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The Labour Party, Militant and 'infiltration'

In fury at the popularity of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership campaign, right wing politicians and media alike have been referring to 'infiltration' of the Labour Party by Militant supporters. Militant was the predecessor of the Socialist Party - whose supporters in the past were members of the Labour Party. This has not been the case for decades.

In the 1980s and early 1990s some of our members were witch-hunted out of the Labour Party and Militant became a banned organisation. Labour's structures were changed to try to prevent the influence of socialist ideas.

Militant supporters led the heroic struggle of Liverpool City Council, which won millions of pounds of funding back from the Thatcher government and built 5,000 homes, six nursery schools and created more than 6,000 jobs. It was Militant supporters who organised the anti-poll tax movement, through the mass non-payment of 18 million people, which defeated that tax and brought down Thatcher.

In a whole number of other campaigns - from forcing the shutdown of the headquarters of the racist British National Party, to leading a strike of 250,000 school students which defeated the threat to remove benefits from 16 and 17 year olds - Militant worked both within and beyond the structures of the Labour Party to organise fighting working class campaigns.

These re-printed articles look back at some aspects of this history.

What was the Labour Party and how did it change?

Extracts from a Socialist Party pamphlet written in 2001

Historically the Labour Party was a 'capitalist-workers' party'. The leaders at the top reflected the outlook and interests of the capitalist class. And the capitalists relied on them to keep the profit system safe for themselves.

But at the bottom of the party, workers were pulling in a different direction.

They had taken the initiative, through trade unions and socialist organisations, in forming the Labour Party so that they could have their own independent political voice. This had meant breaking with the Liberal Party which, for many years, claimed to be a 'broad church' representing both bosses and workers.

In the course of strikes and social struggles, workers discovered that the Liberals always came down on the side of the bosses. They drew the conclusion that they needed an independent party to represent their specific class interests.

Constant struggle

Having set the party up, workers demanded that the Labour leaders implement policies which put their interests first. A constant struggle took place between the two, but workers were always able to make their voices heard and have an influence over the policies and direction of the party.

Until the early 1990s the Socialist Party (then called Militant) campaigned for socialist ideas inside the Labour Party.

At the same time however, we argued that to achieve socialism it was necessary to have a cohesive party with a clear programme for fundamentally changing society. Workers and young people in

or around a mass capitalist-workers' party, as the Labour Party was, could, we argued, be won over to the idea of a fundamental transformation of society.

The Labour Party provided a mass forum for debating and comparing the ideas of fundamental socialist change with those of gradual reform of capitalism.

But New Labour sold its soul to the capitalist free market in the 1990s. And it was not alone. Leaders of the Labour, Social Democratic and Communist parties throughout the world abandoned any idea of fighting for fundamental change in the capitalist system or even for reforms in favour of working class people.

Instead they swallowed the dominant ideology, reinforced by the 1990s boom, that there was no alternative to the capitalist market and neo-liberal policies such as privatisation and deregulation. The disintegration and eventual collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe played a decisive part in this process. Socialism, the capitalists declared, was dead.

Labour ditched the historic Clause Four of its constitution, which committed the Labour Party to the "common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange". In its place the party embraced 'the rigour of competition', 'enterprise' and free market forces. (See below)

Tony Blair's aim when he became leader was to end socialism as the aim of the Labour Party and, as part of that, to sever the historic ties between Labour and the trade unions. He wanted to transform the Labour Party from a 'capitalist-worker's' party into an openly capitalist one.

Trade union link

Formally the link between the trade unions and the Labour Party remains in place. But the nature of that relationship has fundamentally changed. In the past workers could make their voices heard through the party structures. They could pass resolutions at the annual party conference and have a decisive influence over policy.

Now Blair's 'modernising reforms' have closed those democratic structures off. Prospective candidates, democratically elected by Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), have been undemocratically removed by a leadership clique at the top of the party.

The trade union vote at the annual party conference has been reduced from 90% to 49%. More importantly, the power that conference had to democratically decide policy has been removed and replaced by ineffectual 'policy forums'.

It's clear that the leadership want to further undermine the links with the unions by abolishing the general management committees to which local unions can send delegates.

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- This process of attacking the link between the unions and the Labour Party was taken to a whole new level by Ed Miliband and the Collins Review which, as the Socialist Party commented at the time of its adoption in 2014, meant "the destruction of the last remnants of the trade unions' organised presence within the Labour Party."
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Clause IV Part 4 (1918)

"To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

In 1995 Tony Blair replaced the Labour Party's 1918 socialist Clause IV Part 4 with a clause IV Part 2A containing a commitment to capitalist market forces:

Clause IV Part 2A (1995)

"A dynamic economy, serving the public interest, in which the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation to produce the wealth the nation needs and the opportunity for all to work and prosper with a thriving private sector and high-quality public services where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them."

The battle inside Labour in the 1980s

Here we re-publish extracts of an article by the late Andrew Price looking back at the witch-hunt of Militant from the Labour Party. The original article ('The Road to New Labour') appeared in Socialism Today in 2010 and can be found at www.socialismtoday.org

The 1970s was a decade of class struggle that radicalised growing sections of the working class.

This in turn affected the Labour Party, as Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) and party conferences endorsed a number of left-wing policies. The decade ended with the defeat of Callaghan's right-wing Labour government and the coming to power of Margaret Thatcher whose brutal brand of Toryism was unique in post-war Britain.

During the 1980s, support for Militant grew considerably in both the CLPs and the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Thatcherism accelerated the radicalisation of the working class and the shift to the left. Coupled with this was an organised campaign led by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer to democratise the party and ensure that future Labour governments did not drift into right-wing policies.

These developments were viewed with consternation by the ruling class which, through the mass media, expressed concern at the growth in support for socialism in the party. They urged their shadows in the Labour Party to take action to reverse these trends.

The demand was raised for disciplinary action against Militant supporters, branded as 'infiltrators' into the Labour Party.

This was an outright lie. From Labour's inception, Marxists had been party members. And, as a relatively democratic party, Labour had always allowed like-minded individuals to organise. What irked our opponents was our capacity to be better organised than most.

Expulsions

In 1983 party leader Michael Foot buckled to pressure and initiated the expulsion from the party of the then editorial board of Militant: Peter Taaffe, Ted Grant, Lynn Walsh, Clare Doyle and Keith Dickinson. Foolishly, Foot and others believed that by cutting off the head of Militant its growth in the Labour Party would stop.

Labour fought the 1983 election with its most left-wing manifesto since 1918. It called for the reversal of all Tory cuts, scrapping Britain's nuclear weapons, repealing anti-union laws, and the restoration to public ownership of all industries and services privatised by the Tories.

The Labour Party lost the election, with the Tories securing a massive parliamentary majority (albeit losing 685,000 votes). The ruling class and its shadows in the Labour Party argued that Labour's defeat resulted from a left-wing manifesto with too much emphasis on socialism.

Liverpool Labour

None of the proponents of this view were able to explain the results in Liverpool. Given a big national swing to the Tories, Liverpool, where Labour was clearly identified with the left, recorded a swing to Labour which, if repeated nationally, would have been sufficient to form a Labour government. The same was repeated in 1987 when Labour received 57% - its highest ever share of the vote in the city.

Such details were ignored as Labour was urged by its political enemies to 'modernise', including a purge of Marxists from its ranks. This was the key issue in the leadership election following Foot's resignation in 1983, where Neil Kinnock was elected leader.

Kinnock's efforts to 'modernise' the Labour Party were frustrated by two major developments.

In March 1984, the provocative behaviour of the Tories led to the epic miners' strike, which lasted until March 1985. At grassroots level most Labour members saw the Tories determined to smash the miners and their union, and expected Kinnock to support them.

