

TORY COVID CHAOS

To the surprise of absolutely no one, given the disastrous Tory record so far, we face a new Covid peak this autumn. Some scientists say Britain could be on course for 50,000 new cases a day by mid-November, resulting in 200 daily deaths.

This would put Britain among the worst countries in the world for virus spread - alongside India, the US and Brazil.

'Look over there.' That's the summary of Boris Johnson's response. Sound and fury to distract from the multiple forced U-turns - and little else. His much-trailed speech and amendments to the Covid laws solve none of the threats to our lives and livelihoods.

With no effective opposition (Keir Starmer has committed to backing whatever measures Johnson puts forward, and to reinforce his messages) we are encouraged to blame each other for the crisis made in Downing Street and in the boardrooms of big business.

Blame

So those who are concerned about their health are encouraged to blame those who have returned to work and education. Those who fear for their jobs are invited to direct their anger at those who campaign for safety and against a reckless reopening of society.

Yet the weak Tories cannot even agree about what measures to take.

Initially Johnson had intended to take no measures to deal with the virus, but was forced to out of fear of mass anger if the NHS became overwhelmed. Now the brakes have been pulled on the return to the workplace that he was pushing just a few days ago!

The Tories' constant zig-zaggy derives from being buffeted between their attempts to prioritise the 'economy', ie the bosses' interests, and the threat of mass opposition to their disastrous measures.

Student anger forced a U-turn on A-levels. This indicates what mass, organised pressure on the weak and divided Tories could achieve.

➤➤➤ **CONTINUED ON P4**

● *Lockdown anger, testing mess: p2-3*

Join us in the fight for:

- Public ownership and oversight of test-and-trace, health, social care, and public services
- Work or full pay. The trade union leaders must coordinate mass action
- Workers' control over workplace safety
- A socialist alternative to the chaos and crisis of the capitalist system

Working-class mass action to defend our lives and livelihoods

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

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

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

Testing shambles: unions must fight back

GLENN KELLY
NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION ORGANISER
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The government claims that testing for key workers in the NHS, care and schools is provided.

Yet care homes are reporting that when they can get tests, it's taking 15 days or more to get the results. And Enfield Council, for example, says that only 19 out of 79 care homes have access to tests.

The position for school workers and students is no better. Up to 25,000 teachers may be self-isolating in England, according to a survey by Teacher Tapp. Thousands of students will have been sent home, and thousands more will have been kept in class despite symptoms.

Many are unable to find out if they are positive as they cannot get tested. Most of those who can are testing negative, but losing out on schooling because of the delays in getting that test.

One headteacher in the South of England summed up the frustration: "It's all a nightmare. I have three staff off, not because they have symptoms, but someone in their household does and they cannot get a test..."

"How am I supposed to run a school in these circumstances? Working ridiculous hours; and now I have a local authority inspection next week; and told I must reduce my budget deficit next year. No wonder no one wants to be a head!"

The east London borough of Redbridge, just after the government closed its walk-in test centre, reported it had the capital's top infection rate, 37 per 100,000 of the population. At least seven Redbridge



PHOTO GOVERNMENT/CC

schools have confirmed cases, with some saying they could be days away from wholesale closure.

This is a picture that is mirrored around the county. In Bradford, after a school outbreak, the union found itself in a battle not with the head, but with the local public health authority. It had told the school not to send home 'bubbles', but instead to draw a two-metre line around the child's seat, and only send those that were within it home!

The government is to blame for these failures. It is a mistake not to provide regular testing for school workers. Even a former Tory health minister has called for it.

It was a mistake to allow bubbles of 300 or 400 pupils, instead of listening to school unions and keeping the bubbles small, bringing in supply teachers, commandeering local resources and using 'blended learning'. Local councils share the blame for not implementing this locally and fighting for the funds to support it.

These failures mean children are removed from school unnecessarily, having already missed six months of class. Parents are then faced with having to take time off work at little or no notice, with no pay. And school workers are being stretched to the limit.

The unions must now seek to galvanise the growing anger, and to try and avoid any division between parents and workers. We must organise joint protests and ballots for industrial action.

- *More on the crisis in schools: see 'Dispatches from the front' on p7*

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Johnson's schools social-distancing lie

In a big PR exercise designed to reassure us that it was safe for schools to reopen, Boris Johnson visited Castle Rock High School in Coalville, Leicestershire. The county's schools began their autumn term before most of the rest of the country.

There was a handful of pupils in shot, safely social-distancing. However, when Johnson was leaving, the camera operative panned to the other side of the classroom. Pupils were crammed in, sitting close to each other.

Such deliberate deceit and recklessness. We cannot trust Johnson and the Tories to fight this virus. We need unions that will defend health and safety.

HEATHER RAWLING
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY



PHOTO JOHN HALE/CC

North East lockdown: simmering anger at Tory incompetence



PHOTO JIMMYGUANO/CC



For the estimated 40,000 students arriving at Newcastle's two universities, instead of a warm Geordie welcome, they will be met by police patrolling student hubs!

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
SOCIALIST PARTY NORTHERN REGION SECRETARY

There's a sense of weary resignation in the North East as around two million people across seven council areas have coronavirus restrictions imposed.

In early August, we had the lowest official rate of Covid-19 across the country. However, as with other parts of the UK, there was unease as children started going back to the classroom.

Then every night we began to get reports on the local news of confirmed Covid cases in schools, with children and school staff having to go into self-isolation. Also the news that for the first time since July, over 100 people were on ventilators in the region.

This time around, far more than in March when the initial lockdown began, there is simmering anger at how inept the government is. This is particularly the case over test and trace.

In Sunderland there was mayhem as people were forced to queue in a two-mile traffic jam to be tested for Covid, only to be told by police to turn around as there was no one there to swab people!

One woman caught up in this

fiasco spoke on the radio about her experience. Her child was ill with Covid symptoms. She'd been given a slot at the Sunderland testing centre.

After waiting an hour with an ill child in the car, she was told the testing wasn't going ahead. She immediately went on her mobile to book a test elsewhere. Imagine her anger when she saw the appointment was for the same test centre that she was being turned away from - they were still sending people there!

Others in the region have been given slots at various centres, turned up at the allocated time, but turned away because they hadn't received QR codes. Others were told the nearest testing was in Scotland. All this chaos is replicated across the country.

One leading scientist who had been invited to check out the out-sourced 'Lighthouse Labs' said that testing "is dying on its arse." Among other things, he was appalled by the lack of staff.

At the beginning of this pandemic, there was a prevailing mood to give the government a chance. This was a new virus, and many felt that perhaps it was understandable they didn't get everything right.

But this goodwill has been squandered by the utter incompetence of Johnson, his government, and his

chief political adviser Dominic Cummings. Cummings is viewed like 'Typhoid Mary' locally, potentially spreading the virus to our region.

This time around, far more people are questioning things. Clearly a layer of low-paid workers will have no option but to break the rules or risk losing their jobs.

It's all over social media - you can meet up, but only if there is a till! There's an understanding that for the Tories, profit comes before health. Growing anger has also been turned towards local councils.

Amid all of this, there is clearly an attempt to blame young people for this latest spike in Covid cases. This includes establishment media attempts to whip up anger about hedonistic young people out partying.

For the estimated 40,000 students arriving at Newcastle's two universities, instead of a warm Geordie welcome, they will be met by police patrolling student hubs! To add insult to injury, it is the universities who are coughing up the money for the extra policing - money that should be going towards students' education.

Workers and young people from across the country must join forces to fight this callous Tory government, whose first, second and third priority is the profits of big business.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

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.

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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Johnson complains about salary

The Times and the Mail report the prime minister is “subdued” and “moody,” due to struggling for money. He receives a mere £150,000 a year after forgoing speaking engagements and a £275,000 Telegraph column.

Johnson reportedly hates being “at the helm in rough seas.” He struggles to afford a nanny on top of his rent-free Downing Street residence and paid-for cleaner. We invite readers to insert their own sarcastic conclusion to this pitiful tale.

Fighting Madrid’s class lockdown

Protesters hit the streets in Madrid on 20 September after the regional president locked down 850,000 residents, disproportionately in poorer districts. The selective lockdown as Covid-19 cases surge allows many wealthier denizens to continue moving freely.

That evening, opera spectators in the cheap seats in Madrid’s Teatro Real protested at the lack of social distancing. Most of the higher-priced seats further down had more space. Loud clapping and shouting forced some reseating and the eventual abandonment of the performance.

US billionaires one-third richer

United States billionaires are worth 29% more than before the pandemic, finds the Institute for Policy Studies. Since 18 March, the 643 billionaires have added \$845 billion to their obscene personal fortunes.

Their total wealth rose from \$2.95 trillion to \$3.8 trillion - equivalent to \$4.7 billion, or the annual GDP of Somalia, per day. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos is worth fully 65% more - a \$73 billion increase, to a record \$186 billion.

Economic adviser Robert Reich points out that “Jeff Bezos could give every Amazon employee \$105,000 and still be as rich as he was before the pandemic.” Take the wealth off the 1%!

Tory migrant lies exposed

The Home Office’s anti-working-class immigration policies are based on “anecdote, assumption and prejudice,” says parliament’s Public Accounts Committee. The Tories spend £400 million a year on immigration enforcement, but officials have “no idea” what it achieves.

The committee’s chair declared that the government “accepts the wreckage that its ignorance and the culture it has fostered caused in the Windrush scandal - but the evidence we saw shows too little intent to change, and inspires no confidence that the next such scandal isn’t right around the corner.”

