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Issue 1060
17-23 October 2019



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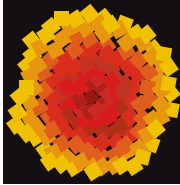
the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**



Tony Mulhearn 1939-2019:
Courageous fighter for the
working class and socialism

- Obituary >p12
- Review of Tony's book >p13
- Book launch >p13



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

SOCIALISM 2019
2-3 Nov, central London
socialism2019.net >p5

How
can we
end the
scandal of
low pay?
>p8-9



TORIES OUT

GENERAL ELECTION NOW

- General election to kick out the Tories
- No to a Tory bosses' Brexit
- No unity with pro-austerity MPs

- For an anti-austerity Corbyn-led government with socialist policies
- For an EU exit deal that defends jobs, workers' interests and the environment

Elaine Brunskill
Newcastle Socialist Party

Boris Johnson will be hoping that the archaic ceremony surrounding the Queen's Speech will act as a distraction from the Brexit crisis. An unofficial party political broadcast, it combined empty promises on social issues with a hardline 'law and order' agenda.

The speech pledged to "support and strengthen the NHS... enabling it to deliver the highest quality care".

Time and time again the Tories have shown they cannot be trusted with the NHS. Recent reports show that 4.3 million patients are stuck on waiting lists.

There are labour wards that are too cold to safely care for babies. One hospital trust reported faeces had seeped through the floor in an ultrasound corridor.

Victims of domestic abuse have been promised transformative legislation. Any legal protection is welcome but it is necessary to fight to end cuts to the services women need to be safe.

The Tories have presided over almost £7 million of cuts to refuges since 2010. Such is the shortage that there have been cases of women and children being rehoused, unsafely, in generic homeless hostels.

The Queen's Speech also announced Johnson's promise that "all young people will have access to excellent education - unlocking their full potential". Tell that to the children who have had their school hours cut because education budgets have been slashed to the bone.

It seems that as mayor of London Boris Johnson had no qualms handing out taxpayer-funded grants to a known associate. And Tories have always been happy to pay off bankers and cut taxes for the rich.

But Johnson's promise to deliver all the pledges outlined in the Queen's Speech, under what he brags will be a "dynamic free-market capitalism", will be like pie crusts - easily broken!

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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.

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DEADLINES

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

CORBYN MUST STAND FIRM AGAINST ESTABLISHMENT AND LABOUR RIGHT



WHAT WE THINK

The Tory government's new spending promises are not a change in a working-class friendly direction. Rather, they are temporary concessions in an attempt to win a general election. Having seen his party's opinion poll lead increase to an average of eight points, Boris Johnson hopes it is within reach of winning a parliamentary majority in an election, whatever happens with Brexit.

The polling figures are hyped up by the right-wing media. But just a brief look at what happened in the last general election shows that voting intentions can change very rapidly. Just two months before the June 2017 election, Labour was polling around 25%. But by election day it had gained 16 points to achieve a vote of 41%, just 2.5 points behind the Tories.

Will a similar or greater surge happen again, despite the disappointment in Corbyn that has accumulated because he hasn't led a bold, offensive challenge to the Tories or spearheaded the building of a mass mobilisation to remove them from power? There are signs that the potential exists for it, such as the rally in Newcastle on Saturday 5 October which drew thousands of people to queue up to hear Corbyn speak.

Another indication is a recent study of low-income voters by the Joseph Rowntree foundation. It showed that Labour has a polling lead among low income voters. Regarding those in that layer who didn't vote in the last election, over half intend to do so next time.

Brexit not only issue

The same study states: "Despite the unique role Brexit will play if there is a general election soon, it would be a mistake to run campaigns purely about Brexit to attract voters among this group. Brexit is not the uppermost issue in their minds". The cost of living, health, crime and housing came higher up than Brexit on people's list of priorities.

So Johnson could discover that Brexit won't dominate in workers' minds as much as he expects - a pitfall which befell Theresa May in the 2017 election when her government came under attack for its record of cutting public services.

However, while Corbyn's pledges are attractive - scrapping tuition fees, ending Universal Credit, nationalising water companies, a £10 an hour minimum wage, etc - they



photo Mary Finch



The aim cannot be unity at the price of capitulation to capitalist interests and backing away from socialist demands - Corbyn must stand firm against such 'unity' and McDonnell should back him

won't be enough to automatically guarantee an election victory. The Rowntree report also pointed to the generally low levels of trust in the leaders of the parliamentary parties. Corbyn and those around him at the top of Labour have to get across an ability to actually deliver on their manifesto - to convince that they will be able to withstand the pressures they will face from the capitalist establishment and big business.

There have been more warnings recently on this vital question. Corbyn's correct insistence that a general election should take place as soon as possible is constantly weakened by the public utterings of Labour MPs who want to put it off for as long as possible. The mantra 'referendum before election' has been coming

from many on the Labour right and, unfortunately, has also been echoed in various ways by a number of shadow cabinet ministers on the Corbyn-supporting left.

Some of the right-wing Labour MPs are also desperate to prevent Corbyn from becoming the leader of an interim 'caretaker' minority Labour government. Failure to directly challenge these Blairites - and force them to abide by working-class interests, or leave Labour and join a pro-capitalist party - will only fuel more scepticism on whether Labour can deliver its policies.

John McDonnell, in a GQ magazine interview published on 11 October, was way off beam when he said: "I've never seen the Parliamentary Labour Party more united in the

last couple of years. Everyone is very careful about holding that political vase so that we don't drop it."

If an analogy with a vase is to be drawn, it can only be a vase with a deep class-based crack in it, which will inevitably break into two pieces if the Corbyn wing rightly pursues a pro-working class course.

The aim cannot be unity at the price of capitulation to capitalist interests and backing away from socialist demands. Corbyn must stand firm against such 'unity' and McDonnell should back him. And they must go further than that - to expose the politics of the right wing, challenging their positions and removing the whip where necessary; and strongly backing mandatory, democratic re-selection contests at a local level.

MASS UNITED ACTION AGAINST THE WAR ON SYRIAN KURDS

No trust in regional and imperialist powers



WHAT WE THINK

The decision by US president Donald Trump to pull out 1,000 American troops from northern Syria gave the green light to the Turkish army to launch a brutal invasion against Kurdish-held areas. Now this is spiralling into a wider conflict, involving the Syrian regime, Russia and Iran.

The Turkish army's indiscriminate shelling of towns along the Turkish-Syria border has already led to the slaughter of many civilians, including children. Over 200,000 people have been forced to flee their homes, and water supplies to nearly half a million people are cut off.

Turkey's Syrian militia allies, involving reactionary Islamic fighters, are accused of carrying out summary executions. There are widespread fears that the conflict will allow Isis fighters to regroup in the area.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), dominated by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), has said it has brokered a deal with Damascus that will see the Syrian army occupy Kurdish-controlled territory and deploy along the Syrian-Turkish border.

But at what cost to the Kurds? The Syrian army advance will see President Bashar al-Assad near his stated goal of reconquering "every inch" of Syria, after nearly nine years of bloody civil war.

The Syrian regime has always opposed the semi-autonomous statelet, in Rojava, that emerged during the civil war, regarding it as an attempted "partition" of the country.

SDF leader, Mazloum Abdi, claimed that the deal with the Syria regime and its Russian ally could "save the lives of millions of people who live under our protection". However, he conceded that it would entail "painful compromises".

Having occupied the Kurdish areas, Assad is no more going to allow the Kurds to consolidate genuine self-rule and a de-facto separate state than Turkish



Around the country, Socialist Party members joined solidarity demonstrations opposing the Turkish state's invasion of northern Syria and in support of Kurdish self-determination photo London SP

president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Neither will countenance allowing the Kurds their full democratic and national aspirations.

It is now a race between Turkish and Syrian armies to see who can grab as much territory as they can. While it is unlikely that either Turkey or Syria, backed by its "military sponsor" Russia, and regional ally, Iran, want to clash directly, the situation is volatile and a wider war cannot be ruled out.

Betrayal

The Kurds have a long history of betrayal by regional and world powers. Today they have the likely prospect of seeing the region carved up between competing regional powers and their backers.

The allies and defenders of Kurds today will turn out to be their foes and oppressors tomorrow.

The US used the SDF as proxies to spearhead the fight against Isis in northern Syria. Once Isis was largely defeated in Syria, it was only a matter of time before Trump would ditch them.

Calls for the 'international community' to deploy an international force to enforce a "no fly zone to prevent catastrophe" were simply ignored by the big powers.

How can we rely on governments of the rich, which carry out austerity policies against their own working class, to act in the interests of Kurds and other oppressed minorities? The US, France, Britain - which sells arms to its Nato ally, Turkey - and other military powers, have for

many years cynically exploited the Kurds' plight, for their own selfish geo-strategic aims in the Middle East.

The Kurds and other oppressed peoples of the Middle East, and the entire working class, can only rely on their own strength, self-organisation and class solidarity.

We say:

- Working class solidarity and mass protests around the world to oppose the Turkish army's bloody invasion
- Organise workers' boycotts and strikes against the weapons trade to Turkey
- Build multi-ethnic defence militias, democratically-run, to resist Turkish army attacks
- No trust in regional and imperialist powers who have only ever betrayed the Kurds
- Build powerful independent workers' organisations, including trade unions and mass workers' parties, on a socialist programme, in Syria, Turkey and across the region
- Link the Kurds' struggle with Turkish workers resisting Erdogan's anti-working class policies
- Full cultural and national rights for Kurds, including the right to self-determination
- Overthrow capitalism! For a socialist Kurdistan, as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East and Turkey, on a voluntary and equal basis, to bring lasting peace and a transformation of living standards



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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- 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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to find out more today!

