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# TORY MELTDOWN ORGANISE TO FINISH THEM OFF

**T**ory MPs are dropping like flies. Johnson has lost control of his party, parliament, and the plot.

A few crumbs thrown at public services isn't going to make up for ten years of savage cuts. And now he wants us to pay the price of a no-deal Brexit.

Enough is enough. We need policies that benefit working-class and young people not the super-rich elite who Johnson represents.

Corbyn has said he wants to stop the cuts in public services and benefits, increase spending on the NHS and schools, build one million homes, scrap tuition fees, introduce a minimum wage of £10 next year, and take rail, water, gas, electric and Royal Mail out of the hands of the private profiteers.

He supports a deal with Europe which would defend the interests of workers, not the bosses and the rich.

If he energetically campaigned on that anti-austerity programme in a general election he could win. That could mark the first step towards transforming society for the benefit of ordinary working people, for which socialist policies will be needed.



We say:

- No unity with pro-austerity politicians
- Unions must build mass protests to fight for a general election
- For a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies



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Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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

TORIES IN TATTERS: CORBYN MUST SEIZE THE TIME



WHAT WE THINK

The Conservatives, once among the most successful capitalist parties on the planet, are shattering into pieces before our eyes. The Tory party's weakness and splits are far from new. Now, however, quantity has turned into quality and, under the leadership of Boris Johnson, the relatively slow inglorious decline of the Tories has become an unprecedented collapse.

In two days Johnson became the first prime minister since 1894 to lose his first parliamentary vote, and transformed his majority of one into minus 43 by sacking 21 rebels - including the grandson of Winston Churchill and a host of other Tory grandees.

His own brother has deserted him and he has had a minister - Amber Rudd - not only resign from the cabinet but, by surrendering the whip, from the parliamentary party. Johnson is left suspended in mid-air unable to govern, with a general election as his only option.

For the millions of working and middle-class people who have suffered a relentless diet of Tory austerity for over a decade, the implosion of the government is a reason to cheer. At this stage this is not the reaction of many, however. No wonder.

Political representation

While there is a huge crisis of political representation for the capitalist elite - with no major party reliably representing their interests - there also remains a crisis of political representation for the working class.

Many workers trying to follow the chaotic machinations at Westminster will have concluded that no one is speaking for them. Among some there is even the hope that the Tory toff Johnson - who is cynically posing as standing with people against parliament - could represent a means to hit back against the establishment.

Nothing could be further from the truth. But the only way to cut across his right-wing populist rhetoric is to put a clear programme in the interests of the working class.

In the last snap election Jeremy Corbyn was able to enthuse millions of workers and young people. Labour gained 3.5 million votes, including a million who had

previously voted Ukip. The potential still exists for him to build on this and win the next election, perhaps even by a landslide, provided that he stands on a socialist platform that offers the working and middle class a real alternative to austerity.

Unfortunately, however, Labour is not a workers' party, but what we have described as 'two parties in one' - a potential workers' party around Jeremy Corbyn, alongside a pro-capitalist wing which dominates the parliamentary Labour Party and local council chambers.

At every stage the Corbyn wing has been prepared to make concessions to the pro-capitalists in the vain hope of pacifying them. The inevitable result is the - at best - muffling of Corbyn's anti-austerity programme and, at worst, workers seeing Labour as no different to the major parties of the capitalist establishment.

Now, as the parliamentary crisis has reached boiling point, the weaknesses of the approach taken by the Corbyn wing of the Labour Party are being shown in high relief. The capitalist class are in a panic, Johnson's preparedness to risk a chaotic Brexit, with the economic disruption it would create, is horrifying the majority of the elite.

As is his willingness to further undermine the institutions of British capitalism, leaving them with less authority to act against more serious threats to their interests - most importantly a socialist government with mass support.

Crisis

Faced with this crisis, more far-sighted representatives of capitalism have made impassioned appeals to MPs to defend the interests of their system. The Financial Times editorial on 29 August, for example, declared that "parliamentarians must seize their opportunity... to assert the will of the Commons against the prime minister", despite the consequences of splitting the Tory party and risking a Jeremy Corbyn-led government. In the course of these events MPs from every party responded to this plea.

This has been done under the banner of the 'national interest' of preventing a no-deal Brexit. Of course, many working and middle-class people will welcome attempts to avoid a no-deal Brexit, fearing the potential consequences for jobs and economic security. Nonetheless, it is a serious mistake by the Labour leadership to foster the idea that there is a common national interest between representatives of the capitalist elite and the working-class majority.

They are, of course, right to describe Johnson as a liar who can't be trusted. But it is outrageous - as numerous Labour MPs have done - to contrast him to previous 'trust-

photo Mary Finch



worthy' Tory prime ministers like Theresa May! Ken Clarke, now being portrayed as some kind of 'friend of the people', was a minister throughout the whole of Thatcher's prime ministership, responsible for countless crimes against the working class - including introducing the first major steps to privatisation in the NHS.

The Liberal Democrats, now being joined by various ex-Labour and ex-Tory MPs, took part in the Con-Dem coalition government, which carried out the most savage austerity since the World War Two.

By joining in with the narrative of parliament's 'rebel alliance' - supposedly uniting together for the national interest against the monster Johnson - Labour is in danger of helping Johnson create the illusion that he is the one standing up to the establishment.

The ongoing implosion of the Tory Party is not an accident. It flows from the crisis-ridden, rotten character of capitalism today, which ultimately results in the undermining of the social basis of all parties that act in its interests.

With capitalism offering a diet of stagnating or worsening living standards, politicians like Johnson attempt to use right-wing populist rhetoric in order to mobilise popular support. The only force that can effectively counter this is an independent workers' movement, armed with a socialist programme.

The road to disaster is for leaders of the workers' movement, under the banner of stopping right-wing populism, to unite with representatives of the capitalist establishment. And, of course, much of the so-called rebel alliance has two goals,

not only stopping Johnson, but also stopping Corbyn. Recent parliamentary manoeuvres have centred on the relationship between stopping a no-deal Brexit and having a general election.

Terrified

Terrified of giving Corbyn any authority, pro-remain, pro-capitalist MPs in all parties dismissed Corbyn's proposal that would have guaranteed both - backing a vote of no confidence and allowing him to lead a minority government that would then extend Article 50 while an election took place. Instead, they took the route of trying to implement legislation - not to remove Johnson but to tie his hands.

The pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party successfully argued that, even once the legislation is

passed, Labour should not support an early general election before the proroguing of parliament. The publicly stated grounds for this were that Johnson should not be allowed to choose the timing of an election, but should instead be made to stay in power.

This is a bizarre argument. Having spent a week enacting legislation to try and control Johnson's options on Brexit, they are risking refusing the chance to get him out of power in time for Labour to take control of Brexit negotiations.

Lying behind these contortions are two factors: from some on the left a fear that they could not win an election, and from the right, continuing attempts to prevent a Jeremy Corbyn-led government coming to power. The only way to prevent a general



For the millions of working and middle-class people who have suffered a relentless diet of Tory austerity for over a decade, the implosion of the government is a reason to cheer



photo Garry Knight/CC



photo Arno Mikkor/CC



The working-class vote for Brexit in 2016 represented, at base, an elemental revolt against capitalist austerity. An unelected national government trying to reverse the 2016 result would fuel that anger

election in the near future would be for the formation of some kind of 'national government', probably posed as a temporary measure to 'resolve Brexit'. Such an attempt would be very dangerous for the capitalist class.

The working-class vote for Brexit in 2016 represented, at base, an elemental revolt against capitalist austerity. An unelected remain national government trying to reverse the 2016 result would enormously fuel that anger.

If the Corbyn wing of the Labour Party stood firm against such a move, it would also mean that, with the right of the Labour Party splitting to join such a national government, Labour would be in the hands of the left, standing in opposition to a deeply unpopular government. >Continued on page 4



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.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts. All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment. An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.

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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- 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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>Editorial continued from page 3

A general election is, therefore, the most likely outcome of the current situation, despite Labour's hesitation. Corbyn, however, urgently needs to focus on fighting for a quick general election and, vitally, to start to put a clear position in the interests of the working class, attacking the policies of all the pro-capitalist politicians in Westminster, both those in the rebel alliance and in the government.

