

Corbyn condemns establishment and their rigged system

A bold socialist campaign could get rid of the Tories

"The dividing lines in this election could not be clearer", [declared Jeremy Corbyn as he launched Labour's general election campaign](#). He went on: "It is the establishment that complains I don't play by the rules: by which they mean their rules."

"And in a sense, the establishment and their followers are quite right. I don't play by their rules. And if a Labour government is elected on 8 June, then we won't play by their rules either. They are yesterday's rules, set by failed political and corporate elites and should be consigned to the past. It is these rules that have allowed a cosy cartel to rig the system in favour of a few powerful and wealthy individuals and corporations. It is a rigged system set up by the wealth extractors, for the wealth extractors. But things can, and they will, change."

Jeremy's clear call for voters to elect a Labour Party that "is standing up for working people to improve the lives of all" was a good start to the election campaign. Only by clearly putting forward a radical anti-austerity programme will he be able to lead Labour to victory in this election against the Tories' government of millionaires.

In the [first round of the French elections](#), the equivalent of the right wing of Labour - the PS - was reduced to 6% as workers punished it for carrying out capitalist austerity. Meanwhile, Melenchon - standing on a fighting, left programme - scored 19%, despite a very late campaign. Melenchon's substantial vote, like the support for Bernie Sanders in the US, shows that voters are angry with the capitalist establishment and will vote for parties and candidates that they see as standing up to it.

Theresa May has [called a general election gambling](#), based on the opinion polls, that she will be able to increase the Tories' currently puny majority. She wants to try and buttress the Tory government against the coming class storms that even she can see on the horizon. May hopes to win an increased majority by appealing to workers that only the Tories can negotiate a Brexit deal in 'Britain's' interests, but she is only interested in negotiating a deal in the interests of Britain's big business. In fact a major factor in her calling the election now is in the hope that she can then avoid a general election for five years - because she knows full well that any Brexit deal she negotiates will mean increased misery for the majority.

But hers is a very high-risk strategy. If Corbyn leads a fighting campaign there is every chance that May could end in June!

There are myriad ways that May could come unstuck. Already [Chancellor Philip Hammond's refusal to rule out tax increases](#) seems to have cut the Tories' poll lead. Anything that drives home the reality of a May government - not help for the 'just about managing' but brutal austerity - would destroy the Tories' poll lead. So could losing a section of Tory 'remain' voters to the Liberal Democrats, and having the deep divisions in the Tory party over Brexit come to the surface in the course of the election.

The most important factor in this election, however, is the real possibility that Jeremy Corbyn will be able to mobilise popular support around a radical anti-austerity programme. Jeremy has rightly pointed out that the establishment will do all they can to prevent this. It is necessary, however, to explain who 'the establishment' are. In reality it is the 'capitalist establishment' - the capitalist class. Today a tiny group of people, in Britain and worldwide, own and control industry, science and technique, and harness them in order to maximise their own profits.

Globally [eight people own as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity](#); the greatest polarisation between rich and poor in human history. In Britain there are today around 100 major corporations that completely dominate the economy. It is the tiny elite that own those companies and their hangers on who are the real establishment.

Jeremy Corbyn rightly name-checked [Sports Direct](#) boss Mike Ashley and former [BHS boss Philip Green](#) - who have both been caught in particularly vicious acts of exploitation - but they are not alone. Capitalism is a system based on production for profit and not for social need. The exploitation of working class people is written into its DNA. Today capitalism is increasingly not even capable of carrying out its historical mission of developing science, technique and the organisation of labour.

Capitalism today, despite the claims of 'recovery', has only economic crisis and endless austerity to offer the majority; hence the search for an alternative that has led hundreds of thousands of people to signing up to Labour in order to support Jeremy Corbyn.

The capitalist establishment, however, is strongly represented inside the Labour Party as well as outside. As last summer's coup attempt showed, the big majority of Labour MPs are desperate to ditch Corbyn. Contrary to their claims this isn't because he is 'unelectable' but because they fear he might be elected.

Back in 2015 [Tony Blair declared that Corbyn becoming prime minister would be "a very dangerous experiment"](#) which he wouldn't be prepared to risk. No surprise then that he is now going all out to try to prevent it happening - even suggesting that Labour voters consider supporting Liberal Democrats or Tories if they are 'pro-remain'.

If a pro-Corbyn MP had suggested people vote for non-Labour candidates the majority of MPs would be baying for their expulsion but you can be sure that won't apply to Blair. On the contrary, many Labour MPs are not far behind him, with the likes of Wes Streeting and [John Woodcock blatantly declaring they couldn't support Jeremy Corbyn as prime minister](#).

Never before has it been so clear that Labour is two parties in one: A pro-capitalist Blairite party and a new anti-austerity party in formation. Over the last six months doomed attempts by the anti-austerity party to try to compromise with the Blairites have meant no clear anti-austerity message has reached the majority of the working class.

Only a campaign in the hands of the potential new anti-austerity party stands a chance of winning the election. The manifesto should be decided by Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters - it is too important to allow it to be watered down to 'austerity-lite' via compromise with the right wing. Any attempts to impose a right-wing manifesto should be met with mass protests from the hundreds of thousands who are actively supporting Corbyn.

What should be the socialist policies in the manifesto? The policies that first thrust Jeremy Corbyn into the leadership of the Labour Party would be a good beginning - an immediate introduction of a £10 an hour minimum wage, an end to zero-hour contracts, free education for all, mass council house building, rent controls, repeal of the anti-trade union laws, and nationalisation of the rail and energy companies. These should be combined with policies such as an immediate end to all cuts in public services and a pledge to immediately renationalise Royal Mail.

Of course, the capitalist media will scream that such modest policies are 'unaffordable' - by which they mean that they might be detrimental to the gargantuan profits of the capitalist elite. There is no lack of wealth in Britain, but it is in the hands of a tiny handful of billionaires. We have to answer that the working and middle class can no longer afford to continue living in a society based on low pay, super-exploitation and unaffordable housing.

When the 1945 Labour government founded the NHS the capitalists also squealed about it being unaffordable but it was met with enormous enthusiasm by the working class able for the first time to access decent healthcare.

For 30 years successive governments - Tory and New Labour - have privatised public services, leading to vast profits for the privateers, and the undermining of public services for the rest of us.

There is huge popular support for renationalisation of privatised public services. Jeremy should pledge to renationalise them all, with compensation paid only to small shareholders in genuine need. This does not mean simply repeating the nationalisation of the post-war era. This time it should be based on popular democratic control involving service workers, trade unions and users.

And why limit public ownership only to what was achieved in the past? The fact that the pharmaceutical industry was left in private hands when the NHS was founded costs taxpayers billions through extortionate charges for medicines. It is estimated that payments to the pharmaceutical industry cost the NHS around 10% of its annual budget, around £11 billion a year.

And what about the banks? When the capitalist financial system was teetering on the brink of collapse New Labour did step in and effectively nationalise the banking system - but it was socialism for the bankers, not for the rest of us! The bankers were bailed out while we suffered endless austerity. Socialist nationalisation of the banks would bring them under democratic control, run in the interests of the majority - including low cost mortgages, and loans for small business. These demands and others should be linked to the need for fundamental socialist change - for a society run in the interests of the majority instead of for the profits of a few.

A clear anti-austerity programme - in the interests of the working class - should also define the Labour manifesto's approach to Brexit. Corbyn is of course correct to say they would rip up May's negotiating plans and start again. Workers who voted for Brexit did so primarily because they were in revolt against all the misery they have suffered over the last decade. Jeremy should make clear that he is fighting for a Brexit in the interests of the working and middle class majority.

It would be a mistake to allow the Labour right to pressure Corbyn into calling for membership of the single market, or even to include access to it in his demands for Brexit, if by that he means acceptance of its neoliberal rules. Instead he needs to set out a programme based on repudiating the EU's anti-worker posted directives and privatisation rules that oppose nationalisation of companies and industries. This should be linked to opposing racism and defending the rights of EU migrants, as Jeremy has done. It should not be confined to this country but on these policies reach out to the working class across Europe who are suffering from the EU's austerity offensive.

It is clear to everyone that Jeremy Corbyn will not be able to rely on the capitalist media, or the right of his own party, to give unbiased reports of his programme. The election campaign cannot therefore, be fought only on this unfavourable ground. Those trade union leaders who support Corbyn, including Len McCluskey - re-elected despite the best efforts of the Blairites - should vocally and energetically campaign for Corbyn. Mass rallies should be called in every town and city in the country. This should be combined with a gigantic trade union demonstration in defence of the NHS and education, and in opposition to austerity.

From the TUSC website:

Saturday 22 April 2017

TUSC chair Dave Nellist welcomes general election chance to drive out the Tories

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national chairperson, Dave Nellist, today welcomed the general election called for June 8th as a chance to drive out the Tory government and reverse their vicious austerity agenda.

Dave, a Labour MP from 1983-1992, urged his former backbench colleague Jeremy Corbyn to fight the election on clear socialist policies, pledging to support him in resisting the efforts of Blairite MPs to water down the anti-austerity platform which won Jeremy his Labour leadership victories.

