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Tories' Brexit bust-up - general election now

Before this week's EU summit Tory ministers were once again desperately trying to square the circle on their Brexit proposals.

At such a late stage and with no EU withdrawal agreement, May still hung onto a variant of her 'Chequers proposal', despite it facing opposition from many Tory backbench Brexiteers and Remainers and from the EU heads.

In addition, several cabinet members are considering resignation if an open-ended commitment to the EU Customs Union is adopted. On the other hand, the DUP - whose MP's votes prop up May's government - plus a few Tory MPs, threatened to vote against the government's budget on 29 October if a customs border in the Irish Sea isn't ruled out.

Vitriolic attacks and counter-attacks continue. Daily, the media reports snipes by Tory MPs against each other, which have included the allegation that Tory whips have offered bribes of knighthoods and peerages to get backing for May.

Bribes have been accompanied by threats - especially the spectre of a general election, the last thing most of them want. But with party discipline out of the window it's been used to try to force them into line.

May on her part asked 'all' MPs to "put the 'national interest' first" and vote for whatever deal she ends up putting to parliament. With a working majority of only 13, she's trying to entice some Labour MPs to vote with the Tories or abstain. Shamefully some want to oblige.

While these shenanigans go on and the top corporations fret about the consequences for their profits, the disgust felt by working-class people towards all the pro-capitalist politicians only increases.

Anger directed at them was one of the central factors underlying the Brexit vote in the first place. Since then, with no end to the austerity being inflicted by both central and local governments, and seeing all the baffling haggling and careerist manoeuvring over Brexit, their standing has been undermined even more.

This is an escalating and multi-faceted crisis for Britain's ruling class, which it can't resolve.

For workers, one of the certainties is that no type of Brexit delivered by the Tories will be in our interests. A general election is urgently needed in which a completely different alternative can be posed.

The Socialist Party argues that this should be a Brexit which puts the needs of ordinary people first. It should promote international working-class solidarity, along with democratically organised and coordinated socialist measures across the continent.

Corbyn must fight for a workers' Brexit

If a variant of Theresa May's Chequers proposal eventually becomes a Brexit deal, it will mean Britain remaining subject to much of the EU's austerity-promoting and privatising neoliberalism.

On the other hand, if the Tories who want a 'hard' break from the EU win out, it will also be against workers' interests. Instead of a 'race to the bottom' in wages and working conditions on a European level, they favour a 'race to the bottom' on a world level, in which exploitation of workers would be stepped up and the welfare state further eroded in order to make British corporations more competitive globally.

Faced with these two positions, most British capitalists favour the first - mainly because of the benefits and protections that the EU institutions and markets give them. But also they fear the disruption that a hard Brexit would mean, especially in the event of no deal being agreed.

'No deal'

Inevitably, with the vast amount of cross border trade and financial dealings being between Britain and the other 27 EU countries, a badly prepared for 'no deal' scenario would have an impact on the economy.

But this doesn't mean that socialists or others in the workers' movement should support any of the Tories' proposals, as a number of Labour MPs are expressing willingness to do. Among them is Caroline Flint, who said she would back a "reasonable" Tory deal to avoid the prospect of no deal.

On the contrary, the only route to defending workers' interests is to refuse to support May's proposals, which are constructed to serve capitalist interests, and instead do everything possible to bring her government to an end and force the calling of a general election.

Jeremy Corbyn would then be able to present a manifesto for standing firm in Brexit negotiations on working class interests and rights, making sure that the richest in society pay any economic price of Brexit and not the majority. He could also, very importantly, put out a message of international solidarity with workers across Europe.

His government would need to seek a trade deal with the EU. If Labour were to win a general election decisively - which can be done through inspiring voters with bold socialist policies - negotiations with the EU capitalist club would be from a position of greater strength and backing than those conducted by the weak, fragile Tory government.

In addition, a Corbyn-led government would be able to use a programme of nationalisation to take the ability to inflict job losses, closures or reductions in pay and conditions out of the hands of any corporations that move to take that path. Jaguar Land Rover has already blamed Brexit for its decision to reduce its Castle Bromwich plant to a three day week.

If Brexit does threaten any workers' jobs or pay through its impact on bosses' profits, which might be the case in some sectors, taking those enterprises into public ownership, under working class democratic control and management, should be the reaction of a left-led government. In that way, all jobs can be safeguarded and, if necessary, production could be changed to more socially needed products.

The need for such measures won't just arise because of Brexit. Jaguar Land Rover also announced a two-week shutdown of its Solihull plant because of declining sales to China and the US.

This is an example of the impact of the present stalling of world trade growth, which although made worse by the protectionist steps of Trump and other countries, is at root symptomatic of the underlying weak state of the world economy. The onset of a new recession is only a matter of time - warning signs have already appeared. So determined action will also be needed to protect workers from the ravages of that inevitability, regardless of the type of Brexit.

Capitalist interests

The EU is a structure of institutions developed by Europe's most powerful capitalist classes to serve the interests of their corporations, originally through creating a 'common market' and a bloc to aid their competition with other world powers. The desire to defend the profits of those corporations was clear when EU negotiator Michel Barnier slated May's Chequers plan for giving British companies "a huge competitive edge" and being "counter to our very foundations".

The Tories, as representatives of British capitalism, do want precisely that: to undermine the trading interests of other European multinationals, whether through a soft or a hard Brexit. But a Corbyn-led government would potentially be able to shift the whole present character of the negotiations away from being shaped by capitalist greed and profit-making, to being based on the mutual interests of ordinary people across Europe.

Such a government would be able to call on workers throughout the continent to fight the 'race to the bottom' in their own countries and mobilise against attempts by their own governments or the EU to pursue punitive measures against other workers whether in Britain or elsewhere, as was so brutally done to the Greek population by the EU.

It isn't just Britain's Tory government that's increasingly weak and fearful of the next round of elections. The Bavarian sister party of German chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU party has just had its worst election result for 68 years.

French president Macron's popularity has rapidly fallen. In March the EU's leading governments were horrified when the mainstream capitalist political parties in Italy failed to win a general election, with the far-right League party and populist 'Five Star Movement' coming to the fore, both posing as anti-establishment and now moving to challenge the EU's austerity diktats.

The role - outlined here - that a Corbyn-led government could play, would have to go along with decisive steps to democratise the Labour Party and deselect right-wing candidates if it were to be sustained and developed. Widespread support from workers and youth could be generated for this vital task.

At present a large number of young people believe that remaining in the EU is the only way to support multiculturalism, or environmental standards. Promoting a programme that exposes the great limitations of the EU bosses on these issues would begin to shatter those illusions. And it could show how socialist policies would be able to deliver a massively better future in all respects than any international capitalist institution will ever be capable of.

Universal credit = universal misery

Tories in retreat...

Build a mass fightback to boot them out

Simon Carter

Hapless Prime Minister Theresa May, at the recent Tory party conference, threw a bone to the public by declaring 'the end of austerity is in sight'. If you're on the receiving end of Universal Credit (UC) it probably feels like you'll need to use the Hubble telescope!

This mean-minded, vindictive 'reform' is being rolled out across the country with the pledge that more benefit claimants will be better off. Yet researchers for Policy in Practice found that millions of households will have their benefits cut by an average of £52 a week - the difference between having a roof over your head or living on the streets. For disabled claimants the average loss rises to £76 a week.

Feeling the hot breath of public anger on their necks, the Tories have partially retreated by delaying its full roll-out and by cushioned 'transitional arrangements' - but they haven't yet scrapped it.

And for those already on UC, having to wait for up to five weeks or more for payment is forcing claimants into debt and despair. The biggest foodbank in the country reckons that 24% of the million plus people they help are there because of lengthy delays in UC payment.

Of course, this government (and previous ones) didn't delay in handing over billions and billions of pounds to the failed bankers to keep them luxuriating in their super-rich lifestyles.

And anyway, why is it that millions of working households are forced, cap in hand, to claim UC in the first place?

It's because of the universal blight of low pay and soaring rents. In other words, the public purse is being used to subsidise scrooge bosses and rip-off landlords.

To end this nonsense we need to boot out the Tories and make the tax-dodging companies pay up. And if they won't, then a Corbyn government should nationalise them.

There should also be rent cuts and rent controls reintroduced. A minimum wage of at least £10 an hour should be brought in. For those who still need them, benefits should be enough to live on without having to decide whether to eat or to heat the home on any day.

New anti-poll tax type revolt needed today

The following letter was sent to the Guardian on 11 October by Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe

Owen Jones is correct ([Guardian 11 October](#)), as were [Gordon Brown](#) and [John Major](#), to warn of a poll tax-type revolt over Universal Credit.

