Boris Johnson has announced the minimum wage is going up. It’s not by nearly enough. And at the same time, the Tories let bosses get away with paying hundreds of thousands of workers below the legal minimum!

Scandalously, nearly one in four workers on the mis-named National ‘Living Wage’ is underpaid, according to a report by the state’s Low Pay Commission. To make matters worse, the figures show a year-on-year increase. 305,000 workers lost out in 2016; 339,000 were underpaid in 2017; and 369,000 were swindled in 2018. Retail, hospitality, cleaning, maintenance and childcare are the worst culprits.

The official figures - damning in their own right - only tell a partial tale. What they don’t reflect is the something-for-nothing culture that bosses have come to expect. Workers are pressured - and often outright bullied, particularly in zero-hour workplaces - into working unpaid overtime, as bosses squeeze every last ounce of profit out of us.

Working through breaks, starting work early to ‘get ahead’, or staying behind to ‘finish up’ - all while being off the clock - are illegal. Yet they’re commonplace in many industries.

Moreover, in a bid to cut costs, many employers are laying off (or not replacing) staff - while expecting the remaining workforce to pick up the slack by working harder!

It is clear that this government of big business, intent on scrapping workers’ rights, cannot be relied upon even to uphold its own laws on these matters. Some employers even create jobs to gain government tax incentives, then keep those workers in poverty with zero and low-hour contracts.

However, it doesn’t have to be this way! By joining a union and getting organised in the workplace we can force the bosses back.

Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), falls far short when she simply says more investment is needed to identify lawbreaking employers. The TUC could take a lead from French workers, and boost workers’ confidence with a call to action on low pay and a national demonstration.

Underpaying workers is nothing short of theft. By getting organised in the workplace we can collectively enforce our rights and show the bosses we will not tolerate this injustice.

By having the confidence to make demands, backed by preparedness to demonstrate and strike for better conditions, we can make it clear to the bosses that it’s only decent wages, not poverty pay, that will do!

The Socialist Party fights for
- £12-an-hour minimum wage now, without exemptions, as an immediate step towards £15
- Full-time hours for all who want them, with flexibility on workers’ terms, not the bosses’
- Trade union action to defend, extend and enforce workers’ rights
The Socialist

2

The Socialist is the weekly newspaper for working-class news, socialist analysis and fighting strategy.

Editorial

2

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the Socialist

WHAT TO DO

What should trade union members do?

Before making a nomination, the executive committee of the Labour Party trade unions should discuss the membership crisis and union members should be educated about the candidates.

Members should demand that the unions table questions and demand the way forward to build a mass movement around the Labour leadership and a working-class programme.

The answer to the so-called ‘red belt’ was eroded when our councils were used to support Blairism, is illustrated by the Labour Party LeadershiP contest.

- closely followed by Emily Thornberry, and Lisa Nandy who told the Today programme Long-Bailey achieved unity and so on. It is essential not to back- "like a hole in the head". She intervened in a Twitter ex-

"...the railways?"

"...one found by the Skwawkbox blog, "..."...he process to elect a new particle that built homes and created jobs, instead of the same old profit-making, profit-making, without compulsion."

"... SoCialiSM and inTErnatiOnalIsm..."

"...the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is a democratic socialist plan of action that safeguards the environment."

"...As capitalism dominates the globe, and run them under ownership the top 150 companies and..."

"...end police harassment."

"...On the candidates, and debate..."

"...All workers, including part-timers, receive a full-time..."

"...The Blairite Tony Blair has lost his base..."

"...not achieve by this means, anyway.

"...the whole of early obsolescence and un-recycled energy and into ending the problems of..."

"...A democratic socialist plan of action that..."

"... workers' party with a socialist..."

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"...workers' party with a socialist..."

"...youth and age, and other forms of..."

"...members should demand that..."
Labour leadership race

**REVERSE UNISON’S UNDEMONSTRATIVE NOMINATION OF BLAIRITE STARMER**

The Labour Party leadership race has once again put the Labour Party in the spotlight. The recent Labour leadership re-

omination has been characterized by a lack of enthusiasm and only a small number of candidates have stood for the role. However, there is a growing concern among members that the party is not adequately representing the views of its grassroots members.

The Labour leadership race is an important opportunity for the Labour Party to demonstrate its commitment to democracy and transparency. The party must ensure that the process is fair and that all members have the opportunity to express their views.

