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CHRISTMAS

The Socialist quiz of
2018 and Christmas
book offers

>p14-15



FRANCE

Eyewitness: Macron's
concessions 'too little, too
late' as movement spreads

>p12-13



JOHN MCLEAN

Revolutionary
fighter of the
working class

>p8-9

Corbyn, unions: call action now

FINISH THE TORIES OFF



This issue of the Socialist goes to press amid an unprecedented governmental crisis. Just one day before the planned vote in parliament over Theresa May's Brexit deal proposal, she was forced to cancel it.

It wasn't just that she was going to suffer a defeat - that had been clear for weeks.

It was that it became clear that the scale of the defeat would have rendered May's premiership unsustainable.

Jeremy Corbyn was right to point out that this move exposed that the UK does not have a functioning government.

But the question is what do we - workers, trade unionists, socialists and all opposed to austerity - do about it, and what role does Corbyn himself play in that process?

>Continued on page 2

■ **General election now!**

■ **For a mass, trade union-led, national demonstration to kick the Tories out at the start of the New Year**

■ **France shows mass action gets results**



What we think

>Continued from front

An effective strategy could mean a breakthrough in favour of the interests of the majority has been made by the time the next issue of the Socialist is published in the New Year. But this seems far from guaranteed.

May's hope seems to be to force the Tory rebels' hand by leaving the vote until too late for any alternative to be agreed. The choice before parliament will be May's deal or no deal, and she hopes MPs are more opposed to 'crashing out' than to her version of Brexit. There is no binding legal stipulation for a meaningful vote in parliament until 28 March - the day before the planned departure date.

May plans to go back to negotiators for further assurances that the 'backstop arrangement' for Northern Ireland - which is the ostensible sticking point for many Tory Brexiteers as it could result in the UK remaining in the Customs Union indefinitely - would be temporary and unlikely. But the Tory backbenchers are seeking what they term legally binding assurances which would unravel the whole withdrawal agreement.

So what will be their response when the deal is brought back for the so-called meaningful vote? Clearly many are furious at May's approach so far, and the threat of a no confidence vote being launched against her within the party remains present. On the other hand, there are limiting factors on the Brexiteers' opposition. They were overwhelmingly clear, for example, that they wouldn't back Labour if Corbyn moved a no confidence vote against the government in parliament. Clearly these right-wing Tories are not a force we can rely on to bring about a desirable outcome for the working class - defence of the overall interests of capitalism is more important to most of them than any 'principles' on Brexit.

Blairites

The same is true of the majority of the other side of the parliamentary chamber - the pro-Remain Blairite Labour MPs. These defenders of capitalism could also get behind May if faced with an acrimonious breakdown in talks and a no-deal Brexit, which would be devastating to the interests of the capitalist class and the neoliberal EU. On the other hand, pragmatism may dictate that they choose to hold off bringing the civil war in the Labour Party to a head at this stage - especially in the context of realising that May cannot see this process through. Why threaten their careers - and their future sabotaging role in a Corbyn government - to save a sinking ship?

Fundamentally neither the EU, the Tories nor the Blairites are capable of taking things forward for ordinary people. We must rely instead on our own strength. So what do we do? How can we get a Brexit in the interests of the majority in society? The question is posed of throwing open the whole process to a new approach - one that rejects the capitalist chaos we are currently watching unfold - led by new negotiators.

An open letter from leading figures in the 'Socialist' International - the 'international' of the German SPD and ex-president Hollande's French Socialist Party and so on - appealed to Corbyn to commit to revoking Brexit if he comes to power. Again this shows the bankruptcy of these old organisations and the need to create a new, socialist, internationalist challenge to capitalism, including the

TORY CHAOS REACHES FEVER PITCH - CORBYN AND UNIONS MUST MOBILISE WORKERS TO KICK THEM OUT



Socialist Party members call for a general election to kick out the Tories at Westminster on 11 December photo Paula Mitchell

institutions of the EU. This is the case not only here but elsewhere in Europe too - most notable in France with the inspiring Gilets Jaunes movement (see pages 12-13).

Corbyn is presented with a big opportunity by this situation - one which he must urgently seize. Key to this is to fight for a general election. The main way to do this is to call for a movement on the streets, in the workplaces and among young people. Events in France show that when given the opportunity to get organised against the establishment in this way, people will respond. Corbyn and the trade unions should organise now a mass campaign for a general election, starting the New Year with a mass, Saturday national demonstration.

As well as fighting for a general election, Corbyn must be preparing now for one to be called at any time. He should, for example, now open the trigger ballot process - which allows for challenges to MPs for who will be the candidate in a coming election. This could allow local parties and trade union affiliates to select candidates capable of representing the hundreds of thousands who have joined Labour to back Corbyn's anti-austerity programme. It is also essential that Corbyn is clear that, whenever the vote on May's deal does take place, any Labour MP voting to save May will have the whip withdrawn immediately.

Failing to quickly take this type of approach presents a big danger. Len McCluskey, general secretary of Unite the Union, was right to highlight the risk of feelings of betrayal against Labour if it is seen to support a backtrack on Brexit. And shadow chancellor John McDonnell was wrong to suggest that a general election is 'not the most likely' outcome of the Tory crisis. Nothing is inevitable if the huge potential power of the working class, organised through the trade union and Labour movement, is fully mobilised to fight. Such a fight is more needed and possible than for generations.

We say:

- General election now! Jeremy Corbyn and the trade unions must meet urgently to call mass action, including organising an emergency national demonstration, to kick out the Tories.
- Tories out, Corbyn in. The 2017 general election showed that an anti-austerity programme is deeply popular. Jeremy Corbyn should build on this success, adopting clear, socialist policies that can point a way forward in the interests of the 99%, including on the question of Brexit.
- No support for the Tory deal - it's been struck in the interests of big business and the super-rich. Re-open negotiations on the basis of opposition to all EU single market and customs union rules - like those on state aid, 'market liberalisation', or the posted workers' directives - that go against the interests of the working class.
- A socialist alternative to the EU. Corbyn should take as a starting point in EU negotiations the need to protect the interests of working class people. This means seeking to build a European-wide campaign of socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks to tear up the current pro-big business rules of the EU bosses' club.
- Nationalise the banks and major monopolies under democratic working class control and management. This could prevent attempts by the capitalist class to use economic sabotage to try to force Corbyn to retreat from implementing his programme. It can pave the way for a socialist plan of production in order to meet the needs of all.
- For a new collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis - based on working class solidarity across borders.

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Corbyn supporter wins Welsh Labour leadership Now fight the cuts!



No to austerity - fight for no cuts budgets!
photo Scott Jones

Dave Reid
Socialist Party Wales

Mark Drakeford, a self-described supporter of Jeremy Corbyn, has been elected as leader of Welsh Labour and will be elected as First Minister as we go to print.

Of the three candidates for First Minister, Mark is considered the most left wing - he supported Jeremy Corbyn in the first ballot for Labour leader.

The other two candidates, Baroness Eluned Morgan and Vaughan Gething, are thinly disguised Blairites.

Most activists have welcomed his election as "a step in the right direction". But it remains to be seen how much of a change it will be from the era of Blair-lite Carwyn Jones.

Drakeford put forward a number of policies that workers would welcome. For example, he promised to ensure that any contractors bidding for Welsh government work conformed to ethical employment practices and to end 'holiday hunger' by providing school meals to children

in school holidays. But the big question is what steps will be taken to fight to end austerity in Wales?

Drakeford's record as a Welsh minister does not inspire much hope that they will be big steps, if any. For two years he has been the finance minister who has implemented the biggest ever cuts to Welsh public services.

Prior to that, he was the health minister who applied serious cuts when he re-organised hospital services, including the infamous South Wales Programme.

Strategy

To really improve public services and to start to tackle the scandal of one-third of Welsh households needing Universal Credit, a serious strategy would have to be adopted to fight the austerity being imposed by the pitifully weak Tory government in Westminster.

Thus far, Mark Drakeford as finance minister has continued the Welsh Labour policy of tamely implementing the cuts on behalf of the Tories - about £2.5 billion in real terms since 2010.

This year, education and schools are being targeted for serious cuts.

If Mark were to put forward a strategy of refusing to carry out the cuts, use the reserves and borrowing powers of the Welsh government and local authorities to keep services going, and mobilise working-class people in Wales to demand funding for services, he would gain a huge response that would rock the Tories on their heels.

The useable reserves of Welsh councils alone amount to £1.4 billion.

Mark should withdraw the threat to impose a social care levy on working people in Wales. The social care crisis has arisen because of privatisation and austerity.

But the Welsh Labour government has decided to tackle it by taxing working people in Wales with a regressive social care levy that will put an even greater burden on living standards while not solving the problem.

With Theresa May clinging to power by her fingernails and with the example of the 'yellow vests' forcing the government in France to retreat, it has never been a better time for a genuinely radical Welsh government to begin the struggle to reverse austerity.

