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BOOT OUT BORIS AND ALL THE TORY TOFFS



photo Paul Mattsson



photo Chris Brown/CC

Paula Mitchell
London Socialist Party secretary

What should be done when the Tories are in historic crisis?

When a maverick, right-wing populist is elected prime minister by a tiny number of aging 'Little Englanders'?

Eton-educated Tory toff Boris Johnson, sitting atop a crisis-ridden, divided Tory party, is obviously preparing for a general election.

There are populist promises such as money for adult social care and a declaration on paying the London living wage, at the same time as proposals for tax cuts for the big corporations.

The Tories are divided like never before. To try to stop Johnson crashing the UK out of the EU on 31 October with no deal, several remainder Tory MPs say they are prepared to vote against him in a vote of no confidence.

Big business, most of which wants to stay in the EU in order to maximise profit-making and exploitation with as few barriers as possible, has no party reliably representing its interests.

What should be done? The workers' movement should seize the moment and fight like the blazes for a Corbyn-led Labour government with socialist policies! Drive out these rotten representatives of the rich and fight for a government in the interests of working-class people.

> For more see editorial on pages 2 and 3

Fight for socialist policies for the 99% not the 0.1%

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SUMMER SCHEDULE

The Socialist is now in its fortnightly summer schedule. This issue, 1052, will run from 15 to 28 August. We will return to our regular weekly schedule with the following issue, 1053, published on 29 August.

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"The philosophers have only
interpreted the world, in various
ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

General election looms...

CAPITALISTS IN
CHAOS: FIGHT FOR
SOCIALISM



Despite the historic crisis for British capitalism represented by a looming Brexit with no reliable party to represent its interests, so far the chaotic farce of a Tory government has rumbled on. But whatever happens next in this unpredictable political charade, this autumn things are not going to 'just carry on'.

Just eleven weeks from the date of this issue of the Socialist is 'Brexit Day'. It can be postponed if there is agreement reached for a second extension with all the 27 EU powers. But if no extension is requested by the government and no withdrawal agreement is passed by parliament then Britain will leave the EU with 'no deal'.

Boris Johnson says he is preparing for no deal, but at the same time saying that there is only a one in a million chance of it actually happening, because he will be able to renegotiate. So far, the EU says that the immediate withdrawal agreement can't be renegotiated, but the shorter political declaration could be.

But the European Council is not the only hurdle: it's the Tory party and parliament. The majority of Johnson's cabinet voted remain, and Johnson himself voted for Theresa May's agreement. But the problem is that it is unlikely that any tinkering will satisfy the hard Brexiteer European Research Group of Tory MPs led by Jacob Rees-Mogg.

Tory remainder MPs are prepared to vote no confidence in Boris Johnson to try to prevent a no deal Brexit. Time is short. Parliament only reconvenes from 3 till 12 September before it stops again for the party conference season. They then reconvene on 8 October, just 18 working days before Brexit Day.

A vote of no confidence can only be tabled by the leader of the opposition. Under the Fixed Term Parliament Act, if a vote of no confidence is passed there are 14 days allowed to try to come up with an alternative government, and then if that fails there has to be a general election.

Johnson has threatened that if he loses a no-confidence vote he won't step down; he'll hang on to call an election at the start of November, just after Brexit Day.

In response, John McDonnell said he and Jeremy Corbyn would aim to form a caretaker government and that he'd send Corbyn in a black cab to the Queen to insist on forming a new government.

What's needed to break through the parliamentary impasse is a fight for a general election and a massive campaign for a victory for a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies. That means acting both to fight for a general election and to demonstrate that a Corbyn-led government plans to act decisively in the interests of the working-class majority.

Socialist challenge

For example, the best way to undercut Johnson's adult care funding statements is for Labour councils to immediately stop carrying out cuts and invest in adult social care. Challenge Johnson's divisive and brutalising approach on knife crime, beefing up draconian stop-and-search powers and more prison places, by Labour councils rebuilding youth services.

To fund these policies and more, councils should use their reserves and borrowing powers, and Corbyn should pledge that a Labour government would underwrite any debt.

Socialist policies would include a fight for jobs and skills - pledge to nationalise any company threatening to close down and lay off workers, like the Harland and Wolff shipyard, British Steel, Honda, and Ford at Bridgend.

A minimum wage of at least £10 an hour for a start - we say £15 should be the living wage in London. Stop and scrap universal credit. Reverse austerity cuts to much-needed services.

Scrap tuition fees and student debt. Scrap zero-hour contracts and end the exploitation of the precarious gig economy.

Renationalise rail, mail and the



The possibility of renewed workers' struggles is inherent in the current crisis photo Scott Jones

energy companies. Build council houses and bring in rent controls in the private sector. Rebuild our NHS.

Take the banks and the big companies into public ownership, undercut democratic workers' control and management, to release the resources necessary and plan the economy for the benefit of the vast majority of the population and to protect the environment from climate change.

Corbyn and McDonnell should call in the trade union leaders to plan a massive demonstration, and campaign of coordinated strike action if necessary, to drive this rotten lot out as soon as possible and to fight for a socialist programme.

That's how to inspire millions of people to take to the streets and to vote Labour. With a landslide victory and a massive movement behind him, Corbyn could renegotiate Brexit in the interests of the millions of working and middle-class people.

A Corbyn government coming to power on the basis of a popular surge is the big fear of the Tories, and is what has, up till now, been the glue that has held them together.

Corbyn's policies are, in reality, quite moderate compared to even Labour's own manifestos in the past.

What big business and its politicians fear is not Corbyn himself but the huge expectations that could be unleashed. The possibility of



Even if only planned
to be short term... a
national government
could stoke up huge
anger

big struggles is posed as workers campaign for what has been promised, and push for more.

And pro-capitalist, pro-austerity Blairite Labour MPs agree with that fear, and are fighting to prevent a Corbyn government.

The revolt against Corbyn includes all the Labour members of the Scottish Parliament rounding on McDonnell for saying Labour would not block a second independence referendum taking place if it was requested.

In the 2015 general election, Labour was almost completely wiped out in Scotland in punishment for lining up with the Tories in the 2014 independence referendum.

While fighting on trade union rights and austerity is crucial in Scotland as elsewhere, the workers' movement will be seriously weakened if it does not support the democratic rights of

self-determination in practice.

Tom Watson, deputy Labour leader, is training anti-Corbyn MPs in how to resist being deselected by their members in the 'trigger ballot' process. That's so they can encircle, strangle and then remove Corbyn should he win an election.

But they are also preparing to split away in big enough numbers to form a new party to prevent a Corbyn victory, if they think that is necessary.

There are 247 Labour MPs and 160 have signed up for Watson's 'Future Britain' group. So a split away of all those MPs to form a new pro-capitalist party could then become the official opposition.

A split in the Tory party, the oldest capitalist party in the world, now reduced to a small number of mostly retired members, is also possible.

National government?

The talk now is of a 'national unity' government. The line-up calling for this includes Yvette Cooper (also posed as a replacement Labour leader), Hillary Benn, Polly Toynbee - all of whom have spent all their time since Corbyn became Labour leader doing their utmost to undermine him. 60 Labour MPs are reported to support a national unity government even if it is led by a Tory.

The chorus has been joined by Green Party MP Caroline Lucas - for whom many people voted because

they believed the Green Party was a left alternative to pre-Corbyn pro-austerity Labour. Lucas's twist is the divisive identity politics approach of "a cabinet of women to stop a disastrous no-deal Brexit".

These ten women include pro-austerity politicians of all parties: Tories, right-wing Labour, Lib Dems, the SNP, Plaid Cymru - but apparently more left-leaning women like Diane Abbot are not the right sort of women!

But a new pro-capitalist 'democratic socialist' party, or a national unity government, are problematic options for the Blairites and Tories alike.

The cry for a national government is sometimes raised by the capitalists when they fear an untrustworthy (from their point of view) Labour government and believe the Tories are too weak to rule with stability.

The last time it was seriously raised in Britain was in the 1960s and 1970s against the Wilson-Labour governments, but at that time the fear that resorting to a national government would push Labour and the trade unions further to the left stayed their hand.

Now, even if only planned to be short-term and to move to a general election after Brexit is 'sorted', a national government could stoke up huge anger. This is a time of savage austerity and another economic cri-

sis on the horizon.

