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the Socialist

Issue 1177

28 April - 4 May 2022

formerly **Militant**

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LOW PAY

CUTS

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AGAINST
CUTS**

VOTE TUSC on 5 May



JAMES COLLETT
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Robbing the working class and poor to pay for the crisis of profit-driven capitalism, Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak both deserve the title: 'Robin Hood of the rich.'

This month, many workers will be taking a hit to their pay packets due to millionaire chancellor Sunak's decision to raise National

Insurance in the midst of a spiralling cost-of-living crisis.

This is the fifth-richest country in the world and children are going to school hungry. Child poverty in the UK now affects one in four children - and that figure rises to 46% for children from black and minority ethnic groups. Supermarket Iceland has started offering loans to its customers because, in the words of CEO Richard Walker: "We're losing customers to food banks or, not being overly dramatic, to hunger."

It was workers who kept the country running through the pandemic, many losing their lives, losing family members, losing the opportunity to say goodbye to loved ones dying in hospitals and care homes. Meanwhile,

Johnson and Co were partying on Downing Street. During the parliamentary debate on Johnson's rule-breaking, the gang of professional liars in Westminster studiously avoided using the word 'liar' and sang hymns to "our great democracy" - a 'democracy' in which the working class has no voice.

The trade unions formed the Labour Party to be a political voice for the working class. Today it is anything but that. Keir Starmer has shown himself to be an obedient servant of the bosses, and Labour councils have made it their business to pioneer 'fire and rehire' tactics, break strikes, fine the homeless, and implement Tory cuts.

The Socialist Party is standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)

in the local elections on 5 May because workers need a party of our own to stand up for our interests. Workers, trade unionists, socialists and community campaigners are standing as candidates ourselves, to fight for socialist policies. If elected, TUSC candidates pledge to oppose cuts to jobs and services in deeds, not just in words.

Fighting for socialist councillors is a step forward in the process towards a new mass workers' party that can take the enormous wealth in society out of the hands of the super-rich and use it to provide decent homes, jobs and services for all. Vote for TUSC on 5 May.

● Read more on TUSC election campaigns pages 3,10,11

FRANCE: WE WON'T LET MACRON HAVE FIVE MORE YEARS IN POWER! >>> p13

MAY DAY GREETINGS >>> pull-out inside

BLAIRISM: A LEGACY OF ECONOMIC CRISIS, INEQUALITY AND WAR >>> p8-9

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

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

Fragile Tories and lacklustre Labour

Build the working-class opposition to cost-of-living crisis



PIPPA FOWLES/10 DOWNING STREET/CC



Coventry bin workers striking against the Labour council PAUL MATTISON

to Johnson. But one former cabinet minister was quoted as saying that "a broomstick would be better" than what they have now - such is their desperation.

They have no single candidate because the Tory party, while ultimately representing the rich and powerful, is an amalgam of irreconcilable factions, divided on how best to offload the crisis onto working-class people.

Tory glue

The main divide is between the neo-Thatcherites like Rishi Sunak, who want to boost big business profits by reducing the role of the state, and the red wall Tory MPs who, while also supporting Thatcher's 'small state' ideas, want at least some crumbs thrown to the people who 'lent' the Tories their vote in the last election and are now taking them back. 'Election winner' Johnson was the 'glue' temporarily holding the factions together.

But with him seemingly on his way out, the warring will intensify. As will the cost-of-living crisis which none of the factions have an answer to.

According to the IMF, the British economy will be the worst of the G7 in the next year, and the country in which inflation will take the longest

to fall. Consumer confidence is at a 14-year low as people cut back on spending in the face of rocketing prices.

Starmer's Labour offers no alternative to the floundering Tories as far as working-class people are concerned. Its pledge to 'balance the books' will mean more cuts and austerity, and no relief for those struggling to pay the bills and put food on the table.

Starmer has ditched Jeremy Corbyn's promise to nationalise the energy companies, which would be the first step needed to bring down the astronomical price hikes.

In this crisis situation, working-class people need two main things: combative trade union leaders that can fight for the wage and benefit rises necessary to keep our heads above water, and a new party that represents the interests of workers, young people and pensioners in opposition to the pro-capitalist policies of the main establishment parties.

We need a party that has a vision of a different way of organising society - taking the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and planning the economy under the democratic control of working people - and is prepared to organise to fight for it on a mass scale.

By standing workers' candidates in the May elections, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, we are showing on a small scale that a political alternative for working-class people can be built.

New mass workers' party

Trade unions are coming into increasingly sharp conflict with Labour, like in Coventry where bin workers in Unite are striking against a vicious Labour council refusing to pay them a decent living wage. If these workers and unions, alongside the unions that have already broken from Labour - like the baker's union BFAWU and transport workers' union RMT - were to stand candidates on a much wider scale, the basis for a new mass workers' party could be laid.

At the same time, an immediate task is to organise to make sure that the national demonstration which, under pressure, the Trades Union Congress has called for 18 June, is built for. It must become a platform to unite the anger of working-class people and coordinate strike action for higher wages against the attacks of the Tories and the bosses.

TUSC standing against cuts

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) - which the Socialist Party is part of - is standing hundreds of candidates in the 5 May local elections. We're

demanding councils take action to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. Below and on pages 10-11, people say why they're standing for TUSC.

Private profiteers have asset-stripped Southampton for too long

CATHERINE CLARKE
TUSC CANDIDATE IN FREEMANTLE

Whether Conservatives, Labour or Liberal Democrats have been in charge of the council over the years, the city has had to endure cuts to services. While council tax, rent, transport, social care and utility bills increase, wages remain stagnant.

Even the Greens have now thrown their hat in with the Lib Dems, agreeing not to contest each other's chosen wards. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing in every ward in Southampton.

With 10,000 people on the housing waiting list, our council has the power to spend its £200 million reserves and take advantage of its unrestricted borrowing to provide

10,000 low-rent, high-quality, carbon-neutral council homes. We say compulsory buy empty homes, flats and offices and refurbish them.

If elected, we would ensure all landlords are registered to cap all rents at genuinely affordable rates. A major, publicly funded insulation and energy plan for all existing housing stock would reduce energy bills and carbon footprint.

We would run a free solar-electric municipal bus service, rather than the profit-driven private service presently on offer. Routes could be expanded so people could leave their cars at home to reduce pollution and open up the streets to others.

We would restore youth services in every ward. This would help more vulnerable young people affected by crime and drug abuse.

We would return social and childcare facilities to public ownership providing free, high-quality services for all who needed it. We would immediately provide grants to all households who are struggling with their energy bills. By working closely with all trade unions - three TUSC candidates are on Southampton and South Hampshire Trades Union Council - we could encourage support for the renationalisation of energy companies and all utilities.

The private profiteers have asset-stripped Southampton services for too long. And COP26 has taught us that the capitalist market economy will never address the urgent issue of climate change. Only through a socialist alternative can this be achieved.



Cardiff Labour cuts create 44% Grangetown child poverty

JOE FATHALLAH
TUSC CANDIDATE IN GRANGETOWN

44% of Grangetown children grow up in poverty, in no small part due to Cardiff Council passing on vicious cuts.

Labour council leader Huw Thom-ion as recently announced that Cardiff is aiming to participate in Unicef's 'child-friendly cities' initiative. But this is a sick joke when held up against the reality for working-class children.

Grangetown Playcentre, locally known as the adventure playground, was effectively closed by the Labour council. The centre's funding was cut, and it was transferred into 'community control', but this was a death sentence.

A facility like this needs professionally trained staff working full time. It wasn't long before the centre ceased to function.

This was despite a heroic campaign by young people, parents, and youth workers - supported by Cardiff Against the Cuts. We held a mass protest, and marched on and occupied County Hall.

But the council pressed ahead with the cuts. There are no longer any facilities like this for children in Grangetown.

In 2014, the council proposed building a school on the site of Chan-nel View leisure centre, another vital community facility. There is genuine need and demand for Welsh-medium education in Grangetown. We fully supported building the school - but not on top of the leisure centre!

The old Grangetown Library was sold off and converted into flats. It was replaced by Grangetown Hub, but this doesn't have all the same facilities.

Working-class communities like Grangetown have been targeted, because Labour councillors - plus Plaid Cymru and Liberal Democrats when they were in coalition - have proved totally incapable of standing up and fighting against Tory austerity, and have instead passed cuts year after year.

If elected, instead of voting through cuts, I would draw up - in collaboration with local communities - an alternative budget based on the real needs of the city. This would involve dipping into the council's £120 million reserves to plug the funding gaps. This could buy time to launch a real fightback against the Tories in Westminster, involving council workers and trade unions, service users, and communities, to win the funding for the jobs and services we need.



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 £15 an hour without exemptions. 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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Food price misery, driven by profit

SIMON CARTER

EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

It's a choice between keeping warm or putting food on the table.' This common refrain on soaring household energy bills will need to be revised to add 'or neither' in the light of a massive hike in consumer food prices.

On top of an expected rise of £1,000 a year in average household energy bills, a typical family's annual basket of groceries is also set to rise by an extra £1,000 a year.

A 'perfect storm' of factors is creating global shortages and supply disruptions of vegetable oils, used in processed foods and for domestic cooking.

The latest shock to the system comes after Indonesia's president recently announced an export ban on his country's palm oil production. This is in order to quell popular unrest over a domestic shortage of cooking oil, which has led to a 40% increase in prices.

Indonesia's profitable palm oil industry, with its highly destructive impact on rainforests, accounts for 50% of world palm oil exports. Neighbouring Malaysia cannot make up the shortfall as its palm oil industry has been hit by a pandemic-induced shortage of migrant workers.

Climate impact

The global shortage of palm oil has also caused the prices of alternatives to soar - with soybean prices reaching a record high. This crisis has been exacerbated by poor harvests of soybean in Argentina, and by drought devastating Canada's canola harvest.

Closer to home, Russia's invasion has badly impacted Ukraine's sunflower oil production and exports. Ukraine supplies 70% of Europe's sunflower oil which, like palm oil, is widely used in processed foods and as domestic cooking oil.

Major UK supermarkets like Tesco

£1,000

A typical family's annual basket of groceries is set to rise by an extra £1,000 a year



As supermarkets' prices rise, so do their profits. Tesco reported a rise in pre-tax profits of £636 million for 2021, up to £2.03 billion

and Morrisons have rationed the sale of sunflower oil to customers to prevent 'panic buying'.

