

# RICH GET RICHER AT OUR EXPENSE ORGANISE THE FIGHTBACK



STEVE SCORE  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

**C**ivil unrest may “not be very far off”, according to money-saving expert Martin Lewis. No amount of money-saving tips will save working-class people from rising energy bills and the cost-of-living crisis, which Martin himself admits! Instead, action is needed to stop the rich getting richer at our expense.

As usual, things are worst for lower-income households, which are expected to face an income drop of £1,300 this year, in real terms. But if wages, on average, had kept pace with payouts to company shareholders over the last 20 years, everyone would be £2,100 a year better off! This was even before the horrific further rise in the cost of living we are about to suffer.

Vast profits have been siphoned off by big business from workers in that time. Yet average pay in real terms is still below what it was before the 2008 economic crisis.

Just take Shell and BP, who are currently reporting sharp increases in profit. In the last ten years they handed £147 billion (yes billion!) to shareholders, while we endure excruciating prices rises. You can have no clearer argument for the nationalisation of fuel and energy companies to help control prices.

There is a critical need now for an organised mass fightback. The trade union movement, with over six million members organised in the workplaces, could take that lead and draw in

millions more who are suffering.

It's a start that the TUC has called a national demo in London on 18 June to protest at the cost of living. But unions need to build for it. Go to every member and campaign to get them there, provide the transport - and make sure it's filled!

The 18 June protest needs to be used as a step towards mass coordinated strike action, linked to mass protest on the strike days in towns and cities across the county. A mass movement can start to force back the bosses and the Tory government, itself already rocking, and win decent pay, benefits, and pensions.

Let's give them civil unrest - positive, organised and with a clear programme of socialist change!

- Nationalise the energy companies under democratic working-class control and management
- For a trade union-led mass movement against the cost-of-living crisis
- Build a new mass workers' party

# the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

Issue 1178  
5-11 May 2022

### DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

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

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

### CONTACT US

editors@socialistparty.org.uk  
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

### DEADLINES

Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

### SUBSCRIBE

to the Socialist for weekly working-class news, analysis and fighting strategy [socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe](http://socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe)

- Paper subscription £4.50 a month, or £6.50 including Socialism Today
- E-subscription £2.50 a month, or £4 including Socialism Today

### SOCIALISM TODAY

our monthly Marxist magazine [socialismtoday.org](http://socialismtoday.org)

- Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50

### SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST

on all major podcast platforms

### FOLLOW US

facebook.com/CWISocialistParty  
Instagram @SocialistPartyCWI  
YouTube - Socialist Party  
Twitter @Socialist\_Party

### SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk) [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)



### BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Socialist Books: our publishing house [socialistbooks.co.uk](http://socialistbooks.co.uk)  
Left Books: Marxist classics bookshop [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk)

### OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM

<b>Editor of the Socialist</b> Sarah Sachs-Eldridge <a href="http://socialistparty.org.uk">socialistparty.org.uk</a> Judy Beishon <b>Circulation manager</b> Chris Newby	<b>Editorial staff</b> Paula Mitchell Scott Jones Ian Pattison Josh Asker
---	---

ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications,  
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT  
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office  
Printed by trade union labour at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964

The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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



# Sleaze, sexism and the need for a socialist alternative

PARLIAMENT/CC



## WHAT WE THINK

Two weeks ago, the editorial of the Socialist commented on the fines given to Boris Johnson, Rishi Sunak and other MPs for breaking their own Covid rules, and on the blatant tax avoidance of Sunak's family. We said these events "came on top of so much sleaze before, and more is no doubt to come". It didn't take long.

Following the revelation of a Tory MP watching pornography in parliament, women MPs and staff have reported 'wandering hands' and many other experiences of sexism at the hands of MPs.

Sadly all of these sexist experiences will be recognised by women of all ages. A recent report found that a staggering 97% of women had experienced sexual harassment.

However, there is undoubtedly a culture in parliament which means that, once in power, many male MPs think they are above it all and can get away with anything. This is undoubtedly true of many of the wealthy, entitled, 'Bullingdon boy'-type Tory toffs, embodied by the likes of Boris Johnson.

With regards to tackling sexism in parliament, talk abounds about the need to 'clean up' parliament, improve the code of conduct, change employment processes for staff, etc.

Labour MP Harriet Harman also

commented that women need to stand to become MPs in order to "kick misogynist backsides". But while Labour MPs like Harman, Jess Phillips and Stella Creasy speak out strenuously against sexist men, the Labour Party under Keir Starmer has driven out any trace of a programme from the party which might do something to ease the burden on working-class women.

They jettisoned Jeremy Corbyn's policies for an end to cuts and privatisation in public services and the NHS, for council housing, for investment in services for those fleeing domestic violence, for a decent minimum wage and benefits, for example. Labour councils are implementing Tory cuts that include switching off street lighting and cutting bus services, which further endanger women in public spaces.

It is an indictment of Starmer's Labour that at this time, when the Tories are exposed as a party of lies, sleaze and tax avoidance, while the cost-of-living for working-class people goes through the roof, the overwhelming mood on working-class streets encountered by Socialist Party members campaigning for Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates in the local elections is that all politicians are the same. That's what happens when Labour no longer fights in the interests of working-class people.

Working-class people need our own political voice to fight for decent services, benefits, and pay, and for a socialist alternative to this profit-led capitalist system that rests on and perpetuates inequality in all its forms.

The money, the connections, the

lifestyle, the 'culture' encouraged within the halls of Westminster, are some of the ways in which the capitalist establishment tries to ensure anyone elected with an aim of standing up for workers' interests is drawn in and made safe for big business. That is why a key demand of the Socialist Party is for elected representatives to only take a workers' wage.

### Mass workers' party

The lack of a mass working-class party, which organises and mobilises people, that debates and fights in working-class interests, is a key reason why those at the 'top' in parliament, big business, the media etc, feel they can get away with whatever they want. A workers' party would enable real debate and accountability - a real-life check on behaviour and a different 'culture'.

Sexism is a running sore through all parts of capitalist society, based as it is on deep divisions established for thousands of years since the development of societies divided into exploiting and exploited classes. While it's necessary to build a movement to combat sexist attitudes and behaviour wherever they occur, it will take the removal of capitalism through a mass movement of the working-class to create the conditions in which those deeply ingrained ideas can be finally wiped out - through a socialist alternative to the division, exploitation, brutality and inequality of the current system.

Do you agree?  
**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**  
[socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)



**A workers' party would enable real debate and accountability - a real-life check on behaviour and a different 'culture'**



Outsourced health workers strike at Barts Hospital Trust, east London PAUL MATSSON

## Government guilty of care home deaths

### • Fight for health and social care in public hands

GLYNN DOHERTY

This government has blood on its hands.

The exact numbers of avoidable deaths in care homes, after the government allowed untested patients to be discharged into care homes during the first few weeks of the Covid pandemic, may never be known.

The damning High Court judgment that the government acted illegally has been welcomed by the families who brought legal action.

The decision by Matt Hancock and Boris Johnson to discharge patients blew apart their arguments it was to place a "protective ring" around care homes. The opposite

happened. Covid-carrying hospital patients weren't tested, bringing the disease into care homes whose patients then weren't allowed any treatment in hospitals. That wasn't protection! It was basically locking up the 'contaminated' and throwing away the key.

The government cannot claim they were unaware of the dangers. The ruling mentioned the alternative opinions at the time, including that of the government's chief scientific adviser. He aired his concerns on Radio 4, hardly a non-mainstream media outlet in government circles!

With a statutory public inquiry to come, things could get worse for the prime minister, if he manages

to dodge all the other allegations of corrupt practices before then. But while he, and other Tory frontbenchers, should be held accountable for their actions through law, this isn't enough. After all, at the time of writing, the law-breaking prime minister remains in office!

The trade unions should escalate their campaigns for a completely public national health and care service.

Until the provision of fully funded health and social care is in public hands, with users and workers having a democratic say in its running, there will continue to be a government threat to lives in the pursuit of profits for their big business allies.

## Private providers profit from NHS waiting-list misery

A STUDENT NURSE

SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The number of people waiting on a list for more than a year for NHS treatment has grown by 186 times since the start of the pandemic. A total of 6.2 million people are waiting to be seen. For many, these treatments are life-saving and could mean an improvement in their quality of life or extension of their life. Despite these facts, Tory ministers still deny the NHS the funding it needs.

As a result, more and more people are turning to private providers. The private sector market hit a staggering £1.17 billion in 2020, and is predicted to continue to grow. However, not

everyone can afford to pay up, and nor should they have to!

Many people spend their savings attempting to save their health or their life, and the number of Britons raising funds for medical treatment via GoFundMe has increased 20-fold in the last five years, according to the Financial Times. Britons now have almost as much 'out-of-pocket' healthcare spending as Americans - almost 2% of GDP.

As a student nurse, I have worked in the NHS for the past three years and have witnessed the impact that a lack of resources and poor funding have on both patients and staff. The recent pandemic sought to highlight the insufficient ability of the NHS to cope with anything above normal

workload, with staff already pushed to their limits before the pandemic.

For NHS workers, like myself, burnout is becoming an increasingly more prevalent issue with droves of nurses and other healthcare workers continuing to leave the profession. Without funding and a decent pay rise for NHS staff, waiting lists will not get any shorter.

The only people that benefit from private health extortion are the super-rich bosses. That's why we say: take the private health facilities out of the hands of the profit vultures. Fight for a fully funded, fully public NHS where decisions about care are made democratically in the interests of our health, not in the interests of profit.



## 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 dominates 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!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206** to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

## DONATE TODAY

[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](http://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)





The Socialist Party has campaigned for trade unions to take up the issue of the menopause in the workplace PHOTO: PAUL MATTESSON

# HRT Crisis: Women left without drugs and facing battles in the workplace

JANE NELLIST  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

For too long, the menopause had been ignored, regarded as the last taboo subject for women. Not any longer!

The anger and panic of women over the shortage of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) medication, as well as increased public awareness, has demonstrated that millions of women rely on HRT to offset some of the more debilitating symptoms of the menopause.

Menopausal women can experience hot flushes, headaches, tiredness and excessive sweating. High workplace temperatures, poor ventilation, poor or non-existent rest or toilet facilities, or a lack of access to cold drinking water at work can make all of these symptoms worse.

