

**£1/£2** solidarity price

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# the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**



**USA**  
Socialist Seattle councillor  
Kshama Sawant on how Donald  
Trump can be defeated  
>p8-9

**POVERTY**  
Even UN slams  
poorhouse  
Tory Britain  
>p4-5



**SPAIN**  
One million students on  
strike against sexism  
and for inclusive sex  
education  
>p14

## Tory Brexit meltdown

# GENERAL ELECTION NOW!



- No support for the Tory deal
- Tories out, Corbyn in.  
End austerity now
- For a socialist alternative to the EU
- For an emergency labour  
movement conference
- Kick out the Blairite saboteurs
- Nationalise the banks  
and major monopolies
- For a new collaboration of the peoples  
of Europe on a socialist basis
- See pages p2-3 for more







# HOUSING ARREARS DOUBLE, SUICIDE RISK SOARS - SCRAP UNIVERSAL CREDIT!

## ■ General election now to reverse welfare attacks

**Corinthia Ward**  
Birmingham Central Socialist Party

Universal Credit claimants are being pushed into serious mental health problems, with some even considering suicide, according to public health researchers in the North East.

Housing workers in Gateshead have even had suicide prevention training. Meanwhile, council tenants on Universal Credit have over double the rent arrears of those still on old-style housing benefit, according to BBC Panorama.

Socialists have opposed this disastrous welfare system - which lumps benefits together while reducing and delaying them - right from the start.

The Tory government, not wanting yet another humiliating u-turn on an unpopular and disastrous

idea, put £2.7 billion into 'tweaking' the scheme in the October Budget. This money could have been much better used to fund actual welfare payments, by scrapping Universal Credit altogether.

The fact the Tories went ahead with pushing through Universal Credit shows their complete disregard for the working class and poor.

Missed or wrongly calculated payments take up to seven weeks to come through - leaving some families nothing but £30 a month to live on after rent. This results in many having to use foodbanks while waiting weeks for the money they're owed to come through!

Uncertainty over bill payments, and having to choose between food or a roof over your head, is pushing more people to the brink, causing anxiety and depression.

Yes, there are the poorest in society, many unable to work due

to illness or disability. But also big numbers of those in work who, because of low wages and the high cost of living, are forced to rely on benefits to get by.

With a million people on Universal Credit so far - expected to rise to eight million if fully rolled out - the situation will only get more severe.

What we need is Corbyn to demand that Universal Credit be completely scrapped, and those already left short be paid what they are owed immediately. We need all cuts to welfare reversed, a £10-an-hour minimum wage as a step towards a real living wage, the end of zero-hour contracts, and caps on rents.

The Tories are on their last legs - Corbyn and the union leaders can mobilise workers to push them out. Workers should not be subsidising bosses' poverty wages and landlords' overpriced housing!

photo Socialist Party Wales



What does the European Parliament... well... do? It doesn't have any real law-making powers - those rest with the unelected European Commission. It cannot overturn the leadership of the EU, the unelected European Council. But it can write angry letters. The latest missive is to internet retail giant Amazon, signed by 27 MEPs. It calls for "the discontinuation of sales of goods with the hammer and sickle symbol, representing the Soviet Union."

They point out that the crimes of Stalinism were grisly and sweeping. But the hammer and sickle was not of Stalin's making. It was first a symbol of workers and peasants coming together to run society for themselves, overthrowing the murderous warmonger dictatorship of the landlords and capitalists.

It isn't the Stalinist betrayal of the Russian revolution which concerns these capitalist politicians. It's the growing interest in an alternative social system: one based on public ownership and democratic planning, not the chaos of the market and dictatorship of the billionaires.



photo Paolo Margari/CC

# Even UN slams Tory poorhouse Britain

## ■ 14m in poverty

**Adam Harmsworth**  
Coventry East Socialist Party

A United Nations special envoy has published a report that harshly condemns poverty in the UK, and links the capitalist establishment's brutal austerity programme to it directly.

After two weeks of speaking to impoverished people, government ministers and community groups, Professor Philip Alston has produced a report that is essentially one attack after another on the Tories' failures on poverty, on welfare,

and much more.

In fact, when he confronted ministers about the severe hardship Universal Credit had caused, they resorted to denying the problems and "blaming political opponents for wanting to sabotage their work!" His conclusion was clear. The Treasury could have spared workers and the poor, but the government chose tax breaks for the rich instead.

The findings and conclusions won't be a surprise to most of us.

In my hometown, Coventry, rough sleepers can be found throughout the city centre. 100,000 people had received emergency food from one

foodbank between 2011 and 2017.

Many have faced years of poverty and hunger and desperation. All because a ruthless Tory government has made a political choice to further enrich the super-wealthy, aided and abetted by the Blairites.

But while the report was damning enough to offend the Tories, its recommendations do not come close to offering the real solutions needed.

### Social revolt

The UN may be keen to push for less poverty, not least to try to put off mass social revolt. But as a gathering of capitalist governments, dominated by the major imperialist powers, the UN will not pursue the demands necessary to actually end poverty and guarantee a decent life for the majority.

With over 14 million in the awful conditions the report describes, a clear call from Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union leadership for an immediate general election to end austerity would resonate with a huge portion of the British population.

Austerity and all its cruelty must be brought to an end, along with the capitalist system that demands it. We say only a mobilised working class with bold, socialist leadership can do it.

# 75,000 KIDS IN FOSTER CARE - AND COUNTING: END CUTS AND FOR-PROFIT CARE

**Kris O'Sullivan**  
Former foster child, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

"Fostering sector ripe for consolidation... fostering is a growth market... private equity and other companies have been attracted to the sector largely because they can see the potential for cost savings..."

These were the thoughts of the Financial Times back in 2013. Translation? Children going into care are seen as a profit opportunity by capitalist vultures.

And business is good. The numbers of looked-after children rose to 75,420 this year, a 4% increase according to the Department for Education.

Austerity is the main driver of the rising number of children in care, as more and more families cannot cope financially. Social issues such as neglect and abuse also play a major role.

But also, the profit motive of privately owned care firms - mirrored in the business model of charity care firms - sees kids as commodities, risking a perverse incentive to put more into care.

Since 2010, savage austerity cuts have gutted already underfunded frontline services, and devastated local council welfare provision. This has pushed working-class and poor families to breaking point - and break they have.

Youth services destroyed, after-school programmes cut, nurseries privatised.

Draconian benefit sanctions, women's refuges disappearing, and widespread destruction of our welfare state. It all means a steady supply of children with price-tags for the private equity firms pulling the strings.

My own old foster care company, Foster Care Associates, was recently sold off to a private equity firm whose holdings include a leading company in pig slaughter. I'm sure they're only thinking about the kids' welfare!

