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the Socialist

Issue 1110

19-25 November 2020

formerly **Militant**

Tories in turmoil... 'RESET' THE WHOLE SYSTEM! Fight for socialism



PHOTO ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY/CC



ELAINE BRUNSKILL

SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

Who needs Game of Thrones when you have the unfolding events in Johnson's government?

Against the backdrop of the pandemic and Brexit, we have images of Johnson's senior adviser Dominic Cummings walking out the front door of Downing Street.

When, almost a year ago, Boris, with Cummings by his side, won a landslide general election many thought both were invincible.

Certainly, back in May, after a backlash against Cummings' road trip to Barnard Castle, many were

incredulous that he survived his rose garden interview.

Sometimes it can take time for events to unfold. We are now seeing the unravelling of Johnson's government.

Cummings has gone, Boris is no longer looking invincible and a post-Cummings government 'reset' will not resolve their problems, even with the prospect of a Covid vaccine (see pages 8-9). Covid and Brexit

are exaggerating all the fault lines, not just in the Tory government, but also in their rotten capitalist system.

As always, it is the working class who will be hardest hit, while the super-rich rake in mega-profits.

A growing number of workers and young people are drawing the conclusion that capitalism can no longer offer them an even half-decent future. We need a 'reset' of the whole system. We need to fight for socialism.

So don't just get angry, get organised! Join the socialists and fight for a new mass workers' party that represents our interests, not those of big business and the rich as the Tories and now Starmer's Labour Party do.

Where is Britain going?
One of the sessions at
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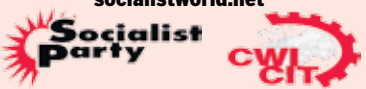
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Croydon Council declares bankruptcy

No cuts in Croydon or any other council

DAVID MAPLES

MERTON UNISON, CHAIR (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

With a £66 million gap between income and expenditure, Labour-controlled Croydon Council is effectively bankrupt - politically and financially. The council has issued a section 114 notice that prohibits anything other than essential expenditure.

It threatens more job losses and cuts to services, in addition to the 410 announced in the summer. Already 59 staff have been made compulsorily redundant.

During a decade of austerity, Labour councils have had a choice. Fight for the resources for the services the community needs or come up with 'clever schemes' to generate income. Croydon chose the latter, making investments including a hotel, shopping centre and risky housing development.

A £36 million shortfall from the housing development has exacerbated the crisis. Another £30 million shortfall was caused by necessary spending to fight the pandemic and repeated cuts from central government funding.

Labour has already made deep



PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

cuts in Croydon and outsourced refuse collection, street cleaning and parks maintenance with neighbouring councils. Council chief executive Katherine Kerswell emailed all staff: "Everything that costs the council money, including our terms and conditions, will need to be considered in the search for savings."

Unison, the union representing council workers, has correctly stated it will not accept a section 114 notice as cover for attacks on members' terms and conditions and jobs. But how?

Labour councillors need to make the decision to stand up for the communities they've been elected to defend or stand aside for those who will.

If a single footballer, Marcus Rashford, can force this weak and divided government into repeated U-turns over free school meals, then 7,000 Labour councillors could mount a successful campaign to gain the £12 billion needed to properly fund local services.

Extraordinarily, only one of the candidates in the Unison general secretary election, Hugo Pierre, mentions local authority cuts in their election address. The crisis in Croydon shows the absolute need for the strategy he sets out (see below).

What now for the fight against austerity? at

socialism2020.net

Online forum 20-23 November

Unison general secretary candidate Hugo Pierre says:

Fight for the funds from the Tories

I want to send solidarity to all Unison members and the Unison branch in Croydon, and other trade unionists working for Croydon council. Finding out that your council has issued a Section 114 notice is worrying.

Croydon is not the only council in this situation, but looks like it's the first to crack, following years of reduced government funding and Covid 'spend whatever it takes', without sufficient funds from the government.

The Tories will no doubt call this a profligate Labour council. But this decision exposes the massive weakness of Labour councils' strategy.

Where is the pressure on Chancellor Sunak to put up the £12-15 billion that councils say is needed to end their deficits? Where is the call from the Labour frontbench to fund cash-starved councils? Why doesn't Croydon have the backing of the Labour Party to be the first council to say it refuse to make these cuts?

This lack of a strategy could have a demoralising impact on Unison members. I have been calling on our general secretary, from my seat on the Unison national executive council, to give our members in local government a fighting strategy to save their jobs and services.

We should be supporting our members to take action. And we should be calling all our local government branches together in national action, to win back the money the Tories have taken from our services.

If Labour councillors are not prepared to take this stand at this crucial time, our union should give no more money to cutting and privatising Labour councillors. It should allow our branches to democratically decide to support candidates from the trade union and workers' movement who will fight for our jobs and services.

● See Hugo's programme for women workers on page 7 and find 'Hugo Pierre 4 Unison General Secretary' on Facebook.

● Rules introduced by Unison to clamp down on democratic debate in the union mean that candidates for union elections cannot 'invite or accept' support 'in money or kind' from any entity which 'is not provided for in Unison rules.' This article is produced without the authorisation of Hugo Pierre, in order to comply with these requirements.

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PHOTO MARY FINCH

Tory crisis cannot be 'reset'

Workers need a new mass party



PIPPA FOWLES/NO 10

Socialist Party

WHAT WE THINK

Relations at the top of the government have become so putrid and precarious that it only took the appointment of a new press secretary - Allegra Stratton - to trigger a chain of reactions leading to the exit of two of the closest staff to Boris Johnson.

Stratton had refused to work under the director of communications, Lee Cain, and a plan to mollify him by promoting him to the role of chief of staff fell apart. It was widely reported that Johnson's partner, Carrie Symonds, among others, had intervened against it.

Cain resigned, followed a few days later by the notorious senior advisor Dominic Cummings, derided and ridiculed across the country ever since his disregard for lockdown rules and subsequent 'explanation'.

"An opportunity to muck out the stables" said one Tory MP on news of the departures, reflecting the view of a significant number of Tory backbenchers and ministers. They've been fearing for their political careers as Johnson's popularity has plummeted, with some of the blame being directed at the arrogant clique around Cummings and Cain.

However, the resignations won't end the ferocious infighting, which stems from irreconcilable differences across the party that have been raging for a long period, on a number of fundamental issues. At root they are ideological.

In part, the fault lines over Brexit were resurfacing in this latest blood-bath. Cain was part of the 2016 EU Leave campaign which was headed by Cummings and Johnson. Tensions

have escalated during the final weeks of negotiations with the EU over the end of the transition period, and now Biden's victory in the US has thrown an additional factor into that cauldron.

This has overlapped with other political issues, and also with a desire to try to give the party and the government a more caring, less toxic image - argued for by some of those who wanted rid of Cain and Cummings.

U-turns

This is a government in huge crisis, responsible for the highest Covid death toll in Europe and the greatest economic decline of all the most developed countries. It has zigzagged on every crucial question that has arisen, including the lockdowns, school exams, free school meals and the furlough scheme, and has been facing parliamentary rebellions by an increasing number of Tory MPs.

The party infighting has become more entrenched as different line-ups search in vain for a way out of the multiple and severe crises. Myriad internal 'factions' exist: the Northern Research Group, Common Sense Group, One Nation Caucus, China Research Group, the Blue Barricade, among them.

Unsurprisingly, big business leaders have expressed dismay at the incompetence and uncertainty, even questioning the government's whole attitude to business and the economy. Conservative governments have usually been the preferred representatives of the capitalists, and Johnson's government is intrinsically based on capitalist interests. But there is deep concern in the ruling class over the fault lines within it, some of the political decisions taken, and on the manoeuvring and ineptitude of Johnson - and his choice of officials.

There's also unease over the speed at which trust in capitalist 'democracy' is being undermined. The government's Covid-related failings loom largest in this, but there are

also smaller episodic issues. For instance, the Cabinet Office still hasn't published the results of an investigation into the behaviour of home secretary Priti Patel. Nor has any action been taken against housing secretary Robert Jenrick for presiding over "opaque and not impartial" funding decisions, as reported by the House of Commons public accounts committee.

The total dysfunction of the Tories underlines why the capitalist establishment has been so positive about the election of Starmer as Labour leader and his counter-revolution against Corbyn and Corbynism. They need a political fall-back position that poses no threat to the capitalist economic interests.

Any idea that a reshuffle of ministers and staff will 'reset' the government on a stable path is pie in the sky. Or that Johnson's fortunes can be transformed by the planned daily broadcasts to the public by the new Downing Street press secretary, by-passing the media.

Their difficulties should give confidence to workers and young people to get organised in the trade unions and in the communities to fight for their interests on health and safety at work, on jobs and livelihoods, and on public services.

But the only way to end the Tories wretched state, and their anti-working class agenda, is to hasten their end and get them out of office - an urgent task of the workers' movement. This needs to go along with laying the basis now for the building of a new mass workers' party that can offer a socialist alternative.

• TUSC and the fight for working-class political representation on page 11

Where is Britain going?
- one of the sessions at
socialism2020.net
Online forum 20-23 November



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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Wales exams scrapped: What's behind the headline?



Liverpool students protesting their results in the summer

MICHELLE FRANCIS
BANGOR SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The decision by the Welsh Government to scrap 2021 end-of-year exams for A-level and GCSE students is a step in the right direction. However, the assessments taking their place are still basically exams.

They are marked externally, they are in exam paper form, and have a time limit. Teachers will be able to alter the content of the exam to reflect what they have had the most teaching time on.

The 'assessments' will take place at different times of the year for

different schools. The answers could be all over the internet.

This silly loophole could be closed by replacing phoney exams with proper teacher assessment. And it is still unclear how students taking a BTEC or vocational course will be graded.

From speaking to other students and my own experience too, I can say that teacher evaluation could provide a much more efficient and less stressful way of assessing students. That could be achieved far sooner if students and workers had more power over the curriculum and the ways we are taught and assessed.

● Scrap our exams too and bring in teacher assessment

Watching thousands of students across the country receive their A-level results this summer was difficult viewing for me and everyone else who grew up in an 'undesirable' postcode. I can remember the nerves opening my own A-level results in 2017.

They were so much more to me than just exams. They were the manifestation of the hard work of me and my single mother, and my ticket to university.