He is also right to point out that it was the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, set up by Militant, now the Socialist Party, and the mass movement of non-payment, together with the issue of Europe, which brought down Margaret Thatcher.

This movement was not organised by the witch-hunting Labour Party leadership of Neil Kinnock, nor unfortunately the trade union leaders, nor even the Labour left.

It was Militant that pioneered the tactic of non-payment which led to 18 million people refusing to pay the poll tax and finishing it off.

Terry Fields, the Labour MP for Liverpool Broad Green, went to jail for refusing to pay the poll tax and Dave Nellist MP was expelled by Labour for doing so.

Hundreds of others were imprisoned for their defiance, including at least 34 supporters of Militant.

But to expect the Momentum leadership to lead such a movement against Universal Credit is fanciful in the light of their many political retreats, for instance on mandatory reselection.

Indeed, Jon Lansman, Momentum's leader, directly told us early on that he opposed mandatory reselection.

It would be a welcome political somersault if Momentum were to join with us and others in leading such a movement but it must also combine with the fight against all cuts. In particular, Labour councils must pursue legal 'no-cuts' needs budgets.

To help with this, the Socialist Party should be allowed to join Labour - with the same rights as the Co-operative Party, for instance - in a new, democratic socialist federation.

Such an 'extra-parliamentary movement', combined with action in parliament, could force a general election and defeat May and the Tories.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Taaffe

General Secretary, Socialist Party

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 12 October 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Homeless driven from Windsor streets for royal wedding: abolish the monarchy and end homelessness now!

Alex Wedlake, Cardiff West Socialist Party

Quick, look rich - the royals are coming! Yet again the homeless of Windsor were moved on in preparation for another royal wedding on 12 October.

The council insists that the intention was to keep the homeless safe due to the expected increase in footfall with over 3,000 gathering outside the gates. With a security bill of over £2 million, and a further £250,000 for the clean-up, surely this money could have gone to better use protecting those most vulnerable in society.

Take, for example, my home town of Cardiff. Official figures in Cardiff put rough sleepers at a little over 100, a figure that has risen steadily each year by 7% as austerity grips the nation. But the figure for applications for help with homelessness to Cardiff council was 3,987 in 2017-18.

With funding for homeless provision in Cardiff slashed by at least 70% since 2011, it is no wonder that the city is struggling to find provision for those at the sharp end of austerity measures.

At least 450 homeless people in the UK have died this year, exposing the "national emergency" of homelessness across the UK. One high-profile death in Cardiff last year was contributed to by the police operation 'Purple Ash' that sought to crack down on begging and the homeless.

This meant that homeless people were moved away from city centres towards less visible areas of the city, giving them less access to food and help.

Yet councils across the country do little to address this emergency, refusing to even implement legal no-cuts budgets that would protect the most vulnerable.

It is absolutely scandalous that Cardiff City Council not only refuses to utilise reserves to address the city's homelessness issue but partners with the city's police and crime commissioner to persecute those on the streets in the 'Purple Ash' operation.

Join the Socialist Party in Cardiff on Thursday 25 October at 7.45pm at St German's Church in Adamsdown to build a campaign demanding:

- An immediate measure to put a roof over every head
- Rent controls to cap rents at genuinely affordable levels
- Banning of letting agency fees
- Use of reserves and prudential borrowing powers to embark on a mass council house-building scheme
- Funding and support for social services to assist homeless people into housing and employment

Toxic fracking gets the go-ahead while protesters jailed

Dan Gilmore, Newcastle Socialist Party

After seven years of an England-wide ban on fracking, high court judge Justice Supperstone has overturned a request for an injunction on the soon to be opened fracking site in Lancashire run by Cuadrilla.

Fracking continues to be pushed by big business despite complete condemnation by climate scientists and trade unionists, and this decision effectively opens the floodgates for fracking nationwide despite the complete lack of support from the public.

This decision comes just two weeks after the ruling by Judge Robert Altham to jail three anti-fracking protesters for up to 18 months, with another protestor being given a 12 month suspended sentence. These sentences represent an outrageous attack on the democratic right to protest. This sets a dangerous precedent for the future.

Several trade unions, including the National Education Union, the transport union TSSA and bakers' union BFAWU, called the sentences "politically motivated" and "manifestly excessive".

Recent information about Judge Altham has shown his family business, JC Altham and Sons, has direct supply ties to the Irish Sea oil and gas industries.

The company owns three oil rigs in the Irish Sea which supply the energy company Centrica, who in turn have pumped millions of pounds into Cuadrilla.

In addition, Judge Altham's sister Jane, alongside 119 other businesses in the area, has lent her name to an open letter written by the 'North West Energy Task Force' (now 'Lancashire For Sale') which directly petitioned Lancashire County Council to allow fracking to continue. After hearing of the prison sentences Lancashire For Sale has callously remarked that "justice had been served effectively".

These obvious conflicts of interest show how far capitalists will go to protect their profits. Only a socialist society can guarantee the democracy of the working class and protect our environment. We must stand together against those that would potentially trigger earthquakes, poison our water and fracture our communities in the name of profit.

No to fat-cat top judges' £59k pay hike - fight for decent pay for criminal justice workers

Greg Randall, lawyer and member of Lambeth and Southwark Socialist Party

The Senior Salaries Review Body recommends that salaries for High Court judges be increased by 32%, taking them from £181,500 to £240,000 a year. The establishment pay board says this is needed to recruit future judges.

Civil servants providing administrative support in court will be astounded by this. Their union, PCS, has rightly pointed out the contrast between already very well-paid judges getting a massive pay rise while most workers' pay is falling in real terms.

Money could be better used to end swingeing austerity cuts to the court service. The applications that I file at court as a solicitor are regularly delayed and mistakenly rejected, sometimes repeatedly, because there are not enough trained staff to deal with the administrative workload. This adds to my clients' costs as I have to do the work of putting things right.

My experience is shared by other lawyers who take cases to court. A judge once apologised to me after I had to unnecessarily cross London and appear before him due to a basic mistake. He said that his court's staffing has been halved since 2010, so this happens frequently.

Because of the removal of legal aid from most cases, the meltdown is made worse by the need for staff and judges to deal with a surge of claimants and defendants who can't afford lawyers. The system, especially the family court, gets clogged up by litigants trying to run their own cases and negotiate complicated procedural rules.

If the court service were properly funded, with enough trained staff on decent pay, the system's running would be much smoother to everyone's benefit. It's recruiting, paying and retaining these workers that matters.

As a socialist lawyer, I would also like more judges - but I want them to be lawyers who have worked at the sharp end of the law, not the ruling-class milieu that most judges are drawn from now. Then we could get both value for money and a better quality of justice.

Bail hostel worker: "We haven't had a pay rise in ten years"

"I can't tell you how angry I feel about the proposed pay rise for judges. I work in the criminal justice system in a hostel for ex-prisoners, convicted of violent and sexual crimes including murder and rape. We haven't had a pay rise in ten years. I've also had to take on additional responsibilities while my role has been downgraded. I get £10.30 an hour. We deserve a decent pay rise. What's good enough for the judges is good enough for us."

Tory and Trump hypocrisy over murder of Saudi Arabian journalist

Tom Baldwin, Bristol South Socialist Party

The disappearance and presumed death of US-based, Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi has provoked a worldwide reaction.

On 2 October, Khashoggi, who works for the Washington Post, had entered the Saudi consulate in Turkey to obtain a divorce document in order to marry his Turkish fiancé. According to her and the Turkish authorities he never came out of the building.

He had formerly edited newspapers in Saudi Arabia and acted as advisor to Saudi princes. However, he had become critical of some of the regime's policies and left the country last year as he feared reprisals.

This has led to fears that he was abducted and even killed by Saudi forces. Turkish authorities claim a group of men, including Saudi intelligence agents, flew to Istanbul from Riyadh and back again on a private jet on the day of the journalist's disappearance. These claims add to rumours that he died during interrogation. The Turkish police even claim to have audio footage proving that he was murdered.

Turkish and Saudi authorities are now conducting a joint investigation into the incident. However, two weeks after Mr Khashoggi's disappearance, and after cleaners have had a chance to thoroughly clean the building, it is unclear that this will be able to find any answers.

After initially making the claims, it seems like the Turkish regime have toned down their criticisms. Perhaps they are prioritising their international relations with Saudi Arabia over finding out what actually happened?

Criticism from Western countries has also been relatively muted. Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry has criticised the government for a slow response - they waited a week after the disappearance to demand answers from the Saudi regime.