The Home Office apparently had “no answer” to the obvious problem that “potentially exaggerated figures calculated by others could inflame hostility towards immigrants.” It seems the bullying ‘go home’ vans and thuggish raids on low-paid workers were just expensive propaganda to divert attention from the bosses.

The Socialist Party says that workers from all backgrounds should be organised together in trade union and political campaigning. If the bosses can’t play us off against each other, we can win more resources for all.

‘FinCEN Files’ expose rampant financial corruption: nationalise the banks!



JAMES IVENS

The intimate connections between organised crime, high finance and the capitalist state have been exposed. Documents leaked from the US Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) detail over \$2 trillion of suspect transactions over two decades.

The so-called ‘FinCEN Files’ number tens of thousands of pages across 2,657 documents, including 2,100 ‘suspicious activity reports’. Even this handful of 1999-2017 files is a tiny fraction of the data held by the US Treasury’s money laundering and fraud watchdog.

Terrorist funds, drug cartel fortunes, cash piles embezzled from poor countries, and a ‘Ponzi scheme’

scam that conned small investors. All illegal. All facilitated by major banks. All unchecked by state regulators in the wealthy ‘liberal democracies’.

These revelations follow damning exposés on super-rich tax dodging in recent years. The Panama Papers in 2016 and Paradise Papers in 2017 showed that even the feeble laws regulating big profits are optional for fat cats.

As to the FinCEN Files, former FBI agent Michael German told BuzzFeed that “the largest money laundering operations occur with the cooperation of the financial institutions, or at least some officers within those institutions. The lack of money laundering enforcement had nothing to do with a lack of evidence of suspicious transactions, but a lack of

interest by political and law enforcement leadership.”

US bank JP Morgan, for example, moved over \$1 billion in five years for a firm suspected of representing Semion Mogilevich. That’s the ruthless international mobster who moves in the highest circles of the Russian state.

But the worst offender seems to be British capitalism, according to samples highlighted by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. Such is the legacy of Thatcher’s ‘Big Bang’ deregulation of the City of London.

In the US, still the economic centre of the universe, 2,209 suspect transactions totalled \$3 billion. But in the UK it was almost double: \$5.9 billion in or out across 1,680 transactions.

And the British Virgin Islands, a notorious tax haven, received \$107 billion in just 21 payments!

British bank HSBC is at the centre of a particular scandal. It served a fraudulent company called ‘WCM777’ that thieved at least \$80 million, mostly from small migrant investors in the US. Rather than investing productively to generate profit, each round of investors was paid by the investments of the next: an illegal ‘Ponzi scheme’.

With three US states already moving to close it down, HSBC let the scheme transfer over \$15 million. The firm’s owner scooped up Sierra Leonean mining rights, a mansion, and two golf courses.

HSBC has learnt nothing from its earlier bust in 2012. Alongside fellow British bank Standard Chartered - which the FinCEN Files show handling alleged Taliban money - it had laundered hundreds of millions for Mexican drug lords. The United States was pressing criminal charges.

George Osborne was the Tory chancellor of the exchequer at the time. Osborne (whose own family business appeared in the Panama Papers) wrote to US officials. He had “concerns” over “unintended consequences” and “contagion.” To avoid wider damage to the profit system, the threat of jail became a fine.

Top bankers should do time for criminal activities. So why is there “a lack of interest by political and law enforcement leadership”?

Robert Mazur, another former federal agent, explains: “Even if it’s bad wealth, it buys buildings. It puts money into bank accounts. It enriches the nation.” By ‘the nation’ he means only ‘the capitalists’, as the Panama Papers and cost-of-living crisis attest.

Banks even claim not to know who some of these clients are! HSBC staff in the US reportedly asked the Hong Kong branch for the name behind a suspect firm. ‘Trade Leader’ had made over half a billion dollars of transactions. According to the FinCEN files, Hong Kong replied: “None available.”

By contrast, just think about the somersaults which workers and small businesses have to perform to access financial services. There can be no doubt such ignorance is studied and derives from profit interests.

Banks control the bulk of economic activity. They are owned by the billionaires and ‘regulated’ by their overpaid friends. Mass anger and the needs of the market can lead to secondary restrictions. Beyond that, you might as well ask the Moon to regulate the orbit of the Earth.

Where there’s profit to be had, the bosses will find a way to have it. Not just ‘legitimate business’, but organised crime. And not just official crime, but the social crimes of ruinous lending practices, home foreclosures, and extorting public bailouts after gambling away the economy.

Ending these crimes requires breaking the power of their beneficiaries. Nationalise the banks and finance sector, under the elected control of ordinary bank workers, users and the wider working class.

With the profit motive removed, financial secrecy and crime could be stopped at source. And the colossal resources and organising power of the banks, directors of the economy, could be planned democratically. They could create jobs, homes and services, not bosses’ treasure troves.

The six-month eviction ban has come to an end. Hundreds of thousands of people could now be threatened with eviction. The Social Housing Action Campaign (Shac) participated in a protest in London on 16 September to demand the ban be extended. Shac chair and Socialist Party member Niall Mulholland spoke at the protest.

I live in a housing co-op. The housing co-ops, so far, have resisted evictions because of tenants’ loss of income due to lockdown. We’ve no intention of making people homeless because they’ve been furloughed.

If a housing co-op can do that, why not massive housing associations, council housing, and private landlords, who have an enormous amount of wealth? If there are smaller housing associations, who are genuinely struggling financially, then the government should step in to help those organisations, and co-ops that are struggling as well.

With furlough and huge cuts in wages, rent arrears are inevitable. I don’t like the phrase ‘rent forgiveness’. It’s not ‘forgiveness’; it’s people’s right to live in a home, in a secure situation with affordable rent.

The eviction ban should continue and evictions should be waived. The result of lifting the ban? Mass evictions will take place.

The only way to resolve this situation is a mass programme of council house building. Jeremy Corbyn, when Labour leader, put forward building 100,000 council homes a year.

A 59-year-old woman from Yorkshire was forced to live in a van for the last year. This crisis is going to get worse. We’re talking about hundreds of thousands or millions of council homes that are needed.

It’s not utopian. Even Tory governments did that in the 1950s. It can be done again. It’s a question of will.

It’s a question of will by the national government. It’s a question of will by local councils, of all colours and all political stripes. They have not carried through a programme of building the housing that’s needed by working-class people.

Build council housing and cap private rents, so people can’t be ripped off eternally by private landlords.

Even under the eviction ban, there have been almost 1,000 illegal evictions in London over the past 15



I don’t like the phrase ‘rent forgiveness’. It’s not forgiveness; it’s people’s right to live in a home



Hundreds of thousands or millions of council homes are needed. It’s not utopian. It’s a question of will

months, reports Safer Renting. The end of the ban could fire the starting gun on further waves of illegal evictions, as well as processes that can end in legal evictions

Tory Covid chaos

➡➡➡ CONTINUED FROM FRONT

It is certainly not impossible to protect both health and jobs. But not if the interests of the boss class are prioritised.

We need a programme based on protecting health and defending jobs: demanding work or full pay; fighting for workers’ control of workplace safety; fighting the privatisation of the NHS and public services that the Tories are pushing under cover of Covid; and campaigning instead for investment and expansion of publicly run and democratically controlled test-and-trace services.

This is the start of what is necessary to defend our lives and livelihoods,

and to unite working-class people in action in the face of Johnson’s divisive efforts.

The Socialist Party is fighting for such a programme in the trade unions which, with their 6.5 million members, have enormous potential strength to force much greater retreats from the Tories.

In the National Education Union, Socialist Party members are fighting for safe schools; track-and-trace; immediate testing where there are outbreaks; maximum class sizes of 15 where the infection rate is above 20 new cases per 100,000; extra resources for ‘blended learning’; allowing vulnerable staff to work from home; and



PHOTO PAUL MATISSON

an escalation of industrial action if necessary to achieve a safe workplace.

In the RMT transport union, Socialist Party members have been to the fore in fighting for the union to oppose redundancies and attacks on pay. Why should the working class pay for a crisis not of our making?

We link this demand with the need to fight for an independent working-class political voice and for a socialist alternative to the cuts and chaos of capitalism.

The end of rail franchises is a tacit acknowledgement that the market system doesn’t work. However, mass organisation and action by the working class is necessary to fight for the alternative - nationalisation under democratic working-class control and management as a step towards a socialist plan for the economy.

Capitalism and its defenders cannot keep us safe or offer us a future. We have to organise to fight for that.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

October issue includes...

- Breaking down: The fragile equilibrium cannot last
- Results fiasco: Should there be exams anyway?
- Leon Trotsky and the revolutionary party

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● Cardiff trade unionists oppose bus workers' job losses

Cardiff's council-owned bus operator is threatening to axe 20% of workers. Cardiff Bus has told staff it "will need to dismiss as redundant at least 130 members of staff across the entire workforce" out of 700, blaming reduced income due to coronavirus.

Cardiff Trades Union Council held an outdoor, socially distanced meeting in Cardiff Bay on 21 September to discuss the issue, as well as safety at work, NHS pay, and the furlough scheme. The meeting sent solidarity to Cardiff Bus workers and said:

"This shows the urgency for our movement to fight against the job cuts that will arise if the government ends the jobs retention scheme next month. Our movement must stand up to demand that the scheme is retained and prepare to fight for every job."

● Watch a full recording of the meeting at: facebook.com/cardifftradescouncil

● NUJ strikers reach agreement

The strike by journalists employed by Bullivant Media on free newspapers in Worcestershire and Warwickshire is over. The strikers have reached an agreement with the owners to restore journalistic control over published content.