But Kinnock regarded the strike as the last thing he wanted given his modernisation agenda. In private, he attacked the strike. In public, he maintained a craven silence.

The other development was the election of a Labour council in Liverpool led by a number of Militant supporters. Liverpool Labour council was determined to lead a fightback on behalf of a city whose people had been brought to their knees by poverty, unemployment and bad housing.

From the outset of the struggle, Kinnock was implacably opposed to the strategy of Liverpool Labour council, and attacked it in a disgraceful speech to Labour Party conference.

This speech was the green light for a mass purge of Marxists from the party. Quietly the word went out: where witch-hunters were in the majority, expel; where not, as in Liverpool, Labour's National Executive Committee would do the dirty work.

Gains undone

Kinnock turned from purging Militant to purging party policy. Every one of the gains made by the left was removed.

The major problem with Kinnock's plan to make the Labour Party more 'electable' was that it failed to impress the voters. In 1987 Thatcher was returned with a majority only slightly less than the Tories had in 1983.

In the dying years of her premiership, however, Thatcher scored a spectacular own goal with the introduction of the poll tax.

Throughout Britain millions of working people could not, or refused to pay this iniquitous tax. On the ground, Militant supporters responded by organising anti-poll tax unions, giving support to non-payers.

A Sun editorial referred to the advocates of non-payment as 'Toy Town Trots'. Following their lead, as ever, Kinnock employed the same term in a speech attacking non-payment with far more force than the poll tax itself.

At the height of the non-payment campaign, the Tories dropped Thatcher as leader. Militant - certainly not Kinnock and the Labour Party - deserves the credit for her downfall.

Read [The Rise of Militant](#) online or [buy the book at Left Books](#).

25 years since invasion of Kuwait

Gulf War 'unfinished business' remains today

25 years ago, Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded neighbouring Kuwait. Western powers responded with a build-up of forces that led to the Gulf War the next year. Niall Mulholland of the Committee for a Workers' International looks back.

The "New World Order" proclaimed by triumphant American imperialism after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was rudely interrupted by the Gulf War.

Iraq was recovering from a devastating Western-backed eight-year war with Iran, and was burdened by national debts from the conflict. But President Saddam Hussein still commanded an army of one million.

Most of Iraq's routes to the Persian Gulf are through Kuwait. During the summer of 1990, Saddam threatened Kuwait over coastal access.

Iraq claimed Kuwait was stealing from Iraqi oil reserves by 'slant drilling'. It also blamed Kuwait for depressing oil prices by producing more than its agreed quota. This was costing Iraq \$1 billion a month, and threatened to bankrupt the country.

Breakdown

Talks broke down. In late July, Iraqi armed forces amassed on Kuwait's border, and on 2 August they rolled in. The Amir of Kuwait and his cronies fled to Saudi Arabia. A week later, Saddam declared the annexation of Kuwait as Iraq's 19th province.

Saddam believed he had the 'green light' for his invasion from long-time ally the United States. But Western powers feared Iraqi forces would proceed to Saudi oil fields, giving Saddam control of more than half the world's oil.

As Militant, forerunner of the Socialist, commented at the time, the imperialist powers could not tolerate Saddam gaining even a "finger-hold on the lifeline of Western capitalism".

Western imperialism could intervene directly because of the changing balance of world relations. The Stalinist states, previously a counterbalance, were in their death throes. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev acquiesced. The United Nations Security Council unanimously imposed sanctions against Iraq, blocking foreign trade and freezing its foreign assets.

George Bush

Republican US president George HW Bush readily agreed to Saudi Arabia's request for troops to "defend the kingdom". A huge build-up of naval, land and air forces - totalling around 600,000 personnel - was amassed, primarily by the US, but with considerable British and French contingents.

54 other countries gave military or financial aid, including Egypt, Syria and Morocco. But the Arab League was divided, with some member states worried about the consequences of an influx of Western armies.

Saddam played on poor Arabs' resentment of the feudal sheiks of Kuwait and other autocratic Gulf regimes. The Iraqi dictator cynically portrayed himself as a modern-day Saladin, the 12th-century sultan who united Arabs against European crusades.

Occupation

He contrasted the West's rapid military response with their acceptance of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land. Despite his secular regime, Saddam called for a jihad against the Western invaders. But the brutality of his dictatorship

meant he could not overcome the hatred and suspicion of many Arabs.

Militant in Britain, and its co-thinkers across the world, were to the fore in the anti-war movement. We opposed the massive Western war machine in the Gulf. It was not assembled to defend 'democracy' or the peoples of the Middle East. It came to reinforce the power of the ruling classes of the US, Britain, France and others.

In no way did Militant's "implacable opposition to imperialist intervention" give the slightest support to the Saddam dictatorship. We called instead for support for "Iraqi workers and peasants in fighting for a socialist and democratic Iraq".

The US obtained UN Security Council authorisation for force if Saddam failed to leave Kuwait by 15 January 1991. Shortly after the deadline, it unleashed devastating air assaults. Saddam could only respond with largely ineffective Scud tactical missiles against Saudi Arabia and Israel.

After five weeks of Western coalition bombing, the Iraqi army was routed. It is estimated that 60,000 to 200,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed overall. Many of the Iraqi conscripts were mercilessly bombed as they retreated in a 20-vehicles-wide traffic jam. Estimates for civilian deaths, as a direct result of the war, range from 100,000 to 200,000. The coalition recorded some 300 losses.

The collapse of Iraqi forces indicated the internal weakness of Saddam's regime, and opposition from Kurds, Shia Muslims and others. But the US had no intention of entering Iraq. Bush feared it would see the coalition crumble, and embroil the US in a drawn-out conflict.

Western imperialism also preferred dealing with Saddam to possible destabilising alternatives. Just weeks after the war, Saddam was free to brutally suppress Kurdish and Shia risings with the remaining half of his army.

Reparations

Defeated Iraq was forced to agree to stringent terms by imperialism, and paid heavy reparations. Cruel UN sanctions, including on medicines, led to the death of up to half a million children.

But Saddam remained a thorn in the side of imperialism's interests in the region. Following the 9/11 attacks and invasion of Afghanistan, Bush's son, President George W Bush, returned to complete unfinished business.

Iraq's potential for weapons of mass destruction was eliminated under the 1991 peace terms. Despite this, Washington concocted the "imminent" threat from Saddam to justify the 2003 invasion and occupation.

Consequences

Like the Gulf War, this was to safeguard oil supplies and enhance imperialism's geo-strategic interests. Enormous marches across the world against the impending war were not enough to stop it. That would have taken strikes and general strikes as well.

The Iraq War was disastrous, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths. Iraq's infrastructure was destroyed. Imperialism's 'divide and rule' tactics led to sectarian bloodletting. The Western-backed, corrupt and repressive Shia-dominated regime in Baghdad antagonised Sunnis so much that reactionary Isis was able to make sweeping territorial gains.

After 25 years of war, poverty and dictatorships, it is more than ever the case that only class politics can show a way out in the Middle East. United working class action with socialist policies can bridge sectarian, national and ethnic divisions, and end the madness of capitalism and war.

Subscribe to the Socialist!

Mark Best

This edition of the Socialist and previous ones give a glimpse of the stormy period ahead of us. The Tories have announced they are ramping up attacks on young people and the organised working class. This autumn they will be trying to pass into law the anti-trade union bill, further attacks on benefits and more.

There is a massive need to fight back. At the same time as the attacks are being drawn up we've seen the rise of Jeremy Corbyn, showing the popularity of anti-austerity ideas. Whatever the outcome of the Labour leadership election it's clear that there are sharp turns ahead.

Analysis

This shows the importance of our weekly newspaper - the Socialist. Being able to react to events quickly, offer analysis and point the way forward is vital. The production of the newspaper is the result of hard work - writing, editing and laying out articles and pictures from around the country and the world.