The British economy shrank 0.2% in the first quarter this year and so is on the way to a new recession, with the backdrop of a slumping global economy and trade wars.

The class issues - the suffering from cuts, job losses, the housing crisis, poverty - that led to the Brexit vote in 2016 will not go away. Any perceived betrayal of the Brexit vote could lead to huge anger.

It would potentially leave the space to the left for a Corbyn-led party to harness that anger. Even with a reduced number of MPs, with a large membership and a bold programme, it could rapidly grow.

Left trade unions, such as the RMT and PCS, would need to fight to restore the collective working-class voice in the party, and for all the steps that the Socialist Party has raised since Corbyn won the leadership in 2015 - for mandatory reselection, to readmit expelled socialists, to open up the party to all anti-austerity forces.

The Socialist Party would again apply to affiliate, to assist a transformation into a mass working class party.

This is the time to step up the fight for a socialist programme, and for mass struggle. This is the time when our class needs leadership to sweep this rotten lot aside and build a socialist alternative to failing capitalism.



Despite his pre-election sweeteners and 'no-deal' bluster the Tories are hopelessly split and widely despised photo F&C Office/CC



Corbyn should call in union leaders to plan a massive campaign, with strikes if necessary, to drive out the Tories photo Paul Mattsson



Labour's Tom Watson is training anti-Corbyn MPs in how to resist being deselected by the party's ranks photo Tom Oxley/CC

Tory bribes don't hide destruction of NHS

In 2010 every Tory candidate in our county, Gloucestershire, received a donation from a hedge fund manager with interests in private healthcare, yet at the same time there was a Cameron-led election campaign pledging full support to the NHS.

Local Tory MP Mark Harper, who fought closures of the community hospitals, went on to vote for the Health and Social Care Act of 2012 which opened the floodgate of privatisation. Across Britain the story is the same: Tory and Lib Dem MPs claiming to support the NHS while voting for every measure designed to destroy it.

With a general election looking likely, Boris Johnson has made three announcements of more funding for the NHS in the same number of days. £1.8 billion to upgrade 20 hospitals sounds impressive but the Nuffield Trust think tank has said that in reality £3.2 billion would be needed for this.

They also point out that to make meaningful improvements to NHS services each NHS trust would need at least £160 million - a total of £33 billion nationally.

Johnson's promise, designed to impress voters, is no remedy to the crisis in the NHS, nor will it restore privatised services to public ownership.

The story of Cheltenham A&E is just one example. Night-time



The majority of the public won't be fooled by Boris Johnson's 'smoke and mirrors' NHS extra funding announcement photo Paul Mattsson

closure of Cheltenham A&E has already placed huge pressures on Gloucestershire Royal Hospital as well as on the ambulance services. We've also seen the closure of minor injury units.

In the last few years there have been demonstrations of many hundreds of people in towns across Gloucestershire against privatisation and cuts with varying degrees of success. We don't need

election bribes; we need a sustained, coordinated campaign, massively supported by the healthcare unions and a Labour Party wholly committed to restoring the NHS.

Boris Johnson has also promised

£250 million investment in artificial intelligence to improve the NHS. It's an insult to our intelligence to imagine the NHS will ever be safe in Tory hands.

Gloucestershire Socialist Party

After the fire: fight for facilities for all

Linda Taaffe
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Not quite three weeks after the devastating fire at Walthamstov's shopping mall Save Our Square (SOS) campaigners were out on Saturday 10 August in the lime tree avenue leading to the east London market, making it quite clear. We are still here!

The plans granted to property developers Capital and Regional PLC are still thoroughly opposed by the local community. We never meet anyone in favour! After four years not a shovelful of earth has been dug; not one of the beautiful mature trees has been felled.

A group of local Extinction Rebellion campaigners were also out at the same time defending the trees - which was welcome news. We joined in their "conversation" event about a strategy to defend the trees.

SOS campaigners outlined a few examples of activities we have carried out over the last four years, not only on the trees but about the loss of public space and the need for genuine council housing.

Nancy Taaffe, chair of SOS, said: "The proposal to build four huge tower blocks of unaffordable flats would ruin our environment in a different way, and would take space



Socialist Party members in Walthamstow campaigning against environmentally destructive private developers photo Paula Mitchell

that is currently public realm and give it to a private outfit to make money."

However, now that the fire has happened - and while we await the fire service investigation, the responses of the council and mall development company - we are determined that, if any building work is going to happen, we want reconstruction and regeneration to be around a plan that the community really wants.

It is our town centre. The land belongs to the council, i.e. us - not rich property profiteers. Any plans should meet with our approval.

We have received suggestions for leisure facilities to be reinstated in our town centre, like a bowling alley and table tennis. Or a putting green and swimming pool - like existed 50 years ago - as well as upgrading the green and children's playground.

To that end we have produced a survey with ideas aimed at drawing up a genuine people's plan, which we will be working on in the coming months and through local public meetings in libraries too.

We feel our campaign is going from strength to strength. There is still some way to go, but no, we are not giving up.

Leeds estate residents push back private 'mega-block' development

Leeds Socialist Party members have been campaigning alongside the Little London Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) against a 'mega-block' proposed for this community on the outskirts of Leeds city centre.

We spoke to Steve Skinner, chair of Little London TRA, about the recent victory the campaign won in getting the development knocked back at a Leeds City Council planning meeting.

What are the proposals and why do local residents oppose them?

Steve: The proposals were for a 17-storey private apartment block on council land at the heart of our estate. We certainly need more homes here as many people in Little London are living in tremendously cramped conditions.

But the flats aren't for us - only 12.5% are deemed 'affordable'. Anyway, 'affordable' actually means 80% of the city centre market rate which is still unaffordable for most people living around here.

Apart from this, Little London is a densely populated estate with few

facilities - particularly green space where people can relax and children can play. Wherever you go you see children trying to play games on tiny stretches of land or in corridors.

What campaigning took place against these proposals?

We've petitioned, lobbied councillors, held packed meetings and protest events. The best thing about the campaigning work is that it has brought people together from so many different backgrounds - black, white, Kurdish, East European.

Where does the campaign go from here?

Hopefully, this campaigning work has now paid off! At the panel meeting where the developers presented their case they got an absolute drubbing. They might be back at some stage, but if we keep up the pressure, it might not be worth their while.

In the meantime we'll keep campaigning around this and other issues - fire safety, rent levels, benefits and everything else. Then, if the developers do return, we'll certainly be ready for them!

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■ Summer of airline industry strikes against low pay and worsening conditions



Heathrow Airport shop steward

August has seen a number of strikes threatened in the airline industry, in particular at Heathrow Airport but also at Gatwick Airport and potential industrial action by British Airways and Ryanair pilots. Strikes at Gatwick and Heathrow have been suspended because of improved offers.

In the past, workers in the airline industry have had a high level of organisation and militancy which has resulted in the trade unions being able to protect members' wages and conditions.

Since the financial crisis, the airline industry has experienced long, drawn-out attritional battles. These have seen a combination of outsourcing and new contracts, often resulting in severe reduction in terms and conditions and wages.

The consequence is that new employees have borne the brunt of this attack because in reality they have had to sign up to inferior contracts. Where these contracts have been the poorest, there is rapid turnover of new joiners.

Before the financial crisis in 2008, airlines struggled to make consistent profits. However, since the massive reduction in the working conditions of the new generation of airline employees we have seen an explosive growth in profits of both the budget airlines and the full service carriers.

Billions of pounds are being returned to shareholders which have directly come from the pockets of the workers.

The recent return to industrial action ballots reflects an understanding from the new generation of workers that they need to repeat the battles of the past in order to return to a level of pay they can live on.



**NSSN 2019
TUC lobby**

**Sunday 8 September,
1pm at the Holiday Inn,
Kings Road, Brighton
BN1 2JF**

**See shopstewards.net
for more**

Hull: Karro Food meat processors strike against poverty pay

Janet Gibson

Hull Socialist Party

A Karro Food pork processing plant in Hull that hasn't witnessed a strike in 30 years is now seeing a section of workers roll out strikes each Monday, organised by general union GMB. This low-paid workforce has had enough!

A Karro striker explained: "The aim is to receive at least the real living wage, as most of our members are on the minimum wage, or just above at £8.41, even if they are classified as being skilled.

