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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**



Is a workers' Brexit deal possible?

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Egypt: Street protests challenge Trump's favourite dictator

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A festival of political debate on socialist ideas to get rid of the Tories and change the world

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BATTERED BORIS MUST GO

and all the Tories with him!

Nick Chaffey
Socialist Party national committee

Battered by his own MPs in parliament, his Oxbridge allies in the Supreme Court, and even some press barons, the isolated Tory leader has used his party conference as a platform for a right-wing populist election manifesto.

He is hoping to appeal to working-class leave voters, angered by three years of parliamentary obstructions. But nothing Johnson offers will solve the problems of workers or end the crisis.

Trying to appeal to working-class voters with promises to raise the

minimum wage and increase funding for the NHS, schools and the police, shows the looming election will not be fought only on Brexit. It will also be a judgement on austerity. A record that haunts Johnson wherever he goes.

The announcement of an increase in the minimum wage is an admission of the poverty that has risen under the Tory austerity rule of Cameron and May. All voted through by millionaire Johnson.

A promise for the future will do nothing now to alleviate the record rise in child poverty, the daily pressure on low-paid families to buy food and pay the rent.

Attempts to patch up the Tory party with a right-wing populist appeal will not last the week. When a perpetual liar throws around future spending promises on health, education and local authorities, that will mean nothing for the hospitals, schools and councils; for the nurses, porters, teachers, TAs and council workers.

There is no new money today, and what is on offer in no way makes up

for years of cuts. So the acute crisis in public services will continue and the anger at austerity will continue to boil.

But as parliament re-opens, the pantomime continues with debates on procedure and inflammatory language. The continued delay and uncertainty over Brexit leaves working-class voters increasingly alienated from politics, and full of four-letter words of their own.

Away from the media headlines, but reported every week in the Socialist, the growing number of localised strikes, and now important national disputes developing in Royal Mail and the universities, reveal the battle lines that this election should be fought over.

Corbyn's own conference commitments on pay, social care, education and scrapping Universal Credit will enthuse working-class and young voters. But it needs to be heard, loud and clear.

That must be done on the streets, through rallies and demonstrations mobilised by the left-led trade unions, demanding an immediate

- **General election now**
- **No unity with pro-austerity MPs**
- **For an anti-austerity Corbyn-led government with socialist policies**
- **No to the bosses' EU**
- **For an EU exit deal that defends jobs and workers' interests**

general election and an end to austerity. Corbyn has to call on his own Labour councils not to implement another penny in further cuts.

All of this could counter the lies and slanders in the Tory media.

Linked to a decisive call for a vote

of no confidence in Johnson, such a campaign could be a winning platform for Corbyn, especially if he were armed with socialist policies and Labour candidates prepared to fight for a permanent end to the age of austerity.



photo Paul Mattson

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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party supporters. We want you to write for the Socialist.

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

Supreme Court warning to future socialist government

CAPITALIST ELITE SPLIT - FIGHT FOR A GOVERNMENT IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING CLASS



WHAT WE THINK

This year's Tory party conference slogan 'get Brexit done' sums up Johnson's attempt to appeal to millions who are fed up to the back teeth with the three years of parliamentary paralysis since the Brexit vote. That paralysis, however, reflects an intractable crisis for British capitalism, which none of the warring wings of the ruling elite has an answer to.

There was nothing pre-ordained about the 'fog of Brexit' that has seemed to hang over everything, obscuring class divisions, during the last year. It can still be cut through by the leaders of the trade unions and by Jeremy Corbyn.

The latter's anti-austerity message has been muffled by his mistaken approach of compromising with the pro-capitalist Blairite wing of the Labour Party in the vain hope of pacifying them. The inevitable result is the current mood of confusion among big sections of the working class.

The Labour left's weakness has been writ large over the last two weeks. Labour Party conference, after a botched attempt to remove the pro-capitalist deputy leader Tom Watson, seemed like it might result in a strengthening of the right wing. In the event, this did not happen. On the contrary the reserves of support for Corbyn were demonstrated in pushing back the right.

At the same time, there were a number of policy announcements, including scrapping prescription fees, free personal care for the elderly, and steps to tackle the profiteering of the big pharmaceutical companies.

These were limited - the only really effective way to tackle the

profiteering of big pharma would be to nationalise the pharmaceutical companies, for example - but they are nonetheless potentially very popular.

For now at least, however, these potential steps forward have been partially undermined by Labour's mistaken approach in parliament. Tory toff Johnson is using Westminster as a platform to cynically claim he is standing up for the people against the establishment.

Nothing could be further from the truth. His claims to be planning increased public spending are an attempt to disguise the reality that a Johnson Brexit would mean a further assault on workers' living standards and privatisation of public services.

His cynical lies are being given some credibility, however, by the failure of Corbyn and McDonnell to fight for a general election and to clearly differentiate themselves from the representatives of capitalism who are desperate to thwart Johnson for their own reasons.

The capitalist class in Britain approves of Johnson's plans to attack workers' rights, but objects to his preparedness to risk a chaotic Brexit, with the possible consequences for their profits. They are also opposed to his lightminded willingness to ignore and undermine the institutions of British capitalism, which could set a dangerous precedent for the future.

Hence the dramatic step taken by the Supreme Court, where eleven judges unanimously found that Johnson's prerogation of parliament was "unlawful, null and of no effect".

It is an indication of the severity of the crisis for British capitalism that the Supreme Court unanimously ruled against a Tory government, the traditional party of British capitalism. It is also high-risk from the capitalists' point of view, undermining the appearance of the judiciary of being 'independent' and 'above politics'.

photo Paul Mattsson



For the workers' movement, however, these serious splits at the top should lead to only one conclusion; to take full advantage of their weakness to fight for a general election, and for the election of a government that stands in the interests of the working class.

A Financial Times editorial called for Johnson's removal, and this was followed by another entitled 'Corbyn's Labour cannot be trusted to govern', calling on parliament to find a new 'credible' opposition - i.e. an opposition that can be trusted to act in the interests of big business.

Corbyn and McDonnell must take an independent stance in opposition to both Johnson and the pro-capitalist leaders of the 'rebel alliance' who - whether Blairites, Liberal Democrats or ex-Tories - are

attempting to block a Corbyn-led government.

The Labour leadership has instead, been dragged again into going along with the false idea that there is a common 'national interest'. The workers' movement has no common interest with pro-capitalist MPs who have implemented savage austerity.

Even the prolonged debate on the language used in parliament fell into this trap. Johnson is deliberately using provocative language in order to strengthen his populist appeal, breaking with the parliamentary tradition. That tradition, however, was designed by the capitalist elite to prevent reality - such as millions living in poverty - being stated plainly.

Socialists should not defend that tradition, but themselves speak the

have understood that and therefore welcomed the ruling.

Daniel Finkelstein, writing in the Times, pointed out that one of the legal principles outlined in the judgement was that "the executive cannot exercise prerogative powers so as to deprive people of their property without the payment of compensation". Finkelstein went on to say that "it doesn't require much imagination to think of circumstances where that sort of ruling might come in handy."

This gives a little taste of the capitalists' fear of a left government and the measures that they would be prepared to take to frustrate such a government democratically agreeing to carry out nationalisation, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.

Fight for socialism

To proclaim the alleged 'independence of the judiciary' is to miseducate working-class people about the role state forces play in defending the power and rule of the capitalist class. Instead, the class character of the state should be exposed and measures put forward to point in a different direction, such as the election of judges under the democratic control of the working class.

That is not to suggest that the capitalist class would allow their state to be 'gradually' taken over and run in the interests of the working class. In order to decisively break the ability of the capitalist class to sabotage a democratically elected socialist government, it would be necessary to nationalise the major corporations and banks that dominate the economy under democratic working-class control, combined with full government control of incoming and outgoing foreign trade.

Provided this was backed up by the power of the workers' movement outside of parliament, the capitalist class would be powerless to stop it. This would lay the basis for the development of a socialist planned economy, and a democratic workers' state, that would really be able to use the huge wealth, science and technique created by capitalism to build a society for the many, not the few.

These issues are not abstract but can become of critical importance in the next period. Despite the hesitations of the Labour leadership, a general election is looming. Johnson's right-populist posturing is a high-risk strategy fraught with difficulty at the polls, with the danger of losing votes to both the Lib Dems in Remain areas, and the Brexit Party in working-class Leave areas.

The most important factor in an election, however, will be the role played by the Corbyn Labour leadership. If it stands in the election on a socialist programme it can still cut through the fog of Brexit and convince millions of workers to vote for an end to austerity. Corbyn could therefore be in power within months.

The capitalists are right to fear that outcome, not so much because of Corbyn himself, but because - after a decade of misery - the working class would have its hopes raised and would be demanding a Corbyn-led government acted decisively in the interests of the majority.



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 for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15 an hour. 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.

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Socialism - the podcast: on all platforms
facebook.com/CWISocialistParty

- 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

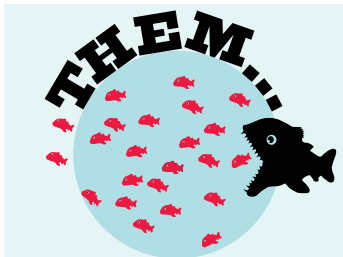
- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!
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Friends with benefits

Boris Johnson is facing separate questions over dodgy dealings.

An oil company run by a major Tory party donor has had a billion-pound deal underwritten by the British government following a meeting with Boris Johnson - despite the company being a investigated by the Serious Fraud Office. The investigation relates to suspected bribery, corruption and money laundering.

Meanwhile another 'friend' of the prime minister appears to have benefitted from their relationship. Jennifer Arcuri, an American businesswoman, received a £100,000 grant from the UK government after she attended three overseas trade missions led by Johnson while he was London mayor.

