

- Editorial of the Socialist issue 1032

Attacks on Corbyn supporters ratcheted up

No retreats: Corbyn must stand firm against the Blairites

With Jeremy Corbyn now in his fourth year of leadership of the Labour Party and the Tory government deep in crisis, no time can be lost by Corbyn and his allies in Labour's leadership in preparation for winning a general election.

This won't be possible on the basis of making serious concessions to the pro-capitalist Blairite Labour MPs, such as the suspension from party membership of left Labour MP Chris Williamson.

Rather than focusing on democratising the Labour Party and getting out socialist policies, their present stance is one of retreat in the face of the right wing's further avalanche of allegations of antisemitism.

The right have been spurred on by the recent split from Labour of nine of their co-thinkers, no doubt partly designed to step up the pressure against Corbyn inside Labour.

The suspension of Williamson, following a false charge of antisemitism, was the culmination of an onslaught by the Labour right to achieve that end as part of their project to isolate and damage the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell.

Their assault was backed up by the capitalist media, right-wing GMB union leader Tim Roache, and even in parliament by Tory leader Theresa May, who joined the chorus of demands for Labour to take action against Williamson.

Windrush

This is the same Tory prime minister who last year presided over the Windrush scandal, which showed how racist her party and policies can be. But when she flung a manufactured accusation of racism at Williamson, unfortunately Labour's leadership did her bidding.

The ruse for attacking Williamson was a speech he had made in which he rightly said that Labour's response to accusations of antisemitism has been "too apologetic". In the same speech he referred to antisemitism as a "scourge", making it clear that he in no way defends it - his argument was that the Labour Party does counter it and isn't a racist party.

While action should always be taken against any genuine cases of antisemitism in any political party or elsewhere in society, there hasn't been any research evidence that Labour has a particularly high incidence of it.

The party's general secretary, Jennie Formby, has reported that, over the last ten months, 453 party members have been investigated for antisemitism, which is less than a tenth of 1% of the membership. And these were investigations rather than members judged as guilty.

Last Sunday's Observer carried a shock-horror exposé that "senior officials" in Labour had "opposed the suspension of some members accused of antisemitism". So for the baying hounds of the capitalist media, accusations alone are sufficient grounds to justify suspension, without consideration of the nature or severity of the comments or deeds.

Labour's deputy leader Tom Watson, who spearheaded the assault in the parliamentary Labour Party, said on the Andrew Marr Show on 3 March that it ought to be the "Jewish community" and "not Labour Party members" which is the judge of whether Corbyn eradicates antisemitism.

His "Jewish community" is not the many Jewish people - with Rabbis among them - who reject the slur of antisemitism against Corbyn, but a layer of right-wing, anti-Corbyn Jewish people who concur with Watson's purpose.

Outrageously, Watson has argued that Wavertree MP Luciana Berger had been "bullied out of her own party by racist thugs". The court convictions for serious antisemitic attacks on Berger have been of neo-nazis, not Labour members, and the executive committee of Wavertree Labour Party stated that any suggestion that it is a party to bullying and antisemitism is a "false and slanderous accusation".

The pressure on Berger from her local party was due to her continually criticising Corbyn, as Wavertree party members also explained.

The departure of the nine deserters has been used by Watson to launch a rallying call to anti-Corbyn Labour MPs to join a new "social democratic forum". Sunday Times deputy political editor Caroline Wheeler commented that this grouping "is already committed to carrying out new policy work and could eventually have its own spokespeople and even separate whipping arrangements, which could make it easier for the group one day to declare its independence from Corbyn's leadership and morph into a new party".

No quantity of concessions from the leaders of Labour's left - other than complete capitulation to a pro-capitalist agenda - will reconcile these right-wing plotters to accepting Corbyn's leadership and the pro-working-class policies he stands for. If Labour is to be transformed into a 100% anti-austerity party, the only way to respond to them is to launch a counter-offensive.

Mobilise support

Corbyn and McDonnell - along with others in Labour's leadership who they can convince to take this approach - above all need to mobilise the support of the hundreds of thousands of party members and workers outside Labour who want to see them win a general election and deliver bold socialist policies.

Several constituency Labour Parties have passed motions supporting Chris Williamson, viewing the right's smears for the travesty that they are. And more could be won to a strategy of exposing and fighting such attacks.

The Blairite saboteurs can and must be replaced, through democratic reselection of candidates and withdrawing the Labour whip if they defy the Labour leadership in key votes. The nine who split saw the writing on the wall. Four had already faced successful no confidence motions in their local parties.

The right-wing majority of Labour MPs don't represent Labour's rank and file - they are a product of the years during which the party was transformed into Tony Blair's capitalist New Labour Party, organisationally and politically. If Labour is to become a mass workers' party - in tune with its founding aims - the anti-democratic changes to the party structure must be reversed and trade union influence significantly stepped up.

The capitalist media and politicians promote the myth that Labour won't be able to win a general election if there are defections by its MPs, but the opposite is the case: it won't be able to win if pro-working-class policies are undermined and dismissed by these careerist, pro-big-business Blairites.

The Socialist Party's call for the convening of a labour movement conference to draw together all socialist fighters, trade unionists and anti-cuts activists to discuss and debate how the Labour Party can be transformed has never been so urgent. Chris Williamson has a recent record of actively campaigning for democratisation of Labour and could help to organise such a conference as well as participating in it.

One organisation he can't look to for support is the Corbyn-supporting Momentum, the leader of which, Jon Lansman, has been disgracefully tail-ending the right's attacks. So-called lefts like Owen Jones and Novara Media's Ash Sarkar have also failed to support Williamson.

The class-based dividing line in the labour movement becomes ever clearer. A Labour Party that is 'two parties in one' will not be able to deliver Corbyn's policies. It is necessary to stand firm in fighting for one that can.

International Women's Day 2019

A socialist programme to end women's oppression

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party national organiser

In the era of austerity and capitalist crisis, women are struggling against their oppression. Women are taking action - marching, striking, getting organised.

The weak Tory government has not launched a major offensive against women's legal rights as it would provoke a mass opposition movement. But that is not to say that women's rights and conditions are not under enormous attack. It's estimated that 86% of the burden of austerity falls on women. But women are fighting back.

In Glasgow, a strike for equal pay for the home care workers in October 2018 delivered a £500 million settlement. At the victory rally, the mainly women workforce recognised the importance of the support they had, especially the solidarity action by the mainly male refuse workers.

Women Against State Pension Inequality (Waspi women) organise to challenge Tory changes to the state pension age that disproportionately impact women born in the 1950s.

In many other struggles and strikes women are often to the fore - in housing campaigns, in the climate strikes, against schools funding cuts, and fighting cuts, closures and privatisation of public services from respite care to youth services to refuge closures.

The 'MeToo' hashtag has brought wide attention to sexual harassment on campuses, at work, on the streets. The Google workers' global walkout showed how the potential anger on this issue to be channelled into workers' action.

All women suffer sexism in class society. Working-class women suffer doubly - as women and as workers. But what makes working-class women most important is that they are part of the class that has the potential to be the agent of socialist change to end the capitalist system and, therefore, to end the inequality, racism, homophobia and sexism which are inherent in capitalism.

Here we draw up a ten-point programme for discussion on what is necessary to end women's oppression.

1. End austerity now

For women, austerity is a 'quadruple whammy'. As women are the majority in the public sector workforce, the cuts to jobs, wages and pensions hit hard. Women also tend to suffer more when services and benefits are cut, and are left filling in the gaps as state services are withdrawn. As women's economic independence is eroded, the ability to flee domestic violence is threatened. Meanwhile funding for women's refuges has been cut.

a. Build a mass movement against all cuts. No to cuts in jobs, benefits and public services. Coordinated strike ballots by the trade unions and a mass Saturday demonstration called by the TUC

b. Call on Labour councils to reject Tory cuts and set budgets based on need, using their reserves and borrowing powers to fund them

c. Tories Out - build mass action to fight for a general election now!