This year, I watched the disappointed faces of my friends in my former college. They were doomed to the pandemic postcode lottery of the 2020 A-level results, until the Tory U-turn.

The class of 2021 is looking down the barrel of sitting GCSE and A-level

exams after months of online classes delivered by teachers stretched to the limit by underfunding.

The Welsh Government is placing more trust in its own teachers. They can provide the best assessment of students' progress and the extent to which each individual has been affected by the pandemic.

If Tory education secretary Gavin Williamson were to ask himself: 'What is best for young people?' he may have good reason to follow suit.

Extra work must not be placed in the hands of teaching staff without also providing the essential resources and investment that education is desperate for after years of Tory austerity.

MIA WROE
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST STUDENTS



Tories 'evacuation' plan will not work Provide resources for students to return home safely

BEA GARDNER
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The government has finally announced its plans to allow students in England to travel to their non-term time addresses for Christmas. The plans have been imposed on students with no consultation, generate even more uncertainty, and do nothing to alleviate the stress of those currently trapped in student halls.

The plans place an enormous burden of work on university staff with few, if any, resources allocated by the government to support the operation, and next-to-no time to do it. Students will be allocated a 'travel slot' anytime from 3 to 9 December.

The government is allocating a limited number of 'rapid result'

Covid tests. But not all students are being tested before they travel. Consequently, students are actually deterred from getting a test, through fear of being forced to self-isolate for another 14 days.

All students were sent a letter from the university minister at the start of the England lockdown, urging them to remain at their term-time address. Now they are being told that, as soon as that lockdown ends, they must travel on a date and time given to them, regardless of personal circumstances, including work and other commitments.

The government has told universities to work with businesses "to discourage opportunities for students to socialise" prior to their travel slot.

Students face a month of lockdown in their rooms, with only minimal in-person classes, and limited possibility to socialise at the end of it, whether or not they actually intend to leave campus over Christmas. Understandably, many are simply ignoring

the government's plea and returning home now.

It should be possible for students to safely travel between their term-time and home addresses with no academic detriment. But the privatised test-and-trace system has failed.

Test-and-trace must be brought back into the public sector, fully funded and with the democratic oversight of workers, the community and local authorities - and not run for profit.

University bosses are determined some in-person teaching goes ahead up until the travel window, so they can justify £9,250-a-year tuition fees and huge accommodation rents. It is motivated by desperation to get hold of students' cash at the expense of our health and safety.

We need free education and democratically decided rent control on housing. We need democratic staff and student oversight of the return plans and teaching provision for after Christmas.

Campus chaos: a crisis made by capitalism - one of the sessions at socialism2020.net
Online forum 20-23 November

Campaign for school Covid safety must continue



In Newham, we don't just talk about action, we deliver it

LOUISE CUFFARO
NEWHAM NEU SECRETARY

School-by-school action is exhausting for members. They bear the brunt of emotional blackmail by school managements who take it personally. Members do not feel the solidarity of being part of a national-led action.

Individual school action can win gains over single-school issues. Unlike those on the executive that just call for it, Newham National

Education Union (NEU) is delivering it.

We have two schools currently on strike. One over an imposed expansion, with a proposed building not fit for purpose, the other opposing the summary dismissal of their union rep.

But this is not the way to defend ourselves against a pandemic, let alone end toxic exams, excessive workload, and league tables.

The strategy of talking members to death on webinars - with no

opportunity for members to give reports, ask questions or demand action - is demoralising. The membership growth earlier in the year is being squandered.

The current leadership will be challenged from below. Elections for the NEU executive and the deputy general secretary are next year. It's time to replace those who will not lead.

● **Read about the Little Ilford strike against ill-thought expansion on page 6**

How can we make schools safe?

The motion that Socialist Party member Nicky Downes moved at the NEU executive on 12 November demanded:

- Schools are included in future lockdowns and circuit breakers
- Schools otherwise operate on an agreed rota basis, instead of with full classes
- All staff in higher-risk groups can work from home

- Schools operate according to agreed and regularly updated risk assessments
- School staff should be regularly tested as part of improved test-and-trace arrangements, including full isolation of 'bubbles', to combat school outbreaks
- School staff, who will be working hard to support learning at home and in school, are protected against unreasonable workload demands

- classroom observations, Ofsted inspections and other unnecessary supervision to cease during the pandemic

- Government provides funding for additional resources, spaces and staffing cover, as well as full pay for parents and carers who are unable to work owing to childcare
- Assessment arrangements for 2021 are adjusted in line with union demands

● **Read these comments and the motion on union-wide action in full at spined.co.uk**

NEU exec rejects union-wide action

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES
LANCASHIRE NEU MEMBER

The National Education Union (NEU) demands for Covid safety in schools have, once again, been totally ignored by government ministers. So, when the NEU national executive met on 12 November, you might expect it to have agreed a plan of action to answer this rejection. Sadly not.

The plan proposed by Socialist Party member Nicky Downes was voted down, with only six votes in favour. The overwhelming view on the executive, also put by the Socialist Workers' Party when they voted against the motion, was that members wouldn't vote for action if a ballot was launched.

Where executive members had opposed a ballot, unsurprisingly they got a response back that reflected the doubts raised by their leadership. But where a lead was given, and it was explained why action was necessary, it got support.

Simply concluding that 'there's no mood' leaves us exactly where we are now. Our demands will continue to be ignored.

The NEU leadership is throwing responsibility back on members, saying it will support action only when a

school group calls it. But school-by-school action doesn't win national demands.

Most managements, although certainly not all, have done what they can to try and operate safely. But they can't solve the lack of testing or stand up alone to local authorities and the government insistent on fully open schools.

Members feel more confident if they are acting alongside other schools, not on their own. We need far more than occasional isolated action.

Workload

This lack of national strategy existed before Covid, particularly over workload. Again we were told there's no mood for a union-wide struggle to win a national contract.

The same problems arise. Union demands haven't been met.

Excessive workload continues to drive staff out of their jobs. Union reps and officers are drowning in casework.

The national union continues to send out petitions, emails, and publicity on social media, but it has no strategy for when they are ignored. Schools continue to operate in dangerous chaos, with staff and students ill or in self-isolation.

A different strategy is needed.

"We are a trade union, not a pressure group"

Only one motion was put to the National Education Union (NEU) executive meeting, proposed by Nicky Downes, one of the NEU executive members for the West Midlands and a member of the Socialist Party. It called for a disaggregated union-wide ballot for strike and non-strike action to win the union's Covid safety and workload demands. Here are extracts from her speech.

It's become clear that education workers are expendable. The students and local communities we serve are seen as unworthy of protection.

This union rightly called for schools and colleges to be included in this lockdown. But, on a national level, we had nothing in the back pocket to bargain with.

Our only response was to lobby. We are not a pressure group, we are a trade union.

French education staff strike to close unsafe schools, and London transport workers threaten action and win.

Our most at-risk staff are not being protected, nor are those that shield family members. Nearly every school in Coventry has had positive cases. And our infection rates are nowhere near that in the northern regions.

It's simply not true that every at-risk staff is working from home. Some

have not even had their risk assessment updated. Some fear asking for working from home.

We have members that have chosen to continue to work in school. They don't want the stress of remote learning or the isolation.

We are not protecting our most at-risk pupils, or protecting the children of key workers as we did in the first lockdown. So many pupils are self-isolating or ill that schools are rarely fully open. Schools were safer for these groups of pupils in the first lockdown than they are now.

The suggestion is rotas for secondary school, but what about all our schools where social distancing is impossible and infection is rising?

It's not true

It has never been true that primary-age children do not transmit or are in well-spaced classrooms. Primary reps are asking - how are they included?

The union has successfully employed action short of strike action in the past. Why not look to that again?

These are national issues, which require national action. We have won small victories in some schools, but what about the rest?

We should be standing up to the government, not just to school leaders who often agree with us but are as constrained as we are.

We have a strong collective voice of educators, it's time we flex that muscle. Put all the options on the table, and ballot our members on both action short of strike action and strike action.

Workers' control in the workplace - one of the sessions at socialism2020.net Online forum 20-23 November

Optare: Right to strike defended against bullying management and the police

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Unite members at Optare in Yorkshire returned to the picket lines on 16 November for the first day of their now escalated four-days-a-week strike at the bus manufacturers.

Threats from the police to fine strikers if they continued to picket, citing the new Covid restrictions, had prevented picketing, until the government conceded that the right to picket should remain, on the eve of Unite taking the health secretary and North Yorkshire police to court.

As Howard Beckett, Unite assistant general secretary, stated: "This is a vital victory for the entire labour movement." This attempt to prevent picketing was a brazen attempt for the power of the state to be brought to bear on the side of management in the dispute, particularly given the effectiveness of pickets in turning back deliveries.

With masks, hand sanitiser and their own track and trace in place, the picket line is likely more 'Covid-secure' than the workplace, where the strikers are still in for one day a week.

Management's response has been twofold - on the one hand trying to claim the strikers are helping the company out at a time when there are limited orders, mocked as 'walk out, to help out' on the picket line.

But on the other hand, this bluster



OPTARE WORKERS ON STRIKE 16 NOVEMBER PHOTO IAIN DALTON

is belied by a 'personal message' that Optare's CEO has issued to staff. In it, he talks about the security of the future of the business, being largely dependent on getting a share of a proposed order of 4,000 zero-emission buses by the government.

But he goes on to state: "We have orders in the interim but only if we

can deliver on time and to budget. Any delays risk contracts being cancelled, fines being imposed, a reduced order book as customers lose confidence in our ability, and an even worsening outlook for the business." Further on he begs for volunteers to work overtime on weekends.

There is a simple way for the work

to get carried out though, meet the demands of the workers!

As one picket mentioned, in January the company will be getting a handout from the government through the job retention bonus of £1,000 for each worker previously furloughed.

Rather than further handouts for bad bosses, like Optare's owners Ashok Leyland, who will sooner put such money into the pockets of shareholders than workers, the company should be taken into public ownership, under workers' control to manufacture these zero-emission buses. Workers should be paid the proper rate for the job in the industry, rather than their current sub-standard pay.