Harry can't get out of bed

Prince Harry claims he struggles to get out of bed in the mornings.

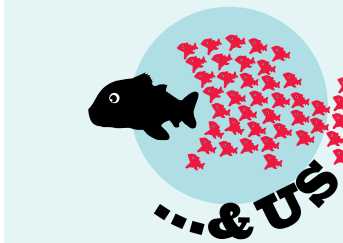
The 'struggle' is apparently due to his worry about all the problems in the world. But if the rest of us want to eat we have no choice but to get out of bed. Doesn't matter if we're about to work all day for pitiful wages, at a back-breaking job which we hate.

Not problems that cause worry in Harry's world.

Stop me if you've heard this one before

The Tories have refused to step in and help Thomas Cook, allowing the travel operator to collapse, leaving thousands unemployed and thousands more stranded and out of pocket. And Tory transport minister Grant Shapps couldn't even be bothered to write a statement about the crisis.

It's been revealed he simply reused a statement on the Monarch Airlines collapse in 2017 by calamitous former transport secretary Chris Grayling. The statement is identical apart from the substitution of Monarch's name for Thomas Cook and adjusted figures.



Have you got news for the fishes? Email editors@socialistparty.org.uk

NATIONALISATION ONLY WAY TO SAFEGUARD JOBS AND SKILLS AT WRIGHTBUS

CWI member Northern Ireland

Wrightbus is one of the last remaining bus manufacturers in the UK. It produced the Routemaster, also known as the Boris bus, for the London Transport Authority.

The company was enjoying huge levels of growth in recent years - boosted not just by the contract to supply the Routemaster, but the additional fleet demands associated with legislation which mandated buses to be disability accessible.

With the passing of the peak of new bus demand, the company's finances tightened - a situation made much more difficult by the amount of profits being taken out of the accounts by owners, the Wright family.

Chief Executive Jeff Wright doubles as a pastor in the Green Pastures church located next to the main Wrightbus site. He is said to

have a throne in the church. Financial reports circulated in the aftermath of the company's collapse confirm that more than £16 million has been transferred to Green Pastures over recent years - most recently as part of a build project.

While the finances were squeezed by these factors, the company invested in bringing forward new hydrogen-powered bus technology and was recently awarded an initial contract to supply local public transport provider, Translink, with six experimental hydrogen buses.

With the consequent demand for working capital, the company suffered a severe cashflow crisis leaving it unable to pay workers their wages at the end of September.

Desperate attempts to find alternative buyers came to nought as the family - who own the land on which the factory is built under a different company, which is not in administration - sought to obtain too high a price for its sale or lease

from potential buyers.

The result was experienced by workers on the morning of 25 September when they were informed that, as the company had entered administration they were to be made redundant.

The workforce decided to leave and hold a meeting outside the factory after Unite union officials were barred from entry (no doubt fearing a repeat of the Harland and Wolff occupation).

The reaction among workers as they milled on the car park was anger and disgust. This came to a head as the founder of the company William Wright came to explain that the closure was caused by the bank. He was directly challenged by workers who told him that he no longer owned them.

On the following Sunday, approximately 100 workers organised a spontaneous but silent protest outside the Green Pastures church, leaving their work clothing on the fence surrounding the building.

The workers' union Unite has organised a mass rally in the Ballymena United football grounds for Wednesday 2 October, with a march and rally for the following Friday. The union has raised the demand for the workplace to be nationalised and provided investment as a means to deliver renewable-powered buses. But as yet none of the main political parties has backed that call.

The union has also demanded that the Wright family hand the land back to the local community, and remove obstacles to potential buyers coming in to reopen the site and allow a return to work.

The focus of these rallies and marches are sure to keep the pressure on. As will the announcement that after ten weeks of a workers' occupation of Harland and Wolff, a buyer has been found who is promising to re-employ the workforce and invest to expand production on site.

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An unmissable event to discuss the questions confronting us...

AND SOCIALIST IDEAS

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
Socialism 2019 organiser

Events swirl around us. Governments offer no solutions. Westminster spirals deeper into chaos. Austerity rolls on. What is the way out? More specifically what is the way out in our interests - not for the bosses and billionaires?

This is what Socialism 2019 is about - the questions confronting us and socialist ideas to point a way forward.

Can Johnson be booted out? How do we deal with bullying bosses? Can the Blairite plotters who want to do Corbyn in be stopped? How do we overcome the divisions between different groups of people in society?

One of last year's Socialism attendees said that "hearing stories of working-class people standing together to fight for socialist values left me feeling hopeful for the future at a time when austerity seems never ending."

The struggle against austerity is the struggle to defend our living standards and everything that the working class has won. We'll discuss: 100% council homes and the fight against homelessness; how do we end the universal misery Universal Credit brings? and Corbynomics - is it socialism or Keynesianism?

At Socialism 2019 we will discuss: Is climate change too urgent to fight for socialism? Did socialism fail in Venezuela? And what do we even mean by socialism? Can capitalism be reset or is more fundamental change needed? Is the working class still able, like Karl Marx said, to be capitalism's gravedigger, the agent of socialist change?

These are complicated times. Finding a way forward is not easy. People are sick of Brexit - yet socialists and the labour movement can't abandon these issues to the bosses and their representatives. That's why we will our sessions include: Is a pro-worker Brexit deal possible? We will also look at Brexit in context - Trump, trade wars and tariffs, and Northern Ireland, Brexit and the border.

Another Socialism 2018 attendee remarked that it was "fantastic to hear about struggles in Britain such as the Glasgow equal pay dispute and the Refugee Rights campaign". Fighting oppression is on the agenda at Socialism 2019: What do Marxists say is the way to end violence against women?; 50 years after Stonewall, how can LGBT+ rights be fought for and defended?; identity politics in the fight against oppression.

Socialists are internationalists. The mass struggles in Hong Kong, Sudan, and Kashmir will feature, and Marxists from across the world will participate, enriching the discussion enormously.

So, if you want to be inspired for the battles ahead, to meet new friends in the struggle, to share your experiences and your ideas, and to build the ideas of socialism - then this is an unmissable event!

Labour's mass social housing pledge

Jeremy Corbyn used his Labour conference speech to repeat his call for "the largest council housebuilding programme in a generation". Conference unanimously passed a resolution calling for building 155,000 social rented homes a year, including 100,000 council homes.

This marked an important move to the left which could have mass appeal if it is followed through.

In last week's issue of the Socialist (see 'Standing up for the needs of working-class people' at socialistparty.org.uk), Labour councillor Tolga Aramaz explained the campaign to get Enfield Council to pledge 100% council housing on its 10,000-home Meridian Water development instead of largely unaffordable homes as planned.

This would offer hope to those in overcrowded council homes and the 4,500 families on the waiting list. Labour councils should take the opportunity this policy gives them.

It is not automatic that this resolution will find its way into the next manifesto. Labour's Blairite housing shadow ministers are reported as making comments about the difficulties of carrying out the policy. There is no doubt that the mass of delegates supported Jeremy Corbyn as representing fundamental change, but many MPs and shadow ministers are pursuing a pro-capitalist agenda. The fight to transform Labour into a real political voice of the working class continues.

Campaigners fighting the commercialisation of housing associations will also note that conference supported a call for local authorities to be given "powers and resources to take housing associations under direct council control."

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PCS general secretary election

Support Marion Lloyd - action not words; a proven track record of fighting for members' interests

Katrine Williams
Vice-President DWP Group
(personal capacity)

On 14 October, nominations close for the PCS civil servants' union general secretary election.

Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd is standing as a candidate. She needs 15 branch nominations to get on the ballot paper. Our message is simple. If you want as general secretary a socialist woman with a proven record of fighting for members support Marion Lloyd.

A union member all her working life in large and small government departments, and in the private sector, Marion is currently BEIS group president and has been on the union's national executive committee for nearly 20 years.

■ An experienced negotiator locally and nationally, she has led campaigns and strikes which have saved jobs, prevented office closures and improved pay and conditions.

■ Marion stands for action not words. Typical of this is her leading role in the campaign against the Sheffield BIS office closure - saving 400 jobs.

■ Marion is standing on a 'no personal gain' platform. She pledges to "stay on my current wage and not take the general secretary salary."

■ Marion will campaign to get the Tories out. She says "PCS should support Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto and a Labour government based on this. Any general election should be used



Marion Lloyd (centre) on one of the six strikes at the Business, Innovation and Skills office in Sheffield, May 2016 photo Alistair Tice

to build mass support for a bold anti-cuts programme in line with PCS policy, rather than to give blanket support to all Labour candidates."

■ Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to put a stop to attacks on our pay and conditions. Marion argues this is welcome but "we cannot sit back and place all our hopes on a Corbyn government. Preparations for a third statutory ballot is necessary for 2020 pay. Having failed to achieve legal ballots twice already, a fresh approach is required which encourages maximum debate and discussion to help us get our tactics and strategy right - allowing

consideration of individual group ballots and the inclusion of a range of issues in addition to pay."

■ Marion has first-hand experience of balancing the challenges of being a working mother and trade union activist. She will "prioritise measures such as a full equality overhaul of all departmental personnel policies and practices to help secure better equality at work and within the union - LGBT+, women, youth; older members, disabled and black members. Equality starts in the workplace."

■ Union democracy is a major part of Marion's programme. She

believes: "Control of the union at all levels by members and lay activists is crucial" and that "All senior full-time officers should be elected and accountable."

■ Alongside pay, jobs and office closures are the major concerns of members. Marion believes that a successful campaign to save jobs and stop the closure of her office in Sheffield shows resistance can work. She says: "A strong national lead is needed to oppose the wholesale office closures programme and give members confidence to get involved in local battles against office closures and to defend jobs."

■ The school students and Extinction Rebellion have focused much-needed attention on climate change. Marion argues: "This is a trade union issue. It starts in the workplace by making sure our offices follow best practice on green issues including statutory rights for green reps."

