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Fighting to save the NHS

- Victory in Mid Yorks >p7
- Stop Leicester cuts plan >p8
- Union campaign launched in Middlesbrough >p9



Birmingham prison crisis shows catastrophe of privatisation >p4



Argentina's pro-choice 'Green Tide' after the Senate vote >p14

BLAIRITES GO ON SAVING TORIES

photos: May Home Office, Boris, Foreign and Commonwealth Office



BOOT THEM ALL OUT!

Ross Saunders
Socialist Party national committee

The Tory party's painful breakdown continues, as hardcore neoliberal Remainers like Anna Soubry pull in one direction, and right-wing populists like Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg pull in the other.

If it weren't for the covering fire provided by Labour's right wing, then the Tories would have been pulled apart by Brexit and the failure of an endless string of policies like prison privatisation (see page 4).

Instead, we've had Blairites riding to the rescue of the Tories every time Corbyn gains ground. Nothing will make them stop. If Labour is to be transformed into a party that fights for working class people, the right must be kicked out.

The latest proof is provided by millionaire heiress and Labour MP Margaret Hodge. Despite screaming at Corbyn, calling him an "antisemite and a racist" in the corridors of parliament, the Labour Party has dropped plans to discipline her.

How does she show her gratitude? She goes on national TV to compare her treatment to the regime in Nazi Germany! Theresa May must be so grateful.

The right-wing saboteurs must be booted out, or Corbyn's Labour will never look like it could credibly stand up for working class people. Deselection of Kate Hoey and Frank Field, who rescued the Tory government in a vote on its Brexit policy, would be good start - but must be accompanied by mandatory reselection of all MPs and representatives.

Without the constant undermining of Umunna, Leslie, Hodge and co, Corbyn's message would make a much bigger impact on the working class.

Pro-Remain Tories, Blairites and Lib Dems rub shoulders and again threaten to form a new party. Multimillionaire capitalist Simon Franks has even announced he wants to launch one - 'United for Change'.

But what policies would these neoliberal politicians be standing on? Privatisation, austerity and war?

That is not a popular basis for a new party. In fact, all the establishment parties face crisis, because mass support just doesn't exist for the misery their ideas have caused.

The leadership of Labour and the unions must seize their opportunity now, or risk gains by the populist right. Bold socialist policies, a programme for the democratic transformation of Labour, and decisive, coordinated strike action can bring this hated government down.

■ **Editorial: antisemitism smears against Corbyn are battering ram of the right - p2-3**

ANTISEMITISM SMEARS AGAINST CORBYN ARE BATTERING RAM OF THE RIGHT WING

- Organise against the Blairites
- International working class solidarity against all oppression and racism



What we think



photo Mary Finch

In recent weeks accusations of antisemitism directed at Jeremy Corbyn have resurged to a fever pitch. Yet once again, when the substance of the cases is examined, they don't indicate that the Labour Party has a particular problem with antisemitism, either regarding the number of cases or their nature.

What the onslaught shows very clearly however, is the way in which this issue is being used to attempt to inflict blows on Corbyn's leadership, as a battering ram by the capitalist establishment and Labour right wing in their drive to see him removed.

Among the vehicles for the attacks is not the 'Jewish community' so regularly referred to by the right-wing media, but the current virulently anti-Corbyn leaderships of a few Jewish organisations, including the Jewish Leadership Council, the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Labour Movement.

United with them in the aim of slandering Corbyn are Blairite Labour MPs, especially the 70-plus of them in Labour Friends of Israel, which is no more critical of Israel's Netanyahu-led government and its killings in Gaza than is the right wing-led Israeli Labour Party.

Corbyn should face "unequivocal condemnation from everyone - left, right and everything in between," declared Netanyahu recently. Among the Blairites who obliged was Labour MP Chuka Umunna, who lambasted Corbyn in a piece for the Independent's website, accusing him of allowing "institutional racism" to "flourish" in Labour. Again, without any evidence that holds water.

Wreath laying

Corbyn's presence in Tunis in 2014 at a wreath laying ceremony for killed Palestinians was not antisemitic. Nor was a 2011 initiative cited by Umunna to rename Holocaust Memorial Day as Genocide Memorial Day, with the intention of still recognising the appalling horror suffered by Jews in the Holocaust.

Umunna also highlighted abusive messages sent on social media to two Jewish right-wing Labour MPs, again without evidence that this illustrated 'institutional antisemitism' in Labour. All abusive, racist and antisemitic messages must be condemned, but there has been no published evidence that a disproportionate number sent to those MPs came from within the labour movement. Also, two separate studies by researchers from Salford university and Amnesty have showed that pro-Corbyn MPs have generally been receiving a much larger number of abusive messages on social media than their critics.

Umunna's anti-Corbyn tirade was followed on the Independent's website by a long stream of political comments from the public, most of which strongly disagreed with him, with many suggesting that it's right-wingers like him who should leave Labour rather than Corbynites.

While the mainstream media's massive onslaught has unsurprisingly led - according to polls - to more people believing that Labour might have a problem with antisemitism, an Opinion poll reported in the Observer



Socialist Struggle Movement Israel/Palestine photo SSM

showed only 16% of people thinking the Labour Party is 'definitely prejudiced against British Jews'. A YouGov poll of Labour Party members in March showed 77% as believing the charges of antisemitism to be deliberately exaggerated.

Contrary to the high incidences of antisemitism on the far right, the Labour Party, with over 550,000 members, has at present only got a backlog of 70 cases of alleged antisemitism to investigate. Many of these might prove to be expressions of hostility towards the actions of the Israeli government rather than towards Jewish people.

Some of the others are likely to be angry reactions to the attacks being made on Corbyn, which might be poorly - or well - worded, but not stemming from antisemitism. Recent allegations against Labour MP Chris Williamson, Renfrewshire Labour councillor Jim Sheridan and Labour NEC member Peter Willsman have come into these latter categories.

Palestinian struggle

Following Netanyahu's direct attack on Corbyn - which came after the reports of Corbyn's presence at the Tunis commemoration - Corbyn rightly responded by condemning Netanyahu for the deaths of over 160 protesters in Gaza since March this year. He also pointed out that he was paying respect to Palestinian civilians and Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) staff killed by Israeli bombs on the PLO's headquarters in 1985, and in the words of his spokesman: "Jeremy did not lay any wreath at the graves of those alleged to have been linked to the Black September organisation or the 1972 Munich killings. He of course condemns that terrible attack, as he does the 1985 bombing."

That condemnation of terrorist acts against civilians was important to make clear. They not only result in terrible loss of life of ordinary people but also have never aided the Palestinians' struggle. Such atrocities are followed by a subsequent strengthening of reaction and repression against the Palestinians and don't help to build the mass struggle that the Palestinians need to engage in.

While the hypocrisy and lies in the attacks made on Corbyn on this issue must be exposed - including the false accusation of antisemitism, it's also necessary

for the Labour left to adopt a clear class-based position on the struggles in Israel-Palestine. This means siding with working class Palestinians and Jews and their interests, and supporting their struggles and genuine representatives.

Some left organisations and individuals internationally have mistakenly given support to Fatah - the leading PLO party - in its period of resorting to terrorist actions or in the decades afterwards, or to the right-wing Islamist Hamas party. These parties, however, have never had programmes that can advance the Palestinians' cause, and today are pro-capitalist, with leaders who in reality fear the development of a mass, democratically organised struggle against the occupation.

Definition of antisemitism

Three newspapers - the Jewish Chronicle, Jewish News and Jewish Telegraph - carried identical frontpage onslaughts on Corbyn, demanding that he accept all the 'examples' associated with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism.

However, these examples were not originally aimed at setting boundaries of behaviour, as one of their originators, US lawyer Kenneth Stern, has pointed out. He advised the US House of Representatives not to adopt them in US colleges, arguing that the definition's clauses could be used to suppress freedom of speech.

One of the examples he gave was of a speech due to be given by a Jewish survivor of the Budapest ghetto at Manchester university in March 2017. It had the subtitle, aimed against Netanyahu's Israeli government: "You're doing to the Palestinians what the Nazis did to me." Israel's ambassador to the UK complained that it breached the IHRA definition, with the result that the university placed restrictions on the meeting.

