Academic staff in the University and College Union (UCU) are striking at 60 universities for eight days until 4 December.

At Goldsmiths University, banners made by the strikers included the demands of the strike - 'strike for equal pay,' 'strike for pensions,' 'strike for your weekend,' 'strike for job security.'

In Southampton, hundreds turned out to chant, “workload, overload!” and listen to speeches from striking UCU members. They included Socialist Party member Bea Gardner, from the UCU branch executive.

Ross Gibson, UCU member at Strathclyde, told us, “the average UCU member does over 13.5 hours of unpaid overtime per week.” Anthony, at the University of Bradford, said staff are regularly working 50-hour weeks plus, to get the workload done.

Pension robbery
In Bristol, pension robbery and the precariousness of short-term contracts were repeatedly cited as reasons for the solid turnout. One striker in Newcastle told us how difficult it is to plan your life when you don’t know how long your current contract will last.

Socialist Party members on strike with UCU said that to win, “we will need a strong union and leadership which can keep the pressure on university managers.”

If the bosses don’t immediately back down, the UCU should call more strike action in the New Year. And universities that didn’t meet the Tory’s anti-democratic 50% strike ballot turnout threshold should be re-balloted, so they can join in.

In Liverpool, management lied when they said students would be breaking the law if they joined picket lines. They even threatened international students that they risk jeopardising their visa if they refused to cross the picket line. But Socialist Students is building support for the UCU action among students.

The whole union movement should come to the aid of the UCU. In London, UCU invited postal workers in the Communication Workers Union (CWU), who had their right to strike blocked by the courts, to join their rally.

See page 13 for UCU strike reports from across the country. Turn to page 6 for the latest on the CWU dispute.
TORY ELECTION CAMPAIGN’S DANGEROUS TRICKS AND LIES

Resist attacks against free speech on campus - fight for democratic students’ unions!

When a general election is taking place, and students are discussing how to fight for free education, affordable student housing, and a decent quality of life, they will often encounter campus managers or student union officials. This is in addition to what is already known about universities: the student unions have banned students and academics from either campaigning or canvassing on campus during the election period.

These attacks come at a time when the universities are conducting a number of “teach-ins”, “work-in”, and “ring the bells” protests against austerity measures, cuts to education funding, and the fees and grants system.

At the same time, there is a huge fightback taking place in our society. Universities on campus are taking days of strike action against the government’s attack on jobs, pay, and pension provisions.

For the only once in a generation, the campaign to defend democratic students’ rights to self-organisation and the rights of students to organise on campus is beginning to make headway.

Prince Andrew’s astonishing performance once more exposes the caprice of the British monarchy in the interest of the victims of abuse. The question is how to build on this opportunity for meaningful change.

The government’s Brexit campaign continues to expose its own disrespect for democracy. The government’s Brexit campaign, in which it waged war on democratic institutions such as parliament, exposed the bankruptcy of the establishment’s claim that the United Kingdom’s future is being decided by the people of the United Kingdom.

Everyone rights anti-trade union laws! For a mass workers’ party drawing on the strength of the working class across the world.

In order to build the strength of the working class, we need to ensure that the government’s austerity programme is dismantled and that the public sector is nationalised. This requires a programme of publicly owned housing, a major research and investment into the NHS, and the introduction of a living wage of at least £15 an hour. For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

As capitalism dominates the globe, a mass workers’ party is needed to defend the interests of the working class and to organise a global movement for democracy and socialism - a democratic society in which all major decisions about the world are made by the working class and organised across the world.
Labour’s manifesto: the legal and working rights that workers have won are in trouble - and only now were they made law

We need a mass movement to win the election and make a socialist revolution happen

CORBYN IN GENERAL ELECTION NOW!}

Labour’s manifesto: the legal and working rights that workers have won are in trouble - and only now were they made law

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CORBYN IN GENERAL ELECTION NOW!
CUW’s RIGHT TO DEFEND MEMBERS IS ON THE LINE

South Western Railway strike: ‘We’re up for the fight’

On the eve of a month-long walkout by train crew on South Western Railway, Geoff Kite, SWR guard and RMT transport union executive member, addressed a meeting of Socialist Party members, with Socialist Party local section members, at a meeting in London. He explained how RMT is resisting attempts by SWR to use the vital safety-critical role of train guards and move them to director-only operations.