Under this vicious management though, workers continue to face a vindictive approach which includes putting in place "an embargo on holiday requests from those striking until the end of the year." Such discrimination against workers is illegal, and will be subject to further challenge from Unite.

It is vital the wider labour movement continues to rally around the Optare strike.

- Send messages of support to davidbrain99@icloud.com
- Donate to the strike fund via bank transfer: Unity trust bank. Account name: NE/200/1 Optare Branch. Account number: 20327132. Sort code: 60-83-01

● Hackney council parking services brought in-house

Hackney Council has been forced to bring its parking wardens in-house, ending a 16-year arrangement with private company APCOA, following a campaign and strike action by the workers, members' of union Unite.

Unite called directly on Hackney Mayor Philip Glanville to have the service run directly by the council earlier this year, after the borough's traffic wardens went on strike with calls for an increase in pay and reports of workers facing physical violence as a 'regular occurrence'.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab says: "Unite has campaigned, lobbied and taken strike action to win exactly the points now agreed by Hackney Council. It has been a tough campaign, but it has resulted in a great win that should send a clear message to other councils in London that the days of the flawed outsourcing business model are numbered."

The service will now come back under local authority control when the contract ends in March 2022.



● Strike action ballot at UEL over job cuts

The University and College Union (UCU) has warned the University of East London (UEL) of potential industrial action over the university's decision to push ahead with compulsory job cuts.

UCU will ballot members at UEL starting on 17 November and finishing on 16 December. The dispute centres on ten compulsory job cuts, including seven to academic posts, and the knock-on additional workload that staff would face. In July, UEL said it needed to make 134 people redundant due to an expected decline in student numbers due to Covid-19, but the university is forecasting higher student enrolments than last year. The cuts would mean 92 jobs would go in total, after 82 staff agreed to take voluntary redundancy.

The union said it sent a worrying message to students that the university was cutting almost 100 jobs, despite the university forecasting an increase in student enrolments, and with staff workloads already at unbearable levels.

- Agreement has been reached to resolve the dispute between Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh and the UCU, in relation to potential compulsory redundancies. The university proposed to cut over 100 jobs, and the agreement now includes a commitment to no compulsory redundancies.



SCHOOL STRIKE RALLY ON 12 NOVEMBER PHOTO JAMES IVENS

Overcrowded Little Ilford School strikes against more expansion

JAMES IVENS
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A huge picket line, 50 strong, launched the strike against forced expansion of Little Ilford School on Thursday 12 November.

The enormous comprehensive in Manor Park, east London, already teaches 1,470 students. Labour-run Newham Council wants it to take 1,800. Any more would overwhelm students and staff.

Ebullient pickets chanted "stop the expansion" and sang protest lyrics set to the Sister Sledge hit 'We Are Family' as smiling Year 11 students filed past.

Staff voted overwhelmingly against the expansion. One picket told the rally that the council's 'consultation' spoke to just 12 parents!

Socialist Party member Louise Cuffaro, secretary of the borough's National Education Union branch, told the strike rally: "We will strike until they listen!" Newham NEU has accepted the offer of talks - it's the council which has refused to engage - but plans to keep the strike on until there is an acceptable proposal.

The council has known about the need for more secondary places for six years. It's a consequence of

Labour's gentrification projects in surrounding areas, combined with Labour's compliant execution of Tory austerity.

Now the council wants to cram working-class kids into an already under-resourced school at the eleventh hour. Of course, the local authority is making promises of more facilities and staff to sweeten the deal.

But as another striker told the rally: "We need those things now, even without hundreds more students. We need family liaison now. We need more teaching assistants now. We need vocational subjects now."

The need for a working-class alternative to both Tory and Labour anti-worker politicians is plain. The Socialist Party says that the experts in fighting for the working class are people like those on strike at Little Ilford. They should consider standing candidates in the 2021 Greater London Authority elections with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

The NEU nationally should also take note. This kind of action across the country is what is necessary if we want schools to be safe. Little Ilford's next planned strike days are Wednesday 18 and Thursday 19 November.

A PROBATION HOSTEL RESIDENTIAL WORKER
AND UNISON MEMBER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

“It’s bedlam at the care home”, said one care worker, my neighbour and Unison member. She went on to say: “They admitted three more patients at the weekend. We have never been so full. Some residents are not dressed and brought downstairs until the afternoon, because there aren’t enough chairs for them to sit on. And they haven’t taken on any more staff. We’re exhausted and we’ve had enough.”

She clearly expressed the pressures on staff, mainly women, across the public and private sector. NHS workers reeling from the first Covid wave are battling the second wave with inadequate resources. They are exhausted and war-weary. The government can’t even promise nurses a decent pay rise.

All workers, and particularly women workers, given their roles in capitalist society as both caregivers and workers, need strong trade unions to defend their jobs, pay, conditions and services.

Unison has over a million women members. The general secretary election in Unison gives women members the opportunity to vote for a candidate that will mobilise members to defend pay and conditions, to fight for more resources, and against any further cuts in services.

Failed leadership

The preferred candidate of the outgoing Prentis leadership is Christine McAnea, aiming to be the first woman leader of the union. But that leadership failed to seriously fight austerity, which meant big numbers of women workers lost their jobs and livelihoods and the services they relied on.

Only Socialist Party member Hugo Pierre has pledged to fight on a platform against austerity and to defend the jobs, pay and conditions of women workers in Unison.

The burden of over a decade of austerity in Britain has left women in an increasingly precarious position. Cuts to public services have had a disproportionate impact on women. Amnesty International estimates that between 2010 and 2018 women shouldered 86% of the burden of austerity measures. Add to that the impact of the Covid pandemic, and women have been placed on the front line at home, at work and as service users.

And there will be worse to come, with an economic crisis exacerbated by the pandemic, unless an effective resistance is conducted by the trade union movement.

Single mothers and women from ethnic minority backgrounds have been hit particularly badly by austerity. Even before the pandemic, black

Why I am backing Hugo Pierre for Unison general secretary

Women workers need strong trade unions to defend their jobs, pay and services



and Asian households were expected to see drops in living standards of around 19-20% from 2010 to 2020. And it was forecast that the income of single mothers would drop by 18%.

The nightmare of domestic violence has been made worse by cuts in services, refuges, and lockdowns, with no way out for vulnerable women.

The hospitality and other sectors worst hit by government Covid measures also employ a majority of women, so they are likely to suffer huge cuts in pay and hours, and job losses.

However, women have shown that they are amongst the most determined fighters when a call to action is made.

The Glasgow equal pay strike demonstrated that. Trade unions and lawyers representing 13,000 Glasgow

council workers reached an agreement worth around £500 million, to end the equal pay injustice suffered by low-paid women workers for over a decade.

The city shook

The decisive catalyst for this breakthrough was the impact of the 8,000-strong 48-hour strike, by the workers and their trade unions in 2018, which shook the city. This was an historic turning point in the fight for equal pay. Determined action recruits members like nothing else. Trade union membership grew in the dispute and a new energised layer of shop stewards and activists emerged from it.

This Tory government, despite its large majority in parliament, is weak and divided. It has already done so many U-turns, it must be dizzy. With a fighting, campaigning leadership, prepared to oppose all cuts, Unison members could play a vital role in forcing major concessions to defend workers’ jobs, wages, and conditions.

Hugo Pierre has a proud record of fighting on issues of concern to women. As a Unison schools convenor in Camden, he successfully helped organise the campaign to save Hampden Nursery. Hugo worked alongside parents and staff to demand that the Labour council refuse to cut its Early Years’ budget by £600,000.

Hugo also organised with school kitchen workers in Camden in a successful 18-month long campaign where they won the London Living Wage. This victory came after unanimous votes for industrial action forced management to negotiate - without a single strike day becoming necessary.

By actively campaigning and involving members, Hugo helped take the struggle into all the school kitchens. Building union membership and recruiting keen and energetic shop stewards was an important part of the strategy.

Hugo has fought alongside others for Unison members to take national action against school funding cuts.

He would organise a national fight against further cuts from ‘Covid austerity’ in local councils. He stands for no cuts to services, jobs, pay and conditions, and calls on Labour councilors to refuse to vote for cuts.

As a residential worker in a probation hostel, I have experienced the detrimental impact of contracting out services to the private sector. The system is inefficient and expensive, and puts the health and safety of workers at risk, when essential maintenance work is not done. Hugo is campaigning to bring public services back in-house, with full collective bargaining, and national terms and conditions.



● For more information on Hugo’s campaign and his full programme for a fighting, democratic Unison general secretary on a worker’s wage, see ‘Hugo Pierre 4 Unison General Secretary’ on Facebook.

● Rules introduced by Unison to clamp down on democratic debate in the union mean that candidates for union elections cannot ‘invite or accept’ support ‘in money or kind’ from any entity which ‘is not provided for in Unison rules’. These articles are produced without the authorisation of Hugo Pierre, in order to comply with these requirements.

Hugo also stands for

- A real fight on NHS pay, an immediate pay rise of 15% and a reversal of the cuts
- For a renationalised NHS and social care sector
- No to education privatisation and full funding for Early Years and schools, FE and HE
- End Low Pay. A £15 an hour minimum wage
- Safety first for all staff
- Full stocks of PPE. Renationalise the equipment supply chain. Bring test, track and trace into public health
- Union health and safety reps must decide if it is safe to work
- No fees for training. Bring back healthcare student bursaries and end tuition fees for all

COVID, VACCINES, ‘BIG PHARMA’ – AND THE NEED FOR SOCIALISM

JON DALE
HEALTH WORKER AND SECRETARY UNITE UNION EM/NG32 NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH BRANCH
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

News that early results from a Covid-19 vaccine - produced by US-based pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, in conjunction with German company BioNTech - showed 90% effectiveness has been greeted with relief. Another vaccine trial, by US company Moderna, has also shown 95% effectiveness in early results. People across the world desperately hope this means the pandemic’s end is in sight.

It has been a terrible year since the virus swept across the globe. By 16 November, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had recorded 54.3 million confirmed cases, with 1.3 million deaths. Many still suffer ongoing illness (‘long-Covid’). Many more have been left in pain, disability and anxiety as overloaded health services halt diagnosis and treatment of other conditions. Vaccination could prevent Covid-19’s ongoing spread, allowing normal activities to resume. Computer modelling has shown a vaccine with 80% effectiveness could reduce the peak by 85%, if given to 75% of the population with 5% already exposed to the virus.