■ **Support Marion Lloyd for general secretary with your vote at your branch nomination meeting. If you have any questions or would like to invite Marion to speak contact Marion4GenSec@gmail.com**
■ **Facebook Marion Lloyd for PCS General Secretary**
■ **Twitter @marion4gs**

Bromley libraries strikers proved right - private company admits job cuts!

Socialist Party reporters

Unite union members employed by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) in Bromley, south London, have been on indefinite strike since 6 June, in defence of the library service.

Tory-run Bromley council handed the service over to GLL as part of its plans to become an "enabling authority" where, rather than provide services, the council privatises everything and simply manages the contracts.

Unite ran a campaign opposing the transfer and predicted that it would lead to job cuts. GLL and Bromley denied the union claims and, as recently as a month ago, threatened to sue Unite regional officer and Socialist Party member Onay Kasab for libel and defamation unless the claims were withdrawn.

Unite refused - and has been proved right. GLL

is now proposing to cut 30 library staff. Yet library workers are on strike precisely because the service is at breaking point due to unfilled vacancies!

This cut will mean library closures. GLL has once again been exposed. Despite its mission statements claiming to be a "worker-led social enterprise", in truth it is no better than any profit-chasing private company. This was proved during negotiations on 19 September when the company admitted it had "bid cheap" in order to win contracts and then make savings by cutting staff.

This is a campaign that the strikers and the union are determined to win, as shown by the strikers who remain resolute after being on strike for so long. There now is a tremendous responsibility on the trade union movement to back this dispute to a victory - it is currently the longest-running all-out indefinite strike in the country and can serve as a tremendous example of how to fight cuts.

The campaign, as well as defending jobs, is calling for the service to be in-sourced with immediate effect.

■ **Donations to the campaign can be made via the campaign crowd funding page: Search 'Bromley library strike on justgiving.com**

■ **For speakers and messages of support contact onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org**

End low pay - support Salford Royal security workers' action

Outsourced security staff in Salford Royal - an outstanding NHS hospital - have voted for strike action with a 100% turnout and 100% yes vote in a ballot! This follows over a year of failed negotiations to gain parity in pay and terms and conditions with their colleagues.

The security staff are employed by Engie Services under a private finance initiative agreement with the hospital's foundation trust, and are on terms far below the NHS national 'Agenda for Change' conditions that other NHS workers enjoy.

Some workers are on the minimum wage rate of £8.21 an hour, whereas the lowest NHS rate is £9.03 an hour; a difference amounting to £1,500 a year.

The security guards say: "We don't take this action lightly but have been left with no choice." Security staff in all NHS hospitals provide a safe working

environment for NHS staff, patients and visitors, yet many are earning minimum wage.

This stark example shows how the influx of private companies, pushing their snouts into NHS resources in order to boost their own profits, creates a two-tier workforce - an avenue for them to divide workers and to drive down pay and conditions. But NHS staff are saying 'no'.

Recent activities to generate support for these vital workers have been strong. An accident and emergency health-care assistant, quoted on the security guards' leaflet about their action, said "they support us every day and every night and we must now support them in their fight for fair pay!"

While negotiations are ongoing the strike dates are set for 6 and 7 October - with pickets at Salford Royal, Eccles Old Road, Salford, starting at 6am each day. Messages of support to the Engie security guards to: union@srft.nhs.uk.

Richard Griffiths
Manchester and Salford
Socialist Party

Hull: Construction workers' walkout forces employer to back down



Keith Gibson speaking to striking workers at a workplace gate meeting photo Matt Whale

Mick Whale
Chair, Hull Trade Union Council

The unofficial construction workers' dispute involving the building of a wood chip processing plant at Saltend Chemicals Park, in Hull, has been a struggle to prevent the blacklisting of two senior Unite and GMB union stewards - Paul Tattersfield and Keith Gibson.

It was a clear attempt by employer Engie Fabricom to breach the national collective agreement (NAECI - known as the 'Blue Book') signed between the trade unions and construction bosses over worker rights

and industrial workplace procedures on all steel construction Blue Book sites.

The right of the trade unions to appoint accredited senior stewards to a job covered by NAECI is an important element of workers' control gained in previous struggles.

However, employers in construction are attempting to reduce workers' strength by eradicating trade union workers' control in their industry.

The refusal of Engie Fabricom to accept Paul and Keith as union-appointed reps clearly suggests that a de facto blacklist is still covertly operating in construction, despite

it being illegalised in 1999. What other interpretation can workers draw?

Fabricom management's response to union negotiators is that management should appoint the stewards! The union negotiators response? 'The unions don't appoint the managers, the managers shouldn't try to appoint the union reps.'

Deafening silence

When the unions asked the direct question: "Why will you not allow Keith Gibson as the senior steward?" Deafening silence!

Both Paul and Keith have

suffered blacklisting in the past. On a previous job run by Engie Fabricom, Keith's workmate asked a supervisor why Keith was not being allowed onto the job. His supervisor replied that it wasn't him that was blocking Keith rather it came from "above".

Check out the Blacklist Support Group website, it is clear that some construction companies are still operating a blacklist.

In one sense, it is a testament to Socialist Party member Keith Gibson that the bosses fear him. Keith has tirelessly fought for construction workers' rights throughout his working life, most significantly at

Lindsey Oil Refinery in 2009.

However, to deprive a worker of their livelihood because of trade union or political activity is an absolute scandal, that all trade unionists, regardless of where they work, must challenge.

The unofficial strike action taken by the workforce has finally forced Fabricom to back down.

The full-time union officers had a meeting with company representatives and an agreement has been reached that Keith will start in the next three weeks.

The unofficial strike achieved more in four days than nearly 18 months of "official" procedures.

Crown Paints dispute - union senior steward speaks out

Workers, members of the GMB union, at Crown Paints in Hull have in recent weeks taken four days of strike action in pursuit of a just pay claim. **Shane Allinson**, GMB senior steward, has made a statement about the dispute, extracts of which we carry below.

"Crown Paints has made paint and varnishes in Hull for over 200 years. We have a sister site in Darwen, Lancashire, and both sites are covered by GMB and Unite with collective bargaining rights.

In February 2019 the collective stewards of both sites started the annual pay talks, canvassing the members and creating a mandate to take to the company.

The 'wish list' was simple and in our opinion something that could have been negotiated.

■ Salary increase of 5%
■ Extra day's holiday
■ Cancer clause added to our existing hospital benefit

The percentage increase started high to achieve a realistic number

as most pay awards are. The company responded with 1.9% and discussed away the two other parts of the claim.

The stewards committee agreed that the company offer can't be taken back to the members as it was a derisory figure. We asked the company to go away and consider its position and at the next meeting they came up with 2%. The union group considered its position and made a stance of 3% - that would be the lowest we would go.

Strike action

A ballot was held on the 2% offer and rejected by the members. The company met with us again and issued a further increase to 2.2% adding this is their final offer.

This was balloted on and again highly rejected which led us to a consultative ballot and thereafter a postal ballot to take industrial action.

The results of the postal ballot were massively in favour of taking action up to and including strike action.

We are asking our friends and workmates to stand by the democratic vote and withdraw their la-



GMB members picketing Crown Paints

bour. To stand on a picket line and not earn a wage for that day to fight to maintain a differential on our wage packets.

Minimum wages are rising and rightly so, but the differential is getting smaller. Our brothers and sisters over generations have fought to maintain our terms and conditions and now it's our turn.

Our fight at Crown Paints is to stop the pay gap being closed, to stop the influx of temporary workers, to get the business to uphold our rights as a union and not ride roughshod over age-old agreements, to address

concerns over health and safety issues and to get the company back to a place where it looks at its biggest asset - us the workers - as part of the family and not just a number."

■ **Please send messages of support to: shaneallinson@googlemail.com and solidarity strike donations to Hull Paint and Engineering GMB Branch, post to 62 Russell Street, Hull. HU2 9AD**

Get all the latest union news...
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Karro Foods victory Hull

Workers at Karro Foods in Hull have won a 7.1% pay increase over two years.

Trish, a steward and main organiser of the dispute, explained that when they started the strike, the workforce did not believe that they could win but that they had to do something.

Many of them have to spend the day carrying out backbreaking work for minimum wages. Scandalously, many of the workforce are reliant on food banks.

This victory will increase the confidence of Karro workers and also the wider labour and trade union movement who have supported them.

IS A WORKERS' BREXIT DEAL POSSIBLE?

Paula Mitchell
Socialist Party executive committee

This newspaper described the Leave vote in 2016 as a revolt against the capitalist establishment, a working-class 'cry of rage' against mass poverty and savage austerity while the rich get richer.

A Tory-led Brexit, deal or no deal, will do nothing to solve the causes of that rage. But remaining in the EU also offers no solution to poverty and austerity. On the other hand, overturning the result of the referendum can only stoke the existing anger against the main pro-capitalist parties even further.

The Socialist Party has always opposed the EU as a 'bosses' club': a set of treaties between different capitalist governments aimed at creating the largest possible arena for multinational companies to maximise their profits with as few barriers as possible.

We have consistently argued for a Brexit deal in the interests of working-class people. In the referendum we argued that there was a responsibility on the shoulders of the leaders of the workers' movement - the trade unions and the anti-austerity forces around Jeremy Corbyn - to harness that mass anger with an independent pro-working-class, anti-racist, internationalist programme for exiting the EU.

We argued that a vote to leave the EU would have been a shattering blow to Cameron. It could have split the Tory party and led to the fall of the Tory government, hastening the possibility of a Corbyn-led anti-austerity government.

With the exception of the transport unions RMT and Aslef, and the Bakers Union, the leaderships of the trade unions failed to rise to the challenge, and instead left the field to racist, pro-capitalist, right-wing forces to lead the charge for leave.