Other symptoms can include blocks of memory loss, not being able to finish a sentence, feelings of anxiety and increased stress levels, and a loss of confidence as well as excessive, unpredictable bleeding.

For a time, there was uncertainty about the safety of HRT treatment. Many women were put off by reports that they caused dangerous side effects.

Insufficient investment in research into the menopause and how to support women during this time, as well as a lack of public awareness, have added to the lack of understanding.



**HRT shortages have left women in serious distress, resorting to extreme methods to try and access medication**

With advances in medical understanding, HRT has proved to be effective for millions of women experiencing the menopause - allowing them to be able to work and live without too much inconvenience.

HRT shortages have left women in serious distress, resorting to extreme methods to try and access medication. Unscrupulous online dealers put women at risk from those who seek to make money out of the crisis.

Celebrities, like Davina McColl, have helped to lift the veil on this hugely important issue. Talking

publicly about the impacts of the menopause on their health and well-being, and their career, it resonated with older women and the issues they had been forced to contend with in the workplace.

Let's be clear though, this is a class issue. For many women, the cost of trying to access HRT is prohibitive. Even paying for prescriptions, if you are on low pay, is out of reach for some. And not all women can take HRT.

There are now far more women over 50 in the workplace. This will continue to rise as the pension age increases, benefits are cut, and older women are forced to work.

What's more, at this time of life, women have more demands placed on them to care for elderly relatives or support grandchildren because of cuts to our services.

The fight to have the menopause recognised in the workplace has been ongoing, and Socialist Party members have campaigned for the trade unions to take up the fight.

In 2014, myself and Nicky Downes, two Socialist Party members, campaigned for the education union, NUT, now NEU, to produce campaign materials and policies to use in workplaces to support women

experiencing menopausal symptoms (see 'The menopause: breaking the taboo' at socialistparty.org.uk). With women making up the majority of the union's membership, it was seen as a crucial issue. Added to which, there was evidence of older women being victimised by bosses.

Other trade unions have followed suit. Wales TUC has produced an excellent document outlining the importance of campaigning and fighting for workplace policies. But more must be done!

We need to fight to change our society to one where all are valued and supported.

- Fight for:**
- Free prescriptions for all
  - End the HRT shortage - take over the profiteering drugs companies under democratic working-class control and management
  - Workers' control in the workplaces, including the right to adjust your role, working hours and annual leave, without loss of pay
  - Fully fund menopause clinics and education programmes with access for all women
  - Shorter working-week for all with no loss of pay and £15-an-hour minimum wage

## While the rich get richer the poor get poorer

The cost-of-living crisis spirals deeper. Working-class people see bills and tills go up. But for the big business bosses, pound signs are rolling over their eyes and even more money rolling into their bank accounts.

### Dishing out dividends

Dividend payments made to shareholders of UK-based corporations grew by 132% between 2000 and 2019, according to the Office for National Statistics. If wages had kept up with dividends, workers would be paid £2,100 a year more. For most of us, an extra £2,100 in our pockets would go some way to properly heating our homes, or to afford to eat well.

### Tesla bosses' Twitter toy

Meanwhile, the world's richest man, Elon Musk, has agreed to spend £35 billion on his new toy, Twitter. For comparison, Sri Lanka's debt mountain is roughly £28 billion. There, the government just defaulted on its debt, workers and poor are left unable to meet even their basic needs, and workers' protests have erupted (see page 9).

### Cancer patients can't afford heating

One in four cancer patients report that they "can't afford life" at the moment, according to charity Macmillan. At further cost to their health, patients are cutting costs on food and sleeping in cold bedrooms. Meanwhile, statutory sick pay remains at a pitiful £99.35 a week and lasts just 28 weeks.

### The health gap grows wider

Health inequality is growing. Men living in the poorest areas die 9.7 years earlier than men in the wealthiest, for women the gap is 7.9 years, according to the Office for National Statistics. The gap is growing.

There is an even greater disparity between rich and poor 'healthy life expectancy'. If you are a woman from a rich area you get 19.3 more years of healthy life than a poor woman; for men the gap is 18.6 years.

A lifetime of hard work, stress, pollution, unsafe housing conditions, limited access to health services and being unable to afford nutritious food - all contribute to a shorter life expectancy. All made worse by the policies of Tory and Labour bosses' politicians, and all a consequence of a system where the rich get richer at our expense.

Follow, comment, like  
Instagram  
@socialistpartyw

# Cost-of-living crisis: Tories out of ideas

## Jacob Rees-Mogg: 'Scrap green levy'

## We say: Nationalise the energy companies and invest in renewables

DUNCAN MOORE  
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Boris Johnson ordered ministers to come up with solutions to the cost-of-living crisis in a cabinet meeting at the end of April.

Stagnant wages and soaring inflation are leading to disaster for millions of workers. 2022-23 will see the fastest fall in disposable incomes since records began, according to the Office for Budget Responsibility. Four-in-ten households are predicted to be pushed into fuel poverty this autumn when the price cap rises again.

The Tories spent £400 billion propping up big-business during the Covid pandemic. But Chancellor Rishi Sunak's caveat to cabinet's 'brainstorming session' was that any suggestions had to cost the Treasury nothing!

Jacob Rees-Mogg suggested cutting the green levy, which adds £153 a year to the average annual energy bill. Any reduction in bills is welcome, but compared to the extra £700 a year, it barely touches the sides.

What's more, if scrapping the green levy means abandoning funding for renewable energy, this will only serve to increase energy costs in the future.

Investment in renewable energy is needed. The money to pay for it shouldn't be lumped onto our bills, but taken from the swollen bank accounts of the big energy companies. BP and Shell are set to make a combined profit of £40 billion this year,

yet have paid no tax on North Sea gas and oil for three years.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has hinted that he is considering adopting Labour's policy of a one-off windfall tax on energy giants' profits would certainly be welcome. However, Labour expects such a tax to raise just £1.2 billion, and it would be temporary.

Clearly, given the scale of the crisis, far more drastic measures are needed. BP, Shell and the other major energy companies should be nationalised under democratic working-class control and management. The billions which Shell and BP are spending on share buybacks could instead be productively invested in renewable energy and insulating homes, ensuring low prices for consumers and tackling the climate emergency.



SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND



PHOTO: PAUL MATTESSON

## Boris Johnson: 'Sacrifice safety for childcare on the cheap'

## We say: Fight for fully funded, publicly owned, free childcare

HELENA BYRNE  
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories have demonstrated again how out of touch they are with the challenges faced by ordinary people. Instead of suggesting ideas that will make a difference, they suggested cutting much-fought-for health and safety and environmental protections.

Boris Johnson suggested that he could cut the cost of childcare by allowing nurseries in England to take in more children without employing extra staff. He believes that relaxing health and safety rules is the route to solving the cost-of-living crisis, putting our children at unnecessary risk.

Under current regulations there must be at least one member of staff for every three children aged two years and under. For over-twos, there must be one staff member for every four children.

These regulations weren't plucked from the sky, they are based on evidence from past experiences when lessons were learned from catastrophic incidents. The charity Millie's Trust was established by the parents of Millie Thompson. She tragically passed away in a choking incident at a nursery in October 2012. The charity has slammed Johnson's proposals, stating that it will put more children at risk.

Since the Tories gained power in 2010, the cost of childcare has risen by 50%. Since the beginning of the pandemic, without sufficient government support, 300 nurseries have closed. Families struggle to find a place, let alone afford it.

Full-time childcare in London costs around £1,600 per month. This eye-watering price is above the average wage for women, and makes it almost impossible for families to put two children through nursery.

The excessive cost of childcare effectively locks women out of work, with long-term consequences for a woman's career, pay progression and pension benefits. It also pins families with children into poverty.

Increasingly, services for children and young people are privatised, including childcare. When the goal of any service is profit, children's safety is jeopardised in favour of the bosses' bottom line. And when the bottom line doesn't hold, services close. 85% of childcare providers say they are operating at a loss or breaking even.

If Johnson was serious about tackling the childcare crisis, he would invest in fully funded, publicly owned childcare facilities, employing well-trained, well-paid staff at a safe ratio. But he is not, he is interested in sacrificing our children's safety by providing services on the cheap.

## US abortion ruling: Build a mass movement to defend the right to choose

Leaked court documents suggest the US Supreme Court may soon issue a ruling overturning the right to abortion.

The leak has already provoked protests in the US. A final decision is expected in July. We say: build a mass movement to defend the right to choose.

- For the right to choose when and whether to have children

- For the right to abortion and contraception, free at the point of use
- Read our article, published in December 2021 when the hearings began. Search: 'Defending abortion rights in the US' at socialistparty.org.uk

## Lying supermarket bosses still raking it in

Sainsbury's has boasted that it is lowering prices and raising pay. Newspapers owned by Reach PLC, like the Coventry Telegraph and Media Wales, have proclaimed that Sainsbury's is putting "customers ahead of profit". What a blatant bit of bosses' propaganda!

No supermarket is "putting customers ahead of profit!"

Sainsbury's is gambling that lowering prices will create a profit, by winning customers from their competitors.

There is no doubt about the motivation of Sainsbury's bosses. When the supermarket chain was looking to merge with Asda only a couple of years ago, Sainsbury's CEO was caught singing: "We're in the money", to himself before an interview about it. Around that time, bosses were trying to force new contracts on workers that actually cut pay elements.

Today, pay across the whole industry is still sickeningly low, leaving some supermarket workers using foodbanks despite their difficult work during the pandemic. The bosses' priorities are still their bottom lines,

rather than shop workers and supermarket customers.

The capitalist free market delivering some of the lowest wages in the economy for retail workers, while also squeezing suppliers, despite giant profits from industry giants like Sainsbury's that tempted the Asda merger in the first place.

Lowering prices a little now won't resolve the cost-of-living crisis they're helping to cause with low wages. The only way to secure affordable food for all is to take the food industry itself - the supermarkets and big suppliers and distributors - into public ownership to have democratic control over food prices, wages, and production.

