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# the Socialist

Issue 1095

16-22 July 2020

formerly **Militant**

# FIGHT FOR SAFETY

# STOP THE JOBS MASSACRE



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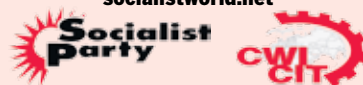
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." Karl Marx

Workers and young people need planning for jobs, not handouts for bosses



photo Jennifer Zima/USA/CC

JOSH ASKER SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Like every aspect of the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Rishi Sunak's "plan for jobs" is more headline than substance, and doomed to fail in its stated aims.

The Tory chancellor's summer statement set "a clear goal: to protect, support and create jobs." The very next day, Boots and John Lewis announced thousands of redundancies. In fact, almost daily, news arrives of thousands more job losses from almost every sector of the economy.

The statement represents the government's strategy for life beyond furlough. The 'job retention scheme' has paid 80% of 8.9 million workers' wages from government funds but is being wound down from July, and ended in October.

At its peak, the scheme has cost £14 billion a month, which the Tories judge to be too expensive for British capitalism to continue to fund. But it's clear that many bosses are preparing to respond to the end of the scheme by sacking thousands more workers.

So, in a feeble attempt to encourage

companies to keep staff on, Sunak plans to give employers a one-off £1,000 'job retention bonus' for each formerly furloughed employee who hasn't been sacked by the end of January.

In reality, for many big companies this will be yet another government subsidy - paying them to keep on workers they would have done anyway without the 'bonus'. This on top of the hundreds of billions already doled out to companies and owners who have spent the last period swimming in profit and dishing out huge dividends to shareholders.

For other companies, faced with a shrinking market and profit margins, £1,000 represents a tiny, shrivelled-up carrot, dangled a long way in the distance, and will do little to encourage them to retain workers.

The furlough scheme should be extended for those small companies that are genuinely struggling, but only after their financial books have been opened to inspection by workers and the trade unions. Large companies threatening redundancies and closures should be taken into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management - with compensation paid only on the

basis of proven need. If the public is paying to keep big businesses afloat, then the public should own them!

Youth 'Kickstart Scheme': real jobs, not workfare!

Youth unemployment is set to more than double this year, likely rising to over a million workers under the age of 24. The Tories' 'strategy' to address this has echoes of the 'workfare' schemes introduced by the Con-Dem government after 2010.

This time, the 'Kickstart Scheme' will fund six-month 'work placements', paying the pitiful youth minimum wage rates, for 25 hours a week. The Tories say these must not replace existing workers, but only the trade unions can really ensure that unscrupulous employers do not lay off staff today to replace them with super-exploited young people tomorrow.

The trade unions must prepare now to fight. There should be no compulsion for young workers to enrol on the Kickstart Scheme; the placements must provide real training, paid the union-agreed rates for the job, with the guarantee of a permanent full-time job at the end.

Sunak's plans are doomed to fail, partly because the funding falls a

long way short of what is needed given the scale of the crisis that faces the economy. But primarily because it is based upon a capitalist system now in a permanent state of crisis.

The Covid-19 pandemic, together with the previous economic crisis, have shown that the market cannot organise the provision of what we need. Blind competition for the private profit of the rich must be replaced with conscious planning of the economy.

A real plan to save jobs and prevent all the devastating effects of economic crisis, including a massive programme of socially useful job creation, needs to be a socialist one. This means nationalising the banks and top 150 companies that control the big majority of Britain's economy, under democratic workers' control and management.

A socialist government would lay the basis for the working class to democratically organise the economy as the only way to ensure full employment and a good standard of living for all. Spending and production could then be directed not on the basis of aiding competing bosses in seeking profit, but on the basis of a plan to meet the needs of society.

SOCIALISM

Graphic for Socialism 2020 featuring a target, a rainbow flag, and a crowd. Text: A SOCIALIST FORUM OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE OVER FOUR DAYS 20-23 November 2020. Sign up now! This will be an online event - but if the opportunity to have in-person meetings arises you can decide to upgrade your ticket or keep a virtual pass. Agenda, tickets, info: socialism2020.net. Hosted by Socialist Party.

Socialism 2020 - Ideas to change the world

20-23 November

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE SOCIALISM 2020 ORGANISER

The need to discuss ideas to change the world is more pressing than ever. Each year the Socialist Party organises a major public weekend event to debate socialist ideas. Around a thousand people normally attend the workshops and rallies. We cannot allow the current Covid restrictions to stop that happening. So we have gone online.

The Black Lives Matter protests have brought the issue of racism to the fore - but how can it be ended? Malcolm X said you can't have capitalism without racism. Can capitalism be reformed? Or do we need to replace it? How? With what? Who will do it?

Why should workers and young

people have to pay for the corona and economic crises? But how do we make the fat cats pay? Are women being pushed back to the 1950s?

What does the end of the Corbyn era mean for the political participation of working-class people? The environmental time-bomb still ticks. What is the socialist solution? And what is socialism actually about?

The opportunities to meet in person are limited. But the questions are burning.

Going online means we have been able to address the most common complaint we get at Socialism - that time limits mean people can only attend three workshops. This year everyone with a ticket for the whole event can attend seven discussions over the course of the four days if they wish. Or you can buy a bundle of three workshops - or just attend a single workshop for only £1!

Who should attend? Young people, whose future capitalist crisis puts in jeopardy. Campaigners in defence of jobs, conditions and public services. Trade unionists organising for fighting trade unions. Unless you're a member of the 0.001% you probably have a reason to want to change the world - so get a ticket for this event.

Of course, Socialism 2020 won't be the same as previous events - the chats over coffee, putting faces to names, perusing the extensive bookshop - all of this will not be possible. However, if the opportunity to have in-person meetings arises, you can decide to upgrade your ticket or keep a virtual pass. But, in the end, the most important part of the Socialism weekends is the chance to discuss with other people who want to change the world as much as you do.

• See www.socialism2020.net for agenda, tickets, and other info.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
• No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
• Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
• Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

WORK AND INCOME

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

- Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
• 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 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.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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# Sexist dismissal of women's health: NHS NEEDS DEMOCRATIC CONTROL

MARY FINCH  
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Agonising pain, periods that last for a month, birth defects in every one of their children. These are just some of the serious health issues found by the Cumberlege Inquiry which were dismissed by doctors as "women's problems," the concerns of overbearing parents, or of those approaching the menopause.

The arrogant, deeply sexist and unaccountable tops of the medical establishment refused to accept that the dangerous treatments they had prescribed were causing any negative side-effects. This was despite women telling doctors over and over that they were.

Sadly, this won't come as a surprise to most women. Almost all of us have experienced it at one time or another. And the issues covered in the Cumberlege Inquiry - vaginal mesh causing severe pain, and hormonal pregnancy tests and epilepsy treatments which seemed to lead to birth defects - are only the tip of the iceberg.

It still takes an average of seven years to be diagnosed with endometriosis, for example, because so many doctors just don't believe the pain is as bad as women say it is. Millions of women suffer from this common and excruciating condition.

When I went to A&E last year after having abdominal pain so severe that I couldn't move or speak for 45

minutes, the doctor who examined me poked my stomach for two minutes and then told me to go home and wait it out. I had an ultrasound scan a few months later which found a huge 12cm cyst on my left ovary.

Then there is the 'husband stitch' - where vaginal tears from childbirth are sewn up with extra stitches to 'tighten' the vagina and, theoretically, increase sexual pleasure for male partners.

This is often described as a myth or an old wives' tale. But there are a myriad of stories from women suffering severe pain afterwards - and in some cases, actually being told by nurses they had been stitched too tight.

## Impossible conditions

Understaffing and overwork - caused by austerity and privatisation - are major factors too. Most health workers are doing their best in impossible conditions. But deep-rooted sexism in the medical establishment and in wider society is putting women's health and even our lives at disproportionate risk - the inquiry clearly shows that.

It's also a brutal demonstration of what happens when you allow big business to put profit above health. Schering, now part of Bayer, was the company behind the hormonal pregnancy test Primodos which is linked to birth defects. They still refuse to acknowledge the connection.

Bayer also settled over 19,000 lawsuits from women who suffered



Serious health issues were dismissed by doctors as "women's problems"

blood clots, heart attacks and strokes after taking its birth control pill Yaz. These are just two of countless examples of big pharmaceutical companies cutting corners in the pursuit of profit.

The Socialist Party demands justice for all women affected by these issues, who have been belittled

and ignored and forced to endure life-changing consequences as a result. We need a healthcare system run under the elected control of both workers and service users, to ensure women - and all people - are listened to and given proper healthcare.

We can't trust big business to keep

us safe. The coronavirus pandemic has shown the urgent need for a fully publicly funded, democratically controlled NHS. And the Cumberlege Inquiry is a brutal demonstration of how healthcare, and society as a whole, needs to be completely overhauled to root out sexism. That requires socialist change.



Over 3 billion litres of water is lost per day through leaks PHOTO JIM LINWOOD/CC

## Water shortage warning: nationalise now!

ROGER BANNISTER  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has expressed concern that parts of England could run out of water within 20 years. This seems a crazy situation - especially to those of us living in the North West, where water falls freely out of the sky on an all-too-frequent basis!

And crazy it is, because it is the crazy logic of capitalism that created it. Prior to 1989, water and sewage were the responsibility of ten publicly owned regional water authorities. But Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher had them in her sights for privatisation.

She started by curtailing the ability of water authorities to borrow money. This meant they were unable to maintain infrastructure - much of which dated back to the 19th century, and was in dire need of renewal.

Thatcher then posed privatisation as the 'only' way to guarantee sufficient investment. Her government sold off the regional water authorities in 1989. Since 1991, they have paid out £57 billion in dividends, funded

by £48 billion in debt, which could have gone on infrastructure.

Instead of renewing the system, the new capitalist owners pursued asset-stripping to make a fast buck for shareholders. By 2006, they had sold off reservoirs to the value of around £500 million, most of them drained to make way for housing developments.

Thames Water, responsible for the rapidly expanding Greater London conurbation, sold off 24 Severn Trent Water in the industrial Midlands sold off 12 in 2011, and a further five in 2016.

## Attacks on workers

At the same time, water companies embarked on a process of reducing pay and conditions for their workers. Often they introduced a two-tier workforce, where new employees were hired on worse conditions than those transferred from the old regional water authorities.

Meanwhile, water charges steadily increased. They are now over 40% higher than their pre-privatisation levels.