1.Early results and safety - the many unanswered questions

Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna’s vaccines are the first of many in development. 90% effectiveness is much better than hoped for. However, these are early results based on 94 and 95 people who developed Covid-19 symptoms seven days after their second dose of either vaccine or a placebo for comparison.

So far, Pfizer/BioNTech have not issued the full data, only a press release. This does not show the severity of illness among those who did not receive the vaccine compared to those who did. The research is answering the easiest question but not the most clinically relevant. The aim of a vaccine must be to prevent hospitalisation and death, not just mild illness.

How long protection will last cannot yet be assessed. Will further booster doses be needed? Might it need repeating annually? Does it protect against asymptomatic infection? If not, individuals who feel fit and well could still infect vulnerable members of their community.

Does it protect the most vulnerable, including the elderly and those with other illnesses, or pregnant women or children under 12? These groups are excluded from this trial.

Vaccine safety is a critical issue. In 2010, five in every 100,000 children in Finland developed narcolepsy, a serious nerve condition. The usual number was one case in 300,000 children.

The 17-fold increase appeared to be linked to the Pandemrix vaccine to prevent swine flu, manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline. The vaccine’s development was speeded through as a dangerous pandemic was anticipated, although it turned out less severe than initially feared. The European Medicines Agency recorded 980 adults and children believed to have developed narcolepsy after

receiving Pandemrix.

There have been other vaccine-related serious safety issues in the past. But in the midst of a pandemic now causing about 10,000 deaths a day worldwide, the risk from delaying effective vaccines could far exceed the risk from using them while safety evaluation continues.

To have reached Phase 3 clinical trials with about 40,000 participants, vaccines should have completed more limited Phase 2 trials with a few hundred participants, identifying any common safety issues.

As socialists, we demand that all trial designs and results are open to public scrutiny. There should be independent evaluation of the safety and effectiveness of all new vaccines and medicines under trade union supervision. Trade unions such as UCU, Prospect, Unite, and the BMA, the medical professional body (and their international equivalents), have members with the necessary expertise. This would expose any corner-cutting by profit-making pharmaceutical corporations.

Anyone developing a serious side effect from a vaccine should be compensated for full loss of earnings, any care needed and any other loss they suffer - for life if necessary.

2.Fast development, public subsidy and socialism

The speed of Covid-19 vaccines development worries many people. It usually takes ten to 15 years to develop a new vaccine. The first vaccine against Ebola virus was approved last year - 43 years after the virus was discovered. As Ebola is mostly restricted to some of the poorest countries in the world, pharmaceutical companies did not invest in research where they expected no profits would be made.

Covid-19 has caused a massive economic shock to global capitalism. Social and political shocks will follow, and are feared by governments everywhere. To try and end the disruption to their economies, they have placed big orders at very early stages of vaccine development. The market for effective vaccines is therefore huge.

117 vaccine research projects are currently recorded by WHO, of which 65 are recruiting patients. Ten are now in clinical trials. Thousands of scientists, doctors, engineers, data analysts and others have been mobilised across the world. 1,000 scientists in China are reported to be working on Covid-19 vaccines, including from the Academy of Military Medical Science.

Vast sums of government money have poured into this research (see chart opposite). Corporations that usually compete with each other for markets and sales have collaborated to speed vaccine development. This alone destroys the oft-repeated defence of capitalism - that competition drives forward progress.

These fast developments indicate what could be achieved if scientific and medical research was coordinated and planned to meet the needs of humanity across the planet, rather than for the profits and power of

capitalists and the ruling elite.

“For decades vaccines were a neglected corner of the drugs business, with old technology, little investment and abysmal profit margins. Many firms sold their vaccine divisions to concentrate on more profitable drugs” (The Economist).

Instead of giant pharmaceutical corporations researching copycat drugs of existing money-spinners, treatments to cure many illnesses that afflict the poorest of the world could be found.

Instead of squandering huge sums of money and scientific talent on researching agribusiness and food products that damage our health, similar effort could be used to grow and produce sustainable and nutritious food for all.

And instead of pouring billions into researching armaments that destroy life, the money and skills could be re-directed to mitigating and reversing pollution and global heating.

Socialism, with democratic, working-class control of publicly owned industries, would enable planning of resources for need, not profit. The rapid development of Covid-19 vaccines gives a glimpse of the possibilities of planning to meet needs.



CEO Bourla was paid \$17.9 million in 2019, clearly not enough for him as he ‘earned’ a further \$5.6 million selling Pfizer shares on the day the company announced its vaccine had been 90% effective

3.Manufacture and distribution

After developing vaccines that work and are safe, manufacturing the billions of doses needed is a major challenge. Pharmaceutical corporations often use contract manufacturers. However, few of these have the capability to produce the active ingredients for mRNA vaccines like Pfizer/BioNTech’s and Moderna’s, not least because they are unique and patented.

Over the summer, a legal dispute took place between Moderna and Arbutus, a small Canadian company. Arbutus owned the patent to a key ingredient in Moderna’s vaccine.

The dispute stems back to another legal fight between the two companies in 2016. Arbutus’ patents have since been taken over by Genevant Science - a subsidiary of Roivant Sciences, which is itself Arbutus’s biggest shareholder. These complex business schemes and disputes only serve to obscure and obstruct what should be freely available to public scrutiny.

Vaccine manufacture includes packaging into small glass or plastic vials. Pfizer/BioNTech’s vaccine needs storing at -70° Celsius, requiring borosilicate glass (‘Pyrex’) to avoid cracking. The UK’s manufacturer of this glass closed its Sunderland factory in 2007, so it needs importing.

As global demand for these

specialist glass vials rockets, a repeat of the Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) shortages seen during the spring could take place. Pandemic contingency planning, on a worldwide scale and in Britain, has been woefully inadequate.

Storage and transport at such a low temperature also presents new problems. Domestic freezers, as found in local health centres, only go down to -20°C. The vaccine will need to be kept deep frozen from factory to warehouse to local vaccination centre, requiring a highly specialist logistics chain, including planes and lorries. This does not yet exist.

Whereas PPE could sit in an airport warehouse for a few days and not deteriorate, whole consignments of vaccine could be wasted.

This is a particularly important and difficult problem in large parts of the world, where electricity and roads are at best patchy, and often barely exist. In 2005, WHO estimated up to half of vaccines were wasted globally every year, mainly due to lack of temperature control and logistics to support an unbroken cold-chain.

A more recent estimate puts the annual cost of supply chain issues at \$35 billion in wasted biopharma products (IQVIA Institute for Human Data Science).

4.NHS creaking under the strain

Once the vaccine arrives at its destination, health workers need to check each person, give the jab, make a full record, and organise follow-up and repeat doses as necessary.

But years of cuts and pressure from the ongoing drive towards privatisation mean there aren’t enough staff, even without any additional Covid-related needs.

37,800 unfilled full-time NHS nursing posts in June - a 30% drop of social care nurses since 2012 - health visitors cut from over 10,000 to 6,600 since 2015 - a 3% drop in GP numbers since 2017. Where will the vaccination staff come from? Will they be taken away from other pressing work?

2021 will be another year in which people suffering with non-Covid health problems are forced to wait for the care they need. Those who can afford it will be tempted to pay for private treatment rather than wait in pain or failing health. The rest will suffer, and some will prematurely die or experience more permanent disability.

An immediate 15% pay rise for all health workers would help get back some of those who left in recent years, unable to afford the 20% real terms pay cut since 2010. New staff could be recruited from those made unemployed elsewhere to carry out tasks like record-keeping and data collection.

5. Not-for-profit?

Several of the biggest pharmaceutical companies have claimed they are not developing Covid-19 vaccines to make big profits. Indeed, some say they will sell their vaccines at cost price. But who can believe them?

AstraZeneca, partnered with Oxford University to produce a vaccine discovered at the university’s Jenner Institute, says it will sell the vaccine at no profit while the pandemic continues. However, it will decide when the pandemic is over and then raise the price, as soon as July 2021. It could then sell hundreds of millions more doses with a hefty profit.

Johnson & Johnson has made a similar claim - to sell their vaccine “on a not-for-profit basis for emergency pandemic use.” Who will decide when the emergency is over?

Pfizer’s chief executive, Albert Bourla, said the company “will make a very, very marginal profit at this stage.” He has also said he doesn’t agree with those who say Covid-19 vaccine developers should forgo profits. “You need to be very fanatic and radical to say something like that right now. Who is finding the solution? The private sector” (Barron’s, a US financial magazine).

Bourla was paid \$17.9 million in 2019, clearly not enough for him as he ‘earned’ a further \$5.6 million selling Pfizer shares on the day the company announced its vaccine had been 90% effective. His income this past year is probably enough to supply over a million free doses in a poverty-stricken country.

But while adopting a ‘holier-than-thou’ stance over vaccine profits, big pharma has been mute over the stratospheric rise of company stocks. US pharma and biotech companies stocks have risen by 630% in the last year. Novavax, which received \$1.6 billion in government funding, has seen its stock

rise by 2,000% - big bonuses for directors and shareholders!

Earlier this year, a bidding war developed among wealthy nations over PPE supplies, driving prices upwards. This also happened in 2009 with the swine flu vaccine. The same could now occur for the most effective vaccines, leading to potentially astronomical prices. Middle and low-income countries would be priced out.

But if parts of the world continued to be Covid-19 reservoirs, it would be a matter of time before the virus mutated and spread back to those parts of the world where high vaccination levels had been achieved. There would be no guarantee this would protect against a new strain of the virus. Recently, fears have been expressed over mink farms in Denmark spreading a mutated Covid virus back to humans.

All big pharmaceutical corporations need to be taken out of the hands of profiteers and into public ownership. This global industry shows how vital internationalism is for socialism.

As a start, a workers’ government with a socialist programme would need to nationalise the big companies in its own country, with compensation for small shareholders in genuine need, including workers’ pensions. But it would also need to appeal to workers elsewhere to take similar measures, as the industry is organised on a global scale.

Medicines and vaccines could then be planned to meet the needs of all. But to give everyone a chance of living healthy lives, we also need well-paid jobs with safe working conditions; good housing, education, health and social care; healthy food; clean air and water; and action to halt global heating. Vaccines can’t achieve these but socialism can.

