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What we think

Right wing attempts to use single market against Corbyn

Stand firm for an internationalist, workers' Brexit

Just six weeks ago Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, and radical election manifesto, [led to a historic surge in the Labour vote](#). In the immediate aftermath many of the right-wing Labour MPs who had attempted a coup against Corbyn only last summer were eating humble pie and falling over each other to profess their loyalty to him.

We warned then that it would be a serious mistake to believe that the Labour right would now be willing to unite behind Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity programme. The hostility to Jeremy Corbyn over the last two years has not been, as the right has claimed, because they thought he was 'unelectable' but rather that his programme, and the movement in support of it, represents a threat to the capitalist elite. This is the fundamental reason that the capitalist wing of the Labour Party, the Blairites, has been determined to oppose him.

A few 'ultra-Blairites', including Blair himself, have continued to openly attack Corbyn. The majority, however, are hoping to surround him and force him to step back from his anti-austerity programme. They are doing this most openly around the question of Brexit and the single market. [First Chuka Umunna moved an amendment to the Queen's Speech guaranteeing membership of the single market](#).

EU protection?

The 51 Labour MPs and MEPs who supported this move signed a statement which described the single market as not being a simple free trade zone but "uniquely, a framework of rules that protects people from the worst excesses of globalisation and unfettered capitalism." This is nonsense. The EU single market was established as a result of an EU treaty signed by Maggie Thatcher; not known for protecting people from 'unfettered capitalism'! Ask the Greek working class if they feel they have been protected from its 'excesses' after suffering an unprecedented fall in living standards as a result of capitalist crisis and EU diktats.

[The single market is neoliberal, pro-austerity and anti-worker](#). It is based on the so-called 'four freedoms' - the free movement of goods, services, capital and labour. Among its many anti-worker measures are the European Postal Services directive (used to justify the privatisation of Royal Mail), and the anti-union rulings by the ECJ in the notorious Viking and Laval cases, putting business 'rights of establishment' ahead of workers' right to strike.

The overwhelming majority of big business in Britain is firmly in favour of remaining in the single market as the best means to maximise their profits. The cooperation on this issue of the Blairite wing of the Labour Party with such 'friends of the working class' as George Osborne tells you everything you need to know about whose interests they are acting in.

Jeremy Corbyn is correct to say that he does not support Britain remaining in the single market. In response to the hysterical opposition of Labour's right wing he should go on the political offensive by making clear that the starting point of his 'Brexit negotiation policy' would be to implement policies in the interests of the working and middle class. From a £10 an hour minimum wage and the abolition of zero-hour contracts, to public ownership of the banks and the major companies that dominate the British economy - annulling every EU law that was an obstacle to implementing them.

At the same time, as he has done, he should continue to make clear that a government he led would guarantee the rights of citizens from other EU countries living in Britain. An appeal made on this basis to workers' organisations across Europe would have an electrifying effect. It would be possible to use the Brexit talks to go on the offensive against the EU's neoliberal rules and to fight for a socialist Europe.

Transform Labour

The lessons also need to be learnt, however, from these new attempts by the Labour right to undermine Jeremy Corbyn using the issue of Brexit. [Labour remains two parties in one](#). A campaign needs to be immediately launched to transform the Labour Party into a genuinely anti-austerity, democratic party of workers and young people.

This requires the introduction of compulsory reselection contests for MPs. The next general election could be at any time and Labour must not face another election with the majority of its own candidates opposing Jeremy Corbyn. That means MPs should have to account for their records, via a democratic process, to Labour Party members in their local area.

This should be combined with the democratisation of the party, including restoring the rights of trade unions, and welcoming all genuine socialists in a democratic federation. These measures could create a party which was genuinely able to bring together all the young people, socialists, workers and community campaigners who are inspired by Jeremy Corbyn into a powerful mass force.

- Fight for a socialist Brexit. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the Brexit talks to tear up the EU bosses' club rules. For a new collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis.
- Prepare for a new, early election - that means mandatory re-selection contests for the Blairites
- Open up the Labour Party. Restore the rights of the trade unions within Labour. Re-admit the socialists, with the right to organise in an inclusive federation.

Barts health strike: Low pay, no way!

Paula Mitchell, London Socialist Party

Serco strikers in Barts health trust in east London have led [a magnificent fight so far!](#)

Ten days of strike action with big, bold, noisy picket lines, marches, rallies and dancing in the streets, have been backed up with visits to workplaces seeking solidarity and protests at employment agencies.

A thousand people marched through east London to back the heroic strikers on 15 July. The boldness of the picket lines was brought on to the streets with music, singing and chanting.

Bright red Unite banners were joined with union and community banners from across London. Socialist Party placards were held high demanding 'Serco pay up' and 'low pay no way'.

John McDonnell, Labour shadow chancellor, spoke in support and then appeared on the Andrew Marr Show the next day to put Tory chancellor Philip Hammond on the spot about his scandalous remarks that public sector workers are overpaid.

Later, [Mile End hospital cleaner Malgorzata Sacewicz and Unite branch secretary Len Hockey appeared on Channel 4](#) to say Tory millionaire ministers are living on a different planet.

In the first two days of the strike Serco claimed they were doing fine. But seven days in, photos appeared in the press of the chaos in the hospitals.

No serious offer has been made, so a 14-day strike has now begun. But none of this mess is necessary - Serco should just pay up!

This strike is attracting attention from the national press and trade unionists around the country. Why? Because the heroic battle being waged by these low paid workers speaks for us all.

After years of austerity, being told to tighten our belts, work harder, that there is no choice, working class people are saying no more!

The raw anger that was expressed in the Brexit vote began to find a political voice in Corbyn's election manifesto. In the Barts strike it finds an organised expression in militant trade unionism.

These strikers are fighting the super exploitation of migrant workers by standing up and fighting as a class - black, white, Asian, migrant workers on strike together.

One, Ebrima Sonka, said: "We just have to make our mark. We know they're not going to give up easily, they're a big multinational company. Nothing is going to be given to us on a platter, we have to fight for it. It is our right to fight for what we need. In 20 years to come there will be people who say those are the people who fought for what we are enjoying."

Barts strikers are fighting the reality of decades of privatisation, bullying and intensification of work. The same profit-driven policies that led to the catastrophic fire at Grenfell Tower have led to millions of working class people struggling to get by every day.

Solidarity and donations have been pouring in from trade unionists across London and around the country. These include support from the national executive of the PCS civil service union.

The Socialist Party and National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) will keep working hard to spread support for the strike. Also workers should do workplace collections. Waltham Forest Trades Council has set up a support group (contact secretary Linda Taaffe lindataaffe66@btinternet.com).

Socialist Party members attended an [international meeting in Barcelona from 17-22 July](#). We made solidarity videos with health workers and trade unionists from six different European countries who will also raise support and protests in their unions. 400 trade unionists and socialists sent a solidarity photo, and Irish socialist Solidarity MPs also sent a message of support.

The [British Airways cabin crew strike](#) and workers preparing to strike at the Bank of England have linked up with the Barts Serco strike. On 27 July, nurses in the Royal College of Nursing will be protesting to scrap the public sector pay cap and Barts Serco strikers should join up with them too.

Workers were also delighted to have support from strikers at the University of London and London School of Economics.

Socialist Party members and the NSSN have long campaigned for the TUC to coordinate action and call a 24-hour general strike to defeat Tory austerity. Come to the NSSN lobby of TUC conference on 10 September at 1pm, Arundel Suite, Holiday Inn, 137 King's Road, Brighton, BN1 2JF.

- To support the strike, send a message to len.hockey@unitetheunion.org
- Donations to branch LE/7384L sort code 60-83-01 account number 20344885
- Put pressure on the trust to intervene! Get copies of the protest letter to the CEO of Barts Trust, and to the scrutiny committees of Waltham Forest and Tower Hamlets councils [here](#)

- Protest to Serco, send an email to: generalenquiries@serco.com and sign the online petition change.org/p/serco-pay-up
 - Let's make sure no agencies supply illegal labour! Protest to Team Support and Selective agencies. Selective: ho@selective-recruitment.co.uk 01372 362200 and Team Support: stratford@tss.uk.com 020 8519 6622
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Birmingham bin workers stand firm as management steps up dirty tricks

Clive Walder, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

Birmingham Labour council is playing dirty in the [ongoing bin dispute to defend 113 threatened jobs](#) now that the action is beginning to bite.

They are recruiting expensive agency staff and private 'partners' to scuttle round the city clearing up rubbish left by the strike. They have written to individual workers about a confidential hotline to encourage those scared by the threat of job losses to jump ship and weaken the entire workforce.

These tactics from management - more akin to Thatcher against the miners than to Jeremy Corbyn - while they were supposed to be talking to the union!