On that basis he can win a general election decisively. That includes making it clear that Labour should not be the 'remain' party, but the party of the working class - both those who voted remain and those who voted leave.

Corbyn should be putting forward a confident position that he would renegotiate Brexit from an entirely different standpoint to that of the Tories. His 'red lines' would be the removal of all legislation that undermines workers' rights and blocks state aid and nationalisation. The rights of people in Britain from other EU countries would be guaranteed.

On this basis Corbyn could make an appeal for solidarity, over the heads of the EU's governments, to working-class people across the EU, putting a Corbyn-led government in a far more powerful position to negotiate than the Tories. Having negotiated such a deal it would not be wrong to put it to a confirmatory

vote. But Corbyn should be energetically arguing in favour of that deal, rather than the alternative of continuing as part of the pro-capitalist EU as many Labour MPs are proposing, including the shadow chancellor, John McDonnell.

Such an approach would be one aspect of a socialist programme. Other aspects would include insisting that all companies threatening redundancies or closures - whether on the grounds of Brexit or otherwise - immediately open their books to workers' inspection. Where necessary, they should be nationalised under democratic working-class control and management.

Immediate measures like mass council house building, a £10-an-hour minimum wage and free education would need to be combined with a programme for the nationalisation of the major corporations and banks to really take the levers of power out of the hands of the capitalist saboteurs that would otherwise do all in their power to prevent the implementation of pro-working-class policies.

The political situation in Britain is highly unstable and unpredictable. The tasks of the workers' movement are urgent.

Left unions should be setting the date for a mass demonstration, and calling on all trade unions to support it, as the first step to getting the Tories out and the coming to power of a Corbyn-led government with a socialist programme.

## TUC: LOST OPPORTUNITY TO ORGANISE A UNITED STRUGGLE



photo Paul Mattsson

Glenn Kelly  
Socialist Party industrial organiser

With the Tories in meltdown, having lost their majority, and Boris Johnson reeling and on the ropes, many workers would be hoping that Labour and the trade unions would now deliver the knock-out blow and force them from office.

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) meeting for its conference this week was ideally placed to lay down plans to mobilise its 6.5 million members to see the Tories off.

In the debate on Brexit, a number of speakers from Unite the Union, civil service union PCS, and FBU, the firefighters' union, said "we need to unite leave and remain voters", "the real fight is against austerity", "we must not allow our class to be divided", and "we want a general election".

However, unfortunately, not one union proposed a way to achieve this as advocated by Socialist Party members in the unions and at the National Shop Stewards' Network rally (see page 8).

TUC president Mark Serwotka did say he wanted a national demonstration for a general election. The only problem was it wasn't on the agenda.

This was because Serwotka, along with the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Voice, had opposed an emergency motion to go to the TUC moved by Socialist Party and Broad Left Network members of the PCS

national executive committee just a few days before the TUC.

This motion included the demand for the TUC to call a demonstration before 31 October (see page 9).

At the TUC, not a single concrete proposal was put forward to either unite workers or help oust the Tories. In fact, the TUC took a step further towards division by not only supporting a second referendum but also moving towards a remain position of overturning the 2016 referendum result.

This would only serve to set one union member against another, playing into Boris Johnson's hands.

The rail union TSSA and the Musicians' Union motion calling for a second referendum with remain on the ballot was agreed. Verbally the movers went further than the text by calling for Article 50 to be revoked and for a campaign for a remain position in a second referendum.

The main TUC general council statement was also voted through with opposition only from the RMT rail union (which unfortunately chose not to speak in the debate). The statement called for a general election, then a second confirmatory vote on any new deal, with remain on the ballot paper.

However, it didn't propose any action by the trade union movement to fight for a general election.

It was a grave lost opportunity that the TUC failed to organise a united struggle of all workers - whether they voted leave or remain - to get the Tories out. Left union leaders urgently need to make such a call.

## Another London block of flats destroyed by fire - remove unsafe cladding now!

Mihaela Gheorghe  
Barking Reach  
residents' association

I woke up on 9 September to learn about the fire that happened at Worcester Park, south west London, exactly three months after the fire that took place in Samuel Garside House in Barking, the building where I live.

Fortunately, like in our situation, there were no casualties. But the impact of the fire and the trauma it has inflicted on us all, as residents, will stay with us forever.

Initial reports say that flames quickly spread to all four floors of the building at Worcester Park, probably as a result of wooden cladding, very similar to that on Samuel Garside house.

Like our fire, some 125 firefighters and 20 fire engines tackled the blaze, which started, residents suspect, on the wooden balconies, which would again be exactly like ours. The danger was greater in Worcester Park because the fire took place at night

and once again it's a miracle that no one died.

After Grenfell, the government confirmed a ban on some of the combustible cladding, but only on high-rise buildings over 18 metres. This still allows all those deadly flammable materials to be used on low-rise buildings.



**Flammable materials are still allowed to be used on low-rise buildings**

We were all extremely lucky to get out of the flames in time and we want to force the government to change the building regulations. If not lives will be lost. The reality of that happening is likely - a matter of when, not if.

Wooden cladding still decorates the first phase of the Riverside estate from one side to the other. We're still

waiting to see whether the builders and landlords will act on our demands that all flammable cladding be removed.

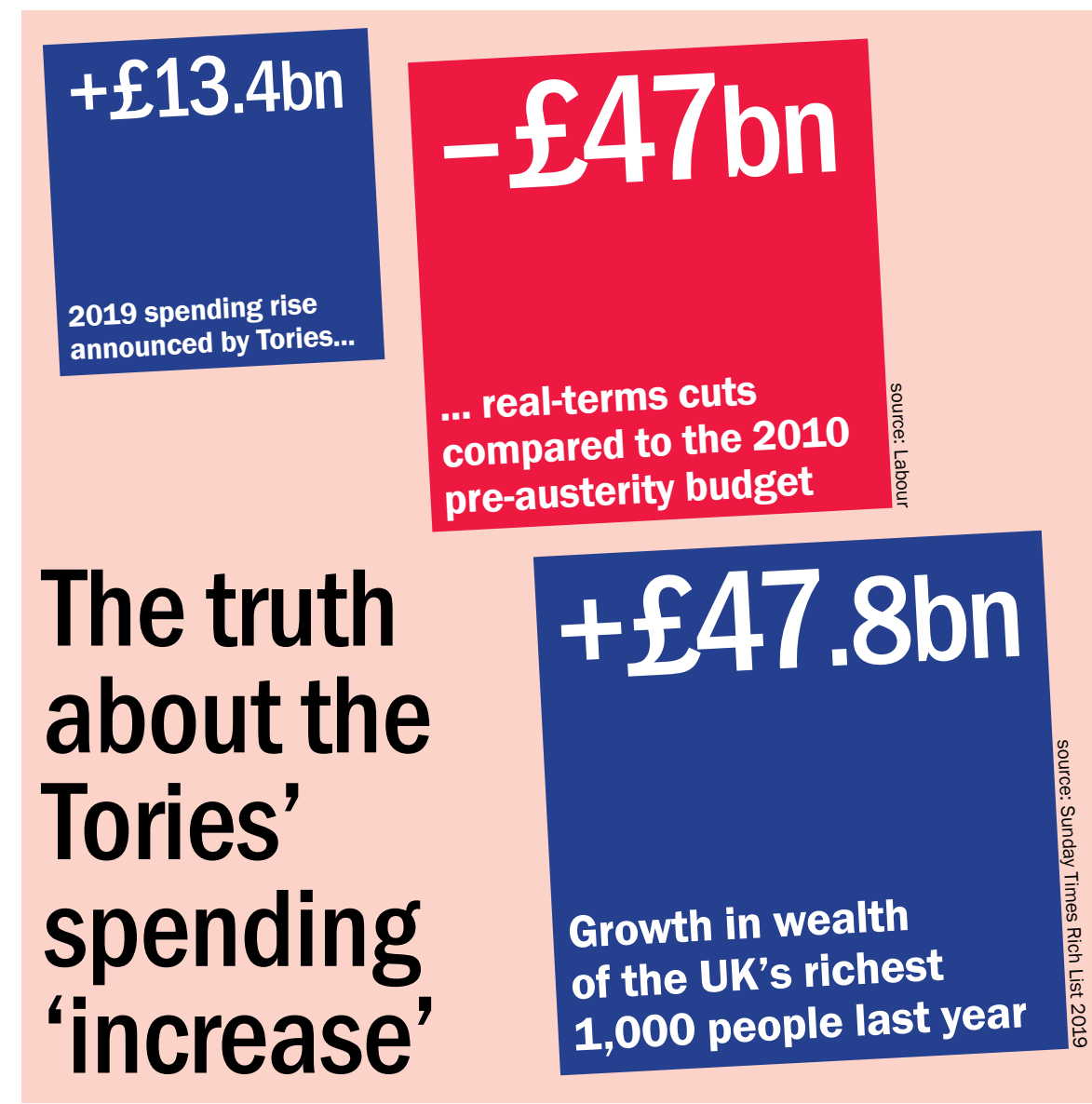
Samuel Garside residents, alongside all the residents of the Barking Riverside estate, condemned the government for its failure to force landlords to remove the evident danger to life, and its philosophy of deregulation and privatisation. Our Barking Reach residents' association is conducting its own independent enquiry to expose the failings.