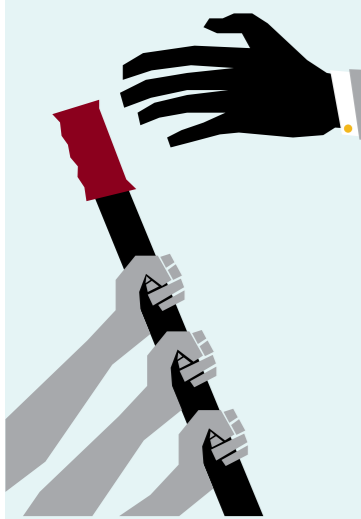




Just 20 fossil fuel companies are directly linked to more than one third of all greenhouse gas emissions since 1965. The company top of the list - Saudi Aramco - is responsible for 4.38% on its own while the top four privately-owned firms - Chevron, Exxon, BP and Shell - have contributed 10%.



The list shows both the need for nationalisation and public ownership of these companies - but as many on the list are already state owned - also the need to go further and run these companies under democratic workers' control and management as part of a planned socialist economy.



'Is climate change too urgent to fight for socialism?' Join the discussion at Socialism 2019, 2-3 November in central London. See opposite page and socialism2019.net for details

THE CAMERON TORY LEGACY

Review of David Cameron's book 'For the Record'



David Cameron photo UK Parliament/CC

Lawrence Davies
West London Socialist Party

In the establishment's eyes David Cameron's claim to fame will be the EU referendum, triggering the current political crisis and disintegration of the Tory Party.

But for millions of ordinary people, his legacy is more lasting - his ruthless implementation of austerity and all its consequences. He was the leader of the Remain campaign, a reminder that working-class people have as little in common with Tory Remainers as with Tory Brexiters.

He constantly tried to portray himself as a 'compassionate conservative'. But his admiration of Margaret Thatcher shows his true colours: "My generation was divided into those who hated her bourgeois capitalism... and those who saw her as a brave fighter for economic and political freedom, who was determined to modernise Britain and free us from the grip of over-mighty trade unions.

"I was securely in the second camp. I believed that what was being done by Thatcher was essential."

His loyalty lasted to the end of her days and always won out over 'compassionate conservatism'.

In fact, he boasted of extending her legacy. If ultra rights complained that his brand of Toryism was too left wing, he reacted angrily: "This would infuriate me. I would sometimes reel off a list of all the things I did which Thatcher had never dared to do, like increasing tuition fees in universities, reforming public sector pensions, allowing private operators to run state schools, capping welfare... and privatising Royal Mail."

As expected, this book surveys the major events of his premiership - austerity, the EU and Scottish independence referendums, the general elections, interventions in Libya and Syria and so on.

There is much self-justification, and considerable detail of his day-to-day activities in these events. But despite studying politics at Oxford, his outlook was very superficial, with no understanding of wider social and political processes.

We do gain some insight into the patrician mindset and lifestyle of a Tory Prime Minister - as well as his breathtaking ignorance of life for the 99%.

A "blissful" Tuscan family holiday was cut short by the riots which began in Haringey in London. Here, 'bliss' for young people was in short supply, as every youth club had recently been closed due to council cuts. He refused to acknowledge that austerity was a factor and quickly reverted to type.

At 'Cobra' meetings with security chiefs, he asked "should there be baton rounds? Should there be water cannon? In what circumstances should we bring in the army?"

"Hardline response"
Punishment followed swiftly. "I was driving the capacity of our courts by introducing emergency nighttime sittings... I've always wanted faster justice, and was determined that our courts wouldn't be found wanting.

"Historically the British justice system has taken a very dim view of rioting - and it certainly demonstrated that tradition in the following weeks."

He concluded: "I learned that a hard-line response is often right... the riots were, by and large, simple criminality."

Unfortunately, after the Trade Union Congress (TUC) leaders betrayed the public sector pensions campaign in 2011, Cameron was never seriously tested by the organised labour movement, as Thatcher had been by the miners' strike.

In the entire 700-page book, the TUC is mentioned only once - something inconceivable in the memoirs of any Tory politician during the Thatcher era. But his reaction to the riots indicate that he would have behaved exactly as she did if facing a similar challenge.

The final chapter loftily asserts that due to his 'reforms', "the rich were paying a higher share of tax than ever before... the elderly were better off than at any time in our history... the economy was undoubtedly stronger, and Britain was fairer, and more equal... our society was safer and healthier".

Not a scenario that the vast majority of people would recognise today!

Catalonia: Mass protests against punitive political jailings

The Spanish supreme court has condemned nine leaders of the 2017 Catalan independence referendum to between nine and 13 years in prison.

While cleared of violent rebellion, which could have led to a 25-year sentence, they were found guilty of sedition and misuse of public funds.

Protesters immediately took to the streets in opposition to this punitive political sentence by the Spanish state, and to demand the release of the political prisoners.

For further information on the political background see 'Catalonia independence movement two years on' at socialistparty.org.uk

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Hosted by Socialist Party socialistparty.org.uk

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THEME	Saturday 3-5pm	Sunday 10am-12 noon	Sunday 1-2.45pm
BROKEN BRITAIN	Corbynomics: socialism or Keynesianism? Speaker: Nick Chaffey, Socialist Party Southern secretary	Universal Credit - how do we end it? Speaker: Steve Score, Socialist Party East Midlands secretary	100% council homes and the fight against homelessness Speakers: Paul Kershaw, Unite housing workers' branch; Nancy Taaffe, Socialist Party national committee
BREXIT QUESTIONS	Can there be a pro-worker Brexit deal? Speaker: Clive Heemsker, editor Socialism Today	Brexit in context - Trump, trade and tariffs Speaker: Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary	Northern Ireland: Brexit and the border Speaker: Niall Mulholland, CWI international secretariat
WHAT IS SOCIALISM?	Is climate change too urgent to fight for socialism? Speaker: Judy Beishon, Socialist Party executive committee	Fighting for socialism in the 21st century - can capitalism be reformed? Speaker to be confirmed	Did socialism fail in Venezuela? Speaker: Tony Sauniois, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) international secretariat (IS)
LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION	Violence against women, harassment and #MeToo - what do Marxists say? Speaker: Helen Pattison, London Socialist Party organiser	Identity politics - friend or foe in the fight for liberation? Speaker: Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party executive committee	50 years after Stonewall - how can LGBT+ rights be fought for and defended? Speaker: Michael Johnson, Socialist Party LGBT+ members group
IN DEFENCE OF TROTSKYISM	Do we still need a revolutionary party? Speaker: Paula Mitchell, Socialist Party London secretary	Automation, deindustrialisation, zero-hours: is the working class still capitalism's grave-digger? Speaker: Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary	A transitional programme - what it is and how to use it Speaker: Rob Williams, Socialist Party executive committee
BUILDING THE FIGHTBACK	Tamil Solidarity debate: Corbyn's policy and Tamil rights Speakers: Sen Kandiah, Tamils for Labour; Lawanya, Tamil Solidarity; Mathan, Refugee Rights	Fighting council cuts - the legacy of Tony Mulhearn and the Militant in Liverpool Speaker: Harry Smith, member of the Liverpool 47, Socialist Party	£15 an hour minimum wage - is this what we need to fight for? Speaker: Alistair Tice, Socialist Party Yorkshire secretary
GLOBAL CRISIS	Hong Kong's mass revolt Speaker: Clare Doyle, CWI international secretariat	Nigeria - capitalism red in tooth and claw Speaker: Peluola Adewale, Socialist Party Nigeria	Why is a new recession looming? Speaker: Robin Clapp, Socialist Party South West secretary
TROTSKYISM TODAY	Sudan: the relevance of the theory of Permanent Revolution Speaker: Bob Labi, CWI international secretariat	Revolution Betrayed - what happened in the Soviet Union? Speaker: Martin Powell-Davies, Socialist Party national committee	REGISTRATION: Registration will open at 12.30pm on Saturday 2 November and 9am on Sunday 3 November
POLITICAL UPHEAVAL	Schedule can be subject to change. Check online for updates at socialism2019.net	New Right - are the right populists a prelude to fascism? Speaker: Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales secretary	Europe's new formations: what's left? Speakers include: Micha Koschitzki, CWI Germany and Ross Saunders, Socialist Party national committee
MILITANT TRADE UNIONISM	Re-building a fighting left in PCS Speaker: Marion Lloyd, candidate for PCS civil servants union general secretary	The general strike - a tool for our movement Speakers: Bill Mullins, former Socialist Party industrial organiser; Gary Clark, CWU rep	THREE CLOSING RALLIES: Sunday 3 November, 3-4.30pm, £5 entry or included in Sunday, weekend or golden tickets. ● BOOK LAUNCH: IN DEFENCE OF TROTSKYISM ● SOCIALIST CHANGE TO END CLIMATE CHANGE ● THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL & ITS AFTERMATH 1989-2019
NATIONALITY & CAPITALIST CRISIS	Is Scotland on the road to independence? Speakers: Philip Stott and Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland executive committee	Kashmir in turmoil Speaker: TU Senan, CWI IS	What does the crisis reveal about parliamentary democracy? Speaker: Alec Thraves, Socialist Party NC
THE STATE	Spy-cops and blacklists: a warning to our movement Speakers include: Lois Austin, May Day protesters, campaigners against blacklisting and the police spies	OPENING RALLY: Saturday 2 November, 6.30-8.30pm TORIES OUT - FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM Logan Hall, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, WC1H 0AL, £5 entry or included in Saturday, weekend or golden tickets.	Understanding Marxist economics to ready for revolution Speaker: Iain Dalton, Socialist Party national committee
THEORY OF REVOLUTION	Marxist philosophy: historical materialism and dialectics Ken Douglas, Socialist Party executive committee		

PCS union general secretary election

Marion Lloyd - standing for action on members' pay, jobs, pensions and more

Katrine Williams
Vice-president PCS DWP Group
(personal capacity)

Marion Lloyd is on the ballot paper for the PCS general secretary election having won 39 nominations from all parts of the union.