2. Homes and health for all

Lack of affordable housing can force women to stay in abusive relationships. Female street homelessness is rising more quickly than the overall rough sleeping population. Over half of NHS admissions and 77% of the NHS workforce are women

a. A mass building and renovation programme of decent, affordable council housing to make it easier for women to leave a violent relationship. For councils to use their existing powers to introduce rent control now

b. Save our NHS. Invest in publicly owned, democratically run, high quality and free adult, social and children's care. For a socialist NHS - free at the point of use and under democratic control, providing all necessary services including mental health services. Kick out the privatisers

c. End the schools funding crisis. 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

3. Defend living standards

Over a third of the female workforce, representing 3.6 million workers, earns less than £15,000 a year. Poverty pay has a knock-on effect in old age with over 300,000 pensioners condemned to poverty. Almost half of lone parents live in poverty, the majority of them women.

a. 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. A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay

b. Reverse the pension attacks. Increase the state pension by 50% now as a step towards a living pension

c. Scrap Universal Credit. Labour councils should use their existing powers to implement payments to make sure no family or individual suffers as a result of this cruel Tory measure. Reverse all benefit cuts

4. Stop sexual harassment

More than half of female students have suffered some form of sexual harassment on campus resulting in the victims avoiding lectures and seminars. More than half of women workers have faced sexual harassment in the workplace. Resisting sexual harassment at work is even more difficult on a zero-hour contract.

a. Build campaigning student unions that challenge sexism. For democratic and accountable elected committees of students and workers to have a say in how incidents are dealt with so decisions are not left in the hands of overpaid and unaccountable university vice-chancellors or boards. Free education would free women from the vulnerability student debt creates

b. For trade unions to organise and campaign against sexual harassment including organising strike action to stop sexual harassment in the workplace. Support unions taking action to defend safety measures such as the RMT union's campaign to keep the guards on trains. Scrap zero-hour contracts

c. For mass action to establish intolerance to sexism such as the strikes of students and workers in the Spanish state against the sexism of the judiciary

5. Fight workplace discrimination

An estimated 54,000 women a year are sacked by employers as a result of getting pregnant or taking maternity leave. 44% of working mothers earn less than before they became pregnant. The 3.5 million women workers aged 40-50 find employers unsympathetic to their menopause symptoms. Pregnancy and the menopause are trade union issues.

a. For trade union organisation to stop bosses sacking pregnant women and to ensure that women's pay and terms and conditions are not cut on their return to work after maternity leave

b. For a trade union campaign to win improved working conditions including the right to time off work for symptoms of the menopause and for training of trade union health and safety reps to help enforce this

c. End period poverty. For free, quality sanitary products to be provided in schools, workplaces and relevant public services

6. No cuts to domestic violence services and refuges

Every week two women are killed by a partner or ex-partner. Every day over 90 women and 94 children are turned away from domestic violence services because of funding cuts, closures and lack of affordable housing. A fundamental change in how society is run is needed to end violence against women altogether.

a. Build local and national campaigns to fight cuts including calling on councils to set no-cuts budgets - the prerequisite for providing women with a means to escape domestic violence

b. Back the Women's Lives Matter campaign appeal to John McDonnell to pledge that an incoming Labour government would replenish any reserves a Labour council used to avoid cuts to domestic violence services and refuges now and underwrite borrowing made for the same purpose

c. Fight for democratic and accountable services specialised to suit the needs those fleeing domestic violence. Services should be brought in-house with democratic accountability to and by service workers and users

7. Real justice for victims of violence

It is estimated that in Britain only 15% of all rapes are reported to the police, and only 7% of those result in conviction. Of all the women killed globally almost half are killed by their partners or family members.

a. Increased and improved services to help those women affected by domestic violence, rape and abuse, including paid time off from work to access support

b. Re-instate access to legal aid. Increase threshold for legal aid so that all women can access it for divorce cases. No to enforced mediation

c. Campaign for police accountability and the election of judges under democratic control by the working class

8. For the right to choose

Although the 1967 Abortion Act was an important victory, women are still denied the real right to choose when and whether to have children. In Northern Ireland a mass movement and an independent working-class political voice is needed to fight for access to safe, free and legal abortion. The housing crisis, low pay and lack of affordable childcare can make having children a more difficult choice. Austerity means that 37% of children will be living in poverty by 2024.

a. Mass struggle, led by the trade unions, to defend the right to free, safe and legal abortion. End the need for two doctors' signatures. End the Northern Ireland exception

b. Access to free fertility treatment on the NHS for all who need it. Nationalise big Pharma and fund research into safer, more effective contraception and the right to fertility treatment on the NHS - no to rationing of IVF.

c. End maternal and child poverty. Reinstating pregnancy grants, maternity and child benefit for all and end the government's two-child policy on tax credits and Universal Credit. Raise benefit levels to reflect the real cost of pregnancy, childbirth and bringing up a child. Fight for free, flexible childcare. For the right to paid parental leave

9. Build fighting mass organisations

Women need fighting trade unions and a political voice against austerity and fighting for jobs and better pay and terms and conditions. For trade unions this starts with a programme of fighting cuts, resisting the anti-trade union laws, and building democratic and inclusive structures. The Blairites offer no alternative to austerity which is planned poverty for the working class.

a. 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

b. 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.

c. Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites!

10. Fight for socialism

Ending violence, discrimination and oppression against women requires a fundamental transformation in the way that society is structured and organised. Through democratic workers' control and management of the major banks and corporations - moving away from a system based on inequality and exploitation to one founded on equality and co-operation - it would be possible to not just end the economic problems which women face, but to prepare the ground for eliminating sexism and cultural oppression too. Movements towards collective action by workers, including the vital building of a mass workers' party will be critical steps in the struggle for socialism.

a. 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

b. A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment

c. No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

[Click here](#) for the CWI statement for International Women's Day

International Women's Day 2019: End oppression with fight for socialism

Clare Doyle, CWI International Secretariat

On Friday 8 March, women and many men across the globe are striking, marching, protesting and celebrating International Women's Day in unprecedented numbers.

Not all those who mark this special day will know its historical origin. Chosen by socialists in 1910, International Women's Day has been a day for women workers to strike and demand a better deal.

More than ten years after the financial crash of 2007-08, there has been no real recovery in the world economy. In Europe and the US, policies of austerity have hit women hardest. Many of the hard-won steps forward in the lives of working women are being reversed.

While the super-rich get richer, the overwhelming majority of the world's population live in what seems like unending poverty. Even the capitalist class and its advisers are wary of the tsunami of revolt that could be already in the making.

In France, there has been an eruption of anger against the government of the one-time banker, Emmanuel Macron. The 'gilets jaunes' (yellow vests) protests are marked by the substantial participation of women. The entry of the organised working class, with sustained strike action, into this very determined 'uprising' would give it the necessary strength to overthrow not just the government but the bosses' rule in one of the most important countries in the world. This would indeed spread like a prairie fire!

In the 21st century, capitalism is rotten ripe for socialist change and the conditions exist for workers' movements to leap from country to country. To achieve the socialist transformation of society, a party is vitally needed that stands for workers' democracy and international socialism.

Labour movement

In the absence of major struggles on the political or industrial plane internationally, the vacuum has been filled by movements on important single issues on their own - like the environment, abortion rights, violence against women, anti-racism, caste discrimination, LGBT+ rights, and so on, which for the most part have not been linked up to the broader labour movement.

The 'new wave of feminism' is to be welcomed if it enhances women's struggle against the specific oppression they face in capitalist society. With the spread of the #MeToo phenomenon worldwide - there has never been more awareness of, and opposition to, the horrors for women of sexual harassment and rape.

At the same time, it is necessary for socialists to politically challenge pro-capitalist feminist ideas which are present in women's movements globally. As socialist feminists, we recognise that the real liberation of women is entirely linked to the need to get rid of capitalism which, based on inequalities of power and wealth, sustains and perpetuates women's oppression.