Geoff Kite:

‘We want to keep the guard on the train. Because that is the safest way to run our railways

The RMT is on our side. Politically, where we are at is to back Labour’s call to nationalise the railways and to get the passenger guard back on the trains. We are up against the ‘No public sector limits’ policy of the government.

We are preparing to take 26 days of action this week already. The campaign is not on strike action and is up against the state forces of the government and the safety culture of the railway industry. It is not a political issue, it is a safety issue.

Despite this, it was not obvious to us that we have a strong position. We were not given a guarantee that we would be on strike.

We have written from the SWR to the RMT, asking:

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Support from Socialist Party members

Socialist Party members in Leicester gave support to striking National Education Union members at Wigston and Queen’s Elizabeth 4th-grade College. One of 63 colleges nationally taking strike action on 20 November for pay, decent working conditions and an end to competition between schools. Please support the strikers.

Socialist Party members in Cambridge gave support to striking University staff in their dispute over pay, working hours and pensions.

The Socialist Party is militantly on strike action with RMT. Please join the strike at your workplace. You will change history.

Sixth-form college strikes

‘Sticking two fingers up at the Tories’

Sixth formers on strike in Leeds, York and Derby

Barbara Ehrenreich

‘Our union can be big. We need a new approach to win. We need to tackle the root causes of underemployment, poverty and racism.

We need to go beyond the union leaders’ plans of career guidance to the root causes of our predicament. To do this we need to organise our own strikes, to challenge the bosses, to challenge the union leadership. To do this we need to organise a general strike to get pay rises, decent working conditions and an end to the privatisation of the NHS, education and rail.

We need to organise a national strike to get the RMT and TSSA to go on strike. We need a national strike to engage the wider working classes in the fight for a new society.

The Socialist Party is supporting the CWU strike fund should the CWU ballot for strike action. We support the CWU and the RMT.

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END COUNCIL CUTS NOW,

Nick Chaffey
Socialist Party national committee

Tory austerity has meant a decade of attacks on the working class. Nowhere has this been felt more sharply than in local councils. As the 12 December general election approaches, a bold call by Jeremy Corbyn for Labour councils to immediately halt council cuts would show the possible difference a Corbyn-led anti-austerity government would make compared to previous Tory, Lib Dem and Labour governments in this century.

In particular, Tory government cuts since 2010 have been brutal, impacting on young and old alike, decimating vital services and council jobs, leaving council workers overworked and underpaid. At the same time household council tax bills have risen, leaving workers paying more for less services. The slashing of council tax support, forcing the poorest to pay more, court summons for council tax arrears are rising fast.

Combined with the hated ‘Bedroom Tax’, benefit cuts through the introduction of Universal Credit, along with a chronic housing shortage, rising market and social rents, increasing homelessness, and over one million using food banks, and so on, working-class communities have been thrown back to the poverty levels associated with the 1930s. This cost of living crisis is stoking enormous anger.

Bankrupt
Some councils are on the verge of bankruptcy despite squeezing spending cuts. Tory-run Northamptonshire was the first, but others are reaching the edge.

Scandalously many of the biggest councils carrying out most of the cuts are Labour controlled, led by right-wing opponents of Jeremy Corbyn. This vast bureaucracy of Blairite councillors - many of whom campaigned for Corbyn’s removal in 2016 - are dutifully carrying out the Tories’ dirty work.

Right now cuts are being made by Labour councils; and jobs lost mean lives ruined. Local councils are also preparing new cuts budgets for 2020.

This has left a deep scepticism in working-class communities towards Labour, fed up with years of broken promises and betrayal. Jeremy Corbyn’s promise of an end to austerity has the potential to enthuse millions as the election in 2017 showed. He has made positive announcements about restoring council funding to schools, social care and youth services - amounting to £25 billion additional money. He has announced an intention to restart council house building - a good beginning of 100,000 a year by 2024. And an extra £1.1 billion funding to tackle homelessness.