They could, of course, stop imposing their lousy plan, let bin workers go back to work and save money as a result. By being prepared to spend more on breaking the strike than by settling it, they indicate that this may be about breaking the union, possibly in preparation for privatisation. At the end of 2015-16 Birmingham council had £895.7 million of usable reserves!

In response, daily two-hour stoppages will become three-hour stoppages. Wagons will return to the depot at lunchtime from 28 July, increasing the backlog which the council is finding difficult to contain.

Bin workers are pleased that Unison, which represents street sweepers, is now also balloting for action.

Public support

Bin workers explain that they have had far more public support than ever before. So management is trying, with the help of local media, to turn the public against them by posting bin workers' salaries online. But they only post maximum salaries which only a small proportion of the workers earn.

They claim that no existing worker will lose their job but fail to mention that many workers will have to reapply for their existing job at a lower grade which will see some workers lose £6,000 a year.

They also claim that they are creating permanent jobs and reducing the number of agency workers, yet they have been happy to employ agency workers for years.

Bin workers shouldn't be forced into this position by the council. Workers have already had two pay cuts since 2008 and there is anger that a Labour council should be using such methods to slash back workers' terms and conditions.

One striker said: "They talk about rats on the streets. What about rats in the council?"

At Perry Barr depot they suggested that: "Corbyn and the 'crew in Birmingham council' are totally different".

Another said: "If Tory cabinet members now claim they reject austerity, why won't Labour councillors?"

Jeremy Corbyn should demand that Birmingham councillors stop all attacks on the bin workers - and other council workers - or stop them standing as Labour candidates in future elections.

Birmingham Socialist Party members are regular visitors to picket lines and have produced a weekly bulletin for bin workers and a flyer for public distribution putting the workers' case.

Bron Afon workers strike against £3,000 pay cut

Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales

Support workers for Bron Afon housing association in Cwmbran, south Wales, have taken their third day of strike action against a £3,000 annual pay cut imposed by management on the staff in the Supported Living Team.

The workers provide assistance to vulnerable people over the age of 50 in their own homes, helping them access benefits and acting as their advocates with housing and financial problems. They provide practical support too for those with mental health issues, addictions and those who have experienced domestic abuse.

But when Bron Afon renegotiated its contract with Torfaen council, it cut the workers' wages from £23,572 to £20,416 and increased the workload. Increasing client numbers under the new contract means staff are having to work even harder for significantly less pay.

The mood was high on the picket line on 21 July as workers from other Unison branches and Cardiff and Newport trade union councils mobilised to support them on their third strike day.

If Bron Afon can get away with cutting wages as the funding cuts bite then that will set the bench mark for care companies and other housing associations to follow in a race to the bottom of wage levels and working conditions.

Torfaen council, which has councillors on the Bron Afon board, is getting a service from Bron Afon workers at cut-price wage levels.

The strike at Bron Afon emphasises the dangers of the outsourcing epidemic that has engulfed Welsh council workers. Most of the councils boast of being living wage employers, including Torfaen, but this claim is completely undermined as all the councils in Wales, mostly Labour councils, are forcing down the wages of outsourced workers.

The next strike date is 3 August. You can send messages of support to Unison members at Bron Afron - send emails to a.gittins@unison.co.uk

- Read more at socialistpartywales.org.uk/news328
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Court victory for PCS and all trade unions

John McNally , PCS national executive committee (personal capacity)

Civil servants' union PCS has won a [major victory in a High Court ruling](#) that stated it was "unlawful" for the Tory government to exclude the union from negotiations.

Last year the government attempted to cut redundancy pay through changes to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS), the governing scheme for such payments. The Tories tried to intimidate unions representing civil servants to accept cuts and changes to the CSCS as a precondition for talks on the issue.

PCS, which represents the vast majority of civil servants, regarded talks on such a basis as a sham, refused to give the assurances demanded and was excluded from the talks. Other unions, representing small numbers of members, entered into negotiations, which resulted in significant cuts to the scheme.

Calculating they had no real political opposition and that they could isolate PCS, the Tories attacked the union for not bowing down to their threats. So did Prospect, a union led by right-wing general secretary Mike Clancy, who positions himself as the leading voice of business unionism, concession bargaining and the collaborationist idea that there can be no alternative to either the capitalist system or to cuts, privatisation and austerity.

This judgement is a serious blow to the Tories who are, since the [tremendous showing of the Corbyn-led Labour general election campaign](#) around a manifesto that posed an alternative to austerity, in a weak and chaotic state. It is also a real blow to the right wing in the trade union movement whose failure to fight back against such attacks has merely emboldened the Tories to deepen their attacks on terms and conditions.

Restrictions attempted

A Cabinet Office official wrote to the civil service unions after the first round of talks on the changes last year and said: "I want to be clear that attendance at any further discussions will be taken as a clear commitment that those unions engaging in the talks have accepted that the proposals above will form the basis of a reformed, negotiated set of arrangements that their relevant executives can recommend acceptance to their members in any ballot".

This arrogant tone demonstrated the utter contempt in which the Tories and their senior Cabinet Office officials hold the trade unions and the workers they represent.

PCS, the POA union of prison staff, and general union Unite rejected this ultimatum. It was wrong for a free and independent trade union to enter into talks with an employer on the basis of surrendering the main points at issue before negotiations had even begun. It was a precedent that posed a serious threat to all trade unions and a blatant attempt to undermine the very basis of collective bargaining.

The judgement itself is a forensic and coruscating exposure of the Tories' attempt to impose detrimental conditions on their own workforce by circumventing the negotiating process.

The judges concluded: It was "not surprising [the three unions] were unable to give such a commitment." "It is an obligation to consult in good faith and in a spirit of willingness to consider counterproposals." "There was no basis on which the minister was entitled to exclude the PCSU from the consultation."

The court ruling

The judgement dealt with the Tories' cynical argument that the exclusion of PCS would not have affected the outcome of the negotiations, saying: "It cannot be said that it is highly likely that the outcome would not have been affected if the PCS had been allowed to participate in the second round of discussions, as it should have been."

"The safeguard for workers is that they will not have their rights to compensation benefits diminished or removed without a genuine attempt first having been made to secure agreement in that specific issue with their union representatives. These provisions are not concerned only with vague agreements in principle."

This is a major victory for the entire movement and a major blow against employers attempting to force unions into 'negotiations' on a basis in which, as PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said: "...the terms are rigged and

the outcome fixed in advance".

PCS balloted its members, who rejected the government's proposals by a massive 96%.

John Manzoni, the chief executive of the civil service, issued a message to civil service workers that said the judgement against the government was only on the basis of 'process'. That is not true, the judgement was clear - the minister acted unlawfully.

Manzoni is an ex-board member of BP, which he left after the investigation into the Texas City refinery explosion concluded he "had paid insufficient attention to safety and failed to spot clear warning signs."

Stunned by the judgement, Manzoni and the Tories say they will appeal. Disgracefully, Manzoni says that if the judgement results in "additional cost", that will be loaded onto already stretched departmental budgets. PCS will expose and oppose any such move.

Rather than this type of corporate style thuggery, the Tories and the obscenely overpaid Manzoni should obey their class's own laws and stop attacking their hard-working and committed workforce who deliver valuable public services on a daily basis.

Prospect leader attacked PCS

The reaction of the Tories may be predictable but that of the union Prospect is astonishing. Its deputy general secretary Garry Graham has sent a letter to its members attacking PCS for taking the government to court.

Completely failing to see how important this judgement is for all trade unions, Graham's reaction is even more self-deluding than Manzoni's. He states the judgement is based on "technical points", that the pre-conditions for the second round of talks were only an "interim offer" which was not acceptable to Prospect, and that PCS was simply "not a party to the negotiations."

Graham goes on to say his union is "perplexed" by the judgement and that if it is not subject to a "stay" (effectively set aside) then the Cabinet Office will simply launch a new consultation on "terms that are significantly worse".

This union 'leader' then goes on to attack PCS for an earlier court challenge we made on the CSCS under Labour which was also successful in protecting workers' rights. Graham says it led to the "far greater challenge of negotiating with the coalition government."

Graham sinks even lower by saying: "The strategy of PCS in seeking to block an agreement reached by eight other unions is less than clear, as is their appetite and desire to engage in any relaunched consultation process. There is a real danger that those in government will see this as an opportunity to revisit the terms negotiated in 2016 with the object of seeking greater savings".

This is nothing less than encouraging the Tories to not only launch further attacks on PCS members but all civil servants, including Prospect members. Perhaps he should be more concerned about his own members considering whether they should take Prospect to court to seek compensation for its role in selling their conditions in an unlawful negotiation.

Right-wing union leaders are incapable of recognising a victory even when it is staring them in the face. Conditioned to concede to the employer at every stage they actually resent the fact that a fighting, campaigning union can achieve what they do not even try to do - stand up to attacks on union members' terms and conditions.

