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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

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HOUSING SMASH THE TORY WRECKING BILL



Bob Sulatycki

A Dickensian world of slum housing, overcrowding, soaring rents and the threat of eviction is now becoming the reality for millions of ordinary people in Tory Britain.

But this is just a foretaste of what is in store if the Tories' Housing Bill becomes law. Sell-offs, rent hikes and shorter and shorter tenancies will be rolled out.

Neither council nor housing association tenants will be immune. According to the former head of the civil service, Lord Kerslake, social housing itself is threatened. Largely unaffordable 'starter homes' will replace it, at a cost of up to £450,000.

In reality, establishment politicians have been attacking social housing since 1979. At that time 42% lived in council homes. Now it's under 8%.

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- For a mass programme of council house building
- Rent controls now - cap private rents, not housing benefit
- Lifetime guaranteed social housing tenancies for all who want them
- Tax the super-rich and take over long-term empty property
- Nationalise the banks and large building companies - under the democratic control of workers and the community - to ensure cheap mortgages and access to resources

Councillor smears TUSC policy as 'BNP'

WHAT WE SAW
A right-wing Labour councillor in Tower Hamlets, east London, has accused anti-austerity activists of emulating the far-right, racist British National Party (BNP).

Councillor John Pierce attacked supporters of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) after they attended a council oversight and scrutiny committee meeting.

TUSC includes transport union RMT and the Socialist Party.

Activists were making the case for a legal no-cuts budget. They referred to Stoke's Tory-Independent council, which is using reserves to delay cuts. Unrelated to this, one of Stoke's independent councillors is apparently a former BNP member.

photo Naomi Byron

I am disappointed Cllr Pierce attempted to smear TUSC as "advocating the policies of the BNP".

This was in response to TUSC arguing for Tower Hamlets Council to use some of its £71 million general reserves to temporarily stop cutbacks, in order to launch a mass campaign to win the money back from central government.

To say this is supporting BNP policies is ignorant in the extreme. BNP councillors have voted for cuts time after time. One BNP councillor in Kirklees boasted: "You get rid of 25% of council staff and no-one would notice."

The cuts Tower Hamlets Labour is proposing attack the most vulnerable. Worst of all, they are not necessary. The council has the money to protect jobs and services, buying time to coordinate trade unions and the community to fight for more funds.

Naomi Byron, Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

Top tweets @Socialist_party

David Cameron recently attacked Muslim women. He apparently said the "traditional submissiveness of Muslim women" is a cause of terrorism. His answer was English language training - which his government has cut the funding for. More detail on Cameron's latest racist efforts in our editorial, pages 4 and 5.

Nabeela Zahir @NabeelaZahir
British Muslim women responding to Cameron's recent comments #TraditionallySubmissive (tweets are in English by the way)

Asmaa Malik @asmaam
My mom was so #TraditionallySubmissive she left home to go to med school in 1960s Pakistan. Thanks her, I'm a journalist and a professor

Jamilla @JamillaTweets
The University of Karueein (pic right), the oldest in the world. Founded by a Muslim woman. #TraditionallySubmissive

Sofia Ahmed @sofiaahmed1
My earliest memory as a child was watching my #TraditionallySubmissive mother protect us from getting beaten up by racists



The blast furnace at Redcar photo Jeff Pardoen/Creative Commons

STEEL WORKERS MAY FACE BENEFIT CUT-OFF FOR NOT SEEKING BAR JOBS

Rudi Abdallah

Skilled steelworkers, recently made redundant, are apparently facing punishing benefit sanctions - for refusing to seek low-paid work which doesn't use their skills.

2,200 workers lost their jobs when the SSI steelworks in Redcar, North Yorkshire closed last October. Redcar's Labour MP Anna Turley told parliament that job centres have reprimanded steelworkers for not applying to shops and bars.

Claimants are meant to have a 13-week window to apply for similarly high-skilled work. Yet Turley says they've been ordered to apply for

lower-skilled jobs only two weeks in.

Reportedly, one apprentice with nearly three years' experience was told "he should get a job in a bar". Of course, serving beer is what logically follows years of training in steel-making.

The Department for Work and Pensions denies this has occurred. But the workers shouldn't be in this situation in the first place.

Slashed

Since last summer, profit-hungry firms have slashed nearly 5,000 jobs. Tata, SSI and others claim they are unable to contend with a cocktail of issues, ranging from high energy costs to cheap Chinese steel.

Across the country, beleaguered steelworkers have been betrayed by callous Tories, uninterested in helping working class people - who make all the riches they and their mates own.

In a shocking example of double standards, the Tories supported Gordon Brown bailing out the greedy banks that wrecked the economy in 2007. But they have refused to intervene here, claiming the situation is beyond their control.

Nationalise steel under the democratic control of workers and the community. Steelworkers are blameless. Public ownership would return their dignity, and retain valuable skills.

Oscars snub black artists: fight racism and austerity in the arts

Olivia Onyehara Actor

This year, I'm not excited about who is going to win an Oscar.

I've been watching the films, but it has been difficult to ignore the very big, extremely white herd of elephants in the room. No black nominees for the second year running.

Oscar voters snubbed 'Beasts of No Nation', about child soldiers in west Africa. It is brilliantly written and directed, and performed by a hugely talented and almost entirely black cast.

These voters are predominantly white, male and over 50. They represent

the entertainment industry's wealthy elite.

As a young black actor, I wonder if they feel that only 'black films' which depict the subjugation of minorities by rich white men are worthy of Oscar nomination?

Non-white actors, producers, and theatre and film makers are under-represented, as are women. Cuts in arts funding, and tuition fees in drama schools and universities, disproportionately affect us. We are never given a full and equal opportunity to represent and be represented.

The entertainment industry is rapidly turning into a private playground for the rich. This means that black and Asian actors are unlikely to be cast

as leads.

Instead we are limited to small, supporting and often stereotyped roles. The people funding and casting the projects cast the world they live in - an ever more bleached world, devoid of working class voices.

Out of 2,900 Oscars, 31 have been awarded to black actors.

Cuts

As well as better casting policy, reversing the cuts is fundamental to creating space for black, female and working class voices to flourish in the arts. And democratic control of broadcasters like the BBC - including representatives of viewers, and entertainment union Equity - would help prevent 'whitewashing'.



photo Ivan Bandura/Creative Commons

Google pays pittance for avoiding £2bn tax

Andrew Carss

State benefits and tax cuts for rich corporations - pay cuts and job losses for the rest of us.

Search engine and advertising giant Google has agreed to pay £130 million in ten years of back taxes. This is a derisory sum considering Google recorded sales in Britain for 2014 alone of £4.5 billion.

The Tax Justice Network estimates it should be paying £200 million every year!

This comes after tax officials proposed in December laughably 'tough' fines of £300 for companies which submit their tax records late. For big firms, £300 will promptly be ignored. They will plough on regard-

less, hoarding vast profits to stow in offshore tax havens.

And who pays for the taxes they do not pay? We, the working class, in the form of relentless service cuts and pay theft. We didn't create the financial crisis, but we are certainly paying for it.

Meanwhile, the healthcare wing of US mega-corporation GE has taken root in the NHS. It makes hundreds of millions of pounds in sales of equipment and testing services - and apparently pays negative corporation tax!

Through tax benefits, GE Healthcare has actually made a net tax profit of £1.6 million, according to research by the Independent. This will come as an outrage to the hundreds of thousands of NHS staff, liv-

ing on the edge of a knife, enduring pay freezes and job losses for years.

We cannot trust the Tories' tokenistic efforts to clamp down on tax avoidance. Much can be done to improve tax collection, but closing the loopholes will always be an uphill battle under capitalism.

Nationalise

We demand that all tax avoiding companies be taken into public ownership under democratic working class control.

Nationalise the banking industry too - it is complicit in this extortion, providing safe havens for the bosses' ill-gotten gains.

Take it all off them - and pay no compensation to leeching, fat-cat capitalists!