‘Socialising the risk, privatising the profit’

At the beginning of the pandemic, ‘big pharma’ was reluctant to invest in a vaccine, given the lengthy time and failure rate of vaccines for diseases like Zika and Sars, with research being ‘parked’ as these diseases retreated.

However, huge sums of public money made available by governments have greased the wheels of the pharmaceutical industry (see chart below).

Now, 202 companies are involved in developing inoculations. Of these, 47 potential vaccines are undergoing clinical trials.

“Hundreds of millions [of dollars] were thrown at several of these companies in a way that took their breath away,” says Peter Hale, executive director of the Foundation for Vaccine Research in Washington.

And according to David Mitchell, founder of the US campaign group Patients for Affordable Drugs, companies such as US-based Moderna are having all their costs covered by the government.

“That means anything over the cost of goods is pure gravy for these companies,” he said. “Their oft-made claim that they need to charge high prices because of the risks that are involved in developing new drugs is no longer valid.”

“We’re socialising all the risk and privatising all the profit,” he added.

Governments’ Covid-funding of pharmaceutical industry

AstraZeneca/Oxford University	\$1.7 billion+
Johnson&Johnson/Biological E	\$1.5 billion
Pfizer/BioNTech	\$2.5 billion
GlaxoSmithKline/Sanofi Pasteur	\$2.1 billion
Novavax/Serum Institute of India	\$2 billion-
Moderna/Lonza	\$2.48 billion

(Source: MSF)

‘Covid, capitalist crisis, working-class political representation & the fight for socialism’. The main rally at socialism2020.net Saturday 21 November 6-8pm. See back page for details

Tory cronyism rules

The Johnson government has dished out secretive, unscrutinised pandemic contracts worth billions to private companies, using emergency powers. Many of these contracts, as shown by the test-and-trace fiascos, have been costly disasters. A multimillion pound contract for testing kits was given to Randox Laboratories without even going through a public tender process. Tory MP Owen Paterson just happens to be a paid consultant for Randox.

Government pandemic appointments showing connections to Tory MPs are well documented. Former managing director at private equity firm SV Health Investors and now chair of the government’s vaccine task-force is Kate Bingham. Coincidentally, she is married to Tory MP and old Etonian, Jesse Norman.

The much panned ex-chief of TalkTalk, testing and tracing boss Dido Harding, also happens to be married to a Tory MP, John Penrose. In 2014, the then PM David Cameron elevated her to a peerage in the House of Lords.



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

● Labour: the party is over!

The left in the Labour Party argued that the recent national executive committee (NEC) election was very important - that members should not leave, so that they get a vote.

In the event, ultra-Blairite Luke Akehurst topped the poll. The 'left' won five seats.

According to the ballot result, the Labour Party has 495,961 members on paper - slightly down from the height of the Corbyn era. Many members have cancelled their standing orders over the past months, but they are only removed from the membership lists after they have reached six months arrears.

A truer indication of the real membership number is the number who voted in the NEC election - 129,549 members. This is less than half the 293,093 who voted in the NEC by-election at the beginning of the year, and a small fraction of the half million who voted in the leadership election of 2016.

This shows that the hundreds of thousands who flocked to the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership are disengaging and leaving.

Among the youth, the collapse in membership and engagement is even greater. Corbyn embodied the hope of the youth for a better future. Tens of thousands turned out to hear him, and mobilised to campaign for him in 2017. But only 8,159 voted for the NEC youth rep on the NEC. In the Corbynista stronghold of London, only 1,660 voted.

If Corbyn and his supporters set up a new party, they could quickly assemble a large membership. Unfortunately, Corbyn has basically given up, and the so-called Socialist Campaign Group

(which has not organised any campaigns for decades) have kept their heads down and have limited themselves to mild pleas for Starmer to readmit Corbyn.

But a new party is needed. Those who want to help build it should come along to Socialism2020 next weekend. (See page 12 and back)

AMNON COHEN
NORTH LONDON

● Vaccines for all?

Undoubtedly, many people will have been happy to hear of the news that a 90% effective vaccine against Covid-19 could be on the way, with the possibility of protecting the estimated one-fifth of people around the world at severe risk from the virus. And along with that, the possibility of a return to a more normal existence.

But in its leading article welcoming the vaccine, the Economist gave us yet another example of how capitalism's contradictions hold back the meeting of human need.

Undoubtedly, a new vaccine is likely to be in short supply. Pfizer, one of the partners in this particular vaccine, has stated it could produce 50 million doses in 2020 and 1.3 billion in 2021, which means even those at severe risk couldn't be immunised by the end of next year. Undoubtedly then, the wealthier imperialist powers will attempt to use their wealth and power to secure as great a share of supplies for themselves.

However, according to modelling the Economist reports, a vaccine which is 80% effective administered in two billion doses by the richest 50 countries would save half as many lives than if the vaccine was administered in proportion to the population of all countries.

This, from one of the mouthpieces of the capitalist class. Yet another damning

criticism of a capitalist system based on competition, which highlights the need for a socialist plan of production, under the democratic control of workers, not just for distributing a vaccine to Covid most effectively, but for all the necessities of life.

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS

NHS services will be put under enormous strain in distributing a Covid vaccine. My sister is part of a collection of GP surgeries in Norfolk. They've been told to get their plans in place by 1 December, though really there's no expectation that the vaccine or the logistics will be ready to get going before Christmas.

Only one site will have the freezer capability to store the vaccine, so all the vaccines for the area will be given from that one site. 30,000 in three weeks, then repeated. Because of the storage issues, they'll have to give the vaccines as soon as they come in - even if that means a batch arriving on Christmas Eve and calling people in to be vaccinated on Christmas Day!

PAULA
EAST LONDON

● See also pages 8-9

● After trees debacle, South Yorks councils try bridge-building!

A couple of miles across the fens from the Great Ouse at Littleport, Cambridgeshire, lie the villages of Little Ouse and Brandon Bank, separated by a tributary river of the Ouse and a bridge between the villages used mainly by local people.

The BBC recently reported that this bridge is around 50 years old and is to be updated. Imagine the surprise of villagers to be contacted by Bidwells (an upmarket Cambridge-based firm of surveyors and agents) with a request for a contribution of £650 per household towards the cost of the works on the bridge, plus an extra £75 for the supply of a key to the new gate for it.

Bidwells' client was revealed as South Yorks Councils' Pension Authority, joint owners of the bridge. It would be a fair bet that the popularity of this request mirrored the reaction to the tree-felling in Sheffield (See 'Sheffield: Tree-cutting council must admit it was wrong' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Toll roads disappeared in England with

the creation of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century, and more recent tolls have been removed from bridges (Severn and Skye) after long campaigns. Perhaps local government trade unions will take action to open up pension fund investment decisions?

STEVE CAWLEY
PETERBOROUGH

● London buskers outlawed

Westminster Council plans to bring in licensing fees across the West End in order to criminalise unlicensed street performance.

Anyone walking through central London might find themselves in a large crowd watching any number of street acts, buskers, performing music, comedy or some death-defying piece of acrobatics. Great and you'd probably put in a donation for the pleasure.

If Westminster Council gets away with its current plans, that could be a thing of the past, damaging for the thousands of buskers who perform for a living.

They plan to restrict pitches to just 25 with only five allowed amplification over a borough of 21 million square metres. This is nothing new. Back in 1832 'noise' came to the attention of the Metropolitan Police Act. Why? Well then, as now, councils and their friends the developers want a perfect patch to profit from, and buskers don't fit their description.

Nick Broad, co-founder of the Busking Project explains: "Limited pitches, limits number of performers. Limited amplification, limits performance time, you cannot shout for hours. Buskers will be asked for £2 million liability insurance, which is nothing to do with public safety. Musicians selling their own CDs are told to get a traders' licence, who does that benefit?"

A £20 buskers' licence means those who are touring not going to pay everywhere, put off travelling performers. No performers, no art. For many people, street art is the only art they see." For performers and the public this means art becomes ever more something for the rich with the working class ever more excluded.

Developers behind the new legislation have funded the council to employ police to fine and ticket buskers in Leicester Square. Nick also explained: "Issues

around noise level and performing times, alongside consideration for local residents, is something street performers are trying to work and collaborate with the council over but have been ignored. Westminster Street Performers Association has a notification email, self-policing system which shows what is possible."

The Socialist Party argues for government support to protect all jobs in the music and arts industry, we fight for greater funding in schools that has seen cuts to art, drama and music. These attacks reflect the narrow outlook of capitalism's profit-first motive and the need to fight for a socialist future that allows genuine freedom and access for those who wish to perform and participate.

A second consultation ends in mid-November and an online petition is gathering support. Protests by Save London Buskers have drawn publicity. More information is available at savelondonbuskers.com

NICK CHAFFEY
SOUTHAMPTON



PHOTO JOHN BRADLEY/CC

Obituary: Paul Chettle

Eastern Region Socialist Party members are mourning the loss of long-standing Cambridgeshire Socialist Party member Paul Chettle, after a long and recurrent illness. Paul had been active in High Wycombe Labour Party Young Socialists in his youth, and formally joined the Socialist Party again in Peterborough some eight years ago.

Until prevented by health reasons, Paul attended practically every local Socialist Party branch meeting, and also enjoyed campaigning on our stalls from time to time. But local members were always aware that his main activity was in the PCS civil service union, with roles at all levels in the then CPSA Broad Left and in the union itself. Some of his comrades in the union have paid tribute to Paul.

Richard Edwards, retired former Eastern PCS regional secretary, says: "I first met Paul when he joined the PCS regional committee as an elected member. He was renowned for his passionate anger at injustice and for his deep socialist beliefs. Despite suffering from his combination of illnesses he maintained a sense of optimism and quiet humour. I will not forget him."