"According to the annual Sunday Times Rich List survey the wealth of the thousand richest people in Britain has more than doubled since the Tories came to power in 2010", said Dave. "Levying capital gains tax even

just on that increased wealth would alone bring in over £80 billion for extra public spending. Austerity is 'working' only for the rich and a new course is needed.

"If Jeremy resists the pressure of the pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party and instead sticks firmly to core socialist policies he could confound the pundits' predictions and win enthusiastic support. That wouldn't stop the Blairites continuing to plot against him - including during the election campaign itself - but it would inspire millions that a different society is possible.

"TUSC was the sixth-biggest party on the ballot paper in the 2015 general election, standing 135 candidates across Britain (see <http://www.tusc.org.uk/policy> for TUSC's 2015 general election platform). But the political situation has changed since then with Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party.

Local election candidates

"TUSC has still continued to contest local elections against right-wing Labour councillors carrying out Tory cuts. We have 80 candidates in this year's elections (see <http://www.tusc.org.uk/17354/10-04-2017/local-elections-2017-final-list-of-tusc-candidates>) and every vote for TUSC on May 4th will bolster the case for Jeremy Corbyn to stand up against the right.

"Our local election campaigns will also lay the groundwork for building the support Jeremy will need against the capitalist establishment, including the Blairites within the Labour Party, if he does win in June.

"But a general election intervention is different to building a campaign against local Blairite councillors, and in a hastily called snap election especially so.

"So the TUSC steering committee will be discussing in the coming days how best we can take forward our founding aim of helping to create a mass vehicle for working class political representation, in the general election itself and, even more importantly, in the new political situation that will present itself after June 8th".

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 25 April 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

40% of GPs plan to quit - reverse all NHS cuts and sell-offs!

Rich Edwards, Cardiff East Socialist Party

445 GPs quit in England in the last three months of 2016, [according to NHS data](#). And two in five more plan on leaving their position, says a Department of Health-funded survey.

This is an indictment of an NHS being hobbled, hampered and destroyed by the greedy saboteurs in Theresa May's government.

A demoralised workforce within a desperately underfunded NHS is being forced to leave a profession they trained for years to enter - a profession within Britain's most treasured and vital public service.

Tory austerity attacks an NHS that is already [suffering under the burden of the disastrous 'PFI' privatisation schemes](#) expanded by New Labour. By 2014, the government had given £1.5 billion of NHS contracts to Tory donors alone, and nearly £9 billion total to their friends in the capitalist class.

All while the heroes who work saving lives in the NHS - like those in other public services in the era of austerity - are attacked by the Tories as the 'greedy' ones.

Corbyn's Labour must be bold. His manifesto must promise massive increases in funding for the NHS.

Raise the stagnant and insufficient pay of workers in the public sector. Cancel the ruinous PFI debts which hang like a burden on NHS trusts and other public bodies. Full nationalisation of all NHS providers and big business in the health sector.

Socialist policies are necessary to defeat the greed, lies and propaganda peddled by those who seek to sell off our health service. Fight for our NHS, kick the profiteers out, and kick the Tories out of government this June!

Cuts, profit and bureaucracy lead to 50% rise in mental health deaths

- Tories out
- Reverse all NHS cuts
- Nationalise the whole health sector

'Harriet Ryman', NHS mental health nurse

Cuts are putting at least 11,000 mental health patients each year at greater risk of suicide because [they are not promptly followed up after leaving in-patient care](#). Mental health charity Mind obtained these numbers in a Freedom of Information request.

At the same time, there has been a [50% rise in deaths of people using mental health services over the last three years](#), according to a BBC Freedom of Information request.

The Tories have tried to explain away this increase by claiming the NHS has improved the way it is recording deaths. But any employee in a mental health setting, and any service user, can see the truth about what is happening.

These tragedies have occurred in the face of mental health trusts losing £150 million from their budgets over the previous four years.

Liberal Democrat Norman Lamb is joining Mind in calling for discharged patients to be contacted within 48 hours as a solution to the escalating problem. This is a demand that socialists should support.

But it does not go far enough to address the dangerous crisis unfolding in mental health services - which has ramifications not only for patients themselves, but for the whole of society.

In order for NHS mental health trusts to implement 48-hour follow-ups, NHS England, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and the trusts themselves need massive investment in resources on the front line.

Alongside increased funding, NHS England and the CCGs should review all private contracts and so-called 'mixed models' of service provision. They must start a drive to bring all outsourced services back in-house.

The current expensive model of investing in 'leadership' is turning mental health trusts into upside-down Christmas trees. A multitude of managers harasses shrinking numbers of workers - in a system driven by meeting unrealistic financial targets instead of health outcomes.

Mental health trusts generate their income by increasing "NHS activity" - admitting, assessing, screening and then rapidly discharging patients over a brief timespan.

Worryingly, the management view is that even if the same patients get discharged and then quickly readmitted, it doesn't matter. It all shows up as 'activity' and so the trust gets paid more by the CCG.

This attitude goes against the principles of the "recovery model" - where patients are helped to manage their mental conditions, and return to fullest possible functioning in society.

NHS trusts argue that they are meeting "access targets." But the question about what the patient is receiving within the NHS needs to be raised by health unions.

Shut out

There is an increasing trend towards managing patients off waiting lists by rejecting them from mental health services, sending them "opt-in letters" and "signposting" them to services that charge. This means an increasing number of vulnerable people are shut out of mental health services altogether.

Tory and Blairite policies mean rising poverty and inequality, and the rates of mental illness will increase as a result. The correlation between inequality and mental illness has been researched by the epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, who presented their findings in the book 'The Spirit Level'.

Any sincere effort to address mental illness in society must address the increasingly harsh material realities NHS patients - and workers - struggle under.

Fighting on policies like these could rally even greater numbers of NHS workers and service users to Jeremy Corbyn's campaign.

200,000 empty homes - 250,000 homeless - end property speculation

[Over 200,000 homes in England sat empty for at least six months last year](#), according to investment firm Property Partner's analysis of government figures. Over 20,000 of those sat empty in London, worth around £9.4 billion in total.

For the same year, Department for Communities and Local Government statistics showed that [4,134 people slept rough](#) on any given night.

Without a safe place to rest and shelter from the cold, there are many dangers to which homeless people are exposed every night they spend on the streets. Sleep deprivation, malnutrition, addiction, depression, hypothermia, pneumonia, violence and rape.

The figures speak for themselves, and it is clear that profit stands in the way of basic human needs in cases like this.

Capitalist politicians would rather serve big business and the super-rich, who are motivated by private profit instead of improving life for the majority.

Very few second-home owners actually need a second home. But a quarter of a million people do not even have a first home according to homeless charity Shelter.

The Socialist Party fights for genuinely affordable, quality housing for all - because it's a basic human need. The Tories - aided by the Blairites - have presided over a worsening housing crisis.

Corbyn's announcement last year that a Labour government would build 500,000 new council homes is a good start, although the more the better.

To help pay for it he should propose nationalising the big construction firms and estate agents - as well as land and homes held unused to drive up prices - with compensation only on the basis of proven need.

The establishment will cry: 'but it's not that simple!' Yes it is. The fight to win it isn't, but the programme which can solve the housing crisis is a simple question of political will.

Benefit bullies

A man with chronic health problems died after the hated 'work capability assessment' found him 'fit to work'.

[Lawrence Bond had a heart attack after leaving a job centre in London this January](#). He had to attend because of the decision to end his disability benefit.

Meanwhile, the private firms doing this for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have made over half a billion from it. [The Socialist commented on this last issue in 'Them & Us'](#).

But many benefit cuts don't even save the bosses money. One exceptional case is Janet Davis from Ayr in Scotland.

[The DWP took away the car it had provided Janet](#) after deciding she could live independently without it. This will save the government a measly £8,000 over three years.

But the DWP also decided she was still eligible for help getting to work. The cost of the taxis it authorised instead? £65,000.

Refugee rescue

Over 1,000 migrants have died trying to cross the Mediterranean so far this year, [according to the United Nations](#).

The barbaric, racist policies of the EU have allowed these people - fleeing war, terror and destitution - to die. Both the Tories and the EU have to go.

Only public ownership and socialist planning can guarantee jobs, homes and services for all. Corbyn must fight for a Brexit based on defending all workers, not accepting the bosses' single market and brutal foreign policy.

Tory trouble

- Three leading staff members have already [resigned from the Tory campaign team](#). The prime minister's director of communications resigned on 18 April - the day May called the snap election. On 21 April, the end of that week, her press secretary jumped ship. By the start of the next week, 24 April, [a senior advisor to the chancellor had gone too](#). There are plenty more Tory spin doctors where those came from. But it's not a good start for May's campaign - while Corbyn begins another round of mass rallies.
 - A Tory council candidate in Scotland has confirmed he wants people not to vote for him. Thomas Williamson [described his candidacy as a "cock-up" to the Shetland Times](#). Conservative HQ asked him to stand, but Williamson says he never agreed.
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What we saw

Looking for an affordable home in east London? How about a caretaker's storeroom round the back of a poorhouse for £350,000?

[Infamous estate agents Foxtons apparently listed the glorified shed as a "studio" flat](#).