Our members and supporters work hard writing for a publication that reflects their life and selling the paper to their friends and workmates. And we have a full time staff working on the paper every week.

We need to spend money on printing, distribution and wages. The Socialist is a newspaper funded by working class and young people most affected by the attacks and who see the need to fight back.

Production

To produce this paper on a regular basis, we need to have money coming in. One thing you can do to aid this is to make the simple step of subscribing to the Socialist to get it delivered direct to your door through the post each week.

So whether you are a long standing reader or this is the first issue you have read, if you would like to support our paper and receive our ideas and analysis regularly and would like to make sure you get your copy of the Socialist every week then you should subscribe via one of the methods below.

How about also taking direct debit forms (available from us) around the people you know who might subscribe?

Fascists caged, humiliated and driven out of Liverpool

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool Socialist Party

There was a great result for anti-fascist activists in Liverpool on 15 August who opposed far-right group National Action and their planned 'White Man March.'

The presence of hundreds of anti-fascists ensured that the 20 or so fascists who turned up never left Lime Street station. They were eventually caged in the left luggage office for their own safety, and smuggled out of the city in the back of two police vehicles. A truly humiliating defeat for this pernicious sect.

The number of young people participating, marching alongside veteran trade union campaigners, was incredible.

To see Mayor Joe Anderson depicted by the local media as the champion of the anti-fascist forces and to hear Labour councillors, fresh from implementing the most savage cuts for a 100 years, speaking on anti-fascist platforms, can only sow confusion.

Cuts

The cuts programme of the Tories, implemented by Labour councils, can create the conditions where the forces of reaction can gain when jobs and social provision are in short supply. Cameron, Farage and other assorted reactionaries use racist language to provide a scapegoat for the problems facing the working class.

History shows the necessity of uniting the forces of anti-fascism and linking it to the fight against austerity.

Every Labour councillor should be told loudly and clearly that the next time they vote to diminish services they are creating the conditions for the far right to sink its poisonous roots.

On this occasion the anti-fascists outnumbered the fascists by 20 to 1.

They threaten to return to Liverpool later in the year. The Trade Union movement should organise to harness the anti-fascist movement into a mighty force capable of not only driving the fascists off the street, but equipping the working class with a socialist programme which ditches all elements of the far right into the dust-bin of history.

We won't pay for their crisis!

Laurence Maples

As the number of officially unemployed people increases, Tory Cabinet minister Michael Hancock has announced punitive plans to force unemployed youth to attend military-style boot camps.

This is supposedly to teach young people employability skills, but is in reality a further intensification of the government's benefit sanctions regime and an attempt to blame the unemployed for the crisis caused by the criminal bankers.

The odious, privately educated, carpetbagger Hancock has never been subjected to such a regime himself - despite once failing to get out of bed for a TV debate with Socialist Party member Ian Pattison and subsequently lying about it!

This attack follows on from tens of billions of pounds of cuts to social security by the previous government and the withdrawal of housing benefit for under-21s, announced in the June budget.

Labour no better

The Tories are deliberately attacking the young as an easy target, but this is the thin end of the wedge.

Once implemented, the change will be extended to others, just as the single room rate for housing benefit has been extended to all under-35s. However, the vast majority of Labour MPs are no better, having abstained on the welfare bill vote in the Commons.

The ruling class is making young people and workers pay for a crisis caused by the failings of the capitalist profit system.

The banks trashed the world economy resulting in millions of workers being laid off, while low-paid, insecure employment has proliferated.

The Tories would have us believe that there is no money to fund jobs and services. Yet while the previous government cut £80 billion, the exact same figure was paid out in bankers' bonuses!

This is to say nothing of the £120 billion plus stolen by big business in unpaid taxes, the £700 billion corporate cash

hordes of UK plc, or the £93 billion in big business subsidies paid each year. Big business is the real scrounger!

A workers' government would eliminate unemployment by nationalising any company laying off workers and cutting the working week to share out the work with no loss of pay.

Taking the bosses' profits would also make it possible to raise the minimum wage to £10 an hour for all and bring an end to zero-hour contracts.

Socialist nationalisation of the major industrial and financial corporations would enable the democratic planning of the economy to end poverty, create full employment, and provide fully funded public services.

NSSN public rally and lobby of TUC Congress in Brighton

Speakers to include:

- Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary
- Mick Cash, RMT general secretary
- Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary
- Ronnie Draper, BFAWU general secretary
- Steve Gillan, POA general secretary

Sunday 13 September, 1pm

Charlotte Room in the Grand Hotel, 97-99 King's Rd BN1 2FW

(next to the Brighton Conference Centre)

www.shopstewards.net

Anger at bus service cuts in Sheffield

Alistair Tice, Yorkshire Socialist Party

Sheffield Bus Partnership is attempting to make drastic cuts to bus services in the city. Through removing, replacing, reducing and re-routing, 10-15% of all services will be cut. 50 buses a day will be taken off the network resulting in approximately 150 bus workers losing their jobs.

The proposals are set to be implemented in October, and the lack of consultation has sparked huge anger across Sheffield with around 4,500 people voicing opposition in one form or another.

March

The Socialist Party and TUSC (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition), along with the South Yorkshire Freedom Riders and Sheffield Trades Council, have been at the forefront of campaigns against these cuts.

On 30 July, thirty people marched from the bus station to the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, forcing our way into their office and handing in TUSC petitions against the cuts.

We will also be demanding that the Labour led council, which ultimately has the final say, should halt any changes until a proper public consultation has been conducted. The 'official' consultation has been a sham with hardly any publicity and very confusing questions - you need to be a geographer to work out what's going on!

The Tory government funding cuts, passed on by the Labour council, and the drive by private bus operators First and Stagecoach to increase profits by cutting "not sustainable" services, have led to this.

That's why the Socialist Party will continue to demand that the Labour council defy Tory cuts. We call on South Yorkshire Labour councils to use existing legislation to introduce bus regulation through a Bus Quality Contract.

In the long run though, bus services should be taken out of the hands of the 'big five' private operators and returned to public ownership.

Over 25 joined a protest called by Cardiff Housing Action outside the offices of Peter Alan, which boasts that it is the biggest letting agent in Wales and charges extortionate rents. Socialist Party speakers called on the Welsh Assembly to end this rip-off and tackle the housing crisis. photo Christos Palmer

TUSC by-election boost in Grimsby and Cleethorpes

Last May we fought in all 15 council and the Grimsby and Cleethorpes parliamentary seats.

The campaign focused on the closure of the Care4All centres in North East Lincolnshire. It was rumoured that two out of the four centres were to close. They provide day-care for the elderly and disabled and the Meals on Wheels services.

We received a lot of positive feedback from the residents of Croft Baker who were shocked and angry that such a vital service for their community was being targeted by more vicious cuts. People were glad to see somebody standing up against cuts and to defend services.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate Dave Mitchell won 4.1% in a council by-election in Cleethorpes. This was up on 1.8% in the last election.

Corbyn challenge: A very welcome upheaval in British politics

As the Labour Party prepares to send out ballot papers to the over 610,000 people registered to vote in its leadership contest, the *Socialist* asked Socialist Party executive committee member Judy Beishon some questions on the Socialist Party's view of Jeremy Corbyn's challenge so far.

Why has Jeremy Corbyn's challenge in the Labour leadership contest been so popular?

The Labour Party's right-wing leaders have been astonished and horrified at the over-flowing rallies for Jeremy Corbyn around the UK over the last few weeks. Those careerist, staunch defenders of austerity can only dream about attracting such large, enthusiastic and young audiences.

Jeremy Corbyn, with his rejection of austerity, has become a lightning rod for an impressive display of mass anger at declining living standards and the plight of young people faced with poverty wages and the lack of affordable housing. His bold stand rapidly became an outlet for the pent up anger and frustration at the years of cuts, privatisation and wage restraint that have been suffered.

