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CLOSURE THREATS: HONDA, FORD AND THE HIGH STREET

Trade union action and socialist nationalisation can save jobs

> p2-3



photo Steve German

GRENFELL TWO YEARS ON

> p8-9



Still fighting for safety and justice

photo Paul Murphy



SOUTHERN IRELAND ELECTIONS ANALYSIS
>p14-15

photo Pete Mason

Barking flats burn two years after Grenfell Private firms put profit first

SAFE HOMES FOR ALL NOW

Pete Mason
Chair of Barking Reach Residents' Association and East London Socialist Party member

On Sunday 9 June - almost two years to the day after the Grenfell Tower disaster - a fire ripped through a block of flats on the Barking Riverside estate.

Fortunately all residents managed to escape. But this blaze should never have happened. Grenfell was a stark warning that the profit drive in housing risks lives. How many more lives have to be destroyed before there is real action against housing criminals?

Industry journal Inside Housing reports the wooden material which spread the fire had an insufficient "Class D" fire resistance, and that property management knew this two weeks after Grenfell in 2017 (see p8-9). Bellway Homes, which built the blocks, claims this is false - because, by government regulations, no fire resistance was needed at all!

When we in the Barking Reach Residents' Association asked Bellway to come to the estate just one

month ago, after BBC Watchdog exposed failings in its construction, the company refused.

When Bellway finally arrived after the fire, representatives announced they would survey the estate and remove dangerous material 'if necessary'! What more proof do they need than this fire? Remove the cladding now!

Since Grenfell, the residents' association has raised questions about the wooden material used in the balconies and cladding. We were verbally told the materials used in homes would not ignite for 30 minutes in a fire. Yet the building was consumed by flames by the time the fire brigade arrived, around five minutes after being alerted.

An angry and emotional meeting of residents from the 80 flats affected was held by the council the next morning, Monday 10 June. Residents' feelings on the immediate issues were loud and clear: take the cladding down now!

In the view of residents, the private landlord - Adriatic Land - collects its lucrative ground rent without taking sufficient responsibility for maintaining the property, leading to this terrible fire.

The owners awarded property management to Residential Management Group last October. This was to prevent self-management by residents, which the residents' association was and is fighting for.

Residential Management Group

initiated a review of fire safety - which clearly was not up to scratch, because it introduced a night-time fire warden. But it would appear from the fire that its measures merely scratched the surface. The blame for this lies ultimately with the landlord.

Barking and Dagenham Council should also have been acting in the interests of residents, not landlords and investors. It could have demanded the testing and removal from our homes of dangerous material.

Council leader Darren Rodwell claims he was held back by government restrictions and private ownership. This only underlines that Labour councils' policy of privatisation is the wrong path.

> Continued on p10

Nationalise to prevent closure

Ross Saunders
Socialist Party Wales

The announcement that Ford Bridgend is to close is the latest in a series of blows to manufacturing workers. We are in the midst of a new wave of deindustrialisation that is weakening the UK economy.

Jeremy Corbyn should pledge that a Labour government would act decisively to prevent this, carrying out nationalisation of all industries threatening redundancies under democratic working-class control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.

The Bridgend announcement comes on the heels of Honda confirming it will close its Swindon plant, with the loss of 3500 jobs, Nissan announcing it will not build its new XTrail model in Sunderland and Jaguar Land Rover and Vauxhall preparing to axe thousands of jobs.

The bankruptcy of British Steel shows that the crisis isn't confined to the automotive industry and isn't a recent development in response to Brexit. Even before this announcement, Wales, a former manufacturing heartland, had already lost 13,000 manufacturing jobs – 8% of the total – in the last ten years, according to the GMB.

Demand

Ford itself used to have 27 factories in the UK but now has just five, only three of which are manufacturing plants. The company blames the Bridgend closure on a lack of demand for the engines produced by the plant but in reality Bridgend Ford had been set up to fail.

It's true that the contract for Jaguar Land Rover engines is due to end as JLR takes its engine production back in house in 2021. But there is considerable demand – for 500,000 annually according to Unite – for the Dragon 1.5l Ford engine which goes into the Fiesta and Focus models, the most popular in Britain and in many other parts of the world.

The reality is that Ford is using fluctuations in demand to try and divest itself of factories in countries with a higher wage bill – that's what's behind the company's talk of Bridgend's 'cost disadvantage' and lack of 'efficiency'. Jobs at Dagenham will face a similar threat.

Thanks to Ford's 2008 'One Ford' restructuring programme, Dragon engines are also manufactured in Brazil, China, Russia and Mexico, where wages are much lower than in Europe. Unite has quite rightly demanded a fair share of the work



Honda workers marching to stop the closure of their factory - the Socialist Party said "nationalise to save jobs" photo Steve German

distributed across these sites.

It is not in the interests of the working class of any country to let big corporations continue the race to the bottom and pull out of countries where wages and conditions are higher.

Ford typifies one of the fundamental contradictions in capitalism, which drives down wages in order to pump profits up, but then finds that workers collectively don't have the money to buy the products they have produced.

Ford wants access to the lucrative UK automotive market – one of its biggest – but doesn't want to have to pay UK wages.

The global car industry is also facing other threats, including a drop in demand for diesel and the enormous investment necessary to transition to electric.

Brexit does have a potential impact on the industry, where supply

chains criss-cross national borders, many times before finished products are assembled. However, it is being used as an excuse for layoffs and closures.

Ford is also shutting its Bordeaux plant in France, has announced 5,000 job cuts in Germany, and there are cutbacks in Russia and Brazil, too.

Cost cutting

Globally the company plans to save \$11bn in a cost cutting exercise whose advertised purpose is preparing for investment into electric cars and other new technology.

GM is slashing 14,000 jobs, Volkswagen 7,000, and so on. Contrary to the industry's claims, much of these savings will be squandered as dividend payments and share buybacks, rather than invested in production.

The mega-mergers in the industry

that are on the horizon are part of the same phenomenon, as the big companies which dominate huddle together in order to share costs and risk.

The huge handouts these private companies take from the state haven't solved its problems either.

Ford took a \$6bn loan from the US government to develop the Dragon engine made at Bridgend, and over the 40 years it's been on the site has also taken £140 million in public cash from the UK and Welsh governments.

Just like the railways, we are subsidising huge profit making companies but getting no control over decisions like job cuts and relocations in return.

The only lasting solution is to nationalise the industry. The Welsh government could make a start by nationalising Ford Bridgend, just as they took over Cardiff Airport when

it was threatened with closure by the previous owner.

Many workers will have questions how this could work. How, for example, can you nationalise factories that only make a component, not a finished article that workers want to buy?

But in reality most factory workers have been through a transition where a factory introduces a new line of product. Here the government would provide the necessary investment to fund the transition, including prioritising switching to environmentally friendly production and products.

Instead of setting up taskforces to direct workers to non-existent alternative jobs, democratically elected committees involving the workforce and consumers could identify what might be produced and what is needed.

An example like that could spread like wildfire and compel further action, across Britain and further afield. It was a Tory government that was compelled to nationalise Rolls-Royce in the 1970s.

An appeal should be made to Corbyn to go further, to take similar steps in other threatened and ailing plants UK-wide which could be linked up in a publicly-owned car industry with the workers controlling and managing the business.

Why stop there?

But why stop there? One steelworker pointed out to us the lunacy of using Chinese steel that had been shipped halfway across the world – with all the damage done to the environment – to erect wind turbines on the hills above Port Talbot steel works, when the local plant was threatened with closure.