The election starts 7 November when ballot papers will be posted out to members. It closes at noon 12 December.

Marion is a member of the Socialist Party, is the elected president of the BEIS Group and a member of the PCS national executive committee. She has been a PCS member all her working life and has been employed in a range of government departments big and small.

Marion says: "I'm delighted with the response from branches, activists and members. I am looking forward to taking my programme to PCS members in the ballot. I am standing on the basis of 'Action not Words', addressing key issues such as:

- **More resources to support members and branches locally including finance, quick access to legal advice, improved membership services and support for personal casework - lay control over all aspects of**

the union and decision making including the election of all senior full-time officers.

■ **A pay strategy for 2020 which puts us in the best position to secure a statutory ballot, and action to win on pay and other crucial issues such as jobs, pensions and office closures.**

■ **No material gain for me as I will stay on my current wage and give back the rest to the union.**

■ **An equality agenda which starts in the workplace and union branches and builds from there.**

■ **A general election now to get rid of the Tories.**

■ **Support for a Corbyn-led government on an anti-austerity agenda but retaining the right, as a politically independent union, to support candidates who support us.**

"After a decade of defensive struggle it's time to go on the offensive. We need a leadership which will listen, encourage debate and then give a lead. A leadership which gives members the confidence to fight on the issues that matter to them. A leadership which will actively co-ordinate across the union our fight on pay, jobs, pensions, compensation scheme and office closures.

"I led a successful campaign to stop the closure of my own office, BIS Sheffield. I feel the tremendous support for my candidature reflects



Marion Lloyd

a recognition of my record. But also I sense there is a mood for change and for a fresh approach. I am the candidate who best meets this need."

There is very little time for PCS

branches to get ready for the next critical stage of this important election. Ballot papers go out to members on 7 November.

@marion4gs

'Marion Lloyd for PCS General secretary'

■ **If you can help or want more information contact Marion4GenSec@gmail.com**

Rebuilding a fighting left in PCS
one of the discussions at
SOCIALISM 2019
2-3 Nov, central London
socialism2019.net

RMT union executive committee ballot

Jared Wood - Fighting cuts, defending jobs, pay and conditions



Jared Wood addressing fellow trade union activists at a National Shop Stewards Network conference

Ballot papers will be posted to RMT transport union members this week to fill a seat on the union's executive committee from the London transport region.

Jared Wood, a Socialist Party member, is standing for election on a fighting programme to defend jobs, pay and working conditions.

Jared has a proven record of building strike action and successful negotiations, and campaigning for a democratic, member-led union to fight cuts and privatisation.

Jared has been nominated by ten branches and enjoys the support in this election of many RMT lead representatives on the industrial relations functional councils.

f jaredwood4NEC
for full programme

t jaredwood4NEC

News in brief

■ Sixth form strikes

National Education Union (NEU) members at 25 sixth-form colleges will be striking on 17 October over widespread concerns - namely, fair pay, conditions and employment, reversing job losses, class size increases and cuts to teaching time and curriculum provision.

In a postal ballot 84% of members voted yes to action and yes to saving the sixth-form sector. There was a 43% overall turnout and there will be strike action in the 25 colleges that reached the 50% turnout threshold. Union members will be re-balloting colleges where the turnout was just short of the 50% stipulated under the Tories' restrictive 2016 Trade Union Act.

The walkout on 17 October will be followed by strike days on 5 and 20 November and possible further days of action.

NEU support staff dismiss Tory 'extra funding' hype

The National Education Union was formed in September 2018 to include school teachers, further education lecturers, education support staff and teaching assistants. On 5 October around 100 support staff delegates gathered at our first section conference to discuss the crisis in education funding, the general election and our pay claim.

It was noted that although Boris Johnson has promised £7.1 billion extra school funding by 2022, there is no funding increase next year. Nor does this take inflation or rising school numbers into account. Even with this 'extra funding', 80% of schools will still get less than they received in 2015, while 30% of the poorest schools will see their budgets being cut.

Special needs students and the support staff working with them are bearing the brunt of the cuts and exclusions are rising as these children are thrown out of school and put in 'special schools'. These are typically run by small private companies which do not recognise trade unions, and cut health and safety corners when it comes to lone working and other unsafe practices.

Our section motion to NEU conference boldly called for a £3-an-hour increase (approximately £5,000 a year), a living wage for cleaners and caterers and a campaign to bring those services back in-house.

We also voted overwhelmingly in favour of electing Tracy McGuire (Education Solidarity Network) and others to be our section delegates to NEU conference.

Alex Moore
NEU national council support staff member (personal capacity)

Hackney SEND transport workers achieve victory



Hackney Council drivers and passenger assistants in the Special Education Needs Service celebrate winning their pay claim

Drivers and passenger assistants employed by Hackney Council in the Special Education Needs Service have won an outstanding victory following strike action in support of a pay claim.

The workers, through their union Unite, launched a campaign demanding financial recognition for working split shifts. Such payments were abolished as part of a 'single status' agreement many years back

when local authorities attacked pay and conditions in the name of equal pay - in reality an exercise to level down pay.

To their immense credit, the workers launched a fight to start demanding that money back. After refusing to negotiate initially, then making some laughable offers, the employers were forced to concede due to effective strike action and picketing. The offer includes an

annual, consolidated lump sum. In true democratic fashion, the decision was made on the picket line - no calling off action, pending consultation. Action only called off when decided by the workers.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: "The workers who won this dispute are an example to low-paid local government workers - you can fight and you can win".
Hackney Socialist Party members

Wales: Hundreds march to save the Orb works

Dave Reid
Socialist Party Wales

On 12 October steelworkers from all over Britain joined hundreds of Orb workers and their families on an impressive march through Newport, South Wales, to demand that the Tata Orb steelworks in the city is saved.

Tata has announced the closure of the Orb works, which has been making steel in Newport for over 100 years, with the loss of 380 jobs. The company claims the plant needs £50 million of investment to make it viable. Orb makes specialist electrical steel which now more than ever will be needed for the production of electric vehicles.

Steve Turner, assistant general secretary of the union Unite, pointed out that workers there inherited their jobs and that now we must pass them on to future generations of steelworkers in the city. It is crazy to destroy these jobs, these skills



photo Unite Wales

and this plant just as the economy should be transitioning to an electrically-powered one. He called on the Tory UK government to intervene to save the plant.

Delegations of steelworkers from Scunthorpe, Llanwern, Port Talbot, Shotton, Runcorn and many other areas brought solidarity to the Orb workers, which summed up the

threat to the whole British steel industry. As Steve Turner pointed out, the British economy cannot function without a large manufacturing sector. And a manufacturing sector

cannot function without a strong steel industry.

Community, the steel union, has put forward a plan to upgrade the plant so that it can produce steel for electric vehicles and use steel from Port Talbot. It would require £30 million funding from the UK and Welsh governments, with just £10 million net funding from Tata.

The plan shows how an integrated steel industry plan can be developed by the trade union movement. But we cannot rely on the vagaries of a multinational global giant like Tata to control what happens. The Welsh government should be intervening to nationalise Orb and bring it back into public ownership, demanding that the weak Tory UK government steps in to save a vital industry for British society.

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photo Nick Harling/CC

■ Wilko action suspended

Strike action on 11 and 14 October by nearly 1,800 GMB union members at Wilko distribution centres in Magor, Wales and Worksop, Nottinghamshire, was suspended after union officials said a new company offer "meets their aims".

The strike action was in response to the 'family business' imposing a new seven-day rota, described by the GMB as "brutal", which would "force staff to work on the weekends, splitting up family time, without the agreement of their employees".

The offer will be voted on, with new strikes planned for 21 and 22 October if members reject the offer.

■ South Wales brewery strike

Around 300 Unite members at the AB InBev brewery in Magor, south Wales, walked out on 10 October in a dispute over pay.

The strike action followed a month-long overtime ban in pursuing a modest pay rise. Further strikes are scheduled for 18, 23 and 31 October.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the introduction of the national minimum wage by the Tony Blair New Labour government. The Low Pay Commission, which advises the government on minimum wage levels and rises, has applauded the fact that the minimum wage has increased nearly twice as much as average earnings over the last two decades.

But this hasn't ended low pay. In fact, in-work poverty and the number of working poor has increased. And in many sectors of the economy, such as in hotel and catering, retail and care work, the minimum wage has become the 'going rate', or even the maximum wage. There are now two million workers on the minimum wage compared with 770,000 when it was first introduced.