Through this race, the Labour Party has the chance to show that it is not just the people showing up in delegations at the NEC who should have a say in the decision-making process. Because of that, there is a need for the NEC to be more accountable and transparent.

The NEC should consider expanding its role to include a greater emphasis on consultation with grassroots members. This could involve creating a system where decisions are made through a democratic process that includes feedback from local branches and members.

The NEC must also be held accountable for its actions. If members feel that their voices are not being heard, they should have a means of challenging decisions made by the NEC.

In conclusion, the Labour leadership race presents an opportunity for the party to demonstrate its commitment to democracy and transparency. The NEC must be held accountable for its actions and decisions, and the process should be made more inclusive to ensure that all members have a say in shaping the future of the Labour Party.
A long-running dispute between Hackney council and school bus workers over a 12-hour split shift at a school in Hackney is due to enter its second week next month.

The council has agreed to pay a 12-hour split shift job to a union shop steward, but it has refused to agree to similar terms for all school bus workers.

The union is demanding that the council negotiations over the split shift take place at the same time as those for other school bus workers.

The council is arguing that the 12-hour split shift job is a special case and cannot be applied to all school bus workers.

For example, the union said that the 12-hour split shift job is paid at a lower rate than the 8-hour shift job, and that it is not as safe for workers as the 8-hour shift job.

The council is also arguing that the 12-hour split shift job is not as safe for workers as the 8-hour shift job, because it is more likely to cause fatigue.

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Sustainable food production and the need for socialism

Recently, the term ‘greenwashing’ has become popular in discussions about climate change. This is the idea that companies and governments are using sustainability as a marketing tool to promote their products and services, while not actually doing anything meaningful to combat climate change. In other words, system change requires socialist political action and control over the means of production.

The capitalist system is responsible for around 25% of emissions. It has led to the changes in the atmosphere that are responsible for around 50% of warming. The industrial food system is responsible for 40% of fresh water used, contributing to antibiotic resistance and environmental degradation. Many studies show widespread pesticide presence in human urine in all countries studied.

The Green Revolution increased food production worldwide, but so what would happen if we banned it? Under capitalist agriculture, food is produced as a commodity to be sold on the market, not to serve the needs of the people. Increased production didn't stop hunger. People starved because the capitalist market produced things that were not needed by the majority of the population.

At the same time, rising agricultural prices have helped drive many small-scale farmers off their land. This has led to the changes in the atmosphere that are responsible for around 50% of warming. The industrial food system is responsible for 40% of fresh water used, contributing to antibiotic resistance and environmental degradation. Many studies show widespread pesticide presence in human urine in all countries studied.

Sustainable food production is possible by promoting local, organic, and regenerative farming practices. This includes growing food as a service to society, not for profit. The point is to address the consequences of capitalist production, not the method of production.

We need to take democratic charge of the food system and use it to promote health while looking after the environment. The food industry is a necessary first step in transforming the capitalist system. It is possible to produce food without harming the environment.

If capitalism can’t make a profit, they will throw the food away rather than feed the hungry. Today a quarter of all food produced goes to waste due to the search for the highest yields. The cost of the Green Revolution is high, not only for its adverse environmental impacts but also for the health of the people who produce it.

The antibiotic residue ends up in household water systems, as indeed it does in all water systems. It is therefore deflected from the search for the highest yields while increasing the cost of food production.

The solution to this doomsday scenario is to promote local, organic, and regenerative farming practices. This includes growing food as a service to society, not for profit. The point is to address the consequences of capitalist production, not the method of production.

We need to take democratic charge of the food system and use it to promote health while looking after the environment. The food industry is a necessary first step in transforming the capitalist system. It is possible to produce food without harming the environment.
It’s no surprise whatsoever that millions of young people voted for Jeremy Corbyn in the December general election. Despite Labour’s defeat at the hands of Blairite sabotage against Corbyn in Parliament, the media, and the council chamber, Labour overwhelmingly got by and far the largest youth vote compared to other parties.

56% of 18 to 24 year olds voted for Corbyn’s programme, as well as 54% of 24 to 29 year olds. The Tories got 21% and 23% in the same respective age categories.

Although this was slightly down from 2017 - when 62% of 20 to 24 year olds voted Labour - the youth still overwhelmingly went to Corbyn. In seats kept by Labour, the youth population was on average 1.5 times higher. 1.4 million under 25s registered to vote, 36% more than in 2017.