In our case, a fire risk assessment clearly pointed to the danger the continuous decorative wood on the balconies posed and yet the landlord failed to take sufficient action to remove it. Was there a fire risk assessment done in Worcester Park? The Worcester Park residents have our wholehearted support and solidarity during this difficult time.

'How can we end austerity'  
Join the discussion at  
**SOCIALISM 2019**  
2-3 Nov, central London  
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Corbyn's Brexit 'red lines' would be the removal of all legislation that undermines workers' rights and blocks nationalisation photo Paul Mattsson



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# PCS strike at BEIS

## “THE LIFE WE LIVE IS NOT LIVEABLE”

PCS members working as cleaners and catering staff at the government’s business department, BEIS, are on indefinite strike. The workers are employed by private companies Aramark and ISS. Striker **Joshua Ameyaw** spoke to London Socialist Party secretary Paula Mitchell and explained why they are on strike.

“The life we live is not liveable. We work in a government department and yet we can’t get the London living wage (£10.55). We can’t pay bills, we can’t look after our families, some of us are in debt. We took several days of strike action but there was no good news from the managers, so we decided ‘enough is enough’ and on 15 July started an indefinite strike.

Our strike has involved pickets and protests, and we’ve had great support from other trade unionists and socialists. For these two weeks, the porters, security and reception staff are on strike with us, picketing every day, which is a real boost to everybody.

Boris Johnson and the Tory government don’t care about people like us, they don’t do anything for poor people.

Johnson says he thinks staff in



government departments should get the London living wage - so go on then, pay up!  
We’re not begging for anything,

just what we deserve. We need a government like Labour with socialist policies. We’ll carry on fighting but we also want a general election

as soon as possible.

They have to bring this dispute to an end. We want the living wage but we also want decent terms and con-

ditions, good holiday pay, good sick pay. At the moment when we’re sick we don’t get paid for three days! And we want to be taken back-in-house.”

BEIS strikers joined on the picket line by socialist PCS general secretary election candidate Marion Lloyd (right) photo Paula Mitchell

# Asda workers protest against worse contract

**Elaine Brunskill**  
Northern Region  
Socialist Party secretary

Asda workers are being threatened with the sack if they refuse to sign a new contract which will worsen their terms and conditions.

To highlight this pernicious contract, Asda workers belonging

to the GMB trade union held a protest outside the company’s South Shields store on 5 September. This was one of 15 union protests against the imposition by Asda of the notorious ‘Contract 6’. 150 MPs have demanded Asda rescind the new contract.

One of the protesters explained how Asda had used a divide-and-rule tactic. In 2017 they told workers

that Contract 6 was voluntary. Some workers signed up as it included an extra £1 an hour more on their wages. However, within months, it was worth less than this as the government increased the minimum wage.

Earlier this year Asda decided they wanted all their workers on the contract by November.

Any implementation of Contract 6 will be a massive blow to these

workers. It would give Asda the right to give four weeks’ notice that hours or departments can be changed.

No time-and-a-half for working bank holidays. Night shift workers would lose three hours of premium rate pay, which would leave these workers up to £50 worse off over a four-week period. Asda wants all this extra flexibility for workers for just £9 an hour, which is only 79p more than the minimum wage.

Clearly the protesters were getting support, both from shoppers and other Asda workers. Ultimately if Asda gets away with this contract, it’ll come back for more. One of the workers commented that she feared that sick pay would be the next of their conditions under attack.

To fight these attacks workers will need to show they are prepared to take strike action to defend their pay and conditions. And with only three months to go before Asda imposes the contract, the GMB trade union leaders must urgently organise an industrial action ballot.

### Get your workers’ paper here!

About 60 very lively and noisy Asda workers and supporters, GMB members, protested against Contract 6 outside of Wolstanton Asda in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire.

Protesters were pleased to have our National Shop Stewards Network banner next to theirs and we gave them all leaflets advertising the NSSN Rally at the TUC Congress taking place on 8 September (see pages 8-9).

Socialist Party members assisted Asda workers in giving out about a 1,000 GMB leaflets to shoppers. We then gave out Socialist Party leaflets headed “All workers must support Asda workers in stopping Contract 6” to all the protesters and sold 12 copies of the Socialist.

One of the key GMB reps was even shouting to other protesters that copies of the Socialist were on sale!

Stoke Socialist Party



GMB union members protest outside Asda in South Shields photo Elaine Brunskill

# UCU ballots - yes to strike action on pensions, pay, workloads and equality

**Lucy Riglin**  
UCU Cardiff University rep  
(personal capacity)

University staff in the University and College Union (UCU) are currently voting on strike action - this time in two ballots. The ballots close on 30 October.

One vote will be about pensions, to which we currently contribute 8.8% of our salaries. Last year’s pensions strike forced our employers to set up a panel to investigate the situation, but now it looks like they’re going to ignore this and try to make staff pay more (9.6% for our current pension. This shows that the bosses can’t be trusted, and that sustained struggle is needed.

It’s estimated that on average staff in higher and further education staff work more than two days unpaid each week

The second vote is about pay-related issues. Staff voted on this earlier this year. But although almost 70% voted for strike action in England, Scotland and Wales we missed the Tory government-imposed 50% turnout threshold, getting 41% in the ballot.

The vote covers a range of issues, including addressing gender and ethnicity pay gaps, reducing zero-hour and hourly paid positions and reducing excessive and unsafe workloads. Pay has fallen by 21% in real terms over the last decade.

It’s important that these ballots draw in all UCU members, as some will be more affected by some issues than others.

For example, a lecturer near retirement might be particularly worried about their pension, whereas a newer lecturer who is only guaranteed a small number of hours’ work a term might be more angry about zero-hour-like contracts.

Most staff members are stressed by their workload: it’s estimated that on average staff in higher and further education work more than two days unpaid each week. Like with all employers, unpaid overtime is a way for universities to save money by not hiring the extra staff they need.

It’s important that the union builds a fighting organisation to unite all of its members behind resisting these attacks to their pay and working conditions. It’s also important that students support this struggle, as many did previously, as overworked staff will negatively impact on quality education.

Debating the way forward for trade unions  
one of the discussions at  
**SOCIALISM 2019**  
2-3 Nov, central London  
socialism2019.net

UCU members campaigning in defence of their pensions in 2018 photo LornaMcCampbell/CC



### Pilots ground BA flights over pay

BA pilots took strike action on 9-10 September and have named 27 September for another strike day following management’s failure to improve its offer of an 11.3% pay rise spread over three years.

This offer was decisively rejected by 93% of pilots on a turnout of 90% organised by the Balpa union and demonstrates the high level of discontent not only over pay but also over working terms and conditions.

Meanwhile UK-based pilots at Ryanair will be out on a third round of strikes between 18-29 September, again over pay and conditions. These strikes follow the refusal of Ryanair to seriously negotiate and the company’s rejection to taking the issues to arbitration. Planned action in Ireland was called off after Ryanair blocked it by obtaining a court injunction.

### Wilko walkouts

Around 1,600 GMB union members at two Wilko distribution centres in Magor, Wales and Worksop, Nottinghamshire, are expecting to strike - although no dates have yet been set.