Why? There are three main reasons: 1) Real wages have fallen, and are on average still £13 a week below 2007 levels 2) Inflation - especially the rising higher costs that mostly affect working-class people such as housing, energy, public transport and child care 3) Tory cuts to in-work tax credits and benefits have far outweighed rises in the National Living Wage (NLW - the Tories' renamed minimum wage for 'adult' workers) since 2016.

Even according to government figures, two million workers (7.3% of the workforce) are paid on or around the NLW. 60% are women, 60% are part-time and 90% work in the private sector.

Using the two thirds median earnings definition of low pay used by the Resolution Foundation, an 'independent' think tank, then 4.7 million workers (17%) are low paid.

According to The Living Wage Foundation, a campaigning organisation aiming to persuade employers to pay a Living Wage, based on an independently calculated recommended minimum wage to cover workers' basic needs, 6.5 million workers are paid below their Real Living Wage - that's 24% of all workers.

No wonder that in-work poverty has increased. Of the 14 million people living in relative poverty in the UK, eight million live in households where at least one person is working.

Decent standard of living

But how much pay/income is needed for a decent standard of living? The European Union, the UK government, the Resolution Foundation and, in practice, the Living Wage Foundation, all define low pay as below 60% - 70% of median earnings. However, should the workers' movement accept government, think tank and charity definitions? Real wages have gone down or stagnated over the last 10-15 years. Which means two thirds of low pay is lower pay!

The trade unions themselves should be working out what wages/earnings are needed to guarantee every worker and working-class family a decent standard of living. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) should set up a commission involving supermarket and retail workers, housing, transport and fuel poverty campaigners, etc, along with statisticians, to formulate what's needed.

The Minimum Income Standard (MIS) set by the social policy charity the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

gives an indication of what the trade unions could do. The MIS is calculated on surveys of what the public think is needed for a decent minimum standard of living, including a smartphone, a laptop, a low budget UK holiday and Xmas presents.

Significantly, the MIS 2019 report estimates that a single person needs £18,800 a year and a working couple with two children need £51,200 between them. On the current minimum wage of £8.21 an hour, a single person is £36 a week short of the MIS and a working couple £47 a week short.

On the basis of a 35-hour week, £12 an hour would gross £21,840 a year, still leaving a working couple with children short of the MIS, whereas £15 an hour would gross £27,300 a year, taking such a family over the MIS threshold.

Fighting for the minimum wage

However, what figure the Socialist Party should call for as the minimum wage demand doesn't just depend on what is needed to achieve a decent standard of living. It also depends on what we think we can convince the workers' movement to campaign and struggle for, and whether workers see it as being realistic and achievable.

Most trade unions and even the TUC now support the £10 an hour minimum wage demand, at least on paper. The Bakers Union, which was one of the first to take up the campaign for £10 and initiated the Fast Food Rights campaign and McDonald's strikes, has recently launched a call for £15, starting in London. The Socialist Party in London is raising the demand for a £15 London Living Wage.



Of the 14 million people living in relative poverty in the UK, eight million live in households where at least one person is working

Most workers recognise that there is a higher cost of living in London, especially housing, so would accept the need for a higher rate in the capital. But from a campaigning and mobilisation point of view, would it be better to fight for one national rate?

The current Living Wage Foundation's London Real Living Wage is £10.55 an hour. Most London local authorities already pay it, and there have been several successful strikes to achieve it. Recently, outsourced catering workers at the Whitehall BEIS government department after three months indefinite strike action won a victory.

£15 an hour is a 42% increase on £10.55! For workers that have had pay rises of only 1%, 2%, 3%, 4% or 5% tops in recent years, wouldn't a 42% pay claim just seem like pie in the sky? The current Real Living Wage outside London is £9 an hour. To increase that to £12 an hour would be a 33% rise, to £15 a 66% rise!

It's true that at present most workers would not regard such percentages as realistic, let alone achievable.

Minimum wage debate

HOW CAN WE END THE SCANDAL OF LOW PAY?

Alistair Tice
 Socialist Party national committee

"Javin" it large - Savid Javid vows the Tories are the 'worker's party' as he hikes the minimum wage to £10.50 an hour".

This was the The Sun newspaper's headline the day after the Conservative Chancellor's announcement at the Tory party conference. It only mentioned in the small print that this pledge was not until 2024.

The Treasury claims that this promise will benefit four million workers by an average £4,000 a year, and "over the next five years will ...end low pay altogether." This bold claim

is made on the basis that £10.50 will, by 2024, be two thirds of median (middle) average earnings - internationally recognised as the level below which constitutes low pay.

All this is rich coming from the Tories who have implemented ten years of austerity policies that have caused the longest period of wage stagnation in Britain for 200 years. Real earnings are not expected to return to their pre-financial crash peak until 2025 - that's 18 years! However, this minimum wage policy is part of the Boris Johnson government's populist agenda in preparation for a general election, along with promises of increased public spending on the NHS, schools and the police (see page 4).

It may well be all a con, but the £10.50 soundbite figure gazumps Labour's re-affirmed commitment to introduce a £10-an-hour minimum wage in 2020, a policy extended to now apply to all workers including 16-17 year olds.

Labour's policy, if implemented, would give six million workers an average pay rise of £2,640 a year. But is £10 an hour still enough? Jeremy Corbyn first pledged it in his 2015 Labour Party leadership campaign. By next year, there will have been a 10% increase in prices since then.

The Socialist Party, which has campaigned for £10 an hour since 2013, recognised this recently by increasing our minimum wage demand to £12. Our What We

Stand For column (see page 3) now says "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."

But is even £12 an hour enough to give all workers a decent living wage or should it be £15 now? This article aims to start a discussion in the pages of the Socialist about what constitutes low pay, who decides what we need to live on, and what fighting demands the Socialist Party should raise in the labour and trade union movement to really "end low pay altogether."



But what is regarded as unrealistic or unachievable now can still change on the basis of a serious campaign, strategy and struggle.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) campaigned for a £30k salary across the board for all fire service employees back in 2002. Nearly 20 years ago. That was a 40% pay claim. It seemed OTT at the time. But the 30k figure had a galvanising effect on FBU members, generating enthusiasm and determination that this was a pay increase actually worth fighting for.

After 15 days of national strike action, the FBU won a 16% increase over two and a half years, albeit at the cost of 'modernisation' and future service cuts. Even so, it showed how fighting spirit can be lifted by and for a seemingly 'unrealistic' demand.

Trade union action

The power or potential power of the trade unions is the key to whether a much higher minimum wage can be achieved. On average, pay for union members is 8% higher than for non-union workers in comparable jobs. Yet last year, 440,000 workers did not even get paid the legally required minimum wage in sectors and companies where there are no trade unions.

Today 23% of all workers are trade union members and 26% of workers are covered by union collective bargaining agreements. 90% of those on the minimum wage work in the private sector where trade union density is 13.5%.



To deliver big pay rises in the face of the inevitable bosses' intransigence will ultimately require widespread and co-ordinated industrial action

So clearly, any serious campaign for a higher minimum wage requires a mass trade union membership, organisation and representation drive. But a bold campaign for £12 or £15 could provide just the spark, focus and energy needed to convince workers to join a trade union and take action. Especially young workers who are currently struggling on between £4.35 and £7.70 an hour and have never seen the power of unions to radically improve their lot.

Currently, only 8% of 16-25 year olds are in trade unions. But the campaigns and strikes by McDonalds workers, and at Uber, Deliveroo and TGI Fridays, have given a glimpse of their fighting potential, and must be captured for the future of the trade union movement.

Local campaigns like Sheffield Needs A Pay Rise, initiated by the local trade union council in response to Sheffield wages being £50 a week less than the national average, can play a role by targeting especially low paying employers like Sports Direct, with leverage campaigns and helping with unionisation drives.

But to deliver big pay rises in the face of the inevitable bosses' intransigence will ultimately require

widespread and co-ordinated industrial action. This could start at sectoral level, such as in the public sector where the 2011 pensions strike by two million workers showed the massive power trade unions still have. Or in the supermarket sector, where the Big Four, have all imposed, or are imposing, flexi-contracts - like Contract 6 at Asda.

Such sectoral action could then be coordinated into more generalised strike action. This may seem ambitious, but that is what's needed. And the potential is there if we can transform our unions into militant, fighting organisations.

Winning such a higher minimum wage on its own would not be enough to guarantee a decent standard of living. However, the struggle involved to secure it would transform the combativity, confidence and consciousness of the working class to demand much more such as:

- The indexation of the minimum wage to price rises or average earnings, whichever is the highest, as monitored by the trade unions. Plus rent caps to reduce the cost of housing, regulation of public transport to reduce fares and free child care.

- Guaranteed hours and employment rights for those currently in precarious work. Ban zero hour contracts and stop bogus self-employment in the gig economy.

No youth exemptions would mean a huge increase in the minimum wage of younger workers. But this could squeeze the differentials with more experienced, skilled and semi-skilled older workers. So the unions would need to expand collective bargaining agreements, and take strike action if necessary to maintain premium payments.

Of course, employers would howl that they couldn't afford any of this. They opposed the introduction of the minimum wage, and every increase since, claiming they threatened hundreds of thousands of job losses. That hasn't happened yet, but a much higher minimum wage would lead to threatened closures and lock-outs.