We base ourselves on the working class as the key force in society to bring about real and lasting change. We emphasise that it is only through a united struggle of the whole of the working class - not just individual sections - that this will be possible.

In many countries a working-class fightback is gaining momentum. In Scotland we saw 8,000 female council workers strike for equal pay and win, with the support of their male colleagues taking unofficial strike action. There have been walkouts at Walmart,

McDonald's, Google and Amazon on the issue of women's rights.

There have been mass strikes of women garment-workers in Bangladesh for a living wage and walkouts of women on the tea plantations in Sri Lanka for 1,000 rupees a day (just US \$5.50). In Ireland, nurses and midwives have been on strike in a struggle over pay and conditions.

The oppression of women has been an endemic feature of all class societies. It will not be ended until the prerequisites for a classless socialist society are firmly established through the elimination of capitalism.

Class divisions

While education, upbringing and religion can play a big role in perpetuating stereotypes and encouraging the oppression and harassment of women, socialists see the roots of these attitudes in the division of society into classes. For slave-owners, feudal lords and capitalists, the family has been a vital construct for transmitting their property and wealth from one generation to another.

Over the years in many developed capitalist economies, public services have been fought for which have eased the burden of working-class women in relation to childcare and other 'domestic' responsibilities. Now, the clock is being turned back. Even the basic provisions of state health and education systems are under threat. To achieve lasting reforms, the active involvement of workers and their organisations - above all the trade unions - is required.

Members of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) have succeeded in reviving the tradition of striking on 8 March. In the Spanish state last year, at the initiative of the Sindicato de Estudiantes (student

union) and Libres y Combativas, the socialist-feminist platform of the CWI in the Spanish state, over two million students and workers walked out to protest against the horrific levels of violence against women. This year, with even more determination, they will be striking and demonstrating.

In Belgium, there will also be walkouts from work and tens of thousands of women in Argentina and Italy will be demonstrating under the slogan 'non una di meno' (not one less). Likewise in Brazil against the newly elected, openly sexist President Bolsonaro, who turns his back on the vile murders of women and LGBT+ rights campaigners, and aims to reverse hard-won and vitally needed abortion rights.

In the US, International Women's Day marches will no doubt be fuelled by Donald Trump's world-renowned misogyny. There will be walkouts in southern Ireland, where one year ago the campaign to repeal the law forbidding abortion was nearing its historic victory. The pressure is now on for that same right to be available in the north. In Poland the struggle continues to reverse attacks on abortion rights...

- See [socialistworld.net for the full statement](https://socialistworld.net), and for updates and reports of action around the world
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90 years since Trotsky's expulsion from Soviet Union

Leon Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism

Lenny Shail, Socialist Party national committee

Ninety years ago this January, Leon Trotsky was exiled from the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin and his increasingly powerful bureaucracy gave the command.

The motivation was not personal rivalry, but their need to wipe out the original ideas and methods of Bolshevism, the legacy of the 1917 October revolution, and any element of workers' democracy within the Soviet Union.

Often it is asked: how could Trotsky, a key leader of the Bolshevik Party alongside Vladimir Lenin and the head of the Red Army, allow Stalin to rise and cement power around himself? Why did Trotsky not take power himself with the Red Army? How could he be 'outmanoeuvred' by Stalin?

Trotsky answered many of these questions himself, on the basis of his analysis of the political degeneration of the young workers' state.

From a Marxist standpoint, it is completely superficial to present the conflict as a personal struggle between rival leaders. Stalin and Trotsky, in their different ways, personified conflicting social and political forces. Trotsky in a conscious way, Stalin unconsciously.

Trotsky opposed and organised against Stalin through political means. Stalin fought Trotsky and the 'Left Opposition' through state-sponsored terrorism.

"Stalin conducts a struggle on a totally different plane," Trotsky wrote. "He seeks to strike not at the ideas of the opponent, but at his skull."

Revolution isolated

Lenin and Trotsky had made clear from the start that the October 1917 Russian revolution could not survive indefinitely in isolation, especially in such an economically backward country. It had to be the spark for further revolutions across Europe and the world.

Even at the height of civil war and invasion by 21 imperialist armies, the Bolsheviks organised the first conference of the Communist (Third) International in 1919 to help organise Marxist revolutionary forces on an international basis.

Subsequent revolutions in Germany and Hungary failed, primarily because of the mistakes of inexperienced leaderships - and the lack of a party with the clear methods and ideas of the Bolsheviks.

Defeat in the German revolution in 1923 - which the blunders of Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin in the Third International's leadership contributed to - reinforced the isolation of the young Soviet state.

Years of imperialist wars, followed by civil war to crush the revolution, had taken the lives of millions and caused severe privations. The civil war in particular cost the lives of many of those most courageous in defending the ideas of the revolution.

The mass of workers became exhausted. Seeing the failure of revolutions in larger, industrialised economies demoralised the masses still further.

In this crushing context of setback, isolation and low political activity, the crystallisation of a bureaucratic caste became possible. The bureaucracy formally defended the revolution, but increasingly it put its own comforts and privileges before the interests of the international revolution.

Like in any period of setback for the working class, even some revolutionaries turned away in despair from the genuine democratic and working-class methods of Marxism. They were joined by ambitious middle-class careerists, and malcontent, incompetent officials looking for promotion. This was Stalin's base of power in the party.

In 1923, Lenin called for the removal of Stalin from the post of general secretary. He was aware of the dangers to the revolution and Stalin's increasing work to bureaucratised the new state and the Bolshevik Party - by then called the Communist Party.

The Soviet Union was becoming "a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations." Lenin began preparing a struggle against the bureaucratisation of party and state. But his death in 1924 prevented him leading that struggle.

Left Opposition

With Lenin dead, Stalin began a systematic elimination of those fighting to defend workers' democracy. In sync, the Third International increasingly became a tool of Russian foreign policy for the Stalinist bureaucracy.

There was an organised terror campaign against any remnant of the October revolution, over the course of two decades, until Trotsky was finally murdered by a Stalinist agent in Mexico in 1940.

But none of this happened without a struggle.

In 1923, Trotsky's Left Opposition was established as a faction of the Communist Party. He proposed the 'New Course' in October: to campaign against bureaucratisation; for proven working-class elements to take leading positions in the party; for elections to all party positions; a plan for industrialisation; and policies to improve the lot of poorer peasants.

The bureaucracy feared the programme of the Left Opposition - for the restoration of workers' democracy - would find the ear of new sections of workers. And it did. Thousands of workers supported it.

A struggle also erupted over Stalin's so-called theory of 'socialism in one country'. The Left Opposition continued to argue for genuine internationalism, and warned this policy would change the Third International into a counter-revolutionary tool of Stalin's foreign policy.

The tragedy of the Spanish revolution, 1931-37, proved the warning correct. Eventually, in 1943, at the request of Tory prime minister Winston Churchill and US president Franklin Roosevelt, Stalin dissolved the Communist International.

Stalin's direction and policies in the 1920s and 1930s resulted in disasters for the Soviet and international working class. The failed revolution in Germany in 1923, and subsequent mistakes, paving the way to fascism

in 1933. The betrayal of the British general strike, when workers could have taken power, in 1926.

The bloody massacre of the Chinese revolution, 1925-27, at the hands of the capitalist and landlord Kuomintang party. Stalin had instructed Communists to join it, and allow Kuomintang forces to enter Shanghai in April 1927 - setting them up to be massacred at the hands of pro-capitalist military leader Chiang Kai-shek.

The list goes on. Many other struggles broke out with the Communist Party and Soviet state as Stalin manoeuvred against any possible opposition to his strengthened totalitarian regime.

Stalin's purges

But by the end of 1927, the dominant Stalinist faction had decisively defeated the Left Opposition, imprisoning or exiling its leaders.

