

# Get the Tories out

## Build the anti-war and anti-austerity movements

Judy Beishon

Theresa May, leading a Tory government with no majority, used 'royal prerogative' to authorise the bombing of Syria, afraid of losing a vote in parliament. The Tory cabinet rallied behind her with no waiting for the ground investigation in Syria to even begin into whether the Syrian regime had used chemical weapons.

The military jets were dispatched in the face of polls showing that more people in Britain opposed the action than supported it. Cruise missiles - valued at £790,000 each - were fired, in a grotesque competition between May and French president Macron to be the main European backer of Trump's much stronger US force.

Over 500,000 people have died in the Syrian war and 11 million have been displaced. This so-called 'humanitarian' bombing on science institutions and other sites did nothing to aid their plight and only added to the destruction. It also aided Syrian president Assad who could use it to bolster his support in the areas he controls.

The three western powers were using their chillingly sophisticated missiles to flex their muscles in a country which is being torn apart by many outside interventions, all leaning on one or another of the military forces involved in the raging internal wars.

The anti-war movements internationally must be built to become strong enough to achieve the withdrawal of all foreign interference. It is the task of the Syrian people - through building democratic workers' organisations - to end the war and possible future attempts by any side to use chemical weapons.

Genuine solidarity with that struggle can only come from workers' organisations in Britain and worldwide, as they represent the class in society that has no interest in imperialist face-saving or the seeking of profits and influence.

Jeremy Corbyn was right to call for a parliamentary vote on the military action, as a possible means of inflicting a serious defeat on May, as was done against Cameron on a similar issue in 2013. But as a succession of right-wing Labour MPs lined up to side wholly with May, attacking Corbyn and his anti-war position, these events show yet again the urgency of candidate reselections to remove these representatives of capitalist interests from Labour.

Whatever the outcome of votes and decisions in parliament on Syria - or by the United Nations - socialists will remain firmly opposed to military intervention. This principled opposition must go alongside helping to build the anti-war and anti-austerity movements into forces that can accelerate the end of May's government. For the Labour Party to be an effective political voice for those movements - and be positioned to be an anti-war government - its left wing needs to move to ensure that its MPs reflect the views of the party members and trade unionists they should be representing.

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The article below was posted on our website in the days before the bombing took place.

# No to the bombing of Syria!

## Build a mass movement against the war

Serge Jordan, CWI

Donald Trump's administration is gearing up for another possible round of missile strikes against regime targets in Syria.

This could trigger an explosive chain of events potentially leading to a more serious military conflagration between major international and regional powers in the Middle East.

Moscow has responded to Trump's open threats by saying it would target US units involved in any attack on Syrian soil.

Both Trump and British Prime Minister, Theresa May, are going through turbulent political times, and are in need of diverting attention away from the woes of their administrations.

In Britain, it has been very convenient for May that the alleged chemical nerve attack, with no concrete evidence provided, took place in the run up to this crisis.

Along with France, where President Emmanuel Macron grapples with a new wave of working class action, and Saudi Arabia that has offered facilities to support the other three, all are ratcheting up their rhetoric and flexing their muscles against Assad's regime and its supporters in the Kremlin.

They are cynically using the pretext of a reported recent chemical attack in Douma, the main city of Eastern Ghouta in the suburbs of Damascus, for this purpose.

This abhorrent attack, which has allegedly killed dozens of people, is blamed, without as yet any substantiated evidence, on Bashar al-Assad's regime and its foreign backers.

To be sure, Assad's regime has defended its corrupt rule over the years through rivers of innocent people's blood. The CWI does not give an inch of support to this brutal reactionary regime, nor to its Russian and Iranian patrons.

Yet why would the Syrian army launch a chemical attack now, bringing down the wrath of the western imperialist powers? While not ruled out, the tactical logic behind such a decision is not obvious. Military victory in Eastern Ghouta was indeed within the regime's grasp, entrenching Assad's hold over most of Syria's urban centres.

Some commentators have speculated that this recent attack might have been initiated by "rebel" jihadist forces in order to draw US imperialism deeper into the conflict.

Regardless of who is responsible for this attack, the urge to use it as an excuse for another imperialist intervention in the Middle East should be rejected and resisted outright.

Fifteen years after the invasion and occupation of Iraq, millions of people remember the lies of ruling politicians and their friends in the pro-establishment, pro-corporate media at the time in order to justify that calamitous war.

Justifiably, many are hence not ready to uncritically lap up the official version of events presented now by western governments and mainstream media outlets.

Other western interventions into Afghanistan, Libya have also been a disaster for the peoples of the area and have only worsened the crisis.

The war in Iraq precipitated the decline of US imperialism in the Middle East; the ongoing war in Syria has exposed it further, providing an open space for Russia and Iran to expand their regional influence.

This, combined with Trump's administration move towards a more outright and naked support of Iran's arch enemies, Israel and Saudi Arabia, has brought regional tensions to a very high pitch.

Tensions in the region between the main powers, precariously kept in check during the battle against ISIS, have now come back to the fore with renewed intensity, as ISIS' proto-state has all but crumbled.

Recent developments have seen an escalation in "inter-State" military skirmishes on Syrian territory, with a deeper military engagement from Israel, Turkey, Iran and others.

Trump's air strikes are likely to be a show of strength of limited duration, along the lines of what happened in April 2017, when the US navy fired 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian airbase.

Broader options, such as an all-out war for "regime change", would not only risk dragging the whole region into the flames of a major war, but would also hasten major political and social convulsions in Western capitals and across the globe.

But war has a logic of its own, and new US airstrikes in such a combustible situation could lead to unintended consequences.

## **Hypocrisy**

As inter-imperialist tensions rise in the Middle East and across the globe, the ruling classes' sheer hypocrisy and double standards are reaching staggering proportions too.

Accusing Assad of "disregard for human lives", Trump, May and Macron have all recently rolled out the red carpet for Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, the architect-in-chief of the carnage and deliberate starvation of Yemen, which is killing a child every ten minutes on average.

All went overboard to congratulate counter-revolutionary butcher al-Sisi for his recent farcical "re-election" in Egypt; all gave a de facto free pass to Turkish President Erdogan's ethnic cleansing operation in Afrin, as well as to Israeli snipers liberally gunning down unarmed Palestinians in Gaza - the condemnation of

which US imperialism vetoed at the UN Security Council.

None of the commentators displaying outrage at the use of chemical weapons to justify a new military aggression in Syria raised any eyebrows when last year, the US army made use of white phosphorus in heavily populated areas of Mosul and Raqqa in the battle against ISIS.

Hundreds of civilians could apparently then be dispensed with and their cities obliterated in the name of the "war on terror".

The same logic has been used by Assad and Putin supporters to try and rationalize murderous sieges and brutal bombings of civilian populations living in areas of Syria held by armed rebel groups, most of which are of an Islamic-fundamentalist inclination - like the Salafists of 'Jaysh al-Islam' who were until recently in control of Eastern Ghouta.

In reality, the murderous rampage of Assad and his allies, like the civilian killings brought along with Western imperialist "liberation" from ISIS, combined with the mass poverty and alienation of millions, are likely to act as recruiting agents for future extremist Sunni armed groups - unless they are challenged by a genuine alternative.

In parallel, the actions of ruthless armed gangs of the Salafist and jihadist types have helped Assad to maintain - through fear - control over important sections of the population.

A new round of imperialist airstrikes would have the same effect, reinforcing Assad's narrative comparing his regime to a fortress defending itself against domestic and external terrorist and imperialist enemies.

The CWI vigorously opposes all military strikes on Syria, along with any foreign interventions and meddling in the country.

The bloodshed and destruction, which has gone on almost unabated for the last seven years, need to be stopped, not heightened further.

This is a task that all existing capitalist and imperialist powers involved in the region, struggling between them for power, prestige and profit, have shown utterly incapable of doing.

There simply can be no solution to the horrors confronting the Syrian people on the basis of this rotten system.

Whereas the Syrian people are bearing the full blows of counter-revolution and war, an important and powerful working class exist in countries such as Iran, Turkey and Egypt.