But inflation isn't only being driven by supply issues. Recent private equity takeovers of Morrisons and Asda have also resulted in big price hikes of food staples.

Farming in crisis

During the pandemic, a fall in consumer demand for dairy products saw farmers pouring over a million of litres of milk down the drain.

Poor wage rates and working conditions, expensive training, and Tory Brexit have led to a shortage of lorry drivers, leaving the UK economy's post-pandemic supply chain extremely fragile. Single purchaser contracts mean that driver shortages often result in milk being dumped.

Also, farm labour shortages continue to hamper production and harvesting. Food is left to rot in fields and healthy animals culled. Add to that the effect of the Ukraine war,

then farming is experiencing soaring prices of fuel, fertiliser and seed.

And farmers' fixed price contracts with large supermarkets mean that over half of egg producers, saddled by ever-rising input costs, are close to stopping production.

As inflation impacts on household incomes, economic demand will fall. A combination of lower output and rising prices, is indicative of a developing 'stagflationary' economy, not seen in the UK since the 1970s (see '1973 oil price shock, are we headed

for a new period of capitalist stagflation?' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Capitalism, with its irreconcilable contradictions and widening inequalities, is in a cul-de-sac.

But while the majority of the world's population, with few resources, are losing out, a small minority of super-rich billionaires are laughing all the way to the bank. To them, high prices mean big profits.

If there was ever a need for socialist change then the cost-of-living crisis is it.

JOSH ASKER

ENFIELD AND LEA VALLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Having already sacked 800 workers to hire cheaper replacements, P&O Ferries has now sought to cut pay further! When P&O bosses wielded the axe in March, they expected disruption to only last ten days. Over a month later, and the 'Spirit of Britain' vessel has only just been cleared by authorities to resume the Dover-Calais route.

This vessel and a number of other P&O ships, staffed by new, unfamiliar seafarers, have also been detained by authorities due to safety concerns.

Newly employed workers had been brought in on temporary contracts to replace existing seafarers organised in the RMT union. By doing so, bosses hoped to smash the union and join other ferry operators in employing seafarers on less than the minimum wage. Facing attacks themselves, the new workers are approaching the union for help. Under pressure, the latest attempted pay cut has been reversed.

Transport minister Grant Shapps has muttered some mealy-mouthed words about enforcing the minimum wage in the industry. But ports bosses have described this as "unworkable". What they mean is "less profitable".

P&O Ferries bosses' latest attacks, and the provocative admission that they knowingly broke the law, show what lengths bosses will go to boost their profits. No doubt they are emboldened by the bosses' Tory government acting in their interests, safe in the knowledge they will not be seriously challenged.

The P&O scandal demonstrates the consequences of profit-driven capitalism. Competition between ferry operators creates a brutal race to the bottom for pay, terms and conditions, and safety standards.

The Socialist Party campaigns for P&O Ferries to be nationalised under democratic workers' control and management, along with the other major ferry operators. By doing so, seafarers working from Britain's ports could be paid a decent wage and safety be ensured.

NHS staff see pay slips shrink

Unions must step up fight for a real pay rise

HOLLY JOHNSON

UNION REP IN THE NHS, TUSC CANDIDATE FOR NETHER EDGE AND SHARROW WARD, SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Thousands of NHS staff inspecting their payslips for April are finding themselves worse off, and that's before the effects of the rising cost of living!

National Insurance, pension, student loan and tax increases, for many NHS workers, amount to more than last year's pitiful 3% pay offer. Many are being pushed into looking for second jobs. Significant pay deductions, coupled with the free hospital parking being taken away, is pushing more beyond tipping point.

One staff member explained that the removal of the NHS staff parking permit means they will be saying goodbye to their job in A&E and will be applying for a permanent bank nurse job instead.

An NHS porter explained that they have been working for the NHS for 25 years and seen their rent, energy bill and council tax all increase. Now they can only afford to feed themselves for three weeks of the month. With further price and tax increases coming, they do not see the point in working at all.

Parking is a burning issue in hospitals. A typical NHS staffer in England pays approximately £1,000 a year to park at work. Not to mention the parking charges if you park in council spaces and are unable to break from your shift to even top up parking on the app. Community staff have been facing hardship due to the fuel crisis and an out-of-date NHS mileage



allowance policy. The £60-a-month wear-and-tear payment for staff who use their own vehicles has been cut. There hasn't been an increase in the mileage allowance for nearly eight years.

On the back of an unprecedented pandemic, staff are overworked and under-resourced. Many staff are leaving or planning to leave. There are already 100,000 NHS vacancies, and one in five nurses are over the age of 55 and expected to retire in the next five years.

The government has delayed its submission to the Pay Review Body, which is supposed to decide our pay

for the year 2022-23. It is expected that there will be an announcement around June.

Union campaigns locally have won victories to increase mileage allowances, and outsourced workers at Bart's Health NHS Trust in east London have taken successful strike action to be brought back in house with a pay rise. But the pay campaigns need to be stepped up. Union reps continue to battle on the ground to build workers' confidence to fight. But without a clear lead from the tops of the unions, there is a real risk of workers' anger leading to staff simply leaving their jobs.

Tories plunder graduates' pockets

Free education now, wipe out student debt

MICHAEL MORGAN

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Interest rates on student loan repayments are set to rise in September. Some will pay as much as 12%, up from 4.5%. Higher-earning graduates will plunge £3,000 further into debt in just six months.

This is just another rising cost for students. Among energy price hikes, national insurance increases and inflation, students have been sold a rotten deal. Many are forced to live with their parents, unable to afford the exorbitant rents charged by landlords.

Student loan interest rates are rising to the level of commercial lenders. The government may be forced into a cap from March 2023, but it is likely to be at just 7% or 9%, still a

major rise, and little comfort to people trying to pay their bills.

Education is not a product, and should increase student's knowledge, not the contents of university vice-chancellors' pockets. As well as all of this, from 2023 those who take on new student loans will have to pay them for up to 40 years rather than 30. Graduates in lower-paid positions, such as nurses, will have to pay longest. Those from working-class backgrounds are also far more likely to take out the full loan, paying more over a longer period, and now at higher interest rates.

Currently only 17% of graduates pay back their loan in full. Many prospective students now decide not to pursue a degree at all, or to stop short of studying for a postgraduate

degree. According to the Guardian, one graduate left education with £189,700 in debt. Whilst this is an exceptional figure, the image it paints of a higher education system run as if it is about making profit is abhorrent. People should not be discouraged from education because of money.

University fees should be scrapped entirely, and student debt should be written off for all graduates. We need to build an education system that is about fostering skills and knowledge, and not about profit. We should remove all barriers to education for working-class students, which means the reintroduction of maintenance grants, tackling soaring rents and poor student housing conditions, and making education accessible at every stage of life.



Health workers at Barts Trust strike PAUL MATTSOON

Pay, benefits, pensions

- An immediate above-inflation pay rise for workers to restore wages after over a decade of pay freezes and below-inflation rises
- Regular pay increases for all, linked to trade-union agreed measures of inflation
- Raise the minimum wage to £15 an hour, without exemptions
- Restore the pension triple lock
- Restore the additional £20-a-week Universal Credit payment. End the benefit cap
- Living benefits and pensions for all who need them, rising with the cost of living

Housing

- Freeze council and social housing rents
- Rent controls to cap rents – decided by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and trade union representatives

Make the rich pay, not the workers

- No rise in national insurance or council tax, scrap student debt
- No worker should be made to pay more tax, raise tax thresholds in line with inflation
- Take the wealth off the super-rich, nationalise the top 150 companies and banks to be run under democratic working-class control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need

Price rises

- Reverse the rise in the energy price cap. Nationalise energy and other utilities under democratic workers' control and management to reduce bills by removing the profit motive
- No increase in public transport fares. Return transport into public hands, to guarantee a fully funded, free, environmentally friendly, sustainable transport system
- Stop price rises, end bosses' profiteering. Open the books of big retailers to inspection by trade unions. Nationalise the big retailers under democratic workers' control to be run to meet need, not for profit

Trade union struggle

- For a trade union-led struggle against the cost-of-living crisis
- The TUC-organised demonstration on 18 June must be used as a stepping stone towards coordinated strike action, uniting workers' struggles for pay rises
- For fighting, democratic leaderships of the trade unions

New workers' party

- No trust in Starmer's Labour to fight in our interests. For a new mass workers' party based on trade union and workers' struggle

Socialism

- End the chaos of the capitalist market. For a socialist plan of production, based on the need of the overwhelming majority, not for profit

P&O bosses launch another attack on workers



Protest at P&O owner DP World's offices on 22 April LONDON SP

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Socialists give lead at leaderless regional TUC conference

MICHAEL WHALE
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

The Yorkshire and Humber regional TUC conference took place in Hull from 23-24 April. While the conference was a huge step forward after two years of Covid restrictions, muddled messages came from the regional executive.

On the one hand, conference correctly promoted the need to get organised and build the unions in light of the huge attacks on the cost of living. On the other hand, there was a huge emphasis on 'partnership' working with private companies to get a fairer deal for workers.

This reached ridiculous levels when a session included a representative from Yorkshire Water on the panel. This privatised company made £142.2 million profit last year yet paid no corporation tax. The conference should have demanded the renationalisation of Yorkshire Water, and all of the privatised industries, not getting into bed with them.

The highlight of the conference was a rally in support of P&O workers. Gaz Jackson from the RMT highlighted the determination of the union to continue the struggle to get the sacked crew their jobs back. TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady condemned the way that P&O bosses had behaved, but gave no real way forward.

In contrast, Socialist Party member Alex Hutchinson, representing Hull Trades Council, explained how millions of young people had been inspired by the leadership and socialist

policies of Jeremy Corbyn. His defeat was a backward step, but in Hull the Trades Council has got young people organised through the 'Engage for Change' festival. The Unity Shop had also helped to activate a layer of workers who might not otherwise have been linked to the trade union movement.

One such person is Joyce Marshall. Joyce is a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate in the local elections for West Carr ward in Bransholme, Hull. She declared herself "a virgin at this" as she made her first public speech at the regional TUC conference.

Joyce explained how she had never been a union member until she came into contact with the Unity Shop, which was founded by Hull Trades Council to promote solidarity not charity, and has provided food parcels during the pandemic. She explained people found themselves in need through no fault of their own, and that with the cost of living crisis it is only going to get worse.

Joyce declared: "Don't let anyone push us around, enough is enough, we need to spread the word, making the unions bigger and stronger, together" to great applause.

