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#corbynwins

...but Labour's civil war continues

No compromise on fighting austerity

> Now transform Labour into a fighting, socialist party

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(editorial)

Consolidate the Corbyn victory

Refound Labour as a democratic, socialist, anti-austerity party

“The war continues.” So declared one ex-shadow cabinet minister to the Sunday Times (25 September).

The attempted coup against Jeremy Corbyn by 172 Labour MPs has ended in abject failure, with his mandate strengthened. In the aftermath of the leadership contest many Corbyn supporters will have hoped that it would now be possible to unify the Labour Party around a clear anti-austerity programme in a battle to defeat the Tories. Within hours however it was clear that, as we warned, there is no possibility of the right accepting the democratic will of Labour Party members. They are reeling under the impact of a crushing defeat, with no clear idea of how to launch the next stage of their ‘get Corbyn’ campaign, but the one thing they are united on is its necessity.

Around the country a smattering of Blairites have torn up their Labour Party cards, including the leader of Portsmouth council Labour group, and businessman and SDP founder Lord Mitchell. The majority have, however,

made clear that at this stage they intend to stay and try to 'reclaim' their party for the capitalist class. There are rumours that a few will rejoin the shadow cabinet but most are indicating that they will only do so if the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) gets to choose its membership.

Disgracefully, Dave Prentis, general secretary of Unison (which voted to support Corbyn in the leadership contest) has suggested that this is the way to heal the rifts in the Labour Party. But such a measure would not be about healing rifts but handing victory to Tom Watson's rumoured 'Project Anaconda' - to isolate and then crush Corbyn.

That they have failed to do so to date is only because of the hundreds of thousands of people who have rallied to the defence of Jeremy's leadership and anti-austerity platform, resulting in Labour having the biggest membership of any party in Western Europe. However, Labour remains two parties in one: the old pro-capitalist, establishment party and the new anti-austerity party in formation.

Whose interests?

In essence the struggle taking place in the Labour Party is about in which classes' interests it is going to act - the working class majority in society and the middle class with no hope for the future, or the capitalist 1%? The pro-capitalist wing of Labour dominates the PLP and Labour councils. It still controls much of the Labour Party machine, successfully preventing around 150,000 voting in the leadership election and banning regular local Labour Party meetings from taking place during the leadership contest.

The expulsions and exclusions look set to continue. The list of words that Labour Party members are banned from using even includes 'Blairite'! The right are also fighting tooth and nail to establish a majority on Labour's National Executive Committee.

To respond to these savage attacks by attempting to pacify the right is a major mistake. This was the approach taken after Jeremy's first leadership victory and

it ended in the coup. A second attempt could only end the same way. The leaked 'Project Anaconda' email put it bluntly saying: "Every concession JC makes will be used to tighten the grip." No more concessions should be made. Nor should the current, highly-undemocratic, Labour Party rules and structures be accepted. Labour should be rebuilt as an open and democratic anti-austerity party.

Right-wing MPs are in a frenzy because Jeremy only said that the "vast majority of MPs will have no problem whatsoever" in keeping their seats in the selection contests that could take place as a result of boundary changes. Nothing but a promise that the seat of every single MP was safe would satisfy them.

But every MP and councillor should face mandatory reselection. This democratic procedure was hard fought for by the left in the past, including Corbyn and McDonnell, only to be abolished as part of the Blairites consolidating their grip on the party. There is no doubt that this made it easier for Labour MPs to vote for tuition fees, privatisation and war, and in some cases to fiddle their expenses, without any fear of being removed and replaced by their local membership.

Kick out the Blairites

The reintroduction of mandatory reselection would be an important step forward, but is not sufficient alone. Jeremy has a huge mandate for the anti-austerity programme on which he was elected. He should now insist that all Labour MPs agree to support his leadership and vote for his programme in parliament. It can no longer be the case that Labour MPs can vote for benefit cuts or privatisation of hospitals without consequence. MPs who do so should be excluded from the PLP.

In the short term this would undoubtedly leave Labour with fewer MPs but a PLP which was united in opposing austerity and supporting workers in struggle would be far more effective than the current situation, where a big section of the

PLP are doing their best to 'get Corbyn' even at the cost of losing a general election.

And far from being unpopular, such an anti-austerity Labour Party could quickly make electoral gains. Unfortunately, the attempts to compromise with the right have muffled Corbyn's anti-austerity programme over the last year. But many of his policies – a £10 an hour minimum wage, free education, mass council house building, renationalising the railways - are enormously popular and now need to be shouted from the rooftops. Unfortunately the Labour Party conferences shows the danger that, once again, the anti-austerity message is not heard because of a desire to compromise with the right.

The question of local councils is an important aspect of this. Millions of working class people do not yet recognise Labour as an anti-austerity force because they live in Labour-led local authorities, which are implementing savage austerity. Central government funding of local authorities has been cut by 40% since 2010 and Labour local authorities are dutifully wielding the axe, resulting in 670,000 job losses and destruction of vital local services.

Pressure is mounting. This year Unite and GMB conferences supported a call for councils to refuse to implement any further cuts. In a vain attempt to protect Labour councillors from the anger of workers whose jobs and services are being destroyed (like the 20% of Manchester firefighters facing the sack from a Labour-controlled fire authority) a rule change is being put to Labour Party conference barring Labour councillors from voting against Labour cuts budgets or from setting so-called 'illegal' no-cuts budgets.

The Labour leadership should urgently make clear their opposition to it. It is in part a red herring but Labour conference should be passing a motion demanding Labour councils refuse to implement cuts, not trying to prevent them from doing so. The 58 Labour-led councils that had elections this year alone have £4.5 billion in general reserves. If these were pooled every Labour council in the country would be able to implement legal no-cuts budgets. This could be

used to launch a struggle against Tory austerity which could defeat the government.

In Liverpool, where the Labour Party conference is taking place, in the 1980s the council was able to successfully take on Thatcher and win an extra £60 million in funding for the council. In the course of doing so they were decreed to have broken Tory laws, but the results - building council houses, nurseries, leisure centres and more - stand in bricks and mortar. Labour Party conference delegates should be taken on a tour to visit them.

And far from being electorally unpopular, the swing to Labour in Liverpool in the 1987 general election, had it been repeated on a national scale, would have led to a landslide victory for Labour instead of the defeat it was led to by witch-hunter Neil Kinnock.

It is urgent that a battle is launched to transform Labour into an anti-austerity party in word and deed. Alongside this a campaign should begin to democratise the party. This should include readmitting all those socialists that have been expelled and excluded.

The role of the trade unions - workers' organisations with over six million members - should be restored, on a democratic basis so that union delegates genuinely represent the views of their members. John Hanne, the right-wing general secretary of the Usdaw shop workers union, is backing the Blairites to the hilt. But he is not representing the views of many of his low-paid members, who would fully support a leadership fighting for a £10 an hour minimum wage.

Federal structure

The national structures of the Labour Party would also need to be opened out and democratised. The Socialist Party argues for a return to the founding structures of the Labour Party which involved separate socialist political parties coalescing with the trade unions and social movements like women's suffrage campaigners and the co-operative movement. That federal approach applied to today would mean allowing political parties that were prepared to sign up to a

clear anti-austerity programme, including the Socialist Party, to affiliate to Labour as the Co-op Party still does.

The movement in support of Corbyn opens up a very important opportunity for working class people in Britain. It creates the possibility of a workers' party - standing for the 99% instead of the 1%, and able to attract all those workers and youth wanting to fight back against capitalism. It is urgent that Jeremy Corbyn's victory is consolidated and the opportunity grasped.