They will certainly be welcomed by many. But how much more so if he was to come out clearly and say, “Enough is enough. Stop the cuts. Use your reserves and borrowing powers. We will reimburse you on 13 December.” Action speaks louder than words.

Whatever the outcome of the election, the battle to restore council jobs and services to meet the needs of working class communities will continue.

Union policy
The current policy of council workers’ unions - Unison, Unite and GMB - is to oppose cuts and campaign for councils to use reserves and borrowing powers to protect jobs and services as the means to fight for full government funding. That policy needs to be urgently put into action.

This will require building militant, fighting, democratic trade unions that act in the interest of their members. The council cuts crisis will be a battleground of an anti-austerity Corbyn government. The capitalist class will mobilise all its forces to block reforms in the interests of working-class people that encroach on its profits and show an alternative to the capitalist crisis.

Even if Corbyn gains a majority of MPs in the election based on support for his anti-austerity manifesto, the Blairite MPs will be part of the capitalists’ campaign that seeks to block a radical Corbyn manifesto going through parliament, and will undoubtedly be assisted by Blairite councils.

The Socialist Party has repeatedly outlined the need for the ‘Corbyn insurgency’ to take on the hierarchies of the Blairites with fighting socialist MPs and councillors, restoring the party’s federal, democratic structures, placing the trade unions at the centre of the party, and readmitting all expelled socialists, including the Socialist Party.

It is clear that the task of replacing these ‘pink Tory’ cutters with fighting, socialist councillors is still to be done. That task cannot be put off forever, events will demand it.

In the meantime, while the Socialist Party gives its support to a Corbyn-led anti-austerity government carrying out policies in the interest of working people, where Blairite Labour councillors continue to cut, we will continue to ensure there are anti-cuts candidates in local council elections, fighting for the ‘Liverpool road’ (see opposite), to ensure the services are here to meet the needs of our communities.
TO END TORY AUSTERITY!

A decade of fighting back

There has been a fightback, despite the depth of the crisis, and the woeful role of Blairite councillors and the unwillingness of their allies in the tops of the trade unions to mobilise national resistance by council workers and working-class communities.

Resistance to cuts at a local level has been widespread. The fight to save libraries, children’s and youth centres, swimming pools, and care homes, has been endless.

As the initial round of cuts were imposed a small but heroic number of councillors refused to vote for cuts in Southampton, Hull, Warrington and Leicester. And with the help of the Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - an anti-cuts electoral alliance established by the RMT transport union and the Socialist Party in 2010), these rebels called for ‘no cuts’ budgets.

No cuts budgets

This was before the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in 2015. What a different situation would we be in, if his election had been used as a platform to build a united campaign of Labour councils to stop council cuts?

By using reserves and borrowing powers to set no-cuts budgets, councils could then mobilise mass campaigns of council workers, their trade unions and the community, demanding the Tory-led government restore council funding.

Elsewhere, important industrial battles have taken place, with council workers fighting back. Key victories have been won showing what is possible by the Birmingham bin workers (2017-18) and home care workers (2018-19), the Glasgow equal pay strike (2018), and Southampton council strike in 2010-11, and teachers at Valentine primary school in Southampton this year.

If council union leaders had mobilised their huge ‘army’ of members in national strike action, council cuts could have been halted.

These struggles, especially in Birmingham against a right-wing Blairite council, exposed the need for a different approach. Unite assistant general secretary Howard Beckett got significant support for his criticism of Birmingham Blairite councillors when he told them: “If you act like Tories, we’ll treat you like Tories.”

By calling for an immediate freeze on council cuts, Corbyn would distinguish himself from these ‘pink Tories’ and mark a decisive turning point in the election.

Calling for support from council trade unions to back his call to freeze cuts would help in mobilising the kind of election campaign that is needed to bury the scepticism about a Corbyn-led government and inspire confidence that real change is coming.