ADAM HARMSWORTH  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY



### 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'

### 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

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

## Fawley contractors strike for pay and suspended rep

NICK CHAFFEY  
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

On Monday 25 April, maintenance contractors at the Fawley refinery were out in force striking for better pay, sick pay and in support of their suspended trade union rep. Following the success of the first day of action, the rep was suspended after directly employed maintenance crews refused to cross the picket line.

After working through the Covid pandemic as 'essential workers', they

are furious that Exxon Mobil are offering just 2.5% - after making £6.75 billion profits in 2021! Malcolm Bennett, Unite official, attacked Exxon for leaving workers, who are out in all weathers every day of the year, on statutory sick pay, while others on site receive full company sick pay.

With large numbers of strikers protesting at the two main gates, it is clear that workers are determined to win their share of the profits made during the Covid pandemic, defend their rep and their union rights.

## Victory for hospital security guards

JOHN GILLMAN  
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

After 16 months of strike action - marches, protests and support from the wider trade union movement - security workers employed by private company Kingdom at The Royal Berkshire Hospital have secured a 7.5% pay rise, with some back pay. Even Labour councillors were

forced to support them - although they have outsourced their own services!

These workers often have to defuse tense situations by those frustrated at long waiting times at A&E caused by Tory cuts. While 7.5% is a step forward we need 15% now for all workers in the NHS. The campaign goes on to bring these services back into the NHS. Why pay the middle man?

## Just Eat strike spreads to Darlington

ALAN DOCHERTY  
TEESSIDE SOCIALIST PARTY

The strike of Just Eat couriers working for Stuarts in the 'gig' economy, that started in Sheffield, has spread to the North East - at first to Sunderland and Middlesbrough, and now Darlington.

They are angry at the £1.10 cut in their base rate for each delivery, from £4.50 to £3.40. On 28 April, at a meeting of 30 Darlington drivers, they agreed to start strike action straight away and every day between 12 noon and 2pm for at least a week. They are targeting McDonald's, Greggs, KFC and others.

The dispute now has the support of over 60 drivers with pickets at most fast food outlets across the town. Their action forced the companies to shut down the delivery app over lunch times. Morale is high and strikers enthusiastic that they are getting

their message across to Stuarts: to reverse the cut and for decent pay!

These workers are technically self-employed. We would call it bogus self-employment. They get no holiday or sick pay. One worker said that during the pandemic he was petrified he would get Covid as his family's income would then be non-existent.

A striker told us that, after the cut in base rates, he is lucky if he makes about £10 an hour. And that is before the rising cost of fuel, higher car insurance for business use, and higher prices for everything.

As a small independent union, the IWGB has no strike fund, so is appealing for trade union donations to sustain and spread the strike action. You can donate by BACS to:

- Account name: Couriers and Logistics branch
- Sort Code: 23-05-80
- Account number: 17001094

## School workers take action against LGBTQ+ prejudice

GREG RANDALL  
LAMBETH AND SOUTH WEST LONDON  
SOCIALIST PARTY

National Education Union members at John Fisher School in Purley, south London, took strike action on 28 April over anti-LGBTQ+ policies of the school's sponsor, the Catholic Diocese of Southwark.

Young adult author Simon James Green was invited to speak at the school, but the Diocese ordered that the visit be cancelled because of the gay characters and themes in his work. The school governors refused this, so the church authorities sacked all their appointed governors, replacing them with more compliant ones.

The actions of the Diocese demonstrate more concern about doctrine than educational needs. The ban can only damage gay students at the school.

The school NEU branch has no confidence in the new board of governors, and is calling for the sacked governors to be reinstated and the author's visit to go ahead. At the picket last week, strikers received support from their students.

The introduction of the Tories' 'Section 28', under Margaret Thatcher, effectively banned discussion of LGBTQ+ issues in schools. This reactionary measure was repealed by New Labour, but Labour and Tory policies of taking schools out of local authority control allow school

sponsors to effectively reinstate it without any democratic control.

Currently, John Fisher School is 'voluntary aided', so the church does not appoint all governors. The NEU fears that it will be turned into an academy, giving the church total control.

This dispute shows how collective workplace action can be taken against prejudice and reaction.

The Socialist Party calls for schools to be under the democratic control of local education authorities, school staff and parents. At the time of going to press four more strike days are planned, with action on 4 and 5 May, then 10 and 11 May.

● Messages of solidarity and support should go to [bruno.broniecki@neu.org.uk](mailto:bruno.broniecki@neu.org.uk)

## Victory to the Walthamstow Primary Academy strikers!

SARAH SACHS ELDRIDGE  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Teachers, teaching assistants and office staff in the NEU have taken eight days of strike action so far at Walthamstow Primary Academy. The reasons the strike started back in March include bullying, unequal pay and treatment of staff, and lack of training and support.

The reasons the strike continues, with nine further days planned, is the intransigence of the head and lack of serious engagement in negotiations.

The picket line is 'manned' by brilliant women workers, mostly striking for the first time. Students and parents show their affection greeting them by name.

But not so the senior management. Appeals for training and ideas for improvements get turned down. Feedback comes in the form of a telling-off. Think of the nurturing environment a primary school should be - this academy chain is creating

the opposite.

The school is part of United Learning, an academy chain with a number of schools locally and hundreds across the country. The academy model, introduced by the Blair New Labour government and developed under subsequent Tory governments, outrageously allows the schools to bypass pay deals nationally negotiated with the unions. But collective action by the school workers points to the limits of such arrangements.

While parents, local trade unionists, and socialists have supported the strikers, when they have sought support from the local council they have not even received a reply. Under the Labour-run council in Waltham Forest, 33 of the borough's 77 schools have been turned into academies. But in 2022 a number have faced strike action already, an indictment of the academy model.

Imagine if the council was fighting with education workers to overturn the privatisation model. That's one of



Walthamstow Primary Academy strike, April 2022 GLENN KELLY

the reasons TUSC candidates stood in the council elections, so workers like these have a voice.

A mass campaign against all the bullying, low-paying academies is needed, with education workers driving it. It is teachers, school workers, parents, students and the local trade unions and council who should be running our schools, not 'business' people and the brutal prioritising of their interests over the students.

## Independent school workers fight 'fire and rehire'

STEVE SCOTT  
BRANCH SECRETARY, EAST RIDING NEU  
AND NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Wednesday 27 April saw day three of strike action at Pocklington School in East Yorkshire. The Independent school is threatening members of staff with the abhorrent practice of 'fire and rehire' in order to remove them from their pension scheme, the TPS.

Members of the NEU and NASUWT overwhelmingly voted for industrial action.

The staff do not want to be out on strike, they want to be doing their job, teaching the pupils. But through

lack of dialogue and, in my opinion, lack of meaningful consultation, members feel like they have no option other than to undertake industrial action.

The unions have written multiple times to the school and the governors, only to be told that the employer will not enter into discussions with either union, who represent a majority of staff at the school. They insist that communication takes place via their lawyers!

The school is not in financial difficulty. This is the main message which staff conveyed throughout the consultation process. To add insult to injury, during this consultation

over pensions, the school have written to parents informing them of an increase in fees, blaming the rise, amongst other things, on "staffing costs".

With each day of strike action, more teachers join the picket line. They hope the employer comes round the table to seek a resolution to end the dispute.

The members originally voted for five days of action, with days four and five being 4 and 5 May, but after no signs of movement, members have voted for nine further days. The nine new proposed dates will run Tuesday to Thursday each week from 23 May.

## Hackney council - whose side are you on?



Housing maintenance workers on the picket line and lobbying the council HACKNEY SP



## Chep workers' pay victory

Unite members at Chep UK in Trafford Park in Manchester have won a major 14% pay victory. This comes as a result of a determined strike since December 2021 by workers who do the vital job of supplying and repairing pallets for goods transport.

Unite reports that they will receive a 9% pay increase, and other elements, including a lump sum and extra annual leave. The total package is worth as much as 14%.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "I'm very proud of Unite's reps and members at Chep. This was a tough dispute but the workers stood their ground and won an excellent deal. The workers knew that the company could afford a fair wage so they kept up the fight and they won."

Get all the latest union news  
**national shop stewards network**  
with the NSSN bulletin  
[shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

## RMT ballot for strike action across the railway network A once-in-a-generation battle

A MIDLANDS RMT MEMBER

RMT is balloting over 40,000 members across most of the British railway network.

All grades will be balloted - including train crew, signallers, maintenance and booking offices - in both Network Rail, which maintains and operates the infrastructure, and the Train Operating Companies (TOCs).

Some have called this our 'miners' strike', as this confrontation has been provoked 100% by the rail employers, with the government backing them up.

They are using the Covid pandemic recovery as their opportunity to go after our jobs, hard-won pay and conditions, and pensions.

Throughout the pandemic we and other key workers were hailed as heroes. We have been 'rewarded' for our commitment with a two-year pay freeze with inflation now over 9%. They also want to rip up our terms and conditions.

Network Rail director Nicky Hughes crassly attempted to justify her own bloated salary by stating that

Hackney management's propaganda machine has rivalled George Orwell's novel '1984' in recent days in regards to Unite members' strike action over pay at Millfields waste depot, Andrews Road special education needs and disability (SEND) driver and escorts depot, and the building maintenance depot.

In an email to all employees from the chief executive and group directors, they thank staff for the extra effort made during the action to ensure vulnerable residents receive the services they need.

This means thanks to those that have scabbed on the dispute, and to senior managers, particularly at the waste depot, who have harassed and verbally abused strikers and supporters. One 80-year-old resident who was supporting the strike has reported she was pushed.

This also ignores the very real impact on all residents that 12 years of cuts totalling £140 million has had every day of every week of every year.

Management congratulate themselves on their good working relationship with the unions, despite late consultations and local joint committees that managers do not attend. This has led to denying the unions a voice over very serious matters.

This is one of the reasons that Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates stood in the May elections in Hackney to challenge these arrogant out-of-touch councillors.

Management claim "examples... of entirely unacceptable behaviour". The only unacceptable behaviour has been from managers trying to break the strike.

All the unions in Hackney have strengthened their resolve to support Unite members to ensure they are successful in their claim of 10% to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis.

BRIAN DEBUS  
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY AND PRESIDENT,  
HACKNEY TRADES COUNCIL

## Coventry and Rugby bins The fight for pay justice goes on



Coventry bin strikers lobby the council 3 May LEN SHIAL

DAVE GRIFFITHS  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

On Tuesday 3 May, 200 people marched through Coventry town centre to the council house in support of the Coventry HGV bin drivers' pay claim and for the reinstatement of Unite rep Pete Randall.