PCS will continue to use all methods to oppose attacks on our members' terms and conditions and to resist the destructive austerity cuts and privatisation agenda that is systematically destroying our public services.

The best way to defeat these attacks is unity among unions on the basis of a 'no cuts, no privatisation' policy. We hope all the unions involved in this battle will welcome the successful result of the PCS challenge as the POA and Unite have, but will reject completely the attempt by Prospect to denigrate this achievement to the detriment of its own members and all civil service workers.

We are awaiting the decision on what remedy will be put in place following the judgement. An update will be given as soon as the decision is known.

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Tesco's 10% pay increase accompanied by cuts and job losses

Scott Jones, Usdaw East London C026 branch chair (personal capacity)

The headline figure in the result of the latest Tesco pay negotiations is [a pay rise of 10.57% to £8.42](#), in Tesco's own words its "biggest ever pay award". And it is far higher than the pay rises of 2% or less that I received when I used to work for Tesco.

But in the detail below the headlines it's revealed that this rise will take place over the course of the next two years, straight away meaning that the increase is actually just over 5% a year. And this increase comes after small or no increases in the last couple of years.

Another blow will be the decrease in Sunday and bank holiday pay from time and a half to time and a quarter, which in Usdaw's Network magazine for August is flippantly brushed aside with the justification that most companies already pay a flat rate for bank holiday working. And inflation is currently running at around 3%.

So while a pay increase of 5% is welcome, against a backdrop of cuts in terms and conditions, now and previously, this is merely playing catch-up. And while Usdaw members will have different opinions over the pay deal, the fact that yet again Tesco workers don't get a vote on it means there is no accountability.

And as one Tesco worker commented to me, with the [estimated 1,100 potential job losses at its call centre in Cardiff](#) and possibly more at head office, Tesco is moving money around the company as opposed to making a large investment in this offer. An investment it could afford to do, with a rise in operating profit and a £3.7 billion takeover of cash-and-carry group Booker on the cards.

There is no excuse to close the call centre in Cardiff which will be devastating for those 1,100 workers and the local area. Usdaw and the Welsh government should put as much pressure on Tesco as possible. The union in particular should ballot for strike action over this and future attacks on terms and conditions.

The Mandate trade union in Ireland [brought Tesco workers out on strike earlier this year](#) after Tesco tried to change contracts and force workers to take redundancy.

Their strike, which was extended and spread with brilliant picket lines throughout the dispute, was an inspiration to workers here and shows what's possible. Usdaw should look to this as an example in the fight to save jobs, terms and conditions and to secure a £10 an hour real living wage for all.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 14 July 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Mears workers escalate action to all-out strike

Becci Heagney

Unite members working for Mears in Manchester have started an all-out strike. These housing maintenance workers have been taking strike action three days a week since 15 May, holding many good protests and picket lines, but as the company has refused to talk they have escalated the action.

Workers are fighting huge differences in pay and an attempt to bring in attacks on holiday pay, sick pay and other terms and conditions. Many of them have refused to sign the new contract as well.

After pressure, Greater Manchester metro-mayor Andy Burnham helped to organise a meeting between Mears and Unite on Thursday 6 July, but nobody from Mears bothered to attend. Meanwhile, around 100 of the workers were protesting outside Manchester town hall.

Mears is hoping it can hold out until the end of the strike action and that workers will be forced back to work. However, the Unite members are extremely determined to win this dispute and are balloting for further action. As part of the escalation, no emergency call out work is being done either.

Mears is trying to tell Northwards tenants (a housing association that it does maintenance work for) that the appointments are fully booked because the company is busy, not because its workers are on strike!

Manchester and Salford Socialist Party branches are giving full solidarity to the strike and we have been doing all we can to build support for it.

- Donations can be made to the strike fund: UCATT UD.393 Manchester 1st Branch. Sort code: 60-83-01
Account number: 46034412

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 11 July 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Workers' campaign underway to stop ward closure

Nottinghamshire nurse and Unison rep

I am a registered nurse in a community hospital in Nottinghamshire and a Unison rep.

On our ward there is very much a family feel among us all and we pride ourselves on providing excellent care. It's an amazing place to work.

While I was away at the [Committee for a Workers' International \(CWI\) summer school in Barcelona](#), the 'powers that be' came into the ward to announce we are being closed down!

At first there were many tears of despair, workers felt frightened, alone and helpless and they were straight on the phone to me. But with the help of Socialist Party members we started to campaign right away and this despair has quickly turned to anger. By the following day you would be forgiven for mistaking them as revolutionaries!

Technology means that international messages of solidarity were quickly pouring in.

With no plans for a replacement service there will be many people with long-term neurological conditions that will be left stranded in our community relying on inadequate private home care.

We have already started a campaign to oppose this and I have already been attacked by management for posting the truth on Facebook.

The staff understand that the fightback can only come from us, and by taking the campaign out into the community. They are greatly emboldened by the messages of support from CWI members, which shows the power of international socialism.

Workplace news in brief

Jobcentre walkout

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announcement that Sheffield Eastern Avenue job centre is a confirmed closure site has only made the staff there, members of the PCS civil servants' union, even more determined to keep it open.

Having campaigned since February and already taken [six days of strike action in May and June](#), 50 PCS members took another five days of strike action from 17-21 July. Pickets were well attended every morning by strikers and supporters. The job centre could only offer a token service by bringing in managers and staff from other sites.

This strike is gaining national significance as the staff are not only fighting for their own jobs but to keep the local job centre open in one of the most deprived areas of the city of Sheffield. Award winning film maker and director of "I, Daniel Blake", Ken Loach has publicly supported the campaign.

After the DWP announced the confirmed closures, two more PCS branches have requested ballots for industrial action. There is a PCS DWP delegate meeting to consult over possible national action. And Eastern Avenue members expect to be on strike again in August.

Alistair Tice

UCU banned

The University and College Union (UCU) has been banned from attending a meeting that was hosted at Teesside University on 21 July.

The meeting concerned the university's decision to force all staff to "justify their work" and reapply for their jobs or face redundancy over the summer.

No explanation has yet been given by Teesside University to make clear the rationale behind this, though what is clear is that this process is highly likely to be damaging to the morale of its staff. In a double whammy by the university, and to further add insult to injury, the 27 professors (the vast majority who are members of the UCU), have now been told they may only send two representatives in their place!

The Socialist Party agrees with the UCU that the decision to deprive their staff of fair and democratic representation is unacceptable.

Challenging both the thoughtless decision and speculative timing, over 750 academics have now signed an open letter condemning in the strongest terms the university's plans and decision.

A statement released by UCU regional official Jon Bryan said: "Facing a summer of uncertainty is bad enough. But then to be told that your trade union cannot be part of the collective consultations is like kicking you when you are down".

He confirmed that the UCU would be doing all that it can to challenge the university and to support its members. "Not being allowed in will not stop our voice being heard", he said.

The Socialist Party stands in solidarity with UCU and will continue to support them in their struggle.

James Hunter, Newcastle Socialist Party

Building workers' struggle and the forces of international socialism

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) recently convened its international summer school in Barcelona with Izquierda Revolucionaria (IR) and members from its sections in Spain, Mexico and Venezuela.

A special congress of delegates during the school confirmed the unification between the two international socialist organisations. Below, the Socialist carries an extract of the document agreeing this historic merger.

A high point of the week-long event was [the 600-strong rally celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution](#), where leading representatives of the CWI and IR spoke. A rally report is also carried [here](#).

Additional debates and discussions from the school will be posted on socialistworld.net

Why the CWI and IR are unifying

This historic unification has a clear material basis in the profound change in the class struggle internationally opened up by the world capitalist crisis which began in 2008 and which still rages today.

Such periods of sharp change and turmoil are invariably also reflected in developments in the workers' movement and the left, including the revolutionary left - resulting in splits, realignments and fusions - as ideas, organisations and tendencies are put to the test.

It is our common understanding of, and response to this new period and agreement on the method of how to intervene in it and the central tasks it poses for the working class and Marxism, which is the basis for our unification.

The capitalist crisis is deep and intractable. None of the attempts of the world's ruling classes to deal with it have brought a solution any closer or re-established the system's lost equilibrium. On the contrary, they have stored up the potential for new crises and conflicts.

The world economic crisis of over-production, characterised by a crisis of investment and chronic lack of demand in the world economy, is no closer to being resolved than at the moment of its outbreak.

The trillions of dollars injected into the world economy in the form of 'quantitative easing' have not had anywhere near the desired results, in resuscitating either investment or demand.

Maelstrom

Far from representing a new motor for world growth as hoped for by many capitalist commentators, the last phase of the crisis has seen the so-called 'emerging' economies - with China at the head - drawn into the maelstrom of the world crisis.

The global strike of capital investment paints a clear picture of the obstacle which private ownership of wealth and means of production, together with the nation state, represents for the development of the world economy.