There has been a slight dip [in both house prices](#) and [new private rental rates](#) at the start of 2017. But this will not make up for years of speculation-driven shortages, and Tory and Blairite sell-offs of council homes.

The real origins of May Day

Dave Nellist, Socialist Party national committee

May Day has been a public holiday in the UK since 1978. But its real origins lie in the great struggles in America by working people for shorter working hours at the end of the 19th century, and the martyrdom of union leaders executed 130 years ago.

The centre of the [movement for an eight-hour working day](#) was Chicago, where some factories imposed an 18-hour day. An eight-hour law had actually been passed by the US congress in 1868. However, over the next 15 years, it was enforced only twice.

But over that same period workers began to take matters into their own hands. For example, in 1872 100,000 workers in New York struck and won an eight-hour day, mostly for building workers.

In the autumn of 1885, a leading union, the Knights of Labor, announced rallies and demonstrations for the following May - on the slogan of "eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will."

Their radicalism and success in key railroad strikes had led to membership growth. From 28,000 in 1880, the Knights of Labor grew to 100,000 in 1885. In 1886 they mushroomed to nearly 800,000. The capitalists were increasingly frightened at the prospect of widespread strikes.

On 1 May 1886, the first national general strike in American history took place, with 500,000 involved in demonstrations across the country. As a direct consequence, tens of thousands saw their hours of work substantially reduced - in many cases down to an eight-hour day with no loss in pay.

The employers lost no time in executing their revenge. The New York Sun, as direct as its modern British namesake, advocated "a diet of lead for hungry strikers"!

Two days later, on 3 May, 500 police herded 300 scabs through a picket line at the Chicago factory of farm machinery firm International Harvester. When the pickets resisted, the police opened fire and several workers died.

Haymarket

A protest meeting was organised for the following evening [in Haymarket Square](#). Towards its end, in the pouring rain, with only a couple of hundred workers left, the police arrived to break it up.

The meeting had been orderly, but suddenly a bomb was thrown into the ranks of the police. Seven officers were killed and 66 injured.

The police turned their guns on the workers, wounding most of the demonstrators, and killing several. It was never established who threw the bomb - an 'anarchist,' or a police 'agent provocateur.' At the subsequent trial of the union leaders the prosecution said it was irrelevant, and the judge agreed.

Police raids rounded up hundreds of union activists throughout the country. Eight union leaders were put on trial. Seven of them had not been at the demonstration and the eighth was the speaker on the platform, so none of them could have thrown the bomb.

Legality was never the aim of that trial; revenge was. The Chicago Tribune of the day gave the game away with the headline: "Hang an organiser from every lamp-post."

The trial began on 21 June. Instead of choosing a jury by picking names from a box - the normal method - it was rigged by a special bailiff, nominated by the prosecutor. He ensured the jury was made up of "such men as the prosecutor wants" - a practice echoed by today's jury selection in Ireland's Jobstown protest trial!

On 19 August that jury duly returned a verdict of guilty. Before sentence was formally announced, the defendants were allowed to make statements.

One of the eight, August Spies, a leader of the anarchist International Working People's Association, made a powerful speech: "Your Honour," he began, "in addressing this court I speak as the representative of one class to the representative of another..."

"If you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labour movement... the movement from which the downtrodden millions, the millions who toil in want and misery expect salvation - if this is your opinion, then hang us!

"Here you will tread upon a spark, but there and there, behind you - and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out."

On 11 November 1887, four of the union leaders were executed.

International protests followed. Huge meetings were addressed in England and Wales by Eleanor Marx, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde and William Morris. 200,000 people in Chicago lined the streets for the funerals.

Day of solidarity

From that day on, 1 May has grown to an international day of solidarity among working people.

In 1889, the founding meeting in Paris of what became known as the Second International passed a resolution calling for a "great international demonstration" to take place the following year. The call was a resounding success.

On 1 May 1890, May Day demonstrations took place in the United States and most countries in Europe.

Friedrich Engels joined half a million workers in Hyde Park in London on 3 May, and reported:

"As I write these lines, the working class of Europe and America is holding a review of its forces; it is mobilised for the first time as one army, under one flag, and fighting for one immediate aim: an eight-hour working day."

As workers have emerged from tyranny and repression in whatever country, they have adopted May Day as theirs. Its true history will undoubtedly inspire a new generation of socialists, as it has done so often in the past.

- Every year on May Day, the Socialist prints messages of solidarity from across the workers' movement. [Click here to see this year's record 99 greetings across ten pages](#), which raised over £5,200 for socialist ideas.

French presidential election: Macron and Le Pen reach second round

Melenchon result shows potential for building a mass left force

Statement from Gauche Révolutionnaire, CWI in France

The election results confirm that the establishment parties have taken a mighty blow!

In an unprecedented manner, [the second round will take place without an official candidate of the 'Socialist' Party or the conservative Republicans.](#)

The Republicans' François Fillon, who started out as the presidential front runner, ended up with 19.9% of the votes. The furore over corruption and his luxurious lifestyle (often at public expense) stemmed his popularity. But it was his plan to smash social security and put up VAT last December that began his free fall in the opinion polls.

The candidates of the two big parties responsible for all the policies carried out for the last 30 years have been truly swept aside, confirming the wave of 'clearing out' that left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon has spoken about.

With seven million votes, along with one out of every three youth votes, Mélenchon almost got to the second round.

His campaign - promoting an anti-austerity and pro-worker message - brought together tens of thousands of activists, and a genuine hope of reaching the second round began to emerge. It was a wave of support that made all the defenders of capitalism tremble, so much so that the Washington Post could declare, paraphrasing Marx in the Communist Manifesto, "a new spectre haunts Europe, that of Jean-Luc Mélenchon".

The [movement of the 'unbowed'](#), in which Gauche Révolutionnaire participated, will not stop there. Seven million votes represent a gigantic force and potential for challenging the pro-rich policies of Macron - the probable winner of the second round.

Socialist Party punished

On the other hand, Benoît Hamon received the worst ever score for a Socialist Party (PS) candidate, with only 6.35% of the vote.

He refused to withdraw and support Mélenchon. The vote for Hamon directly accounted for Mélenchon being behind Le Pen and Macron, showing that the PS remained true to itself, only able to think in terms of cooking things up for the next election.

Apart from his proposal of a "universal income", Hamon was quite unable to say publicly whether he approved of Mélenchon's flagship measures such as raising wages, cutting working hours or retirement at 60.

Hamon will of course pay the price of his attitude: a complete sidelining after such a low score, and the team of right-wing former prime minister Manuel Valls and others will regain control of the PS, in order to reach an agreement with Macron and his movement. Already, many elected PS members have either obtained a place in Macron's movement for the legislative elections, or have entered into discussion with him.

Macron

Emmanuel Macron's candidacy has a specific role: to ensure the continuity of the policies pursued over the past few years: smashing up the labour law and public services, and policies in favour of the multinationals and finance groups.

It was with the discreet but real support of president Hollande and many big bosses that Macron was launched, like a marketing product, combining demagogic speeches ('everyone would have a chance to become a millionaire') to a (well masked) declaration of war on workers (ending the 35-hour maximum working week, the wiping out of tens of thousands of public jobs).

With 23.8% of the votes, his support in the population is not strong. Many will be quickly disappointed, and there will certainly be an angry awakening among his many young voters that Macron is only continuing the

policy of his predecessors.

Le Pen

Facing him, far-right Front National's Marine Le Pen can play a very useful role for the capitalists. Her presence in the second round will favour Macron who has the support of the super-rich, the banks, etc.

Only the candidacy of Mélenchon would have been an obstacle to this ideal scenario for the bourgeoisie and the politician caste. He, at least, really denounced the policies pursued in the service of the super-rich without scapegoating the main victims of capitalist exploitation, especially migrants and Muslims.

Le Pen only secured 600,000 votes more than Mélenchon. The rural areas voted primarily for her, as well as many areas affected by factory closures and the running down of public services. But the large and medium-sized towns, especially the larger working-class towns, often supported Mélenchon more than Le Pen: Le Havre, Seine-Saint-Denis, Roubaix, Marseilles, etc.

If Le Pen's score is really high (but much less than what was predicted in the polls), her further progress is not inevitable.

Le Pen's speeches did attract a layer of angry young people, workers, retired people, and unemployed, who for more than 15 years have suffered the attacks of various capitalist governments.

She has recently, however, made it clear to the big bosses during her meeting with the employers' body, Medef, that she would not touch any of their privileges, nor would she be in favour of increasing workers' wages.

Her anti-migrant worker, anti-Muslim, nationalist position will be ramped up during the second round while attempting to publicly distance herself (temporarily) from her extremist Front National party.

Prosecuted for embezzling public money, she is protected only by her parliamentary immunity. Similarly, her party is filled with careerist politicians in exactly the same way as the PS or the Republicans.

Faced with Macron, Le Pen may receive votes from people who are tired of policies at the service of the rich. But in reality she does not propose a different policy; she defends capitalism as much as Macron. She does not call into question exploitation or the dictatorship of profit. On the contrary, coming from a family of millionaires; she is in the camp of the rich.