Google hasn't coughed up for a decade - and one estimate suggests it should be paying £200 million a year photo Robbie Shade/Creative Commons

TORIES TO END ALL SOCIAL HOUSING

> Continued from page 1

For millions of people, particularly young people, getting a roof over your head means struggling in the jungle of private renting. Already, in London and other hotspots, the boom in property prices has meant a bonanza for investment companies and private landlords - including many MPs - but a nightmare for ordinary working people.

Unscrupulous landlords are driving up rents at their fastest rate for four years. Meanwhile wages stand still and benefits are capped.

Property developers eye up council estates in areas with market potential if socially cleansed. Evictions and homelessness have multiplied.

Clearances

The 'London clearances' have already pushed 50,000 people out. Hundreds of thousands more live in fear of losing their homes.

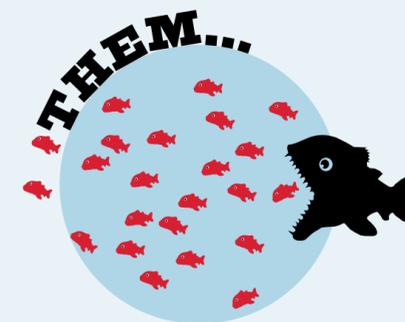
But a massive groundswell of resistance is building from below.

Council, housing association and private tenants all face the same issues, caused by the anarchy of capitalism.

Even many homeowners, particularly leaseholders convinced into buying their council homes, find themselves trapped through spiralling service charges and mortgage repayments.

The rich have no interest in ensuring provision of affordable housing. The enemy is the super-rich 1%, the bankers - and their kept politicians who preside over this system.

Read more online at socialistparty.org.uk



Pensioners freeze, energy firms profit

Half of Britain's pensioners were due to turn down the thermostat during January's cold snap. Meanwhile, big energy firms are posting record profits - the big six will make over £1 billion for the first time.

A study reported in the Times found that five million over-65s were planning to risk their health - and lives - by sitting in the cold.

Energy prices have remained stubbornly high for consumers. Bosses are pocketing the difference of two years' falling wholesale costs.



Sick bosses sicken sick workers

One in four bosses now demands to interrogate you on your illness before granting sick leave. That's pretty sick.

And one in ten workers is forced to make up the lost time, with similar numbers made to use annual leave for medical appointments.

The survey by a health insurer also found that even 30% of bosses who claim to be more sympathetic are "frustrated by the working time lost" to sickness. Bullying, low pay and job insecurity are becoming normal. Have bosses considered that workers might just be sick of them?

Worker told to pay boss

A worker in London was outraged when a prospective boss asked her to pay £44 to attend an interview.

The Socialist has received copies of email correspondence between the prospective employee and a tutoring firm. After approving her CV, the boss instructed her to pay a £44 "registration fee". This

was apparently to pay for a DBS criminal record check - with no promise of a job.

The worker rightly declined the boss's kind offer to pay his firm for an interview. She wrote to him that "I believe your company's policy of making potential applicants and your own workers pay for their own DBS check is inappropriate and approaches the immoral."



Have you got news for the 'fishes'? Email editors@socialistparty.org.uk

TORIES 'PREVENT' CIVIL LIBERTIES



What we think

Increasingly the government's 'Prevent' strategy is facing protest. Over 280 academics have condemned it. A House of Commons committee report stated that "Prevent risks undermining positive cross-cultural work on cohesion and capacity building".

Originally trialled in 2006 by Labour, the Tories launched their Prevent strategy in 2011. Last year it became a legal duty. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 requires staff in public services - schools, colleges, prisons, GP surgeries etc - to report on anything that might suggest someone is vulnerable to 'extremism'. This can mean the involvement of social services and the police, and being put into the process of 'de-radicalisation'. Not to report a suspicion is potentially a criminal offence.

According to figures from Prevent Watch, referrals increased by 500% in 2015.

Occasionally a story makes the headlines and illustrates the reality of Prevent, such as the 14-year old questioned for talking about eco-terrorism. But there are lots of stories: Such as the secondary student questioned by social services for watching programmes about world war two on a Middle-Eastern TV channel. Or the child reported to the police for refusing to shop at Marks and Spencers.

Waltham Forest Council of Mosques, representing up to 70,000 Muslims, has vowed to boycott the programme. Muslim leaders in Newham claim the Prevent strategy is causing a "breakdown of trust" and "spying on our young people".

Prevent even faces opposition from some in the police. A former senior Muslim police officer, Dal Babu, argues that the policy has become a "toxic brand" for the organisations it has helped fund, so that Muslim activists working in their communities are now tainted.



Prevent requires staff in public services to report on anything that might suggest someone is vulnerable to 'extremism'

Stereotyping

In Waltham Forest the 'Brit' project, 'Building Resilience through Integration and Trust', is being trialled in five primary schools with a large Muslim intake. Children as young as nine have been expected to complete surveys designed to provide clues to possible radicalisation. The questionnaire asked how much they trust the police and people from another race or religion.

They were asked whether they agree that it is acceptable to marry someone from outside their race or religion and whether women are just as good as men at work. Another question asked "If a student was making fun of my race or religion I would try to make them stop even if it meant hurting them."

'Prevent' involves outrageous - and hypocritical - stereotyping which can only serve to increase mistrust of Muslims and division in schools and wider communities. For example, the Tory secretary of state for education, Nicky Morgan, who voted against gay marriage, cited hostility to homosexuality as an example of a sign of susceptibility to extremism.

The National Union of Teachers reports that Prevent is causing significant nervousness and confusion among teachers. Teachers already have a duty of care to safeguard all children. Students and teachers need to develop a relationship of trust - much more likely to lead to a result if there is a problem - but this will erode that and make young people less likely to talk for fear of being reported to the police.

A study by the Claystone think tank, 'Building distrust: Religious profiling in primary schools', considers that



David Cameron has suggested that Muslim women in the UK who do not speak English could face deportation photo Garry Knight/Creative Commons

Prevent "clearly points to a pattern of ethnic profiling in counter-radicalisation policy in British schools".

The Tories have stepped up anti-migrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric with so-called 'anti-extremism' measures. The Prevent strategy is part of this, alongside the teaching of 'British values' in schools. David Cameron said "If you walk our streets, learn in our schools, benefit from our society - you sign up to our values".

The latest example is David Cameron's suggestion that Muslim women in the UK who do not speak English are at risk of radicalisation and could face deportation if they do not learn English. He proposed a £20million fund - not mentioning the £45million that used to be spent annually on English for Speakers of Other Languages (Esol) until that was cut last August.

Terrorism

The Socialist Party, along with the vast majority of Muslims, condemns terrorism and we understand that many people are fearful of the possibility of another terrorist attack in Britain. We completely oppose the ideas and methods of Isis, a brutal right-wing organisation. In fact around the world the majority of victims of terrorism are Muslim. Only a very tiny number of Muslims are attracted to the ideas of Isis.

But a government of the rich, elected by just 24% of the electorate, split over the EU and beset by crises in the economy and the Middle East, with a refugee crisis on its doorstep, all of which it has no solution for, is attempting to scapegoat Muslims and whip up fears and

division among working class people.

They want us all to look away and blame each other, while the rich get richer and we face unprecedented austerity. They want to reduce our ability to unite and fight back.

At the same time they hope to be seen to be 'doing

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photo woodleywonderworks/Creative Commons



The risk of a terrorist attack in London has been increased by the bombing of Syria photo Alisdare Hickson/Creative Commons

something' in response to fears of terrorist attack.

However, the bald fact is that no amount of anti-terror legislation has made or will make the threat of attack go away. New anti-terrorism laws were introduced in 2000 which did not stop the terror attacks of 7/7 in 2005.

The risk of terrorist attack in London has been increased by the bombing of Syria.

It is the foreign policy of the British and other western governments and their global allies - years of subjugation, wars, invasion and occupation in the Middle East, the terrible treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli state, backed by the US - that has created the conditions for terrorism.