The more venom and dire warnings that "Anyone But Corbyn" politicians and the capitalist media have flung towards Corbyn's campaign - including the prospect of Labour's "oblivion" and "electoral annihilation" - the more his support

has risen, such is the level of disillusionment in capitalist politics and desire for an alternative.

It also graphically reflects the point that the Socialist Party has long argued - that the population is significantly to the left of the present Labour leaders, as indicated by the polls that have showed majority support for public ownership of rail, energy and post.

John Cruddas MP used his own 'research' to try to argue the opposite: that the electorate rejects an anti-austerity position and the Corbynites are out of touch with reality. But the survey responses he received didn't back this up. According to his polling, 58% of voters think "we must live within our means, so cutting the deficit is the top priority". This doesn't mean, however, that they think the 99% should have to pay to reduce the deficit, while the richest 1% become ever richer!

Labour didn't lose the general election in May because Ed Miliband was 'too left-wing' as the right-wing media chorused, but because he was barely distinguishable from the Tories in policy. He was fully signed up to the pro-austerity mantra. Many voters in the Labour leadership contest are clearly drawing that conclusion - a YouGov poll for the Times put the most right-wing candidate, Liz Kendall, on just 8%.

Corbyn's detractors are also repeatedly arguing that the 1983 general election defeat of then Labour leader Michael Foot was due to a left manifesto. But in reality other factors were to blame, including the political sabotage of right-wing leaders like Denis Healey and Jim Callaghan, the 1981 split from Labour to form the SDP and the aftermath of the Falklands war which enabled Margaret Thatcher to create a patriotic wave.

As well as his condemnation of austerity, Jeremy Corbyn is attracting support on a range of other issues, including his call for free education, for trade union rights, and his anti-war and anti-nuclear positions. Also, he has awakened hopes in a different type of parliamentary politics, not being a 'career politician' full of spin, soundbites and deception, but willing to debate ideas in an honest fashion and refusing to make personal attacks on opponents.

As he himself pointed out, it's the mood of Greece, Spain and the US coming to Britain, following the surge of support in those countries for Syriza, Podemos and Bernie Sanders respectively. It is also the anti-austerity mood that surfaced during the independence referendum in Scotland.

Jeremy Corbyn's unexpected entry into the Labour contest has become a very welcome upheaval in British politics, but there are still a number of different possible eventual outcomes. A straight-line process from it towards genuine political representation for working class people is unfortunately not at all assured, as the experiences so far in Greece, Spain and the US also demonstrate.

To fund his policies of ending austerity, free education, council house-building, etc, Jeremy calls for tax justice, Quantitative Easing for public services rather than the banks and the establishment of a National Investment Bank to support infrastructure projects. What does the Socialist Party think of these ideas?

Firstly, the Corbyn-backing Labour MP Michael Meacher rightly said: "the Blairites have made the absolutely fundamental error of demanding that the way to reduce the deficit was by harsh and persistent cuts in benefits and public expenditure ... And it's not as though their policy, the same as the Tories' policy, is actually working ... the deficit today is still stuck at a massive £90 billion and has hardly reduced at all after five years of Osborne austerity".

Meacher went on to say that Jeremy Corbyn "uniquely stands for making a clean break with Tory policies, above all by advocating growth as the way to pay down the deficit, not austerity".

Left-wing MP John McDonnell elaborated in a Guardian article that a Corbyn-led government wouldn't make cuts to "middle-and low-income earners and certainly not to the poor" but would target tax avoidance and "the subsidies paid to landlords milking the housing benefit system, to the £93 billion in subsidies to corporations, and to employers exploiting workers with low wages and leaving the rest of us to pick up the tab".

These policies and measures, including those mentioned in the question above, would all significantly help in a left

government's programme to improve the living standards of the majority of people and would be hugely popular - bailing out public services rather than banks!

The Socialist Party believes that in addition it will be necessary for the workers' movement to pursue the path that Jeremy Corbyn has touched on in his welcome comments on re-nationalising rail and energy companies and bringing back some form of Clause 4, part 4 of the Labour Party constitution, which was abolished by Tony Blair. That clause called for the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.

It would be necessary to take into public ownership the main corporations and banks that dominate the economy and place them under democratic workers' control and management, to begin to transform society along socialist lines. The capitalist system, due to its inbuilt contradictions and today's level of crisis, is incapable of delivering a sustained increase in living standards for all. Nor can it end the environmental degradation it is inflicting.

How can Jeremy's campaign help defeat austerity?

His campaign is already aiding the fight against austerity by prominently putting forward an anti-austerity position - rarely seen before now in the big-business owned media. It is also very significant that the two largest trade unions in the country, Unison and Unite, along with other unions, have backed Corbyn's position, indicating the powerful forces that could be mobilised in national anti-austerity industrial action.

And action is precisely what's needed! Vital services are being slashed and privatised, Working Tax Credits will be drastically reduced, along with a myriad of other attacks on working class and middle class people, who can't sit back for another five years while the Tories push on with their brutal onslaught.

In the surge of support for Jeremy Corbyn, the union leaders have a glimpse of the wide layer in society - especially in this case young people - who would enthusiastically support coordinated trade union action against austerity if it were called.

The Tory government is in reality very weak, elected by less than a quarter of the electorate. Many workers' disputes have already broken out around the country since the general election, including by the London tube workers. A one-day general strike, with further action if necessary, would attract massive support which could bring about a halt to the cuts agenda and an early general election.

This action would be taking place with the certainty that there are developments on the political front leading in the direction of the creation of a new mass workers' party.

450 councillors have signed up to support Jeremy - what does the Socialist Party say to them?

There are 7,087 Labour councillors in Britain, so only 6% of them - 450 - have backed Jeremy Corbyn. The number of Labour councillors in Labour-led councils who have refused to vote to pass on the government's savage cuts is still barely more than a handful. So the 450 backing Jeremy Corbyn are mainly Labour councillors in councils led by other parties and those in Labour-led councils who 'oppose' cuts but argue they have 'no choice' but to pass them on.

Some of the platform speakers at 'Jeremy for Leader' rallies have been councillors who are in that latter category. For example, during the London rally on 3 August, Haringey councillor Emine Ibrahim said that councillors like herself "didn't want to be ... dragged into council chambers across the country to implement the cuts that we are forced to by the Tory government".

But no one is forcing councillors to impose cuts and they can't be fined for not doing so. The Socialist Party calls on them to take a real stand of resistance to austerity by refusing to vote for cuts and by helping to build a mass campaign in their area in defence of jobs and services. Notwithstanding the change of Labour's leader, TUSC will still need to stand candidates in next May's local elections against Labour councillors who are making cuts.

What should Jeremy do as Labour's leader?

The number of people registered to vote in the Labour leadership contest reached over 610,000, with polls indicating that Corbyn could win decisively. Over a quarter of those voting signed up to the list in the final 24 hours before the registration deadline, in a dramatic end surge.

It appears that the right-wing dominated Labour Party machine will try to weight the result against Corbyn by voiding the votes of anyone they deem as 'infiltrators', but this is unlikely to alter the outcome decisively. Even the Electoral Reform Society waded in and called for a delay in the ballots being issued.

The media is also making last-ditch attempts to influence the result, including the Daily Mirror urging a first preference vote for Andy Burnham and second for Yvette Cooper.

A Corbyn victory would be very welcome. He will face immediate testing challenges, as he'll be surrounded in Labour's parliamentary party and HQ by hostile, pro-big business politicians - only a small minority of them are left-wing. They will put up strong opposition; a number of Labour MPs and leaders are already plotting how they could remove him from office.