Many are rightly angry at this 'choice' of second round candidates. It is crucial that wherever possible, we organise and multiply mass initiatives against Le Pen, against capitalism and racism.

It is through mass mobilisation that the extreme right will be stopped. And by the construction of a mass party of struggle which really defends the interests of workers, young people and the majority.

Le Pen's electoral successes are because many are desperate and at the same time angry, but also because parties like the PS or the Republicans, carry out policies that aggravate the social situation for the majority.

It is understandable that many will vote for Macron to block the nightmare that Le Pen and her party represent. Gauche Révolutionnaire has always opposed Le Pen, and we must continue mobilising against her and her party.

The first mobilisations have a dual objective: to show Le Pen that she will not pass, and to prepare young people and workers, for the struggles that will have to be waged against the capitalist attacks of Macron.

We need a new mass left-wing party to collectively decide on our struggles and our demands. Along with a programme for democratic socialism and against capitalism, this is what Gauche Révolutionnaire stands for.

Rejection of the French establishment

Historically, [our commune*](#) in south west France was Socialist Party or Communist Party. In the first round of the 2017 presidential election votes for the five leading candidates (in an 84% turnout) were: Mélenchon 55, Macron 54, Le Pen 51, Fillon 37 and Hamon 18.

This reflects in part the history of the area (mining and glass manufacturing) and in part the way in which the elections went in France as a whole. It amounts to a massive rejection of the traditional parties of the French capitalist establishment.

So we have Macron and Le Pen in the second round on 7 May. Macron is expected to win by a sizeable margin. Already Fillon, Hamon and president Hollande have endorsed him. But it's not straight forward. Le Pen is campaigning as the anti-establishment candidate and with elements of an economic programme, at least in rhetoric, aimed at workers.

Whoever wins the second round, French capitalism will find no solution to the crisis it faces. A Macron victory will mean large scale industrial strife as he tries to enact his anti-worker, pro-capital programme. A Le Pen victory will be accompanied by massive social upheaval.

Terry Adams - Tarn, France

- A [commune](#) is an administrative area of varying sizes from a city to a hamlet
-

Strikes can end nurses' poverty pay

Unions and Corbyn must lead NHS action

Matt Whale, NHS nurse

Three thousand nurses have been forced to take out payday loans, [according to data received by the Sunday Mirror](#) - and that's just in the last six months!

This is a direct consequence of [the real-terms pay cut of 14%](#) nurses have had over the past seven years of Tory rule. Nurses' union RCN also highlights the worrying trend of nurses turning to food banks in order to feed themselves and their families.

The government's disdain for the NHS is clear. Vicious cuts to funding, hospital closures and privatisation of services are putting patients' lives at risk. Now the staff who somehow keep the NHS together despite all the attacks are turning to legalised loan sharks and food banks in order to make it from month to month.

But we aren't taking these attacks lying down. The inspirational struggle by junior doctors has given confidence to NHS workers that we can struggle, that we can take on the government.

The RCN is taking historic steps towards potential strike action, polling its members to find out if there is a mood for a formal industrial action ballot. Unison, the largest health union, must do the same.

Action gets results, [as NHS domestic staff in east London recently showed](#) - with victorious snap walkouts against removal of their tea break. With the support of the health unions and the public, we can win.

Anger is growing within the nursing profession at the state of the NHS, nurses' pay and the quality of care we are able to provide. A genuine campaign across the unions against cuts and to scrap the pay cap - with the genuine threat of industrial action - could force the Tories back.

A nurses' strike with full support from our brothers and sisters in other sectors would be huge. To build support for strike action and anti-austerity policies, Jeremy Corbyn, the health unions and the Trade Union Congress should call a second national march for the NHS during the election campaign following [the very successful one on 4 March](#).

The NHS is at breaking point. Workers and the public need to come together in defence of our NHS, and in defence of the brilliant staff who make the NHS the incredible service it is.

Len McCluskey re-election - a defeat for the right

The Socialist Party welcomes [the re-election of Len McCluskey as General Secretary of Unite](#). His victory over Gerard Coyne is a defeat for the Tories and the capitalist establishment as well as the Blairites within Labour. They moved heaven and earth in the Tory media, [with Coyne disgracefully using the Murdoch press, even including the hated Sun](#).

They regarded this election as the platform for another attempt to unseat Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, to open the way to seize back the leadership of the party. But this result, coming at the beginning of the General Election campaign, will give a major boost to all those forces who want to push Corbyn into government on a pro-worker, anti-austerity programme.

We call on Len, with this renewed mandate, to put himself and the union at the helm of Labour's election team alongside Jeremy and John McDonnell.

This Unite election has shown the role of the mass media and it can only be defeated in the next seven weeks if there is a mass campaign of meetings, rallies and demonstrations - mobilising around a socialist programme against this austerity government of not merely the 1% but the 0.1% super-rich.

A Coyne election would have also been the signal to attempt to move the union back into the dark days of partnership with the bosses. We believe that the closeness of the result (see below) shows that the candidature of Ian Allinson was an unnecessary risk that threatened to let in Coyne through splitting the left vote.

Four Socialist Party members are standing on the United Left slate in the Unite Executive elections, which will be counted in the next few days. If elected, their presence on the Executive will be essential in ensuring that the union continues to act in a militant manner politically and industrially.

Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser, for the Socialist Party EC

Len McCluskey 59,067 votes

Gerard Coyne 53,544 votes

Ian Allinson 17,143 votes

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 21 April 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Usdaw ADM 2017: Left challenge needed to end assault on retail jobs and conditions

Amy Murphy, Usdaw executive council member (personal capacity)

In 2016 many changes were made within the big four supermarkets as they adapted to falling sales. The Coop, Sainsburys, Morrisons and Tesco all saw many store closures and thousands of jobs lost.

Within Tesco [it didn't just stop with closures](#) - new developments were scrapped, head office jobs were cut, layers of management removed and office hours shortened.

A complete restructure took place, leading to less full time positions replaced by short-hour flexi contracts. Then just before Christmas several stores, my own included, made cuts and changes resulting in huge redundancies.

Accounting scandal

To top it all, Tesco was facing a £263 million accounting scandal. So where are we now? When you think things cannot get any worse it all starts again!

[1,700 deputy managers' jobs lost in Tesco Express stores](#), replaced by lower paid shift leader roles. More 24-hour trading hours cut, counter closures, colleague rooms outsourced, opticians now being sold off to Vision Express - all resulting in more redundancies.

[Tesco has just been fined £129 million](#) by the Serious Fraud Office for the accounting scandal. Once again it's the low paid workers who pay the price for mistakes made at the top.

With the number of job losses over the last year it's no wonder that Usdaw's membership has taken a downward turn. For the first time in 22 years we are losing members.

Now, more than ever, Usdaw needs to be strong for its members and take on the issues faced by retail workers head on, Usdaw needs to push back attempts to erode terms and conditions and push for more full-time contracts.

Elections

2018 is a crucial year in the Usdaw calendar - both the executive council and the president are up for election and the need for a left challenge is crucial.

We should also support Jeremy Corbyn in the general election. To use the words of Jeremy: "[Fairness for only a few is not fairness, but privilege.](#)"

Jeremy has committed to close the gap between top earners and low paid staff. With the right result on 8 June this could become a reality and be built on by a electing a left-wing Usdaw leadership.

PCS Left Unity says get rid of the Tories!

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

Theresa May's [calling of a snap general election](#) on the pretext of needing a mandate on Brexit is a sham. However, the election campaign gives an opportunity to expose and oppose her government's austerity programme and to get rid of the Tories.

Under the Tories, PCS members have suffered unparalleled attacks on pay, jobs and conditions. Services have been cut and privatised and offices closed. More attacks are planned if the Tories get back in.

PCS members and their families are also suffering from the Tories' attacks on workers. Benefit cuts are leaving millions unable to feed themselves. The NHS is facing life-threatening cuts and large-scale privatisation. The housing and education crises in working class communities are acute.

The Tories' [draconian anti-trade union laws make it illegal for the likes of PCS members](#), teachers, nurses and railworkers who work in essential services to strike unless 40% of union members vote in favour with at least a 50% turnout - even though the Tories were elected by only 24% of the electorate.

They are doing this to try to neutralise opposition to the further attacks they are planning to both the welfare state and workers' rights.

The election will raise many issues, including the possibility of a further referendum on Scottish independence and the political situation in Northern Ireland. Immigration will be an issue exploited by the Tories and the right-wing press. PCS Left Unity is opposed to all forms of racism and will continue to campaign for workers' unity.

Left Unity welcomed the election and reelection of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader on an anti-austerity programme. We also welcomed his commitment to end cuts in the public sector to pay, jobs, pensions and services. Labour must campaign in this election on the basis of socialist policies, rebuilding the welfare state and the public sector and against austerity.

Jeremy Corbyn

Left Unity believes PCS members should support candidates prepared to commit to our union's policies, and would welcome the election of Jeremy Corbyn as prime minister with a Labour government committed to an anti-austerity agenda.

As socialists in PCS, we believe this election gives an opportunity to get rid of this vicious Tory government in the interests of our members and class. Whatever the outcome of the general election it is important that we have a PCS leadership capable of dealing with the challenges that face our union and its members.