■ Read more: "Corbyn victory another step to transforming Labour" at socialistparty.org.uk

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#CorbynWins

New tasks for TUSC

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was set-up in 2010 to push forward the process of re-establishing a mass party for working class political representation. With Jeremy Corbyn re-elected as Labour leader, Socialist Party executive member and TUSC's national election agent Clive Heemskerk examines what role TUSC should play in the next period.

Jeremy Corbyn's re-election triumph is a significant defeat for the capitalist establishment - the corporate bosses, media tops, and their political representatives, both those outside and inside the Labour Party. Prior to

Jeremy's election as leader last summer this elite had achieved unchallenged control of the Labour Party for over 20 years, effectively disenfranchising working class voters by removing any choice at the ballot box.

The capitalists benefitted enormously from the transformation of Labour into Tony Blair's New Labour and they will not lightly accept the new situation. Consolidating Jeremy's victory against their continued opposition - by really transforming Labour into an anti-austerity, socialist, working-class mass movement - is the critical task facing socialists in Britain today.

The first meeting of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee after Jeremy Corbyn's re-election takes place on 12 October. The Socialist Party will be presenting proposals on how TUSC can contribute to the central task at hand.

TUSC and Labour

TUSC was established in early 2010 and initially involved the Socialist Party and a number of leading trade unionists participating in a personal capacity.

These included Bob Crow, the general secretary of the 80,000-strong RMT transport workers' union, which had been expelled from the Labour Party in 2004. The RMT's predecessor union was one of the founding organisations of the Labour Party.

In 2012 the RMT's annual delegate general meeting (AGM) agreed that the union would formally participate as a constituent organisation of TUSC, with representatives appointed to the coalition's steering committee. The RMT's continued involvement has been endorsed, not without debate, at every AGM since.

The Socialist Workers' Party was invited into TUSC in 2010 and independent socialists also participate. By providing a common electoral umbrella for trade unionists and working class community campaigners to challenge establishment politicians at the ballot box in defence of core socialist policies, TUSC's aim

has been to push forward the process of re-establishing a vehicle for working class political representation.

The TUSC founding statement recognised that there were “different strategic views” about the way to advance this cause, “whether the Labour Party can be reclaimed by the labour movement, or whether a new workers’ party needs to be established.” But aside from recognising that there would be Labour candidates “who share our socialist aspirations” who would not be challenged by TUSC, to date TUSC has not taken a policy position on what would be required to transform the Labour Party. Jeremy Corbyn’s re-election poses this question point blank.

Role of the unions

The Socialist Party is proposing that TUSC makes a clear policy statement that a critical step would be to re-establish within the Labour Party a role for trade unions, the biggest voluntary organisations in Britain, commensurate with their importance as the collective voices of millions of workers.

Under Blair, Brown and Miliband the unions’ power within the Labour Party was gutted. The real social weight of the RMT, for example, is shown when it is routinely denounced by the capitalist media as ‘holding the country to ransom’ every time it is forced to take strike action to defend its members and public safety on the railways.

But if the union was to affiliate to the Labour Party today it would have less say than the House of Lords Labour Group in the party’s national policy-making forum! As the RMT’s political strategy endorsed by this year’s AGM says, Labour does not currently have “structural/constitutional arrangements that would make affiliation in the union’s interests.”

The Socialist Party is not proposing that TUSC draws up an alternative constitution for the Labour Party. TUSC is a coalition whose component parts have different views. But it could agree a broad policy to take into the labour movement: that the unions must have their collective representation and

proportionate weight restored in the formation of Labour Party policy, the selection and re-selection of Labour Party candidates, and the administration of the party locally and nationally.

Space for socialists

The RMT rulebook commits the union “to work for the supersession of the capitalist system by a socialistic order of society.” There should be no problem for TUSC to also adopt policy that socialists excluded from the Labour Party should be allowed in.

The best way to achieve this - above board and undercutting media scares about ‘infiltrators’ - would be to allow for affiliation to the Labour Party for socialist parties and organisations. This right should also be extended to anti-austerity, anti-racist, socialist feminist, and Green campaigners and organisations, in a modern version of the early federal structure of the Labour Party which encompassed trade unions, the co-operative movement, women’s suffrage campaigners, and a number of independent socialist parties.

But this call obviously raises the question of TUSC’s electoral activity.

The Co-operative Party, an independent party separately registered with the Electoral Commission, has an affiliate status agreement with the Labour Party on the basis that it does not contest seats against Labour. The Socialist Party will be proposing at the October steering committee that TUSC should campaign for a similar arrangement for its constituent components.

The 2017 elections

Since Jeremy Corbyn’s initial victory, TUSC has already re-calibrated its electoral activity.

In the May 2016 local elections, for example, no TUSC candidates were even considered to be run without local TUSC groups seeking a dialogue with the sitting Labour councillor or prospective candidate on the critical issue of their preparedness to resist cuts to local council jobs and services (see

www.tusc.org.uk/txt/380.pdf for a full report of TUSC's participation in the 2016 elections).

The Socialist Party is proposing that TUSC continues its campaign for Labour councils to join the resistance to the Tories' austerity agenda. TUSC supporters have played an important role in winning backing for a fighting strategy to oppose cuts to local public services in the main local government unions, Unison, Unite, and the GMB, as well as this year's Wales TUC conference.

This campaign should be resumed in the autumn, as councils begin preparing their 2017-18 budgets, with the added urgency of the need to coordinate an organised defiance of the new Housing and Planning Act. Labour councillors should be pushed to fight the Tories or resign and make way for those who will. However the responsibility for removing alleged 'Labour' representatives who implement Tory policies does not rest with TUSC alone. TUSC candidates have polled over 350,000 votes in various elections since its formation and the prospect of an electoral challenge from the left can add to the pressure on 'Labour' cutters.

But with Jeremy Corbyn's re-affirmed mandate it is not the only way to bring them into line. The councillors on the Labour-controlled Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service Authority, for example, who are planning to sack one in five firefighters and re-employ the rest on worse contracts, should be suspended from the Labour Party unless they back down.

Consequently, the Socialist Party is proposing that TUSC agrees to make no further preparations for contesting the May 2017 local elections in England and Wales pending discussions with Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters on the new possibilities opening up following his re-election victory.

Unity

Many other organisational and political steps would need to be taken for the Labour Party to be fully consolidated as a working class, socialist, anti-austerity

mass movement. This would include measures to defeat the opposition that will continue to Jeremy Corbyn's leadership from Labour's right.

TUSC's constituent components will have different views on how best a movement can be built that is capable of defeating the pro-capitalist consensus upheld by the establishment politicians, their media, and other institutions.

But October's steering committee discussion, in welcoming Jeremy Corbyn's re-election triumph, provides an opportunity to signal that TUSC will fully participate in that struggle.

■ See tusc.org.uk for updates

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“Suspended adulthood” the norm for young people

Youth Fight Austerity

Ryan Aldred

A damning study by the Young Women's Trust has found that 18 to 30 year olds are living in a “suspended adulthood” due to a combination of lack of work and low pay.

For many young people this won't come as a surprise when faced with the harsh realities of zero-hour contracts and the growing ‘gig economy’. On top of this, with rising tuition fees many are left with crippling debts reaching up to £50,000 by the time they reach 21.

Is it any wonder then, that worries about the future and a feeling of being worn down were the most prevalent themes reported throughout the study?