To small businesses, a state subsidy could be offered to ensure their workers received the higher minimum wage. Currently, nearly £30 billion a year of taxpayers' money is paid out in government tax credits to top up low pay - effectively a state subsidy to low wage employers.

But to big business, the trade unions should say "open your books, show us your accounts, where have all your profits gone?" and they should be forced to cough up. If a firm really would go bust, then it should be nationalised and brought into public ownership, which itself would point towards the need for a publicly owned and planned socialist economy that really would end low pay altogether and forever.

- The Socialist would welcome your comments and opinions about what level minimum wage we should be fighting for and the other issues raised in this article

'£15 an hour minimum wage - is this what we need to fight for?'
 Join the discussion at
SOCIALISM 2019
 2-3 Nov, central London
 socialism2019.net

Major new book out in November: In Defence of Trotskyism

Ben Robinson
Socialist Books

Since the financial crisis of 2007-08, many different movements have developed against oppression, austerity, neoliberalism and capitalism - with mixed success.

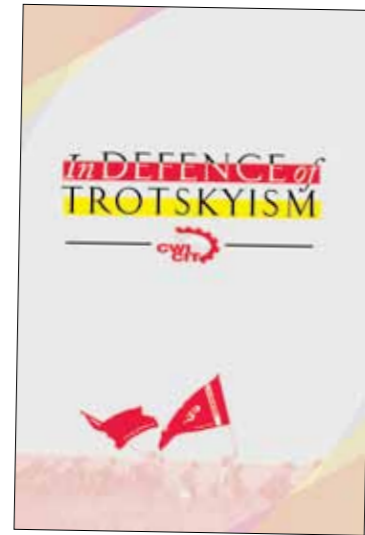
In a complicated situation, Marxists must take stock, analyse what is going on and why, and present a way forward.

In 2018-19, a debate broke out over exactly these questions within the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), the world socialist organisation which includes the Socialist Party in England and Wales.

'In Defence of Trotskyism' is a new book bringing together many of the key documents produced to defend a working-class, Trotskyist CWI; a process which culminated in the CWI's refoundation.

The focus of this debate included the questions of socialism and 'identity politics'; the role of the trade unions and the working-class movement; struggles for national liberation; and under what programme and how should Marxists organise nationally and internationally.

Internationalist in form and content, In Defence of Trotskyism collects contributions from across the world, bringing together the collective experience of working-class fighters to weigh on these important questions.



This book is much more than a record of an internal debate. It is a re-statement of Marxist principles, and a living example of their application in today's world. In Defence of Trotskyism will be invaluable to all those fighting for socialism.

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Hear some of the book's authors at the Rally for Socialism 2019 - full details on page 5

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TRADE UNIONISTS DISCUSS CLIMATE CHANGE

Helen Pattison
London Socialist Party

Socialist Party members attended a climate change discussion event organised by members of the National Education Union on 12 October.

Before the start we had interesting discussions about the need for socialist change to end climate change.

Some also wanted to talk about the role of the curriculum in educating

people about the environment. As more schools become privately run 'academies', what little voice parents and staff had is further restricted. Students, staff and the local community should have genuine democratic control of education.

Later that day there was a rally of around 100 trade unionists hosted by Extinction Rebellion in Trafalgar Square. Speakers raised the need to fight for secure, well-paid green jobs, and retraining so workers can remain employed.

PRESSURE NEEDED TO FORCE SECRET POLICE DISCLOSURE

Come to the Trade Union Conference Opposing Political Policing



photo Paul Mattsson

Lois Austin
Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance, and Socialist Party

For at least 40 years, special undercover sections of the police spied on trade unionists, socialist organisations including the Socialist Party, and campaigners such as the family of Stephen Lawrence, victim of a racist murder. Almost 120 'spy cops' are thought to have infiltrated over 1,000 groups.

But the official inquiry has major problems with disclosure and evidence. So the Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance (Cops) is holding a Trade Union Conference Opposing Political Policing on 16 November.

Police are known to have spied on campaigns for at least the period from 1968 to 2008, and we believe before and since as well. Officers often used the names of dead children. Many deceived women into long-term intimate relationships, even fathering kids with them. They also befriended grieving families, and acted as agents provocateurs.

Such was the public outrage when details emerged, that in 2015 Theresa May as home secretary was forced to launch the 'Undercover Policing Inquiry'. But for the last four years we have been swimming in treacle.

Numerous hearings have considered the legal principles of anonymity, disclosure, and data protection.

Police legal representatives have drawn this out to protect the identities of their operatives.

With a sick sense of irony, the officers claim releasing their fake and real identities would breach their human rights! The new judge in charge - Sir John Mitting - has danced to the tune of the Metropolitan Police and strung out proceedings.

The inquiry promised to publish all the infiltrated groups once the anonymity process for the Met's 'Special Demonstration Squad' was complete. It is now complete, but there has been pushback from the inquiry. We are campaigning for full disclosure.

Meanwhile, scrutiny is limited to police squads in England and Wales. This is despite much evidence demonstrating political policing in Scotland. And it is not clear how the inquiry intends to deal with Special Branch officers directed by MI5, or indeed how the security services will be considered.

The inquiry has announced it will begin taking evidence in three 'tranches' starting next year. At this stage no timetable has been released.

Members of Militant Labour and the Socialist Party, as well as Youth Against Racism in Europe, were targeted by the Met throughout the 1990s. Over the years, supporters of Militant, especially in the unions, were targeted by MI5.

The inquiry is assembling evidence packs from the police to help undercover officers prepare prior to giving statements. But the core participants in the inquiry, those spied upon, will not get the packs until just before the spy cops give evidence!

This cannot be accepted. We will challenge it legally - and, more importantly, through the workers' movement.

The inquiry feels pointless at times, and potentially a recipe for a cover-up. However, Marxists must take up battle even on unsympathetic territory - if that means the courtroom, then so be it.

We intend to squeeze every last drop of information and disclosure from this inquiry, and where possible use it to expose the class nature of the 'democratic' capitalist state throughout the labour and trade union movement. To this end we are encouraging union branches to send representatives to the Trade Union Conference Opposing Political Policing.

- Trade Union Conference Opposing Political Policing, 16 November at the Queen Anne Buildings, Greenwich University
- Request a speaker from Cops by emailing opposingpolicesurveillance@gmail.com
- Register for the conference by searching 'undercover policing' in London at eventbrite.co.uk

BE PART OF THE FUTURE: JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY



Why I joined the Socialist Party

YOU'VE GOT TO BE RED TO BE GREEN



Today, the old world order, capitalism, is in chaos. It offers us climate change, poverty, and constant instability for working-class and young people.

Karl Marx said of socialists that "in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future."

The new technologies held back by capitalism are part of that future. A future which could provide plenty for all, not riches for the billionaires, as well as saving our environment.

To help build that movement, we've reprinted our excellent pamphlet 'The Case for Socialism - Why you should join the Socialist Party', as well as a leaflet on some of our record in struggle. You can order copies at leftbooks.co.uk or through your local Socialist Party organiser.

And if you're reading this wondering how you can contribute to the struggle against misery and inequality, we say: join the Socialist Party!

Tom Gray
Exeter Socialist Party

I've been interested in politics for the past few years. Always tending towards the green movements and parties - and I still do, to an extent. I stood locally for the Green Party in the last election, the first time I was eligible to vote.

I ran for them because I genuinely believed they were the party that best represented me. I have many critiques, however.

For a start, I have been completely discouraged by Caroline Lucas's constant cross-party buddying. Firstly with Nigel Farage, a few years ago, to protest against the 'first past the post' electoral system.

Then more recently, it seems she has become best friends with the vile Anna Soubry, purely because they agree on one issue. Anna Soubry may not be a Tory anymore, but she was still part of that wretched government that has brought the working class to its knees with austerity.

Leading Green Party members

Daryl Clifford
Grimsby and Scunthorpe Socialist Party

In my twenties I had my fair share of abuse from the capitalist system. Like being treated unfairly in factories with zero-hour contracts, or verbally assaulted by the Department for Work and Pensions.

I was overworked and underpaid. I wanted to focus my energy on something positive that I enjoy,

seem content to live within the capitalist system. The system that leaves the working class to fight for scraps. That has normalised a lower quality of life, especially for my generation. And worst of all, that continues to destroy our environment.

Are they scared of socialism? The answer - for some at least - is no;

rather they fear that the voters may be. So they try to fight the things that capitalism causes - while staying within the capitalist system!

It leaves you with the question: why aren't all working-class people crying out for socialism? Well, one reason is that the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, promises

pro-worker policies but doesn't seem serious about fighting for them. Meanwhile, his own party works to destroy his credibility with their Tom Watson-led, Blair-loving group.

That is why I found it so important to join the Socialist Party. Corbyn isn't going to last forever, and whatever happens in the next election, Labour could end up with a Blairite leading the party if the socialist movement doesn't push for bold policies and help re-inspire the working class.

It is important that our movement also reaches out to left-wing Green Party supporters to explain that climate change will not be stopped by carrying on inside the capitalist system. It is a system that is centuries out of date and gets us closer to the world's boiling point day by day.

I want to live in a world where I can go out and easily find a job that pays a living wage. I want the option to get on a train or bus and not have to think "bloody hell, how much?" I want to think about retirement without having to work well into my 80s.