Jobs and homes not racism Kick the Tories out!



photo Paul Mattsson

Socialist Party reporters

Thousands marched on Sunday 9 December to oppose Tommy Robinson and Ukip marching through central London. More people came out to oppose the racist, divisive politics of Tommy Robinson than marched behind his banner.

Socialist Party members were at the demo with leaflets and placards calling for jobs, homes and services, no to racism. We were also saying that the most immediate step needed in the fight against racism is getting rid of the Tories - the party of the Windrush scandal and the hostile environment.

The Tories are literally on the brink. There is enormous anger and fear among very wide layers of the population, not just in relation to Brexit, but as a result of austerity and impoverishment. It is important to oppose Tommy Robinson's attempts to gather up this raw mood behind a far-right agenda.

The best way to do that right now would be for Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union leaders to call a mass demonstration and mass action against the Tory government to force them out of power. If this was done around a bold socialist programme it would show that he could fight on behalf of workers and

young people, not in the interests of the bosses.

As we have written in previous articles about how to fight the far right and its ideas, the unions need to place themselves front and centre.

The organised working class can unite people around a positive programme and win better pay and conditions for everyone. This can help cut across the bosses' divide and rule tactics. It is unfortunate that the trade unions did not play a leading role in the demonstration on Sunday.

There is a risk that other organisations can come in and fill the space, exacerbating the situation. Pro-EU organisations present on Sunday's march tried to organise a bloc and had limited numbers on it. If these organisations are seen to set the tone of fighting against racism it risks adding to the idea that all Leave voters are racist, pushing working-class people angry at the political system closer to charlatans like Tommy Robinson.

As Malcolm X said "you can't have capitalism without racism." It's by fighting for a different world based on collective ownership and democratic planning - for socialism - that we can build a society free from want and misery and end racist divisions once and for all.

Give us a bumper Christmas cash boost!

We are appealing to all our members and supporters to help us make this year as big a success for the fighting fund as possible.

While Theresa May is fighting for her political life, forced to postpone the Brexit vote, the Gilets Jaunes in France are successfully pushing back against austerity.

It shows that mass action works, something that is not lost on workers and young people here who are signing our campaign petitions. We too need mass demonstrations to help drive out the Tories.

Socialist Party members are out campaigning in the town centres demanding that Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union leaders call demonstrations and mobilise the

millions of workers in the trade union and labour movement to help finish May off and get rid of the Tories and Tory austerity.

At the same time our members are working tirelessly, collecting donations to make sure we start 2019 with the finances to get our message out to as wide an audience as possible.

■ **Can you help? Every donation will help support the fight against all cuts and for a socialist alternative to austerity and Tory Brexit.**

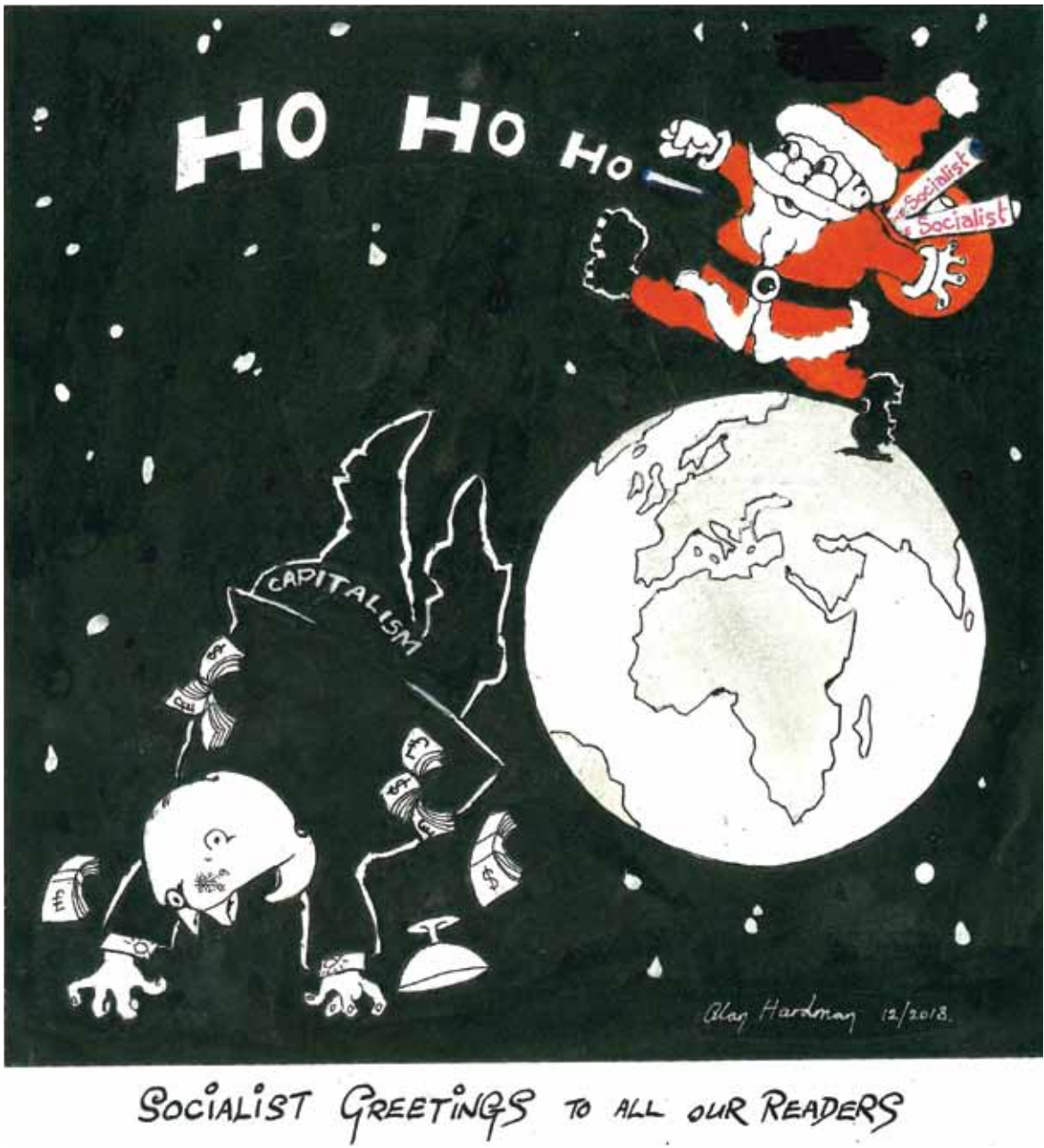
■ **You can donate by phoning 020 8988 8777 or online at www.socialistparty.org.uk/donate.**

Ken Douglas
national treasurer



the Socialist Christmas/New Year schedule

This issue of the Socialist is the last in 2018. Issue 1023 will be available from 4 January 2019. The editors wish all our readers season's greetings and a happy New Year.



NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS FACES BANKRUPTCY - TRANSFORM NUS NOW!

Theo Sharieff
Socialist Students national chair

Reports have surfaced that the National Union of Students (NUS) is facing a profound financial crisis, estimated to lead the NUS to bankruptcy by April 2019.

In leaked internal reports from the NUS, it has emerged that a £500,000 overdraft facility once available to the NUS expired on 5 November, leaving the organisation searching for £3 million to avoid insolvency. 'Cash in hand' is expected to drop to £39,000 by April 2019 and minus £2.9 million by June.

In response to the crisis, a 'Turn-around Board' has been established by the union's leadership.

Solutions to keep the NUS solvent in the immediate future were proposed in a letter signed off by President Shakira Martin to NUS members, including cuts to full-time staff

and also 'radical reforms' to NUS's corporate and democratic structures: "The purpose of the reforms will be to drastically simplify and modernise the NUS". This includes proposals to do away with full-time student officers within the NUS.

A previous 'governance review' was launched by the leadership of the NUS in 2007.

2007 review

The review, which was forced through undemocratically by various Blairite leaderships (see 'National Union of Students: Right wing force through undemocratic changes' at socialistparty.org.uk), attacked the democratic structures in place within the NUS.

It cut down drastically the amount of time given each year for delegates to discuss and debate motions to the annual conference, for example.

These changes essentially shifted the focus of the NUS further away from being the student equivalent

of a trade union, to being a charity, lobbying politicians on behalf of students.

These kinds of attacks by the right wing of the union did not only affect the political nature of the NUS. Also established was a separate 'commercial arm' of the union, including the creation of an NUS discount card.

These provide students certain discounts on campus, while providing companies 'opportunities to run flash-sales or competitions to the student market' and also "data capture opportunities".

The Socialist Party is of course not opposed to students getting discounts on campuses. Yet it's this undemocratic model - with a board of unelected and appointed trustees and a CEO - which has led the NUS to the brink of financial ruin.

Difficulties

The recently revealed financial difficulties themselves have been attributed to "a series of bad investment decisions made by the board", after a trustees' report. This was signed off at last year's April conference and stated that they had 'no concerns' about the financial state of the organisation.

Central to fighting for the continued existence of the NUS then is the fight to transform the organisation

from the ground up.

The way forward for the NUS now is to call a special emergency conference, with delegates chosen through special delegate elections carried out within all affiliated student unions, to discuss the way forward for the NUS.