The GMB said: “More than 84% of votes were cast for strike action. It’s clear how angry workers are about this brutal new rota system.

“Wilko prides itself on being a family-run company - but they’re imposing contracts that will force staff to work on the weekends, splitting up family time, without the agreement of their employees.

### DVSA strike downs IT

PCS members’ continuing month-long strike over working practices and restructures at Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in Nottingham and Swansea is impacting on the agency’s IT systems.

According to the trade magazine MotorTransport, “Hundreds of HGV drivers are in danger of driving illegally after technical problems at DVSA prevented drivers’ training records from being uploaded ahead of the Driver CPC deadline, which kicks in at midnight today (9 September 2019).”

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# NSSN LOBBY OF TUC: UPBEAT MEETING CALLS FOR TRADE UNION LEAD TO BOOT OUT TORIES

**Julia Leonard**  
 Hillingdon Socialist Party

A packed and enthusiastic National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) rally took place at Trade Union Congress (TUC) conference in Brighton on 8 September, the tenth year that the rally has taken place.

Linda Taaffe, NSSN secretary, opened the meeting saying: "If we thought the political situation was confusing when the NSSN annual conference took place in July, there are no words to describe the mess that the ruling class are in at the present time!"

A group of strikers representing the 62 on indefinite strike at Bromley libraries (now in its 13th week) addressed the meeting with an inspiring speech about their struggle and a medley of songs that they are using on the picket line to keep spirits up - a good way to get across serious issues. One, to the tune of the Addams Family theme tune started off: "They're underhand and sneaky, their promises are leaky, they're letting us down weekly".

The strikers paid tribute to support from the NSSN and Socialist Party members on their picket lines and also to the RMT transport union for money donated to their strike fund at a time when the RMT themselves are involved in strike action.

## Unified movement

Rob Williams, NSSN chair, said he wanted to be the first to say that with the previous night's resignation of the Work and Pensions Minister the Tories are now "Rudderless". He described the TUC as "our parliament" and that it needed to show clarity and a way forward for workers to be unified. The labour and trade union movement has more than six million members - this is the real 'rebel alliance'.

A much talked about government of national unity will only serve the interests of the bosses. It would include Liberal Democrat MPs whose part in the coalition government enabled David Cameron and George Osborne to push through their austerity programme and lead to years of attacks on the working class.

A common theme from many of the speakers was that we need maximum unity of our class - too many divisions have been sown between Remain and Leave supporters and the Tories are only too happy to divide the working class, as they do through

racism, xenophobia, homophobia and islamophobia.

Everyone agreed that this TUC conference is taking place at a crucial time. We have to put pressure on the Labour Party for a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies that supports workers' rights and ends austerity, stops zero-hour contracts and reverses all outsourcing of contracts.

Any delay or dithering will just give the Blairites in the Labour Party more confidence and lead to more attacks on Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. It was noted that some Blairite ex-Labour MPs have been in three different parties in recent months. They have no loyalty to those who elected them and are only interested in their own careers.

Speeches included comments about the debates taking place at the TUC and how delegates seek to influence decisions made during the conference.

The meeting had a good mixture of experienced trade union members, young workers, students and workers newly involved in struggle to protect their jobs and services.

The number of trade union leaders who addressed the meeting is an indication of the importance attached to the NSSN with its union affiliates and representatives of rank-and-file trade unionists.

Amy Murphy, president of Usdaw shop workers' union and Socialist Party member, highlighted the struggle against Sainsbury's where workers at Waltham Point distribution centre are being told that any sick leave after two weeks is at the discretion of their manager - a change from the previous limit of 26 weeks! A policy she described as "starving sick people back to work".

Dave Ward, Communication Workers' Union general secretary, described his members being "tagged" so managers can check on their whereabouts. He called for more co-operation between unions, and to find ways to deal with new technology - to restrict how its introduction affects workers. Unchecked use of new technology can result in the intensification of the working day.

New people attending found the meeting really inspiring, to hear directly from those involved what is going on in the trade union movement and what can be achieved by the struggle and solidarity of workers - news that is very hard to come by in the mainstream media. Shop stewards described the actions they are involved with and how workers are becoming emboldened to take indefinite strike action.

In turn, more experienced trade union members said how inspired they have been by the struggles of young people in the climate change demonstrations and their determination to fight. Three young school students from Guildford described how they have protested and spread the word locally. Trade unions have a vital role to play in supporting the climate strikes and encouraging their members to take part.

The meeting ended on a very upbeat mood. Calls were made for those present to take every opportunity to recruit workers to trade unions, and to use the NSSN to support workers in struggle.

A demonstration with trade union banners and placards along the seafront followed the rally to make our presence felt outside the TUC conference.



BEIS striker Mariela



Dave Ward



Amy Murphy



Lobbying the TUC following the NSSN rally NSSN photos Mary Finch

The most pressing priority for PCS civil servants' union members and the wider working class is to bring the government's austerity programme to an end. This is why I have argued at the PCS national executive committee that we need a general election to do all we can to get the Tories out and find a Brexit solution which protects PCS members and stops cuts, closures and attacks on public services.

I am a Socialist Party member and have served our union the whole of my working life. Along with others, I played an important role in paving the way for PCS to become a fighting union, first under New Labour and then against the Tories, and their vicious austerity. However, I believe that this is now under threat.

The attacks on our union and our members in this age of austerity has been unprecedented. I have always argued for a fighting strategy to defend our members. I have led and taken part in national and local industrial action which has won for members by protecting our pensions and jobs.

I am currently group president in the BEIS group and led the campaign to stop the closure of the Sheffield office and all local offices. Together with members we saved 180 jobs. I continue to support the action being taken by outsourced workers including the indefinite strike action in my own department for a decent wage (see page 6). All these services should be brought back in-house.

It is because of my fighting and campaigning record that I am asking members to vote for me to be the next general secretary.

## Programme

My programme is committed to protecting our terms and conditions, fighting to reverse the cuts and attacks, campaigning to save our offices and jobs.

We must ensure that the struggle for equality, on issues like equal pay and real reforms which remove the barriers to a decent working life for women, disabled, black and LGBT+ members, is integral to everything our union does. Part of this must be to remove barriers to enable members to play an active role in our union, particularly women.

If I win, I will not take the full general secretary wage. I pledge to remain on my current civil service salary and not materially gain if elected.

Making this stand ensures our trade union leaders do not become removed from the members they represent. I also pledge to reverse the creeping erosion of member-led

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# FIGHTING PCS GENERAL SECRETARY NEEDED - MARION LLOYD: WHY I AM STANDING

democracy of our union and give back control to our elected committees and members.

My immediate priority will be to put pressure on the government to ensure that we have the staffing levels required to deliver - whatever the fall-out from Brexit - across the civil service and partner organisations including the commercial sector.

## I will fight to:

- Stop office closures and save jobs. Work with members in DWP, HMRC and other groups where mass office closures are planned, to build campaigns and industrial action to defend local offices and jobs.

- Break the pay cap and win a cost of living pay rise which compensates for the pay cuts of the last decade. To win this we need a fighting pay strategy which includes all member ballots but also a strategy which can overcome the draconian anti-trade union laws. This includes group and employer ballots and action to win for members. Linking this to building for national and coordinated industrial action across the union. PCS also needs to take a lead in convincing

other public sector unions to join with us and coordinate ballots to win decent pay rises across the public sector.

- Build group and all union campaigns and industrial action to defend our terms and conditions and stop the constant erosion. Fight to reverse the detrimental changes of recent years and extend the best to all members and new starters.

- Strengthen the lay structures of reps and members. Build on the democratic gains including implementing the conference policy to extend the election of full-time officers beyond general secretary and assistant general secretary.

- Link up with school student strikers and develop a trade union approach to a just energy transition and climate jobs.

I will campaign for the election of a Jeremy Corbyn-led government with anti-austerity policies in a general election.

However, I have opposed attempts within the PCS leadership to move us towards affiliation to Labour in the current situation. I back the union's policy of supporting candidates

who support PCS policies and our members' interests.

But as well as Jeremy Corbyn, within Labour there are also Blairite MPs, who in government attacked the pay and conditions of civil servants, and still stand for cuts and privatisation today. I stand for the democratisation of the Labour Party and the deselection of the Blairites.