It is vital to [secure a Democracy Alliance victory in the PCS elections](#), which is necessary to defend pay, jobs and services. Left Unity urges everyone to work hard to achieve this.

BMW strikers determined to win pensions dispute

On 19 April, workers at BMW's engine plant in Coleshill, Warwickshire, held the first of five separate 24-hour strikes [against changes to their pension scheme](#). Part of the first national strike by BMW workers in the UK, the stoppage was called by Unite the Union after a massive 93% yes vote by 72% of workers.

The company is trying to force through a change from a final salary pension scheme (based on workers' contributions) to a defined benefit scheme (leaving retirement income at the mercy of stock market fluctuations).

This could see the 5,000 workers in the scheme losing up to £160,000 over the course of retirement. The move comes despite BMW making profits of £5.89 billion in the year to March 2017.

There was a determined mood among those on the picket line to fight back, with one striker saying: "You plan out what you think you'll need for your retirement, and keep putting towards your pension pot, and then suddenly the company turns round and says you might not be getting what you thought you would. It's a disgrace".

Reports from inside the plants suggest that some sections were closed entirely, with managers desperately looking for qualified staff to keep production going on others.

Nick Hart, Birmingham Socialist Party

National Shop Steward Network supporters from Bristol and Gloucestershire joined pickets at the BMW's Swindon plant on 19 April. The pensions dispute takes place despite BMW promising to keep the scheme open to existing members when it was closed to new employees four years ago. Pickets were in a determined mood.

Matthew Carey, Bristol South Socialist Party

- The strike continues with further action planned on the 3, 16, 18 and 24 May
-

Forest Hill School demonstration

200 staff and parents marched through the streets of Catford in support of Forest Hill School, Lewisham, south London on 22 April. Forest Hill School has a £1.3 million deficit and is facing significant cuts, including potentially 15 teacher redundancies on top of support staff who have already gone. National Union of Teachers (NUT) members [have taken strike action](#) when one picket line banner read: it's "not our deficit".

[At NUT conference](#) on 15 April delegates from Lewisham, south London, moved a motion which identified areas where there can be action against funding cuts. Like at Forest Hill, around half a dozen different London boroughs have seen action, but this needs to be coordinated. As Socialist Party member James Kerr said: "We need a strategy that can win on cuts."

Workplace news in brief

CWU conference latest

The start of the [Communication Workers Union \(CWU\) conference](#) on 23 and 24 April saw Socialist Party member Lenny Shail support an emergency motion by the CWU leadership backing Jeremy Corbyn in the general election and to call on him to back renationalisation of Royal Mail and BT. Lenny also called on the CWU to take Jeremy around Royal Mail and BT workplaces to meet workers and build a campaign for these demands.

A motion initiated by another Socialist Party member working in Royal Mail called for a mass demonstration before the general election in support of Corbyn's policies, including in defence of the NHS, but this was defeated.

The Socialist Party is [calling for Jeremy, together with the trade union movement and health campaigners](#), to call a second demonstration (following the hugely successful one on 4 March) during the election campaign, mobilising millions onto the streets against the Tories and in defence of the NHS.

STOP PRESS

As we go to press CWU conference passed an emergency motion in defence of Royal Mail pensions and other terms and conditions. The motion calls on Royal Mail to "respond positively to the union's 'four pillars of security' agenda" one of which is a proper pension for all. If this fails to happen by August the CWU will consider all means available, including industrial action, to fight for the demands.

Security strike

It was a brisk morning to say the least, but with flags flying, music playing and tea and sandwiches on the go, the security officers on strike at Senate House, HQ of the University of London (UoL), were in high spirits on 25 April. As picket after picket explained, their demands are "simple and fair": they want their bosses to keep their promises!

They are striking for no zero-hour contracts, proper payslips, and for UoL to honour its promises on pay. Low paid cleaners achieved the London Living Wage in 2011 and the employer promised then to increase the wages of other grades to maintain differentials, but instead wages of security officers have stagnated.

They are now demanding a 25% increase, with £12 an hour for the lowest paid. Pickets were proud to announce that workers brought in to do the jobs of strikers had joined the union!

20 years since 1997 general election

How Blairism sank its claws into the Labour Party

2 May, as well as being in the midst of preparations for the upcoming snap election, marks 20 years since another general election - the one in 1997 which brought Tony Blair and New Labour to power. Fittingly, *From Militant to the Socialist Party* - a new book by Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe - will be out soon. The book covers the period 1995 to 2007, including the whole of Blair's premiership. Here we publish some edited extracts.

The Tory government under John Major could not escape electoral nemesis and they were aware of this. The response of Tony Blair, elected as Labour leader in 1994, and the Labour leadership was to drive even further towards the right, shamelessly stealing Major's ideas and garb.

The latter, [in his evidence to the 2011 Leveson inquiry, said he used to joke](#): "I went swimming in the Thames, left my clothes on the bank and when I came back Mr Blair was wearing them."

The brewing mass opposition to the Major government widened the split within the Tory party. The economic upswing which British capitalism was experiencing resulted from its unexpected eviction from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism and the forced devaluation of sterling on [Black Wednesday](#), 16 September 1992.

The massive groundswell against the Tories had nothing to do with the policies of the Labour leadership. Dissatisfaction with the government stood at 80%, a record high, and Major's approval rating plummeted to 15% but there was no one else in the Tory leadership capable of doing any better.

The benefits of economic growth were spread unevenly as the rich skimmed off the cream from the 'boom' while the real wages of the poorest actually fell. A gaping chasm opened up within the Tory cabinet with the [Thatcherite eurosceptics described by Major as "bastards"!](#)

Tory policy

The right-wing leaders of the Labour Party did everything to shore up the government. Blair and David Blunkett openly supported grant-maintained schools, which led to criticism even from right-wingers such as Roy Hattersley. Harriet Harman, Labour's employment spokesperson, disgracefully accepted the Tories' opt-outs from European legislation, including paying young workers less.

Blair adopted the law and order programme of Major, calling at Labour's 1995 conference for 3,000 extra police on the beat, and making the infamous pledge ["to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime."](#)

More importantly, working class living standards had gone back under the Tories because real wages had dropped by at least £50 a week on average compared to 16 years before. However, the majority of the official tops of the labour movement had fully embraced capitalism politically.

Echoing Blair's approach, John Monks, general secretary of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), commented: "The debate on the centre-left is no longer about socialism versus capitalism. It is about different kinds of capitalism."

Just how alienated Blair was from the base, the outlook and loyalty of the ranks of the labour movement was indicated by his revelation: "I voted Labour in 1983. I didn't really think a Labour victory was the best thing for the country, and I was a Labour candidate!" From the beginning, Blair and his like were the real 'entrists' into Labour - in the interests of capitalism!

Big business representative

Blair was unashamed about his origins and his politics: "What sort of leader was I at that point? I had a philosophy that was clearly different from that of the traditional Labour politician. I was middle class, and my politics were in many ways middle class... I didn't want class war."

Nevertheless, class war is a fact and Blair throughout his prime ministership was a better representative - more fitted for the times - than the Tories in carrying out class politics in the interest of big business.

From the outset he hated the Labour left, with special venom reserved for Militant (predecessor of the Socialist Party, whose supporters were then members of the Labour Party). He recounts a journey back from a meeting in the company of Tony Benn:

"We talked about Militant. I wanted to know what he thought about this Trotskyist sect that had infiltrated Labour. I was representing the party in the legal case against them and, having studied them and their methods, I knew there was no dealing with them, other than by expelling them.

"He didn't agree, and I spotted the fundamental weaknesses in this position: he was in love with his role as idealist, as standard-bearer, as the man of principle against the unprincipled careerist MPs."

In some ways this sums up what the Labour Party became under Blair - and in contrast to what it could have become if Benn had won the deputy leadership in 1981. Blair was to preside over 13 disastrous years of right-wing Labour government which resulted in a hollowed out organisational shell and almost five million lost general election votes. Benn enjoyed widespread support within the ranks of the labour movement until his death in 2014.

1995 and 1996 saw the Blair counter-revolution against the Labour Party carried out. This vindicated the analysis of Militant. Blair was compelled, at first, to disguise his intentions about changing the constitution - [the elimination of Clause IV Part 4](#), with its aspiration for a socialist society - as merely a 'rephrasing'.

In his autobiography his aims are spelt out: "After the 1992 defeat, and without discussing it with anyone, not even Gordon [Brown], I had formed a clear view that if ever I was leader, the constitution should be rewritten and the old commitments to nationalisation and state control should be dumped."

Blair, a relatively new member, helped expel the alleged 'entrists' of Militant - who had decades of membership of Labour behind them. The dirty work by him and former 'left' ex-leader Neil Kinnock succeeded in ridding Labour of Militant. But this was just one of his and the right wing's aims.

The rest of the left was subsequently attacked, as we had warned at the time of our expulsion. Indeed, the expulsion of Militant supporters and [the heroic Liverpool city councillors](#) represented a key moment in the shift towards the right within the Labour Party. In time this would lead to its demise as a specifically workers' party at its base.