43% of 18 to 30 year olds surveyed reported that they were still living at home. So, not only will this generation face living conditions worse than those of their parents, but many are being forced to move back in with their parents due to a lack of job prospects and financial insecurity.

The Tories have committed to a national 'living wage' of £9 an hour by 2020. This increase doesn't even apply to those under the age of 25. 18 to 20 year olds currently have to scrape by on £5.30 an hour.

The Trade Union Congress has argued that £10 an hour would be necessary for a genuine living wage - in 2016.

We need serious investment in our future if millennials are not to be written off as a lost generation. As the fifth richest economy it is not unreasonable to demand that we invest in our future. The Socialist Party stands for:

An immediate increase in the minimum wage to £10 an hour with no youth exemptions

An end to zero-hour contracts – secure contracts with guaranteed hours.
Flexibility for workers, not the bosses!

Free education and maintenance grants to cover the cost of living while studying

Investment in public services and infrastructure to create decent jobs for all

A massive programme of council house building and rent control to make homes genuinely affordable

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Tony Aitman

This month marks the 80th anniversary of what has gone down in history as the Battle of Cable Street. On 4 October 1936 thousands of workers across the East End of London rose up to prevent a march through their areas by the uniformed thugs of Oswald Mosley's fascists.

The fascist threat in 1936 was much greater than the far right groups around today. Hitler was in power in Germany, Italy had been under Mussolini's fascist jackboot for 14 years and the opening struggles had just begun in Spain where, despite the heroism of the Spanish working class, three years of bloody conflict ended in the victory of Franco (see <http://bit.ly/2d6d86v>).

In Britain, one of the earliest fascist organisations, the British Brothers League, claimed around 45,000 members at the turn of the century. Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) - the Blackshirts - which boasted a full time defence force, claimed 40,000 members and had the enthusiastic support of Lord Rothermere's Daily Mail.

Blackshirts

The Blackshirts held a notorious rally at Olympia in 1934. 12,000 people attended, with 2,000 uniformed Blackshirts there to beat up any opposition that dared rear its head. From that point on, anti-Semitism became a central point of Mosley's propaganda.

In 1936, it has been estimated that of the 350,000 Jews living in England, nearly half lived in the East End.

In the street where I lived, Yiddish was the lingua franca that enabled immigrants from Russia, Germany, Austria, Lithuania and a host of other countries to communicate.

This was the heart of Stepney, where over 60,000 Jews lived in cramped terraced housing, typical 'two up, two down'. Our house would later have the luxurious addition of a basement, built to afford shelter during the war.

The lead-up to the events of 4 October was a series of meetings throughout east London, as the fascists attempted to whip up working class opposition to Jews as the scapegoats for the economic crisis, saying "Jewish interests" were responsible for the looming war.

To consolidate his position, and to intimidate the population, Mosley proposed a march through the East End on 4 October, in full uniform. The fascists were to meet at Royal Mint Street, and, after a military style review of the troops, march in four separate groupings to meetings in east London.

There was an immediate response to this; the Jewish People's Council launched a petition calling for the march to be banned which gained 100,000 signatures within two days. There was massive opposition to the march. Yet, the anger and readiness to act of the youth and the rank and file of the movement was not matched by the leadership.

The Communist Party (CP) was at its strongest in the East End - CP member Phil Piratin was elected MP for Mile End in 1945. In the street where I lived as a child, virtually everyone was in the party. However, the Young Communist League had organised a rally in Trafalgar Square on the same day as the march, in solidarity with the Spanish Republic. East London CP organiser Frank Lefitte put out a statement: "If Mosley decides to march, let him. Don't attempt disorder."

As for the Labour Party, George Lansbury (the hero of Poplar council, jailed in 1921 for resisting cuts in poor relief - see <http://bit.ly/2dlAyEa>) wrote: "What I want is to maintain peace and order, and I advise people who are opposed to fascism to keep away from the demonstration."

The Jewish hierarchy organised a sports day out, trying to get the youth away from the East End: "Jews who, however innocently, become involved in any

possible disorders will be actively helping anti-Semitism and Jew baiting... keep away.”

But opposition from below was growing. Joe Jacobs, secretary of Stepney CP, was demanding direct confrontation with the fascists. The Independent Labour Party, the CP rank and file, Jewish groups throughout the area, were demanding direct action.

The largest Jewish settlement in the East End then was in Fairclough (now Henriques) Street. Along with the synagogue, ante-natal clinics and youth clubs that it housed, it was an organising and recruiting point for the Communist Party among the Jewish youth - it was there that my mother met my father and recruited him to the party. They wanted to meet the fascists face to face in organised opposition.

On the day, the East End erupted. Over 300,000 packed east London's streets - 50,000 congregated around Gardners Corner, the site of a department store between Aldgate and Whitechapel. It was there that a police horse was pushed through the plate glass window of the store and there that my aunt was kicked in the head by another police horse.

At Cable Street, too, barricades were put up to stop the fascists marching and the police defending them. A shower of rubbish and the contents of chamber pots - few houses had indoor sanitation and these were a common feature of workers' homes - were thrown on the police, while children threw marbles under the horses' hooves to send them crashing to the ground.

If the fascists had marched through, there would have been an utter rout of the uniformed thugs of the BUF. To prevent this, the Police Commissioner decided the march could not go ahead and the Blackshirts were forced to retreat in complete humiliation.

A united campaign of Communists and Jews on Commercial Road and Cable Street, the Irish Catholic dockers who threw up the barricades, the youth and the women - my mother, 17 at the time, sneaked out of the house to join the battle -

had dealt Mosley a major defeat, destroying any hope he may have had of building a mass fascist party in Britain.

The lessons of the Battle of Cable Street are many: the role of the labour and CP leaders, the fact that unity can be built in action. But it also has lessons for the building of a mass workers' party. The CP was widely seen as the leadership of the battle: party membership doubled between 1935 and 1937 and again in 1945.

CP influence on the local council continued for some time. Yet, the chasm between the CP leadership, tied to the politics of Stalin, the Comintern and "popular frontism", and the rank and file caused an irreparable breach in the party.

Joe Jacobs was expelled in 1937, and the rot continued. Phil Piratin, one of the leaders of the opposition to Mosley, was elected to parliament in 1945 with 47.6% of the vote, but he lost his seat in the 1950 election, albeit with changed boundaries, with only 12.5% of the vote.

History

In many ways, my family, nearly all CP members, reflected the whole history of the CP from Cable Street onwards. Our street joined Commercial Road to Cable Street, our lives played out to the sound of the railway rattling overhead.

The streets were joined by covered arches, where, in the days before legalisation, the bookies would wait to get the pennies of local housewives putting an each way bet on Lester Piggott. One of my uncles, a CP member, worked there as a bookies' runner, keeping an eye out for the police.

My father, a building site worker, left the party in 1956 in disgust at the Soviet invasion of Hungary; he later donated towards the publication of Joe Jacobs' book *Out of the Ghetto* (see [Left Books](#) ad below).

My mother's sister and her husband, Sam, who had been involved in the Workers' Film movement, both lifelong party members, left in despair in the 1970s, eventually joining the Labour Party.

Shortly before their deaths, they found in supporters of Militant, the Socialist Party's predecessor, the same commitment and beliefs they had had in their youth.

The battle that they fought and won in 1936 should inspire us all in the battles we face today.