The Socialist Party and Socialist Students would argue within that for the abolition of any unelected boards or committees, and the opening up of the NUS's books to the democratic oversight of students and elected NUS officials as part of an investigation into the finances and potential financial solutions to the crisis.

Democracy

At this special conference, Socialist Students would argue against the key proposals by the current bureaucratic NUS leadership to resolve the financial difficulties through a combination of further clampdowns on democracy within the NUS and cuts to full-time staff.

Only a restructured NUS - whose leadership is accountable to students, ultimately through a fully restored national conference - can ensure that the NUS's role in leading students in the fight against cuts, fees and the Tories is not further diminished by this financial crisis.

Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!

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photo Scott Jones

Interserve

Shares in Interserve - one of the UK's largest private providers of public services - have collapsed after it announced it has £500 million worth of debts. Interserve is the largest private provider of public services. For example, at King George Hospital in east London (whose A&E is under threat of closure) Interserve has a £35 million contract for cleaning, security, meals, waste management and maintenance. It also has its fingers in infrastructure projects and even probation.

The revelations follow the collapse of Carillion in January. Like then, we call for all the contracts and services to be brought back in house by the government and for every job to be saved.



Universal Credit

The shocking effects of Universal Credit have been revealed by the ordeal faced by one mother this Christmas. Speaking to the Mirror, she explained she has resorted to putting free sugar sachets in her little girl's stocking after the switch to Universal Credit left her barely able to cope. She hopes she will be able to get hold of a branch to use as a Christmas tree.

She said: "I look out of the window and envy people with cars who are going out, going to the cinema, affording haircuts and new clothes while I struggle to get food every day. Thank you Universal Credit for the extra sadness and pain and hurt." Under pressure, the Tories have had to make some concessions and delay the full roll-out (for existing claimants), but we should demand the complete scrapping of Universal Credit and its replacement not with the old benefits system, but with welfare which guarantees everyone a decent standard of living.



photo Socialist Party Wales

Tommy Robinson

Far-right racist Tommy Robinson, who led a march in London on 8 December, (see page 3) is receiving financial support from US right-wing think tanks and others including the David Horowitz Freedom Centre (DHFC). The DHFC are well funded by influential right-wing donors, according to tax returns scrutinised in an investigation by the Guardian. In 2014-16, the returns showed they received a total of almost \$5 million from several millionaire donors.

Worldwide threat to journalists at its worst for ten years

Roger Butler

Swansea and District NUJ (personal capacity) and Swansea and West Wales Socialist Party

The murder of Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi has brought into horrifying focus the dangers faced by reporters throughout the world.

At least 74 journalists have been murdered so far in 2018 - and in the past six years, more than 600 journalists have been killed. Practising journalism is now more dangerous than at any time in the last ten years. Today only one out of ten killings of journalists is resolved.

The human rights organisation 'Article 19' says that 78 journalists were killed in 2017 and a further 326 were imprisoned for their work due to the rise of authoritarian governments. More than half of those behind bars were held in Turkey, China, and Egypt, often on charges of opposing the state.

Journalists are facing the 'normalising' of hostility towards them for doing their job along with increased internet censorship, concentration of media ownership and job losses.

US President Donald Trump

claims that critical reporting is fake news. His condemnation of reporters he considers 'out of line' helps to legitimise hostility towards journalists which increases the risks for reporters in many parts of the world.

Many of the attacks are happening in countries that continue to have political and economic ties with the UK government.

The International Federation of Journalists' (IFJ) 'End Impunity' campaign 2018 aims to hold governments accountable and to denounce crimes targeting journalists that remain unpunished.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) is supporting the IFJ proposal for an international convention on the safety and independence of journalists and other media professionals.

While it is vital to support such measures, journalists need to build strong independent trade unions in each country to defend journalists and journalism from oppressive governments and employers.

Journalists cannot rely on governments and employers to ensure a free press. We need to campaign for a genuinely free media that is neither under big business control nor state control. Instead, we call for

nationalisation of media resources so they can be used for the benefit of all sections of society.

Many capitalist governments and employers alike talk about 'freedom of the press' but are prepared to attack the freedom and endanger the safety of journalists if it suits them.

In a socialist society it should be a means of communication for everyone, with its parameters discussed and decided democratically involving the widest possible number of people. Then it can help with discussing what people need and want.



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Protest by Indian journalists against attacks photo Mumbai Press Club

Cuts and NHS crisis result in 'excess' elderly deaths - end pensioner poverty now

Ian Hunter

Derby Socialist Party

The latest figures from the Office of National Statistics reveal that there were 50,100 'excess deaths' in England and Wales in the winter of 2017-18, the highest number since the mid-1970s. The term 'excess deaths' refers to a temporary increase in the normal mortality rate for the population.

In response, Caroline Abrahams, Director of Age UK, stated: "A toxic cocktail of poor housing, high energy prices and ill health can make winter a dangerous time for many older people, and tragically it is the oldest and those who are the most vulnerable who particularly suffer the consequences."

The possible reasons for this huge increase include the prevalence of newer strains of flu and increased numbers of long-term illnesses such as cancer and diabetes.

But also the effects of inadequate social care resources and serious, continued underfunding of the NHS. Last winter saw the largest

increase in hospital admissions of patients with flu, and a sharp rise in cases seen by GPs. In the first week of January 2018 the rate of hospital admissions rose by over 50%, and the GP consultation rate rose by 77.5%.

The president of the Society for Acute Medicine, Dr Nick Scriven, doubts the ability of the NHS to cope effectively with the many challenges of 'an older, frailer population with increasingly complex medical problems, a lack of funding across health and social care to meet demand and a recruitment crisis.'

The National Pensioners Convention has called for the resignation of Energy Minister Claire Perry following the news of increased winter deaths among older people.

The 50,100 excess deaths translate as approximately 414 a day (17 an hour) for the four winter months December to March. Around 1.4 million older people are estimated to be in a situation of fuel poverty, and almost one in three live in homes with poor heating and insulation.

Currently those aged 65 and over are under constant attack from the



Tory government. Too often they are dismissed as a comfortably off baby boomer generation, especially by those seeking to create inter-generational division with younger 'millennials'.

For most of the older generation

this spin on the issue is not only divisive but also far from the truth. The state pension increase next year will be 3.25%, less than a penny a day!

In addition there are massive cuts by councils to meals on wheels provision and even pressure from the International Monetary Fund on the government to consider means-testing the state pension.

Cuts, austerity, NHS privatisation, inadequate pensions and a crisis in the care sector have left many elderly people in poverty. Labour councils should be resisting savage cuts to social care, not doing the Tories' dirty work.

The Socialist Party calls for councils to set no-cuts budgets and leading mass campaigns to demand the funds needed. Jeremy Corbyn should pledge now that any council taking this road would have its funding fully restored on the first day of a Labour government.

We demand the end of cuts and reinstatement of funding for public services, a fully-funded NHS, the end of privatisation and a decent pension to end pensioner poverty.

SPONTANEOUS HULL WALKOUTS STICK TWO FINGERS UP AT TORY ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS

Hull Socialist Party

Ferrybridge workers on construction sites and fast food factories have stuck two fingers up at the Tory Trade Union Act by striking.

At a Ferrybridge construction site in Yorkshire trade union officials tried to persuade the workers to “go through the proper channels”. The walkout was over the site alarm system. On 28 November some of the workers made it clear that they could not hear the alarm so they withdrew to their cabins.

The union reps came back with a proposal that would have involved the foreman walking around with a klaxon! The men were told that they would not get paid for the time they had downed tools. This escalated and on the 3 December they walked off the site.

Union reps recommended a return to work and to try and get the unpaid money back through company channels. This was rejected by the workforce. Full-time union officials were sent in to try and persuade the workers to return but this was also ignored.

“How many votes?”

Every morning the officials held a ballot to try and overturn the resolve of the workforce. Many workers drew a parallel with the call for another EU referendum. “How many votes do they want until they get the result they want?”, said one worker.

Even the appearance of national full-time officials failed to convince the workers who continued to picket the site. This included Polish and British workers who work on scaffolding, electrics and the mechanical contractors.

It was finally resolved after more than a week’s strike action. A deal was agreed in which the local fire brigade would resolve the safety issue. Management agreed also to pay for the time when the workers stood down.

In a separate dispute at Cranswick Foods just outside Hull, the GMB union had attempted to organise a strike ballot but had failed to get the necessary quota under the Tory Trade Union Act. This did not stop the workers though! 190 workers including Polish staff walked out spontaneously.

Management assumed that the GMB had organised the walkout but it was a move from below.

The spontaneous character of these walkouts show that if workers can’t find a way forward through official channels they will take unofficial action.

KWL workers protest in Hull photo Socialist Party



Hull council workers fight to protect sick pay

Mick Whale Hull Socialist Party

Workers for Kingstown Works Ltd (KWL) in Hull have started a campaign to protect their sick pay scheme with a lobby of Hull North constituency Labour Party (CLP). KWL is the old ‘direct works’ of Hull City Council, responsible for maintaining the city’s housing stock.