Members of the Left Opposition, followers of Lenin and Trotsky's ideas, were arrested in their thousands and sent to labour camps in Siberia. Not only did they refuse to collaborate in any way, they continued their protests in the camps!

In October that year, on the tenth anniversary of the October revolution, Trotsky was forced out of the Kremlin and had to take refuge with oppositionist friends. Days later, he was expelled from the party.

Later, fellow oppositionist Adolph Joffe killed himself. It would be the first of many of Lenin and Trotsky's allies and Left Oppositionists who were driven to death, or directly murdered, by Stalin's regime.

A "river of blood" opened up between the genuine ideas, methods and workers' democracy of the Bolsheviks and the October revolution, and the totalitarian methods, and systematic and ruthless repression of Stalinism.

In January 1928, Trotsky was forced into his last foreign exile - his first two had been under the Tsarist regime! First he was deported to Kazakhstan. Then in February 1929 he was deported to Turkey, on Prinkipo island, near Istanbul.

By then the struggle against Stalin had opened up internationally. Left Oppositionists in Europe and the Americas had been expelled from the Communist Parties and the Third International.

Some created small groups that proclaimed sympathy or solidarity with the Left Opposition. During this period, Trotsky worked on formulating the major programmatic statements of the International Left Opposition.

Fourth International

Rather than respond emotionally to his exile, and the continued degeneration of the Soviet Union, Trotsky set about the difficult task of assembling the forces of a new international revolutionary organisation. The Fourth International was founded in 1938, adopting as its core policy document Trotsky's 'Transitional Programme'.

Trotsky understood that the material gains of the 1917 revolution, and the nationalised planned economy that the bureaucracy rested on, still remained. In fact, they would allow the Soviet Union to continue to make some progress, and should be defended as part of a struggle to remove the Stalinist caste that had consolidated power at its top, in a political revolution for genuine workers' democracy.

Trotsky warned that without democracy, the Soviet state would suffocate and continue its slow degeneration until it collapsed. A prognosis that proved true, decades later, when Stalinism fell in Russia and Eastern Europe and ruinous gangster capitalism took its place.

For Trotsky, the Third International presiding over the failure and destruction of the organisations of the German working class and allowing Adolf Hitler to take power signalled the Communist International and its leaders were no longer of any use to the working class around the world.

"An organisation which has not been wakened up by the thunderbolt of fascism... is dead and cannot be revived."

The forces of the Left Opposition around the world set about building a new international based on the original and genuine methods of Marxism, Lenin and the October revolution.

Despite his central role in helping to lead the Russian working class to power, Trotsky was in no doubt of the historical issues at stake and his role while in exile. "I think the work in which I am engaged now, despite its extremely insufficient and fragmentary nature, is the most important work of my life..."

"Now my work is the most 'indispensable' in the full sense of the word... To carry out the mission of arming a new generation with the revolutionary method."

Debates around socialism, Trotskyism and Stalinism are once again opening up due to the inability of capitalism to provide a future for workers and young people. There are many essential lessons in the struggle of Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The Socialist Party and Committee for a Workers' International are proud to stand in that tradition today.

Further reading from leftbooks.co.uk

Short pamphlets

- '1917: The Year that Changed the World' collection of articles from the Socialist
- 'In Defence of October' by Leon Trotsky
- 'Stalinism and Bolshevism' by Leon Trotsky (out of print - [text available at socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk))

More detailed books

- 'History of the Russian Revolution' by Leon Trotsky
 - 'The Revolution Betrayed' by Leon Trotsky
 - 'The Transitional Programme' by Leon Trotsky
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Boot out failing Grayling and the other Tory wreckers

Simon Carter

What does it take before one of the most incompetent government ministers in modern times is sacked? I am of course talking about transport minister Chris Grayling.

The Tory cabinet member has cost the public a small fortune over the recent Brexit ferry fiasco.

His department has had to pay Eurotunnel £33 million to avoid legal action by the Channel Tunnel operator - which was excluded from the bidding process of a £108 million contract to ensure extra cross channel transport capacity in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

Effectively the company made a massive £33 million profit for doing absolutely nothing! This huge blunder comes after Grayling's department scrapped a £13.8 million ferry contract it had awarded to Seaborne, a start-up ferry company with no ships!

Probation privatisation

Grayling has also been slammed over his disastrous privatisation of the probation service in 2013 when justice minister.

The National Audit Office found that his scheme had been "extremely costly", both in terms of the huge increase in the number of offences committed by reoffenders and in terminating the failed contracts of private companies. The cancelled contracts are expected to cost the public purse more than £467 million!

And on it goes. Grayling, in an official report, was also held responsible for overseeing the disastrous introduction by private train companies of new railway timetables in 2018, when rail users faced thousands of train cancellations for weeks on end.

Labour reckons that Grayling's policy disasters have, in total, cost the economy and the public an unbelievable £2.7 billion.

The Socialist Party says that, instead of handing out huge sums to private contractors, public transport - including rail and ferries - as well as the probation service, should be renationalised, with democratic workers' control and management, and compensation paid to shareholders only on the basis of proven need.

Grayling has also previously been accused of sleaze over claiming expenses on his flat in Pimlico despite having a constituency home just 17 miles away from parliament.

And, as minister at the Department for Work and Pensions under Cameron's coalition government, he oversaw axing 100,000 staff which disastrously impacted on both workers and claimants.

Yet despite these (and more) monumental failings, the right-wing neoliberal minister continues to enjoy Prime Minister Theresa May's 'full confidence'. Clearly, to protect the public not only should the transport minister be sacked but the whole Tory government booted out.

Solidarity with Chris Williamson

An open letter from two Socialist Party branches (edited extract)

1 March 2019

Dear Chris,

We send you our solidarity against the unfounded attack on your reputation and unwarranted suspension.

The attack and suspension is one of the numerous attempts by the right wing of the Labour Party to undermine Jeremy Corbyn.

Your suspension will not stop the attacks nor stop the use of false accusations of antisemitism as a battering ram against the left.

While any Labour Party member who indulges in antisemitic remarks or any racist, homophobic or other inappropriate behaviour should be investigated, there needs to be evidence.

It is a grave mistake for those who claim to be Jeremy Corbyn supporters to be taken in by unwarranted attacks and unwarranted claims of antisemitism or other inappropriate behaviour, when it is clear this is a political attack on you and a proxy attack on Jeremy.

The right wing is using allegations of antisemitism as they know antisemitism is quite rightly linked in the minds of the population with the terrible crimes of the Holocaust and of fascism - a political ideology and movement that was also used to smash up the organisations of the working class and democratic rights.

Your strong support for increased accountability of Labour MPs will have infuriated those MPs who see parliament as a career and who defend the capitalist system.

If you organise a speaking tour to defend your reputation and to continue your campaign for greater democracy, and for the delivery of Jeremy's policies, we will certainly support your meeting in the Derby and Nottingham areas (and would help organise it if you so wished).

We believe Jeremy and John McDonnell need to be more proactive in arguing politically against the right wing of the Labour Party and also in organising against them. This includes the current deputy leader, Tom Watson, who has been undermining Jeremy.

You may not recall that one of our members chaired the public sector union Unison's South Derbyshire Healthcare annual general meeting when you spoke at it.

He would like to say that at no time in that meeting did you say anything that would have justified the scurrilous allegations against you; he would say that you spoke as one would wish other Labour MPs to do and which few do (with honourable exceptions).

Although we may not agree on every political issue - such as how Labour-led local authorities should fight the cuts and the Socialist Party's support for a pro-worker socialist EU Exit - that does not in any way mean that we do not defend you against your suspension.

We believe that Labour councils should refuse to make cuts, using reserves and legal borrowing powers to give themselves time to stand up and really fight for proper council funding, building a mass campaign involving the council trade unions and the local community. Local councils making cuts undermines the Labour Party.