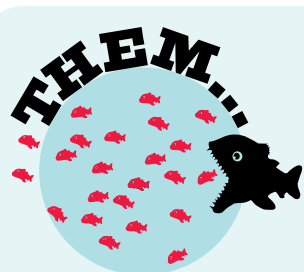
Who is to blame? The Tories and their austerity for sure - and Labour councils passing on the Tory cuts without a fight. And that's not even to mention Tony Blair's legacy: privatisation, opening up foster care to 'market forces'.

For the true welfare and protection of looked-after children we need foster care brought into public ownership, and all the cuts reversed. Councils have the power to start this now by using reserves and borrowing to make up the shortfall and building campaigns to win the money back.

The Tory government and its Blairite enablers must go. To solve the problems in foster care, we need a general election now. A Corbyn-led government, with socialist policies to end austerity, must commit to fully funded public ownership of the care sector.



photo Matt J Newman/CC



■ The ex-head of an 'academy' primary in south London is getting £850,000 from the school's funds. Business-run Van Gogh academy in Stockwell is funnelling money from its private leisure centre to disgraced boss Sir Greg Martin. We say: cut him off! Take the school and leisure centre back into council control!

■ What's the hottest social media fad among capitalists? The Times reports: "Instagram's latest craze: billionaires posing with tiger cubs."



■ Are you filthy, stinking rich and concerned about workers' revolt? Anxious plutocrats are installing luxury panic rooms in their mansions, says Business Insider. A bullet-proof, blast-proof chamber replete with flat-screen telly, plush furnishings - and a bar - could set you back a mere \$500,000.

■ What do you get the boss, who has everything, for Christmas? How about one of a series of 25 bespoke reboot editions of "claustrophobic" 1973 supercar the Lancia Stratos! Just €550,000 plus tax, says the FT. Oh, and you'll need to buy a Ferrari F430 first for the designers to build it out of.

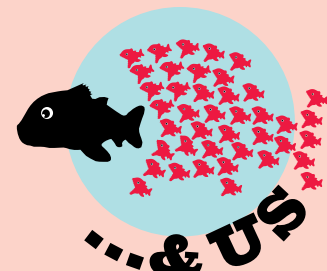


■ 25 years after the law that privatised British Rail, fares have risen an average of 20% in real terms. Some fares have more than doubled. And on top of this, the added cost to the taxpayer is £5 billion a year, says Labour analysis.

■ They crashed the economy. They made us pay for it. Now the banks are forcing us to travel further and further just to get to them. Two-thirds of branches have closed: 20,583 in 1988 to 7,586 today, says Which? Almost a fifth of us now live over two miles away from essential banking services.

■ Police bosses floated plans to relax stop-and-search rules so officers could search anyone - without reason. Even with the current "reasonable grounds" requirement, black people are eight times more likely to be stopped and searched, according to government figures.

■ The EU has erected over 1,000km of border walls since its inception in 1993, says the 'Building Walls' report. That's seven times the length of the Berlin Wall the EU's capitalist founders claimed they were overcoming. Over 34,000 desperate migrants have died trying to get into the EU in that time, most by drowning. That includes 3,915 last year alone.



■ Have you got news for the fishes? Email [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)



## Arriva Rail North under pressure after nineteenth Saturday strike

**Paul Gerrard**  
Salford Socialist Party

RMT transport union members picketing Manchester Victoria train station on 10 November had an unusual visitor - and it wasn't Santa Claus. It was none other than David Brown, managing director of Arriva Rail North.

Most had never seen him face-to-face before, only on TV or in the company magazine, and certainly never at a picket line. He was respectful, friendly even: "We don't want bad feeling with employees, like some other franchises" he said for example.

After he'd gone, his visit was widely interpreted as a sign that Arriva

Rail North are coming under real pressure. The RMT's switch of tactics - from striking mid-week, and regrettably hitting commuters - to striking on Saturdays, is paying off.

The commuter Facebook groups are back on side and businesses are the ones complaining. This was the nineteenth consecutive Saturday of strike action and the first to hit the popular - and extremely profitable - Christmas markets.

Rumour has it that Andy Burnham, Greater Manchester mayor, is jumping up and down complaining that Arriva Rail North hasn't settled with employees, like some other franchises" he said for example. After he'd gone, his visit was widely interpreted as a sign that Arriva

been settled!



**Arriva Rail North strikers**  
photo Elaine Brunskill

## Tube strike rock solid against victimisation

Workers on the Central line of the London Underground walked out for 24 hours on 7 November, organised by transport union RMT and train drivers' union Aslef.

At Leytonstone station in east London, pickets were joined by the assistant general secretary of the RMT, Steve Hedley.

Talking to Socialist Party members, workers described the events which led to the strike. These included a refusal to employ enough drivers, as well as the victimisation of a union member.

All this, when it emerged at the

end of 2016 that 50 bosses received £100,000 'golden handshakes' on leaving their management posts at Transport for London!

Despite the cold and wet weather, spirits were high on the picket line with strikers openly discussing the dispute and feelings of determination to keep on fighting.

The support of the Socialist Party and the National Shop Stewards Network was warmly received by strikers, who even shared home-made cake with us!

**Theo Sharieff**  
**Waltham Forest Socialist Party**

## Save the high street: public ownership, not ghost malls



photo Beata May/CC

**Iain Dalton**  
Chair, Usdaw Broad Left

This year has been a bad year for the retail sector. About 14 shops are closing a day, a net loss of 1,123 from Britain's main high streets in the first half of this year, according to accountants PwC. Squeezed incomes, reduced free time, transport difficulties and lower effective tax rates for online retailers have all hit the high street

hard. So it was hardly surprising that Tory chancellor Phillip Hammond made a great play of being its rescuer in the recent budget, pledging £1.5 billion.

This allocated £900 million for business rates relief - tax cuts for small retailers, meaning those with a 'rateable value' under £51,000.

But it's the big chains that are responsible for the bulk of store closures and workers out of a job.

Big retailers could benefit from the rest of the sum, allocated to 'transformation fund' for the high

street. This is supposed to be used for renovations and 'small-scale transport infrastructure'. However, the Tories will not disburse this according to the needs of retail workers and local communities, but instead to suit the needs of bosses and property owners.

### Udaw

In contrast to this, retail workers' union Usdaw recently launched its 'Industrial Strategy for Retail'. This includes some welcome measures: a £10-an-hour minimum wage,

minimum 16-hour contracts and the right to a contract reflecting regular hours worked. Also, reducing the gap between chief executive pay and ordinary workers, and measures to stop corporate tax avoidance.

The strategy supports Labour's pledge to introduce free bus travel for under-25s. It calls for removing the loophole allowing employers to avoid collective consultations when closing sites with less than 20 staff.

But it falls short of asking a central question: under whose control is the retail industry to be developed,

and in whose interests?

Udaw's 2017 conference resolved that failing retail companies should not to be allowed to sack workers and close stores, but be brought into public ownership instead. Usdaw should make this a cornerstone of its industrial strategy for retail.