It is now a Hull City Council wholly owned company, a step towards privatisation. Hull councillors sit on the management board and, scandalously, support the attack on the workers’ conditions.

Deputy leader of the council, Darren Hale, has represented the KWL management on local radio and at times sounded more like a

corporate boss justifying the race to the bottom than a Labour councillor. He spoke about the need to make “efficiencies” and implied that the current sick pay scheme was better than what most workers in Hull enjoy. This sort of language is used by the bosses to justify the ‘race to the bottom’.

Division

Hale went on to attack the GMB union, claiming that they did not represent the whole workforce. Hale should be ashamed of trying to divide the workforce by playing one union off against another.

BBC interviewer James Piekos reminded Hale that earlier in the year, he had stood on a picket line demanding that FCC (a private company that handles waste recycling in

the city) give their workers a decent sick pay scheme. Yet here he was, six months later, attacking his own workforce’s sick pay.

The lobby was upbeat with 40 workers taking part. Flags of council unions GMB, Unite and Unison were flying, giving the lie to the idea that it was just the GMB. To its credit, North Hull CLP allowed a speaker into the meeting and gave the workers a big round of applause.

The hope now is that management will back down. But if they don’t, the workers are clear that the campaign will escalate.

If KWL management, together with the city council and wider labour movement, were to campaign against the cuts and austerity, they could build a mass campaign for the resources Hull desperately needs.



Cammell Laird workers walk out photo Hugh Caffrey

Strike action saves jobs at Cammell Laird shipyard

SELECT CHRIS BAUGH AS LEFT UNITY AGS CANDIDATE

Chris4AGS campaign statement

PCS Left Unity members will be saddened to hear that Janice Godrich is suffering ill health, and therefore not able to accept the Left Unity nomination for assistant general secretary (AGS) of the civil servants’ union.

Everyone in the Chris4AGS campaign wishes her a speedy recovery. Janice’s decision not to accept the Left Unity nomination for AGS was announced the day after the national Left Unity conference which took place on 1 December.

A new Left Unity national committee was elected at that conference. The Left Unity secretary sent out an email to Left Unity members saying that, as a result, the matter would be referred to the national Left Unity committee.

Close vote

Most trade unionists would assume that, given the closeness of the vote and the fact that no other candidate was put forward, incumbent AGS and Socialist Party member Chris Baugh would automatically be announced as the Left Unity candidate for AGS. But it seems not.

Since the announcement on 2 December, many Left Unity members

have written in to the national secretary, Gordon Rowntree, expressing confusion as to why this hasn’t happened already, so that we can get on with uniting around our candidates. The official PCS nomination process for positions opens on 17 January.

No further communication has gone out from the newly elected national Left Unity committee on this important issue - who will be the left’s candidate to lead our union in the AGS position?

An article in the Socialist Worker newspaper, a key supporter of Janice’s Socialist View faction, has stated: “Discussions among supporters of Godrich’s campaign were ongoing as Socialist Worker went to press”.

PCS Left Unity was set up as a democratic organisation working with broad layers of socialists to agree common aims to build a fighting union. Socialist View supporters have a right to their opinion but this should be expressed through Left Unity and the Left Unity national committee.

We support the call for an early Left Unity national committee to confirm Chris as the Left Unity candidate for AGS and for an end to divisive attempts to block the left’s most credible candidate for the position.

Jack Yariett Wirral Socialist Party

The planned 291 redundancies at Birkenhead’s Cammell Laird shipyard have been put on hold following 13 days of strike action by workers starting on 26 November.

The redundancies were announced just weeks before Christmas in spite of £621 million worth of upcoming contracts for the company. Unions feared that the sacked employees would be replaced with low-paid agency workers. But bosses have been forced to climb down and come to the negotiating table. The strikes have been temporarily suspended.

It is no wonder the strike has had such an effect. It’s been rock solid from the start. Support for the strike among workers was overwhelming and picket lines were jam-packed with both Cammell Laird workers as well as those who had joined to show their support, including Socialist Party members.

Delivery trucks turned around at the gates to show solidarity. Just one week after walking out, Cammell Laird workers had already voted to double the length of the strike action.

As Unite the Union official Ross Quinn said: “The solidarity with Cammell Laird workers is overwhelming, the only people who

don’t seem to want to save the jobs are the management. The GMB and Unite union members voted to further the strike after management started attacking them for exercising their basic human right to withdraw their labour.”

Cammell Laird boss John Syvret complained after just a matter of days that the strike had cost the company up to £1.5 million and later attacked the strikers by claiming they were “pandering to negative stereotypes of Merseyside”, remarks for which he was later forced to apologise for through gritted teeth.

A benefit gig at the Marine Street social in New Brighton to raise money for the strike fund on 7 December was turned into an impromptu celebration of this temporary victory.

Support

Given the overwhelming support for the strike action and opposition to redundancies among the workforce and the local community, and the fact that the redundancies have been pushed back, workers have good reason to be confident that the redundancies can be beaten completely.

We will be following negotiations closely and we will be on hand to lend our support should strike action resume.

This win should be a boost to all workers and trade unionists and it is a great example of what can be done when workers organise and fight back to turn the tide of casualisation.

Veolia waste workers vote for action in Cheshire

Waste workers in Unite the Union in Cheshire, employed by Veolia UK, have overwhelmingly voted for strike action in their dispute over unpaid shifts.

Workers at the site in Widnes are employed on a contract of any five shifts in seven, but drivers are not being paid if they work a sixth shift in a seven day period. 78.3% voted in favour of strike action and action short of strike in a turnout of 92%.

Unite rep David Loughe said: “The company is insisting we work on Saturdays without paying us for it. Our contacted hours are any five out of seven days, up to 48 hours. But because we don’t always work 48 hours every week the company

has decided we should work an extra day to make up the shortfall. Veolia made £78 million in profit last year and paid three directors £3 million in bonuses, but won’t pay their drivers for working extra shifts.”

Veolia have a poor record on workers’ pay, including a strike involving GMB members in Yorkshire in 2016. In Sheffield, Veolia shipped in strike breakers from London in an attempt to defeat the workforce. With such a strong turnout in the ballot and a high vote in favour of strike action the employer should fund a negotiated settlement to this deal.

Ste Armstrong, Warrington, Halton and St Helens Socialist Party



Veolia bin lorry photo House Buy Fast/CC



[News in brief]

Shelter victory

Members of Unite the Union employed by housing charity Shelter have secured a victory after agreeing an improved pay offer ahead of a strike due to start on 11 December. Workers accepted an offer of a 4% increase, four times the original 1%. As a result of the fight and threat of industrial action, Unite the Union have recruited a further 100 members at Shelter.

Reps reinstated

Two Bectu entertainment union reps unfairly sacked by Picturehouse-owned Ritzy cinema in Brixton, London, must be returned to their former positions, an employment tribunal hearing has ruled. The reps, who have worked at the Ritzy for a number of years, will

have to be reinstated in January. Picturehouse workers, including at the Ritzy, have taken strike action and been campaigning to be paid the official living wage in London, for fair pay rises for supervisors, managers, chefs, sound technicians and projectionists and for company sick pay for all staff. They are also demanding company pay for maternity, paternity and adoption.

Wardens walkout

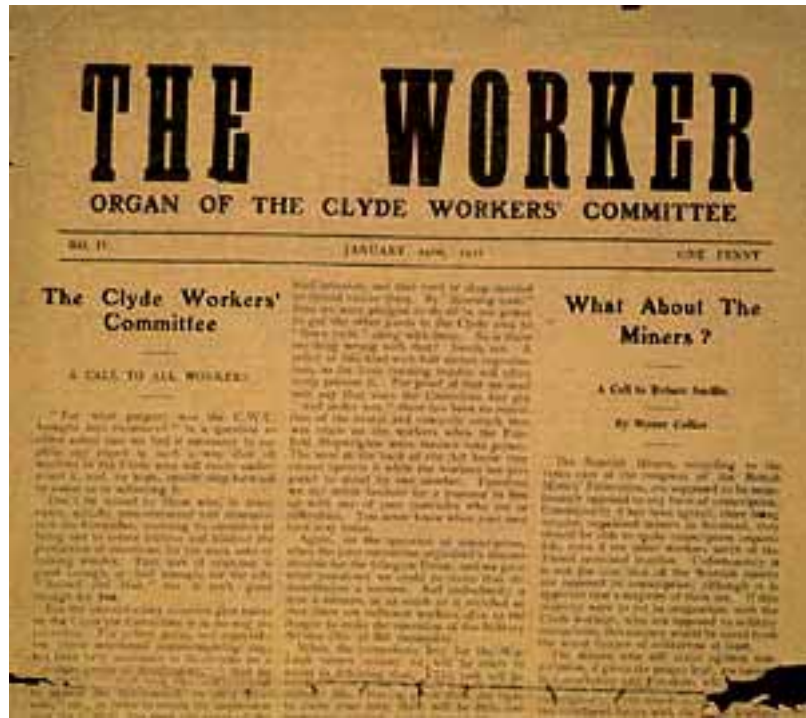
Unison members in Camden, north London, working for private company NSL as traffic wardens have walked out again for 14 days until 19 December, after recently taking five days of strike action as part of their fight for decent pay. They are asking for £11.15 an hour, an amount that Camden Unison argues is very reasonable particularly when the top director at NSL gets over £320 an hour. For updates about the dispute and to send messages of support, contact unison@camden.gov.uk

Get all the latest union news from the National Shop Stewards Network at shopstewards.net



John Maclean

JOHN MACLEAN REVOLUTIONARY FIGHTER OF THE WORKING CLASS



On the recent 95th anniversary of the death of Scottish Marxist John Maclean, **Philip Stott**, Socialist Party Scotland, looks at Maclean's contribution to the socialist and working-class movement.

