

Windrush: Rudd resigns

May and Tories must go

Build for the 12 May TUC demo

Amber Rudd made an "inadvertent" mistake. That was the ludicrous claim made by the outgoing home secretary in [her resignation letter](#).

Families have been pulled apart and cancer patients denied treatment. People have lost homes and jobs. They have had their lives turned upside down and thrown into chaos.

All the while, the Home Office has sought to turn the screws, with targets for both increasing and fast-tracking deportations.

These were targets which Rudd personally ordered and signed off on. Now, exposed as a liar for denying their existence, and faced with mass anger among working class people, she has been forced out. Good riddance.

But this by no means draws a line under the issue. [The Windrush scandal](#) has exposed the callousness of this Tory government afresh.

May has sought to erect a firewall between herself and Rudd, claiming that the hostile environment policy - of which the prime minister was chief advocate and architect - had nothing to do with the home secretary's resignation.

Rudd was a key ally to May in the cabinet. Her exit has substantially weakened a prime minister who was already teetering on the edge. It has been widely welcomed, especially by those at the sharp end of the government's racist policies.

But responsibility for this scandal, as well as for all the savagery of this austerity government, goes beyond one minister.

As Jeremy Corbyn rightly commented, "Amber Rudd has been the human shield for Theresa May, and she's now gone." Corbyn must now draw the obvious conclusion from this and boldly lead the call for the prime minister to resign. He should demand a general election.

May must go. The Tories must go. The policies that have led to the Windrush outrage are not aberrations.

They are not mistakes or mishaps. They go hand in hand with cuts, austerity, and privatisation. They are part and parcel of this government's systematic disregard for the lives and living standards of all working class people.

This could not have been summarised more clearly than by the appointment of Sajid Javid as Rudd's replacement. Javid is a man who, as communities secretary, presided over the horrific Grenfell disaster and its aftermath.

He stood by while hundreds of surviving families were forced into temporary accommodation and denied even the most basic of government support.

And Rudd isn't the only cabinet member to have been caught out for their 'inadvertent errors' recently. NHS axeman-in-chief Jeremy Hunt is now under investigation for allegedly breaching money laundering rules.

He was apparently given a bulk discount on the purchase of seven luxury south coast properties by a Tory donor - the sort of 'mistake' only a multimillionaire like Hunt could make.

This government of the rich is embroiled in scandal and crisis on multiple fronts.

It is also a government dogged by bitter internal division. There has been a further intensification of what is, from the point of view of May's government and the capitalist class more widely, an intractable crisis: the Brexit negotiations.

The EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, threatened the collapse of negotiations unless a resolution was found on the question of the Irish border.

Meanwhile, the government suffered a fresh defeat in the House of Lords on the question of whether there will be a parliamentary vote on any potential deal.

This defeat was only made possible by the support of 19 Tory peers - a small glimpse of the enormous crack which runs right down the middle of May's party.

We have a government that is weak, divided, and on its knees. The workers' movement must act now to sweep it from the stage.

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) has called for a national demonstration to take place on 12 May. At the moment, the march is being organised under the unclear slogan "a new deal for workers". This must now be transformed into a mass protest to kick out the Tories.

The TUC's leadership should mobilise on the basis of clear slogans, explicitly calling for the resignation of May, and for a general election.

If they did so, this protest could potentially be enormous. Indeed, if bold demands were combined with a serious approach, both to mobilising trade union members and appealing to all working class and young people, it's even possible that this demo could reach a similar size to the 750,000-strong march which took place in 2011. That was an event which led directly to a 2 million-strong strike of public sector workers later in the year.

If the TUC was willing to break with its current passive approach, and fight to mobilise mass struggle - including organising coordinated strike action - it could build a movement capable of bringing down this hated government.

Smear campaign

Corbyn also has a responsibility in this situation. He has correctly attacked the government over the Windrush scandal, including demanding Rudd's resignation. But he has stopped short of making an explicit call for May to go, or for a general election.

What's more, Corbyn should be prepared to actively call on working class people to take to the streets and organise to get the Tories out. As a starting point, that means encouraging all his supporters to mobilise for the TUC demo on 12 May.

Corbyn has partly been hindered in his ability to land clear blows against the government by the persistent attempts to undermine his leadership being made by the Blairites and their friends in the right-wing media.

The effect of this has been to help take the heat off the Tories over crucial issues, including Windrush.

Most recently, the campaign of slander and smear has taken the form of a co-ordinated attempt to create the (false) impression that anti-semitism is rife within the Labour Party and is especially prevalent among Corbyn's supporters.

This resulted in a march of roughly 50 Labour MPs to accompany their Blairite colleague, Ruth Smeeth, to give evidence at the disciplinary hearing of Labour Party member Marc Wadsworth.

This march was clearly intended to further build pressure towards his expulsion. Marc Wadsworth had been placed 'in the dock' for accurately pointing out that Smeeth had been briefing a Telegraph journalist on the way into the meeting announcing the findings of the Chakrabarti report.

Outrageously, [Marc Wadsworth has subsequently been expelled](#) from the party by the national constitutional committee.

If this ruling is allowed to go unchallenged, as it so far has - both by Corbyn and by the leadership of Momentum - it will set the tone for a further escalation of the witch-hunt against left-wing Corbyn supporters.

After almost three years, the approach of the leadership of the Corbyn movement - of attempting to pacify the Blairites through, at best, failing to actively challenge them and, at worst, acceding to many of their demands - has been proven to be utterly ineffective.

Labour remains two parties in one. On the one hand, there are the tens of thousands of members who joined the Labour Party in order to support Corbyn. On the other, there are the right-wing Blairites. It is this Labour Party - the party of cuts, tuition fees, privatisation and war - that continues to dominate in parliament and the council chamber, as well as in much of the party's machinery.

The capitalist system is itself a 'hostile environment' for all working class people. It is not coincidental that those Labour MPs most viciously attacking Corbyn on the supposed basis of antisemitism, were the very same people who, in 2014, voted for the Tory immigration bill which ultimately led to the Windrush scandal.

This includes figures such as Yvette Cooper, who has nauseatingly attempted to take credit for Amber Rudd's resignation, and who has been lauded by right-wing commentators. The vast majority of Labour MPs did not oppose the bill - only a few like Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell did.

With the government on the ropes, it is vital that Corbyn is prepared to go on the offensive against all the representatives of the capitalist class - including those who sit behind him on the Labour benches.

This means fighting for a clear, socialist programme, based on democratic, working class control over resources and the economy.

It means supporting the democratisation of the Labour Party, including measures such as mandatory reselection of MPs to give members and trade unions democratic control over who represents them at elections.

It means opening up the Labour Party to all genuine, socialist forces, including the Socialist Party, so that they can participate on a federal basis.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 1 May 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Young people trapped in private rental

Housing costs force workers out of London

Vote TUSC to cap rents and build council homes

Ellen Kenyon Peers, TUSC local election candidate, Lewisham

It's a tough time to be a young person in Britain. Almost two-fifths of Millennials, young people born by 2000, rent privately at 30.

That's double the rate of 'Generation X', born between 1966 and 1980. It's quadruple the rate of the 'Baby Boomer' generation, according to the Intergenerational Commission led by the Resolution Foundation. Even these older generations face rising rents and mortgage costs, and attacks on social and council homes.

In Newham, east London, the average worker spends 60% of pay on rent, according to general union GMB. That's 157 days' pay a year going to the landlord. For those on poverty pay, the figure is much higher.

Businesses in the capital are reporting that worker retention is a problem. Two-thirds of leading firms say they struggle to recruit at entry level due to housing costs, according to a Confederation of British Industry survey.

28% said staff had left because of the crisis. Many workers can no longer afford both their rent and commute.

Expectations

The capitalist establishment has tried to focus on driving down expectations rather than building much-needed council housing.

Patrik Schumacher is a top architect who in 2016 called for the abolition of social housing and privatisation of all public space. In a recent report for the ultra-Thatcherite Adam Smith Institute, he states young professionals need only "hotel room-sized" flats!