If the car industry and steel, as well as the energy industry and the railways, were nationalised under democratic workers control and management, great improvements and efficiencies could be identified.

Capitalism is a system in crisis offering workers a diet of job losses and closures. These are only small examples of what could be achieved by socialist policies.

If a Corbyn-led government was to nationalise the 120 major corporations and banks that dominate the economy – backed by the active mass support of the working class majority – it would be possible to harness the enormous wealth, science and technique that exists in Britain, not for the profits of a few, but to provide decent living standards for all.

In a world of poverty and job cuts, such an approach would create enormous enthusiasm from the working class worldwide.

Rob Williams (2nd right) protesting with other Ford workers against pension cuts photo Socialist Party



FORD BRIDGEND CLOSURE ANNOUNCEMENT MUST BE MET WITH UNITED DEFIANCE

Rob Williams
Former Unite convenor at ex-Swansea Ford plant

After months if not years of rumours and speculation, which have shredded the nerves of workers and their families, Ford have finally announced the closure of the Bridgend engine plant after nearly 40 years of production.

This is a catastrophe for these 1,700 workers, their families and communities and the whole Welsh economy.

The message that must be immediately sent by the unions and the Labour Party in Cardiff and Westminster to Ford and the Tory government is that the plant will not be allowed to close.

Campaign

This would be the platform to build a mass campaign from the workforce on the Bridgend shop floor and workers in the related companies that depend on the engine plant that make the components and provide services.

If a determined programme of industrial action is spelt out, it can give workers confidence to fight and build the pressure on the company

and the politicians.

The Labour-run Welsh government should tell Ford that the plant will be nationalised to save jobs and communities and Jeremy Corbyn must give the commitment that a Labour government led by him will take it into public ownership. This would put huge pressure on the weak and divided Tory government to intervene.

Nationalisation

In 1971, a previous Tory government nationalised Rolls-Royce, and months later was forced to intervene when workers at the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders conducted a working occupation and 80,000 marched in solidarity.

Honda workers in Swindon and steelworkers in Scunthorpe are facing the same scenario and support the call for nationalisation to save jobs. Public ownership as the foundation of a socialist plan of production offers the possibility to re-tool the plant for alternative production, without loss of pay and pensions.

The Ford unions have already threatened a national strike ballot if Bridgend is closed. This must be prepared immediately.

A national demonstration to save Bridgend would be an important first step and could build workers' confidence. A national meeting of

Ford shop stewards should meet with plant meetings throughout the company's sites. This is the best way to undermine any Ford divide-and-rule tactics.

The best way to protect the other sites is to fight to keep Bridgend open. The lesson of the last 20 years is that every plant closure makes others easier and more likely.

In 2000, there were over 50,000 Ford UK workers but now only a fifth of that remains in work. In Bridgend right now there will be workers from closed plants such as Treforest, Swansea and Southampton. There is nowhere else to go.

A national strike would send a clear message of defiance, as would an immediate stoppage at the plant. It is surely not accidental that Ford sent workers home on the day of the announcement so that they couldn't discuss together or they may have been concerned about a walkout.

Occupation

Ford should be told that the plant will stop if there is any attempt to move out machinery and equipment. Even the idea of a plant occupation should be considered.

Two years ago, Unite won an industrial action ballot when it emerged that the company's sourcing plans threatened the plants'

future. However, no action was called.

This was a serious mistake as undoubtedly it would have given Ford the impression that there wouldn't be a fight. This is a lesson that must be learned now.

As usual, when Ford looks to close plants, it has designed a closure package that attempts to buy off resistance. But no matter how much is offered, it will never be as good as a job on terms and conditions that have been won by the militancy of generations of Ford workers, in Bridgend and nationally.

Pension

While those 55 or over can get immediate access to a full pension and those 45 or over will qualify when they reach 55, younger workers who face the dole will have to wait until they are 65.

But as ex-Swansea plant workers know, your pension is never safe. They were spun-off to Visteon in 2000 but their pensions went into the Pension Protection Fund which pays out reduced pensions, when the new company went into administration in 2009.

Only a five-year struggle by Visteon pensioners from the closed plants in Swansea, Belfast, Basildon and Enfield forced tens of millions of pounds in compensation.

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Nigeria: Stop police harassment of Abbey and Azeez!

■ Persecuted for the ‘crime’ of organising workers in a union



Socialist Party members protest outside the Nigerian embassy in London photo Ian Pattison

Sudan: Military crackdown to break revolution



Mass protests against the regime continue in Sudan photo Lana Hago/CC

Dave Carr
East London Socialist Party

A violent counterrevolutionary offensive is underway in Sudan. Health officials say hundreds of civilians have been killed and wounded by the Rapid Support Forces - the militia operated by the ruling military clique.

Opposition leaders have called for ‘mass civil disobedience’ in response. However, unless a strike movement is linked to a determined strategy to seize power, the armed might of the state forces will prevail. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of Sudan’s junta, visited Egypt and the United Arab Emirates for talks last month. Negotiations between Sudan’s ruling Transitional

Ian Pattison
Socialist Party national committee

Abiodun Bamigboye (Abbey Trotsky) - a member of the Socialist Party’s sister organisation in Nigeria, the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) - has been arrested by Nigerian police again and again and again. He has now been arrested by the political police DSS. In 2018, Abbey and DSM helped striking Sumal food workers win a 30% pay rise, a reduction in hours and the working week, overtime pay, more lenient sick leave, and the reinstatement of sacked employees. The Sumal workers’ victory inspired a wave of protests for better pay and conditions among other Sumal workers and at other factories in Ibadan city in Oyo state. Abbey was the candidate for the Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN), set up by DSM, for Oyo governor in this year’s general election. The police meted out similar harassment to sacked Sumal worker, Azeez Arowosegbe. Scandalously, the National Union of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Employees back the management. When Abbey and others met with Sumal management at the police station, Abbey, Azeez and members of DSM/SPN were not even allowed to sit! Only their lawyer was. Sumal have accused Abbey of ‘inciting’ the workers against management. But it’s the workers who

invited Abbey to help, after the terrible role played by the union leaders. It’s clear why Abbey and Azeez have been arrested. Management want to cut off the head of the movement, and wear activists down, so the workers are forced to agree to a rotten compromise. Sumal management even tried to bribe Abbey, which he rejected. The same can’t be said for others! DSM said: “Several cartons of biscuits were offloaded by policemen from the vehicles that had brought the Sumal Food reps” to the police station meeting. “One can only imagine how much must have exchanged hands.” The Socialist Party organised a protest outside the Nigerian embassy in London on 6 June. Officials initially refused to take our letter demanding an end to the harassment of Abbey and Azeez - denying that we even had the right to protest - but relented after pressure. Please send messages of protest to Sumal Foods contact@sumal-foods.com and the Nigeria police oyostatepolicecommand@yahoo.com. And copies and messages of support to DSM dsmcentre@yahoo.com. Contact Nigerian embassies and high commissions to protest too. ■ See ‘Sumal Food Company Ibadan: Production activities crippled and management brought to its knee by protest and strike of casual workers’ at socialistnigeria.org