"Over the last few years the company has time and again tried to attack our members' pay and conditions, to the point where members have got so fed up with being asked to do more work for even less pay that they have no option but to strike."

CapVest, a €4 billion private equity firm situated in London's plush Pall Mall, is the owner of Karro Food Group and Young's Seafood - with an estimated combined turnover of £1.2 billion in sales.

While Seamus Fitzpatrick, founder of CapVest, resides in his €8 million

Dublin home, one worker on the rain-drenched picket line described the back-breaking work making sausages and profits for Karro Food: "I have to lift 20 to 25 kilos of frozen blocks of meat from the pallet to the conveyor belt. It takes 500 kilos to make one mix. One belt last week was down for 138 mixes."

The use of legal intimidation by management can be witnessed in the letter signed by the site director, who obviously fears a step up in the strike action.

The letter states: "Both the company and GMB are disappointed to receive information today that a number of colleagues may be planning to undertake some additional days of illegal unofficial strike action."

How dare this company write on behalf of the GMB? The letter goes on to quote the employment law giving the legal right of the employer to summarily dismiss, without notice, any employee taking unofficial action.

In comparison to the boss's dismissal threat, our Socialist Party leaflet was warmly received. We call for the repeal of all anti-trade union legislation, and demanded the company open up the books so

workers can see where the profits they created have gone.

We call for trade union struggle for a minimum wage of at least £10 an hour for all, with annual increases at least in line with inflation.

We call for the companies that dominate the economy to be nationalised, and for democratically elected committees of workers to control and manage them.

This would enable a socialist plan of production that satisfies human and environmental needs, not the profit drive of the super-rich 1%.

For now, the strike is mainly composed of directly employed workers. It's important for the union to reach out to agency workers to join the action.

Please send messages of support to:

■ trishacarlise@yahoo.com, GMB strike committee

■ shaune.clarkson@gmb.org.uk, GMB official

■ Cheques to GMB Hull Branch No 7, c/o Shaune Clarkson, Karro Food Strike Committee, GMB Offices, 62 Russell Street, Hull HU2 9AD

**Read full article at
socialistparty.org.uk**



Karro Food workers process pork products
photo Erich Ferdinand/CC

EQUITY: REJECT UK THEATRE'S PAY CUT DEAL

Socialist Party members in Equity

Performing arts union Equity has balloted members who work in subsidised theatre on the deal negotiated with UK Theatre, the representative body for most of the largest publicly subsidised theatre managements.

The main deal is unacceptable. Many members are not happy about it. UK Theatre has offered a measly 2% pay rise in basic rates over the next three years. This amounts to a cut when taking into account inflation. Members will be working just as hard and taking home less.

There are better increases in touring allowances, and enhancements for extra responsibilities like 'swings' and 'dance captains'. Members will also welcome improvements on maximum hours during rehearsal and minimum breaks between shows, as well as the audition code of conduct for employers.

But beyond this the deal seems to have very few solid agreements. Management is asked to "sympathetically consider any requests for flexible working."

Meanwhile, we are promised "a working party to negotiate a five-day rehearsal week" - Equity will try to negotiate a five-day week only after the three-year deal is signed, sealed and delivered.

What's truly disappointing is that



Equity members on a protest against Universal Credit outside the High Court, 17 July photo NSSN

the union actually advises acceptance. How can we expect to get anything out of theatres if we accept deals like this without even voicing opposition?

On the one hand, Equity rightly observes austerity has hit arts subsidy hard. Theatres which claim they will struggle to meet a real increase should open their books to inspection by the union.

And Equity should link its pay claims to campaigning for councils to set legal no-cuts budgets that could protect arts subsidies and force more funding from central government.

But the union also states that "to improve the deal members would have to take industrial action." So is the money there or not?

There is an unspoken assumption

that members will not take industrial action. Even junior doctors struck in 2015. When the deal is taking money out of members' pockets, isn't it worth at least raising the idea with them?

A vote to reject would show the union and management the strength of feeling on this issue so we can put some kind of pressure on UK Theatre.

LINCOLNSHIRE HEALTH WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST £2,000 LOSS OF PAY



photo Unite the Union Twitter

Jon Dale
Secretary, Unite Nottinghamshire Health branch

Health visitors - nurses and midwives who visit homes - in Lincolnshire have been on strike for 14 days against the Tory county council. This is probably the first ever health visitors' strike in Britain. 58 Unite the Union members are fighting to save the essential service they provide to young families.

In 2017 they were transferred from the NHS to the council. Although NHS and local authority workers have had (small) pay rises since, the council has frozen health visitors' pay. They have lost over £2,000 a year each.

Children at risk

The council is deskilling specialist experienced health visitors by introducing a split-level service. A 'junior' health visitor role no longer has specialist responsibilities like 'complex safeguarding' of children at risk of criminal exploitation.

This will put young children and families at risk - and risk the smaller number of 'seniors' burning out with stress.

Instead of preventing childhood and family problems, health visitors

will be box-ticking or rushing from crisis to crisis.

The council wants the service on the cheap for future privatisation to a profit-making company. What a greedy short-term outlook the Tory council and government have! The number of health visitors nationally has fallen by 25% since 2015. These massive cuts will lead to more health and behaviour problems as children grow up.

On strike days the health visitors have marched through shopping centres across the county with placards and leaflets (except where landlords of privatised public space have barred their way!) Support for these brave and determined workers has come from local people, Unite and other union branches.

Workers have had enough of austerity and applaud those fighting back. It shouldn't be left to one small group to fight alone when workers everywhere face similar problems.

When the Trade Union Congress meets in September it should draw up a plan to bring all workers together with marches and strikes demanding an immediate general election. A Corbyn-led government could reverse the cuts, so these specialist nurses can help young families instead of fighting to save their service.

■ Sign the strikers e-petition at megaphone.org.uk/petitions/support-lincolnshire-health-visitors and send urgent messages of support and donations to Unite East Midlands Region, Unit 2, Pride Point Drive, Derby DE24 8BX labelled 'Lincolnshire health visitors strike fund'

■ Join the demonstration on Saturday 17 August, 11.30am, Minster Yard, Lincoln LN2 1PX

Bradford: All-out action to defeat backdoor NHS privatisation

Iain Dalton

Yorkshire Socialist Party

The escalation of the strike at Bradford Teaching Hospitals Trust to all-out strike action at the end of August marks a significant intensification by Unison union members in estates and facilities at the trust.

They are fighting to defeat the proposed transfer of their jobs out of the NHS and into a 'wholly owned subsidiary' - a private company owned by the trust.

Determination

The Socialist Party continues to fully support their action after a fortnight of strikes which has demonstrated their determination.

Last year, when such bodies were first mooted in West Yorkshire, it was the successful ballot at Mid Yorkshire, with determination to

to organise the strike.

Unison should organise strikers to speak at union branches across Yorkshire and nationally to appeal for support and donations to the strike fund.

The hospital trust is due to hold its next public meeting on 12 September - a mass public lobby of this meeting would show the depth of opposition to the board plans.

Unison should mobilise its membership and the wider trade union movement, particularly in the NHS, to a national demonstration in Bradford in support of the strike on the first or second Saturday of all out strike action.

Councillors

Local councillors spoke at the rally on 2 August - they should ensure that no obstacles are put in the way of any further public rallies and collections for the strike fund.

Jeremy Corbyn sent a message of support to the rally - he should pledge to scrap any wholly owned subsidiaries that have been established and return all staff to NHS employee status.

A general election could happen any time and a policy of reversing NHS privatisation and funding cuts would make a huge difference if a Corbyn-led government was elected - and to put pressure on the trust today.



photo Unison Twitter

■ Harland and Wolff occupation continues - renationalise to save the shipyard

The Harland and Wolff shipyard occupation continues. We give our full solidarity and support to the workers in Belfast, in the Unite and GMB trade unions, who are fighting to secure their future. We support their call to renationalise the shipyard to save jobs.

We also support the call by Unite assistant general secretary Howard Beckett to run worker candidates in North and East Belfast in upcoming elections, following the failure of the DUP to support the workers.

Ten years ago, Belfast Visteon workers occupied their plant when the company went into administration. They fought for their jobs alongside their brothers and sisters in Enfield and Basildon. The plant closed but they won enhanced redundancy when facing mere statutory terms.