Unfortunately, they were unable to get the company to rescind the three compulsory redundancies, but the strikers believe that the action will provide a firm base to strengthen the National Union of Journalists chapel going forward.

CLIVE WALDER

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A day in the life of a salon worker during the pandemic

In the face of worse working conditions and a cut in pay, we stood up collectively and won

A SALON WORKER, CARDIFF

I work in a salon in Cardiff. It was bad before the pandemic began, and some employers are using the crisis to either drag more work out of their staff for little to no more rewards, or to cut hours, cut pay, and to carry out redundancies.

Since we have returned to work, staff hours have been cut to part-time so that we can work in shifts of smaller teams to adhere to social-distancing measures. Of course, this comes with a cut in wages, with the lost hours being made up with the 80% flexible furlough, soon to be tapered to 70%, meaning a loss of 30% pay of already low wages for skilled workers.

The team were originally given longer appointments with no lunch breaks on nine-hour shifts, and were blackmailed into accepting these conditions by being told they could lose out on commission. Of course, in reality, there was clearly more of a concern of a loss in profits for the boss.

Safety

Standards of safety have also been skipped, with workers returning to shorter appointment times, and limited time to clean effectively in between appointments. Lunch breaks have now been reinstated. However, these are, and always have been, unpaid.

Our team are rightly concerned about safety, not only for ourselves but for our clients, family and friends, as local lockdowns continue, as well as the added pressure of wage concerns and long hours.

The outlook has changed among my team during the pandemic, though, as we have realised the power we have. When the UK went into lockdown in March, there were obvious concerns about what would



happen with our wages. But collectively, we put pressure on our boss, by means of a Facebook post about wages on our staff page. Once one person commented about the concerns of pay, everyone followed, and our boss had no choice but to pay us the 20% of wages that we would have lost.

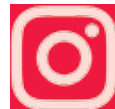
This victory gave us all a huge boost of confidence, and we are now all talking and openly sharing examples of bad practices for us as individuals and as a team. It won't be long before we have an organised and fully unionised workforce!

Super rich

The pandemic and lockdown have highlighted poor conditions for all workers across the globe, and how bosses are putting profits before the needs and safety of their workers. How is it that the 1% of the super-rich have gained more from this pandemic than anyone else?

Why are the super-rich like Richard Branson, Jeff Bezos and Tim Martin either earning trillions or asking for government bailouts while not paying taxes, when workers are being sacked, given zero-hour contracts, not receiving 100% pay and being made to work in unsafe conditions?

Trade unions should demand that these big businesses open their books for inspection, and be taken into public ownership. In this rotten capitalist system, profits and the 1% are always looked after above everyone else. But, that is all they are 1%. Us, the workers, are the 99%, and united we have the power to build a world for the needs of the working class, and not the capitalist elite.



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WARRINGTON INCLUDING AMY MURPHY (LEFT)



TOTTENHAM

● Reinstate Richie Venton protests

Workers in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Warrington staged simultaneous protests on 19 September calling on Ikea to reinstate sacked Usdaw union rep Richie Venton and reinstate sick workers' wages. This followed Socialist Party members and National Shop Stewards Network chair Rob Williams sending solidarity from outside Ikea in Tottenham, north London.

Udaw president and Socialist Party member Amy Murphy attended the Warrington protest and said: "Solidarity to Richie in his fight against his brutal sacking by Ikea and all Ikea workers who are victims of the outrageous sickness policy the company have implemented."

● See more at reinstaterichieventon.com and socialistpartyscotland.org.uk



GLASGOW INCLUDING RICHIE VENTON (RIGHT)



EDINBURGH

DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT - CHAOTIC SCHOOLS ARE NOT SAFE!

● "Already down from seven year groups to four"

Two weeks in and we are already down from seven year groups to four because of whole year groups having to isolate after confirmed cases. Three teaching staff are now confirmed as Covid positive as well.

We are having to think on our feet in terms of distance learning because the work we set for individually isolating pupils must be different to what we set for whole year groups who are isolating. Both of these must be different to what we leave as cover work for isolating teachers.

One of my department members was in tears before 9am recently because this is all so unmanageable and overwhelming, and because being in the school environment is frightening and unpredictable.

What's worse is that engagement with distance learning is an issue for poorer families who don't have internet access or the necessary IT equipment. If routine testing was in place, we could open more safely and ensure all pupils could access learning.

AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION (NEU) REP

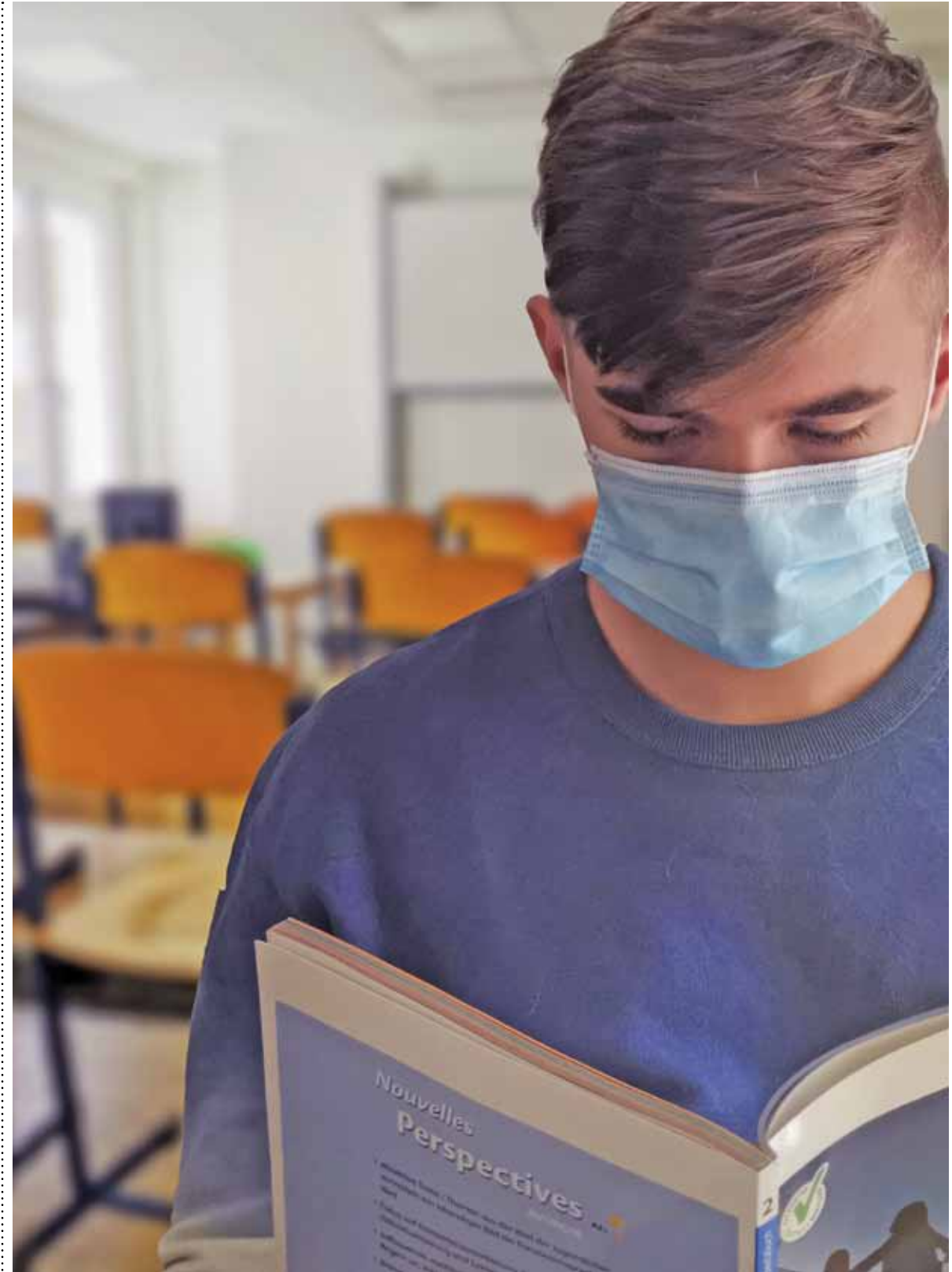
● "I recently taught 120 children over the span of three days"

I am a teacher in an East London primary school. The school is described as larger than average, with a high population of students from low-income households. Our borough has been particularly devastated by the effects of Covid, with a high rate of infection and death.

Although we have been repeatedly told the opposite by the media and government, it is clear that schools are unsafe places and become more unsafe with every passing week. Amid the uncertainty, it is a convenience to believe younger children are not vectors for the virus. The reality is much less clear.

Our school management takes the virus seriously, which is a small mercy. We are lucky enough that the use of face masks or visors is tolerated. We all know of local schools that have banned the use of PPE. The government has repeatedly told us that face masks are 'unnecessary' for adults working in primary schools with little-to-no solid evidence to back this claim.

Cleanliness in the school is a top priority. The flow of people (children and adults alike) is carefully managed. Nevertheless, this all feels like a fruitless endeavour when you enter a small, cramped, unventilated classroom with thirty pupils and



sometimes a handful of adults. You stand at the front of the room and ask the children not to approach you. This, of course, doesn't work.

I recently taught 120 children over the span of three days. A colleague lent me some anti-bacterial wipes so that, in an attempt to mitigate disaster, I could at least wipe down some of the equipment between classes.

Throughout the week I attended to first aid issues, I handed out individual resources, I marked books, I corrected pencil grips, I did up shoe-laces, I held the hand of a child who had lost a family member. All of this made social distancing impossible.