Some of the left - particularly those gathered around the Tribune newspaper - allowed themselves to be persuaded that the attack on Militant was a one-off, that by our 'intemperate tone' and militancy we were partly responsible for the attacks on us. They consistently and completely underestimated Blair and what he represented.

Whether Blair was conscious of his role or not is beside the point. The British ruling class, particularly Thatcher, had a long cherished ambition to destroy the basic class character of the Labour Party, determined by its link to the trade unions and its socialist aspirations as envisaged by Clause IV Part 4.

Thwarted

However, whenever the Labour right wing had attempted this in the past, they were defeated. They attacked the left but were thwarted by the mass opposition of the rank and file of the party, particularly manifested within the Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs).

The Labour Party leadership of Hugh Gaitskell tried to remove Clause IV in 1959. This met a brick wall of opposition, particularly from the trade unions, some who formally stood politically on the right. Faced with huge opposition the leadership retreated.

Blair succeeded where other right-wing attempts at destroying the Labour Party as a voice of working people had failed. He would never have been able to achieve this without the fundamental change in the political situation following the collapse of Stalinism [the regimes in the USSR and Eastern Europe].

This changed the overall class balance of forces in Britain and internationally, particularly from an ideological point of view. Blair, as a precondition for his success, wanted to distance New Labour from any semblance of the class struggle or socialism.

He wished to destroy the trade unions' integration with Labour, in the manner of the Democratic Party in the US. There, the unions give money, claim to have 'influence' over the Democrats but are not affiliated to it.

Blair was determined to brook no opposition to plans to abandon Clause IV and weaken union influence: "From the very beginning I was determined to be the architect of something revolutionary, transformative and undeniable. I had kept the plan on Clause IV very tight. On the opening weekend of party conference, just before the beginning, I started consultations with other key people."

Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw "was delighted". He had played a pernicious role in attacks on Militant supporters. He later buttressed Blair during the Iraq war, swallowing the fairy tale about 'weapons of mass destruction'.

This was a complete rupture with the ideas upon which the Labour Party was based of breaking from capitalism and initiating a new socialist society. Moreover, it was taking place when capitalism worldwide was incapable of significantly improving the conditions of working class people.

This was one of the reasons why Labour was ahead in the opinion polls in 1995 - and not the alleged superstar image of Blair. We pointed out: "Blair's successful campaign against Clause IV is on the coat-tails of the capitalists' offensive. He was enormously assisted by the purge against Militant and others on the left."

We also pointed out that revolts of the working class were inevitable given the incapacity of capitalism to satisfy human needs.

Militancy

The more farsighted representatives of capitalism understand this. Writing in the Financial Times, Ben Pimlott, professor of politics, indicated why Clause IV historically occupied such a key position: "In the 1970s, the left began to present common ownership, once again, as the essence of socialism.

"In an age of grassroots industrial militancy, it became harder to argue that the inscription on every comrade's membership card was there just for sentimental reasons. Those were remarkable times. It is extraordinary to recall that in 1973 the Labour Party National Executive Committee advanced the plan for the state takeover of 25 leading companies; that the figure of 25 was reached because... if it was not quantified someone might try to duck out of the obligation."

He went on to say: "Even this figure of 25 did not satisfy the hard left, which wanted to add a further 250 major monopolies together with the land, banks, finance houses, insurance companies and building societies with minimum compensation... all under democratic workers' control and management."

This learned professor failed to point out what we stressed: "That this later resolution was moved, with considerable support, by Militant delegates at the Labour Party conference in 1973."

Blair's right-wing leadership was therefore quite conscious that Clause IV was not just some outdated totem. In conditions of crisis it could become a beacon, a point of reference for radical policies.

Blair, with the support of the media, pushed relentlessly for the elimination of Clause IV. It met some resistance from below, with a survey revealing that 60 out of the 62 CLPs that had debated the issue passed

resolutions demanding it be unchanged.

The leaders of some unions demanded commitments from the Labour leaders that they would renationalise the water industry in exchange for their support.

Militant criticised them: "An attempt to stitch up a fudged compromise on such a vital question is a glaring example of 'undemocratic manoeuvres in smoke-filled rooms'. The union leaders should be fighting for the nationalisation of all privatised industries as well as the retention of Clause IV."

Blair talked of replacing the 'anachronism' of the clause with a modern expression of 'broad values', like justice, equality and opportunity. Nobody would disagree with such aims but they remained a pipedream in a crisis-ridden capitalist system.

The press and the ideologues of capitalism never stopped repeating that 'socialism is dead'. Why then were they and their right-wing allies in the labour movement so ferociously determined to see the removal of Clause IV?

They correctly feared that future big social upheavals in Britain - following on the heels of economic crisis - would crystallise mass support around the ideas of socialism if Clause IV remained in Labour's constitution.

As Blair assaulted Clause IV, he also publicly expressed his admiration for the most hated Tory politician of the 20th century, Margaret Thatcher. In an interview with the Sunday Times, when asked whether Thatcher's eleven years in power did some good, he replied: "Yes. Britain needed change at the end of the 1970s." He added: "She was a thoroughly determined person and that is an admirable quality."

Thatcher

Thatcher, as the conflicts over the miners, Liverpool and the poll tax demonstrated, was a determined class warrior whose stated aim was "the destruction of socialism". Thus, there was a certain symmetry between her and Blair.

New Labour would not touch the anti-union legislation. This alone should have been sufficient for the unions to dump it and prepare the basis for a new mass party.

Blair's belly-crawling to Thatcher contrasted sharply with his arrogant attacks on the unions, still the paymasters of Labour. He warned that the unions would never again have an "arm lock on a Labour government; they would have no more influence over that government than the employers".

And he was true to his word from day one in office as he bent the knee to big business and spurned the demands of the working class and poor. More than any previous Labour leader he was seeking to mollify big business by 'putting the unions in their place', even before coming to power. He was conducting a war, calling for the continual revision of the trade union block vote until it was reduced to only individual union members holding a party card.

None went quite as far as Blair in consciously setting out to destroy Labour as a workers' party, making sure that he lined his pockets in the process. In 1994, without consultation with any section of the party apart from his press officer, Alistair Campbell, he renamed the party 'New Labour'.

New Labour

Moreover, he would not tolerate any compromise which would involve downplaying 'New' in the title. He wrote: "New Labour with a capital N was indeed like renaming the party."

However, there was some resistance: "As if to underscore how difficult it was all going to be, the next day the party, at the insistence of the unions, passed a resolution reaffirming Clause IV... For me, I was absolutely clear: if the change was rejected, I was off."

At Labour's special national conference the atmosphere was muted because the decision to scrap Clause IV was decided well in advance - even the speakers were predetermined. Delegates were forced to fill in speakers' cards, a well-known right-wing device for stitching up debates.

Benn, Labour's longest serving MP, tried to speak throughout the debate on this vital issue but shamefully was not called.

The right-wing evolution which had even corroded its base was reflected most glaringly in the CLP delegates. Incredibly, 90% of the constituency delegates voted for Blair's abandonment of socialist principles, something that would have been absolutely unheard of in the 1950s and 1960s boom when the rank and file were consistently on the left.

But the new breed of 'delegates' - smart suited careerists seeking a shortcut to power and influence - were far removed from worker delegates of the past. Only two out of eleven CLP speakers opposed the dropping of Clause IV.

The mood was captured by Garfield Davies of the shop-workers' union Usdaw. He concluded that one of the three landmarks in the recent history of the party had been Kinnock's attack on Militant, claiming it saved the party and ensured that the abolition of Clause IV could happen.

In opposition, a few constituency delegates reminded the conference that when the [Gang of Four split to form the Social Democratic Party in 1981](#), they had demanded that Labour should abolish Clause IV, introduce 'one member one vote' and break with the unions. "Doesn't this sound familiar?" asked one.

Another "recalled that Labour had won its largest ever parliamentary majority in 1945 by promising and carrying through a programme of public ownership of the railways, pits, and creating the National Health Service".

Even in this 'Blairised' conference some opposition was evident even from right-wing unions. Nevertheless, they went along with Blair largely because working people, and particularly the unions, were desperate for a change of government.

They therefore swallowed the argument that 'modernisation' was necessary to get rid of the Tories, even if this meant ditching principles.

[The vote on the amendment to abandon Clause IV](#) was 65% in favour with 34% against. The unions were split with 38% in favour and almost 32% against, while the CLPs voted in favour with a meagre 3% against!

Walkout

Many delegates were disgusted and walked out of the conference, some of them greeting Militant Labour members outside, including Dave Nellist, the Labour MP for Coventry South East from 1983-92, who had been expelled in 1991 for his socialist beliefs.

An innocuous new clause was adopted where all mention of socialism, the idea of a planned economy and nationalisation, were expunged. It should not be forgotten that it was not only Blair but also Gordon Brown who was one of the architects of New Labour.

Brown bears joint responsibility for the party's swing towards the right. His conflict with Blair was within the New Labour apparatus, a personal struggle for power.

Blair himself said that the elimination of Clause IV was a "defining moment" for the Labour Party, quite clearly indicating that he had been successful in changing its class character. However, much as he would bask in this unique "personal achievement", the reality was that a similar process had developed worldwide.