Steve Scott from the National Education Union also made a good contribution to the rally, explaining how schools are underfunded and kids from working-class areas get a raw deal.

We sold 18 copies of the Socialist newspaper. Two people expressed a wish to discuss joining the Socialist Party.

Usdaw Annual Delegate Meeting 2022

Bulging profits and struggling staff - the situation facing retail and distribution workers



RICHARD GROVES

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

After being run ragged during the last two years of the Covid pandemic, it's pretty clear the vital role that workers in retail, and throughout the production and distribution sector, play in keeping society functioning. But has our 'key worker' status actually led to any substantial improvement in the pay and conditions of Usdaw members?

Several companies have now gone through the £10 an hour pay barrier - but that's only 50p above the adult rate of the minimum wage (the so-called 'living wage'). And it's not much better than the situation facing retail workers a few years ago, when many of us still received premium payments for unsocial hours and paid breaks. Even the concessions that were made at the beginning of the pandemic around sickness absence policies are being snatched back.

Meanwhile, our employers are laughing all the way to the bank. The pandemic has helped them shore up what had been declining market shares, more widely implementing online retail orders and deliveries, and, most importantly for them, seeing bulging profits.

Tesco posted a pre-tax profit of over £2 billion last year. Even when warning of a £250 million hit to profits as a result of inflation and supply chain crises, it still expects to make

an operating profit of between £2.4 billion and £2.6 billion!

No wonder private equity companies are angling to take over supermarket companies, with Asda and then Morrisons bought out by such firms seeking a quick buck. Asda's owners report a 20-fold return on their debt leveraged acquisition, while Morrisons' new owners have been quick to sell off production and distribution sites. Members will be wondering where the comment on this sell-off is on the Usdaw website, let alone a campaign of opposition to this!

Too often the priorities of Usdaw's leadership seem to be mitigating the worst aspects of the attacks of employers rather than making a clear case to oppose cuts to our members, jobs, and testing the mood of our membership for the necessary action to challenge the employers. But even this partnership, or tripartite approach hasn't avoided battle. Usdaw members in the last year have had to fight 'fire and rehire', have gone on strike on that issue and over employers trying to make jobs redundant on the cheap.

Members in Tesco distribution had to threaten the largest strike the company has seen in order to get a pay offer that will now sadly be subsumed by rising inflation levels.

The document produced by the union's executive council for the

conference on automation and new technology shows once again this approach.

Rather than make the bold case necessary for using new technology to reduce the working week with no loss of pay, much of the document focuses on simply getting employers to listen to concerns of their workers. But new technology, as with many other issues facing Usdaw members, poses a sharp question: in whose interests are any changes being made?

Fundamentally, the only way to shape our workplaces to meet the needs of our members and the customers we serve, rather than the bulging bank balances of the bosses, is for those workplaces to be run under the democratic control and management of elected representatives of workers, both within the workplace and from the wider trade union movement, to represent the interests of customers.

In itself that would mean the big retailers and supermarkets, instead of being private concerns, being brought into public ownership.

Usdaw's rulebook includes as part of the union's, aims "to work consistently towards securing the control of the industries in which its members are employed." This increasingly must not be left as words, but should be the cornerstone of the union's campaigning.

RMT ballots 40,000 Network Rail workers

The RMT is balloting more than 40,000 workers in a dispute over pay and jobs, which it says could be the "biggest rail strike in modern history".

The strike would be against Network Rail plans to cut up to 2,500 jobs as part of a £2 billion cut in spending.

The proposed job cuts include workers who maintain

tracks, signals and overhead lines, which the union calls "safety-critical jobs". The cuts would make accidents more likely.

The 40,000 members work for 15 different train-operating companies that have also attacked members' jobs, pay and conditions in recent years.



'We do the dirty work' ... 'Inflation's at nearly 9%. Do the maths!'

BRIAN DEBUS AND JAMES IVENS
HACKNEY AND ISLINGTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Council workers in three vital departments in Hackney, east London, are striking back against inflation. Fantastic displays of working-class solidarity are putting the borough's 'Labour' local authority to shame.

A striking bin worker said to us: "We do the dirty work. We keep the borough clean. We took our lives in our hands during Covid. How are we meant to afford to live now?"

Labour's austerity in Hackney has been going on for over a decade with £140 million of cuts. Inflation has hit 8.5%.

A housing maintenance worker told his picket line: "There's managers here on hundreds of quid a day. They're not on the frontline. They're working from home."

"But for years we've been getting pay rises that have been nullified by other things. Inflation's at nearly 9%. Do the maths!"

Housing maintenance, bins and street cleaning, and special educational needs and disability (SEND) transport workers have had enough. Following abysmal local government pay 'rises' going back over 15 years, general union Unite is claiming 10% - not the paltry 1.75% agreed nationally.

As they are all key frontline services they will have an immediate impact. Strike days in the run-up to the local elections, including polling day itself, will cause an added degree of embarrassment to the council.

The 100-strong housing maintenance picket lines show a solid strike and boisterous mood. Over at the SEND drivers' and escorts' depot, service seems around a quarter of normal capacity, if that.

At the refuse and street cleaning depot, the dispute is already bitter. Some of the current managers are former union reps. Now they're undermining the unions.

This includes intimidating up to 150 agency workers - some without permanent jobs for years, some freshly interviewed. They all fear they won't get sent shifts if they join the action.

Housing maintenance workers immediately shouted to their reps

Council workers strike for 10% rise in Hackney



Bin workers picket LONDON SP



Housing maintenance workers LONDON SP

blockaded the gates to stop trucks going out on the first strike day on 25 April. Management called the police, who turned out in force. But pickets report that managers blocked the road outside to disrupt buses in order to get the Met down!

Housing maintenance reps reported the bin management's bullying to their own picket line. "They're being abused. It was shocking. They need our help."

Housing maintenance workers immediately shouted to their reps

that they should all go down to the bins the next morning. Sure enough, around 40 turned out at 5am to support the bins.

However, management had moved most of the wagons out following the previous morning's stand-off. So dozens of supporters of the striking workers marched across Hackney Marshes to where the bin wagons were, and blocked them leaving for some time again!

Over 100 workers have attended each of the rallies before and during

the strikes on the town hall's steps. They were buoyed up with solidarity support from other Unite branches, and other council unions, including Union and the National Education Union, and the Socialist Party.

In a powerful speech, Unite's lead national officer for local government, Onay Kasab laid responsibility for the dispute at the feet of Hackney Council. He pointed out Labour councillors can earn more in allowances than the workforce gets in wages - and still have outside jobs as well.

The Labour council has attacked the strikes, saying they will hurt local residents. Onay turned this on its head. Strikes last days at a time - but the council's annual budget cuts hurt local residents and workers every day of the year.

Onay reminded the council it has around £300 million of usable reserves. They say these are "for a rainy day" - well right now, "it's pissing down!"

Workers and residents are facing ever-rising energy costs, fuel bills, housing costs, food bills... And the council has hiked rents by £4 a week and put 4.99% on council tax bills.

In line with Unite's policy on local government initially using reserves while mobilising mass campaigns to fight the cuts, seven Socialist Party members are standing in the Hackney elections. We are part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition challenge nationally and fully support the 10% wage claim.

Onay Kasab is our main speaker at an eve-of-poll rally on Wednesday 4 May. We have invited reps and strikers from the council disputes to attend and speak as well.

This dispute could play a crucial role in exposing the rubber backbones that Labour councils have in not standing up to this weak Tory government. Instead of meekly implementing their cuts, they should be standing tall and demanding the money back. If they did that, the local community and the workforce could stand as one with them and dump the Tories out of office.

● Hackney Socialist Party eve-of-poll rally - vote TUSC! Wednesday 4 May at 7pm in the Dalston CLR James Library, Dalston Square, London E8 3BQ

NEU workers' strike



Members of Unite, employed by the National Education Union (NEU) in London, took a 48-hour strike on 20-21 April in support of a victimised worker who they believe was unfairly disciplined. The workers voted 94% in favour of strike action in support of Michael Gavan, who is a regional officer at the NEU and a Unite rep. Michael was disciplined on a matter that members believe should have been dealt with informally or through mediation.

Rugby bin strike



Bin workers in Rugby walked out on 26 April kicking off a two-week strike over pay. Unite said the Labour council had "dragged its feet for more than a year" over a pay deal with street cleaners, HGV lorry drivers and loaders.

Socialist Party members and striking bin workers from Coventry visited the picket line. The workers are demanding a "significant" pay rise to meet the rising cost of living.

National Shop Stewards Network conference 2022

Workers fight the cost of living squeeze - trade union lead never more needed!

- Speakers include: Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary, with more to be confirmed
- Saturday 2 July
- 11am - 4.30pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL
- Register on the day or email the NSSN at info@shopstewards.net
- Attendance fee £6



NSSN bulletin:
shopstewards.net

BLAIRISM: A LEGACY OF ECONOMIC CRISIS, INEQUALITY AND WAR

NICK CHAFFEY

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Twenty-five years ago, after 18 painful years of Thatcherism, Tony Blair was elected with a 178 seat majority. By the time of his resignation in 2007, he had become the longest-serving Labour prime minister. Yet Labour went on to defeat in the 2010 general election, losing close to five million votes from its peak in 1997. As Blair's record is revived as a model for Keir Starmer's Labour, what is the relevance of Blairism for today, and what is his legacy?

Promising much, Blair's rebranded 'New Labour' must be judged by what it delivered and for whom. Jettisoning the social democratic goal of progressive reforms in favour of the working class, Blair adopted an openly capitalist agenda, carrying out a Thatcherite programme of privatisation and public sector cuts, alongside tax cuts for big business.

Abroad, Blair carried out the interests of British capitalism, entering six wars including the catastrophic invasion of Iraq. By the time of his resignation, Blair had accumulated a personal fortune and presided over a massive increase in the wealth of the super-rich while widening inequality. Blairism laid the basis for the Tories' continued dismantling of the welfare state under the years of austerity and Covid pandemic.

Elected leader in 1995, Blair moved the party decisively to the right. Even prior to the triumph of Blairism, Labour governments had ultimately acted in defence of the capitalist system. Nonetheless, Labour leaders were susceptible to pressure from the working-class base of the party via its democratic structures, and were therefore unreliable from the point of view of the capitalist elite. New Labour was different.

How did Labour, a party formed by the trade unions, with its socialist Clause Four calling for the 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange', end up as a tool for the interests of capitalism and big business?