Allied with the region's poor and oppressed, and joining hands with a much needed anti-war movement in the West, such a force, armed with democratic socialist policies, can show a way out of the nightmare confronting Syria and the wider Middle East.

### **We say:**

- Stop Trump's attacks on Syria - withdrawal of all foreign forces from Syria now - no to all outside powers' interference in the region
- Build a mass international movement against the war

- For the building of united, multi-ethnic and non-sectarian defence committees in all parts of Syria to defend workers and poor against sectarian and military attacks from all sides
  - For the building of independent trade unions and mass workers parties, with a programme of land to the masses and factories to the workers
  - Down with dictatorship, capitalism and imperialism - for workers' unity and socialism
  - For a democratic socialist confederation of the Middle East and North Africa, respecting the rights of all minorities
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## **Labour councillors could stop unsafe 'driver-only operation' tomorrow**

**Hugh Caffrey, Socialist Party North West secretary**

Many train companies across the country are trying to get rid of the guards on the trains. These 'safety-critical' staff are to be replaced with a bank of tiny TV screens in the driver's cab.

Instead of the guard being able to respond to incidents or help people, the driver is supposed to keep watch on everything behind him as well as drive the train and respond to problems on the train!

Huge majorities of guards, drivers, train passengers and the public at large are all opposed to this.

In favour are greedy profit-seeking companies that see a chance to boost profits by cutting jobs, greedy pro-profit Tory politicians backing them up... and local right-wing Labour politicians.

In many local instances, ['driver-only operation' \(DOO\)](#) is being pushed through with the assistance of these Blairite councillors.

This is in complete opposition to Labour's policy in favour of (gradual) rail renationalisation and Jeremy Corbyn tweeting his support for the guards.

This is true in Merseyside where the transport committee is Labour-run and oversees the local rail network.

Across the north of England the 'Rail North' project is backed by lots of Labour council leaders, including prominently Manchester's Blairite supremo Richard Leese.

Liverpool city region mayor Steve Rotheram washes his hands of the dispute in public while backing the bosses in private.

His counterpart Andy Burnham in Greater Manchester seems to have lost his voice when it comes to public transport, despite making pro-passenger regulation of transport a major election pledge.

These people could stop many of the DOO projects tomorrow if they changed their position from actively supporting it to actively opposing it!

## **Public ownership**

So Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates will be running in the May elections against some of these anti-guard politicians, and others like them.

We want rail renationalised fully and in one go, with all public transport returned to the public sector, and massively expanded in a democratic socialist plan to meet the needs of people, society and the environment.

TUSC supporters are already supporting the guards on their strike picket lines, on our campaign stalls, and so forth - and we will use the election campaigns to step this up a gear.

TUSC councillors would - and any pro-guard politician should - seek immediately to use all possible procedures to query, halt and scrap DOO policy.

We would call on Corbyn-supporting Labour councillors to work with us to force the anti-guard politicians to back down with a massive public campaign as well as arguing the case within council meetings.

The guards' trade union, RMT, has been fighting a tremendous industrial battle for well over a year in the north west and longer than that on Southern Rail, to defend guards and public safety. We believe that the guards, their union, the travelling public and the public at large, deserve better political representation than they're currently getting!

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The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an anti-austerity electoral alliance including transport union RMT, the Socialist Party, leading members of other trade unions and non-affiliated socialists and community campaigners.

TUSC is standing 112 candidates across 34 councils on 3 May: [see tusc.org.uk](http://see.tusc.org.uk)

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## **Merseyrail: TUSC stands against councillors that cut guards**

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing candidates in this year's local elections against two members of the Liverpool city region transport authority, responsible for [trying to push safety-critical guards off the trains on Merseyrail](#).

The representatives from Halton and Liverpool councils on the transport committee are seeking re-election as councillors on 3 May.

But this time they will be challenged by TUSC candidates Stephen Armstrong, a Unite union workplace rep, and Ann Walsh, the former chair of the Merseyside Pensioners Association.

Both are committed to backing the RMT transport union's campaign to keep the guards on the trains.

Merseyrail plans to introduce driver-only operation (DOO) on the new stock that will come into service by 2020.

The Merseyrail franchise is under the control of the Liverpool city region combined authority, led by the Labour metro mayor Steve Rotheram and councillors from Merseyside's six Labour-led councils.

As the RMT general secretary Mick Cash recently said, on the first anniversary of the Merseyrail guards' dispute: "It's time for metro mayor Steve Rotheram and the leaders of the six councils to call a halt to this madness.

"There is no reason why they cannot instruct Merseyrail to put a second safety-critical member of staff on all of the new trains.

"On the first anniversary of the RMT dispute it's now time for the politicians to either listen to the people they claim to represent or stand down".

The two right-wing Labour councillors seeking re-election have completely ignored Jeremy Corbyn's public support for the guards.

And unfortunately they haven't stood down. But they certainly won't go unchallenged in the ballot box on 3 May!

Also standing as TUSC candidates on Merseyside are Warwick Roberts, a Merseyrail RMT local level rep, and the former Unison national executive member Roger Bannister.

Roger stood as the TUSC candidate for metro mayor in May last year polling 7,881 votes.

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## **Free bus passes**

Jeremy Corbyn has said that under a Labour government all bus travel will be made free for young people aged under-25.

This is a very welcome step away from the Tory's train fare announcement. In last year's autumn statement, Tory chancellor Philip Hammond, promised to extend rail fare discounts to millions more young people. In the end only 10,000 new railcards were offered.

We don't have to wait for a Labour government. [Labour councils could introduce these policies now.](#)

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## **Grimsby local paper reveals Labour candidate 'tried to defect to the Tories'**

The Grimsby Telegraph [has revealed](#) that a local councillor they describe as "one of Labour's leading figures" on North East Lincolnshire council tried to defect to the Conservatives in 2016, following Jeremy Corbyn's re-election as Labour leader.

The paper reports that councillor Matthew Brown, who signed an open letter of support for Owen Smith's challenge to Jeremy Corbyn in the 2016 Labour leadership contest, met with Conservative councillors in November that year.

The Conservative group on North East Lincolnshire council decided, however, after discussions among themselves, that "we did not want to offer him the opportunity to join us".

Following further revelations in which he wrote to the Conservatives advising them on how to defeat a Corbyn-supporting Labour candidate in a previous election the Labour Party has withdrawn support for him, saying he is no longer the official Labour candidate and taking away financial assistance.

Councillor Brown is still standing on 3 May in Grimsby's Yarborough ward, where the other candidates are Ukip, an open Tory, and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition's (TUSC) Kieran Barlow, a member of the Usdaw shopworkers' union.

Following a suggestion from TUSC some local Labour Party members are proposing to put out a leaflet supporting the TUSC candidate.

Dave Nellist, the former Labour MP and now the national chair of TUSC, said: "This revelation completely vindicates TUSC's decision to selectively stand candidates in this year's council elections - not against supporters of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message but the Blairite cutters and, as shown in this case, closet Tories.

"Over 30 Labour councillors standing for re-election this year who signed the open letter supporting [Owen Smith's attempted coup](#) against Jeremy Corbyn's leadership in 2016 are facing TUSC candidates at the ballot box next month.

"The news from Grimsby confirms that we can hardly expect councillors like these to stand up to the Tories when they are happy to sit down with them to discuss joining the Conservative Party!

"I'm confident that Labour voters in Yarborough ward who want to fight the cuts, when they realise that the choice on the ballot paper lies between an open Tory, a Ukip Tory, a secret Tory and TUSC, will know who to back".

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## **TUSC campaigners challenge youth club cuts and closures**

Hounslow's Labour-led council has recently decided to chop a further £27.4 million from the 2018-19 budget including slashing all funding for youth clubs, meaning they will close in the next few months.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters have found so much anger over this that we have made it a key campaigning point for our candidates in the local elections.

We are the only campaigners pointing out all the facts to the electorate, and many are horrified when they hear them.

They mention all the headlines in the media about [increasing youth violence and knife crimes in London and elsewhere](#).