In 1971, workers in Upper Clydeside Shipbuilders in Glasgow undertook a working occupation, supported by a demonstration of 80,000 trade unionists, and forced a Tory government to intervene to keep the yards open. We say nationalise the shipyard under the democratic control of the workers!

■ Read 'Northern Ireland: Harland and Wolff shipyard workers enter occupation' at socialistparty.org.uk

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Niall Mulholland
Committee for a Workers' International

Fifty years ago this month, troops were deployed on the streets of Derry and Belfast by the British Labour government of Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

The capitalist establishment described it at the time as a temporary measure to stop widespread riots and pogroms. Yet troops would patrol the streets of Northern Ireland for the next 28 years.

Establishment commentators will mark the half-century by wringing their hands over the impossible situation facing the army trying to keep apart two 'warring tribes' - the Catholic pro-Irish unity nationalists and republicans, and the Protestant pro-UK unionists and loyalists. But the road to August 1969 shows that the possibility existed of successful united working-class struggle.

Following the bloody partition of Ireland by British imperialism in the early 1920s - carried out primarily to cut across national and social revolutionary movements - the minority Catholics in the new Northern Ireland state found themselves second-class citizens. They suffered systematic discrimination in jobs and housing, the repressive 'Special Power Act', and were partly disenfranchised by Unionist gerrymandering of electoral constituencies.

By the late 1960s, Catholics were no longer prepared to accept the half-century of Unionist misrule. The youth were inspired by the black civil rights struggles in the United States, as well as the global anti-Vietnam War movement and revolutionary events in France in May 1968. At first, a few hundred took to the streets of Northern Ireland, demanding an end to discrimination, and jobs and housing for all.

In Derry, on 5 October 1968, a protest - mainly made up of left-wing organisations, including the Derry Labour Party, and its youth wing, the Derry Young Socialists - ignored a Stormont government ban on demonstrations. It was brutally attacked by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).

The baton-wielding police were caught by TV cameras, igniting fury among Catholics across the North. Overnight, the civil rights struggle became a mass movement.

Left and socialist ideas were strong in the Derry Labour Party and Young Socialists. They not only opposed Unionist misrule, but also the conservative Nationalist Party that had failed to win any meaningful reforms for mistreated Catholics.

The Derry Labour Party and Young Socialists recognised that while Catholics suffered from institutionalised discrimination, the Protestant working class also faced widespread poverty and joblessness, and also suffered from the extreme shortage of public housing.

In the months leading up to August 1968, the labour and trade union movement had the opportunity to lead the civil rights struggle on a clear class basis, uniting Catholic and Protestant workers. But the timid, conservative leadership - including that of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, which attracted Protestants and Cath-

olics - stood aside from the gathering maelstrom of mass protests and riots.

They merely called for calm and welcomed the too little, too late 'reforms' by the rotten Unionist government. This handed the initiative to middle-class nationalist forces in the civil rights movement, who opposed socialist and working-class ideas and slogans.

Allowing the civil rights struggle to be cast largely in terms of rights only for Catholics was a boon for bigoted demagogues like Ian Paisley. Diehard loyalists would always oppose the granting of any civil rights, but Paisley and his cohorts were given room to whip up wider sectarian hatreds by depicting the civil rights movement as against the interests of Protestants.

The potential for developing the left wing within the civil rights movement was exemplified by the courageous figure of the young Bernadette Devlin. She defeated a Unionist in 1969 to win the Mid Ulster Westminster MP seat.

Her People's Democracy party, formed by left-wing students at Queens University Belfast, attracted thousands of young Catholics including working-class youth, and a layer of middle-class Protestant students.

However, many of the left civil rights leaders were beset with ultra-left and confused ideas. They tended to adapt to rival leaders' policies and vacillate under pressure, rather than consistently put forward a clear class position and tactics.

Some agitated for the capitalist-dominated UN to send 'peace forces' to the North. But like the British Army, UN troops would primarily be there to protect big business, private property and capitalist law and order.

Supporters and future supporters of Militant - the then name for Committee for a Workers' International groups in Ireland and Britain - played an important role in the Derry Young Socialists, but our forces were too small to influence events.

A recently declassified police file, published in the Derry Journal of 2 July 2019, shows the RUC was quite accurate in its assessment of the political balance of forces in the civil rights movement.

In a 4 July 1969 intelligence memo requested by Northern Ireland's home affairs minister, Robert Porter, RUC county inspector David Johnston surmised that three elements vied for control of the movement: "the Nationalists; the Derry moderates of the Action Committee; and the People's Democracy Trotskyites."

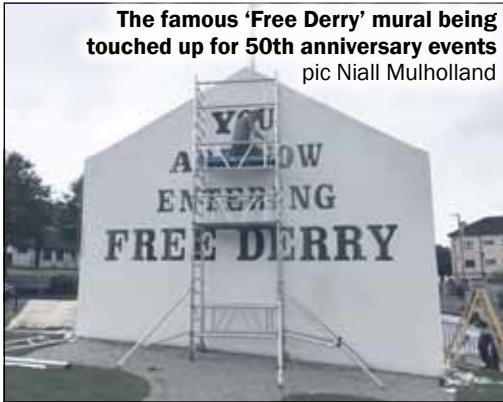
Notably, Johnston found "Betty Sinclair & Co" - Sinclair was a leading member of the reformist Communist Party of Northern Ireland - a "reckonable force."

Although the IRA hardly existed at the time, following the failure of its armed 'border campaign' in the 1950s, Johnston added that "official Republican Movement... IRA, Sinn Féin and the Republican Clubs," were playing an "active role."

Albeit disparaging, the RUC officer showed the class potential of the civil rights' struggle: "In composition the Movement was and is Catholic, but in the beginning a Protestant sprinkling of idealists and do-gooders presented a broader façade. This has now largely been shed, however, apart from an element of radical Socialists and Communists.



Bogside residents defending their barricades against police and loyalist assault



Labour prime minister Harold Wilson sent in the troops
pic Allan Warren/CC



British forces remained for decades
pic Jeanne Boleyn



Shipyard strikers led the working-class response against sectarian conflict



People's Democracy MP Bernadette Devlin
pic Conorkaysomagh/CC

"At grass roots the Movement has now crystallised into the familiar 'green' composed of Republicans and Nationalists, but still, as I have said, containing a vociferous minority grouping of Trotskyites or Revolutionary Socialists."

As 1969 wore on, especially in the lead-up to the Protestant Orange 'marching season', a backlash against the civil rights struggle led to sectarian tensions. The prospect of the annual 15,000-strong Protestant 'Apprentice Boys' parade marching past the Catholic Bogside in Derry raised the spectre of a pogrom and sectarian fighting spreading across the North.

In Derry, a citizens' defence committee was established. In areas of Belfast, local 'vigilante' and 'defence' groups sprung up, often involving both Catholics and Protestants in 'mixed areas' aiming to keep bigots out of their communities.

The right-wing trade union and labour leaders failed to capitalise on these grassroots initiatives. They made no effort to bring together genuine defence groups with organised labour, community groups and tenants' associations into a powerful anti-sectarian force.

On 12 August, Derry Labour Party and Young Socialists attempted to restrain Bogside youth, but inevitably stones were thrown at Apprentice Boys marchers. Fighting ensued, and the RUC launched a full-scale attack against the Bogside.

What became known as the "Battle of the Bogside" was a two-day uprising by the working class and youth of the area. They erected barricades and rained down a hail of stones and petrol bombs on the RUC's repeated attempts to invade. Catholics in other parts of the North took to the streets to stretch the police.

Under pressure from mass anger in the South, the taoiseach (Irish prime minister), Jack Lynch, said his government would not "stand idly by." Irish military field hospitals were to be set up across the border from Derry in Donegal. Although a token act, this was enough to enrage Protestant feelings in the North.

With the ill-trained and ill-equipped RUC facing defeat, the Unionist Northern Ireland government called up the notorious B-Specials, an armed, bigoted Protestant police reserve. This posed the prospect of a bloodbath in the Bogside leading to civil war.

Britain's Wilson government decided to act to stop this possibility, deploying troops onto the streets of Derry. Given the historic crimes visited upon Ireland by British imperialism, it is clear this was not done on humanitarian grounds.