PCS should be supporting candidates who support PCS policies and our members' interests, but not campaigning for those that support cuts and austerity, whatever party they belong to.

My record shows that I have the experience required to lead PCS through these unprecedented times, while my programme ensures that PCS will campaign on the issues that matter most to members. As such, I would ask that you nominate me in your branch to ensure that I can take this programme to PCS members during the election.

Candidates need fifteen nominations to get on the ballot paper by the closing date of 14 October. Please give me the opportunity to put my programme to the PCS membership.



Marion Lloyd (second left) on strike with fellow workers and PCS members photo Marion Lloyd for PCS GS

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photo Senan

# END AUSTERITY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE: GENERAL ELECTION NOW

## Socialist Party members in PCS

Prior to the conference of the Trade Union Congress, a motion was put by Socialist Party members and others to the national executive committee (NEC) of the PCS civil servants' union.

This called for a national demonstration against austerity, for an immediate general election, for the end of the anti-union laws and for the renationalisation of Royal Mail and the railways. The motion was defeated by those on the NEC who mistakenly want opposition to a no-deal Brexit to be at the forefront of the union's campaigns.

Whether it's Brexit accomplished by a Tory government, or Remain, accomplished by a Tory government or some coalition of Tories, Liberals and right-wing Labour MPs, each represent a threat to civil service workers and to the communities that we serve.

On the one hand, there may be decisions to move staff between departments and away from the work they were recruited to do or to transfer staff offices.

There may be specific attacks on EU nationals who work for the civil service and related bodies. Staffing has been slashed to pieces and yet the civil servants covering the Border Force or Customs will be expected to handle the mammoth task of an emergency exit from the single market.

On the other hand, there will be a continuing bleeding of the civil ser-

vice and our privatised brothers and sisters in companies such as ISS, Aramark, Interserve, G4S. The devastating closures programme which has seen hundreds of Jobcentres and tax offices close, and lost tens of thousands of jobs will continue (including in specialisms that supported the vulnerable to claim benefits or which investigated tax avoidance by the super rich), as will pay cuts.

For our union the key task should not be falsely posing Remain as an answer to the real fear of further Tory attacks. It should be mobilising our members to defend ourselves from attacks - especially if there are threats by the nationalistic cabal around Johnson to remove members of our union from their jobs or from the country based on their nationality.

We should be mobilising to demand a general election to decisively end austerity, by pushing a Corbyn-led government into power and holding it to promises about trade union rights, pay and national bargaining in the civil service, which include substantial improvements for union members on private sector contracts.

Corbyn and McDonnell should be sent to Brussels to negotiate an exit from the EU which could be an international platform from which to defend workers' rights and to attack reactionary policies, such as the post-ed workers directive and the rules against nationalisation and state subsidies that protect jobs.



**Dave Nellist**  
Socialist Party member and Labour MP 1983-1992

Parliament is packed with pro-capitalist politicians who neither reflect the balance of the views of the electorate on Brexit, nor the needs of the working class to overturn austerity. Wages of three times the average, to say nothing of the other perks of the office, isolate MPs from the day-to-day problems of ordinary working people.

The Socialist Party believes that workers' MPs should be subject to the right of recall and paid only the average wage of a skilled worker.

In my own years in parliament I never once heard the equivalent of 'the closure of BSC Scunthorpe' bill, or the 'export of motor manufacturing jobs to Slovakia' bill. Parliamentary democracy is limited - limited political democracy ensuring real economic decisions remain in the hands of unelected bankers and investors.

Such limited democratic rights that we enjoy were never a 'gift', but hard fought for - the rights of association and freedom of assembly, the right to join a trade union and to take collective strike action, and the right to vote itself. All were first fought and won outside parliament, and then later codified by parliament into laws.

**Parliament suspended**

The use by a prime minister, selected by a mere 90,000 Tory party members, of executive powers to overrule elected MPs, and extend the shutdown period in-between two Parliamentary 'years' through prorogation, is designed to reduce the influence of elected MPs and increase executive power. The suspension has provoked widespread protests under the slogan #StopTheCoup.

Boris Johnson's action makes hollow the talk of Britain being a parliamentary democracy, when the prime minister, with a majority of minus 43 at the time of writing, can invoke the power of the crown, via the Privy Council, to suspend parliament for five weeks. Even the Financial Times has described that as "constitutional chicanery... without modern precedent."

Prerogative powers stem from medieval kings. These powers are not merely an historic footnote, but are still available today.

They enable governments to deploy the armed forces, make and unmake international treaties and grant honours.

Though rarely used, the crown reserves even more draconian powers, including the ability to dismiss governments. For example, the dismissal of the Labour government in Australia in November 1975 by the Governor-General Sir John Kerr. (See 'Australia: when the Queen's representative sacked a government' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)).

The Privy Council, where these powers are exercised, is composed of over 650 establishment appointees - senior MPs, all cabinet members, and some royals, church leaders and judges.



photo UK Parliament

# CAPITALIST 'DEMOCRACY'

# V



# SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

Postal vote for wildcat strike action photo Alistair Tice

Socialists stand for the abolition thereby removing these constitutional powers of the monarchy, and the abolition of the Privy Council.

**Transform Labour**

A missed opportunity over the last four years, since Jeremy Corbyn was elected Labour leader in September 2015, has been the failure to accelerate political and organisational change in the party, particularly mandatory reselection of MPs.

Council candidates are reviewed during each term of office and general secretaries of trade unions

must stand for re-election every five years. MPs should not be insulated from that democratic review.

As part of our internationalist opposition to the capitalist European Union we are against the obstacles it places in the path of essential socialist measures. Socialists call for a Brexit with pro-worker-negotiated red lines.

These include the removal of all obligations under treaties and directives that undermine the rights of workers, that would hamper trade unions from enforcing industry-wide negotiated agreements,

or would be used to create legal obstacles to a Labour government from carrying out measures to protect jobs or extend control over the economy, via either 'state aid' or renationalisation.

We stand for a socialist society, replacing capitalist structures with a workers' state and workers' democracy. In a socialist society, democracy would be essential - as essential as the flow of oxygen through blood.

Far more positions will be elected, subject to recall, with wages based on a skilled workers' rate.

Democratic decision-making under socialism would extend beyond parliamentary elections every five years, to all aspects of our lives, so the working class had real control over our workplaces and communities.

While this would only be possible through a fundamental break with capitalism, in building towards that we would argue for the maximum democratisation of capitalist state structures to win every possible improvement to the lives of workers today.

That would include a single,

elected chamber - with no prerogative powers used by, or in the name of, the monarch which can overrule that elected chamber. Politicians should be elected for a maximum of two years, and the voting age should be lowered to 16.

It is capitalism and its supporters that restrict democracy to defend their current system of exploitation. The capitalist class is a tiny minority within society and democracy is only acceptable to it as long as it can convince a majority of the working class to support pro-capitalist politics. That was sharply expressed in 1977, in the book 'Inside Right' by leading Tory MP Sir Ian Gilmour.

Long before Tony Blair made Labour an out and out capitalist party, Labour's turn to the left after 1970 prompted Gilmour to write: "Conservatives do not worship democracy. For them majority rule is a device... a means to an end, not an end in itself. And if it is leading to an end that is undesirable or inconsistent with itself, then there is a theoretical case for ending it."

It is the capitalists, not socialists, who threaten democracy in Britain.

■ **A socialist MP fighting for the working class in Parliament**

"Once appointed, in almost all cases, privy councillors hold their position for life. Only a quorum of three is needed for a Privy Council decision, such as shutting down Parliament, to be requested from the Queen. In legal terms, the Cabinet is actually a committee of the Privy Council.

"Declarations of war and adherence to international treaties are exercised in the name of the crown under prerogative powers by the prime minister, who may or may not choose to consult the House of Commons.

"For example, there was no motion put to the House of Commons to authorise British involvement in the first Gulf war in 1991. Opponents of that war had to use arcane motions, such as whether the Commons should adjourn for the day, to raise their opposition.

"In fact, I organised the last such debate of 1990, starting that debate on 19 December at 6:53am! On the day the ultimatum to Iraq expired, 15 January 1991, I was one of the tellers reporting the 'anti-war' adjournment vote to the Commons.