As well as drastically reducing

storage capacity, little action was taken to upgrade the Victorian system, which was, and still is, in a state of degeneration.

So today, 20% of the water in the supply infrastructure - over 3 billion litres - leaks out on a daily basis! And the nine private water firms released raw sewage into rivers 200,000 times last year.

Rather than deal with this situation, the water companies are looking elsewhere to get water. From rivers, and in particular in the south of England, from chalk streams.

If they are allowed to do this, it would be at the cost of disaster for wildlife habitats, and possibly agriculture, which often relies on rivers and streams for irrigation.

Although the Labour Party officially has a policy of renationalising water, Sir Keir the Silent has made no pronouncement on this scandalous situation. That is not good enough.

Water should be renationalised as a matter of urgency, under the elected control of water workers and users, with no compensation to the fat cats who have brought the industry to the brink of disaster.

## Lockdown Leicester: trade unionists and parents fight for safety

SIMON ROBINSON  
PRESIDENT, LEICESTER NEU (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Trade unionists, parents and campaigners across Leicester are organising a campaign to defend safety and workers' rights in the pandemic-hit city.

At a meeting of Leicester District National Education Union (NEU) on Wednesday 1 July, Socialist Party members successfully proposed a motion describing the conditions which led to the Leicester lockdown being imposed by the government (see 'End the scandal of sweatshop labour in lockdown Leicester' at socialistparty.org.uk).

The motion called on Leicester NEU to organise "a joint union and parent Covid defence campaign to support workers defending their rights to a safe workplace. The NEU to coordinate with the Safety First parents', carers' and students' group, and other unions."

An online meeting was called for Saturday 11 July, attended by members from at least eight different unions and campaign groups, and supported by Leicester and District Trades Council, which coordinates across unions in the area. Union activists and local campaigners were invited to discuss the Leicester lockdown, and how we can organise together to resist the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on workers in Leicester.

I was proud to represent Leicester NEU, and was able to describe the partial successes we had in preventing a rush to reopen schools in June, using the NEU's 'five tests' as a key bargaining tool.

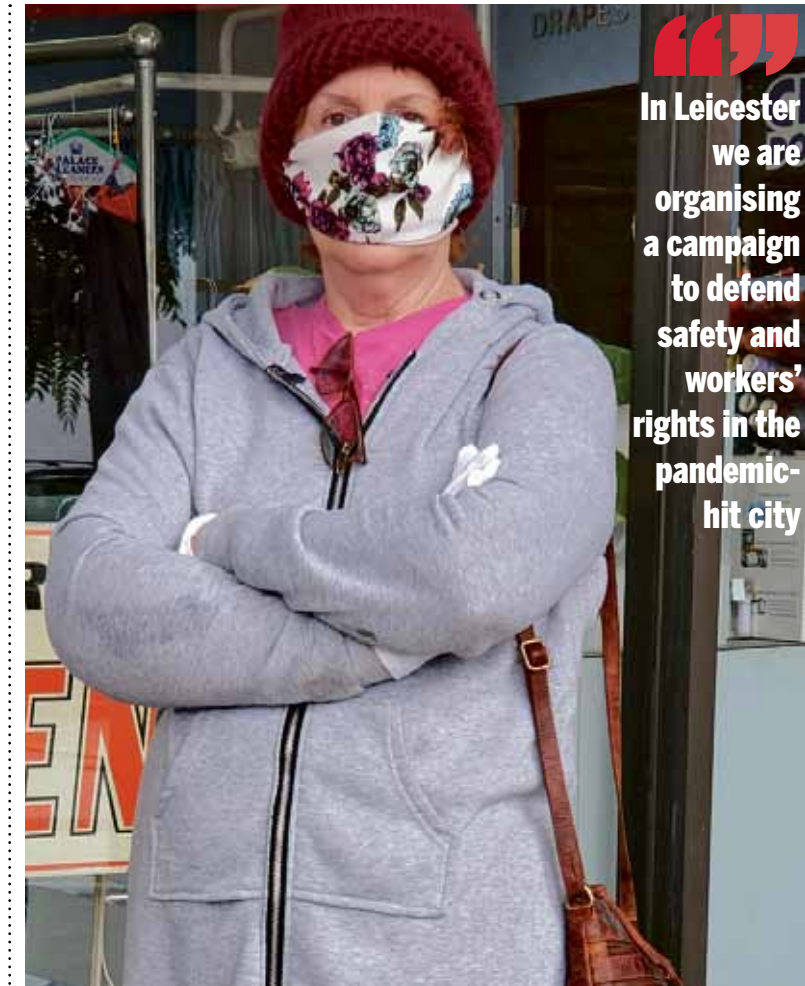
However, it was the subsequent outbreaks in schools during June, many in east Leicester, that led Leicester NEU to call for a temporary closure of all schools while the outbreak was investigated.

This call was ignored by the city mayor, Labour's Peter Soulsby, and the local public health officials, until the government declared the current lockdown.

Socialist Party member Lindsey Morgan, from the Safety First campaign group, described how it had linked up with Leicester NEU to raise awareness of the five tests, and to put pressure on headteachers and the council. The campaign is calling on heads and academy trusts to not fine parents for non-attendance in September, and for local councillors and MPs to back that demand.

Representatives from the BFAU union spoke of their campaign to unionise workers in many of the 1,500 sweatshop textile factories in east Leicester. Many of these workers are earning between £2 and £3 an hour in unsafe conditions.

Workers are being intimidated by bosses and immigration officials to prevent them speaking to unions and campaigners. BFAU plans a



In Leicester we are organising a campaign to defend safety and workers' rights in the pandemic-hit city

door-to-door leaflet campaign to organise these workers.

National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) speaker Moe, a bus driver and Unite union safety rep, described how he had helped organise bus workers in London to gain vital safety measures. This was despite intimidation from bosses, and lack of support from Labour. He explained how the NSSN, alongside the local trades council, could play an important role in organising solidarity work in Leicester.

A representative from the 'Modern Slavery - This Must Stop' campaign, explained that up to 10,000 workers could be victims of modern-day slavery in Leicester. The campaign has worked hard to highlight this over years.

The meeting discussed how the union movement in Leicester can coordinate to unionise and defend workers in the textile industry, and how the NEU, parents and students can fight for a safe return to schools later this summer.

## Defend free TV licences for pensioners!

KEITH DICKINSON  
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The BBC has announced it will be knocking on pensioners' doors to collect £157.50 from 1 August, in pursuance of this Tory government's policy of withdrawing free TV licences for over-75s.

Most pensioners have worked all our lives creating the wealth now in the pockets of the billionaires who exploit the economy from their luxury yachts in some sunny climate. Tens of thousands of us have died in the pandemic, and millions are locked down fearing for our lives, with only the TV to give us an inkling of what's going on in the world outside.

It is clear that pensioners are pawns in this government's vicious campaign. Free licences for over-75s were introduced in 1999, with the government to pay the bill.

In 2015, Tory chancellor George Osborne passed responsibility for the costs onto the BBC from 2018. The corporation's bosses accepted this, providing they could increase everyone's licence fees in line with inflation from 2020.



Last year, the BBC announced the concession would be scrapped, except for those receiving pension credit benefits. Currently, 600,000 of those entitled don't claim. And BBC

director of policy Clare Sumner immediately caused uproar, stating that "outreach" workers from infamous outsourcer Capita would visit pensioners at home to ensure we pay up!

This is part of the Tories' ideological determination to discredit public broadcasting - despite the BBC's value to capitalism as a state propaganda machine, proven once again during the coronavirus outbreak. At the same time, they want to whip the BBC even further to the right, and commercialise more of its profitable sections for their money-grubbing friends.

The Tories are even prepared to set a precedent of decriminalising non-payment of what is, in effect, a regressive tax. According to 'Culture Secretary' Oliver Dowden, they fear "it will be an own goal of epic proportions to start hauling people over 75 in front of the courts."

If the Tories themselves fear this issue blowing up, where are the trade union and Labour leaders? They should demand no fees for pensioners as a minimum. Really we need to end the licence fee for all, to be replaced with funding from general taxation - and genuine democratic control of the media.

● See also 'This is the BBC: fight the cuts - and the capitalist media' at socialistparty.org.uk

## Hillingdon Hospital corona outbreak: workforce not to blame



WALLY KENNEDY  
HILLINGDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A coronavirus outbreak led to the self-isolation of up to 70 staff members at Hillingdon Hospital, west London, and its closure to admissions on Tuesday 7 July. Management is blaming staff.

But back in April, Hillingdon healthcare assistant Tracy Brennan had self-isolated for 14 days following her daughter's Covid-19 symptoms, and returned to work wearing a mask. She was instructed by hospital management, led by Chief Executive Sarah Tedford, to remove the mask.

Following discussions, Tracy resigned her post, angrily declaring that "I am not allowed to wear proper PPE to safeguard the patients, visitors and myself." Now, unbelievably, the same Sarah Tedford blames staff for "not wearing appropriate masks and you are not adhering to social distancing!"

The hospital only began to provide masks and sanitisers for general staff and public use this month, in anticipation of a spike in infection rates. Hillingdon is the borough with the highest infection rate in London, having increased from 6.9 to 8.2 per thousand in the week preceding 5 July.

Hospital workers should elect workplace committees to control health and safety rather than leaving it in the hands of incompetent managers. The unions should lead a fight for all the PPE and safety measures necessary.

The wages and conditions of maintenance staff have also now come under attack in an attempt to impose cuts and changes without discussion. One worker reported: "Some union reps appear to be in bed with the management... and have been that way for a long time... but there may be changes this week."

All NHS and all care services must be brought back in-house and placed under the democratic control and management of workers and service users. Put an end to the dangerous and wasteful privatisation nonsense!



## SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNITE

Supporters of United Left, a group in general union Unite, is meeting virtually on 18 July for a hustings and online vote to select its candidate for the next Unite general secretary election. The election must take place by early 2022 at the latest to replace incumbent Len McCluskey.

Socialist Party members will take part in the hustings with a clear view of what is necessary for Unite in these unprecedented times.

We call on prospective candidates to declare themselves and debate their programme openly, in front of activists and members.

We believe that the United Left process has been inadequate and too rushed and the debate across the left in the union should continue beyond the weekend.

Those left officers who appear to have declared are assistant general secretaries Steve Turner and Howard Beckett, who will run off in the United Left hustings, and executive officer Sharon Graham.