Many other lawyers and academics have criticised the IHRA definition and its examples as being unsuitable for practical use. Even the cross-party Westminster home affairs committee in 2016 judged the definition to be inadequate in protecting the right to criticise the Israeli government. Umunna was one of the members of that committee when it drew that conclusion, but now dismisses it.

In addition, it has shortcomings for Jewish people. Yair Wallach, head of the Centre for Jewish Studies at SOAS, University of London, wrote in an Israeli newspaper: "Insisting on a particularistic, Israel-centred definition has resulted in a poor text which provides Jews with far weaker protection than existing UK equality legislation."

But the main issue at present isn't a rational debate over the merits of the definition, but the way it has been seized on as tool for a witch hunt of parts of Labour's left, in particular Corbyn. The attacks have been whipped up to such a frenzy that people are called antisemites just for questioning the scale of the problem or the motives of those making the attacks. Even the Zionist Kenneth Stern could be labelled as antisemitic according to the benchmarks being used by those leading the attacks.

The Israeli government has long flung out accusations of antisemitism against anyone around the globe opposing its policies. Now, the coordinated frontpage editorials by the above three British Jewish newspapers directly imply that criticism of the Israeli government should be classed as "political antisemitism" - ie that such criticism should be banned in Britain.

Shamefully, the trade union leaders Dave Prentis of Unison, Tim Roache of the GMB and Paddy Lillis of Usdaw jumped on the bandwagon of insinuations against Corbyn from those organisations and other sources, by repeating some of their allegations and calling on Corbyn to accept the entire IHRA definition.

These right-wing union leaders argue that adopting the full definition is a necessary step towards creating unity in Labour and retaining support from the 'Jewish community'.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, on the other hand, has intervened from a welcome pro-Corbyn standpoint, arguing that Labour isn't an antisemitic party and pointing to the plotting that has been taking place by Blairite MPs towards forming a breakaway party.

He has rightly recognised that: "the more Corbyn has personally sought to build bridges [towards those attacking him], the worse the rhetoric [against him] has become." So his hope, expressed in the same article, that another attempt to conciliate with the right by accepting the IHRA definition in full could enable the party to 'move on', will not be realised.

Conceding to right-wing demands

The approach of Corbyn himself, while refuting some of the lies being told, is mainly placatory, conceding regularly to demands by the right. It's now clearer than ever that this approach won't work - the pressure from the right will go relentlessly on, and the only response which will take the labour movement forwards is a very bold counteroffensive. This means exposing the motives of the right wing and vigorously pursuing democratisation of the Labour Party and an agenda of reselections of parliamentary candidates to kick out the pro-capitalist Blairites.

Of course there should always be action taken in the labour movement against real cases of antisemitism. But the movement has to democratically decide its own codes of conduct independently of pro-capitalist organisations and views and not be pushed into making concessions to opposing class interests.

Unfortunately Jeremy Corbyn has few left leaders around him who advocate a strong, firm, independent approach. The Momentum leaders cave into pressure from outside the labour movement and take a defensive, concession-based path. One of the latest examples is their withdrawal of support for the re-election of Corbyn-supporting Peter Willsman to Labour's NEC after he made comments against the right's antisemitism attacks, which were distorted by the capitalist media as being antisemitic.

But Corbyn can and must turn to the support of the hundreds of thousands of Labour members and the millions beyond them who are desperate for change, in a battle to transform his party. No false unity with the right will achieve this. If a number of them break away in order to try to split the Labour vote and reduce the chance of a Corbyn-led government - and to preempt themselves being deselected as Labour candidates - it would remove them from being in a position to directly obstruct moves to the left in Labour.

Such left moves are crucial to Labour being able to offer an attractive programme of countering capitalist interests and delivering socialist change. It is only concrete steps in that direction which can definitely bring about and secure the position of the next Labour government, not more concessions and leeway for the wrecking policies of the right.

Have you got news for us? DEADLINE: Friday before publication date - urgent news: Monday

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Birmingham Prison crisis: a catastrophe of cuts and privatisation



photo JobsForFelonsHub.com/CC

Siobhán Friel
Birmingham South East
Socialist Party

Birmingham Prison has become the latest in a long line of catastrophic failures of privatisation, as the government is forced to step in and take over management from notorious private contractor G4S.

A recent inspection found HMP Birmingham inadequately staffed and very unsafe, rife with drugs and increasingly violent. G4S took over in 2011, and incidents of violence at the prison have risen fivefold since 2012.

The next day, Tory prisons minister Rory Stewart admitted on LBC radio that up to 20 prisons are in similar states of collapse!

17 out of 123 prisons across England and Wales are privately run. Five of these are run by G4S - which proudly boasts on its website that it offers "value for money" in the criminal justice system.

The chief inspector of prisons, Peter Clarke, said HMP Birmingham was "the worst I've seen anywhere." The details included in his report are stomach-churning. Vomit, blood and rat droppings.

It is mind-blowing that this is what it takes to make the government take action. Birmingham Prison experienced rioting in 2016. But instead of taking steps to improve safety, G4S and the Tories have allowed conditions to get even worse.

But what is even more shocking is the government's shameless attempt to squirm out of accepting that austerity and privatisation caused the fiasco.

The prisons inspector rightly says there is "a clear correlation between the lack of resources and the increase in violence." But the prisons minister admits only that perhaps a few too many staff - 4,500 net - were cut, while claiming the crisis is "largely driven by these new psychoactive substances like spice."

G4S and the government are keen to stress the firm has only failed one of its five prison contracts. But that's not the whole story either.

Unsafe

Last year an Ofsted inspection into Oakhill Youth Prison - run by G4S - found it "unsafe." And G4S gave up management of Medway Secure Training Centre in 2016, after BBC's Panorama exposed violence against teenage prisoners.

There is clear and repeated evidence of the abject failure of cuts and privatisation - not just in prisons, but railways, the NHS, schools, and across the board.

Government intervention at HMP Birmingham is temporary and not good enough. At the time of writing, G4S has not even had its contract ended. Nor have the Tories ruled out farming out more prisons to private interests - in fact, they continue to defend privatisation in the face of

ever more damning evidence.

The prison and probation services must be fully renationalised with all staff cuts reversed, and fully funded to ensure the safety of all prisoners and workers. A socialist justice system would work for protection and rehabilitation, not private profit.

'The resources aren't there'

The Socialist spoke to **Joe Simpson**, deputy general secretary of the POA, the trade union for prison, correctional and secure psychiatric workers.

■ "The POA fought these job cuts - and warned of the consequences. Cost-cutting by austerity-driven governments and profit-driven contractors has devastated prison officers' numbers, time and resources. "Personal officer" schemes which built relationships with inmates to deal with drug and violence problems have gone. Often-vulnerable people are confined to cells for unacceptable lengths of time. "Many would be better served in secure hospitals or non-custodial rehabilitation anyway, but the resources aren't there. "Yet again, prison workers are bearing the brunt of these dangerous, failed policies. Only reversing the cuts and outsourcing can start to solve the problem."

Beth Webster
Cardiff West Socialist Party

The average worker would take four lifetimes to earn what the average FTSE 100 chief executive makes in one year.

The latest report by the High Pay Centre reveals obscene levels of inequality growth. Last year, Britain's highest-paid CEO - Jeff Fairburn of housebuilder Persimmon - 'earned' around 2,000 times more than the average worker: £47.1 million.

Mean chief executive pay rose 23% in the last year, compared with just 2.5% for the average worker - while living costs continue to soar, with inflation at 3.2%.

The Tories have held down public sector pay for a decade. It's a sign of the weakness of their fractured government that they've been forced to scrap the cap for some workers following massive pressure from below.

Even then, they've attempted to get away with paltry below-inflation rises, claiming they can't afford more. They can, however, afford to help out the obscenely rich by slashing corporation tax to 19%.

And not content with this, Jim Ratcliffe, Britain's richest man, is moving to Monaco to dodge taxation on his £21 billion personal fortune. In 2013, his petrochemicals company Ineos was bailed out by the government with £134 million of public money - after feigning financial distress and threatening thousands of jobs.

Imagine what the billionaires' money could do if invested in education, public transport, housing and the NHS. If their companies were nationalised, it could be. Some could also be reinvested in the companies themselves to improve their services, wages and working conditions.