Of course. Britain's housing crisis is because too many people have 'luxuries' like living rooms and kitchens!

With housing high in voters' minds in the local elections, the Tories have been touting May's pledge to start what disgraced former deputy Damian Green called a "rebirth of council house building."

But [a Guardian investigation](#) was able to show almost one in ten councillors in London - Tory and Labour - either work for property businesses or have received gifts or hospitality from them. The real figure is likely higher still.

How can we solve the housing crisis when the people in charge of planning homes are in the pockets of the developers?

We need anti-cuts, anti-privatisation councillors who will fight for mass council house building, rent caps, and more rights for tenants. Councillors who can't be bought by property moguls. When the government says "cut," Tory and Blairite councillors say "how much?"

In Lewisham, south London, I am standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). That's the anti-austerity electoral alliance including transport union RMT and the Socialist Party.

Lewisham's cuts since 2010 total £153 million. But it has tens of millions in unallocated reserves and huge borrowing powers. Vote TUSC to cap rents and build council homes now - and fight to win the money back from the Tories!

Reject the mega-supermarket merger: nationalise to save jobs

Iain Dalton, chair, Usdaw Broad Left (personal capacity)

Workers in Sainsbury's and Asda were shocked to hear on Saturday 28 April that their employers were at an advanced level of merger talks, confirmed as a deal agreed on the morning of 30 April.

They would have been especially angered by the incredible behaviour of Sainsbury's chief executive Mike Coupe. ITV News published a video of him [singing "we're in the money" to himself](#) between TV interviews announcing the merger!

No consultation has taken place with workers in any of the three recognised unions in the two companies. Retail and distribution union Usdaw organises in Sainsbury's throughout the UK and Asda in Northern Ireland. Unite the Union also organises in Sainsbury's, and general union GMB organises in Asda in England, Wales and Scotland.

Clearly, this move follows the stagnation of the UK retail sector, as well as buyouts such as wholesaler Booker by Tesco and Argos by Sainsbury's. As the discounters have eaten into the retail share of the 'big four' - Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Morrisons - bosses are seeking 'efficiencies' by combining resources.

This is despite both companies being profitable, with Sainsbury posting its best Christmas results ever and Asda recording successive quarters of sales growth, despite the recent retail squeeze.

Closures

The companies have pledged no store closures. This seems unlikely. The Competition and Market Authority which regulates mergers will probably require some store disposals to prevent local monopolies.

The deal talks about 'supply chain efficiencies'. Shopfloor representatives are rightly demanding no job losses.

But Usdaw's outgoing right-wing general secretary John Hannett [has only promised "monitoring" and "clarification."](#) The unions must demand no cuts to jobs or pay, and back it up with the threat of industrial action.

Sainsbury's is currently trying to force workers to sign new contracts which raise the basic rate but cut important pay elements. Unite has rightly demanded management halt this at least until the merger.

This once again highlights the question of why the supply of food, a necessity of life, is left in the hands of capitalism's profit motive.

Asda is owned by the notoriously anti-union US giant Walmart. Sainsbury's largest shareholder is the Qatari sovereign wealth fund.

The priorities of both are their bottom lines, rather than shop workers and supermarket customers. The free market delivers some of the lowest wages in the economy for retail workers while also squeezing suppliers.

Instead of leaving such a key sector to the whims of big business, the big supermarket chains and their distribution networks should be brought into public ownership, under democratic workers' control and management. This, as part of a socialist plan of production, is the only way to guarantee retail workers' jobs in the long term.

100k more zero-hour contracts in just a year

Strike to win secure work!

Liat Norris, secretary, Usdaw North West Marks & Spencer branch (personal capacity)

The number of zero-hour contracts in Britain rose by 100,000 in just a year.

There are now 1.8 million zero-hour contracts, as exposed in the latest Labour Force Survey by the Office for National Statistics. With many more on short-hour contracts of four to 12 hours, it's clear bosses are continuing their drive towards insecure work.

Bosses tell us workers appreciate the flexibility these contracts provide. The reality is this is flexibility only for the bosses.

When the average working week for someone on a zero-hour contract is 26 hours, it's clear workers are being taken for a ride; denied the basic rights fought for by the workers' movement.

Last year's Tory-commissioned Taylor Review into working practices made some minimal suggestions for improving the lives of zero-hour workers. This includes a higher minimum wage for non-contracted hours, and the right to request a contract that reflects hours actually worked.

But even these small demands seem too much for the bosses, so have been met with stony silence from the Tories.

At its recent annual conference, [retail union Usdaw voted unanimously to campaign for all zero-hour contracts](#) to be abolished, and to replace them with minimum 16-hour contracts except where workers ask for less. This would be a step towards reversing growing underemployment and insecure work.

However, these demands cannot just be words. We cannot expect to simply ask the bosses and their politicians nicely and hope they give in.

Workers need determined action from across the trade union movement to win these basic demands. The example set by [the striking McDonald's workers](#) should inspire all workers in industries plagued by short and zero-hour contracts to demand action against them.

We need to build a bold movement which campaigns for at least £10 an hour as a minimum wage without exemptions; which campaigns against all insecure working practices, to guarantee decent, well-paid jobs for all.

Windrush: Whitehall demo shames Tories and Blairites

Vote TUSC to fight racism, cuts and privatisation

Paula Mitchell, London Socialist Party

Hundreds of people marched in Brixton when the Windrush scandal broke, and then an important protest took place in central London on 28 April, called not by any organisation but by individuals who see the need to fight.

Socialist Party members attended, as did local election candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), the electoral alliance including transport union RMT and the Socialist Party.

Hugo Pierre is TUSC candidate for mayor of Tower Hamlets, and a member of the national executive council of public service union Unison.

He spoke at the protest. As a trade unionist, Hugo has defended people affected. "People who have lived in this country from being young children, then being told they don't have the right to remain.

"We've had to fight every one of those cases, and actually we've won some of those cases, people who have now started to get their biometric cards, so they can stay and be resident, and keep their jobs and their livelihoods."

Hugo pointed out that "25 years ago, thousands of us marched through the streets of south London after the murder of Stephen Lawrence, and it shows how things have not moved on.

"We had the spectre of Labour ministers starting this 'hostile environment', under Tony Blair and his neoliberal policies. We've now seen a Tory government run with it.

"We have to oppose all of those politicians who voted for these measures or who disgracefully sat on their hands." To cries of "shame," Hugo pointed out that only six Labour MPs opposed the legislation at its third reading in 2014.

Hugo called for everyone to attend the 12 May Trade Union Congress demonstration. He said: "Organise action through our trade unions, demonstrations to bring our communities together, black and white youth, trade unionists, working class people need to come together to oppose the austerity measures and immigration measures.

"The Tories are running scared. We've got to get them out and put in place a government that's prepared to fight in the interests of ordinary working people."

Labour members' fury at expulsion of anti-racist activist Marc Wadsworth

Labour Party member

Marc Wadsworth has been expelled, after 22 months suspended on charges of bringing the Labour Party into disrepute.

He had been accused by Blairite MP Ruth Smeeth in June 2016, during the launch of the Chakrabarti report, of "traditional antisemitic slurs to attack me for being part of a 'media conspiracy'". Smeeth had stormed out of the meeting.

The incident was recorded on video which showed that Wadsworth had said nothing antisemitic, and had only pointed out how Smeeth was working hand in hand with the Telegraph and other papers to attack Corbyn. The accusation of antisemitism was false and libellous and Smeeth has recently removed it from her website.

But Wadsworth was immediately suspended from the Labour Party, and it took 22 months until he was given a hearing. Smeeth marched to the hearing with 40 Blairite MPs in an attempt to intimidate the panel.

Wadsworth is an anti-racist activist and has been supported by Jewish Voice for Labour, the Jewish Socialist Group, and Chris Williamson MP.