In 2010, Len McCluskey was elected as the first general secretary of Unite after it was formed by the merger of the Transport and General Workers' Union and Amicus. He defeated the right-wing candidate Les Bayliss in what was seen as a victory for the left that offered a way forward for the new union.

The election took place in the aftermath of the great recession of 2008, and in the first few months of the Tory-led ConDem coalition. As Unite members voted in the election, David Cameron and George Osborne were announcing their austerity offensive, including the trebling of student tuition fees, which brought tens of thousands of students on to the streets.

The impending general secretary election will take place as a new, even graver crisis unfolds. The Covid-19 pandemic has put all trends in the union movement to the test. As with a war, many of the union leaders have succumbed to the 'national unity' pressure to lower their demands and stop action in the 'national interest'. This has also been reflected in the slowness of the unions to mobilise sufficiently when the Black Lives Matter movement broke out, being constrained by the lockdown.

But now we have clearly entered a new phase of the pandemic - an economic crisis with closures and mass redundancies threatened. This shows that the Tories and the bosses feel only a class unity against workers and their unions.

**Brutal assault**

Unite is the main union in British Airways facing a brutal assault by management, which is trying to seize this opportunity to smash the unions and their members' jobs and contracts.

To retreat under fire would threaten the future of the unions. The experience of coronavirus has already shown that workers have been attracted to the unions at this time, precisely because when your life and living are on the line, being organised is seen as the best defence. But to retain members, unions have to give a fighting lead.

The crisis can deepen the pessimism of some leaders, leading them to call for partnership with the Tory government and the employers as the only realistic solution, especially when a hurricane of job losses faces

# A FIGHTING PROGRAMME FOR UNITE



PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

them. But the crisis doesn't mean that it is impossible to fight, only that it must be on a far higher level - both industrially and politically. The starting point for the movement must be that workers cannot pay the price for this new phase of capitalist crisis.

The battle against the Tory cuts that were unleashed from 2010-12 found the union leaders totally unprepared for what was a full-frontal assault on the gains made by workers during the post-war period.

But the massive 750,000-strong Trade Union Congress demo of March 2011, and the public sector pensions strike in November of that year, when two million workers took action together in what was effectively a public sector general strike, showed the huge potential for struggle if a lead was given.

Cameron could have been defeated if the strike had been extended and continued, but the right-wing union leaders of the Trade Union Congress, Unison and GMB in particular, moved to end the action just as it had begun.

This emboldened the Tories to roll out huge cuts, particularly in local government. But here too, the Labour-affiliated unions failed to sufficiently campaign to put pressure on Labour councils to refuse to pass on Tory cuts, even during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

One of the exceptions to this was in the 2017 Unite binworkers' dispute in Birmingham. Union assistant general secretary and acting Unite

West Midlands regional secretary, Howard Beckett, went to the Trade Union Congress and Labour Party conferences to denounce cutting Labour councillors as being the same as Tories.

The need to fight back will be even more sharply posed in the next period, with council unions already forecasting a £10 billion funding shortfall.

Sharon Graham has also said, "We cannot willingly allow Labour politicians to heap austerity upon austerity. We should not turn a blind eye to Labour cuts. The excuse of a Labour cut being 'better' is just nonsense. We must do everything in our power to defend both our members and the services they provide. If this means taking on Labour Councils then so be it."

**Grangemouth**

Similarly, at Grangemouth in 2013, Unite was unprepared for the scale of action needed in the face of the brutal management of Ineos under the billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, one of Britain's richest men.

Five years before, the union had defeated Ineos's attempt to end the final salary pension scheme. When the company went back on the attack, Unite called strikes, which they backed with a leverage campaign. But Ratcliffe went nuclear by threatening a 'cold shutdown', which would have put the plant's future on the line.

Faced with this deadly threat,

without a clear answer from Unite's leadership, there wasn't the confidence to continue the action. This setback was seized upon by Ratcliffe to go after the union and its two leading convenors.

There are no guarantees in any struggle. But it would have been necessary to escalate the action by occupying at least part of the site, and then appealing for support to the union movement in Scotland and throughout the UK to put pressure on the Scottish government to nationalise the plant.

Such a militant industrial approach, combined with the demand that companies be taken into public ownership to defend jobs and communities, will be necessary in the economic crisis we are entering.

This Tory government has been forced against its will to intervene on an historic scale during the pandemic. But it will need militant action to force it to act when closures are posed. Such industrial action is the most effective leverage for workers.

The Grangemouth experience showed that the union needs to combine a militant industrial and political strategy. Under Len McCluskey, Unite has vastly increased its fighting capacity industrially, with no unofficial action ever repudiated by the leadership.

As part of preparing the union for the battles to come, it is necessary to strengthen the lay democracy in the union. This should include extending

the election of officers beyond just that of the general secretary, alongside moving to an annual policy conference.

The union under McCluskey also played a key role in supporting Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party. Actually, the Blairites saw winning the previous union general secretary election in 2017 as a key part of their plan to seize back control of Labour, backing the candidacy of Gerard Coyne.

The Socialist Party gave critical support to Len McCluskey as his election victory, by a narrow margin, pushed back the right-wing in Labour. In the aftermath of Starmer's victory, it is entirely possible that the Blairites will again stand a candidate for Unite general secretary to seek to consolidate their position in Labour, which should be a consideration for prospective left candidates on a fighting programme.

But the four and a half years of Corbyn's leadership were ultimately a missed opportunity to transform Labour into a party that could be a political vehicle for working-class people. This would have needed the reversal of the undemocratic Blairite measures that crucially weakened the collective power of the unions in the party.

Also, despite Unite policy for mandatory reselection of MPs - due to a motion moved by a Socialist Party member at the union's 2016 policy conference - it wasn't implemented in the party. The Blairites kept their grip on the Parliamentary Labour Party, and used it to sabotage Corbyn's leadership.

These mistakes helped lead to the election of Starmer, which was a defeat for the Labour left, and a victory for the capitalist establishment in their project to restore Labour as a reliable vehicle for them. The pandemic has shown all too clearly that this is vital for the capitalists, as Johnson's government lurches from one crisis to another.

**Debate**

This opens up a debate within the unions, and especially Unite, about political representation for workers. We believe that the unions need to seriously discuss all possibilities, including new formations that can bring together socialist, anti-austerity and anti-capitalist forces across the labour movement.

We recognise, however, that there are those, who believe that the fight cannot go beyond the confines of the Labour Party.

But what must unite the left within and outside Labour is an industrial and political challenge to pro-capitalist, pro-austerity forces standing in Labour's colours. This starts with refusing to cover for the likes of London Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan and Labour councils which take on their workforces by implementing Tory cuts.

A new period of brutal class conflict is opening up in front of our eyes as an economic crisis unfolds that could be deeper than anything seen since the interwar years. That was a tumultuous time, when the fundamental ability and capacity of the unions to defend workers was on the line.

To be able to face up to this harsh reality, and draw the conclusions for hardening the union, is a necessity for its reps, members and officers for the battles now, and those to come.



# PCS executive majority cancels union democracy

DAVE SEMPLE,  
PCS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

At its meeting on 8 July, the controlling majority of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) National Executive Committee rejected moves to resume this year's union elections. The proposal from the Broad Left Network - the left group in PCS supported by Socialist Party members - would have restarted the elections in August.

PCS holds elections annually for president, vice-presidents and national executive committee. But arrangements for the 2020 elections were suspended part-way through March this year.

The elections, which are by postal ballot, could have gone ahead at that time. Socialist Party members argued in favour of this and suggested extending the ballot period by a month to allow for postal delays during the pandemic.

The decision to suspend the elections was taken by the Left Unity (Socialist View/SWP) majority bloc on the executive, which argued it was impractical to hold ballots during the pandemic, but said it would keep the situation 'under review'.

Astonishingly, Left Unity's justification for now entirely cancelling the elections ranged from 'there are many different ways of engaging with members other than elections'



## Socialist Party members argued for extending the ballot period by a month to allow for postal delays

to 'members are not knocking at our door demanding elections'!

The executive's decision to keep itself in office without elections is as shameful as it is unsurprising. Its failure on the 2020 pay campaign; the refusal to lead a collective response to the health and safety threats faced by members during the Covid pandemic; and the continued drop in union membership, is a record not easy to defend. Why would it want elections!

At the same executive meeting, the Left Unity majority rejected a Broad Left Network amendment to a Trade Union Congress motion: "To defend jobs and communities [by taking] into public ownership companies that threaten mass redundancies and closures." Rejecting such a basic workers' demand exposes the hollowness of any claim they might have to be a 'left campaigning organisation'.

Join the Broad Left Network and fight for a leadership that will lead!

# Tower Hamlets council workers strike back

HUGO PIERRE  
UNISON NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Unison union members working for Tower Hamlets Labour-run council were sacked on 6 July, while taking their second day of branch-wide strike action, and re-engaged on worse terms and conditions.

The right-wing Labour mayor, John Biggs, is forcing changes to long-standing agreements with the council's trade unions.

The first tranche of strikes on 3, 6 and 7 July were very well supported by lively and upbeat picket lines, especially as a lot of council staff were working from home. Masks, social distancing and limits on material that could be handed out, didn't stop strikers from getting a lot of support from the public passing by. A lot of car drivers tooted their horns in support.

On one picket line, bin workers, Unite union members, refused to cross picket lines. They had recently taken strike action themselves against non-payment of wages against their employer, Veolia. Now they have been taken back in-house by the council, and could be affected by the new contract in the future.

Mayor Biggs, received a petition from hundreds of Labour Party members locally calling on him to back off implementing the proposals. Instead of organising a democratic debate among party members, who would then be allowed to decide what the mayor should do, he has desperately written to them with 'data manipulation, obstruction and obfuscation' to defend his position.

The council has faced a halving of its government funding since 2010 as part of Tory austerity. The mayor has chosen to abandon leading any fight against these cuts. He has even perversely used millions of pounds the council has saved in reserves over the last few years to paper over cracks in funding rather than use them boldly to defend services while building a mass campaign to fight for the lost millions.

Tower Hamlets desperately needs this. It is the London borough with the highest rates of child poverty, despite having the mega-rich Canary Wharf banks and finance centre sited within its boundaries.

Instead, Biggs plans to make £2 million savings each year from the new employment contracts.

The strikers are incensed that during the Covid-19 pandemic the council has referred to them as "heroes" and "key workers" only to be re-employed on inferior terms and conditions.