But most of all, I just want to live in a world where a decent quality life for my generation and the ones after is possible for all, not just an elite.

Why I joined the Socialist Party

OVERWORKED AND UNDERPAID, I WANTED BETTER

like writing. So I went to university to deliberately get myself into debt in order to better myself.

I know that writing doesn't pay well, but I think if you don't chase after your dreams you spend your entire life thinking "what if?"

I began to read Karl Marx and

other left writers like Noam Chomsky. The more I read, the more I connected with what they had to say.

One day at a friend's house I looked through Corbyn's manifesto and became even more passionate. More recently I went on a Karl Marx tour around London.

I got to see the house he lived in, hear about his life and the things he fought for. I think this is what helped me make my mind up about joining.

To me, socialism is the human spirit. It's the compassion that's always attracted me to this ideology.

MASS UNION MOBILISATION NEEDED TO COUNTER ANTI-CHOICE GROUP

Nancy Taaffe
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Waltham Forest in east London has become the focus of intense activity over the last month by anti-abortion rights group 'CBRUK' and those of us who defend a woman's right to choose.

Local Labour MP Stella Creasy is using parliamentary procedure to try to extend abortion rights to Northern Ireland. A couple of weeks ago, 20-foot billboards appeared around the borough showing human foetuses

next to her head with the slogan "stop Stella."

There was an outcry against this very personal attack on the local MP, who is pregnant and has spoken out publicly about her difficulties conceiving, miscarriages, and feelings of vulnerability. The Socialist Party unequivocally condemns her harassment.

The billboards were immediately painted over. CBRUK has taken the personalised slogan off, and now appears with posters in Walthamstow Town Square instead.

But unfortunately, Stella Creasy, a

right-winger, has not used her position to mobilise the community en masse against this threat to all women. Instead, she frames the issue as a hate crime against her.

Stella Creasy and the Blairite local council publicly asked supporters to stay away from the demonstrations in the square so as not to give CBRUK the 'oxygen of publicity'. But this simply allows them to campaign in public - and intimidate women - unchallenged.

It is a mistake to rely on the state to counter this group. On the last counter-protest, police issued a

'Section 14' to pro-choice campaigners blocking the CBRUK demonstrators. They said our peaceful attempt to prevent further intimidation of women constituted 'harassment', and if we didn't stand back we would be arrested.

Many ordinary local people, disgusted by the anti-choice posters, have ripped them down. One woman who had gone through a miscarriage was so upset that she tried to do so.

But because Stella Creasy is using harassment laws to contain CBRUK, this woman was warned

that if she carried on, she would be the one arrested!

It is vital that the trade unions call a mass labour movement mobilisation against this group. A thousand people in our square would be a massive show of opposition and make them feel unwelcome. It would also boost the confidence of all those women who feel upset, angered or intimidated by them.

Public meeting on abortion rights 7.30pm on Thursday 17 October, William Morris Community Centre, 6-8 Greenleaf Road, Walthamstow, London E17 6QQ

Obituary

Peter Taaffe
Socialist Party general secretary

Tony Mulhearn 1939-2019: Courageous fighter for the working class and socialism

Tony Mulhearn was a titan, a courageous leader of the working-class movement in Liverpool and Merseyside, as well as a life-long proud member of Militant, now the Socialist Party. His death at the age of 80 leaves a big gap for Socialist Party members in Liverpool and elsewhere. We will miss his steadfastness in the cause of socialism.

Much has been written about the Liverpool struggle but most of this in the past was superficial and facile in character. Only in our account of the Liverpool struggle and the lessons for the labour movement (Liverpool: A city that dared to fight) was a proper record published of this epic struggle.

Tony has added to this through his recently published autobiography, "The Making of a Liverpool Militant" (see page 13). He played a central role, particularly as the president of the Liverpool District Labour Party (DLP), in coordinating the battle which defeated the 'Iron Lady' herself, Margaret Thatcher.

How did Militant supporters like Tony Mulhearn and Derek Hatton and hundreds of others come to wield such influence in Liverpool? Even the serious strategists of capital were at a loss to understand how the mass movement took shape, and, moreover, one whose leadership had the strategy and tactics able to defeat, on behalf of the working class, the capitalist enemy.

The possessing classes attempted, with all the enormous means at their disposal in the media, to heap abuse against the mass movement. Particularly, against leaders like Tony, and Militant supporters generally, who were in the vanguard of the struggle. This was done in order to deflect attention from the real colossal achievements in housing, health, education, as well as the heightened political awareness of the working class of Liverpool.

The ruling class were answered and defeated again and again because of the deep roots and mass support that had been built up through incredible mass campaigns. These went into every section of the working class throughout Liverpool and Merseyside.

Lenny McCluskey, leader of Unite the Union, recently wrote about the struggle in Liverpool: "It is little wonder that the Militant Tendency received the reputation that they did in Liverpool. Their reputation on the doorstep never matched Neil Kinnock's lies. Many working people supported them because they were fed with cut after cut imposed by central government."

"The people of Liverpool wanted someone to stand up and fight on their behalf and during that period an enormous amount was done, including the building of beautiful, brick-built, semi-detached council homes with front and back gardens. To many in the city it is still remembered as the time when Labour defiantly stood for the communities it was meant to represent."

Tony played a key role, along with others, in helping to create



could comfortably coexist with Labour councils that were carrying out Tory cuts. No Labour leader condemned Newcastle City Council, which had cut 1,300 jobs from a workforce of 18,000.

But if there were any doubts about the mood that was developing in Liverpool, these were soon dispelled by the turnout on 19 November 1983. In bitterly cold weather, but with a carnival-like atmosphere, more than 20,000 workers marched through the city streets in a solid working-class demonstration. This was seen as just a springboard for an even wider and greater mobilisation of the working-class population of Liverpool behind their council.

Tony Mulhearn was in the vanguard of this movement. He pointed out the stand of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders workers in 1971 who forced a Tory government into a u-turn. He said that the Liverpool labour movement intended to get the same result - big concessions from the government - which was duly achieved. Tony warned the Tories that the Liverpool labour movement would never be bought off, that the city still faced appalling problems and would not be satisfied until the Tory government was removed from office and the capitalist system destroyed.

Both he and Derek Hatton got a tremendous reception, especially when they said that even the victory gained at that stage was temporary so long as capitalism continued to exist.

The vote for Labour's budget - which included the concessions from the government - was carried by 57 votes to 38, and resulted in wild celebrations with a standing ovation for the councillors from the public gallery. In appreciation of Militant's role in the struggle, the Labour councillors carried an advert printed in our paper: "Fraternal greetings and thanks to the Militant newspaper and its supporters for the outstanding help and assistance

this mass movement and leading it to victory over the Thatcher government. He spoke to 20-30,000 at the end of mass demonstrations and rallies at the Pier Head in Liverpool. He was president of the DLP for many years. Attendances at the monthly meetings climbed to 700, the biggest of any section of the Merseyside labour movement and anywhere else in the Labour Party throughout Britain.

Steadfast approach

The steadfast approach of those like Tony - not just Militant supporters, but a broader layer of politically developed workers he helped to educate - pushed the Labour Party in the city towards the left. This culminated in the great triumph of May 1983 council elections in Liverpool. In a brilliant victory, Labour gained 12 seats, 10 from the Liberals and one from the Social Democratic Party. Not a single Labour seat was lost and even the Tory leader lost his seat to Labour.

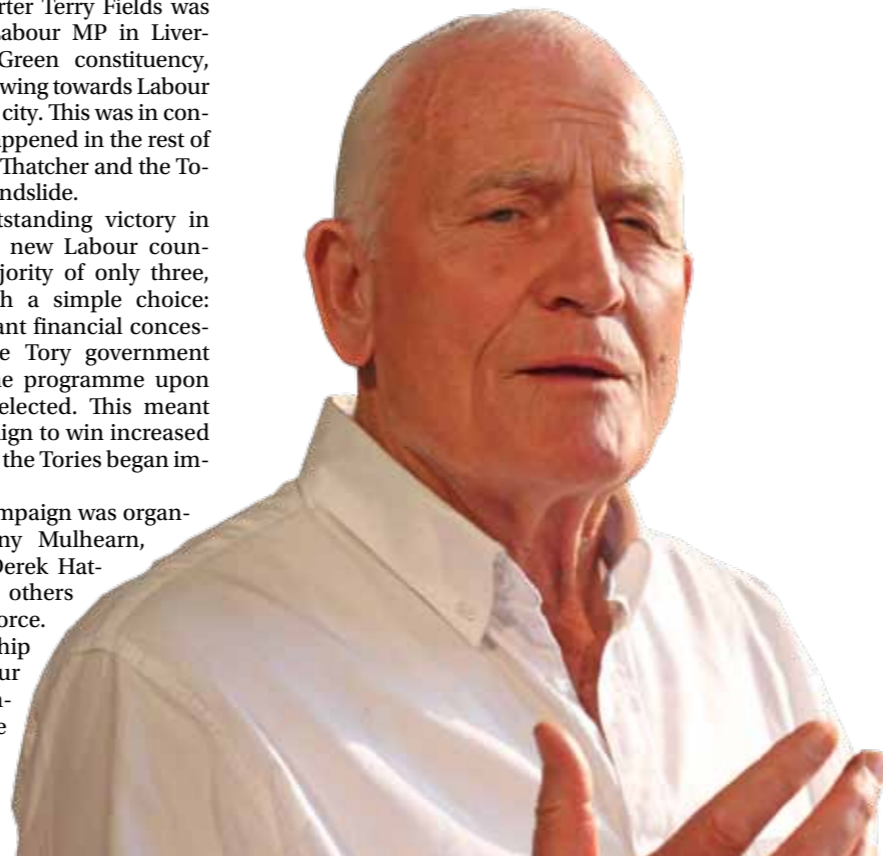
This was in a city dominated by the Tories until 1964! Labour's vote increased by an astonishing 40% - 22,000 extra votes. A month later

Militant supporter Terry Fields was elected as a Labour MP in Liverpool's Broad Green constituency, with a general swing towards Labour throughout the city. This was in contrast to what happened in the rest of the country, as Thatcher and the Tories won by a landslide.