Teaching younger year groups

amplifies this issue. We have all seen the misleading images on the news of big airy classrooms with just a handful of children present. This is not reality.

Teachers are desperate to teach. They have not been provided with a safe space to do so and now they teach in unsafe conditions. Vulnerable staff, pregnant staff, completely unprotected staff, all teach in crowded, poorly ventilated rooms for hours at a time. The lack of tests and the increased waiting time for test results only compounds the danger. Already, we have lost a local teacher. It seems inevitable there will be more deaths as the months go on.

A PRIMARY TEACHER AND NEU REP

● "Children are so close they are touching"

Children are taught in classes of 33 in small rooms. They are so close that their arms are touching. In many rooms the windows do not open. No masks are worn in class. Masks are supposed to be worn in corridors but this does not always happen. In between lessons corridors, which are really only designed for one person to walk down at a time, have three rows of children walking in either direction or lining up outside classrooms.

A HISTORY TEACHER AND NEU REP

● "The school does not appear to be cautious at all"

We had a girl in class this week, came in clearly unwell and complaining of a sore throat.

Her temperature was taken, with a reading of 38C, higher than the Covid symptom range. It was taken again in 30 minutes - temperature was again 38C. Told to take again at break. Temperature still at 38C. School said they would phone parents - thought that perseverance had paid off.....nope, Mam was asked to bring in Calpol.

When this was challenged the reply was that she was only showing one symptom. She has remained in class all week.

Another child in class sent home to be observed following chest pains when breathing. Back in the next day.

Had a child off for three days with a 'cold' - no test asked for. A number of children off throughout the week with 'colds', and while it may be the case that that is all they have, the school does not appear to be cautious at all.

We have a staff meeting soon with 20 staff all in the same room (hall). While social distancing may be feasible, it still doesn't feel safe.

Risk assessments mean nothing if they are not followed. It is becoming increasingly clear that attendance figures are of more importance than the health and wellbeing of pupils, staff, and their families for a number of schools.

A PRIMARY TEACHER AND NEU REP

● See the website of Socialist Party members in education at spined.co.uk

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

● editors@socialistparty.org.uk

or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

Thousands of university and college students are returning to further and higher education campuses despite warnings this will lead to significant outbreaks of Covid-19. The University and College Union (UCU) and other education unions are calling for online teaching as the default until the 'five tests' for a safe return are met. But with university bosses pushing ahead with campus reopening, what are the perspectives for campus outbreaks? And what could this mean for the emergence of student and workers' struggles?

BEA GARDNER

SOUTHAMPTON UCU (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Around two million higher education students are starting courses at universities this month. Around 1.5 million of them are aged between 18 and 24 - the age range currently registering the highest Covid-19 infection rates per 100,000.

Young people are increasingly being blamed for the rise in cases, which averts attention from the government's disastrous test-and-trace system, the push for workers to go back into, often unsafe, workplaces earlier this month, and the rush to reopen schools.

Nevertheless, the mass forming of new student households, particularly in halls of residence, where hundreds of students are living in close quarters, does increase the potential for rapid spreading of the virus.

A recent model predicting how the virus would spread in a UK university setting estimated that one in five students will get Covid-19 by the end of the first term, and 75% of students by the end of the academic year. The model, based on a medium-sized university, predicted that 1,000 students would be infected with Covid-19 in the mode university on the last day of term, coinciding with a return to family homes for Christmas.

The government's scientific advisers in SAGE recently published a report which warned universities are "highly likely" to experience "significant coronavirus outbreaks" when students return to campus activity.

Fees fuel reckless return plans

Both the Tories and university bosses have pushed for a reckless return to campus learning. They are terrified that uncertainty and restrictions around coronavirus will mean many students defer their place, leaving universities - which rely on tuition fee income - financially ruined. The government has refused to underwrite or 'bail out' universities which get into financial difficulty due to reduced numbers.

Consequently, university bosses, similar to the big business bosses, have crossed their fingers and taken an 'optimistic approach'. In reality, this means ignoring mounting evidence and planning for a 'best case' scenario.

They are promising campus-based activities, including sports facilities, café and bar opening, and face-to-face teaching, in the hope of securing student numbers. By guaranteeing in-person activity, they also hope to secure lucrative first-year accommodation revenue.

So far, student numbers are much higher than predicted at the start of the outbreak. A significant factor in the record UK student numbers is the devastating work prospects for young people, including growing unemployment among 16-24-year-olds.

However, the same concerns for financial security fuelling the rushed return to campus activity have also influenced the amount university bosses are willing to spend on making campuses Covid-19 secure. Instead of employing additional teaching staff to allow smaller gatherings, casual staff have been left without work. Many other recommended measures, such as regular testing and provision of isolation accommodation, have been mainly ignored or minimally introduced by campus bosses.

Unsurprisingly, concerns are now mounting regarding record dropout rates when students discover that the reality of in-person teaching is nowhere near 'business as usual', and when they find themselves unable to secure part-time work to fund their studies.

Lessons from the US

UK scientists are particularly concerned that the UK could go in a similar direction to the United States, where large outbreaks have forced learning back online. The University of North Carolina registered 1,000 confirmed cases in the first week of teaching alone, out of a student population of 30,000.

Evidence from the US also discredited the belief young people are not severely affected by the virus - something used by the UK government and university bosses to downplay the significance of campus outbreaks. Growing information about post-acute Covid indicates that as many as a quarter of symptomatic young people have long-term complications, including heart inflammation and fatigue. The effects of students falling seriously ill, having previously been told they are relatively unaffected, could be another source of student anger.

Even if students themselves do not become severely ill, outbreaks on campuses spreading to local areas, potentially triggering local lockdowns, could cause divisions between students and local communities. Tensions could be further heightened if such measures coincide with the end of the furlough scheme and the threat of mass redundancies which will accompany it.



Student numbers are at record numbers, partly because of devastating work prospects for young people

COVID AND THE CAMPUSES

University workers and students must unite in fight for safety



PHOTO THEONLYSILENTBOB/CC

Research by the UCU found that more than half of polled residents in university towns believe that the student return will trigger additional restrictions, and half support online-only teaching this term. Currently, 48% of those polled said any rise in coronavirus cases as a result of university activity was the fault of the government, but nearly a quarter blamed students themselves. This is one reason why the government is determined to fuel divisions in society, deflecting blame onto young people.

One of the tasks of the UCU and

the wider trade union movement is to counter this attempted deflection by holding firm that any outbreaks amongst the student community are the result of the reckless return strategy imposed by the Tory government and university bosses.

A programme which unites staff, students and local communities, and fights for the resources to ensure safety for all, including the continuation of furlough, will help avoid such divisions.

On the campuses, a programme to unite students and staff should

include the call by the UCU for democratic trade union control and oversight of health and safety measures taken on the campuses, including democratic representation by the student population as well. This could afford the space for a democratic discussion about what it is everyone on campus requires for safe working and learning conditions.

If it is not safe, escalate!

The UCU is calling for online teaching as the default until the 'five tests' for a safe reopening for both staff and

students are met. The union is also hosting a special conference later this month to propose a national claim over Covid-19 attacks. The five tests require much lower numbers of Covid-19 cases, a national plan for social distancing, comprehensive testing, and a whole university strategy for health and safety which includes the protection of the vulnerable, prior to a return to face-to-face teaching.

The unions should call for transparency regarding rates of local infection, including numbers of staff and student cases and for democratic



Universities should be taken into democratic public ownership, so the resources in society can be used to ensure education and research benefits everyone

workers' control of testing. Individual members shouldn't be left alone to fight, and the union should demand swift action in the event of outbreaks.

The campus unions should prepare for a national strike ballot, disaggregated by employer, to allow strike action to be taken if these steps have not been agreed, and if infection rates continue to pose a threat to the health and safety of members in their workplaces.

However, unions' escalation of their struggle for safe campuses should be combined with a fight for the resources needed on campus to ensure a safe, and the highest possible quality, learning environment. This could cut across attempts by university bosses to divide students and staff.

The UCU should appeal to students to struggle alongside staff for resources: for extra teachers and support staff to maximise socially distanced contact time, for more spaces to safely learn and socialise on campus, and for regular cleaning of learning spaces and student accommodation. The campaign could also take up the already existing demands of campus unions, such as bringing all outsourced, low-paid cleaning staff back in-house on trade union rates of pay.

Students rightly ask why they should pay for this campus experience. Workers ask why they pay the corona price in pay and conditions. Central to a unifying programme for safe campuses, education for all, and fighting cuts, is the demand for free education. Corbyn's 2017 'For the Many Not the Few' 'grey book' estimated that the cost of removing university tuition fees and restoring maintenance grants was £11.2 billion a year. That would not significantly change the £210 billion spent on corona so far this year.

Outlook for students

Students will not relish the idea of moving to online learning in the face of further restrictions - paying £9,250 for the privilege, unable to afford decent technology and internet to support their learning. The prospect of further lockdowns could also provoke a backlash, especially given the isolation experienced by young people during the first wave, exacerbating mental health issues.

University bosses are cynically claiming their commitment to in-person teaching is to protect student mental health. Yet little attention has been given to how students will be supported when back on campus. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's current position is that students should not be allowed to return home in the event of a university outbreak, leaving thousands of students isolated and quarantining in often overcrowded or substandard accommodation.

Some universities are even attempting to profit out of so-called 'Covid welfare' measures, with one university found charging £25.00 for food parcels consisting primarily of budget noodles.