Also youth workers have approached our stall and promised support. It takes a lot of effort to break through the alienation and lack of interest on the doorsteps in local elections created by years of Labour carrying out Tory policies.

In Hounslow this has resulted in 45% of children living with out-of-work parents or in low-income households.

Over 2,700 people are in temporary accommodation and the poorest residents have to spend over 60% of their income on uncontrolled rents with a huge shortage of council housing.

One in four residents are low-paid and [universal credit has increased the risk of evictions](#).

The TUSC campaign is raising the consciousness of locals with the youthful, enthusiastic energy of our candidate Sukh Sethi on her first campaign and the experience of our other candidate John Viner, a Unison shop steward and a long-time Socialist Party member.

**Keith Dickinson, West London Socialist Party**

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## **Huddersfield TUSC takes on the Blairites**

**Mike Forster, Huddersfield Socialist Party and TUSC candidate**

Our campaign in Huddersfield is focusing on two seats held by Blairite candidates in Ashbrow and Crosland Moor.

This has allowed us to issue an introductory leaflet and an election communication to every voter. So far 18,000 leaflets have been delivered. Volunteers recruited from social media have all made the job a lot easier.

Our candidate in Ashbrow, Nicola Jackson, is going down a storm on the doorstep. As one canvasser said: "Canvassing is easy here when everyone knows Nicola".

Likewise in Crosland Moor, I've been helped by Labour supporters to get the message out. There is a growing list of supporters who have rung up after getting the leaflets offering to help.

The campaigns will now be stepping up a gear to raise our profile even further with daily leafleting and open air public meetings as we finally get warm weather. The message is clear - councils which persist in making cuts will be punished.

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## **Butterfields tenants join TUSC campaign**

We have 17 candidates in Waltham Forest, and local people are getting used to seeing us everywhere - at stations, shopping areas, schools, workplaces and colleges.

One highlight has been a team of Butterfields tenants who have come out to door-knock with us, and to leaflet with us at the local station.

In 2016 Socialist Party members assisted these tenants to fight eviction. [They achieved a famous victory when all the homes were saved.](#)

Now the tenants are calling for a vote for TUSC. Where there used to be 'Butterfields Won't Budge' posters in the windows, there are now 'Vote TUSC' ones!

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## Haringey TUSC fights Blairite cuts

In Haringey, where many [right-wing pro-housing privatisation Labour councillors were deselected](#), in Seven Sisters ward there are TUSC candidates standing against the rump of discredited right-wingers still in place.

Our campaign stalls have become a hot discussion spot as local people stop to talk about the need to reopen the youth centres shut down by the council, to cut across [the violence that has hit the headlines that young people are facing](#).

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## For a fighting, democratic Labour Party

As events of recent weeks have made clear, the right-wing Blairite side of the Labour Party remains unreconciled to Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the party. They are using every opportunity they can find to attempt to undermine and discredit Corbyn, while trying to push the Labour Party decisively back towards the pro-capitalist, warmongering policies of the Blair era.

They are aided in this by the Labour Party's current structures - which remain in the [undemocratic state that was inherited from the Blairites](#). While the left has been able to make some gains on the national executive committee (NEC) and in the appointment of Jennie Formby as general secretary, much of the party machine - and a majority of Labour MPs and councillors - remain as bulwarks of the right wing.

A democracy review has been established to look at measures to renew Labour's structures. This is potentially positive but unfortunately the review has ruled out considering mandatory reselection of MPs - a vital measure to allow the workers' movement to choose MPs who act in its interests.

The Socialist Party argues for the democracy review to put forward a proposal to completely transform the Labour Party. Some of the key measures that are needed are the re-introduction of mandatory reselection of MPs, and the democratisation of the selection of Labour councillors, with local wards able to choose their own candidates.

The [restoration of trade union rights within the Labour Party](#), under the democratic control of trade union members, is vital. It would be part of returning the Labour Party to a modern version of its founding federal structures. This would enable all socialist and working class forces to come together to build a powerful, 100% anti-austerity party.

If the democracy review doesn't put forward the measures needed Jeremy Corbyn should present his own proposals directly to trade unionists, members, and registered supporters.

The Socialist Party has written to Jennie Formby, the new left Labour Party general secretary, to discuss the Socialist Party's right to affiliate to Labour, as part of a root and branch transformation of the party. Below it are extracts from a submission to the democracy review by Dave Nellist, former Labour MP and now a member of the Socialist Party national committee, developing the arguments for a federal structure.

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Dear Jennie,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Socialist Party (previously the Militant). We would like to meet with you to discuss the possibility of our becoming an affiliate of the Labour Party.

From the beginning we have enthusiastically [supported Jeremy Corbyn's election as leader of the Labour Party](#), which has offered the possibility of transforming Labour into a clear anti-austerity party, based on the trade unions and the working class. Clearly, your appointment as general secretary, replacing Iain McNicol, is an important step towards the renewal of the party along these lines.

Nonetheless, as is shown by the recently renewed [baseless attacks by Labour MPs on Jeremy Corbyn](#), Labour still remains two parties in one; with one section doing all it can to undermine the Labour leadership. Without doubt, if it is able to, this wing of the Labour Party would act to try and sabotage a democratically-elected Labour government attempts to implement radical policies.

As we are sure you will agree, [measures to democratise Labour's structures](#) are therefore urgent. We would argue this should include the re-admittance of all those socialists, including ourselves, who were expelled in the past as the pro-capitalist wing of the party - epitomised by Tony Blair - consolidated its grip on power.

Another aspect of democratising the party could be to restore the federal structure on which Labour was founded. Above all this would mean full rights for the trade unions within the party, but it could also mean allowing other parties and organisations to affiliate, provided they had a clear anti-austerity programme.

As you will know remnants of this structure still exist today, particularly with the Co-operative Party. When [we previously raised this example with Iain McNicol](#) he recognised the comparison, but went on to dismiss it, saying the Co-operative's affiliation was, 'a historic link with a sister party agreed and endorsed by our annual conference'. We see no reason that the party couldn't decide to make new links in the future, in order to strengthen the anti-austerity movement that has been inspired by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in solidarity,

## Addressed to Katy Clark, chair, Labour Party democracy review, 23 March 2018

Dear comrade,

I am writing to you as chair of the Labour Party democracy review, in particular about 'phase 2' and your consideration of the role of affiliated socialist societies.

The Socialist Party warmly welcomed Jeremy Corbyn's two election victories as Labour leader in 2015 and 2016, and the glimpse of a socialist alternative which has enthused so many new members of the party and begun to regain millions of votes lost, particularly in the previous 20 years.

But I believe there would be positive benefits for Labour in developing an alliance of anti-austerity, anti-racist, socialist feminist and green campaigners and organisations. In particular such a wider, federal arrangement could create an even more effective electoral umbrella, potentially reaching out further to parts of the working class.

This is not, in fact, the first time I and other Socialist Party members have made this approach.

### Expelled socialists

You may be aware that in November 2016, 75 expelled and excluded socialists, including myself, general secretary of the Socialist Party Peter Taaffe, PCS assistant general secretary Chris Baugh, and former Liverpool Labour councillors such as Tony Mulhearn, [applied for readmittance to the party](#). Our approach was backed by hundreds of signatures of trade unionists and community organisations. The application was rejected by the (then) general secretary Iain McNicol.

We also wrote to Iain McNicol to ask the NEC to consider affiliation of a wider range of socialist and campaigning organisations, including the Socialist Party itself.

One of the objections to our approach may be that the Socialist Party is in fact a separate party, with members, branches, its own policies, structure and programme. But Labour has always had affiliations from organisations with separate structures.

Indeed, Labour itself was founded in 1900 as a federal organisation of affiliated trade unions and socialist organisations, of women's suffrage campaigns and indeed individual socialist parties such as the Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society. The Fabian Society remains affiliated to Labour today - it still has membership, branches, structure, and separate policies for which it campaigns.

Perhaps an even closer analogy would be the Co-operative Party, which also has an independent structure, maintains its own membership, branches, staff, national executive committee, and policies, all of which are independent of, though clearly complementary to, Labour. Since the general election of 2017, there are 38 MPs who are elected, and sit in parliament, as joint members of both Labour and the Co-op parties.