A version of this article first appeared in the Socialist on 11 October 2011. Other previous feature material in the Socialist on Cable Street can be read on <http://bit.ly/2d9Ro9L>

Black history month and ITS relevance today

In the next five issues the Socialist will carry a series of articles for Black history month. Here Bharathi Subramaniam, a member of the Socialist Party's black and Asian group, comments on racism and capitalist society.

Black history month celebrates the contribution of black people to society. But while establishment politicians and their media hail the 'successes' of US president Barak Obama and other black politicians and celebrities in breaking racial barriers, the reality facing the majority of black people is very different.

Three people are shot dead every day on average by US police, including high profile racist killings of black people in Chicago, Ferguson, Charlotte and elsewhere.

Black history month comes following a wave of 'black lives matter' demos and protests. These demonstrations have highlighted the importance of viewing these racist attacks as part of a broader picture of the institutionalised racism, most immediately, of the police.

Police

In Britain too, the death of the footballer Dalian Atkinson, after being tasered by police, recently hit the headlines. The police are still many times more likely to stop and search black people in the UK than white people; and the police are disproportionately more likely to kill black and Asian people in custody or shootings, according to advocacy group Inquest.

The 2011 riots, sparked by the unlawful police death of Mark Duggan, were mainly an outpouring of rage against this system. A system that black revolutionary Malcolm X famously denounced: "You can't have capitalism without racism."

Since the 23 June EU referendum, racist attacks on black and ethnic minorities have increased by five-fold in the UK. This follows the racist rhetoric employed by the leaders of both the establishment Remain and Leave campaigns. But racism was rising aggressively well before the vote.

Establishment politicians and capitalists continually scapegoat migrants and immigrants for austerity cuts and failing public services, fuelling divisions among workers and communities.

Also embedded in the system are the racist immigration services that make it much harder to migrate here as a person of colour than a white person, especially if they're not wealthy. A system which detains hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers in detention centres like Yarl's Wood, the vast majority of which are people of colour.

With the Tories in power austerity is what we - the 99% - face. Cuts to local services in working class communities disproportionately affect black and ethnic minorities. In fact conditions today are going in backwards, with more

black and ethnic minorities in low paid jobs, zero-hour contracts, unaffordable housing, etc.

Poverty

Unemployment and poverty are still higher in black and Asian communities. Black children are three times more likely to be excluded in schools, and black graduates earn 23% less than their white counterparts.

However, the Jeremy Corbyn movement has given a platform for black and ethnic minority people to project their voices. The policies and programme on which Corbyn stands is a good way to unite the working class and fight for a common goal.

Members of black and ethnic minority communities joining a trade union and joining the organised workforce is also an effective tool.

Most importantly, inequality is worse than ever. In order to truly celebrate black history month we need to fight to end the capitalist system which profits from racist oppression. Socialism can guarantee jobs, homes and services for all, laying the basis for campaigning to eliminate racism once and for all.

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Theresa May attacks migrants and refugees

Naomi Byron

Theresa May's speech at the United Nations, trying to blame destitute migrants for eroding support for refugees, is part of a cynical attack on the right to asylum.

May voted to invade Iraq, and bomb Libya and Syria: all disastrous military interventions, which helped create the current refugee crisis in the Middle East.

Faced with the human consequences of the warmongering she supported, her 'solution' is to slam the doors shut. She insists refugees should have to stay in the first 'safe' country they come to - Greece, Italy, Turkey!

May then goes on to blame "unprecedented" numbers of economic migrants for undermining support for refugees' rights. Her comments will encourage more horrific racist attacks.

There has already been a rise in verbal and physical abuse, thanks to the anti-migrant propaganda pushed by both establishment campaigns - Farage's Leave and May's Remain - in the EU referendum.

Comments like May's always give those with prejudices more confidence to express them. The Socialist Party defends the right to asylum, and opposes the anti-migrant propaganda which leads to such attacks.

One of the biggest reasons people give for wanting migration cut is feeling their standard of living is under threat. More competition for housing, scarce public resources like GP appointments, increases in school numbers with no increase in resources.

But the cause of these problems is lack of investment in public services. Those that remain are bled dry by privatisation. Reducing migration won't help divert more resources for healthcare, for example, when we have a government bent on privatising the NHS and driving all junior doctors abroad!

Jeremy Corbyn was right on the Andrew Marr show to take up the issue of the undercutting of wages, which has fed anti-migrant feelings.

The solution to this is a trade union campaign against bosses forcing competing workers into a 'race to the bottom'.

Fight for equal pay and conditions at a rate all people can live on, migrant or not - and for an end to austerity.

Wales: school students late and hungry due to privatised trains

Neil Stonelake

Socialist Party Wales

Just weeks after Jeremy Corbyn was taken to task by the media for highlighting overcrowding on trains under privatisation, more evidence has emerged of its effects.

Treorchy Comprehensive lies in the Rhondda Valley in south Wales. It is one of the Welsh government's flagship schools. It has been marked out as a "centre of sixth form excellence" by the Labour-led administration in Cardiff.

Now students complain their education is suffering as a result of overcrowding and poor service on Arriva, the privatised company paid a whacking subsidy to get pupils to school on time.

Passengers in the morning are frequently forced by overcrowding to stand in the toilets. Pupils have been forced to spend their dinner money on bus fares if they are not to be late. Carriages have been cut from four to two at the busiest times.

Angry students and their parents have started a campaign following the decision to end free bus passes and charge up to £32.90 a term for a season ticket.

One parent commented: "They have us both ways. The Government in Cardiff subsidises the railways, then the companies clean up on fare increases, no matter how abysmal the service is."

At the same time, transport union RMT is in dispute with Arriva over plans to further compromise safety and passenger welfare with more cuts to staffing. Investment, not cuts, is what's needed. The patchwork of privatised bus networks add to the problem.

The Socialist Party fights for immediate public ownership of the transport system under democratic workers' control and management. Pay compensation to owners only on the basis of proven need.

Incompetent bosses waste £46 million suspending public sector workers

Brian Debus

Chair, public service union Unison, Hackney local government branch (personal capacity)

Bosses in the public sector have spent £46 million suspending workers over the past three years.

The right-wing press spins this as workers being paid not to work. The truth is that suspensions are traumatising and disempowering, and often a product of management bullying and incompetence.

Workers often face a long, drawn-out disciplinary process, with the threat of the sack at the end of it. In Hackney, and most other workplaces, this falls disproportionately on low-paid and women employees.

Most disciplinary procedures contain the phraseology that suspension is a 'neutral act' and does not imply guilt.

This is duplicitous. The suspended worker is barred from their workplace, and cannot have any contact with colleagues.

On many occasions the process drags on for six to 12 months due to the inefficiencies of management. These have been compounded by more and more job cuts.

As a consequence, union reps often take on the mantle of counsellor in the long run-up to the hearing. Sometimes the process is more damaging than whatever the final outcome might be.

Although some cases may justify the sack, many could be resolved with lesser sanctions and appropriate training.

Currently, senior managers both investigate and sit in judgement on the accused. Why not call in outside representatives of human resources and the trade union movement to conduct a joint investigation?

This could speed up the process, save money in the long term, and provide a more balanced investigation. A fair hearing panel should also include at least one representative from the trade unions, not just management.

Clearly this bosses' government will not do this, in spite of its tokenistic talk of workers on boards. But Jeremy Corbyn's re-election as Labour leader opens the possibility of creating a mass party that fights for workers' rights.

One million victims of 'rogue' landlords

Nancy Taaffe

Housing campaigner

A million renters are suffering at the hands of 'rogue landlords', finds a report for housing charity Shelter.