The crisis has already resulted in profound changes in the moods and outlook of all classes, most significantly among the working class, young and oppressed peoples around the world.

Marxists predicted at the onset of the crisis that it would usher in a period of revolution and counter-revolution, and this has been the tenor of events since then. From the revolutionary upheavals of the "Arab Spring" in 2011, to mass movements against austerity and the current social rebellion against Trumpism in the USA's urban centres, the period has been marked by the increasing entry of the masses onto the scene of history.

This has been accompanied by a polarisation in society with a shift to the left in political consciousness and also, as a result of the bankruptcy of reformism and the traditional bourgeois parties, an electoral growth of the far right.

The development of new left parties and formations, like Podemos in Spain, France Insoumise (led by Jean Luc Melenchon) etc, together with the mass left movements around Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn, are powerful - though complex and unfinished - expressions of this.

These new left formations and movements are contradictory and volatile, reflecting the nature of the period which has given birth to them.

Our role is to intervene energetically in these processes, while at the same time audaciously and openly defending a socialist, class-struggle based programme.

While building our own revolutionary organisation, we work to assist the development of these formations into new mass parties of the working class armed with a revolutionary alternative to capitalism.

A new era of opportunities for revolutionary change has opened up. CWI sections in the USA and Ireland have already played leading roles in mass working class movements which have won important victories ([water charges in Ireland](#) and \$15 Now in US). The members of Izquierda Revolucionaria, in the leadership of the Sindicato de Estudiantes (students union - SE) [waged a victorious battle against the "revalidas"](#) (education counter-reforms) in the Spanish state which has consolidated the SE as a fighting point of reference in the struggle against austerity.

Victories

These victories show our ability to engage with the masses and, in certain circumstances, to become a real factor in the situation, which sets our organisations apart from other Marxist organisations.

Our unification is rooted in a broad agreement on the perspectives for world capitalism and the tasks which arise for Marxists. However, it is reflected in much more than this.

Our mutual experience of discussing and fighting side-by-side has revealed an agreement not only in ideas and perspectives, but in strategy, tactics, programme and orientation. As Lenin said, without revolutionary ideas there is no revolutionary movement. But equally, ideas and theory without practice are blind.

Our revolutionary international and sections have a clear orientation to intervene in the mass struggles, trade union and political organisations of the working class. We also maintain the principle of the political and organisational independence of the revolutionary party.

Flexibility in tactics, coupled with principled political and programmatic firmness, is a hallmark of our shared political roots and method.

We fight to occupy the front line in the struggle against all forms of oppression, uniting the working class and all the oppressed around a perspective of socialist change.

The CWI, together with our new comrades in IR, is an international Marxist force with a real base among workers and youth in a number of key countries.

Barcelona rally: Celebrating 100th anniversary of the Russian revolution

Izquierda Revolucionaria

The international rally on 19 July organised by IR and the CWI was a huge success. More than 600 workers, youth and activists from both organisations and the wider left packed the main hall of the Cocheras de Sants, Barcelona. There was an electric atmosphere, in defence of the October 1917 revolution and Marxist internationalism.

Speakers were: Ana Garcia the general secretary of the Sindicato de Estudiantes (SE - students union), Paul Murphy, Solidarity TD (MP) in the Irish Republic; Juan Ignacio Ramos general secretary of Izquierda Revolucionaria; Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party and Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative councillor in Seattle, USA.

In two hours they covered a broad scope of issues from the October revolution to the class struggle today. All of the speakers emphasised the extraordinary legacy of Bolshevism, the ideas of Lenin and Trotsky and their relevance in the fight for a socialist world today.

The banner of the October revolution is for us a guide to action. When the workers and youth of Russia took power they showed in deeds and not only in speeches that it really is possible to change reality and bring down capitalism.

There were also references to the collapse of the USSR and the Stalinist regimes in eastern Europe, which gave way to a vicious capitalist counterrevolution.

At that time, capitalists internationally cried victory and the leaderships of the traditional left organisations, the old communist parties and social democracy, as well as the trade unions, turned sharply to the right and accepted the creed of neoliberalism.

But in the middle of the storm of reaction and of abandonment of struggle, Marxists resisted. We knew that the apparent triumph of capitalism would be temporary and that a new crisis would dispel all illusions

Capitalism

All speakers underlined how, starting ten years ago, world capitalism is living through its worst recession since 1929.

Conditions determine consciousness, as Karl Marx said. The crisis accelerated all the processes of the class struggle and led to an upturn in struggle.

The consciousness of millions of workers and especially youth has advanced, together with social polarisation. Capitalism has been thrown into a period of uncertainty and pessimism.

But the experience of these years has also shown that if we want real change, rhetoric and speeches are not enough.

The example of Greece is conclusive. Left party Syriza and its leader Tsipras had the backing of the working people. But Tsipras lacked a revolutionary policy, accepted the logic of the capitalist system and capitulated shamelessly to the 'Troika' (group of capitalists), applying its austerity.

Kshama Sawant explained the work of Socialist Alternative in Seattle - the successful campaign for \$15 an hour, and the big mobilisations built, together with others, against Trump's reactionary policies.

Kshama explained how to use an elected position to raise the level of organisation and consciousness. The same applies to Paul Murphy in the struggle against water charges - which provoked a brutal response by the state.

However, the Socialist Party (CWI in Ireland) organised with others a mass campaign against the criminalisation of protest, which managed to defeat this attack and achieve a 'not guilty' verdict for all defendants in the biggest political trial for a generation.

Peter Taaffe explained the main ideas of Bolshevism, underlining the importance of the existence of a revolutionary party to transform society completely. This is the central task of the epoch: building revolutionary parties all over the world, through patient intervention in the class struggle and in the new political phenomena which arise as a consequence of the crisis of the system and of social democracy.

Ana Garcia focussed on the key role of young people in all the events we have seen in Spain. The children of the crisis see that this system has nothing to offer them. They have been the spinal column of the social rebellion which has held the minority Popular Party government in check.

School strikes

Ana explained how the Sindicato de Estudiantes has played a leading role in this battle with 25 general strikes in schools and universities against the government which is the inheritor of Francoism.

Millions of youth want a deep and radical change but this change cannot be achieved by respecting the logic of capitalism. This is why the SE defends the ideas of Marxism and Bolshevism.

Borja Latorre and Juan Ignacio Ramos both spoke in defence of the right of self-determination in Catalonia. For IR, the Catalan people have the right to decide, and this should not be conditional on the state accepting it. This right must be won by mobilisation and mass struggle.

We cannot subordinate ourselves to the Catalan bourgeoisie, right-wing nationalists like PDeCat, who are champions of cuts and repression. We fight for a socialist Catalonia, a socialist republic, to unite the forces of the workers and youth of Catalonia with those of the rest of the Spanish state, to win real democracy which can only be socialism.

The rally finished with an emotional singing of the Internationale in various languages by more than 600 people, ending a deeply red and internationalist event.

Abolish tuition fees and student debt!

Clare Laker-Mansfield, Socialist Students national organiser

Jeremy Corbyn's [election pledge to abolish tuition fees, with the bold promise that this would be fast-tracked to come into effect from September](#), was one of the most attractive and popular offers in Labour's manifesto.

Combined with other socialist policies including a £10 an hour minimum wage, nationalisation and an end to austerity cuts, it was a major factor in generating an enthusiastic surge in support for Corbyn. Almost two-thirds of voting 18-25 year olds are thought to have backed him.

This should come as little surprise, especially when you consider the staggering debt levels of graduates - last year, £44,000 on average. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often end their courses owing as much as £60,000 for a three-year degree.

To make matters worse, interest rates are set to increase to 6.1% from September. This means the (already huge) sums owed will quickly escalate. With falling wages and increasing levels of insecure and low-paid work among graduates, this all adds up to a lifelong debt burden. Outstanding student debt in the UK has now reached over £100 billion in total.

It was therefore very warmly received when, during an interview in the lead up to the election, Corbyn hinted that, as well as abolishing fees, he might support writing off existing student debt.

Costings

Unfortunately, it appears that Corbyn is not prepared to commit to this. [On the Andrew Marr show he said that, at the time of his pre-election comments, he had not known the full 'costings' for such a policy and was therefore unable to make such a commitment.](#)

In an example of truly breath-taking hypocrisy, the Tories have seized on this as an opportunity to attack Corbyn for 'lying' and to repeat their refrain that Corbyn's policies are unaffordable. Almost like a pincer movement, the Tory attacks have been combined with the renewed attempts from Labour's right at undermining him.

The Blairites are also opponents of Corbyn on the question of free education. Indeed only recently at a Progress conference, Blairite MP Wes Streeting admitted that, far from wanting to wipe out student debt, he actually opposed free education altogether!

But Corbyn makes a mistake by agreeing to the terms of debate as set out by the capitalist establishment on the question of 'costings'. The reality is there is enormous wealth in society - far more than enough to eliminate student debt many times over.