Civil war would have destroyed trade, private property and the economy in Ireland - and with it, bosses' profits. Conflict would have spread to British cities with sizeable Irish populations. Anger among the large Irish-American population would have led to demands for a damaging economic boycott of Britain.

As it became clear that troops were not going to invade the Bogside, a temporary uneasy calm descended on Derry. In Belfast it was a different matter, with fierce sectarian rioting erupting.

The RUC fired machine gun rounds indiscriminately in the Catholic Falls

Road. Seven people were killed in the fighting and over 700 injured. Entire streets were burnt out and residents forced to flee their homes. British troops were also then stationed in Belfast.

Many civil rights leaders welcomed the deployment of troops. Many on the Left, in Ireland and Britain, gave way partially or fully to the mood of support for the army's presence. In contrast, Militant gave a clear class position and took a principled stand.

The headline of the September issue of the monthly Militant newspaper demanded the withdrawal of the troops. Militant warned: "The call made for the entry of the British troops will turn to vinegar in the mouths of some of the civil rights leaders. The troops have been sent to impose a solution in the interests of British and Ulster big business."

It was not the army but the actions of working-class people taking to the streets across the North that stemmed conflict and stopped a descent into full-scale civil war. Shop stewards in the large factories and workplaces followed the lead of shipyard shop stewards, who called a mass meeting which voted for a brief strike opposing conflict. In this context, Militant advocated armed trade union-based defence forces.

Rather than support these initiatives and coordinate them, the labour and trade union leaders applauded the Unionist regime's measly reforms and called for the street barricades to be taken down. This abdication of leadership helped provide space for other emerging forces.

The Provisional IRA ('Provos') split from the Official IRA a few months later, citing the failure of the leadership to offer any widespread defence of Catholic areas in August. Loyalist paramilitary organisations like the UDA and UVF soon set about their murderous sectarian campaigns.

The failure of Northern Ireland Labour Party leaders to offer a socialist alternative, instead taking a one-sided, pro-Unionist position, saw the effective demise of that party in the 1970s. New sectarian-based parties came to prominence.

A British army curfew of the Lower Falls in the summer of 1970 marked the end of any lingering Catholic honeymoon with the troops. Many on the Left who previously supported British troops being deployed became cheerleaders for the Provos' armed campaign.

From the start, Militant warned that the Provos' divisive campaign of individual terror, based on a minority within a minority of the population, would alienate Protestant workers, deepen sectarian divisions, and fail to achieve republican aims.

August 1969 was a serious setback for the working class. Half a century on, the 'peace process' sees society still divided along sectarian lines, and the power-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly suspended for over two years. Brexit, the 'backstop', and a possible future 'border poll', all indicate how overcoming sectarian divisions remains insoluble under capitalism.

As in 1969, only by building a mass party of the working class with socialist policies can workers defeat the Green and Orange bosses, overcome sectarianism, and lead the fight for a socialist transformation of society.



The labour and trade union movement had the opportunity to lead the civil rights struggle on a clear class basis, uniting Catholic and Protestant workers... but stood aside



It was not the army, but the actions of working-class people taking to the streets across the North, that stemmed conflict and stopped a descent into full-scale civil war

Far right seen off at Oxford Circus - but trade union lead needed

Mark Best
East London Socialist Party

Socialist Party members joined several hundred others at a counter-demonstration opposing supporters of the jailed far-right provocateur ‘Tommy Robinson’ on Saturday 3 August.

Organised by the anti-racist group ‘Stand Up to Racism’ (SUTR) and the anarchist-led London Anti-Fascists, this protest again demonstrated that the trade unions need to take the lead in the fight against the far right. The Socialist Party has long emphasised and campaigned for this.

It is important to counter the far right. Especially we need to mobilise to defend local communities.

Anti-racist protesters and police saw off attempts by the far right to attack the counter-demonstration on this occasion. However, by the end of the march, anti-racist protesters were kettled in a pen, leaving groups of the far right to march down Regent Street unopposed.

Those on the counter-demonstration were left in the dark about what was happening. Why did the march repeatedly stop on the way to Oxford Circus? Where were we going? What were the plans when we got there? SUTR organisers did not give a lead and had nothing to say when asked what was going on.

The Socialist Party gave out our leaflets on the need to fight to kick out the Tory government, and for Jeremy Corbyn to contest a general election on a socialist programme.

Construction workers and shoppers at the sides of the counter-demo took our leaflets and bought copies of the Socialist.

Unfortunately, trade union banners and delegations were almost entirely absent. In 2018, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) made the decision to launch a “jobs, homes, not racism” campaign to unite the



Some of the Socialist Party members on the 3 August counter-demo
photo Kevin Parslow

trade union movement in the campaign against the far right. This has not materialised in any serious way.

Socialist Party members have moved motions in trade union branches and conferences calling for union leaders and the TUC to act on this decision - but also for

Part of this has to be responding to the previous calls for a trade union stewarding group for demonstrations such as this. Stewards from the unions, disciplined and accountable, would be able to organise to defend protesters from the far right - and from police if necessary.

We could then rely on the collective strength of our own working-class organisations, instead of untrustworthy agreements with the police or the unaccountable actions of anonymous ‘leaders’.

This must be linked to a political campaign against the divisive, racist politics of Robinson and his ilk. The unions represent over six million workers in Britain. If the unions could mobilise a serious section of workers against the far right, this would be a real blow to their confidence.

But to do this, the fight against racism has to include the fight against the conditions that allow racism to flourish. We fight for jobs, homes and services, against the ‘race to the bottom’. Trade union action on these issues could build a movement that would cut across the present small support for the far right.

Capitalism will attempt to divide workers to maintain the profit system. The working class in struggle can sweep aside these divisions, but to do so needs a programme worth fighting for.

Workers fighting against the bosses and the bosses’ government, to win any improvements we can, shows our power as workers. We fight for a socialist society where workers collectively own and democratically control the wealth in society, so we can provide jobs, homes and services for all.

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union branches not to wait. Union branches should discuss and debate “the slogans and tactics necessary to defeat the far right, putting the resources, authority and power of the organised working class at the centre of a mass, anti-racist, anti-austerity movement.”

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	£ target	£ received		July-September 2019
South West	1,800	1,271		71%
Yorkshire	3,300	1,198		36%
Wales	2,300	833		36%
West Midlands	2,600	638		25%
Eastern	1,200	281		23%
Southern	1,600	312		20%
London	6,100	1,130		19%
East Midlands	1,850	302		16%
Northern	750	106		14%
North West	2,100	198		9%
South East	750	47		6%
Other	5,650	6,428		114%
TOTAL	30,000	12,745		42%

Hereford and Worcester building boom: stop the fire cuts!

Pete McNally
Worcester Socialist Party

There is a building boom going on in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. 5,000 more homes are planned in and immediately around Worcester. There is a scramble to fill any possible space with houses or flats.

One planning application was turned down because although there was enough room on the plot for the two planned houses and associated parking spaces, if the cars were parked it would have been impossible to open the car doors to get in or out.

In Hereford, an estate of 1,200 homes is planned, accompanied with, employment opportunities,



photo Worcester Socialist Party

leisure facilities and so on. You would think the local services would need to expand.

But managers at Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority beg to differ. They seem determined to cut fire and rescue cover at night.

The Fire Brigades Union has opposed these cuts every step of the

way. Its campaign is gathering support, with a public meeting planned for Wednesday 21 August in Bewdley where the fire station is threatened with closure.

The Socialist Party supports trade union action to save fire services. Our campaign stall against fire cuts (pictured) sold 20 copies of the Socialist.

TV: Young, British and Depressed



still Dispatches/Channel 4

David Kaplan
North London Socialist Party

In ‘Young, British and Depressed’ (‘Dispatches’ on Channel 4, 29 July), Sanah Ahsan focussed on the crisis facing young people in their search to be treated for mental health problems.

Advertising campaigns have called for more openness about mental health, encouraging people to talk about their issues and seek help. But, as one young person in the programme pointed out, the problem is there is just no help available.

Young people want to access talking therapies, but there is a waiting list for these of one year or longer. One in eight people aged five to 19 have a problem with their mental health, and two out of three young people are not getting the treatment they need.

In 2018, there were 700,000 referrals of under-19s to child and adolescent mental health services - a 45% increase in two years.