The outrageous expulsion of Wadsworth is more significant as it occurred after the left won control of the Labour national executive committee. It shows that supposed Corbyn supporters are incapable of withstanding the pressure from the Blairites and the media to defend their own allies.

Instead of defending Wadsworth, they threw him overboard, sacrificing him in order to appease the Blairites and the press in the hope that they will stop mudslinging about antisemitism. But this only serves to dishearten the left and embolden the Blairites, some who are now demanding action against Chris Williamson for daring to defend Wadsworth and call out the hypocrisy of the Blairite antisemitism slurs.

This decision, less than a week before the local elections on 3 May, can only serve to dishearten activists. If Wadsworth can be expelled, then no activist is safe from the Blairites and the Labour Party machine.

Witch hunts

The appeasement of the Blairites - by giving in to their demands for witch hunts - will fail. They will not rest until they have deposed Corbyn.

They have shown time and time again their irreconcilable opposition to Corbyn and all he stands for. [They will use every opportunity to attack and undermine him.](#)

Corbyn needs to stand firm against them, drive them out of the parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour Party machine. The Labour Party needs to be democratised with a restoration of mandatory reselection. And a firm, consistent and socialist campaign bringing together the left in the Labour Party with those outside the party who want to fight for Corbyn's manifesto now needs to be built.

This must stand firm against attacks from the Blairites and from the capitalist class - attacks which will massively intensify in the event of a Corbyn government. The Socialist Party has asked to be readmitted into the Labour Party and could play a key role in building this left force.

Lib Dems backed benefit sanctions to win 5p carrier bag charge

A Lib Dem wonk has claimed credit for the plastic bag charge - saying all it took was agreeing more attacks on welfare.

Polly Mackenzie was a policy director for Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg under the Tory-Liberal coalition government. On 19 April, [she told Twitter](#):

"It is now so cool to ban plastic, it's the government's go-to policy to move the news on from a bad story. Worth reflecting on how far we've come in the last four years..."

"Lib Dem ministers started agitating for a 5p charge on plastic bags. It took us months to persuade Cameron and Osborne.

"We finally got the policy in an eve-of-conference trade, in return for tightening benefit sanctions."

200 years of Karl Marx: Marxist ideas more relevant than ever

Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary

The 200th anniversary of the birth of the great Karl Marx is on 5 May. Marx, together with Friedrich Engels, formulated the ideas of scientific socialism which were to shake the world in the nineteenth century and even more so in the twentieth.

The [Russian revolution of October 1917](#) stood under the signboard of Marx's ideas. The Russian Bolshevik party - the greatest and most effectively democratic mass party in history - under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, the leading disciples of Marx, led the workers and peasants of Russia in the 'ten days that shook the world'.

A wave of revolutions resulted from the example of the Russian revolution, particularly in Europe. These had a profound effect on the US and provoked mass upheavals and revolutions in Asia.

For this alone, the birth of Marx deserves to be celebrated worldwide. Instead, we are likely to be treated by most of the pro-capitalist commentators to a colossal distortion of the real ideas of Marx.

At the very least, an army of university professors and commentators without any real understanding of Marx's ideas are likely to be paraded in front of the TV and the rest of the media offering up a caricatured, gross underestimate of Marx's real ideas.

They will claim that Marx was wrong, in his general philosophical and economic ideas and in his predictions for the future. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Scientific socialism

Marxism - scientific socialism - represented the highest level of thought within society at the time when Marx formulated his ideas in the middle of the nineteenth century. It combined German philosophy with British political economy and French socialism.

Marx and Engels rescued 'dialectics' - the method of thought which seeks to understand the all-sided character of phenomena, first enunciated by the ancient Greeks - by refuting the German philosopher Georg Hegel's idealism. They "turned Hegel upside down" and put him "from standing on his head firmly back on his feet".

Hegel viewed the evolution of nature, humankind and social relations as based on the development of ideas. But Marx and Engels argued that ideas and consciousness are expressions of material forces, which are the driving impulse of history. Their ideas are either consciously or unconsciously accepted by most conscientious analysts today.

For instance, former US president Bill Clinton famously if crudely declared in 1992: "It's the economy, stupid", which ultimately determines the march of events; in his case the outcome of the presidential election.

But it was Marx and Engels who first argued that the economy is the ultimate determinant of the "political superstructure", the state, politics, etc. Today, this is almost taken for granted.

But this did not mean that Marx had a crude determinist position. On the contrary, he and Engels analysed how the state - part of the political superstructure - both had an effect on and is, in turn, affected by the development of economic processes.

Capitalist commentators, while sometimes conceding a certain historic relevance of Marx and Engels, in their legions rushed to argue that 'Marxism' and its associated idea of socialism and the planned democratic economy were buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall.

The collapse of the Stalinist regimes in eastern Europe, and with them their planned economies, albeit managed bureaucratically, resulted in unbridled capitalist triumphalism. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan on behalf of the capitalists boasted "the lesson of the 1980s is that socialism has failed".

The former USSR plunged into an economic abyss, which exceeded the collapse in the USA following the 1929-33 slump.

But it wasn't long before even the capitalists themselves began to ponder the contradictions of their own system. One of them, John Cassidy, prompted by a banker friend, delved into Marx's writings, including the Communist Manifesto.

His comments made in the mid-1990s were very revealing: "The longer I spend on Wall Street, the more convinced I am that Marx was right." His friend commented: "I'm absolutely convinced that Marx's approach is the best way to look at capitalism."

They did not resort to the usual demagoguery and ignorance of many capitalist writers in linking Stalinism to Marx's ideas: "Marx's legacy has been obscured by the failure of communism [Stalinism]."

Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, recently made the same point, saying that the automation of millions of jobs could lead to mass unemployment, wage stagnation and the growth of communism within a generation. He warned "Marx and Engels may again become relevant."

Cassidy goes on to confess that Marx "wrote riveting passages about globalisation, inequality, political corruption, monopolisation, technical progress, the decline of high culture, and the enervating nature of modern existence - issues that economists are now confronting anew, sometimes without realising that they are walking in Marx's footsteps."

Using Marx's methods, we were able to predict the inevitability of a recession or slump - that was not evident at the time that these remarks were made by supporters of the system in the early 1990s.

We wrote in *Socialism Today*: "A serious recession or slump would inevitably result in the introduction of protectionist measures by the different national capitalists." Is this not what the tendency has been in the aftermath of the devastating world economic crisis of 2007-08?

And Trump is putting into practice this perspective through his trade sanctions against China and other countries, which have provoked counter-measures against the US. The ruling class worldwide is afraid of a new tit-for-tat trade war along the lines of the Smoot-Hawley Act of the 1930s, which enormously aggravated the depth and the length of the depression.

Marx, in many of his writings, attacks capitalism for retarding the development of industry, science and technique, the productive forces. At the time when he was writing - the nineteenth century - capitalism was still playing a relatively progressive role in taking society forward, economically at least.

It was relatively reactionary. But it became absolutely reactionary only with the onset of the World War One, which was an expression of the fact that the productive forces had outgrown the narrow limits of the nation state.

It is true that capitalism has experienced spectacular structural growth at certain times since then, for instance in the period between 1950 and 1973. But this was a unique and special development, largely determined by the destruction caused by World War Two and the opening of new markets to world capitalism.

However, that period was followed by a depressionary phase in which booms like that of the 1980s were lopsided, the relative position of the working class declined, as did the living standards of the peoples of Africa, Latin America and large parts of Asia. The growth rates of the 1980s were far inferior, as was the rate of investment back into industry compared to the 1950-73 upswing.

However, even this scenario - which allowed working people to get a few crumbs off the very rich table of capitalism - came shuddering to a halt with the onset of the devastating crisis of 2007-08.

Before this, each of the alleged basic ideas of Marx was dissected and maliciously distorted by capitalist economists and commentators.

One of the alleged 'myths' of Marx was the so-called "theory of increasing misery". Marx did not advance such an idea, particularly in the simplistic and therefore erroneous way in which his critics presented it.