Jeremy Corbyn's first capitulation to the Blairites after he won the La-

bour leadership election in 2015, was to put to one side his longstanding opposition to the EU bosses' club in order to campaign for Remain. If Corbyn had led an anti-austerity, socialist exit campaign, it would have transformed the debate.

But it is not too late. In fact it is vital. Fighting for an anti-austerity, socialist Brexit in the interests of working-class and young people could overcome the 'Brexit divide'. In many ways, working-class leave voters and young anti-racist Remain supporters share a complete lack of trust in politicians, a fear about the future and living conditions, and a huge sense of lack of control.

A fight for a 'workers' Brexit' would cut through the attempt of Boris Johnson to be 'with the people' against the politicians and expose him for the pro-austerity, pro-capitalist representative of the rich that he is.

A Brexit implemented by a government acting in the interests of the working class would prevent the attacks on living standards and rights that would otherwise inevitably continue after a pro-capitalist Brexit.

General election

It is vital to fight as hard as possible for a general election now, including calling mass action. So, instead of Boris Johnson, or another Tory, going to negotiate with EU representatives - while continuing anti-working class policies at home - it would be Jeremy Corbyn going to negotiate new trade arrangements with the EU, with a mobilised movement of working-class and young people behind him.

Corbyn negotiating with the EU should not mean secret talks behind closed doors. It should be in front of, and accountable to, a mobilised labour and trade union movement. A workers' Brexit will not be achieved by 'clever' arguments, but by a bold fight backed up by mass meetings, demonstrations and actions.

The EU is not all-powerful. That was demonstrated by the Lindsey

oil refinery dispute in 2009. A united struggle of British and Italian workers smashed the posted workers' directive, which allows businesses to employ workers on the pay and conditions of their home countries rather than those of the country they work in, thus driving down pay.

An appeal to workers across Europe would be crucial. While meeting with EU negotiators, Corbyn should also meet with representatives and address mass meetings of the workers' movement across Europe. A bold challenge to the EU by Corbyn could have a huge impact with working-class people battling austerity throughout Europe.

What would a workers' Brexit mean?

It is no wonder the government tried to suppress its official 'Yellowhammer' report into what a no-deal exit could mean. While there has been scaremongering, it is undoubtedly the case that a no-deal exit could have harsh consequences in the initial period.

Delays of days at the channel crossings, supply disruptions for medicines and other vital goods, potential prices rises for food, fuel and electricity, potential closures of services that are run by private profit-seeking businesses.

But even if the Tories managed to secure a deal, a pro-capitalist Brexit is not good for workers. Boris Johnson aims to 'roll out the red carpet' for American big business, including opening up the NHS to US private health companies. He reportedly plans to push down company tax rates and diverge from EU standards and regulations.

Economic recession looms around the corner, in or out of the EU. The news of big companies collapsing and thousands of workers losing their jobs seems to be almost daily: Wrightbus, Thomas Cook, Honda, British Steel, Ford at Bridgend.

Workers are already having to organise to fight attempts by grasping bosses to cut wages and attack conditions at work, such as in Asda and Sainsbury's warehouses; attacks on trade union rights such as the construction workers in Hull; bullying management attempting to circumvent agreements made with unions in order to carry out further attacks, such as in Royal Mail. Under the cover of Brexit, how many more companies will threaten closure, job cuts, pay cuts, or attacks on conditions?

No worker should have to pay the price of this crisis. Any business making such threats must open their books to show where the money has gone. Where necessary, companies that threaten closure need to be nationalised, under democratic working-class control and management. That would enable not only the protection of those jobs for current workers but the preservation of decent jobs and skills for future generations and wider society.

EU regulations aim to prevent this necessary action to save jobs, skills, pay and rights. A workers' Brexit would mean withdrawing from these regulations.

It is true that there are some EU rules which offer some limited protections - such as 'Tupe', the Transfer



photo Paul Mattsson

of Undertakings (protection of employment) regulations that offer some protections when workers are transferred between employers. The EU Social Chapter includes some protections, such as the 'Working Time Directive', which sets limits on average working time.

But the British government under Thatcher in the 1980s was allowed to 'opt out' of the Social Chapter. The 'protections' of the EU did nothing to stop the attacks on trade union rights in the Tories' 2016 Trade Union Act. EU member states that have been bailed out by the EU institutions have suffered the biggest fall in collective bargaining rights in the world - falling by an average of 21% across the ten EU countries hardest hit by the economic crisis.

EU laws include strict rules in the European Fiscal Compact, limiting public spending and government borrowing, thus enforcing austerity. Since the world economic crisis of 2007-8, the institutions of the EU have imposed terrible austerity on Greece in particular, but also Portugal, Ireland and other countries.

EU procurement and competition policies enforce privatisation, including of health services, postal services and transport services. They forbid nationalisation and even restrict state subsidies to companies. When private sector company Carillion collapsed in 2018, Corbyn correctly called out this "outsourcing racket". EU treaties promote zero-hour contracts, low pay and 'flexible' working as part of its structural adjustment programme.

A Brexit in the interests of working-class people would mean maintaining any of the EU regulations that workers would want to keep, and in fact significantly strengthening them - scrapping, for example, all the Tory anti-trade union laws and improving workers' rights.

But crucially, it would mean scrapping the anti-worker EU laws intended to prevent nationalisation and state intervention, that attempt to enforce austerity and attacks on workers' rights and living conditions.

These could be used against a Corbyn government which tried to implement the extremely popular measures to renationalise Royal Mail or the railways, to end privatisation and bring back in-house privatised council, government and health services.

Climate change

A workers' Brexit would also enable serious action to be taken on climate change: nationalising the big energy companies, and investing in the development of renewable technologies. It would enable, where necessary, a transfer of skills from environmentally damaging industries into socially-useful and environmentally sustainable work.

Many people, young people especially, support the EU because they are anti-racist and internationalist. They understandably fear that Brexit is about racism and a 'little Englander' outlook. But the EU is not internationalist. EU governments allow refugees to drown in the Mediterranean rather than admit desperate people fleeing war and poverty into Europe.

A workers' Brexit, on the other hand, would guarantee the right of all those EU citizens working in Britain

to be able to continue to do so with full legal rights. Ending the posted workers directive would be a step towards ending the super-exploitation of migrant workers. Guaranteeing all workers the rate for the job - with at least a £12 an hour minimum wage - is also the best way to stop the 'race to the bottom', where bosses use low paid migrant workers to try to force overall wages and living standards down.

There should be no illusions, of course, that we simply have to leave the EU and all will be rosy. The EU is not the source of the problem or the main obstacle workers face. It enshrines and enforces austerity and eases things for the bosses. But the reason for austerity, poverty and privation is capitalist crisis and the capitalist profit system itself. In or out the EU the bosses will fight tooth and nail to prevent this programme being implemented.

“
A worker-led Brexit would be an enormous blow to capitalism across Europe. If the institutions of capitalism can be broken, why stop there?

That is why the fight for policies in working-class interests requires calling working-class and young people to action. A bold programme for jobs, for a million council homes, to rebuild the NHS, for a decent minimum wage and an end to zero-hour contracts, to reduce the working week, end Universal Credit and provide free adult social care and more, as promised at Labour's conference - can mobilise masses of people for the fight that will be necessary.

A mass movement is needed as a counter-pressure to the pressure of the capitalists, to push a Corbyn-led government to implement its programme and go further - to nationalise the banks and main parts of the economy in order to democratically plan the use of the vast wealth in society in the interests of all.

Combined with a bold appeal to workers across Europe - for example, proposing economic cooperation that would ensure workers' protections, pay and pensions, and that would allow public ownership of the banks and major companies in Europe - this would be real internationalism.

A worker-led Brexit would be an enormous blow to capitalism across Europe. If the institutions of capitalism can be broken, why stop there? This would be the basis of a movement to fight to overthrow capitalism in different European countries and fight for a socialist Europe, in place of the capitalist, pro-austerity bosses' club that is the EU.

'Can there be a pro-worker Brexit deal' at
SOCIALISM 2019
2-3 Nov, central London
socialism2019.net



Socialists in south east London are celebrating the 80th birthday of Peter Redfam.

The son of a shipping clerk, he was born in Chester just after the start of World War Two. At Trinity College Dublin he became active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and discovered a range of political views. On his return to Merseyside he joined the Labour Party in 1961. He met Peter Taaffe from Birkenhead Young Socialists and Ted Mooney among a number of comrades who launched Militant in 1964, forerunner of the Socialist Party.

After a year of unemployment, Peter moved south to become a research assistant at the London School of Economics. Since then he has lived and worked in various parts of London. He was a union rep at National Freight Corporation. He spent his later working years as a postman at Nine Elms.

Forty years ago, the national tabloids turned their attention to the spectre of the growing Militant Tendency inside the Labour Party. Peter was sharing a Lewisham council house with other Militant supporters and was surprised to find it featured in the Sunday Express under the headline “Why the secret of 13 Elsiemaud Road shocked Mrs Box” (she being the landlady). The reporter revealed a portrait of Karl Marx was on the wall inside!

Peter has always been an active and strong member of the Socialist Party. Generous with his time and money, he has been a good and frequent contributor of letters and articles to the Socialist and before that Militant, including issue number one.

He is thoughtful and patient, never sectarian but he strongly defends socialist ideas. Comrades like Peter have tirelessly argued, from Nye Bevan to Tony Benn to Jeremy Corbyn, that the primary quality of leadership is not personality but to have clear political ideas.

We need a programme that can inspire working people to organise within their mass organisations and consciously replace capitalism with a democratically planned socialist economy.

We are indebted to comrades like Peter who have done the consistent work in the trade unions and the workers’ organisations to help build the authority of the Socialist Party.

The need to rearm the trade union and labour movement with a socialist programme is becoming clearer. The continuing efforts of Peter are a great example to a new generation.