The claim we can't afford to nationalise big business is nonsense. They've had billions from us in tax breaks and bailouts, particularly since the 2007-08 crash. They should be nationalised with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need: not a penny to Fairburn, Ratcliffe and the other fat cats.

Such gross inequality cannot continue. Jeremy Corbyn stands for a minimum wage of £10 an hour, and even got a warm response from the public when he floated the idea of a maximum wage.

Corbyn's policies would be a huge relief to millions of workers, but he



BOSSES' PAY UP A FIFTH
WHILE WORKERS' PAY
FALLS YET AGAIN...

Take the wealth
off the super-rich!

needs to go further if he is to secure them. Nationalisation of public services and the biggest companies, including the FTSE 100 and the banks, under democratic workers' control and management, as part of a socialist plan of production.

End the rule of the 1%. Join the Socialist Party and our fight for the 99%!

Paul Kershaw
Chair, Unite the Union
housing workers' branch

The government's latest policy document on housing is a much-delayed response to mounting anger at the Grenfell Tower fire and the deep housing crisis, with unaffordable homes and increasing number sleeping rough.

The Tories promise a "fundamental rethink of social housing in this country." But there is no new thinking, and no new money for building new council and social homes, or supporting rough sleepers.

Housing agencies say at least

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90,000 social homes need to be built each year to meet demand. That figure is too low anyway - but last year just 5,900 were built, the lowest on record. Housing minister Kit Malthouse was forced to concede that building would remain at a record low.

Such is the social disaster created by decades of attacks on council and social housing, and reliance on the private sector, that even the pro-capitalist Financial Times conceded:

"The lack of subsidy for construction means sub-market-priced housing will continue to be subsidised through rents in the inefficient form of housing benefits. So the state will still be paying off the mortgages of private landlords, rather

than investing in the construction of an asset owned by either the state or a non-profit landlord."

The few concrete proposals are returns on policies introduced in the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government under Cameron.

The coalition's plan to force social landlords to offer only fixed-term tenancies, rather than lifetime tenancies, is ditched. So too are plans to force councils to sell off their most valuable housing. These represent significant victories for housing campaigners.

In words, the green paper responds to growing concern at the treatment of social tenants, raising the idea that the role of the regulator

Johnson's burqa outburst highlights racist Tory hypocrisy

■ Corbyn and unions can halt right populism by leading fight

Isai Priya
Socialist Party black and Asian group

Boris Johnson's attack on Muslim women who wear the burqa - comparing them to "letterboxes" and "bank robbers" - is a sexist, dehumanising comment, with racism at its root.

The former foreign secretary is known for his divisive, bigoted rhetoric. But his latest remarks further expose the racism that is rife within the Tory party.

Theresa May, under pressure, has acknowledged that Johnson has caused offence to Muslim women. But she has not acknowledged that his comments were racist or sexist.

The Tory party is weak and divided - fundamentally on Brexit, but more widely on a number of issues. The only thing they agree on at the moment is that Jeremy Corbyn must not enter government, so they join the Blairites' attacks on Corbyn's alleged antisemitism (see editorial, p2-3).

Yet the Tories ignore the far wider problem of racism - including anti-Muslim and antisemitic attacks - within their own party!

Sayedda Warsi, the Conservative Party's former chair, said she spent more than two years trying and failing to get her successors, and Theresa May, to engage with the problem. The Muslim Council of Britain claims there are "more than weekly" incidents in the party.

The anti-Muslim hate-crime monitoring group Tell Mama has reported a spike in abuse against Muslim women since Johnson's Telegraph column appeared. His comments



photo Mary Finch

have emboldened a small number of right-wing, racist thugs to carry out these attacks.

The fact that he continues to defend his comments, and refuses to apologise, shows this was not just a throwaway comment. It was a calculated step towards building a right-populist support base.

Johnson has been sure to cover his bases, of course. He may be attempting to build support among sympathisers of racist or far-right groups, but his attacks on Muslim women were actually made while opposing a ban on the veil.

However, the divisions in the Tories are deep. Leave EU, a right-wing

pro-Brexit group, is even asking supporters to become Tory members to back Johnson.

The future leadership of the Tory party - even its continuation as one party - is in question. It is clear that Boris is positioning himself as a leader.

Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union leaders have the power to cut across any growth of the racist right. To do so, they must adopt a bold, socialist programme which can really transform working class lives.

And they must lead a fight to get rid of all the Tories - both those in government, and the Blairites in Labour's own ranks - right now.

your housing association gets a low rating. Much more is needed to put power in residents' hands."

The green paper suggests a mix of the measures used in schools and the NHS: league tables, inspections and so on.

Accountability

What is really needed in social housing is democratic accountability to tenants, and more openness. It is a scandal that some social housing residents still cannot see fire risk assessments for their homes, for example.

But that would run counter to the current model of social housing providers reliant on running up huge debts with banks - and then giving

top priority to keeping them happy.

The Tories have no answers. Neither does Labour's right wing, which also advanced neoliberal housing policies.

Jeremy Corbyn must have Labour decisively break with the neoliberal policies of recent decades, from parliament down to councils. They must campaign instead for a mass programme of council house building, rent caps in the private sector, and strengthening of residents' rights across sectors.

**What's your
view? email:
editors@socialistparty.org.uk**

Mid Yorkshire NHS workers score victory over privatisation

Adrian O'Malley

branch secretary,
Unison Mid Yorkshire Health
(personal capacity)

Unison members working within estates and facilities at Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust were due to start three days strike action against the formation of a wholly owned subsidiary (WOS) company on 20 August. 900 staff were at risk of being transferred.

The Unison strike vote was 97.4% to strike on a 56.7% turnout. A further 100 staff had since joined the union to take part in the strike.



If you stand together, are prepared to fight together and if necessary strike together, then you can win

The Trust announced it could not proceed with the formation of the company this financial year due to not getting permission from NHS Improvement (the body responsible



Mid Yorkshire NHS Unison members on a previous strike photo Iain Dalton

for overseeing foundation trusts, NHS trusts, and private providers). But it was still looking to form a company at a later date.

Staff briefings were held, at which senior managers were left with no doubt about the strength of feeling against the WOS by workers angry about the possibility of being moved "outside the NHS". This, along with the rock-solid strike vote by 500 plus Unison members, resulted in a change of mind by the trust

board and letter going out to trust employees confirming that the plan was off.

After agreeing a joint statement that all work on the WOS, now and in the future, had stopped, the strike was lifted.

This has been seen as a massive victory by our members. The only complaints we have had are from members who were looking forward to three days on the picket lines!

Following the successful strike

in Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh trust against its WOS, this is another battle won in the war against privatisation of the NHS.

It sends out a message that if you stand together, are prepared to fight together and if necessary strike together, then you can win. We need to continue this battle across the country to stop any future WOSs being formed and return the workers in existing companies back into the NHS.

'Pay us a living wage!'

In early August, cleaners at Kensington and Chelsea council and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) took three days strike against poverty pay. The cleaners, who are outsourced to agency Amey, are paid the minimum wage (£7.83 an hour) and they have decided enough is enough. Both the council and MoJ conveniently blame the contractor for the low rates of pay.

The vibrant picket lines are a staple of the United Voices of the World union, which organises mainly low-paid cleaners, many who come from South America. The Socialist spoke to 'Mariela' on the Kensington and Chelsea picket.

Can you tell us what the strike is about?

It's about the living wage because we are looking for the living wage in London (£10.20 an hour). We are now employed on poverty wages.

How successful has the strike been?

Yes really, really successful, because now they listen to us. Before, without the strike, they don't want to listen. Many people support us. They [the council] are coming to talk to us, people who are very important. And we are very, very bold now.

It's a really good first step. Are many cleaners on strike? Is it the majority?

Yes it's the majority and many people from other companies are coming to support us as well. Today it

is just Kensington and Chelsea and the Ministry of Justice on strike but there is another company as well.

What sort of problems do the cleaners face?

Because we get poverty wages we have to work more hours a day. Like me, many cleaners are working eleven or 12 hours a day, and another team is working 60 or 80 hours a week just to pay the rent, pay the bills, the transport... we have to work lots of hours.

Maybe if you win it will have an effect on other low paid workers in other councils and other low paid work places?

Yes, if we win it will be a lesson for everyone, people will be very happy, very excited. It's not only about us - it's against the poverty wages in



photo London SP

London. We are looking out not only for us but for all people.