• Messages of support to [john.mcloughlin@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:john.mcloughlin@towerhamlets.gov.uk).



Striking Unison members PHOTO HUGO PIERRE



PHOTO ELAINE BRUNSKILL

# 'Hands off our pensions!' demand angry Nissan workers

ELAINE BRUNSKILL  
TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

Around 500 Nissan workers joined a march and rally (pictured above) in opposition to plans to close their final pension scheme. The rally took place at the main gate of Nissan's Sunderland plant.

Nissan is closing the existing defined benefit (or 'final salary') pension scheme, replacing it with an inferior defined contribution scheme, impacting 2,000 workers

This is the first time in the plant's 33-year history that any form of protest has happened, and speaking to workers it is clear that if Nissan

doesn't back down with this attack on workers' pensions, it will undoubtedly lead to more militant trade union action.

Steve Bush, Unite national officer, told us that Nissan management had taken an "arrogant stance" which was unacceptable. He went on to say he was really pleased with the turnout of the protest, which would put the union in a good position to negotiate with Nissan management.

Workers told us that Nissan had recently put out a DVD explaining the strength of Nissan in Sunderland was its workforce and team spirit - yet this is how Nissan wants to repay their workforce!

Another said how the company used to listen to their workers. They used to have on-site meetings, where employees could put questions to their bosses.

Now they have televised statements or emails sent out to them - Nissan are no longer interested in having a dialogue.

It was good to see a banner at the protest "Stay Strong Barcelona", in reference to the Nissan plant in Spain which is due to close.

We spoke to a number of workers who expressed the view that the attack on Spanish Nissan workers was an attack on all, and a wake-up call for many workers at the Sunderland

plant who had once regarded Nissan as a company that looked after its workforce.

International workers' solidarity is important as the attack on the Sunderland pension scheme is one part of Nissan's £2.3 billion cuts worldwide.

Nissan, in alliance with Renault, is using the Covid crisis as cover to cut jobs, intensify work, reduce capacity and pit workers against each other in the name of 'efficiency'.

Nissan workers on the protest were hopeful that this protest would be a wake-up call for Nissan, but are clearly prepared to step up the action if protesting is not enough.

# Ratcliffe rats on Bridgend workers

Mega-corporation Ineos, owned by anti-union, multibillionaire James Ratcliffe, has reneged on its agreed investment in a 500-job 4x4 car plant in Bridgend, south Wales. The planned site was next to the doomed Ford Bridgend engine plant, soon to close with the loss of 1,700 jobs. It seems that Ineos has switched investment instead to a former Mercedes-Benz plant in France.

Last September, to much fanfare, Ineos said: "The decision to build in the UK is a significant expression of confidence in British manufacturing, which has always been at the heart of what Ineos stands for."

Having praised Ineos and sunk a considerable sum into the venture, the Welsh government is now left with an enormous omelette on its face.

The clear lesson is, 'you can't plan what you don't control, and you can't control what you don't own'. The trade unions must campaign to nationalise Ineos, under democratic workers' control and management.

Get all the latest union news...

[nationalshop](http://nationalshop.org)  
[stewardsnetwork](http://stewardsnetwork.org)  
SSN bulletin: [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)



## We need a socialist education programme

Even before the call for a 'new normal' in the aftermath of the coronavirus crisis, the UK education system has been crying out for change.

The Department for Education has said that "No child should be disadvantaged by the Covid-19 outbreak". But it is not the virus that has disadvantaged these children.

Education in the UK is class-based; headteachers in private schools have recognised the huge advantage that their students have over students in state-funded schools. Class sizes are so small in private schools that they haven't had to introduce social distancing measures - they have carried on as they are. What is good enough for the elite and for those who can afford it should be good enough for everyone.

Teachers try to make their subject engaging and meaningful. However, the reality is that what is demanded of students is often seen as abstract and irrelevant.

As it stands, the education system is a 'one-size-fits-all model', with insufficient flexibility to meet the needs of individuals who do not fit the model. In secondary schools, the mind-numbing rules and rituals that students have to follow every day are just a preparation for a life of adherence to more rules and subjugation. 'Student Voice' is tokenistic: it is patronising and gives the impression that what students have to say will make a real difference to what happens in schools.

The introduction of the new-style GCSEs in 2015, with the first examinations taking place in 2017, saw an increase in anxiety and depression among school students, because of

the increased emphasis on academic achievement. Most teachers believe that the focus on exams has become disproportionate to the overall wellbeing of student.

The cancellation of the GCSE (and A Level) examinations this year, because of the Covid-19 lockdown, meant that end-of-course outcomes of students rely solely on teacher assessment of evidence produced by students over the course of the year.

Adapting to the current crisis has shown what is possible. With more thought put into what students learn (and how they learn best), reflecting the real needs of communities locally and nationally, schools could become facilitators in organising learning, rather than providers. This change in emphasis could parallel socialist change in society.

Schools need to be more accountable to the communities they are there to serve: having elected headteachers will help to achieve this. The governing bodies of schools or the board of trustees of multi-academy trusts are a pale reflection of what could be achieved under direct control and management of schools by education workers, local authority representatives and representatives from the local community. The pay gap between the lowest and highest paid in the sector should be drastically reduced. This programme would make a real difference to the sector, opening up education to reflect the needs of society.

DAVID KAPLAN  
TEACHER

• See also 'Towards an anti-racist school curriculum' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)



# A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME FOR SCHOOLS

IN THE THIRD IN OUR 'NO GOING BACK' SERIES, THIS FEATURE CONSIDERS HOW SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS, AND WHAT KIND OF FUTURE SCHOOL SYSTEM WE NEED.



## Covid crisis exposes Tory hypocrisy

One of the most nauseating sights and sounds of the lockdown has been Tory politicians justifying their attempts to fully reopen schools. They have the barefaced cheek to argue that they are concerned that vulnerable children will be left at risk if schools don't open.

What hypocrites they are! Do they really think that school staff and everyone working with young people will forget the last ten years of austerity and the devastating impact that has had on the lives and life chances of young people? Do they think that we will forget the impact of millions of pounds worth of cuts to local authorities that have stripped away children's services to a bare minimum? Do they think we have forgotten the hundreds of young people with mental health problems, and their families left without support through Tory cuts to 'Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services'?

Labour and Tory critics of the Johnson government have cited the need to commandeer libraries and youth clubs for extra space to teach while observing social distancing. But, just like the failures over 'track and trace' systems in healthcare, these calls

Parents are doing their best for their children, but there are limits. For some parents, work means that they cannot be around to support their children with homework or even to make sure that they are safe.

A feature of the recent period has been young girls missing school because their families have to make a choice between food, paying for heating and buying sanitary products - so called 'period poverty'. Financial pressures on families bring other pressures. Family break up and even domestic violence have also been affected by Tory austerity. The number of children in care has skyrocketed in recent times.

Instead of the leaders of the labour movement, it took a Premier League football player to expose the reality facing working-class families under Tory austerity and welfare cuts. When Marcus Rashford wrote, "the system was not built for families like mine to succeed", his words reverberated out into society because they chimed with millions of working-class kids' lived experiences. The hypocrisy of Tory concern for vulnerable children was laid bare by their initial refusal to fund school dinners over the summer.

So the next time a Tory minister tries to pretend that they are concerned about vulnerable children, don't throw something at the TV in anger. Get active in the Socialist Party to get rid of the Tories and their rotten capitalist system that creates vulnerable children in the first place.

NANCY TAAFFE AND MICK WHALE

The Covid-19 crisis has shone a spotlight on the crisis in our education system, especially the early years and primary sector.

Children in the UK start more formal education earlier than in most other developed countries. Their class sizes are larger, and their classrooms are smaller. Huge funding cuts and staffing cuts all add to the problems.

Since the development of our modern schooling model, governments (including Labour) have completely failed to listen to education experts about what the requirements are for the building blocks for good child development. The valuable work on play in the curriculum, that was developed from the Plowden report in 1967, has still not been implemented.

We must ask ourselves why the mental health of our young people is at an all-time low? Testing and more testing saturates, distorts and 'infects' the curriculum. The continued pressure on the curriculum for more formal methods of teaching, especially at an early age, is toxic.

The opportunities for imaginative, play-based and creative activities are being squeezed out of the curriculum, disregarding how young children develop and what sort of experiences they need to harness before moving on.

I know schools where painting and creative activities are rare, teachers forced to concentrate on a more rigid curriculum which stultifies rather than invigorates children's enquiring minds.

## Child-centred not test-driven education

When I started teaching over 28 years ago, teachers worked together to create a curriculum that all children could relate to, using the local area and resources. We shared books not just isolated passages. Children worked in mixed-ability groups, getting extra support where needed.

We learnt about punctuation in context, but we encouraged children to discuss and use their imagination, to be excited about learning new things, and to not be afraid if they didn't get it right first time. Teachers were more trusted. We worked hard ensuring that the curriculum was designed for our children, not a 'one-size-fits-all'. Over time, the trust has been stripped away.

Teachers want their pupils to develop the skills and learning that will enable them to achieve, and to support them in that journey. The freedom to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of the pupil has been taken away from them.

For many working-class children, their experience of school is increasingly one of pressure. With over 4.2 million children living in poverty, schools should be a haven

- an opportunity to thrive and to feel valued as well as exploring and learning.

It is imperative that as, and when, children return to school, education be very different. We will need to step up the fight to develop a curriculum that is child centred instead of test driven.

JANE NELLIST  
COVENTRY NEU

### The Socialist Party says:

- Put safety and wellbeing first. National Education Union must stand firm on demanding the 'five tests' are met
- Invest in education. Reverse school cuts, reduce class sizes
- Value school staff. End performance pay, win national pay scales and workload limits for all
- End academies. Bring all schools, including private schools, under democratic local control
- For child-centred not test-driven education. End Sats test and league tables in England
- For an anti-racist curriculum that stresses the need for working-class unity

## September - no full return until it's safe

Boris Johnson has announced that schools in England will be re-opening "with full attendance" in September. This follows a sustained propaganda campaign from the media and pro-capitalist politicians designed to put pressure on schools to reopen as soon as possible.

But it will be impossible to run full capacity schools in a safe manner. It would mean either scrapping all social-distancing restrictions, against all independent scientific advice, or somehow finding more staff and infrastructure. The latter is impossible given the timeframe and clear lack of willingness from the government to properly fund education.