You may be aware of the Socialist Party's call for the convening of a labour movement conference to draw together all socialist fighters, trade unionists and anti-cuts activists to discuss and debate how Labour could be changed into a 100% anti-austerity party.

Our two branches hope you will support this as well as the re-admittance of the 75 members of ours that continue to be excluded from the Labour Party (with over 1,000 years membership between them, including one of our local member's with approx. 20 years membership).

Despite any differences, what unites us is campaigning for a Jeremy Corbyn-led socialist Labour government and increased democratic accountability within the labour movement.

We believe a way to help defeat the pro-big-business wing of the Labour Party is to campaign for pro-worker, no cuts policies AND to organise for:

- The introduction of mandatory re-selection of Labour MPs - we cannot rely on more MPs like Chris Leslie to leave; they need to be deselected
- Labour MPs to live on a worker's wage - like Dave Nellist and Terry Fields (both Labour MPs in the 1980s and Militant supporters)

Once again, please accept our solidarity.

Yours,

Charlie Taylor and Gary Freeman

On behalf of Derby and Nottingham Socialist Party branches

Poverty pay for 1.2 million public sector workers. 2.7% pay rise for MPs

Trade union action to end low pay now!

Scott Jones

More than one million public sector workers are paid less than the minimum amount needed to make ends meet, as set by the Living Wage Foundation. They calculate this as £9 an hour, or £10.55 in London.

Outsourcing to private companies is partly to blame. But many of the 1.2 million are employed directly by the state. Both sets of workers account for 20% of the six million who are paid less than the Living Wage in Britain.

Employers and the government get away with it because the legal minimum 'national living wage' is £7.83 an hour across the country. It is set to rise to £8.21 from April.

The Socialist Party argues that not only is the legal minimum not enough - neither is the so-called Living Wage. We call for a minimum wage of £10 an hour as a step towards a real living wage. Council workers in London are starting to demand more to avoid £10.55 becoming the new maximum.

If the state can afford to give already generously paid MPs a 2.7% pay rise to £79,468 a year then it can afford to pay public sector workers a wage that means there's not too much month left at the end of their money.

Public sector trade unions should strike and fight to end low pay for all state-employed and outsourced workers and an end to privatisation which drives down pay and terms and conditions.

They should then link up with private sector trade unions - whose members in the BFAWU bakers' union, Unite the Union and others walked-out for better pay in McDonald's, TGI Friday's and JD Wetherspoon last year - to win a minimum wage of £10 an hour for all, with no youth exemptions.

We want a real pay rise - and we want it now!

A&E 4-hour waiting targets scrapped - Save our NHS!

NHS nurse

NHS England is backing a plan to scrap four-hour A&E waiting time targets 'within a year'.

The current target is for 95% of patients to be seen at A&E within four hours.

Ditching this will mean that many patients with so-called 'less serious' illnesses could be forced to wait for well over four hours - which is already a long time!

The government has previously talked about the idea and doctors warned that getting rid of the target would have a "near-catastrophic impact" on patient safety.

A&E staff have also expressed concerns about triaging - deciding the order in which patients are treated.

But, as I have seen in wards I have worked in, the current targets are already insufficient. Emergency units have not hit the target since July 2015 for example.

In Wales - where the target will not be scrapped - Maelor Hospital in Wrexham in January posted the worst waiting time for an accident and emergency unit in Wales on record. Only 49% of patients were seen in under four hours.

Instead of scrapping A&E targets we need a big increase in staff to meet patient demand.

We demand:

- Reverse all cuts and privatisation to guarantee the needed funds to meet targets and treat patients
 - Urgently train more NHS staff to work in overstretched wards and hospitals
 - Trade union action to ensure they are paid a real living wage
 - Nationalise all the big companies leeching off the NHS, cancel the PFI 'debts'
 - Run the NHS under democratic workers' control as a real public service
-

Them & Us

Profits for housebuilders...

Persimmon has made the biggest ever profit by a UK housebuilder - with almost half of its house sales made through the taxpayer-funded help-to-buy scheme.

The profits of £1.09 billion is a result of money made from each house it sells nearly tripling since 2013, when the government introduced the help-to-buy scheme in an attempt to help struggling families buy their first home.

This shows the scheme, as we said at the time, wouldn't go to help workers and young people afford housing but has instead lined the pockets of the bosses.

...homelessness for us

As the bosses rake in government money and turn it into huge profits it is estimated around 100,000 children are waking up in B&Bs and other temporary accommodation every morning as the lack of affordable housing bites.

Stop post-16 education cuts

- UCU general secretary election: Fight for an accountable left leadership

Sam Morecroft, UCU Democracy Commission (personal capacity)

University and College Union (UCU) general secretary Sally Hunt has resigned her position on health grounds. Socialist Party members have had criticisms of her leadership, and we stand by those criticisms, but of course we are saddened she has been forced to resign and wish her the very best in the future.

Unfortunately, an emergency meeting of the union's national executive committee voted by 26 to 21 to hold the election for Sally Hunt's replacement straight away.

This was done in full knowledge that the elected Democracy Commission will be putting forward rule changes to UCU's Congress this year. These will allow members to recall a general secretary and force an early election.

The left on the national executive committee opposed an early election because the new general secretary will be in place and their contract signed before congress can take a view on the Democracy Commission recommendations.

No doubt at our congress the right wing will again disgracefully argue that the democratic right of recall constitutes an attack on the employment terms and conditions of the general secretary! Last year they walked out and shut down our congress. Will they try to frustrate the will of the sovereign body of our union again this year?

Unelected senior official Matt Waddup has announced his candidacy for general secretary. Disgracefully, he says he doesn't agree with the Democracy Commission's recommendations and doesn't want to be subject to the recall process.

Who is he to challenge an elected body created by our democratic congress? He's never even worked in education!

Worse still, he was key to the stitch up that withdrew the threat of further strikes in the USS pension dispute last year. Before then, all of the leverage was with us after 14 days of magnificent strike action.

Victory sabotaged

Now, the employers are attempting to impose contribution increases on our members, despite the Joint Expert Panel report demonstrating our pension scheme is healthy. What should have been a total victory has been sabotaged.

Unfortunately, left candidates in the national executive committee elections - which just closed - did not concretely raise the demands for recall put forward by the Democracy Commission. Undoubtedly that means we are in a weaker position than we would have been in responding to these developments.

It's essential that the left and the rank and file in the union unite around one general secretary candidate, not just to defeat Waddup, but to continue the fight to democratise our union and to build a strategy to overcome the Tory anti-union laws and defend post-16 education against cuts, marketisation and privatisation.

The announcement in recent days that all staff at the University of Surrey have been offered voluntary redundancy shows the severity of the attacks we face.

UCU Left should call an emergency conference, alongside groups like the Branch Solidarity Network and UCU Rank and File that grew out of the pension strike, to discuss these developments and our response.

We need to unite around a candidate who will:

- Pledge to respect the recommendations of the elected Democracy Commission and the will of congress
- Take only their existing wage and donate the rest of the exorbitant £130,000 a year salary back to the labour movement
- Implement the policy agreed by national executive committee to mobilise to get the Tories out and fight for a Corbyn-led anti-austerity socialist government
- And most importantly, develop a strategy to beat the Tory anti-union laws and build the strike action needed to defend post-16 education, including rebuilding our branches, particularly in further education

As we go to press, the results of the national executive committee elections are still to be announced, which will have a bearing on the general secretary election.

Interview with a shop worker: Rigid bosses demand 'flexible' work

The Socialist spoke with a shop worker and union member, Olivia, about her conditions at work.

Tell us a little about your role.

I work as a flexi-keyholder for a clothing retailer which has a good presence on the high street. This means that I get a base rate of pay - which is minimum wage - unless I'm the most 'senior' member of staff. In this instance, I get 50p an hour more, but not in all cases.

When are you not paid the extra?

If I'm the only other 'manager' in when a manager goes on lunch, I'm effectively the most senior member of staff. But I don't get paid the extra if I'm covering breaks, despite being expected to be an acting manager.