The shift towards the right of 'socialist', 'labour' and even 'communist' parties indicated a wide, deep-going ideological shift. The political wind was in the sails of all those organisations that positioned themselves within the framework of capitalism.

Alternatively, those who defended the 'socialist project' were forced to swim against the stream, not for the first time in history.

The outcome of the general election two years later was summed up by the front page headline of the Socialist: "Tories Wiped Out". The anti-Tory tide was devastating as 180 seats changed hands.

Yet Labour's vote share was lower than its 1945 landslide victory; lower even than the victory of 1966 - and 1951 and 1955 when Labour lost. The overall turnout of 71% was 7% down on 1992 - and meant that the numbers who abstained had increased by a third on the previous election. The lowest turnouts were in traditional Labour-held seats.

As we had warned, Labour's shift to the right had alienated many of its traditional voters. Only the burning desire to get the Tories out led people to vote for Blair's party.

More than anything, Labour was the fortunate beneficiary of a massive and decisive rejection of the Thatcherite brutalities and inequalities of the 1980s and 1990s. The irony was that New Labour believed it had to adopt pro-Thatcherite policies to get elected when the majority of the population was overwhelmingly prepared to reject those 'values'.

We pointed out that New Labour's biggest advantage for now was that they were not the Tory government. However, the size of the Labour victory promoted expectations and illusions that Labour was incapable of fulfilling.

Ominously, on the steps of Ten Downing Street, Blair warned: "We were elected as New Labour and will govern as New Labour." This meant that, despite one or two minor changes, Thatcher's counter-revolution would not be overturned. Nonetheless, a new period had opened up in British politics.

The sequel to *The Rise of Militant* by Peter Taaffe - pre-order today!

From Militant to the Socialist Party

This general election campaign will see a choice for those opposed to Tory austerity. The battle within Labour rages over Tony Blair's legacy and those seeking to continue it, and supporters of Corbyn who want to see working-class political representation. In this battle, the example of Militant has been a touchstone, showing how it is possible for working-class people to organise and win.

From Militant to the Socialist Party covers developments from the New Labour takeover to the first rumblings of the world economic crisis of 2007-08, and is the sequel to *The Rise of Militant*. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Stalinist regimes, capitalism's representatives proclaimed 'the end of history'.

But the struggles of workers and young people continued. From the Liverpool Dockers' strike to the mass movements against the invasion of Iraq, *From Militant to the Socialist Party* charts the fightback, and highlights the lessons of these movements for today.

From Militant to the Socialist Party offers unique insight into how Marxists organised, the programme and strategy put forward at key stages of the struggle.

Peter Taaffe is the former editor of Militant newspaper, and the general secretary of the Socialist Party. He was a founding member of the Committee for a Workers' International, which now organises in over 45 countries.

- RRP £15, but pre-order for only £12. Send your name, address and contact details to benrobinson@socialistparty.org.uk or leftbooks.co.uk - Expected publication date mid-May 2017.
 - [Rise of Militant](#), also £12
-

Jobstown trial begins - call on Corbyn to support the defendants!

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge

"It's a rigged system set up by the wealth extractors, for the wealth extractors." With those words [Jeremy Corbyn boldly launched his general election campaign](#). But Jeremy could also have been talking about the outrageous trial of seven anti-austerity protesters in Ireland that will run concurrently to the general election here.

On 24 April the trial of [seven protesters](#) began in Dublin, the first group of 18 adults who will stand trial. All seven pleaded not guilty to the outrageous charges they face - of false imprisonment following their participation in a peaceful sit-down protest in 2014.

Their real 'crime' is that the protest was part of an anti-austerity movement against water charges and privatisation that won. As Jeremy Corbyn said: "When we win, it's the people, not the powerful, who win" and they can't bear that.

The first day of the trial was mainly about jury selection. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) had been seeking bans on who could sit - including a Trump-like ban on the 14% of the Dublin population who come from the Tallaght area and all trade union members!

Melenchon

However the DPP has been forced to retreat on some of these proposed exclusions by the pressure of the solidarity campaign. It already includes [French presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#) and many other prominent left spokespeople around the world. The Labour Party in Northern Ireland has also passed a resolution in support of Jobstown Not Guilty.

Like the Blairites seeking to attack Jeremy Corbyn before, during and after this general election, this trial will expose the Blairites in Irish Labour. As we go to press the prosecution is setting out its case and will call witnesses including Labour's Joan Burton, former deputy prime minister, whose anti-working class policies provoked the Jobstown protest. She will testify against socialists leading the fight against austerity.

The push-back against the DPP shows the need to continue building this campaign for the six weeks of the trial. Readers of the Socialist are asked to help build even wider trade union support and to intensify the social media campaign. Please email jobstownnotguiltygb@gmail.com for a campaign pack including a model trade union motion.

[The campaign in England and Wales](#) has already had big successes. 38 trade union branches and trades councils have already democratically voted to back the campaign with many more preparing to do so. Over £2,000 has been raised from these branches which can help counter the media blackout of the case.

Also, crucially, Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, RMT transport union president Sean Hoyle, BFAWU bakers' union president Ian Hodson, Amy Murphy, Usdaw shop workers' union executive council, leaders of the PCS civil servants' union, members of Unison's national executive, and many more key trade union activists have written to Jeremy to say:

"Support for Jobstown Not Guilty would be consistent with your record of defending trade union rights, standing against repression and for democratic rights and we hope that you will back this campaign."

Health Campaigns Together meets to chart the way forward

Mike Forster, HCT vice chair (personal capacity) and Huddersfield Socialist Party

The largest ever gathering of [Health Campaigns Together \(HCT\)](#) took place on 22 April at its annual general meeting in London.

60 delegates attended from all over the country representing around 50 community groups and organisations. It shows the campaign has obviously grown out of the [hugely successful 4 March demo](#) to save the NHS and, of course, this has raised the standing and authority of HCT. A number of proposals were therefore in front of the meeting to chart a way forward.

The looming general election has now changed the entire political landscape and dominated the debate. It was agreed the campaign group will rush out an election special newspaper to address the central health issues in the election and to call on all supporters to make the NHS a central theme (which the Tories will not want).

An organising resolution was passed calling on all local groups to extend and develop their networks and to lobby councils and MPs about the sustainability and transformation plans and cuts and closures. A conference will be called later in the year but there will be a mobilising focus on the NHS' birthday on 5 July.

Inevitably, the main debate focused on the general election and how to build on the 4 March demo. After much debate and discussion, it was agreed to support the proposal from Hands Off HRI in Huddersfield that we call on the Labour and trade union movement to back a larger national demo in defence of the NHS within 12 months.

The meeting also agreed to approach the National Union of Teachers (NUT) about a possible joint demo on health and education. A demo like this could have an electrifying impact on the outcome of the election.

It was also agreed we should develop wider regional networks of HCT across the country and also support any health unions which take action in support of their members.

Action

An action committee has now been delegated to take ideas about the elections and 5 July forward which will develop more detailed plans. A quick get together of the committee took place after the meeting which heard about the excellent initiative already taken by doctors and nurses to target marginal seats with a very strong message about saving the NHS.

A group of officers has now been elected, including myself as vice chair, who will continue the work of the campaign. A huge challenge faces us, along with the major health unions: to galvanise and mobilise popular support for the NHS into a mighty force that can blow away the Tories and their plans to kill off our health service.

Protests in solidarity with LGBT+ people facing persecution in Chechnya

Around 400 people gathered in Leeds on 22 April to rally in solidarity with LGBT+ people [facing violence and imprisonment in Chechnya, Russia](#).

Recently reports have circulated of imprisonment, torture and killing of gay men along with other groups of people deemed as 'threats' by the Chechen government.

The rally called for support for those campaigning in Russia and Chechnya to support LGBT+ people trying to flee the violence. It also called for demanding our government take action to support those trying to leave Chechnya.

But the rally also raised that the LGBT+ community in the UK must fight back against the Conservative government here; opposing their treatment of LGBT+ asylum seekers who have been deported back to countries where they face violence and death for reading LGBT+ magazines for example. We must also oppose the huge impact of the Conservatives' austerity agenda.

The rally focused on the fact that the LGBT+ community gained rights by fighting for them and we need to continue that legacy to oppose not only the treatment of LGBT+ people in Chechnya, but to fight for an end to discrimination against LGBT+ people everywhere.

Michael Johnson, Leeds Socialist Party

Over 150 people marched through Birmingham city centre against the current repression of the LGBT+ community in Chechnya.

Reports say that gay men and women have been arrested due to their sexuality, with beatings and extra-judicial killings carried out. Chillingly, the Chechen president, Ramzan Kadyrov, has pledged to "eliminate the gay community by the start of Ramadan."

Socialist Party members joined in to show our disgust at the persecution suffered by LGBT+ people in Chechnya and throughout the world. We also took the chance to point out that the fight for LGBT+ rights isn't over in this country.

Prime Minister Theresa May has voted in parliament against LGBT+ rights on multiple occasions. On 8 June we have the chance to kick her out - let's take it!

A young LGBT+ Socialist Party member addressed the rally, mentioning the fact that 100 years ago the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia following the October revolution, and it became one of the first countries in the world to legalise same-sex relationships.