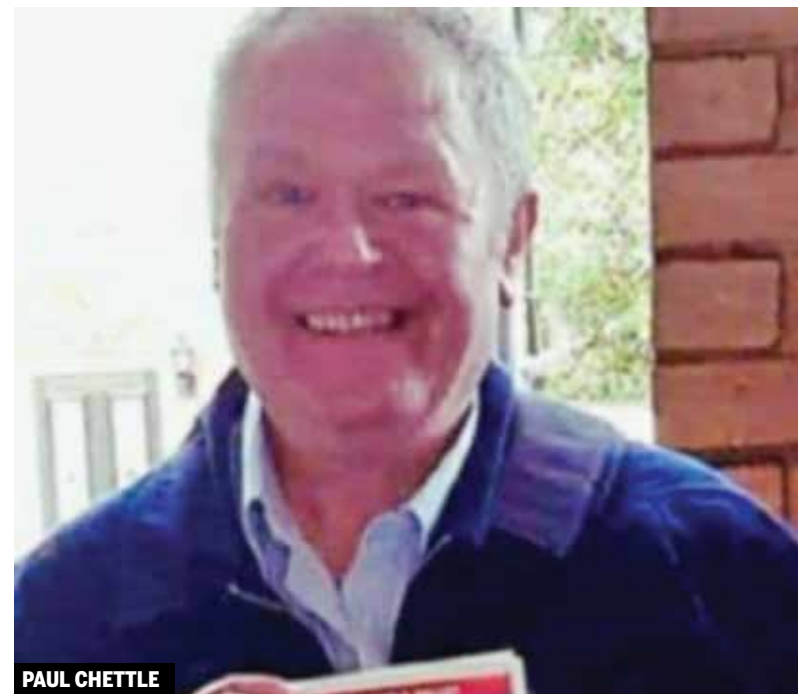
Chris Baugh, former PCS assistant general secretary, said: "After his brave fight against illness, it is a sad moment to lose such a principled and warm-hearted comrade as Paul Chettle."

"I had the honour of getting to know Paul through his tireless work as a PCS rep in HMRC and as an active Socialist Party member both in

his union and his community. My condolences to his partner, his family and his wide circle of friends. RIP friend and comrade Paul Chettle."

Marion Lloyd, PCS national executive committee member (speaking in a personal capacity) said: "Paul was a dedicated socialist, a great person and true to his convictions. It never ceased to amaze me that, despite his illness, he not only supported me, but also encouraged others to do so, when I stood for general secretary. A committed socialist to the very end. I already miss him!"

Rachel Heemskerk, PCS Eastern regional chair (speaking in a personal capacity) said: "Paul was an active member of PCS in my region and had the interests of our members at the heart of everything he did. Personally, I will miss the comradeship he gave me and his support during long Trades Union Congress regional council meetings, where his humour kept me going."



PAUL CHETTLE

After Corbyn: TUSC and the fight for working-class political representation

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee has condemned the suspension of Jeremy Corbyn from the Labour Party, and pledged to fight Keir Starmer's 'resurgent Blairism' - including at the ballot box next May.

At the same time, it welcomed new members to the coalition steering committee from the national executives of five different trade unions and the former Labour MP Chris Williamson, who was himself suspended in 2019 and prevented from defending his Derby North seat as a Labour candidate in last year's general election.

TUSC national chairperson **Dave Nellist**, also a parliamentary colleague of Jeremy Corbyn when he was an MP from 1983-1992, said: "The ruthless decision to suspend Jeremy Corbyn is the clearest signal yet that under Keir Starmer's Labour, the interests of Britain's capitalist establishment will be in safe hands, if and when they decide to move on from Boris Johnson's inept premiership.

"TUSC wholeheartedly supported Jeremy's leadership of the Labour Party as an opportunity to achieve working-class socialist political representation on a mass basis. We adjusted our electoral activity in response, not standing candidates in either the 2017 or 2019 general elections.

Resumption of TUSC

"But our decision in September that we would resume contesting elections because of the new situation created by Starmer's leadership has been completely vindicated by subsequent events.

"Labour candidates standing in the elections next May - in Scotland, Wales, London and the English councils - who endorse Jeremy Corbyn's suspension while agreeing to implement austerity measures directed

from the Tories in Westminster, cannot expect to be unchallenged. We will fight resurgent Blairism, including at the ballot box."

Jared Wood, a national executive committee member of the RMT transport workers' union, officially represented on the TUSC steering committee, said: "The RMT was the first trade union to declare its support for Jeremy Corbyn when he stood for leader in 2015 and, with 80,000 members, was the second biggest donor to both of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaigns, in 2015 and 2016, only behind the 1.4 million-member Unite union.

"His subsequent suspension by Keir Starmer shows that the opportunities for achieving working-class political representation within the Labour framework created by Jeremy's leadership are closing - just at the time we need a fighting political voice for workers to meet the deep economic and social crisis triggered by the Covid pandemic."

Chris Williamson said: "The Labour Party has been hijacked by establishment lackeys and no longer welcomes socialists within its ranks.

"We therefore need to build a new vehicle outside the Labour Party to offer a refuge for disgruntled members and others dissatisfied with the



It is vital to build a working-class political alternative to right-wing Labour PICTURE PAUL MATTSSON

discredited political and economic status quo.

"The situation facing the country is dire, which requires us to work out how to cooperate on the left to establish a social movement throughout the land and a credible electoral alternative for voters."

● TUSC was co-founded in 2010 by the late Bob Crow, the RMT transport workers' union leader.

Along with the RMT, its national steering committee involves leading trade unionists from other unions together with the Socialist Party, the Resistance Movement, and independent socialists.

● For interviews, and so forth, please email info@tusc.org.uk or call Clive Heemskerk, the TUSC National Election Agent, on 020 8988 8773 or 07988 109980.

Dave Nellist can also be contacted, on 07970 294237, and Chris Williamson on 01332 343261 or 07966 457796.

How can a mass working-class political voice be built? One of the sessions at socialism2020.net Online forum 20-23 November

Scottish TUSC to stand in the May 2021 parliamentary elections

A well-attended and inspiring online Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) conference took place on Saturday 7 November. There was unanimous support for a resolution to stand candidates as widely as possible in the May 2021 Scottish parliament elections.

Leah Ganley (Socialist Party Scotland) and a GMB union branch committee member from the Highlands chaired the conference.

Jim McFarlane - a member of the Unison executive and a branch secretary of Dundee City Unison, speaking in a personal capacity, pointed out that in local government, workers are facing attacks from both Scottish National Party and Labour councils. There was no difference in their consistent passing on of Tory

austerity rather than standing up and setting legal, no-cuts budgets.

Michael Hogg, the Scottish regional secretary of the RMT and a former miner sacked in the 1984-85 miners' strike, said the recent announcement that miners sacked during the strike were to be pardoned in Scotland was an important victory, a result of decades of campaigning. He also highlighted current struggles that the RMT are involved in, like the Caledonian sleeper strike.

"TUSC stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the working class, unlike Labour and the SNP", he added.

David Semple, executive member of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, speaking in a personal capacity, highlighted the unprecedented crisis with Covid-19

and the economic catastrophe in its wake.

PCS members, like all workers, are having to deal with bosses who are putting business and profit before workers' health and safety. The need for a fighting socialist alternative was ever more urgent.

A socialist Scotland

Lynda McEwan spoke on behalf of Socialist Party Scotland. Lynda pointed out that there is a majority for Scottish independence just now, especially among young people and the working class, but there is no majority for the continued rule of the millionaires and billionaires, whose profits have skyrocketed during the pandemic. "That's why we need to use the election campaign to fight for

an independent socialist Scotland."

The final platform speaker was Gary Clark, branch secretary of the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) Scotland No.2 branch.

Gary brought solidarity greetings from his branch of 3,000 postal workers. CWU members have been at the forefront of the battle for health and safety during the pandemic. A socialist leadership for the trade union movement is vital at this time, in opposition to the drive for so-called national unity which has been followed by some trade union leaders.

There was a wide-ranging and enthusiastic discussion that saw a range of contributions about the need for a socialist election challenge for the Scottish elections in May 2021.

Philip Stott from the Scottish TUSC steering committee moved the resolution to stand as widely as possible in the 2021 elections, with a Scottish TUSC conference planned for early February to finalise a manifesto and candidates. It was agreed unanimously.

● Read full report on socialistpartyscotland.org

● Contact Scottish TUSC for more info via a message to the Facebook page or scottishtusc@gmail.com

Is Scotland on the road to independence? One of the sessions at socialism2020.net Online forum 20-23 November



Visiting the student occupation MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Manchester student occupation - End rip-off rent, free education now

SEBASTIAN PRIOR
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members in Manchester visited the 25 students occupying ‘The Tower’ at Manchester University to show our solidarity on 15 November. These students represent the discontent and anger of the whole student body. Like other institutions across the country, Manchester University has taken full payment of the £9,000 tuition fees, and £4,000 annual rent, with the promise of a high-quality education. A promise which has not been met.

Students have been exposed to dangerous living conditions, online education, and a rent increase, all while being isolated from their

families and each other. The ‘Tower’ occupation was described as the result of a gradual fanning of the flames of student anger. Throughout this process the university has refused to meet with the students, and has even utilised police and private security to prevent supporters from joining them, or passing them food and vital supplies.

The mood on campus is one of betrayal, but most importantly of determination. Students spoke of continuing the rent strike, and their anger at the commodification and privatisation of universities, stating: “They’re treating the university like a business, and we’re sick of it, you can’t prioritise education if you’re prioritising profit.”

The awareness of students is certainly rising, and the students we spoke to made this very apparent, stating that the effects of this strike could be a victory not just for Manchester, but for all students. They spoke of the need to remove the profiteers from university institutions, and take the accommodation and the university into the hands of the students and workers at the university.

We had a warm welcome and our ideas clearly enthused and resounded with the strikers and supporters. We will continue to act to support their demands, and help them achieve the goal of democratic workers’ and student control of universities.

Stop Leicester hospital closure

STEVE SCORE
CO-CHAIR SAVE OUR NHS LEICESTERSHIRE

Leicester’s NHS bosses seem scared about the ‘Save Our NHS Leicestershire’ campaign’s attempts to put forward alternative views on their proposals to reorganise our hospitals, including the closure of the Leicester General Hospital.

Despite the huge amount of resources they have to put their case, including slick TV ads, glossy brochures with wonderful artists drawings of new buildings, and easy access to the media, they still appear defensive. Letters from local NHS bosses to the local paper and official social media posts have been issued directly attacking our campaign.