Demand is at an all-time high; half of children who need the services wait more than four and a half months before being assessed. Often, their level of need is not deemed great enough, so they are not prioritised for early intervention. In the meantime, their crises worsen.

The programme surveyed 1,000 GPs. 86% said that prescribing antidepressants had increased because of the lack of availability of alternative, talking therapies. 39% said they prescribed anti-depressants to under-18s but only 1% thought it was the best treatment for them.

A head teacher recognised that poverty contributed to the mental health problems of students in her school. And one young person on the programme concluded: “What is

wrong with our society that all these people are feeling this way?”

One of the key anxieties facing young people is GCSEs. Two years ago, the Tory government introduced a new grading structure, format and content for these exams. Little attention is drawn to the fact that these exams fall around one-third of those taking them.

Along with the Ofsted inspections, performance tables, and a lack of proper funding, this has placed incredible pressures on secondary schools to maintain their ‘standards’ and ‘performance’. Teachers and students have borne the brunt of the changes.

Abolition of performance tables would relieve the pressure on schools - and on the students who are expected to perform at the end of year eleven. We need to abolish Ofsted and the other inspectorates.

There needs to be a reduced emphasis on the outcomes of GCSEs, and alternative ways of assessing the achievement of students, not just through examination results. School leavers also need fully funded training and apprenticeships, with guaranteed jobs at the end, as an alternative to the academic route.

Education and health unions need to campaign alongside students for more funding for NHS mental health services and a reform of secondary education. Service workers, young people and the local community should control and manage education and health services to ensure they meet the needs of everyone.

A socialist society could ensure that the pressures that face young people today are ended, and instead allow people to flourish in their own way and take control over their own lives.

■ ‘Young, British and Depressed’ is available on All 4 until 28 August

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Dundee: young workers fight for unions and discuss Marx

Oisín Duncan and William Campbell
Socialist Party Scotland

Members of the ‘Young Socialists - Young Workers’ Rights’ campaign met for a national day of action in Dundee city centre on 6 August. We demanded a minimum wage of £10 an hour and the scrapping of zero-hour contracts. Our call on young workers to join trade unions was met with a warm response.

We teamed up to talk to workers inside JD sports, Subway, Burger King, McDonald’s and Home Bargains. One young worker in Subway asked for a further handful of leaflets to hand out to other members of staff and hang up in the break room. We then marched through the city

centre calling on young workers to join the Young Socialists and the fight for a proper living wage.

After our activity we held a discussion on the fundamentals of Marxist economics, introduced by Dundee Socialist Party Scotland members Maddie, a fast food worker, and Wayne, a factory worker.

We can see parallels with “primitive accumulation” - Marx’s description of how capitalists came to own the means of production in the first place - in Brazil’s far-right president Jair Bolsonaro opening up increased logging in the Amazon rainforest. And we can see a new global capitalist crisis on the way in both the trade war between China and the US and the related stock market fluctuations over the past days and weeks.

But of course the most central finding of Marx was that of “surplus value.” While at their job, workers create more value through their labour than they receive back in their wages.

Where does this “surplus” go? To the boss - who in Marx’s time might have reinvested some in expanding production. Nowadays the capitalists are reluctant even to invest.

This relationship between boss and worker creates a tension in the workplace which expresses itself through class struggle. The Socialist Party views Marx’s economic theories not as academic pieces but as a call to action, for the working class to take hold of the economic levers in society and turn them to a democratic plan of production...

■ socialistpartyscotland.org.uk



photo Young Socialists - Young Workers’ Rights campaign

THE PETERLOO MASSACRE 1819

When a fearful ruling class tried to crush working-class political aspirations



Mike Leigh's 2018 film Peterloo (pictured) exposes the bloody nature of capitalism through the massacre

Kevin Parslow

Friday 16 August will mark the bicentenary of the Peterloo Massacre, perhaps the most significant atrocity carried out by the British authorities against their own people. Thousands of words will be published which will talk about the lack of democratic rights as the motivating factor for the 60,000 or more people who assembled on St Peter's Field, Manchester on that fateful day in 1819. While the struggle for genuine representation was indeed the theme of the meeting, for most of the participants, who were mainly textile workers, life or death issues were prominent in their motivations. Few had any awareness that

their lives would be imperilled for wanting a better world. British society, contrary to what many capitalist commentators would assert, has never developed in a peaceful and gradual way. There are many instances of volatile upheavals in its history, the period following the end of the French was being one of them. British capitalism had been at war with France almost continuously from 1793 until the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815. With the war over, hundreds of thousands of men returned from the fighting to find a scarcity of jobs. Manufacturing industry faced a downturn with reduced needs for armaments, uniforms and other materials. The Tory government refused to assist the poor; in the wars it had accumulated debt of £1 billion (approximately worth £88 billion today

- roughly the figure reduced from government spending by the Con-Dem government of 2010-15). This was a government representing wealthy landowners, financiers and a section of the big manufacturers incorporated into the ruling class. To make matters even worse, the government introduced the Corn Laws, which kept the price of grain artificially high. This, of course, pleased the Tories' landed friends but raised the cost of bread, the most staple of foodstuffs. This added to the hardships already faced by workers and the poor. Protests erupted after the war. Two demonstrations in Spa Fields, London, at the end of 1816 were put down by the government. In March 1817, weavers in the Manchester district organised a march to London to present a petition to the Prince Regent on their distress.

Most of the 'Blanketeers,' as they were nicknamed, were arrested or prevented from marching past Stockport. In June the same year, workers in Pentrich Nottinghamshire, although incited by a provocateur, rose against the government (see socialistparty.org.uk: The Pentrich Uprising - revolution and counter-revolution in 19th century Britain). The following year saw an upturn in the economy, which emboldened workers to struggle for pay rises. Workers then had not recovered their living standards of many years previous but attempted in 1818 to recoup some of their losses. This was at a time when trade unions were banned by the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800. Nevertheless, organisations sprung up and mushroomed as the anger built. Weavers and

spinners in Manchester, Stockport and the Lancashire districts were part of a strike wave. Some groups of workers won increases but most returned to work with very little to show for their sacrifice as employers linked with the government to suppress the actions. Thwarted on the industrial plane, workers often turn to the political field against their enemies. This they did in early 1819 with mass meetings in Manchester and Stockport, addressed by radical leader Henry Hunt. At Stockport, the assembled crowd beat back the attempts of the authorities to break up the meeting. Further meetings were held in the north west and throughout Britain to discuss the plight of working people. At some, so extreme was their situation, that government-sponsored mass emigration to the Americas or Australia was considered. By this time, petitioning the Prince Regent - the aim of the Blanketeers - was seen as pointless. But at most of these meetings, each of which was attended by thousands, the demand for political reform was raised and endorsed. In 1819, only about 5% of the adult population, all male, owned or rented enough land to vote. Most parliamentary seats were in the gift of the aristocracy and their allies. Many seats were 'rotten boroughs': Old Sarum, an empty hilltop in Wiltshire, and Dunwich in Suffolk, which was falling into the sea, both elected two MPs. Manchester, even then a sizeable town, had no designated MP of its own.



No ruling class will give up its power without a struggle. The authorities were massively armed and the working class was unprepared for its brutality

even move to the towns. This was the foundation of capitalist society in Britain, and its ruling forces in 1819. For the middle class, they wanted a bigger share of an expanding cake. But even a sniff of reform was anathema to the Tories. Echoes of the most radical phase of the French Revolution (1789-94) and the threat of 'Jacobinism,' the most radical government of that phase, still reverberated through British society. Even if they could, the ruling class would be loath to offer a crumb to those protesting if it meant opening the floodgates to further change. **Repression** So when the Manchester radicals called a meeting for 9 August 1819, to elect a peoples' representative, the magistrates of the town banned the demonstration on the grounds that an election was illegal. Lord Sidmouth, the Tory Home Secretary, wrote to the magistrates urging them to suppress the movement, not excluding the use of force. The government also used spies to report on the political movements, and intercepted post between radicals. The government was fully aware of the potential danger to its rule of a mass movement demanding reform. The radicals rearranged the meeting for 16 August, with a less provocative title to which the authorities found it difficult to object. Nevertheless, a military intervention was prepared. The Manchester and Salford, and Cheshire Yeomanries, part-time forces, were mobilised to be used alongside regular Hussars and special constables. Tens of thousands, the largest proportion being handloom weavers, outworkers in their own homes, came to St Peter's Field from Manchester and the surrounding towns. Some had been 'drilling' outside of their towns, but this was not to protect the participants but to learn to march in a disciplined way! Hardly any were prepared for a possible attack by the armed forces. Many women attended, and women's political unions had been formed in some towns, mainly to back up the demand for universal male suffrage, although some called for votes for women almost 100 years before this was won. Children had been brought along; a semi-festive spirit prevailed. Hunt was the main speaker at St Peter's Field beginning at 1.15pm. Barely had he said two sentences when the special constables began to clear a path. The Riot Act had allegedly been read, though nobody heard it, and a warrant issued for the arrest of Hunt and other radical leaders. The Yeomanry charged in, emboldened by alcohol, and proceeded to attack the crowd. They were followed by the Hussars. In less than 30 minutes, the vast majority of the 18 dead and almost 700 injured were mown down on the field. There had been no provocation other than support for political ideas hostile to Toryism. The people were defenceless. The authorities had made a brutal political point. They feared a revolution so they made the people fear them.