Nick Hart, Birmingham Socialist Party

Doncaster TUSC: TUSC's programme for local jobs and services

Steve Williams, [the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition \(TUSC\) candidate](#) to become Doncaster's mayor had to send his apologies to the Chamber of Commerce invitation to the mayoral hustings at the chamber's business conference on 21 April.

Steve is not a professional politician. He works as a mental health nurse in the NHS. He was rostered to work on the night and, like most workers, could not take time off.

However, Steve has issued a statement of his policies which TUSC believes would benefit the Doncaster economy, create jobs and raise wages. These include refusing to carry out the Tory government-imposed cuts in council spending, implementing a £10 an hour minimum wage, a mass council house building programme and inviting small businesses to contribute to his 'peoples budget'.

Steve said: "TUSC opposes the Conservative government cuts in local authority funding which has taken £106 million a year out of the council's budget and the local economy. But the Labour council and mayor have passed on the Tory cuts without standing up for local people and plan another £67 million cuts by 2021.

People's budget

"Instead, I propose a people's budget that in the first instance would draw on council reserves and prudential borrowing powers to set a legal no-cuts budget and introduce economically stimulative policies. I would build support locally for such policies and link with other councils to force a change in central government economic policy.

"Average wages actually fell in absolute terms in Doncaster between 2011 and 2015! That's why I would introduce a £10 an hour minimum wage for all council and contracted staff and encourage workers in the private sector to join a trade union.

"I would initiate a mass council house building programme that would both tackle the housing crisis and homelessness, and provide contracts, jobs and training in the local economy.

"I would invite local small businesses to contribute to my people's budget. Local council procurement policies could include, post-Brexit, giving first preference to local businesses and local employment, and require companies bidding for public sector contracts to pay suppliers within 30 days."

Peter Taaffe speaks in Birkenhead

Birkenhead born Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party, returned to his hometown on Monday 24th April to speak about the situation in Britain today and also his new book - '[From Militant to the Socialist Party](#)' - being published soon by Socialist Books. The book is a sequel to the Rise of Militant, also written by Peter, and covers events and the Socialist Party's role between 1995 and 2007.

Dave Jones from Wirral Socialist Party reports:

The largest Socialist Party meeting in Birkenhead in many a year saw 60 people hear Peter Taaffe powerfully spell out the challenges and opportunities for Socialists today. Roger Bannister, TUSC City Region Mayor candidate, and Angela Grant, PCS activist, also addressed the meeting.

The contributions from the floor, applications to join the Socialist Party, and a financial appeal raising nearly £700 were testament to the inspiring atmosphere.

Birkenhead has a long and proud militant history, this meeting demonstrates that socialism has a bright future here as well.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 25 April 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

East London tenants fight 40% rent hike

[Tenants faced with a massive 40% rent hike by their housing association](#), One Housing, met on 24 April to pledge to fight it. The majority of the tenants, who live in West Ham, east London, are still paying the old rent via standing order and are campaigning for all tenants to do the same.

They have created the One Housing Tenants Action Group to collectively take on One Housing with support from the National Union of Teachers, the Socialist Party, local councillors and other activists. The tenants are confident and determined.

At the meeting they heard from a Butterfields tenant [who, with others, successfully fought eviction in 2016](#). The tenants are planning to march on One Housing's office on 6 May to say 'can't pay, will stay!'

The Socialist inbox

Do you have something to say?

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

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

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

Life-or-death election

Watching the brilliant 'Guerrilla' TV drama with Idris Elba, about the British Black Panther Party in the early 1970s, where black and Asian people faced a very harsh reality with constant police brutality.

The left-wing militant characters know that it is the British establishment, at root, that is racist, corrupt and capable of anything to keep a right-wing power base firmly in place. The activists, who without doubt have the humanity if not the sham of a law on their side, must fight fire with fire.

Working class white people have not usually suffered the same potent force of a ruthless establishment against them - at least in terms of false imprisonment or beatings based on colour alone.

But the oppression of the whole working class is very harmful to the health and wellbeing of all individuals, families, children, the disabled, the elderly and the sick through vicious Tory policies and cuts more reminiscent of the 1930s than the 1970s.

This is why this election is so vitally important, to unite everyone behind socialist demands, get behind Corbyn and vote the Tories out. It's life and death for many.

Nick Slater, Torquay

Militant v metro-mayor

I'm curious about the cause of the blood-letting between Liverpool Labour councillors and metro-mayor candidate Steve Rotheram.

They both embrace the insane strategy of carrying through Tory cuts as the best way of 'defending' the city (Liverpool Echo, 13 April). Why then are Labour councillors refusing to distribute election literature for Labour's metro-mayor candidate?

It appears that Rotheram's reference to the damage wreaked on Liverpool by Thatcher has triggered unease among Labour councillors - on the grounds it will remind people of the [campaign to defend the city spearheaded by the socialist council in the 1980s](#).

Councillor Steve Munby is quoted as bleating that he "can't think of anything more damaging than to put out a leaflet evoking the 80s which will remind people of Militant."

His anxiety is justified. The more the younger generation learns about the magnificent campaign of resistance to Thatcher - spearheaded by the 47 Liverpool Labour councillors, in which Militant played a leading role - the more they will question the role of Labour councillors and MPs who meekly accept Tory cuts without any semblance of a fightback.

This follows on from an incident in the local Garston and Halewood Constituency Labour Party. A resolution supporting the RMT's campaign against driver-only operated trains was ruled out of order - on the grounds that it would embarrass Rotheram.

This is another reason for supporting the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition's mayoral candidate Roger Bannister, the only anti-austerity, pro-RMT metro-mayor candidate.

Tony Mulhearn, former Militant-supporting 'Liverpool 47' Labour councillor

Militant v Momentum

It seems that most establishment writers find it impossible to comment on conflicts in the Labour Party without an inaccurate reference to the Militant Tendency.

Sean O'Grady's piece - "[I'm far from pro-Corbyn, but the Momentum conference made me wish the Blairites wouldn't ignore them](#)" (Independent, 26 March) - was another in this vein.

Perhaps he is ignorant of the fact that three Militant supporters were elected as Labour MPs in the 1980s, with firefighter Terry Fields winning what was supposed to be a Tory marginal.

Or that Militant supporters led the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, which led a mass movement that defeated that inequitable tax and brought down Thatcher.

Sounds somewhat removed from the picture of a group that didn't "want to win elections and campaign on the streets."

Labour Party members would do well to examine the real lessons of what Militant argued for in the Labour Party, rather than the caricature that O'Grady and others have presented.

Militant - and its successor, the Socialist Party - stands for accountability of MPs, defence of public services, support for trade union struggle. Many of those inspired to join Labour in the wake of Jeremy Corbyn's election will find that they share more than they think in common with Militant.

Iain Dalton, Leeds

Holocaust hero

As a teacher of history I am confronted consistently with the challenges of teaching about the Holocaust.

I have recently been in Leeds for a pre-Auschwitz visit seminar, and am due to attend a day trip to Auschwitz with some school students. At the orientation seminar I heard survivor testimony from a truly inspirational man, Steven Frank.

Steven was brought up in a secular Jewish family in the Netherlands, with an English mother and a Dutch father. His story is one of millions, but his warmth, humour and genuine belief in the goodness of all humanity was inspirational. His message was of love, and the strength of the human spirit.

Steven experienced as a child the unrelenting nature of Nazi atrocities. But he also experienced the willingness to fight: his father was a prominent member of the Dutch resistance, and he talked passionately about the need today to fight against the rise of right-wing populism in the US and Europe.

The Nazis ran arguably the most evil and barbaric regime in history. But we must not forget this was not a random event, nor was it unavoidable.

Capitalists in Germany collaborated with and funded the Nazis through fear of the rise of workers' organisations, and the first victims of Nazi atrocities were the leaders of the workers' movement. The workers' movement, in turn, could have defeated Nazism with a bold programme to seize power with the working class.

In times of crisis, the capitalist class can eventually turn to fascistic methods to hold onto power and to crush the labour movement.

As socialists we must be armed with the correct ideas to fight racism, to fight for the labour movement and to fight for a socialist world. Only then will we be able to truly utter the phrase "this will never happen again."

Victoria Wainwright, NASUWT union rep

Football frenzy

AFC Militant, the recently created football team for Socialist Party members, beat neighbouring Virtual Goldfish in a 5-2 thriller on 9 April. Playing only our second match, we recovered from a previous narrow loss.

Militant started brightly with a front three getting behind the opposition defence. Virtual Goldfish fought back effectively, repeatedly playing the ball over our defensive line. Half time: Militant 3 - Virtual Goldfish 2.

Militant started the second half well, finding plenty of room behind the opposition defence. Ian Pattison finished the game with a darting run and great strike to secure his hat-trick.

The Socialist Party supports the working class traditions of football - from the workers who set the clubs up, to protests against the financialisation of the game, and football in the workers' movement itself.

If you would like to play, attend games or help support the team, contact Paul Callanan on paulcallanan@socialistparty.org.uk.

Laurence Maples, Clapham, south London

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25349>