The so-called "war on terror" waged by western imperialists powers for the last 15 years has brought terror to Iraq, Libya, Syria, Paris, Tunisia, London - and many more places.



We have to fight for class demands and campaign action that is capable of uniting all sections of the working class

These interventions have created a daily nightmare. But when people try to escape, they are left to drown in the sea or languish in squalid camps while the same western governments turn their backs.

Young people see all this, and experience the racist response of the government, while their own future is torn away by austerity cuts, fees, privatisation, low pay, zero-hour contracts and extortionate rents. Young Asian people in particular face more poverty. 20% of white families live in low-income households - an appalling statistic itself - but that rises to 60% of Pakistanis and 70% of Bangladeshis.

The Socialist Party completely opposes racism and all division. But we think it is important not to respond

to vital issues such as refugees and Prevent as stand-alone issues, separate from austerity and attacks on the working class generally, which is unfortunately the approach of some, such as the Socialist Workers' Party, in campaigns like Stand Up to Racism.

We have to vigorously fight for class demands and campaign action that is capable of uniting all sections of the working class.

Terrorism cannot be eliminated by capitalist governments as they create the conditions in the first place. For the working class and poor all capitalism offers is poverty and austerity.

The only way to rid our world of the threat of terror attacks is to eradicate the conditions that breed them: poverty, war, oppression and exploitation. Unity of working class people in mass movements is essential.

'Extreme'

This is why, while Prevent is overtly aimed at Muslim 'extremists', the definition of radicalisation is undefined and has been interpreted by some trainers to include 'extreme' left-wing views. The government also encourages teachers to look out for 'extreme' left-wing views.

In Hull the police interviewed young people who organised an anti-austerity protest in June last year. The teaching of 'British values' has been used to warn school students against protesting at MPs who voted to bomb Syria.

The Tories' anti-extremism laws come alongside attacks such as the Trade Union Bill, a draconian attack on workers' rights that aims to shackle the ability of working class people to fight to defend their jobs, pay and services.

Jeremy Corbyn winning the leadership of the Labour Party means that an expression of anger against racism, anti-democratic policies and imperialist wars are at least aired in the mainstream media.

It is essential that these correct ideas are married with a clear programme that fights for homes and jobs for all, to harness all anti-austerity and working class forces in a battle to defeat Tory austerity and the division and racism they create.

Red doors scandal Stop stigmatising refugees!



A refugee outside their red door in Middlesbrough

Sabah Ahmed
 Social worker

Refugees and asylum seekers in Middlesbrough, Teesside, are experiencing daily abuse and attack. Their homes have been marked out with red-painted doors by property developer Jomast.

Meanwhile in Cardiff, private firm Clearsprings Ready Homes has been marking the asylum seekers it houses with compulsory red wristbands.

Jomast, owned by Stuart Monk, is a subcontractor for notorious private security firm G4S. Monk receives millions of pounds annually to provide accommodation for thousands of asylum seekers.

G4S

Local campaigners first raised the matter four years ago with G4S, asking it to change the doors; the firm refused. Then they raised it with Parliament's Home Affairs Committee. Now, with increasing violence, the Home Office has ordered an urgent review.

Refugees report that they feel vulnerable and unsafe. One said: "This red door affects our life."

When we open it, we have to watch our back in case we meet someone trying to do something. We have had eggs thrown at the door, they bang on the windows and we get abuse."

The Times reported that asylum

seekers at one house felt so stigmatised that they painted their door white. Jomast repainted it red after an inspector visited and said it was "against company policy".

Jomast's "company policy" is reminiscent of marking the doors of Jews with the Star of David in 1930s Germany. It must end now. The council must provide safe, decent accommodation for refugees.

Clearsprings has now promised to stop its wristbands policy after public outrage.



In Cardiff, private firm Clearsprings Ready Homes has been marking asylum seekers it houses with compulsory red wristbands

The Tory government has cynically placed refugees in some of the country's poorest areas, which already have too few resources. The Socialist Party campaigns for investment in affordable homes for all, and the right to stay for migrants.

We fight against racism and stand in solidarity with refugees and all workers. Reverse all cuts and kick out the warmonger politicians!

“I have left work many times in tears” - a council worker comments

work in an office for my local council supporting social workers. Some days I really enjoy my job and I feel I help social workers with the paperwork side of their job, so that they can focus on the more critical parts.

A lot of social workers are very grateful for the support I provide and I feel valued by them.

However, I do find there is a lot of ‘office politics’ that comes with the administration side of the work.

There have been a lot of changes to the definition of an ‘administration task’ and in what the social worker is expected to do themselves.

This is due to the many restructures that have taken place. It can lead to some of my colleagues feeling very awkward when they have to say they cannot do what they have been asked.

It can be a very high pressured environment and people can sometimes be short with one another. As someone with a ‘hidden

disability’ this can be very difficult as people do not understand how they can deeply upset me. I am open about my disability, however I don’t wish to be defined by it and am cautious of people using it against me.

Hope

I have left work many times in tears from feeling very overwhelmed. At times my depression has been greatly heightened due to being in the workplace.

There have been positives of being in work. From where I was three years ago, when unemployed, I have grown dramatically in confidence. When I work on computers I am in my element.

Senior managers should have more awareness on the effects that high workloads have on people, because I struggle to tell people that I’m not coping before it’s too late.

That is my hope but I think we as a workforce and trade union will have to fight for it!



photo JC Count/Creative Commons

BIRMINGHAM TEACHERS STRIKE TO RESIST ACADEMY ATTACK



The picket line at Small Heath School on 19 January photo Jane Nellist

Olive Walder
Birmingham Socialist Party

Teaching staff in the NUT at Small Heath School in Birmingham have started nine days of strike action (19-21 and 26-28 January and 2-4 February) against the threat to turn it into an academy.

The school have failed to properly engage with staff, pupils or parents. Teachers have already taken five days of strike action before Christmas over this issue.

Two days after teachers voted for this round of strike action NUT rep Simon O’Hara was suspended by management in an obvious attempt to break the action.

About 50 teachers and supporters attended the first picket on 19 January on a freezing cold morning and heard many passing cars toot their horns in support.

Determined

The mood was lively and determined and the picket line was visited by NUT NEC and Socialist Party member Jane Nellist.

There was another well attended picket on 21 January when NASUWT members were out on strike too. Once again many cars tooted their horns in support.

Management are still refusing to talk to the unions, it may well be that they are trying to drag the dispute out and hope that the majority of parents will eventually oppose

the strike.

It is possible that management want this to be a watershed dispute in the struggle against academisation.

But there is at the moment a vocal group of parents in support of the strike and IT staff who are members of the teachers’ and lecturers’ union ATL will be striking on the next dates.



Two days after teachers voted for this round of strike action NUT rep Simon O’Hara was suspended by management in an obvious attempt to break the action

The teachers are determined to win what could be a bitter dispute.

Please send protests about Simon O’Hara’s suspension to mail@smallheathschool.org.uk, messages of support to banut@btclick.com and sign the online petition in support of Simon at chn.ge/1Q12Jm4

See pages 8-9 for more on the education fightback.

KILL THE BILL: TRADE UNION BILL WILL STRETCH RESOURCES AS WELL AS LIMIT ACTION



NSSN ‘Kill the Bill’ lobby of the TUC in 2015 photo Paul Mattsson

Dan Celardi
Lambeth and South West London Socialist Party

The government finally released its impact assessment for the trade union bill on 21 January. It estimates the bill will cost unions £37 million over the next six years.

Initial scrutiny already suggests the predictions are far too modest.

For example, they expect trade unions to be able to process a direct debit or change of details form in just 30 seconds!

‘Hard working people’

The Tories claim the bill is about protecting hard working people. This principle doesn’t seem high on the agenda when they are slashing the vital jobs services that people rely on.

The real agenda is to silence resistance to their savage policies.

The TUC planned week of action for 8-14 February is nowhere near the action needed to defeat this bill.