Young workers and students have suffered under Tory cuts. Resolution Foundation research found that the living standards of millennials are on the decline in most measurements.

Half of today’s young people believe that they will have worse living standards compared to their parents. Only 22% think we will do better.

The young people who voted for Corbyn’s manifesto will now ask - what are the next steps necessary to win those ideas?

Unbearable

Life for millions of young people has been unbearable under the last decade of Tory rule and will continue to be so long as they’re in government. That Corbyn didn’t win will no doubt leave young workers and students feeling disappointed, if not extremely worried, about what their future will look like under a Boris Johnson government.

Despite the Tory victory, the idea of an alternative to the misery of capitalist driven austerity will not simply disappear back to where it came from, in fact it can grow.

The genie is well and truly out of the bottle. This is especially true for millions of young people whose lives have been blighted by austerity.

As we enter 2020, it is more vital than ever that young people get organised to fight against Tory austerity in workplaces (see front page), in schools, colleges and universities, and in local communities.

Whatever happens in the Labour leadership contest (see pages 2-4), young people and students desperately need a party which is rooted in and takes its cues from the working class. A mass party of workers and youth that will fight for our interests against the big business bosses and their capitalist system.

Socialist Students is calling for a ‘council of war’ on the university campuses - to bring together students, activists, uni workers and unions to discuss how to resist further Tory attacks to our education and our democratic right to organise and protest on campus. This should include University and College Union (UCU) - which is discussing taking further strike action in the new year - and Unison.

The National Union of Students (NUS) leadership should now begin organising for a mass student demonstration, linked to mass student and workers’ meetings on campuses.

These local meetings should be organised by student unions - and the campus trade unions too. They should discuss and plan the tactics of building for a national protest, linked to a programme of refounding and democratising NUS.

If you want to help in the fight against the Tories, then join with us.
Locals can’t afford. The market is a stone’s throw from the new development of expensive flats built on West Ham’s old Boleyn football ground. We don’t want another Rathbone street market, near by in Canning Town, where the market is reduced to a handful of stalls surrounded by flats and restaurants locals can’t afford.

Land grab

Newham is already victim to the big business land grab happening all over London. The traders, their stalls and the vital service of providing decent cheap food must stay.

The mayor let slip that there will be £45.3 million cuts in the borough, and that the future of the elderly sheltered accommodation, Hamara Ghar, opposite the market, is up for ‘consultation’. Some of the residents were in the room. They said: ‘we are here, you have consulted us and we are telling you we don’t want to go anywhere!’

Socialist Party members responded to all this by saying, Newham is already on its knees. There are people sleeping in the parks and children living in basements and garages. Where will your axe fall, because this borough cannot take another blow?

The mayor - elected 20 months ago on a ticket of standing up for Newham and being different from her arch-Blairite predecessor Robin Wales - said: ‘Newham council will not break the law; we have to set a legal budget.’

She blamed the old administration for failing to put up council tax and made it clear she will. The audience responded by saying we don’t want that either.

The current tranche of Labour councillors have been in power for 20 months. They have done a few good things, like employ 43 youth workers more than any other borough. But there is no big visible improvement in living conditions. In fact things have got worse.

The mayor and council were given no grace by locals at the meeting. Gentrification of Queen’s Market and closure of Hamara Ghar will be fought if they attempt it.

We warned the mayor that we will be protesting against her just like we did with Robin Wales. The mayor told us she was different from the old administration, she said she was a fighter.

If that is the case, then set a no-cuts budget. Socialist Party members will fight for that.

- Save Hamara Ghar and Queen’s Market
- No to gentrification
- Give working-class people democratic control of our communities

Stop gentrification in Newham

“We ARE HERE, YOU HAVE CONSULTED US AND WE’RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE!”

100 Newham, east London residents and market traders crowded into a church hall on Green Street to hear Labour Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz explain plans to ‘regenerate’ Queen’s Market. The fear though, of all at the meeting, was that what we will actually get is gentrification.

The market is a stone’s throw from the new development of expensive flats built on West Ham’s old Boleyn football ground. We don’t want another Rathbone street market, near by in Canning Town, where the market is reduced to a handful of stalls surrounded by flats and restaurants locals can’t afford.

Socialist Party national committee meeting

The Socialist Party held a very important National Committee on 11-12 January, the first since the general election.