Instead of handouts to private equity firms owning shopping centres, why not nationalise them, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need?

Instead of the further corporatisation of the high street, why not allow democratically elected committees of high street workers and the local community to decide what changes they feel are necessary?

They could decide rents and rates democratically. They could decide if and how surplus retail space should be converted to provide some other use which protects jobs, like community centres. In fact, this could begin immediately where Labour-controlled local authorities own shopping centres.

Only on the basis of empowering ordinary workers to control our communities and workplaces can we avoid the fate of the 'ghost malls' and 'ghost towns' that haunt the US.

### We say:

- Open the books of big retailers to inspection by workers and trade union representatives - to see where the profits have gone
- Renationalise the public transport system, with cheap, affordable fares
- Raise the minimum wage to £10 an hour, end zero-hour contracts and short-hour contracts
- Fight for a shorter working week of no more than 35 hours, without loss of pay
- Nationalise big businesses in retail and distribution under democratic workers' control and management as part of a democratic, socialist plan of production

## Hamilton posties walk out against bullying

**Ian Kerr and Matt Dobson**  
Socialist Party Scotland

A three-day wildcat strike by 45 postal workers in the Communication Workers Union (CWU) has taken place at Hamilton delivery office in Lanarkshire against management bullying.

The workers walked out and picketed on 15 November and agreed to return to work on 20 November after winning a settlement that satisfied the demands of the members.

A Hamilton postal worker told Socialist Party Scotland at the picket: "Since privatisation, bullying has become endemic. Workers up and down the country are being coerced and harassed into carrying a workload and more overtime that simply isn't possible. I wouldn't tolerate being spoken to the way we [have been by managers] on the street, for example, and we weren't about to take it in the workplace".

Recently there have also been walkouts in Gateshead and Grimsby



**15 November walkout**  
photo CWU

in the summer. It seems Royal Mail management are not living up to 'the culture of respect' element of the Four Pillars trade union agreement. The CWU should organise an official national strike ballot on the issue.

- Send messages of support to CWU Glasgow and District amalgamated branch cwuglasgowamal@btconnect.com

## 'WORKER'S DEATH COULD HAPPEN AGAIN' AT LEICESTER PLASTIC FACTORY

**Leicester Socialist Party**

No one expects to die at work, no one should have to. But under capitalism the harsh reality is that private profit often outweighs worker safety.

Tarsem Singh, an employee of 23 years for Nylacast Engineering Solutions, plastic engineers in Leicester, died in April 2016 after an industrial accident. He was hit by the end cap of a pressurised moulding machine travelling at a speed of up to 80mph.

A former employee has testified that he had been hit in the hand by an end cap in a previous incident. A safety expert has said the machine had not been properly risk-assessed and was an accident waiting to happen.

The case was due to come back to court in December but a worker for Nylacast contacted the Socialist when the workers were threatened by the company to keep their mouths shut.

### Threats

He told us that a statement was read out to the workers on behalf of the chief executive saying that the company was going to plead guilty in the court case so that Tarsem's family would get a pay-out, but that Nylacast was in no way guilty and that any worker caught saying otherwise would be disciplined.

This worker went on to say that the equipment at the company is falling apart. He said that machinery had been bought in 2000 and never replaced - that not only was Tarsem's death an avoidable accident but one

that was waiting to happen again.

According to him, there used to be two health and safety workers on site. But after one left in December 2017 he has not been replaced. All this from a company with a turnover of £32.4 million

Our source says that workers are furious at the death of their colleague and the threats from above. He described company bosses that are incredibly anti-union and workers as being in fear of losing their jobs.



**A worker has told the Socialist that workers were threatened to keep their mouths shut**

### Strike

But when two metal workers died at work in Cadiz, southern Spain, earlier this year, a general strike of thousands of metal workers across the sector paralysed the industry and held the bosses to account.

The strike made it clear that these deaths were not just accidents but a direct result of the high turnover of staff due to precarious contracts, the intense pace of work and the lack of security - all measures taken with the aim of saving money.

It is a scandal that globally and in the UK, the sixth richest economy in the world, that workers' lives are at risk. This is the reality of a capitalist system run for the wealth of a tiny privileged elite.

Workers organised in their workplaces can fight together in trade unions against callous exploitation and for a socialist world where profit does not stand in the way of health and safety and there is no price tag on a worker's life.

Trade unionists locally are discussing the possibility of organising a protest at the next court date.



photo Keith Hayes



On 10-11 November, around 1,000 people took part in Socialism 2018 - a weekend of discussion and debate hosted by the Socialist Party. **Kshama Sawant**, Seattle City Council Member for the Socialist Party's US co-thinkers, Socialist Alternative, was among the keynote speakers. Kshama led a discussion on the struggle against Trump in the US. Here, we carry edited extracts from her opening remarks.

The question on everybody's mind is can Trump be defeated? To begin to answer, it's first necessary to state that in Socialist Alternative we don't believe that US society is moving to the right as a whole.

Clearly, there is a consolidation and hardening of Trump's right-wing base. But it remains true that by far the majority of people in the US do not agree with his politics.

The larger picture is one of deep polarisation within US society. This is a result of the profound social crisis and the abysmal failure of capitalism to meet the needs of American workers and youth.

Since Trump's election in 2016, we have seen tectonic shifts in politics and organising.

We saw the colossal women's march - the largest day of protest in US history. We saw high school students leading an uprising against gun violence.

We've seen a record number of strike actions and strike authorisations - signalling the fresh rise of the mighty labour movement in the US. Most recently, we've seen the protests against the appointment of the reactionary judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

What's more, we are seeing a deep crisis in both the main capitalist parties in the US - the Democrats and the Republicans. The millennial generation is utterly rejecting corporate politics.

### Bankrupt ideas

The leadership of both parties is characterised by a bankruptcy of ideas on how to solve economic stagnation, falling living standards, and the threat of climate change - not to mention the way to fight oppression such as racism, sexism and prejudice against LGBT+ people.

There are impending signs of economic problems. 10 October saw a dramatic stock market plunge. Even capitalist economists are now warning of the potential for a new recession - possibly a cataclysmic one.

The question of how long Trump's base will stay with him hinges - at least partially - on the economic situation. Up until now, Trump has taken exclusive credit for any positive signs in the economy.

But one unintended side-effect of economic growth has been a confidence boost for workers. Workers have been more willing to take action. They

have been less willing to accept stagnant and falling wages.

We've also seen a real period of upheaval on women's issues. The Kavanaugh protests were just one expression of this.

These protests took on a grass-roots and working-class character, particularly when compared with the women's marches last year. In fact, they were decisively different.

They were much more youthful and radical in their make-up. They were characterised by a clear rejection of corporate feminism.

On the Kavanaugh protests we found openness to a deeper understanding of how women's oppression connects to capitalism.

### Google

We encountered similar openness among the 20,000 Google workers who took part in a work stoppage on 1 November. Workers from across the world - India to Seattle - participated in the strike.