During the banking crisis over £850 billion (and billions more in 'quantitative easing') was found in order to save capitalism from itself. Bailouts are acceptable for super-rich banksters - but for working class people struggling to pay back extortionate tuition fees they are 'simply unaffordable'.

Corbyn should boldly call for the abolition of student debt. As a first idea for how to fund it - how about nationalising the banking system we bailed out, with compensation to shareholders only on the basis of proven need? Their huge profits could then be used for the benefit of society.

With the government on the ropes Corbyn must go on the offensive, taking on both the right in his own party and the Tory government, and putting forward the kind of socialist programme necessary to transform society in the interests of the 99%.

Education cuts: Tories buckling under public pressure

Unions must go on the offensive

James Kerr, teacher and Lewisham Socialist Party

The pressure of the growing campaign against education cuts is starting to have an effect on the government.

With opinion polls showing that the threat to school budgets cost the Tories dearly in the general election, Education Secretary Justine Greening has been forced into making an announcement over school funding.

[She claims to have found an additional £1.3 billion for schools over the next two years.](#) But the extra £416 million in 2018-19 and £884 million in 2019-20 falls far short of what is needed to stop schools having to sack staff, cut the curriculum and put up class sizes.

Schools need an extra £2 billion right now just to address the real term cuts over the coming school year. This is because the government has not been funding school budgets sufficiently to meet the rising costs of pay, pensions and national insurance.

The £1.3 billion isn't even 'new' money from the Treasury but has been found by redirecting cash from other parts of the Department for Education budget. Unions estimate that the extra cash would still leave schools short by over £2 billion a year or nearly £7 billion in total by 2020.

Stolen funds - not new money

Greening also made clear that the Tories will be pressing ahead with their plans for a 'national funding formula' which could see funds being stolen from some areas to help pay for increases in others. Further announcements are due in the autumn but this could result in further school cuts for some.

So, behind the 'smoke and mirrors' of her announcement, Greening has actually done very little to address the mounting school budget crisis. The extra funds will do little to satisfy the Heads who have been warning parents of the cuts they are having to make, nor the parents and school staff who have been campaigning together to defend education.

However, the announcement should also give school campaigners confidence that Greening and the Tories know they are in trouble. This small increase shows that, if the campaign continues to build, then the Tories will have to do better than just find spare cash down the back of the DfE sofa.

Schools and students need the funding both to fully reverse school cuts and also to address the rising teacher workloads and declining real salaries that have created a recruitment and retention crisis that is severely damaging education.

The Tories' announcement that some less experienced teachers, if their performance is judged good enough, could be awarded a 2% increase instead of the 1% that their colleagues will receive, will also only provoke more bitterness. School staff deserve a decent pay rise as of right, not divisive performance-related pay and schools need to be fully funded to pay for those awards.

Labour councils also have a responsibility to make sure school students get the education they deserve. They should agree that local authority schools are granted licensed deficits instead of having to cut staff to balance their books. That has to be part of a mass campaign of parents, staff and school students to defeat school cuts.

National Education Union

Teacher unions, particularly the National Education Union (replacing the NUT and ATL in September), must take a lead by building further strike action to oppose cuts and increased workload and redundancies, including doing the necessary campaigning among members to hold and win a ballot for national strike action.

Greening's announcement shows the Tories are on the back foot. Now they must be forced to make a genuine u-turn over school cuts.

'Shake the magic money tree and scrap the pay cap!'

Demonstration and rally Thursday 5 October

(Called by London NUT with support from other unions)

Assemble 5:00pm opposite Downing Street, London SW1A 1AA

March past Department for Health > Treasury > Department for Education > Home Office. Rally in Parliament Square

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 19 July 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

BBC yawning pay gaps revealed

Tom Baldwin, Bristol Socialist Party

The BBC has been made to [reveal all its staff earning over £150,000 a year](#). The announcement made front page news in most papers, revealing some eye-watering pay.

Chris Evans topped the list on over £2.2 million. It also exposed a shocking gender pay gap with the highest paid woman, Claudia Winkleman, on 'just' £450,000.

While most people only dream of earning this much, the BBC rates still appear to be relatively modest for the entertainment industry. ITV's Ant and Dec apparently earned more than all the 96 named BBC staff put together.

The requirement to reveal top pay was added to the BBC's rules by the Tories as a stick to beat them with and the story was jumped on by all the privately-owned media. They want rid of the BBC to make space in the market for them to profit from.

Nonetheless, the list does show some shocking inequalities. The top seven earners are all men.

There were examples of women being paid less than their male co-stars on the same programme. 40 female stars have written to BBC director general Tony Hall to demand that the gender pay gap be addressed.

Elite

45% of the list were privately educated, compared to just 7% of the population. Only ten of the 96 aren't white.

At the other end of the scale, broadcasting union [Bectu has revealed 400 BBC staff earn under £20,000](#), less than 1% of Chris Evans's pay. Strong national pay bargaining by unions is needed to eliminate the pay gaps and ensure all workers get a fair rate for the job.

Socialists defend the idea of a publicly owned media. But we call for democratic workers' control to ensure fair pay for all.

Homelessness and evictions soar under the Tories

Kieran Barlow, Grimsby and Scunthorpe Socialist Party

[120,000 children are currently in temporary accommodation](#) according to the Local Government Association (LGA). And the number of families declared homeless has shot up by more a third since the Tories came into office in 2010.

Although not a new statistic, the LGA puts the 120,000 figure into perspective by stating that from 2014 this is equivalent to one secondary school full of children every month.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation charity recently published research that found 40,000 tenants were evicted from their homes in 2015 alone, with private landlords carrying out more evictions than councils and housing associations.

Due to cuts in housing benefits, private landlords are also reluctant to let to tenants claiming benefits.

One of the fastest growing reasons why families become homeless is the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector. The LGA also points out that there has been a 40% reduction since 2009 in homelessness prevention by local authorities too.

Tenants are feeling forced to stay living in poor and sometimes unsafe conditions because they can't afford anything else. Many fear their landlords may use a 'section 21 notice' to evict them before the end of the fixed term for 'complaining' - with some claiming that their landlords just turned up and changed the locks while they were out.

The Socialist Party fights for housing demands including: rent controls and rent reductions; ending benefit caps and cuts; a mass building programme of publicly owned housing; an end social housing privatisation.

Them & Us

Bosses' profit...

The bosses' greed knows no bounds. This year UK companies paid out [a record £33.3 billion in dividend payments](#), up 15% from last year.

That money could have been put to raising the wages of millions of the low paid and into services to benefit working class communities. For the bosses their priority is lining their own pockets from the exploitation of workers.

(thanks to Bill Murray)

...From workers' unpaid labour

Meanwhile nurses, social workers, teaching assistants and many others who struggle to keep our vital public services going are, according to the GMB union, clocking up an average eight hours unpaid work each week. [This translates into an estimated £11 billion freebie for the government.](#)

So much for Tory Chancellor Philip Hammond's bull that public sector workers are "overpaid".

No optical illusion

It's not your eyesight deteriorating, retail products - [2.529 over the past five years](#) - have been shrunk by manufacturers.

Are smaller Toblerone's and Maltesers, etc, the capitalists' way of tackling the obesity health crisis? No. Apparently it's their charitable way of 'keeping the product affordable' - even though the products cost the same.

Readers may think that such a change, in effect, is a price rise and of course they'd be right. The bosses defend this sleight of hand by claiming production costs have soared and therefore they're protecting the consumer from price hikes. How kind!

However, the wholesale price of ingredients, like sugar and cocoa, has fallen. So it's a simple case of profiteering. Perhaps reducing the size of the capitalist class to zero might help.

Longevity and austerity

Move to the planet Vulcan or fight the cuts if you want to 'live long and prosper'.

According to Michael Marmot, director of the Institute of Health Equity at University College London: ["Since 2010, the rate of increase in life expectancy \[in England\] has about halved."](#)

Marmot's research suggests that the slowdown in life expectancy rates has coincided with austerity measures that have seen massive cuts in health and social care spending in England. Before 2010, spending on the NHS rose around 3.8% each year, but this has since fallen to 1.1% a year.

Russia 1917: how art helped make the revolution

Manny Thain

Revolution in Russia swept away the dictatorial rule of the Tsar [in February 1917](#). Then in October, led by the Bolshevik Party, a second revolution set up the world's first workers' state.

Society was turned upside down as working class people exercised power through the direct democracy of mass councils - or in Russian, 'soviets'. It was a time of liberation and celebration.

But building the foundations of a socialist society would not be easy in such an impoverished country.

The economy had been wrecked by the Tsar's disastrous involvement in World War One as an ally of British and French imperialism. Then civil war raged as the reactionary forces of the old regime were backed by the military intervention of the capitalist powers.