New Labour prepared in opposition

Blair exploited the desperation to remove the Tories, arguing that rejecting radical socialist policies would win the centre ground and a majority in Westminster. In preparing for power, Blair scrapped Clause Four, adopted in 1918 against the background of the Russian Revolution. Attempts to do so by previous right-wing leaders had failed.

Blair was able to succeed in the aftermath of the collapse of the Stalinist regimes that had existed in Russia and Eastern Europe. While bearing no resemblance to genuine socialism, these brutal dictatorships were nonetheless based on very distorted forms of planned economies. Their collapse led to a wave of capitalist triumphalism, and the widespread acceptance that the 'market' was the way forward.

Moving Labour decisively into a



PAUL MATTSSON

pro-capitalist position was accompanied by rule changes that weakened the democratic role of the trade unions, members and conference decision making. Leaning on conservative right-wing trade union leaders and drawing on the defeat of the miners, rather than their fighting determination and the important Militant-led victories of Liverpool council and against the poll tax, Clause Four was re-written. The proposals to remove calls for public ownership passed with the backing of 90% of constituency branches.

For Peter Mandelson this was New Labour, "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich", ideologically recast and organisationally neutered. Blair's New Labour adopted Thatcherism just as the voters were preparing to reject the toxic Tory era in the general election.

As Peter Taaffe explains in his book covering the period, 'From Militant to the Socialist Party': "Now that the Blair counter-revolution had destroyed the workers' political voice [our dual tasks were] to fight for new, broad socialist parties of the working class, while maintaining the thread of a revolutionary, Marxist perspective and organisation."

Blair in power for the 1%

After the vicious neo-liberal policies of Thatcherism, with sustained attacks on the working class and trade unions, the election of a Labour government came with a sense of relief as much as hope. Blair's acolytes claim his rebranding of New Labour clinched the election, but in reality a mood of 'anything but the Tories' got Blair into Number 10.

The first signs were ominous. Thatcher was the first to visit Blair in Number 10. As if to reinforce from day one what was to be expected under chancellor Gordon Brown, Labour retained Tory spending limits, developed and implemented Tory plans to end free education - introducing £1,000 a-year tuition fees in 1998 - and retained all the Tory anti-trade union legislation in readiness for inevitable opposition from the trade unions.

Some shine was given to Blair by the impression of economic competence as recessions were avoided. Chancellor Brown even claimed to have ended the cycle of boom and bust; his delusions were shattered in the financial crisis of 2007-08.

Blair and Brown had been the fortunate beneficiaries of Britain's sudden ejection from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism on Black Wednesday in 1992 and the devaluation of sterling, which gave a limited boost to exports. However, this was mainly a joyless boom for the working class. It saw continued deindustrialisation. Car manufacturers closed with devastating impacts on jobs in Dagenham, east London and in the West Midlands, with the right-wing trade union leadership unwilling to lead resistance.

In the public sector, the huge expansion of disastrous Tory policies, like Private Finance Initiatives in the NHS and academisation in education, extended privatisation far further than even Thatcher had dared to go. The continued break-up of the NHS contributed to increasing unpopularity as the expectations of New Labour improving workers' lives waned. Here too, the right-wing-led public sector

unions failed to fight. On the railways, underinvestment and privatisation saw horrific rail crashes, and calls made for renationalisation from the transport union RMT gained overwhelming support.

By the 2001 general election, the signs were clear, as working-class voters fell away. But with the Tory electoral recovery failing to materialise, Blair won a second term. In 2001, economic storm warnings as the dot-com bubble burst challenged Labour's fortunes. Industrial conflicts developed as New Labour sought to hold down public sector pay, with important political ramifications. Labour wheeled out the army to act as strike breakers when firefighters took strike action over pay. This led to the Fire Brigades Union's disaffiliation from Labour in 2004. The RMT moved to back socialist candidates in Scotland in 2004, leading to its expulsion from Labour. And when prison officers in the POA union took strike action on pay, retribution followed with Labour outlawing strikes in the prison service.

In local government, Labour councils were failing to reverse the impact of Thatcher's savage cuts, or tackle the housing crisis by building low-rent council housing. In Coventry, that led to the election of Socialist Party members Dave Nellist, Rob Windsor and Karen McKay to the council, leading the fight for council workers and working-class communities. Those who refused to vote through cuts were expelled, like Councillor Ian Page in Lewisham who went on, with Chris Flood, to lead Socialist Party campaigns opposing cuts and housing privatisation.



Chancellor Brown even claimed to have ended the cycle of boom and bust; his delusions were shattered in the financial crisis of 2007/8

Imperialist war for oil in Iraq

Following the interests of big business at home, abroad Blair led British forces into six wars, more than any other Prime Minister. Following the Al-Qaida 9/11 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, Blair backed Bush's initial attack on Afghanistan, and a seemingly rapid victory over the Taliban. But this was only a precursor to the planned disastrous invasion of Iraq.

Defeated in Vietnam in 1973, US public opposition to foreign wars had held US imperialism in check. But Bush seized the moment to try and rebuild US global military dominance, and with it economic and political control over Iraq's oil supplies. Blair was accurately portrayed as Bush's poodle, prepared to lend credibility to this adventure, aiming to boost Britain's wealth and prestige. As we predicted it had the opposite effect, speeding up the decline of both US imperialism and Britain, its very junior partner in the war.

Universal opposition to the horror of Al-Qaida did not result in blanket support in the US, Britain, or internationally for the Bush-Blair war plans. The Socialist Party took a clear and consistent position - opposing both the imperialist war aims of the US and Britain, as well as the terrorist attacks of Al-Qaida. In opposition to the warmongering of Blair, we fought for workers' unity and socialism. To end the brutal dictatorships in Iraq and elsewhere, it was the only the Iraqi working class and international workers' solidarity that could offer a way out for the masses on a socialist basis.

We warned, correctly, that the invasion of Iraq would become a quagmire for imperialism and increase support for, and the threat from, Islamic fundamentalist terror groups in the Middle East and beyond.

As Bush and Blair pressed on with their war preparations, opposition grew, and demands for evidence and justification for the invasion hardened. This reached its peak in the mass anti-war protests of 15 February 2003. Millions took part globally, the White House was encircled, and over one million marched in London. Blair produced his 'dodgy dossier', alleging Iraq held weapons of mass destruction, later proved to be false, and pressed ahead with the invasion with all its devastating consequences. For this he is now seen justifiably as a war criminal in the eyes of many.

As the 2005 election loomed, discredited over the Iraq war, Blair won with a reduced majority. Calls for his removal increased, leading to his resignation in 2007. False expectations that Brown would be any different were firmly wiped out by the financial crash of 2007-08 and the multi-billion-pound bail-out of the banks to save capitalism. The working class suffered the consequences.

Potential for new workers' parties

Drawing the necessary conclusions, that New Labour would represent capitalist interests, the Socialist Party was launched in 1996 in preparation for the election of 1997. In the election



As Bush and Blair pressed on with their war preparations, opposition grew and demands for evidence and justification for the invasion hardened



Firefighters took strike action over pay during the Blair years. The Labour government used the army as scabs PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

we stood a modest 18 candidates, a marker for future events that would sharply change consciousness and erode support for New Labour and Blair.

In the course of the anti-war movement the Socialist Party posed the idea of launching a new party that would link the opposition to war with the battles at home to oppose privatisation, low pay and inequality. It was not the first or last time that a critical opportunity was lost.

Had a new party been launched from the million-strong demo, and gained just a tenth of the marchers, it would have been the basis to fight the general election campaign of 2005 with mass forces. Such a stand could have tapped into disillusionment with New Labour and provided a political reference point for the working class as the financial crisis of 2007-08 unfolded.

Industrial battles which led to an important militancy amongst a fresh layer of trade union activists saw unions such as the RMT, PCS and FBU move left and elect more fighting leaders. The potential existed to consolidate the mood of opposition to New Labour's pro-capitalist policies, and develop it into an organised form by taking serious steps towards launching a new workers' party.

The alienation towards New Labour and the vacuum it presented dangerously allowed the far-right to make gains, with the re-emergence of the British National Party (BNP), which won 32 council seats in 2006. Alongside the anti-war movement, opposition to the BNP and racism could have fed youthful forces into a new party.

It was around the late RMT leader

Bob Crow that a significant step forward was taken. In the 2009 European elections, the first post-war trade union-led alternative to Labour stood under the 'No2EU - Yes to Democracy' banner, opposing the pro-business European Union and its anti-worker legislation. This led to the formation of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in 2010, as a federal coalition, with the involvement of Bob Crow, the Socialist Party and others, that stood in the 2010 general election. In 2012, the RMT officially affiliated. By the 2015 general election TUSC stood 135 candidates alongside 650 council candidates.

Workers' disenfranchised

Promising much, Blair delivered only for the super-rich, including Mandelson's friends like the now infamous Russian oligarch Deripaksa. Inequality widened as New Labour allowed the rich to profit while pay, benefits and pensions for the working class were attacked.

Working-class voters deserted, opening the door to a return of the Tories in 2010 and a brutal decade of austerity.

Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader offered an opportunity to re-found Labour as a working-class party based on the trade unions with a socialist programme. Doing so would have required a determined campaign against the Blairites who continued to dominate the Parliamentary Labour Party and the party apparatus.

That opportunity has now been lost, with Blair's replicant Keir Starmer firmly in charge. Siding with Johnson



It remains an urgent task to build support in the trade unions for the idea of a new mass workers' party

in 'national unity' through the Covid pandemic, and now over the war in Ukraine, Starmer is once more positioning Labour as a party capitalism can rely on in power. Despite this, as Johnson and the Tories' divisions resurface and widen, a Starmer-led Labour government could be the outcome at the next election. However, based on pro-capitalist policies, it will be unable to provide a way forward for the working class.

In the face of a sharply deepening economic crisis, as workers are forced to organise, strike and fight-back against the eroding effect of inflation on living standards, it remains an urgent task to build support in the trade unions for the idea of a new mass workers' party. Such a party could lead an independent mass movement of the working class which, armed with socialist policies, could bring about a permanent end to the era of capitalist crisis, war, and inequality which Blair did so much to foster.