**NSSN
TUC Congress
Rally Sunday 9
September in
Manchester**



photo Paul Mattsson

On the 150th anniversary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) will be organising a rally before the start of TUC conference.

Leaders from fighting unions will be speaking alongside rank-and-file union reps and activists, including those who have been taking industrial action.

The NSSN has a proud record of

supporting workers and building solidarity. We also have a history of fighting for the biggest coordination of action across the unions to take on Tory austerity and the bosses' offensive.

■ Sunday 9 September, 1pm, Manchester Mechanics Institute/Conference Centre, Princess Street, M1 6DD



[News in brief]

■ Sunderland Liebherr strike for better pay

"We'll be out as long as it takes", was the strident attitude of Liebherr strikers. The Unite the Union members on the picket line told the Socialist Party that they are striking for a decent pay increase. Liebherr's offer of 3% was rejected by a decisive 94%.

Liebherr is a global company, and the site in Sunderland is profitable. They assemble high quality cranes for the oil and maritime industries. Globally, turnover was almost €10 billion in 2017.

For a number of years the company has made promises to pay more when the company does better. Yet management aren't forthcoming when it comes to offering a decent pay increase. As the strikers' leaflet says: "The members expect the management to make good on its previous 'jam tomorrow' promises."

The mood on the picket line is upbeat. The only ones going into the plant are temps and apprentices. While I was there a lorry making a delivery was turned away, and many others have also refused to cross the picket line.

Send messages of support to mark. sanderson@unite.theunion.org.

Elaine Brunskill

■ Sheffield Supertram workers win improved pay rise

Sheffield Supertram drivers and conductors voted by two to one to accept an improved pay offer having walked out for five days and threatening a further eight days of strike action.

While not gaining all that their union Unite had demanded, there is no doubt that the first strikes in Supertram's 24-year history represent a victory for the workers against a previously intransigent and bullying management that has raised workers' confidence and strengthened the union.

Alistair Tice

■ Woolwich ferry workers set to strike

Unite has issued notice to Briggs Marine, the contractor which operates the Woolwich Ferry, for strike action to take place on 28 August, and 3, 7, 10, 14, 17, 24 September.

The action is against the imposition of weekend working into the normal working week, job cuts and lone working.

The bigger issue is about automation and its impact on workplaces. New hybrid boats will be introduced and as a result jobs will be cut due to the boats needing less maintenance.

Unite Regional Officer Onay Kasab stated: "This is the sharp end of the debate on automation. We welcome the development of technology, but not at the price of this being paid out of the pockets of the workers we represent."



photos Sarah Wrack

WALTHAM FOREST LABOUR COUNCIL VOTES TO CLOSE LIBRARY - CAMPAIGN GOES ON

Nancy Taaffe
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

In 2016 Wood Street library - along with two other libraries in Waltham Forest, east London - was earmarked for closure and 'relocation' to sterile plastic retail units in newly 'regenerated' housing developments.

Wood Street is my local library, where I worked until 2012 when I was made redundant through cuts. In a consultation, the community responded by 85% to keep the library in its iconic 1950s building.

The plans seemed to go silent as the local elections approached. Because of the pressure of the campaign that sprang up to defend the library, all of the political parties who stood pledged to keep Wood Street Library.

It was received with shock and outrage when on 17 July we found out that the original 2016 proposal to shut

the library was going to the council cabinet. The campaign immediately sprang into action. We called for the cabinet decision to be called in for scrutiny.

We called on everyone we knew inside the Labour Party, spoke to Corbyn-supporting councillors at meetings and tried everything to contact and convince any Labour councillor. To no avail. Not one Labour councillor helped us. Into this silence came the hypocritical cavalry of Tory councillors who opportunistically managed to get the decision called in.

Even though the council virtually shuts down for the whole of August and many families who may use the library go on holiday, the campaign had a good lobby of the scrutiny committee and a cross section of campaigners spoke in the committee, appealing for a reversal of the cabinet decision.

The Labour councillors, including one who had previously espoused her "love for Corbyn" at a meeting of

Momentum in 2016, voted to close our library. In this topsy-turvy world of local government cuts, Tory councillors got cheers while Labour ones were heckled.

The decision taken at the cabinet was to agree in principle the closure of the 1950s building and the library's relocation in a year's time.

Some in the campaign want to constitute ourselves so we can bid for the old building when it comes to be sold. Some believe that we can run it as a voluntary community centre.

As socialists we have explained that this option could only be a stop gap, as something we consider doing in the context of an incoming socialist Labour government taking the building back into public provision and giving jobs back to local people.

The campaign has agreed to fight on. A year is a long time in politics and we're all agreed... it ain't over.

■ See full article at socialistparty.org.uk



photo Paul Mattsson

Fight Leicester NHS cuts plan

KEEP MIDDLESBROUGH HOSPITAL STAFF IN THE NHS

Tom Barker
Secretary, Save Our NHS Leicestershire

As the winter crisis in the NHS (now an annual event) clearly indicated, services are already stretched to breaking point. We currently do not have enough capacity for both emergency and planned admissions in Leicester.

Concentrating even more services onto the Glenfield and the Royal Infirmary will not solve this problem, especially given the pitiful amount of money being made available.

UHL says its current plan would increase efficiency but because of inadequate government funding the local NHS is having to cut £400 million from its own budget every year. That is what is driving plans to hold down bed numbers below what is needed and to sell off NHS land.

This is not about efficiency, it is about austerity. Staff and users are both set to lose out if these plans go ahead.

The campaign to save the heart unit at Glenfield showed that when we fight together against unjust proposals, we can win. Now we need to mobilise again in defence of the General.

■ Lobby the health and wellbeing scrutiny committee: 4.45pm, 23 August at Leicester City Hall

John Malcolm
Teesside Socialist Party

Roseberry Park Hospital in Middlesbrough is a 365-bed mental health site built using a private finance initiative eight years ago at a cost of £75 million. By the end of the contract Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Health Trust will have paid out £328 million plus maintenance costs.

The construction company Laing O'Rourke cut corners and the building has major defects, including leaking roofs, problems with the water supply and faults with the security and fire alarm and safety system. Carillion, which had the maintenance contract, was unable to rectify the faults and it will now cost £50 million to put right. Every ward will have to be closed one by one and patients transferred to a new unit currently being built in the grounds.

The trust applied to the high court to cancel the contract. This is the first time this has happened and the high court recently ruled in favour of the trust, including awarding court costs.


Carillion employed about 25 workers. Since the collapse of Carillion

these workers have faced insecurity over their future. The trust has set up an arm's length company, which Carillion staff were transferred into this June.

Bosses are now considering a number of options which could see the transfer of hundreds of ancillary staff out of the NHS into the new company. This is effectively another form of privatisation as their pensions, terms and conditions would be at risk and new employees would be employed on different terms and conditions, leading to a two-tier workforce.

Nationally, a number of trusts have already set up similar arms-length companies and strikes have taken place against them in Wigan and in Mid Yorkshire (see page 6).

All unions representing staff at Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys are opposed to the new wholly-owned subsidiary and the Unison branch covering the trust is launching a campaign.

 Like Socialist Party on Facebook

Newcastle fans protest against Mike Ashley

John Hird and William Jarrett

The long campaign to force Mike Ashley out of Newcastle United football club continued on the first day of the season on 11 August. Hundreds of Newcastle fans protested at the city centre Sports Direct, owned by Ashley, organised by fan groups and supported by the Socialist Party and National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN).

A Socialist Party member entered the store to assure staff and security contractors drafted in that the protest was not directed against them, but their greedy Victorian-era villain of a boss.

As the protest grew fans unfurled a giant banner: "He is only one man, we are a city." During the last five minutes of the match fans staged a stand-up protest against Ashley.

Cut-throat capitalist Ashley is at Newcastle United to make money. Crowds increased from an average of 49,754 in 2015-16 to 51,992 in 2017-18 and tickets prices have gone up. With shirt sales, merchandising and TV money, the club makes a massive profit. Yet manager Rafa Benitez has to beg for cash to buy players and keep the ones he has.

In 2016 Sports Direct was forced to admit it paid staff at its Shirebrook warehouse less than minimum wage. An MPs' report compared its



photo Elaine Brunskill

operations to a "Victorian workhouse." In reality it was a grassroots campaign led by Unite the Union and the NSSN which forced the issue into the open.