Donald Trump has also sought to let the Saudi regime off the hook by suggesting responsibility may lie with rogue agents. He has rejected any suggestion that the incident could stop arms sales. He revealed the real interests of Western governments and businesses when he said: "I don't like stopping massive amounts of money that's being poured into our country - they are spending \$110 billion on military equipment".

Saudi Arabia plays a key economic role as a major oil supplier. They are also an ally for the British government in the region and the UK is the second largest seller of arms to the Saudi regime.

While the disappearance of a US-based journalist has forced the spotlight on Saudi Arabia, the regime there has routinely repressed dissent within the country. They have also gone to war in Yemen which has led to humanitarian disaster and many civilian deaths.

The hypocrisy of the Tory government in relation to this case - dragging its feet to defend even the most basic journalistic right to criticise - shows once again that they place the interests of big businesses, including arms dealers, first.

Fully fund mental health services now

Mary Finch, East London Socialist Party

Stigma around mental health is decreasing, and that's definitely a good thing. But it's not nearly enough when services are being cut to the bone and most of us have been left without crucial lifelines.

It's not an exaggeration - people are dying because of the mental health crisis. It's led to such a drastic rise in suicides that the Tories were forced to appoint a new minister on World Mental Health Day to deal with the emergency.

Suicide prevention minister Jackie Doyle-Price has backed cuts which have decimated local services, including mental health support. Doyle-Price has also consistently voted to attack welfare - 91 times according to website They Work For You.

The link between benefit cuts and mental health problems has been well documented.

The Tories hope they can distract people from their role in exacerbating - even causing - this crisis.

Cuts and privatisation in the NHS have smashed counselling and support services. It's standard for people to wait months or even years to access crucial therapy.

Plenty are bounced around different services, each with very specific requirements designed to limit the number who try to access them.

Ending the mental health crisis isn't just about services. It's crucial to fight stigma.

Encouraging people to talk about their experiences is just one part. We need resources to educate people about the symptoms of mental illness, so they can recognise it in themselves and seek support.

Take obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) for example. How is someone supposed to recognise actual OCD symptoms - terrible intrusive thoughts and anxiety - when they're consistently told it's just about being clean and tidy?

We can't rely on charities to spread awareness and understanding of mental illness. It has to be a public service.

For that to happen, austerity must end.

A day in the life of a mental health support worker Juggling admin and emotion in the era of austerity

Sam Gleaden, mental health support worker

I wake up at 7am. No time to eat. No need to rush for the commute. I'm already at work.

I didn't sleep more than three hours because of residents waking up in the night and a no expense spared sofa bed from nineteen eighty something. It's me and 12 mental health care home residents to look after for the next six hours.

I work two 24-hour shifts a week on top of normal hours. I've already been at work since 1pm the previous day and since 5pm on my own.

I have to juggle medication, paperwork, health and safety inspections, financial admin, and more paperwork. Meanwhile, I somehow have to find time to engage with the complex lives of the residents. There's not much time to be emotionally supportive when you're running a care home on your own.

Often when I'm nearing the end of the shift, someone will come to me in a desperate emotional state. I'm usually so tired by this point I barely have the energy.

My main client has serious anger management issues relating to his psychosis. In 12 months here I haven't had any training on de-escalation or challenging behaviour.

Over half my pay goes on rent. I get a paltry £30 to 'sleepover' - there is no hourly rate for that time.

The residents here will see a mental health clinician once every four to six months. This is nothing more than lip service.

The cuts are the real burning injustice

The prime minister has pledged to tackle the "burning injustice of mental health". But the burning injustice is the inadequacy of provision from cutting resources.

Poverty and poor access to services are major triggers for some mental illnesses.

New research also indicates that women who are subject to sexual assault, domestic violence and harassment are more likely to suffer anxiety and depression.

Our society, our government in particular, is failing people. The answer is to throw out this Tory government and its neoliberal capitalist ideology and fight for a socialist society that puts people's mental and physical health at the centre.

Ian Hunter, Derby Socialist Party

Mental health facts

- Serious mental health illnesses reduce life expectancy by ten to 20 years - Oxford University psychiatrists
- The number of NHS beds for mental health patients has been cut by 30%
- Mental health hospitals were cut by £150m in the four years up to 2017. They were cut by £600m under the Con-Dem coalition - Health Foundation
- Even Tory health secretary Matt Hancock has admitted that mental health services are under resourced
- Children's mental health services will not meet demand - National Audit Office
- A fifth of mental health services provide substandard care - Care Quality Commission
- 40% of patients referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in 2016-2017 were never assessed - Spurgeons charity
- £4.5m was cut from mental health in 2017 while mental health services need an extra £1bn - NHS England
- Worldwide 13.5 million lives could be saved every year if mental illness was addressed properly - Lancet Commission

- Mental health trusts were £105m down in real terms over the last five years - Royal College of Psychiatrists
 - Around 8,000 adults a year are sent out of their home area for mental health care in England, despite a government pledge to end the practice altogether - Centre for Mental Health
 - NHS hasn't properly reviewed mental health among children for 14 years
-

PCS union: nominate Chris Baugh as Left Unity candidate for assistant general secretary

Marion Lloyd, PCS national executive committee member, and PCS Left Unity chair (personal capacity)

The left in the PCS union, PCS Left Unity, has started the democratic process to agree its programme for the union, and who will stand on the Left Unity ticket for the PCS 2019 national elections.

Meetings to agree nominations and motions are taking place until 26 October. These will be followed by voting meetings during November, culminating in the national Left Unity conference on 1 December.

A key issue will be who the Left Unity candidate is for the union's assistant general secretary (AGS).

Socialist Party member Chris Baugh is up for re-election. He has been the Left Unity candidate on three successive occasions since 2004, and won the union's election each time.

Chris is being challenged by Janice Godrich, the union's president. This challenge was started and is actively supported by the general secretary, Mark Serwotka, supposedly because of personal dislike and alleged inability to work with Chris.

But as the election process within PCS Left Unity has got under way, the 'justification' for standing against Chris has turned into a campaign of slurs, half-truths and distortions.

Chris Baugh's campaign is supported by the 'Re-elect Chris for AGS' campaign. Its focus is a programme which sets out [what is needed to defend members](#).

Ballot tactics

A key example is pay and conditions. The 2018 pay strike ballot, despite a massive campaign and huge effort, fell short of the 50% turnout required under the Tories' vicious anti-union laws.

The response by Mark Serwotka, Janice Godrich and their supporters is inadequate - effectively, they want to do the same again in 2019, but be better organised and ballot earlier.

In contrast, we have called for a special delegate conference on pay, to draw on the experience of activists in 2018 and determine PCS's approach in 2019.

Key questions should be discussed. Should we consider 'disaggregated' ballots of each department - similar to the University and College Union, which delivered a successful national strike ballot? Should we include other issues like office closures, jobs and conditions - similar to the Communication Workers Union, which also delivered a successful national strike ballot?

Our opponents have called our suggestions, put forward at the September meeting of the PCS national executive committee, "wrecking" amendments. Now they are part of the union's national 'consultation'!

We want a full and democratic debate involving reps and members so we can prepare for a 2019 pay campaign on the strongest basis.

On union democracy, we stand for the election of all key full-time officers. On equality, we stand for the removal of all barriers which divide workers.

On political representation, we support the election of a Corbyn-led anti-austerity government, but with PCS maintaining its political independence. On PCS Left Unity itself, we stand for building a campaigning, rank-and-file organisation that defends and strengthens the lay democracy the left has fought so hard for.

Please visit the ['Re-elect Chris Baugh AGS'](#) Facebook page and [blog](#) for more details of our programme and the full slate.

And at the Left Unity nomination meetings, please nominate and support the candidates below. This is a part of a slate which leaves places open to other candidates, indicating our willingness to work united with others in Left Unity, in the interests of our members and against government attacks.

National PCS elections

Nomination for Left Unity candidate for AGS: Chris Baugh

Nominations for Left Unity slate for the PCS national executive committee...

- President: Marion Lloyd
- NEC: Clive Bryant, Alan Dennis, Steve Thorley, Kris Hendry, Rhea James, John Jamieson, Tahir Latif, Marion Lloyd, Kenny McKay, Dave Semple, Hector Wesley, Katrine Williams

PCS Left Unity national committee

- Chair: Marion Lloyd
- Treasurer: Alan Dennis
- Equal opportunities officer: Kris Hendry
- Editor: Dave Semple
- Young members officer: Sarah Spencer
- Scrutineers: Sian Ruddock
- Committee members: Clara Paillard, Bobby Young

Striking Brum home carers reject 'final' pay cut offer

Birmingham Socialist Party

At a mass members' meeting on 5 October, Birmingham Council home carers unanimously voted by show of hands to reject the council's 'final' offer and continue striking.