The meeting was against the background of an increasingly unstable world situation and global workers’ uprisings.

We discussed the reasons behind the Tory victory in the election, the Labour leadership contest (see pages 2-4) and what is likely to happen under a Johnson government.

We need to be battle-ready for the attacks on the working class coming from the Tories. And so we had a special session on our work in the trade unions.

There was a session on building the Socialist Party. There has been an upturn in people joining the party since Johnson’s victory.

And we agreed campaigns to increase the sales and subscriptions of the Socialist, the fighting fund and membership subs too, so we have the resources to put forward a fighting socialist strategy.

Socialist Party branches should arrange now to get a report from national committee members.

We also made a plan for the Socialist Party’s national congress on 29 February and 1 March.

London

PROTESTERS RETURN TO OPPOSE MIDDLE EAST WAR

Lily Douglas
Stoke Socialist Party

On 11 January, Stop the War called a second demonstration in central London after the recent attacks in Iraq and Iran. Whilst it was not a huge turnout, the march was an opportunity to talk to young people about the workers’ action needed to stop war, and socialist ideas to end capitalism.

It was good to see young people join the march and their determination to fight against the Johnson and Trump governments. A team of Socialist Party members took part, including new members.

One brand new Socialist Party member said she was encouraged by the loud chanting and lively mood. She noticed the amount of support we got from young people and how many members of the public stopped to chat to us about socialism and our stance around events in the USA.

Overall, despite the fact it was only a small march, we managed to make an impact. The front page of the Socialist paper read: ‘Climate change. Poverty. War. Capitalism must go. Fight for socialism.’ We sold 40 copies. And we met at least five people who wanted to know more about joining the Socialist Party. This is on top of 33 people who bought a Socialist paper and dozen who wanted to join the Socialist Party at the previous Saturday’s anti-war protest.

- Check out the latest socialist analysis on Iran page 14
- Search ‘Trump attacks Iran: London protest - We need workers’ action against war and austerity’ at socialistparty.org.uk for a report of the previous week’s protest

20 young people protested outside Barclays bank in Nottingham on 11 January. Eleven pension fund shareholders are putting the first ever climate resolution to Barclay’s annual general meeting, calling on the bank to phase out investment in fossil-fuel projects and companies.

Since 2015, Barclays has invested £64 million in fossil-fuel initiatives, including tar sands oil projects in Canada, causing devastation to First Nation lands and communities.

It is not just Barclays but the capitalist system that has caused, and will not solve, the climate crisis. We need socialist change to end climate change.

Pete Mason
East London Socialist Party

Socialist Party national committee meeting

The government stands accused of ‘systemic failure’ to uphold building regulations and keep residents safe from fire.

Over 100 angry leaseholders told the Tory minister for housing that their homes have been rendered dangerously unsafe and of zero value, at an all-party parliamentary group meeting on cladding reform for leaseholders and common holders.

The cladding scandal has heightened the demand for the abolition of leasehold, so that residents can own their homes and can make their own decisions.

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Nottingham

Youth protest against Barclays

£64 million fossil-fuel investments

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The govern
WE NEED SOCIALISTS IN LONDON’S CITY HALL

A socialist mayor could spearhead the fight to stop the Tories

London Socialist Party statement

Labour London mayor Sadiq Khan has joined the front ranks of the right-wing Labour Blairites attacking Jeremy Corbyn’s policies. Who will fight for those policies in May’s London elections if Sadiq Khan goes unchallenged by socialists and trade unionists?

Sadiq Khan has not actively fought austerity in any shape or form. He has not used his powers to fight for council housing and he has not supported workers fighting to improve their lives in the various strikes across London.

Billionaire’s mayor

He is known as ‘the property developers’ man’, as well as saying things like “London needs more billionaires.” We don’t, we need socialist policies that will make London work for the people who work and live there.

London is seen as ‘Labour’, but so was Scotland, so was the north of England. The same conditions - the housing crisis, the struggle on poverty pay, etc, exist here and the same potential for disillusionment is here. It is the failure to fight by right-wing councils and Blairites that is responsible for undermining support for Labour, not the fight for socialist policies.

Housing crisis

London faces an historic housing crisis with an estimated need for 800,000 extra homes. There are record levels of street homelessness and families in temporary accommodation. 170,000 people are homeless in London, and almost 9,000 sleep rough - three and a half times what it was in 2005.