The battle for the safe reopening of schools is far from over. At the start of the pandemic, the National Education Union took a strong stance by setting out 'five tests' that need to be met before schools can return. These tests remain as relevant as ever, especially given the current lack of a functioning tracking and tracing system.

The National Education Union needs to make clear that it will not support any wider reopening in September that is based on unsafe conditions. Given the danger of a second wave in the autumn, it is essential that schools are closed as soon as a case of Covid-19 is found in the school community, to allow cleaning, testing and tracking to take place.

Schools have lost the funding that previously allowed for teaching assistants and support workers to help the most vulnerable, meaning the capacity to ensure these students have a carefully managed return to school does not exist. Cuts to council

services have often forced schools to play the role of social workers too, meaning they will be under immense pressure come September.

It seems likely that some form of 'blended learning' will be needed in September - balancing home learning with contact time in school. Teachers will need to be given the time and equipment to do this, and proper training on how to manage it effectively and safely. The government needs to ensure that disadvantaged students have access to laptops and internet at home, something they have already promised and not adequately delivered.

The government has suggested that schools should open over the summer to help students 'catch up'. Not only is this a breach of teachers' conditions, it will also damage the mental health of young people. Instead, the government should properly fund summer school provision that focuses on general wellbeing and learning through enjoyment - something that existed before the cuts.

Rather than spending money on privately run tuition, supply teachers that have desperately struggled for work over the lockdown should be employed directly through properly funded local authority pools.

When schools do safely return, we need a focus on student welfare and socialisation, not a high-pressured academic catch up and exam preparation. Sats tests should be scrapped and the curriculum suspended to allow teachers to focus on helping students readjust to a positive learning culture.

JAMES ELLIS  
TEACHER





# Will boosting the 'black pound' improve black workers' lives?



PHOTO SIR MAGNUS LUFFBRAINS

## A NORTH LONDON LABOUR PARTY MEMBER

The response of Haringey's 'Corbynista' council in north London to the mass Black Lives Matter movement has been to promote 'Black Pound Day'. This is when the Labour authority asks residents to shop at a black-owned business.

We are told that in this way we will "uplift black-owned enterprises and foster economic independence and empowerment in the black community." The council leadership explains: "We take the view that supporting the Black Lives Matter movement is not just about keeping black people alive, but is also about improving the lives that black people live."

The council is absolutely right that it is important to improve the lives that black people live. But it does not explain how it thinks shopping at black-owned businesses would improve the lives of the vast majority of black people, who do not own businesses.

The implication is that some version of 'trickle-down economics' means that increasing the wealth of black entrepreneurs increases the wealth of black people at every level of society. But the council's support of these businesses was not even made conditional on their staff being unionised, or paying the London Living Wage.



**Haringey's Black Pound Day initiative seems more like an attempt to divert the movement into 'safe' channels for capitalism**

Subsidies linked to mandatory trade union pay levels and conditions, regardless of race, would be better. And what would be most effective in improving the lives of far more black people is creating well-paid, secure jobs. And bringing the council's outsourced contractors back in-house and onto the London Living Wage. And improving the housing conditions on estates the council controls.

Instead, asking residents to buy from black-owned businesses is a tokenistic gesture. It costs the council nothing, and does not bring it into conflict with the Tory government or the profiteers who deliver many of the council's privatised services. Meanwhile, most workers have to make decisions about where to shop

based on what they can afford, not who owns it - and black workers are more likely to be low-paid.

The Black Lives Matter movement has brought hundreds of thousands of working-class youth onto the streets, demanding an end to oppression and a fundamental change in society. Socialist Party posters quoting Malcolm X - "you can't have capitalism without racism" - caught the mood on demonstrations.

Haringey's Black Pound Day initiative seems more like an attempt to divert the movement into 'safe' channels for capitalism - rather than proposing socialist policies for jobs, homes and services for all, and united working-class action to win them.

Labour councillors around the country have a record of trying to build a social base on local businesses, landlords and so on. This approach does nothing to improve the lives of the working-class majority, black or white.

The enthusiastic response to the Socialist Party's ideas on the powerful Black Lives Matter demonstrations shows the hunger for a real, working-class alternative. If Labour councillors are not prepared to lead a fight for working-class interests, including no-cuts budgets and socialist policies, they should stand aside for trade union and community-campaigner candidates who are.

# TV: Ross Kemp - Living with Forced Out Families Yet another housing scandal

## BASILDON HOUSING WORKER

Part of a series directed and presented by Ross Kemp, 'Living With Forced Out Families' is a programme about homeless people faced with leaving their local area in order to put a roof over their head - hence 'forced out'. The programme tells us that 24,000 people are in this position, and highlights the housing crisis affecting London in particular. Kemp meets Jade and her daughter Gracie, living in what was, until three years ago, an office building in Wimbledon.

It's in the middle of a working industrial estate, surrounded by main roads with no shops nearby, never mind schools or parks.

Jade was moved there by Tower Hamlets (Labour) council as she was homeless. We see the effect both of Tower Hamlets council's failure to build council housing, and the reality of 'permitted development rights'.

Permitted development rights allow for the conversion of offices and industrial units into housing without the usual planning scrutiny by local authorities.

Since 2015, there have been nearly 55,000 homes created from office or industrial buildings.

Local councils and residents have no say about the impact of an

increased population on schools, GP services or traffic. Converted flats don't have to comply with space standards, and many are tiny, with no parking spaces. Some don't even have windows!

It is a scandal that local authorities, London boroughs in particular, are buying up or block-renting sub-standard office conversions, in some cases hundreds of miles from the borough, to use them as temporary accommodation for their homeless applicants.

## Human warehouse

We have one such 'human warehouse' in my home town of Basildon, where offices above the defunct BHS shop in the town centre are now 'housing' homeless people from a London borough.

Kemp visits one block of flats in Bradford, where all of the tenants are from the south east. The two we meet are placed there by Medway Council in Kent, and Barking and Dagenham Council in East London.

They can't afford to travel to visit family, so are isolated and unsupported. In response to a query from the programme, Barking and Dagenham Council blandly replies that 70% of their applicants find homes within the borough - meaning that around one-third don't!

Under the Housing Act 1996, a local authority is required to tell another borough if it places someone in its area. The programme exposes how this is not happening. This means that 'host' boroughs can't plan properly for school places, health and social services - even if they had the resources to do this.

Basildon Council (Labour) leader Gavin Callaghan tells Kemp that Basildon had 700 'extra' children in the last four years which the council hadn't planned for.

In the absence of a fight from local councils for the resources needed from central government, and unfortunately there is no fight at present, this could lead to tension and resentment against 'outsiders'.

Don't expect any answers from the programme. It is worth a watch, and Kemp manages to avoid demonising or patronising the tenants he meets - which is quite refreshing.

However, the two politicians that Kemp interviews, right-wing Labour MP Siobhan McDonagh and right-wing Labour councillor Gavin Callaghan, had no answers to what Callaghan rightly called a housing national emergency.

Callaghan and McDonagh were actively hostile to Jeremy Corbyn and his programme when he was Labour Party leader, and worked to



Ross Kemp with a 'socially cleansed' single parent

undermine both. Kemp missed the chance to ask McDonagh why during the years of the Blair government in which she served, so few council

houses had been built, and why Labour councils have not resisted the devastating austerity cuts imposed by Tory governments.

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

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- #BLM rising - a movement for system change
- The origins of racism
- A new era begins

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# Books that inspired me: On the revolutionary life of Fred Hampton

## How the FBI and Chicago police murdered a Black Panther

### ALEC THRAVES

SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY

For a new generation of activists involved around the Black Lives Matter (BLM) mass protests of recent months, there has been an exposure to the historic and deep-rooted institutional racism that exists in the US, highlighted by the police murder of George Floyd.

It has also introduced to this young layer of anti-racists a glimpse of some of the heroic black fighters who have been prepared to stand up and confront the white supremacists, bigots, police, corporate politicians, and government agencies, who continue to brutally oppress the black working class of the US and internationally.

Socialists are of course familiar with black leaders such as the assassinated civil rights campaigner Martin Luther King and radical black activist Malcolm X, as well as socialist Black Panther leaders, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton.

However, probably because he was murdered by police at the early age of 21, Fred Hampton, Chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Party, deserves wider recognition as a leader for black liberation. But more importantly, as an advocate of revolutionary socialist change to achieve that objective.

The publication last year of an updated paperback edition of the Jeffrey Haas book, 'The Assassination of Fred Hampton', is well timed for understanding the present BLM movement. It is a riveting and disturbing account of Hampton's murder in 1969 by the Chicago Police Department, in collaboration with the FBI, and the ensuing lengthy legal fight to prove that it was effectively a state-sponsored assassination.

Hampton's short adult life was naturally influenced by the momentous social and political upheavals of the 1960s.

When he turned 18, in 1966, he refused to register for the Vietnam War draft - undoubtedly influenced

by world heavyweight champion boxer Muhammad Ali's own draft refusal when he defiantly proclaimed: "I ain't got no quarrel with the Vietcong. No Vietcong ever called me a N\*\*\*\*\*!"

At the same time as the anti-war protests, riots were breaking out across US cities in response to growing police harassment and inequality. The pacifist civil rights leaders were coming under increasing pressure from an emerging Black Power movement to more directly confront the poverty and discrimination facing urban blacks.



**You can kill the revolutionary but you can't kill the revolution. You can jail the liberator but you can't jail the liberation. You can run the freedom fighter all around the country but you can't stop freedom fighting...**

The message of Black Power resonated with Fred Hampton. However, unlike some black nationalists, he saw it not as a tool to attack whites, but as an attempt to bring black people together and build their confidence.

After moving to Chicago, Hampton rapidly evolved from black rights activist to Panther leader and advocate of revolutionary socialist change.

His organisational skills and political clarity were not only recognised by the Panther Central Committee, but also became increasingly visible on the radar of the Chicago Police Department, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).



FBI boss Hoover, seen here between Robert Kennedy and President JF Kennedy

Under the bold and inspiring leadership of 20-year-old Hampton, the Chicago Chapter of the Black Panther Party flourished to such an extent that it temporarily stopped taking new members so that it could integrate all those who had joined!

Hampton's rallying call of class struggle and socialist revolution was echoing around the city of Chicago, the state of Illinois, and across the US. It was a dangerous and unacceptable threat to the US capitalist class which had to be dealt with.