Ashley claimed to know nothing about the 'six strikes and you're out' policy at Sports Direct which meant staff were sacked for chatting too much, spending too much time in the toilet or being sick and unable to attend work. Three quarters of Sports Direct staff are on zero-hour contracts.

Ashley claims he has no money to pay staff decent pay and invest in decent players at Newcastle yet revenue in the year to 30 April 2017 rose by

11.7% to a whopping £3.24 billion. He recently found £90 million down the back of the sofa to buy House of Fraser.

The Socialist Party has long campaigned to kick fat cats like Ashley out of the beautiful game and for it to be run democratically by and for the fans.

There were excellent discussions at the Socialist Party campaign stall with supporters about the next phase of the campaign. 40 copies of the Socialist were sold and generous donations were gratefully received - fans acknowledge our role in this fight.

■ Read 'Reclaim the Game' available from leftbooks.co.uk

End Runcorn school PFI rip off

Ste Armstrong
Warrington and St Helens Socialist Party

Schools, colleges and universities are struggling under the weight of cut-backs forced on them by Tory austerity. In Halton, Cheshire, a wave of cuts, poor management and an ill thought out private finance initiative scheme have created crisis in the local education system.

The Grange comprehensive, junior, infant and nursery schools in Runcorn were demolished less than ten years ago, and a new modern, all-purpose school was built in their place. Initially, parents were delighted with the new buildings. However,

those same parents have come in for a shock as the bill for the rebuild is set to reach £85 million!

The sum was revealed in a statement of accounts published by Halton Borough Council in which it revealed the project has £65.6 million left to pay during the remainder of its 25-year contract. According to local authority figures, the school cost £24.13 million to build, and will cost an additional £29.66 million in service and maintenance costs for the duration of the deal, and £31.33 million in interest alone.

The rebuilt school opened in 2013, and in January this year it converted to an academy. Despite its new academy status, the debt remains under the remit of the council.

These figures emerged just over a

month after the Labour council confirmed it was going ahead with massive cuts to the special education needs budget in the area, citing central government funding reductions.

In April the council promised a review of the policy following a backlash from parents. The cuts were cynically confirmed six weeks after the local elections, leaving a bitter taste in voters' mouths, particularly after Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition activists revealed the council had over £4 million in cash reserves.

Labour should call for a general election now, to bring in a Corbyn-led government committed to ending the privatisation rip off, reversing austerity and funding education fully, to protect our children's futures.

Huge but chaotic Brighton Pride needs to be politicised

Members of Brighton Socialist Party attended Brighton Pride on 4 August. Although it is the UK's biggest Pride event, drawing in more than 400,000 people this year, in recent years it has been largely depoliticised.

Instead, the businesses that take part pay lip service to support for LGBT+ people, while upholding the systems of oppression and discrimination they deal with on a daily basis.

At the same time, considerations for public health during the event were treated with neglect. Inadequate rubbish disposal led to a massive litter problem over the weekend, and a lack of transport after the event led to a crush at the train station. The station was then closed, forcing some visitors to sleep on the beach.

Despite this, people were keen to

discuss our slogan, 'Pride is political', and how LGBT+ people can organise to fight for their rights. This includes fighting austerity, with NHS cuts in mental health services being a serious concern for young LGBT+ people, and ending the capitalist system which thrives on division and discrimination.

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Connor Rosoman
Brighton Socialist Party

Non-fiction: Ahed Tamimi - a girl who fought back



Ahed Tamimi photo Haim Schwarczenberg schwarczenberg.com/CC

Ahed tamini - a girl who fought back
by Manal Tamimi, Paul Morris, Paul Heron & Peter Lahti
£15.50 including postage.
Available from leftbooks.co.uk

WORLDWIDE SYMBOL OF SELF-ESTEEM IN FACE OF OPPRESSION

Dave Nellist
Coventry East Socialist Party

On the morning of the last Sunday in July, Palestinian activist Ahed Tamimi was released from an Israeli prison, where she had been for eight months since her arrest on 19 December 2017.

On 15 December, Ahed's 15-year-old cousin had been shot in the head. The rubber-coated metal bullet removed one-third of his skull.

Some hours later, heavily armed soldiers from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) arrived at the Tamimi house in the occupied West Bank village of Nabi Sahel, wanting to use part of the property as cover to shoot at other youths down the road.

Ahed tried to tell the soldiers to leave the family's garden. She was pushed away but pushed back and slapped one of the soldiers. Her mother filmed the incident and posted it on Facebook - the video went viral.

Four days later, in the middle of the night, Ahed was arrested, and, at only 16, initially faced a ten-year sentence.

Her story is the subject of a new book, published in Sweden. It is written by three members of the Committee for a Workers' International, the world socialist organisation the Socialist Party is affiliated to: Paul Morris, a university lecturer; Paul Heron, a human rights lawyer;

and journalist Peter Lahti. Ahed's aunt, Manal Tamimi, is the fourth contributor.

Ahed Tamimi has a history of resisting the IDF - much of it can be found on YouTube or via QR code links in the book itself. The authors describe her upbringing, of trying to be a child with childhood dreams, but being forced to grow up quickly to stand up to an occupying army. The dreams of playing for Barcelona turn instead into study for a profession she believes could help those around her: a lawyer.

The book describes how Ahed became a worldwide symbol of "self-esteem in the face of oppression." Hers is not, however, an isolated case.

The criminalisation of Palestinian children such as Ahed has meant that, since 2000, approximately 8,500 have been detained, interrogated, prosecuted and imprisoned. Despite condemnatory reports from august bodies across the globe, Israel maintains a brutal military 'legal' system in the territories it occupies.

Ahed's slap to an IDF soldier was seen worldwide as a symbolic rejection of the imperialist ambitions of Israel's ruling elite. The book chronicles the origins and development of Zionism.

It graphically describes the physical and geographical consequences of the foundation of Israel when, 70 years ago, 250,000 Palestinians were driven from their lands and 200 villages were destroyed. Hundreds of thousands more Palestinians have

been exiled and made into refugees as Israel has expanded from the original 1948 borders.

Continued international solidarity against that crime is clearly essential. But to break the siege on Gaza and the occupation of the West Bank, the book argues, will take not only the work of the Palestinians - but also those in Israeli society, themselves suffering worsening conditions, or beginning to see through right-wing Zionist lies, to jointly stop the Israeli war machine with mass action.

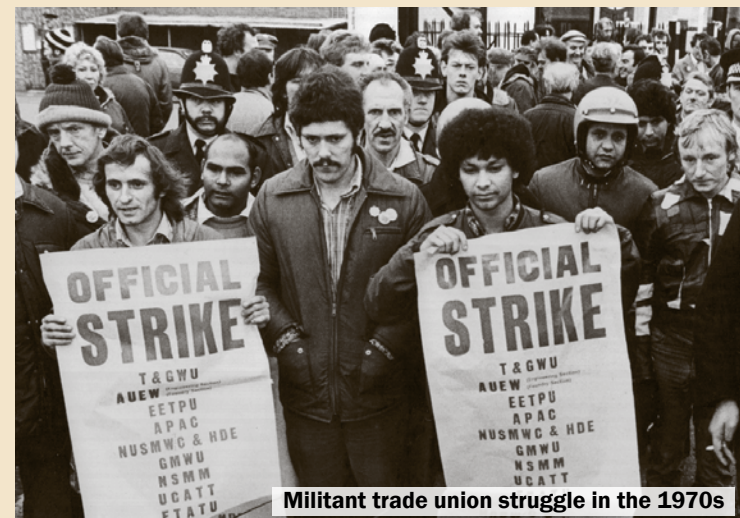
Ahed's aunt, Manal, tells of her own arrests and also of the leading role women are playing in harnessing the struggles of the Palestinian people in the villages and refugee camps. But the last words are left to Ahed:

"Right now, injustice is happening all across the world. We should extend our struggles to one another in order to end all of the world's injustices. We are all victims of some kind of occupation. We won't let anyone suffer alone."

Solidarity work needs an empathy with suffering, individual and collective, and above all a strategy to secure fundamental change. This book is certainly well worth reading as a contribution to both those tasks.

