and spending will become impossible to deliver. The worst estimates say that a 'no deal' exit could cause twice the damage of the banking crash.

False promises

Johnson's false promises will become apparent very quickly and provoke a response which the Tories didn't anticipate. The relevance of the anti-austerity agenda promoted by Jeremy Corbyn will be back in the minds of working people.

The trade union movement must prepare now. PCS should demand the Trade Union Congress (TUC) call an urgent 'council of war' to plan the fight back against Johnson's attacks - including demands for socialist policies and immediate support for PCS, education, postal and rail workers currently in dispute.

If the TUC doesn't act, then PCS must meet with like-minded unions to organise an effective and quick response.

For PCS the battle lines are now being drawn with Johnson, aided and abetted by his side-kick, the unelected, unaccountable Dominic Cummings, planning their overhaul of Whitehall which will impact all



photo Senan



BEIS workers in London won their strike against low pay in 2019 photo Paula Mitchell

our members and the communities we serve. Let's not forget it was Cummings who lectured that a permanent civil service belongs in the history books!

The priorities for PCS members are already set. Fair pay, a return to national bargaining, investment in the key services we provide and an end to office closures, job losses and pension cuts. In short this means a fight to preserve a permanent, properly trained and rewarded civil service. We must also step up our campaigning to stop climate change.

The PCS Broad Left Network will have a vital part to play in the struggles ahead. We must hold the current PCS leadership to account. The 9,278 members that voted for me in the recent union general secretary election showed a tremendous level of support for the Broad Left Network and our programme.

The PCS national executive committee must reflect these members'

and key activists' views, as well as the 5,059 who voted for Bev Laidlaw.

We want:

- A return to a member-led union
- A joined-up strategy to rebuild PCS which links bargaining to organising
- A coordinated fight back against office closures to save jobs, with PCS groups and national branches fully consulted
- Lay structures (the activists who are PCS members), and not full-time officials, directing the best use of union resources

The Broad Left Network will be standing candidates in the PCS 2020 elections with a programme to counter the Tory attacks and fighting to defend our members' interests. Attend the event we have called on the 18 January in Manchester. Join us in this struggle by joining and supporting the Broad Left Network.

- Search PCS Broad Left Network on Facebook to get involved

Socialist Party members across the country were out doing street stalls on the Saturday after the general election, with a special post-election supplement of the Socialist. See 'Stand firm for socialist policies against Tory attacks' at socialistparty.org.uk

■ Gateshead and Newcastle

We had two Socialist Party stalls on Tyneside - Gateshead then Newcastle. They were both phenomenal!

We were all a little apprehensive about what the mood would be like. But we were bold and audacious and people responded enthusiastically to our call to stand firm against the Tories.

We were helped by our Socialist Party post-election supplement - which lays out clearly what needs to be done next. We had one posted on the front of our stall and people were stopping to take a look at it.

In Newcastle, people were queuing up to join or find out more about us. I've never had my hand shaken so many times on a stall! We were thanked for arguing that Boris can be beaten.

A woman in Gateshead - who charged up to us to say she'd turn up her Labour Party card because she supported leaving the EU - thanked us for being out on the street fighting back.

We reminded people that in 1987 Thatcher had a majority and she thought she was invincible. But then she attempted to impose the rotten poll tax - and the so-called Iron Lady was reduced to iron filings, as a result of the mighty anti-poll tax campaign.

Boris also thinks he is invincible. He will come a cropper against the working class.

Now is the time to join the socialists! Join the fightback.
Elaine Brunskill

■ Birmingham

In Birmingham there was volatile anger going both ways, pro/anti-Corbyn or Boris and their stances on Brexit. But also lots of support for us and wanting to join up.

In some ways it was like a psychological warzone, but more optimism than pessimism.

The main message and sentiment was ordinary workers are not happy to wait for another five years for another election and are prepared to get organised here and now to join a fightback against Tory austerity.

Places like Erdington, Northfield, Castle Vale, etc, can't be abandoned by the labour movement.

Kris O'Sullivan

■ Bristol

Our post-election Saturday stalls went well in Stroud and Bristol. I received a text from a young Socialist Party member, a worker in Barnstaple, telling me he'd signed up six friends to the Socialist Party.

Two join applications have come in from Plymouth, from workers who have decided it's time to come on board. Also a paramedic from Weymouth called me to say he wanted a membership card without delay. He got his wish.

There are lots of tasks to be undertaken in rebuilding the confidence of the left, but these signs all point to a realisation that the struggle must be waged

After the general election: Socialist Party members campaign on the streets

STANDING FIRM FOR SOCIALIST POLICIES AGAINST TORY ATTACKS



In Newcastle there were...



...queues to join the Socialist Party



Bristol



Stratford, east London

York

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differently next time. The fuel of Marxist ideas and solid organisational methods are indispensable foundations for success, politically and industrially.

Our post-election analysis was called "brilliant" by one supporter. Now the challenge is to turn these expressions of defiance into active socialists.