From Militant to the Socialist Party
by Peter Taaffe

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CAMPAIGNING FOR TUSC – SOCIALIST CANDIDATES PREPARED TO FIGHT

Waltham Forest – 24 candidates and fourth biggest party

With 24 candidates across the borough, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is the fourth biggest party contesting the Waltham Forest council elections. Socialist Party members leafleted workplaces last autumn appealing to trade unionists to stand. We discussed with workers on the picket lines of RMT night tube strikes and at Whipps Cross hospital.

TUSC hosted a meeting to argue the case for a no-cuts budget in December. And we have consistently raised in the Save Our Square campaign that standing in elections is a key part of challenging the council's policy of handing public land to private developers to build expensive flats no one can afford, while 24,000 people are on the waiting list.

The result? Our candidates include Whipps Cross workers and tube train drivers, housing and Save Our Square campaigners, education workers who have been on strike in schools and universities, and community campaigners. The age range of our candidates is over 55 years!

There's been a purge inside Waltham Forest Labour Party. Hardly any candidate who previously supported Jeremy Corbyn got through the selection process.

Nonetheless, the pressure from angry working-class residents, and years of relentless campaigning by the Socialist Party and TUSC supporters against cuts and for council housing, has had an effect.

Labour candidates declare on their leaflets that they will build 1,000 council houses... over four years when there are 24,000 people on the waiting list!

Some may consider protesting against Labour by voting for the smaller number of Green candidates, or for independents. We appeal to the Green, independent and the Labour left candidates: join with us in fighting for a no-cuts needs-based budget, and help us mount the fight necessary to win the funding Waltham Forest needs.

Almost everyone we meet can vote for us. There's only two wards out of 22 where we don't have a candidate. Our campaign is big and bold, out on the streets as much as possible, visible and talking to people.

We are conducting a central campaign that anyone can get involved in, so all our candidates feel they are part of that. At the same time, everyone has the freedom to work their own patches and run their own campaigns.



We have a station roadshow in the mornings. As well as our main campaign stall on a Saturday in the heart of the borough, we leaflet and talk to people on Sundays, and on week-nights at different hubs.

We are at the main workplaces, like the hospital, the town hall and the job centres. Our youngest candidate has organised campaign stalls with other young supporters aimed at students.

We want debate. But there are only two planned hustings, hosted by the trades council and Save Our Square. Socialist Party members helped organise both. Labour Party right-wingers try to whip up a Facebook frenzy against us on community pages – without much success – but disappear when we say, ok, let's have a public debate.

We're enjoying our campaign. We know it's modest. But we have seized the opportunity of this election to put a socialist alternative before a mass audience. In our small way, we are pushing the debate forward in workplaces and union branches.

PAULA MITCHELL
TUSC CANDIDATE IN WILLIAM MORRIS

Newham Labour cuts and gentrification

The Socialist Party and allies in the Newham Resists campaign group put pressure on Labour's Rokhsana Fiaz at Newham mayoral hustings on 23 April. James Ivens was speaking on behalf of Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) mayoral candidate Lois Austin.

Newham Labour council is branding its next round of £47.9 million

cuts and charges as "savings". James made the case for a needs budget that would utilise Newham Council's £616 million reserves, and the need to build a mass campaign to fight for the money from Number 10.

Mayor Fiaz spoke about the council's plan to build another 4,000 council homes. But only 50% will be at social rents. When challenged from the floor why it wasn't 100%, she said it was to make it "financially viable".

We have over 34,000 people on the housing register, private rents are skyrocketing, and the current cost of living in Newham isn't financially viable for most people. TUSC raised that the council could start a mass project of council home building tomorrow if they grew a backbone and fought against Tory austerity.

The mayor was clearly rattled, even accusing TUSC of 'financial illiteracy'. We reminded her that on top of millions in cuts and charges to the working class, when her council repurposed Stratford Circus arts centre, it was able to lose £300,000-a-year Arts Council funding.

Fiaz was talking about how Labour is delivering 'affordable' homes for Newham, while the hustings venue was surrounded by luxury developments in Canning Town none of us can afford.

When challenged about the closure of Newham City Farm, Fiaz claimed that underfunding and mismanagement put the farm in such disrepair and the animals so badly cared for that the council needed to close it down.

Labour has controlled this council for decades, with Fiaz being mayor for the past four years. Surely if those problems existed, she could have provided the funds to rectify those issues?

Yet that never happened, and an important and loved community feature has been lost. And the same people in that community are being hit with new charge after charge from this council.

Newham needs a change. We need socialist councillors and a socialist mayor to fight this cost-of-living crisis and improve the lives of the working class in this borough.

We need an end to all cuts and gentrification, with council homes and rent control. And we need genuine training and jobs for young people. Vote TUSC and for all 'needs budget' candidates in Newham.

FERDY LYONS
TUSC CANDIDATE IN MARYLAND

Oxford cost of living – I worry for children in my classroom

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) appealed to me because it was prepared to put up a fight. When Tory central government says to 120 Labour councils "cut", the Labour councils simply reply "how far?" TUSC challenges these Labour councillors to either admit that they have become a vehicle for austerity, or come on board and join the fight.

On the streets around the Cowley Centre, we get NHS staff, BMW factory workers and pensioners all asking why they are not being paid more to cope with spiralling inflation. There is anger and, at times, despair. People feel they are not supported by the government and council, and are not being listened to.

One NHS nurse who stopped to

talk when she noticed we were calling for a 15% pay rise for NHS staff, said: "Great. We need a proper socialist party." A young school teacher asked: "I'm already struggling to pay my rent. What is being done to tackle the housing crisis?"

As a school teacher myself, I worry that children will soon be coming into my classroom from homes with no electricity, or at the end of the year will come in hungry because their parents have had to choose to heat or eat.

Only TUSC is prepared to stand up for working people. And we are gaining momentum, with seven candidates in Oxford this year. Whatever happens, we will continue to grow and get the message out there about a genuine socialist alternative.

STEPHEN BROWN
TUSC CANDIDATE IN ST CLEMENTS

Tower Hamlets interest in socialist alternative

From our door-to-door canvassing, people are interested in the Socialist Party and what we stand for. Those that showed interest were concerned about the cost-of-living crisis and the environment.

A lot of people weren't even aware there was an election coming up. Our stand outside Mile End station was a success – collecting a lot of names and selling the Socialist. Leafletting outside Queen Mary University got more students interested.

NANDI SHALITA
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Hackney cost of living turns people against Tories

Our campaign has consisted of leafletting, canvassing and poster to draw attention to our upcoming public meeting – the cost-of-living crisis has been a constant topic of conversation.

People are opposed to the Tories, open to the ideas we put forward, but wary of not voting Labour. But we will continue to highlight the gap between what we need and what we are getting from the Labour council.

CAMERON HENSHALL
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Do you agree?
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join

Town councillors leave Labour and join TUSC

TUSC now has two representatives on Lydney Town Council. Roger Holmes and Steve Stockham were longstanding Labour members and lifelong socialists suspended from Labour.

Steve's 'crime' was to act on a request from Lydney Labour Party to discuss the reasons behind Jeremy Corbyn's suspension. Lydney Town Council will now have a real opposition to cuts and failed local government policies.

Why I'm leaving Labour and joining TUSC

STEVE STOCKHAM
LYDNEY TOWN COUNCILLOR

I've been a Labour supporter and voter for all of my adult life. My activist journey began when I was elected National Union of Students (NUS) rep at college, followed by time with NUJ, Nupe, and the post office workers unions, and Unison with my final job before retiring.

I joined the Labour Party in the mid-1990s. Like many socialists, I left after the Iraq War, and the obvious embracing of neoliberal free-market economics by Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson.

I rejoined in 2017, enthused by Jeremy Corbyn's vision of a socialist Britain. I still thought that the industrial-political class would allow socialism if it gained enough popular support. The mass media smear campaign and hatchet job on Jeremy Corbyn in the run up to the 2019 elections showed just how wrong I had been.

I was suspended from Labour by Keir Starmer in December 2020 for allowing my branch to discuss national policy decisions. I'm still suspended 16 months later with no recourse to appeal.

The current Labour leadership with its support of neoliberalism, anti-democratic actions, and complete lack of support for the working class has left me embarrassed to be associated with it. TUSC on the other hand stands for everything a socialist wants – anti-austerity, renationalisation of utilities, support for NHS, a fair distribution of wealth etc.

The status quo acts against social change. Grassroot movements such as TUSC are our best hope, which is why I would be proud to transfer my political allegiance as a town councillor to TUSC.

TUSC welcomes socialist councillor Steve

TUSC national election agent, Clive Heemskerker, welcomed Steve's move as indicative of a growing mood to resist Keir Starmer's Labour.

"There are over a dozen TUSC candidates who were previously Labour councillors or Labour Party council candidates from Jeremy Corbyn's time as Labour leader. They have decided to carry on the fight for anti-austerity, socialist policies by standing as TUSC.

"Standing as TUSC – or forming a TUSC group on a council – is more politically significant than describing yourself as 'independent'. That actually doesn't distinguish you from ex-Tories or former Ukipers who often hide their real policies under the 'independent' label.

"Nor does it give a signal that what is needed is a national alternative to Starmer's Tory-lite party, or the role that the trade unions must play in giving an alternative real authority. While TUSC is only a step towards

the new working-class party that we need, using the description, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, couldn't make it clearer where you stand."

Swindon poverty and failing services

30 attendees packed into the first-ever meeting for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in Swindon, with more on Zoom. One speaker – Labour town councillor in Lydney, Steve Stockham – ripped up his Labour membership card.

Steve said that he and fellow councillor Roger Holmes will now be TUSC councillors. In June, there will be a TUSC meeting in Lydney which will discuss campaigning in the local elections next year.

Rob Pettefar, one of two TUSC candidates in Swindon, explained the town's mounting social and economic problems – 14% child poverty, failing services and the loss of key local amenities.

TUSC national chair Dave Nelist said Labour councils are failing to address pressing issues, the ways they could actually help working-class people, and the need for the unions to build a new mass workers' party.

Sheila Caffrey, National Education Union (NEU) executive and Bristol trades union council president, in a personal capacity, touched on how the pandemic had impacted on teachers and other key workers, the cost-of-living crisis, and the need for trade unions and a new political party to challenge the bosses' system. Several audience members commented that we need more representatives like Sheila.

SUE POWELL
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Save Derbyshire day centres

Tory-controlled Derbyshire County Council's plan to close eight of its 12 day centres for people with learning disabilities will have a serious effect for families who rely on them as a crucial service.