They walked out with several demands, but particularly to protest against false 'arbitration' in cases of sexual harassment, which has been used to deny justice to victims.

The US Google workers said they were inspired by another one-day work stoppage - the walkout by McDonald's workers.

In many ways, that McDonald's walkout was the more significant of these two events. It was primarily led by low-paid women workers.

These low-paid workers inspired the much better paid, college-educated tech workers in Google. But this is only one glimpse of what is happening in the workers' movement in the US.

One example of rising militancy among a section of workers is the nationwide strike authorisation that has been won by hotel workers in the US. These workers took extremely powerful strike authorisation votes in multiple cities and many have gone on to take action.

There is a giant workers' movement waiting happen. The most significant political development in the US in the last year was the teachers' strike in West Virginia.

This is a state that's been dismissed as a 'red' (Republican) state. But it was here that this important labour uprising took place.

What was important about this strike was that it had rank-and-file leadership. It was an uprising against defunct trade union leadership - as well as against US capitalism.

Can Trump be defeated? Really the question translates into: can we see an uprising in the US labour movement that is able to

“ ”

In Socialist Alternative we don't believe that US society is moving to the right as a whole. Trump's right-wing base is hardening and consolidating. But by far the majority of people in the US do not agree with his politics



photo Socialist Alternative

“ ”

The millennial generation are rejecting capitalism and are looking for a viable alternative

push back, including against a bureaucratic trade union leadership joined at the hip to the corporate Democrats?

The West Virginia teachers' strike saw a fundamental break with 'business unionism'. The national leadership of the teachers' unions were pressuring the rank and file to take a shoddy agreement.

But the rank-and-file leaders decisively pushed back at this approach, refusing to take any 'handshake deal' cooked up with the Republican governor.

There are other glimmers of hope as well. There's a real

rejection of the exploitative conditions faced by Amazon warehouse workers, for example.

### Tax Amazon

This mood to fight for workers' rights has combined with the 'tax Amazon' struggle that Socialist Alternative has led in Seattle.

Because of all these battles, Amazon has been forced to concede a bit - taking all its workers to \$15 an hour.

Initially they said they would fund the rise for part-time workers by abolishing bonuses for full-time staff. But they were forced to withdraw from this attack under mass

pressure.

These important examples of struggle offer a foretaste of what is likely to come in the future in the US.

travelling through Mexico, for example - calling it an 'invasion'.

But the other main feature of the midterms was the deficiency of the Democratic Party leadership. It focused on 'rejecting hate', but offered no answers on housing, healthcare, education, jobs and so on.

But another important thing to recognise was the surge of left and progressive candidates standing as Democrats - something we in Socialist Alternative have a different approach to.

The Democrats fielded a record number of women and teacher candidates. This contributed to

a record turnout in many districts, despite the voter suppression spearheaded by the Trump administration.

### Medicare for all

Among the progressive candidates that ran in the midterms, 52% put forward Medicare for all. So, while the Democratic Party nationally did not put this forward, in many areas individual Democrat candidates did.

There were also a number of self-described socialists standing. This included Julia Salazar, who is headed to the New York State senate, as well as Alexandria Ocasio-

Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, who are both heading to congress.

This is one of the major components of change happening in the US: the rise of socialist ideas. The millennial generation are rejecting capitalism and looking for a viable alternative.

There is a refusal to accept a society that only offers low-waged jobs, that does not provide solutions to climate change, and so on.

All along the West Coast, the whole summer was filled with unprecedented forest fires. This was a live reminder that this defunct system does not offer a solution.

Both the Democratic Party

leadership and the new left candidates elected to congress are now going to be put to the test of the rising expectations of their base.

Right after it became clear that the Democrats would take control of congress, at a meeting of donors and strategists, their leader in congress, Nancy Pelosi, promised that the House of Representatives would now function as a "bipartisan exchange of ideas".

"Bipartisan" in reality means the Democrats and Republicans colluding with each other to act in the interests of Wall Street against a pro-working-class agenda.

Some high-profile progressive candidates did lose. We saw the defeat of Beto O'Rourke in the Texas senate race, who lost to the odious Ted Cruz.

The Democratic Party leadership is now attempting to use results like this to justify its conclusion that the midterms vindicated a 'centrist' approach - as opposed to an approach offering transformative social change.

This is ridiculous. Beto O'Rourke had an outstanding result. He was running in a state in which there has been no state-wide Democrat win in more than 25 years. This race actually showed that the shift to the left we have seen in the big cities and among young people is now spreading to the south.

### Referendums

In Florida, voters restored voting rights to 1.4 million residents convicted of a felony who have completed their sentences. This is a massive victory - especially for African Americans who, due to racist policies of mass incarceration, are disproportionately affected by this law.

Three 'red' states also voted to expand Medicaid. This is very important. Three cities in California also passed a tax on big business - victories which must be seen in the light of the tax Amazon struggle.

In 2019, Socialist Alternative faces a major battle. I am fighting for re-election to Seattle City Council.

This will be a battle fought not only between socialists and big business, but between the working-class and the capitalist class. The lines have been drawn in the tax Amazon struggle.

We would argue that the key component missing in US politics is a decisive left leadership that can point a way forward.

An example that demonstrates this effectively is that of Missouri. In this state there was one senator up for re-election - Claire

McCaskill - a big-shot in the Democratic Party establishment. She lost the race to a no-name Republican.

Why? Because rather than taking up a working-class agenda to push back against Trump, instead she did what the Democratic establishment does: when the Republicans ratchet up their right-wing agenda, the Democrats feel they have to move to the right.

She released radio ads supporting Trump's anti-migrant agenda. The only choice McCaskill offered was the lesser of two evils: 'right-wing lite'. That is not a real choice.

This is the same state - Missouri - where voters backed an increase in the minimum wage the very same day. What's more, in August these same voters defeated proposed anti-union 'right to work' legislation.

### Democrats

We need a political force that will fight just as hard for ordinary people as Trump fights for the right wing. It's also necessary to discuss whether the Democratic Party will be an effective vehicle for this.

Socialist Alternative believes not. But, at the same time, we don't make the mistake of isolating ourselves from the tens of thousands of young people who consider themselves democratic socialists and who want to test this strategy out.

These are people serious about building an alternative. We have a friendly and frank approach towards them.

Just yesterday (on 9 November), Socialist Alternative published a letter of solidarity and support for Salazar, Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib, explaining that we think their elections herald the possibility of real change, and that for that change to happen they will have to fight against the Democrat leadership in congress and the state legislature.

We warn that if they end up choosing a route of compromise with the Democratic Party leadership, whether they want to or not, they will end up betraying working-class people.

That's why we continue to raise the urgent need to build an independent party for the working class in the US - a party which can offer a genuine alternative to the corporate politicians - and which we believe needs to be based on mass social struggle.

## Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

November issue includes...