For example, Simon Danczuk MP declared: "Am I going to put up with some crazy left-wing policies that he is putting forward and traipse through the voting lobby to support him? It's not going to happen, is it? So I would give him about 12 months if he does become leader".

Tony Blair, whose latest desperate plea was to say that even those who hate him (ie Blair) should not vote for Corbyn, gave a glimpse of the underhand methods the right will go to against the left when he said: "The party is walking eyes shut, arms outstretched over the cliff's edge This is not a moment to refrain from disturbing the serenity of the walk It is a moment for a rugby tackle, if that were possible."

However, Labour's right may feel forced to tolerate Corbyn for a period of time if he wins the leadership ballot by a very high margin - while plotting a hundred ways to undermine him and manoeuvre towards a new leadership election and a "moderate" leader.

Jeremy Corbyn rightly would like to head a party that acts on the basis of rank and file democracy and involvement in decision-making; he has stated that party policy should be decided on that basis.

But the Labour Party has had much of its democratic structure destroyed; for instance the annual conference was turned into a showpiece for the media and big business rather than being maintained as a forum for genuine discussion and democratic decision-making. The character of the party as a political voice of the organised working class in the trade union movement was also stripped away.

So Corbyn would face massive obstacles in trying to lead the party for any length of time in a left-wing direction, not just from within the party but also from the senior ranks of the civil service, the pro-capitalist media and from virtually the entire ruling class of Britain.

To counter these pressures he would need organised back-up from the working class in the trade union movement, anti-cuts campaigns and left organisations. He would need to call an open conference of this support base - including of those who voted for him - to discuss how his left programme can be delivered and developed further.

Could a Corbyn-led Labour Party be transformed back into a party that stands primarily for workers' interests?

It's not impossible that the right-wing could decide to leave to form a new party and the Labour Party could then as a whole turn leftwards. It would effectively need to become a new party itself in many ways, as a result of the changes that would be needed to democratise it and attract new young people and trade unionists into activity in its ranks. Corbyn has adopted an open approach by 'welcoming back' members who have returned to the party and he has spoken of the need to welcome back unions that have disaffiliated from Labour.

However, if the road to such a transformation is blocked by those in the party hierarchy who are not willing to be part of a turn to the left, Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters shouldn't return to being prisoners of that situation but should

help build a new mass workers' party outside of Labour. They could draw on the support of the many thousands who have been enthused by the Jeremy for Leader campaign and come together with the thousands of socialist and trade union activists outside Labour, including those in TUSC.

Meanwhile Labour would continue to implement Tory policies and the process of it being increasingly dismissed by working class people would continue.

Learning from the experiences and lessons of the new left formations in countries like Greece, Spain, Brazil and Germany, a new party in Britain could quickly take on flesh as a combative force acting in workers' interests, both electorally and in campaigns and struggles. In whatever way the scenario inside Labour develops, great opportunities will open up in this country for the development of workers' political representation.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 14 August 2015 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Solidarity with the Polish workers' strike

Maciej Krzymieniecki, Socialist Party Cardiff West branch and Cardiff strike organiser

On 20 August, Polish workers in Britain are going on strike to say no to cuts and low wages. They are also taking a stand against the migrant worker bashing attitude of the people in power, who use their media to try and shift the blame for the capitalist crisis from themselves onto people without any power.

This unofficial strike of thousands of workers (supported by 70% of Polish Express readers, the biggest Polish newspaper in the UK), represents Polish workers saying "enough!" to the xenophobic lies and wage slavery they have to put up with.

They will leave their delivery trucks idle, their buses in the station, their shops and workplaces closed, and instead will attend picket lines in cities from London to Cardiff. They will be joined by enthusiastic Lithuanian and Asian workers, as well as British people displaying their solidarity.

This day will show that Polish workers stand alongside British workers in the struggle against austerity.

Some right wing media have dismissed the strike as "pointless" and "nationalistic". Some even go as far as saying it's against British people.

This couldn't be further from the truth. We are going on strike, because we want to say no to the exploitation of everyone, regardless of origin.

One of our main aims is to simply point out that blaming the crisis on immigrants is not going to get us anywhere. The capitalist media is trying its hardest to turn worker against worker. Our aim is to change that, and this strike will help us to get this message in the mainstream.

Shifting the debate from immigrant blaming will help us start talking about political policies which will actually help this country's economy.

We have to explain that deportation won't raise the minimum wage; racist stories in the tabloids won't get rid of food banks; cutting our benefits won't provide a fair education; and getting rid of our right to vote won't stop austerity.

It's wrong to say that immigrants are a strain on the economy. The economy profits £20 billion from migrant labour, £5 billion from Polish workers alone.

Moreover, it's capitalist politicians who vote to spend £100 billion pounds on Trident weapons of mass destruction, and allow the super-rich and big corporations to dodge hundreds of billions of pounds in taxes.

Polish people want to end feeling isolated and bullied. We are not a statistic - we are people too, and we are ready to join up in the international struggle for a world free from austerity, poverty and capitalist exploitation. Together we can build a better world.

A Socialist Party leaflet is available online at www.socialistparty.org.uk

British trade unionists should give solidarity support to strikers. In particular, they should be prepared to defend their fellow workers from any victimisation by employers, arising from the strike. We would also encourage Polish workers to make links with UK trade unionists in their workplaces, as the best way of defending themselves.

Government discrimination against EU workers

Phil Bishop, Bristol North Branch

Tory attacks on the most vulnerable in society are gathering pace. The savage cuts in benefits show how vicious this government is. All this austerity is to bail out their rich friends.

Now they are tightening the screws even more. In Bristol, two Socialist Party members and their families are having their very right to live and work in the UK threatened. Both are European Union (EU) nationals with children, who came to the UK to work.

Unfortunately both lost their jobs when the company shut down and temporary contracts ended. Consequently, they claimed Jobseeker's Allowance and other benefits.

Rule change

However, rules relating to claims by EU nationals and the right to reside (ie live and work here) were changed in April 2014, limiting their entitlement to a maximum of six months. After that period not only do their benefits cease but they also lose the right to reside.

Only if they can show a "genuine prospect of work" will this be extended, at the discretion of the Department for Work and Pensions. This appears to mean an offer of a job, nothing less.

So, thousands of EU nationals who live and work here, if they lose their job, are in danger of effectively being deported.

A sympathetic Jobcentre adviser told us that in February of this year they received a confidential memo. It stated that all EU nationals making a claim should be reviewed every three months, including those who have a claim that began before 1 April 2014. This may be illegal.

We also know of a Spanish national, resident and employed in the UK for 30 years and married to a UK national, who has been told he is no longer entitled to benefits.

While central government will save money, cash-strapped local councils will bear the brunt of housing and supporting those affected.

The Tory leader of Kent County Council, interviewed on BBC Radio 4, admitted that the new measures were about saving money. But he also pointed out that local councils have a duty of care to homeless and vulnerable people,

especially where children were involved.

This is also political. The Tories are trying to outdo Ukip with their anti-migrant worker policies, with one eye on the coming EU referendum. But these are real people's lives they are playing with.

Both cases have been taken up with their local MPs, and we will be holding a public meeting to raise awareness of these issues.

We aim to organise solidarity action elsewhere and to provide a political answer to the system that blames ordinary working people for the crisis, instead of the capitalists.

Tories attack both UK workers and migrants

The government is planning new restrictions on EU migrant workers claiming in-work benefits, such as tax credits.

Its election manifesto said a Tory government would stop EU migrant workers claiming benefits for the first four years.

However, this would be discriminatory under EU law. Therefore, the government also intends to stop Britons aged 18 to 22 (around 55,000 young workers) claiming benefits - another attack on young people.

Labour, in its bid to jump on the migrant worker bashing bandwagon, has proposed a two-year ban.

Anyone who works in the UK should be entitled to work-related benefits, irrespective of their nationality and age.