The Prince Regent as portrayed in Peterloo

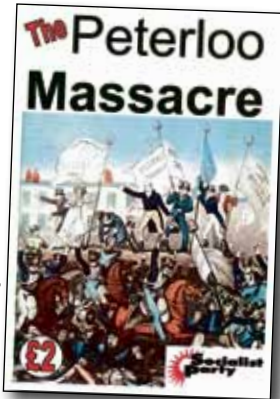
That evening, the Ancoats district rose up and the last fatality, Joseph Whitworth, was shot dead. The authorities in London and Manchester congratulated each other, and pursued the radicals. The government brought in the 'Six Acts' which limited still further the already restricted ability to organise politically and attacked the few existing liberties of the press. Radicals responded to the massacre with open meetings of tens of thousands in London and other cities in protest at Peterloo. There were uprisings in some towns in the north, which were put down. In early 1820, radicals led by Arthur Thistlewood planned to assassinate the cabinet. The 'Cato Street Conspiracy' was thwarted by a police spy. In the first week of April the same year, central Scotland saw the 'Radical War', a series of strikes and protests against the authorities. However, the ruling class had bought some time in preserving its rule. **Lessons** What lessons should socialists today glean from the events of Peterloo? Firstly, that no ruling class will give up its power without a struggle. The authorities were massively armed and the working class was unprepared for its brutality. Any workers activity - demonstrations, picket lines, meetings - has to consider the level of risk posed and the appropriate response. Secondly, that the working class has to have its own organisations, programme and leaders. After Peterloo, many middle-class radicals fled for cover. They feared the government's power but also the potential strength of the working class. Eventually, government political concessions through the 1832 Reform Act and the fear of revolution

broke sections of the middle class away from the working class. This was largely due to workers beginning to organise, through larger and more stable trade unions, even despite severe limitations on their activity. The formation of workers' political groups, culminating with the Chartists in 1838, who linked democratic political demands to a social and economic programme for workers, further challenging capitalism in Britain. Today, when capitalist govern-

ments, both in Britain and internationally, are curtailing democratic rights and extending their rule by semi-authoritarian methods, extending democracy might appear popular. But such reforms in and of themselves are not enough; a socialist programme for change, including taking the economy into working-class hands, has to be inscribed on our banners in the 21st century if we are to end the conditions which forced the workers of Peterloo to protest.



Left Books



The Peterloo Massacre, Socialist Party pamphlet - £2
The Making of the English Working Class, EP Thompson - £25
A Peoples' History of England, Al Morton - £17
The Age of Revolution 1789-1848, Eric Hobsbawm - £12

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The Peterloo Massacre bicentenary March for Democracy

Sunday 18 August Assemble: Lime Bank Street, off Ashton Old Road, Manchester, 11.30am. March off at 12noon. Rally in Albert Square - 1pm

Kashmir crisis: Stop the attack on democratic rights

The scrapping of Jammu and Kashmir's 'special status' and imposing brutal direct rule by Narendra Modi's right-wing Hindu-nationalist BJP government, has significantly increased repression in Kashmir and ratcheted up tension between the Indian and Pakistan governments. As recently as March this year both governments (which possess nuclear arsenals) clashed militarily over the disputed territory. New Socialist Alternative, CWI section in India, and CWI supporters in Pakistan have issued a joint statement condemning the BJP government's latest repressive move and calling on the working class to defend democratic rights, including self-determination for the people of Kashmir - a right that cannot be realised under capitalism but requires a socialist transformation of the sub-continent. A shortened version of the statement is carried below.



Hundreds of Kashmiri people living in Britain protested outside the Indian High Commission in London on 10 August. There was a huge amount of anger. People were grabbing the mic to express their feelings. Twice the protest broke out of the police designated pen. The second time, a majority of protesters marched to Trafalgar Square to continue the demo. There were some supporters of the Pakistan People's Party who also attended the protest. Their hypocritical role of supporting military control in Pakistan occupied Kashmir was criticised by other protesters.

The Socialist Party supported the protest (image above) and handed out a joint statement by our Committee for a Workers' International sister party in India and supporters in Pakistan. Many on the demo welcomed the Socialist Party's support for the right to self-determination for the people in Kashmir, and several bought copies of the Socialist. Ian Pattison, East London Socialist Party

The ruling BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) regime in India has once again displayed its contempt and aversion to democracy. This regime had been increasing its armed forces to the tune of 35,000 in the Kashmir valley (which is already one of the most militarised regions in the world), citing bogus 'terrorist' threats.

When the Rajya Sabha (upper house of Indian parliament) convened, Home Minister Amit Shah announced from the floor that their regime had decided to scrap Articles 370 and 35A.

These articles gave 'special status' to the region of Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP government also went on to propose splitting the Kashmir state into two Union Territories (UTs) - Kashmir and Jammu as UTs, with legislatures, and Ladakh as a UT without a legislature.

This decision comes at a time when the democratically elected government of Jammu and Kashmir has recently been scrapped and Indian Presidential rule imposed.

This regressive move was also supported by other regional parties like the Uttar Pradesh-based Bahujan Samaj Party (which claims to be a party of the oppressed), Andhra Pradesh's Telugu Desam Party, etc.

The opposition, led by the Indian National Congress with the left parties - People's Democratic Party in Kerala, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam also in Tamil Nadu, and various other parties, all protested against this blatant attack on the constitution. The Communist Party of India announced immediate protests in Delhi and burned effigies of BJP leaders.

However, none of these parties, including the Communist Party, has stood for the national rights of Kashmiris. Some of these parties are now using the situation to oppose BJP rule as nationalist tensions in many states, particularly in the south, have been mounting over recent years.

These tensions flow from the attempt of the BJP government to create 'one country' - introducing a sectarian national citizen registration for 'checking genuine Indian citizenship', one taxation system and one language - which has faced huge opposition.

But the BJP's attempt to 'integrate India' is destined to fail as India has never been one nation state.

The support for the government's move by a section of the liberal media also exposes the deluded stance of Indian liberals who believe Kashmir 'belongs' to India. This lays bare the fact that even after 70 years of

independence, Indian politicians have only replaced the British rulers with local rulers who have utter disregard for the people.

While the present crisis has been created by the ruling BJP, Congress created the mechanisms that the BJP is using now to suppress the national rights of the people of Kashmir. The confused stance of the various left parties and their failure to address the national question of this country has also to an extent contributed the current crisis.

The people of Kashmir have lost thousands of lives in this long drawn out conflict. The BJP-led Indian state is now preparing for the brutal suppression of any opposition that may emerge in Kashmir.

Renewed war

Of course they will also blame this on Pakistan. The Pakistani state in turn will use this opportunity to whip up patriotic support to cut across the opposition to the ruthless International Monetary Fund demanded privatisations that they are carrying out.

Existing tension at the border is likely to escalate further, even into an outright war between the two nuclear-armed powers. This could cause the loss of lives of tens of thousands.

India is a prison house of nationalities. Various regions that were brought together under British rule

by force have never established a real union. The Congress party, became the main culprit in the recent past behind the brutality that exists in Kashmir.

It is significant that various regional parties and the so-called left parties have come forward to oppose the attack on Kashmir. However, their opposition is also very limited.