"The Iraq war in 2003 did have a formal vote before Britain's involvement. Although Theresa May reverted to the use of the royal prerogative, rather than risking losing a Commons vote, before bombing Syria in April 2018."



photo Dun.can

**Andy Beadle**  
Unite the Union shop steward (retired but still knackered after 23 years bus driving)

A major report has at last been published, following concerns over driver fatigue on London's buses. High levels of deaths and injuries involving buses have been recorded.

These led to years of campaigning by activists in Unite the Union, the Socialist Party and other groups concerned with road safety. Under pressure, Transport for London (TfL) finally ordered the survey "to understand if fatigue is a problem

for London bus drivers, and if so, investigate the nature of this problem and propose solutions." (See [content.tfl.gov.uk/bus-driver-fatigue-report.pdf](http://content.tfl.gov.uk/bus-driver-fatigue-report.pdf)).

When the boss isn't listening, any driver will tell you we're always knackered. And if TfL don't know (or pretend they don't know) why are they running the industry?

The Loughborough University survey was never going to blame the bus bosses, considering they were effectively the paymasters for this report. Yet despite the academic and sometimes diplomatic language, the truth shines through.

In each bus company a "focus

group" of 6-8 drivers was interviewed. All of the participants believed that fatigue is an issue among London bus drivers.

In addition to shift work, insufficient sleep and long working hours they listed time to travel to work as a factor, with commuting times of up to one and a half to two hours each way. Additionally, due mainly to inadequate pay, levels of overtime are high.

Of 25,000 London bus drivers, 1,353 responded to a survey questionnaire. Alarming, 17% of drivers indicated that they had fallen asleep while driving the bus at least once in the past 12 months. 79% of

drivers who responded believed that their working hours lead to sleepiness while driving the bus.

Of the ten bus firms operating for TfL, none has a formal or specific policy relating to driver fatigue despite the fact that most operators recognised that it is an issue that needs to be addressed.

The majority of participants know how to report fatigue, but many are unsure of how this would be handled by managers, and so few have ever done so. A small number of drivers had reported fatigue because of worries about the safety implications of carrying on working while tired.

Others believed they would face being disciplined if they admitted to feeling tired and suggested they would be more likely to call in sick in such a situation. Participants suggested that they were 'not allowed' to be tired and were unlikely to discuss fatigue either with managers, supervisors, or other drivers.

Two other notable points came out in the focus groups. There was a general wish for shorter hours with better pay, which it was thought would lead to a reduction in fatigue. And a more active union was cited as being required to help improve the working situation for bus drivers.

The big bus operators are the same companies responsible for the catastrophic safety outcome on Britain's railways. (First group does not operate buses in London at present.) Although TfL is supposed to regulate them, the truth is rather the other way round.

Unfortunately, the proposed solutions of the report do not consider the significance of the worsening in safety culture since London bus privatisation in the 1990s. The rule by the big public transport companies is not considered.

Instead, the report states that "all parties (drivers, managers, operators at all levels, TfL, borough councils, unions and the Department for Transport) have a part to play in implementing any proposed solution."

Bus workers cannot let themselves be lured into this approach. TfL on behalf of the big bus companies suggests drivers and unions take responsibility while they run the industry for private profit. Union involvement would be a trap.

Unite's objectives in its own rule book - based on many decades of collective experience - offer a practical approach. It demands a "socialist vision for... a collective society in which public services are directly provided on the basis of public need and not private greed, and... public ownership of important areas of economic activity and services including... local passenger transport."

Unite should see the recent demo outside London City Hall as a first step in a persistent and energetic campaign with these industrial as well as political demands.

- End Tory TFL budget cuts. Unite is Labour's biggest donor. We should tell London Mayor Sadiq Khan to demand the Tory government restores funding to TfL to maintain all services. He should refuse to pass on Tory cuts and join with transport unions to fight them
- One pay scale for all London bus workers - the best
- Shorter, safer hours of driving to combat fatigue - with no loss of pay
- The return of London buses to public ownership, democratically run by workers - no private profit from public transport

**Class society and the state**  
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**Socialist newspaper sales round-up**

Just some of the sales of the Socialist newspaper in the past few days...

**Merthyr Tydfil march**

Dave Reid in south Wales reports that independence marchers in Merthyr bought 76 copies of the Socialist on 7 September. There was a warm response to the Socialist Party's main demand to nationalise the Bridgend Ford engine factory to save the jobs.

**DVSA strike**

Clare Wilkins reports nine striking PCS union members at the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency bought the Socialist at the picket line and strike social.

**Brighton**

Martin Reynolds reports that 20 people in Brighton bought the Socialist on a campaign stall before TUC conference on Saturday 7 September, and ten people signed up to find out about joining the Socialist Party. People were searching for answers to the political crisis in Westminster.

**North West**

Roger Bannister reports that Socialist Party members in the North West sold 17 copies of the Socialist in Liverpool and Wigan.

**Salisbury welcomes Socialist campaigners**

James Ward and Ali Cook  
Wiltshire Socialist Party

On 7 September, Wiltshire Socialist Party held our first campaign stall in the centre of Salisbury. Considering it has always been a Conservative safe seat, we were expecting a hostile reaction.

Apart from a few glares, this was not the case! We got an amazing response. It completely exceeded our expectations.

We campaigned on the NHS and also on kicking the Tories out. So many people stopped to talk. 'We need to get rid of Boris now' was a recurring theme.

There was also support for Corbyn and his policies, but it was tempered with real disappointment over his inability to be firm and decisive. We talked to Labour members who said there was an urgent need to throw the Blairites out of the party.

There were also some interested younger people, rightly afraid of the state of the NHS, who made donations and bought newspapers.

One man paused at our stall and then walked off. He then reappeared half an hour later and said he had walked home but came back because he had some questions.

What is socialism, are all members of the Labour Party socialists, and what did we think about Brexit? He thought our view on Brexit was clear, honest and correct. He was frustrated by all of the main political parties, and left exclaiming that he liked our position and would look into the Socialist Party further.

In two hours we sold 17 copies of the Socialist, which people were keen to read, and collected £16 for the Socialist Party fighting fund. To end a brilliant stall, a man who called himself a Trotskyist stopped and recited the poem 'Say not the Struggle Naught Availeth' before buying a paper and giving a generous donation.

Iain Dalton  
Leeds Socialist Party

# Leeds pensioners occupy BBC to save free TV licenses



photos Iain Dalton

"BBC, shame on you" was the chant as around 50 pensioners from across Yorkshire, including as far away as Scarborough, occupied the reception area of the Leeds BBC offices.

Their plan had been to hold a rally outside with speakers. But after being kept waiting half an hour for someone to accept a letter from the Yorkshire and Humber Pensioners Convention, then told no one was actually going to do that, they decided to go in to make sure management knew they were there and what they were campaigning for.

Speakers were careful to highlight that the proposal to scrap free TV licenses for over-75s was due to the government removing funding to the BBC for this a few years ago.

**Unions**

There was a strong presence of retired trade union members, especially from general union Unite. Gerry Lavery, secretary of Leeds Unite Community branch, commented: "Given the increased loneliness in society, it's crucial this remains a universal benefit for over-75s, and the government must take responsibility for funding it."

Dave, a Unite Community member from Leeds, told us: "We're here primarily because we don't want to see free TV licenses taken away from over-75s. But this could be followed by the abolition of other things. In the past there's been talk of removing the concessionary travel pass or the winter fuel allowance."

Socialist Party members in Yorkshire have been campaigning on this issue, linking the need to defend free TV licenses for over-75s with reversing the increasing commercialisation and outsourcing of the BBC. We fight for a publicly owned, fully funded and democratically controlled BBC.

## Frimley hospital staff fight back-door privatisation

There was a noisy and enthusiastic demonstration outside Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey on 22 August against outsourcing NHS staff to a 'wholly owned subsidiary'. Good to see NHS staff in uniform joining the protest.

General union Unite is balloting members for strike action, and general union GMB is holding a consultative ballot.

I think what is required is a united approach with all unions balloting for strike action.

We held the 'Defend Our Community Services' banner to demonstrate that all of us have a vested interest in NHS staff winning this struggle.

**Terry Pearce**  
Bracknell Socialist Party

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leftbooks.co.uk

## Leicester Kashmir protest rejects religious smokescreen

Leicester Socialist Party supported the 7 September demo against attacks on the democratic rights of the Kashmiri people by the right-wing Modi government.