Striking Rugby bin workers joined the Coventry demo, returning the solidarity shown to them by Coventry strikers. On their picket lines, the Rugby workers had come out in a mighty show of strength, and the bosses had been left scuttling in panic as the gigantic picket was joined by Coventry strikers.

Rugby rep Paul Hancox spoke at

the rally. Summing up the whole issue, he declared: "This austerity has been going on for years and then they offer us these bullshit wages. But it's time we stood up to these bastards!"

Paul told me that six months ago he would never have thought this could have happened: "Our lads aren't militant". But attacks on pay and a fighting lead from the union have changed everything.

Chants rang out through the town included: "Shame on you for turning blue", directed at the Labour council acting like Tories. And the conclusion from that was also chanted by many: "Vote TUSC!" referring to the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates that stood on 5 May.

ourselves. We not only have to campaign to fully explain the issues and for a 'yes' vote, but we must ensure that at least 50% actually vote. This burden does not apply to elections for capitalist politicians, only for workers' organisations.

However, despite these hurdles we can win this ballot! At my own depot the WhatsApp group is constantly buzzing. Peer-to-peer texting and phone banking has been organised by the national union.

Regional and national meetings have been organised, which have all reflected a real mood for a fight.

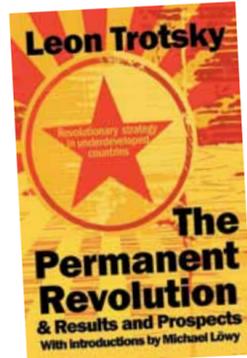
It is clear that the bosses want to smash our union and will be planning their scabbing operations behind the scenes. But a train with a scab manager acting as a guard won't get very far if there is no signaller, fitter or infrastructure engineer on duty, will it?

I am confident that we can get the result

over the line. When we do, the RMT leadership must use this mandate to put forward a militant plan of action. The enormous potential power of railway workers can drive the bosses back. This is a once-in-a-generation battle for the future of the railway which we cannot afford to lose.



**2022 National Shop Stewards Network Conference**  
**Saturday 2nd July**  
11am-4.30pm Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL  
**Workers fight the cost of living squeeze**  
**Trade union lead never more needed!**  
speakers include: **Sharon Graham,**  
**Unite general secretary**  
**www.shopstewards.net**



# The Permanent Revolution: Trotsky's writings have many lessons for today

In the latest article in our series reviewing Marxist classics, **Helen Pattison** looks at Trotsky's writings on the 'permanent revolution'.

Today, the theory of permanent revolution has multiple lessons for Marxists around the world. It is particularly relevant in those countries where economic development has been held back. But it also has relevance in every country, including the most developed capitalist economies. It explains why, in every country, Marxists' core responsibility is building the struggle for socialism.

Trotsky wrote 'Results and Prospects', the first part of his writings on the permanent revolution, after the defeat of the 1905 revolutionary movement against absolutist feudalism in Russia. It was a reply to ideas such as those put forward by the Mensheviks, who believed that, in an underdeveloped country like Russia, socialists should critically support liberal capitalist forces that would carry out the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution - with the fight for socialism delayed into the future.

Trotsky, along with Lenin, understood that the liberal capitalists, weak and dependent on international capital, would never be able to carry out a revolution in Russia that would solve the tasks of the capitalist democratic revolution, which included the elimination of feudal and semi-feudal relations on the land and the unification of the country into a nation-state, democratic reforms, and freedom from domination of foreign imperialism.

## Working-class power

Lenin, at that stage, called for a democratic alliance of the working class and peasantry as the main forces that could transform society. Trotsky went further, as Lenin later did, explaining that, despite comprising a small percentage of the population, the working class, with its potential collective power in the industrial workplaces, would need to play the leading role in such an alliance.

The much larger peasant population, scattered across the countryside, wasn't capable of playing a collective and independent role in the revolution or in a future government. It would be the working class which would have to lead the peasant masses and could win them to the fight for socialism. Therefore, armed with the correct programme, the working class would be able to win power and keep it, especially if it developed the correct approach to the rural peasant population.

Russia had a relatively small and 'young' working class compared to more developed capitalist economies in Europe. Though they had already

shown their potential strength in the 1905 revolution, the growing cities had only just become places of industry, but the factories were comprised of large workforces. In a relatively short space of time, the cities had grown from 300,000 in the early 18th century, to 16 million at the end of the 19th century. Yet still the working class made up a small percentage of the population, about 13%.

It was a 'young' working class in the sense that the people who would take part in the revolution were the first generation who had only just moved into the cities for work. Their families had made up part of the peasant population and hadn't had much chance to experience the huge and growing strength of the working class.

## Capitalist development

Factories and industry were able to develop relatively quickly in Russia, feeding off of the technology and development of capitalist economies internationally. This, however, didn't complete the process of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. At the start of the twentieth century, the Russian capitalist class, which had developed very late, was incapable of completing this historic task. They were completely intertwined with the imperialist powers and with the old feudal regime. Landlords invested in industry and vice versa. Above all, they were scared that the working class would demand power.

Instead of limiting the struggle to overthrowing the Tsar and landlords, and other important democratic demands, Trotsky explained: "The factory industrial system not only brings the proletariat to the forefront but also cuts the ground from under the feet of bourgeois democracy." He said the working class would be forced to take power in the course of the revolutionary movement and then should keep it, rather than handing over power to a capitalist government. He also highlighted that "power will pass into the hands of that class which plays a leading role in the struggle", and that was the working class.

Trotsky, along with Lenin, concluded that revolution might start with people wanting to fight against the feudal system but end with them convinced of fighting for socialism, and that this would be necessary to achieve the basic demands of the movement: ensuring the peasant population was given the land it wanted, the war ended and hunger eliminated. Peace, bread and land.

Capitalism is a global system and so the successful overthrow of



A leader of the 1917 October Revolution, Leon Trotsky pioneered the theory of 'permanent revolution'

capitalism in Russia in 1917, with the working class - as Trotsky had predicted - playing the key role, had international importance, as is shown in Trotsky's work and writings. Not only did it spark revolutionary movements in other parts of the world - there was a revolutionary wave in Europe after 1917 - but defeating capitalism in a more developed capitalist country would have also aided the workers' government in underdeveloped Russia.

As Trotsky said, capitalism had bound "all countries together with its mode of production and its commerce, capitalism has converted the whole world into a single economic and political organism."

Unfortunately, the defeat of revolutions in other countries left Russia isolated in a sea of more developed capitalist economies, which wanted to overthrow the workers' government. This isolation slowed the process of pulling the population out of poverty. At any one time, a huge portion of the countries' tractors would

be broken, so even on a very practical level, if a workers' government had taken power in Germany, for example, it would have been able to exchange designs on better farming equipment, meaning they could better feed the population and protect the gains of the Russian revolution.

## Stalinist degeneration

The resulting degeneration of the Soviet Union from a democratic workers' state into a brutal Stalinist dictatorship, which had no interest in healthy workers' revolutions in other countries, came with the adoption of a new form of the Mensheviks' approach, the 'stages theory', where Communist Parties around the world gave support to supposedly 'progressive' capitalist forces.

Trotsky reiterated his ideas in the 'The Permanent Revolution' after the Russian revolution had succeeded, to warn against the mistaken idea of the stages theory.

Today the world is very different from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

But the lessons of the permanent revolution are still vital. Not only are there many countries where capitalist development has been stunted. Globally, there is also still a large peasant population of poor farmers and the landless poor.

Many of these people make up some of the world's poorest, and are also part of minority populations within their own countries, such as the large, rural, farming populations in India, who have been recently forced to fight back against the Modi government's removal of grain subsidies and soaring prices.

Their heroic struggle defeated Modi's most recent attack, but it will take the socialist transformation of society to really secure their living conditions. The Modi government, alongside its capitalist friends, wants to increase their profits from the rural farm lands of India, even if it means destroying the livelihoods of tens of millions of people.

While the Communist Parties in India have opposed Modi, they haven't done this by building an independent working-class leadership. Instead, they have mistakenly pushed for unity of 'progressive forces', a form of stages theory. These ideas result in kicking the fight for socialism down the road.

## Working class today

Today, the world population is different from when Trotsky was organising. A far greater portion of the population is part of the working class, meaning it is much clearer that they can challenge capitalism and fight for an alternative if organised. Not only that, it is clear that capitalism plays no 'progressive' role: there is a growing gap between the rich few and the world's poorest masses. Even in the most developed capitalist countries, children expect to be poorer than their parents. Over 100 years after the Russian Revolution took important steps against women's oppression, news headlines are full of violence against women and girls, sexual harassment and similar crimes.

The theory of the permanent revolution can still have important lessons even in more developed economies. Capitalism saw the creation of the nation state, such as the United Kingdom, which seemed to resolve the national question. Yet today in the 21st century, there is renewed anger and support for Scottish independence, for example. Much like Trotsky's approach to the many different ethnicities and languages within Russia, socialists must take up the fight against all forms of national oppression today and link it to fighting the whole capitalist system.

It reminds us of the international nature of the working class. Famous socialists and trade union leaders had often repeated the quote that they have more in common with a worker in their own industry halfway around the world than with the bosses and capitalist class of their own country. Capitalism is international, and therefore so should the movement which fights it, and these are just a few of the lessons of reading Trotsky's work.

● Trotsky's 'The Permanent Revolution' is available for free in e-book format from marxists.org

**LEFT BOOKS**  
The bookshop of  
the Socialist Party  
leftbooks.co.uk



# Sri Lanka erupts into biggest-ever workers' protest

SRINATH PERERA

UNITED SOCIALIST PARTY (CWI SRI LANKA)

Tens of thousands of workers from all over Sri Lanka came out on strike on Thursday 28 April. They are demanding the resignation of the country's corrupt president and his family-led government, who have created the present disaster where workers and the poor are unable to meet even the basic needs of life.

Workers on the railways and at the ports, in the banks, post and telecommunications, emigration and immigration services, schools and universities, and many other sectors, all struck work in a one-day general strike.