A huge proportion of the UK's 4.3 million private renters have had landlord experiences that could be found unlawful in court. Of course, when you fear for the roof over your head, legal action doesn't seem much of an option.

The report states more than 64,000 renters have had their utilities cut off by landlords. Almost 50,000 said their belongings were thrown into the street by landlords during disputes. And at least 600,000 said landlords had entered their home without permission.

It does raise the question: why are these landlords described as 'rogue' - as if they are rare exceptions - when bullying and law-breaking is so common?

Thatcher abolished much of the protection previously afforded to private tenants. Through the long winter of Tony Blair's rule, these rights were not restored. In fact, New Labour compounded the situation by continuing council house sales, along with 'stock transfer' of whole estates.

Inheriting this housing catastrophe are people who have no choice but to privately rent - and thus face these Wild West practices.

Housing could be the issue which propels Jeremy Corbyn to power. The crisis is now endemic. A rapid council house building programme, plus establishing tenants' rights like rent control and secure tenure, could capture the popular imagination.

The Socialist Party campaigns for these policies. They could build a movement capable of cutting through right-wing press lies, and ending the housing crisis once and for all.

Them & Us

Pension plunder

The head of privatised power network National Grid will retire on £11,000 - a week. The governor of the Bank of England has cost us a quarter of a million in

travel expenses. And David Cameron gave generous raises of up to £18,000 to top aides while slashing public sector pay.

Former National Grid chief exec Steve Holliday turns 60 in October. He will be eligible for a pension of £591,000 a year, including shares. That could pay for 25 staff nurses.

Holliday retired at 59. Many workers will wait until 68 - or older - for an annual pension of less than he earns in a week.

Mark Carney, boss of the UK's central bank, has only been in office three years. A Freedom of Information request reveals he has claimed nearly £250,000 in luxury foreign travel in that time.

His annual pay package adds up to £879,000. That's 38 staff nurses.

And hated ex-prime minister David Cameron hiked special advisors' pay by up to 24% during his tenure. Millions of workers instead had their pay cut.

After losing the top job, Cameron has now resigned from parliament. He will have only his huge family wealth, top-level connections, and ministerial pension to rely on.

Coaster crime

The boss of theme park Alton Towers will likely keep his job after presiding over a horrific rollercoaster crash.

Two young people lost a leg and 14 others were injured in the 'Smiler' crash last June. At the time of writing, chief executive Nick Varney is still in post, and due a £1.4 million share bonus.

Investigators found a series of safety failings led to the crash, described as “foreseeable” by a judge. Health and safety is an inconvenience when there’s profit to be made.

Socialist speaks at UN

A member of the Socialist Party’s sister party in Sweden spoke at the United Nations about the Pakistani regime’s brutal repression of Balochistan.

Workers and the poor in the province “are threatened by religious extremism, militarised clans, suicide bombers and state terrorism.”

Kristofer Lundberg of Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna also said “European governments are no longer credible representatives of human rights when they continue with deportations to war, terror and dictatorship. The new Swedish asylum law is a total attack on the right of asylum.”

He concluded that “The working class in Balochistan is in great need of help and solidarity from the international labour movement...

“Only under a banner of unity of the working class against war, occupation and oppression, for peace, equality and a socialist federation of the region, can peace and freedom be achieved. This includes the right to independence for Balochistan and other national minorities.”

What We Saw

Socialist Liverpool FC supporters' group Spirit of Shankly recently unveiled its new banner.

As well as combining Liverpool and Everton colours, the banner prominently features Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. It also backs foodbanks and carries union endorsements.

The roster of supported campaigns includes the Blacklist Support Group, Shrewsbury 24, Orgreave Truth and Justice - and, of course, the Hillsborough Justice Campaign.

Liverpool and Everton fans have a proud history of actively campaigning for working class interests. Supporters' groups stood alongside trade unionists to defend Liverpool's socialist council, led by Militant, the Socialist Party's forerunner.

(pages 12&13)

Socialism 2016

A weekend of discussion and debate

12 & 13 November - Central London

Get face to face with the socialists!

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

national organiser

With bias in the establishment media so widespread, many people turn to social media for their real news and to share updates on workers' and young people's struggles.

But nothing beats discussion and debate with other activists to tease out the multitude of questions that face us in this turbulent political time. How can we unite a movement against the Blairites and the bosses? How do we overcome the challenges of the 'gig' economy? How can we help the junior doctors win and save the NHS?

Movements and campaigns are springing up and provoking important questions about how we fight back - from #BlackLivesMatter, to discussion around identity politics, to how we defend migrants' rights.

"Technology cannot substitute for direct human interaction". Don't take our word for it - this comes from the Forbes magazine survey of more than 750 business executives - ie people who only spend money on meetings if they think it's worth it.

So the first thousand reasons for coming to Socialism 2016 will be the 'direct human interaction' with over 1,000 other socialists, socialist-curious, working class fighters, Corbynistas, anti-austerians, trade unionists, anti-racist campaigners, and others. There will be two fantastic rallies but most of the weekend will consist of workshops and discussion forums where everyone gets a chance to speak.

There are thousands of other reasons to come. We need to discuss what the alternative to capitalist crisis and everlasting austerity is - as well as how we can achieve it.

And after the victory of Jeremy Corbyn what kind of a party do we want - what is the model for anti-austerity Labour? What is the role of new technology in democratic organisation?

Other key themes will include Trotskyism in the 21st century, Militant's real history and a 'Bitesize' series of 50-minute workshops on some of the fundamentals of socialism for school and college students.

You should come to Socialism 2016 because it will be an event crammed with discussion and debate on all this and on the most important question in the world - how we can change it.

Washdyke v Shoreline: the housing battle in Immingham

Mat Harrison

More than 60 residents from the Washdyke flats estate made the short journey to the Immingham resource centre to voice their objection to the demolition of their homes by Shoreline, the housing association that North-East Lincolnshire Labour council has outsourced social housing to.

This third residents' meeting was once again organised by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and chaired by Dave Mitchell, who earlier that day had been interviewed by Look North and the local radio stations.

During one interview he had been mistaken for a Shoreline representative and pelted with eggs! After some discussion with the resident, Dave was able to carry on with the interview.

With questions repeatedly being asked about the bedroom tax and how it will affect residents if they were to move into two or three bedroom housing, the biggest concern for Shoreline was clearly a lack of one bedroom housing within the Immingham area, with social housing at an all-time low.

Afford

The Shoreline representative also pointed out that people would only be allowed into two bedroom housing if they could afford it. It was suggested by the rep that Shoreline was doing residents a favour because housing associations

wouldn't consider letting anyone have a property bigger than their absolute needs, even if they could afford it.

The 'consultation' deadline has now passed. The next residents meeting will elect a committee based on at least one rep from each of the 18 blocks, who will organise the next stage of the campaign to resist demolition and fight for alternative social housing in the Immingham area.

NHS heart centre campaign intensifies

Steve Score

The fight to stop the closure of the East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre at Glenfield Hospital, Leicester, stepped up a gear following a hugely successful public meeting on 24 September.

150 people attended and were determined to save the centre. The unit is one of three specialist heart centres threatened with closure by NHS England.

Many parents came with their children who have been treated at Glenfield Hospital. They made passionate pleas for the centre to stay open. Glenfield has 50% of the entire country's capacity for the lifesaving ECMO skills and equipment for example.