Being offered an alternative to travel on public transport to the remaining services across the whole of Derbyshire is not good enough. For many, it will mean consignment to their homes, to be looked after by unpaid family carers, who themselves are often elderly relatives who will lose a much-needed break during the day.

The council claims the services must close because of a lack of demand, but this is nonsense. Even its consultation says they intend to work with independent, private, and voluntary providers to continue services for those

in need. If there is no demand, why?!

"We are proposing to redesign services to move away from traditional building-based day services, in favour of offering alternative opportunities in the community", says its blurb. This removes the single most important feature about day centres: their existence as places to go for companionship and support. Removing the actual building can remove people's contact with the outside world.

The council's heartless plan will destroy all of this. Derbyshire Union, the union which organises the workers, has pledged to fight the closures. Chesterfield Socialist Party is urging a major joint campaign involving families, staff, trade unions and community supporters to keep our day centres open.

Workers' anger in Wellingborough, like everywhere else



Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

The Socialist Party's second week campaigning in Wellingborough, and the payoff is instantaneous. Unsurprisingly, the thoughts and feelings aired were the exact same as those we hear every week when we campaign in Northampton, as I'm sure we all hear across the country: big bosses and the Tory government are not doing enough for us, and we won't take it anymore.

Whether it was energy bills, childcare costs, the clear distinction between workers and bosses,

both in attitude and pay, the struggles are the same across the board. Boris Johnson's 'partygate' scandal also cropped up a few times. I don't think his attempt to bury the scandal worked too well here.

There was consistent interest in our campaign stall on the cost-of-living crisis throughout the day; there wasn't even the need for us to call out from the campaign stall that much.

It was really encouraging to see a variety of ages and communities take an interest. This is definitely an area we will be revisiting. There's room for a successful Socialist Party branch here. I feel it in my bones.

TIMEA KUN
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● Socialist editor Dave Carr retires

The editorial team would like to wish a happy retirement to Dave Carr A.K.A Simon Carter, who is

hanging up his boots after 26 years as an editor.
All the best Dave.

AREA	\$ RECEIVED	\$ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2022										DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2022
Eastern	840	1,200											
East Midlands	720	1,850											
Northern	193	750											
South West	357	1,800											
Wales	398	2,300											
Southern & SE	337	2,350											
North West	109	1,150											
London	307	4,600											
West Midlands	79	2,600											
Yorkshire	33	2,550											
Other	45	3,850											
TOTAL	3,418	25,000											

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Campaigning in Swansea

TV review: ‘Then Barbara Met Alan’

Rights not charity – an account of disabled people’s direct action

PAUL COUCHMAN
STAINES SOCIALIST PARTY

Twenty-seven years ago, there were several days of protests in Westminster (outside Parliament), demanding equality and civil rights for disabled people. This was the culmination of several years of protests and civil disobedience by the disabled people's Direct Action Network (DAN). These were not just placard-waving protesters; these were proud disabled people and their allies, chaining themselves to buses, throwing themselves out of their wheelchairs, chanting ‘Piss on pity’ and ‘Rights not charity’.

In the early 1990s, I worked for a few years as a personal assistant (PA) to several of these disabled activists. I got to know some of the most inspiring people I have ever met.

Now, a TV programme has been made about two of these activists, Barbara Lisicki and Alan Holdsworth (aka Wanda Barbara and Johnny Crescendo - their cabaret stage names). I was privileged to work as their PA, with tasks as varied as looking after their little daughter and acting as national secretary to the DAN network.

One of the first targets was the ITV Telethon charity fundraiser. As Barbara says: “Telethon was a grim little charade of unacceptability. Sitting in baths of baked beans, dressing up like fools and showing films of pathetically tragic disabled children whose lives could only have

meaning if the great British public donated their loose change. This was ITV's vision of television with a noble purpose. They had no idea what was about to come their way...”

“In 1990 something within us snapped. [Disabled people] couldn’t stand the Telethon - it was a televisual monstrosity.”

At the 1992 ‘Block Telethon’ demo, protester Vic Finkelstein said: “Today, this protest is the only place in the whole of Britain that you can feel proud of being a disabled person”.

1992 was the last year of the Telethon. At the Block Telethon protests in 1990 and 1992, and on many of the subsequent protests in London, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, etc, many protesters were arrested. Anyone witnessing the events could not fail to be inspired by their determination and bravery.

This was an exciting and important time in the history of fighting for disabled people's civil rights and the film brilliantly captures the mood of the time - including actual footage of some of the demonstrations for accessible public transport, and showcasing the range of talent among disabled actors, including Ruth Madeley and Arthur Hughes, who play the lead roles.

The film understandably concentrates on the relationship between Barbara and Alan, which is important, as intimate relationships between disabled people are rarely shown on mainstream TV. But the most important role of the film, in



Ruth Madeley and Arthur Hughes play the lead roles in the BBC TV film ‘Then Barbara Met Alan’

my opinion, was showing what can be achieved by a determined, militant group of activists fighting for a cause, and the eventual shortfalls in not linking this determination to the need to abolish capitalism and fight for a socialist society.

Some attempts were made to link up with the trade unions and



This was an exciting and important time in the history of fighting for disabled people’s civil rights

broaden the political scope of the movement. There was an excellent demonstration by DAN in 1997 against the New Labour government in Downing Street, dubbed the ‘Blair’s Blood’ protest. The protest was against the ‘welfare reforms’, ie cuts, being proposed by the New Labour government.

Four wheelchair users climbed out of their chairs and smeared themselves and the pavement with red paint. Unfortunately, the film did not include this aspect of DAN’s work.

Barbara herself makes it clear at the end of the film that although much has been achieved (accessible public transport, the Disability Discrimination Act and subsequent Equality Act) disabled people are still treated as second and third class citizens. Disabled people are still over-represented among the unemployed, low-paid, and socially isolated in capitalist society.

Militant supporters (forerunners of the Socialist Party) at the time, including myself, produced a pamphlet called ‘Militant and Disabled’, aimed at providing a socialist alternative to the poverty and isolation faced by disabled people.

For disabled people to become fully included, equal members of society we need to address the root social causes of inequality and inaccessibility - capitalism and the profit motive:

- Nationalising and fully funding the health and social care sectors - to provide universal health and social care without the profit motive
- Investing in technologies and allowances to permit disabled people to participate more fully in society both in and out of work, with requirements for employers to supply them
- Democratic working-class control of work and services, as part of a democratic, socialist plan for the economy - with representation of disabled people in running and planning services: nothing for us, without us

● If readers want to see more actual footage of DAN protests, search ‘disabled people’s direct action network’ on YouTube.

● ‘Then Barbara Met Alan’ is available on BBC iPlayer



Most Remploy sites - a network of government-run workplaces employing disabled people - were closed by New Labour and the following Con-Dem coalition governments with the loss of thousands of jobs between 2008 and 2012, despite some strike action and other trade union protests. The remaining sites were privatised PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

COUNCIL PERKS AMIDST COVID-AUSTERITY

ROB SHELLEY
STAFFORD

I am so pleased that in these cash-strapped times of Covid-austerity to hear of the obscene pay packets that some of the executives at Staffordshire County Council have been enjoying!

In a recent article, my local

paper - The Staffordshire News-letter - revealed that council chief exec John Henderson troured £203,375 in 2020-21.

This included a £15,000 ‘bonus’. At that time, many in the county were in massive debt, and suffering job losses, and cuts to services.

The deputy - who is also

director of families and communities - pocketed £195,994, which included expenses and pension.

Between them, this amounts to almost £400,000, and that is just two that we know about!

It shows the sheer inequality of the capitalist system when a couple of people in the county can gain so much when so many are

losing so much!

Staffordshire County Council has a Tory majority, but there are many reports of Labour-run council executives elsewhere netting massive salaries too.

It’s time to build a new party that acts in the interests of ordinary working people rather than greedy fat cats!

Macron: We won’t let you have five more years in power!

EXTRACTS FROM A STATEMENT ISSUED BY
GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE (CWI FRANCE)

Emmanuel Macron won the presidential election with 58.54% of the votes, against Marine Le Pen’s 41.46%. Macron was able to win a second presidential term, despite the vicious policies he pursued against the interests of the majority of the population and the accumulated anger. Once again, it was far-right Le Pen’s presence in the second round which allowed Macron to get through.

There was a particularly high abstention rate for this election (28.01%), plus blank votes (4.57%), and spoilt ballots (1.62%). It was the lowest second round voter turnout since Georges Pompidou election in 1969. So it’s not a big victory for Macron.

Already, the legislative elections in mid-June look as if they will be quite fierce - like a ‘third round’. However, Macron wants to proceed quickly with his capitalist, anti-working class policies, especially on pension reform, pushing back the retirement age from 62 years to 64 or 65.

Anger runs high

Le Pen gained 2.6 million votes and Macron lost 1.9 million compared to the 2017 presidential election. In the absence of left-winger Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the second round, once again Le Pen partly benefited from a protest vote against Macron’s policies of the last five years. But Le Pen and her Rassemblement National (RN - National Rally party) will never call for strikes against Macron’s policies.

Defeating Macron

Macron has a small base to govern from. He will try to win over the traditional right and some of the greens.

All the opposition forces are looking towards the legislative elections in only six weeks’ time. Mélenchon was the first to indicate that electoral revenge ‘in the third round’ is possible by voting for his Popular Union (UP).

UP (Mélenchon’s election platform) is in discussion with the EELV (Ecologists), the PCF (Communist Party of France) and the NPA (New



Macron's pursuit of capitalist policies will inevitably provoke a fightback from the working class

the Le Pen vote as the anti-Macron vote that she claimed to represent. Voting Le Pen meant an even more authoritarian, violent, racist and anti-worker policy. Some of these voters understandably chose Macron against Le Pen.

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UP (Mélenchon’s election platform) is in discussion with the EELV (Ecologists), the PCF (Communist Party of France) and the NPA (New

Anti-capitalist Party) to find agreement on a programme for government - a coalition that makes a clean break with the now largely defunct, establishment Parti Socialiste.

The PCF made a foolish, strategic error by competing with Mélenchon in the first round. The PCF’s modest 800,000 votes would have been enough to get Mélenchon into the second round, (who lost out to Le Pen by just 400,000 votes).

The PCF’s aim was to maintain its old alliances with the Parti Socialiste when the latter has no different policies from that of Macron (who was previously a PS minister) and only got 1.74% of votes in the first round.

The UP, faced with the challenge of needing to win a parliamentary majority, to effectively counter Macron and his policies, this must be in conjunction with a high level of workers’

struggle, and organising those who want to fight, into a mass workers’ party.