They were determined to push

ahead with a consultation during lockdown, despite the fact that face-to-face meeting and debate is not possible, and many people will not be able to access their online events. Leicester has been continuously in some form of lockdown since March. Yet the glossy brochures do not answer key questions and obscure some of the reality.

When over 80 acute services are removed from a hospital site leaving a ‘campus’ with just four services, while most of the land is sold off for housing, it is effectively a hospital closure. But the official material doesn’t say that. When there are a totally inadequate number of hospital beds being provided, despite future projected population growth, it is a real cut in the number of beds per head. When they say that services in the community will soak up the extra demand, while not elaborating how that is to be done - or how it will be financed - it is a flawed plan.

The proposals do not account for the lessons of Covid. Future planning has to allow for more space and capacity in our NHS to deal with potential pandemics to come, not less!

The campaign has been active on the streets, produced leaflets explaining our points and put our case to council health scrutiny committees. We have done our best to get media coverage, and have organised a series of online public meetings. Big banners and window posters are going up across the city, county and in Rutland.

The deadline for the end of consultation is 21 December. We are doing what we can in these lockdown conditions to get our message across to the community and into the trade union movement.

Selling the Socialist: Supporting the campaign for a 15% NHS pay rise



LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

● Cardiff

The Socialist Party has been out in Cardiff continuing the campaign for a 15% pay rise for NHS workers. It’s a disgrace that nurses and other health workers who have risked and, in some cases, lost their lives, will be ‘rewarded’ with financial difficulty if the government has its way. Health unions like Unison need a leadership willing to fight for fair pay. Good luck to Hugo Pierre in the Unison general secretary election!

ROSS SAUNDERS

● Birmingham

We spoke to NHS staff, youth and key workers from all over Birmingham. They gave shocking insights into the daily realities of what our frontline services are dealing with

- underfunding, understaffing and under attack from austerity cuts. Cheap claps don’t pay the bills, don’t feed your kids, don’t keep your lights on - we need 15% for NHS staff now!

Join our community campaigns, trade union organising, and grassroots activism, fighting for living wage jobs, affordable homes and fully funded services. Workers can’t pay the price for a crisis we didn’t cause!

KRIS O’SULLIVAN

● Coventry

Despite wind and rain, and fewer people in the city centre, we had a great campaign stall and completed two pages of signatures against hospital parking charges!

One young guy told us he had unfortunately lost his partner in

hospital last week, after two weeks in the hospital. He signed our petition because when he went into the hospital every day for those two weeks, he had to watch the time he was by his partner’s bedside to make sure he didn’t spend more than he could afford in the car park.

You should not have to count penalties when you visit hospital. Not to visit an ill or dying relative, partner, friend, not to have treatment yourself, and not when you are the staff working there!

In 2018, car parks at Coventry and Warwickshire hospital trusts made £7.4 million in profit. The car parks only cost £1 million to run. We say, let’s kick profit out of our NHS services, let’s scrap the parking charges, let’s have hospital services including parking built and managed for need not profit! Over two thousand people have now signed our petition.

ADAM HARMSWORTH

How will Socialism 2020 work?

Socialism 2020, from Friday 20 to Monday 23 November, will be like no other event you will attend this year. It will provide a Marxist analysis and explanation of many of the different aspects of the multi-crisis world we live in.

In that way, Socialism 2020 is not different to previous Socialism events. But this year we are sadly prevented from meeting in person.

Nonetheless, there is no drop-off in the numbers attending – and you will want to know how an online Socialism works. All details will be emailed to ticket holders.

Rally: world in crisis and the fight for socialism

Saturday 21 November
6-8pm

Workshops:

Starting Saturday 21
November 11am-1pm,
through to Monday 23
November 2-4pm

In the workshops there will be an introductory speech which sets out the Socialist Party’s take on the issues, and then time for discussion and debate, and a reply to the discussion. All the workshops will be on Zoom. They will not be live-streamed. The links for the Zoom workshops will be emailed to everyone who has bought a ticket – whether for the entire event, three workshops, or one workshop. You can buy tickets or upgrade your ticket until 2pm on Monday 23 November.

Financial Appeal

During the rally there will be a finance appeal. The Socialist Party relies only on the support of our members and supporters, and has no big business backers. We have set an ambitious target for the weekend of £25,000.

● If you would like to donate to this fund, please visit our website: socialistparty.org.uk/donates20 or you can text an IOU to 07958032071. Please include your name, the amount you are pledging, and when you can pay it by. You can donate until the close of Socialism 2020 at 4pm on Monday 23 November.

Friday evening introduction

Friday 20 November 6-7pm

This Zoom event, open to ticketholders, is starting later than advertised to accommodate those at work, school, etc. This short session will set out why it’s so important to organise Socialism 2020 and how it will work. You will hear from leading members and activists on some of the key themes of the weekend.

Can you join the Socialist Party during Socialism 2020?

If you are not yet a member of the Socialist Party there will be a more informal zoom meet-up on Sunday 22 November at 1pm in which you can find out how to join, what being a member means, and ask all the questions you want about the Socialist Party.

Fund the fightback DONATE TODAY

- socialistparty.org.uk/donates20
- or call 020 8988 8777
- or text IOU to 07958032071
- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



PAUL MATTISSON

#SpyCops inquiry – Revealing police violence against Socialists



PAUL MATTISSON

LOUIS AUSTRIN
NON-STATE CORE PARTICIPANT

Six years since it was first announced, the Undercover Policing inquiry finally started taking evidence from witnesses last week. This phase of the inquiry concerned the earliest days of the Metropolitan Police’s spy cops unit, the Special Operations Squad, later called the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS), for the years 1968-72.

It is clear from the evidence so far that the SDS was set up to spy on the revolutionary socialist left by the secret services. They were scared that British workers would be inspired by the revolutionary events in France 1968. While some of the intelligence reports disclosed to the inquiry exaggerate the role of SDS officers in subverting the left, it is clear that the state was genuinely worried about how the idea of socialist change could win wide support.

The most harrowing parts of the inquiry so far are the stories of women deceived into intimate sexual relationships. The lawyer representing

30 women told of how ‘Rosa’, as she is known to the inquiry, escaped an abusive relationship with an undercover police officer and started a new life, only for him to turn up at the bookshop she was working in to plead with her to get back with him. She told of how, once Rosa found out that her partner was a spy, SDS officers made a ‘welfare’ visit to her home telling her that she couldn’t tell anyone, and if she did the full might of Special Branch would be used against her.

One undercover officer unwittingly gave the game away, saying the two leading figures he targeted were not planning violent disorder. “They were very nice people, very intelligent”, he said. He was also asked how he came to be whacked over the head by a police truncheon on an anti-Vietnam demo, he said: “Because I looked like a protester, long hair and scruffy and the police wanted to hit the protesters.” So there you have it; an admission of a police riot and brutality.

There are big problems with this inquiry. Lawyers representing

non-state core participants are prevented from questioning undercover officers. Rajiv Menon QC was told by the head of the inquiry Mitting, that “he will be silenced” after he attempted to ask questions aimed at probing the evidence.

There is also no live stream of the inquiry so we have a public inquiry held in secret. We are still campaigning for live streaming, the right to ask police witnesses questions, full disclosure of cover names and the names of organisations spied on.

● See also ‘Spycops inquiry: why the capitalist state feared and continues to fear socialism’ at socialistparty.org.uk

SOCIALISM the podcast

The weekly Marxist podcast from the Socialist Party
● Listen and subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, YouTube, and all major podcast platforms
socialistparty.org.uk/podcast



MARY FINCH

YOUNG SOCIALISTS ORGANISING FOR OUR FUTURE

As capitalism plunges into a new period of crisis, young people face a potential future of unemployment and hardship. A socialist programme which says “we won’t sacrifice our future to capitalist crisis” is needed now more than ever. Two young members of the Socialist Party explain aspects of our ‘Youth Charter’. How can we ensure decent jobs and training for young people? And what can be done to build organisations to fight for that?

Young Socialists fighting for jobs

AMY SAGE
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The capitalist Covid crisis has severely impacted pay, jobs and training opportunities, with young people being hit particularly hard. Workers aged under-25 are more than twice as likely to have lost their jobs in the last two months compared to older workers. With the second wave now well and truly upon us, and millions across Britain facing further lockdown restrictions, the number of young workers without a job is set to hit one million within weeks, sooner than initially expected.

For those still employed but unable to work during the second lockdown, the government’s extended ‘Job Support Scheme’ has been changed last minute, to be 80% of wages. As we saw over the summer, people were, unsurprisingly, struggling to survive with a 20% pay cut. That has not changed, the cost of living is no cheaper!

Described as a ‘sticking plaster at best’, the ‘Kickstarter scheme’ announced back in July, which claimed to create 350,000 six-month job placements, will do nothing to create permanent and secure jobs. As part of the Socialist Party’s ‘Youth Charter’, we are campaigning on a set of demands in relation to the pay, jobs and training for young people.

Full pay

We demand full pay, for as long as is necessary, to protect jobs and livelihoods during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Workers can’t be expected to survive on 80% of wages, or on pitiful levels of Universal Credit.



Youth Fight For Jobs campaigning as youth unemployment soared during the last economic crisis PAUL MATTHOSON

To those workers who are struggling to make ends meet, even while they are in work, we say that wages should meet the cost of living. The minimum wage must be increased to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15 an hour. Benefits should be increased in line with the national minimum wage, with no youth rates or delays in payment.

We demand that companies threatening job cuts and closures open their books to trade union scrutiny. By doing this we could plan how to use the resources to protect jobs and workers’ incomes. Any large company that declares redundancies or plant closures should be nationalised under democratic workers’ control and management, with compensation to be paid to the former owners only on the basis of proven need.

Job creation

To address youth unemployment we need a massive programme of job creation. The government should invest in building the hundreds of thousands of council homes that we need, and develop green energy. All as part of a democratic discussion involving young people, the working class, and the trade unions, about what kind of socially useful jobs are required.

To Rishi Sunak, whose proposed ‘Kickstarter scheme’ is nothing more

than an attempt to distract us from the unemployment crisis, we say no to bogus apprenticeships or training schemes. Young workers cannot be forced to work for our benefits, or be used to under cut older workers’ pay, terms and conditions.