In today's BLM movement, Fred Hampton's most recognisable and popular quote has inspired numerous potential revolutionary socialists, with his demand that in order to finally eradicate racism, poverty and inequality, socialist change is needed: "We're going to fight racism not with racism but we're going to fight with solidarity. We say we're not going to fight capitalism with black capitalism but we're going to fight it with socialism."

To those black nationalists who refused to participate with the Panthers, and who accused them of being 'engrossed with oppressor country radicals, or white people, or honkies', Hampton replied with an unequivocal class response: "First of all we say primarily that the priority of this struggle is class... It was one class, the oppressed class, versus those other classes, the oppressor. And it's a universal fact. Those who don't admit to that are those who don't want to get involved in a revolution, because they know as long as they're dealing with a race thing, they'll never be involved in a revolution."

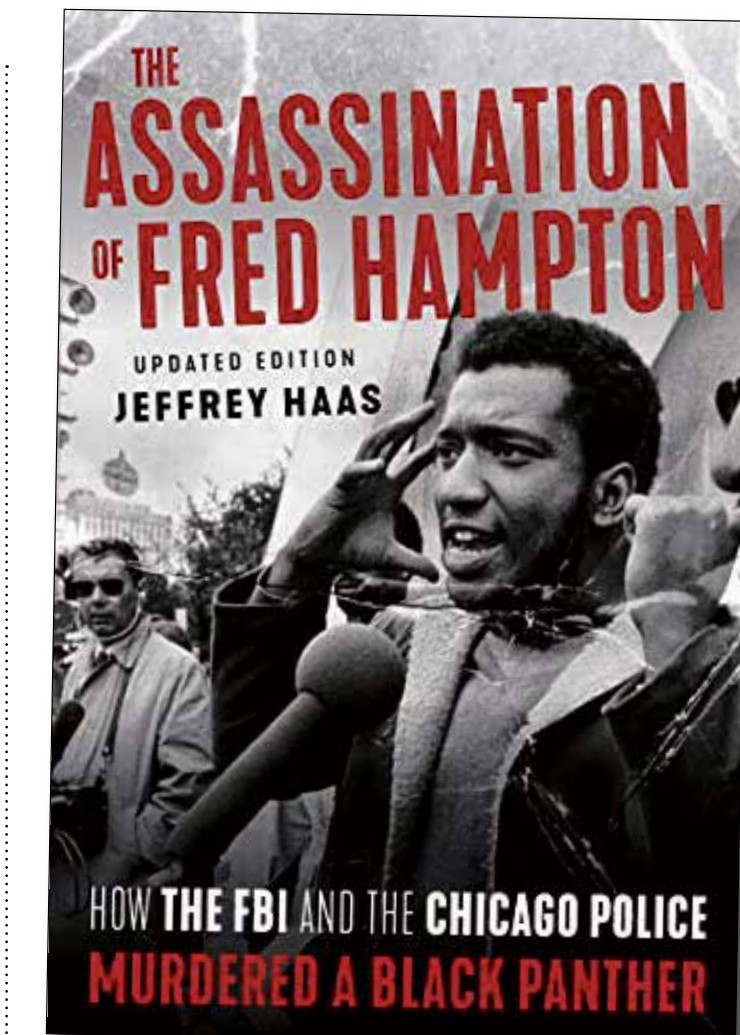
## State persecution

Little wonder that Hampton's principled class approach, of uniting the working class of all colours and races to overthrow the capitalist class and their system, led to the full might of the US state apparatus - the police, judiciary, governmental departments - turning their telescopic gunights towards this dangerous Panther revolutionary.

J. Edgar Hoover, FBI director and witch-hunter general of 'communist' agitators, trade union militants, black activists and any other 'enemies' of the US capitalist state, had already compiled a 'Key Agitator Index'. Hampton, after his arrest for "mob action" (at a peaceful picket), was placed on the list for FBI agents to monitor closely.

Hoover had also initiated a secret, illegal, Counterintelligence Programme (COINTELPRO) ordering FBI agents in all cities with Panther Chapters to develop "hard hitting programmes designed to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralise" the Panthers.

Another stated objective of Hoover was to "prevent the rise of a 'messiah' who could unify and electrify the militant Black Nationalist movement". With Martin Luther King and Malcolm X already murderously dealt with, and Huey Newton and Bobby



THE ASSASSINATION OF FRED HAMPTON HOW THE FBI AND CHICAGO POLICE MURDERED A BLACK PANTHER BY JEFFREY HAAS - LAWRENCE HILL BOOKS, CHICAGO

Seale in jail, the charismatic 21-year-old Hampton rose to the top of Hoover's most wanted list!

At 4.30am on 4 December 1969, while asleep in his apartment, Fred Hampton's life was extinguished by two police bullets to the head.

In secret collaboration with the FBI, the Chicago Police Department's officers claimed that while they were trying to serve a search warrant, looking for weapons, they were fired upon from inside the apartment, and returned fire in self-defence.

This so-called 'act of self-defence' was met with anger and incredulity by Chicago's black community, when it was revealed that the police had shot almost 100 bullets into the apartment, whereas only one bullet hole could be found exiting!

After this one-sided shootout, Hampton's pregnant girlfriend was dragged out of their bedroom. She then described two police officers going into the bedroom, hearing one of them fire two shots, followed by "He's good an' dead now".

One elderly woman paying her respect, alongside the thousands of others who toured the apartment in the days following, commented: "This was nothing but a Northern lynching".

Hampton's state execution was followed by years of court trials and legal disputes in which the author of this book, Jeffrey Haas, led his team of lawyers in a strenuous attempt to prove that the assassination of

Hampton was planned, organised, and literally executed by the US capitalist state, to prevent a potential socialist 'messiah' from spreading the gospel of socialism.

The determination and tenacity of Haas, attorney Flint Taylor, and others in the People's Law Office team, ultimately exposed the ruthless role of the state in defending their system, and is a stark warning and lesson to be learnt for today's activists.

## Health warning

From corrupt judges, racist police, smug and lying prosecutors, black police informers, Democrat and Republican political lackeys, and 'untouchable' FBI agents, this book is not a good read if you suffer from high blood pressure!

It makes you really angry but it also inspires. Inspiring to read how a young revolutionary like Fred Hampton recognised that racism, poverty and inequality could only be eradicated by uniting the working class around a socialist programme.

At his funeral, Father Clemens, known for his advocacy for black youth, ended his eulogy with these words: "You can kill the revolutionary but you can't kill the revolution. You can jail the liberator but you can't jail the liberation. You can run the freedom fighter all around the country but you can't stop freedom fighting. So believed Fred - so said Fred - so say we all."

Absolutely!



ERIC SEGAL  
KENT SOCIALIST PARTY

We've all got mums haven't we? We all take them for granted, don't we?

What happens when life turns bad? When dad drinks and beats his wife?

What happens when dad dies and the son goes to work in the factory, where his father worked for many years? How does the son react to working long hours, in horrendous conditions, and when his pay is cut?

How does a mother react when her son takes a different path to that of his dead father, a path that leads to confrontation with the state and revolutionary struggle?

This confronted Maxim Gorky when he set out to describe the struggle of the working class in Russia in the early 1900s. His challenge was to describe the significant part that women played in building the workers' movement that led to the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP).

Gorky bases his powerful novel, *The Mother*, around the actual events of what began as a peaceful May Day demonstration on 1902 in Sormovo, and the subsequent violent reaction by police and army that concluded with the arrest, imprisonment, trial and deportation of the socialist leaders.

#### Bitter

Gorky, which means 'bitter' in Russian, was not the writer's real name. Born Aleksei Maksimovich Peshkov in 1868, he chose the pseudonym when he was 24 and his first story was published, to underscore the bitterness he felt at the plight of Russia's poor.

*The Mother* describes the struggle in the early 1900s to organise and build a party of the working class, the poor, the dispossessed and the peasantry.

Palageya, 'The Mother', watches in disbelief as her teenage son, Pavel, refuses to emulate the violent drunken ways of her dead husband and other workers. Pavel begins to study and read books that are forbidden under the Tsarist regime.

He brings other workers from the factory and some intellectuals together in a study group at his home. His mother overhears the word socialist, which terrifies her - wasn't it socialists who assassinated the Tsar?

Palageya is initially suspicious of her son's new friends and feels out of her depth listening to new ideas and words that they use during their discussions. But soon she becomes part of the discussion group.

They are particularly interested in the changing mood of workers at the factory where Pavel works and which dominates the town. They write and print leaflets, which Pavel and other workers circulate in the factory,

# Books that inspired me: *The Mother* "Seas of blood won't extinguish the truth"



calling for better wages and terms and conditions for the workers.

The boss at the factory announces his intention to deduct a percentage of each workers wage to clear a large swamp overgrown on the factory premises "for the sake of improving living conditions for the workers".

This announcement, without any negotiation with the workers, and with the help of leaflets produced by the socialists, increases the growing anger in the factory. Pavel leads the workers' agitation against the factory management and gets arrested.

Palageya realises that now that her son has been arrested, the leaflets are not being distributed in the factory. The authorities could use this as evidence to prove that her son is the main activist.

Palageya decides to take responsibility. She asks a friend for work helping to sell soup at the factory gate.

The leaflets are hidden in her clothes. She distributes them as she sells the soup to workers. Pavel is released once the authorities think that others are smuggling the leaflets into the factory.

The discussion group makes arrangements for an illegal May Day demonstration. They leaflet the factory and make a banner.

The demonstration is a success but the authorities call out the troops who violently disperse the demonstrators and arrest the leaders, including Pavel who was holding the banner.

Palageya decides that she must support Pavel and help to build the movement. She takes socialist books and newspapers to the peasants in villages, and meets up with a group of peasants in the forest who make tar and charcoal.

They live in desperate poverty but are thirsty for ideas and organisation. They grab the books, pamphlets and newspapers.

#### Lives and freedom

Palageya returns home to find that Pavel is still in jail awaiting his trial. She says: "If our children, the dearest parts of our hearts, can give their lives and their freedom, dying without a thought for themselves, what ought I to do, a mother?"

At his trial Pavel says: "We are against the society whose interests you judges have been ordered to defend. We are its uncompromising enemies, and yours too, and no reconciliation between us is possible until we have won our fight."

"All of you, our masters, are more like slaves than we are. You are enslaved spiritually; we, only physically." Pavel and his co-defendants are sentenced to deportation to Siberia.

Palageya and the socialists print Pavel's speech. She takes bundles of the leaflets, goes to the railway station, but the police catch her.