■ Corbynisim three years on

■ How revolution ended World War One

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## Step up your fundraising for the Christmas Collectathon!

**Ken Douglas**  
Socialist Party national treasurer

Just over £35,000 pounds was donated and pledged at the Socialism 2018 rally on 10 November.

This is a fantastic result which means we are on course to smash the fighting fund target for the whole of 2018 - but only if we maintain our fundraising drive. So we can't stop now!

Socialist Party branches are already making plans for a bumper Christmas Collectathon to make sure we push that total as high as we can. Starting on Saturday 1 December, we are asking all branches to plan extra fundraising stalls, Christmas parties, raffles and more.

The Tories are on the rocks. They could be pushed out with a determined fight - especially if a bold lead is given by Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union leaders.

Despite being massively weakened, the Tories are continuing their attacks on working-class living standards, including destroying

council services, undermining the effectiveness of the NHS, and continuing with Universal Credit.

Socialist Party members will be campaigning in the town centres and shopping arcades with our message that the Tories are so weak they can be forced out, and that if we fight the cuts we can win. There is only one 'people's vote' that we need - and that is a general election now.

We have no rich backers. Indeed we are the bitter opponents of the rich - like in Seattle, where Socialist Alternative councillor Kshama Sawant has led a campaign against Amazon and its hundred-billionaire boss, Jeff Bezos.

Our fighting fund is raised from the support of ordinary working-class people. It is crucial to our ability to spread socialist ideas as widely as possible, through the pages of the Socialist, through leaflets and pamphlets, and the campaigning of our members.

Can you assist us in this struggle? Can you make a donation to take us nearer to our goal?

### Donate today!

Agree with what you read in the Socialist? Help us fund the fightback with a donation to the Socialist Party's fighting fund

- [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate) for card or recurring donations
- call 020 8988 8777 to donate by card
- cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



### Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ received	£ target	October to December 2018										Deadline: 2 January 2019
Wales	5,301	2,300											230%
Northern	1,392	750											186%
West Midlands	4,508	2,600											173%
East Midlands	1,983	1,850											107%
Southern	1,675	1,600											105%
Yorkshire	3,100	3,300											94%
South West	1,586	1,800											88%
South East	618	750											82%
Eastern	912	1,200											76%
North West	1,337	2,100											64%
London	2,968	6,100											49%
Other	2,307	5,650											41%
TOTAL	27,685	30,000											92%



photo Mary Finch

## Thousands march against racism Now Corbyn and unions must take lead

## Mansfield council must step in to save miners' park

**Jon Dale**  
Mansfield Socialist Party

The proposed closure of Berry Hill Park in Mansfield has led to a storm of protest. Around 300 turned out at a few days' notice to demonstrate. 7,000 have signed an online petition in under a fortnight.

The park, with its running track, football pitches and beautiful open spaces, is a vital service for the whole town, as well as hosting regional and

national events.

Berry Hill Park is privately owned and run by a charitable trust, Berry Hill Social Welfare Centre. Its three trustees are ex-miners nominated by the breakaway 'Union of Democratic Mineworkers'.

The UDM emerged after the 1984-85 miners' strike, when most Nottinghamshire branch officials for the National Union of Mineworkers encouraged their members to work through the strike.

A small part of the park is leased

by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) - a charity set up before coal nationalisation through a levy on coalmine owners. After nationalisation, miners contributed weekly deductions from their wages to CISWO, until the last (reprivatised) pits closed.

The park needs its facilities repaired and maintained, but the Berry Hill Social Welfare Centre is not getting enough income for this.

The Berry Hill Social Welfare Centre trustees wanted to sell the piece



**The Tories are responsible for the Windrush scandal that exposed capitalism's racist immigration policies... the most immediate demand in fighting racism is for a general election now**

**Isia Priya**  
London Socialist Party

Thousands of trade unionists, students and anti-racist campaigners marched on the national unity demonstration against racism and fascism on 17 November.

Socialist Party members and Refugee Rights campaigners took part in the demo with placards and leaflets calling for "jobs and homes, not racism." We chanted loud and clear that we want to get rid of the racist Tories.

The Tories are responsible for the Windrush scandal that exposed the capitalist establishment's racist immigration policies.

This caused a mass outrage and forced Amber Rudd to resign as home secretary. Disgracefully, just a day before the demo, Theresa May appointed Rudd back into cabinet as the secretary of state for work and pensions!

This desperate attempt to resolve the latest fallout from the Tories' Brexit crisis underlines the need to get rid of them. So the most immediate demand in fighting racism is for a general election now.

Jeremy Corbyn should call an emergency meeting of the trade unions to organise a mass demonstration. The Trade Union Congress, instead of just giving support to anti-racist demos called by other organisations, should use all its resources to build for such a demo.

That would be the best launchpad for a serious jobs and homes, not racism campaign, to lead the fight-back against racism and the right, and force the Tories out.

## Solidarity with Irish rape trial protests



photo James Ivens

**London Socialist Party**

Megaphones and placards declaring "end victim-blaming" and "fight sexism - no to all oppression, no to austerity" were adorned with lacy thongs.

Young women and men crowded round the Irish embassy in London on 16 November in solidarity with protests against the terrible treatment of young rape victims in Irish courts.

"You have to look at the way she was dressed. She was wearing a thong with a lace front."

These were the words of the barrister in a recent court case in Cork, where a 17-year-old's underwear was used as evidence against her accusation of sexual assault. The case has caused national and international outrage.

The London solidarity protest was called by Socialist Students. Enraged by the sexist actions of the courts, inspired by the protests in Ireland and the actions of Socialist Party member and Solidarity TD (MP) Ruth Coppinger holding up a lacy thong in the Irish parliament, nearly everyone on the protest signed up to get involved, and attend a Socialist Students meeting on 5 December on

how to oust the Tories.

As well as lots of chanting, and speeches from Socialist Students London organiser Helen Pattison and UCL Socialist Students member Keishia Taylor, many protesters took the opportunity of our open mic to speak about their own experiences.

Socialist Party national organiser Sarah Sachs-Eldridge explained about Women's Lives Matter. This is a new campaign which is tackling head-on the big attacks taking place on women's refuges and women's services in Britain, calling on Labour councils to stop implementing the cuts.

Socialist Party London regional secretary Paula Mitchell explained the role of the organised working class in combating sexism, fighting to kick out the Tories and for a Corbyn-led government that stops the cuts and implements socialist policies.

### Women's Lives Matter national meeting

- Saturday 8 December, 10.30am to 4pm, St George's Centre, Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3DL
- Crèche places available - search 'Women's Lives Matter national meeting' on Facebook

reserves and borrowing powers to fully fund park maintenance and all local services, while building a campaign to win the needed money from the government.

This park is used by former miners, their families and the community suffering from the loss of its mining industry. Successive governments have taken £3.5 billion from the miners' pension scheme since British Coal privatisation in 1994. How could the government claim it doesn't have the money?