Donald Trump and US imperialism is content to allow these regional powers to call the shots in Sudan, while the UK government is, as usual, tail-ending the US administration. The working class and poor of Sudan cannot rely on outside ‘mediators’ or western powers to assist their cause. It is necessary for the mass movement to rapidly build democratic councils of action throughout the country to create an alternative power base. But for this to succeed a clear revolutionary programme and strategy is needed. While Sudanese workers and youth have shown their determination to struggle, they need an independent revolutionary party that is unflinching in its aim of taking power. A revolutionary party must also embrace a socialist programme of nationalising major industry and the banks to provide jobs, public services, and end poverty, to consolidate working class support. On that basis it would be possible to split the sympathetic rank-and-file soldiers away from their reactionary officer corps to the side of revolution, undermining the capitalist state. Socialist Party members went to the demonstration in support of the Sudan protests in London to call for this and show our backing to the Sudanese revolution. ■ See ‘Revolution and counter-revolution in Sudan’ at socialistparty.org.uk



photo Paul Mattsson

WIDESPREAD CONDEMNATION OF HORRIFYING, VIOLENT, HOMOPHOBIC ASSAULTS

Tory drug hypocrisy

Michael Gove’s Tory leadership campaign was tripping to catch up after he admitted taking cocaine on several occasions while working as a journalist. But as Tory education secretary, Gove introduced rules that banned teachers for life if they did the same. Unbelievably, Gove has defended the policy! Gove and other Tory contenders are unfit to govern because they’ve presided over a decade of cuts, privatisation and declining living standards. The Tories don’t deserve to come within a sniff of power. Gove put a line between him and millions of workers when he fast-tracked school privatisation. His Tory rivals promise a heady cocktail of cuts for workers laced with tax cuts for the rich. We need a general election now to kick them all out!

Terrible child murders linked to cuts



photo Steve Score

Jean Thorpe
Child protection social worker (personal capacity)

The terrible murders of two young children in Northamptonshire have been published in reports called ‘serious case reviews’. Dylan Tiffin-Brown, aged two, was murdered by his father in December 2017 and Evelyn-Rose Muggleton was murdered in April 2018 by her mother’s partner. Both reports comment on the impact cuts made by Northamptonshire’s Tory council have on children’s services. The reports refer to high staff turnover, management sick leave and inadequate IT systems. Although the serious case reviews made clear that it was unlikely anything could have been done to prevent the “single catastrophic incidents” that led to the murders, there

Lindsey Morgan
Leicester West Socialist Party

Two lesbian women were subjected to a horrifying, violent, homophobic assault on a London night bus on 30 May. A group of men, who saw them kissing, asked them to kiss for their gratification. When the women refused, they were punched and robbed. The incident, and the image of the two women bloodied from the violent attack, drew widespread condemnation from working-class people who overwhelmingly reject homophobia. The current system of capitalism causes inequality and encourages division. Right-wing populists have exploited workers’ anger against austerity to encourage reactionary ideas such as homophobia. The Detroit Pride march was violently disrupted by neo-Nazis. In the Socialist Party, we argue there is no place in society for homophobic hatred and violence. In Britain, two women actors were also attacked on their way to perform in an LGBT+ play called Rotterdam. A group of people threw stones at them and heckled them after they kissed. LGBT+ people often live in fear of being subjected to harassment on the basis of their gender or sexuality, which often forces people to be nervous displaying either affection for their partner or other aspects of their sexuality in public.

In response to the assault, the actors’ union Equity released a statement on Twitter: “There is no place for homophobia in society, Equity stands in solidarity with the cast and crew of @RotterdamPlay and we will do everything we can to assist members who experience this kind of hate crime.” The offer of solidarity and support is welcome. It demonstrates acknowledgment that sexual harassment is a union and workplace issue, even when incidents occur outside the workplace. More can be done to eradicate homophobia. The pioneering work of the Campaign Against Domestic Violence in the 1990s shows the potential power of the trade unions. This campaign, led by the Socialist Party, demonstrated that violence is a workplace issue, not separate to struggles for liberation. We ask that the Trade Union Congress organise the unions to fight for the funding of services the working class needs. The trade union movement should be calling for mass demonstrations to force the pathetic Tories from power. The capitalist class exacerbates divisions along the lines of identity in order to prevent us unifying together to fight them. Inequality, and therefore homophobia, racism, and sexism, are built into the capitalist system. We fight homophobia now. And we say unite and fight alongside the entire working class for a system that allows for our full liberation through the socialist transformation of society.



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is no doubt that council cuts have contributed to and been a huge cause of the dire staffing and workloads for social workers. An Ofsted inspection last October found social workers were “overwhelmed and drowning.” Over 260 children needing social work intervention did not have an allocated social worker. Some staff had caseloads of up to 50 children. 25% of qualified social worker posts were filled by agency staff, and therefore temporary, and a further 18% were not filled at all! **Bankrupt** In August 2018, Northants council became the first to go technically bankrupt for many years. It passed a further £70-million cuts budget. The council already outsourced huge parts of its services and will now privatise children’s services to an ‘independent’ organisation. Ray Jones, a social work academe-

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Socialist Party members make big impact at trades council conference

Iain Dalton
Leeds TUC delegate

Socialist Party members made a big impact as delegates at the TUC's trade union councils' congress 8-9 June in Bournemouth.

Among the various motions passed, Socialist Party member Tanis Belsham-Wray moved one in support of the still unresolved Arriva Rail North guards' dispute, making the call for the company to be stripped of its contract and the service brought back into public ownership.

A motion was carried unanimously, based on the model by the Women's Lives Matter campaign calling for councils to defend domestic violence services, including by setting no cuts budgets.

Kevin Parslow seconded a number of motions from London which had originated from Waltham Forest Trade Union Council dealing with the fire service after the Grenfell Tower disaster and opposing gentrifying regeneration schemes.

Socialist Party members also tried to bring emergency motions in solidarity with the student climate change strike. Though neither was debated on congress floor, this did force the conference to issue a statement of full solidarity with student strikes and opposition to any reprisals from schools.

On another climate change motion Tanis was able to point to the way trade union councils in Yorkshire had provided active support to the students, including being invited to address rallies in Leeds, York and Hull as well as providing a meeting place for school students to organise in York.

General election

Socialist Party member Katrine Williams moved an emergency motion making the demand to actively campaign for a general election on a positive programme of workers' rights and socialist demands for jobs, pay and services and nationalisation.

The motion also called on the TUC to encourage trade union councils to hold meetings and rallies to discuss a trade union and socialist response to the Brexit Party and a workers' programme for Brexit.

Despite TUC opposition this was decisively carried by conference, with a handful of votes against.

Throughout the conference Socialist Party members made the case for trade unions to take a lead on these issues.

We fully supported the call for trade union councils to be actively involved in the Stop and Scrap Universal Credit campaign. We argued that trade unions can give an outlet for the anger of workers by providing a collective way to tackle the problems facing our class.

Dave Beale
Lancashire Socialist Party

1 June marked the sixth strike day by Preston and Chorley's Stagecoach bus workers. Demanding an extra 50p to receive £11 an hour, Unite the Union members have organised the strongest and most enthusiastic picket lines seen in central Lancashire for a long time.

Stagecoach is paying better wages to its bus workers in other parts of the north west, cynically maintaining the pay differentials of the old companies it bought up. Bosses refused to budge in negotiations last December, so Unite responded with a strike ballot - securing an astonishing 98% vote for a strike, with a 83% turnout!

Unite recruited almost all of the non-union members in recent months. Pickets are often 100 plus, out of 250-300 branch members.

One of the pickets immediately sold seven copies of the Socialist for us, such is the fighting spirit.

Provocatively, Stagecoach is bringing in managers from other areas as scabs, stuffing money into their pockets and accommodating them with expenses in a local 4-star hotel.

These scab drivers are breaching safety standards, for example by picking up passengers at unsafe locations and not stopping safely at bus stops.