In addition to their separate identities, therefore, this joint work shows it is possible to be a Labour Party member at the same time as being a member of a different party, with a separate programme, constitution and membership structure. It should therefore be possible to construct a similar relationship with members of the Socialist Party or, for that matter, the Green Party. Others have made a similar point.

Jon Lansman suggested in September 2016 that the Greens should stand joint candidates on a joint ticket with Labour, as Labour does with the Co-op. In a recent Guardian article, journalist Owen Jones also raised the possibility of a similar relationship between Labour and the Green Party.

At the 2015 general election TUSC (the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, co-founded Bob Crow in 2010 with the Socialist Party and others) stood 135 parliamentary candidates and over 600 local council candidates becoming the sixth largest party at that election.

However, TUSC has recognised that with Jeremy's election there was a new national anti-austerity message coming from Labour and, following a wide-ranging debate, [stood down all its parliamentary candidates in the 2017 general election](#) and instead campaigned for Jeremy Corbyn. This showed our serious approach to elections, taking account of new, changed circumstances.

But this wasn't a blank cheque - [TUSC has continued to selectively stand against austerity candidates](#), of whatever party, in order to try and save essential local services (libraries, youth clubs, children centres, etc) under threat from councillors carrying out Tory cuts.

But in the local elections, particularly since May 2016, no TUSC candidates were even considered to be run without local TUSC groups seeking a dialogue with the sitting Labour councillor or prospective candidate on the critical issue of their preparedness to resist cuts to local council jobs and services.

TUSC supporters have played an important role in winning backing for a fighting strategy to oppose cuts to local public services in the main local government unions and worked with anti-austerity councillors in several cities to prepare legally compliant, no-cuts budgets.

But having been excluded from the internal debate within Labour on how to resist austerity, we feel working people have been left little option but to stand against pro-austerity Labour candidates. That is not because we are implacably a hostile body to Labour.

## **Anti-austerity policies**

In fact, it could be argued that we have better represented and campaigned for many of the anti-austerity positions which Jeremy Corbyn has brought to be policy of the Labour Party than a significant proportion of Labour local candidates. In particular: a £10 an hour minimum wage; an end to tuition fees and loans and the restoration of student grants; public ownership of rail, post and water; and a refusal to accept that working people should pay the price for the gambling and speculation of the banking system which triggered the recession of the last 10 years.

A discussion around the 'Co-op affiliation route' could provide a different path. Socialists could strengthen support, particularly locally, for a fighting opposition to Tory austerity. And if some of them were selected as joint Labour-Socialist candidates that also wouldn't be new. After all, joint Labour-Socialist candidates predated the 1927 Co-op agreement by almost a decade.

For example John Maclean, the celebrated Scottish Marxist, became a Labour candidate at the 1918 general election, following the affiliation of the British Socialist Party the previous year. 24 other British Socialist Party members were also selected as Labour parliamentary candidates in 1918.

We look forward to participating in discussions on how those currently outside the Labour Party could join together in building a wider, stronger, working class and socialist mass movement.

In solidarity,

**Dave Nellist, Labour MP 1983-1992, now member of the Socialist Party**

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## Young people need homes

### Vote TUSC to fight youth homelessness and the housing crisis

**Tom Costello, TUSC local election candidate, Preston**

Youth homelessness is on the rise. The housing crisis and delays in benefit payments under the Tories' 'universal credit' system are major factors.

92% of respondents in a survey by Homeless Link said welfare changes were worsening the problem. 55% of homelessness services reported increased demand over the last year, with a quarter of young men sleeping rough aged 16 or 17.

Meanwhile, the weak Tory government has made yet another u-turn - this time on its hated pledge to [scrap housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-olds](#). Esther McVey, work and pensions secretary, said the main reason was a commitment to "providing young people with the support they need to get started with their working lives."

Nobody should see this as anything more than a smokescreen. One of the Tories' first moves in power in 2010 was to stop under-35s from claiming benefits for a home on their own. Their policies have consistently enriched developers and bosses at the expense of renters and workers.

The real reason for the Tories' turnaround is the [tremendous levels of youth support for Jeremy Corbyn's policies](#). Many of the pledges in his [general election manifesto](#), such as rent controls and building a million social and council homes, resonate massively with young people.

We are increasingly unable to find affordable housing in a system rigged for exploitative and parasitic investors. Current trends mean a third of Millennials will be stuck in the rent trap our entire lives, according to the Resolution Foundation.

May's government is in an exceptionally difficult situation. It is the main party of the super-rich and must stay faithful by carrying out attacks like these. But at the same time, its low popularity means it has to try to project the image of a party concerned with the wellbeing of young workers.

Last year's general election results were a humiliation for the Tories, and were spearheaded by young people and workers enthused by Corbyn's anti-austerity message. The 3 May council elections are an opportunity to fight for those policies at a local level.

It was Blairite Labour which introduced the 'local housing allowance' which limits housing benefit - under [Tory recalculations](#), to imaginary levels often well below real private rents. And Labour councils, dominated by the right-wing enemies of Corbyn, have sold off council homes and helped push up private rents just like their Tory colleagues.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is the anti-austerity electoral alliance including transport union RMT and the Socialist Party. We fight for capping private rents at genuinely affordable levels and building council homes instead of selling them off.

We are standing against some of the worst anti-Corbyn, pro-cuts councillors in support of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and the policies which have enthused millions of young people.

Young people can be a leading force in the fight for socialist change. Vote TUSC where you can, and [join the Socialist Party](#), to help achieve it.

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## **1,400 beds empty as patients lay in corridors: health unions must act now**

**Laurel Fogarty**

During the toughest year on record for the NHS, over 1,400 hospital beds in England were mothballed amid short staffing and lack of funds.

The 1,429 beds are now in 82 'ghost wards' - unusable despite [overcrowding in hospitals over the winter crisis](#). The 'winter' crisis itself looks set to continue into the summer, compounding the deepening staff shortage.

Poor working conditions, stagnant pay, and ever-increasing demands on NHS workers, along with chronic underfunding, have left a staffing black hole in the NHS. Among the worst hit are nursing staff.

Over 160,000 nurses have been pushed out of the NHS in the last five years alone, according to a parliamentary answer to Labour. With the cuts to bursaries for nursing students, young nurses face racking up thousands of pounds debt to complete their training, and the staffing crisis looks set to worsen.

Hospital administrations across the country echo Tory policy on further dismantling the idea of a publicly owned, free health service. Instead of fighting for the funds to give crucial NHS staff with decent pay and working conditions, they create backdoor privatisation vehicles and have expensive agencies plug the gaps, further depleting stretched funding.

The shortage of beds is putting patients at risk. How many patients queued in corridors or stuck in ambulances outside A&E were there due to unusable empty beds?

**Danger**

And staff at Manchester Children's Hospital report that sick children are discharged early to free up beds and that staffing has reached dangerously low levels. They say children are being put in danger by low levels of staff on wards - and management forces staff themselves to train for free in their own time.

With a health secretary who co-authored a book including how to dismantle the NHS and replace it with a US-style market system, the deepening crisis in the NHS comes as no surprise. It's all part of the establishment's drive for profit at any cost.

Corbyn's manifesto pledged to restore £30 billion of funding to the NHS and reinstate nurses' training bursaries. These policies won huge popular support and remain one of the Tories' and Blairites' many vulnerabilities.

The health unions must lead the way: neither NHS workers nor patients can wait up to another four years for a general election. Coordinated industrial action - on pay, for example, alongside civil servants and teachers - could tear this divided government apart now.

The Socialist Party has shown what can be done to fight the Tory cuts. Workers and local campaigners have won victories against closures and cuts in [Leicester](#), [Mansfield](#) and elsewhere with our members playing leading roles.

The unions must use their power to push for action on our NHS now. Corbyn should join the Socialist Party in calling for this, and for full public ownership of the healthcare sector.