Stretched resources had to be turned towards defending the workers' state, rebuilding the economy and providing people's basic needs.

Even so, in November 1917 the church's stifling monopoly on education was ended. Teaching methods were modernised and made relevant to working class and peasant communities.

Children were encouraged to take part in music, drama, literature and art as part of an all-round approach to human development. Free technical college and university education was opened up.

From August 1918, the agit-trains criss-crossed the country, spreading news of the revolution's aims: democratic decision making, land reform, women's equality, the right of national self-determination, international solidarity.

The carriages were brightly painted, depicting topical themes. They fired the imagination with debates, news, recordings of events in Petrograd and Moscow, exhibitions, performance and film. The 'Red Star' ship towed a cinema barge with seating for 800 people.

Censored under the tsar, shunned by the old art establishment, rebellious artists were swept up by the mood. They got stuck in. One key task was to raise the educational level. It is impossible, after all, for people to run society when most of them are illiterate. Poster art came into its own.

In 1918, the avant-garde artist Vera Ermolaeva founded the 'Segodnia' (Today) collective in Petrograd, the first Soviet children's book publisher. This was when Russia's paper-producing regions were occupied by enemy forces, effectively halting book production.

When the civil war was over at the end of 1920, printing went into overdrive. By 1922 there were more than 300 publishing houses in Moscow and Petrograd.

Ermolaeva also worked at the Petrograd City Museum and helped Kazimir Malevich develop the student-based 'Unovis' (Creators of the New Art). This forged a direct link with the Lomonosov porcelain factory - art into mass production. They teamed up at the experimental and interactive Museum of Artistic Culture which aimed to put control of art into the hands of artists.

Yiddish literature was another crucial part of the education drive - Jews had long been persecuted under the Tsar - with leading roles played by artists such as Marc Chagall. This was only possible because the Bolsheviks had lifted Tsarist restrictions on the Yiddish language.

In August 1918, Chagall became commissar of arts for Vitebsk, the town of his birth (in what is now Belarus), organising art schools, museums, events and conferences. He set up the People's Art College for 300 students in a residence taken over from a fat-cat financier.

A local newspaper announced: "From the lavish mansion of the banker Vishnyak, built on the blood and sweat, the suffering and tears of hundreds and thousands of people impoverished by usury, the dawn of a new culture rose above Vitebsk."

Lyubov Popova applied her ground-breaking art to set designs for the radical theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold. His style was visual, bold and energetic, engaging the audience - not patronising or aloof.

Varvara Stepanova produced an iconic poster for Sergei Eisenstein's revolutionary film Battleship Potemkin. Popova and Stepanova worked together with the state textile factory in Moscow.

Innovation

Free art studios were set up in Moscow in 1918. One of the teachers was Vladimir Tatlin, who designed a building with rotating floors, meant for the conferences, executive, and communications centre of the Communist International, originally set up to spread socialism across the globe. The building was to be transparent so the workings of socialist democracy could be seen by all.

Steel shortages and technological problems meant that Tatlin's tower could not be built at the time. Its design stands, nonetheless, as a testament to the ambition and optimism of the day.

Tackling the housing crisis was another pressing priority. Innovative solutions were encouraged, combining areas for communal eating, recreation and meeting spaces. The plans often included crèches, shops, libraries and medical services. A central aim was to promote women's equality and participation by freeing them from isolating domestic drudgery.

The general approach was to link art, architecture, engineering and production - breaking down rigid divisions and hierarchies. Inevitably, tensions and jealousies arose at times, reflecting the difficult conditions and the pre-1917 upper-middle class roots of many of the leading artists.

The new workers' state had prepared the ground for this outpouring of energy. Only by nationalising key economic sectors and developing a plan of production could the necessary resources be freed up.

And that was a beacon for the whole world - socially, economically and culturally.

It had created the most modern of modern art anywhere on the planet, and involved many thousands of workers and youth in creative activity, science and technology.

Tragically, however, this new generation faced an almost insurmountable barrier. It is impossible for any country to realise socialism on its own, and Russia in particular needed the support of more economically advanced countries.

Although revolutionary movements shook Germany between 1918 and 1923, they did not overturn capitalist rule. Other mass movements in Italy, Britain, China, the United States, France and Spain - among others - likewise failed to make the breakthrough.

The isolation of the revolution in Russia left the new workers' state stunted. Straining to win the civil war and rebuild the shattered economy, workers did not have the time or energy to participate fully in running society. A bureaucratic caste of administrators and officials - increasingly backed by security forces - began to solidify at the top.

Led by Joseph Stalin, it was a privileged layer resting on top of the nationalised planned economy. In the process of strengthening its grip on power, it snuffed out the last remains of workers' democracy and derailed revolutionary movements internationally.

The superiority of a planned economy over profit-driven capitalism could be seen in the growth of the Soviet Union into a world superpower after World War Two. Moreover, in important social provision: jobs, housing, education and healthcare.

Stalinism

The grotesque top-down nature of the system under Stalin, however, meant that this was achieved at colossal cost: in wasted resources, environmental disaster, distorted development and savage repression costing millions of lives.

Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Vladimir Lenin of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, and many other Bolsheviks and workers, fought for workers' democracy and in defence of international revolution in the 'Left Opposition'. This was opposed to Stalin's self-serving declaration of "socialism in one country."

But the global revolution was stalling, and the population was exhausted by war. And so engagement in the democratic structures of the Soviet government and Bolsheviks - by then renamed the Communist Party - receded.

Stalin's supporters in the bureaucracy took advantage of this period to marginalise the Left Opposition, increasingly with physical repression, and dismantle the democratic structures - to guard against a future resurgence.

Stalin's attack on democracy went hand in hand with a general attack on freedom of expression. In 1926, the Museum of Artistic Culture was shut down. In 1927, Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party, forced into exile the following year. In 1930, Malevich was arrested, his work suppressed. Many artistic organisations were closed in 1932.

In 1934, the Stalinist regime declared that 'socialist realism' was the sole authorised artistic style - alongside 'proletarian literature'. Artists and writers were being ordered to glorify the regime, Stalin above all. Trotsky would sum it up as "a kind of concentration camp for the arts."

Rare examples of innovation and resistance did exist - no regime can impose complete control - but they had to be smuggled out like contraband.

Those unwilling to toe the Stalinist line were targeted. Artists, writers and composers saw their work censored and confiscated. Ermolaeva was arrested in 1934, charged with 'anti-Soviet activity' and sentenced to three years imprisonment. Just before her release, she was sentenced to death - shot dead in a forced labour camp in 1937.

In 1938, Meyerhold's theatre was closed down. In 1939 he was arrested and tortured, on the ludicrous accusation of spying for both Britain and Japan. He was executed in 1940. Zinaida Reich, the actress he married, was knifed to death in their apartment, undoubtedly by secret police agents.

Thousands of other examples could be given. This ran alongside the Moscow show trials as Stalin systematically purged revolutionaries from the system.

Trotsky continued to fight against this counterrevolution. In 1938, the year he set up the Fourth International - founded to defend the revolutionary ideas the Third International had by then abandoned - he drew up the 'Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art'.

This was with André Breton, cofounder of the surrealist movement, and the artist and revolutionary Diego Rivera. It led to the formation of the International Federation for Independent Revolutionary Art, grouping together antifascists and anti-Stalinists.

It was a bold but short-lived initiative. The onset of World War Two and the assassination of Trotsky by one of Stalin's agents in 1940 cut across it. Stalinism emerged strengthened at the end of the war - until it finally collapsed in 1989-90.

Trotsky, however, had left a priceless legacy: keeping alive the proven idea that the working class can take power on a democratic socialist and internationalist programme. That there is a viable alternative to capitalism, and to Stalinism. His analysis of art and revolution, art and society, has also been an invaluable addition to Marxist understanding.

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- More about the Russian revolution: 1917revolution.org
 - Read about artists fighting back today: badartworld.net
-

Literature and Revolution by Trotsky - £12.99

Art and Revolution by Leon Trotsky - £16

- Available from Left Books, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD
 - leftbooks.co.uk
 - 020 8988 8789
 - add 10% postage. Cheques payable to Left Books
-

Young people...fight for a future, fight for socialist policies

Dan Crowter, Coventry Young Socialists

Young people in the UK have faced brutal attacks from successive governments on our living standards and our futures. The introduction of university tuition fees by New Labour, paving the way for the Tory-Lib Dem coalition to triple fees to £9,000 a year, has left those of us who want to get a degree with [a lifetime of crippling debt](#).

Bosses exploit us with poverty pay, zero-hour contracts and in the insecure 'gig economy', further threatening the few rights we have. Housing benefit for under 21s has been axed and for most people under 35 is limited to paying for a single room in a shared house - so many young people are forced to live at their parents' home.