She manages to throw the leaflets to the crowd that has gathered around and cries out: "Poverty, hunger and illness, that's what people are given by their work."

"Everything's against us, we're dying all our lives, working day after day, always in dirt, always deceived, while others through our labours amuse themselves and eat their fill and keep us like dogs on a chain in ignorance - we know nothing - and in fear - we're afraid of everything! Our life is night, a dark night."

The police beat, choke and try to silence her. But she manages to call out: "Seas of blood won't extinguish the truth."



## Why I joined the Socialist Party - For a future worth fighting for

JAY SLAYTON-JOSLIN  
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Labour is moving away from the ideas that brought me to the party. I joined the Socialist Party because a choice between Labour and the Conservatives would not bring the revolution that would benefit the majority.

People like Jeremy Corbyn and Rebecca Long-Bailey gave me hope in the future and an interest in politics. While I initially was hopeful for Keir Starmer, his inaction and silence during an awfully handled pandemic made me realise that he wouldn't lead the party that I wanted to be part of.

The more I read and learned, I realised that the future I want has to be a future led by the people and will need a revolution. The future we're entering resembles nothing close to my ideals and beliefs.

The Socialist Party is one of the few organisations that are out there campaigning for a better future. Far

beyond just throwing out ideas and seeing what sticks, but proactively campaigning and fighting for causes, and other peoples' voices.

Equality, homes, healthcare and food on the table shouldn't be a luxury or an afterthought in society, but the foundation that it's built on.

I still have plenty to learn about the world and politics, but everyone I've met in the Socialist Party so far has been welcoming, informing and friendly. No discussion felt inappropriate or one-sided.

I'm excited to now be part of a movement that will stand up for others, listen and take our causes to the doorstep of those who think austerity and marginalisation are working.

The days of working-class people changing the world is far from over. Socialism used to be a dirty word, but now, to me, it's the most important one to have a future worth living in.

● [socialistparty.org.uk/join](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join)

### ● Black Lives Matter protests - another injustice exposed

#### Bristol

1,000 people turned out for Bristol's latest Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest on 12 July. With protesters socially distanced and sat on the grass, there wasn't the same energy as the first BLM demonstration in the city, which saw the toppling

of a statue of slave trader Edward Colston.

Those attending were no less determined in their desire to fight for change though. Every mention of the statue coming down elicited cheers from the crowd.

But the organisers were clear, change has to go wider than removing the name Colston from the city's buildings, and must include ensuring that the real history of Bristol and the slave trade is taught in schools.

The large panel of speakers put forward a range of different ways for fighting racism. These included advocating for more black-owned businesses (see page 10).

### ● Selling the Socialist in Swansea

"It's good to see you back, we need people fighting back." It was encouraging to hear this from one passer-by at the Socialist Party campaign stall on 11 July.

Our members are glad to be back on the street, doing what we do best, advocating for socialist ideas to change society.

It's still quiet in the city centre, even as business and services are

opening back up, but the struggle hasn't stopped. It's clear from the conversations that we had that people don't want to go back to the 'new normal'.

### ● Thank you - your donations help us campaign and fight for socialism

"It's not much, but I hope this helps"

# Nottingham trans rights protest: Our demands are the same as everyone's

CLARE WILKINS  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

"Trans rights are human rights" was one of the chants as 300 trans people and supporters marched from the Forest Recreation Ground to the Old Market Square in Nottingham on 11 July. The march was young, colourful and lively.

When we reached the Market Square we joined the morning's 150-strong anti-racist protest. More chants of "Trans Lives Matter", "Black Lives Matter" and "no justice, no peace" filled the air.

"I'm free and I'm proud and I shout this out loud" was sung by a trans woman. The open mic rally heard from veterans of the LGBT+ campaigns from the 1960s and 70s, as well as younger trans voices and supporters.

A trans woman said that trans demands were the same as everyone else's - public toilets, properly funded domestic abuse services, affordable and decent housing, jobs, equality and lives.

Richard, age 80, who had been involved in the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in the 1960s, when being gay was illegal, told how the GLF use to have a trans meeting every week in London. He said the LGBT+ movement has come so far together, and that together it is strong.

A trans woman, who came out 20 years ago, said that she has had to fight every day for her rights and to be who she wants to be. She said it was humbling to see so many trans people and supporters on the march, stopping traffic and making people think.



photo Tom Wolf

Trans people only obtained the legal right to change their gender in 2005. Now there are threats to stop reform of the Gender Recognition Act to allow trans people to self-identify, threats to healthcare services particularly for children who identify as trans, and to make trans women use male toilets.

Another speaker pointed out that there are already men in women's toilets - attendants, cleaners and plumbers, and if a man wanted to dress as a woman to enter them, then they have always been able to do so.

A speaker for the trades council - bringing together unions across Nottinghamshire - said that there is no place for any discrimination in the labour movement.

I asked to speak from the Socialist Party, but was told by the organiser that they didn't want organisations. I said I still wanted to speak.

Socialist Party members handed out leaflets which quoted from Malcolm X saying "you can't have capitalism without racism". We put forward a socialist alternative to this racist capitalist system, where the economy would be neither white-owned nor black-owned, but collectively owned and run by the working class.

black man by Sussex Police was captured on video. He was restrained on the ground by three officers, and can be heard complaining that he can't breathe.

The real anger stirred up by the incident was reflected on the march by the overwhelmingly young crowd.

As with previous Black Lives Matter protests, the Socialist Party received an enthusiastic response, with real hunger for our ideas. Over the last two demonstrations we have met dozens of people interested in receiving more details about the Socialist Party.

DAVID RICHARDS

Party Wales public meeting on the need for a new workers' party, including a day's income from Kate and Geoff Jones of £100.

Our members continue to make sacrifices. A further £100 to our coronavirus appeal from Bill and Marilyn in Nottingham, both retired, on top of an earlier £50. £100 also came from Katrina Williams and £100 from Jon Dale.

Our coronavirus appeal at the end of our website articles brought anonymous donations of £2, two donations of £10, and one of £50. Many donated £2 or more after Zoom

meetings - having saved the cost of bus fare, room hire, and maybe a few beers after the meeting.

"Just to help your work in a small way" writes Richard Stone, donating £10 and seeking to pay regular amounts. You can do this too at [socialistparty.org.uk/finance](https://socialistparty.org.uk/finance).

Marin Tomuta in Stanton, California donated £50. International donations welcome!

Finally Josh Asker sent in £6: "Donation for taking a friend's cat to the vet." We don't mind how you raise those extra pounds, they are all welcome.

The organisers also asked us not to hand out our Socialist Party trans rights leaflets or sell our newspaper, the Socialist. Others disagreed, snapping up our leaflets, buying the Socialist and donating to our fighting fund so we can keep campaigning.

When I did get up to speak, I said I brought solidarity and support from Nottingham Socialist Party. People liked it when I spoke about the need for working-class unity. I said that we wanted a world where we could all be who we wanted to be, and who we identified as.

We fight for the right to self-identify, de-medicalisation of the process, scrapping of the charges, fully funded services for LGBT+ people, proper investment in domestic abuse services with secure funding and resources to meet the needs of all survivors, proper public services for all, and a fully funded and resourced, public NHS free at the point of need.

There was loud applause for the speech and the Socialist Party's demands.

#### The Socialist Party says:

- Fight for trans rights and an end to all forms of discrimination
- Unite struggles of trans and non-binary people with the whole working-class struggle
- Councils to set no-cuts budgets - fight the Tories for the money stolen from council services
- No trust in pro-big business politicians. Build a new mass workers' party
- For a socialist world free from oppression, discrimination, exploitation and the inequality of capitalism

#### Stevenage

A lively and enthusiastic BLM protest, overwhelmingly young, marched from Fairlands Park to Stevenage town centre, where an impromptu rally was held.

Speakers highlighted the many examples of police racism both here and in the USA. Everyone then took the knee.

We carried Socialist Party banners on the march and almost everyone accepted our leaflet that we handed out.

MARK PICKERSGILL



## Srebrenica massacre - 25 years on

# HOW CAPITALIST RESTORATION LED TO WAR AND 'ETHNIC CLEANSING' IN THE BALKANS

JUDY BEISHON  
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**T**wenty-five years ago, in July 1995, 8,000 Bosnian Muslim refugees were slaughtered in and around the Bosnian town of Srebrenica - one of the final atrocities in the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

The designation of Srebrenica as a 'safe haven' by the United Nations (UN) was a cruel travesty for those victims and the tens of thousands of others who were driven out of the town.

During the war, the Bosnian Muslims suffered the worst of the atrocities, including an untold number killed on the bridge at Visegrad. There were also many victims in the Serb and Croat populations - the largest single act of 'ethnic cleansing' in those years was the Croatian army brutally expelling 200,000 Croatian Serbs from the Krajina area of Croatia. Overall, 100,000 people died during the war and over two million were displaced.

The right-wing nationalist Serb and Croat leaders in Bosnia, aiming to consolidate territory they could link with adjoining Croatia and Serbia, were mainly responsible for the bloodshed. That didn't mean, however, that socialists could give any support to the military aggression of the Bosnian Muslim warlords. Like their Serb and Croat counterparts, they were acting in their own interests and not those of the section of the population they were claiming to protect.

The descent into war had come

out of the collapse of the Yugoslavia federation - a stagnating, bureaucratically run, Stalinist regime. The break-up began when Slovenia declared independence. In the countries which then became immersed in war, nationalist leaders had moved to turn to their own advantage the fears of insecurity and discrimination in the Serb, Croat and Muslim populations.

The war ended with the Dayton agreement, imposed in 1995 by the imperialist powers. By then, the opposing militia leaders had largely exhausted being able to further their interests through continuing the war. Bosnia was declared to be a single entity, but in reality the deal reinforced a division between a Bosnian Serb entity and a Croat-Muslim federation. Essentially, it ratified the ethnic cleansing that had taken place, imposing a patchwork of ten cantons, and a government structure based on ethnic quotas.

### Convictions

Since the war, many of the families of Srebrenica, and other victims, have welcomed the conviction of over 90 people for war crimes by the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Those given long prison sentences included Bosnian Serb ex-general Ratko Mladic, and Radovan Karadžić, the former Bosnian Serb president.

The ICTY was eventually closed down with 3,000 outstanding cases being shunted off to national courts. It was always incapable of delivering real and full justice to the victims in



The Srebrenica massacre memorial photo Mark Norton/CC

Bosnia, not least because it was inevitably acting in the interests of the UN's paymasters, the world's leading capitalist powers.