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## Catalonia: 1m marchers demand self-determination

Over a million people came out onto the streets of Barcelona on 15 April to [demand Catalan self-determination](#) and show solidarity with Catalonia's imprisoned pro-independence parliamentary deputies. The independence movement has faced vicious repression from the Spanish state, led by conservative prime minister Mariano Rajoy.

Members of Esquerra Revolucionària, the Socialist Party's sister party in Catalonia, were active participants. Across Catalonia and the Spanish state we have fought against Francoist repression, for an end to Rajoy's reactionary administration, and for an independent, socialist Catalonia with a workers' government.

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## Billions for the bosses, benefit cuts for us

Simon Carter, East London Socialist Party

Capitalist wealth distribution is now at its most unequal and set to widen further.

As of March, there were 2,208 billionaires in the world, according to Forbes. Their total worth is \$9.1 trillion, an increase of nearly a fifth on 2017 - average wealth, \$4.1 billion.

And Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has become the planet's first hundred-billionaire, with a \$106 billion personal fortune. He pipped Bill Gates to first place by adding a staggering \$39 billion to his wealth in just a year.

Shortly afterwards, the Tory government's latest cuts in 'universal credit' benefits came into effect.

Even before the most recent changes, families had to wait many weeks for payment, [leading to rent arrears and evictions](#). And food banks report a big uptake from families in areas where universal credit has been rolled out.

Now, according to the Resolution Foundation, 3.2 million working families in the UK are expected to be worse off, with an average loss of £48 a week. About 600,000 of those, mainly couples with children, will no longer be entitled to any help at all.

True, 2.2 million working families will gain an average increase of £41 a week. But the maths shows that overall, one million families will lose out.

But what about the government's commitment to reign in the tax-dodging mega-rich? "When it comes to opportunity, we won't entrench the advantages of the fortunate few," pledged Theresa May.

Yet parliament's Public Accounts Committee has found that the HM Revenue and Customs tax take from 'high net worth individuals' fell by £1 billion since the Tories set up a special unit for them. Income tax paid by all other taxpayers has risen by £23 billion over the same period.

For the Tories, it's business as usual - robbing Peter to pay for super-rich Paul. Four years ago, a PCS union-commissioned report found that £119 billion in tax was being dodged in the UK, mainly by big companies and wealthy individuals.

Compare that figure to government spending on education, £90 billion, transport, £20 billion, and health, £148 billion in 2016-17, according to Institute for Government analysis.

Let's kick out this government of the multibillionaires and fight for a socialist programme to reverse austerity and make the super-rich and their giant corporations pay to increase the living standards of the 99% through nationalisation and progressive taxation.

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## Them & Us

### BlackRock billionaire

Larry Fink, founder and CEO of BlackRock, the world's giantest investment giant, is the latest addition to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. The world had 2,208 billionaires in March, according to Forbes - the 0.00003%.

BlackRock's \$6.3 trillion of interests include outsourcers like Circle International and G4S which are cannibalising the NHS and other public services. The firm employs former chancellor George Osborne, architect of austerity, on £650,000 a year for just 48 days' work.

## **Bolshevik banker?**

Is capitalism digging its own grave? Mark Carney, the Bank of England governor who 'earns' £880,000 a year, worries it is.

He says that thanks to automation, the internet and AI, "you have exactly the same dynamics as existed 150 years ago, when Karl Marx was scribbling the Communist Manifesto."

Carney told the Canada Growth Summit that "Marx and Engels may again become relevant." They never stopped being relevant. The bosses just stopped paying attention.

## **Kill or cure**

You can only cure a patient once - and that's bad for business, says Goldman Sachs. The US investment bank's April report 'The Genome Revolution' asks: "Is curing patients a sustainable business model?"

"The potential to deliver 'one-shot cures' is one of the most attractive aspects of gene therapy... However, such treatments offer a very different outlook with regard to recurring revenue versus chronic therapies."

"While this proposition carries tremendous value for patients and society, it could represent a challenge for genome medicine developers looking for sustained cash flow."

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## **Apprenticeship lies**

Bosses are "simply rebadging low-quality, low-skill and often low-wage roles as 'apprenticeships'," according to think-tank Reform.

The Tories have forced large employers to spend a proportion of their wage bill on 'apprenticeships'. Reform's report 'The Great Training Robbery' finds two-fifths of government-approved apprenticeship standards are not in line with genuine learning on the job.

KFC's 'apprentice hospitality team members', for example, learn to fry chips and mop floors. Firms can claim up to 90% of their 'apprenticeship' spending back.

## **Paupers' funerals**

Local authorities withhold the ashes of cremated loved ones from families who can't afford to pay, according to an investigation by the Times.

The outcry caused by the practice of councils stacking dead babies in resealable mass graves has led Theresa May to promise a children's funeral fund. But the families of adults who can't afford it have no recourse.

82% of council 'paupers' funerals' involve families who can't or won't pay, compared to 44% ten years ago, says Stirling Citizens Advice Bureau. The average cost of a funeral has doubled since 2003, according to the Times, while the government has cut bereavement benefits.

## **Cold snap cuts**

Almost a million fewer pensioners were allowed to claim emergency heating help this winter than when the Tories came to power.

'Cold weather payments' of £25 go to pension credit claimants when temperatures drop below zero for over a week. In 2017-18, just 1.7 million claimants qualified - compared to 2.6 million in 2010-11, according to Commons Library data requested by Labour.

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## **Enoch Powell's racist 'Rivers of Blood' rant 50 years on**

**Scott Jones**

Tory MP Enoch Powell made his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' racist rant 50 years ago. He used disgraceful language in the 1968 speech that would have even appalled in 1868.

Yet Powell's message is still invoked today, with support for the speech coming in 2014 from Ukip's Nigel Farage, former Thatcherite minister Norman Tebbit, Conservative MP Gerald Howarth. As did corrupt former Tory MP and Welsh Ukip leader Neil Hamilton on 16 April.

Powell made his speech on 20 April 1968 in Birmingham in opposition to Labour's proposed Race Relations Bill.

The bill would make it illegal to refuse housing, employment or public services to someone on the grounds of race, skin colour or ethnicity.

But Powell used the bill's second reading to launch into a tirade against immigration, particularly from the Commonwealth.

At the time there were a million black and Asian migrants in Britain. Most had been encouraged to come here to work to fill the demand in industries such as transport and healthcare.

They were often paid less for doing the most difficult work. This began to change only as black and white workers joined together in the trade union movement to fight for the same pay and conditions for all.

They came mainly from South Asian and Caribbean countries that had been exploited by British imperialism over centuries.

Yet Enoch Powell referred to these workers in disgusting racist language and talked of "the black man having the whip-hand".

He proposed ending or stemming immigration going onto finish with a quote from a Roman poem: "As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood", hence the speech's name.

He claimed to be speaking on behalf of a concerned constituent who it was later revealed was a 'no Irish, no blacks, no dogs' variety landlord.

Two months prior to the speech, in Militant (predecessor of the Socialist) we predicted that the actions of the Labour government would provoke this when they passed another bill - the Kenya Immigrants Bill - which following Tory pressure limiting Asian immigration to 1,500 a week.

As Militant said, the Tories used the entry into Britain of persecuted Asian families from Kenya to "whip up the basest racial prejudice".

Following Powell's speech Militant explained that this "latest incitement" was "directly related to and is a product also of the capitulation of the Labour government".

Some workers, especially meat porters at Smithfields market in east London who took part in a march instigated by someone who stood for Oswald Mosley's fascist organisation in the 1966 general election, were taken in by Enoch Powell and the Tories racist propaganda.

We pointed out at the time that the likes of Enoch Powell and the fascists were advocates of smashing the very unions used by those workers to march and strike in support of Powell.

We said the capitalists would use divide and rule to: "seek to break the trade unions, the labour movement, the very organisations of the workers themselves."

But other workers at the time reacted differently. A mass meeting of shop stewards at the Ford Dagenham factory condemned the speech with a resolution saying: "Attacks on racial minorities are attempts to divert attention from the major problems."