However, the strikers are very committed and determined, knowing they are being cheated with

Stagecoach strike - bus workers show how it's done



photo Dave Beale

£1.20 an hour less than other Stagecoach drivers in the north west.

Meanwhile the company makes fat profits in Preston and Chorley. The longer term union objective is to achieve pay parity for all Stagecoach drivers in the region.

However, such disputes are a symptom of Thatcher's bus deregulation and privatisation, which the Blair and Brown Labour governments refused to reverse.

What is needed now is a clear commitment by Jeremy Corbyn not only to re-regulate bus services across the country but also to bring them into democratic public ownership.

This is the only viable long-term basis to guarantee decent pay and conditions in the industry, to provide a radically improved bus service for both urban and rural areas, and to establish an integrated transport system in conjunction with rail

nationalisation.

■ Further strike days will be on 18, 22, 25, 29 June, and 13, 16 July.

■ Send messages of support to: gary.campion@stagecoachbus.com

■ Donations to: Peter Winstanley, Stagecoach Preston, Preston Bus Station, Preston, Lancashire PR1 1YU. Write cheques to: 'Unite Branch 6/91'. Please notify david.beale03@gmail.com of whatever you send

Southampton hospital workers win

Security staff at Southampton General Hospital, who have been attacked in the A&E department, have voted to accept a new offer covering pay, sick pay and new protective equipment.

Unite the Unite lead officer for health in the south east Scott Kemp said: "Unite is pleased to announce that our security staff at Southampton General Hospital have accepted a package that includes increased pay rates, improved sick pay arrangements, and new personal protection equipment."

"We regard this as an important victory which demonstrates the strong solidarity shown by our members during this long-running dispute and also, more widely, the support they received from the local community."

■ Scott will be speaking at the National Shop Stewards Network conference on 6 July. See backpage for details

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photo Brent Kennedy

Sellafield nuclear workers' strike

Low-paid Mitie workers at the Sellafield nuclear site in Cumbria went on strike on 7 June for a substantial wage rise and to have their union, Unite, recognised. The workers bought copies of the Socialist newspaper which included

reports of their previous picket lines and strike meetings.

They are currently taking part in a two-week strike against what Mitie worker Debbie Matthews and Unite organiser Michelle Smith revealed as the dirty, dangerous and bullying reality behind the glossy, hi-tech image of the biggest industrial site in the country.

"We work in the same

environment as the skilled workers but without the training and protection. I've had to clear out cupboards containing used protective masks and I worked in a building full of asbestos. Even some of the Sellafield direct workers haven't had hot water to shower or wash their hands after the toilet." Science hasn't brought civilisation to Sellafield!

SCOTTISH AIRPORT STRIKES AGAINST ATTACK BY "IDEOLOGICAL CAPITALISTS" - FIGHT FOR BETTER PAY AND PENSIONS



photo MP4-23/CC

Socialist Party Scotland

Hundreds of Unite trade union members at Glasgow and Aberdeen airports are striking to defend pensions and announce that our security staff at Southampton General Hospital have accepted a package that includes increased pay rates, improved sick pay arrangements, and new personal protection equipment.

The strike has had a large scale impact with long queues at airport security and flights affected and grounded when the action started on 7 June.

There have been well-attended pickets with management trying to keep trade unionists as far away as possible from main airport buildings and supportive passengers.

Mechanics, firefighters, security, admin, car park attendants are all fighting together. One picket told Socialist Party Scotland that airport owners make massive profits and have "engineered the disputes to try and break the union as they are ideological capitalists".

Unite's planned programme of strike action and an overtime ban up until October is a response to massive attacks by airport bosses AGS: a paltry 1.8% pay offer, really

representing a pay cut, is combined with the closure of the final salary pension scheme.

Unite should continue to coordinate the action and also look at involving AGS workers at Southampton airport. An important fight will be to try and prevent the use of sub-contractors and agency staff to break the strike by appealing to workers to not cross pickets.

"Wall of silence"

A Unite spokesperson said: "Multiple times this week, Unite has requested to meet with management to seek to remedy the dispute. This has been met with a wall of silence. We cannot stand by while the boardroom of AGS enjoys pre-tax profits of £91 million, and let them close our pension scheme."

"We continue to call for further negotiations to end the dispute, but we have been ignored and will be continuing with our action until we are heard."

This dispute shows again the rising anger of workers over pay and attacks on terms and conditions. In the public sector, council workers in Dundee, Angus and West Dunbartonshire are also balloting to strike. Oil workers on the North Sea platforms have recently taken

strike action.

We have seen the victory of the Glasgow equal pay strikers after a 48-hour strike. Scottish teachers also won big concessions on pay after a mass demonstration and the threat of a national strike.

This shows workers' action gets results and that if trade union leaders call action workers respond. The national and Scottish Trade Union Congress leaderships should take note and call co-ordinated action for pay rises to meet the cost of living, stop attacks on pensions and jobs and end austerity.

This dispute in the airports, a key expanding part of the economy, has the potential to have a major impact.

Socialist Party Scotland supports the demand of Len McCluskey and Unite for a general election to drive out the Tories and for a Corbyn government. AGS clearly want a race to the bottom in wages and conditions in order to boost profits for the company, as is typical with big business capitalists.

We need to fight for socialist solutions where the major 150 companies, banks and key infrastructure such as aviation is brought under public ownership and democratically controlled and managed by the working class as a whole.

Socialists in Unison hold positions in elections despite ban on campaigning

Glenn Kelly
Socialist Party industrial organiser

28 socialists who are supporters of broad left group Unison Action have been re-elected to the national executive committee of public sector union Unison maintaining its position on the 67-strong committee.

Six Socialist Party members were re-elected out of the seven seats we held. The right-wing hold on the union executive remains tenuous with just 31 of their slate elected.

Frightened, and in a desperate bid to hold on to power, the union leadership took the unprecedented step this year to not only ban members of political parties campaigning in their party name. They also said that even an organisation made up of "exclusively Unison members" was to be defined as an "outside organisation" and banned from campaigning under the threat of disciplinary action.

Disgracefully, as we go to print, it is possible that four Unison Action supporters - three of them Socialist Party members - may face the threat of a witch hunt for simply calling for a vote for themselves and others on Facebook!

The Socialist Party is used to dealing with witch hunts and the union should know that we will fight any attempt to victimise or remove

elected members.

The Unison Action steering committee voted to defend the right to campaign enshrined in the union rule book and agreed to defy the ban on campaigning as it was in breach of the rules.

However this decision was undermined by some of the national steering committee and even Unison Action officers who ignored this decision and in the end no material was produced.

Not surprisingly this attack on democracy has seen a further fall in the turnout in the election with just 4.5% of the membership voting.

As with some other unions many members have, and see, no day-to-day connection with the national leadership and the need to change it. After all, the current Unison leadership has presided over nearly a million lost jobs since 2010 and a massive fall in living standards.

For many the union is most relevant when it's seen to fight to defend members at a local level where we have seen major victories in the likes of Glasgow, Birmingham and Mid Yorkshire, where a fighting socialist lead has been given.

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South Western Railway guards to strike again

Nick Chaffey
Socialist Party Southern secretary

Talks between the RMT transport union and South Western Railway (SWR) at conciliation services Acas have failed to achieve an acceptable agreement. RMT guards have voted to recommence strike action - this time for five days beginning on 18 June.

While SWR agreed to the presence of a guard, it has refused to agree the duties that guards will perform - a guard in name only. For RMT this fails to address the key issues of safety and access for passengers.