Western governments are not, of course, willing to be tried for their own interventions in the Balkans, such as the brutal Nato air assaults on Bosnian Serb areas during the Bosnian war, or the vicious 1998 Nato 'humanitarian' bombing of Serbia to force Serbian troops out of Kosovo.

Today, such are the increasing antagonisms and conflicting foreign policy interests between the world powers, it's not difficult to see why international tribunals have not emerged regarding war crimes in warzones like Syria and Yemen.

Following a recent decision by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the Afghanistan war - with its many civilian deaths at US hands - and also a preceding decision to look into Israel-Palestine, Trump's US administration has resorted to accusing the ICC of corruption and even threatened sanctions against ICC officials.

Echoing the reality of capitalist 'international justice', US attorney general William Barr called the ICC "little more than a political tool employed by unaccountable international elites".

### Workers' organisation

Only through working-class people building their own organisations will it be possible to conduct genuinely independent, democratically run investigations into past atrocities. And in the Balkans, workers' political representation needs to be built to challenge the whole agenda of ethnic

and religious division promoted by the ruling classes - which is ongoing today, along with their massive enrichment.



**The descent into war had come out of the collapse of the Yugoslavia federation - a stagnating, bureaucratically run, Stalinist regime**

A year ago, a wave of protest swept the region, with an article in the New York Times reporting: "From Bosnia to Serbia, and even in Albania, citizens have taken to the streets by the hundreds of thousands for months in an epidemic of discontent. Specific grievances vary, but all are animated by the sense that their governments are increasingly ruled by kleptocrats with authoritarian tendencies who have taken advantage of young democracies with weak checks on executive power."

Now, a year later, protests have again broken out, with repeated demonstrations in Serbia in recent days - including an attempt to storm the parliament - against president Aleksandar Vucic's handling of the coronavirus crisis and his government's autocratic rule.

At the same time, on 8 July, 3,000 frontline medical workers in Bosnia's capital Sarajevo began strike action

to demand pay supplements to cover their extra work due to the coronavirus. Last autumn, a 36-day teachers' strike took place in Croatia.

Working people across the Balkans of all nationalities, ethnicities and religions are having to move into struggle against their capitalist bosses and governments, which will raise awareness of the opposing class interests involved, and the need to fight against division among ordinary people from different backgrounds.

The Srebrenica massacre 25 years ago arose from a drive by right-wing leaders to whip up division in order to carve out spheres of influence for themselves and their wealthy allies.

Today, the task of building grassroots unity against poisonous sectarianism and a future round of bloodshed is more than ever linked to the fight against inequality, and for decent living standards.

Serbia's working class showed its potential strength when, 20 years ago, it moved into mass action, including a general strike, forcing president Slobodan Milosevic out of office.

The need now is to study all the lessons from the past: the failure of the Yugoslav planned economy due to the lack of workers' democracy; the subsequent descent into ethnic and nationalist bloody conflict due to the weakness of the workers' movements at that stage; and the ways in which rabid nationalism has been used by the elites to play 'divide and rule'.

The conclusion will be that the working class must collectively develop a programme and organisations for a socialist alternative - the only way of placing capitalist wars in the dustbin of history for good.



The fragmented area of Bosnia/Srpska in 1997 following the Dayton accord



# 1975 Australia coup: correspondence with queen released

ALISON HILL  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

In November 1975, the queen's representative in Australia, Governor-General Sir John Kerr, dismissed the elected Labor prime minister. He replaced Gough Whitlam with the leader of the right-wing Liberal Party, Malcolm Fraser. Documents just released from the National Archives of Australia reveal how closely the monarchy was involved in the discussions leading up to this coup.

It took a four-year campaign by historian Jenny Hocking, and a decision by the Australian High Court, to get the documents released. And their contents are a warning to all who think of the monarchy just as a useful tourist attraction or a national soap opera.

Gough Whitlam was Australian prime minister from December 1972 to November 1975. He was originally on the right of the Labor Party, but was pushed to the left by the tumultuous events of the 1960s.

In Australia and throughout the world, workers went into struggle and won reforms, on the basis of the favourable economic conditions of capitalism's post-war boom. Against this background, the Australian Labor Party was swept to power in 1972 after 23 years of Liberal Party rule.

## Reforms

Whitlam's initial aims were to rationalise some aspects of the economy and improve the welfare state. At that stage, these aims were not seen as a threat to the established capitalist order. Right-wing media mogul Rupert Murdoch even supported Labor in the election.

Whitlam set about making significant reforms, under pressure from the working class and associated social movements. Free higher education was introduced, with a massive increase in university students. Healthcare spending was increased to provide a universal system.

Legislation was passed introducing equal pay rights for women, and the first Aboriginal land rights were granted. Australian troops were withdrawn from Vietnam, and a swathe of social reforms introduced.

But as the post-war boom petered out, crisis loomed. The international oil crisis plunged the global economy into a downward spiral. World commodity prices fell - a particular problem for Australia, whose economy relies on raw material exports. Profits fell, and inflation and unemployment rose.

Big business was desperately trying to protect its interests. Bosses were worried that the strike wave that erupted throughout 1974 could continue to grow.

## Palace letters show the monarchy is a weapon for capitalism



Gough Whitlam in 1981 in front of a portrait of the governor-general John Kerr, who undemocratically sacked him photo Peter van der Veer

They demanded public spending cuts from the Labor government, and got them. But that was not enough. On the pretext of a failed attempt

to borrow from the Middle East, the Liberals blocked the budget in the Senate - the upper house in the Australian parliament - causing a

constitutional crisis. That was when the governor-general intervened and removed Whitlam.

Workers walked out on strike in

protest. 400,000 took to the streets in Melbourne and held a huge rally.

The capitalist class was worried that the situation would get even more out of control. Fortunately for them, they could rely on the Labor and trade union leaders, who refused to do anything to organise this mass movement against the coup.

As a result, the movement receded. Over the following decades, a lot of the Whitlam reforms were scaled back to suit the demands of big business in the face of a crisis-ridden world economy.

There are important lessons to learn from the Whitlam government and these events. One is that reforms are only won through working-class struggle - and they must be backed up.

The struggle must be continued around a programme of defending those reforms by taking control of the major levers of the economy and running them under democratic working-class control. Any government anywhere in the world which seeks to put workers' interests first must understand this.

The Socialist Party warned Jeremy Corbyn of this. In the event, the right wing of Britain's Labour Party intervened to protect big business before there was even a chance of forming a pro-reform Labour government.

## State machine

The other major lesson is about the role of the monarchy. It is a component of the state machine, holding special constitutional powers in reserve, which the capitalist establishment can use to supersede even the limited democracy of parliamentary elections.

The letters reveal a careful discussion with the queen - about the constitutional powers of the governor-general to carry out this right-wing coup, and the fear of how far Whitlam would go, even worrying that he would sack the governor-general!

The queen is a weapon of the ruling class which is usually kept relatively sheathed. But she gives royal assent to all legislation. MPs and the armed forces do not swear allegiance to parliament; they swear it to the queen. Tory prime ministers have recently used the 'royal prerogative' to act without parliament's approval, and even suspended a dissenting parliament using the queen's power of 'prorogation'.

The monarchy is a powerful ideological and legal tool for capitalism. It can be used quickly, as these events show, to prop up the profit system against workers' struggle. As such, abolition of the monarchy must form part of a broader programme for socialist change.

## ● Stop hypocritical arms sales to murderous Saudi regime

Merely a year on from the suspension of arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the greed of British capitalism has lifted it.

The suspension occurred due to pressure from campaigners against the regime's assaults on Yemen and

its appalling human rights record at home. The Tory government even followed up on 6 July with further sanctions.

However, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace reportedly arranged a phone call with the totalitarian Saudi

monarchy and told them not to worry about said sanctions! British arms companies engaged in sales the very next day.

Over the past five years, Saudi-backed coalition forces have killed approximately 12,000 civilians in Yemen, and campaigners fear the weapons being sold will be used in this conflict as well.

Yet still the Tories are completely fine with continuing weapons' sales. The profit and international prestige are worth much more to them than innocent life falling at the hands of a bloodthirsty regime.

The hypocrisy of British capitalism shines bright. It will happily sell weapons to a regime which only the day before it condemned

as dripping with human rights violations.

The British government is complicit in these murders. The Socialist Party completely opposes the sale of weapons to capitalist warmongers and human rights abusers.

JOSH BAVIN  
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



£1 / £2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

# YOUNG SOCIALISTS AGAINST RACISM

## Jobs, homes, services and a future for all !

**THEO SHARIEFF**  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL YOUTH ORGANISER

**T**he Black Lives Matter protests have lifted the lid on the enormous level of built up class anger amongst young people in Britain today. Sparked by the racist murder of George Floyd, a new generation of young people is on the move, determined to fight for a future free not only of racism, but also poverty, inequality and all forms of exploitation and oppression.

The present system we live under today, capitalism, was built through colonial slavery and murder, alongside the brutal exploitation of working-class people in Britain. Searching for real gains many of the protests have demanded the removal of statues and monuments to prolific slave traders throughout Britain's history.

Having ignored the calls of the local community over the years, the establishment politicians have been forced to remove some of these statues to try and satisfy the new movement. Young Socialists considers the removal of these statues as a victory for our movement. But this significant symbolic victory has to be built upon if racism is to be truly defeated.

There is no way this generation will be satisfied with the tokenistic efforts of politicians, keen to be seen as fighting racism but taking little to no action over its concrete manifestations - police brutality, slum housing, poverty pay, and no access to a decent education system.

As a new tidal wave of economic crisis hits this generation, bringing with it a new round of attacks by the rich, and the politicians who represent them, young people of all

ethnicities will have no choice but to launch a common struggle to fight for all of our futures.

Young Socialists has produced a socialist youth charter as a campaigning programme, demanding that young people are not be made to pay for this new round of capitalist crisis - not with our jobs, not with our education, not with our futures.

We demand a future worth living for all young people, with access to a decent, well-paid job for all, access to a place to live, access to high quality and free education, to well-funded public services, and a future cleansed of all forms of prejudice and oppression, including racism - a socialist future.

We will be out campaigning all across the country with our charter this weekend - join us in our fight to ensure our future is not sacrificed to capitalist crisis.



PHOTO WOLVERHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

**A SOCIALIST RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS**  
▶▶ socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus

**WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS**  
▶▶ see column on p3

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