Speakers included leading trade unionist and Socialist Party member Gary Freeman, who spoke out against NHS England's arguments for ending children's heart surgery at Leicester. Patients Amanda French and 18 year old Ria Pahwa also spoke on the platform.

A campaign to build support for a mass protest march through Leicester on 29 October was launched. 5,000 leaflets were taken away by people to give out in their neighbourhoods and workplaces.

Pedal power pounds

A sponsored bike ride from London to Cambridge by Chris Newby and Naomi Byron has raised well over £340 so far, with more donations expected.

West London Socialist Party members hosted a celebration of the 200th edition of *Socialism Today*, the Socialist Party's magazine (see advert page 5). A fighting fund collection at the event raised £116, a sum matched by the coins collected by Sharon Dixon from her sales of the *Socialist*.

Newcastle: Socialist Party defies ban to counter the far-right

Socialist Party members from Tyneside defied an outrageous ban imposed by Newcastle Unites (NU) to join a counter-demo against the far-right English Defence league on 24 September. With our Socialist Party banner and placards held high we were the most distinct group on the march.

The reason for NU's ban is based on material, in the most part, taken from the social media of the local far-right British National Party (BNP) organiser, who

NU acknowledge, “has a history of spreading lies and rumours.” Our member, who in the past was on the periphery of the BNP, has dropped any illusions he had in them and completely repudiates their racist and reactionary ideas.

Backfired

The handful of NU organisers who met with us to discuss this issue were dominated by Socialist Workers Party and Labour Party members. From the onset it was clear that nothing our member said would be enough to persuade them that he utterly rejects the far right. Indeed, we repeatedly asked what he could do to convince them - they never answered this question.

As we assembled at the beginning of the counter-demo we were approached by trade unionists, other left groups and individuals who were angered by NU’s attempts to ban us, and pleased to see we were boldly participating. We have also received a lot of support on social media. NU’s attempts to smear us and exclude us from its activities have clearly backfired.

The Socialist Party has a proud track record of fighting racism and fascism. Nationally this includes the Socialist Party, through our involvement in YRE (Youth against Racism in Europe), organising the biggest European-wide demonstration against racism and the far-right in Brussels. We also organised mass demos as part of the campaign which closed the BNP’s HQ in Welling, south London.

In Newcastle, Socialist Party members have been to the fore in standing against the far right, both on the streets and electorally.

Our members recently initiated a counter-demo and rally against the far right in Byker, which the person in question played a central role in organising. This rally was addressed by trade unionists, community activists, students and others opposing the far right. It should be noted that initially the NU position appeared to be to let the fascist demo in Byker go unopposed - which is why we stepped in and organised.

The Socialist Party has always had a different approach to fighting racism and fascism from Newcastle Unites. We believe that it's not enough to simply condemn the far right's racism and nationalism.

To cut across the growth of the far right in working class communities the left must link the struggle against racism to the fight against the worsening social conditions under capitalism - unemployment, zero-hour contracts, low pay, housing shortages and failing public services, etc. Socialists can only effectively cut across racism by simultaneously fighting against austerity.

It has been the failure of the Labour Party, particularly at local level, to mount a campaign against these conditions that has assisted the rise in support for Ukip, the EDL and other far-right groups. At every stage NU have set out to deny us a platform to put across this message as it embarrasses the Labour councillors in their midst who are carrying out council cuts.

Ricky Tomlinson

Furthermore, it is our position that there are numerous examples of people who have temporarily been around groups such as the BNP, but through their day to day experiences have ultimately drawn socialist conclusions. Perhaps the best known being actor Ricky Tomlinson, who as a youth joined the National Front.

If social media had been around, some of Ricky's views from that period may have reflected badly on him. However, Ricky's subsequent role as a trade union activist, which led to his imprisonment as a Shrewsbury picket, highlights how such a political journey, away from the poison of the far-right, is possible.

The Socialist Party will not be stopped by the sectarian actions of Newcastle Unites and its SWP and Labour Party leadership from participating in fighting racism and fascism.

#corbynwins

Liverpool: Labour Party conference

Campaigning to reinstate socialist ideas

Mark Best

When Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership re-election victory was announced, members of the Socialist Party were on the streets of Liverpool engaging with Labour Party conference delegates, visitors and the public.

“Kick them out”

Leaflets containing the socialist ideas required to fight the right-wing Blairites were enthusiastically taken. These ideas - introducing mandatory reselection of MPs, only giving the Labour whip to those MPs who pledge to fight austerity, democratising the Labour Party by restoring trade union rights, readmitting expelled and excluded socialists, and allowing socialist and anti-austerity organisations, including the Socialist Party, to affiliate - struck a chord. The call for deselection was met by people cheering “kick them out!”

We heard horror stories about the disdain some right-wing Labour MPs have for their working class constituents. One reported that a Liverpool MP refused to speak to a class of 12 year olds because their questions couldn't be agreed in advance!

While many other groups - among them Momentum, an organisation set up to support Jeremy Corbyn - were present at the conference, none were putting forward the programme required to defeat the Labour right and refound a party for the 99%. There was either a preaching of unity with the Blairite plotters or a lack of saying what is needed to defeat them.

At a Momentum fringe meeting - ‘The World Transformed’ - there were many references made to the city's proud history of fighting back. Shamefully, there was no mention of the successful mass movement the Militant-led Liverpool

city council led against Thatcher's cuts in the 1980s. That socialist council with the support of thousands of working class people took on the Tories and won, building over 5,000 council houses and securing over 10,000 jobs.

As we go to press Merseyside Socialist Party is hosting a meeting with speakers including Tony Mulhearn - one of the Liverpool 47 councillors who were expelled from Labour for defying the Tories - and Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party national organiser.

This meeting will draw out the key lessons from the Liverpool council struggle to show how the Tories cuts today can be fought and also how to defeat the Blairites.

(pages 6&7)

Socialist Students launched in USA

Student members of Socialist Alternative, the Socialist Party's co-thinkers in the United States, have officially launched Socialist Students, a nationwide initiative to help build a socialist movement in schools and on campuses across the country. Elan Axelbank, a student in New Jersey and member of Socialist Alternative, explains why.

Starting with Occupy Wall Street five years ago and moving through the Fight for \$15, Black Lives Matter and Bernie Sanders movements, the scope of American politics is being changed. And at every turn, young people are at the forefront.

If you're 20 years old like me, you were 12 when the 'great recession' of 2008 happened. The worst economic recession since the depression 85 years ago, the 'great recession' rocked working and middle class families. My generation, in our formative political years, watched our parents get laid off. Families lost their homes and couldn't pay back debt and mortgages.

We are called "the generation of the overeducated barista" because the amount of good-paying jobs plummeted after the 2008 recession and many of us are stuck in low-wage jobs with no way out in sight.

Many of us placed hope in Barack Obama when he became president in 2008, only to see him campaign on the same promise of "hope and change" in 2012 after not delivering much of either in his first four years.

If we were old enough many of us even voted for him in 2012 despite being disappointed, because we sure as hell didn't want Mitt Romney the Republican.

What's changed?

Not much has changed under the first black president. Racism still runs rampant, we still have troops in the Middle East, catastrophic climate change is underway, and more and more wealth is being concentrated in the hands of a few rich capitalists, while the rest of us are figuring out how to pay off our student loans.

So it shouldn't be a surprise that in many places the Black Lives Matter movement has been led by young black women, or that the Fight for \$15 was led mainly by young fast food workers, or that more young people voted for Bernie Sanders and his call for "a political revolution against the billionaire class" in the primaries than Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump combined!