A ‘mass meeting’ via the internet with Frances O’Grady will not stop the Tories.

The TUC and affiliate unions should be calling meetings in every branch and every workplace to discuss action.

The government’s trade union bill will cost unions at least £37 million over the next six years

Ultimately, the only thing that will stop the Tories is action on the scale of what defeated previous anti-union laws.

Workers need to organise and build together for a 24-hour general strike. A campaign of this magnitude would build a movement to kill the bill and kick out the Tories.

24-hour tube strike suspended

A tube worker

The 24-hour tube strike set to start on 26 January has been called off after tube workers union the RMT agreed to suspend it.

The other tube unions, Aslef, TSSA and Unite had already called off their action over pay, night tube and rosters.

The campaign so far has forced London Underground (LU) to delay their plans on night tube, showing that LU cannot just steamroller through whatever they want.

However, there are still big issues

over stations that remain unresolved.

Management want to impose rosters that would result in fewer weekend rest days and new working practices that would allow them to change people’s start times and locations at short notice.

The new rosters would create chronic understaffing at many stations.

The RMT suspended the strike due to start on Tuesday 26 January, but instead will take action on stations in the week commencing 7 February, which is the week the changes would be imposed.

Care services under threat in Haringey



photo Chris Marchant/Creative Commons

John Doan
Haringey Council care worker

In an earlier round of austerity cuts under the Con-Dem government, Haringey Council in north London closed its council-run respite service for adults with learning disabilities.

They instead relied on the private sector to provide this service, but a recent experience has illustrated once again that private provision doesn’t meet caring needs.

Look Ahead Care and Support ran Haringey respite services after the closure of Haringey Council’s provision and also provided a supported living service and outreach services.

At the end of December 2015 Look Ahead wrote to the families of service users stating:

“Services have consistently been operating at a large deficit for the organisation, which is no longer sustainable. We can no longer con-

tinue to deliver these services and continue to sustain the financial losses. We have to inform you that Look Ahead Care and Support have sadly needed to serve notice on the contract and we will cease to operate the support provision on all the Haringey services from the 12 January 2016.”

Guarantee

This shows that the only way to guarantee proper care provision for vulnerable people is through a publicly managed, publicly funded service based on needs not ability to pay.

Haringey’s Labour-run council should once again provide these services that the private sector has walked away from because ‘they are unprofitable.’

Haringey Council should also halt their current widespread privatisation plans, to prove in practice that the Labour Party is now an anti-austerity party.

[News in brief]

Rep defended



Glen Hart photo NSSN

Tube workers are being balloted in defence of victimised RMT rep Glen Hart. The National Executive Committee considers that there is strong support for Glen from members across all London Underground grades and have taken the decision to conduct a ballot for strike action and action short of a strike. A dispute exists over the continued suspension and threat of disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against Glen. This will remain in place until Glen Hart is reinstated to his full substantive role. The ballot papers were posted out to all London Underground members on 21 January and the closing date is 4 February.

See issue 877 for more.

Anti-cuts protest

A demonstration called by Labour-run Brighton and District Trades Council has been called for 30 January against unprecedented cuts to council services. The protest will start at 12pm at The Level before marching to the town hall. Trade unions and local campaigners are demonstrating in the face of £68 million of cuts and the huge impact they will have across the city.

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TEACHING: A PERFECT STORM IS BREWING

James
London teacher

A perfect storm is brewing in the education system. A lack of school places, teacher shortage and cuts are compounding existing issues related to workload, staff morale and testing.

Michael Gove the previous Secretary of State for Education declared in 2014: "we've done all we can to ensure the authority, respect and prestige of teachers is enhanced in and beyond the classroom." This would raise a laugh in any staffroom. Even Ofsted, the schools' inspectorate body, not one for rocking the boat with central government, has warned there is a looming recruitment crisis.

Is it any wonder when workload has continued to rise? In the last published government statistics on teacher workload, from 2013, it was found that teachers were working on average 55 hours a week in secondary and 60 in primary (up from a 50 hour average at the start of the Con-Dem government).

Lots of teachers are finding it completely unsustainable, many leaving early in their career. A survey by the ATL teaching union suggested a staggering 40% of teachers leave within a year of qualifying.

League tables

What is driving this exponential rise in workload? League tables have created a competitive market among schools. This has a huge impact on individual teachers. Much of the extra workload is teachers having to jump through hoops to fulfil targets and tick boxes.

The introduction of performance related pay means increasingly teachers' pay is linked to exam results; not enough students passing means no pay rise. This naturally has a detrimental effect on the advice offered and the relationships built between staff and students.

40%

of teachers leave within a year of qualifying, according to a survey by the ATL union

In a National Union of Teachers (NUT) study 86% agreed with the statement "Pupils are encouraged to take subjects that will count in the league tables irrespective of their interests/aptitudes." It is just another thing which explodes the myth that school reforms are all about giving young people the best possible chance in life.

These measures are not confined to secondary schools with the government introducing baseline assessments for children at the start of

primary school and the slated return of formal SATs for seven year olds, alongside a host of other tests. A teacher from an 'outstanding' primary school sums up the impact in the NUT's 'Exam Factories' pamphlet: "It is heart breaking to have a four year old approach me in tears because they 'are still in the bad group for reading' because they have already been streamed."

Something even more sinister lies behind the aggressive scrutiny and data-led micro management of schools. Education secretary Nicky Morgan has said: "In future, we could try to link qualifications to tax data too in order to demonstrate the true worth of certain subjects."



Much of the extra workload is teachers having to jump through hoops to fulfil targets

The Tories, egged on by their supporters in big business, are opening up our schools to the big corporations and their interests. Schools can't technically be run as profit making businesses yet but many of the allied support services and supplies are provided by large corporations who have their eyes on how they can cream off funds from the public sector.

Standardised tests are just a part of this. In the US the standardised testing market is worth \$2 billion with multinationals providing the tests and of course the study materials to go with them.

Standardised tests mean more standardised teaching with more and more schools adopting centralised curriculums. In some schools, particularly the academies, this could be used as the basis for employing more unqualified teachers who can simply 'deliver' a packaged curriculum.

Funding

Schools are also faced with a funding crisis. Many budgets are trimmed to the bone as a result of changes to pension and national insurance payments but it's about to get worse when the government introduces a new funding formula.

It will supposedly make things 'fairer' with allocations closer to parity between big cities and rural areas. Teachers and communities should welcome more funding for rural and coastal schools but not at the expense of urban ones.

Only one authority will actually see a real terms rise and cuts will bite up and down the country, especially in some of the most deprived areas. Schools in Hackney could see cuts of 20%. This will result in staff losses, larger class sizes and an even higher workload.

It may seem a bleak picture but



photo Karen Stintz/Flickr

teachers are willing to fight. The Tories' trade union bill is designed to make it difficult for education unions to achieve legal ballot thresholds and the ability to hire supply teachers to break strikes will act as a green light to the most anti-union employers.

This is why serious preparation needs to be done to ensure the unions are able to respond. At the heart needs to be the understanding that national strike action will be the only way to beat this government back (see right).

The victory of Corbyn shows a changing mood in society and suggests a desire for a political alternative. His call for a 'rethink' on 'free schools' and academies has broken the Westminster consensus on privatisation too.

The need for socialist policies will be posed in this new situation as teachers see on a daily basis that a few cosmetic changes are not enough to create the education system staff and students deserve.

Teachers across the country are demonstrating a willingness to fight for, and more importantly win, on pay and conditions with a flurry of schools taking strike action over the last few months. But as a strategy, school-by-school is not going to resolve the problems for all teachers.



photo Paul Mattsson

Strike to win! We need a national strategy for a national struggle

Jane Nellist
NUT national executive (personal capacity)

Teachers across the country are demonstrating a willingness to fight for, and more importantly win, on pay and conditions with a flurry of schools taking strike action over the last few months. But as a strategy, school-by-school is not going to resolve the problems for all teachers.