A leader of 'Red Clydeside', John MacLean was an outstanding orator, a peerless educator in Marxist ideas. He emerged as a leader of the anti-war struggle during World War One and as an implacable fighter against capitalism and in defence of the rights of the working class.

His name and contribution is rightly mentioned among the other great Marxists of his generation; Lenin, Trotsky, James Connolly, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

It was a period when the ideas of socialism and Marxism were taken up as a weapon by millions in the struggle against capitalism and blood-soaked imperialism. Above all, it was a time when the collective experience of the working class internationally drove them towards the conclusion of the socialist revolution.

Mass poverty

John Maclean's parents had been victims of the brutal Highland clearances and forced to migrate to Glasgow, a city that was an 'urban inferno' of explosive industrial capitalism.

One million people - 20% of the Scottish population - lived in or within eight miles of the city. Yet the conditions facing those workers and their families were utterly horrendous. Cholera, typhoid, smallpox and tuberculosis were rife.

It was upon this fertile ground that the ideas of independent working-class politics, socialism and Marxism began to take root.

The Independent Labour Party had been formed in 1892, the Scottish Labour Party was launched in 1888 by Keir Hardie and the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) Conference in 1900 led to the creation of the Labour Party.

The Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) had significant roots in Glasgow, a regular newspaper and effective public spokespeople in the 1880s and 1890s

along with the leaders of his own party like H M Hyndman, who adopted a chauvinist, apologist approach towards British imperialism.

Maclean, alongside Lenin, Trotsky, Connolly, Luxemburg and Liebknecht, came out against the war with an internationalist appeal to the working class. He threw himself into anti-war activity. In Glasgow the BSP with 500 members split, although a majority backed Maclean.

Teacher

John Maclean was already a Marxist when he began work as a teacher in 1900. He organised regular education classes to explain the ideas of economics and capitalist exploitation. The main textbook was Marx's 'Capital'. Shop stewards from the engineering factories and shipyards from across Glasgow were schooled by Maclean.

In 1915, at the height of the rent strikes, the fight against conscription and other mass movements, hundreds attended Maclean's weekly Glasgow class, including all the leading shop stewards from the major workplaces.

But he was not merely an educator. Maclean wrote and campaigned for municipal public housing, for public control of food and hygiene safety and common ownership of land and agriculture.

The sectarianism and opportunism of the leaders of the SDF led to clashes. The SDF had walked out of the LRC in 1900 because it would not accept socialism as its aim. Maclean, who joined the SDF in 1903, wrote that he had regarded this as a mistake, while remorselessly criticising the pro-capitalist policies of Labour leaders and a majority of its MPs.

He fought for the idea that Marxists should not be apart from where the working class was but should instead fight alongside these workers looking towards the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party.

An even bigger clash was to emerge with the leaders of the British Socialist Party on the outbreak of the war in 1914. The Second International, including the SDP in Germany and the Labour Party in Britain, supported their 'own' capitalist class when war began.

Maclean heroically refused to go

Women, including Mary Barbour, became leaders of the "we are not paying increased rent" campaign. This was a Glasgow-wide movement with marches across the city.

The biggest was in October 1915 when 25,000 marched. Moreover the involvement of Maclean and other BSP members meant that the campaign was taken to the shipyards and engineering factories.

Under mass pressure the government was forced to set up a Committee of Enquiry, but it proposed rent rises, including areas unaffected by rent rises previously. Maclean called for a mass non-payment campaign of all of the rent, not just the increased amount.

Faced with being unable to collect the rents and being unable to evict tenants, the government and factors went for wage deductions instead. 18

shipyard workers were summonsed to the court on 18 November 1915 to have their wages arrested for non-payment of rent.

A general strike had been called for across Clydeside on 22 November unless the government agreed to a rent restriction act for the duration of the war. A rent restriction act was introduced immediately!

This massive victory reflected the enormous power of the working class and a growing revolutionary socialist outlook among its most advanced layer.

The ruling class also understood the threat, hence the concessions over rents. But this was combined with brutal repression, particularly against its most prominent leader, John Maclean. Maclean was jailed in November 1915 for five days, after being found guilty of charges under the

Defence of the Realm Act for his anti-war activity.

Conscription was introduced in early 1916 and Maclean and the leaders of the CWC mobilised against it. This, of course, was in opposition to the official policy of the TUC and the trade union leaders.

Maclean was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to three years' hard labour in Peterhead prison. In response, a huge campaign demanding Maclean's release was launched.

His imprisonment lasted 14 months, until June 1917. By then the February Russian revolution had already electrified the working class across Europe.

The 1917 May Day demonstration in Glasgow saw 80,000 marching in solidarity with the Russian workers, against war and demanding the freedom of John Maclean.

The All-Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' delegates sent "greetings to the brave fighter for the International, comrade Maclean."

The British capitalist class were alarmed at the growing revolutionary upsurge and Maclean was released at the end of June.

His freedom did not last long. The rising revolutionary tide, boosted further by the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917, drove the ruling class to strike again. In April 1918, Maclean was again found guilty and sentenced to five years imprisonment. But not before he had delivered possibly one of the most famous speeches ever.

Maclean defended himself and his 75 minute address to the jury was a master class in exposing capitalism and war while making the case for socialism.

"I am not here, then, as the

accused; I am here as the accuser of capitalism dripping with blood from head to foot," he told them.

Despite a draconian sentence he was released within seven months. As his daughter Nan Milton wrote: "Demonstrations were being held all over the country. When the red banners with slogans 'Hands off Russia!' and 'Release Maclean', were unfurled at the huge Albert Hall rally in London, the audience went wild...."

On 3 December, after his freedom from prison Maclean was met by thousands of workers celebrating his release. He was carried via a carriage by workers, red flag flying, down Jamaica Street and towards the Clyde.

Russian revolution

The Bolshevik revolution set alight the Clyde as news filtered through of the victory of Lenin and Trotsky.

Lenin himself, as early as 1916, declared: "In all the countries during the war there has been observed a trend of revolutionary socialism... To this trend belongs the Bolsheviks of Russia... who are persecuted for the same crimes for which Maclean and Karl Liebknecht are being persecuted."

In recognition of his outstanding role in the struggle against the war and his support for the Russian revolution, Maclean was elected as Honorary President of the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets in 1918.

Demands for real improvements after the war, the impact of the Russian revolution and rising industrial unrest combined to pose a real threat to British capitalism. The demands for a shorter working week resulted in a mass strike wave.

A general strike was also called for 24 January. On that day all the main yards and engineering shops in Glasgow came out on strike.

The role of the official union leaders, who reflected the interests of the capitalist class as opposed to the shop stewards committees, was to limit the action. Apart from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Belfast the strikes in other areas of Britain were not organised.

The then secretary of state for Scotland Robert Munro said: "It is a misnomer to call the situation in Glasgow

a strike - this is a Bolshevik uprising."

The ruling class responded to this threat with savage repression. Thousands of police had been mobilised and when the workers assembled in George Square on 31 January they bation charged. Huge battles took place with workers trying to defend themselves, indeed again and again the police were driven back.

Unfortunately, there were no attempts to fraternise with the troops. Willie Gallacher, a Red Clydeside, leader admitted that: "there should have been a march to Maryhill barracks to enlist the support of the troops... we could easily have persuaded the soldiers to come out and Glasgow would have been in our hands."

Instead, an agreement was made for a reduction of the working week from a typical 54 hours to 47 hours and the strike ended.

Given the seismic events that erupted on the Clyde, why were there not attempts to form soviets - workers' councils - and a preparation for power?

A key factor was the relative isolation of the mass strike wave but, crucially, the lack of a Bolshevik-type party in Scotland and Britain at the time. A period of preparing the ground and building the forces of a disciplined Marxist party among the working class was necessary. But this was not done.

Revolutionary party

John Maclean represented the ideas around which such a revolutionary party could have been built.

Yet, in reality, there was not a distinct revolutionary Marxist party in Scotland or Britain at the time. The BSP had many outstanding revolutionaries in its ranks, not least Maclean himself. But it was very far from being a disciplined and coherent revolutionary party.

No matter how outstanding an individual may be, and Maclean was an outstanding Marxist, without a revolutionary party to allow for such discussion and clarification mistakes are inevitable. He mistakenly refused to join the Communist Party of Great Britain, which largely drew together

the BSP, parts of the Socialist Labour Party and others when it was founded in 1920.