He was well aware that there were periods when the working class was able to extract concessions, and important ones, from the capitalists.

But even in these periods, superficial appearances disguise the fact that often the share of the working class of national income actually declined. In other words, there was a relative decline of the working masses' standards of living.

Moreover, with the return of malnutrition - starvation on the streets of Britain and the rest of the capitalist world, symbolised by the relentless increase of food banks - has not Marx's prediction of "increasing misery" become a reality in the 'modern' world?

Following the onset of the crisis the real living standards of the working class - it is hardly even necessary to argue this point today - not just in the neocolonial world but in the US, Europe and Japan have stagnated and declined.

Moreover, the 'inequality gap' - the massive abyss between rich and poor - has everywhere grown exponentially.

As the Independent points out: "Just nine of the world's richest men have more combined wealth than the poorest 4 billion people." Previously, we used to say that they could fit into a London bus. Now, they could get into a minibus!

The same journal points out: "If these top billionaires continue to see returns on their wealth, we could see the world's first trillionaire in as little as 25 years."

Billionaires

There are currently over 1,500 billionaires in the world, with more than 560 in the US alone. China, Germany and India each have 100 or more billionaires.

These are the 'Masters of the Universe' who hold the fate of humankind in their hands, as Karl Marx brilliantly predicted. But not even Marx thought the concentration of wealth would be taken to such an extent as it has.

He believed that long before we reached this situation the working class would have taken power and capitalism would have been replaced by socialism. Glaring inequality, matched by terrible and worsening worldwide poverty, let alone a world scarred by unending war, would have been a thing of the past.

The fact that this did not happen is entirely down to the failure of the leadership of the official labour movement who again and again remained within the framework of a rotten system rather than mobilising working people as Marx advocated in a mass movement to establish a socialist world.

When Marx died and was buried in Highgate Cemetery with just eleven people present at his funeral, his great friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels declared: "His name will live on forever." So it will, particularly if we follow his ideas and realise the goals he stood for of a socialist Britain linked to a socialist confederation of Europe and the world.

France '68 - week one

May 1968: Police attacks on students spark mass revolt

James Ivens

A wooden beam will appear quite solid and unchanged as termites chew away within it. But there comes a time when one step can bring down the whole rotten house.

[In May of 1968](#) the whole structure of capitalism in France was in jeopardy.

When students and workers erupted into action in the first week of May, few had seen it coming. It started with student protests on a variety of concerns including overcrowded classes. Within days there were barricades in the streets and an insurrectionary mood throughout the country.

So what disguised France's revolutionary potential?

The long boom after World War Two meant bosses could concede some important but limited enhancements to workers, and still extract fabulous profits.

This allowed trade unions and workers' parties to grow in confidence and size. But it also caused many workers' leaders to conclude capitalism could sustain gradual improvements in workers' lives, perhaps forever.

And some so-called Marxists believed the boom had pacified the working class in the advanced capitalist countries. That it was only students, or the peasants and workers of the neocolonial world, who would fight.

The supporters of Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party, were almost alone in rejecting these skin-deep analyses. Mass movements of workers are coming, they said.

No period of economic or political stability can last in a society built on blind competition and the exploitation of the majority by the super-rich.

Like today, the working class and youth everywhere had a litany of grievances - social as well as economic. And, like today, society was increasingly polarised.

In 1958, France's ruling class had brought back strongman General Charles de Gaulle as president, unelected at first, to resolve a major political crisis. His repressive regime helped prepare another one.

On Thursday 2 May, a group of activists faced trial in university courts.

There had been student demonstrations and occupations since 1967, in particular at the University of Paris Nanterre. The soulless Nanterre campus was established on the capital's outskirts in 1964 as an overflow for the famous Sorbonne.

Students were still overwhelmingly from middle class or ruling class families. But the university population had risen from 123,000 in 1946 to 500,000, without staffing and lecture halls to match. Gender segregation rules in accommodation compounded frustrations.

The university administration feared students would meet the trial with mass protests. The dean of Nanterre ordered his campus shut.

So on Friday 3 May, students instead descended on the Sorbonne itself, in Paris's Latin Quarter on the Left Bank of the River Seine. Terrified by the presence of 300 peaceful protesters, the university's rector asked police to clear the square.

They did. With the help of thugs from the CRS riot cops, they stormed in to make mass arrests. Passers-by disgusted by the heavy-handed intervention replied with cobble stones and bottles.

Police made 596 arrests. The lecturers' union, SNE-sup, called a strike in support of the students.

On Sunday 5 May, as the lecturers' strike spread, the state jailed seven students and banned demonstrations in the capital. Demonstrations went ahead.

Students began to occupy the universities on Monday 6 May, demanding their reopening. School students burdened with endless exams joined the protests.

The Communist Party of France - a Stalinist organisation that retained historic authority among workers - had denounced the students. Demonstrators were unrepresentative "groupuscules" or even CIA provocateurs.

The 6 May demonstration of 60,000 in the Latin Quarter proved otherwise. "We are a groupuscule!" they chanted in defiance.

The CRS charged the crowd, and the ensuing violence hospitalised 739 people. Protesters started to build barricades for self-defence.

The attacks inspired mass sympathy for the movement, even among middle class 'pillars of society'. One poll reported 80% popular support in Paris.

A doctor who had watched the clashes from his window wrote to Le Monde newspaper. "Tomorrow there will be police denunciation of 'foreigners' and the real demonstrators will have smashed the cops and I say this with satisfaction."

What was going on? The student movement in France was not unique. Students in many countries were engaged in mass protests for better conditions and against the Vietnam War.

In Germany the student movement was more militant still. Why didn't that blossom into revolutionary upheaval?

France had unprecedented access to consumer goods and a growing economy. But workers saw inflation, VAT rises and deregulation of rents eroding their wages. Strikes had broken out in many places in the months preceding the great strike of May '68.

And de Gaulle's decade of arbitrary arrests, press censorship, rising unemployment and slum housing had stored up mass resentment. Workers in France were spoiling for a fight.

There were unrelated strikes throughout this week. Paris bus drivers struck against longer hours. Metalworkers at Sud Aviation struck against job cuts. Postal workers struck for more pay.

And by Tuesday 7 May, young workers had joined the students. Some arrived with their pneumatic drills to dig up paving stones for barricades.

Several days of fighting took place as young workers and students battled police for control of the streets. This would reach a high point in the bloody 'Night of the Barricades' on 10-11 May.

A division was already opening in France's frightened ruling class. Would making concessions defuse the movement - or was it better to meet it with more violent repression? Such a split is one of Lenin's four classical preconditions for revolution.

Meanwhile, unable to withstand the titanic pressure rising beneath them, the leaders of the major union federations and the Communist Party were about to call a one-day general strike.

They thought this would safely vent accumulated anger. That they could straightaway return to their comfortable existences without the disagreeable work of confronting capitalist power.

They were wrong.

- Read more in the next issue of the Socialist: May 1968, week two - history's greatest general strike begins
- For an overview of the May '68 events, read ['France 1968: when workers were on the brink of taking power'](#)
- 'France 1968: Month of Revolution' by Clare Doyle - [£7.50 from leftbooks.co.uk](#)

May Day McStrike: "A symbol for all workers on low pay and zero hours"

At midnight at the start of May Day, workers from the Oxford Street McDonald's in Manchester, the biggest and busiest in the city, walked out on their first ever strike.

Despite being a small number of union members they have made a huge and historic impact. This was the only branch in the north to take action along with five others in London, Cambridge and Watford and the BFAWU members had voted 100% yes in their ballot to strike.

To welcome those who walked out were other workers and around 40 supporters from trade unions and organisations like Young Socialists and the Socialist Party.

Showing the determination and the levels of support these workers received, a few hours later there was another big and loud picket line to cover the morning shift.