What happens when an accident occurs? Will SWR guards be trained in their safety critical role and have control to open doors and take passengers to safety, if the driver has been disabled? What happens to passengers who need help with

assisted access on the network? Who will SWR provide to ensure there is trained staff to assist?

SWR has pushed RMT guards into 35 days of strike action over the last two years by its intransigent refusal to reach an agreement. Failing to ensure safety, SWR has also failed in their franchise delivery to provide increased timetable capacity and new rolling stock resulting in losses over £100 million.

With rising ticket prices on overcrowded trains, support for rail renationalisation continues to grow.

As car congestion and concerns over air pollution and associated health problems grows, the case for rail renationalisation also grows. A fully funded, integrated public transport system providing safe, accessible and affordable travel must be a key part of the campaign for an immediate general election to bring an end to the failed decades of privatised rail.

Paul Kershaw
Chair, Unite union
housing workers' branch

Two years ago, on 14 June 2017, 72 people perished in the Grenfell Tower fire in west London.

The capitalist press expressed outrage when Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell rightly described it as “social murder.” But the loss of life was caused by profit seeking, cuts, and an institutional contempt for working-class residents; it was not some unpredictable natural catastrophe.

For the bereaved and local people, the grief and shock continue. It has become increasingly clear that the factors that led to Grenfell are far from unique. Similar risks exist nationwide, as shown once more by the fire at Barking Riverside on 9 June (see front page).

Amid tears of self-pity, Theresa May used her resignation speech to claim credit for a ‘caring’ response to the disaster. Her comments were dramatically at odds with the mood of those affected.

She claimed her office was a “platform to give a voice to the voiceless, to fight the burning injustices that still scar our society.” She added that “it is why I set up the independent inquiry into the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, to search for the truth so nothing like it can ever happen again, and so the people who lost their lives that night are never forgotten.”

The residents’ group Grenfell United responded that it is harder to think of a greater injustice than Grenfell. They pointed out that - two years after the fire - the government has failed to deliver housing reform, failed to make people safe in their homes, and made the last two years a battle for the bereaved and survivors.

The fire exposed again the class chasm in society, and the callous incompetence of the capitalist state at a local and national level. It also tested the workers’ movement. We should seriously consider the strengths and weaknesses revealed.

Them and us

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, the local council was almost absent from the relief effort, reflecting the impact of years of cuts.

There was an enormous outpouring of solidarity as community groups sprang into action and volunteers from all over London travelled to north Kensington to help and bring donations. Trade unions also organised collections.

Theresa May visited, but avoided meeting local people, provoking outrage by just seeing officials. In contrast, Jeremy Corbyn met volunteers and local people.

A typical comment picked up in the mainstream media was that “Corbyn came here and walked around as if he is one of us. That’s how it is. That’s why he has been so successful. Because he

is one of us” (Independent, 16 June 2017).

Wellsprings of support for Jeremy Corbyn and the anti-austerity policies he was associated with were revealed. May promised that people displaced - who, as she said, often had nothing - would be rehoused within three weeks.

In fact, progress has been agonisingly slow, stretching over years - despite the local area being one of the richest in Europe with more than enough empty homes to house families. Official figures showed at least 1,652 homes as completely empty in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

But even these figures play down the scale of housing being used as an investment - as safe deposit boxes for the rich - because they exclude homes occupied for part of the year. Housing charity Shelter estimated in August 2017 that over 10% of homes across the borough were kept empty most of the year.

When Jeremy Corbyn raised the idea of requisitioning empty homes to help displaced residents, he got an enormous response.

Socialist Party members campaigning in the area in the days after the fire were left with no doubt that the mood was intensely political.

Local people queued up to take our leaflets, and welcomed what we said supporting Corbyn and calling for real action. Comments to the effect that ‘they’ can find the money for wars, but not for ‘us’, were common in the discussions that followed.

Fighting for safety

The Socialist Party put out campaign materials straight away to assist any group of residents who wanted to organise for safe housing in the aftermath of Grenfell.

This could have been the start of a massive, sustained campaign. The capitalist press responded in horror to the suggestion of requisitioning because it challenged sacred property rights. They sensed the danger in popular anger being linked to radical demands.

Labour should have pressed on with demands that empty homes must be used for the homeless - and have added that council cuts, which laid the basis for heightened fire risk, should be reversed immediately so vital safety work could begin as rapidly as possible.

Blocks around the country face similar dangers to Grenfell. It was entirely possible that a Grenfell-like fire could have occurred in a Labour-controlled authority. The Barking fire has demonstrated that point.

Across the UK, the flammable cladding that played a major role in the Grenfell Tower fire was found on nearly 500 buildings, around 170 of them private residential blocks. It has since emerged that other types of cladding are also unsafe.

Even now, few of the blocks with



The Socialist's front page on the disaster



Marching for justice two days after the fire
pic James Ivens



Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017
photo @NatalieOxford (Twitter)

GRENFELL TWO YEARS ON

STILL FIGHTING FOR SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Grenfell-style cladding have been fully made safe. Recommendations to install sprinklers in high-rises - dating back at least to the inquiry into the 2009 Lakanal House fire in south London, and repeated since Grenfell - have been widely ignored by landlords and politicians.

A stand-off between government and private owners, each expecting the other to pay up, has left tenants and leaseholders stuck in the middle, with neither government nor freeholders wanting to foot the bill, waiting for the other to blink first. Unsurprisingly, there are reports the consequent anxiety is having a terrible impact on the mental health of residents.

Imagine how things could have developed if Labour had committed to reimburse councils that carried out vital life-saving work, not waiting for a general election.

Industry journal Inside Housing reports that Labour has now called for the remaining 150 blocks to demonstrate “substantial progress” towards removing the cladding by December or face confiscation. They have had two years - confiscate them now, get the cladding off!

The Institute for Fiscal Studies calculates that local government spending on housing has been slashed by half over the last eight years. If Labour councils had started safety work on the back of a mass campaign and billed the government, they would have won enormous support.

In the context of perhaps

the weakest Tory government ever, such a campaign would have been an irresistible force.

Of course, if the leadership had set a fighting, anti-austerity course, based on the potential power of the organised working class, it would still in the end have faced ferocious opposition not just from the landlords, bosses and Tories, but also from the Labour right.

The pro-capitalist wing of Labour remains dominant in the party’s power structures, including local government. In order to properly respond to Grenfell, the Labour leadership would have to be prepared for a fight with the Blairites.

Residents around the country often did not know how safe their homes were. Local authorities are subject to Freedom of Information law, so have to provide that information when demanded. Housing associations, which now manage most social housing, are considered private bodies and not covered by that law.

Many associations initially refused to share fire risk assessments with residents, despite the recommendation of the state’s official ‘information commissioner’ that they should proactively make them available.

Most (not all) now do when demanded, but not proactively. Grenfell residents had raised fire concerns



pic Matt Finch

A socialist programme for safe homes after Grenfell

For an independent, working-class inquiry

The workers’ movement should initiate a major investigation into Grenfell Tower and the implications for housing around the country, in addition to the official inquiry. It should be led by trade unions and residents’ groups, drawing on independent expertise.

That investigation must be genuinely independent of government and profit interests so it’s free to draw out the implications of spending cuts and privatisation, as well as make recommendations that do not compromise safety because of austerity. It should examine why recommendations following earlier fires were not implemented.

The official inquiry is slow and too narrow. Even the initial report on events on the night of the tragedy has now been postponed to October. Who knows when the final report will emerge? All this has a knock-on effect on the possibility of criminal prosecution. Jail the killer housing criminals!

Clean up the toxic waste!

Investigate and clear up toxic waste from the fire! Scientists testing the area have warned that repeated assurances there was no risk are wrong.