To accept the offer would have meant part-time-only hours, resulting in staff losing between £5,000 and £11,000 a year. The members of public service union Unison took another full day of strike action on 9 October, making over 30 days of strike in total.

Workers on the picket lines outside council offices said they see this as a management tactic to cut costs by forcing workers out. The Blairite council has cut the service by 48% in the last year through voluntary redundancies, despite claiming it only 'needed' a 40% cut.

This is a vital service. It plays a crucial role in promoting clients' independence at home. It also supports their transition from hospital, freeing up badly needed hospital beds.

Home carers began their strike day by leafleting the bin workers' depots at five in the morning! Only last year the bin workers won their strike against the council against similar attacks. Messages of support were shared between both sets of workers.

The strikers received nothing but support from their colleagues in other council jobs. No job under Birmingham's Labour council is safe.

Birmingham Socialist Party demands the council stop all attacks on the workforce immediately. Instead it should build on the popularity of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto.

Labour councillors should draw up a balanced no-cuts budget using reserves and prudential borrowing powers - and, at the same time, launch a citywide campaign to return the money stolen from Birmingham by central government.

Reselection proceedings should immediately be commenced against any Labour councillor who continues to vote for cuts and privatisation.

The Tories are weak and divided. If Birmingham Council truly wished to represent workers and residents rather than the interests of big business, it would be fighting central government rather than its own workers!

South Western rail workers launch five-day safety strike to save guards

Workers on South Western Railway are striking for five days from 23 to 27 October against management plans to remove the safety-critical role of the guard.

Bosses refuse to engage in serious talks with transport union RMT to reach agreement in the long-running dispute over 'driver-only operation' (DOO).

The Socialist Party is taking part in the National Shop Stewards Network's 'Solidarity Saturday' in support of the strike.

On 20 October, street stalls will take place in Southampton, Portsmouth, Salisbury, Basingstoke and Woking.

Guards and drivers have four further 24-hour Saturday strikes planned in their latest phase of action this autumn, on 3, 10, 17 and 24 November.

No to DOO! Save the guard!

Uber drivers strike against unfair 'deactivation' and low pay

Tom Woodcock, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

"We want our rights! We want our rights!" Uber drivers struck across the country on 9 October against unjust disciplinary sanctions and poverty pay.

The IWGB union organised the two-hour strike, along with a 'digital picket line' encouraging customers not to use Uber for the duration. Drivers demand an increase in fares and a cut in 'commission' payable to the company.

Over 30 strikers gathered outside the company's Broad Street office in Birmingham to protest over a range of grievances against the multinational gig-economy giant. Pickets were angry and described appalling working conditions at Uber.

I spoke to two of them, Mohammed and Ahmed, who explained what prompted the strike. "The number-one issue is Uber deactivating drivers' accounts. They show us no respect at all. We are on less than the minimum wage."

It seems that Uber operates a one-sided system where the bosses can unilaterally deactivate a driver's account, without any recourse, based on passengers' allegations alone.

Protests took place simultaneously at Uber offices in London and Nottingham.

Bolton hospital workers strike as subsidiary company refuses NHS pay rates

Steve North, Salford Socialist Party

Cleaners, catering staff and porters at Royal Bolton Hospital struck for 48 hours on 11 and 12 October over pay. The strikers are organised by public service union Unison.

Their employer, iFM Bolton, is a 'wholly owned subsidiary' of Royal Bolton NHS Foundation Trust. It refuses to pay the recent NHS wage increase - because its workers are technically not employed by the NHS.

The recent three-year NHS pay deal, while not good enough, does mean that workers in the health service's 'Agenda for Change' pay system will earn a minimum of £9.89 an hour by 2020.

Despite signing an agreement in 2017 stating it would implement any nationally agreed NHS pay rates, the most iFM has been willing to offer is £8.75 an hour. Even that was only after the workforce challenged management.

Socialist Party members attended picket lines on the Thursday and Friday morning. We spoke to a determined workforce, which rightly insists it should be treated the same as any other NHS workers.

On Friday lunchtime, pickets and supporters battled heavy rain in Bolton to hold a strike rally. The highlight was a message of support from Joanne, a Unison member in Wigan who was part of the recent victory against Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust. Workers prevented the establishment of another such wholly owned subsidiary through industrial action.

The message from the iFM workers was clear. Yes we want NHS pay, but we won't stop fighting until we're employed directly by the NHS!

Grimethorpe dinner ladies stage all-out strike against redundancy

Angie Waller, Barnsley Socialist Party

"No ifs, no buts, no dinner lady cuts," is the song from the picket line. Nine dinner ladies at Ladywood Primary School in Grimethorpe, Yorkshire are now on indefinite strike against being made redundant.

Teaching assistants are working to rule, and will join the strike organised by public service union Unison on 22 October. The school has proposed that teaching assistants take over supervising meals to save cash.

Initially the women took six days of strike action, but the school would not back down. And Barnsley Council has not helped to resolve the dispute, saying the school is 'well managed'!

School management claims it faces a significant shortfall in the budget for 2019-20. However, teachers and school staff who support the dinner ladies say this does not make sense.

The school has money enough to employ two assistant heads and two newly appointed teaching assistants, and has kept on permanently the teaching assistant who was covering maternity leave.

The mood is very strong and the women are standing firm, along with the solidarity from their colleagues and the parents at the school. Parents are joining the dinner ladies on the picket line every day.

It's the parents who have put a petition up to say they have no confidence in the school head, as she has failed to resolve concerns about teaching. Now 900 people in the community have signed the petition.

Unison has highlighted a number of areas where the school could make savings without any redundancies, and had offered to suspend industrial action for a review of the staffing structure. But school management refused.

The spirit on the picket line remains strong and solid, and the singing continues!

- Please send messages of support to branchoffice@unisonbarnsleylg.org

Cable makers' pay strike bites as production falls 33%

Bea Gardner, Southampton Socialist Students

Production at Prysmian Cables and Systems in Eastleigh, Hampshire has dropped by a third since workers launched industrial action in September.

Members of general union Unite held their third 24-hour strike, over a peanuts 2% pay increase offer, on 10 October. Members of Southampton Socialist Students, Southampton Socialist Party and the Community section of Unite joined the picket lines in solidarity.

Workers organised an impressive march through the town centre to raise the profile of the action, which bolstered everyone's spirits and confidence.

Since the action began in September, the expected output of the factory has been reduced from 1,200 tonnes to just 800 this month. Management has yet to agree to return to negotiations, so the union has set a fifth strike date.

Combined with the 24-hour stoppages, work-to-rule action is also causing chaos for the bosses, with machinery clogging up, breaking down and being switched off by workers no longer prepared to fill in for the company's lack of investment.

One striker told us the factory is run on the goodwill of workers. Another said that since he started working there 16 years ago, the workforce in his department has been cut in half. He added that the refusal of the multibillion-pound company to invest has meant workers taking on more and more duties to keep things running, including work previously done by machines that have broken and not been replaced.

The determination to keep fighting was clear, and Socialist Students members will continue to show our support for the workers of Prysmian who deserve far more than a below-inflation pay 'rise' of 2%.

- Please send messages of solidarity to steven.phillips@unitetheunion.org

Workers walked out on their third out of four strike days at cable manufacturer Prysmian in Eastleigh on 10 October. They are organised by general union Unite.

Fifty strikers were on the picket line in good spirits, with supporters including five local members of the Socialist Party. We marched to Eastleigh shopping centre.

This is the first dispute at Prysmian in 30 years, and workers are only asking for a 2.5% pay increase. There are separate disputes at sites in Wales and Spain. The planned fourth strike day is 17 October.

Mike, Southampton Socialist Party

Newham finance staff fight pay and grading insult

Workers for Newham's Labour-led council who are responsible for processing payments to suppliers are hacked off at bosses for grading their important jobs in a way that gets them less pay.

All seven 'payables officers' held a protest outside the east London borough's office, Building 1000, on 15 October.

General union Unite has balloted the entire team for industrial action. If their reasonable demands aren't met, they're going to strike on 26 and 29 October, and 2 and 5 November.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: "Our members have four days of strike action planned and this could mean that suppliers of goods and services to the council won't be paid on time - the process will grind to a snail's pace.

"We are calling for the council to do the right thing and revert to the agreed process for this particular job evaluation. If the council gets away with not paying this group of staff what they are rightly owed, council management will feel able to get away with it with other sections of the workforce."