We heard from BFAWU members Lauren and Ali who the union members report have disgracefully been suspended from work on trumped up charges - because they had raised concerns over health and safety issues and began to organise their colleagues.

A couple of weeks ago a solidarity protest was held outside the McDonalds to demand their reinstatement and to build support for the strike.

Lauren and Ali, when speaking to the picket line, both raised that it is outrageous that workers under age 25 are paid less and that the strike is about demanding a £10 an hour minimum wage with no youth exemptions.

BFAWU President Ian Hodson spoke and called the McStrike "a symbol for all workers on low pay and zero hours contracts, showing that you can fight back!".

In Manchester we are celebrating 150 years since the birth of the trades council and there could be no better way to do so than by supporting and helping the spread of the McStrike and building a movement to get rid of these exploitative working conditions forever.

Becci Heagney, Manchester Socialist Party

Watford

Strikers at the two participating stores in Watford protested at lunchtime in the hometown of McDonald's chief executive Steve Easterbrook.

One Watford McDonald's worker, a member of the Socialist Party, told the Socialist why he walked out:

"It's time for Steve Easterbrook to explain why McDonald's do not treat their workers with respect. He earns thousands a day while we're just scraping by."

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 1 May 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Hull college workers and students protest redundancy plan

Mike Whale, Hull Trade Union Council

Over 100 Hull College workers and students protested on 23 April against the planned axing of up to 400 jobs at the college. Walking out over their lunch break they heard speakers from the local trade union movement.

Particularly well received were Ellie and Annie, two criminology students who explained that the college was happy to take student money for course fees but now were planning to cut back on that course provision.

Matt Whale, speaking as international officer of Hull Trade Union Council, got a rousing cheer when he explained that the government could spend money bombing Syria but was not prepared to invest in education for the next generation. "The college should be brought back into public ownership and run democratically for the people of Hull", he said.

Tony Smith from [the FCC waste workers' dispute](#) also spoke and many students are looking to join their picket line when that starts again in a week's time.

Overshadowing the protest, which was organised by Hull Trade Union Council, were threats and intimidation from management. An email sent out the day before from the college's HR had threatened any staff member with disciplinary action for taking unauthorised strike action if they went on the protest.

Scandalously it accused the trade union council of "bad-mouthing" the college. As Andy Stankard, Unison chair, pointed out: "It seems that management can't distinguish between a lunchtime protest and a strike,

which is worrying seeing as they are going to be negotiating important aspects of employment law".

As well as trying to intimidate the staff, despite being "cash strapped", the management organised a subsidised ice cream van for the students with a local mobile radio station on the other side of the campus. These attempts to stop the protest failed dismally.

In fact they show how worried management is. Both staff and students feel emboldened as a result.

RMT members reject Labour affiliation calls at London debate

Socialist Party members in RMT

The RMT transport union will hold a special general meeting on 30 May to discuss the issue of affiliation to the Labour Party. RMT was expelled from Labour in 2004 after supporting Scottish Socialist Party candidates.

The pro-affiliation move is being resisted by a campaign to defend RMT's existing political strategy which was launched by the two biggest RMT branches. Socialist Party members in RMT are opposing affiliation on the terms being offered.

As part of the campaign for affiliation, a debate was organised featuring RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley arguing for affiliation and London Underground Engineering branch secretary Paul Jackson against. Around 50 attended. RMT members who spoke from the floor spoke ten to six against immediate affiliation.

The debate revealed that the pro-affiliation campaign is relying on assertions that not to affiliate will jeopardise Labour's prospects at the next general election and that unless we're affiliated Labour will not include RMT policy in its manifesto.

They ignore the current constitution of Labour - inherited from the Blairites - and say that only by affiliating can RMT members intervene in constituency Labour Parties (CLP) to deselect Blairites.

But most speakers saw through this. The idea that the affiliation of RMT will make any difference at the ballot box is tenuous. So is the influence RMT could expect once affiliated.

A seat on the Labour national executive committee would require negotiations with other trade unions and would be extremely difficult even if the RMT affiliated the majority of its members (at significant cost). And affiliated members cannot vote at CLPs - they must also be individual members.

One pro-affiliation speaker claimed he could take 85 RMT members to vote in one constituency! But it does not require a national affiliation of RMT to do that.

As RMT's general secretary Mick Cash told the 2017 annual general meeting, RMT has already influenced Labour to include renationalisation, repeal of anti-union laws and the maintenance of guards on trains in its manifesto. It is ridiculous to suggest that Corbyn is going to dump these policies if we don't affiliate.

The crux of the question for those who are opposed to immediate and unconditional re-affiliation is this - we all support Jeremy Corbyn and Labour's 2017 manifesto, but will affiliation now materially help to fight right-wing coups and bolster the left in the party? The answer is no.

RMT does not need to be redirecting our political fund away from those candidates we choose to support to instead fund the national Labour machine.

Why give RMT money to the Mersey mayor and councillors who are removing guards from trains? Or Sadiq Khan who is imposing savage cuts on Transport for London and London Underground?

Those who mistakenly believe the affiliation proposal is about building the left in the Labour Party should look at the way in which the pro-affiliation campaign demands we support the right wing.

Those of us in the Socialist Party and RMT prefer to stand, as London's Finsbury Park branch recently agreed to, with those who oppose austerity. In spite of opposition from some pro-affiliators, the branch agreed to support expelled Labour councillor Rachel Heywood.

She was prevented from defending her council seat in the London Borough of Lambeth after she defied the Labour whip to oppose privatisation and library closures. Rachel was following RMT policy, which is to oppose all cuts.

Are we really going to tell her, and others like her, that we will now leave her to fight without us?

We would rather keep the freedom to back candidates, including Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidates and others, who support RMT policy.

And all this before we even consider Scotland, where the vast majority of members are opposed to affiliation. A drive to force through affiliation at this time and on the terms offered is an unnecessary risk to the coherence of RMT.

- See also ['RMT Labour Party affiliation debate - where do socialists stand?'](#)
-

Radiographers' union discusses coordinated strike action in pay battle

Maggie Fricker, South East region delegate (personal capacity)

Delegates to the annual conference of the Society of Radiographers in Leeds between 22-24 April should have been celebrating smashing the pay cap. But feelings were very subdued as most felt what was on offer would make little difference in real terms.

Unable to persuade my regional committee to put forward an emergency motion to reject the pay offer and for the health unions to fight to recoup the 14% real-terms cut in pay since 2010, I distributed a leaflet - to build a campaign of action to fight for a better deal.

This sent the union's leadership into a frenzy, visiting every delegation claiming this 'outside' influence must be ignored and was full of misleading information! When I got the chance to speak during the short debate on the issue, I pointed out that they had no right to demonise me as a socialist, given my 20 years working in the NHS.

The leadership waved my leaflet at delegates and said the choice you have is to accept or organise coordinated strike action - unfortunately on this occasion the conference voted to accept, but it won't always be that way.

Discussing with some of the younger delegates we found those who knew of our campaigns elsewhere, including opposition to water charges in Ireland. There was also support for setting up a broad left organisation to organise to make the union more combative and prepared to fight over the issues of concern to all of us working in the NHS, of staff shortages, cuts to resources and safety.

The leadership was defeated over the issue of cuts to smaller regional radiotherapy services, and also on setting minimum safe staffing levels - a crucial issue when administering radiation to patients.

We were also able, under watered down motions, to put forward our own ideas against privatisation and in favour of nationalising the drugs industry.

Usdaw conference 2018: Outgoing leadership's attacks on socialism contrasts with fighting mood of conference

Liat Norris, Usdaw ADM delegate (personal capacity)

In the run up to Usdaw's annual delegate meeting (ADM) rank-and-file activists discovered that the Socialist paper was denied a press pass to cover the conference.

This was met with outrage from ordinary Usdaw members who couldn't believe a decision to bar a paper that covers trade union issues, and supports workers in struggle. Some called for emergency motions to criticise the decision.

Socialist Party members didn't let this stop us from selling the Socialist to conference delegates - selling over 100 copies assisted by Socialist Party members in the North West.