Andy Beadle
South East London Socialist Party



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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photo Mary Finch

■ Menopause policies

One of the last taboo issues for women, the menopause, is now getting the attention it deserves.

In 2014, I, along with other trade union caseworkers in the National Education Union, had identified that older women were being targeted by managers for capability issues. Nicky Downes and myself, both Socialist Party members, wrote a motion for our conference leading to policy and advice documents which were taken up by other trade unions and the Trade Union Congress on the menopause.

At the Labour Party conference recently, I was pleased to see Dawn Butler, Labour's shadow equalities minister, announced that companies with more than 250 employees are to be required to train managers on the effects of the menopause so they can accommodate the needs of employees.

As well as this, they would need to look at their sickness absence policies to ensure women were not discriminated against. Thousands of women suffering from the impact of the menopause could therefore be protected from discrimination.

However, the limit on 250 employees would mean that many women would not be protected and that cannot be fair.

All women need protection and better working conditions with proper ventilation and access to regular breaks. We need much more research into the menopause and how it impacts on women.

Access to earlier retirement, shorter working weeks and flexible working, without a loss in income, would also help all workers, but especially women.

The taboo is broken, now we have to fight for our rights.

Jane Nellist
Coventry

(undocumented immigrants) who faced time in jail when they had not committed a crime.

France is no stranger to corrupt politicians but Chirac managed to stand out as a hideous example.

Derek McMillan
Worthing, West Sussex

■ Where will votes go?

The establishment and their pseudo-experts pontificate about whether the Leave vote will go to the Tory party or Brexit Party.

Are these people ignorant, or is it pure propaganda? I'd remind that a percentage of both Leave and Remain voters also voted for Corbyn in 2017.

They also completely ignore the youth vote. A substantial amount of that vote will go to Corbyn if he pursues

the left wing programme of 2017: scrapping zero-hour contracts, tuition fees, a £10 an hour minimum wage, and building 500,000 affordable public homes. With regards to the narrative 'are you Leave or Remain', the answer should be unequivocal - we are an anti-austerity party.

Don't let Johnson fight the election on the Brexit debacle. Fight it on socialist policies. They try to bury their rotten policies behind the Brexit debate. The beneficiaries of some Tory Remain voters will be the Lib Dems. Equally some Leavers will vote for the Brexit Party.

Either way the Tories could lose seats. The situation is very fluid with votes cast all over the place. All the more reason for Corbyn to stand by his left-wing message.

Bill Buchanan
Nottingham

Rebel Music



Jacques Chirac photo
Jean Weber/CC



We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Dave Nellist

Coventry South East delegate to 1979 Labour conference and former MP

The election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in September 2015 fundamentally altered politics in the party. But for the last four years he has been hamstrung by the 80% of pro-capitalist Labour MPs who owe their political loyalty to the Kinnock/Blair eras.

Blairite MPs have falsely accused Corbyn of anti-Semitism, pressurised him to move to an openly Remain position on the EU and attempted to stifle his radical programme. If that programme is to be fully implemented by a future Corbyn-led Labour government, steps need to be taken now to remove those MPs who would attempt to sabotage it.

This is not a new battle. 40 years ago, the experience of Labour's 1974-1979 period in office, and its economic attacks on working-class families, produced demands for constitutional change, particularly rank and file control of MPs who had voted for that austerity.

In the 1970s the economy was mired by stagflation - high inflation (peaking at 25%) alongside stagnant economic growth and unemployment three times the 1960s levels. The capitalist class demanded drastic reductions in the share of wealth produced by working-class people which went back to them in wages and government services.

In 1976, Labour Chancellor Denis Healey sought a loan of £2.3 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilise the value of sterling, and to cover government budget deficits. The IMF demanded cuts of millions of pounds in health, education and welfare. Tax and interest rates were to rise, while legal limits of 5% were put on wage rises when inflation was three or four times that level.

Anger

The consequent anger of the organised working class erupted in widespread strikes against Labour's austerity measures, with a peak of 4.6 million workers involved in the so-called 'Winter of Discontent' in 1978-79.

Labour lost 50 seats in the May 1979 election. The experience of the 1970s led to an enormous transformation in the consciousness of Labour's rank and file. Demands grew for the replacement of MPs who had supported austerity; for the election of a future Labour leader to be at conference, not in the sole hands of MPs; and for the control of the election manifesto to be taken away from the leader's veto.

Then, as now, many Labour MPs lived a lifestyle hardly different from their opposite numbers on the Tory benches in the Commons. They saw the job of MP as theirs for life, and themselves more and more as Westminster-based, 'threatened' by activists in their constituency.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) was established in 1973 to campaign for mandatory reselection: the requirement that

40 YEARS ON MANDATORY RESELECTION MORE VITAL FOR LABOUR THAN EVER

photo Rwendland/CC



every Labour MP face a contest, once in the lifetime of every Parliament, to become the candidate at the subsequent election.

Supporters of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) played a significant role in the constituencies and unions, particularly prominent rank-and-file conference speakers such as Pat Wall and Ray Apps, and NEC youth representative from 1978-1981, Tony Saunois.

At the 1974 Labour conference mandatory reselection, although defeated, got 2 million votes. The idea came back at each successive conference, gaining more local party branches and affiliated trade union support.

At the 1979 conference the core CLPD motion came from Coventry South West, and was supported by the Labour's ruling executive by 15

votes to 9.

The campaign was blamed by the press on 'bedsit infiltrators'. Shirley Williams, later leader of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), a right-wing split from Labour, described Militant supporters as "termites, gnawing away at the foundations of the Labour Party".

One right-wing MP, Neville Sanderson, perhaps gave the clearest description of the right's real fears when he described those supporting reselection as "career assassins". The position and privileges of Labour MPs were more important to them than defending the interests of working-class families.

The debate and vote on mandatory reselection took place on 2 October, and was carried by a majority of 2 million as the big trade union delegations swung behind the idea.

The press reacted with fury. The Daily Express claimed "the purge could begin at once and some 60 MPs are in danger".

In fact, the proposals were delayed for two years whilst the right tried to undermine them. The necessary constitutional changes were finally put into Labour's constitution at the 1981 special conference at Wembley, which also committed the party to unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from the European Economic Community (today's EU).

The conference decisions became a key trigger for the formation of the SDP in March 1981 and split the Labour vote in the 1983 election, allowing the Tories to be re-elected.

The right-wing never gave up

Mandatory reselection lasted only a decade. As part of the rightward transformation of Labour, Neil Kinnock ended it in 1990. It was replaced with the presumption that a sitting MP would remain unless challenged by over 50% of local party organisations and affiliates in a 'trigger ballot'. (That was reduced in 2018 to one-third of party branches or affiliates).

The Socialist Party argues that mandatory reselection is needed in today's Labour Party. Councillors, shop stewards, union branch officers and general secretaries of trade unions face regular reselection. When reselection for MPs is the exception and not the norm it allows the media to home in and - particularly where a right-winger faces reselection, such as Margaret Hodge currently - bring enormous pressure against Labour's ranks.

This would be different if reselection were an automatic, mandatory process.

And although the Socialist Party has been prevented from affiliating to Labour, we have played our role in trying to democratise the party. While Momentum has been opposed to mandatory reselection until recently, socialists in the trade unions have been actively promoting it.

Unite, Labour's largest affiliated trade union, backed mandatory reselection at its conference in July 2016 by approving a motion moved by a Socialist Party member. A similar motion was narrowly lost at the 2017 Usdaw shop workers' union conference (also moved by a Socialist Party member).

As in 1979, if Labour's ranks are to ensure that radical policies passed at conferences are actually implemented, they need to control their representatives at all levels. Mandatory reselection is required again today.

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Socialist Students

Campaigns

Students across the country are furious with Johnson and the Tories, but see Corbyn as too hesitant. They are looking for ideas which can explain the unprecedented political crisis, and for a way to join a real fight for socialist change.

Below are reports on just some of the campuses where Socialist Students and the Socialist Party have been out building the fightback. Find out more and join Socialist Students at socialiststudents.org.uk.

Cardiff

We had an excellent first Cardiff Socialist Students meeting - 50 people there, and the best discussion I can remember. More questions and more engagement than we've had before.

We've signed up close to 300 people now across the city's three university sites, which has got to be a record. We're also discussing with several people already about joining the Socialist Party. Looking good!

Ross Saunders

Leeds

At the University of Leeds freshers fair, students queued up to sign up to Socialist Students' mailing list.

Over the last few years, many students have said they are interested in socialism because of the anti-austerity policies Jeremy Corbyn's put forward in leadership and election campaigns. This year, many were critical that Corbyn wasn't pushing those ideas enough, and were keen to get involved with a campaigning organisation that could push socialist ideas more consistently and further.

Over the course of freshers and the climate strike around 120 signed up to our mailing list.

Our first meeting was among the best we've ever had, with students grappling with the confusing political situation, including discussing how to defeat the Blairites within Labour, what is the basis of Johnson's populist appeal, and how long could that last.

The meeting was clear that if Corbyn moved decisively for a general election, and pushed his anti-austerity policies to the fore by defending jobs and campaigning for public ownership in a new Brexit deal, this could have huge appeal.

Iain Dalton

Southampton

"I mean, nationalising the banks shouldn't be that big a deal, it's necessary," said one student. Many were keen to discuss socialist perspectives on Brexit, ending austerity and tackling climate change. Students also asked questions about how we could redistribute wealth and how working-class people could take power.

Socialist Students signed up over 52 people at the University of Southampton on 25 September. Several expressed interest in joining the Socialist Party too.

Our first meeting was a great success. We had eight new members along, and several students signed up to attend Socialism 2019 (see page 5). New members will be joining us on our regular campus stall.