Ian Pattison, East London Socialist Party

Libres y Combativas: striking for women's rights in the Spanish state

On 8 March 2018 - International Women's Day - [an unprecedented strike against sexism and women's oppression](#) took place across the Spanish state. The socialist-feminist organisation Libres y Combativas played a central role in organising and mobilising for this event. Now, the campaign is building for a new student strike against sexism in education to take place on 14 November. The Socialist spoke to Ana Garcia, an activist in Libres y Combativas and the general secretary of the Sindicato de Estudiantes (student union).

Why did you set up Libres y Combativas and what makes it different to other campaigns or organisations set up to support women's rights?

Libres y Combativas is a socialist-feminist platform that was launched by the Sindicato de Estudiantes (SE), along with Izquierda Revolucionaria (IR - the CWI in the Spanish state). We launched the organisation as a response to the effects of capitalist crisis, particularly on young and working-class women.

Here, as in many other countries all over the world, the fight against the oppression of women is becoming a more and more important arena of struggle against the capitalist system.

The issue of sexism is among those prompting millions of people to wake up to politics - to the need to take action. What's more, young and working-class women are increasingly drawing the conclusion that it is the capitalist system which perpetuates sexism.

Within the movement for women's rights here in the Spanish state there are different debates ongoing. These have included discussion on the question of whether the fight against women's oppression is a task for women alone. We defend the idea that this is not just an issue for women but for the whole of the working class.

Of course, working-class women should take a lead in this struggle. But for us it is a class issue. Women are oppressed because they are workers as well as because of their gender. That's why we know this is not a task for every woman, but for the working class majority.

Female bankers who order evictions of poor single women, female owners of big companies who implement lower wages for women and fire women when they're pregnant, or female right-wing politicians who defend cuts in education and health care and who say abortion is murder: those women are not welcome at our protests.

On the other hand, working-class men, who fight on the same issues we do, are very welcome in this struggle. We need our male comrades on our side to defeat the system that promotes the oppression of women.

What kind of action has the campaign taken so far - what has it been able to achieve?

Libres y Combativas is composed of workers and young women. Its main strength is among young women. We have been taking part in movements which already existed.

But we make an important contribution to these movements by offering an anti-capitalist perspective and socialist ideas to solve the problems faced by women.

At the moment, there is a very angry mood about aspects of women's oppression which are being newly revealed and brought to light.

For example, a lot of capitalist institutions - including the government and the justice system - are in a state of crisis. Their reactionary character is being exposed.

Recently there have been several court cases involving rape and violence against women in which reactionary judgements were made. These have included judges blaming the victims.

This has highlighted that women's oppression is not 'natural' or 'inevitable'. It is governments who make reactionary laws, who implement cuts which often hit working-class women hardest.

It is the Francoist justice system which routinely blames women for their own experiences of rape and sexual violence.

One of our first and most significant actions was on 8 March this year, International Women's Day. This day marked a real explosion against the reactionary Partido Popular (PP) government.

This strike was a shout against all of the right-wing politicians - against the sexist justice system as well. But the 8 March general strike was not the only action.

SE organised several strikes, including one responding when five alleged gang rapists walked free following a very prominent court case. The response to this case had some of the characteristics of an explosion. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets.

The action was not only about showing solidarity with the victims of rape, but also about denouncing the kind of 'justice' offered by capitalism: 'justice' which effectively punishes women, essentially putting them on trial for reporting the violence they have suffered.

You've recently called for another strike to take place in November. I know that since the last strike in March, the government of Spain has changed. Now you have a government led by Pedro Sanchez and the so-called socialists of PSOE. Is the new government attempting to pose as feminist? Is there still a mood to come out and protest?

The PSOE government's main aim is to maintain social peace - to dampen the outbreaks of mass struggle that have rocked the Spanish state in the last period. They are giving a lot of speeches about women's rights, about the historic memory of people who were killed under the dictatorship, and so on. But they are not doing anything about the issues we face.

So the purpose of the strike we have called in November is to kick sexism out of schools. We argue that education should be used to help combat sexism and LGBT+phobia.

This raises the need for the restoration of funding taken from the public education system in the last years of austerity.

It also requires opposing the large amount of public money which is currently given to the Catholic Church to teach religion and to spread reactionary, sexist, homophobic and transphobic ideas within schools.

We are demanding the introduction of sex education in schools in order to counter sexual harassment and rape culture, and to help make young people feel free to be who they want to be - not to be bullied, not to be judged and not to be punished, as happens right now.

We are also fighting against sexist dress codes in schools. In particular, during the summer months when the weather is very hot, women are often forbidden from wearing appropriate clothes. Often students are asked to go home and change.

The argument used is that our clothes are a provocation. But our clothes don't provoke anything! This is an echo of the sexist arguments used against women in the justice system when they report experiences of rape and abuse.

We are saying to the government - if you say you oppose sexism, what are you going to do about it? PSOE like to call themselves "the feminist government" because they have more female ministers. But they have so far done nothing to change the situation for working-class women.

So you recently won a battle to call a strike on 8 March - on the next International Women's Day...

It wasn't only our victory. It was a victory of the working-class part of the women's movement which is by far the majority of people who have been in the streets demanding the end of our oppression.

There has been pressure coming from the supporters of the new government within the women's movement to 'keep social peace' and not mobilise to fight for our demands. The capitalist class is desperate to maintain the relative stability that the first few months of this new government has provided.

But we have not kicked out Rajoy's PP government only to remain in the same situation. Precisely now is the moment to go one step forward - not one step back!

So Libres y Combativas attended the '8M commission' - the open assembly set up to organise action for International Women's Day. We argued that there should be a general feminist strike - a strike by people of all genders to fight for women's rights - and that we should be exposing the hypocrisy of this new 'feminist government', demanding real changes.

We emphasised that even if it is a feminist strike this should not just be a strike of women. We want to stop everything! The whole economy! Challenge the big owners, bankers, political representatives who implement

our oppression in every sense! For that, we need our male comrades to support our strike and to stop working too.

Our arguments made a big impact. The commission voted that there would be another general strike on 8 March.

This doesn't exclude further attempts to 'soften' this call by those whose priority is the maintenance of social peace. But the mood of the movement is so strong that I believe there is little question that it will go ahead on an equal or possibly even greater scale to last year.

The renewed relevance of Engels' classic Socialism: Utopian and Scientific

Tony Saunois, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)

This short pamphlet by Friedrich Engels is, along with the Communist Manifesto, one of the best and most significant introductions to Marxism. It greatly adds to our understanding of the roots of socialism and the tasks of the working class to fundamentally change society.

Written and published in 1880, it was originally a part of the much longer work, 'Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science' - better known as 'Anti-Dühring' (published in 1878). Dühring was a well-known German academic whose ideas were having a negative and disorientating effect on the socialist movement in Germany at the time.

Socialism: Utopian and Scientific was a reworking of three chapters from Anti-Dühring in a more accessible form to give an account of the origin and development of socialist ideas and the Marxist theory of history, also known as 'historical materialism'. Both of these works were used as basic education studies in the German workers' movement.

In particular, Engels discusses the development of social classes and class struggle, in each historical epoch and social system.

Key to understanding

Although written in another historical era, the ideas contained in this short pamphlet are fully relevant today. They help us to understand and answer the ideas of today's 'utopian socialists'.

These re-emerged following the rise of the Occupy movement and other 'new left' formations, including Podemos in Spain and Momentum in Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party.

It is against the background of the rebuilding of the workers' and socialist movement - following the collapse of the former Stalinist regimes in the former USSR and Eastern Europe and the 'triumphalism of capitalism' in the 1990s - that some of the old 'utopian socialist' ideas have re-emerged.

Engels, in this marvellous pamphlet, traces the emergence of socialist ideas through different historical eras and stages of development in society, culminating in the ideas of scientific socialism, formulated by himself and Karl Marx.

In the 18th century, French materialist philosophers, who helped pave the way for the 1789 Great French (bourgeois or capitalist) revolution, were a major influence on the development of early socialist thinkers.

They argued that the existing social and political order was irrational. As Engels explained, they wanted to replace such irrationality with a "kingdom of reason; henceforth superstition, injustice, privilege, oppression, were to be superseded by eternal truth, eternal right, equality based on nature and the inalienable rights of man."

Engels explained that these philosophers believed they were defending universal truths for all of humankind. In reality, they were articulating ideas that represented the interests of the then emerging and rising bourgeoisie and the system of capitalism. They wanted an end to the limitations of the old feudal social order and the privileges within it.