Jeremy Corbyn's policies have offered a beacon of hope to youth that change is possible. While not committing to scrapping student debt is disappointing, abolishing tuition fees would be a huge step forward and empower the rest of us to demand that our debts are wiped as well.

That's why the Young Socialists support his leadership and policies but will be campaigning to go further and demand the scrapping of all tuition fees and student debt, an immediate £10 an hour minimum wage with no exceptions, an end to zero-hour contracts, and trade union rights for all.

If capitalism 'can't afford' our demands, then we can't afford the profit system - that's why we fight for socialism, for the economy and society to be run by and for "the many, not the few".

- Young Socialists will be meeting and organising stalls and protests across the country over the summer - join us!
 - Contact: 020 8988 8761
-

Grenfell survivors tell Tories: "Step down and resign"

Bob Sulatycki, West London Socialist Party

Hundreds of local residents, together with supporters and campaigners, lobbied the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBK&C) council meeting on 19 July at which the Tories presented [their new leader, Elizabeth Campbell](#).

Residents were not impressed and demanded that she and her fellow Tory councillors should instead resign their seats.

There was also fury that no one, either from the council or private contractors, has yet been arrested by the police. "If there had been a terrorist attack involving this loss of life, does anyone really think nobody would have been arrested even a month later?" was how one person put it.

The public gallery was packed and some residents were allowed in to address the council. In some extremely moving speeches residents spoke of family members and friends who had died in the blaze. But they were also extremely angry that the council had badly let them down.

One survivor, Mahad Egal, accused the council of acting for political gain, of criminal acts, selfishness and disgrace.

"You've let the dead down. Now you're going to come for the living? ... Madam, step down and resign," he urged Campbell.

All of this was being relayed to supporters outside via a big screen with big cheers greeting the residents when they attacked the council.

The lobby came on the day that it was revealed that not one of London's 20,000 empty homes were seized by councils in spite of the dire housing crisis in the capital.

RBK&C has 1,399 standing empty, but has only made one (failed) application to bring long term empty properties back into use under the 2006 Empty Dwelling Housing Orders.

It has also been revealed through the council's own documents that RBK&C has received almost £50 million from housing developers last year to make up for them building little or no affordable housing in the borough - but did not reinvest this in council housing.

Socialist Party members got a very positive response to our petitions, leaflets and the Socialist. We also received a good response to our [call for an independent working class inquiry; to take over empty properties to immediately rehouse those residents who are now homeless; and for the council to use its £300 million reserves to support these residents and immediately improve all social housing in the borough to make it safe.](#)

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

Vigil for Grenfell

Hundreds of people attended the vigil for Grenfell, in west London to mark four weeks on from the terrible fire. Those attending mainly came from the local community and family and friends of those who have died or are missing.

While the overwhelming reason for people attending was to pay their respects, there is still anger about why the fire happened in the first place, that no-one has been charged criminally, that the Tory councillors are still in place and that the vast majority of residents have not been properly re-housed.

Socialist Party members attended the vigil with leaflets [taking up these issues](#), arguing for: No cover-ups - jail the killers; for an independent, working class, community inquiry; take over empty property to re-house those made homeless; use the £300 million reserves of Kensington and Chelsea council to make all council homes safe and to maintain them in a good condition.

We also argue that there should be immediate elections. Local residents and workers need councillors who fight for them. Councillors not willing to do so should stand aside for candidates who are.

Our leaflets went down well with some coming back for more. The Socialist Party will continue to support the community around Grenfell in their struggle for justice and we will continue to help build the movement to remove this rotten Tory government and the capitalist system that caused this disaster.

Chris Newby

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 13 July 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations meeting reveals huge anger of tenants

Bill Mullins, council leaseholder and Southwark Socialist Party

The latest news about the Grenfell Tower fire disaster continues to reveal Kensington and Chelsea Tory council shenanigans in its abuse of the worst off in the west London borough.

It was revealed this week that the council had received last year alone £50 million from developers "in lieu of" not having to meet the developer's obligations to have a certain percentage of new developments as 'affordable homes'.

To those of us involved in housing campaigns this is not news; in my own borough of Southwark the Labour council over the last period has received some £300 million from developers (£106 payments) 'in lieu of building affordable homes'.

When I challenged the cabinet member for regeneration Richard Livingstone at a meeting of the Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations on 17 July over what the council was doing with the money, he dodged the question (and not for the first time).

The debate was about a group of residents on the Ledbury estate in Southwark who have been kicking up for years about the massive cracks in the fabric of their tower blocks. These cracks were recently identified as dangerous by London Fire Brigade inspectors. The council was forced (in the light of the Grenfell fire) to bring in "fire marshals" but as it turned out, and was raised at the meeting, these were completely untrained and had no idea what to do in the event of a complete evacuation of the towers!

The councillor had said that Southwark council could not afford to requisition the huge amount of empty properties built by developers for overseas clients. This was "because the housing revenue account was ring-fenced" and couldn't be used to requisition new homes for the Ledbury tenants.

New developments of apartments along the south bank of the river Thames cost anywhere between £1 million and £2 million and none of them have affordable homes. This leaves aside what is considered 'affordable' in the first place, often up to 80% of the market rate.

The Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations meeting revealed the huge anger of tenants across the borough and indeed London wide over housing policy which only benefits property developers and landlords.

Grenfell was a game changer and it won't stop there.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 20 July 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Corbyn visits Southampton on marginal seat tour

Jane Ward, Southampton Socialist Party

Over 1,000 people packed Guildhall square in Southampton on 15 July to hear Jeremy Corbyn. It was great to see so many young people. The RCN nurses' union was well represented and we met many angry nurses whose pay has been effectively cut by 14% in the last seven years.

Hundreds of our leaflets were handed out and people were pleased to be invited to our meeting about how we can stop the cuts. There was also a very good uptake of the Socialist paper. I personally have not sold as many in one day before!

Corbyn said that the election result was not the one he wanted but that we can take pride in the fact that the Labour vote increased by three million.

His call for the public sector pay cap to be lifted was well received by the crowd and was reflected in the enthusiasm we saw in people wanting to sign our 'scrap the cap' petition. He said that Tory MPs line up to praise the paramedics, firefighters and nurses but that does not pay the bills.

Corbyn visited Southampton Itchen as part of his tour of 60 marginal constituencies - Labour lost by only 31 votes in the election here.

Huddersfield A&E closure referred to Jeremy Hunt

Matthew Hirst, Huddersfield Socialist Party

On 21 July, the greater Huddersfield and Calderdale Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (JHSC) referred the decision to [close the A&E department at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary](#) and to downgrade the hospital to the health secretary Jeremy Hunt.

On 14 July the Calderdale and Greater Huddersfield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) released its full business case (FBC), a fortnight overdue from the original release due date, which came as a shock to the residents of Huddersfield.

From the original plans to have a 120-bed, cottage-style hospital, this was halved to only 64 beds, alongside a loss of nearly 500 jobs.

The residents of Huddersfield have been out in force though, with several daily sessions of leafleting in the town centre, and at many outlying villages and supermarkets, to raise awareness of the key meeting on the 21 July, between the CCG and the JHSC.

Over 10,000 leaflets were distributed, and some 5,000 names collected on petitions to show their opposition to the latest devastating news.

The people of Huddersfield turned out en masse to lobby the councillors on the JHSC. As they entered the town hall, local media from both ITV and BBC were present and filmed the crowd chanting passionately to defend their hospital and for the NHS as a whole.

Inside the building, local campaigners, councillors and MPs showed frustration and anger at the CCG's proposals.

After an agonising adjournment, the JHSC returned a verdict of 5-3 to refer the CCG's FBC to Jeremy Hunt. As the result came through, campaigners in the overspill room could be heard chanting "Jeremy Hunt, hear us say, HRI is here to stay!"

Whatever Jeremy Hunt decides, he can now no longer pretend that the Tories are not involved in the dismantling of the NHS by stating that these decisions are made at a local level.

Since the release of the FBC, Huddersfield Socialist Party members have been at the forefront of the leafleting campaign. In just a week, we have sold 130 copies of the Socialist and raised over £200 for the fighting fund.

From Militant to the Socialist Party - what you thought

On 4 July Birmingham South East Socialist Party branch discussed the new book [From Militant to the Socialist Party by Peter Taaffe](#).

I started by briefly outlining my political history and how it related to the history in the book. We discussed the themes that are particularly pertinent to current events, especially the situation with Corbyn and the manifesto versus the Blairite dominated Parliamentary Labour Party and the party machine.

I pointed out that almost everything we have said has been borne out by events.

And now there is a resurgence of interest in socialism, Marxism and Trotskyism. Militant has come back into its own as a description of fighting socialists and we are 'out and proud' about our history.

In the discussion Eamonn talked about voting for Tony Blair in 1997 and how he came across the Socialist Party years later in the early Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition days. He talked about the failures of New Labour, which betrayed the optimism of 1997. People voted for change but did not get it. He totally fell out with them over tuition fees.