People who will rebuild the road to those alienated workers who voted Tory or opted out altogether, strengthen the indissoluble links we already have in the trade union movement and in so doing move on towards our ultimate goal - the successful realisation of socialism.

Robin Clapp

■ Sheffield

Sheffield stayed Labour, even increased some majorities. Passing our stall were some triumphal Tories and a few saying "I've always voted Labour but...", and a few saying "you're a bit late" to get the Tories out.

But those that came up to the stall were gutted, fearful but defiant. Twelve bought a copy of the Socialist and a young woman filled in a card to join the Socialist Party.

Alistair Tice

■ Leicester

One guy donated £20 despite not being convinced, but he was glad to see someone fighting. The number of people around the Socialist Party and interested in getting involved has increased, including a student who stopped at our stall.

Tessa Warrington

■ Reading

We had a really enjoyable Socialist Party post-election campaign stall. Even gloating Tories admired us for being out so soon. We got new recruits, sold papers and received larger-than-normal donations.

John Gilman

■ Portsmouth

Socialist Party members joined the Portsmouth trade union council rally in support of the striking guards on South West Railway. It's high in Johnson's sights to ban strikes on the railways, these fighters in the RMT union are in the frontline.

Any attack on trade union rights must be met with the full force of the trade unions' six million members - far more powerful than the handful of Tory MPs and their billionaire friends.

■ York

In York we had support from NHS staff, including an ambulance crew, taking time out to buy our paper and post-election bulletin.

Michael Johnson

■ Halifax

A very positive stall in Halifax. There were a few negative comments, but lots of people were worried about the NHS and up for a fight. Four filled in cards to join or receive more info and around ten bought copies of the post-election supplement of the Socialist.

■ East London

Whatever blows the bosses and their politicians land, the Marxists are always straight back out, contradicting the capitalist media lies and building the working-class resistance. Many people

who stopped to chat with East London Socialist Party in Stratford saw immediately that Corbyn's anti-austerity policies are hugely popular, and blamed Labour's mistaken position against Brexit.

Some did mistakenly blame Corbyn's left policies for the defeat. There's definitely a fight on to make sure we stand firm in support of socialist policies.

Newham's schools are being privatised through academies. And the nearby King George A&E is threatened with closure. Anti-working-class policies that Boris supports.

Will we accept our schools sold off and NHS closed? No!

James Ivens and Ian Pattison

■ Walthamstow

Tory Austerity Britain out here today. Cash Converters have some poor person dressed as a teddy bear giving sweets out in the market. But we're here too - to talk to people about standing firm for socialist policies to fight Tory attacks.

■ Swansea

We sold 28 copies of our paper, two people said they would like to join us and there was a real spirit of resistance from everyone I spoke to, from a 15-year-old lad to a woman of 83. They were disappointed yes, but determined.

Gareth Bromhall

■ Nottingham

75 attended Nottingham and Mansfield trade union council protest. The Socialist Party was there, continuing to fight for socialist policies and against the Tories. Our election special was well received. We gave out lots of leaflets for our next Nottingham Socialist Party open meeting.

Clare Wilkins

■ Brighton

We've had two new members of Brighton Socialist Party in two days.

■ Southampton

A devastated nurse told us: "We have to fight!" We sold papers, collected donations and received contact details from people interested in joining.

■ Scotland

Several hundred, mainly young people came out to demonstrate against the Tories in Glasgow on the evening after the result. There was a pro-Scottish independence mood and also cheers for speeches that defended Corbyn.

Socialist Party Scotland member Ian Kerr - speaking as a Disabled People Against Cut's activist - got big cheers when he spoke of the need to support the postal workers and defend the right to strike as well as the need to build working-class action against cuts and Universal Credit.

Socialist Party Scotland's post-election leaflet calling for workers' action against Tory attacks, a mass mobilisation for a second independence referendum and an independent socialist Scotland was well received by hundreds

Lots of people signed our petitions, supporting a fightback against Johnson and the Tories. The mood was defiant - an anticipation of the movement that is coming.

£50,240 - a new fighting fund record

We smashed the fighting fund target in 2019, breaking all records for the most money raised in a single quarter at least since the millennium. The Socialist Party raised a magnificent £50,240 between October and December, ensuring that we go into 2020 on a real high.

We raised £140,896 in 2019 as a whole - the second highest annual total that we have achieved. This was due to the record finance appeal at Socialism 2019 and the tireless fundraising efforts of our members and supporters.

The Socialist Party has no rich backers. We rely entirely on the sacrifice of our members and the support of ordinary people - that's the only way that we can be an independent voice of the working class and for socialist ideas.

We raised money on campaign stalls, from appeals at public meetings during the general election, with fundraising events and by asking for donations.