The key task was to strive to build a genuine revolutionary party in Britain at that time.

Tragedy

The death of Lenin, the isolation of the Russian revolution, and the coming to power of Stalin impacted decisively on the Communist International and its national sections.

From being an instrument of world revolution, within a decade or so, the International became its opposite: a tool to defend the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Tragically, John Maclean died in November 1923 at the age of 44. At his funeral thousands of workers turned out to say goodbye to their "Dominie" (teacher).

John Maclean's contribution rightly places him in the front rank of the greatest Marxists of all time. Today, as capitalism staggers from one crisis to another, the ideas of revolutionary socialism are more necessary and relevant than ever.

■ Full article on socialistworld.net

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The October 1917 revolution led by the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky (saluting, Lenin beside) fired the Clyde workers' ambitions

Women's Lives Matter national meeting

A determination to fight cuts to domestic violence services

Heather Rawling

Congratulations to Women's Lives Matter for organising a brilliant first national meeting. People from around the UK attended and brought with them a wealth of experience, ideas and proposals.

Sinead Daly, CEO of Dundee and Angus Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre, opened the meeting by saying that we shouldn't have to have this discussion. But all the political parties who run councils are guilty of an abject failure to combat austerity, including cuts to women's services and refuges.

And despite Corbyn's anti-austerity stand, at local level, Labour councils have been implementing savage cuts to these services.

Speaker after speaker graphically demonstrated with examples from their own experience how public sector cuts in general have impacted on women's lives and made it more difficult to leave an abusive relationship. Women and their children are turned away from refuges as there is no capacity to take them.

"What happens to them?" Sinead asked. "How many are killed? How many turn up at A&E?"

"Our lives do not matter to pro-capitalist politicians. If they did, they would find the money to fund these services. The wealth is there in society in the hands of a small number of rich and powerful people."

Speakers showed how cuts in benefits, mental health services and a chronic shortage of council-owned homes exacerbated the



photo Iain Dalton

problem. While domestic abuse affects women across society, it is much more difficult for working-class women to escape it because of lack of resources.

Urgency

The meeting agreed that our main focus should be to campaign against domestic violence and against the cuts in funding for women's refuges and women's centres.

Amy Cousens, a longstanding activist in Women's Lives Matter in Yorkshire and Socialist Party member, introduced a discussion on organising the fightback.

Amy drew on the experience of

fighting to keep Doncaster Women's Aid open where MPs and councillors had said they would do all they could but had not saved the service. That has already resulted in enormous suffering.

Her conclusion was that our campaign cannot wait for those forces to be prepared to act against the austerity funding cuts that lead to closures. Women cannot wait.

Leeds Women's Lives Matter proposed campaign demands, a guide to action and a model motion which people in the meeting expanded on. It started with the demand for councils to set needs budgets to provide the services everyone needs.

Amy's appeal to the meeting to grasp the nettle of this strategy was not opposed - the meeting included members of many trade unions and campaigns, the Green Party, the Labour Party and the Socialist Party. Amy was also able to report on the links the campaign has already built with service providers in other parts of the country.

Proposals were made to raise the campaign in our trade unions at local and national level. We are proposing a Day of Action on International Women's Day, 8 March 2019.

An enthusiastic and inspiring meeting. A call to action!

'Stansted 15' - outrageous guilty verdict

The 'Stansted 15', who took non-violent direct action at Stansted airport in March 2017 to prevent the deportation of 60 people who were at risk, have been found guilty of "endangering safety at aerodromes" - a terrorism-related charge. Sentencing will take place in February.

The original charge of "aggravated trespass" was changed after four months to the more serious "endangering safety at aerodromes". Clearly the intention of this unprecedented verdict is to deter non-violent direct action protests for fear of severe legal consequences.

Of the 60 deportees, ten are currently pursuing asylum claims in the UK, and at least one has since been granted permission to remain in the UK.

The Socialist Party sends solidarity to the 15.

■ **Further reports to follow at socialistparty.org.uk**

Socialist Students LJMU victory

Socialist Students at Liverpool John Moores University has been successful in getting David Hitchmough reelected as a delegate to NUS conference where he will provide a socialist voice.

This coming year Socialist Students will be at the forefront of fighting rip-off tuition fees.

Also, we will be campaigning for free sanitary products for female students, as the university does not provide them.

Recently, Liverpool Football Club has provided these products free to all female season ticket holders, so why can't the university?

Alex Ryan, LJMU Socialist Students and Liverpool Socialist Party

Obituary - Beth Roper (1990-2018) - comrade, friend and fighter



photo Dave Reid

Comrades in South Wales are mourning the loss of Beth Roper, who was suddenly taken from us in an accident on a train on 1 December at the age of just 28.

Everyone who knew her will feel her loss. Beth was one of those rare people who always seemed kind and sincere.

She was no pushover though. Beth had steel, and was utterly intolerant of injustice.

She was always instantly and unquestionably on the side of anyone suffering under any form of oppression, always ready to defend them, and willing to put her own shoulder to the wheel to move things.

Beth had a penetrating mind too. She'd always challenge an idea or an argument if she wasn't

convinced by it.

Beth went traveling during the Brexit referendum but followed the debate and posted letters from afar on social media challenging the idea that the European Union was a progressive force when it was treating refugees so brutally.

She volunteered for some time with the Welsh Refugee Council and became so central to the work that they took her on paid - one of three jobs she worked.

I first met Beth ten years ago when she was in school. She helped set up a campaign in Penarth to save the local fire station from being gutted of two-thirds of its firefighters. We won that campaign, thanks in no small part to the campaign stalls she helped run, the support gig she

helped organise and the other activity she engaged in. She was ever the activist: fighting back against injustice was part of her DNA.

Beth was active in Cardiff Unite Energy and Services branch and was a delegate to Cardiff Trade Union Council. She was also the chair of Cardiff West Socialist Party branch, and was on our district committee.

Beth was unobtrusive, totally without ego. I went to a Socialist Students meeting on climate change a few months ago, which she introduced. She began by saying: "I'm not an expert on this issue. I've been asked to start us off with some points to get the discussion going," and then, after some self-deprecating remarks, gave an encyclopaedic account of the causes and remedies

of the climate change threat! The student comrades will attest that it was one of the best meetings they've organised.

That episode summed her up - doing the necessary, important work of building organisations to stand up against an exploitative system.

Beth lived her short life fighting for a fairer, socialist world and fighting to build the revolutionary party, the political vehicle we need to create that world. In her memory we rededicate ourselves to that struggle.

We send condolences to Beth's family and friends.

Ross Saunders

■ **See socialistparty.org.uk for full obituary**

Clive Heemskerk
TUSC national agent

New twist in Derby TUSC election agent case

A recent ruling by the Electoral Commission has cast new light on the case of Chris Fernandez, the local election agent for eight Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates at the 2016 council elections in Derby, who earlier this year was jailed for alleged 'electoral fraud'.

Twenty years after the introduction of the Registration of Political Parties Act 1998, the Electoral Commission has announced that, from now on, descriptions used by party candidates on ballot papers must clearly identify the party they are standing for. That this has not been a legal requirement before significantly undermines the case made against Chris at his trial and shows what an injustice was perpetrated against him.

A full account of what was a politically motivated prosecution is available on the TUSC website at tusc.org.uk/txt/413.pdf but, in essence, Chris was judged guilty of misleading members of the public on the electoral register into signing nomination papers in the 2016 local elections. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) argued and won on 12 out of 14 counts that people did not know they were signing local election nomination forms for TUSC candidates.

At the trial the CPS barrister, Gareth Roberts, made great play of asking every witness whether they knew of "the TUSC political party" (the exact name of which he often got wrong himself). His argument was that people who signed a nomination paper "must understand that they are signing to nominate a candidate from a political party which they have heard of and which they support". Their hazy recollections of doorstep discussions from twenty months ago were held up as 'proof' that they must have been misled.

New ruling

Chris was adamant that he did not set out to mislead anyone and that he had explained he was from TUSC. But now the Electoral Commission's ruling has confirmed that identifying the candidate's party was not actually a requirement of electoral law anyway.

The nomination paper itself does not refer to the candidate's political party. There is no box headed 'party'. Instead there is a box headed 'description', which can be the party's name but can also be what is known as a 'registered description'. Each political party on the Electoral Commission's official list of parties (there are over 300 of them) is allowed to register up to 12 descriptions. Until the new ruling from the Commission, many of the permitted descriptions that were registered to appear on nomination forms had no reference to the party in them.

The Liberal Democrats' registered descriptions are an example. Thousands of Liberal Democrat local council candidates have used the description 'Focus Team' on their ballot paper. In these cases the words 'Liberal Democrat' would not have

Some 2015 TUSC candidates
photo Paul Mattsson



The Electoral Commission, an unelected quango, is not a neutral defender of democratic rights

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This latest development highlights the injustice meted out to Chris

appeared anywhere on the candidate's nomination paper. Someone filling in such a form may not have known they were "signing to nominate a candidate from a political party which they support" - to use the phrase of the CPS barrister, Gareth Roberts. Would he argue that these candidates too must have been fraudulently nominated? Probably not - Roberts was a Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate in the 2005 general election (although this was not revealed at Chris's trial).