An effective quarantine strategy on campus has to include the provision of remote learning resources and equipment for students forced to isolate or awaiting test results, food delivery services for students, and the right of students to cancel or defer accommodation contracts without penalties, including part-way through the year if further lockdowns and campus closures are introduced.

In this environment, the demands for free education and living grants

for students, which the Socialist Party puts forward, could win wide support. So too could the understanding of the need for democratic planning. Mechanisms such as making accommodation available for effective quarantine and isolation would mean students could return home safely following a negative Covid test in the event of a lockdown.

However, students face a crisis of leadership. Students need organisations through which they can democratically thrash out a programme the student movement needs to win. The already existing student unions, the majority of which are affiliated to the National Union of Students, have a long record of acting simply as 'consumer representatives', instead of putting forward fighting demands on the government and university bosses which can win the necessary support and resources for students to have quality education.

Socialist Students exists on campuses across the country to help build democratic and fighting campus-based student organisations, linking the struggles on separate campuses into a national struggle for free education, including the scrapping of tuition fees, introduction of student living grants and the cancellation of all student debt.

A socialist programme for universities during Covid

To ensure no detriment to staff, students or the wider community as a result of Covid-19, democratic planning is essential. The Socialist Party has called for the establishment of joint staff and student health and safety committees since the start of the pandemic.

These bodies could play a vital role in ensuring that there is no staff or student detriment as a result of Covid restrictions. Any return plans which do not address the concerns and needs of staff and students are doomed to fail.

Even the government's scientific advisers have encouraged universities to involve students when developing return-to-campus plans, to increase the likelihood of student adherence and "prevent anger, confrontation and stigmatisation". The trade unions and students need to have representatives on all decision-making bodies regarding the return to campus activity. They should also be involved in decisions regarding further lockdowns and trigger points for campus closures.

Ultimately, the only way campus safety can be assured, while maintaining a quality education for students, is with adequate resources. The fee model of income is incompatible with this. Universities should be taken into democratic public ownership, so the resources in society can be used to ensure education and research benefit everyone, not just the capitalist system.



PHOTO SCOTT JONES

MEGAPHONE

The magazine of Socialist Students

2020 issue includes...

- Where next for Black Lives Matter?
- Will the Labour Party fight for students?
- 80 years since the murder of Leon Trotsky

leftbooks.co.uk/2020megaphone
and at freshers' fairs - £1



Liverpool Council must save care homes

Politicians, speaking at the protest to stop the closure of two care homes in Liverpool, made false promises to silence families and lessen anger on 21 September.

Labour MP Ian Byrne claimed that Liverpool mayor Joe Anderson had, moments before the protest, told him to ask staff and residents not to leave the care home. This is an utter sham- bles. Residents are already being of- fered places in other care homes.

Although the organiser said that the protest was not political, protest- ers accepted Socialist Party leaflets on the issue. Somebody from the crowd also asked when this could become political!

The organiser did say staff need to be employed by the local coun- cil and “we are here to stay”. Mayor Anderson said the cost of running the homes is too much for the cash- strapped council.

Like Militant - now the Socialist Party - did when we led Liverpool council, the current Labour council should refuse to implement cuts. If they don’t, then we will stand candi- dates against them, who will defy the cuts.

BHARATHI SUBA



PHOTO SOCIAL CARE/CC

Coventry: Socialist Students is back - Come to our outside meet-ups

MICHAEL MORGAN
COVENTRY SOCIALIST STUDENTS

At Coventry University, we talked to students angry about the crisis grip- ping universities.

Coventry Socialist Students put up posters and had a stall on campus. It was received positively by students, who took leaflets, read material, and discussed with us.

This summer, students experi- enced the A-level fiasco, Black Lives Matter and the continuing envi- ronmental crisis, so political en- gagement was high - many people stopped to talk to us.

Where students disagreed, we de- bated with them. Where they agreed, we encouraged them to sign up to Socialist Students. We got over 50 sign-ups.

Eleven came to our outdoor meet- ing, at a social distance, by Coventry university library. Students from Ire- land to Colombia discussed the is- sues facing them.

The meeting gave freshers the op- portunity to ask questions about our programme. We asked them: “Do you feel you’re getting your money’s



worth?” and what they thought we should campaign on - housing and tuition fees were key.

Socialist Students campaigns for tuition fees to be scrapped, for living grants, and for student debt to be cancelled.

We will follow this up with a cam- paign stall and meeting each week, and a Socialist Students Zoom meet- ing for the West Midlands. Online

communication is crucial for the student movement. But Socialist Stu- dents does not neglect face-to-face campaigning, and we do so safely.

Students are angry. Many are pre- pared to join a political fight against the injustices they face.

Socialist Students can provide a radical alternative to young people. Now we need it the most.

- socialiststudents.org.uk

Sussex: Hands off Peacehaven schools

BILL NORTH
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Parents in the town of Peacehaven, on the Sussex coast, have relaunched their campaign to save their primary schools from academy privatisation.

Last year, the community cam- paign won a major victory against the plans of Tory-dominated East Sus- sex County Council to hand Peace- haven Heights and Telscombe Cliffs schools to an academy trust. Hun- dreds of parents, children and staff

were involved, and the schools’ gov- ernors voted to reverse the decision.

Rather than accept the views of lo- cal people, the council sacked the governing bodies of both schools and replaced them with an unelect- ed ‘interim executive board’, made up of bureaucrats appointed by the council.

Campaigners have good reason to believe that the schools are - once again - being lined up for privatisa- tion. The local community currently has no say in the running of the

schools, major decisions are made without consultation.

Perhaps the most outrageous example was the decision by the Peacehaven Heights board to fill in the school’s swimming pool during the summer holidays. This act of van- dalism had the backing of the coun- cil, which claimed that the pool was an “undue burden on the school’s finances” - ignoring the fact that the local community raised £100,000 to ensure that the pool could continue to be used.

The main demands of the re- launched campaign, to ensure Peacehaven schools remain ac- countable to the local community, are:

- Parents’ forum at each school, so parent voices are heard
- The process to set up new, normal governing bodies, accountable to the community to begin immediately
- No irreversible decisions, such as academy conversion, be taken by imposed governors

One week to raise £3,444

PETE MASON
SOCIALIST PARTY FINANCE ORGANISER

“Thank you for your articles - the voice of sanity in all this chaos” writes an anonymous donor, sending the Socialist Party £20 after reading the Socialist newspaper.

Our socialist newspaper has ap- peared without fail throughout the pandemic, thousands of cop- ies printed and distributed through England and Wales each week. Your donations continue to fund the voice of sanity - the voice of socialism - in these difficult times.

As we approach the end of our six- month campaign, we have just one week to raise £3,444, to help fund our paper and also all our campaigning work on the streets, among the youth and the trade unions. Every penny and every pound will count.

Thanks goes to Helen Hayes, a reg- ular reader of the Socialist in Liver- pool and a long-standing supporter,

and to Neil Adams in Reading. Both gave £100 to our Fighting Fund.

A raffle in east London has brought in £25, Naomi in Hackney sent us £20 from a tax credit refund, and a big thanks to all the donations that brought in £1,890 last week.

Make this a record year for our fun- draising. Make a donation today.

- socialistparty.org.uk/donate

| SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| AREA | £ RECEIVED | £ TARGET | APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2020 | | DEADLINE: 2 OCTOBER 2020 |
| Northern | 3,040 | 2,063 | | | 147% |
| North West | 4,166 | 3,163 | | | 132% |
| East Midlands | 6,310 | 5,088 | | | 124% |
| South West | 5,861 | 4,950 | | | 118% |
| Eastern | 3,419 | 3,300 | | | 104% |
| Wales | 6,542 | 6,325 | | | 103% |
| Yorkshire | 7,024 | 7,013 | | | 100% |
| London | 12,187 | 12,650 | | | 96% |
| West Midlands | 6,486 | 7,150 | | | 91% |
| Southern & SE | 5,538 | 6,463 | | | 86% |
| Other | 4,735 | 10,588 | 45% | | |
| TOTAL | 65,306 | 68,750 | | | 95% |

The Socialist: More than a newspaper, we want change



The Socialist Party is a voice of sanity in all this chaos

I was delivering copies of our paper to subscribers on 17 September. I share bits from the Socialist a lot on Facebook, but with good reason.

There was a lot of good stuff in is- sue 1101:

- Headline call for mass protests, because we’re here for more than just news, we want change
- Article direct from a headteacher about the disaster of fully opening schools: A delicious page of satire ‘Rule of six - some guidance from your government’
- Report from a militant and determined trade union rally
- It mentions Coventry!
- It goes international. What’s the wave of repression in Egypt? Why

are Nigerians being arrested for protesting?

- Clear analysis of the test-and- trace scandal, the dramatic job losses, Boris and the EU clashing, local lockdowns from people experiencing it, and much more
- If you fancy a copy, it only costs £1, and that money goes right back into keeping the Socialist going. The more people it reaches, the more people learn about events here and abroad, and see how to fight for a better world.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

- [Read the articles that Adam mentions at socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

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Why we joined the Socialist Party

Why I became and remain a socialist

Keith Dickinson, the Socialist Party's longest-standing member, recently celebrated his 85th birthday. Keith explains what inspired him to join the predecessor of the Socialist Party, and why he is still fighting for socialism in his ninth decade.

In the early 1950s, I joined a trade union. Although I didn’t realise it, like a lot of youth today, I was thinking along socialist lines be- fore that.

The voting age was 21 and I thought that was when I could do something about my ideas.

My Mum and Dad were card hold- ing members of the Labour Party. When the party collector came for their subs every month, I signed up. That was 1957.