	£ received	£ target	October to December 2019										Final chart
Northern	2,202	750											294%
Eastern	2,674	1,200											223%
Southern	3,334	1,600											208%
South West	3,749	1,800											208%
East Midlands	3,109	1,850											168%
West Midlands	4,121	2,600											159%
South East	1,187	750											158%
Wales	3,474	2,300											151%
London	6,825	6,100											112%
North West	2,339	2,100											111%
Yorkshire	2,662	3,300										81%	
Other	14,579	5,650											258%
TOTAL	50,254	30,000											168%

Help fund the fightback DONATE TODAY

visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate
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or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



Some of the ways the Socialist Party raised fighting fund

photo USAF/Justine Rho/CC



money painstakingly collected in loose change jars.

Branches which started using a card reader - for all those who wanted to buy a paper but had no cash - also found that they got more fighting fund in too.

Boris Johnson posed during the election as a politician able to represent the interests of the working class - he is of course nothing of the sort. 'Fat Cat Monday' comes just 33 hours into the new year - the day when FTSE 100 bosses will have earned the same as the average annual wage of a worker. Johnson will show himself to be what he is, a representative of those fat cats.

We have to maintain our determined approach to raising the finance necessary in 2020 to ensure we have the money and the



photo Shannon/CC



campaigning materials to raise high the banner of socialism - as we help to build opposition to Johnson's Tory government.

Can you help? Can you commit yourself to raising £3 fighting fund each week and selling 5 copies of the Socialist? If you aren't already a member of the Socialist Party, can you make a regular donation - and of course join us?

Go to socialistparty.org.uk/donate or contact the finance department, Socialist Party or Socialist paper on 020 8988 8777.

Walthamstow: Avenue of trees saved

Linda Taaffe
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

The people of Waltham Forest, east London received an early Christmas present. Waltham Forest council said that "the avenue of lime trees will remain" as part of revised plans for the mall and town square.

But unlike little children who are usually advised they'll only get presents if they are good, Save Our Square campaigners, supported by thousands, got here by being a thorn in the side of the councillors and the mall company.

For four years we have battled every step of the way. From petitions and letters, numerous events, a demonstration and publicity stunts, we have been out there taking the issue to local people, the trade unions and the local Labour Party. Our Tree Defenders were ready to swing into action at the drop of a hat.

The consultation in October demonstrated in no uncertain terms the depth of opposition of local people.

The council may even have got wind of our intention to use new environmental legislation to go for



legal action.

However, the campaign started with objections to the height of the proposed blocks plus the unaffordability of the flats, and to the loss of almost a third of the public realm to private property developers.

These issues remain. It is nothing short of daylight robbery!

Therefore we remain, and urge all campaigners to stand firm. The battle is not finished. Let's see what is in the revised plan.

Meanwhile, let's raise a glass to

Save Our Square, and all those campaigners who, in one way or another, over the years, demonstrated that they were willing to go to the end to save our beautiful lime trees.

■ **Read the full article online at socialistparty.org.uk**

BUILD UNION RESISTANCE TO TORY ATTACKS



photo Jane Ward

Rob Williams

Socialist Party industrial organiser

The mask has slipped - almost the first act of Boris Johnson's new government was to use the Queen's Speech to prepare new anti-trade union legislation. So much for Boris trying to portray himself as pro-worker. It's the same old story, or rather same old Tory!

This will be a government of and for the rich, against the working class. Like all Tories, Johnson recognises the power of the unions. With over six million members it is still potentially the most powerful force in society - as long as it is mobilised to fight.

The Tory government has got the unions in its sights, starting with the transport unions

and especially the RMT transport union.

The RMT has shown over the last three decades that militant trade unionism wins for workers and therefore attracts new members. Under the late general secretary Bob Crow, the union grew by 40% on this record of action. Such an increase across the union movement would see it rise by two-and-a-half million members!

Over the last few years, the RMT has been to the fore in fighting to stop train companies getting rid of guards. In December, RMT members on South Western Railway took 27 days of action in what is a strike over passenger safety.

As commuters usher in the New Year and are hit with yet another fares rise, they should see that their best protection for their income and safety are the rail workers and

their unions. Johnson, however, is firmly on the side of the privateer bosses, who have collectively put £4.4 billion into the pockets of their shareholders in the last ten years.

Right to strike threat

The right to strike is on the line. Royal Mail workers smashed the undemocratic voting thresholds in the most recent anti-union law, brought in by the discredited former Tory PM and fellow Old Etonian David Cameron.

The Trade Union Congress was found wanting then, with not one national demonstration being organised against the Trade Union Act 2016. Neither the postal workers' union, CWU, (currently in dispute with Royal Mail bosses over widespread management bullying, and attacks on workers' terms and conditions) or the RMT, or any other union, must be left to

fight alone as it will be yours next.

We can win and push back austerity, zero-hour contracts, attacks on pensions, and so on, if the union movement fights together.

The French bosses thought president Macron was invincible, yet the current strikes against his pension attacks is now the longest for 50 years - since the revolutionary general strike of 1968.

If we mobilise, we can take on Boris and defeat him and his Tory government.

■ **How the RMT can halt Johnson's anti-union bill. RMT executive member Jared Wood writes in the Socialist - see page 4**

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