The strike was called by the newly formed Collective of Trade Unions and Mass Organisations. It was responded to even by trade unions which are not affiliated to the Collective, and was very enthusiastically received by the general public.

Most public services were completely closed as workers got an opportunity to express their anger and disgust at this feudal-type family rule by the Rajapaksas. Gotabaya Rajapaksa is the president and his elder brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa, is the prime minister.

Several other brothers of the president and the son of the prime minister have held ministerial posts, and other relations have been in important positions in state institutions. They have engaged in many corrupt activities, using public money for personal gain - akin to 'daylight robbery'.

## Protest blockade

Thousands of youth and others have been engaged in an unprecedented permanent protest in front of the president's office in the capital, Colombo. They have been blocking its entrance since 9 April, demanding that the president and his regime resign, and have been getting more and more public support every day.

According to official figures, inflation is at 29%, but almost all other economists dismiss this figure, pointing out that inflation has gone over the 100% mark.

The strike was organised to demand the regime acts to provide immediate relief to workers and the poor, in the wake of the unprecedented economic shocks created by the complete mismanagement of the economy by the Rajapaksa regime. It demanded that the ruling clique must resign, as it is responsible for the misery faced by ordinary people.

Tens of thousands of workers made their way to the main railway station in Colombo and walked in scorching heat to the protest site where the youth have been protesting. They were enthusiastically received by the young people and other masses gathered there. Trade union leaders addressed the public, and stated that they would carry on this struggle



United Socialist Party (CWI Sri Lanka) joins protests

until this regime resigns and all the public funds robbed by this corrupt clique are returned to the public coffers.

The most significant feature of this strike action was that workers protested in large numbers all over the country. In the southernmost town of Mathara, the numbers were so big that an older person remarked that it was the first time he had seen such a big mass gathering in that area.

Similar protest rallies and demonstrations were held in many other parts of the country. In the central hills, thousands of tea plantation workers of Tamil and Indian origin also joined the strike. They held protest campaigns in several towns, including Nuwaraeliya and Hatton, and the local shops were also closed.

The Collective of Trade Unions and Mass Organisations is mostly comprised of relatively young trade union leaders, but it is led by some trade union leaders who say they are apolitical. Even the younger activists have been infected with this malady, and it is very difficult to take a clear political programme into this collective. Their activities are clearly of a political nature, but they try to separate themselves from political parties and show that they are 'above' party politics.

However, the Free Trade Union Centre, linked to the United Socialist Party (CWI Sri Lanka), was able to get involved in this Collective and played an important part in calling the strike. Some union leaders had

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the international socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world.  
socialistworld.net

been hesitant to call for general strike action at the initial stages.

The United Socialist Party is calling for another round of strikes to be organised if the regime does not heed the demands of the workers and youth. The Collective should act as a rallying point for all workers in the country, including workers in the north and east and oppressed Tamil and Muslim communities.

We call for struggle committees in every area and a democratic assembly of workers' and farmers' representatives to plan a challenge to the old way of running a capitalist Sri Lanka. We campaign for land, industry, banks and transport to all be in public hands and run by workers' democratically elected representatives.

This is the message we sent out for this year's May Day rally of the United Socialist Party and its supporters from around the country.

● A further nationwide day of strikes and protests - 'Hartal' - has now been called for Friday 6 May. The main demand of the Hartal is for the ruling Rajapaksa family to step down, and for a new election. An indefinite Hartal, to begin on 11 May, has been threatened if the government refuses to step down.



JOHN WILLIAMS

## Cardiff protest against conversion therapy

GINNY BAYLISS

SWANSEA AND WEST WALES SOCIALIST PARTY

150 protested outside government and BBC offices in Cardiff calling for a ban on conversion 'therapy' for LG-BTQ+ people. The Socialist Party and Socialist Students had a strong contingent at the protest.

The event, organised by Trans Aid Cymru, was mainly young, with people from across south Wales. Many shared moving accounts of their own experiences.

The protest's main organiser, Shash Appan, opened with a description of how she was taken to India to undergo conversion therapy, and was denied help by the British embassy. I followed with a call for us to maintain the political momentum

generated by this wave of protests: "Get organised to fight for trans rights and the systems of oppression that prop up capitalism."

Cardiff Socialist Party member Max Quayle also spoke, encouraging the crowd to "build a socialist future for all people. If we fight for it, we can win". Max poked fun at the idea that Labour might "sort it all out for us", to laughter from protesters all too familiar with Keir Starmer's indecision on trans rights.

The air of solidarity at the event was typified by those assembled drowning out hecklers with proud chants in support of trans rights. The protest was a powerful demonstration of working-class solidarity, and a crucial message of support to trans and non-binary people.

# Save Mary Smith's Pantry

## 'They won't admit that people who need food banks exist'



BERKAY KARTAV

ANDY TULLIS

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

"Westminster Council just wants to sweep poverty under the carpet, they don't want to admit that people who need food banks even exist." This was how one local woman expressed her anger at what's happening to the food bank on Ebury Bridge Estate in Pimlico in central London.

30 local residents and users of the food bank protested attempts to scupper the project by the Tory council. Poverty, low wages and homelessness do exist in Westminster, the very heart of London and the fifth richest economy in the world.

The foodbank was originally set up by longstanding Pimlico activists like Mike Smith. But the council closed their former premises on spurious safety grounds.

A recent agreement with the council allowed the food bank some places to store its produce, and promised a portacabin so they could also administer free benefit and housing advice. However, the council reneged on these promises.

The project is now operating on the street in all weathers, without premises or basic facilities. The demonstration also protested against the building contractors involved in 'regenerating' the area, who have

been colluding with Westminster Council in making things difficult for the Mary Smith's Pantry and their volunteers.

Just a few yards from where the pantry once operated, the Tory council has funded trendy new pop-up boutiques selling high-end jewellery and art. Some have already failed and their plush premises now lay empty. "Why couldn't one of these be given over to our community food bank?" asked Mike.

The workers' movement must get behind the campaign. The Tory council can't be allowed to get away with closing down such an important community resource.

## Fund the socialist alternative to billionaire crumbs

ISAI PRIYA

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL TREASURER

'The Giving Pledge' is a scheme set up by Bill Gates and Warren Buffett to encourage billionaires to make a financial contribution to solving the world's problems. Apparently, the number of 'philanthropic' billionaires has increased.

Well, that's only logical. The number of billionaires has also increased!

While the 99% of us are enduring cuts to our living standards, pay, and pensions, the super-rich have increased their wealth. Billionaire wealth has increased more since Covid began than in the previous 14 years. The UK's richest 1% each has an average wealth of £3.6 million, while the bottom 10% has £15,400 or less.

Thank you to the super-rich for giving us a few of their crumbs, but

we don't have to rely on their charity to make ends meet. There is an alternative.

These billionaires haven't got their billions through hard work and an equal system. No, it's the rotten capitalist system that ensures the rich get richer through the exploitation of the working class.

In Britain alone, from 1980 to today, around £250 billion a year (in 2020 prices) has been transferred

from the pockets of the working class to the capitalist class. Why should we pay?

The Socialist Party fights alongside local campaigners, students and the working class. We bring solidarity and support to workers in struggle.

We are campaigning for a new mass workers' party with a socialist programme to end the miseries caused by capitalism. We fight for a socialist society. We boldly say – take the wealth of the 1% to fund our lives.

If you agree with us and have seen us in action, support us by donating today, get involved in our activities

and campaigns, and join the Socialist Party.

We have a quarterly fighting fund target of £25,000 to ensure that we have the resources we need to take our socialist ideas far and wide. This quarter will include a financial appeal at the Socialist Party national congress. If you are a Socialist Party member, your donation will be allocated to your branch target.

Help fund the fightback

**DONATE**

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



## ● Bristol May Day march - fighting back on pay, housing and poverty

Bristol's May Day celebration began with a march through the city centre, followed by a rally, including speeches from three Socialist Party members.

Dan Smart, chair of South Gloucestershire Unison union branch spoke about the crisis in social care, and the need for coordinated national strike action to fight for better pay and conditions. Suzanne Muna, speaking on behalf



AMY SAGE

of housing workers in Unite union and the Social Housing Action Campaign (Shac), linked the struggle in the workplace to the struggle for decent, safe and affordable housing.

Sheila Caffrey, Bristol Trades Union Council president, rounded off the speeches with a call to action: "If

this society can't afford to pay, house and feed us, then we can't afford this society. Let's work together so everyone has enough to survive and enjoy life, and to win all we need and deserve."

AMY SAGE

BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

## Kirkby neglected for decades – now its fighting back against incinerator

NEILL DUNNE

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

75 Kirkby residents marched to protest plans to build an industrial incinerator just across the border from Knowsley in Lancashire. Knowsley councillors were conspicuous by their absence. All the speakers at the 30 April protest brought optimistic energy to the proceedings.

Knowsley Labour council has been

aware of the planning application for two years, but has taken no action. Residents were only made aware in January.

The support from the public was overwhelming, with cars horns beeping and applause at the sight of people taking a stand in a town that has been neglected for decades. The next stage is to take the fight to Lancashire County Council, in whose area the incinerator would be built.

# Ukraine: Russian workers' activist speaks



Protests against war in Ukraine in Moscow AKUTAGAVA/CC

CLARE DOYLE  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

I spoke to Sergei, a worker who lives in Kemerovo, on Sunday 1 May. I asked him if there were any public demonstrations taking place to celebrate the day of international workers' solidarity - the century-old tradition honoured in Russia for more than 100 years.

"It is very limited", he says, "because of the war which is raging in Ukraine." He admits that it's possible that news is not reaching everyone, and the media is not giving out much information. Sergei thought there were some gatherings taking place, organised by lefts and trade unionists, and some by the 'liberal' opposition in Moscow. "But all participants risk arrest if they are critical of Putin's 'Special Military Operation' against 'fascists' and 'Bandera supporters'. Workers fear losing their jobs if they take any industrial action, even on wage claims, let alone against the war."

"Some of the traditionally left forces in Russia have gone along with the idea of reuniting the USSR, even though Putin's aims are clearly imperialist. The Russian Communist Workers' Party (RKRK) has split into three on the issue. The whole section in Novosibirsk has gone. One of its leaders - an old stalwart and fighter against both Boris Yeltsin and Putin, Victor Tulkin, has gone over to support the war."