Early socialistic ideas

However, they did not want to abolish classes. After all, the capitalists cannot exist without wage workers! As capitalism grew and developed, so did the modern working class. This gave rise to even more radical ideas.

Radical socialist or early communistic ideas had begun to develop during the English civil war in the 17th century around the Levellers and other radical groupings, and in the back streets of Paris during the French revolution, with the 'Conspiracy of Equals', and its leaders, like François-Noel Babeuf.

Important as these developments were, they did not amount to the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels but rather an idealistic anticipation of a future communistic society and a rejection of brutal class society. They reflected the plebeian or mixed class character of these social movements.

The development of modern capitalism and the modern working class was needed before such ideas could be fully developed in a scientific manner, with an understanding of the struggle between the two main opposing class interests of the capitalists and the working class.

Yet these movements, and others, represented a bridge to the eventual evolution of the ideas of scientific socialism.

The early socialistic ideas were developed further in the 19th century by the "three great utopians" as Engels called them - Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier in France and Robert Owen, in Britain.

Engels clearly had great admiration for these figures and deals in some detail with the ideas and works of Robert Owen in this pamphlet. Their clear and piercing denunciations of capitalism and pioneering attempts at building a new model society offered a glimpse of what would be possible through the building of a socialist society.

However, despite representing a leap forward in offering an alternative society to capitalism, they remained imprisoned within the relatively

limited development of capitalism and the working class itself. They, like their 18th-century predecessors, abstractly appealed to reason and justice and for people to act and behave differently.

They failed to grasp that the ruling capitalist class acted as it did out of defending its own class interests and that a struggle by the working class to overthrow the capitalist class was essential to begin to build socialism.

In the case of Robert Owen, he took initiatives to establish cooperatives run by those in the community, working in their own interests. Owen established such a cooperative in New Lanark, Scotland.

Later, he travelled to the United States and formed a local 'society' in New Harmony, Indiana. Essentially, they were attempts to build 'an island of socialism in a sea of capitalism', by which Owen hoped others would follow his example.

Inevitably all of them failed and, eventually, Owen lost some of his wealth to these ventures. He became more and more radical in his ideas, as he aged, and was ostracised by 'official society.'

It was to take a further development of capitalist society and the working class before scientific socialist ideas could be developed by the herculean contribution of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx.

Retains it validity

Yet in the modern era, the arguments of Engels in this pamphlet still find full validity. The ideas currently being advocated by some on the 'new left' are but an echo of the utopian socialists of the past. But today there is much less justification than in the past for these ideas because of the bitter, open class divisions which exist in modern capitalism.

In Greece, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras seemed to imagine it was sufficient to appeal to the 'reason' and 'justice' of German imperialism and the European Union to convince them not to impose a brutal austerity on the Greek people. The capitalists' answer was a predictable and firm 'no', as they uncompromisingly acted to defend their class interests.

In Britain, Paul Mason, and others on the left have exposed the brutalities and horrors of modern day capitalism. Yet what is the solution Mason has advocated?

Having turned away from Marxism and Trotskyism, Mason was influenced by the Occupy movement. He has pointed to the emergence of "parallel currencies, time banks, cooperatives and self-managed spaces... new forms of ownership, new forms of lending..."

In his book, 'PostCapitalism', Mason writes that such ideas "offer an escape route - but only if these micro-level projects are nurtured, promoted and protected". By who, and how, we are not told.

In fact, these sorts of ideas are a return to the utopian projects of Robert Owen. At that time, they represented an important milestone in the development of socialist ideas. They gave way, after an inevitable demise, to the ideas of scientific socialism of Marx and Engels.

In today's era of modern capitalist society, rather than representing something 'new', as claimed by their supporters, they represent a step backwards in terms of socialist ideas and socialist programme.

New form of socialism?

In Latin America, 'Socialism in the 21st century', was propagated by president Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and echoed by president Evo Morales in Bolivia. This was, its supporters claimed, to be a new form of socialism.

It included the establishment of cooperatives and buying up a percentage of shares to establish 'mixed enterprises'. Where the working class is weak or not fully organised, support for the idea of cooperatives can develop among workers faced with the closure of their workplaces, and so on.

Socialists, of course, adopt a sympathetic attitude to this development, especially where workers can see no alternative.

Yet Chavez and Morales supported such developments without explaining the limitations of them. The idea was put forward of building an alternative to capitalism within the framework of capitalism, not ending it.

Inevitably, the decisive sectors of the capitalist economy maintained control and consumed the 'alternative' cooperatives and enterprises.

Following the economic collapse in Argentina, in 2002, workers took over factories and tried to establish cooperatives. However, the majority of these 'islands', with elements of workers' control, were swallowed up by the sea of capitalism which surrounded them.

The scientific socialist ideas contained in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* are a crucial tool for understanding the functioning of capitalist society and the struggle between the working class and the ruling class.

They answer the utopian notion that it is possible to appeal to the "reason" and "sense of justice" of the capitalist class and its political representatives.

It also provides a clear answer to those who argue that alternatives to capitalism can be constructed within a capitalist framework - without transforming the entire system and beginning to build a democratic socialist alternative by the working class.

Capitalist society has undergone many changes since Engels wrote this pamphlet. So has the working class. Some left commentators, like Paul Mason or Pablo Iglesias, the leader of Podemos in Spain, have turned away from the working class as a force for transforming society.

Mason dismisses it as a force today due to a weakening of the manufacturing industry that has taken place in many countries.

There has clearly been a decline of the traditional industrial working class in the advanced industrialised countries. However, it still exists and is potentially a powerful force.

Workers in the rail industry, airports, communications, and in the remaining industrial sectors, are still a force with immense potential industrial power.

On a global scale, the specific weight of the working class has increased due to the industrialisation of countries like China, Brazil, India and others.

At the same time, there is an increasing 'proletarianisation' of formerly middle-class layers, who have been devastated by the crisis of 2007-08. Teachers, doctors, civil servants and others, have been radicalised, and increasingly take up the methods of struggle of the working class.

New layers of the working class, including extremely exploited young people on precarious contracts, like the workers at Uber, TGI Fridays, Deliveroo, Amazon and McDonald's, are beginning to take up these methods of struggle. This is in its embryonic stage but is still extremely significant for the workers' and socialist movement.

A reading or rereading of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* will be very rewarding.

It can assist the new generation in the struggle to rebuild the workers' and socialist movement, as an instrument to replace capitalism with socialism.

Marx and Engels' titles, available from Left Books

- *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* - Friedrich Engels £4.50
- *A Study Guide for Engels' Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* - Ed Doveton £7.00
- *The Communist Manifesto and Other Revolutionary Writings* - Marx and Engels, and others £4.50
- + 10% postage at leftbooks.co.uk 020 8988 8789

Demo against far-right DFLA

Up to 2,000 marched in London against the far-right Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA) on 13 October. Socialist Party members took part in the counter-demonstration where PCS assistant general secretary and Socialist Party member Chris Baugh was one of the speakers:

"Solidarity is one of our most important weapons against the far right, against the Tories, and against the super-rich who are making working class people pay the price for a crisis they did not make.

"Those who caused it - the bankers and super-rich, who were bailed out with our money and tried to get away with one of the biggest scams in recent history - have used the terrible and cynical tactic of scapegoating minorities, of stirring up racism and of attempting to divide working class communities.

"If there's one thing that history tells us it's that PCS and all trade unions must stand in solidarity with all those under attack. We must do everything in our power to provide, if necessary, the physical defence of migrant communities that are subject to racist attacks. And in the process we should expose the DFLA.

"In the 1970s the far right tried to exploit football and we saw them off. I'm confident we will see them off again. But we also have to recognise that to challenge racism we have to challenge the conditions that the far right and racists feed off. PCS welcomes the decision of the TUC to support a 'jobs and homes not racism' campaign and we need to put that into practice.

"We need to fight to make the super-rich pay their way and pay their taxes. We need to bring public utilities back into public ownership. We need to build the thousands of homes that are needed in working class communities.

We need to invest in the NHS and in education. Unions have always been central to this fight. We need to reach out to the millions of young and super-exploited workers. We need to use our massive strength to challenge racism in workplaces, on the streets, in communities and in society. Let's fight racism, fight the cuts and show that another world is possible."

Socialism - the podcast offering Marxist analysis for the movement against capitalism

The Socialist Party has launched a podcast! The first three episodes of 'Socialism' are out now, with a new episode to be released every Monday. Each week we'll be interviewing leading members of the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International about Marxist theory, current events and historical struggles.

In the aftermath of the 2007-8 economic crisis, the capitalist system has been exposed and workers and young people are looking for an alternative. Poll after poll has shown that socialism is now more popular than capitalism.