■ *The last issue of the Socialist reported on the threatened closure of Berry Hill Park. After the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation contacted us, Mansfield Socialist Party has clarified its previous article with further information*

## Stop Nottingham Labour's cuts to disabled travel!

**Clare Wilkins**  
Nottingham Socialist Party

"We're making more cuts! You ain't seen nothing yet!" This was the comment of Graham Chapman, deputy leader of Nottingham's Labour council when asked about cuts to the disabled person's mobility card, which gives free bus and tram travel. There are many thousands of card-holders.

The council cut the validity of the card from 24/7 to 9.30am to 11pm in August. This time restriction is having a major impact on disabled people who need to travel to work, hospital appointments, volunteering commitments, day centres and education.

Cutting the hours you can use the card saves only £100,000 a year. But it is part of £100 million of cuts that the council is making - £27 million this year.

Campaigners lobbied the full council meeting on 12 November and collected many signatures on a petition calling on councillors to reverse the cut.

There was a lot of interest from members of the public. One woman donated £20 to the campaign. Five people were interested in getting involved.

Nine campaigners went into the council meeting to hear Councillor Dave Liversidge, head of transport and PR, answer questions raised by the campaign.



He tried to justify the cut by saying the council could not sustain the expenditure of £100,000 a year because it would use up reserves. The council has reserves of £200 million! He said councillors have to make 'savings' because government funding has been cut.

The only 'consultation' carried out was by internet and email with the council's 'disability improvement group'. This was inadequate. Many disabled people will not have known about it.

**Nottingham Socialist Party says:**

- Reverse the time restriction
- No cuts to other services
- No new charges or increases in charges
- No to all council cuts - use reserves and borrowing powers instead, while building a campaign to get the needed money off this weak Tory government

## Only fighting cuts would make Cov Labour 'council of the year'

**A Coventry Unison union member**

Coventry's Labour council has been shortlisted for the 'council of the year' award by the Local Government Chronicle, which will come as a shock to many Coventry workers and residents.

This recognition comes despite savage cuts to local services, including libraries and bin collections, and a 29.5% rise in complaints about the council.

Coventry's entry unsurprisingly mentions the city being named UK City of Culture 2021. While this is obviously very welcome, to a lot of people in Coventry it feels more like a city of homelessness, foodbanks and austerity.

The entry also praises the council for "revolutionising" the way services are delivered. What that 'revolutionary' change means on the ground is that a number of libraries are now run by volunteers, youth clubs have closed, and disabled children's families were threatened with having to pay for transport to school.

It means staff in Cov's Employment Support Service and Job Shop,

who help unemployed people get back into work, have had to fight redundancy. It means the doorways of boarded-up shops are full of people sleeping rough.

Labour council leader George Duggins said the council has taken "brave decisions" to put them in a "good position for the future." But the council's own 'medium-term financial strategy' says there will be a £23.5 million financial gap by 2022. These cuts are presented as inevitable by the council. Unfortunately some of the local media have bought into this line - a recent poll in the Coventry Telegraph asked readers to choose between two bad options, increased council tax or even more cuts!

The Socialist Party has consistently proposed an alternative to these vicious cuts.

The council should use its reserves and borrowing powers to continue funding services, while building a campaign throughout the city to win the money back from the government.

If that happens, Coventry City Council will deserve the title of council of the year!





Stephen Kinnock is stunned by Jeremy Corbyn's 2017 election result photo BBC/the summer that changed everything



photo Steve Score

## Non-fiction: Spirit of Britain, purpose of Labour

# NOTHING TO OFFER FROM THE BLAIRITES

Dave Reid

Labour's right wing is attempting to regroup.

They have been reeling from a succession of hammer blows since 2015: Jeremy Corbyn's landslide victory for the Labour leadership; the Brexit vote in the referendum; and in 2017, to the amazement of the right wingers, Corbyn's left manifesto gained the biggest increase of the vote for Labour at a general election since 1945.

The image that most eloquently conveyed the dismay of the right wing at Corbyn's success in the general election was the picture of a stunned Stephen Kinnock watching the result of the exit poll in the BBC programme 'Labour - the summer that changed everything'.

One of the biggest obstacles that the Blairites have faced is their own policies. Who among working-class people looking towards the Labour Party to offer an alternative would support more austerity, higher tuition fees, a rock-bottom £7.50 minimum wage and so on?

One of the biggest condemnations of Ed Miliband's manifesto in the 2015 election is that the Tory government has actually implemented some of it.

Now Kinnock and a section of

right wingers are regrouping from the devastating blow of Corbyn's programme performing well in the election. 'Spirit of Britain, purpose of Labour' is a collection of articles by 14 Blairites attempting to pull together some kind of manifesto - a 'new' ideology and programme, with a capital 'N'.

This book feels like they have woken up from the nightmare and are attempting to come to terms with the new reality. But they only have a dim view of the reality that has slapped them in the face.

### Weak policies

The authors are all establishment figures on Labour's right. The painfully weak policies they offer underline the weakness of their position.

The book illustrates that Blairism has nothing to offer working people post-2008.

Prior to the capitalist economic crisis it was possible for them, despite privatisation and neoliberalism, to allow a few crumbs from the overflowing capitalist table to fall to working-class people. That era is over forever and now there are not even crumbs on offer.

They are scratching around trying to reorder the chaos of the market, staying within the confines of a diseased and corrupt capitalist system. The book tries to be innovative and 'modern' but it ends up with familiar



This book feels like the Blairites have woken up from a nightmare and are attempting to come to terms with the new reality

ideas to rejuvenate capitalism - investment in infrastructure, a wealth tax, community banks, new models of ownership - without ending the power over the economy of the top 100 or so banks and monopolies.

Kinnock's touching faith in capitalism is revealed when he attacks the 'hard left': "in practice the desire to end markets altogether shows a complete lack of confidence in the nation state's ability to shape markets for the common good." If Kinnock can show an example of nation states shaping markets for the common good I would like to see it.

Their programme is limited to things like adult education funds for people who don't go to university, government-funded training days for workers, a decentralised national curriculum for schools in England, and baby boxes - already introduced in Scotland.

Nothing shows the anaemia of their policies better than housing. Faced with the record homelessness, sky-high rents and hundreds of thousands of empty properties, the group propose... wait for it... restrictions on foreign ownership and an overhaul of the land market.

They do propose a suspension of the right-to-buy scheme - which has already happened in Wales and Scotland - but they do not have any plan for mass council-house building, hoping that private

developers can be persuaded to build new homes.

Just as you are beginning to doze off and think you are having a dream about Miliband and the 2015 general election, the reader comes across a genuinely 'radical' policy - devaluation of the pound by one third, proposed by millionaire donor to New Labour, Jim Mills.

This would increase prices and slash real wages at a stroke. Mill says the intention is to achieve parity with the dollar, dramatically improve the competitiveness of British goods and revive the manufacturing industry.