The Popular Union/France Insoumise grouping is receiving considerable attention from a section of young people and workers. The UP programme, which calls for the freezing and lowering of prices, retirement at 60, an increase in wages (with the minimum wage at €1,400) and benefits, along with expanded public services, is proving attractive.

The coming months can become very important. It will be decisive in confronting the capitalists if, at the same time, struggles are organised in the workplaces, in the schools and in the neighbourhoods against Macron and his policies.

The Popular Union, if it is enlarged around a more clearly anti-capitalist

and combative programme, can play an essential role by being a tool to involve all those who want to resist in the struggle.

Structures should be developed - local committees, coordinating bodies in the departments and regions, national meetings, discussions of programme and activities, with regular meetings inviting young people and workers to get organised.

We also need to debate the need for a new democratic, mass party and struggle of youth and workers to fight Macron and capitalism. This is fundamental in order to win - a step towards a combative party of workers and young people fighting for socialism.

This is the aim of Gauche Révolutionnaire in the weeks to come.

Ireland North: Socialist councillor contests Legislative Assembly seat

Militant Left (CWI Ireland) supporter, councillor Donal O’Cofaigh, is contesting the Fermanagh-South Tyrone constituency in the 5 May elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Donal is running as a Cross Community Labour Alternative (CCLA) candidate. In an election that is likely to be highly polarised and divisive, CCLA aims to offer a path out of this through workers’ unity and by laying the basis for a new mass party of the working class.

Donal’s election to Fermanagh and Omagh Council in 2019, and his record of opposition to the main parties, is a powerful demonstration that an alternative can be built. The Assembly election is the next step in the journey to build the type of new mass party we need.

All genuine left, and anti-sectarian, community and trade union activists should come behind Donal’s campaign, but also look to the future and consider what can and must be done in their area at the next local elections in 2024.

Sectarian politics

Workers and young people are facing a future of falling living standards, cuts to services, and tension and conflict on the streets. They are angry but see no credible alternative to the

sectarian parties. There are very few independent voices who speak up on class issues whilst maintaining a firm anti-sectarian position.

The majority of elected Assembly members win their seats by appealing to one community only and are proud of the fact. They cement division every day through their words and their actions.

The fifth party of government, Alliance, does organise across both communities but stands on the right-wing of the Executive on economic issues. A party which comes back again and again to the anti-working-class policy of bringing in water charges will never provide a real alternative.

It often seems that there is no way out of the morass of sectarian politics, and as a result many workers

and young people give up on voting. The turnout in elections has fallen over recent years as a result, and the decades-old trend for those who reject sectarianism and sectarian politics to leave Northern Ireland, never to return, continues.

Working-class unity

In fact, there is an alternative: the third tradition of working-class unity, solidarity and socialism. At times, this tradition has threatened the dominance of the unionist and nationalist parties, especially in the 1960s when the Northern Ireland Labour Party and other left parties grew quickly.

CCLA is seeking to rebuild this third tradition and re-establish its credibility as a real alternative both at the ballot box and in day-to-day politics.

The unity of campaigners and activists must be based around a basic level of agreement on anti-austerity, pro-working class and anti-sectarian politics.

Ultimately, it is only through the struggle for socialist change that we can solve our problems, including the divisions between communities. In a democratic socialist society, the needs of all will be met, and the democratic rights of all communities will be guaranteed.

A left version of either nationalist or unionist politics is a dead end. We need a militantly anti-sectarian, independent party which actively seeks to build in both Catholic and Protestant areas.

● This article can be read in full on socialistworld.net

How mass working-class action established the 'right to roam'

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the Kinder Scout mass trespass, which paved the way for the establishment of the national parks in the UK. **Dave Gorton** of Chesterfield Socialist Party celebrates that victory and looks at the tasks still needed to gain 'open access' in the countryside.

The rights we have to roam in 15 national parks were won through direct action 90 years ago. The mass trespass on Kinder Scout in the Peak District, Derbyshire, in April 1932 is rightly celebrated as the key event in a series of challenges to landowners by organised socialists, workers and the unemployed.

In the early part of the 20th century, rambling was mainly a working-class pursuit, particularly in the North of England. It provided a break from the hard life in the factories, pits and mills of Lancashire, Yorkshire and further afield. Growing unemployment in the early 1930s increased its popularity - it was cheap and a few hours' escape from the daily struggle to survive.

By 1932, an estimated 15,000 working-class people left Manchester every Sunday heading for the Pennines or the Peak District.

In his song 'Manchester Rambler', folksinger Ewan MacColl famously wrote: "I may be a wage slave on Monday, but I am a free man on Sunday".

From the 18th century, enclosure acts made it possible for landowners to enclose land without reference to parliament, denying the poor centuries-old rights to cultivate or graze animals there.

Possibly 14 million acres were out of bounds to most, used for just a few days a year by the ruling class for grouse shoots (as was the case with Kinder). In the Peak District, less than 1% of the land was openly accessible, with only 12 'legal' paths.

In the 1920s the Communist Party held some influence in Manchester's

engineering factories, and several members played major roles in the radical British Workers' Sports Federation, set up by the National Clarian Cycling Club, among others.

It was this overtly political movement which organised the deliberate mass trespass from Hayfield, Derbyshire, on to Kinder Scout. Their actions were opposed by the more middle-class, official rambling associations - which relied on occasional passes handed out by landowners to a select few.

On 24 April, around 500 set off up Kinder. Following a few minor scuffles with the hopelessly outnumbered gamekeepers, they met a small Sheffield contingent who had walked from Hope. The Manchester Guardian reported the day after: "As they marched they sang. They sang the Red Flag and the International".

Prosecutions

Five marchers were arrested and jailed for riotous assembly, unleashing a huge wave of public outrage. One of the jailed had a pamphlet by Lenin on him at the time, something used against him in court.

The sentences boosted the campaign for the right to roam. Just a few weeks after, 10,000 walkers, the largest number in history, amassed for an access rally at Winnats Pass, outside Castleton in Derbyshire.

Mass civil disobedience succeeded where years of doffing the cap to the landowners had failed. In less than 20 years the Peak District National Park was created.

The lawbreakers of the 1930s helped enshrine the right to roam in the minds of ordinary people. Today,

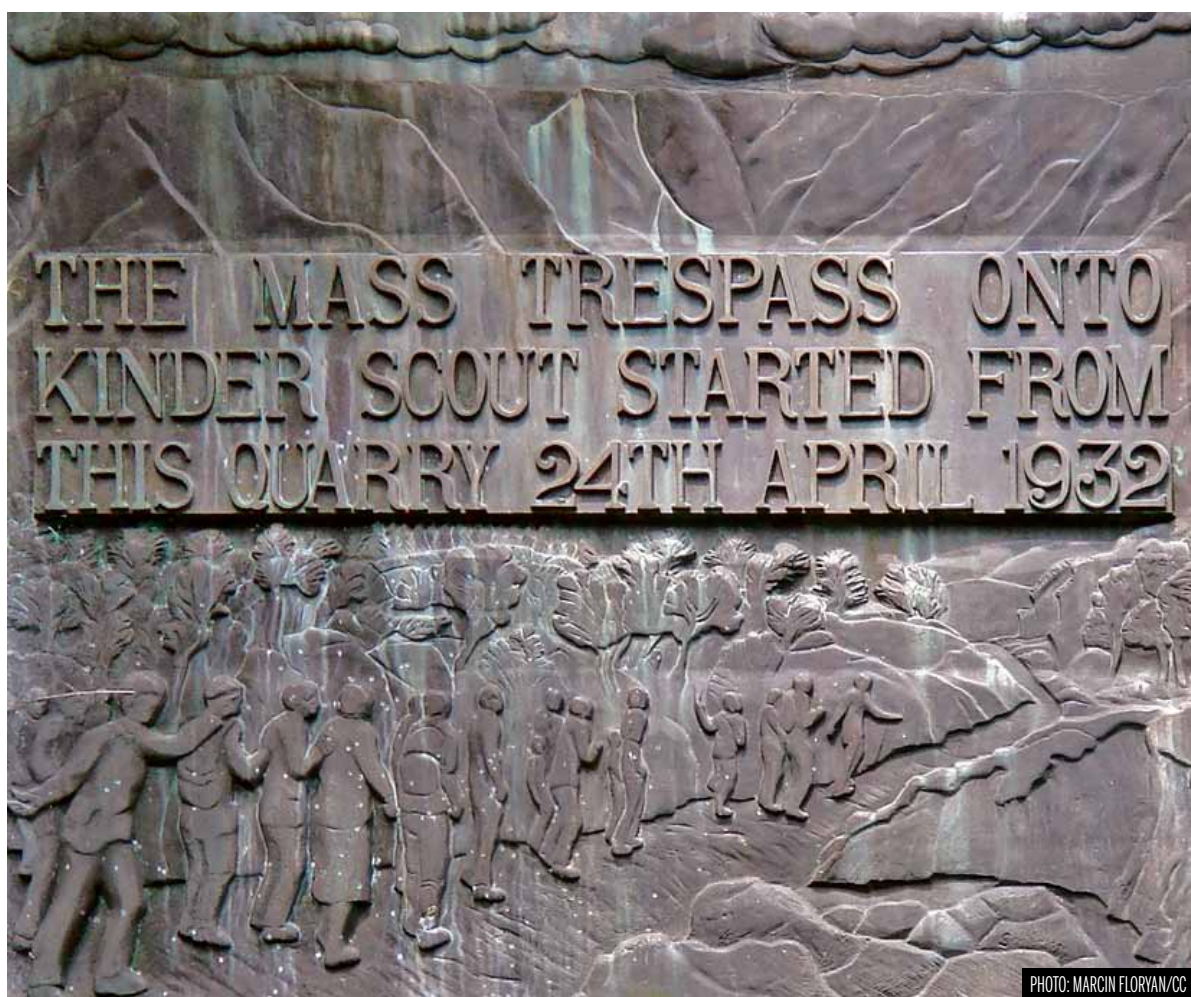


PHOTO: MARCIN FLORYAN/CC



Mass civil disobedience succeeded where years of doffing the cap to the landowners had failed

almost three-quarters of the land in the Peak District is open access,

although the lack of an affordable and efficient public transport network means the majority, including those like myself who live short distances away, can't properly benefit.