I don't receive any overtime rate - which the company clearly benefits from - as, on average, I do more than my contracted hours. I'm also consistently underpaid when doing opens and closes.

I'm paid from 8.45am. But it takes at least half an hour to do an open and I'm expected to open the shop for 9.00am.

Likewise, we close at 5.30pm and I'm paid up until 5.45pm to do a close. But on a good day I'm not out before 6pm.

If I have discrepancies to investigate it can take much longer with no extra pay. Moreover, if something goes wrong or any mistakes are made, I'm disciplined as a manager.

Are you trained to the same level as the rest of the management team?

As my role is only a flexi position I'm in a kind of limbo. I'm constantly told that I'm only a sales assistant by my manager when another manager is in, but I'm treated like a manager when I'm the most senior member of staff.

I'm often not privy to emails or instructions which are only accessible to management. This means I'm not fully equipped to fulfil the role expected of me but I'm quick to be disciplined when, inevitably, my lack of training means I'm not fully aware of what is expected of me when I'm an acting manager!

What are your hours like?

I'm on a 16-hour contract but my hours are far from stable. On an average week, I'll be expected to do 20 hours but sometimes it'll drop to 16 and often I get called in at short notice to cover shifts, doing up to 40 hours with little notice.

How regularly do rotas come out?

It all depends on my manager's mood! Sometimes I get rotas four weeks in advance, but usually a week's rota will only come out a couple of days before that week begins.

Besides which, even if rotas do come out in advance, I'm asked to do extra shifts so rotas are more like a guideline than fixed in stone.

How does this affect you?

I have a six-year-old son and this instability is a nightmare for making childcare arrangements. If I have to work more hours, I have to arrange childcare at short notice.

Also, despite explaining countless times that childcare finishes at 6pm, I am often put on closes as an acting manager, which means I have to get somebody to pick my child up as I'm never out on time.

The hardest part is having to pay for my childcare week by week, whereas I get paid monthly. This means that I'm regularly out of pocket as the pay I would receive for doing a 40-hour week doesn't arrive until the end of the month, but if I've mainly worked 20-hour weeks beforehand it's a real struggle to pay for childcare while still being able to afford to get by.

- Socialist Party member Amy Murphy was elected president of shop workers' union Usdaw last year. She stood on a programme of a £10-an-hour minimum wage, an end to zero-hour contracts, and supporting members taking action to defend jobs, pay, terms and conditions.

- The Socialist Party calls for bringing the retail giants into public ownership under democratic workers' control and management. And in 2017 pushed Usdaw conference to back the nationalisation of failing retail firms.
-

MPs boost their own pay - Only action will grant us a pay rise

Marion Lloyd, PCS national executive committee (personal capacity)

MPs have given themselves a 2.7% pay increase.

It doesn't sound much, but for them it means a rise of over £2,000 a year - more than many members of civil servants' union PCS take home in a month. For us, the government's own workers, it is another year of pay caps and pay misery to look forward to.

Surely what's good enough for MPs is good enough for us. This is why it is vital that our members back the union's 2019 pay campaign.

A ballot will run from 18 March to 29 April. 124,000 members in the civil service and related public bodies will get a vote.

The ballot is for a mandate to take strike action in support of the union's pay demands. These include a 10% pay rise (£2,400 cash underpin) and the restoration of national bargaining on pay and employment conditions.

Undemocratic threshold

Failure to meet the 50% turnout threshold prevented the union taking action in 2018. Despite a massive yes vote - 50,726 to 8,528 - the turnout was only 42%.

PCS assistant general secretary and Socialist Party member Chris Baugh says: "Busting the 50% turnout and a massive yes vote for strike action will put huge pressure on this weak and divided government and will force them to take our demands seriously.

"Many reps meetings have made it clear that they remain determined to do this. PCS activists again have a key role to play.

"The government's failure to take our demands seriously should lead to national strikes and targeted action.

"The latter will be supported by the strike fund - which the union is taking steps to substantially supplement through a 50p levy on members' subs on top of the £1 million allocated from the High Court victory against the Department of Work and Pensions for removing check-off - the right of PCS members to pay their union subs directly from their salaries."

The elections for the PCS assistant general secretary and the national executive committee will overlap with the union's pay ballot - 16 April to 9 May. And PCS branches are currently nominating candidates.

Chris Baugh is the assistant general secretary candidate for Left Unity, the union's broad left. Nominations close 7 March but it is already clear that Chris will receive many more nominations than the minimum 15 required to stand.

Chris has widespread support among the lay activists in the union. This gives good reason to believe Chris will win.

He is expected to be opposed by an ultra-left candidate and a PCS full-time official. The latter is shamefully backed by the Socialist Workers' Party and some others in Left Unity.

Chris Baugh and those who support him will be campaigning for his own election and the whole of the Democracy Alliance slate, which Left Unity is part of.

Victories on pay and the elections are our twin priorities in the weeks that lie ahead.

Workplace news in brief

Cleaners and guards fight MoJ outsourcing

Four unions held a day of action against outsourcing on 26 February. They marched to three coordinated strikes and organised other protests too.

Cleaners and security guards in independent union United Voices are demanding a living wage at the Ministry of Justice. Members of civil servants' union PCS at the government Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy also want a living wage plus equal terms and conditions and an end to outsourcing.

Cleaners in the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain at the University of London want equality with directly employed staff. Transport union RMT also backed the action.

Enfield school workers strike

Staff in the National Education Union (NEU) are striking against academisation at Galliard school in Enfield, London did so again on 27 February.

Later that day, Labour Party and Unite members, backed by the Socialist Party, organised a council lobby where a Labour councillor refused to vote for any more cuts. The NEU will strike again 6-7 March.

Greenwich cleaners fight privatisation

Cleaners and caterers in unions Unite and Unison working for GSPlus in Greenwich protested outside the council on 27 February demanding they be brought back in-house.

Birmingham bin workers strike

Bin workers in Birmingham took more strike action against blacklisting by the Blairite council. They will strike again on dates throughout March if they're demands aren't met.

Come to the Birmingham rally hosted by National Shop Stewards Network - Defend workers from council attacks.

Tuesday 12 March, 6.30pm, Birmingham and Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street, B3 3BS.

Speakers include: Howard Beckett - Unite assistant general secretary, Mandy Buckley - Birmingham home care workers Unison convenor, Rob Williams - National Shop Stewards Network chair, and a bin workers' rep from Unite.

NSSN conference

National Shop Stewards Network conference

Fight council cuts

Elect Sue Atkins in Coxford

- Southampton Socialist Party candidate - against all cuts and privatisation
- Vote 'Socialist Alternative - Putting People First' on Thursday 14 March

Sue Atkins, the no-cuts Coxford by-election candidate

On Wednesday 20 February, protesters gathered outside the Civic Centre in Southampton to demonstrate against another round of council cuts, and to appeal to councillors to take steps to protect school budgets.

Under pressure, the Labour council has retreated from the closure of one care home - but shamefully voted to close another, Glen Lee, despite opposition from care workers' unions Unison and Unite.

Others came to protest against the introduction of parking charges for disabled drivers. With the Tory government's survival in doubt, why would any council take the axe to cut vital services now?

Schools are in crisis as a result of Tory government funding cuts. A young school pupil, Adam, aged ten and chair of his school council, spoke in front of the entire council. He appealed for them to stop the cuts to his school.

At a recent public meeting, Valentine Primary's National Education Union rep said everyone in the school was working to the limit, and the loss of any staff would make meeting the children's needs impossible.

Teachers have now voted by 100% to strike against job cuts. They have the Socialist Party's full support.

At local schools in Coxford, from 2012 to 2020:

- Fairisle Infant School is losing £35,942 - £116 per pupil
- Sinclair Primary School is losing £58,800 - £301 per pupil
- Oasis Academy Lord's Hill is losing £343,900 - £566 per pupil

These cuts mean larger class sizes, cutting subjects like art and music, and losing teaching assistants and admin staff.