Historically, both 'communist' parties - the CPI and CPI (M) - have opposed the nationality rights of the Kashmiri people. Article 370 was what they defended as it is part of the Indian constitution. They never stood for the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination despite that right being included in the initial pact of 1947.

As socialists, we stand for the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. Of course this demand cannot be applied mechanically to the whole region. Due to past history and the policy of divide and rule - Kashmir is now divided into many regions with varying interests. The ruling BJP government is trying to further divide the region to control it and plunder the wealth.

The fate of this region should be determined by the people living in it. This can only be realised by linking up the struggle of the workers, peasants and poor in Kashmir, India, Pakistan and other countries in the region to end the

grip of capitalism and landlordism once and for all.

The socialist transformation of society will also emancipate the masses from all sorts of national oppression. Defending the national rights of all oppressed peoples in the region - whether it be in Kashmir, other parts of India and Pakistan or in Sri Lanka - means struggling for a voluntary confederation of socialist states on the basis of public ownership and democratic control to be able to plan and share the resources in the region to the benefit of all.

We fight for the following demands:

- **End the occupation! Withdraw all army and paramilitary forces from this region**
- **Repeal the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act immediately both in Kashmir and North East region**
- **Stop repression, release all the political activists and protesters**
- **The immediate reinstatement of Kashmir's special status**
- **For full democratic rights - free speech, free assembly and organisation, media freedom, free elections - including a referendum on Kashmir's status**
- **Stop all action which plunders the natural wealth of Kashmir**
- **For the right of self-determination for Kashmir!**
- **For a socialist Kashmir and a socialist confederation of the sub-continent**



One of the many demos in Hong Kong over the last two months photo StudioIncendo

Pro-democracy protests continue to rage in Hong Kong

Theo Sharieff
Socialist Party youth organiser

The issue which sparked the protests over two months ago, the notorious extradition bill, was suspended weeks ago by the city's chief executive Carrie Lam.

Despite this, protesters continue to fight on, wanting the complete withdrawal of the bill and fearing further clampdowns on democracy as the Chinese state seeks to extend its control and influence over Hong Kong. The Hong Kong puppet government is under pressure from the Chinese regime to end the movement, taking a consistently hard-line approach to the protests.

The stakes were upped by authorities when protesters arrested after last weekend's demonstrations, originally charged with unlawful assembly, were charged with the much more serious offence of rioting - a charge that can carry a maximum ten-year prison sentence.

General strike?

In response, the movement has also upped its own stakes, with the call for a 'general strike' being made by Hong Kong's main trade union federation, the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) on 5 August.

The 5 August protests were estimated to be the biggest since the movement began, with an estimated 300,000 or more workers in various sectors, including aviation, the civil service and teachers not attending work on the day.

But the limited extent of the strike action was demonstrated when it was protesters who temporarily shut down the train links, blocking the doors from closing either with their bodies or with umbrellas.

In other areas of the city, protesters established roadblocks to stop

the flow of traffic.

The movement, which has mobilised an estimated quarter of the population on some protests, is diffuse, with different ideas on how to take the movement forward. When the LegCo (Hong Kong 'parliament') was stormed last month, some protesters draped it with Union Flags, demonstrating nostalgia among a section for a return to British colonial rule.

Programme and party

This and the limited nature of the strikes highlight the need for putting forward an independent working-class programme to clarify the ideas necessary for winning genuine democratic rights.

The formation of action committees in workplaces with no trade union presence would be a welcome first step to building for further, better organised, coordinated strike action between different sectors and workplaces.

But limited one-day protest strikes will not be enough to force the Hong Kong government into reversing all of the anti-democratic reforms enacted over previous years.

Hong Kong's super rich ruling elite rely on Hong Kong's relationship with China for their mega-profits.

That's why the struggle for democratic rights in Hong Kong is inseparable from the need to overthrow capitalism and linked to that, to build a united struggle with the powerful mainland Chinese working class to overthrow the Chinese regime.

Despite the existence of different ideas in the movement, crucial to taking it forward would be

a socialist programme, linked to the construction of a new workers' party in Hong Kong capable of giving the working class a political lead.

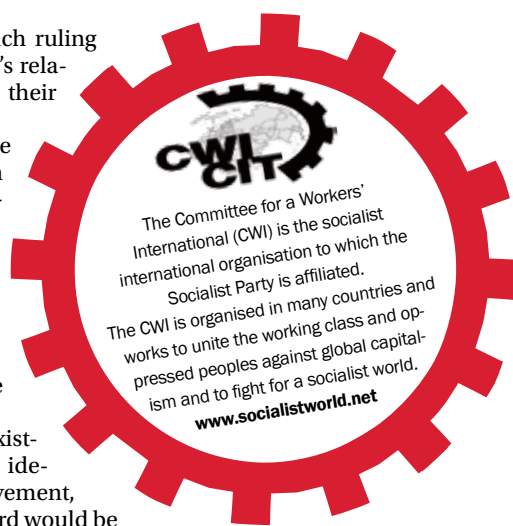
Workers and young people in Hong Kong have been brutally attacked by capitalist austerity measures in recent years, while inequality in Hong Kong has reached its highest level since records began 45 years ago. This is the economic and social background to the current political crisis.

A clear and bold socialist programme, linking the struggle for democratic rights to other working class demands - such as well-paid jobs, public services, housing, etc, for all workers and young people - could elevate the struggle.

It could pull more workers into the movement to build for a general strike to shut down Hong Kong society altogether and as a step to overturning the ruling elite.

Such a movement could abolish capitalism and lay the foundations of the socialist transformation of society.

■ **See also 'Hong Kong: Conflict heightens' on socialistworld.net**



WHAT WE
STAND FOR

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world. 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.

- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

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FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE RETAIL BOSSES!

Join the NSSN lobby of Trade Union Congress



Usdaw members strike at Tesco Dagenham distribution centre in 2018 photo Richard Groves

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Ryan Aldred

Usdaw shop workers' union branch secretary (personal capacity)

The needs of the business' is a phrase most retail staff will be familiar with. Does it mean the need to have a happy, healthy workforce? Does it mean the need to provide decent wages and sustainable contracts? Does it mean the need to ensure workers can enjoy a sensible work/life balance? Not for a second!

Anybody in retail who hears these foreboding words knows that change is coming and it's not going to be pretty. The needs of the business mean cutbacks, worsening of conditions and the threat of redundancy - all to satisfy the need of the

bosses to keep the profits rolling in as we're turfed out onto the street.

The British Retail Consortium reports 72,000 jobs lost in the sector in the last year alone. But this only paints a partial picture when factoring in the diminishing hours of those on zero and low-hour contracts. Is it any wonder then that shop workers have had enough?

Job losses

Tesco announced 9,000 job cuts as recently as January but the blood-letting continues. The axe is now wielded for another 4,500 jobs with more 'flexibility' being demanded of the workers who survive the chop.

Similarly, Asda is using the threat of dismissal to sign its staff up to 'contract 6', scrapping time off on bank holidays and slashing night

shift rates, all while demanding workers be completely flexible. We are expected to be completely flex-

ible at the expense of our lives and families for jobs that may not exist in a year or two!

It is for this reason that myself and many other workers will be joining the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) lobby of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in Brighton on 8 September. We are sick and tired of the needs of the business when it is these same businesses that disregard the needs of the workers.

Coordinated strikes

We need coordinated strike action to make it clear to bosses that poverty wages, low hours and threats of dismissal will not be tolerated. We need the TUC to take up the NSSN's call for mass action to force a general election to get rid of the Tories, the discredited party of Boris and the bosses.



**NSSN 2019
TUC lobby**

**Sunday 8 September,
1pm at the Holiday Inn,
Kings Road, Brighton
BN1 2JF**

**See shopstewards.net
for more**

My family and I, like so many countless others, can no longer afford the needs of the business. Already we have seen Sainsbury's workers take strike action over changes to sick pay, and now Wilko workers look poised to follow as the bosses feel that weekends for workers are a luxury that can no longer be afforded.

With the misery that austerity has inflicted, the TUC needs to bring together the growing mood for localised strike action and push for more generalised struggle to end austerity and bring down this government.

And the unions must fight to raise the minimum wage to £10 an hour, to scrap zero and low-hour contracts and fight for a government that puts the needs of the millions ahead of the greed of a few billionaire shareholders.