[As reported in the last issue of the Socialist](#), this was just one of the attacks made by the Usdaw leadership against the Socialist Party with more being made by Usdaw general secretary John Hannett during the debates on affiliation to the Refugee Rights Campaign and National Shop Stewards Network.

The latter debate saw a massive walkout of delegates over rule-breaking during the vote, forcing a re-run and a narrow defeat in a card vote.

Despite these votes falling, there was a mood on the conference floor for increasing the union's campaigning and it's clear among ordinary Usdaw members that there is a desire to fight against low pay and poor conditions.

There is no better example than the election of socialist Amy Murphy to the union's presidency. Contrast this with commemorations marking Hannett's retirement coming at the end of conference from Tony Blair, Sir Brendan Barber and a representative of Tesco!

- See ['Retail union backs zero-hour ban, leaders oppose rank-and-file coordination'](#) for a further report of the conference

Stop Trump! Build for mass walkouts and protests on 13 July!

Theo Sharieff, national chair, Socialist Students

The White House has announced bigoted US president Donald Trump plans a 'working visit' to Britain on Friday 13 July, to hold talks with beleaguered Tory prime minister Theresa May.

This isn't the first time Trump has attempted a visit. Days after he shared racist tweets by the deputy leader of far-right group Britain First, he announced his 'working visit' would take place in February of this year to attend the opening of the new US embassy.

But because young people and workers got organised to make Trump's visit as unwelcoming as possible, with threats of mass mobilisations, [that visit never materialised](#).

This was after May had originally invited Trump for a full 'state visit'. She had been forced to downgrade her invitation in the face of widespread outrage, condemnation - and the threat of big protests.

The threat alone of mass mobilisation was enough to scare Trump away. Resistance to his visit is a big threat to May as well. The Tories stand to make losses in the local elections on top of their ongoing splits over the Brexit negotiations.

By preparing now for unprecedented resistance, we can stop Trump setting foot in Britain - or land a big blow against both him and May if he does.

Socialist Students is calling for mass student protests on Friday 13 July. We're calling for school and college students everywhere to walk out of their classes and join mass protests against the racist, sexist billionaire president, and the Tory prime minister who wants to bring him here.

We want to send a clear message to Trump and May that racist, sexist, pro-big business politics, designed to stoke division within the working class and shore up the profits of the super-rich, will not go unanswered.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 27 April 2018 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Building fund appeal smashes £150,000, keep it coming!

Tessa Warrington, Socialist Party building fund organiser

As regular readers of the Socialist will know, the Socialist Party is currently under threat of eviction from our national headquarters. We have had a presence in London since the early 1960s and have been at our current premises for over 17 years.

We believe that it is essential that our HQ remains based in the capital city, therefore we have launched a building appeal to secure a new premises.

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

But our members and supporters have been prepared to make a sacrifice to ensure that we have the funds we need, with many paying a week's income or more to the appeal.

A single parent of two living on continually squeezed benefits has pledged £100 and is donating a proportion from the sale of his car. A new 12-year-old member has pledged a whole week's pocket money of £5!

Together we have already smashed through £150,000 in pledges; an enormous achievement but we believe there is the potential to go beyond that. We are looking for a building to buy or rent in London, where rents are high; and large enough properties to buy are over a million pounds. Every penny and pound is needed.

We've had some big one-off donations of £10,000 and £5,000 from savings and windfalls, but also a large number of smaller donations.

Your donation, however big or small, will make a difference. Be part of something bigger - donate to the Socialist Party building fund and know that you're part of fighting for a better world.

Salford nursery campaigners take fight to parliament

Becci Heagney, North West Socialist Party organiser

The 'fight for the five' campaign, which is trying to [save the remaining local authority nurseries in Salford](#), took their battle to parliament on 25 April. A coach full of parents, children, staff, trade unionists, anti-cuts campaigners and councillors travelled to London to meet with MPs and protest outside the Department of Education.

The nurseries are under threat of closure or privatisation because of the cuts to the 'dedicated schools grant'. Labour-controlled Salford council has been forced, because of the mass campaign which has held a huge march through the city, to find the extra money to keep the nurseries open for another year.

However, they are currently consulting on alternative options such as private or voluntary organisation provision.

A petition will now be organised that can be presented to the government - Tory ministers have agreed to meet the campaign on 16 May.

Afterwards, a noisy protest was held outside the Department of Education and Salford is also linking up with similar campaigns in Cambridge and Birmingham to really put the demand for excellent quality, publicly run nurseries on the map.

Parents and campaigners protest Leeds disability travel cut

Leeds council has withdrawn escorted transport funding for young people aged 16 and over with special educational needs and disabilities. Parents and students, alongside Unite Community members, gathered on the steps of Leeds Town Hall on 28 April to protest.

These service users have launched a campaign to highlight the huge impact this policy would have, and reverse the decision. Young people face losing independence and mobility as well as social networks they have built up through years of using these travel services.

The Labour-run council has responded, callously explaining that the law does not compel them to provide travel. While travel for those with the most complex needs may still be funded, the council is also offering 'independent travel training' to some of the disabled young people.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates showed our support and were cheered when we discussed our strategy of utilising reserves and borrowing to halt cuts to vital services.

Rob Hooper, Leeds Socialist Party and Armley TUSC candidate

Obituary: Roy Corke 1945-2018

Wirral Socialist Party members were shocked to hear of the unexpected death of Roy Corke.

Roy joined the Socialist Party only three years ago, yet had such an impact that it felt we had known him much longer. Into his 70s Roy demonstrated that age is no barrier.

Saturday campaign stalls were Roy's forte - every Saturday from 10-1, Roy would be there. Our tremendous fighting fund and paper sales over the last few years have been boosted by Roy's input.

With his cheeky charm, and easy patter, "cancel the Sundays and read the Socialist - the truth's in there", he always made a connection. His relentless positivity even on damp, miserable mornings in Birkenhead kept us going: "We've done better than if we hadn't been here."

From the terraced houses of Barry Street, close to Goodison Park, it was only natural that Roy would be working class, a socialist and an Evertonian. A rich and varied life saw him singing in the pubs, working on the docks and selling insurance, among many other things.

Roy was always the first to make a contribution in meetings and played a key role in visiting picket lines. He was always encouraging people to join: "I should have done it years ago". He had already bought his ticket for this year's Socialism 2018 - his enthusiasm was inspiring.

A proud family man, he is survived by his wife, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He will be missed by all, but not forgotten.

David Jones, Wirral Socialist Party

Leicestershire NHS campaign launched

Charles Wheeler, Leicester Socialist Party

The Save Our NHS Leicestershire campaign was launched - in a standing-room-only Leicester Secular Hall - on 28 April with the meeting brimming with energy to fight the Tories' brutal NHS cuts.

The campaign seeks to build on the incredible success of the campaign to stop the closure of Glenfield Children's Heart Unit, which mobilised thousands of people in Leicestershire and beyond, and link up with other health campaigns around the region.

Chaired by Leicester Socialist Party's Steve Score, who also helped lead the Glenfield campaign, the meeting saw speaker Dr Sally Ruane of the Leicester Campaign Against NHS Privatisation dismantle Jeremy Hunt's lies about record NHS funding.

Multiple speakers cited the need for ordinary people to organise and pressure those in power and recalled the Glenfield campaigners' incredible feat of engaging and empowering thousands of members of the public.

TUSC causing a stir in Haringey

Haringey Socialist Party

Our Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) campaign in Haringey, north London, is certainly causing a stir.

In the Labour council candidate selection process, many arch-Blairite [pro-housing privatisation \(HDV - Haringey Development Vehicle\) councillors were deselected](#). We are standing against the rump of the discredited right wingers still in place, who make no secret of their opposition to the move to the left and would be a thorn in the side of the new council leadership if elected.

As we have warned many times, all eyes will be on Haringey as the first 'Corbyn-council'. There are high hopes among Labour Party members and the community about the new council.