Protesters made it clear they reject this being represented as a sectarian or religious issue.

They understand that Modi, as a capitalist representative, is as much the enemy of the working class and poor in India, Pakistan and Kashmir.

We pointed to January's massive general strike in India with 150 million workers taking part, showing the potential of the trade unions to put pressure on those in power.

Protesters and passers-by were eager to discuss, and stopped us to buy 17 copies of the Socialist which included our article on Kashmir.  
**Leicester Socialist Party**

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	£ target	£ received	July-September 2019	Deadline 1 October
South West	1,800	2,229		124%
East Midlands	1,850	1,163		63%
Yorkshire	3,300	2,026		61%
Wales	2,300	1,256		55%
Southern	1,600	668		42%
West Midlands	2,600	921		35%
London	6,100	2,103		34%
Northern	750	243		32%
Eastern	1,200	375		31%
North West	2,100	609		29%
South East	750	102		14%
Other	5,650	6,513		115%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>18,207</b>		<b>61%</b>

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# Coventry: 100 pack meeting against congestion charge



The meeting on 2 September, and, inset, handing in 1,710 signatures to the council photos Coventry Socialist Party

Coventry Socialist Party

The threat of a government-imposed congestion charge in Coventry led 100 people to attend the second public meeting called in opposition to it on 2 September.

The Socialist Party has argued that the quickest and most effective way of tackling deteriorating air quality is major public investment into clean, more frequent, reliable and cheap public transport - not punishment taxes on those unable to afford newer cars.

Twice as many trips in England are made by bus compared to rail, but government support for bus services has almost halved in real terms in the last 15 years.

**Renationalisation**

And with nine private companies competing for bus routes in the city, Coventry Socialist Party is arguing that renationalisation of buses must be a key component in planning for people's needs, not operators' profits.

A campaign petition launched by Socialist Party members has now reached 9,000 signatures. When it reaches 15,000, the city council is obliged to hear a public debate in the council chamber. A third public meeting is planned in two weeks' time.

James Ivens  
East London Socialist Party

## "We are not monkeys" - West Papuans demand self-determination in London

Dozens of West Papuan protesters and supporters demonstrated outside the Indonesian embassy on 7 September against state repression of the independence movement.

Indonesian military officers have been filmed calling Papuans "monkeys," and protesters carrying the West Papuan flag face arbitrary arrest. Speakers in London demanded a self-determination referendum, release of prisoners, and an end to racism and violence.

A Socialist Party member from East Timor, a former colony of Indonesia, expressed solidarity with the Papuan struggle.

Other Socialist Party speakers proposed strikes to help win the movement's demands, and appeals to unions in Indonesia for solidarity action. The Indonesian capitalist establishment keeps both ordinary Papuans and ordinary Indonesians in dire poverty.

Papua's forests, copper mines and gold mines are very profitable, so the Indonesian state will not grant independence willingly. Strikes in these sectors would have real power. Forming strike committees and local defence committees could allow workers to resist repression and build for a referendum.

Liberating West Papua requires breaking the power of the local, colonial and international owners. This would have to include nationalising natural resources under democratic workers' control and management.

Workers in Britain can help by fighting for mass action to bring down the Tories and usher in a pro-worker, Corbyn-led government amenable to Papuan self-determination.



photos James Ivens



**Climate strikes: trade union round-up**

Campaigning for trade union action on the climate crisis

**Equity**

Performing arts union Equity joins the list published in the last issue of the Socialist of unions organising for action. The motion below was passed by Equity North and East London General branch on 13 July. It received partial approval, with qualifications, from the union's ruling council on 3 September.

Climate change affects all Equity members and has a direct impact on our industrial conditions including working temperatures. Given the very recent confirmation of 20 September as the global day of action on climate change... This branch urges council to:

1. Declare support, publicly and among members, for the general aims of the climate emergency day of action: namely, raising awareness of the climate crisis and demanding action to address it.
2. Support the campaign on 20 September, including lawful actions such as encouraging members to organise protests during breaks or before or after working hours on that day, and encouraging members to take part in lawful demonstrations and meetings.
3. Put pressure on government and industry to take urgent action to address the issue.

**London arts and culture workers**

Trade union activists from workplaces including the Tate, British Library and Southbank Centre, and the PCS, Bectu, Unison, UCU and Equity unions, met informally in Fleet Street on 10 September. The discussion included:

- PCS union culture sector branches, including the Tate, have written to employers asking them to allow staff two or three hours to take part in climate actions on 20 September
- Local councils including Salford, Brighton and Hackney might allow staff to walk out for the action too
- Lunchtime protests and photo shoots, and short demonstrations before or after working hours, as well as union branches and trade union councils holding debates and demos, are practical ways to take part
- There should be an arts and culture workers' bloc on the 20 September action, and defence of any arts or culture workers victimised for taking reasonable action on the day
- Some PCS branches have elected workplace 'green reps' to pressure employers on environmental practices, and other branches and unions could consider doing the same

**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**

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or write to the Socialist Inbox,  
PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



# Scotland and Brexit

In the third of our series of articles exploring Brexit and the 'national question' Philip Stott of Socialist Party Scotland examines its effect on Scotland.

# DEVELOPING THREAT TO THE CAPITALIST UNION

## Right-wing Labour's anti-independence stance alienating working class

The tumultuous Brexit crisis under Boris Johnson's leadership has opened a new phase of instability for British capitalism. Once again it's the threat of a break-up of the UK that is exercising mounting concern.

As the fifth anniversary of the working-class uprising of 18 September 2014 (Scottish independence referendum) approaches, demands for indyref2 are growing louder.

Recent opinion polls have revealed a developing systemic threat to the capitalist union with a 52:48 split in favour of Scottish independence.

Were Boris Johnson to win a general election, that support is very likely to increase decisively. A major confrontation with a Johnson government would follow, with mass mobilisations on the streets demanding a referendum.

This is something the pro-capitalist Scottish National Party (SNP) leadership are extremely reluctant to advocate, preferring to channel the anger in a 'safe' electoral direction.

Reflecting the fears of the ruling class, Gordon Brown, co-architect of New Labour, has opined that Johnson could be "the last prime minister of the UK".

Brown, however, seems blind to the role that his and Tony Blair's big business policies played in driving the mass support for Scottish independence that emerged during the 2014 indyref.

### Outlet

Austerity, ruined public services and rising in-work poverty all laid the basis for mass opposition to the capitalist political establishment, which found an outlet through the demand for independence. Socialist Party Scotland campaigned for a Yes vote and an independent socialist Scotland in 2014.

For the working class in particular, demands for democratic rights are, at root, a desire to break from the nightmare of life under a system run for the billionaire elite.

Indeed the same factors drove the vote in favour of leaving the EU in 2016 among large swathes of working-class communities across the UK.

It was both the growing support for independence and the imminence of a general election that en-



Socialist Party Scotland members campaigning in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum photo SPS



**An independent socialist Scotland could form a free and voluntary confederation with a socialist England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist Europe**

couraged Labour's John McDonnell to announce that a Labour government, if faced by a request from the Scottish parliament for an indyref2, "would not block something like that. We would let the Scottish people decide. That's democracy." Referencing himself and Jeremy Corbyn, he went on to say "There are other views within the party but that's our view."

All hell then broke loose. The Scottish Blairites launched an

immediate attack. A statement from the majority of the Labour group in the Scottish parliament said: "We deplore any attempts to undermine the official policy position of the Scottish Labour Party... that is, opposition to a second independence referendum."

This was to double-down on Labour's abysmal collaboration with the Tories and big business as part of the 2014 Better Together debacle.

The May 2019 European election saw Labour lose both their MEPs, dropping to just 9.3% support. They came fifth, behind the SNP, Brexit Party, Tories and the Lib Dems.

Corbyn and McDonnell have at least now taken a more sensitive attitude to the growing support for independence and demands for an indyref2.

### Blackmail

If Corbyn in power was to stand up to the inevitable blackmail and sabotage of the bosses and carry through the necessary measures against capitalist interests, the nationalisation of the major sectors of the economy in particular, this

would have huge appeal among the working class in Scotland.