After its outstanding victory in May 1983, the new Labour council, with a majority of only three, was faced with a simple choice: obtain significant financial concessions from the Tory government or abandon the programme upon which it was elected. This meant that the campaign to win increased resources from the Tories began immediately.

The mass campaign was organised, with Tony Mulhearn, Terry Fields, Derek Hatton and many others as the driving force.

The leadership of the Labour Party meanwhile were taking fright at what was unfolding in the city. They



given to our campaign to defend jobs in Liverpool." We also celebrated with a Militant rally of 500 people in the city.

Tony was also an intelligent and astute leader of trade unionists, an implacable opponent of the bosses, determined to defend all workers' living standards, particularly opposing right-wing trade union leaders. He is perhaps best known as a mass leader of Militant, speaking to tens of thousands at mass demos, as well as for his leadership of the Liverpool District Labour Party.

The right wing of the Labour Party considered the DLP, which implacably opposed them and their programme of council cuts, to be a small "unrepresentative caucus"! Like other supporters of Militant, Tony was hounded and eventually expelled from the Labour Party by Neil Kinnock and his right-wing cronies, for the 'crime' of standing up for and defending the marvellous Liverpool working class.

Without Tony and many other working-class heroes within the ranks of Militant and in the broad labour movement, the colossal achievements of the Liverpool City Council - of a mass council house building programme, new schools and parks, etc. - would not have been possible.

Achievements

Tony Mulhearn's achievements - as one of the immortal 47 councillors, who stood firm against Thatcher and the right-wing Labour sell outs, like Neil Kinnock - would not have been possible without mass support from the working class, endorsed in every election until they were banned from office.

Like generations of workers before him, Tony was vilified and attacked by the bosses and their representatives, victimised and forced at one time to hunt for any kind of job to keep the wolf from the door, for standing up for his class.

This only acted to deepen and consolidate the respect and love that Tony generated, not just in his steadfast family, but in the ranks of Militant and among working people in general.

He remained firm to the end in his support for the Socialist Party, and for socialism in Britain and around the world.

Book: The Making of a Liverpool Militant by Tony Mulhearn

Iain Dalton
Socialist Party national committee

I wasn't able to go to the launch of Tony Mulhearn's book, The Making of a Liverpool Militant, but my copy arrived in the post a couple of days before, so I spent a lot of time reading it.

So what did I think? It's great! It's written in an engaging style that draws you in. You want to keep reading without stopping.

That is a product both of how it's written, but also Tony's life and experiences. I'm glad friends and comrades convinced him to put it down in print.

The cover shows photos from the great battles against Thatcher with the socialist-led Liverpool Council. There Tony played a crucial role as president of the District Labour Party, a gathering of delegates representing the spectrum of labour and trade union organisations in Liverpool.

They discussed and debated the strategy and policies the 1983-87 Labour council adopted, winning back

"I'M GLAD THEY CONVINCED HIM TO PUT IT DOWN IN PRINT"

tens of millions of pounds for the city. That was invested into building new council housing, parks, nurseries, and to create jobs.

This is of course covered in the book, but Tony refers to 'Liverpool: a city that dared to fight' (see bottom left) to flesh out some of the finer details. In The Making of a Liverpool Militant, he concentrates more on the debates around the strategy they adopted.

This aspect is most valuable about the book - it doesn't just cover the mighty events around the council, but Tony's experiences as a trade union activist, which may be less familiar to some readers.

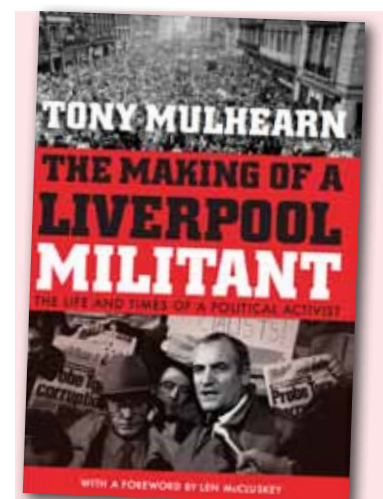
Tony was a trade union rep in many different unions from father of the chapel (branch secretary) of a print works in the National Graphical Association to a call

centre worker and Communication Workers' Union member later in life.

These are a real school for how to get a feel for the mood of the workforce, and develop a fighting stance to take on management. For any current or aspiring trade unionist, these chapters on their own are worth reading the book for.

Sadly, given his recent passing, I won't be able to send my compliments on to Tony. But, a revolutionary socialist party is the memory of the working class - to arm it for future struggles.

By producing this book, Tony has helped preserve the valuable lessons of the important struggles he was a leading participant in. Let us utilise these lessons in the even bigger class battles that are coming to truly continue his legacy.



The Making of a Liverpool Militant - the life and times of a political activist by Tony Mulhearn
£10 plus postage at leftbooks.co.uk (see bottom left)

No space left at packed book launch

Hundreds packed into the big room at the Casa pub in Liverpool, the venue of the Socialist Party's weekly meetings, for the launch of the late Tony Mulhearn's autobiography - The Making of a Liverpool Militant - just days after his sad passing.

The room was overflowing. There wasn't even standing space left!

A film of Tony's life was shown and an array of speakers included Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, Derek Hatton and Dave Nellist. Len McCluskey remembered his years on Merseyside and encouraged the audience to read Tony's other major publication - Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight, written with Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary.

Derek Hatton - deputy leader of Liverpool's socialist council in the 1980s - said that Militant, relaunched as the Socialist Party since 1997, provided a political strategy that was essential to the anti-cuts struggle in Liverpool.

Former Militant Labour MP, Dave Nellist, spoke on behalf of the Socialist Party. He praised Tony's lifelong contribution to the fight for socialism, saying he had remained a Socialist Party member until the end.

Socialist Party members from across the country joined the event. The Socialist, with a short obituary for Tony by Peter Taaffe, was widely sold and a leaflet distributed with the longer version carried on the page opposite.

'Fighting the Cuts - the legacy of Tony Mulhearn and Militant in Liverpool' at SOCIALISM 2019 2-3 Nov, central London socialism2019.net

Packed book launch...



...with standing room only...



...and Socialist Party stall outside photos Lenny Shail



Liverpool: A city that dared to fight
by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn
£12 including postage

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This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Chinese revolution. In the second of a series of articles marking that event, **Tom Baldwin** looks at the period following the declaration of the People's Republic of China

The Chinese revolution of 1944-49 freed millions of people from the yoke of capitalism and imperialism in the most populous country on earth. Yet the society which replaced it was not truly socialist. From the outset it was, in the language of Marxism, a "deformed workers' state", modelled on Stalinist Russia, although with its own features.

Steps were taken to collectivise agriculture, nationalise private companies and to plan the economy. However, this plan was not under the democratic control of workers. Instead, society was run from the top down by a dictatorial, bureaucratic clique in the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), headed by Mao Zedong.

This meant policy was driven by the whims of the bureaucracy, and sometimes subject to sharp changes as a result of splits and power struggles within the ruling group.

Despite these huge distortions, the planned economy was still able to prove its superiority to the capitalist market by delivering rapid development and improvements in the lives of the masses.

During the 1950s the economy grew by 10% annually with industrial production growing twice as fast. These gains meant that the Chinese revolution, like the Russian revolution before it, was looked to internationally, especially by national liberation movements in colonial countries.

Great cost

However, given the bureaucratic, forcible nature of the way these changes were implemented, they also came at great human cost.

One example of the sudden and brutal changes of direction from the regime was the Hundred Flowers movement and its aftermath. Beginning in late 1956, this was launched by Mao in an attempt to placate frustration with the bureaucracy.

Quoting a poem - "Let a hundred flowers bloom; let a hundred schools of thought contend" - he encouraged constructive criticism of the regime. At its height millions of letters were being sent to CCP of-

fices and public discussions of the problems facing China took place.

The policy was then halted in July 1957 and thrown into abrupt reverse. The 'anti-rightist movement' which followed saw purges within the CCP and repression of dissidents. Many of these were persecuted for the criticisms they had previously been encouraged to make.

Internationalism, spreading the revolution and building a world socialist plan of production are vital to genuine Marxists. However, the Stalinist bureaucracies feared the prospect of revolutions elsewhere stirring up the people against them.

This self-preservation at the expense of the world working class was summed up in Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country'. Nationalism is in the DNA of Stalinism, in both its Soviet and Chinese forms.

Nationalist rivalry

That nationalist rivalry meant that from the late 1950s the bureaucracies in Moscow and Beijing became increasingly hostile to one another.