The manifesto does not contain [the no-cuts budget we argued for](#), despite that being voted for at a special Labour Party manifesto conference. But it does contain many of the good ideas expressed at that conference - ending the HDV, building 1,000 council houses, balloting on regeneration, paying the London living wage and bringing services back in-house.

But, as is becoming increasingly clear in the election campaign, this is a 'wait for Corbyn' manifesto. Many of the good plans are only for implementation in four years' time!

At one hustings, a group of low-paid council workers were furious to hear that they may not be paid the living wage until 2022. TUSC candidate Nick Auvache stated they should be paid that now.

Frustrated with the lack of a clear commitment from Labour, they clearly supported our demand and pledged to support our campaign.

At another hustings on social care, the Labour candidate apologised for cuts and closures to services, but wouldn't commit to keeping open the one remaining council run nursing home. All three Labour candidates in the ward concerned want it reopened, as do the overwhelming majority of Labour members.

She suggested voters should 'read between the line' of the Labour leaflet. As our candidate pointed out, you don't have to read between the lines of the TUSC leaflet - just read the actual lines: "Save Osborne Grove"!

We have made it clear we want to work alongside any Haringey Labour councillor who wants to fight for Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto now - we can't wait till 2022. In consequence, not only are local campaigners discussing with us, but on the quiet Labour Party members are recommending a vote for TUSC!

Groundswell of support for TUSC in Huddersfield

Huddersfield Socialist Party

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) election campaign in Huddersfield has exceeded all our expectations. Public and doorstep support has been amazing.

People see the link between the planned local hospital closure and council cuts. In Ashbrow, there is a huge groundswell of discontent about the local cuts and councillor inaction.

Support is swinging to TUSC candidate Nicola Jackson who has lived in the area all her life and has managed to canvass most of the ward.

Likewise Mike Forster has spoken in all five mosques in his area and local Labour Party members have secretly been pledging and canvassing support. In both areas, the TUSC vote will be much bigger than originally expected and will remind Blairite Labour quite forcefully they can no longer take support for granted.

The huge base of support built in both areas will stand TUSC in good stead as the resistance to cuts to public services grows.

TUSC stands against gentrification and cuts in Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest Socialist Party

"I am a fan of Corbyn but I am not a fan of our local Labour councillors. It might be the same party but there are big differences in how they represent the people who elected them. After Mini Holland there's no way I'm going to vote for these local labour councillors," wrote one voter in Waltham Forest, east London.

The idea that you can punish the arrogant right-wing Labour council by voting for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is being taken up in Waltham Forest, it seems. And there are a lot of reasons working class and young people are seeking to punish them.

Since 2010 we have lost youth clubs and public services. £100 million has been stolen by the Tories and the cuts passed on by the Labour council.

On the streets and on social media people ask us where we stand on the key battle lines of gentrification schemes and cuts - and we can tell them every time that TUSC stands with them. People know this right-wing Labour council is in bed with the property developers and the bosses who want to privatise public services.

People are telling us that after a lifetime of voting Labour they will give us their vote. Waltham Forest councillors stand so condemned that some people are saying they will consider giving their vote to the Tories or Lib Dems as a way of giving Labour a bloody nose.

These are people who voted Labour enthusiastically last year for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto. But they haven't seen any of that implemented in our borough. The opposite - from councillors who backed the coup against Corbyn.

"You've got my vote", is becoming a pleasingly common line, often with a smiley emoji. This is when people are asking for info on candidates in Facebook forums and hear about our consistent opposition to austerity and our pro-working class platform.

We will have to see how the different processes play out on 3 May, but one thing is for sure. That local Labour is not Jeremy's Labour is clearly understood by people at the sharp end of the council's knife. And sadly, we have to report that the local council is undermining people's faith in Corbyn to change their lives as they hoped he would last year.

TUSC has offered them hope by putting fighting austerity on the ballot paper.

Spain: 'We don't want to be brave, we want to be free!'

Beth Webster, Cardiff West Socialist Party, eyewitness report from Spain

Protests rocked Spain on 26 April and for a further two days following the sentencing of 'La Manada' - five men accused of raping an 18-year-old woman during the Pamplona bull-running festival in 2016.

The men were cleared of rape and instead convicted of the lesser crime of sexual abuse (which in Spain means 'absence of violence'). The trial has provoked widespread anger for its treatment of the victim, similar in its intimidation and shaming techniques to countless other rape trials worldwide. Defence lawyers used footage the men took of the attack, which showed the victim not actively struggling, as tacit proof of consent.

62 cities were flooded by protesters within hours of the sentencing. In Barcelona 30,000 marched. In Valencia over 5,000 demonstrators chanted: "This was not abuse, it was rape!", along with the names of women killed fighting their rapists in recent years, and "don't worry sister, here is your pack!" - a reference to 'Wolfpack', the name of the convicted men's Whatsapp group.

Protesters also chanted "onward, the feminist struggle!", linking this incident to the misogyny inherent in the wider capitalist system. This system was also challenged in the 8 March International Women's Day strikes this year involving millions of people.

There is a widespread feeling that this sentencing is the ruling class's answer to 8 March - terrified of working class strength and solidarity, they used this sentencing to try and show the futility of struggle.

But the ruling class has seriously underestimated the fury and determination of women, young people and workers in the Spanish state. They see clear links between the countless incidents of violence against women and the wider attacks on the working class - the corruption of the PP (the right-wing ruling People's Party), the police violence against the Catalan independence movement, the incarceration of people criticising the monarchy, and brutal austerity.

Sindicato de Estudiantes (Students' Union) and 'Libres y Combativas' (the feminist platform created by the Students' Union and the Socialist Party's sister organisation Izquierda Revolucionaria) have called a students' strike for 10 May. They are demanding the sacking of the judges who passed the sentence and are showing their anger at the PP and its attacks on democratic rights. They demand an end to the misogynist justice system and violence against women.

This sentencing has reinforced the idea that women alone are responsible for our own safety, and that men who commit violence against us will not be brought to justice. In the words of the protesters: "We don't want to be brave, we want to be free!"

- See the Sindicato de Estudiantes statement on 10 May strike [at socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

Catalonia: Empty classrooms and thousands on the streets against repression

On 26 April the classrooms in schools and universities in Catalonia were empty as students demanded democracy and freedom for the people of Catalonia and refused to accept the anti-democratic attacks which threaten to destroy our rights.

More than 10,000 young people marched in Barcelona and hundreds more in other towns and cities in Catalonia.

We were demanding the freedom of political prisoners and the end of article 155 (the imposition of direct rule by the Spanish state in Catalonia). We also denounced the criminalisation and persecution of the Committees in Defence of the Republic and of all those who have raised their voices against this anti-democratic offensive.

Today the People's Party (PP, the major party of the governing coalition and prime minister Mariano Rajoy) and its allies imprison and persecute people for having pro-independence ideas, but they also begin to do so against those who denounce corruption, the injustice of the PP government and the role of the monarchy.

For this reason, the Sindicato de Estudiantes in the rest of the Spanish state actively mobilised support for our Catalan comrades. We organised protest rallies in the Basque country, as well as assemblies and stoppages in the rest of the state.

We would also like to thank the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organised solidarity actions with our strike internationally.

There is no repression which can stop a mobilised people!

USA: Defend socialist councillor Kshama Sawant against lawsuit

Freeman Ryan, Socialist Alternative (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party)

Two Seattle police officers who shot a black man in 2016 have filed a defamation lawsuit aimed at silencing socialist city council member Kshama Sawant and any public figure speaking against police killings.

Their original lawsuit was dismissed by a judge (see the Socialist, issue 990). They have now re-filed the lawsuit, this time demanding damages be paid by the city of Seattle.

The two officers who shot and killed Che Taylor are claiming damages because their careers were affected by Kshama's statement that the shooting was a "brutal murder".