Corbyn must take the ‘Liverpool road’

In the 1980s a major battle took place against the Thatcher government’s attack on local council spending. While a united campaign of over 20 Labour councils mobilised to oppose cuts, it was the Militant-led Liverpool Labour council (Militant was the forerunner of the Socialist Party) that showed the road needed for victory.

With the backing of a mighty mass movement of council workers, including strike action, their trade unions and working-class communities - mobilised through the then democratic structures of the Labour Party - it refused to carry out Thatcher’s cuts.

This meant the council won an extra £60 million from the government to carry out its programme; building over 5,000 new council homes, leisure centres, nurseries, a city park and creating thousands of jobs and apprenticeships.

This fighting strategy remains the only way to end the decade of austerity. Labour currently controls over 120 councils with a combined spending greater than 16 EU countries’ government budgets!

As TUSC outlined in October 2018: “The Labour-led councils control combined budgets of £78.83 billion, and hold around £9.33 billion in general fund reserves, £1.91 billion in housing reserves, and £2.97 billion useable capital receipts reserves.”

If Corbyn was to mobilise this force under the banner - "Stop council cuts now!" - it would demonstrate to millions of workers, in deeds not just words, that he is determined to end austerity.
**Could a nationalised tata service work?**

Oliver Waddes

In the session debuting the minimum wage at Socialism 2019, I asked who thought we should call on the government to bring in a £15 or £15 minimum wage at the behest of the Tata Steel workers. Everyone indicated for £15. Afterwards, some of those who indicated £15, although not in my session of course, would have been in the Tata Steel's Scunthorpe works management at every level. Who knows how that particular worker would have voted back then if there would have been a ballot? It would have been a far cry from the situation we face today.

We could have a decent standard of living without having to be on the lowest £15 - employment rights, sick pay, holidays and a pension. This would make a difference, and prove that Tata Steel was right in the agitation of the Tata Steel works. I did not think of it, but it is a good point that just a day before the inquiry on the Tata Steel scandal of privatising public transport, the Tata Steel workers could have called on the government to bring in a £15 or £15 minimum wage at the behest of the Tata Steel workers.

Could a nationalised Tata service work?

**The private sector will never provide broadband to every home, nationalisation will.**

Oliver Waddes

I was really interested in your article on minimum wages at Socialism 2019. A Tata Steel 'breach of payment' has failed to deliver - as usual, and apparently always. When we worked for Tata, their inhouse trading union, the Communications Workers' Union (CWU) - passed policy calling for the nationwide rollout of broadband to provide broadband to every home, and to make people's lives easier.

The fact that only 6% of the population in Britain have broadband on their package demonstrates policy failure that is completely divided, splitting between the private sector and tech companies at the time making the investment to develop the network. That is why, despite the paucity of proposals included in the manifesto, the government did not leave the Tata Steel workers alone, and a policy was needed. The government intended to convince that Tata Steel was right in the agitation of the Tata Steel workers.

Denied

Without public sector investment, there is a real danger of people in performance-related pay not getting decent pay, or even being made redundant, unless the government did as much as the Tata Steel workers in 1972.
In Defence of Trotskyism

Posters withdraw goodwill from cruise bosses

Universe and College Union strikes

“This is exploitation!”

Help fund the brighton campaign

Socialist Party

University and College Union strikes

“THIS IS EXPLOITATION!”

Help fund the brighton campaign: support our students”

Brighton

Brighton University

Over 180 parents, children, trade unionists and college students joined the protest outside the University College Union (UCU) Primary School. Brighton on 21 November to support the striking primary school workers.

The protest was joined by education workers from college and university level, and students joined the picket line in support of their parents.

The picket line was strong and enthusiastic, with over 100 people joining the protest, many of whom had been involved in previous strikes.

The mood was one of determination, with the picketers united in their demand for fair pay and conditions.

The protest was a significant moment in the ongoing battle for workers’ rights and fair pay, and it was a clear indication of the growing solidarity among workers in the education sector.