### Devaluation

But the shot in the arm to British manufacturing that Mills hopes for would be blunted by the blinkered approach of British capitalists who would see this as a chance to make quick, short-term profits, rather than expand production to win new markets. And the standard of living for working people would suffer yet another hit.

The main thing that these Blairites took from the Brexit vote is that Labour has to be 'patriotic' now - as though the desire of working-class Leave voters for more control over society is the same thing as the flag waving of Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg.

This stereotypical analysis leads

to such gems as "it must never be forgotten that the communarians' worldview centres on and revolves around the nation state: it is the primary source of democracy, legitimacy and identity."

I suppose we should acknowledge that Kinnock and co have moved on from the Blairite habit of just calling working-class Leave voters "racist". Now the buzz word is 'communitarian'.

Arising from the false idea that politics is now dominated by cultural politics instead of class politics, Kinnock has divided Britain into two tribes - communarians and 'cosmopolitans'.

Communitarians are people in 'conservative' working-class communities in the 'left behind' areas of the north and Wales which voted Leave. Cosmopolitans are 'liberal individualists' in the cities.

Having just discovered the working class in his own Aberavon constituency, Kinnock is attempting to find ways of attracting communarians by appealing to their patriotism and sense of social solidarity - although if he genuinely believes that communarians of Aberavon sing 'god save the queen', then he has not learnt much.

His dichotomy is false.

It is true that older workers in working-class communities - affected by the media campaign against Jeremy Corbyn and vicious attacks by Kinnock and other Blairites - are more wary of the Labour leadership. But the idea that they have separate interests from younger workers in urban areas is utterly false.

Kinnock believes that public-sector pay rises and benefits are unpopular to communarians. But communarian communities in south Wales have much higher proportions of public-sector workers and benefit recipients than cosmopolitan areas in the south east of England.

### Blunted programme

The problem is that Corbyn's anti-austerity programme has been blunted by the Blairites and Kinnock himself, blurring the message brought to areas devastated by neoliberalism and austerity.

So long as Corbyn supports Labour local authorities carrying out cuts there will be a suspicion that he will not really follow through and really attack austerity in government. But the Kinnockites have no answer themselves on these issues.

Incredibly, in the chapter on public services, not once are the cuts or austerity even mentioned. It is not so surprising when you discover that the author, Steve Reed, was leader of Lambeth Council.

Reed carried through brutal cuts to care services, libraries and children's services, while championing co-ops and mutuals so that council workers could be given the job of cutting their own pay and conditions. To the Blairites, cutbacks and austerity are a given that cannot be challenged.

Kinnock and co have done their best to find a way out of their nightmare, but to quote the Roman poet Horace - the mountain has laboured and brought forth a mouse, or rather a group of little mice.



Natural History Museum photo Nancy Taaffe



## The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

■ Send your news, views and criticism in no more than 150 words to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk) - or if you're not online, Socialist Inbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



### ■ "A cathedral to nature"

The natural history museum was built as "a cathedral to natural history". It's a great example of architecture that is not dedicated to religion but the natural sciences.

Half of the facade has living wildlife depicted in the stone, climbing the pillars and framing the windows. The other half of the building has fossils and animals long since gone.

Recently, I saw the wildlife photographer of the year exhibition here. The exhibition is rather beautiful, but heavy in the air is the struggle by animals against the ravages of capitalism.

Many of the photographers are environmentalists trying to stop wildlife extinction.

One photograph actually made me cry, it was of a chimpanzee holding her dead baby. The caption said she walked around with it for days on her back. Eventually she ate it.

It's not good that the exhibition charges so much to get in and is corporately sponsored. But these places are great examples of what culture could be in a socialist society.

**Nancy Taaffe**  
Waltham Forest, London

### ■ Packed trains are unsafe

London's packed trains and tubes are unsafe. On an overground train recently I found myself having to push my way to the door to try and get out at Canada Water.

I couldn't help but be annoyed at the passenger in front who was going so slowly the doors were closing. Guiltily, I

then realised the young woman was (a) close to collapse and (b) very partially sighted.

Another commuter managed to keep doors open as I guided her the last few yards through door then along platform until she could sit down. Another young man was already sat beside her with other commuters assisting because he too had fainted in the crush.

We need decently funded, non-privatised public transport, schools and services. We need a general election. And teachers should vote Yes in the National Education Union strike ballot too!

**Martin Powell-Davies**

**Lewisham, London**

### ■ Universal credit - universal poverty

We held a great Socialist Party stall recently against Universal Credit, now being rolled out in Salford. There were plenty of gut-wrenching stories.

I came home to listen to a Radio 4 programme about the subject. It's even worse than I thought.

The programme gave the example of a couple, both were NHS workers, paid monthly on fixed hours. If their wages are paid into the bank early because the payment date falls at a weekend, they are deemed to have had two payments in one month and Universal Credit payments are stopped!

So Universal Credit turns a couple working for the UK's biggest employer into zero-hour workers! Two things: the NHS should pay them both a living wage so they don't need to claim, and we need to get Universal Credit scrapped!

**Paul Gerrard**  
Salford

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.



## Spanish state:



photo Libres y Combativas

# Over one million students strike against sexism and for inclusive sex education

**Sindicato de Estudiantes (Student Union)**

The general student strike called by the Sindicato de Estudiantes (SE) and Libres y Combativas (free and combative, socialist feminist platform of SE and Izquierda Revolucionaria - CWI in the Spanish state) has been a powerful success.

More than 1.5 million students emptied the classroom with 90% support for the strike in secondary schools. And more than 100,000 people participated in over 60 morning street demonstrations all over the Spanish state!

The determination we have shown against sexism in classrooms, sexist violence and patriarchal 'justice' is also a powerful warning to the social-democratic Sanchez government. We are not satisfied with gestures and promises.

We have had enough of this government looking the other way, and doing nothing to end the power of the Catholic Church in education, tolerating its homophobic and sexist propaganda, accepting scandalous court sentences from the Francoist justice system which allows rapists impunity, and maintaining cuts and privatisation in education.

From the early hours of the morning it was clear that the strike would be massive and the demonstrations very strong. In secondary schools it was solid: 90% in Galicia, Asturias, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Valencia, Andalucia, Madrid and elsewhere, and over 90% in Extremadura, the Canary Islands, Murcia and so on. There was also major participation in universities around the country.

The demonstrations also had impressive turnouts: 15,000 in Madrid, 12,000 in Barcelona, 5,000 in Bilbao and thousands more in other Basque cities. Over 15,000 in Andalucia, 5,000 in Galicia, 5,000 in Valencia, 2,000 in Gijon and tens of thousands more around the country.

The atmosphere was combative and full of enthusiasm on all demonstrations. We shouted slogans including: "My skirt provokes nothing!", "With or without clothes, don't touch me!", "No means no and the rest is rape!", "Yes to sex education, no to religion classes", "Whoever is in government we will defend our rights", "The struggle will be feminist or not at all!", and many other chants.