Comrades should read the book, if not in one go then they can use the chapter headings, the chronology and the index to navigate the book. Most of the chapters can be read as standalone chapters. It is also a way of exploring Marxism with concrete recent historical examples.

Claire Wilkins, Birmingham South East Socialist Party

Socialist sales at Salford station

Over the last year we've done a weekly sale at teatime for commuters who work in Manchester city centre and use Salford train station to get home. Sales usually average seven or eight. Sales were best at the time of the Labour leadership campaigns, again at the election and again after Grenfell.

Normally one member does it but lately another, who can't often make Saturday campaign stalls, has joined the activity. One is fine but two is better - more of a noticeable presence.

Sales to commuters are good in that you are quite likely to see people again next week. On the other hand, commuters are often in a rush and you have to be quick to respond with a leaflet or join card, and change for a

fiver or tenner (always have plenty of pound coins)!

There is a willingness to get something to read on the train - we shout: "Socialist paper, only £1, read it on the train!" However lots of people still think the paper will be free (the Metro is free, as is our local Manchester Evening News in the city centre). Many of these are happy to pay when we explain that we don't get any corporate advertising and are funded by sales, subscriptions and supporters. But if people don't want to pay we give them a leaflet and invite them to check us out on the website.

Seven or eight papers a week doesn't sound much but without this activity we doubt whether we would have made our target in the last two or three quarters. Lots of people see us, including other activists passing by on buses, and they've commented on it.

We've had good conversations, especially with Corbynistas. We got our first person interested in joining from the station sale last week and he is coming to a Young Socialists meeting.

Definitely worth trying.

Paul Gerrard, North West Socialist Party paper organiser

Street cleaners support the Birmingham bin strike

As part of our Saturday stall campaigning on 22 July, Socialist Party members in Birmingham gave out leaflets to raise support for [striking Birmingham refuse workers](#). Not many people know that the strike is not only about pay cuts but also about jobs and safety.

The city's Blairite Labour council wants to get rid of the second loaders who take responsibility for safety at the back and side of the wagon (not non-working 'supervisors' as implied by the local paper). Instead drivers will be responsible for the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and other drivers even if they can't see them!

While campaigning, I met a street cleaner who told me that although he'd been tidying up Birmingham for 13 years, he was still on an agency contract with no holiday, sick pay and other basic rights. Agency workers on street cleaning and the bins are also bullied by management to work unsafely.

I suggested that he and his agency workmates join a union. Already, some agency bin workers in Unite have joined the bin strike. Now Unite is balloting street cleaners too, and I hope the guy I met and his co-workers also join the action.

Bill Murray, Birmingham South East Socialist Party

'Freedom riders' lobby against violent policing

Sharron Milsom, Sheffield North Socialist Party

Pensioners and disabled people from [South Yorkshire Freedom Riders](#) are to travel by coach to York on 31 July to lobby a police misconduct hearing.

The IPCC have directed the British Transport Police to [carry out misconduct hearings](#) into the behaviour of four police officers and one PCSO. One of the officers, PC Money, is charged with gross misconduct. It is his hearing which is to start on the 31 July.

The five hearings relate to the events of 23 June 2014 when police waded into a peaceful protest by 'freedom ride' travel pass protesters at Sheffield train station.

Several elderly and disabled protesters were injured and knocked over, with five going to hospital. Two pensioners were arrested for obstructing the police and not having a train ticket.

One, George Arthur, was pushed along the platform before being forced onto a bench. The other was grabbed by five police and security staff who pushed his head down while, bent double, they pushed him along. Several protesters complained to the IPCC of the officers' use of excessive force amounting to assault.

In a witness statement PC Money had used what the IPCC regarded as 'inflammatory language.' He had referred to protesters as being like a 'pack of rabid dogs'.

The gross misconduct hearing is to decide whether he made the account knowing it to be false or deliberately misleading. It will also consider whether the officer carried out his arrest of George Arthur legally and whether excessive force was used.

- Join the lobby and march at 9.30am, Monday 31 July, at British Transport Police offices, 10 Toft Green, York, YO1 6JT.

Council meeting abandoned after undercover policing protest

Carl Harper, Peterborough Socialist Party

The mayor of Peterborough postponed a council meeting due to protests in the public gallery against Tory councillor Andy Coles.

Coles, the former deputy county police and crime commissioner, resigned from the role following a Channel 4 investigation into the activities of undercover police officers in the 1990s who infiltrated a group of animal rights activists. The programme claimed he had a relationship with a young activist while working as an undercover officer.

The protests, organised by the Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance (COPS), began outside Peterborough Town Hall before carrying on inside. They are demanding that Coles resign as a councillor.

The mayor warned the protesters, before ordering the public gallery to be emptied. This led to a 30 minute stand-off, with police acting as mediators and passing on messages between senior councillors and the protesters.

The protesters stood firm, refusing to take down a banner from the gallery until Coles left the meeting. Faced with this exercising of democratic rights, the mayor cowardly postponed the meeting.

This has forced the Tory council leader to agree to meet representatives of the COPS group.

Education cuts forced back in Hackney

Even before the Tories' proposals for education cuts have been agreed, over a dozen schools and children's centres and central support staff teams have suffered restructures and job cuts across Hackney, east London.

Dionne Thompson, Unison joint education convenor for Hackney, whose own job was cut and is now facing redundancy, spoke to the Socialist.

I have worked in education for 14 years at Stoke Newington school and for just over two years I have been on full union facility time representing members across the borough in over 80 schools.

In May of this year the head teacher and chair of governors at my school presented a consultation document that would impact directly on 30 support staff with up to 12 facing redundancy and a large number facing wage cuts.

Behaviour mentors were to be reduced from five to two, the faculty support assistants team was to be more than halved and made term-time only, which will cut admin support and cover for classes and exam preparation.

A lot of back up support that is provided in the holidays would have been lost, such as updating IT systems and other staff equipment for the September start.

More responsibilities were to be placed on already overworked teachers across their lunch breaks. We would lose five deputy heads of year.

[A major campaign to fight against this proposal](#) by education unions Unison and NUT, alongside parents at the school, included two lobbies and an NUT strike on the day of the governors meeting. This all played a role in forcing a significant retreat.

The action, combined with the trade unions' consultation responses and letters of protest, has led to significant concessions with three job losses, not 12, and no changes to terms and conditions.

In future, headteachers and governing bodies should not just go off and draw up proposals until they have consulted all staff and parents.

Southampton councillors faced with angry anti-cuts campaigners

Maggie Fricker, Southampton Socialist Party

Southampton city councillors faced a lot of angry people on 19 July at their full council meeting.

On the steps outside were parents, staff and children from 'Southampton Fair Funding for All Schools' who handed in their petition demanding the council licence school deficits and the halting of school funding cuts. Inside was a deputation from Kentish Road Respite centre. Three women, all carers, spoke in defence of keeping the centre open. They praised the professionalism of staff and explained why the respite centre is so important. It provides structure and continuity, a sense of community with peer groups and opportunity to form lasting friendships. No other respite like this is available in the area.

One of those who spoke said this was another form of discrimination as the regular respite she receives allows her to work, and caring for their loved ones at home saves the government thousands of pounds.

The Labour cabinet member in response didn't even attempt to justify the closure but said they would keep up a dialogue - they clearly weren't listening.

The alternative they offered, as one of the many in the public gallery pointed out, was just a bed in a stranger's house.

The [Kentish Road campaign](#) was supported by anti-cuts councillor Keith Morrell who begged Labour councillors to reconsider and will support further action being planned to prevent the closure, as will local members of the Socialist Party.

- Save Kentish Road respite centre demonstration at 11am, Saturday 29 July at Shirley Precinct, Southampton. The Tories have no mandate for austerity. Southampton Labour councillors must join the fightback or stand aside for those who will!
-

Plans to bring A-levels back to Knowsley abandoned

Neill Dunne, Liverpool Socialist Party

Education chiefs have abandoned plans to [bring back A-level provision into the borough of Knowsley](#), Liverpool. So the education committee, founded with a £1 million fund last year, has decided that it will do nothing.

The demise and decline of education standards in this borough is partly due to the Labour-run council using the area as an experiment for private funding initiatives.

Knowsley council has allowed 'academisation' to happen on its watch, and prioritised PFI-run schools with good pass rates and high interest. Students in Knowsley have had their life prospects diminished.

It has also become known that Knowsley council adult social care service could also be privatised and hundreds of jobs lost under an evaluation of how the service is run.

Knowsley council has already made £15 million of cuts this year alone while upping council tax by 4.99%.

The only answer for Knowsley residents is a Corbyn-led, socialist government and the removal of the crony, New Labour Knowsley council, which needs to discover the true meaning of what the Labour Party should stand for in a deprived area such as Knowsley.

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25888>