We need trade union oversight and democratic workers’ control of any job creation programmes and youth training schemes to ensure we get the skills we need, as well as decent pay and conditions for all. We demand a decent job guaranteed for all at the end of training.

Take the wealth off the 1%

The resources exist to be able to afford all of this, and more. To those billionaires who have profited, while millions of us have suffered, we say, take the wealth off the 1%! We demand the introduction of an immediate 50% levy on the hoarded wealth of big business.

As an alternative to bailing out big business with billions of pounds of taxpayers’ money, we fight for a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 125 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. This is a step towards a democratic socialist plan for the economy based on meeting need, not big business profit.

Building fighting organisations for young people

ALEX HUTCHINSON
YOUTH OFFICER HULL AND DISTRICT TRADES COUNCIL

The fightback is already taking place, and it is clear that young people will not idly stand by as the world crumbles around them. The wave of protests which swept Britain and the globe around the Black Lives Matter movement was predominantly led by youth.

In August, the fightback against the ridiculous A-level results fiasco, that forced this Tory government into another U-Turn, demonstrated to students that their direct action can have a massive impact on their futures.

Recently, hundreds of students at the University of Manchester pulled down the huge metal barriers which were put up around their campus, forcibly locking them in their accommodation. On top of this, we have seen mass movements

internationally from Chile to Lebanon to Hong Kong as well as global protests over climate change.

Trade unions key

Key to achieving success in these movements is linking with the organised working class in the trade union movement. What the ruling class and the capitalist bosses fear most is workers taking action. It is the working class which, due to its relationship to production, has the power to shut down workplaces and industry. It is imperative that young people not only coordinate action with trade unions, but join them and enter their structures and help to establish democratic and militant youth sections in every trade union.

It is clear that if the unions are to take up a serious fight against mass job losses, education cuts and all the hardships young people are facing, then we must lead calls for this

A SOCIALIST CHARTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We won’t sacrifice our future to capitalist crisis

Search ‘youth charter’ at socialistparty.org.uk

fight within the unions themselves. We must fight for complete democratisation of our union structures and for every official representative to be elected by the membership, with the right of recall while earning the average wage of the union member.

Build fighting students’ unions

As well as the wider workers’ movement, fighting organisations must be established within our schools, colleges and universities. We call on all students to get organised by forming and joining democratic students’ unions, through which action can be coordinated and our right to protest defended.

We call for the building of a fighting, national students’ union, to link the struggles within secondary schools, FE and HE colleges across the country in a national campaign against education cuts and for free education for all. Importantly, action should be coordinated with the teachers’ and lecturers’ unions, like the National Education Union and Universities and Colleges Union. Socialist Party members campaign for all of this within Socialist Students, based in colleges and universities up and down England and Wales.

Finally, we must look towards building fighting political representation. It is clear that the Labour Party under Starmer offers no alternative to the ‘business as usual’ capitalism which has dominated our politics for several decades. Our task now is to build towards a new mass workers’ party that can challenge the status quo, by putting forward a clear socialist alternative for young workers and students.

TUSC

Young members of the Socialist Party will take part in the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in next May’s council elections to start the process of building a new party of the working class. We call on young socialists, many who will have been inspired by Corbyn, to stand against right-wing Labour and the Tories, and fight for socialist policies in their local communities and at the ballot box.

Join the fightback

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

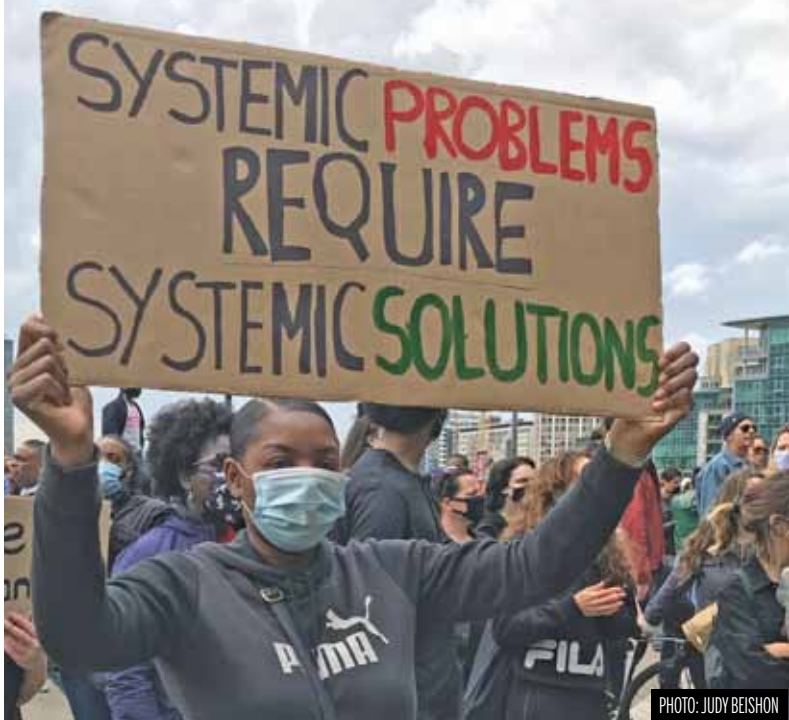
- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206

to find out more today!

System failing thousands of children in care



Race disparity gets worse – fight to improve living standards for all



DAVE GORTON
CHESTERFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

The children’s commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, has described the residential care home system as broken, and accused the Tory government of a “deep-rooted institutional ambivalence” to the plight of vulnerable children in care. She also said: “The growing reliance on private providers, some of whom are making millions, is another symptom of a system failing to prioritise the needs of children. Both the government and councils have failed in their responsibilities by leaving it to the market.”

These damning indictments come in three reports issued by the children’s commissioner’s office cataloguing the crisis in this sector.

The number of children in care in England rose from 64,400 in March 2010 to 78,150 in March 2019 - an increase of 21%, with almost three quarters of this growth covered by private provision. Over 30,000 children are living in an out-of-area placement, of which 2,000 are more than a hundred miles from home. More than 13,000 are accommodated in unregulated homes.

One report details the experiences of a teenager being housed in accommodation eight hours travel from her home town. Others speak of being dumped in places they couldn’t identify on a map, and then finding there was no school place for them there. Over 11% of children in care enrolled at school in 2019 had a change of school during the school year.

Vulnerable children at risk

The system’s failure is placing many vulnerable children at risk of becoming victims of criminal and/or sexual exploitation. Yet still we await the social care review promised in the Tory general election manifesto of a year ago.

‘Private provision in children’s social care’ reports a total operating

profit of £255 million, with a profit margin of about 17% on fees from local authorities. In other words, for every £100 the providers charge, around £17 is profit that is being siphoned off from care. This is one of the most blatant examples of how public money is diverted straight into the hands of private profiteers. Among the top ten providers of children’s homes, seven are owned by private equity firms!

Profit is accumulated by operating with lower costs than local authorities. The average unit cost of independent children’s homes is £3,596 per week compared to £4,750 per week for local authority provision. Much of this difference is created by driving down wage and pension costs. One children’s home manager interviewed estimated a starting salary in a private care home at around £22,000 a year, while in a public home it would be between £26,000 and £32,000.

About councils must fight

When Labour councillors claim they can’t fight government-imposed cuts and have to outsource social care, all they are doing is adding their own responsibility to that of central government in adversely affecting children in need of care and those who provide it.

A programme of action for the social care sector - children’s and adult services - must encompass pledges from councillors to fight any further cuts, joining with local authority trade unions to formulate needs budgets and bringing failing, or inadequate services in-house.

Alongside this, the three major unions - Unison, Unite and the GMB - should be putting forward a united campaign for bringing into public hands all private care, and for staff to receive wage rises commensurate with their caring responsibilities and skills. This campaign should also be targeted at recruiting the million or so unorganised workers in the social care sector.

BHARATHI SUBA
LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOCIALIST PARTY

Disparities in racial progress are getting worse, according to a recent report ‘Black people, racism and human rights’, by a committee of mainly Tory MPs and unelected Lords.

In the months after the Black Lives Matter movement erupted and spilled out on to our streets, the working class, particularly the BAME community, have seen a drastic drop in living standards. Low pay, irregular and zero-hour contracts, unemployment, underfunding and privatisation of the NHS, and the shutting down of local services, have all contributed to this.

The report finds that 25% of black voters are not registered to vote. Is it any surprise when the so-called ‘elected representatives’ vote in parliament and local councils for cuts?

The report also finds that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has been unable to gain

trust in tackling racial inequality, and three quarters of black people in the UK do not believe their human rights are equally protected.

This comes as no surprise, especially with the recent government appointment of right-wing writer and journalist David Goodhart, as commissioner at the EHRC. Goodhart is an infamous defender of the government’s notorious hostile environment policy.

This report’s suggestions are likely to end up as another empty ‘tick-box’ exercise. Investigations into why racist divisions exist should be conducted by democratically elected representatives from communities, workplaces and trade unions.

There is a huge gap for real political representation of the whole of the working class. Building such a party, organising in the trade unions, and fighting to raise living standards for all, is the first step to winning improvements for BAME communities. But that needs to be linked to a wider fight for a socialist alternative to this capitalist system that has inequality rooted in its DNA.

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the Socialist

Issue 1110

19-25 November 2020

formerly **Militant**

SOCIALISM ONLINE FORUM 2020 20-23 November

Hosted by
**Socialist
Party**

COVID, CAPITALIST CRISIS ORGANISE WORKING CLASS RESISTANCE!

Confirmed speakers:

- **HANNAH SELL** Socialist Party general secretary
- **PETER TAAFFE** Socialist Party political secretary
- **HOWIE HAWKINS** Green US presidential candidate
- **HOWARD BECKETT** Unite assistant general secretary and Labour NEC (personal capacity)
- **BEA GARDNER** Student activist
- **HUGO PIERRE** Unison NEC (personal capacity)
- **ISAI PRIYA** Socialist Party National Committee

Chaired by **HELEN PATTISON** Socialist Party London secretary

MAIN RALLY

Socialism 2020 comprises an introduction meeting on Friday, 38 workshops over Saturday, Sunday and Monday, and the main rally on Saturday 6-8pm. Ticket holders will be emailed all details.

FOR AGENDA, TICKETS, INFO:
socialism2020.net

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

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