It was bad enough that neither the CPS, the judge nor, unfortunately, Chris's defence barrister, explained to the court that electors would not necessarily need to be familiar with TUSC, or remember its name, to have validly signed a nomination paper.

Democratic rights

But the Electoral Commission too, which had an observer present at the trial, made no effort to correct the misrepresentation of electoral law. Then again the Commission, an unelected government quango, is not a neutral defender of democratic rights.

The move to reinterpret a law that has been in place for 20 years is not because of a surge in 'sham nominations' in elections. Out of over 2,000 cases of alleged electoral fraud recorded since 2008, only two - a Ukip candidate in Essex and Chris Fernandez in Derby, both formally charged by the CPS in March 2017 - have involved the offence of 'tricking voters into signing nomination forms'. Instead it is part of the Tory government's attempt - alongside new voter ID restrictions, limiting student voter registrations and so on - to make it as difficult as possible for the electoral process to be an outlet for the growing mass anger at the age of austerity, particularly for protest candidates and others outside the establishment circles.

This latest development highlights the injustice meted out to Chris. Not only was he jailed but, after having served four months in prison, he was hit with a bill for £8,847 for exercising his right to contest the case and protest his innocence. Chris had applied for legal aid but, because he lost the case, has to pay a contribution to the costs.

■ Donations to help Chris can be made via the TUSC Legal Costs Fund Appeal, using the PayPal facility on the TUSC website at tusc.org.uk/donate. Please use the 'Add special instructions' button to say that the donation is for the appeal.

■ Alternatively, cheques payable to TUSC can be sent to TUSC, 17 Colebert House, Colebert Avenue, London, E1 4JP, again with a note saying it is for the Legal Costs Fund Appeal.

FRANCE IN REVOLT

Clare Doyle
Committee for a
Workers' International

France has seen an apparently unstoppable revolt from below. Since Saturday 17 November, a massive tide of very visible protest has swept the country, initially against a rise in the tax on diesel, but rapidly becoming a revolt of the oppressed against the president of the rich - Emmanuel Macron.

On the evening of Monday 10 December, after a day of talks between businesses, union leaders and the government, this most unpopular of presidents broke his silence to address the nation - and accepted he had 'upset' people.

Confirming the reversal of the fuel tax rise, he outlined a €10 billion package. This included a €100-a-month rise in the minimum wage, revision of levies on pensions, and a decrease in taxation on overtime pay.

But there was no talk of reversing the massive tax breaks Macron has given the super-rich from the earliest days of his still-short reign. A 'gilets jaunes' representative, Laetitia Dewalle, invited for comment by state TV channel France2, exclaimed: "Of course it's not enough!"

"Why should I listen to him?" said someone watching the broadcast. "He doesn't listen to us!"

The next day, Tuesday 11 December, saw a new wave of protests, including fierce battles between police and protesters, with large numbers of students mobilised. A number of scenarios could open up.

Macron, resign!

Together with his neoliberal party 'La République en Marche' (The Republic on the Move), President Macron has only been in power for 18 months. It is his resignation that every demonstration has been demanding.

Some protesters are veterans of France's month of revolution in May 1968, when the fate of strongman president General Charles de Gaulle hung in the balance. Others refer, light-heartedly, to the way Louis XVI met his end in the revolution of 1789!

This is not yet a revolution, but a very determined uprising of the neglected and deprived sections of the population - especially in the countryside. However, more and more, it has found an echo among layers of France's heroic working class.

The 'invisible' have become visible in their 'gilets jaunes' - yellow high-visibility vests, the uniform of the movement. Their good-natured blockades of roads and toll booths across the country have become a novel, now well-established, feature of this revolt.

As the protests have grown - including people of all political persuasions and none - so have the demands. Workers have joined the blockades and demonstrations in

Paris and around the country.

It has inspired workers and young people across the border in Belgium, the Netherlands and elsewhere, who have had enough of austerity and pro-capitalist governments. Especially if it gains a major victory, the movement could well spread across Europe and beyond.

Many workers and young people are envious of the French people's penchant for exercising their 'constitutional right to revolt!' The Egyptian dictator General Sisi has banned the sale of yellow hi-vis vests, and even Mosul in Iraq is reported to have its own small gilets jaunes protest.

On Monday 10 December, a new impetus was given to the 'uprising' when students in 100 schools set up blockades and joined the struggle. Read more in the articles opposite. Students' entry onto the scene was undoubtedly a weighty factor behind the concessions made by Macron's prime minister Édouard Philippe on Tuesday 11 December.

Revolutionary features

The brutal use of state forces against demonstrators has only increased the determination of many protesters for a fight to the finish. Meanwhile, the ruling layer in French society is at sixes and sevens on how to proceed.

The middle layers in society are already involved in the movement. And the forces of the state have been overstretched - ripe for defection.

These are some of the features of a classical revolutionary scenario. But as yet there is no mass mobilisation of the most powerful force in society for change - the working class in the factories, the depots, the stations, the offices, the schools and the hospitals.

All these workers have already expressed grievances against their bosses or the government - or both! Many have been involved in determined but scattered strikes and struggles.

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the world socialist organisation the Socialist Party in England and Wales is affiliated to. We consider that the only force capable of decisive and lasting victory over capitalism is the working class - on the move, and with a clear, revolutionary leadership. As yet, these factors are missing.

However, the largest trade union federation in France - the CGT - has belatedly called for a build-up of strikes and demonstrations. A general strike could develop, even without a call from the top - as it did in 1968.

It could be limited but successful, like the mobilisation of two million public sector strikers in 1995 which defeated the pension 'reforms' of Jacques Chirac. The strategy - on either side - could be to allow a breathing space over Christmas before another round of battles in 2019.

Whatever happens, it is clear this battle with Macron and his capitalist



France's 'gilets jaunes' movement represents the French masses on the march photo Thomas Bresson/CC

backers is not over.

Former presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the left-wing 'France Insoumise' (France Unbowed) electoral movement, has called for protesters to converge in the cities. He speaks of a "citizens' revolution," but makes no concrete proposals to carry it through.

CWI

The forces of the CWI in France, 'Gauche Révolutionnaire' (Revolutionary Left), are active participants in the movement, as are CWI supporters from other countries. On the blockades, in the lycées and on the mass protests.

A special issue of Gauche Révolutionnaire's newspaper, Égalité, calls for a one-day general strike as the next step to mobilise for bringing down this hated government.

A feature of this movement has been widespread comments of previously comfortable layers of the middle class now forced into the ranks of the working class. Similar moods and sentiments lie behind much of the growth of left and right populism in other countries, along with the surviving post-Stalinist hostility towards organising parties - the perceived risk of top-down policy-making. It means the movement is diffuse.

But the crucial element which can turn this massive cry of rage into a force for transforming society is a party. This must have socialism as its clear aim - not just in its name, devoid of all meaning like the discredited 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties in France.

Socialist programme

Macron may sacrifice his prime minister. He may even be forced to resign himself. New elections may be called.

But any government which stays in charge of an economy where the commanding heights are largely in the hands of private owners will return again and again to make the workers and poor pay for the bosses' recurring crises.

"Now that you feel your power," socialists say, "why not link up representative elected committees on a local, regional and national level, and make a bid to get rid of the government?"

Jean-Luc Mélenchon has called for a constituent assembly. Why not make it an assembly of revolt, with democratically elected representatives at all levels, including from assemblies in the workplaces?

It could have as its programme all the demands of the movement - plus nationalising the big banks and top companies, which form the basis of French capitalism, and where the friends of Macron get their easy wealth. The watchwords of the French Revolution of 1789 - "liberty, equality and fraternity" - can only be secured on the basis of socialism!

■ Gilets jaunes 'charter', attacks on students, 'bourgeois bohemians' - read the full article at socialistworld.net



Eyewitness: Macron's concessions 'too little, too late' as movement spreads

Terry Adams
Albi, France

Emmanuel Macron's embattled government deployed 89,000 police across France on Saturday 8 December. Reports indicate over 1,700 arrests and hundreds of injuries.

Negative media attention and running battles with the notorious French riot police, the CRS, have done nothing to dent popular support for the 'gilets jaunes'. In fact, the violent, repressive tactics of the state - tear gas, beatings, mass arrests including of school students - have met with a wave of public disgust.

Students have blockaded some 'lycées' - state schools for 15 to 18-year-olds - in protest against Macron's proposals to restrict university entrance. On Friday 30 November, the Union Nationale Lycéenne (UNL - National Union of Lycée Students) had also put out a call for blockades.

Students call for university courses to be open to all who achieve their 'baccalauréat' leaving exam, without additional selection based on opaque and unfair criteria. Our daughter Isabelle, a 15-year-old lycéenne student in Carmaux, describes the protest at her lycée on Friday 7 December below.