Bea Gardner

Freshers fairs 2019

STUDENTS IMPATIENT FOR CHANGE AND DETERMINED TO FIGHT



Talking to freshers in Leicester

Bristol

Overwhelmingly, University of Bristol students wanted to talk about ending the Tory government and expressed their anger at Boris Johnson's recent actions.

Without prompting, students commented about the Brexit crisis acting as a cover for the vicious austerity of the Tories since 2010. There was also some scepticism about Corbyn's ability to challenge Johnson while he faced attacks from within the Labour Party.

We signed up 171 interested in Bristol Socialist Students. Most encouraging was the appetite to become active on campus, also reflected in the 7,000-strong demonstration for climate action in Bristol last week.

Frankie Langeland

Sheffield

Sheffield Socialist Party helped our student members at Sheffield Hallam University freshers fair. The student union organisers must have been having a laugh - they put the Socialist Students stall opposite the Conservatives, union flag, Boris and all!

It helped us though. We signed up 58 new students interested in the society. It also gave us an interesting insight into the wannabe future representatives of the ruling class.

Their recruitment lines were "we don't really do politics" and "are you interested in drinking?" So the spirit of Eton and the Bullingdon Club will continue if we haven't already overthrown this degenerate, rotten capitalist class by the time these gilded youth come of age. You've been warned!

Alistair Tice

Students were animated by socialist ideas, but sceptical of Corbyn's strategy, at University of Sheffield freshers on 26 September. Around 20 took part in the first Socialist Students meeting, with more of the 100 sign-ups giving apologies for absence.

There was openness to socialist EU exit arguments, and frustration that the Labour leadership seems unwilling to fight. A lively discussion that evening on how to oust Johnson, and what socialism is, showed much promise for the Sheffield student fightback.

James Ivens

Leicester

Leicester Socialist Party was out at De Montfort University and the University of Leicester to build Socialist Students. Students and workers were keen to sign our petition: Boris out and Corbyn in on socialist policies.

There was a mixed reaction to Corbyn, not helped by him seeming weak. But there was a strong interest in socialist ideas and joining a fighting organisation - Socialist Students.

We had some great conversations, with young people keen to buy the Socialist newspaper and Socialist Students' magazine Megaphone. We discussed the climate strikes, socialist case for leaving the EU, and the role of Socialist Students in fighting alongside workers for socialist change.

Lindsey Morgan

London

There has been a huge thirst for ideas on campuses such as University of the Arts London and Brunel University, where students want to set up new Socialist

links Warwick has with the Chinese Communist Party bureaucracy.

Over 100 signed up across Birmingham City University, Aston University, the University of Birmingham and Brum's many colleges. Socialist Students was also present at the University of Wolverhampton, with a host of people signing up. Eleven new people came to our first meet-up in Birmingham.

Lenny Shail

Brighton

We had regular street meetings all day at University of Sussex freshers fair as groups of students gathered round our stall and to hear our programme to boot out Boris and fight for a Corbyn-led alternative and socialist policies.

Over 50 signed up as interested in Socialist Students, including students from the US, Mexico and Greece who came to our Brighton meeting hosted by Brighton Socialist Party. Our meeting had a strong international flavour, ranging from Britain to Trump, from Mexico to Syriza, with students asking how we can overcome the powerful capitalists and their imperialist policies.

There is a strong anti-Tory mood among students, they are very open to our socialist ideas and are keen to get active, debate and discuss. The meeting agreed to organise further events and campaign on campus to build links with workers and their unions.

Nick Chaffey

Bradford

Reflecting the fog of Brexit, there was confusion and questioning at the University of Bradford, where Socialist Students had a freshers stall just off-campus. There was a smaller but very serious layer of students interested in discussing the ideas to cut through the impasse.

A number of students enthusiastically left their details and bought copies of Socialist Students' magazine Megaphone. We're holding a meeting to try to establish a society for the first time on 3 October.

Iain Dalton

East Midlands

Socialist Students stalls took place across the East Midlands - at Lincoln, Derby, Leicester, Northampton, Nottingham, De Montfort, and Trent universities. At every one there were students who were keen on our anti-Tory message and anxious to get a general election now.

Many detailed discussions took place as students wanted to know what we thought of recent events around Johnson and parliament.

Lots were prepared to sign up to Socialist Students and organise in their own universities. In Northampton, for example, three students were among the nine new people who attended the Socialist Party's public meeting, 'Tories out of Northampton County Council and Tories out of government'. They were making plans to set up a new society at the university straight after.

Steve Score

North West

Socialist Party members met with an interested and enthusiastic response from students in the North West. Many gave their contact details for Socialist Students events, and in both Liverpool, and Manchester and Salford, students attended Socialist Party branch meetings for the first time, at short notice, in order to get involved in our work.

Roger Bannister

NOW IS THE MOMENT TO JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

Mark Best
Socialist Party
membership organiser

Have you been reading the Socialist and thinking about joining the Socialist Party? Now is an excellent time to join.

While the fog of confusion swirls as the Brexit deadline approaches, the capitalist establishment is in crisis. The need for Corbyn to take the fight to the capitalist class and their

representatives - the Tories, Blairites and anti-worker politicians of every type - is urgent.

We hope you find the articles in the Socialist useful in cutting through the confusion to the real processes of change in society, which are sometimes hidden below the surface. Our socialist analysis and fighting strategy represent the condensed experience of Socialist Party members campaigning across the country with Marxist ideas.

We have recently reprinted our short pamphlet 'The Case for Social-

ism - Why you should join the Socialist Party'. This lays out what we fight for and why we need you to join us.

We've also reprinted a leaflet on our record in struggle. Leading 18 million people to beat Thatcher's poll tax. Showing how working-class struggle can create jobs, homes and services on Liverpool City Council. And fighting to get rid of the Tories and build a mass party of the working class.

If you're interested in joining or getting hold of this literature, tell your local seller of the Socialist or contact the Socialist Party national office.



Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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name and
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Why I joined the Socialist Party

I WANTED A WAY TO GET OUT AND MAKE CHANGE

Lilian Young

In my early teen years, like many of my friends, I had almost no political bearing. Most of my information came from my parents' reluctant support for Tony Blair's New Labour.



By the time of the 2012 US elections, I'd developed my own basic stances, which largely boiled down to 'Labour and Democrats good, Tories and Republicans bad'. It wasn't a fully formed understanding, but it shifted me slightly from the 'centre' and got me sliding slowly left.

In the few years that followed, I started to 'find myself' a bit more. I explored aspects of sexuality and gender which opened my eyes, not just to the struggle of LGBTQ+ people, but all oppressed people.

I found online communities of like-minded people who helped me feel safe and secure in my newfound identity. I met people who were politically engaged, and from them I started to learn about what was going on in the world - the things that made me angry.

I learned how much of a constant struggle fights for rights are, how at every turn people in power who

hate us will take every opportunity to push back on progress. I learned how unfairly wealth is controlled in our society - with a small handful of incomprehensibly rich people, who seldom have to lift a finger, propped up by borderline slave labour, especially in the neocolonial countries.

And I learned how some of the biggest oil companies in the world knew for longer than I've been alive that their actions were destroying the environment, but they suppressed the information and continued because it kept making them money.

It was here I realised that capitalism needed to go.

Learning this did not feel good. The world seemed to be getting worse, and I couldn't effect change. I was unable to vote yet, and I was constantly stuck in interminable on-line discussion which seemed to affect nothing. All I wanted was a way to get out and to try to make change.

Then, in 2018, I went to Newcastle Pride, and I saw the Socialist Party's stall - I didn't even know there was such a thing as a socialist party - and I put down my name. As soon as I got involved, I felt welcomed and valued, and like I could finally make a difference, no matter how small.

I will fight to make it happen. That is why I joined the Socialist Party.

Why I'm re-joining the Socialist Party

IT'S TIME TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED IN THE STRUGGLE

Adam Walker

I first wrote in to the Socialist on 18 November 2015. Nearly four years ago. I wrote about the terrible practices on building sites, and how Robert Tressell's classic socialist novel The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists really resonated with me.

Nearly four years later, I found myself no longer a member of the Socialist Party.

I have had three children whose futures I am constantly worried about. I have moved numerous times, down to slum landlords whose properties are never fit for habitation yet charge extortionate rates. And I have watched disabled family members struggle under Tory cuts.

I am still a decorator and have

been working nationwide. Everywhere I go is the same.

The same low quality standards to meet crazy targets to maximise profits for big business. The same disregard for health and safety as it is an inconvenience to quick progress on site.

The same dirty, dusty, mouldy, wet and cold working conditions. And the saddest of all, watching men aged 65-plus still forced into hard labour to make ends meet.

I have come to realise I can no longer bury my head and hope everything goes by me. The last few weeks' events in parliament have made me realise that more than ever I need to stand up and be counted.

I need to re-join the struggle and do what I can to help. It's time for me to join the Socialist Party again and stay for good this time, or I am forever to be a ragged-trousered philanthropist.

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ target	£ received	July-September 2019	Final
South West	1,800	2,389		133%
London	6,100	6,928		114%
East Midlands	1,850	2,023		109%
Wales	2,300	2,403		104%
Southern	1,600	1,623		101%
Northern	750	666		
Yorkshire	3,300	2,560		
West Midlands	2,600	1,475		
North West	2,100	1,014		
Eastern	1,200	428		
South East	750	162		
Other	5,650	7,380		131%
TOTAL	30,000	29,048		97%

Financing socialist struggle: together we can beat the odds

Ade Wallace

Waltham Forest Socialist Party

The big question is: will we, or won't we?

You may be forgiven for thinking I'm talking about Brexit and whether we will exit on 31 October. Or it could be, will we or we won't have a general election in the coming days? Will we or won't we boot Boris out once and for all?

Of course, I could be talking about any of these scenarios. But my question relates to whether Waltham Forest

Socialist Party would reach its fighting fund target this quarter.