This perfectly hit on the real issues - the accusations by the Tories that immigrants are to blame for the lack of jobs and education and pressure on education and healthcare. Similar accusations are made against migrants today.

## **Poverty**

But as the Militant said in 1968: "In Britain as a whole there is a dire need to replace at least five million houses which are overcrowded or dilapidated".

We added that many black and Asian workers were living in this slum property and that, "even if the immigrants were expelled this would leave a shortage of four million dwellings to replace before every family could be given a home."

The same is true with [today's housing crisis](#), with successive government's failure to build new or replace sold-off council housing combined with extortionate private rents to blame, not immigration. It's the same for jobs, education and healthcare.

In 1968 we said: "Racism cannot be fought other than in class terms". Today we argue the same, that capitalism is the root cause of racism which is used in order to divide working class people so that capitalism can make profit at our expense.

The Socialist Party [agrees with Malcolm X](#), that "you can't have capitalism without racism."

The Socialist Party and previously Militant have a long history of fighting racism and fighting the conditions that breed racism.

From responding to Enoch Powell with: "Racial prejudice must be fought tooth and nail", to [confronting the British National Party in the 90s](#) to drive them off the streets of Welling and east London, to more recently [mobilising against the English Defence League](#).

Like in 1968 we need to fight for jobs, homes and services for all as well as against an economic system that relies on racism to justify exploitation of workers divided against each other. That means the struggle against racism must also be the struggle for socialism.

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## Usdaw conference 2018: time for a new era of fighting trade unionism

### President-elect Amy Murphy writes for the Socialist

**Amy Murphy, Usdaw president-elect (personal capacity)**

Being elected as president of Usdaw, the shop workers union, was probably one of the proudest days of my life and I cannot thank everyone enough for the fantastic support and encouragement I received in my campaign.

I am truly humbled by the trust and confidence placed in me to take up this role, and I will continue to fight on behalf of members. [Elected on my campaign and policies for change](#), I believe there are many areas that need addressing and are long overdue.

Now more than ever, with restructures, erosion of premiums, [redundancies](#) and constant attacks on our terms and conditions, Usdaw must work harder to ensure that these threats are pushed back. We need to take a stronger line with the companies we work for and deliver for our members.

With more than 5.2 million low-paid workers in the UK, many of which work in retail, it is imperative that we campaign for a £10-an-hour minimum wage for all workers, with no exceptions. An estimated 905,000 people are on zero-hour contracts, that's 2.8% of people in employment, which equates to one in 35!

Research also shows that one in ten workers are in precarious jobs, including the gig economy, with less access to sick pay, redundancy and job protection. Those on zero-hour contracts earn a third less than average employees.

We need more secure, regular, full-time hours and no zero-hour contracts. I strongly believe that to achieve this we need to make agreements that work better for our members than the partnership approach currently does.

We need to support our members who want to take industrial action in defence of pay and conditions as Usdaw members at Tesco Dagenham distribution centre have voted to do - 70% on a turnout of 62% - for better pay. With Tesco seeing a massive rise in profits we should demand more and begin to claw back the conditions taken away from us.

I am also in favour of working together with other trade unions, campaigning together for common goals, making our collective voice heard. With a combined membership of 6.2 million the trade union movement could and should be a real force to be reckoned with by Theresa May and the Tory government. Let's be united not divided.

By working together with and putting pressure on the new Usdaw leadership, I am hopeful that the above can be achieved and Usdaw can be a fighting union armed with the policies that I campaigned on.

- Come to the Usdaw Activist (Socialist Party members in Usdaw) fringe meeting at conference at the Almeria Hotel, Blackpool, FY1 4QJ at 6pm, Sunday 22 April. Speakers include Amy Murphy
  - [See usdawactivist.wordpress.com](http://usdawactivist.wordpress.com) for the [Usdaw Activist guide to Usdaw conference 2018](#)
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## UCU members vote to end pensions dispute forcing significant concessions

Sam Morecroft, Sheffield UCU anti-casualisation officer (personal capacity)

On 13 April, University and College Union (UCU) members in the USS pension scheme voted to accept [the latest proposal from Universities UK](#) (UUK). 64% voted for and 36% against ending the dispute - or this round of the dispute, anyway. There can be no doubt that university workers have won a significant victory here.

On 23 January this year, UUK announced [plans to completely scrap defined benefit pensions](#) and introduce 100% defined contribution. That represented a monumental attack, which would have left the average member of staff £10,000 a year worse off in retirement.

Fast forward to April, and after [14 days of magnificent and determined industrial action](#), UUK has been forced to state that 100% defined contribution pensions are off the table, to offer a joint working group composed of both employer and union representatives to analyse the pension fund and agree a way forward which provides a 'comparable' pension benefit, and to maintain the current pension provisions for at least another year.

These concessions from the employers came about [purely from the power of our strike](#), and that is perhaps the most important lesson for UCU members, and for workers everywhere.

UCU is not known for industrial militancy, and undoubtedly the employers thought they would be able to get away with this attack without provoking anything more than a one or two-day 'protest' strike, rather than a full blown industrial battle.

But [UCU members have waged a fantastic struggle, beating the anti-union laws](#), forcing major concessions from the employers and building our union in the process - nearly 10,000 new members are thought to have joined nationally!

We have set an example for other unions to follow - and we've also shown that this weak and divided Tory government is incapable of attacking workers in struggle the way they once would have! Workers across Britain should take heart from our struggle, organise to drive the bosses back, and kick out the hated Tory government.

- For full article and lessons of the strike see Socialism Today issue 218
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## **Bromley libraries - indefinite strike action continues**

Bromley library workers employed by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), which was handed the service by the council last year, have been [out on indefinite strike since 28 March](#). Before [the service was privatised](#), Unite the Union warned that there would be cuts to staffing and pay.

Arrogantly, Bromley council made a public declaration that it would be business as usual, echoed by GLL. If by that they meant that it would be the usual broken promises and cuts that typify the Tories and GLL, then they are 100% correct.

No sooner had the transfer happened, then GLL were refusing to fill vacant posts. This soon stretched the service to its limits.

Once GLL refused to honour promises on pay and would not allow time off for the local trade union rep to carry out her role, the straw well and truly broke the camel's back.

Unite members made clear that they were serious - the strike began and members have stayed out since. While Bromley workers have responded magnificently, outrageously GLL has bussed in strike breakers from other boroughs.

But this strike breaking operation cannot last - GLL simply does not have the resources to maintain it. Talks have taken place with the employer and some progress has been made - but pay is a major stumbling block.

The sheer determination of the strikers and the serious nature of the dispute, as shown by the fact that the union has gone for indefinite strike action is a clear indication that this very important dispute can be won. GLL is cutting services under the title of efficiencies wherever it wins contracts.

The mask has well and truly fallen off. GLL disguises itself as a charitable social enterprise - this has not fooled Bromley library workers who are determined to win this fight against the impact of privatisation.

- Message of support can be sent to [onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org](mailto:onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org) and donations to the strike fund should be made payable to Bromley Unite and sent to Onay Kasab, Unite, 33-37 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB.
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## **PCS rejects Acas offer - further strikes announced**

**Marion Lloyd, PCS Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy group president**

PCS served notice to Acas on 11 April to start a programme of industrial action beginning with a work to rule on 25 April and a one-day strike on 11 May followed by further strikes at the beginning of June if the employer does not improve their offer to our Acas members.

The action is being taken in response to the employer's transformation programme and in particular chronic staffing shortages, the downgrading of work and the removal of work out of London, leaving many members vulnerable and at risk of redundancy.

While there was welcome progress during talks last year, including assurances work would be retained in London and guarantees for members facing office closure in Liverpool, it was not enough to reassure conciliators that their work was not being downgraded and that there were proper trade union agreed job descriptions.

Talks have continued but so has the transformation programme. The excellent decision following the court case taken by Unison to remove tribunal fees has resulted in almost a trebling of work, plunging Acas into chaos as there are simply not enough trained staff to do the work.

Talks have produced minor concessions but it is still not enough to ensure there are enough trained staff at the right grade to deliver a key service, nor is it enough to reassure Acas members that there is a strategy for the future to protect jobs, grades, conditions and services.