House prices are unaffordable and people have to pay up to 70% of their income in private rents. Tens of thousands of families have been forced out of London and many more suffer overcrowding.

Yet Sadiq Khan’s London plan involves building high density blocks of expensive flats at transport hubs and town centres around London, with a general aim of only 30% ‘affordable’ homes, handing public land over to private property developers.

There will only be 116,000 “affordable” starts by 2022, and “private developers will continue to build most of London’s new homes”.

We say:
- An immediate moratorium on ‘social cleansing’ schemes. Stop the demolition
- No to Sadiq Khan’s London plan
- In place of handing public land to private developers to build blocks of expensive flats, build council houses on social rent, with secure tenancies, and take over empty speculative property
- 100% council housing on public land
- Set a London rent cap

Low pay

Still over 700,000 workers are paid less than the London Living Wage in London, and only 19 out of 33 London councils are London Living Wage employers.

The London Living Wage has risen to £10.75 an hour but that doesn’t take people up to a decent minimum income - four in ten Londoners don’t reach the Minimum Income Standard - that’s 3.6 million people.

We say:
- End poverty pay - set £15 an hour as the London Living Wage and campaign for it to be the National Minimum Wage
- End zero-hour contracts in all Greater London Authority jobs and call on all London councils to do the same

In May 2020 the Greater London Authority, made up of the London mayor and Greater London Assembly, is up for election. The mayor is elected on a first and second preference basis, and the assembly through a form of proportional representation.

We believe it is vital that there is a stand for socialist policies. We are prepared to stand socialist candidates but we want to work with any other forces - trade unionists, socialists and anti-austerity campaigners, inside and outside the Labour Party - to ensure these policies are fought for in this election, and help refund a party in the interests of working-class and young people.

London councils have lost 50% of their funding, losing libraries, nurseries, social care, jobs and pay.

We say:
- Not one more cut passed down from central government by the GLA. Enough is enough!

Fire service cuts

Boris Johnson closed ten fire stations, cut 14 engines and 552 firefighters. Sadiq Khan has not reinstated them.

We say:
- Reopen fire stations and reinstate the fire engines and jobs cut by Boris Johnson

Transport cuts

Sadiq Khan is passing on Department of Transport cuts to the tune of £1 billion a year.

Tube ticket offices were closed by Boris Johnson and not reopened by Khan.

We say:
- Re-open tube ticket offices
- Cut fares
- Immediately end and reverse the devastating Transport for London cuts passed on by Sadiq Khan
Climate change: Capitalism is the problem – not the solution

The Socialist Inbox
Do you have something to say?
Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

@ The Socialist

Readers’ opinion

Climate strikes

2020 is the year that will bring the UN Climate Change summit to the UK. But will the world’s rulers be able to come up with a solution?

The same conference in 2019 famously agreed nothing, with the two major economies of US and China failing to commit to improving their targets for reducing emissions.

2019 was a year when collective understanding of the scale of climate change moved closer to reality. But capitalist governments and corporations are incapable in acting with the urgency required.

Just as they cry crocodile tears about global poverty but continue to ruthlessly exploit workers and the poor, they continue to ruthlessly exploit the earth too.

Some capitalists and capitalist commentators do, however, understand the long term consequences of climate change on their ability to make money.

The Bank of England has launched a “climate stress-test” for companies to monitor the effects on their business.

The solution will not be arrived at by discussion groups of capitalists, bound by their unrelenting drive for profits. Solving climate change calls for a plan for the economy, where investment by the state in green technologies can far outweigh any token gestures from the capitalists.

But to make the change required it is vital to be able to harness the vast amount of wealth in society held by a tiny number of corporations. This is why we call for the nationalisation of the top 150 monopolies and the banking system under democratic workers’ control and management.

Drawing up a plan to save the environment requires the democratic input of workers who drive the economy and production. It also requires workers to struggle for it. The development of workers joining climate strikes points in the direction of what is necessary in the next decade.

Niall Mulholland
East London

Climate change: Capitalism is the problem – not the solution

Services mugged

Two young people tried to mug me on my way home. I immediately knocked on the nearest house for assistance. The kind person there straightaway drove me home. He said that this isn’t the first incident. That young people, that are hard to find a foster home for, had just been dumped at the address I walked past.