Although their work was government-funded, we only know because the scientists leaked their information. An independent inquiry should

also look at why false assurances were given.

No safety, no rent!

If residents are not satisfied that their homes are safe, the full backing of the workers’ movement must be given to withholding rent and service charges. No safety, no rent!

Cladding off now - bill the government

Money must not be a reason for further delay. The government should have funded immediate removal of dangerous cladding two years ago - it must do so now. The Tories have belatedly pledged £200 million, but this is inadequate.

Claw the money back from irresponsible private landlords. If they refuse, or residents demand it, take them into public ownership. Property management must come under the democratic control of residents.

Fight the cuts!

Labour councils must refuse to pass on any further cuts. Stop all privatisation of housing, repairs and renovation! London mayor Sadiq Khan must reverse all cuts to the London Fire Brigade and other Labour authorities must do the same.

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell must call for this immediately,

over years, but had been ignored or even threatened with legal action by their landlord. Many ‘social landlords’ appear to continue to make the same mistakes as the Grenfell landlord, the misnamed ‘Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation’.

Residents’ control

When the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government came to power in 2010, the social housing regulator which even then had a limited role was restricted further.

Now it narrowly focuses on finance - protecting the private investors that housing associations rely on, not their residents. This was part of the coalition’s notorious ‘bonfire of the quangos’.

Reforms would be welcome - but we cannot rely on state regulators. Social landlords must be made truly accountable through public ownership and democratic control by residents and housing workers.

Instead of operating like commercial property companies focused on ‘investors’ they should be fully funded by social housing grant, as in the past, and be open and accountable to residents and communities. If tenants vote to change their landlord, they should be able to move to council control.

A sense of being ignored and abandoned is prevalent among tenants. Jeremy Corbyn and the trade unions should respond by acting as their voice.

But this will mean being prepared for a decisive break with the pro-capitalist wing of Labour.

and pledge a Labour government to reimburse any council which uses reserves and borrowing powers to make homes safe and reverse council cuts now.

Build council homes

Jeremy Corbyn was correct to say that there is no solution to the housing crisis that does not start with a mass programme of council house building. He has stated that council house building needs to return to the level of the late 1970s.

That requires a return to grant funding instead of attempting to get crumbs from the private developers’ table. The land and big construction companies should be nationalised under democratic working-class control to facilitate this.

Capital controls would stop international speculators driving up housing costs while leaving homes empty. Nationalising the banks and financial system would guarantee that resources can be mobilised to meet housing need, as part of a democratic, socialist plan for the economy.

But local councils can begin today. They have powers to requisition those empty homes now, and must use them. Using the same reserves and borrowing powers that can reverse the cuts, they should start building council homes straight away.

■ Continued from front

At the 10 June meeting, still-shaken residents had many questions for Residential Management Group. Amid shouts of “jail them” and “shame on you” there was an overwhelming feeling that had this fire happened at night the outcome could have been much more tragic.

The flames rapidly spread up six floors through the entirely wooden balconies, which acted similarly to the cladding in the Grenfell disaster. Residents banged on neighbours’ doors to alert them.

Cladding off - safety now

Residents raised questions about the fire alarm, which they report was too faint to really hear and didn’t start until the fire had engulfed one side of the building.

There were also suspicions that the ventilation system didn’t work. Corridors filled with smoke, making it harder for residents to evacuate. All these and other questions must be answered.

Between the landowners, builders, managing agents and housing associations, residents are fed up with each “stakeholder” passing the buck on problems. It can’t be allowed to happen this time.

Residents feel Bellway has never been a fast mover on criticisms or concerns. The neighbouring block, clad with the same material, is heated by a temporary outside unit, run on diesel, which sits near the building!

This is because the heating and hot water are inadequate and have been since construction - a battle the residents’ association has fought for some time. Imagine the fierce heat of a burning building on the side of that unit full of diesel, like an unexploded bomb!

While residents wanted to get home as soon as possible, equally there was no faith their flats were safe to return to. This fear can only be eased by removing the wooden material.

And residents don’t want to take Bellway’s word the properties are safe. They deserve to see fire safety information now. We have demanded it, and have been promised it immediately.

But the whole validity of Bellway’s safety assurances is in question. An independent fire safety check must take place as soon as the cladding is removed.

For quality, permanent rehousing

For the time being, residents are staying in hotels. But some already know they will never be able to return to their homes. They must be rehoused in like-for-like properties.

There are many new builds going up on the estate. After relevant safety checks and removal of any cladding, displaced residents should be offered homes in these.

If decent homes can’t be found for displaced residents, the council should requisition empty homes to

FIRE TEARS THROUGH BARKING FLATS - CLADDING OFF NOW!



photo Pete Mason

Quality, permanent rehousing now!

ensure residents can stay in the local area.

Residents on the estate include owner-occupiers with leaseholds, housing association social tenants, and private tenants. No resident, in particular those displaced, should have to pay service charges for fire damage, of course - in fact, they should instead be credited.

But if residents feel it is necessary, they may decide to use their collective strength, as in other housing campaigns, by withholding rent and service charges to build pressure, under the slogan: “no safety, no rent, no service charge!” This undoubtedly will be a point of discussion.

Already, practical donations have been piling in. Many residents escaped with only the clothes on their backs. The community will have to guarantee democratic control of

these generous donations by organised residents to ensure they continue to get to those who need them.

Since Grenfell, questions have arisen about how much of the millions raised for survivors actually made it to them. We must make sure this does not happen here.

Failure of private sector

If construction work and fire checks don’t happen immediately, it will be more proof of the incompetence of the many private companies getting rich from these homes.

Adriatic has had two years since Grenfell to sort out the cladding, and has failed. The profit-driven private firms should forfeit their ownership and management.

After paying to make good all the properties, along with Bellway,

Adriatic should be made to relinquish the block to the residents for democratic self-management.

If implemented across the estate, this could open the way for fragmented services to be unified and run by the council, for example, which is at least an elected body, unlike the private firms.

Council leader Darren Rodwell may complain, but this tragedy is also down to the council’s policies of privatisation - the entire estate is privately owned.

Rodwell and local Labour MP Margaret Hodge have found time to attack Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn for his anti-austerity politics, but have not done enough to defend the right of residents to safe housing.

Almost exactly two years after Grenfell, those residents are still fighting for justice (see p8-9). Potentially deadly cladding remains

on over 150 buildings across the country, and removal has been extremely slow.

We must build a fight for affordable, decent and safe housing for all. The residents’ association is meeting to launch a campaign on fire safety on the estate this week. I will be arguing that we campaign for:

- **Quality, permanent rehousing of all affected residents**
- **Remove all wooden balconies and cladding immediately**
- **Release and re-do the fire safety assessment**
- **Confiscate the blocks from Adriatic to ensure residents’ safety, and place them in the hands of democratically elected residents’ organisations**

> Read the full version at socialistparty.org.uk



The Socialist Inbox

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

■ Capitalism - a rigged system

“You cannot have capitalism without racism” as Malcolm X explained. Nor can you have capitalism without fraud.

In the UK the Serious Fraud Office has 41 cases on its books. The most well known is London Capital and Finance (LCF).

LCF used advertisements which purported to offer Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) with a return of up to 8%. There is now an investigation into the collapse of LCF and the supervision of the firm by the Financial Conduct Authority - if there was any!

Thousands of first time investors put pension pots and savings into LCF unaware that the core activity of the firm, issuing mini-bonds, is not a protected activity, though other activities may lead to compensation claims.