Kids Company closure

The failure of David Cameron's 'big society'

Paul Callanan

On 7 August Kids Company, a charity providing care for vulnerable children, closed its doors for the last time. Lauded by philanthropists and prime ministers, its demise is a demonstration of the folly of Cameron's 'big society' philosophy.

The charity closed as a result of not being able to secure funding of up to £4 million from wealthy individuals. The government was also attempting to recover £2.2 million from the charity after it used £800,000 to pay staff, apparently breaking an agreement.

Under the Tory government and the previous coalition there has been a massive increase in child poverty. There are currently 3.5 million children living below the poverty line in Britain. Of these 1.6 million live in severe poverty.

Two-thirds of those children living in poverty come from families where at least one parent works, indicating the prevalence of low paid work. It is becoming increasingly common for teachers to have to give money to children who come to school without money to pay for lunch.

There is a direct link between this poverty and the government's so-called big society policies. The past five years have seen £259 million in cuts to local children's services nationally. This includes £5.4 million in cuts to children's services in Southwark, south London, where Kids Company had its main base.

It is into the gaps left behind by the government's swingeing austerity that charities like Kids Company step. According to its own figures Kids Company provided support to 36,000 children and vulnerable adults.

The failure to attain the required funding shows that we cannot rely on the goodwill of the wealthy and charity to provide vital services. Cameron's previous enthusiasm for Kids Company appears to have been merely a PR exercise.

Council services

Charities like Kids Company should be integrated into the public sector. This would also allow local councils to redeploy staff into other children's services to bring staff levels back up to the level required to run them.

Bringing services back under local authority control would also mean that there can be proper scrutiny and democratic control over how services are run.

A number of accusations have been levelled against Kids Company since its closure. Every Friday the charity would hand out money directly to the children it worked with. The charity claimed that it would usually be spent on food or electricity. But some sources claim that it was often spent on drink and drugs.

It would be wrong to take accusations of impropriety made by the right-wing press at face value. The government and its supporters in the press have an interest now in demonising Kids Company as a pretext for ending its funding.

The only way to ensure services needed to lift children out of poverty is for a mass movement to defeat the government's austerity agenda.

Them & Us

Unaffordable housing

The government's revamped Right to Buy housing scheme is essentially a massive subsidy to private landlords. A report from Inside Housing reveals that in 91 councils in England, which responded to a freedom of information request, nearly 40% of council houses sold under the heavily discounted scheme (up to £100,000 in London) have ended up in the hands of private landlords - who then charge up to seven times the average social rent. In one local authority, Milton Keynes, 70% of ex-council properties are now being sublet.

With the government set to extend the right to buy scheme to Housing Association properties it's clear that 'affordable housing' is something of the distant past - unless we fight back!

95%

The average price of student accommodation now consumes 95% of the maximum student loan.

Top dogs whining

"Surprise drop in top dog pay" barked the headline of City AM, a big business free sheet. They were annoyed at a High Pay Centre (HPC) report showing that chief executives (CEOs) of firms in the FTSE top 100 only 'earned' on average £4.96 million last year. The median annual pay for these firms' full time employees was £27,195.

The restrained HPC report said that this 183:1 differential was "far beyond what is sensible to inspire top executives", having increased from an already massive 160:1 figure in 2010. But City AM protested: "Adjusted for inflation, the average CEO would have collected £5.04 million the year before". The poor top dogs are losing out!

City AM may favour caviar banks for CEOs such as Sir Martin Sorrell (£43 million last year), we prefer solutions based on nationalisation of the top companies under democratic workers' control.

£100,000

The total expenses claimed by members of the House of Lords who didn't bother to vote in the last parliamentary session. Between 2010 and 2015, £360,000 in total was claimed by 62 peers who didn't vote.

Unfair fares

Rail fares charged by the highly profitable and government subsidised private train operating companies (TOCs), have soared by 25% since 2010, while average pay has gone up by 9% - according to a study backed by the TUC and rail unions.

The government has bragged that regulated rail fares, which include season tickets and day returns, have been capped to inflation-only increases. However, the TOCs get round this by ramping up unregulated fares ie long distance routes, off peak leisure and advance purchase tickets etc. Some of these fares have gone up by as much as 200% in the last decade. No wonder the demand for rail nationalisation is very popular among the travelling public.

Socialist challenges right winger for Unison leadership

Rank-and-file socialist Roger Bannister is standing for general secretary of Unison, Britain's largest public sector union. Unison members are some of the hardest-hit by austerity, and right-wing incumbent Dave Prentis has regularly undermined action.

If you agree that Unison needs a fighting strategy to beat the cuts, we urge your branch to nominate Socialist Party member Roger Bannister. Nominations open on 2 September and close at 5pm on 9 October.

Roger is secretary of Unison's Knowsley branch in Merseyside. He has been on Unison's leading national executive committee since the union was formed. In that time Roger has consistently supported fighting policies to defend members, and opposed the leadership's illegal attacks on activists.

He led a successful strike in Knowsley to defend the 35-hour week, and to extend it to other workers. He has won pay increases for many groups. He also serves on Unison's industrial action committee, and the health and safety committee. Roger has a proud record of working with members of all unions and building solidarity with workers in dispute.

He can win! He has been the leading left challenger in previous general secretary elections, reliably outpolling others by a sizeable margin. And he is the only candidate who has pledged to take an average workers' wage if elected.

Attacks

Unison members face massive attacks on their jobs, pay and conditions of service. The Tory government is passing the burden of the bankers' crisis onto ordinary working class people.

On top of that, the Tories are preparing to attack our democratic rights. They plan to massively curtail our right to strike against these injustices.

Unison needs a general secretary with a record of fighting for ordinary members. Roger Bannister is the candidate best prepared to lead an effective struggle against the Tory onslaught.

National Gallery all-out strike goes on as bosses sell off

jobs

James Ivens

The prolonged dispute at the National Gallery turned to indefinite strike on 11 August. Management has now signed guest services over to notorious outsourcers Securitas, showing total unwillingness to negotiate.

Incoming director Gabriele Finaldi will face daily picket lines from members of public service union PCS. Although bosses have now taken the unilateral decision to privatise, strikers are still confident they can win.

One major concern is that gallery assistants could be forced to work other Securitas contracts such as concert venues. Standard outsourcing attacks on pay and conditions could also come down on workers. And management still refuses to reinstate victimised union rep Candy Udwin.

Pickets have so far had good support from other trade unionists and members of the Socialist Party.

- Please invite strikers to speak at your union branch: paulb@pcs.org.uk
- Send strike fund donations to sort code 08-60-01, account number 20169002
- Cheques to PCS Culture Media and Sport Association, c/o PCS North West Region, Jack Jones House, 1 Islington, Liverpool L3 8EG

London tube's summer of strikes joined by First Great Western

- Talks ahead of two 24-hour tube walkouts
- Great Western 72-hour bank holiday stoppage

As we go to press, London Underground could be shuttered again by bosses' pig-headedness over staff restructuring and night service. But last-minute talks could still lead to management concessions.

Tube unions RMT, TSSA and Unite plan two more 24-hour walkouts. Unfortunately, drivers' union Aslef will not be taking action this time. To complement the tube's summer of strikes, RMT members on First Great Western walk out for 72 hours this bank holiday.

The next tube strikes will start on the evenings of 25 and 27 August. Aslef members voted by 98% for strikes, and many will be frustrated by leaders stepping back. Strikers will encourage rank-and-file members to support the action by not crossing picket lines in solidarity.

Joint action

This would be the platform for further joint action with Aslef. Tube workers from all unions need to stand firm to again bring London to a standstill.

The tube dispute is over devastating increases in unsocial working hours, hundreds of job cuts and attacks on pay and conditions. Unions accepted night trains from the off, but warn management's proposals will harm workers and safety. There was overwhelming public support for the last strike. It now needs to be mobilised with public meetings of tube workers, the wider union movement and the general public.