Nevertheless, we have seen some stunning victories. In my own area, NUT members at Blue Coat School in Coventry who have battled for months with an intransigent management, took strike action in September over the lack of consultation on school policies and won.

At Bournville School and Sixth Form Centre, NUT and NASUWT members took strike action against proposed redundancies. Nationally

the NUT is consulting on a one-day strike of members in sixth form colleges.

At John Roan School in Greenwich, NUT members took two days of strike action against the imposition of unacceptable assessment, scrutiny and appraisal policies.

The NUT group in their statement said: "We hope others feel encouraged that we can take a stand and win. We are very proud of our strike and what we have achieved over the last six weeks. We now have policies that offer us greater protection against a culture that values 'statistics' more than the students we should be helping."

The strikes that have taken place have also won the support of the wider community with parents and students demonstrating their support.

But the problems facing teachers are national and emanate from

a government that is trying to ripen the school system ready for privatisation.

Socialist Party members have been at the forefront of the Local Associations for National Action Campaign (Lanac) in NUT. Lanac has consistently argued for a serious plan of escalating national action and teachers will need to be prepared to take that type of action to defeat this government.

National action with a proper strategy of escalation, just like that being employed in the school-by-school strategy, uniting all teachers in defence of decent pay and conditions, is the only solution.

We need a national contract that protects teachers from a life of drudgery. We need to use the examples of these successful strikes to build the confidence of all teachers to fight back together. If you fight back you can win!

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TEACHER AND MOTHER

Lianne Francis
Cardiff teacher

In this job, organisation is everything. Without meticulous attention to detail and a lot of forward planning, you can pretty much guarantee you'll be at meltdown stage before the term is out.

Unfortunately, educators now spend less time sharing ideas about how to engage pupils with quadratic equations or Shakespeare and more time discussing 'coping strategies' that will help us avoid having to take time off for stress.

I get up at 6.15am and my head is swimming with thoughts of work by 6.16am. I go over my lesson plans in my head while I shower, having a quiet panic about all the things I haven't yet managed to do this week.

My little girl gets woken up at 7am and her dad gets her dressed while she protests at having to leave her warm bed (I'm with her 100% on that one). We hurry out of the door while it's still dark and I try to squash my rising stress levels as she takes her time walking to the car, asking about the moon or telling me about a cat she saw.

Making the most

I try hard to make the most of my time with her on those journeys, determined to be the best mother I can be in the brief pockets of time where we are together during the week.

I drop her off at the childminder at 8am, some mornings having to peel her off me because she wants me to stay and play with her (if only she knew how much I want to do just that).

I spend the rest of the day juggling meetings, data analysis, lesson planning, reports, exam entries, intervention strategies, training and departmental improvement plans. Sometimes, I even manage to

Lianne and family at the Socialism2014 event photo Senan



do a bit of teaching. I try to escape on time but fail most days, cursing myself for failing as a mother because I've allowed myself to get cornered by yet another colleague or line manager who wants to add another task to my endless to-do list.

Exhausted

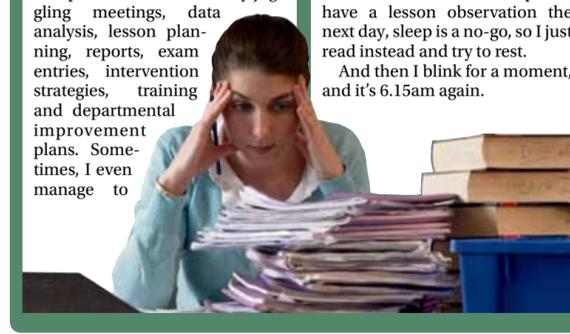
By the time I get my daughter home, we are both exhausted and grumpy but I make sure I never, ever work while she's awake. We play, talk, laugh and read books and I am grateful for that daily, delightful diversion from the job that often feels like it sucks the life right out of you.

But my decision to dedicate time to my family every day comes at a price: if I am to survive as a teacher, I have to resume working as soon as my toddler goes to sleep at 7.30pm.

Most days, I try to wrap things up by 10pm but, in reality, my mind is whirring with work-related anxieties for hours after I put down my red (or purple, or blue, or green) pen.

I often sleep fitfully, waking at regular intervals and relying on various strategies to push thoughts of work out of my mind and drift back off to sleep. If I have a lesson observation the next day, sleep is a no-go, so I just read instead and try to rest.

And then I blink for a moment, and it's 6.15am again.





The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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Rubbish planning
photo Chris Sampson/
Creative Commons

Brum bunglers

Birmingham council's Labour leaders keep telling us that there is no alternative to the massive cuts they intend to carry out at the behest of the Tory government.

Such pleas may be a bit more acceptable if they knew what they were doing. It was revealed recently that council refuse trucks are too big to drive down some of the city's narrower streets!
Clive Walder,
Birmingham

Useless Ukip

What a strange year 2015 was for the United Kingdom Independence Party (Ukip)!

They predicted a 25-seat success at the general election, and not even leader Nigel Farage was elected as an MP.

Since that time, the party has reportedly lost over a third of members, funding is drying up and there are two separate investigations into its European parliament group.

More recently, the defection of their Pontypridd candidate to Labour has provided a rich source of local embarrassment.

Ukip has been boasting about the prospect of winning nine seats at the Welsh Assembly elections in May 2016.

But judging by the penury of their past predictions I very much doubt they will

Ukip's Nigel Farage who failed to get elected
photo Gage Skidmore/
Creative Commons



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

Reader's comment

CAPITALISM ENSURES THE END FOR DEEP COAL MINING IN BRITAIN



Kellingley Colliery
photo Chris Sampson/
Creative Commons

Malik J Rofidi
Selby Socialist Party

Kellingley Colliery closure marks the end of deep coal mining in Britain and is a casualty of capitalism.

My thoughts and best wishes for the future go out to the 450 workers who have lost their jobs due to the closure of the pit in December 2015. It was a sad time for them, their community and indeed the country.

This is a sensitive issue. The tendency has been to depoliticise this matter somewhat, those who draw political links have been accused of using it as a "political football". However, the fact is that the politics behind this is inescapable.

Quite simply, within this capitalist system Kellingley's days were numbered.

Ludicrous

As ludicrous as it sounds, it made sense for Drax power station, Kellingley's big client situated a stone's throw away, to import coal from thousands of miles away as it would be cheaper for them than using the coal beneath their feet.

Why is this so? It is ultimately because through years of struggle, workers in this country's coal industry have won better conditions - essential improvements in health and safety and the working environment, and fairer pay.

They are being undercut by coal suppliers who exploit their workers more effectively, such as in Colombia.

We stand in solidarity with those workers overseas who are exploited to a greater degree. Who wins? Not workers whose greater exploitation is justified by their employers. The Kellingley miners certainly don't win.



It made sense for Drax power station, situated a stone's throw away, to import coal from thousands of miles away as it would be cheaper than using the coal beneath their feet

And let's consider the environmental cost - transporting coal thousands of miles when there is

coal right beneath you?

We should make the transition to cleaner, renewable energy but while the technology is being developed and introduced, the coal that we still require would be better coming from the same area, as Drax's does from Kellingley.

Under capitalism, however, importing from Colombia is the right choice for Drax to make the greatest profit and stay competitive. They do not take into account the social and economic cost to the local area.

Profit

Profit should not be the driving force behind production. We need nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management to allow planning of resources to meet society's needs.

We could then both protect jobs and working conditions and plan the phasing out of coal and phasing in of cleaner, renewable energy.

I think these are goals well worth fighting for.



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ANGRY CAMPAIGNERS PROTEST AGAINST CLOSURE OF A&E



2,000 demonstrate in the town square photo David Stewart

Mike Forster,
Huddersfield Socialist Party

Anger is palpable wherever you go in Huddersfield. Ordinary people are organising events everywhere against the closure of the town's A&E. An online petition has already topped 100,000!

Groundswell

On 20 January, the Calderdale/Huddersfield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) met to reach its final decision on a very secret consultation about the future of accident and emergency provision in the area.