Even then it would be crucial to stand for the right of Scotland to be independent, on the basis of majority support. An independent socialist Scotland could form a free and voluntary confederation with a socialist England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist Europe. This is the policy fought for by Socialist Party Scotland.

Corbyn and McDonnell are paying a heavy price for allowing the capitalist wing of the Labour party to remain in situ. By blocking the majority pro-Corbyn membership from having the right to deselect right-wing MPs, the opportunity for big business to sabotage the possibility of left government, either before or after a general election, has been strengthened.

### General election

A general election is now imminent. Growing support for independence means the SNP are likely to make significant gains by turning the election into, at least partially, a referendum on independence to escape the Brexit turmoil.

Johnson will seek to win a general election by running on a populist platform, pledging to be the only politician prepared to implement Brexit.

If Corbyn stands on a fighting left manifesto he could defeat Johnson. Such a manifesto should include leaving the EU on the basis of policies that would benefit the working-class majority. For example, massive investment in housing, public services, jobs and wages, ending Universal Credit and for public ownership of the economy.

A recent poll showing 54% (after removing those who did not know) want to leave the EU by any means, including a no-deal, underlines the dangers if Corbyn was to advocate staying in the EU in a general election campaign.

The same poll found 88% thought parliament was out of touch with the public. 89% felt MPs "ignore the wishes of voters and push their own agendas" on Brexit.

This reflects a rage against the capitalist establishment that a mass working-class party with socialist policies could base itself on, to offer a future to millions whose lives are being destroyed by a profit-driven capitalist economic system.

Discuss the National Question and Scotland, Wales, Sri Lanka on 2-3 Nov SOCIALISM 2019 socialism2019.net

# Far right makes gains in Germany

## Left must urgently build credible and militant alternative

Tom Hoffman Sozialistische Organisation Solidarität (CWI, Germany), Berlin

The 1 September state elections in the eastern German states of Brandenburg and Saxony saw a continuation of the decline of Social Democrats (SPD) and Christian Democrats (Angela Merkel's CDU), currently Germany's ruling parties. The losses for Die Linke (Left party) were massive. Its share was almost halved (18.9% to 10.4% in Saxony, 18.6% to 10.7% in Brandenburg).

However, the far right AfD (Alliance for Germany) maintained the high level of support it won in both the 2017 general election and last May's European elections.

In both states the AfD is now the second biggest party with 27.8% (+18.1%) in Saxony and 23.7% (+11.5%) in Brandenburg.

In contrast the CDU and SPD - who nationally, since March 2018, have been in a governing "Grand Coalition" - both achieved their worst ever results. In Saxony, the SPD achieved its worst result in its history with just 7.6%.

### Increased turnout

Voter turnout in both elections increased significantly (up 17.5% in Saxony and 13.4% in Brandenburg). The AfD was able to win support from previous non-voters. At the same time, a larger number of people took part in the election in order to prevent the AfD from winning. Thus, the freefall of the CDU in Saxony and the SPD in Brandenburg was cushioned.

However, in Saxony one-in-three voters and in Brandenburg almost 40% of those eligible to vote, abstained. The proportion of people



Sacsha Staničić of CWI Germany addressing a mass anti-racist/far right rally in Berlin

who do not feel represented by any party - not even by the AfD posing as a protest party - is still the largest. This is where the decisive potential lies for Die Linke to mobilise voters.

### AfD's breeding ground

The social breeding ground on which the AfD could thrive must also be a starting point for left-wing and socialist ideas. 30 years after the restoration of capitalism and the sale of East German industry to West German corporations, there is a lack of future prospects, good jobs and infrastructure, especially in rural regions.

Against this background, it is no wonder that the AfD can act as an opposition to the establishment here - especially if there is no authentic offer from the left. The AfD can also channel the fears of, and agitate against, migrants. The capitalist parties and the media have been spreading these fears for years.

### Left alternative

In order to stop the right, a credible and militant alternative from the left is needed, one that takes on the banks and corporations and their political representatives and at the same time draws a clear line against

division and racism.

No moral appeals against the AfD help combat its rise, only the common fight of all workers and socially disadvantaged for social improvements. Combining the struggle against racism in society with the struggle for higher wages and low rents, for example, is above all the task of the trade unions.

Since German reunification, in Brandenburg and Saxony, Die Linke has unfortunately completely failed to organise such struggles and, as a party claiming to be socialist, to do justice to them.

The strategy of the east German

Die Linke leadership - that social improvements can be negotiated with pro-capitalist parties such as the SPD and the Greens - has failed; Die Linke's Brandenburg vote was around 135,500 compared with 400,700 ten years ago.

Instead of aiming to become a 'second SPD' and trying to work the capitalist system, what is needed is a militant socialist party that is the voice of wage earners and the socially disadvantaged, but at the same time does not compromise its anti-racist principles.

Full article on socialistworld.net

# South Africa: Xenophobic violence - a product of failed capitalist policies

Statement by Socialist Party of Nigeria

The Socialist Party of Nigeria condemns the raging xenophobic attacks in South Africa which have affected Nigerians alongside other African migrants in South Africa. Some have been killed and many injured, while shops have been destroyed and looted in the recurrent violence. Reprisal or retributive actions in South Africa and possibly in Nigeria and elsewhere can only further worsen the cycle of violence.

There have been reports of the South African police supporting the violence or looking the other way. Also, there does not appear to have been any effective measures so far taken by the Nigerian government

through its High Commission and Consulate in South Africa to safeguard Nigerians and provide relief to victims of the violence. This is in spite of the much publicised meeting of both countries' leaders recently on the sidelines of the Ticaad conference on African development in Japan where they both mouthed commitments to ending the recurrent violence.

A majority of Nigerian immigrants in South Africa are escapees from the hellish conditions of poverty, lack of jobs and opportunities, as well as the daily insecurity and violence. Meanwhile, thousands more Nigerians and African nationals are trekking through the Sahara desert and drowning in the Mediterranean Sea in the hope of reaching European shores.

Similarly, it is the ruinous anti-poor capitalist policies of decades of post-apartheid African National Congress (ANC) governments that are responsible for the inequality and mass poverty that grips the majority of black South Africans.

As a result of the despair and desperation and with a South African labour leadership not mounting an effective struggle to unite the working class and find a lasting way out of the crisis, the poorest sections and even layers of the workers and middle classes in South Africa are being led, erroneously, to believe that African nationals, including Nigerians, are responsible for their plight.

The only way out is for a united struggle of the working classes of both countries to challenge and

defeat their capitalist ruling classes and install a workers-led government armed with socialist policies.

We therefore call on the Nigerian Labour Congress, the Trade Union Congress, the United Labour Congress and the National Association of Nigerian Students to immediately convene a conference of labour, students and youth activists as well as socialists and all pro-working people's organisations and parties to discuss an appropriate response in both Nigeria and South Africa to these attacks.

Full statement on socialistworld.net





## STUDENTS AND WORKERS

## UNITE AGAINST

## FEEES, LOW PAY AND

## CLIMATE CHANGE

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**Gareth Bromhall**  
Socialist Students  
steering committee

**B**oris Johnson and his Tory government are teetering on the edge of a precipice. Students and young workers have been hit hard by cuts and want to see the back of this pro-austerity

government.

Our generation grew up not knowing any different. But we are keenly aware of the injustices of lower minimum wages, sky-high rents, zero-hour contracts and increasing tuition fees. And we can see the damage that the big corporations are wreaking on our environment in the pursuit of profit.

Any programme that looks to tackle these issues needs to include

the demands of a £10-an-hour minimum wage for all, rent control and a huge expansion of public housing, and an end to zero and low-hour contracts.

There is an opportunity now for students to fight back and to win the abolition of tuition fees, the cancellation of student debt, the introduction of living grants and the rolling back of the marketisation of education.

This can't though be done through parliamentary procedure alone. Students and workers need to stand united and mobilise to fight for these essential demands across campuses and workplaces.

The 20 September climate strike will see students and workers taking action together to fight to defend the environment. We need to extend that unity to fight to kick out the Tories and for a socialist alternative

that can guarantee free education, jobs and a future so that we don't become the lost generation.

**Can a Green New Deal  
save the environment?**  
one of the discussions at  
**SOCIALISM 2019**  
2-3 Nov, central London  
socialism2019.net