"Most of the so-called Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) has remained loyal to Putin, and its MPs have voted in the Duma to support the bloodletting in Ukraine. A small but significant part of the KPRF has split away from the

party. Some lefts have been flying the flag of the Soviet Union, others the red flag, but no one seems to take a clear position publicly on what needs to be done."

## Discussion

"The atmosphere at my workplace is not too tense. You can talk about what is happening, but are forbidden to make any criticism of the army. These days there is a huge recruitment of mercenaries going on, locally, in the Caucasus, and elsewhere."

"I have argued with colleagues that Putin is playing imperialist games. But they just don't see the whole picture - that the top companies are the ones who hold power, and that in capitalist societies, war is a constant feature. I talk about Lenin's emphasis on the need for world revolution, but now there is no great figure arguing the socialist case against war."

"On both sides, there is a huge build-up of military forces and equipment going on - in Kaliningrad and in Belarus on the one side and in Nato's East European member countries on the other. In Russia there are tests taking place of a new intercontinental ballistic missile called Sarmat. It is capable of reaching all the countries of Europe and the USA. If there's a provocation from the 'West' and all that kind of power is unleashed, this could definitely become a world-wide conflict."

Sergei (not his real name) wanted to say that he thinks many people are against the war, but are afraid. "And the saddest thing is that we, the first country in the world to take the communist road, have fallen so far back."

"The communist and left movement is extremely weak... Of course there are people who speak out for internationalism and a fight against the capitalists who have set two brotherly nations at war with each other and brought the world to the brink of a nuclear confrontation, but they are very few."

To finish, Sergei insisted that he still retains the hope that some time Russia will become really free and that workers will again be in power. "I still see an oncoming socialist world!"

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

May issue includes...

- War in Ukraine: A new era of world relations has begun
- Impact on Britain: What it means for perspectives
- Putin's People: How gangster capitalists seized power

[socialismtoday.org/subscribe](http://socialismtoday.org/subscribe) // 020 8988 8777

- Paper subscription £3 a month, e-subscription £2.50



# The 'Headscarf Revolutionaries': Fighting for safety at sea

CLARE WILKINS  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Yvonne Marie Blenkinsop, the last survivor of four 'Headscarf Revolutionaries', fisheries workers and family members of trawlermen, who led a campaign for trawler safety in Hull in 1968, died on 24 April aged eighty-three.

Two trawlers were lost in dangerous Icelandic waters in January 1968 - St Romanus and Kingston Peridot, each with 20 lives lost. Lilian Belocca decided that this was the final straw for the Hessle Road fishing community. Safety measures were needed, including ships not leaving port undercrewed and radio operators on all ships. As the campaign started, the Ross Cleveland sank with nineteen lives lost. The shock of the triple trawler tragedy galvanised the campaign.

Women attended mass meetings and got 10,000 signatures on a

petition in ten days. They marched on the docks, and picketed and stormed fishing industry company offices when bosses refused to meet them. They tried to physically stop ships sailing without a radio operator.

They were told they were interfering in 'men's business'. Lilian received death threats and was blacklisted. Marie was punched in the face in a restaurant. But the men were at sea for three weeks or more at a time, and would lose their jobs or not be picked for crews if they campaigned when they were on shore.

The Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) leaders refused the women's request to speak at its conference. But they stormed into the conference hall demanding to be heard. Delegates supported the women's call to be able to speak, and conference voted that they should be supported.

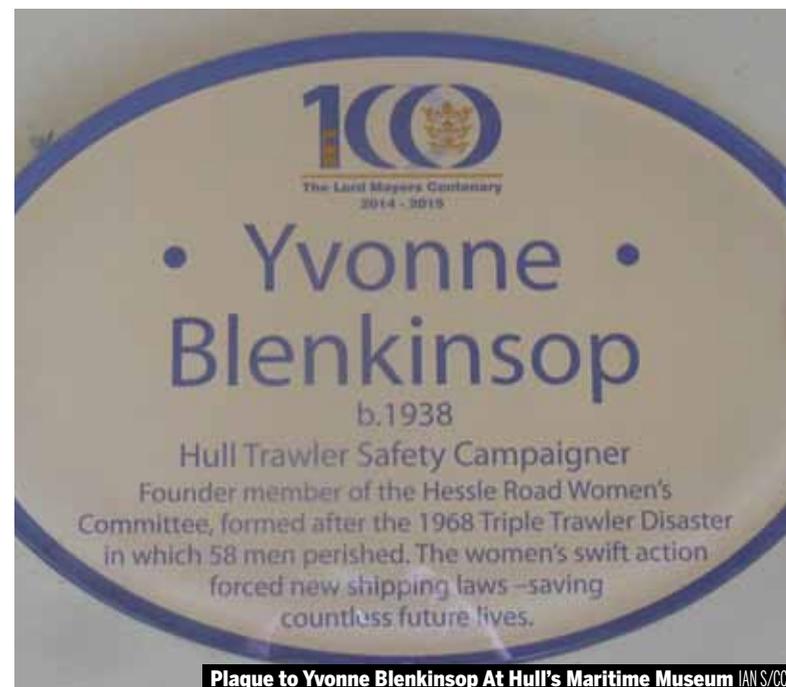
Lilian threatened that they would picket Prime Minister Harold

Wilson's house if he would not meet them. He did, along with the minister of the board of trade, TGWU officers and the fishing industry bosses.

The campaigners won 88 safety measures on ships, including fully and better trained crews, and companion ships with doctors accompanying each expedition, saving thousands of lives.

Safety at sea and conditions for workers are currently in the headlines with the sacking of 800 P&O workers and their replacement with agency workers on lower pay. Ships have been stopped from leaving port after failing safety inspections by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, and on 26 April a P&O ferry was adrift off Larne in the Irish Sea for a number of hours.

The Headscarf Revolutionaries' campaign is an inspiration, and a lesson in campaigning, and the role of women in workers' struggle. It can inform current and future struggles.



Plaque to Yvonne Blenkinsop At Hull's Maritime Museum IAN S/CC

# Unison Health Conference

## Palpable anger - but fighting strategy needed

### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

In the 2021 elections to Unison's national executive (NEC), after ten years of austerity and the previous leadership failing to defend jobs, pay and services, members voted for change. The new left leadership includes four Socialist Party members but is led by the Time For Real Change group.

The leadership of the health service group, however, remained in the hands of the right wing. Elections are now taking place with the chance to win a left leadership in the health group. Unison's Health conference underlined the necessity of the left preparing urgently to mobilise members to fight the cost-of-living crisis, and put forward a serious strategy to fight for the NHS.

The anger was palpable. Delegate after delegate spoke about staff shortages and the enormous damage done to staff health and patient safety; about staff too scared to look at their pay because of being hit by the extra National Insurance contribution and rocketing bills, at a time when their pay was barely covering their rent and bills already.

There was frustration too at lack of progress. In more than one debate delegates said we've been discussing this for years: 'I don't want to come back year after year and be no further forward'.

The motion from the service group executive (SGE) on pay was passed, but did not go far enough in putting forward a fighting strategy. It called for a 'substantial and restorative' pay rise, with no specific claim, and



NHS workers demand a pay rise SOCIALIST PARTY

committed to support strike action if members want it.

Socialist Party delegates spoke of the need for Unison to lead a fight on NHS pay, with a campaign to prepare for national strike action, giving confidence to members that the union will back them 100% if they vote to strike.

Right-wing members of the health SGE on the platform were not happy with this and shook their heads as Socialist Party members spoke. A delegate later complained about this

and got a big round of applause from the hall.

Another theme of conference was the number of outsourced staff who got up and raised the need for the union to put their struggles centre stage. Fringe meetings included one on important and successful struggles to prevent privatisation, and to bring outsourced workers back in-house.

Very few branch motions were allowed onto the agenda. Only ten of the forty motions discussed were

from branches. Important motions including one aiming to strengthen Unison's position against the Health and Care Bill were blocked by the standing orders committee. Despite conference voting to reject that decision, it was blocked again and never made it to conference.

This is the method the right-wing leadership has employed for years and underlines the continued need for change in Unison.

Elections to the Health Service Group Executive run from 28 April to

25 May. It is essential to try and ensure that a left majority is elected that is prepared to lead a determined battle for NHS pay, campaign to defend our NHS against Tory attacks like the Health and Care Bill, and to bring outsourced staff back in-house.

Socialist Party members Adrian O'Malley (Yorkshire), John Malcolm (Northern) and Brian Loader (East Midlands) are standing, and Steve Bell (South East) has already been re-elected unopposed.

# Usdaw conference: Low-paid workers want to fight back

### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

This year's Usdaw Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) has already seen a sea of discussion around the cost-of-living crisis. A common theme is that despite members being recognised through the pandemic as key workers, they continue to remain some of the lowest paid and most exploited.

Socialist Party members were to the fore. Former Usdaw president Amy Murphy moved a proposition calling for Boxing Day to be negotiated as a guaranteed day off, with an additional day's holiday pay. This was keenly taken up by members.

Chair of the Usdaw Broad Left, Iain Dalton, raised the need for Usdaw to push for union recognition for workers in Stepchange, a debt advice charity which the union promotes to members.

Despite unsuccessful manoeuvres to attempt to block Ryan Aldred from speaking from the rostrum, he moved an amalgamated proposition calling for a minimum wage of £15 an hour, while negotiating wages that better reflect members' status as key workers.

The union leadership seized upon a line left in the composed proposition about £12 as a step to £15, to try to backpedal somewhat. But in his right of reply, Ryan invited delegates to indicate whether delegates wanted union officials to negotiate for £15 an hour or £12. The response was unanimous with not a single hand going up for the latter.

Socialist Party members held one of our biggest ever fringe meetings. Those present were keen to show solidarity with victimised Tesco rep Max McGee, who is going



Max McGee addressing the Socialist Party fringe

to employment tribunal in June. Amy Murphy spoke of the need for a new workers' party, and the importance of standing Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates. Iain Dalton emphasised how far Labour policy had diverged from union policies since Keir Starmer took over from Corbyn.

Former PCS assistant general secretary Chris Baugh rounded off the discussion by raising the need for Usdaw members to mobilise alongside other unions for the national demo called by the Trades Union Congress on 18 June.