The decision was picked up by the media and a huge groundswell

of opposition sprung up all over the town: a Facebook group has already attracted over 40,000 members. A protest of around 2,000 on 23 January in the town square heard speaker after speaker condemn the move.

Huddersfield has never seen anything like it! The CCG will live to rue the day they took us all on.

There's no doubt that if this proposal goes ahead, people will die. The nearest A&E is at least 30 minutes away, but much longer in rush hour or if you live in far flung communities.

And this is in Halifax, a PFI hospital which is being drained of money to pay off a colossal debt.

The strength of the campaign is that it's lead from below. Although local MP's formed a 'united front' to

fight the closure, people completely new to the struggle have been thrown into the leadership which has invigorated the campaign.

Socialist Party

The Socialist Party have collected nearly 15,000 signatures on this issue in the last year and our campaign stalls have now been transformed as we engage in the campaign, mobilising young people in particular.

On the first public rally we raised almost £250 in paper sales, badges and fighting fund. There will be no going back from this.

The campaign can be found on Facebook, Twitter and online by searching for #handsoffhri

Socialist Party discusses the fight for socialism around the country

Three regions of the Socialist Party have held regional conference so far this year, below are reports of each:

Southern

Socialist Party members from the southern region met up on the 17 January for their regional conference. It was a great turnout with some new faces.

Deputy general secretary Hannah Sell examined the battle in the Labour Party and the possible directions it could take, leading to a new situation in Britain.

Contributions from the floor

included anti-cuts councillor Keith Morrell who spoke of the lack of fight among local councillors.

The Southern region is steadily building, with a new branch in Basingstoke and one being set up in Didcot. The whole meeting was buzzing with fight and enthusiasm. A great political start to the year ahead.

James Bibey,
Reading and Bracknell
Socialist Party

West Midlands

West Midlands Socialist party held a very successful conference on 16 January

attended by over 60 people, in which national, international and local political developments were discussed.

Following an afternoon session on how to build the Socialist Party in the region over £1,200 was raised in the collection, on top of bookshop sales and money raised through catering.

Mark Best

London

Socialist Party members from across London attended a regional conference on 24 January, discussing the political landscape in London since the election of Jeremy Corbyn

as Labour Party leader. In the afternoon there were commissions on key issues affecting London like housing and council cuts with further discussion on building the Socialist Party.

There was a great mood from those present as contributions were made by young members, trade unionists and campaigners detailing the work they are involved in and ideas on building future campaigns.

The mood was supplemented by a tuck shop which added to the £822 raised for the party's fighting fund on the day.

Scott Jones,
East London Socialist Party

Socialist Students bake off

School & college Socialist Party members in Walthamstow raised more than £70 selling muffins, cookies and brownies they had baked. The young Socialist Party members are going to the Socialist Students national conference (Saturday 13th February in Coventry). People were happy to donate when we explained that the money was going to fund our travel up.



Bake off sale
photo Helen Pattison



Dean Meehan (far left) campaigning for TUSC photo Iain Dalton

New Socialist Party branch fights against St Austell austerity

Gill Birchall
St Austell Socialist Party

Our new Socialist Party in St Austell, Cornwall, have wasted no time contacting our town councillors to seek their view on 'no cuts' people's budgets and to offer our support to those opposed to passing on Tory cuts. At the end of 2015 our town council surveyed local people to ask their opinion on local services in light of intended cuts being passed down from Cornwall Council.

Poverty

Cornwall is reputed to be the most deprived region in England, with one in four children living in poverty in certain areas. We pointed out to the town council that their survey was flawed as at no point did it give the people of St Austell the

opportunity to reject austerity.

Our letter said that those already vulnerable and living in poverty are least able to pay further for services they are entitled to receive such as libraries, leisure centres, public toilets etc. So far we have received three responses, suggesting that 'anti-austerity' is a "meaningless phrase" and that our aim of opposing the impact on the town's most vulnerable is "tokenistic".

Undeterred we are emboldening our approach through weekly paper sales activities to raise awareness and continuing involvement in anti-austerity actions across the county.



Obituary: Dean Meehan 1962-2016

Iain Dalton

Socialist Party members were shocked to learn of the death of Dean Meehan at the age of 53.

Due to ill-health Dean was never as active as he would have liked, undoubtedly a source of frustration to him. He was passionate about a whole number of issues from the plight of the Palestinians to the bedroom tax closer to home.

He was very proud to have stood for the Trade Unionist

and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in his ward of Kirkstall in the May 2015 elections, backed by his union the RMT, winning one of the best TUSC council votes in the city. He was enthusiastic about the campaign and, though nervous, was an incredibly good first time public speaker on renationalising the railways at our general election campaign rally.

He will be missed by all the comrades who have met him and our condolences go to his wife Angela and his other family members.

Children's services closure protest

There will be a protest outside Edgwick Play Centre in Coventry against its closure, at 12pm on 30 January. Followed by a demonstration outside the council house in the city centre at 2pm. Lisa Archar whose children Adriam and Mishara go to the play centre says: "It will mean I would be unable to work to provide for my family".

With council elections in May, against a background of further savage Tory government spending cuts, the need for a fightback has never been greater. However, despite a clear anti-austerity pledge by Jeremy Corbyn in his successful leadership contest, Labour councils continue to plan deeper cuts to jobs and services. As the following articles illustrate, building an anti-austerity movement to defeat the Tories also requires decisively winning the civil war in Labour against the Blairite right wing.



TUSC appeal to Jeremy Corbyn: Let's discuss how to fight the cuts

Ex-Coventry MP **Dave Nellist** (right) - the chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and a former backbench colleague of Jeremy Corbyn - has appealed to the Labour leader to meet up and seriously discuss how to resist the new round of cuts to vital services being made by local councils. The appeal was made after TUSC decided not to contest a forthcoming council byelection in Coventry's Lower Stoke ward, even though socialist councillors have been elected in the city in the past, including Dave himself. Dave explained:



photo Paul Mattsson

“When the council byelection was announced early in the New Year we were immediately approached by trade unionists and community activists in Lower Stoke asking us if we were going to stand.

The byelection is being rushed through by Coventry Labour Party for 11 February, just days before the council's annual budget-making meeting where the controlling-majority Labour Group are proposing a new round of cuts to council services and council workers' jobs.

People asking us to stand wanted to be able to vote for a candidate who would put Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message into action, something which, unfortunately, Coventry Labour councillors have shown no sign of doing.

However TUSC hasn't yet had the opportunity to sit down with Jeremy to discuss what he can do to encourage Labour councillors, in Coventry and elsewhere, to help lead a serious campaign against the Tories' massive funding cuts to local government.

Part of this should be, in our opinion, assuring Labour councillors that they can legally defy the Tories by using reserves and borrowing powers to pass no-cuts budgets, while building the campaign to force the government to reverse all funding cuts.

We would also like to discuss with Jeremy what council service users, trade unionists,

and community campaigners should do in elections if all the likely candidates on the ballot paper are going to carry out the cuts.

Can't wait

We don't believe it is an option to wait for the removal of the Tory government in a 2020 general election, because huge destruction of jobs and services is planned by the Tories between now and then.

On this occasion TUSC agreed not to stand a candidate, so that there is no artificial obstacle to having that discussion with Jeremy and his supporters.

But time is short. Standing aside in a council byelection is one thing. But in May there will be over 2,000 councillors up for election, including those in 58 councils under Labour control, and the nomination deadlines are just weeks away.

TUSC, co-founded by the late RMT union leader Bob Crow, is committed to opposing all cuts to council jobs, services, pay and conditions, as explained in our local elections policy platform at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/policy>

The policy platform includes a pledge to work with any Labour councillor who is prepared to fight the cuts, and local TUSC groups are contacting Labour candidates to that end.

But we are also clear that any politician who votes for cuts cannot expect to have a free run at the ballot box, no matter what party label they wear.”

Nothing to report!