The UNL has not declared itself part of the gilets jaunes movement. Some of the student protesters wear the high-vis vest, some don't. But they all recognise their joint interests in fighting austerity and for increased public spending.



Protest at Toulouse town hall photo Terry Adams

Protests in city centres have attracted the most media attention, but in France arguably the blockaded roads and gilets jaunes-controlled highways are the most enduring image.

On the way to the Toulouse demonstration on Saturday 8 December we went through three major blockades, including a toll booth with free passage courtesy of the protesters. At the roundabouts, with semi-permanent campsites erected, the occupation is continuous.

In Toulouse, thousands of gilets jaunes and environmental protesters flooded into the city centre. Shops drew their shutters down. Public transport was halted.

The main focus was the town hall. Protesters surrounded the building which was guarded by riot police, with shouts of derision and gestures towards the police helicopter hovering overhead.

Cries of "tous ensemble!" (all together) and "Macron démission!" (resign) were interspersed with the singing of La Marseillaise, France's national anthem and the defining song of the French Revolution. On the way back at least one major road was closed by a bonfire straddling three lanes.

The effects of Macron's diesel tax on rural areas, where absence of public transport means many rely on their cars for work, school runs and family care, was the final straw for millions bearing the brunt of his big business agenda.

They received his promise to delay tax increases on diesel for six months as "trop peu, trop tard" (too little, too late). Their demands had already progressed from simply withdrawing the tax hike to greater 'pouvoir d'achat' (spending power). Could this be Macron's 'poll tax moment'?

France school protests: a student speaks

Isabelle Adams
Lycée student protester,
Carmaux, France

We heard that other lycées had been blockaded all week and some of the students wanted to join in.

An anonymous blog was circulating on social media calling for us to join the protests, so we organised to meet up before school and block the entrance.

There were about 100 of us, and we were a bit worried the police might come to break up the demonstration, especially when we saw some of the images on Facebook of kids being beaten and pushed around by the CRS.

photo Terry Adams



There were police, but they weren't the CRS, and they just stayed in the background while we were in front of the school gates.

After a couple of hours we marched to the town centre. The police drove with the march and blocked the roads to traffic while we marched through.

A lot of passing motorists were sounding their horns to support us. We went to the town hall to make the government hear us, and we later joined some of the gilets jaunes to march together against Macron and his government.

About two-thirds of the students from my year didn't attend classes.

Quiz

Brexit chaos... austerity... cataclysmic climate change... far-right populism... stop worrying and instead enjoy the Socialist quiz of 2018 - and step up the fight for socialism in 2019!

1. How many days into 2018 did it take the chief executives of the FTSE100 companies to 'earn' the average worker's salary for the year?
2. Name the Uswad Broad Left and Socialist Party member elected president of Uswad?
3. Name the construction and services giant which went bust on 15 January?
4. In February, who failed to turn up for an opening ceremony?
5. What import ban by China impacted on the UK?
6. Who took 14 days of strike action to defend their pensions?
7. Which group of NHS workers sent a message of thanks to the Socialist Party?
8. What has doubled in the UK over the last decade?
9. Which city told its residents to prepare for no water supply?
10. What label was given to anti-austerity/fuel tax protesters in France?
11. Name the TUSC-supported independent anti-cuts councillor reelected in May?
12. Which revolutionary's 200th birthday was celebrated on 5 May?
13. Who was forced to resign over



photo Sindicato de Estudiantes

the Windrush scandal?
14. Which groups of workers took coordinated strike action on 4 October?
15. How many government ministers resigned over May's Brexit deal?
16. Who said fatal stabbings in London were due to gun control?
17. Which shooting massacre

THE SOCIALIST QUIZ OF 2018

28. Who 'made history' on 23 and 24 October?
29. Who imposed a 10% cash commission for returning a lost wallet?
30. Which Labour MP denounced "Trots, Stalinists, communists and assorted hard left" after the passing of a no-confidence vote?
31. What has been determined to cause a huge decrease in brain power?
32. Name the German city where 5,000 far-right thugs attacked migrants and anti-racists?
33. Who threw a ten-year reunion party?
34. Who issued a Section 114 notice?
35. Who succeeded after taking 80 days of strikes?
36. Where were 91 people killed in wildfires?
37. According to recently released Tory cabinet papers from the mid-1980s, how many civil servants were on a political blacklist?
39. Who replaced Jeremy Hunt as health secretary?
40. How much does the Home Office charge refugee children to register as British citizens?



photo aron urb/CC

41. Which MP was suspended from the House of Commons for 30 days for not declaring their expenses?
42. A Maidenhead primary school in Theresa May's constituency asked its pupils' parents for what?
43. Who won Mexico's 1 July presidential election?
44. Where did an anti-austerity general strike in June remove the prime minister?
45. Who was held responsible for the railways' timetable

chaos in May?
46. How much did Boots charge the NHS for a medicated mouth wash?
47. How many school students went on strike in the Spanish state in November, against sexism and for inclusive sex education?
48. In April, where did construction workers take successful unofficial action over victimisation by management?
49. Where in Europe did abortion become legal?
50. Which daily newspaper conceded the London living wage to its cleaners?



photo Paul Mattsson

in February led to a nationwide uprising of students demanding gun control?
18. According to the National Audit Office, how much will rip-off PFI contracts cost the public purse over the next 25 years?
19. What percentage of wildlife has been wiped out largely by capitalist industry and agriculture since 1970?
20. Who warned the Tory government that Universal Credit could become the Poll Tax of the modern political era?
21. According to a US Gallup poll, what percentage of 19 to 26-year-olds had a positive view of socialism?
22. Name the Trump-nominated US Supreme Court judge who generated widespread outrage?
23. Name the far-right populist elected president of Brazil?
24. Who were jailed over a protest against fracking company Cuadrilla in Blackpool?
25. What eventually commenced in Britain after 30 years and 3,000 dead?
26. Which failed British politician was hired by Facebook?
27. What sent Putin's popularity ratings plummeting in Russia?



photo Paul Mattsson

Quiz answers

40. £1,102 even though the administration costs
41. The DUP's Ian Paisley Jnr who employed several family holidays paid by the Sri Lankan government
42. Among other things, it requested toilet paper
43. Anti-establishment candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador or 'AMLO'.
44. Jordan.
45. Transport secretary Chris Grayling was
46. £3,220. It was available elsewhere for £93.
47. Over one million. It was called by Sindicato de
48. Hull Energy Works. Socialist Party member Keith Gibson played a crucial role in their reinstatement.
49. Republic of Ireland. The country's
50. The Daily Mail. Its mainly migrant cleaners had threatened an all-out strike.
51. 15 January.
52. The Uswad Broad Left and Socialist Party member elected president of Uswad?
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Socialist Party

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.

WORK AND INCOME

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

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!
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Tories' NHS cash insult **MASS** **ACTION CAN** **SAVE** **OUR NHS**

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Jackie Grunsell
GP and Lancashire
Socialist Party member

£20.5 billion extra funding isn't enough to make improvements to NHS services, is the conclusion of Simon Stevens, head of NHS England. A row has broken out between him and the government.

The Tories want him to promise significant improvements to waiting times, cancer care, mental health services, ill-health prevention measures - and expect him to deliver a 'seven-day NHS'. All this for what will amount to a miserly 3.4% increase in funding annually over

the next five years.

Theresa May bestowed this '70th birthday present' on the NHS only as a result of growing public anger. Campaigns have grown against the running down of health services, chronic underfunding, staff shortages and closures.

This latest attempt to appease the public won't wash. Even with this 'increase' - a real-terms freeze compared to some inflation measures, and following years of cuts - the UK will spend less on healthcare than leading EU countries.

There are over 100,000 staff vacancies in the NHS, according to health service watchdog NHS Improvement. Yet there is no extra money

for training and education.

Bosses have cut 6,000 NHS beds since 2014-15, the doctors' union BMA has found. Hospitals are now overwhelmed by demand all year round - not just over winter. Today the UK has one of the lowest numbers of beds per patient in the OECD, representing most major capitalist economies.

And the 'extra' money contains no increase for social care or public health, areas where cuts have devastated services and put vulnerable patients more at risk.

Even according to Simon Stevens' own conservative estimates, at least £80 billion - four times what's on offer - would be needed just to make the

changes the Tories demand.

Yet despite the underfunding, year on year a greater proportion of NHS funding is going to private providers of care. They take the money while cherry-picking the less costly to treat, the less complex patients - further increasing pressure on NHS services.

There has to be a huge investment in the NHS - but no more money should be diverted into the hands of private profiteers. Health workers and the public need direct involvement in democratically deciding how a massive increase in NHS money should be spent, to genuinely improve the service to meet the needs of all.

The Socialist Party says

■ **Avert the winter crisis!** For an emergency injection of resources to help overstretched services cope

■ **Stop starving our NHS!** Reverse all cuts and privatisation to guarantee the needed funds

■ **General election now!** Kick out the Tories, for a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies

■ **Unions: take the lead!** Build for workers' action against the winter crisis, cuts and closures, and call an immediate national demonstration for a general election