The surge in support of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity stand here has been mirrored by huge support for Bernie Sanders' 'democratic socialism' in the US, and similar developments in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Brazil, France and many other countries.

These initiatives represent a desire to break with the neoliberal consensus. But there is also a growing understanding that to change the world, we need more than anger and determination. We need a clear idea of the type of society we want to build and what type of movement can get us there - including preparing for capitalism and its political representatives to use their full force to resist such a movement.

In this process, Marxist ideas offer a way forward. From Corbynism, to the NHS, to workers' strike action, to liberation struggles - the Socialist Party wants to encourage and contribute to current debates and discussion in the movement. We hope that 'Socialism' will be an important part of that.

- At the time of going to press Socialism is live on TuneIn, Stitcher, Spotify, Castbox, Acast, Blubrry, Podbean, SoundCloud and MixCloud, and expected soon on iTunes. It can also be found at the Socialist Party's YouTube channel
- Please subscribe, leave us a five star review, and email your thoughts - particularly suggestions for topics of future episodes or any questions you have - to socialismpodcast@socialistparty.org.uk
- See socialistparty.org.uk/podcast for episode notes, including suggested further reading

Haringey 'Corbyn-council' faces a choice: Implement or fight the cuts

Nick Auvache, North London Socialist Party

Aditya Chakraborty hit the nail on the head when he said "any new Labour administration will be judged on how much change it makes for the people it claims to represent" [in the Guardian on 10 October](#).

Myself and two other socialists stood in Seven Sisters ward in the May elections, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

We said "let's turn Jeremy Corbyn's words into action in Haringey". We pledged to work alongside any Haringey Labour councillor who wants to put those ideas into practice.

One of the key demands we raised was "no redevelopment of Wards Corner without social housing and safeguarding the 'Latin American Corner' local businesses."

Socialist Party members stood alongside anti-private development Labour Party members when they organised and deselected the worst of the old Blairite councillors. We said this was now our chance for a socialist anti-austerity council in Haringey.

We warned:

"Haringey is set to be a 'Corbyn council' and will be under intense scrutiny, not just from the press, Tories and pro-austerity wing of the Labour Party, but from the working class.

"We cannot wait till the next general election. It is imperative that under a 'Corbyn council' the residents of Haringey stop paying the price for Tory austerity through cuts and privatisation of council services, homes and jobs.

"Any other approach not only condemns people to more suffering under the Tory cosh, but also risks the current huge support for Corbyn-led Labour."

Expectations are high in this council. The council leader claims to have no choice, being constrained by Tory cuts and the 'poison pills' left by the previous administration.

The 'Corbyn' Labour council has a clear choice. They should stand up and help mobilise a big campaign to kick the millionaire developers out of our borough.

Instead of preparing to accommodate another 10% of cuts next year, they should prepare a socialist needs-based, no-cuts budget.

They should use reserves and borrowing powers to stave off cuts, and mobilise the trade unions, local residents and community groups in a struggle to press the Tories to provide the necessary funding.

The excuses not to do this lessen every day as the Tories teeter on the brink. Such a struggle could help push them out of power and bring in a Corbyn-led Labour government which should guarantee to underwrite any debt incurred in resisting Tory cuts.

As Chakraborty points out, the council needs to pick the right side in a small case. Corbyn will face much bigger fights in government.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 16 October 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Devon foster carers fight 30% cut in allowances

Sean Brogan, former foster carer and Exeter Socialist Party

If austerity is over, no-one told the Tory councillors of Devon County Council. Foster carers are to have their allowances cut by 30%. Already they have no rights and live a precarious existence with no guarantee of

income. Many are single parents having to meet rent and mortgage commitments.

The reductions will be made after so-called 'consultations'. This practice is sham democracy. The council says the policy will be "fairer and more equitable", attracting more foster carers.

The underlying truth is that the Tories have an agenda of moving all services to private provision. Recently one such private fostering company was sold for £100 million! Fostering children is now about profit for some.

Devon foster carers are fighting back - many have joined the Foster Care Workers Union which is a branch of the IWGB union.

At a recent council meeting, councillors were subject to a barrage of noise and speeches - "no ifs, no buts, no foster care cuts!" - as Henry Lopez, IWGB president travelled from London along with Sandra Anderson, organiser of the Foster Carer's Union to give no-nonsense speeches about the callous way foster carers are being treated.

Foster carers may be seen as a soft target but not when they are organised. Exeter Trade Union Council brought support along with several branches of Unite Community and Exeter Socialist Party.

De Montfort freshers stall

The Socialist Students stall outside this year's freshers fair at De Montfort University, Leicester - demanding 'Tories out - Corbyn in' - got a very good response with over 30 sign-ups.

We were also using the stall to involve students with the local Save Our NHS campaign and this resonated well with many. One nursing student, who attended our follow-up meeting, told us about her own experiences as a carer under NHS cuts. She wants to get involved with the society.

Hopefully, we will soon have a Socialist Students group at the university.

Sofia Wiking

Film: Peterloo

Excellent film exposes bloody nature of capitalism through Peterloo massacre

Kevin Parslow

As the bicentenary of the Peterloo massacre approaches, acclaimed director-scriptwriter Mike Leigh, from Salford himself, has created probably the first feature-length film of the circumstances of the years preceding the massacre and the terrible actions of the day itself.

The Peterloo massacre of 16 August 1819 was a heinous crime of British capitalism against its own population. In terms of its effect, recent comparisons could include such atrocities as [the Marikana massacre which took place in South Africa in August 2012](#).

At least 60,000 mostly working-class people, mainly from what is now known as the Greater Manchester area, had assembled to hear parliamentary reformer Henry Hunt.

They came because they wanted alleviation from the terrible hunger, poverty and unemployment that had beset the region following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815.

While for some at the gathering, the vote - universal suffrage - was the primary aim, for the majority it was seen as a means to an end, a better life and conditions.

The day ended in a lethal cavalry charge on a peaceful demonstration, with 15 killed and hundreds injured.

Leigh has called for Peterloo to be taught in the curriculum. There are obvious reasons why an act showing the working class moving against the system is not widely taught!

Some commentators in the next year may seek to portray this as just a battle for parliamentary 'reform' and not of greater importance to the working class.

But the film shows the major role of the working class, newly herded into the textile factories of Lancashire.

Leigh has also been faithful to the facts, honestly portraying the feelings and interests of the different classes in the Manchester district at the time.

He clearly shows that the government and Manchester authorities were fearful of the influence of the French Revolution and 'sedition', particularly in the north west of England, even after the defeat of Napoleon. He also describes the injustices heaped upon the poor through the courts.

Some of the best scenes are those which contrast the differing approaches of various sections of the authorities, and various sections of those fighting for reform.

The polemical style is reminiscent of Ken Loach's 'Land and Freedom' at times. This I think adds to the narrative rather than detracts, as the clash of ideas is at the heart of the story of Peterloo.

On the side of the state, the possibility of buying off discontent is raised - "If we ask the factory owners to raise wages by a shilling a week..." - instead of the iron hand.

For the reformers, there is the debate between 'constitutionalists' who favour 'peaceable' and piecemeal reforms, against those who favour more radical aims and methods.

These arguments are still relevant to the political situation we face today, as are the scenes which raise warnings about the security of the protest - against the thuggery of the state and those who oppose reform for reactionary reasons.

So there are plenty of contemporary themes in Peterloo, which perhaps confirms that in 200 years, not enough has yet changed in the world.

The cast includes Rory Kinnear as Henry Hunt, and Maxine Peake, who plays the mother in a working-class Manchester family, whose son is based on a real-life participant in Peterloo itself. The whole cast is excellent.

If I had one criticism, it would be that the film does not deal with the aftermath of the massacre. The terrible repression, the decline in the reform movement for a period. And the later rise of the working class as the dominant force for change, with the rise of trade unions and later the formation and [battles of the Chartists](#).

But this is a minor quibble. I would recommend every Socialist Party member and supporter sees this. Why not go as a group and organise a discussion around its themes? This is an excellent film about an event that has been largely hidden from the view of most people in Britain and worldwide.

- Mike Leigh's 'Peterloo' is on general release in cinemas from 2 November 2018

New pamphlet out now:

Produced by the Socialist Party north-west region, this new pamphlet brings together four new articles about the 1819 events: "The Massacre," "Revolution, War and Struggle," "The run-up to Peterloo," and "After Peterloo," together with previously published material on the Pentrich Uprising and the Great French Revolution.

The pamphlet is £2 per copy, or bulk orders 10 for the price of 7.