Brighton

Brighton University

Help fund the brighton campaign: support our students

Selling to the Socialist

Gateshead

On Tyneside, Corbyn’s election manifesto has been roundly and widely rejected, says Nancy Taaffe. It’s stirring, but not shaken up yet, on the streets of Tyneside.

This could change. It could morph into something bigger.

Jane Ward

Southampton

This could be a game-changer. Working about the disposals in Royal Mail, and the consequences, was raised on Sunday, 20 November. We met people who were aware of the cuts and who wanted to see them stopped. We also met people who felt that the cuts were necessary.

The fight for fair pay and conditions continues.

Bill Mullins

Leeds

It is vital to fight together for a better future. We could have sold more, but many people were not aware of the cuts and were not prepared to fight.

Lucy Riglin, Socialist Party member

Help fund the brighton campaign: support our students

Brighton

Help fund the brighton campaign: support our students

Campaigns/workplace

The Labour Party had just launched its election manifesto. This was raised in the campaign and in the lead-up to the election, with a number of conversations taking place in the Labour Party and the wider movement.

Corbyn knows what he is doing. He is reasonable and sensible.

Zara, a young mother with a child, said:

In 2015 I had a major heart attack. It is far too late to try and save the NHS and its resources. We need to stand together and fight for our rights.

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Lewisham

The Socialist Party branch in Lewisham has been working on the NHS cuts and privatisation for many years. Many people felt that their lives depended on the NHS, and they were determined to fight for a better future.

We met people who were keen to talk about the NHS cuts and privatisation. More and more workers are becoming aware of the cuts and are prepared to fight.

The NHS is a national treasure, and we must fight to protect it.

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The workers’ movement, which began two years ago, struck fear into the hearts of both wings of the regime. From the start, the regime used brutal repression, which has continued to this day. But while they may not have been able to immediately achieve their aims, for example the unions’ two-day general strike in February 2019, the demonstrations that followed brought the regime to its knees.

Sri Lanka: Presidential election sees return of dictatorial Rajapaksa clan

No one seriously believes that the Rajapaksa clan will be ousted from power. The current government has already started to make the necessary preparations in order to ensure its survival. Despite the recent general elections, which were won by the ruling party, the country remains in a state of political instability. The opposition is divided and lacks a clear strategy. The situation in the country is characterized by political violence, corruption, and economic hardship. The government has been accused of human rights violations and the suppression of free speech.

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Donald Trump is yet again visiting Britain, on 3 December, to conduct a meeting with representatives of Nato in London. And once again he will be met by protests.

Trump's last two visits to Britain have been met with lively protests, and in the summer of 2018 over 250,000 people flooded the streets of London to protest against the political ideas which Trump represents - an openly racist, sexist, and ultimately anti-working class president who ruthlessly stands in the interests of the billionaire class in the US.

Trump is also an out-and-out climate change denier, and in 2017 announced the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris climate agreement.

He did this to help boost the profits of a big section of the American capitalist class, despite the agreements' very limited measures against climate change, including the fact that the targets set out by the agreement are completely voluntary.

The capitalist class, in its endless pursuit of bigger and bigger profits, is in a constant battle against the protections workers and young people have won in defence of the environment - protections which would restrict the rights of big business to plunder the planets resources and burn fossil fuels.

Trump's visit this year falls in the middle of the general election. He will no doubt be keen to emphasise the 'special relationship' he and Boris Johnson both share during his visit.

Johnson and Trump are two sides of the same coin - they both stand up for the interests of big business, putting profits and privatisation ahead of not only the environment, but also ahead of our living standards, access to affordable housing, free education, public services, and our futures.

In Britain, we have an opportunity at this election to kick out Johnson and the rest of the Tories, and elect a Corbyn-led government - which would reflect the interests of the working class and young people. Defeating Johnson would represent a huge blow for Trump and the rest of the billionaire class internationally. On 3 December, let Trump know he and his political ideas aren't welcome in Britain.

And on 12 December let's channel that anger to kick out the Tories and fight for a Corbyn-led government with socialist policies!