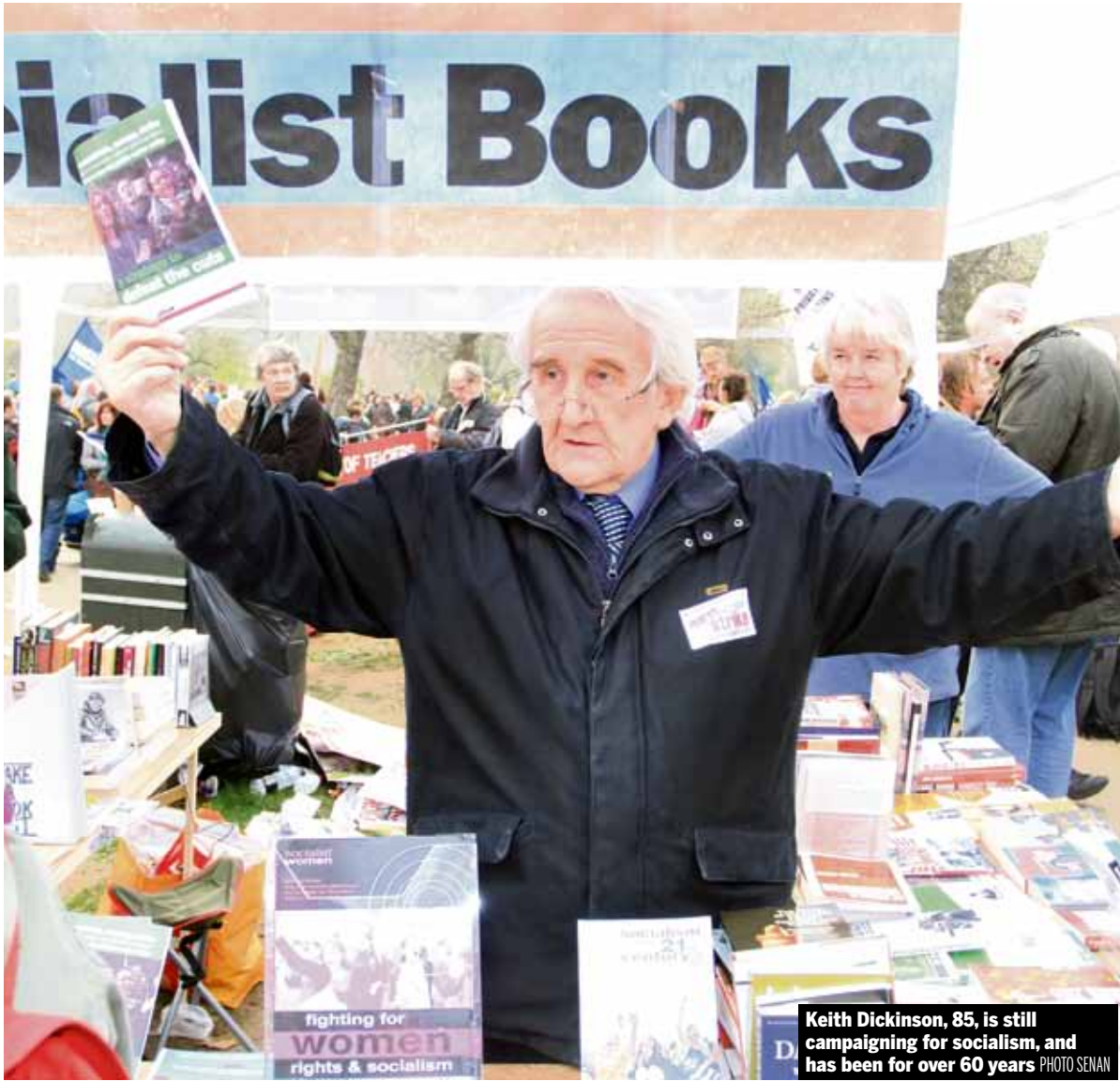
My parents had the Daily Herald, and on Sunday the Reynolds News, delivered through the door. These newspapers supported Labour. I read some of the articles.

I started attending Pirrie Ward La- bour Party meetings. It turned out Pirrie Ward was the most left-wing in the Liverpool Walton constituency. With these enthusiastic workers, I immediately became involved in lo- cal election campaigns.

At the Christmas party, I was ap- proached by one of the young mem- bers from another ward to attend the constituency youth section meet- ings. At these meetings I became convinced that there was an alterna- tive way to organise society.

I had thought Labour was the only alternative, but discovered that when it had been in power nothing had fundamentally changed.

Labour introduced the NHS in 1948. It was a big factor in gaining my support, as it enabled me to get



Keith Dickinson, 85, is still campaigning for socialism, and has been for over 60 years PHOTO SEVAN

I’ve learnt by listening to speeches, making lots of notes and reading the history of working-class struggle: read history, Marxist theory, but I would also stress the importance of grasping an understanding of the economy.

Every new member comes to the Socialist Party and its ideas in differ- ent ways. There are no born or natural Marxists and Trotskyists. They have to be convinced in the process of try- ing to survive with their families.

I considered it a compliment to our ideas when I was expelled from the Labour Party after 27 years

membership in 1983. This was the Labour leadership’s only method of answering our ideas, after decades of their ‘reformism’ letting the working class down.

What could be more convinc- ing than the Militant-led Liverpool 47 councillors in the 1980s? They applied a socialist programme - building 5,000 council houses, six children’s nurseries, three sports centres with free use by the unem- ployed and youth, and created 10,000 jobs for these purposes.

This was more than all the other

I’d lost hope, now I know there can be change and revolution

One of our youngest members - Bethany Morgan-Smith, a 14-year-old Leicester school student - says what inspired her to join the Socialist Party three years ago.

Watching a Channel 4 documen- tary about families struggling on £5 a day after fleeing abuse, made me cry. They wait a month for Uni- versal Credit. The little girl cares for the mum, as she is struggling to cope.

This is capitalism. This is why I, and many others, fight for a better world, where families do not struggle

to pay for things that the big bosses take for granted.

I fight for socialism, an equal so- ciety where the working class takes democratic control of production. One where we tax the rich, have free education, stop racism, stop homo- phobia etc.

I joined the Socialist Party in 2017 and it was one of the best decisions I have ever made. All I ever knew was austerity, cuts to my education and worrying about my future.

When my Mam joined the Social- ist Party and I started going to dem- onstrations in London and Leicester,



Bethany Morgan-Smith

TV: The English Game - how the working class made football the people's game



JOHN REID
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The English Game tells the story of how football was transformed in the 19th century. It was revolutionised from the Southern-dominated amateur, public school sport, dominated by individualistic, dribbling tactics, into a superior passing game, which reflected the cooperation and discipline needed, and developed by workers in the factory who transferred this onto the playing fields. It was this passing game, developed by the Scots and adopted by English Northern and Midland factory teams, which gained mass popularity, first in Britain, and then globally.

Fergus Suter is the star of the show. He was brought down from Partick in Glasgow for a fee, and became the world's first professional footballer. He moved to a factory team - Darwen - and then later to Blackburn Rovers. The series is factually wrong though. It has Suter lifting the FA Cup in 1883, when in fact he was on the losing side for Rovers in 1882. In fact, Blackburn Olympic were the first Northern workingmen's team to lift the FA Cup in 1883.

They beat Lord Kinnaird's Old Etonians. Olympic's team was made up of three weavers, a spinner, a plumber, a cotton operative and an iron foundry worker. Suter's Rovers won the cup in 1884, 85 and 86. Between 1883 and 1915, the cup only went South, once in 1901, when Tottenham Hotspur won the trophy. To reflect the growing

professionalism, the Football League was formed in 1888 by Scotsman William McGregor, and the world's first professional league was won by the original 'invincibles', Preston North End, as they were unbeaten league and cup winners.

The series reflects the class struggle, and how factory owners cut wages and workers fought back with strikes. It shows the appalling conditions faced by the working class, particularly by women. It highlights how factory owners took control of the game to divert workers' minds away from struggle, and how admission charges were introduced for the first time. Now, football is a global multi-million pound game, largely removed from its roots in the working class.

It is a little bit twee, as you would expect from the creators of Downton Abbey, but it is very enjoyable.

● **The English Game is available on Netflix**



Reclaim the Game (2019) - a socialist programme for football by John Reid - available from www.leftbooks.co.uk



DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

- Send your news, views and criticism, in not more than 150 words, to editors@socialistparty.org.uk - or if you're not online, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
- We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. For legal reasons, we need your full name, address and phone number - but confidentiality will be respected if requested

THE SOCIALIST INBOX

● I didn't see it coming

Test-and-trace chief Baroness Harding - who has usurped Chris "failing" Grayling as the most incompetent top public office holder in the UK - cemented her position when she told MPs: "I don't think anybody was expecting to see the really sizable increase in demand [for tests] that has happened over the last few weeks".

Her surprise seemed to ignore the nationwide reopening of schools that her government instituted. Oh dear.

SIMON CARTER
NEWHAM, EAST LONDON

● Lacking authority

Birmingham City Council has put a poster on the city centre's animated poster sites urging people to obey social distancing and hygiene regulations to reduce the city's spiralling number of Covid-19 cases, and avoid a second lockdown.

In order for people to take such messages seriously, they must be delivered by people who are respected in the community. Councils are badly placed to be taken seriously because of their long track record of cutting services and treating people with contempt.

If they want people to listen to what they have to say they should fight austerity and actually stick up for their citizens.

CLIVE WALDER
BIRMINGHAM

● One law for them, another for us!