- Order from leftbooks.co.uk
- or email Hugh Caffrey at manc_sfe@hotmail.com

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 12 October 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, phone 020 8988 8771 or email editors@socialistparty.org.uk.

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

Views of letter writers do not necessarily match those of the Socialist Party.

Brazil's climate threat

On the day the UN released its special report on global warming, showing we now only have until 2030 to halt climate change, the biggest winner in the first round of the Brazilian presidential election was far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro.

He, like right-populist US president Trump, is a climate change denier, and plans to withdraw Brazil from the UN's already insufficient Paris climate accord. Alarmingly, he also intends to allow more deforestation of the Amazon rainforest for profit. The loss of further trees from the Amazon will affect everyone on Earth.

Forests play a crucial role in maintaining global carbon dioxide levels, the rise of which is a major cause of climate change. Worldwide, trees suck up 2.4 billion metric tons of carbon each year, with the massive Amazon absorbing a quarter of that total.

The Amazon also emits 20% of the world's oxygen. Recent research suggests it is the 'beating heart of the Earth', as millions of trees work together as a kind of 'biotic pump' releasing water vapour into the air. This process creates 'flying rivers' in the atmosphere that circulate water and weather patterns around the planet.

But the Amazon is losing its ability to soak up carbon dioxide, emit oxygen, and play its crucial role in water circulation and weather. Deforestation and higher temperatures from global warming have resulted in trees dying at an increasing rate.

Cattle ranching accounts for about 70% of Amazon deforestation. Trees burnt for fuel release their captured carbon dioxide, and the metabolic activity of cattle also releases it.

The UN report says the planet will reach the crucial threshold of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by as early as 2030, risking extreme drought, wildfires, floods and food shortages for hundreds of millions of people. It urges governments to make "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society."

But as shown by Trump in the US and Bolsonaro in Brazil, the capitalists only want to further their own national interests and personal profits. Climate change is therefore a political issue that can only be mitigated by socialist international solidarity and economic planning. Workers around the world can unite to revolutionise energy production by taking over the energy giants and big corporations and forcing a switch to renewable, green energy.

Richard Worth, Newton Abbot, Devon

Cuts breed rats

I am writing to express my anger and that of my estate-wide neighbours. We are currently subject to an infestation of rats on our estate.

The rats are in blocks of terraced houses and down alleyways. These rats venture into kitchens and gardens with impunity.

The Wokingham Borough Council environmental health department has said it is up to individual residents to pay for pest control workers to come and deal with each property's complaint. This is ludicrous and extremely dismissive from the council.

This estate is council-owned land, and therefore we believe the council should be paying for the widely reported rat problem within. It is a futile exercise to pay individually for pest control as it will not eradicate the problem.

Alongside this, how many people on this estate do you realistically believe can afford £80-plus for pest control to just come and have a look for the rats, and then pay for further treatment on top? This is a highly impoverished area. We are the forgotten of Wokingham.

This is disgusting and such a disgraceful attitude to have towards your tenants. We feel as though the council considers this estate to be the back passage of this town - however, sometimes a rear end needs a wipe!

We may live in the back end of the borough, but we are not excrement! We deserve respect and we should be allowed to live with some dignity.

We pay council tax to Wokingham Borough Council, yet we get ignored, our services cut, and told to live in a rats' nest on a condemned estate.

We will be left here to rot for a number of years before any progress is made with development! And it is common with developments, like the plans for Gorse Ride South, that the habitats of local wildlife such as mice and rats will be disturbed and the problem will escalate further.

There will be a meeting held on 29 October at 2pm in St Mary and St John's Parish Hall, Vicarage Close, off Billing Avenue, Gorse Ride South Estate. At this meeting we will be discussing the following: rat infestation and how we want it handled, cutting of our bimonthly large items removal truck, and the fly-tipping that has been caused by this, removal of garden waste bags and collection of them, maintenance and appearance of the estate and its alleyways, and the council's environmental health and housing departments needing to work together to solve the infestation and service issues.

Mrs J Robertson, Finchampstead, Wokingham

End NHS bullying

Stephen Barclay, a health minister, announced a "fit and proper person test" following Mid Staffordshire's care scandal report. It could result in NHS directors being sacked if they fail to confront bullying.

This will strike many NHS workers as the ultimate hypocrisy while an eight-year-long Tory assault on the health service rages on, entrenching the conditions which result in bullying. As many as 25% of workers report abuse from other staff.

Insecure contracts, poor pay, improper management, excessive workloads, transfer of staff to subsidiary companies, and competition from privatisation are all sources of tension among staff.

Migrant and ethnic minority workers are among the foremost victims of bullying and discrimination. Outrageously, as many as 15% of minority ethnic staff report bullying from colleagues and managers.

Bandage-like solutions to the open wound of bullying and discrimination include proposals to appoint workforce "learning and culture ambassadors," the latest non-measure to fail to heal divisions.

Trade unionists know the best remedy to management misconduct is active and strong organisation among workers. Where unions thrive there's cooperation and harmony among workers. Even in periods of adversity, leadership can hold to account managers who fail - without the 'aid' of trendy, top-down, useless exercises to salve top bosses' consciences.

All's not lost, however. Across Britain there are examples of a workforce resisting in the health service. From victorious industrial action to prevent outsourcing to subsidiaries, which resulted in the national pause of their implementation, to a revolt among staff in NHS Highlands to end a culture of bullying in that trust, to workers joining service users to prevent cuts and closures as in the amazing triumph in Mansfield where the Socialist Party played a leading role.

Socialist Party members are active across NHS unions, fighting to make unions work for NHS workers. Join our fight to make unions unafraid to challenge misconduct and fight bosses who exploit us. Join the Socialist Party to help transform our workplaces and renationalise our NHS.

William Jarrett, NHS worker, North Shields

Shared GP appointments

The editors of the Daily Torygraph recently put the heading "All say 'aaah'" to three letters they received.

A reader in Lancashire wrote: "It has been suggested that up to 15 people should see a GP at the same time. What next? Perhaps we could have conference telephone calls for the Samaritans."

From Kent: "Sir, I am proud to have trained as a state-registered nurse, and even prouder of my husband, who has just retired as a GP after 33 years. We were both horrified to read of this scheme.

"Confidentiality is key in a medical consultation. Many people arrive with one set of symptoms in mind but go on to talk about something else, such as mental health issues, as well as other symptoms they had not felt relevant, or deeply personal complaints that they would never raise in a group situation.

"People tell GPs things that they would not tell their parents or partners. Are we seriously considering the end of holistic medicine and continuity of care in the most effective and precious area of the NHS?"

Then a doctor from south London probably best sums up the scorn for May's governance of the NHS: "Might I suggest that, in view of recurring crisis due to the shortage of NHS hospital beds, plans should also be considered for these to be shared?"

It is not surprising that, also in the Telegraph, in a featured article, Lord Archer - the closest of allies of Thatcher - said "our party is in a mess," and after a recent visit travelling through the north of England, "I'd vote for Corbyn if I lived up there."

What a confirmation of the editorial in the last issue of the Socialist on the "Tories' crisis conference," that "enormous anger exists in society. There is huge hunger for an alternative."

Keith Dickinson, Shepherd's Bush, west London

Greens lack answers

A couple of us attended a local Green Party meeting in Malvern, Worcestershire, where Green MP Caroline Lucas was speaking, as it was open to the public.

We sold four copies of the Socialist, and both a written and oral question of mine were taken. It was very good that page 3 of the Socialist had an article on climate change!

Generally we agreed with what Caroline Lucas said, and she is a good speaker. But I found that although she could say what is wrong with society today, she didn't seem to have any answers apart from calling for 'proportional representation' - electoral reform so the Green Party could potentially get some more MPs.

Her position supporting remaining in the neoliberal EU is obviously different to ours. Although she said the EU's Common Agricultural Policy wasn't working well, and that the Agriculture Bill currently up before parliament would give us the opportunity to be more environmentally friendly, so a bit of confusion there!

She also mentioned the 'political will' to change things needed to be there, but there was no indication as to what that might involve.

She mentioned there should be a redistribution of wealth - with something like a pay differential of 1:10 in workplaces - but what is her plan for this to be achieved?

A number of the points she raised which were supposed to reduce environmental damage would put the cost onto workers, not onto those who can and should be made to pay - the capitalists. There was also no mention made during the whole meeting of the major corporations that operate here and internationally who really decide what happens - so need to be owned and controlled by the working class.

Ruthie McNally, Welland, Worcestershire

Audio version of this document

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What the Socialist Party stands for

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

The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Public services

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

Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled 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.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites!

Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
 - Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
 - A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
 - No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!
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