First Great Western workers are fighting driver-only operation and buffet car closures, which would hit conductors' and

caterers' jobs. They are also defending maintenance workers from attacks on jobs and conditions. The strike will cause significant disruption on the London-Wales-West Country network during the 29 to 31 August long weekend.

Probation and courts union Napo needs socialist leadership

Chas Berry, National vice-chair, Napo

Members of probation and family courts union Napo are currently voting for national officers. The union is under sustained attack following the break-up and privatisation of over half the probation service.

In this context, a socialist voice linking our struggles with the wider anti-austerity movement has never been more important. That is why I am standing again for national vice-chair.

In the outsourced community rehabilitation companies (CRCs), members face savage cuts. Their new owners want to cash in through wholesale redundancies.

Union-busting Sodexo, which owns six CRCs, is attempting to bully nearly 500 staff into voluntary severance on drastically reduced terms. While this may be an option for some, most will have no alternative but to stick it out. And we cannot stand by while services are downgraded and destroyed.

Those who have rejected the so-called 'offer' of voluntary severance want a fight to maintain current jobs while protecting terms and conditions.

Staffing

The situation for members in the National Probation Service, now run by the civil service, is no better. Current staffing levels are dangerously low in many areas. Flexible and responsive locally run services have been replaced by a bureaucratic dictatorship. It is proving incapable of delivering the complex "rehabilitation revolution" promised by former Tory justice secretary Chris Grayling.

Members are understandably downcast. But the anti-austerity mood exemplified by support for Jeremy Corbyn shows the tide is beginning to turn. By voting for me, Napo members can show that they too will not be browbeaten by the bosses' big business agenda.

Uni unions ready Manchester jobs fight

UCU members at the University of Manchester

Trade unions UCU, Unison and Unite at the University of Manchester are preparing to fight to save hundreds of jobs. Over 300 staff attended a joint union meeting to discuss management threats.

The university is one of the city's biggest employers. It has traditionally had relatively progressive policies on avoiding compulsory redundancies through redeployment and other measures.

These are now being torn up without consultation. It is a de facto derecognition of the campus unions, cynically using the summer break to start the process.

The initial priority is to defend 37 members of staff being taken off the redeployment register and threatened with redundancy, as well as 219 IT staff at risk due to proposed outsourcing. Other major reorganisations are on the horizon. The pattern is clear: loss of jobs, privatisation and more work for those who remain.

Vote yes

In the current consultative survey, and when a formal ballot is called, members should vote yes to action short of strike and yes to strike action. Only a programme of escalating industrial action can defeat these attacks.

It will also be important to link up with the student union, and provide a wider challenge to the Tory austerity policies that are driving cuts and marketisation in the sector.

Retail union must fight Sunday trading deregulation

Iain Dalton, Vice chair, Usdaw Leeds private trade branch (personal capacity)

The Tory government's emergency budget angered many retail workers.

Among the vicious attacks on working class people was further deregulation of Sunday trading. At present, shops above 3,000 square feet can only open for six hours on a Sunday.

For many retail workers, Sundays are the only days they know they'll have an evening off or a later start. This is especially true given the 'flexibility' of hours supermarkets now demand.

In 2012 the government temporarily suspended Sunday trading laws for the Olympics. Shop workers' union Usdaw surveyed over 20,000 members: 77% opposed deregulation, and only 12% supported it.

Opt out

Even under existing laws, workers can opt out of Sunday working restrictions. Many are pressured into doing so.

Chancellor George Osborne claims deregulation would boost the economy by £20.3 billion over the next 20 years. However, during Olympic deregulation, retail sales for August actually fell 0.4% year on year.

Tories also say they want a level playing field between online retailers and the high street. Yet many of the major stores affected have online outlets now. The main effect would be to further cannibalise smaller and independent retailers.

Osborne proposes devolving powers over opening hours to elected mayors and councils. This is clearly an attempt to shield the government from any negative consequences. But it is also a step towards regional pay and conditions, breaking up national union agreements. And if Sunday becomes a normal working day, bosses could try to end what remains of Sunday premium pay.

Campaign

Given this, we should welcome Usdaw general secretary John Hannett's comment that the union "will vigorously campaign against such a proposal". However, Usdaw's leadership has a poor record on walking the walk. Hannett's fine words need to be turned into action.

As well as encouraging campaigning in stores against deregulation, Usdaw must call a national demonstration when parliament debates the new legislation. The union should mobilise members and supporters across the country - as part of a campaign to build for strike action if necessary.

Workplace news in brief

Pizza pinchers

Pizza Express bosses are thieving 8% of tips paid by card. Workers at the Italian restaurant chain have held a series of protests in conjunction with general union Unite. The Socialist Party calls for an end to the larcenous "administration fee". Staff must receive their tips in full and be allowed full trade union rights.

Radio silence

As we go to press, radio workers at BBC Asian Network are due to strike over redundancies and job moves. Bosses have cut an editor from the Birmingham-based national station, and moved the award-winning Bobby Friction show to London. Members of the National Union of Journalists will walk out for 24 hours on 19 August.

EDF energy

Energy workers at EDF have suspended a 24-hour strike after management offered talks. Meter checkers, maintenance workers and office staff face job losses, and pay cuts of up to £6,000 a year. They are also fighting forced longer hours to install the new 'Smart meters' which send energy usage directly to EDF. Unite members voted by 85% for walkouts.

White goods walkout

Delivery and warehouse workers for Indesit have four days of stoppages, plus work to rule, stored up for stingy bosses. Deliveries of fridges, washing machines and more will be disrupted as Unite members fight years of below-inflation pay deals. Workers will strike for 24 hours on 21 August and 1 September, and 48 hours from 27 August.

Reinstate Alan Brown

Trade unionists expressed solidarity with Alan Brown, victimised union rep at Tory-run Bromley council, south London. Alan, a member of general union Unite, had his disciplinary hearing postponed.

He faces trumped-up charges from a council which has cancelled almost all union organising time.

Bromley also wants to privatise over nine-tenths of its workforce.

Greece: Building a new left alternative after Syriza capitulation

In July Alexis Tsipras, Greek prime minister, agreed the latest 'memorandum' (austerity agreement) with Greece's creditors. On 14 August the Greek Parliament accepted the measures, including oversight by the creditors of every policy decision. Although there was significant opposition. Xekinima (Greek sister organisation of the Socialist Party) described Tsipras, whose Syriza government was elected on an anti-austerity platform, as having "crossed the Rubicon". Xekinima called for a "new mass left".

Lucy Redler from Sozialistische Alternative (German sister organisation of the Socialist Party), interviewed Andros Payiatsos from Xekinima.

What is the mood among Greek workers and youth?

The mass of the population has not yet understood the effects of the new memorandum because the measures are not yet implemented. There is a kind of 'wait-and-see' attitude and the feeling that Tsipras 'tried his best' to fight against the Troika.

However Syriza's support is already falling in the polls. One poll, two weeks after the memorandum was signed, showed a drop of nearly 5% in its support.

At the same time, within the left wing of Syriza and among activists, there is tremendous shock. Thousands of rank-and-file members had always assured their co-workers and their periphery that Syriza would never sign anything similar to what previous governments had.

After Tsipras' retreat, thousands of activists felt betrayed and ashamed. Many of them did not dare to go out of their houses for many days or face their friends.

There is only one way not to become demoralised by events: that is to draw the correct conclusions of the defeat and take the necessary next steps.

Immediately after Tsipras signed the memorandum, we put out a call for a new mass left force. This is because of the huge vacuum on the left created by Syriza's sell-out of the 'No' vote in the referendum on 5 July, when 61.5% voted against the demands of the Troika (European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank).