Prior to this the USSR had been an ally, providing assistance after the revolution. This is despite the fact that the Stalinist so-called 'Communist International' had encouraged the CCP not to take power and to subordinate the Chinese revolution to capitalist forces.

The Sino-Soviet split meant China and the Soviet Union were without the enormous advantages genuine cooperation could have produced. This increased the pressure on the bureaucracy around Mao to try and force the development of the economy.

The dangers of bureaucratic misrule of the planned economy were illustrated vividly with the failure of the Great Leap Forward. This was announced in 1958 as a mad dash toward industrialisation. Workers and peasants were even encouraged to set up back-yard furnaces for steel production.

The policy failed to deliver the desired industrial growth but instead meant the neglect of agriculture. This resulted in a famine in which tens of millions died of hunger.

One consequence of this catastrophe was the effective demotion of Mao by others within the regime. In response he launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966, mobilising 22 million 'Red Guards' against opponents in the CCP.

Under the guise of deepening the revolution and cutting down the privileges of the bureaucracy, young people in particular were whipped up into a frenzy of activity.

They were directed to destroy 'the Four Olds' - old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas. Irreplaceable cultural and historical artefacts

China after the 1949 revolution THE BENEFITS OF THE PLANNED ECONOMY STIFLED BY BUREAUCRACY



were destroyed, a method completely alien to the real traditions of Marxism. Hundreds of thousands of workers and youth died as a result of this power struggle.

By appealing to forces outside of the bureaucracy, in order to conduct a fight within, the Mao wing had unleashed forces that risked running beyond its control.

While Mao had called for a cultural 'revolution', the whole bureaucracy feared genuine revolution, an independent movement of the working class which could threaten its rule and institute workers' democracy. Mao eventually used the army and the militia to violently suppress the Red Guard.

The death of Mao in 1976 again changed the balance of forces with-

in the bureaucracy. The 'Gang of Four' were CCP leaders which had come to prominence during the Cultural Revolution, headed by Jiang Qing, Mao's last wife.

Following Mao's death, they were denounced as counter-revolutionaries, removed from power and charged with treason. This allowed Deng Xiaoping, who had been purged in the Cultural Revolution, to become the most prominent figure within the CCP regime.

Deng initiated the first steps which resulted in the re-emergence of Chinese capitalism, the dominant trend in China today (see next week's Socialist).

The history of Mao's China demonstrates the power of the planned economy but also the crimes of Sta-

linist dictatorships. It is a lesson to workers that in order to harness the full potential of the socialist plan and avoid the danger of capitalist restoration, bureaucratic trends must be resisted at every stage.

The Socialist Party follows in the tradition of Leon Trotsky, a key leader of the Russian revolution, who spent the latter part of his life fighting against Stalin's dictatorship. Trotskyism enshrines the need for workers' democracy and internationalism as vital to the programme for socialist revolution.

Read the first article in our series... 'Chinese revolution of 1944-49: The second greatest event in human history' at socialistparty.org.uk

Tony Saunois

Secretary of the Committee for a Workers' International

Twelve days of mass protests have forced the Ecuadorian government to retreat and restore the fuel subsidies it had removed with Decree 883.

In what was a revolutionary movement, the Indigenous peoples of Ecuador, under the banner of their largest organisation, Conaie (Confederation of Nationalities of Ecuador), came together in a mass movement uniting all sections of the working class and middle class.

A massive general strike called by the main trade union federation, UGTE (General Union of Ecuadorian Workers), was joined by tens of thousands of peasants and rural workers from Conaie.

The role of the working class and the indigenous peoples was central to the struggle. They came together, rejecting separatism. The indigenous peoples of Ecuador comprise at least 25% of the population and have played a central role in the struggles of the past.

Savage austerity

The immediate cause of this uprising was the savage austerity package that the government of Lenin Moreno introduced. A quisling of the IMF, he meekly followed their demands to end subsidies on fuel and introduced attacks on workers' rights in return for a US \$4.2 billion "rescue package".

Overnight fuel prices rocketed by more than 150%. State employees saw their holiday entitlement of thirty days annual leave slashed by half to fifteen days.

The transport unions responded with a call for a protest strike. This was then followed by continued protests - a veritable uprising, with the calling of a general strike.

This movement had many powerful elements of a classic pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation: the ruling class was split and dramatically weakened; the working class and poor showed a determination to struggle; the middle class was not only neutralised but actively participated in the movement; splits and divisions opened up within the state apparatus, with sections even joining the

UPRISING IN ECUADOR FORCES GOVERNMENT CLIMBDOWN

Revolutionary socialist alternative needed



photo Voz de América/CC

Building a socialist international in the era of capitalist crisis
one of the rallies at SOCIALISM 2019
2-3 Nov, central London
socialism2019.net

Identity politics - friend or foe in the fight for liberation?
one of the discussions at SOCIALISM 2019
2-3 Nov, central London
socialism2019.net

protests.

However, the crucial factor, the idea of a socialist alternative, programme and revolutionary party still needs to develop and be built. Without it, the potential victory of the masses to transform society will be threatened and lost.

The brutal repression - which

resulted in over 500 arrests, hundreds of injuries and some deaths - was met with defiance by the masses. In many of the confrontations, the workers and indigenous peoples, armed with staves, stones and, in some cases, improvised rocket launchers have beat back the police and army.

According to reports from TelesurTV (the media channel launched by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela), the indigenous organisations established a "Parlamento de los Pueblos" (Parliament of the Peoples).

The mass movement forced the government to flee the capital

Quito. The working class and indigenous peoples stormed the national assembly and were potentially challenging for power.

Elements of dual power unfolded. However, the masses did not move to take power into their own hands and destroy the old regime. Although the regime has been forced to back down on the subsidies, only the replacement of capitalism by socialism can provide a future for the Ecuadorian masses.

The lessons need to be drawn from this struggle. A programme for socialist revolution would have involved:

- The formation of democratic committees of struggle in all workplaces and communities with delegates elected and subject to recall. Those committees to link up on a city-wide, regional and national level with delegates elected and subject to recall
- Building on the initial steps taken to form "guardia popular" - popular guards - in some of the protests, through the formation of an armed militia of workers and indigenous communities, under the democratic direction of the committees of struggle
- An appeal to all soldiers and rank-and-file police to join the movement and form elected committees and purge all officers supporting the Moreno regime
- The formation of a government of the workers and indigenous peoples. Convening of elections to a revolutionary constituent assembly or to the 'Parlamento de los Pueblos'
- Nationalisation under democratic workers' control and management of all major and foreign companies and banks. Cancellation of the IMF austerity programme
- Equal, language, cultural and territorial rights of all indigenous peoples as part of a democratic socialist Ecuador
- For a party of the working class and indigenous peoples with a revolutionary socialist programme
- An appeal to the working class of the rest of Latin America and the United States for solidarity and support in a struggle for a socialist alternative to break with capitalism
- The establishment of a voluntary democratic socialist federation of Latin America

■ **The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution** by Harold Isaacs, £21 (the definitive Marxist account of the 1925-27 revolution)

■ **Leon Trotsky on China** - £26

■ **The Third International after Lenin** - by Leon Trotsky, £5.95

■ **Prophets Unarmed, Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution** - £49

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Hong Kong's mass revolt
one of the discussions at SOCIALISM 2019
2-3 Nov, central London
socialism2019.net

Massive vote for strike action

POSTAL WORKERS

“WE’RE OUT TO WIN!”



There was a deafening roar of approval at the special meeting convened by the Communications Workers Union (CWU) when it was announced that postal workers in Royal Mail had voted yes to strike action by a massive 97.1%. The turnout easily

surpassed the high threshold imposed on the trade unions by the Cameron Tory government, designed to prevent industrial action. Emerging from the meeting **Gary Clark**, secretary of the CWU Scotland No 2 branch, spoke to the Socialist.

“It’s definitely full steam ahead now. The earliest we can take strike action is 20 November because of the mediation period and legal notice period.

The mood in the conference and up and down the country is we’re up for strike action. This is a different ball game to what we’ve been involved in before. We’ve got a different CEO to deal with, but the members are definitely up for the fight.

The issues are the breakup of

Royal Mail that is proposed, with parts possibly being sold off. We’re due a shorter working week, a one-hour reduction this month, but management has backtracked.

Royal Mail bosses are walking away from national agreements. They want to do away with 40,000 jobs, which amount to a third of the workforce.

This is a fight to defend the public service too. If we lose this fight the public service is gone.

CEO Rico Back wants to rip Royal Mail to shreds for the benefit of

the hedge funds, big business and capitalism.

This is going to be a key battle for the whole of the trade union movement. Rico Back and Royal Mail have shown they want to not only break up Royal Mail, but intend take on one of the largest and strongest trade unions in Britain. If he breaks the CWU then the rest of the trade union movement will suffer.

So the whole trade union movement must get behind the CWU now.

We’ll now go back to the members

and make sure we’re prepared to strike during the Christmas period. We don’t want to strike at Christmas, we want to provide a service, but we have no choice and we will use the ballot we have now got for industrial action.”

The Socialist Party stands four-square behind the men and women in the Royal Mail group who are determined to ensure that the agreement they signed up to with the employer in 2017 is kept to. We believe that the best way to properly reward the workforce and

to improve the public service is by renationalising Royal Mail under democratic workers’ control.

■ **Gary Clark will be speaking at Socialism 2019, 2-3 November in central London. Make sure you’ve got a ticket. See page 5 for details**

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