The administrators of LCF have asked the four people mainly involved to return £236 million. No joy so far.

Promoted as low-risk ISAs investing in hundreds of firms, the products were not ISAs and only invested in 12 firms, ten of which were “not independent” of LCF. The administrators have found “highly suspicious transactions”. A quarter of all the money invested went straight to the marketing firm Surge.

Money invested was loaned to firms which appear to have no prospect of repaying the money. The expectation is that only 20% of investors’ money will be recovered.

The whole structure of the capitalist system is rigged to allow the fraudsters and financial crooks to get away. If you are on benefits and are overpaid the state wants the money back, yesterday. If you miss a job interview the state is onto you straight away. If you commit a massive fraud you will get your day in court.

It is of course impossible that no one in the City of London knew of the outrageous scam of LCF.

We cannot leave our financial future in the hands of these crooks. A socialist society would eliminate the chance of people losing their hard-earned savings in these dodgy investments and use the wealth we have created for the benefit of all.

Pete McNally
Worcester Socialist Party

■ Public sector outsourcing disaster

Fund guru Neil Woodford announced at the beginning of the month that he was suspending his flagship portfolio of funds - ie banning withdrawals by investors.

With an estimated value of nearly £10.2 billion, the Woodford Equity Income Fund experienced serious turbulence trading as public sector outsourcing contractor Kier announced a profit warning which saw its shares lose 41% of their value.

Among the fund’s investors ‘redeeming’ their investment - making a run on the fund - was Kent County Council, seeking its £250 million stake. KCC and other local authorities invest in funds like Woodford’s as part of their local government pension scheme mixtures.

This means that the very local authorities which send public services out to tender have been gambling the success of their pension fund performances on the very privateers marauding jobs and services from councils!

Kier, like other entities among the Blairites’ private-public partnership racket, appears to be running on borrowed time, and lots of public money. Labour and Conservative councils are equally responsible for feeding the private sector Leviathan, failing to bring services back in-house.

The twisted irony is that this time local authority workers may be punished twice - firstly by having their employment transferred to the failing privateers, and now by potentially taking massive hits to their pension pots because reckless councils twice bet on the private sector to deliver instead of providing quality services themselves.

William Jarrett
North Tyneside Socialist Party

Woodford is reportedly still making up to £100,000 a day charging trapped investors management fees - Editors.

■ TV licence fee - over 75s don’t pay!

The Liverpool Merseyside Pensioners’ Association condemns the decision by the BBC to charge over 75s the TV licence fee.

During the last ten years in excess of



photo Ian Capper/CC

£50 billion has been transferred from the working class into the pockets of the Tories’ already very rich friends. The neediest in society have suffered while the top 10% have seen their wealth grow year on year, as shown by the Sunday Times Rich List. They should pay, not the pensioners.

This government has cynically turned over responsibility to the BBC for their own funding knowing that that organisation would claw back any expenditure they could, even it meant attacking the most vulnerable to satisfy their political masters. Of course, the BBC’s ‘star’ performers would still receive their mega-salaries.

The generation that survived World War Two will be among those attacked.

We will call for all pensioners to refuse to pay this further imposition and join us in a campaign similar to the great Militant-inspired campaign against the Poll Tax when 18 million refused to pay. That successful campaign ultimately led to the removal of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister.

We aim to seek the same fate for the present government, to be replaced by a Corbyn-led socialist government committed to ending all austerity.

Tony Mulhearn
Merseyside Pensioners’ Association Media Officer

■ Lords divide and rule

I read with interest Terry Pearce’s article regarding the House of Lords proposed changes to pensioners’ benefits (Young and Old Unite and Fight - the Socialist, 9 May). The Socialist may be interested in what I wrote to the Yorkshire Evening Post on the subject, but wasn’t published.

It is absolutely outrageous and disgusting that these greedy Peers with their £305 a day allowance are suggesting cutting benefits for pensioners including: Winter Payments, free TV licences for over 75s, free bus passes and ending the triple lock on pensions.

This is another attempt to divide and

rule by these disgusting, greedy and most of all unelected individuals. Blaming pensioners and making them pay for the austerity measures imposed by this government on the young is not acceptable.

The British state pension is among the lowest in Europe with some pensioners taking less than £160 a week. I’m all for helping the younger generation but not at the expense of pensioners while at the same time we have tax cuts for millionaires and low corporation tax.

These Lords and Ladies are very good at cutting the benefits of the poorest in society but not so good at cutting their own pay and allowances (not to mention their subsidised bars and restaurants).

Hopefully the next Labour government under Mr Corbyn will set about cutting their Lordships’ allowances with a view to scrapping the ignorant and arrogant House of Lords.

Kevin Wilson
Leeds



photo Nick Chaffey

D-Day for fighting Trump attack on NHS

Portsmouth Socialist Party

There was anger amongst trade unionists and young people to Trump's hypocritical visit to take part in D-Day commemorations in Portsmouth on Wednesday, with over 300 turning out to a lunchtime rally in the Guildhall Square. They were joined by a number of people who had come to attend the D-Day event but wanted to join the anti-Trump protest as well.

Trump, like Theresa May, represents the billionaires who have

pursued austerity policies that have attacked the lives of D-Day veterans by cutting pensions, benefits and the National Health Service.

Arguments against our protest for 'politicising' D-Day were compromised by Trump's call to open up the NHS to US corporate privateers. A letter signed by leading local trade unionists in PCS, RMT and Unison was published by the Portsmouth News and over 100 protesters signed our letter, many buying copies of the Socialist and some filling in join cards.

Socialist Party regional secre-

tary, Nick Chaffey, spoke at the rally giving solidarity to all those who had joined the protest to oppose Trump's racism, homophobia and sexism. He appealed to everyone to build a mass campaign calling for an immediate general election, to end austerity and fight for a Corbyn-led Labour government implementing socialist policies to meet the needs of all.

A successful follow-up Socialist Students meeting discussed these questions, with plans being made to step up our fight to kick out the Tories.

Edmonton joins Enfield North Labour in supporting 'no cuts' fightback strategy

London Socialist Party reporters

Edmonton Constituency has become the second Enfield Labour Party to pass a resolution opposing all cuts, calling for 'no-cuts' budgets using reserves and for launching a mass campaign.

Enfield North Labour Party passed a resolution supporting a similar strategy some time ago - see report from the Socialist. Two of the three CLPs in Enfield now support this strategy.

The Socialist Party, which clearly welcomes this new move, has long advocated a strategy of setting no-cuts budgets as part of developing a mass campaign against austerity. We pledge to offer maximum support in building this important front in the fight to defend services and working-class communities.

The Edmonton resolution criticises the Enfield Labour administration for implementing yet more Tory cuts to vital services which will impact most severely on vulnerable members of the community. It points out that councillors do not have to accept Tory austerity and calls on them to set a legal no-cuts budget.

Moreover, it details that a campaign "involving the council workforce through their trade unions, the CLP memberships and the wider working class communities from across Enfield can be built through a series of large anti-cuts public meetings, rallies, and demonstrations, thus mobilising a huge groundswell



photo London SP

of public support for the Labour councillors."

"An Enfield borough-wide conference should be convened, inviting all interested organisations (trade unions, anti-cuts groups, tenants' associations and community organisations, etc), to come and discuss and then agree on practical measures needed to support the councillors and resist austerity.

"Above all this should be a national campaign. We are all facing the same enemy, the Tory government. Enfield council should therefore reach out to Labour councils throughout London and the rest of the country so that a national conference of Labour councillors who are willing to stand up to the Tories can be convened."