Without a left alternative being put forward, massive demoralisation in society would ensue. Also, the neo-fascist Golden Dawn could present itself as the only anti-memorandum force and grow to become an extremely dangerous threat to democratic and workers' rights.

Did your call for a 'new left' find an echo among activists?

With other left activists and groups we called a public assembly in Athens on 17 July. We only had two days to mobilise for the event. Despite this, it was a very successful assembly with 250-300 people present and at least a dozen different groups represented, including from all the main left tendencies inside Syriza. This initiative is now called the '17 July Assembly'.

Syriza Youth could play an important role in the process of developing a new left. They published a statement against the memorandum and were present at the 17 July initiative meetings. In the past the youth wing was the stronghold of Tsipras, so their participation is significant.

On the other hand, unfortunately the KKE (Greek Communist Party), which would have the numbers and strength to re-arrange the map of the Greek left, refuses to be part of this process.

What is the programme of the initiative?

Through the experiences of the last five years of crisis and the Troika's draconian policies, the radical sections of the Greek left, in general, came to very similar conclusions. There is widespread basic agreement about the following points:

- The sovereign debt must not be paid
- Banks must be nationalised
- Capital controls and public control of foreign trade must be established
- Exit from the Euro and establish a national currency
- Nationalise all companies which have closed down or have sabotaged the economy and put them under democratic workers' control and management

- Nationalise the commanding heights of economy and put them under the democratic control and management of workers and society, in order to democratise the process of production and distribution of goods as a whole

It is important to link the struggle of Greek workers to workers' struggles against austerity and capitalism across the whole of Europe

In what way is the '17 July Assembly' initiative linked to developments taking place within the Syriza left?

Through the initiative we are trying to establish a bridge between the left inside Syriza, the big sections of Antarsya (Anti-capitalist Left) which understand the need for united action and the building of a mass new left formation, and other forces on the left, like ourselves.

At this point of time, a pre-congress debate is opening up within Syriza. The left, particularly the Left Platform of Syriza, asked the Syriza leadership for an urgent congress to be called. Tsipras, under pressure from the Syriza rank-and-file, called a congress for September.

What will happen at the Syriza congress? Do you think a split of the party is likely?

We think that Syriza is heading for a split. If Syriza remains 'united' after Tsipras' capitulation to the Troika, this would represent a double defeat because it would mean the left of Syriza giving in to Tsipras in the name of 'party unity'.

The left inside Syriza is currently fighting to win a majority of the party to its view. This is correct. However the possibilities of achieving this are extremely weak. We call for the them to link this campaign for a majority at the coming Syriza congress with the demand of leadership change, which they have not done yet.

If the Syriza left loses, we think they should leave the party and join with the forces outside Syriza to create a new party. Such a party would immediately have enough strength to enter parliament.

Does this mean the '17 July Assembly' initiative should wait for developments inside Syriza?

No. The left forces outside Syriza which understand the need for a new mass left should use the significant position they have in the movements and in society to influence developments inside Syriza. If a number of sizeable independent groups outside Syriza with links within Syriza call for a new mass left formation, this can and will have a big effect on the processes inside Syriza.

We also cannot wait because there are already many voters, supporters and even members of Syriza, who are turning their back on the party. We urgently need to offer them an alternative.

Through the activity of Xekinima in the previous period, we have already established a number of such local, united left initiatives in a number of cities and areas around the country. They have attracted some of the best elements of the social movements and of class struggles, inside and outside Syriza.

These local united left alliances and the 17 July initiative are not an end in themselves but could serve as a lever to build something bigger in the near future.

Is the building of a left initiative linked to early elections?

We do not have unlimited time to develop this initiative because we will most likely have new elections in autumn. A new mass left formation must be able to take part in these elections. It is important that the left in Syriza is part of that process.

Tsipras will go for early elections in order to get rid of Syriza's left MPs. He can do so because the Greek constitution allows that. If elections take place up to 18 months after the previous elections, the parties' candidates are chosen by the

leaders of these parties.

That means that early elections could probably accelerate the process of a split inside Syriza.

Is there reason to be optimistic after the latest defeat?

This is not a 'final defeat' of the Greek working class. The Greek working class has shown that it can return to struggle again and again - such as in the recent referendum.

If we are able, in next period, to build a new mass left in Greece, on the basis of the programme mentioned earlier, which is now on the table and has some serious possibilities of success, then we can be entirely certain that the Greek working class can actually make an astonishing comeback.

Stop press: After this interview was completed, Andros, along with leading figures of many other left groups, including the Left Platform inside Syriza, issued a statement calling for a new broad anti-memorandum movement to be built and for committees to be set up in every area.

See www.socialistworld.net for updates

Ireland

Drop the prosecutions, scrap the water charges

Twenty-three of the 40 anti-water charges protesters arrested earlier this year in Ireland are expected to be charged with "false imprisonment" of the Tánaiste (deputy prime minister) following a peaceful sit-down protest in Tallaght, Dublin, in November 2014. Those charged include Socialist Party member Paul Murphy TD (MP).

Paul described the decision to charge people with criminal offences as "an attack on the right to protest".

The 'false imprisonment' charge is absurd. Tánaiste Joan Burton was delayed in her car by protesters peacefully blocking the road. The decision of the gardai (police) and the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute is part of vendetta by the political establishment against the organised anti-water charges campaign.

Paul commented: "The whole thing is politically motivated. It was no coincidence that on the day the first arrests were made, all four people arrested were political activists."

However, despite the use of the heavy hand of the state, figures in July revealed that 57% of householders had refused to pay the hated water charges - an austerity measure demanded by the Troika (EU ministers, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank), who are also bleeding the Greek people white with savage cuts and privatisation policies.

Despite these prosecutions the anti-austerity movement in the Irish Republic, including the water charges non-payment campaign, remains unbowed.

US: Kshama Sawant leads Seattle primary elections count on 50%

Socialist Alternative reporters

Kshama Sawant, a member of Socialist Alternative (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in the US) won almost 50% of the vote in a Seattle City Council primary on 4 August. She was standing to defend the seat she won in 2013 as the first open socialist elected to a council in a major urban area in decades.

Kshama was a full 15 percentage points ahead of her nearest opponent, Pamela Banks, in a field of five candidates in her district.

This result is a confirmation of the support among ordinary people in Seattle for Kshama's work on the council over the past 19 months.

Most importantly, she played a critical role in winning the first \$15 minimum wage ordinance in a major city.

She used her position to help build, with union support, a grass roots movement, 15 Now, which has spread to cities across the country.

After many other battles, Kshama is now leading the struggle for rent control and building high-quality public housing to address the massive affordability crisis in the city.

Recently 1,000 people packed a town hall meeting to hear Kshama in a debate with a developer lobbyist and a politician supporting the developers.

That such a debate is taking place at all is a measure of the political shift that has been created by having a voice on the council for the struggles of working people.

Challenging campaign

Kshama's excellent vote came in a challenging primary environment where the electorate tends to be older and wealthier than in a general election. Big business has been increasingly pouring money into the campaigns of Kshama's opponents, particularly that of Pamela Banks.

The result reflects a ferocious campaign with 600 volunteers, who knocked on 30,000 doors and raised an incredible \$265,000, not a single penny of which came from big business.

This result clearly gives Kshama an excellent platform going into the general election campaign. But there is no room for complacency. Big business is very likely to step up the attack and pour hundreds of thousands of dollars into this race.

It might seem incredible that so much corporate money would flow into one city council race, but big business is clear about what's at stake.

They see the massive excitement created by the presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders, who has taken up the call for a national \$15 minimum wage and who calls for a "political revolution" against the billionaire class.

There is a radicalisation under way in the US. Kshama's fight for re-election is the fight of all progressives across the country.

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/21220>