12 Southampton schools are in budget deficit. Those that aren't have made cuts to balance their budgets. The total deficit stands at over £4 million.

But this is just 2% of the council's £192 million budget! It's the equivalent of a chocolate bar in a family's weekly shopping. Can't the city council find that from its reserves to protect school budgets?

Central government has cut £136 million from the city's funding since 2010. In response, the council has cut 1,000 jobs. Yet we are paying higher and higher council tax bills for less and less services.

Councillors say there is little they can do. But that's a total cop out.

When councillors closed Oaklands Pool in 2012, they said they had no money. But then they found £1.5 million to refurbish it instead - in response to the massive support the campaign built.

Last year, the council underspent by £2 million, and increased its reserves by £4 million. Why isn't this money, our money, used to stop cuts to school budgets and the closure of Glen Lee care home?

Coxford's rebel anti-cuts councillors, Keith Morrell and Don Thomas, presented a no-cuts council budget to Southampton council in February 2013. This showed how the council could use its reserves and borrowing powers to set a no-cuts budget to protect jobs and services.

Such a stand by Southampton council today, against a minority Tory government on the brink of collapse, would attract mass support from council workers and their unions, and across the city, if linked to building a campaign to demand the restoration of government funding.

The by-election in Coxford on Thursday 14 March is an important opportunity to build on the campaigning work of Coxford councillors Keith, Don and Tammy Thomas, and the community which has worked with them to stop cuts to vital services.

If you agree with the stand taken by Keith Morrell and the successful campaigning work he helped to lead, then join us and get active building support for the fight to stop council cuts now.

Stop School Cuts community meeting

- Monday 11 March, 7.30pm, Lordshill Community Centre, Cromarty Road, Southampton SO16 8LX
-

Cuts must stop - boot the Tories out

- Councils should set no-cuts budgets
- Join International Women's Day protests
- Save domestic violence services

As the clock ticks down on Brexit, hapless prime minister Theresa May is desperately trying to resurrect her deal with EU ministers, which was heavily defeated by MPs in January. As well as using 'project fear' - ie exiting without a deal - May has attempted to bribe MPs representing 'left-behind communities'.

Given the scale of austerity cuts by Tory-led governments over the last decade, every working-class community has been left behind!

No one should be taken in by the paltry headline £1.6 billion 'funding pot' - which will be spread over seven years and is a drop in the ocean compared to the billions cut in council funding by successive governments. Yet some Blairite Labour MPs might be suckered into supporting May by this financial carrot.

Only last year the Institute for Fiscal Studies reckoned that an extra £19 billion of government spending a year over the next five years is needed to end austerity. The Socialist Party argues that even that will only make a small dent in austerity and is peanuts compared to the trillions of pounds in bailouts and 'quantitative easing' handed to the capitalist class since 2008.

While the parliamentary circus continues to play out the Brexit fiasco, millions of working-class people continue to suffer low pay, falling living standards and crumbling public services.

One particularly vulnerable group are women impacted by domestic violence. Since 2010, funding for domestic violence services has been cut by around a quarter.

The Women's Lives Matter campaign was set up to fight these cuts. Amy Cousens, a Leeds-based activist and Socialist Party member, says: "If women's lives matter, we need action to stop cuts now! 90 women and 94 children get turned away from domestic violence refuges every day, on average. Domestic violence is the main cause of homelessness among women. Tory austerity shows that for this government, women's lives do not matter."

Amy points out: "125 Labour-led councils hold around £14 billion in reserves. We call on Labour councils to reject the Tory cuts that deny women these essential life-saving services."

"We are organising walkouts, meetings and protests across the country on International Women's Day. We have also launched a petition which calls on John McDonnell, who has backed our campaign, to guarantee that an incoming Labour government would replenish any reserves a Labour council used to avoid cuts."

Stop cuts to domestic violence services

- Women's Lives Matter day of action - International Women's Day
 - Friday 8 March, 12 noon
 - Assemble Parliament Square, London SW1P 3BD
 - For a round-up of IWD meetings and events see socialistparty.org.uk/whatson
-

Wildfires hit Europe - build for 15 March student climate strikes

Theo Sharieff, Socialist Students national organiser

Fire crews were battling gorse and grass fires across England, Wales and Scotland on 26 February.

Wildfires such as these are common in the spring and summer months, when warmer and dryer conditions increase the risk. But for this number to break out during winter is virtually unheard of.

They came during one of the hottest Februarys on record in Britain, but also all of Europe - where the occurrence of wildfires had already reached 480 across the continent by 1 March. The average number by this point in the year between 2008 and 2018 was just 21.

This news will no doubt upset and anger the tens of thousands of school and college students who walked out on 15 February to protest against the government's complete inaction and incompetence in the face of climate change.

In London, chants filled the streets around Westminster demanding that Theresa May and the Tory government be kicked out.

Socialist Students will be taking the campaign to the schools and colleges over the coming days to help students organise and build for the next round of walkouts on 15 March.

The wildfires underscore the incredibly urgent need for action against climate change. But what is the solution? And how can young people and workers best fight to achieve it?

Since 1988, 100 multinationals have been responsible for 71% of all greenhouse emissions globally, according to the 2017 Carbon Majors Report. And it is the system of capitalism which compels these companies to pollute our planet as a by-product of their pursuit of profits.

Many students who spoke on the Socialist Students open mic on 15 February in London observed that the system of capitalism compels these companies to pollute our planet as a by-product of their pursuit of profits. Socialist Students agrees.

We think we need therefore to fight for a clear alternative to capitalism. A socialist alternative, where the companies responsible for climate change, as well as the banks and top 150 companies which control around 80% of the British economy, are publicly owned under the democratic control and management of workers and young people.

Then it would be possible to not only rapidly halt pollution, but also fund and democratically plan mass investment into green technologies. Capitalism is incapable of this on the scale we need, as it stubbornly prioritises profits above everything else.

'Extinction Rebellion' events have popularised the tactic of small direct actions, such as blocking roads and bridges, to call attention to the problems of climate change.

But Socialist Students believes we also need to mobilise mass, collective action - specifically strike action, the main weapon of the working class - to shut down not only the roads, but the whole capitalist economy.

That's why Socialist Students will be going to the schools and colleges. Not only to helping students organise for the 15 March walkouts. But also to campaign for the trade unions - starting with the National Education Union and the University and College Union - to link up in struggle with striking students, to fight for a socialist future as the only means to save our planet.

Swansea: Labour council tries to dodge no-cuts protest

Gareth Bromhall, Swansea & West Wales Socialist Party

Swansea Trade Union Council lobbied the Swansea Council budget-setting meeting on 28 February, alongside Socialist Party members and trade unionists from across the city.

The Labour administration once again waved through tens of millions in cuts to jobs and services in Swansea, while praising itself for a job well done.

Our history of protesting at these meetings has had an obvious effect. The council moved the start forward to 3pm, effectively cutting off participation from most working people.

The council also attempted to undemocratically fill the public's ten-minute question time with predetermined questions - including one scaremongering about the "dangers" of not setting a "balanced budget," a direct attack on our call for legal no-cuts budgets.

Our call though was echoed, however, from the public gallery, by a local government workers' representative from public service union Unison, who called on the council to set a no-cuts budget in line with Welsh Trade Union Congress policy.

Socialist Party member Alec Thraves also spoke. He called on the council to fight austerity, and not make the £24 million cuts or sack the 145 teachers and 126 social care workers as set out in the budget. This garnered cheers and applause from the public gallery.

The budget was passed and the cuts and job losses are set to continue. But activists on the ground are committed to fight every one, and continue to challenge the right-wing Labour administration in its participation in the Tories' austerity agenda.