The two policemen shot Che in February 2016 in north-eastern Seattle after he followed orders to get down and put his hands in the air.

Andre Taylor, director of Not This Time community organisation and brother of Che, posed the issue in a very different way when he spoke at the Kshama Solidarity Campaign's initial press conference. "These officers' feelings were hurt, and my brother's life was taken."

With legal experts saying they have low odds to win this frivolous case, why are the officers re-filing it? The reasons are political. There is a strong movement against racism and police brutality in Seattle. The intent behind this lawsuit and the right-wing forces which back it is to push back against the movement by damaging the credibility of the most prominent elected official in Seattle who takes a clear stand against police brutality.

Forcing movements to spend precious dollars and time to fight lawsuits has always been among the tactics used by corporations fighting labour unions and the right-wing fighting broader progressive and radical social movements.

These attacks will not silence Kshama, who has received no funding from big corporations, and will continue to speak out against police brutality and for workers' rights

Many community leaders have already come out to show support and solidarity for Kshama in this lawsuit.

The launch of the Kshama Solidarity Campaign will take place on 4 May. We will highlight the struggles of other activists who face intimidation, while preparing for the fight to defend one of the few public representatives willing to speak out so directly against police brutality.

- [See full article on socialistalternative.org](http://socialistalternative.org)

Malta: right-wing Labour leader's Panama Papers insult to May Day

James Ivens

The prime minister of Malta has tried to use International Workers' Day to attack a murdered anti-corruption journalist.

Allegations against the family and political staff of Joseph Muscat, leader of Malta's Labour Party, emerged from information in [the Panama Papers offshore accounts leak](#). Malta is itself a tax haven with an effective corporate tax rate of 0 to 5%. Claims centre on the sale of Maltese passports.

Investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was central to exposing the alleged dodgy connections of politicians from both Labour and the traditional right-wing Nationalist Party.

Caruana Galizia slammed the Maltese establishment as running a "mafia state." She died in October in the explosion from a bomb wired to her car.

On top of corruption allegations, Muscat has presided over privatisation of several hospitals, the state energy company, and Air Malta. His response to growing international media pressure following Caruana Galizia's death was "the best reply we can give is on May 1" when workers celebrate International Workers' Day.

[May Day is a demonstration of international workers' solidarity.](#) To associate it with the murder of a journalist killed after criticising pro-big business politicians is a disgrace.

The Socialist inbox

Do you have something to say?

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

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

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

Trotsky in 1917

I just came across an extract from one of the speeches Pete Dickenson translated for the marvellous new book 'Trotsky in 1917', which has many articles and speeches translated into English for the first time.

Trotsky quotes from an audacious speech he made to a hostile audience in his 'History of the Russian Revolution'. The translation into English for the first time of this speech, published by the new Socialist Party publishing house, Socialist Books, does a great service to Marxism.

Trotsky addresses a conference that was convened specifically to undermine the Bolsheviks and the soviets just one month before the October Russian revolution in 1917. At the start, the audience barracked Trotsky with catcalls and "long live Kerensky" and the chair struggled to keep order.

By the time Trotsky had finished, at the end of the speech, he is greeted with a standing ovation, "strong applause" and a call of "long live the revolutionary Trotsky."

Trotsky is too modest to mention any of this in his History, which plays down his own pivotal role in the revolution and emphasises the equally critical role of Lenin.

Trotsky in 1917 provides a way for readers new to this revolutionary period in Russia to learn about the fundamental issues that led to this historical, world-changing event through the simple, bitesize, yet brilliantly written and mesmerising articles and speeches from Trotsky.

And the translations, I think, preserve in full the excitement Trotsky generated with that clarity of thought which cuts through all confusion and doubt.

Pete Mason, Barking

- Trotsky in 1917 - £12.50 from socialistbooks.co.uk
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Reject NHS tax

I received an email this morning and was left livid:

The results are in: as it stands, 79% of 38 Degrees members think there should be an increase in tax to help pay for the NHS. But 21% of people, including you, said there shouldn't be.

We know that we're stronger when we work together - so we're emailing you as one of the people who said you don't want to run this campaign to find out a bit more about what you think before we make a final decision.

If the majority of 38 Degrees members are in favour of a tax rise to help pay for the NHS, how would you feel about 38 Degrees running this campaign?

My response:

To be honest none of the response selections you have emailed to me would fit my feelings regarding if you campaigned for a tax to save the NHS.

I'd be furious that people have been so shortsighted and that your organisation is enabling the government, actually campaigning for the government to kill us off and cripple us further financially!

38 Degrees should be campaigning for no more cuts, no more ripping off the public, no more tax evasion, no more privatisation, no more austerity, no more Tory government.

38 Degrees would be better off campaigning to close the corporate tax loopholes, calling for an end to billionaire tax evasion. Why hit the working classes further still?

38 Degrees would be better off campaigning for a better minimum wage or better housing conditions in the private sector, free education for all or an end to austerity.

Look at the increase in child poverty. Look at the cuts to public services. Look at society falling apart around us! 38 Degrees should be campaigning on the above issues, not saying "please tax us more."

For goodness' sake, 38 Degrees, why campaign for this new tax on us to subsidise the billionaires? Are you crazy?

Anonymous Labour Party member

Nation of hairdressers

The Economist reports that the number of hairdressers has increased by 50% since 2010.

Assuming half of us haven't actually grown an extra head of hair that needs trimming, this shows that the Tories' supposedly record-low unemployment levels are actually based on, among other things, workers desperately trying to find self-employment for which the demand doesn't exist.

There's no real road to ending the jobs slaughter but the socialist road.

Ross Saunders, Cardiff

War profits

Theresa May stated that it was "legally and morally right" for Britain to join US-led airstrikes in Syria.

Completely coincidentally, Philip May, her husband and "closest ally," works for a company called Capital Group, the largest shareholder in arms manufacturer BAE Systems.

Britain's contribution to the military strikes was to fire eight 'Storm Shadow' missiles sanctioned by Theresa May. These cost £790,000 each, and represented £6.3 million to BAE. Unsurprisingly, BAE's share price rose.

Readers may also recall that Capital Group was one of the firms linked to the Paradise Papers scandal in 2017.

Carl Harper, Peterborough

Help fund plaque to Liverpool 47 no-cuts councillors

Thirty years ago, 47 elected Liverpool Labour councillors were disbarred from office by unelected Law Lords. Simply because they refused to implement the austerity programme of the then Thatcher government.

They did something then that today's Labour leadership on the city council refuses to do. With their socialist policies they defended jobs and services.

Today, in support of their inspiring work, a group of Liverpool Labour activists are fundraising for a plaque to commemorate the work of the 47.

Mark Holt, Liverpool

The proposed plaque dedicated to the 47 surcharged councillors faced attack in the Liverpool Echo from Janos Pflancer on 26 April 2018.

Pflancer appears confused. He refers to us damaging the city in the 1970s, a view often expressed by opponents of the 47.

He should be reminded that we were not elected until 1983 - and inherited a catastrophe when, under a Tory-Liberal alliance locally and Thatcherism nationally, over 100,000 jobs had disappeared following carnage in our manufacturing base.

Recognising the reality, Merseyside Pensioners' Association members have contributed a magnificent £250 to the plaque dedicated to the 47 surcharged Labour councillors who fought to defend Liverpool from the ravages of Thatcherism.

This is a real testimony to the values held by those seniors who share a lifetime of hard work and experience in the real world. They support Jeremy Corbyn and the values he espouses.

They totally reject the current witch-hunt over supposed antisemitism, initiated and intensified by a gaggle of well-heeled, anti-Corbyn, pro-austerity forces, with Tories and Blairite backbenchers leading the pack.

I hope people emulate the wonderful gesture of the Merseyside Pensioners' Association by contributing to the plaque.

Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool

- [Donations to the plaque to the Liverpool 47 no-cuts Labour councillors can be made at the GoFundMe page](#)
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Audio version of this document

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

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!

Audio version of this document

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

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/27283>