From campaigns for fossil fuel divestment, to campaigns against sexual assault on campus, to the #MillionStudentMarch for free college last year, to Black Lives Matter on campuses, the student movement is growing stronger every day and student members of Socialist Alternative have been there every step of the way.

Last school year, student members of Socialist Alternative initiated and led the organising of the two massive #MillionStudentMarch national days of action against student debt and racism. We demanded tuition-free public college, cancellation of all student debt and a \$15 minimum wage for all campus workers. In November 2015, we had over 15,000 students in the streets at 110 college campuses across the country.

It is time for all students and young people who want to fight for serious reforms - yet see that economic and social justice cannot be achieved without fundamental system change - to come together.

Therefore, student members of Socialist Alternative have officially launched Socialist Students, a nationwide initiative to help build the socialist movement in schools and on campuses across the country.

Socialist Students will hold regular meetings on campuses. We will have political discussions on all sorts of topics ranging from current events, to socialist history and theory, to black and LGBTQ liberation, the limits of reform under capitalism and most importantly how to put these into practice building the socialist movement on our campuses.

Debates

We intend to hold debates on campuses across the country with Democrats and Republicans as well as libertarians on who to support in the presidential election.

Socialist Students will argue the case for students to support the Green Party's Jill Stein in order to continue the political revolution against the billionaire class that Bernie Sanders started.

We want to explain to our fellow students why we do not see the corporate-controlled Democratic Party as a vehicle for left-wing change and why we think that continuing to support the 'lesser evil' year after year is a dead end.

We will also help organise anti-Trump protests and demonstrations but put forward to our fellow students that, despite what the corporate media may tell us, supporting Hillary Clinton and the Democrats is not the way to stop him!

The ‘American dream’ is supposed to guarantee that, as long as you work hard, each generation will have a higher standard of living than our parents. But our experience is telling us otherwise.

Instead we need a democratic socialist society, where the economy is democratically planned by the majority, where resources should be used to meet human need, not to satisfy the greed of a tiny minority.

We have launched Socialist Students to help spread these ideas to other students by building on campuses across the country.

Darletta Scruggs

Socialist Alternative activist is speaking at Socialism 2016 - details page 13

Knowsley: No A-level education on offer

Neil Dunne

Knowsley

In an area with such poverty and neglect as Knowsley, Merseyside, its shocking that no A-levels course will be on offer anymore.

The last academy, the Halewood Academy, to close down this provision claims: “it has become financially unviable to continue to deliver A-Levels.”

They are following suit from two other A-level providers in Knowsley - Knowsley Community College and All Saints Catholic High School sixth form. The latter is the senior school which I attended and provided A-level courses to a good standard. A-levels are one of a couple of routes into higher education which students are constantly told will give them the best chance to get a good job.

Only two other local authorities currently have no state funded schools with A-Level provision - the City of London and the Scilly Isles - where the number of schools and population is far smaller than that of Knowsley.

Maria Eagle is MP for the area around Halewood Academy. Her excuse was that as it was a privately run business, there was nothing she could do about it.

Students will now need to travel up to 12 miles to other premises serving A-level provision. Transport links are poor and would be a financial burden for most, if not all, considering that Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was taken away from students.

I received this EMA and the burden was lifted from my parents, while living in one of the poorest and most deprived areas in the UK.

This is an example of how the poorest suffer the hardest under austerity.

Setting out our stall... reports of campus campaigning

King's College London

Socialist Students held our first freshers fair stall at King's College London on 23-24 September, where we're trying to establish a new society. 50 people signed up in the first hour, meaning we already have enough names to become an official student union society!

Another 50 people signed up over the rest of the weekend, giving us an excellent start to the academic year. There was enthusiasm for socialist ideas and a mood to organise: many students were keen to join us on the 19 November national demo in defence of education. There was also clear support for Jeremy Corbyn, bolstered by his victory, and agreement with our strategy to defend his anti-austerity leadership.

Mary Finch

Leeds University

Students at Leeds University showed great enthusiasm for socialist ideas this year as over 250 students signed up to our mailing list. Our focus on issues such as the junior doctor strikes and tuition fee rises set us apart from other left societies, as well as our strong history in taking action alongside discussion.

Our first meeting was on what socialism is. The word has become more widely used in recent years. We had an interesting discussion about the practicalities of implementing socialism as well as questions about Socialist Students itself. The new academic year sees multiple hardships for students including the scrapping of maintenance grants, high rents and increasing tuition fees. In the face of these, more and more students have shown a willingness to fight back as they do not want to see a future where they are buried under unpayable debt - a fact reflected in the number of sign ups we received. With a national demonstration being called by the National Union of Students (finally) against tuition fees on 19 November, there is hope that student politics will become a force to be reckoned with once more and Socialist Students will be at the forefront of that.

Maddy Steeds

Kingston University, Surrey

Socialist Party activists set up a Socialist Students stall at Kingston University freshers fair on 22 September where leaflets and flyers were handed out. Students showed an interest in our ideas and asked what we stood for. They were rightfully concerned by the current government's assault on education through cuts and rising fees and they supported our stance against such measures. Many of those we spoke to were curious about socialism and interested in learning more. We sold several copies of the Socialist and the Socialist Students magazine, Megaphone, and collected £18 in donation with 35 people signing up to our mailing list.

Sajid Abbas

(pages 10&11)

The guard stays on the train after the RMT defeats ScotRail bosses

Philip Stott

Socialist Party Scotland

After a major campaign of strike action over the summer, ScotRail guards have won a big victory in their fight to keep the conductor on the train. This breakthrough proves that determined strike action works.

The agreement will also be seen by members of RMT, the rail workers union, facing similar disputes with franchise holders across Britain, such as on Southern Rail and now Virgin East Coast, as a major boost.

ScotRail management had insisted that the conductor's role on new trains on the electrified parts of the Scottish rail network, due to be introduced from next

year, should be removed. This was fully supported by the SNP-led Scottish Government.

This led to a 75% vote for strike action by RMT members who work as guards on ScotRail, which is owned by the Dutch rail company, Abellio. Rail unions in the Netherlands have also been involved in industrial action to defeat attempts by Abellio to remove trained guards from rail services.

In June and July ScotRail guards took a total of 12 days of strike action.

Following talks, which included the train drivers' union Aslef, management have now conceded that the skilled guard will be retained on all the new trains.

ScotRail bosses claim that as the driver has the necessary skills there is no need for another skilled staff member on the train. But as the RMT has consistently pointed out, what if the driver is injured or incapacitated?

The huge public support for the RMT's strike action was testimony to the fact that the passengers believed the union and not the bosses.

Scotrail/Abellio management behaved scandalously, attempting to bypass the union by resorting to social media and mailings in a campaign of misinformation with union members. They indulged in a campaign aimed at undermining the support from passengers claiming: "The public will be astonished to hear that this is a strike only about who opens and closes doors on trains, nothing more."

As the RMT explained: "The model that ScotRail wanted to follow delivers an unsafe method of operation for Scotland's rail users."

There was widespread anger among RMT members at the conduct of the Scottish Government during the strike action. Both Nicola Sturgeon and SNP transport minister Humza Yousuf read only from the prepared script of ScotRail management.

Socialist Party Scotland and Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) called for the ScotRail franchise to be taken back into public ownership

two years ago, rather than handed to Abellio with profit going to shareholders instead of being invested into the service.