Paul Callanan

The Labour Party has released its long awaited report into why they lost the general election. Authored by former Blairite cabinet minister Margaret Beckett, it runs to 35 pages and demonstrates a refusal to draw the necessary conclusions from Labour's defeat last May.

A great deal of space is taken up making excuses. The report claims that Labour was treated unfairly by the Conservatives and the media who blamed them for the economic crisis in 2007-08.

While there is a kernel of truth in this it also true that under New Labour the banks were feted as the creators of wealth. The then Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown followed a policy of almost completely deregulating the banks.

At points the report does get close to reality. It does rubbish claims that Labour "lost because it was too left-wing". They also acknowledge that what left-wing policies they did

have, such as those on energy prices and taking railways into public ownership were their most popular.

They also acknowledge that they didn't offer much that was different to the Tories on NHS spending for example. And that people opted instead to vote for the Greens and in Scotland the SNP who were "arguably seen as to the Left of Labour".

Yet in the final section entitled "Learning the Lessons", ironically, none of this is acknowledged. No hint here of how Jeremy Corbyn's thumping leadership victory showed that people are desperate for a party that stands against the Tories' austerity agenda. Instead, it's all empty guff about how "excitement that has been generated by the leadership campaign, gives something on which to build" etc.

The report is more of a papering over of the huge fissure in the Labour Party between those who want to continue with the discredited New Labour project and those who want to build a genuine anti-austerity party gathered around Jeremy Corbyn.



Labour councillors can legally defy the Tories by using reserves and borrowing powers to pass no-cuts budgets, while building the campaign to force the government to reverse all funding cuts

The dark arts of Labour's right

Derek Macmillan

Having been decisively routed in the last year's Labour leadership contest the party's Blairite MPs and Lords, such as Peter Mandelson, continue to wage a guerrilla war against Jeremy Corbyn.

Mandelson (a former disgraced Blairite minister who once said he was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich") had derided the Labour leader as a 'quasi-Marxist trying to con the public into voting him into Downing Street'.

Mandy and his acolytes continue to snipe, most recently claiming that the party is haemorrhaging members due to Corbyn's policies.

However, a recent detailed Guardian survey of the Labour Party refutes Mandelson's claim and "shows overwhelming support for him [Corbyn], a decisive shift to the left and unhappiness with squabbling among MPs" (the Guardian, 13 January).

The survey also reports : "Membership jumped from 201,293 on

6 May last year, the day before the general election, to 388,407 on 10 January" and continues to increase.

Any sane person would say that it is the surge in members seeking a new kind of politics which thrust a socialist into the leadership of what was a capitalist party hell-bent on war and privatisation.

But while new members are overwhelmingly on the left, democratic control over the party machine is not guaranteed.

Those deepest in the counsels of New Labour have obeyed the instruction of Blair, Mandy and "dodgy dossier" Alistair Campbell to be more Tory than the Tories. The right aim to defeat Corbyn and the membership and maintain Labour as a capitalist party.

Small wonder that grassroots members are fed up to the back teeth with squabbling Labour MPs. The party's election system was supposed to prevent anyone on the left becoming leader. It failed. Now, instead of kicking themselves the Blairite rump is kicking Jeremy Corbyn.

NO BACKSLIDING IN COUNCIL CUTS FIGHT!

Roger Shrives

At the January meeting of Lewisham Momentum (LM), Socialist Party members were delighted to see speakers from junior doctors' and nurses' bursaries campaigns getting support from this group of anti-austerity activists.

Unfortunately LM's leaders showed confusion on the big political issues facing working class people, especially on building opposition to the devastating next round of council cuts.

This reflects the political wavering of some Momentum supporters after Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell's letter to Labour councils. Labour councillors and right-wing Blairites in the party have since quoted this letter, claiming it ruled out any moves towards resistance from Momentum.

At the November LM meeting SP members proposed a series of activities including a petition in favour of a legal, balanced, no cuts 'needs budget'. This included using council reserves and operating 'unsupported borrowing'. We saw this as a prelude to the vital task of building a real fightback in a mass movement against austerity.

At the December meeting this was agreed and the petition circulated. But over Christmas LM secretary, Jill Mountford, decided to put this campaign on the back burner, hesitating about registering the petition with the council, which took much of the momentum out of the campaign!

Socialist Party members at the meeting vigorously argued against this. LM's leaders, in attempting to unify all strands of opinion, have ended up putting the comfort of service-

cutting councillors above the jobs of library workers and others considering strike action against cuts?

Lewisham council says that to get our ideas discussed in the council chamber, we needed a huge 8,000 signatures on petitions and e-petitions. LM leaders' new hesitancy could make this hard task even harder, although they said after the meeting that socialists can still use the petitions, including the e-petition.

LM leaders are too pessimistic. Workers want to fight the cuts. Unite the union's national local government committee's call for councils to set 'no cuts' budgets should set the pattern. They want to fight cuts that threaten jobs and services - so should Momentum members in Lewisham and every area!

LM members decided at previous meetings to use the petition energetically on the streets, in the unions and in local areas. We should carry on doing so.



photo Paul Mattsson

stop press

Haringey Labour councillor Gideon Bull has been suspended from the Labour group for opposing cuts to adult care service.

Council worker John Dolan says: "It is outrageous that a Labour councillor is punished for speaking up for a vital service. This is what workers and service users expect them to do! Members of Haringey Labour Party, as well as the Socialist Party and TUSC, have been calling for the council to refuse to pass on the cuts this year." **More on page 7**



photo Senan

Councillors must fight to defend our services

Labour's shadow chancellor John McDonnell, along with local speakers, addressed a North Cambridgeshire Momentum meeting of over 100 in Peterborough on 21 January.

John spoke of the enthusiasm for Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign and of plans to change Labour Party policy and to reverse Tory attacks after the 2020 general election.

From the floor Socialist Party member Joe raised the issue of Labour councillors refusing to make further Tory cuts by means of using councils' reserve funds while preparing a national campaign of opposition.

Council officers

In his reply John gave a brief history of the former Greater London Council's consideration of refusing to levy a rate in the 1980s under the Thatcher government.

John claimed that councils' chief financial officers could stop what

they thought might be unreasonable use of reserves and then take all financial decisions themselves.

However, as the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition points out, local authorities can set legal, no-cuts balanced 'people's budgets' using reserves and borrowing.

Joe had also made the point that if Labour councillors were to fight then councillors and communities might win, but if they didn't fight would definitely face massive cuts. Indeed, by 2020 a further 40% government cut on top of existing cuts in councils' budgets would mean there were little or no services left to defend!

A significant section of the meeting supported Joe and around three-quarters of the meeting took leaflets for the 27 January local Socialist Party meeting to develop the discussion. About one in eight at the meeting also bought a copy of the Socialist.

Socialist Party reporters



The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an electoral alliance involving the RMT transport union, the Socialist Party, other socialist group and leading members of trade unions.

Visit the TUSC website www.tusc.org.uk

'Arab Spring' five years on NEW WAVE OF PROTESTS IN TUNISIA

Al-Badil al-Ishtiraki (Socialist Alternative), CWI in Tunisia

Five years after the fall of the dictator Ben Ali, the demands of the revolution remain unsatisfied. And in recent days Tunisia has been swept by a new 'intifada' (uprising) from its impoverished youth, fed up with a life of misery and mass unemployment. This is increasingly taking the character of a national revolt.

The protests started with a strikingly similar episode to the one which sparked the first flames of the so-called 'Arab Spring' five years ago: a young job-seeker, Ridha Yahyaoui, committed suicide after he was taken off a recruitment list for the local public administration in the city of Kasserine - notorious for its abysmal levels of poverty and unemployment, higher than anywhere else in the country.

Jobs
Even though the suicide of Ridha has been widely reported, his case is far from isolated. The lack of jobs today is more dire than under the old regime. According to a recent report by the OECD (an organisation representing mostly advanced capitalist countries), 62% of Tunisian graduates are without work.