The shock and horror currently being expressed by middle-class liberals about Johnson's threat to break international law is a bit late.

For some years now the UK has been in breach of Conventions 87 and 98 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in respect of the right to strike and unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of trade unions.

The ILO is a United Nations body, bringing together trade unions, employers' organisations and governments to formulate conventions and issue guidance on their implementation. More importantly, their decisions are part of the body of international law.

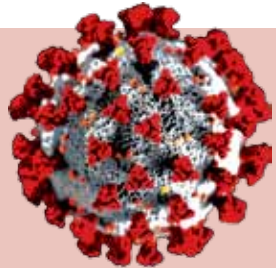
I do not support Johnson's proposals, but just make the point that if international law is so important, why hasn't the capitalist news media focused on these breaches? A cynic could be forgiven for concluding that International Law under capitalism only matters when big business interests are threatened.

ROGER BANNISTER
LIVERPOOL

● Readers' competition

I think the Socialist should run a competition. Namely, who has the furthest to go for a Covid test?

A friend of mine in Hull was informed



that the nearest test centre for his two children who had some of the Covid-19 symptoms was Inverness in Scotland! The journey from Hull to Inverness is 423 miles estimated at nearly 8 hours travelling - and that's with no breaks. Add in the time for the test and the return journey, and effectively this becomes a two-day expedition!

The problems over testing are caused by decades of NHS cuts and 'rationalisations'. It used to be the case that most hospitals had virology departments with labs that could be used for testing. Most of these labs in local hospitals have now been closed and centralised.

Politicians from all of the establishment parties have justified this process as the most effective way to run services. In reality, it has been to make cuts. These cuts have now come back to haunt them as the testing service is shown to be completely inadequate.

Unfortunately, it is ordinary people like us that pay the price. We have to fight for democratic control of the health service so that the right services are available to everyone.

MICK WHALE
CHAIR HULL TRADES COUNCIL

● Uncaring council - fight the cuts!

In Basingstoke, three severely disabled adults who live together in a house run by Hampshire County Council have received notice that their home will be closed by April next year.

The reason given is that renovating the building is not financially viable, and costs of keeping it open are too high. Never mind that the people living there won't survive moving!

The three have formed deep attachments to each other and their carers. The only alternative is moving to a care home six miles away in another town. Here, their families won't be close, they'll be split up

● Marketised misery

Like thousands of other postgraduate research students, I teach undergraduates on a casual basis. I have no contract or guaranteed hours but work by the hour when asked.

Universities have come to rely on casual staff as a cheap, disposable workforce. With the cost of rent high in many areas, many of us are desperate for any work we can get. Universities exploit this, knowing that they have a reserve army of teachers at their disposal.

This year, I received an email on the 12 September asking if I could teach a seminar class this term, starting in less than two weeks. Because of Covid, we have to develop both online and physical lesson plans. Students are expecting that we have prepared all summer to adapt to this shift and to develop excellent online materials!

I had previously been told there would be no work available this year, so

I was not following all of the latest news and training regarding online learning. Even if I had, it would have all been unpaid. Meanwhile, I'm also fearful of the safety of in-person teaching as university bosses have been reckless with their return to opening plans.

Undergraduate students would be shocked to know that I have only had two hours training to teach, all unpaid, of course. I have engaged in extra learning in my own time, so I can deliver to a standard I feel students deserve.

No one has ever observed my classes, and I've never received any feedback on my progress. I am paid £13 an hour but, based on the actual amount of hours put in for each class, it is more like £5 an hour.

Graduate teaching assistants are caught between a rock and a hard place. If we do what we are actually paid for, then our students would rightly complain and it would damage our career prospects too. But if we put in the work that our students deserve,

then we take on hours of unpaid labour which impacts our family time and our research too.

The University and College Union (UCU) 'four fights' dispute last year allowed casualised teachers to voice the realities of their experience: the challenges of being able to rent with agencies rejecting our insecure income, challenges of making plans for the future, difficulties in relationships and unable to take time off sick.

Coronavirus has only exacerbated the plight of casualisation and worsened its effects. The UCU must continue the fight. University bosses cannot get away with this any longer, and students have an essential role to play in the fight.

During the four fights dispute in 2019-20 we said "our working conditions are your learning conditions". Students and university workers should unite and fight against this misery of casualisation caused by the market system.

BEA GARDNER
SOUTHAMPTON



Labour's decisive shift to the right under establishment leader Keir Starmer RWENOLAND/CC

from their housemates and carers, and they won't live in a family setting. It would be life threatening to turn their world upside down and they would not understand why this is happening.

Hampshire County Council is making £80 million of cuts to its budget, which means the most vulnerable and poor will pay the price. But we can turn the tide if we organise our communities and protest!

Basingstoke socialists are organising a campaign to save this home and others. We will put pressure on the Tory councilors to reverse these cuts, and use borrowing powers and reserves to provide good quality housing and care for all.

The Tories are weak and U-turn on every issue when only a threat of protest is made. So join us, and united we can kick them out.

MAYOLA DEMMENIE
BASINGSTOKE

● Stop the culling

The government has ordered that upwards of 75,000 badgers should be slaughtered to prevent cows becoming infected with bovine TB. This is despite an independent survey in 2013 which showed that the killings were inhumane



and ineffective. It also was more expensive than vaccinating badgers, which has been shown to work in Wales.

News of the slaughter comes at the same time as the World Wide Fund for Nature stated that there has been a serious decline in the numbers of most animal species.

Capitalism has been a disaster for wildlife. Through socialism we can protect life-forms and ensure they flourish.

DAVID RAWLINSON
SOUTHAMPTON

● Starmer's new pub decor

New Labour leadership? That reminds me of all those pubs that reopen with "Under new management" signs. Usually it takes a month or two before they close again. Under new management they might have had the interior refurbished, sometimes there is a name change (like New Labour?), but basically they are establishments incapable of meeting the demands of changing conditions or satisfying the needs of the people they serve.

SUE POWELL
GLOUCESTER

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THAILAND: YOUTH RISING AGAINST HATED JUNTA



Thailand's pro-democracy movement has adopted the Hunger Games' three-finger rebellion symbol PHOTO PRACHATA/CC

Protest leaders call for general strike on 14 October

YUVA
SOSIALIS ALTERNATIF (CWI MALAYSIA)

Since the beginning of this year, Thailand has witnessed the rising up of young people and students, who have launched massive pro-democracy protests in several major cities, colleges, and universities. Although initially only concentrated in certain higher education institutions, the protests have already begun to spread to the streets and are attracting many working people into action. This movement was interrupted temporarily at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March, but has resurfaced with a renewed vigour since the start of July. On 24 September, a reported 50,000 protesters gathered in the capital Bangkok demanding the ousting of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha, the ex-army general who seized power in 2014. The student protest leaders also called for the powerful monarchy to be reformed and for a general strike on 14 October.

Conflicts
The reaction of Thailand's youth and students was sparked when the military-controlled government banned one of the opposition political organisations, the Future Forward Party, which had garnered the support of youth in the last general election. Although this was the trigger for the latest democracy movement in Thailand, the country had already been in a prolonged political crisis for almost two decades. Since the military coup in 2006 that toppled the rule of Thaksin Shinawatra, the Thai ruling class has not succeeded in establishing a stable government.

In the last 15 years, Thailand has experienced two separate military coups. The first was when the Thaksin government was overthrown, and the second when the government, led by Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, was overthrown in 2014. **Two wings**
The political figures who fell victim to military repression, such as Thaksin and Yingluck, are representatives of neoliberal capitalists who are hostile towards the crony capitalists under the control of the military and the monarchy. They represent entrepreneurs who are aiming to build a capitalist structure free from the clutches of the monarchy and the military, which is widely seen as hindering the economic development of Thailand. Meanwhile, the monarchy and the military bureaucracy, who control some parts of the economy, are in a prolonged struggle to safeguard their interests and privileges. Thaksin and Yingluck, together with their Pheu Thai Party, made use of populist slogans to gain support, especially from the rural communities. They promised various infrastructure reforms for the poor and provided aid or gifts in the form of money payments, computers, household appliances, food items, and so on, during their rule. As a result, this political wing had managed to gain support from the poor, especially in large numbers from farmers in northern Thailand. Supporters of Thaksin and Yingluck are dubbed the 'Red Shirt' movement, and in the past launched huge protests that temporarily crippled the Thai economy.

This mass movement was seen to be growing again in the wake of the political coups against both the Shinawatras. But it was repressed by the monarchy and the military. The traditional political representation of the monarchy and the military bureaucracy is the Democratic Party - led by former prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. Since losing power in the 2005 election, the military bureaucracy has tried several times to reinstate the Democratic Party back into power, but they have failed to gain electoral support. As a result, the military has instead directly held power for a prolonged period. It has also implemented major adjustments to the national constitution to ensure military-bureaucratic control. Followers of the Democratic Party are known as the 'Yellow Shirts' and have the support of the middle classes, mostly based in Bangkok. They have even managed to organise a few mass actions in the capital in the past. However, their grassroots support is nowhere as great as that of the Red Shirts. Their strength is still dependent on nationalist propaganda that elevates the monarchy and military institutions. **Army coup**
In 2014, after the election victory of the Pheu Thai Party and Yingluck being named prime minister, the Thai army, under the command of General Prayuth Chan-Ocha, launched a coup d'état. It took over the Thai government under the auspices of the National Council of Peace and Order. The junta government has also used its power to ban some opposition organisations, arrest hundreds of activists, and suppress the media.