The challenge was on with all the pressures in these unprecedented times, and as stoic, hardened, working-class folk, we rose to it. I am proud to declare that we made it, and against the odds raised over £800 in just one week, for a total of £1,110 - 101% of our target.

With the target seemingly a long way off, and possibly out of reach, collectively we organised through clothes parties, penny jars, eBay selling, boot

sales, raffles, and lastly an autumnal gathering around a makeshift log fire with soup and jacket potatoes aplenty. Even the rain could not dampen our spirits with a tuneless singalong.

This was an almighty effort by all, and a reminder that together we can achieve, and we did, to finance the revolutionary party. Long may we reign.

Help fund the fightback

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MEGAPHONE

The magazine of Socialist Students

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CATALONIA INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT TWO YEARS ON



The verdict of 12 Catalan nationalist leaders on charges arising from the failed independence struggle in 2017 is expected soon. Nine have been charged with rebellion, which can result in 25 years in prison. These charges are designed to warn and intimidate the Catalan masses against further action for self-determination. **Tony Saunois**, secretary of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), draws out the vital lessons of this struggle.

1 October 2019 marked the second anniversary of the independence referendum called by the Catalan government. The referendum followed an upsurge in the demand for independence for Catalonia fuelled by the repressive, neoliberal Partido Popular (PP) government of Rajoy.

The PP government adopted brutal repression, reminiscent of the Franco era dictatorship, to try and intimidate and crush this movement.

The struggle saw a mass movement of millions, including powerful revolutionary elements. Mass protests of workers and the middle class; strikes, and the building of local community committees of struggle, (Committees for the Defence of the Republic) and splits within the state apparatus took place.

On Catalonia national day - Diada - 11 September, an estimated 1.8 million took to the streets in Barcelona in support of independence. Thousands were injured as the Spanish state machine deployed brutally repressive forces, shut down the internet and seized ballot boxes.

On 27 October the Catalan parliament declared independence. The Spanish state dismissed Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and the parliament, imposed direct rule, and arrested some Catalan nationalist political leaders on charges of sedition and rebellion. Puigdemont and some other leaders went into self-imposed exile.

Lessons

Despite the determination and willingness to struggle by the Catalan masses, the movement suffered a defeat. The capitalist nationalist leaders like Puigdemont were incapable of leading the struggle for independence to a successful conclusion.



The Spanish state and its supporting political parties unleashed a repressive avalanche against the Catalan independence movement photo Robert Bonet/CC

To secure a victory for an independent Catalonia it would have been necessary to link up the struggle with a programme for a socialist Republic.

This could have appealed to those sections of workers and immigrants in Catalonia who opposed the independence movement and had suffered the austerity and cuts which the capitalist Catalan nationalist leaders like Puigdemont and his party, PdeCat (Catalan European Democratic Party), had carried out. These capitalist leaders could not conduct a struggle against the capitalist class in the rest of the Spanish state which would never accept an independent Catalonia.

An independent socialist Catalonia, would guarantee all language and cultural rights for those from other parts of the Spanish state and other countries who live in Catalonia.

A struggle for a socialist Catalonia could have united the working class of Catalonia and appealed to the working class throughout the rest of the Spanish state to join together in a fight against the reactionary PP government.

It could have appealed to the workers in the rest of the Spanish state, Portugal and throughout the European Union to join together to form a voluntary, democratic socialist confederation.

The independence movement was also betrayed by the social-democratic Psoc, (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and the 'anti-establishment' left party Podemos ('We

can'), led by Pablo Iglesias, which also opposed the struggle for independence.

Since the defeat of this movement the determination of the Spanish ruling class to refuse to accept an independent Catalonia has been demonstrated by continued repression. This is despite a change of government - now a minority government led by Pedro Sanchez of Psoc.

For example, in the run up to sentencing the Catalan nationalist leaders, on 10 October, the police have 'discovered' a 'terrorist group' which was allegedly planning attacks in Barcelona.

All of those arrested are members of the Committee for the Defence of the Republic (CDR) which has previously defended and organised peaceful civil protest actions.

Very conveniently this terrorist plot has been discovered as sentencing is about to be passed. For the charge of "rebellion" to be proven, links to violent or terrorist activity is necessary.

Current perspectives

The defeat of the movement in Catalonia has opened up new divisions within the nationalist movement. There is widespread criticism of PdeCat, now led by Catalan President Joaquim Torra, The leaders of the ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia) and JxCat ('Together for Catalonia') pour cold water on the movement, arguing that the independence struggle cannot be won yet and sowing the illusion that it is possible to negotiate an agreement

with Psoc.

Pedro Sanchez and his ministers have made clear their pro-capitalist policies despite some cosmetic window dressing. They will accept the demands of the EU for further cuts of €15 billion in the next two years and a 'reform' of the public pensions system.

Sanchez has not made clear he will repeal the attacks made by the PP on labour rights or education. The cosmetic presentation of a 'new', 'modern' government with a majority of women and for the first time in Spain a gay Minister, did not mean policies and a programme that will challenge capitalism and defend the interests of the working class.

In the April election the right-wing were massively defeated in Catalonia. The main beneficiaries were the ERC, a party of the urban middle class, which has now won some support among the working class.

Yet this party has propped up previous pro-capitalist Catalan governments which have carried through cuts and attacks on the working class. The ERC offers no alternative for the working class.

Illustrating how far Podemos and Pablo Iglesias have moved to the right, they proposed a coalition with Psoc and demanded to enter the government with ministerial positions.

Sanchez rejected this proposal. Not because he or Spanish capitalism fear Iglesias but because this coalition may arouse expectations in the working class to

demand reforms and concessions from the government.

Fresh elections have now been called for November. The horse-trading between the parties in Spain and inability to form a government reflect, as in other European countries, the polarisation and need for a bold socialist alternative which Podemos has failed to offer.

Today, there is a certain ebb in the movement demanding Catalan independence following the defeat of the independence referendum campaign. This was reflected in the much smaller attendance at the Diada in 2019 of approximately half a million.

However, this can change rapidly especially if harsh sentences are dished out to the nationalist leaders.

It is necessary to draw the lessons of this movement in Catalonia and the struggles of the working class and youth throughout the Spanish state - ie the need to build a party of the working class in Catalonia and throughout the Spanish state that will fight to break with capitalism.

Such a party's programme would include: the release of all political prisoners and dropping of all charges; for the right of self-determination for the Catalan, Basque and all peoples; for an independent socialist Catalonia; no to austerity programmes; repeal all anti-labour laws; for the unity of the working class of the whole Spanish state in a struggle against capitalism for a socialist alternative.

EGYPT: STREET PROTESTS CHALLENGE TRUMP'S FAVOURITE DICTATOR



A mass working-class movement is more powerful than any dictatorship when it leads the youth, the poor and middle classes into action

David Johnson

Street protests in Cairo and several other Egyptian cities broke out on 20 and 21 September. Although only involving dozens or a few hundred, at first, they grew in numbers and spread to other cities. Protesters chanted, "The people want to topple the regime" and "Leave, [President] Sisi".

Tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition were fired. Over 2,000 were arrested in the following week. Those arrested were mostly young people, many too young to have taken part in the 2011 'Arab Spring' uprising that overthrew President Mubarak (or to have experienced the same demoralisation later felt by many activists from that time).

Lawyers defending arrested demonstrators, journalists reporting on the protests, and some political opponents of the regime, have also been arrested.

There were further street protests in several cities on 27 September. However, these were mostly smaller as the police and security forces mounted a massive operation to stop people gathering.

On the same day a large pro-Sisi rally was organised in Cairo. Many public sector employees were ordered to attend, and there were reports of villages bussing in residents who were rewarded with free food.

These are the first protests on a national scale since 2013, when the military and President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi took power. Demonstrations are banned with severe penalties of arrest, imprisonment and torture. Trump has called Sisi his "favourite dictator".

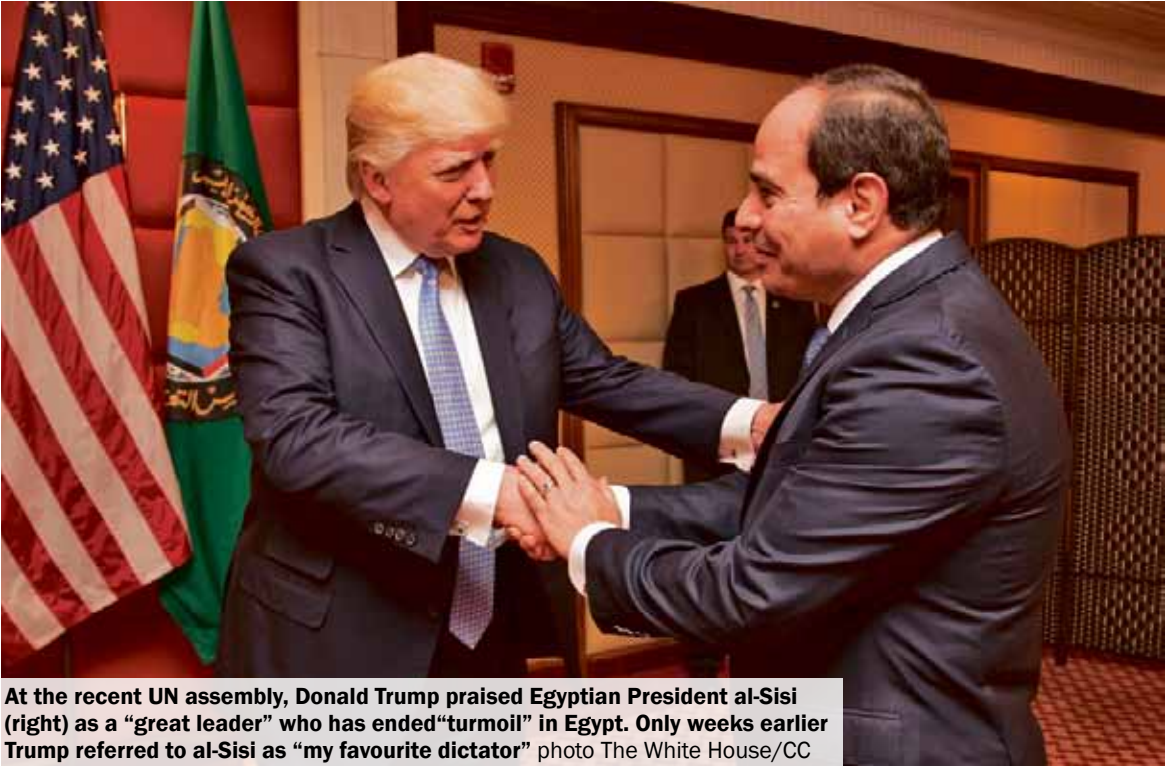
Most Egyptian daily newspapers did not mention the protests. Some foreign news websites and some social media services were blocked.