■ **Keep up to date with developments in the Middle East at socialistworld.net, and follow the work of socialists in Israel/Palestine at socialism.org.il**

Non-fiction: Workers control and workers management



Union bureaucracies, soviets and workers' power

Connor Rosoman
Brighton Socialist Party

'Workers control and workers management: work in the unions' is the new book from Socialist Party member Ted Mooney.

Ted was a leader of the 1960 engineering apprentices' strike, which 100,000 young workers took part in.

In the first of three sections, he discusses one of the socialist movement's core challenges: workers' control of their workplaces from below, and workers' management of production from above.

In the Russian revolution, the soviets - democratic councils of workers, soldiers and peasants - provided an answer. This section explores Lenin's "fluid" approach to the soviets, and the flexible role of workers' control through these institutions in the fight to build workers' states with full workers' management.

However, Ted does not seek to predict the precise forms workers' control and management will take in the future. He points out correctly that this will have to be decided democratically by working people themselves according to the situation facing them at the time.

Modern capitalist management techniques introduced 'Taylorism' and scientific approaches to increasing productivity and exploitation. Ted looks at what workers could take from this when drawing up a socialist plan to advance productivity further while

eliminating exploitation.

This is followed by two case studies. The first is a reprint of a 1969 Militant pamphlet on the strikes at electrical company GEEC in Liverpool. Workers fought against mergers that risked closing factories and making 16,000 workers redundant in the name of 'efficiency'.

Pilkington's dispute

The second is an article from Militant International Review, forerunner of Socialism Today, from 1971. It covers the Pilkington Glass Corporation strike, and the disputes between the workers and their union bureaucracy.

In the course of the dispute, certain workers split to form a new union - in that context, a move that Militant criticised. Ted explains how the action of rank-and-file workers can beat right-wing union bureaucracies.

Throughout the book, Ted explains a clear, Marxist approach to trade unionism. This is especially relevant in today's world, where socialists and growing layers of workers are struggling for fighting, democratic union leadership. This book provides many lessons that all socialists can benefit from.

■ **Workers control and workers management: £5 from leftbooks.co.uk**





photo Sophie Brown/CC

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■ Corbyn antisemitism smears

See our editorial for the latest on the antisemitism furore, p2-3

■ The antisemitism smears against Jeremy Corbyn are not new. In 1981, when Tony Benn stood for deputy leader of the Labour Party, the gutter press compared him to Hitler, Mussolini, and other disgusting individuals. A few years later, Militant, now the Socialist Party, faced similar accusations when we led a successful campaign against Thatcher's cuts in Liverpool. There is no limit to how low the Tories - blue and red - will stoop in their campaign against the left. They will say and do anything to stop a movement that threatens the profits and interests of their class. Corbyn and his supporters should draw inspiration from this history. These accusations were not weathered through apologies, but by coming out fighting. **Tom Barker** Leicester

■ For a teenager like me, it feels easy to look at just the headlines or all the clickbait online and believe that Corbyn is an antisemite. But then you go off, read the claims, and understand that things like Corbyn sitting next to a Holocaust survivor who compared Israel to the Nazi Germany he lived through isn't antisemitism. The antisemitism scandal isn't true, it's ugly. Ugly that we're fed all these lies and meant to believe it. Furthermore, the establishment likens anti-Zionism and anything anti-Israel to antisemitism just to shut down debate and run a smear job. Meanwhile, an undercover reporter filmed an Israeli diplomat plotting to "take down" Labour MPs that support Palestinian liberation. We must remember free speech and

open debate is vital to any form of progress. It's not easy to keep up with lies.

Adam Abdullah
Lewisham, south London

■ Dave Prentis, writing as Unison's general secretary, penned an article in the 10 August New Statesman. He said the public service union's Labour Link committee "has adopted the full International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition" of antisemitism, "with examples" - including the one which restricts legitimate criticism of Israel, the focus of one of the latest battles - "and supported calls for Labour to do the same."

No doubt, Prentis and the Blairites will now face challenges from ordinary Unison and Labour members - including those Labour Link officers and members who were not consulted on this decision taken by their national committee - to explain themselves.

Democratic accountability of union leaderships, like calls for mandatory reselection in the Labour Party, is essential. Meanwhile, a more conservative organisation that has weaponised antisemitism claims is the Community Security Trust charity. It describes its role as serving to "protect British Jews from antisemitism and related threats" and "to speak responsibly at all times, without exaggeration or political favour, on antisemitism and associated issues." But a recent press release suggests the Community Security Trust struggles to "speak responsibly": "The reason Labour's antisemitism problem dwarfs all of its other racism problems is because it originates from the far-left culture that Jeremy Corbyn and his closest advisers and supporters have always belonged to. That culture now dominates the party." None of this is true - and when it comes to antisemitism, they know it! It was only last September the Community Security Trust helped fund the Institute for Jewish Policy Research study 'Antisemitism in



photo Andrea Westmoreland/CC

Contemporary Great Britain', which said: "Looking at the political spectrum of British society, the most antisemitic group consists of those who identify as very right-wing. In this group about 14% hold hardcore antisemitic attitudes and 52% hold at least one attitude, compared again to 3.6% and 30% in the general population.

"The very left-wing, and, in fact, all political groups located on the left, are no more antisemitic than the general population. This finding may come as a surprise to those who maintain that in today's political reality, the left is the more serious, or at least, an equally serious source of antisemitism, than the right." Wouldn't it be useful if Jon Lansman, and other self-identified Corbyn supporters, raised this when attacked?

Mike Barker
Leicester

■ "Being 'present' is the same as being involved. When I attend a memorial, my presence alone, whether I lay a wreath or not, demonstrates my association and support... Where is the apology?" Such is the logic of ultra-Blairite MP Luciana Berger. She was referring to Jeremy Corbyn's attendance at a memorial for the 47 Palestinians killed in a 1985 Israeli bombing in Tunisia four years ago. Another critic, Louise Ellman MP, appeared on BBC's Newsnight, claiming she was "appalled" to find out about another past event arranged by Corbyn... at which Jewish Auschwitz survivor Hajo Meyer criticised Israel. But there are now claims that a letter Ellman apparently wrote at the time to Tribune shows she was in attendance as well. Ellman's alleged hypocrisy is matched by Berger and Jess Phillips MP (who previously threatened Corbyn by saying "I won't knife you in the back, I will knife you in the front"). They have joined Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu in attacking Corbyn for standing up for the

Palestinian people.

The right-wing Spectator magazine reported that Phillips attended its lavish, champagne-laden 190th birthday party, and pictured her next to Berger. Also attending was the rabid antisemite Panagiotis 'Taki' Theodoracopoulos - an outspoken racist who has also written in praise of Greek fascist party Golden Dawn.

Under Berger's own logic, doesn't their attendance show "association" and that they "support" Taki's views? Of course, Berger and co will not be pressed on the contradictions of their anti-Corbyn rhetoric as it fits the capitalist media's narrative. It therefore falls to the labour movement to raise these issues and expose this attempted coup for what it is.

Carl Harper
Peterborough

■ Gender Recognition Act

The Tories' consultation regarding changes to the 2004 Gender Recognition Act (GRA) is now open until October. This invites anyone in England and Wales to express their opinion regarding how the GRA should be changed. The online form asks for opinions regarding how adequate the current process to legally change your gender is. One such question is about the cost to apply to change your gender - currently £140. For working class people this can be too high a cost, especially in the age of austerity. However, this does not even consider the other costs that many transgender people face to be recognised as their gender.

The current NHS waiting time to access hormone therapy is a year, which is too long. As a result, many trans people feel their best option is to access private healthcare, despite the costs. This is not sustainable for most people. The consultation doesn't discuss these

issues, nor will changes to the GRA alone address them.

Some of the problems facing trans people are referred to, for example in accessing employment, mental health services, and so on. However, the consultation itself does not address these issues or how the GRA would affect them.

In fact, Tory changes to the GRA would likely not address them at all - and could potentially exacerbate them. The government could say that easing the restrictions to legally changing gender would make existing trans services obsolete, to justify cutting them, leaving trans people worse off.