Hull: support for anti-cuts policies at Corbyn solidarity rally

Phil Culshaw, Hull Socialist Party

80 people gathered in Victoria Square at the Hull Trade Union Council (TUC) anti-austerity rally to show their backing for Jeremy Corbyn.

Called at short notice in the wake of the backstabbing of the Independent Group, the mood was defiant and determined.

A number of first-time Labour candidates standing in the council elections attended, and expressed support for anti-austerity policies. This included Tony Smith, one of the leaders of last year's FCC recycling workers' strike, which won them entitlement to sick pay.

The Socialist Party says that supporting anti-austerity policies should mean setting a no-cuts budget, using the council's reserves and borrowing powers, while mobilising the unions to fight to get the money back from Westminster.

Joe Gibbins, Hull TUC secretary, introduced Tony: "When the workers stand together in unity and action we can win - a lesson backstabbers like Tom Watson and the Independents need to learn."

Joe explained that the nearer the possibility of a Corbyn-led government committed to anti-austerity policies, the greater the lies and slander from the Tories and their lackeys in the workers' movement.

We sold eight copies of the Socialist at the rally, and over 20 at Hull TUC's annual general meeting.

Hundreds of Tamils protest against death-threat brigadier

Ketheswaran Sritharan, Tamil Solidarity

The case against Sri Lankan brigadier Priyanka Fernando, the war criminal who made death threats against Tamil protesters, has been adjourned to 15 March. Tamil Solidarity members organised a protest outside Westminster Magistrates' Court on 1 March.

Socialist Party members joined protesters in their hundreds to show both the British and Sri Lankan governments that Tamils will not be silenced. The event was filled with loud chants: "arrest, arrest - Priyanka Fernando" - "release, release - political prisoners" - "defend the right to protest!"

Tamil Solidarity also had members in the hearing to report on the case. The court has decided that Fernando cannot use diplomatic immunity as a defence.

Magistrates now need to decide whether his summons was served in time and in the appropriate manner. The court therefore has adjourned for the prosecution to submit all evidence of the summons sent to the Sri Lankan government.

The court has also noted that a previous hearing found the defendant guilty on two counts - but has concluded this was only one alleged offence, and not two.

There was an alarming update for Tamil activists and all protesters when the judge listed the duties of the former defence attaché. One was to document activists who might be working against the interests of the Sri Lankan government.

Tamils' right to self-determination has been a big no-no for every government in Sri Lanka. This clearly shows the Sri Lankan ruling class is on a witch-hunt.

Tamil Solidarity defends the right to protest, and calls for a conviction against the brigadier.

Theatre: Rouse Ye Women by Townsend Productions

Women workers' militancy during the 'great unrest'

Bill Mullins

Townsend Productions' new folk ballad "Rouse Ye Women" follows events in the 1910 chainmakers' ten-week strike in Cradley Heath, the Black Country.

The Cradley Heath women (and children) made the smaller, lighter chains at their own home forges, while the heavy chains were made by mainly men in factories. Home working was a common form of commodity production in Victorian and early 20th century Britain.

The result of course was the women were the most exploited of the whole workforces and subject to the vagaries of the middleman - the "fogger" - who gave them the work, including the tools and iron rods to make the chains.

What was unusual about the chainmakers was that, despite their relative isolation, they were roused to organise themselves in the first place it seems by a dynamic middle-class woman, Mary Macarthur. She agitated and led the women out on strike.

Mary had earlier founded the National Federation of Women Workers, which by the early years of the 20th century had grown to around 100,000 members.

The play follows in a long line of productions by Townsend. These include the events around the 1976-78 Grunwick strike led by Jayaben Desai, the building workers' strikes also in the 1970s - where pickets Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson were jailed for their activities - and a reworking of Robert Tressell's socialist classic *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, among other productions.

The songs and scripts were a joint effort by Neil Gore and John Kirkpatrick ([see interviews in the Socialist](#)).

Neil plays a number of roles including the fogger. Mary Macarthur is played by Bryony Purdue (who as far as I could tell is a trained opera singer). The third actor, playing one of the home workers, is Rowan G-del.

I thoroughly enjoyed the whole production as the songs, using familiar tunes but with new words, followed the build up to the strike and the tremendous support it had from around the country - primarily by the efforts of Mary MacArthur a one women publicity machine.

New unionism

The strike, as I explained in a question and answer session after the performance, was part of a larger workers' movement in Britain at the time known as "the great unrest".

Workers throughout the country, after a period of economic downturn and the rise of 'new unionism' at the end of the 19th century, saw a red tide of militancy develop which the capitalists were unable to stop.

The great unrest was eventually cut across by the outbreak of World War One.

The women chain makers eventually won their battle when the bosses were forced to concede a minimum wage which increased, it seems, the wages of the workers by 100%. That was from an extremely low point of around two shillings and five shillings a week - roughly £10 to £30 today.

As Neil Gore says in the play's programme: "The story of the charismatic union organiser and campaigner Mary Macarthur and the women chainmakers of Cradley Heath... helped to focus the attention of the world on the plight of low paid women workers in 'sweated' industries and make the principle of a national minimum wage a reality".

- Rouse Ye Women is on tour until 18 April. See townsendproductions.org.uk for dates

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.

Support Grenfell survivors, defend the FBU

On the occasion of the broadcast of the Channel 4 documentary 'Grenfell: Did the Fire Brigade Fail?' (18 February), Unite the Union branch SE/6246 (Brighton) renews its commitment to remember those who died and to support the survivors and members of the Fire Brigades Union. Neither will we forget the tenants of the 400 plus council owned buildings similarly at risk...

The documentary was constructed to deflect attention away from the real causes of the Grenfell tragedy: decades of health and safety deregulation, severe cuts to public services, outsourcing of key management responsibility to third parties to limit local authority accountability, and a culture where the needs and safety of working-class people are subservient to the need for profit...

The documentary failed to acknowledge the courage of firefighters in a situation of such an unprecedented scale, who repeatedly put their lives at risk in going beyond the limits for which they were trained.

It further failed to acknowledge the obstacles impeding the collective efforts of the fire crews caused by the sheer scale of the cuts across the city which delayed vital back up...

We need media platforms under the ownership and control of the movement that do not merely defend union members' interests against assaults from the mainstream media but rather enable working people to become the subject of their own development...

Chair - Ian Harrison, Secretary - Ben Armstrong, Unite the Union branch SE/6246

Hostile Tories

If the government can revoke citizenship at the drop of a tabloid, presumably very few of us are safe.

My father was born in Canada in 1914. I have had British nationality all my life. The new dispensation means I could be deported to Canada. Canada could say 'not on your nelly' and I would be up that well-known creek without a paddle.

It is not only Shamima Begum's rights that are on the line. Home Secretary Sajid Javid is attacking the rights of thousands of citizens in the UK.

He has been described as a 'human shield' for Theresa May's right-wing policies. It is no accident that the majority of the citizens affected will be from racial minorities - the very target of May's disgraceful "hostile environment".

Lord Acton observed that "all power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely." Javid was a Tory to start with, so he began from a low baseline. However, this latest display of arrogance takes the biscuit.

Derek McMillan, East Sussex

Blairite traitors

Blairites are starting to depart the Labour Party and most members will say 'good riddance'! These venal bureaucrats cite antisemitism as one reason, with not one scrap of evidence - because it's a blatant lie.

The other reason they give is that the party is being taken over by the "hard left". This is partly true. The left is using democratic procedures to rid the party of these Blairite infiltrators.

Party democracy is something these traitors despise. They conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism. Anti-Zionism is not antisemitism. Lots of Jewish people have written in support of Corbyn.

Some of these rogues would be at home in the Tory party, or even Ukip. Even if they succeed in keeping Corbyn from becoming PM, if the left succeeds in democratising the party we could have dozens of class fighters elected to parliament at the next general election.

It's possible we could be moving towards an Italian-style situation with a coalition on the cards, because the Tories, with their defectors, can't guarantee a majority in parliament either.

Bill Buchanan, Nottingham

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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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