The informal economy is, for many, a desperate outlet to try and survive. For unlicensed traders trying to put food on the table, life remains synonymous with almost daily police raids and the constant fear of being arrested or having one's goods confiscated.

“”
Ridha Yahyaoui committed suicide after he was taken off a recruitment list in Kasserine - notorious for its abysmal levels of poverty and unemployment

The feeling that nothing has changed since the revolution is widespread in Tunisia, particularly in marginalised interior regions like Kasserine. There, the lack of infrastructure and investment is staggering, while the rates of unemployment and illiteracy are double those in coastal areas. People are tired of broken promises, political neglect and widening poverty. As the first youth were coming onto the streets of Kasserine de-



manding jobs and development following Yahyaoui's death, the regime deployed its favoured weapon to deal with this kind of situation; state repression. Throughout 2015, repression has been the response provided by the government to the economic grievances of the poor and working class communities. The fight against terrorism has notably given a cheap excuse for stepping up arbitrary violence against social movements. Hence the police were promptly sent into Kasserine's neighbourhoods to try and extinguish the fire. At the same time, the government decided to sack the first delegate of the governorate of Kasserine, in the hope of calming the situation down, but to no avail.

Crackdown
The state crackdown provoked the opposite effect to what the authorities intended - enraging protesters further, and provoking a wave of sympathy for their demands in other parts of the country. A curfew imposed (which has now been extended to the entire Tunisian territory) to 'avoid any escalation', was ignored by protesters who stayed out on the streets overnight. And escalation is

exactly what the government got. Firstly, the youth of neighbouring towns in the governorate stepped in; then, demonstrations broke out in various other parts of the country, notably due to calls made by the UDC (Union of Unemployed Graduates) and the student union, UGET. "Jobs or another revolution," young protesters chanted in Sidi Bouzid. Slogans and demands reminiscent of the revolution, such as 'work, freedom, dignity', have been revived as the movement transforms into a broader political rejection of the government.



A series of factors have contributed to the present situation. One of them is undoubtedly the perception that the government, behind its façade of strength and police brutality, is increasingly weak and divided. The ruling party, Nidaa Tounes - a new instrument for many old regime cronies and corrupt businessmen - suffered a major split at the beginning of the year forcing a ministerial reshuffle. It has now a smaller number of seats in the Parliament than its main coalition partner, the right-wing Islamist party, Ennahda.

Capitalism
Like all post-Ben Ali governments, the government of Habib Essid has not only failed to deliver on the demands of the revolution, it has consciously continued to implement the same old neo-liberal economic recipes that have inflicted misery on millions of working class and middle class families across the country. While austerity and cuts in state subsidies have been on the menu for the majority, 70 Tunisian billionaires have a fortune equivalent to 37 times the national state budget! Seizing these assets and nationalising the main industries and banks would undoubtedly provide the state with a huge financial tap

to massively invest in infrastructure and public and social services.

A mass programme of public works, funded by such measures, could create socially useful jobs for hundreds of thousands of the unemployed, and could rapidly put regional disparities into the dustbin of history.

“”
'Jobs or another revolution' was chanted by young protesters in Sidi Bouzid

But this kind of measure would require a dramatic shift in political priorities and a government ready to take on the vested interests of big business.

It needs a government made up of representatives of workers and poor, plainly dedicated to satisfying the revolution's demands - in the same way as the present government is dedicated to perpetuate the rule of the capitalist elite and implement the dictates of imperialist powers and their financial institutions. **This article can be read in full on www.socialistworld.net**

India Student death exposes caste oppression



Dalit rights campaigner Rohith Vemula on a protest

The suicide of a Dalit (formerly known as "untouchable") PhD student Rohith Vemula has refocused world attention on the discriminatory caste system in India, in which 180 million Dalits are the most oppressed. Rohith was one of five Dalit students expelled by Hyderabad Central University authorities from student housing for an alleged and unproven assault on a member of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) - the student wing of the governing Hindu nationalist BJP. Poet, writer and socialist Meena Kandasamy, currently in India, explains the issues of caste in this tragedy.

central government ministers to settle scores on behalf of right-wing Hindu forces.

Dalit students
There could not be a more potent image of the caste system at play than the expulsion of these five Dalit students - even though the ensuing strikes highlighted the sense of solidarity among the Dalit Bahujan student community. Education has now become a disciplining enterprise working against Dalit students: they are constantly under threat of rustication, expulsion, defamation, and discontinuation. In a society where students have waged massive struggles to ensure their right to access higher educational institutions through the protective, enabling concept of the reservation policy, no one has dared to shed light on how many of these students are allowed to leave these institutions with degrees, how many become dropouts, become permanent victims of depression, and how many end up dead. That Dalit students like Rohith Vemula enter universities to pursue a doctoral degree is a testament to their intelligence, perseverance, and a relentless struggle against caste discrimination. Textbooks ridden with caste hegemony, the atmosphere that reinforces alienation within college

campuses, classmates who take pride in their dominant caste status, teachers who condemn them to miserable fates and thus enact a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure - these are the impossible challenges for Dalit students to surmount. Our institutions of higher education also specialise in things beyond caste discrimination. They are also notorious for the sexual harassment visited upon women students and faculty members alike. Just as Rohith's suicide has broken the silence over caste as a killer, one day we will also hear the stories of women who were driven to death by these ivory towers. What we see in the case of the University of Hyderabad is the deadly combination of caste supremacy and political pandering. The role of the state machinery, especially the police force, to threaten and subdue students has been established as a classical method of repression on campuses. Now, we have massive deployment of armed police on the Hyderabad campus, and the imposition of a curfew.

Never again
Let every despicable casteist force wince when they encounter a Dalit, a Shudra, an Adivasi, a Bahujan (oppressed castes and ethnic groups), or a woman staking claim within academia. Let them realise that we have come here to end a system that has kept trying hard to put an end to us; that we have come here to cause nightmares to those who dared to snatch our dreams. We have come to learn, but let the monsters of caste and their henchmen bear in mind that we have come here also to teach them an unforgettable lesson.

Donate today!
If you agree with what you read in the Socialist, consider making a donation to the Socialist Party's fighting fund:
■ pay by card via 020 8988 8777 or socialistparty.org.uk/donate
■ cheques payable to 'Socialist Party', PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

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), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

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.

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.

NEW MASS WORKERS' PARTY
■ For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties. Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition as an important step towards this.

WORK AND INCOME
■ Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
■ 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.
■ Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
■ Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
■ A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

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! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

**Join the fightback!
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Davos summit: a broken capitalist system

TAKE THE WEALTH OFF THE 1%!



Robin Clapp

At their annual semi-secret get together in Davos, Switzerland last week, 3,000 bankers, industry chiefs, media moguls and capitalist politicians met to deliberate the state of world affairs.

Their primary concerns were not that 900 children worldwide still die every day from drinking polluted water, or that climate change scientists have warned that 2015 was the warmest year ever recorded. Nor were they embarrassed that under

their ownership of the world economy the wealth gap has now widened to such mind-boggling proportions that just 62 multi-billionaires own the same amount of wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion people across the globe.

Inequality

This shocking report on inequality from Oxfam, concerned them far less than the news that their private casinos, more commonly known as the world's stock markets, had been experiencing difficulties that were undermining their profits and prospects.

These self-declared masters of the universe were forced to conclude that their system isn't working properly. Pumping the banks full of money through Quantitative Easing has merely created more debt and inflated asset prices.

The much-lauded recovery from the 2008 economic crash is unstable and without real foundation. Now, slowing growth in China, recessionary trends in Europe and plunging oil prices, are all creating a perfect storm of global gloominess.

But once again it's the working class and the poor who will be expected to pick

up the tab for capitalism's failures. Our living standards haven't risen during the so-called recovery. On the contrary, savage cuts to jobs, wages and conditions are the new normal.

Socialism

People know this system doesn't deliver for them and their families. What is needed instead is an alternative for the 21st century - a socialist system, where the real wealth creators, the 99%, control and own the wealth produced, thus providing the 1% represented at Davos with their final redundancy notices.