The ballot result, which crashed through the [Tory-imposed laws](#) with a 65% turnout and 85% voting for action, shows the strength of feeling.

- Messages of support to [marionl@pcs.org.uk](mailto:marionl@pcs.org.uk) and we welcome bucket collections to support our members in struggle and for further information on this then please get in touch

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## Vote for a left, fighting PCS leadership

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

On 19 April ballot papers for the PCS executive committee elections will be posted out. Many members can be expected to vote soon after their ballot papers arrive.

It is vital that local reps act quickly to persuade members to [vote for the Democracy Alliance slate](#).

Members of the 90 branches that nominated the Democracy Alliance should be approached to vote for the Democracy Alliance slate

Even if a branch did not nominate the Democracy Alliance slate branch committees can still recommend this slate to members

Leaflets explaining the Democracy Alliance record and programme are available. These should be used in offices where possible or by leafleting outside offices

Left Unity activists have been sent a ballot pack containing guidelines on how to maximise the vote for Democracy Alliance candidates.

That pack also contains materials to use to help make recommendations. More information can be found at [leftunity.org.uk](http://leftunity.org.uk).

The PCS left leadership is one of the most consistent and effective critics of the Tories' austerity programme. We have launched the pay protest and campaign against the pay cap.

Linked with this are efforts to persuade the Trade Union Congress and other public sector unions to take joint coordinated action on pay to scrap the cap.

Continued support for these policies rely on the re-election of the Democracy Alliance leadership.

Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary (personal capacity), says: "I urge PCS members to support Democracy Alliance candidates in the 2018 president, vice-presidents and executive committee election.

"The Democracy Alliance leadership has delivered for members in the workplace and at group and national level.

"A strong and democratically accountable union is required to meet the challenges we face - this is best achieved by voting the Democracy Alliance slate."

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#### **President**

Janice Godrich DWP Clydeside and Argyll

#### **Vice-Presidents**

Jackie Green MOJ Bradford Fran Heathcote DWP Northumbria & Tyneside Zita Holbourne BEIS London North Kevin McHugh HMRC Benton Park View

#### **National Executive Committee**

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## **Avenue School strikers and parents win judicial review**

"We want a ballot and we want it now" was one of the demands chanted on the Avenue School picket line in Newham, east London, on 17 April.

[Striking staff and the parents that support them](#) are demanding a ballot, which the governing board seems to be scared of granting - as its clear the majority of parents oppose academisation.

The picket line was buoyed up by the news that the judicial review parents have been fighting for was granted last week.

There were many messages of solidarity including from Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary, who told the crowd how inspiring the strike was and that the Socialist Party was fully behind it and will be standing against pro-academy councillors in the local May elections in Newham.

[Cumberland School](#), also in Newham, is also on strike against academisation.

**Juliette Fogelman, East London Socialist Party**

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## **Workers' victory over anti-union Scottish council**

The Scottish National Party (SNP) administration in West Dunbartonshire [has reversed cuts to trade union convenors and union facility time](#). This climbdown is a victory for the trade unions and local communities.

Instead of the proposed cut to two convenors, they say they will now retain the full three and a half.

This retreat comes after a mass campaign was mobilised against a budget that detailed not only this attack to trade unions but a swathe of other cuts. These cuts still need to be fought.

A public meeting which attracted a huge crowd, with speakers including from Unite, and Socialist Party Scotland, saw workers make clear their anger at the cuts and their willingness to go to ballot for strike action if necessary.

This is a really significant win and shows what can be achieved when workers and the community take action to fight the cuts.

**Lynda McEwan, West Dunbartonshire Socialist Party Scotland**

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## **Give us your change (and more) to fight for system change!**

**Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer**

Socialist Party members strained every sinew to try and reach the target of £30,000 for the first quarter of the year; in the end we fell just short, raising £28,372.

However this was a fantastic effort as in the same period we have also raised over £82,000 [for the building fund](#).

The fighting fund underpins our ability to campaign and get our ideas out to as wide an audience as possible.

We have no rich backers, we rely on the support of ordinary people and the energy and drive of our members to ensure that we have the resources we need.

The year started, as 2017 had finished, with our members campaigning to save the NHS, a crisis entirely manufactured by the Tories' programme of cuts and privatisation.

Branches from Plymouth to York, Bristol to Liverpool, Wirral, Stoke and Huddersfield have been fighting to save their local hospitals.

In Leicester and Mansfield victories were scored as Glenfield Heart Unit and Chatsworth Ward were saved from closure by determined campaigns.

We battled the snowy conditions in February and March, [supporting the UCU education strikers](#), who showed the anger there is at the bosses' constant undermining of living standards and working conditions.

Regional conferences saw good finance appeals, with over £500 raised at the West Midlands and London conferences, and over £6,000 at our national congress.

At those same meetings appeals for the building fund were also helping raise over £150,000 in pledges; a fantastic response showing how seriously our members take the need for finance. £452 was raised at long-standing member Mary Jackson's funeral in Doncaster.

Branches also tapped into other ways to raise funds, with Swansea raising over £200 selling second-hand books and £100 on a car boot sale.

Carlisle continued their tradition of Burns Night celebrations, raising £190; Salford branch raised £200 with a music night with local bands.

Now branches will be campaigning in the local elections - a great opportunity to raise fighting fund; ensuring that we continue to have the resources we need to build support for a socialist alternative to the corruption and greed of the bankers, the super-rich and their capitalist politicians.

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## **Building fund: £150,000 milestone smashed!**

**Tessa Warrington, building fund organiser**

As regular readers of the Socialist will know, the Socialist Party is currently under threat of eviction from our headquarters in London.

It came as a real blow when [we discovered last autumn that our landlord was kicking us out](#) to maximise profitability by transforming our offices into luxury flats.

We do not have rich backers. We are based in working class communities, among students and young people who have been hammered by austerity, debt and low pay.

We knew it was a huge task to ask our members and supporters to help us raise the amount needed to move to another London premises.

But as of last week we have smashed through £150,000 in pledged donations. This is an incredible feat of collective sacrifice by determined working class fighters and huge thanks must go to all those who have pledged so far.

## **Method**

How did we do it? We were bold. We asked if comrades could afford to donate a week's income, with payments spread over a number of months.

We did not shy away from asking everyone to contribute; from each according to their ability so that the burden would be shared evenly.

As long as our lives are dominated by the capitalist system we have no option but to rely on money to help us achieve our aims.

Our approach to raising finance shows only a glimpse of what is possible when workers are organised and struggle together.

The secret ingredient is that our members understand the need for a socialist society.

Understanding what is necessary gives us the confidence that the Socialist Party has the right ideas to change the world, and maintaining a presence in London is part of that task. Without this, we could never have hoped to reach this amount.

But we can go beyond £150,000! Every penny on top will only further assist us in finding the best premises we can and fighting for an end to capitalist drudgery.

If you haven't already, please pledge or [donate today to the Socialist Party's building fund](#) and join us in fighting for a better future.

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# **The Socialist - a fighting, campaigning, workers' paper**

**Ian Pattison, the Socialist campaigns organiser**

From the first issue of the year, [which highlighted the ever-widening wealth gap](#), the Socialist has featured the major issues confronting ordinary people - from the relentless Tory attacks on our health service and the victories against NHS closures at [Glenfield](#) and [Chatsworth](#), to the determined [battle by UCU university workers](#) against attacks on their pensions.

Now Socialist Party members have launched our local election campaigns. We're part of TUSC (the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition), standing over 100 candidates around the country. We're targeting Blairites who refuse to back Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies.

Already this year sellers of the Socialist in York, Swansea, Gloucester, West London and Cardiff all increased their paper orders to match increased demand.

There will be loads of anti-cuts campaigning by the Socialist Party and TUSC during the local authority elections.

We need to ensure that the Socialist is at the forefront of our campaigning. This way, sales of the Socialist can reach even higher this quarter.

During the start of the election campaigns we've produced feature articles showing how councils can [legally block the cuts](#), and stop Tory attacks on [the NHS](#), [education](#), and [housing](#).