Furthermore, the consultation is only for England and Wales. Scotland has already had its consultation. And Northern Ireland is not going to be affected - once again, LGBT+ people in Northern Ireland are being left behind in potential advancements of LGBT+ rights. Socialists need to campaign for changes to the Gender Recognition Act that are suitable for all trans and non-binary people. We must also fight for all LGBT+ services to be fully funded, as well as the NHS, so all people can receive the care they need without being forced into the private healthcare system.

Maddy Steeds
Hawkesbury Upton,
Gloucestershire

■ Plastic and food

I found Pete Dickenson's article on plastic waste in issue 1004 a far more rounded-out analysis than anything on the issue I've seen in the mainstream media ('Plastic waste - capitalism's Frankenstein monster' at socialistparty.org.uk). In his article, Pete correctly spells out the huge amounts of plastic food wrapping and the need to reduce this or find alternatives. He also correctly points out that plastic packaging is often used to prolong the life of perishable food.

But it's not just the plastic packaging that is used to extend shelf life, but chemical coatings on such packaging, a modified atmosphere contained by the plastic - and, particularly with ready meals and other processed foods, the very components in the meals themselves.

For example, one common chemical food preservative, ascorbic acid, is referred to by investigative food journalist Joanna Blythman as "using a toxin to kill toxins." 'Modified-atmosphere packaging' used often in pre-cut foods generally adds five to six days to the shelf life of a sandwich, and poultry increases from a four to seven-day shelf life to a 16 to 21-day shelf life - at the cost of food rapidly going off as nature catches up. In such situations, is this really just a question of simply replacing food packaging? Or should it be about seeking a more fundamental reorganisation of how our food system is organised, one that aims to help people eat more fresh food and avoid over-processed junk?

Like the question of food packaging itself, this isn't a question of putting the emphasis on consumers. After all, ready meals fill a vacuum created by long working hours and commutes, as well as ever-longer supermarket supply chains, all products of capitalism's drive for profits.

It is a question, instead, of making the food industry work for ordinary people, both in reducing environmentally harmful packaging and in creating high-quality, affordable school and workplace canteens to provide genuinely fresh, nutritious food to ordinary people. This in turn requires taking the key sectors out of the hands of big business, bringing into public ownership the big food producers, distributors and supermarkets, under democratic workers' control and management.

Iain Dalton
Leeds

■ Nation of accountants

The Financial Times had an article on 6 August which exposed the absolute rottenness of the dominance of finance capitalism in the British economy. In a study, a professor from Sheffield University explained that Britain now has more professional accountants than the whole of the EU put together! There are some 360,000 accountants - compared, for example, to less than 35,000 GPs to look after people's health.

He makes the point that Carillion, for example, was signed off by one of the big four accountancy companies, PwC, as a healthy company just before it went bust.

And that was because, as is all too common, the accountancy companies have a vested interest in getting the business of big business by "upward revaluations being treated as legitimate profits while often ignoring future foreseeable losses. This leads to executives and shareholders extracting cash from companies through bonuses and dividends on the basis of illusory profits, as happened at Carillion."

Bill Mullins
Bermondsey, south London

■ Ferrari or rent?

Meanwhile, back in the States... I was watching the TV show Chasing Classic Cars and it was auction time. The host said "this Ferrari is special," and so it was. The hammer fell at \$25 million and the multimillionaire host said "that makes me quite emotional." I also felt emotional as I wondered how I was going to pay the rent!

Mike
Southampton

■ Trump and socialism

Trump's visit reminded me of two events that stick in my mind. Last year I went to Poland and attended a Christmas party. I got talking to an American man who lives in Sweden and has done for the past 20 years. His wife is Polish. We got onto the question of Trump.

He said he was a Democrat supporter and if he had lived in America he would have voted for Bernie Sanders. He also said many, many of his friends in the States who are lifetime Democrats told him they voted for Trump, as they could not bring themselves to vote for Clinton. It just shows that what the Socialist was saying at the time was right. If Sanders had run for president against Trump and Clinton, putting forward a radical alternative, he would have got enormous support.

Secondly, I remember a reporter on the BBC speaking a day after Trump got elected. She had covered the US election. She said she and other journalists on the campaign trail thought Clinton would win, and, in her words, "did not see it coming" - that is, Trump winning.

She recalled a conversation with a voter in the Rust Belt, which she said she should have taken more note of. That voter was a 32-year-old steel worker and shopfloor union rep who had voted Democrat all his life and for Obama twice.

He pointed out that he and many of his colleagues were voting Trump as he had promised to fight to save their jobs. He said the Democrats had forgotten about workers and were out of touch. The establishment is in for a shock, he said.

Is he a racist? Many establishment newspaper reports after Trump's election in the US and Britain were saying racism explained the victory for Trump, especially in the Rust Belt.

If that is the case, then how do they explain that in those same states, many voted for Obama before? I think a more sober analysis came from that 32-year-old steel worker.

Again, just imagine if Sanders had stood. He would have won over workers like that. Although it is a long way until the next presidential election, it cannot be ruled out that Trump wins again if a radical alternative is not put forward, if the vacuum is not filled.

Many people are repelled by Trump, but that is not enough. A radical, socialist alternative which can alter people's lives needs to be put urgently now, in terms of jobs, housing, health, education and welfare. A reality - rather than empty promises of "hope" - which is entirely possible given the resources the US has.

Chris Fernandez
Derby

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.

ARGENTINA: THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S LIVES HAS BEEN PAINTED GREEN!



photo Soyoysoyococmiel/CC

On 8 August, Argentina's Senate voted by 38 to 31 against legalising abortion during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy. In June, the House of Representatives voted narrowly in favour of it. Currently, abortion is allowed in Argentina only in cases of rape, or if the mother's life is in danger. Despite this setback a huge abortion rights movement is developing throughout Latin America.

Maria Clara Ferreira from LSR (Liberdade, Socialismo e Revolução - CWI Brazil), was part of a solidarity delegation on 8 August from the broad left party Psol in Brazil. She reports on Argentina's pro-choice movement.

In the morning, there were already thousands of people, organised in groups, collectives and political parties, singing songs, chanting, hoisting flags and wearing green pañuelos (handkerchiefs).

In spite of the expectation that the senators would vote down the bill, the movement put people on the streets in order to put pressure on the senate to vote yes.

The eyes of the world were turned to Argentina, and society was polarised over the subject. In the square in front of the Senate, two major blocs were organised.

The conservative side, supported by right-wing factions and the Vatican, was able to put many on the street sporting blue pañuelos, symbolising opposition to the legalisation. Even the establishment media, though, had to recognise the protest of green pañuelos was much bigger.

Walking around the streets of Buenos Aires, one could see young girls and older women, students from schools and universities, people from the suburbs and from downtown, all with the same un-

derstanding that fighting to legalise abortion is defending women's lives. In Argentina, around 500,000 backstreet abortions are performed every year.

The demonstration ranged from the most militant left to moderate progressive organisations. It is also significant the high number of men supporting the cause and taking part in campaign actions, reinforcing the importance of unifying the working class behind these struggles.

Strengthened

The result of the senate vote only strengthened the sentiment that this system has failed and does not represent us. On the week of the first vote, in June, polls showed that 55% of Argentinians were in favour of legalising abortion.

Media headlines the next morning prominently featured former president Cristina Kirchner's favourable position on the topic. But they also highlighted that her administration and her party had previously rejected the bill multiple times. This serves to show how fearful this political faction has become to confront this new generation,

now spearheading the movement.

People going to work kept their green pañuelos attached to their suitcases, around their arms, or around their necks, clearly stating that the struggle will go on until it is law.

The news also exposed the strong investment made by the Vatican to pressure senators into voting against the bill. While the movement chanted on the streets: "¡Lesía. Estado. Asunto separado!" ("Church. State. Separate matters!"), the CAEL movement (Argentinian coalition for a secular state) organised a stall to collect signatures for an end to state subsidies for churches based on their number of baptisms - which amounts to 20 million pesos (£830,000) a year.

A new legalisation bill can't be debated again by the House of Representatives for a year. But in October, a new conference of the National Women's Gathering will take place, and will produce papers pointing to the next steps for the movement.

It promises new actions to take the streets and denounce all politicians who voted no in the upcoming 2019 elections.

As this article is being written, there are demonstrations happening in Buenos Aires protesting over the deaths of more women due to illegal, backstreet abortions. This proves, once more, that the fight against oppression will not leave the streets.