The support for our ideas was reflected in the finance appeal and in sales of the Socialist. £141 was raised for the Socialist Party's fighting fund, and £18 from book sales.

As we go to print there are still more than half the propositions left to be debated, including affiliation to the National Shop Stewards Network and Youth Fight For Jobs, which Socialist Party members will be supporting despite opposition from the union leadership. A further report will appear in the next issue of the Socialist.

# Communication workers prepare for action

## Battle lines drawn between the CWU and Royal Mail

### Telecoms fightback

### POSTAL WORKERS IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

At the Communication Workers Union (CWU) postal conference, a motion was carried instructing the postal executive to prepare for industrial action if Royal Mail management does not offer an above-inflation pay rise without strings.

A pay rise was due at the beginning of April 2022, but Royal Mail refused to put an offer on the table until a week prior to the CWU national conference.

What should be remembered is that before Covid, Royal Mail under Rico Back was hell-bent on breaking the CWU. We saw two massive 'yes' votes for action. Action did not take place due to the bosses' High Court action, and the mistaken decision of the CWU executive to call off action in the pandemic.

But since then the CWU has seen off Rico Back. A new national agreement (Pathway to Change) was accepted by the membership. Postal workers worked through the pandemic providing a public service, and the work completely changed. There was a huge increase in the amount of packets delivered, which meant a massive increase in profits, and at the end of last year £400 million was given to shareholders.

Rico Back was replaced by Simon Thomson as CEO. But he is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Royal Mail's delay in putting an offer on the table set off warning bells for many CWU members. The offer which was put could have come right out of Back's book of attacking the workforce. We are being offered a wage cut with attacks on terms and conditions.

While we face a cost-of-living crisis

we are offered a 2% pay rise, with an extra 1.5% once certain strings are enforced. These include a reduction in sick pay, scrapping a number of allowances, making Sunday working compulsory, later start times, annualised hours and significantly different pay for all new members, creating a two-tier workforce.

The CWU stance is very clear: we have only just agreed changes to the way we work as part of last year's agreement, and we must have an above-inflation pay rise without any strings this year. Postal workers in the Socialist Party support this stance as a move to take all postal workers to £15 an hour minimum.

There will be a four-week period for negotiations. If no agreement is reached, then an industrial action ballot will take place, which we are starting to prepare for.

### TELECOMS WORKERS IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The Communication Workers Union voted at its telecoms conference to notify BT, EE and Openreach of its intention to hold a ballot for industrial action over this year's pay claim.

CWU members had no pay rise last year and the company has made a 'final' pay offer of a flat rate £1,500 a year for this year. This goes nowhere near compensating workers for the current spiralling cost of living. BT made £5.1 billion profit last year.

It seems a long time ago that

telecoms workers were lauded as key workers for keeping the country connected during the pandemic. Like with thousands of other employers, this has been forgotten, and they now expect workers to pay for Covid.

There is clearly an angry mood among CWU members and no doubt that BT can afford an inflation-busting pay claim. One delegate said during the debate that where he was brought up in the east end of Glasgow, bullies got a 'pasting'. BT are bullies and CWU members should give them the 'pasting' they deserve.

# Post Office Counters strike

At the same time, our members in Post Office Counters took their first industrial action for many years on 3 May.

After a pay freeze for 2021-22, there is no clear offer for this year. This has angered the 1,500 members up and

down the country, who voted for strike action in a huge 97.3% 'yes' vote.

Without doubt it looks like we are heading for a summer of strike action across the Royal Mail and Post Office network.

Get all the latest union news  
nationalshop  
stewardsnetwork  
NSSN bulletin: shopstewards.net

## May Day Greeting from Unite Notts Health

Due to pressures on our editorial staff with illness, last week's May Day greeting from Unite EM/NG32 Nottinghamshire Health branch was inadvertently smaller than the half page the branch paid for.

The Socialist thanks the branch for its generosity, and assures it we will not reduce our campaigning against NHS cuts, privatisation and for decent pay and conditions for health workers.



# PCS national elections – the current leadership needs to go

### KATRINE WILLIAMS PCS MEMBER

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) is holding its annual postal election for president and national executive. The ballot closes on Thursday 12 May.

The current Democracy Alliance leadership, made up of Left Unity and PCS Democrats, has provided no opposition to government attacks on members' safety, jobs, pay and conditions.

They are a failed leadership. They need to go.

Socialist Party members in PCS are standing in this election as part of the Broad Left Network (BLN) - a socialist rank-and-file group.

The BLN platform includes:

- lay reps' democratic control over all key decisions
- a national campaign leading to a statutory strike ballot, bringing together all the issues of concern to members including office closures, Covid safety, pay and conditions
- a strong political voice which supports ant-austerity candidates (full details can be found at pcsbln.wordpress.com)

The BLN slate includes Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd for president. The BLN increased its branch nominations this year - the only group to do so.

A change of leadership is needed. These are the candidates who will fight for members - in actions not just words.

### PRESIDENT

- Lloyd, Marion (BEIS)

### VICE-PRESIDENTS

- Brittle, Fiona (Scot Gov)
- Brown, Sarah (Met Police)
- Rosser, Jon-Paul (HMRC)
- Semple, Dave (DWP)

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

- Bartlett, Dave (MOJ)
- Bridges, Andi (HMRC)
- Brittle, Fiona (Scottish Government)
- Brown, Alex (NHS Digital)
- Brown, Sarah (Met Police)

- Davies, Jaime (HMRC)
- Dennis, Alan (DSG)
- Doyle, Nick (HMRC)
- Foxton, Gill (DfE)
- Francis, Sue (UKSBS)
- Heemskerk, Rachel (DWP)
- Lloyd, Marion (BEIS)
- McDougall, Rachelle (Crown Office)
- Parker, Nick (ACAS)
- Rees, Dave (DWP)
- Ritchie, Rob (Met Police)
- Rosser, Jon-Paul (HMRC)
- Semple, Dave (DWP)
- Suter, Paul (DWP)
- Tweedale, Saorsa-Amatheia (DWP)
- Williams, Katrine (DWP)
- Worswick, Craig (DWP)
- Young, Colin (DfE)
- Young, Bobby (HMRC)

# Chile: The new Boric government - high expectations dashed



PEDRO ALBORNOZ AND PATRICIO GUZMAN  
SOCIALISMO REVOLUCIONARIO, CWI IN CHILE

A month has passed since the installation of the new government in Chile and the new president, Gabriel Boric. Yet political, economic and social instability continues. There has been no honeymoon.

Boric and his coalition came to power with high expectations from the mass of the population. People hoped that the new government would respond to social demands for profound change in society, and put an end to the institutions inherited from the Pinochet dictatorship that ended in 1990.

The October 2019 mass rebellion, and the massive social movements which followed, not only checked the previous right-wing Sebastián Piñera government, but also the entire former regime. Without a political leadership that would give a revolutionary way out of the crisis, the movement declined, and the energy was channelled into electoral channels.

Boric and the Broad Front (Frente Amplio) were the main advocates of this, and the so-called "agreement for social peace and the new constitution" that was signed by the political class in November 2019. Following

that same line, the new government continues to advocate agreements with the business sector and the old regime, increasingly watering down its reform programme, so as not to 'scare the markets or investors.'

From the time of the appointment of the new cabinet, we pointed out that this should be an alarm for workers and young people. The incorporation of the parties of the former coalition (except for the Christian Democratic Party) into the government in key positions was clearly a response to pressure from the business elite, which was afraid of possible radical changes that would affect their profits.

## Expectations

Beyond the expectations that many had, and still have, in the symbolic gestures or announcements of the new government, it must be judged by the facts. In practice, the government coalition has become a re-branding of the former coalition. Back again are the old politicians and parties - the Party for Democracy, the Socialist Party and the Radicals - all parties that legitimised Pinochet's constitution for years, that attacked the interests of the workers, and that were corrupted by the corporate financing of politics.

Boric has rightly criticised the

Catholic Church for covering up child abuse but he keeps conveniently silent about the corrupt past of his new government allies, simply to get more votes in Congress. It is a return to the old political practices that were criticised at the time by him.

In terms of public security and respect for human rights, no progress has been made in the alleged restructuring of the Carabineros (the police). The proposals for profound changes in these militarised institutions have remained as announcements, with a few cosmetic changes. That is why we continue to see the brutal actions of the police at mobilisations and protests.

In relation to the historic demands of the indigenous Mapuche people, the government repeats the same mistakes of the past. Without coordinating with Mapuche communities, and lacking any serious proposals on which to advance, a meeting to discuss these issues in Temuco failed.

The political and social crisis that opened in October 2019 continues on its course. None of the fundamental demands raised by the population have been answered. We are in the middle of a deep global crisis of capitalism, exacerbated by war and ecological catastrophe. In this context, a massive part of the population continues to be impoverished, while

**Boric has dashed the expectations of the 2019 protest movement**  
NATALIA REYES ESCOBAR/CC

a small group of families continues to obtain multimillion-dollar profits. So any government that plans to make profound changes for the benefit of the vast majority cannot at the same time protect big business and the rich.

An example has been the appointment of Máximo Pacheco as Chairman of the Codelco oil company board of directors. The government disregarded the complaints made by the National Federation of Oil Workers trade union in relation to the irregular bids and corruption that occurred while Pacheco was president of Enap, the state-owned oil company.

On the other hand, the Minister of Mining, Marcela Hernando (Radical Party), in relation to the discussion of the mining royalties, has said: "We are not interested in raising the tax burden much and losing the possibility of investment from other countries and even from companies that are ours." In addition, she stressed that "it is not in President Boric's programme to nationalise, expropriate or scare away investment."

It is quite clear that if the million-dollar profits of the transnational companies are not touched and the nationalisation of natural resources is not fought for, it will be impossible to respond to the needs of the population.

## Tensions and divisions

The government is already under enormous tension, both within the coalition and from opposition attacks. These tensions can lead to ruptures and divisions in the future.

The government proposals on the demand for a fifth withdrawal from the pension funds, which workers have paid into, is a total fraud and are aimed at preventing people withdrawing large amounts. In most cases it only allows people to withdraw a fifth of what they previously withdrew. It also only allows withdrawals for specific issues like payments of debts. It is aimed at protecting the finance system. This issue has already caused a lot of discontent with protests organised, including among the dock workers in Valparaíso.