An unlikely instigator

The initial call to demonstrate came from an unlikely source. Mohamed Ali - a former actor, Ferrari-driving owner of a building contractor business and now living in Spain - released daily videos during the previous two weeks accusing Sisi and his cronies of corruption.

Public money was used, Ali said, to build themselves luxury palaces, seven-star hotels and holiday villas. As the building contractor on several of these projects, Ali was a credible witness.

After the viral spread of Ali's videos, Sisi felt compelled to respond. He addressed the accusations at the eighth National Youth Conference, which was hurriedly called just 44



At the recent UN assembly, Donald Trump praised Egyptian President al-Sisi (right) as a "great leader" who has ended 'turmoil' in Egypt. Only weeks earlier Trump referred to al-Sisi as "my favourite dictator" photo The White House/CC

days after the seventh conference! Sisi did not deny the construction of palaces and holiday villas, claiming they were not for his family and ministers but for the benefit of Egypt.

Other videos then came out on social media adding new allegations to Ali's. These struck a chord with Egyptians struggling to make ends meet.

"Now we come to the presidential palaces," posted a fitness instructor on Facebook, watched 2.6 million times. "Believe me this hurt all of us. We're all barely getting by. We're a mess. So when we hear about the presidential palaces you're building and your answer is 'I'll still build more'.. Who said that modern states are judged by their ability to build luxurious presidential palaces?..

Why are they being built? Even if they aren't for you, these serve one individual and we have so many people that we need to serve. So tell me, why are they being built? Why are you provoking us?"

Over the past three years, the government has implemented an austerity programme agreed with the International Monetary Fund in return for a \$12 billion loan. Value-added tax has been introduced, subsidies on electricity and fuel cut and the currency devalued, all sharply raising the cost of living.

The economy's annual growth rate has increased to 5.5%, the highest since 2010, and unemployment has fallen. Morgan Stanley economists described Egypt as "the best reform story in the Middle East".

But 32.5% were still living on less than \$1.40 a day in 2018, up from 27.8% in 2015. There are signs the economy is now slowing again, with non-oil foreign investment falling to its lowest level for five years in the first quarter of 2019.

Dire conditions

The harsh punishments for workers protesting against low pay and poor working conditions - who are branded terrorists by the regime - have mostly stopped workplace struggles from developing.

But just two weeks before the street protests broke out there was a three-day strike and sit-in at the Uglu factory in Ismailia for not receiving an annual pay rise. Six

workers were jailed for 15 days.

Economic pressures against a background of slowing world trade are taking the shine off Sisi's promises that political stability, the IMF loan and construction of large infrastructure projects would transform the lives of Egyptians.

The beginnings of disagreements and splits within the military-based regime are emerging. There was initial hesitation over how to handle the street protests before a crackdown was launched. This may reflect a mood among more junior officers and ranks of the security and armed forces who are also hit by rising prices.

Workers and youth will gain in confidence as protests continue



A solidarity protest in Newcastle during the 'Arab Spring' photo Newcastle SP

Royal Mail dispute

WORKERS DETERMINED TO FIGHT BOSSSES' INJUSTICES

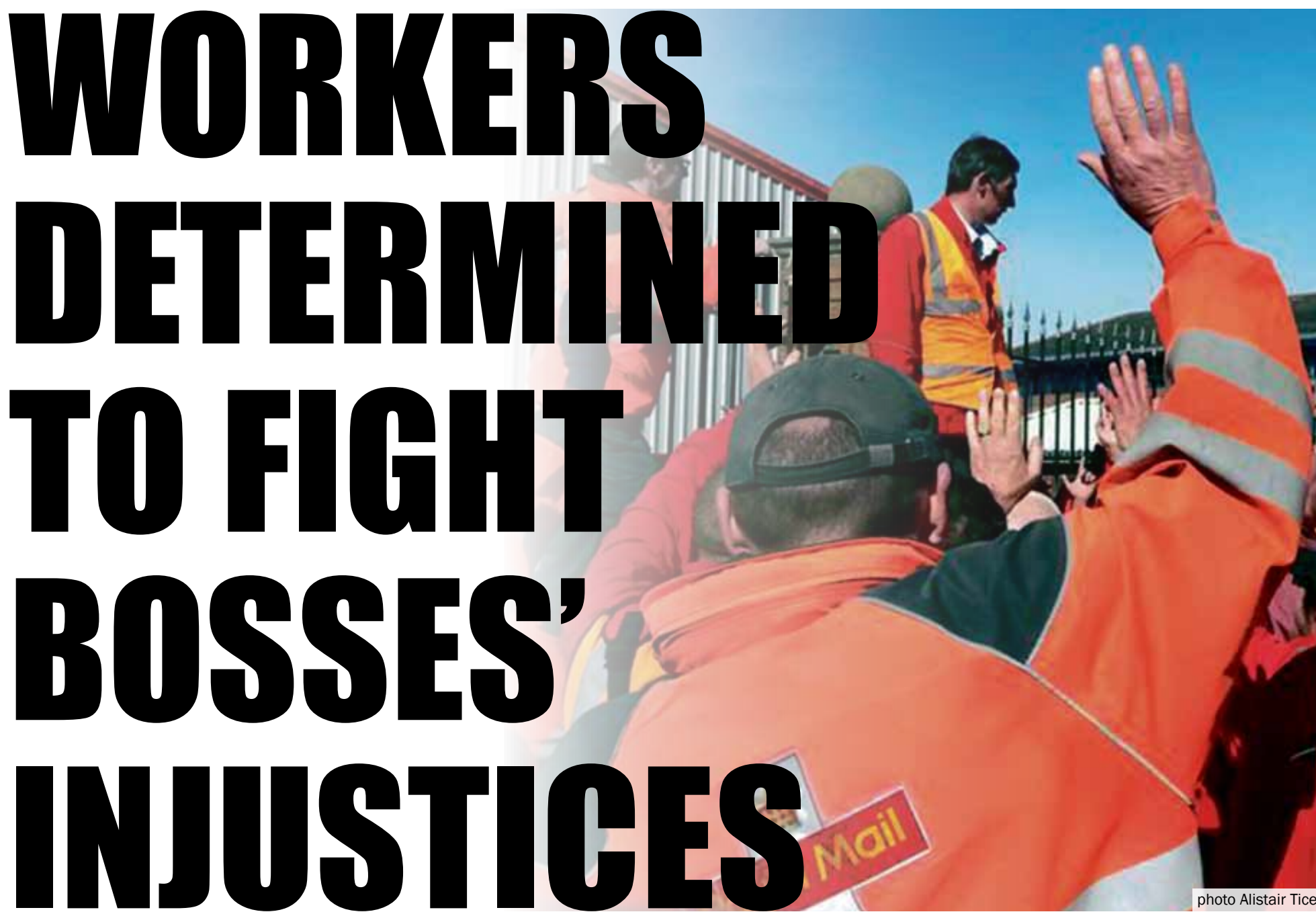


photo Alistair Tice

■ Renationalise the industry under democratic workers' control

Robert McArdle

Coventry Communications Workers Union (CWU) member

A showdown between Royal Mail bosses and 120,000 workers is taking place as jobs and conditions come under attack. Plans to separate Parcelforce workers into a new limited company and rip up agreements with the CWU have rightly angered the whole workforce. Added to this, many postal workers are experiencing harassment and bullying as more pressure is heaped upon their deliveries.

New technology that was meant to improve work life is being used to spy on workers and punish instead.

The CWU 'Four Pillars' agreement, that was signed up to by Royal Mail management in 2017, is now under review, with a real threat to jobs and services, leading to an accelerated 'race to the bottom' on working conditions.

Suddenly, Royal Mail is pleading poverty when it comes to reducing the working week by one hour under the agreement. But it can afford to give millions of pounds to the new chief executive and shareholders!

Faced with the prospect of massive job losses and hard fought gains by trade unionists over the years, CWU members are

determined to fight back. Up and down the country, gate meetings have been taking place to secure a massive 'yes' vote in the ballot.

Expressed anger

Rank-and-file CWU members have joined forces to express their anger. Social media has been ablaze with videos and photos as workers display their unity and strength, determined to beat the restrictive Tory anti-trade union laws and tackle the culture of bullying in the workplace.

All the warnings about the dangers of privatising Royal Mail back in 2013 are now beginning to unfold. Driven by the desire to reward

shareholders and fat cat bosses - workers are expected to pay the price with gig economy working practices.

Postal workers in the CWU are showing that fighting back and collective strength can win the struggle to defend jobs and working conditions. But only a fully nationalised postal service run in the interests of the many not the few, under democratic workers' control, will lead to safeguarding this national treasure. Delivering a massive yes vote in the CWU ballot is the first step in that process.



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