Women are at the forefront of many struggles around the world, not least because we suffer more intensely the inequalities of capitalism.

It is up to the revolutionary left to give answers to the anti-capitalist sentiment present in these movements and show the need for a socialist society that can offer women real choice over when and whether to have children.

■ **Full article and interview with Marta Dillon, one of the founders of the Argentine feminist movement "Ni Una a Menos", see socialistworld.net**

Morandi Bridge disaster - private profit to blame

Commenting on the Mirandi bridge collapse in which 43 people died, Resistenze Internazionali (CWI Italy) writes: "This disaster could and should have been avoided. We want to say it clearly, the collapse of the Morandi Bridge is not the result of some unpredictable and imponderable event but due to a precise political choice - to entrust the management of the Italian motorway network in the hands of the profit-driven private sector. A private sector that hides its interests and responsibilities within a system of holding companies and subsidiaries that are protected by laws written specifically for them."

Interior minister Matteo Salvini of the right-wing Lega has attempted to divert attention from the failings of capitalism by blaming EU austerity. Italian premier Giuseppe Conte, under public pressure, has threatened to revoke the motorway contract of Autostrade per l'Italia - despite having been a legal advisor to Aiscat, the Italian association of motorways and tunnels. And the Lega's coalition partner in government, the populist Five Star Movement, had to delete the article it wrote in 2013, when opportunistically opposing a new road link, dismissing as a "fairy tale" the possible collapse of the Morandi Bridge!

■ **Read more on socialistworld.net**

Huge anti-government demos in Romania

A series of mass rallies in Bucharest and in other cities by Romanians - those living in the country and those returning from abroad - have taken place against widespread government corruption. These protests have been met by brutal police actions, which even the country's president has described as "totally unacceptable." **Mana de Lucru** (CWI supporters in Romania) reports on the background to the demonstrations and what demands are necessary for the movement to succeed.



An earlier anti-corruption demo in Bucharest photo Mihai Petre

We condemn, unreservedly, the scandalous abuses of the Romanian Gendarmerie (riot police) at the protests, which resulted in hundreds of wounded people. Such random violence is typical of this repressive institution, whose key role is to protect the interests of the political establishment against the civilian population. We demand a public inquiry into these abuses and the immediate resignation of the responsible officials.

As regards to the protest itself, we believe the outrage that pushed people out on the streets is genuine and justified. The PSD (Social Democratic Party - descended from the former Stalinist ruling party) government is, without a doubt, a government at the service of corrupt oligarchs, with no real concern for the interests of ordinary people.

We believe, however, that this outrage needs to be channelled against the entire Romanian political elite and the neoliberal policies that forced millions of Romanians to leave the country - with those remaining here having to cope with low wages, insecure jobs and crumbling public services.

Instead, we can see how the opposition parties are trying to take over the protest movement and use it in their own political battle with PSD. However, when they found themselves in government they proved

to be no real alternative to the PSD. The truth is that none of the current parties represents us - neither those who left the country, nor those who remained here. None of these parties offer a programme that addresses the urgent social and economic problems which the majority of Romanians are confronted with.

Unfortunately, such a programme, even a minimal one, is missing from these protests as well. The only clear demands from the leadership - resignation of the government and early elections - seem to serve nobody else but the leaders of the opposition.

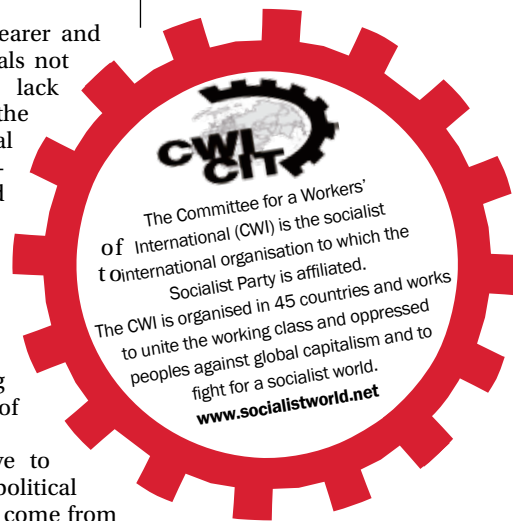
Lack of alternative

The lack of a list of clearer and relevant demands reveals not only the opposition's lack of solutions but also the absence of a political left and labour movement. One strong and militant enough to influence the course of these protests and link the issue of corruption with the other issues in our society, from harsh working conditions to the crisis of the healthcare system.

A genuine alternative to PSD and the rest of the political establishment can only come from

this direction, by attacking corruption not as a purely political phenomenon, but as a key element of the process of capitalist restoration after 1989, which saw a handful of people becoming filthy rich on the back of the rest of us.

We need a socialist and anti-capitalist alternative that represents the interests of ordinary people and not of one faction or another of the dominant class - an alternative that fights for decent jobs and wages, social rights, well-funded public services, an economy in the service of people, and genuine democratic control over our society.



What we stand 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.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled 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 and 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!

**Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!**

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@Socialist_party Text 07761 818206 / CWISocialistParty



Staff and passengers are on same side

NATIONALISE

RAIL!

TORIES OUT!



Paul Reilly, RMT national executive committee member
photo Paul Mattsson

Transport workers speak out

Chris 'Failing' Grayling's hypocrisy knows no bounds.

We have now learnt that the former boss of privatiser Carillion, Mark Davies, has landed another fat-cat salary as managing director in charge of the multibillion-pound first phase of the HS2 rail project. This is despite the fact that in his former role he oversaw the company's collapse, resulting in the loss of thousands of workers' livelihoods.

At the same time, the transport secretary announces he will expect rail workers to pay for a lower increase in fares by having employers use the lower 'CPI' inflation rate for future pay negotiations, instead of the more realistic 'RPI' rate!

Grayling has repeatedly been shown to be totally incompetent in dealing with other fiascos on the railways, such as driver-only operation and timetable changes.

The RMT has made it clear that our members will not tolerate these attacks on their living standards just so this government can line the pockets of its rich friends, the bosses in charge of profit-making rail companies and their wealthy shareholders. Our members will fight tooth and nail, as always, to oppose any attempt to impose below-inflation pay 'rises'.

The RMT also campaigns for affordable fares and reliable, decent rail services for passengers. No to divide and rule! Nationalise the railways!

Paul Reilly
RMT union national executive committee and Socialist Party member

photo Thomas Nugent/CC

Dane Yates
Salford Socialist Party

Beleaguered commuters learnt on 15 August that they will face yet another increase in rail fares from January. We can expect a 3.2% rise - more than average pay increases - on around 40% of fares, mainly on city and commuter routes.

The permitted price increase is linked to the 'RPI' inflation figures released by the Office for National Statistics. This most recent promised hike, coming on top of a 3.6% increase last year, will see the cost of annual tickets go up by hundreds of pounds.

The Campaign for Better Transport says commuters in Britain on an average salary now spend around a fifth of take-home pay on train tickets to and from work!

In typical Tory fashion, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has done his utmost to foster divisions between commuting workers and train workers. He has offered to cap fare hikes at the lower 'CPI' inflation rate, which ignores the rising cost of housing, if transport unions agree to their members' pay being capped at that rate too.

But rail staff and commuters are on the same side. Both face attacks by the Tories and their big business mates. The answer is public ownership and democratic control by workers and passengers, with

services subsidised to guarantee quality, safety, reliability and decent wages for all.

The fares announcement comes against a background of deteriorating services, with mass cancellations taking place on some lines since changes to timetables back in May.

On Socialist Party campaign stalls outside Salford and Manchester's busiest stations, served by the shambolic Northern Rail franchise, people queue to sign petitions demanding rail nationalisation.

The anger towards private profiteers such as Northern Rail is palpable. Commuters understand it is the failing of the private sector, and not the fault of rail staff or their unions.

The overwhelming majority of commuters we have spoken to are also vocal in support of keeping guards on the trains, which transport union RMT is leading strikes for.

All public transport should be nationalised, under democratic workers' control and management. Jeremy Corbyn should commit to taking this step immediately if he is elected, rather than just taking rail franchises back as and when each is up for renewal.

It is clear that private companies, driven by profit and greed, cannot provide a service which meets the needs of workers and commuters. Only a socialist system of democratic planning can satisfy the needs of commuters and rail staff alike.

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