After five years of military rule, an election took place last year. Various dirty tricks were deployed to guarantee success for the Palang Pracharat Party, established by the military bureaucracy and led by General Prayuth Chan-Ocha. Nevertheless, the opposition Pheu Thai still managed to get most parliamentary seats, with 136. Palang Pracharat won 116 seats, and the newly formed Future Forward Party won 81 seats. **Anti-junta bloc**
However, the process for selecting the prime minister was changed from how it was before, and as many as 250 senators, appointed by the military, could also vote to choose the prime minister. Therefore, despite not getting a majority in the general election, Prayuth Chan-Ocha has managed to secure his position by using the support of the 250 senators. The candidate who really got the majority in parliament, based on elected MPs, is the leader of the Future Forward Party (FFP), Thanathorn Juangroengruangkit. Despite this, the government has not managed to achieve the freedom to legislate and act as it pleases. Opposition parties in the parliament have formed an 'anti-junta' bloc. Among the general population, the Prayuth-led government is seen as corrupt and undemocratic. The military bureaucracy, together with its leader, Prayuth, has also been linked with a massive international corruption scandal ('IMDB') which saw the previous Malaysian prime minister, Najib Razak recently sentenced to a 12-year prison term. The military regime has also been

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The monarchy and the military bureaucracy who control some parts of the economy, are in a prolonged struggle to safeguard their interests and privileges



Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha, the ex-army general who seized power in 2014 PHOTO WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL/CC

exposed over its failure to handle the Covid-19 pandemic. While the cronies close to the junta are making record profits, the population of Thailand is facing mass unemployment and austerity measures. Prayuth Chan-Ocha and his regime have begun to increase repression against opposition parties. Leaders of the FFP have been jailed on baseless allegations and the party itself was banned shortly thereafter. This action angered the people, especially the youth, who have sparked the current protest movements. Although the FFP has the support of the youth, it also represents capitalist interests very similar to other parties, such as Pheu Thai. The leader of the FFP is a multi-millionaire rooted in a wealthy business dynasty. **“**
Ultimately, the so-called progressive parties will also exploit the Thai working class and oppress them upon gaining power

market and establish a different kind of government. Workers and poor people, who have been the victims of economic crises, government violence, and iron-clad rule by the military regime, do not have political leadership that truly represents their interests. Earlier this year, Thailand was the country most severely affected by the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in South East Asia. This led to the collapse of its tourism industry on which the Thai economy so heavily depends. As a result, the Thai economy is expected to decline by almost 10% this year. The unemployment rate in Thailand is also expected to reach as high as 25%, not counting the millions of unregistered informal workers who are losing their livelihoods daily. The people are now also facing a political crisis that will spark further tensions and create situations of instability. In the past, and again today, Thai people have shown a tremendous capacity to fight, even without a clear leadership. The students have taken on the military with their own bare hands, risking prison and even death. **Mass workers' party**
The working class of the cities and poor of the countryside in Thailand need a mass workers' party that can unite all the struggles of the people and fight for the will of the majority. All the parties that exist in Thailand, including anti-junta organisations such as the Pheu Thai and the FFP, are simply representative of one wing or another of the capitalists and are at odds with the interests of the working-class majority. Ultimately, the so-called progressive parties will also exploit the Thai working class and oppress them upon gaining power. The anger of the people will only be used as a tool to shape a different form of oppressive structure, even if it is a 'clean' rather than openly corrupt capitalism.

These capitalist political organisations offer no real solutions to the perils facing the Thai majority and will be subordinated to the will of the capitalist class all over again. **The fight ahead**
Young people and students who are protesting in the streets have become more courageous in raising anti-monarchy demands in addition to the demand for democracy. The actions of these youth are incredibly bold considering that in Thailand, any criticism of the monarchy could result in severe prison sentences and was a very rare occurrence in the past. Technically, the protests led by young people and students over the past months were deemed to be illegal by the Thai regime under the Covid-19 emergency laws, and hundreds of arrests followed a brutal crackdown on protests. Despite only two reported Covid-19 infections in September, Prayuth attempted to politicise the virus by criticising on TV the recent mass pro-democracy demonstration for potentially creating new infections. However, even the UK government has recently lifted quarantine restrictions on travellers from Thailand. The bold action by the students and youth who are defying a notoriously repressive regime is inspiring the Thai population. Thai youth have pledged to continue their struggle under the 'Free Youth' umbrella and are planning various actions, including one scheduled to take place in Thammasat University at the end of September. They are determined to carry on with protest action until their demands are met - for the prime minister to resign and dissolve parliament, for the constitution to be amended to include democratic practices, and to stop the government repression towards political opponents and critics immediately. Thousands of Thai protesters have

Flouting his wealth while the majority suffer

After the death in 2017 of King Bumiphol - a popular figure - the Thai army began to lose its credibility, especially since Bumiphol's successor, his son Vajiralongkorn, is generally very unpopular. Vajiralongkorn is considered an irresponsible leader, and his name is often connected with various scandals that have been exposed worldwide. The king of Thailand is the richest monarch in the world, with his wealth estimated at \$45 billion. Recently, the new king made headlines when he flew in his private Boeing 737 jet to a 'quarantine vacation' in an exclusive retreat in Germany. He was accompanied by an entourage of over 100, including his harem. This took place at the end of March, at a time when the Thai population was being strangled by the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. There was also an internal conflict within the monarchy after the death of Bhumipol. In the 2019 general election, the sister of the king, Ubolratana, was named as the prime ministerial candidate for a new party that opposes the military



King Vajiralongkorn is the richest monarch in the world PHOTO PR DEPT./CC

junta government. However, this attempt was ridiculed and criticised heavily by Vajiralongkorn and the government banned Ubolratana from contesting altogether.

taken to the streets in an unprecedented fashion, chanting "Down with dictatorship!" and "The country belongs to the people". Already, these protests have forced the government to hold a parliamentary dialogue forum to discuss all the students' demands and proposals, including issues surrounding the monarchy. This will be the first time in recent memory where issues regarding the reform of the monarchy will be raised in parliament and a challenge made to arbitrary punishment meted out for 'lèse-majesté' (offending the king). **“**
The youth must also raise their demands and formulate an economic and class-based programme to attract the workers and poor farmers

However, no concrete solution can be achieved simply through parliamentary means. The government is dominated by pro-capitalist forces on all sides. In order to gain any kind of reform which will be beneficial to the masses, the existing structure of capitalist politics must be challenged by formulating a clear alternative to the system. The current mood of the masses in Thailand is ripe for a successful battle with the oppressors, and the youth movement should be harnessed in the direction of replacing the capitalist system, rather than depending on one or other of the

capitalist representatives who are unable to deliver any meaningful change. **Alternative**
At the same time, the youth must also raise their demands and formulate an economic and class-based programme to attract the workers and poor farmers into this democracy movement. It's a big step forward that the student leaders are calling for a general strike on 14 October. However, this must be concretised with working-class organisations, in particular, the trade unions. Thailand also needs the establishment of a revolutionary party that can bring a clear political perspective to the mass movement and the working class. A meaningful change for the people cannot be achieved as long as the capitalist system is enslaving the Thai people. The alternative, socialism, which would materially benefit the majority in society, should be the aim of the mass movement. Only with a planned economy, democratically controlled and run by the working class, will a complete redistribution of wealth and sustainable economic growth be ensured in Thailand and internationally.



SECOND WAVE FUND NHS AND PAY RISE NOW

● **For a 15% pay rise and
mass hiring programme**

● **For democratic planning,
not privatised chaos**

BETH WEBSTER

NHS NURSE, CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

Boris Johnson has finally admitted that we are heading into a second Covid wave. NHS workers deserve a pay rise and need more resources to cope.

At least 13 million people are now back under local lockdown, with an R rate as high as 1.4 in some areas. NHS and social care workers are preparing ourselves for a repeat of the last peak, with staff, PPE, and equipment shortages - but all on top of winter pressures and the flu season.

In some hospitals, winter pressure wards have already opened. The Welsh health minister Vaughan Gething has proudly announced 400 beds are opening in Cardiff's biggest hospital in preparation for winter. Unfortunately, hospital staff have been told there won't be extra staff to go with them; they'll be pulled from existing wards which are already short.

If the capitalist establishment learnt anything from the first wave, it's ignoring it. Short-term, media-friendly 'solutions' without substance are all Westminster and the devolved governments are willing to offer us. Health and care workers and our patients will pay the price yet again.

UK health secretary Matt Hancock has said a second national lockdown will be the public's fault. Nothing to do with his government's catalogue of failings, such as the collapsing Covid testing system! NHS workers are still only tested when symptomatic, despite earlier promises we would be tested weekly to protect patients and colleagues.

Capitalism

Capitalism has no way of resolving the economic uncertainty either. A system where hospitals are crying out for more staff while dole queues are lengthening has to go.

Why isn't the government putting emergency funding for training, jobs and facilities in place? Only a socialist system, based on democratic planning and public ownership, could guarantee what's necessary.

Capitalist politicians may be ignoring the lessons of the first wave, but workers are not.

Many NHS workers are organising around the demand for a 15% pay rise, nationally and locally in our own hospitals. This has pushed the unions to adopt bolder pay claims.

NHS workers participating in this campaign have learnt that if we struggle together, we can have an impact. If there are PPE shortages and safety issues again, an immediate fightback would be easier to organise.

The doctors' union BMA is surveying members in preparation for balloting for industrial action over pay. Other health and public sector unions should be following them.

We've learnt that we can't rely on our current governments and many of our current union leaders. Only our collective strength and action will get us through the Covid crisis.