Save Essex libraries protest

Dave Murray Basildon Socialist Party

Over 600 people marched through Chelmsford on 8 June in protest at Tory-run Essex County Council's plan to shut 25 out of its 74 libraries.

The measure has sparked a wave of anger across the county which has seen protests of hundreds in some of Essex's small towns and villages - many of which have not seen mass protests since the peasants' revolt!

When the people of Galleywood or Manningtree take to the streets in their hundreds, it's a sign that austerity is alienating people even in what were once considered to be Tory heartlands.

Police attempts to restrict local demonstrations - by forcing large crowds to demonstrate on the pavement rather than in the road - have

not gone unnoticed by participants.

Demo organiser Andy Abbott (Save our Libraries Essex - SOLE), speaking from the steps of the county library, said that while the campaign was not party political it was anti-austerity. This reflects the fact that people are aware that elsewhere Labour councils have also made cuts.

The demo brought together library users as well as trade unionists from the NEU, Unite, Unison and other unions, as well as many Labour Party members.

Essex County Council's cabinet meets on 23 July to decide the matter. Protesters will gather outside County Hall in Chelmsford from 9am.

You can join the campaign to oppose these closures here: <https://www.facebook.com/Chelmsford-SOLE-Save-Our-Libraries-Essex-191027638500353/>



photo Dave Murray

Socialist Party Building Fund

The Socialist Party is being evicted from our national headquarters.

We have had a presence in London since the early 1960s and have been at our current premises for over 17 years.

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

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

make a sacrifice to ensure that we have the funds we need.

We are looking for a building to buy or rent in London, where rents are high, and large enough properties to buy are over a million pounds.

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

You can make a donation at socialistparty.org.uk/donate and include 'building fund' in the comments.

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Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	April-June 2019	Deadline: 2 July 2019
South West	1,800	1,686		94%
East Midlands	1,850	1,392		75%
Wales	2,300	1,226		
Yorkshire	3,300	1,639		50%
Northern	750	327		44%
London	6,100	2,412		40%
Southern	1,600	632		39%
North West	2,100	754		36%
West Midlands	2,600	825		32%
South East	750	219		29%
Eastern	1,200	340		28%
Other	5,650	2,374		42%
TOTAL	30,000	13,826		46%

TV Review: Chernobyl WORKERS' HEROISM Vs SCLEROTIC STALINISM



Ryan Aldred Plymouth Socialist Party

This five-part docudrama focuses on the disaster in 1986 that took place at the Chernobyl (now part of Ukraine) nuclear facility in the Soviet Union.

The mini-series manages to encapsulate so much without overloading the viewer or rushing the content. Even the score is perfect with the haunting sound of a Geiger counter rising in volume and tempo as some of the more dramatic events are portrayed.

Chernobyl hits hard right from the off, beginning with a suicide; the significance of which only reveals itself at the end of the series after the show trial scene.

We're then thrust straight into the immediate aftermath of the explosion, followed by officials scrambling to maintain the Stalinist bureaucracy which remains a consistent theme throughout.

One of Chernobyl's greatest strengths as a docudrama is that it seamlessly intertwines an imagined dramatisation of the events while largely remaining true to the events that actually took place.

It gives a precise account of the real technical mistakes made by the engineers in the hours and then moments leading up to the disaster while also revealing the overarching political reasons for the maverick attitudes which led to the reactor exploding.

Even some of those most responsible can come across as

sympathetic characters as the mini-series does well to highlight how severely the state machinery bears down and tries to cover up its culpability for ignoring what was by that time a known safety flaw with Soviet RBMK reactors.

Under the rule of this bureaucratic caste the planned economy, which underpinned the Soviet Union, was devoid of any elements of democratic workers' control - the prerequisite for genuine socialism.

Contradictions

Chernobyl paints a very intricate and detailed picture which doesn't simply portray the Soviet state as some unquantifiable entity but exposes its contradictions. It struggles against workers, soldiers and scientists to maintain itself while relying on them to avert more serious disasters from developing.

The heroism of the Russian coal miners, the three men that opened the sluice gates, the firefighters, the soldiers and the scientists that in many cases sacrificed their lives makes for powerful viewing.

Many of them did so not because the Gorbachev regime ordered them with the threat of a bullet reserved for dissenters but because they understood the gravity of the situation.

On the other hand some, like the firefighters, acted without being fully aware of what they were dealing with.

To this day the official death toll for Chernobyl according to Soviet records is 31, despite scientific estimates of thousands dying from the effects of radiation exposure.

The mini-series shows the constant clash between the scientists who were desperately attempting to fix the multitude of problems that arose in the immediate aftermath and the Stalinist state under Gorbachev. It saw the maintenance of its prestige both nationally and internationally as much more important than the truth.

The potential of a planned economy and the utterly stifling effects of the bureaucracy are laid bare.

This is made so glaringly clear when, for instance, 5,000 tonnes of boron and sand are so quickly sourced from across the Soviet Union to put out the reactor fire, as are thousands of workers and soldiers brought in to handle the situation.

However, Pripyat (population 49,360), only three miles away from the reactor site, takes days to evacuate and is only done when it is learned that school children in Frankfort, hundreds of miles away, are being kept indoors to shield them from the radioactive fallout.

Chernobyl is gritty, emotionally charged and yet incredibly informative all at the same time. It pulls no punches in portraying some of the dark tasks that many of the workers and particularly the soldiers had to face.

Clearly deserving of the highest ever rating of 9.7 out of 10 on IMDb; Chernobyl is as harrowing as it is spectacular.

In short, it is a masterpiece rich with political insight while providing chilling entertainment. For that reason it is an absolute must watch.

FIGHT THE CLOSURES SAVE EVERY JOB!

- Join the fightback at the NSSN conference
- Nationalise threatened plants and stores



photo Mary Finch

Tom Baldwin
Bristol Socialist Party

Every week seems to bring a new story of factory closure; another chapter in the destruction of British manufacturing.

Workers are being made to pay the price of economic uncertainty, including around Brexit, as bosses seek bigger profits elsewhere.

Ford's plans to close their engine plant in Bridgend (see page 2) adds to a long list of threatened sites. Nissan in Sunderland, Honda in Swindon and British Steel in Scunthorpe have all announced closure plans

this year.

Each of these threatens tens of thousands of relatively well-paid jobs and devastation to the local communities.

Retail workers are being hit too as the crisis in the high street continues. The number of empty shops rose by 7,500 last year. Big chains including M&S, Debenhams and Boots have announced store closures with thousands more job losses.

Workers will fight to defend their jobs. Thousands joined Unite the Union's march through Swindon in defence of Honda workers. The fightback against the jobs massacre must be built and coordinated. This

includes preparing for industrial action wherever necessary.

Building the fightback will be one of the key discussions of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference on 6 July this year. The NSSN is a rank-and-file trade union body, founded in 2006 by Bob Crow, the late leader of the transport workers' union RMT.

Speakers

Speakers at the conference include Paddy Brennan, Unite convener of the Honda Swindon plant. You can book your place today.

The decimation of jobs must be stopped. The Socialist Party calls for the nationalisation of threatened

plants and shops to save jobs. Workers' livelihoods will only be safe from the designs of greedy bosses if we take the decisions out of their hands.

Taking the biggest businesses into public ownership under democratic workers' control would allow the economy to be planned to serve the needs of the many, not the profits of a few.

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**NSSN 2019
conference**

**Saturday 6 July,
11am - 4.30pm**

**Conway Hall,
25 Red Lion Square,
London WC1R 4RL**

shopstewards.net