There have also been tensions within the Constitutional Convention (Chilean constituent assembly), where sections related to the former agreement and the current government have combined to stop the most radical reforms proposed by the commissions.

Undoubtedly, there are high expectations from broad sections of the population about what this government can do. But these will decline, along with support for the government, if people do not see concrete measures that improve their standard of living.

The same can happen with the Convention and the new constitution when it emerges. This will be fuelled by the campaign of attacks by the most conservative sections of the country.

If there is no response and no way out, the crisis that opened in October will inevitably deepen. The alternative we have as workers and youth is to build our own independent working-class organisations and parties of struggle. The need for a genuine programme of revolutionary socialist transformation in the interest of the great majority, and not of a few, is essential to resolve the continuing crisis.



# The 'Great Unrest' 1911-1914: When the working class shook Britain

Between 1911 and 1914, Britain and Ireland were rocked by a series of mass strikes of miners, railway, dock, and tramway workers, as well as those from other industries that went on solidarity strikes. Cut across by Britain entering into World War One, these strikes, taking place alongside the struggle for women's suffrage and the fight for Home Rule in Ireland, had the potential to develop into a mass revolutionary movement.

The conditions that gave rise to such action have some similarities to the situation facing the working class today. As part of our occasional working-class struggle series, **Amy Sage** examines this period known as the 'Great Unrest' and draws lessons for building the workers' movement today.

The British working class in 1911, much like today, was facing stagnant, if not falling, wages and rising costs in consumer goods. British capitalism had lost its dominant global manufacturing position to its rivals, the USA and Germany. It meant that the era of 'social peace' - when the British ruling class conceded limited economic reforms to the craft unions - was coming to an end.

But while workers were seeing a steady drop in their standard of living, those at the top of society were living in luxury, enjoying their 'Edwardian Summer' full of garden parties, summer houses and seaside holidays.

While the period had seen some progressive reforms brought in by the 1906 Liberal government, most notably the 1908 pensions act and the National Insurance Act 1911, which many see as precursors to the welfare state, these reforms were very limited and did not prevent class antagonisms continuing to rise.

Alongside these economic conditions was a growing discontent among some workers with both the leadership of the newly established Labour Party, which was seen as hanging too much onto the coat-tails of the Liberals in parliament, and a

conservative leadership within the trade unions, whose 'conciliation strategy' with employers cut across their members' desire to take decisive industrial action.

But most significantly was the reluctance of the Labour and trade union leaders to challenge the system of capitalism itself.

As a consequence, many industrial militants were attracted to syndicalist ideas, which thought that workers' struggles alone, without the need for a workers' party, could fundamentally change society.

## 'The Great Unrest'

It was against this backdrop that the period between 1911 and 1914, known as the 'Great Unrest', saw more than 3,000, mostly unofficial, strikes. 1,200 of these happened in 1913 alone. When the union leaders supported strikes it was mostly under pressure from rank-and-file workers' action.

The better known of these strikes include the Llanelli Railway strike of 1911, part of the first ever national railway strike against low pay, which was met with brutal oppression by the police, resulting in the deaths of two workers.

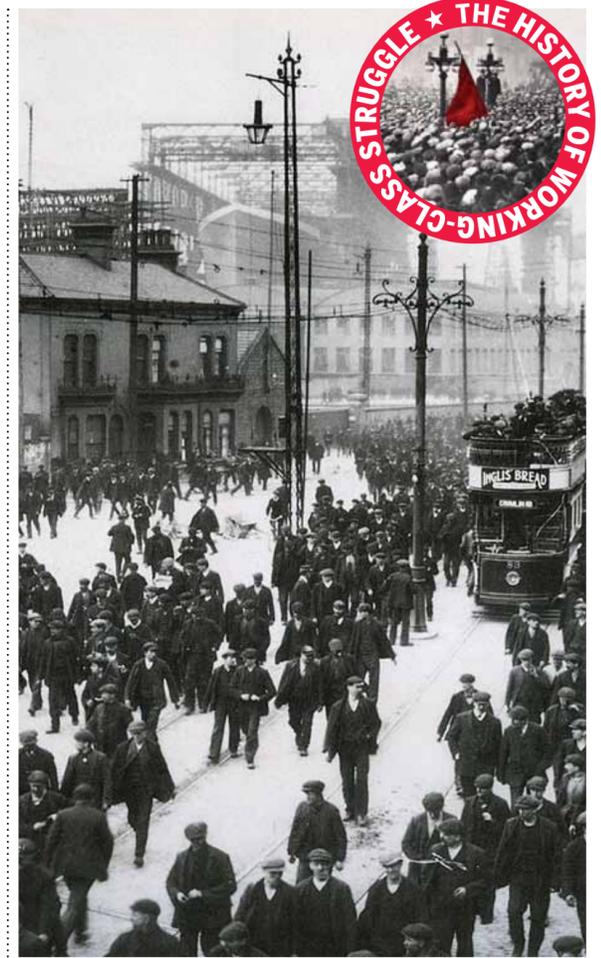
The 1913 Dublin Lockout saw approximately 20,000 workers go out

on strike in response to, among other issues, attacks by their employers upon their right to unionise. Striking workers in Dublin were dealt with harshly by the Royal Irish Constabulary, culminating in the death of two strikers in an event now known as 'Bloody Sunday'.

Perhaps less well-known, but by no means any less significant, is the role played in this period by female workers. Tens of thousands of working-class women, many of whom were also in the midst of the fight for women's suffrage, demanded better pay and working conditions in the workplaces.

Many of the strikes were successful, such as the Cradley Heath Women Chainmakers strike of 1910, in the West Midlands, which helped to establish an industry minimum wage; and the 15,000 female factory workers who went out on strike in Bermondsey, south London, and who, after ten days of action, won better pay, better working conditions, and a new realisation of their collective power.

While the outbreak of World War One, with its wave of national unity, cut across the potential for these strikes to develop into a mass revolutionary movement, industrial action was still relatively common during the war.



**Knocking off time at Harland & Wolff, Belfast, with the Titanic in the background. The construction and fuelling of the ship were hit by strikes** PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Emergency anti-trade union laws, such as the Munitions Act 1915, banned strikes and made it a penal offence to leave your workplace without the consent of the employer. But such measures didn't entirely cow the trade union movement. An engineers' strike in Glasgow against this act led to the establishment of the Clyde Workers' Committee, which itself led to the foundation of the first national shop stewards' movement in Britain.

And with the influence of Marxists like John Maclean, working-class struggle led to a semi-insurrectionary movement in the city - known as 'Red Clydeside'.

## Lessons

The working class during the period of the Great Unrest, determined to fight back against the terrible conditions that were being imposed on them, showed tremendous courage in the face of brutal oppression by the state.

The right-wing leaders of the trade unions and the reformist leadership of the Labour Party, on the other hand, exhibited great cowardice. Much like today, despite the working class facing the biggest cuts to our standard of living in decades, most Starmerite New Labour MPs and right-wing trade union leaders were all too happy to kowtow to big business.

It is clear that, learning the lessons of the Great Unrest, we must organise today in the trade unions and the

workplaces to put maximum pressure on existing trade union leaders to lead and coordinate mass industrial action, and for the election of leaders who are prepared to fight.

We must rebuild the trade union movement, and the strength of the working class, from the bottom-up, by linking up the most militant in our movement. The National Shop Stewards Network, which brings together rank-and-file trade unionists, can play an important role in that process, as a supplement to the official structures of the trade union movement.

Like the tens of thousands of workers who, between 1911 and 1914, went on strike in support of other workers, we must also be prepared to organise mutual solidarity action to support any trade union dispute.

And finally, the working class also needs a mass political voice. The syndicalist influence during the Great Unrest, which rejected the need for a mass workers' party, prevented the movement from realising its full potential and taking the struggle beyond the workplace to challenge the capitalist system itself. Although, under the influence of the 1917 Russian revolution, many did go on to form the Communist Party in 1921.

Today, promoting the need for a new mass workers' party in the trade unions is one of the key tasks of Socialist Party members. Fielding election candidates under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is one step in this process.



**Police blockade a street during the 'Tonyandy riots' in the South Wales coalfield during the 1911 miners' strike** PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

## LABOUR COUNCILS ATTACK WORKFORCES



# WORKERS STRIKE BACK AGAINST "TORIES IN DISGUISE"

SCOTT JONES

**L**abour councils for years have passed on Tory cuts and attacked their workforces. But workers are striking back. In Coventry the Labour council has thrown more money at breaking the strike, employing scabs and discrediting the strikers, than it would take to pay the bin workers what they are asking for.

But, now in its twelfth week, the strike has been solid, even in the face of the lead Unite rep being

suspended, and the strike has inspired other bin workers in nearby Rugby. There, the council had recently responded to a petition asking for better pay and conditions from the workers with an offer of advice on benefits, budgeting and employee loans!

Bin workers have also threatened strike action in Cardiff against management bullying and the use of agencies. Pete Randle, the suspended bin workers Unite rep from Coventry, spoke at Cardiff Trades Council's May Day Rally on 30 April

calling the Labour council "Tories in disguise; if they act Tory we'll treat them Tory."

Council workers in three vital departments in Hackney, east London, are also currently striking against the borough's Labour authority. On huge picket lines the housing maintenance, bins and street cleaning, and special educational needs and disability (SEND) transport workers have been calling for more than the pathetic 1.75% pay offer when inflation is at 9%.

Labour councils have a choice.

But they are choosing to make workers and residents pay, while they pass on Tory cuts and then seek re-election with promises they have already broken. These councils all have millions in reserves which should be used to cover the shortfall, while also mobilising a mass campaign of the working class to win the funding back. The current strike action around the country shows how this could be done.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which the Socialist Party is a part of, stood in the local

elections on this platform - we need no-cuts, needs-based budgets and councillors who will fight for them. Unite's policy on local government is to initially use reserves while mobilising mass campaigns to fight the cuts too. But workers also need their own political voice, supported by the trade unions and bringing together all the disputes, to get rid of the Tory and Labour cutters who are making us pay for austerity and the cost-of-living crisis.

• See pages 6-7 for more on the council worker strikes