This week we look at [dangerous driver-only operation](#) and how the transport union RMT has led a determined campaign to keep a safety-critical guard on trains alongside the driver.

In recent weeks the establishment has been rocked by crisis upon crisis. The Socialist hasn't faltered; we've provided expert analysis on complex issues - from the [Salisbury nerve agent poisoning](#) to [Labour's civil war](#) and [accusations of anti-semitism](#); from [Facebook algorithms](#) to a socialist, internationalist and anti-austerity position on [a customs union](#).

We've had an enthusiastic response for opposing the Blairites in the local elections. Ordinary working class people back our stand against the cuts, [the bombing in Syria](#), and cuts to youth services (linked to the tragic [spate of youth killings in London](#)).

Help the Socialist paper by subscribing today - you can do so online at [socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe](http://socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe). You'll get a free book in the post if you sign up via direct debit.

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## Hull says no to war, no to austerity

Around 200 people turned out at short notice in Hull on 14 April to protest [against the bombing of Syria](#).

Speakers included Socialist Party member Mike Whale, secretary of Hull Trades Council, who drew enthusiastic applause when he clearly made the link between the struggle against imperialist intervention in the Middle East and the fight against Tory austerity at home.

We sold out of the Socialist; dozens of copies of the 'Hull Socialist' were distributed, and there was an enthusiastic response, especially from young people, to our opposition to the massive proposed cuts to Hull College as well as against Trump and May's warmongering.

**Roy Fent**

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# Victorious Fearnville Fields campaigners thank the Socialist

At the final council meeting before the election, Labour councillor Lisa Mulherin, on behalf of Leeds council executive, finally confirmed that [the council has dropped plans to build a free school academy](#).

This was welcome news, especially given that just a week before she had been unable to confirm this.

This victory is due to the pressure of ordinary people, organised through the Save Fearnville Fields campaign with thousands of leaflets distributed and a well-attended public meeting which forced the council to cease ignoring the 69% of respondents to their own consultation opposing the proposals.

We have now established a Friends of Fearnville Fields group to ensure the fields remain a well-used community resource.

We also intend to campaign to make sure the plans to redeveloped Fearnville leisure centre as an up-to-date health and wellbeing centre, as proposed by the council at the same time as the free school academy plans, are delivered upon.

We would like to express our thanks to your paper for its coverage of our campaign.

**Iain Dalton, chair, Save Fearnville Fields**

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## Film: 120 BPM

# Vital depiction of fight for Aids prevention and treatment

**Michael Johnson, Socialist Party LGBT group**

"This is how you fight Aids!" Although it's chanted with scorn as LGBT+ activists are dragged away by the police in an early scene, this line perfectly describes the struggle of 'Act Up' (Aids Coalition To Unleash Power).

120 BPM follows the Paris chapter of Act Up during the 1990s, and the blossoming relationship between two members. The dramatic fightback against political indifference and profiteering by pharmaceutical companies is based on director Robin Campillo's personal experience as an activist with the organisation.

Act Up was initially formed in 1987 in New York, but spread across the world to help organise militant political action against the ongoing Aids crisis.

It had become one of the biggest health crises of modern times - yet faced disinterest at best from those with the power to direct work to end the disease.

120 BPM brilliantly and unashamedly shows us Act Up's fight. It opens with members invading the stage of a government talk on the Aids crisis in protest against them failing to provide information on HIV/Aids prevention.

There are occupations of drugs companies who aren't willing to provide enough of the life-saving medication needed to meet demand - in order to maximise their profits.

Activists teach themselves about medication and biology before walking into schools to provide condoms and information to teens.

The drama also focusses on the vital importance of organisation. In scenes that will be familiar to any activist, much of the film takes place in weekly meetings where members debate strategy, tactics, chants and even the wording of leaflets.

This is a wonderful and vital depiction of an incredibly inspiring part of the fight of LGBT+ rights. Even funerals of deceased members become protests to continue the fight.

120 BPM shows us Act Up's tremendous influence on the Aids crisis. Undoubtedly, the successes we have gained in understanding and treatment of HIV/Aids would not have occurred when they did without Act Up.

But this should also serve as motivation to continue the [fight for decent health services](#) and [liberation for all](#).

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## **The Socialist inbox**

### **Do you have something to say?**

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

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

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

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### **'Antisemitism' smokescreen**

The latest [attacks on Jeremy Corbyn over alleged antisemitism](#) have been nauseating. He has a lifelong history of fighting racism in all its forms.

You only have to listen to his speeches at the 2016 Cable Street rally which showed his real disgust at antisemitism and racism.

I see these attacks as a smokescreen by the Blairite majority of MPs who have never accepted him and never will because they are opposed to him politically - and of course they are aided and abetted by the Tory press and media.

But it's not just Jeremy that's under attack. It's the anti-austerity programme that he represents. The ruling class is terrified at the prospect of Labour implementing socialist policies in the interests of the majority and will use every dirty trick in the book to undermine him.

The pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party was rocked to its foundations by the double leadership election victories Corbyn achieved with nearly 70% of the vote.

After years of Tory-lite policies from Blair, Brown, Miliband and so on, people wanted a real alternative to improve their lives, and Corbyn promised an alternative with a programme in the interests of the many.

To the amazement of lots of the Blairites, May's majority was slashed, and she has to rely on the DUP to keep her in office! Lots of Labour MPs refused to campaign for the manifesto during the election, with some on the right openly attacking it.

It's these same MPs in his own party that are attacking him now instead of turning their fire on the Tory enemy who are continuing with their attacks on working class people.

Its time these Labour MPs were subject to recall and democratic reselection procedures.

**Frank Bowen, Liverpool**

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## **Imperialism's double standards**

When the Israel Defence Forces recently [killed 18 Palestinians who were demanding the lifting of Israel's siege of Gaza](#), the British Foreign Office refused to condemn the killings and call for an outside investigation, because it had to 'establish the facts'.

After the reported nerve gas attack on civilians in Douma, Syria, the Tory government immediately blamed the Syrian regime and its Russian ally for the atrocity and demanded retaliation. No call to 'establish the facts' in this instance.

Clearly this double standard all comes down to what powers in the two conflicts serve the interests of British foreign policy.

Netanyahu's Israeli government is seen as a bulwark against Arab nationalism and radical Islam, and removing Syria's pro-Iranian Assad regime is desired, if unlikely.

Needless to say the real interests of the workers' and poor people in the region - peace, land, jobs and decent living standards - is the least considered.

**Simon Carter, Forest Gate, east London**

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## Save local football

For 90 years Dulwich Hamlet Football Club played their home games at Champion Hill in south London. But developers Meadow Residential, who own the ground, want to cash in and build on the site.

After their initial proposal for development was rejected by Southwark Council, Meadow dropped financial support for the club, presented it with an unexpected bill of over £120,000 - and even tried to ban the club from using the name Dulwich Hamlet FC or the initials!

Then, on 5 March, they revoked the club's licence to play at Champion Hill, erecting fencing around the ground.

In a show of solidarity, long-standing local rivals Tooting and Mitcham United is allowing Dulwich Hamlet to play at its stadium in the short term.

The developers have since rejected a £10 million bid from ex-Manchester United and England player Rio Ferdinand's social housing company Legacy.

Southwark Council has also voted in favour of an application to purchase the land from Meadow and build social housing on the site of a current car park.

On 17 March, hundreds of fans marched from East Dulwich to the padlocked gates of Champion Hill in protest.

Football fans across the UK should join a coordinated campaign calling on Southwark Council to guarantee Dulwich Hamlet the right to play at Champion Hill, if necessary by a compulsory purchase of the ground.

This should be linked to socialist demands for council housing and public ownership of the land.

**Carl Harper, Peterborough**

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## Audio version of this document

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

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## What the Socialist Party stands for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people.

The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

## **Public services**

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

## **Work and income**

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

## **Environment**

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

## **Rights**

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

## **Mass workers' party**

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites!

## **Socialism and internationalism**

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

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## **Audio version of this document**

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

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