We were also delighted with the presence of hundreds of pensioners, veteran class fighters who protested by our side - called out by the coordinating body of the mass pensions



**We made it clear that we would not take one step back in our struggle, that we defend revolutionary anti-capitalist feminism...**

movement. Their presence was an inspiration as reflected in their slogan - "Whoever is in government we will defend our rights" - which we adopted.

We also had the support of dozens of feminist organisations, LGB and trans rights campaigns and movements of women in struggle, such as the Kellys (cleaning workers), anti-violence against women activists, and movement for the abolition of prostitution, who made a lively speech at our Madrid rally.

Many Libres y Combativas and SE activists in schools and universities also spoke at rallies in all the major cities, making it clear that we would not take one step back in our struggle, that we defend revolutionary anti-capitalist feminism, and will not tolerate any

attacks on our rights.

We explained how the movement of working-class women is completely linked to the struggle against the social injustices and oppression of the capitalist system.

We also want to highlight the presence of thousands of our male comrades in struggle, who joined us in a united strike, and who are together with us in the front line against attacks on our rights and those of LGBT+ youth, struggling together against sexism and sexist prejudices.

This strike was a very important step forward to build a youth and student movement against sexism in schools and universities after the great strikes of 8 March and 10 May this year, to win our demands from the government and education ministry.

We will not stop until we have forced this government (led by the social-democratic PSOE) to apply a universal sex education policy in all schools, to educate against sexism, abuse and rape culture, and against homophobia and transphobia.

We will not stop until we have eliminated all internal school

rules which enforce repressive dress codes or go against LGBT+ people.

We will not stop until the government takes disciplinary measures against any teachers - a small minority - who defend sexist attitudes. And until they once and for all repeal the reactionary education bill - LOMCE - and grant free education from nursery to university.

We want respect and dignity, the freedom to be who we are, and the end of abuse and humiliation.

■ Ireland rape trial protests - see page 10



## POLITICAL TURMOIL IN SRI LANKA



**Warring capitalist politicians Rajapaksa (left) and Wickremesinghe threaten to plunge Sri Lanka into civil strife** photos Alexander Nikiforov/CC and US Dept of State/CC

A power struggle between Sri Lanka's main establishment parties erupted into violence last week, with MPs brawling in parliament.

The constitutional crisis began when President Maithripala Sirisena announced on 26 October that he had sacked prime minister and former political ally, Ranil Wickremesinghe, and installed in his place Sirisena's former foe, ex-president Mahinda Rajapaksa (see 'Parliamentary coup in Sri Lanka' in the Socialist 31 October 2018). Rajapaksa, who ruled with an iron fist during 2005-2015, is responsible for war crimes against the country's Tamil people.

Sirisena later dissolved parliament and called a snap election, only for this to be overturned by the Supreme Court. In the meantime, opposition MPs passed two no-confidence votes against Rajapaksa.

Below, we carry a shortened statement from the United Socialist Party (CWI Sri Lanka) on the current crisis.

Sri Lanka is seeing an unprecedented political crisis instigated by desperate and power-hungry capitalist rulers.

Although perpetrated by cliques of the ruling classes, it has a direct bearing on the lives of the ordinary working people and the oppressed minorities in the country.

For the first time in Sri Lanka's history, an intractable conflict has developed between the presidency and the elected legislature, threatening the very edifice of capitalist democracy.

This will lead to civil strife - where the warring factions of various rival cliques take the law into their own hands.

Sirisena and Rajapaksa announced that they will not obey the majority decision in the parliament and they will continue with their illegal government.

As Marxists, we do not believe that capitalist parliaments represent the interests of workers and poor people or their democratic aspirations. Rajapaksa's call to 'the people' to

come onto the streets is really a call to his supporters, who are racially and religiously motivated, and who will create violence and confusion.

The blatantly neoliberal politician Ranil Wickremesinghe of the United National Party has also called on his supporters to fill the streets. The calls by both the rival wings of the capitalist class can lead to mayhem and blood on the streets.

### Workers and poor people

The hooliganism that we have seen inside and outside parliament has exposed the limitations of capitalist democracy.

It is clear that there is no way out for the struggling masses if they continue to be ruled by the capitalist and landlord class whose only interest is to remain in power by any means. People should refuse to be cannon-fodder for either wing of the capitalists.

However, in the absence of mass workers' organisations capable of articulating and expressing the demands of the mass of the

population, racists and violent populist forces could begin to dominate.

Hence it is extremely important that all workers' organisations and the left take immediate action. We are calling on all trade unions, working-class youth, and oppressed Tamil people to come forward to form a united force against all capitalist cliques and to put forward an alternative anti-capitalist, socialist programme.

Defence committees should be formed, with trade union involvement, in municipal neighbourhoods and villages to counter any potential violent attacks.

We demand the immediate establishment of a democratic and accountable Constituent Assembly (CA). Elections to the CA could be held across the country in constituencies representing all communities.

We call on all unions and left forces to establish a national platform to discuss the way forward.

■ **Statement in full on socialistworld.net**



### 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!**

[socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join) 020 8988 8777

@socialist\_party text 07761 818 206 /CWiSocialistParty



# SAVE OUR NHS OUST THE TORY WRECKERS!



photo Paul Mattsson

**Zoë**  
NHS junior doctor

Staff shortages in the National Health Service (NHS) could triple in just a decade, according to recent research from major think tanks. Already, the NHS is over 100,000 short staffed. A tripling of this number will see one in every four jobs left empty and

potentially spell the end for the NHS within the next ten years.

Although shocking, for workers on the ground this figure is no surprise. Years of vicious cuts under the coalition and Tory governments have decimated our health system. Since 2010, staff have seen a 14% real terms pay cut. Dozens of A&Es have closed and tens of thousands elective operations are cancelled each year.

Working in such a dismally

underfunded system is demoralising. We cannot take time off when we want as it leaves the wards even more understaffed. We forgo breaks and work unpaid overtime to keep the system afloat. And perhaps worst of all, we do not have the time or resources to provide the level of care that our patients deserve.

It's no wonder that NHS doctors are leaving for the greener pastures of Australia or New Zealand, where hours are shorter and pay is up to

50% higher. But if the above predictions are true and more staff leave, the vicious circle of working overtime to fill rota gaps will only worsen the situation for those who stay.

As another winter health crisis looms, the future of the NHS, yet again, comes to the political forefront. May's government is on the brink of collapse over Brexit. Now is the time for the trade union leaders, Jeremy Corbyn and the left, both in and outside of Labour, to mobilise

working and middle-class people to force a general election and oust this mess of a government.

Only by booting out May and her Tory wrecking crew and implementing socialist policies, can a fully funded, fully staffed and publicly owned NHS be secured.



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