But in Kent, less than 1% of land is open access. These huge differences between upland and lowland areas is replicated throughout the UK, meaning the 80% of the population who reside in towns and cities have the least access to land close to where they live.

Most of the 'green belt' has no open

access, only allowing us to walk on designated paths. Much woodland, grassland, and river and lakesides were excluded from Labour's Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act in 2000.

Only 8% of England and Wales is open access land. The socialist pioneers of the Kinder Scout trespass earned their place in history; others will follow suit in the future to re-establish the demand that the land belongs to the people and should be returned to us.

Film review - Downfall: The Case Against Boeing

Another story of capitalist greed

AMNON COHEN

HARINGEY AND CAMDEN SOCIALIST PARTY

This documentary examines the crashes of Lion Air Flight 610 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302, just five months apart in 2018 and 2019. Both crashed planes were Boeing 737 Max. The film could easily have been called "The case against capitalism".

When Boeing merged with McDonnell Douglas in 1997, a new management was installed, focused entirely on maximising profits. The new management demanded more work from fewer staff, making tens of thousands of redundancies.

The corporate HQ was moved from Seattle to Chicago, in order to lessen the influence of safety-conscious engineers, and ensure the domination of the corporate moneybags.

The Boeing 737 Max was rushed out to compete with the fuel-efficient Airbus 320. Boeing's management



PHOTO: PJS2005/CC

Boeing was allowed to partially 'self-certify' the 737 Max's flawed software

did not want the cost of designing a new aircraft, or certifying it with regulators. They marketed the plane

to the airlines as not requiring any expensive simulator retraining of pilots.

The 737 Max involved fitting a new, fuel-efficient engine onto a 40-year-old plane. But the new engines were so large that they had to be fitted further forward and higher up to clear the ground.

This new position gave the plane a tendency to rotate upwards, where there was a risk of stalling. There was a sensor to correct this defect.

The original design had two sensors. But this was reduced to one during development.

'Optional extra'

A small mechanical sensor could easily break, get stuck, get hit by birds or other debris. So there was an indicator lamp in the cockpit to warn the pilot the sensor was broken.

But this lamp was not standard - it was an optional extra costing \$80,000. Neither of the crashed flights had the indicator installed. Boeing concealed these problems from pilots and airlines.

After the crashes, Boeing attempted to blame "poorly trained foreign pilots", and resisted attempts to ground the 737 Max. The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which is supposed to ensure air safety, acted to protect Boeing and shield it from accountability.

The 737 Max was grounded only after over 50 countries banned the plane. It was recertified to fly again in November 2020.

Boeing agreed to pay \$2.5 billion to settle a criminal conspiracy charge, ending an investigation into "knowingly and wilfully" conspiring to undermine the FAA. Boeing paid £230 million to shareholders to stop a lawsuit over lost profits.

'Downfall: The Case Against Boeing' and an earlier documentary, 'Boeing 787: Broken Dreams' warn how profit-driven corporate culture in Boeing undermines safety.

● The documentary can be viewed on Netflix

Tory review won't save the beautiful game - kick out the billionaires and put fans in control

SCOTT JONES

Although the World Cup takes place in the winter this year, the summer could still see a huge fixture away from the pitch as the government seeks to implement all ten of the key recommendations of the so-called 'Fan-Led Review of Football Governance', chaired by Tory MP Tracey Crouch.

Sport minister Nigel Huddleston told parliament on 25 April that the government endorses the ideas, and a white paper bringing forward legislation will be published in the summer.

One Premier League chief executive has described the review as "enforcing upon football a philosophy akin to Maoist collective agriculturalism", while at the other end of the spectrum the Football Supporters Association has called it "the basis for a sustainable and prosperous future for the game."

The main thrust of the review itself is the proposed establishment of an independent regulator which would have the power to grant licenses to clubs to compete, govern finances, and oversee aspects of 'club behaviour'. It's understandably been backed by most supporters' groups.

When the owners of clubs at the top of the sport threaten a breakaway with the 'European Super League', and clubs like Bury and Macclesfield further down the pyramid go out of existence, its clear something needs to be done. Covid-19 has only exposed and exacerbated many of football's problems.

At the time of writing, there are two clubs in the second tier alone with asterisks next to their name denoting points deductions due to the financial mishandling of the club by their owners. And it's rarely the owners who suffer in these situations. Instead, it's the supporters and the community, as well as the game itself.

But is the review and its recommendations the answer? The fact that most clubs support the review too, including Super League enthusiasts Man Utd owned by the robber baron Glazer family, who have piled debt onto the club while extracting profits, shows that it's probably not the panacea it claims to be. The author herself gave the game away in an interview on the Athletic podcast in December when she

stressed the regulator would be "independent of government and it won't force anyone to do anything", while also defending the market's role in football. As one of the hosts pointed out: "We've got a water regulator, yet our water is still full of sewage."

In her foreword to the review, Tracey Crouch confirms in black and white that the aim of the regulator is to focus on "specialist business regulation", whatever that means, and "better supporter engagement." What neither mean is ownership of clubs. But you can't control what you don't own.

The first chapter does a comprehensive job highlighting all the issues that need sorting, but the second chapter also fails to address the elephant in the room of ownership of football clubs, when it lists the four alternatives it considered to the current state of affairs, none include challenging ownership of clubs.

The review contains every type of chart imaginable - and lots of stats and figures - but proposes very little. It's also worth pointing out that despite being a weighty 161 pages, only six of them deal with women's football!

We can't trust the Tories or the capitalist system they represent to save football. They defend the profit system that endangers football and has made it unaffordable for many.

They and their media attacked footballers' pay during the early days of the pandemic to distract from their own failings. And just this month their friends in the Tory media have been blaming an alleged increase in trouble at games on 'drugged-up' supporters - rhetoric reminiscent of the slurs after the Hillsborough disaster when drinking and hooliganism was blamed.

This, and the racism that still plagues the game, is a societal problem, not simply a football problem, and the Tories and capitalism are to blame.

Every weekend, several times a week even, supporters and fans show through their passion, dedication, and sacrifice that they are at the centre of the sport. Matches played behind closed doors during the worst spells of the pandemic laid this bare for all to see.

Supporters also showed their strength and solidarity when mass protests erupted at grounds in the wake of the Super League plan a year ago,

and mass outrage defeated it within 48 hours. Supporters are there before an owner buys the club promising the world, and there long after they are gone, and it's all gone, wrong. Communities should own their football clubs and facilities. Players, club staff and their trade unions should have a role in running the game.

Let's not forget players and staff supported the fans during the Super League breakaway battle as they voiced their opposition, while Marcus Rashford and others have been at the forefront of fighting the government since the official opposition of Labour ditched Corbyn and all his anti-austerity policies.

The battle to save the beautiful game must also involve the wider workers' movement, and be linked to the need to change society and the fight for socialism.

The capitalists who own our clubs are the same as those who own the companies we work for and that run society under capitalism. Those top companies that dominate the economy should be nationalised and run under democratic workers' control and management.

Like in society, there is no lack of money in football. Broadcast rights are worth billions alone. This money should be used to keep clubs afloat, as well as to invest in grassroots football and facilities. Football is a mass participation sport, the world's biggest. As the review points out, in England alone 14.1 million people play football and 35 million attend the top four leagues per season.

Clubs should be collectively owned, and run by delegates elected from the supporters, from the players and employees' unions, and from the local community. This should be repeated in the ruling bodies of the game.

Supporters have a common cause to reclaim our game. We want football that we can afford to watch, football that we run, and facilities that we own and can use to participate in.

Like the fight for socialism, the fight to save football is international too. The World Cup at the end of the year is taking place in Qatar, where many construction workers have died working on the stadium, homophobia is enshrined in law by the dictatorship regime, and ordinary fans will be ripped off massively.

Football is the world's biggest and favourite sport. The beautiful game brings people together in our love of the game, and it can bring us all together to save it, as well as in the most important fight of all, the one for a socialist world.

● *'Reclaim the Game' - a socialist programme for football by John Reid, new edition coming soon - available from leftbooks.co.uk*

£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

Issue 1177

28 April - 4 May 2022

formerly **Militant**

RENT CONTROLS AND COUNCIL HOMES



**Vote for socialist candidates
prepared to fight**



Vote TUSC on 5 May

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

RHYS DAVIES

TUSC CANDIDATE FOR RUMNEY WARD, CARDIFF CITY COUNCIL

My three daughters share a small bedroom between them for the nights they stay with me each week. The rent on my two-bedroom house is more than double what mortgage payments used to be on my old three-bedroom house. But my income hasn't doubled!

With the average house price over £300,000, and energy bills nearly doubling, saving any money at all, let alone enough for a deposit on a permanent home, is impossible.

My situation is frustrating and stressful at times, but in the time since I have lived here, the number of people living in emergency accommodation has doubled, and

more than 1,500 children in Cardiff are homeless.

Average monthly rent in Cardiff is at a record high of £1,124 - an increase of 14.5%. In Swansea it is 19.7%, according to Rightmove.

Landlord politicians

115 MPs across all parties have declared earning money from rent, eighteen of these are Labour MPs. This includes Labour's shadow housing secretary, Lucy Powell, who rents out a room in her London flat. The Register of Interests says that it earns her at least £10,000 a year.

There is an obviously high concentration of property interests in British politics. Whether it's politicians themselves, or their party's donors, a sizable proportion have a financial stake in the housing market.

Welsh Labour have failed to keep to their empty commitments to rent control in Wales (see 'What councils could do in the fight for decent, affordable housing for all' at socialistparty.org.uk)

It doesn't take much searching to find that several Labour councillors in Cardiff are buy-to-let landlords. This tells you everything you need to know about the Labour Party and whose interests they serve.

During our campaign work in areas dominated by student accommodation, we found streets full of Labour signs put up while the students were home for Easter.

We need councillors prepared to fight for the safe, affordable housing we need. That's why the Socialist Party is standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition for the local elections on 5 May.

We say:

- **Scrap increases to council rents and other charges**
- **For fair rent, secure tenancies and decent conditions, as agreed by elected committees of tenants and trade union representatives. The right to rent tribunals, overseen by these committees, to challenge rent levels and unsafe conditions**
- **Councils to use their powers to compulsorily purchase property left empty; to be brought back into council housing stock, rented at social rents on secure tenancies**
- **A mass building programme of eco-friendly affordable council homes to tackle the housing crisis, under the democratic control of working-class communities, to prevent overcrowding and to ensure the provision of all necessary services including green spaces**

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



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