The RMT will now continue the campaign to “keep the guard on the train”. Next in their sights is to fight for a guard on those services that currently run as driver only operation in Scotland.

The dispute on Southern Rail over the removal of guards is to be escalated with 14 days of strike action called in October, November and December. The first two-day walkout will be between 11-13 October.

Also a 24-hour strike on 3 October will take place on Virgin Trains East Coast over job cuts and safety.

Victory for firefighters facing dismissal in Manchester

Becci Heagney

Manchester Socialist Party

Over 50 Fire Brigades Union (FBU) reps from around Greater Manchester met, along with FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack and President Alan McLean, to discuss their response to the outrageous move by Greater Manchester Fire Authority to sack its entire workforce. The meeting agreed to fight “using every legal, political and industrial weapon” they have.

Now the fire authority has backed down and withdrawn the threat of mass dismissal and agreed to re-enter negotiations. However, they have not retreated completely and are still likely to try to make cuts.

Plans to re-engage 80% of the 1,250 firefighters on worse contracts were met with resistance from the FBU - and they have had the overwhelming support from the public.

Everyone needs to get behind the firefighters and call on the Labour councillors that sit on the Fire Authority to withdraw this disgraceful attack.

Trade union branches and Labour Party CLPs should pass the model motion available at fbu.org.uk/NoMassDismissals

The Ritzy strikes back

Laurence Maples

Lambeth Socialist Party

Buoyed by Jeremy Corbyn's crushing victory over the Blairites, striking Ritzy cinema workers walked out and created a loud, bustling picket lines that shut down the Brixton cinema at midday on 24 September mirroring their previous strike two years ago.

Carrying banners declaring "the Ritzy strikes back" and accompanied by the Star Wars theme music, they showed their determination to finish what they had started. The cinema was shut down again as the square outside was flooded with supporters.

In 2014 workers took 13 days of strike action in their fight for the London Living Wage (LLW). They ran a high profile campaign with vibrant picket lines successfully shutting the cinema and forcing management to back down. They won a 26% pay increase, back pay going back nearly a year and an agreement from management to implement the LLW this year.

Management have reneged on this agreement in pay negotiations and the workers' minimum pay remains at £8.80 an hour - 60p short of the LLW. They have also failed to address workers' concerns on pay differentials, treatment of new staff, maternity and paternity pay and night pay. This attack has forced the workers to respond. They balloted for action and secured a 90% yes vote - 80% of the workforce is in the union.

The Ritzy workers have also spent the last two years assisting other cinema workers in organising, both within the Picturehouse group and outside.

As a result, they now stand with other workers in their struggle. Hackney Picturehouse workers are balloting for strike action to win the LLW and union recognition - some of them joined Ritzy workers on the picket line.

They won before and can do it again.

Junior doctors' strikes off - coordinated action needed

Left isolated by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) after almost a year of struggle, battered by a wave of vicious media bile, added to by threats from the General Medical Council and sections of the medical establishment, the BMA Junior Doctors Committee has called off the proposed five-day strikes by junior doctors set for October, November and December.

This follows the scrapping of a planned walkout in September. Many junior doctors are angry at the decision by their union the BMA to call them off. An emergency BMA conference of junior doctors should be organised to discuss and democratically decide on next steps for their dispute.

Junior doctors have waged a heroic struggle against Jeremy Hunt's imposition of a dangerous and divisive contract. His intention was to take on and beat junior doctors first, before carrying out similar attacks on all health workers.

The Tories so-called seven-day NHS is part of their plans to close some hospitals while running others even more intensively, preparing for eventual complete privatisation.

Junior doctors on picket lines, on the media and on demonstrations have showed they understand that the future of the NHS is at stake. The leaders of other health trade unions and the TUC should have launched a campaign in solidarity with the junior doctors.

The joint BMA and London National Union of Teachers (NUT) demonstration in April, which the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) helped initiate, showed the potential to build such action.

It was disgraceful the TUC did not invite a BMA junior doctor to speak at its conference. The TUC leadership fear trade union members would be inspired by the junior doctors to take similar action.

The battle in the NHS won't go away, not only will the junior doctors be faced with the reality of trying to work under the new contracts but the continued impact of massive NHS cuts will continue to bite and force other workers to fight.

Already the BMA GPs section voted that if matters are not resolved with the government over workloads and cuts then they be balloted for industrial action. And Unison, another health union, was forced under pressure to move an emergency motion in support of junior doctors at TUC congress in September.

A national demonstration in support of the junior doctors should be called as a start to organising the action needed to defeat the Tories NHS attacks.

Bloodied but unbowed!

Napo delegates

It is two years since Chris Grayling smashed up and sold off over half the probation service. While this act of vandalism has left many feeling bloodied we remain unbowed. We recognise that despair among the membership is giving way to anger as the full implications hit home. This mood can be transformed into a determined fightback if channelled correctly.

As predicted, the big business owners of the privatised Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) have forced out significant numbers of staff. In the publicly owned National Probation Service (NPS) staff burnout and sickness are placing services under unbearable strain with a number of so called 'red-sites' relying on expensive agency workers to prop them up.

It seems clear that no part of what was once a 'gold standard' service is working effectively, but all those who made this disaster possible have now left and there is no plan B. Faced with this mess, what should Napo's strategy be?

Firstly, this is no time for Napo to abandon our national collective bargaining machinery and accommodate ourselves to companies with failed business models and no future.

Secondly, we need a national campaign to back up our claim for 3% across the board pay rise underpinned by a £10 an hour minimum wage for the lowest paid and pay progression to the max within five years for all staff.

Thirdly, crippling workloads in both CRCs and NPS are unmanageable and becoming dangerous. We need a national campaign that sets limits on workloads.

We should press for a Corbyn-led Labour government to reverse the privatisation while maintaining the integrity of professional probation services, including national pay and conditions in the interim.

Unison Broad Left

On 23 and 24 September Unison's South East region held their 'strategy weekend' for 2016 in Woking, Surrey, involving around 70 activists. There was an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation knowing we were gathering at the same time the Labour leadership election result was to be announced.

There was also interest in the Unison Broad Left meeting to be held at the close of the weekend. Leaflets informing people of the location of the meeting and details of confirmed speakers - Glen Williams from Unison's North West region and Daniel from Youth Fight for Jobs - provoked much discussion. There was a rumour that news of this meeting had made some local managers and bureaucrats very unhappy!

At the official meeting Unison President Eric Roberts spoke and was received largely with disbelief and anger, with many leaving before he was finished. One of those who left was overheard saying: "That is the worst speech I have heard in many years."

Eric openly attacked the left saying that the demand for a 24-hour general strike and 'Tories out' is a "mantra and not a strategy".

He went on to claim that there has been no mention of a general strike in the trade union movement, appearing to be totally unaware of the motion passed at the 2012 TUC congress calling for exactly that.

But if he had forgotten this due to it being such a long time ago, the same demand has been raised consistently since then including TUC congress 2016 only a matter of days before!

Those that attended the Broad Left meeting heard a rousing speech from Glen Williams putting forward demands and a clear strategy for what is needed. Glen clearly set out what is wrong with our union, singling out specifics like the general secretary election debacle.

We committed to standing candidates for seats and positions that are opening up and a national website is to be created. A local newsletter will be created for local news and activities in the South East Region.

A collection at the meeting raised over £70, covering the costs for the room and providing a base to cover costs into the future. Throughout the weekend 20 copies of the Socialist were sold giving an optimistic and exciting end to an otherwise disappointing and frustrating weekend.

Declan Clune