Right-wing politicians try to say there won’t be consequences if they make spending cuts. They’ve been saying it for decades and it’s a lie.

Romford is a Tory council, and the provision of services is shocking. But it’s exactly the same in Blairite Labour councils. There is a consequence to cuts. From flammable cladding on Grenfell to no homes, or jobs, or youth services for young people.

All I want is a safe, happy life for me, my partner and son. And all socialists want is a safe environment, with decent jobs, and well-funded services for millions of working-class people.

Ian Pattisson
East London

Long-Bailey in retreat

Rebecca Long-Bailey announced that she has accepted the ten “pledges” demanded by the Jewish Board of Deputies. These include giving a monopoly of “antisemitism training” to the so-called “Jewish Labour Movement” (a body which refused to campaign for Labour at the last election), outsourcing disciplinary procedures - including the expulsion of members - to an outside body independent of control of the party membership, and expelling members who campaign to support those unjustly expelled.

This capitulation on anti-semitism is bad. But far worse is that she was capable of such a capitulation. A socialist prime minister will have to stand up to Trump and his nuclear arsenal, stand up to the IMF, stand up to the CIA, MI6, the permanent civil service, the press barons, the corporations and the capitalist class at home and abroad.

Syria was crushed by the IMF and the ECB who pulled the plug on the Greek economy. In Chile, the Popular Unity government was crushed by a CIA-led coup which massacred thousands of socialists.

Long-Bailey capitulated to the Jewish Board of Deputies, a committee of minor community nobodies who don’t even have a pea-shooter between them. Socialist ideas are utterly useless if you are not prepared to fight for them.

Amnon Yizhak
north London

Mandatory reselection

Whoever comes out on top, if Labour’s leaders aren’t committed to reinstating mandatory reselection then the party is just going to recede back to Blairite control and a return to the liberal pro-establishment politics that working-class people have had enough of.

Michael Hirst, Hull

No cuts test

“If a left-wing candidate is to pick up the mantle laid down by Corbyn and build on it, it’s essential they don’t retreat from any of his pledges on nationalisation, workers’ rights, housing, abolition of student fees and all the other urgently needed steps in the manifesto he spearheaded” (The Socialist, 9 January).

They will also need to show a commitment to transforming the party by building support for the selection of fighting socialist MPs and councillors - who are willing to take on the Tories and ensure Labour councils join the resistance and refuse to carry out further Tory cuts!

Nick Chaffey
Southampton

Front and back stabbers

Labour leadership candidate Jess Phillips once said: “I would knife Jeremy Corbyn in the front, not the back.” It’s important to remember this quote.

A careerist at heart, her policies will be a return of Labour trying to convince big business that they’ll manage British capitalism better than the Tories and continuing austerity.

Manny Dominguez
Bradford

Dynastic blues

Poor Prince Harry indeed! Remember when he boasted about obliterating Afghans - carrying on a long royal heritage of fronting imperialist invasions - from his helicopter? Or the time he thought it was amusing to dress up as a Nazi?

He’s a scion of a privileged, bigoted ruling dynasty who has now fallen out with the rest of them.

Niall Mulholland
East London

Annis horribilis2

Harry and Meghan’s attempt at adapting to a ‘modern monarchy’ has inadvertently lobbed a hand-grenade into the House of Windsor.

Not least because it further exposes the privileged, publicly funded sumptuous lifestyles of these feudal relics.

Coming in the wake of Prince Andrew’s disastrous PR interview on BBC Newsnight, it’s good to see Her Maj experiencing another annus horribilis - something that we commoners experience every year under her reign.

Simon Carter
Newham

Trendsetters

I’ve no problem with Harry and Meghan pulling out of the royal family. I just hope it’s the start of a trend!

Roger Bannister
Liverpool

Who and where now for the Corbynistas?

n photo Paul Mattsson

Gosh! Is that a job?

photo NorthernIrelandOffice/CC

The Socialist

16-22 January 2020
France

Strike wave over pensions - Macron government in retreat

As the biggest and most widespread strikes and protests since the transport workers' action in the current light - has sparked off a third round of mass protests in Iran in just over three years.

In a matter of days, the widespread 'down with the dictator' protests - which included major rallies and street demonstrations - have been unfolding and accelerated. In the last few days, Iran has been facing some of the largest protests since the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Iran's government responded by deploying troops and tanks to Restore order and arrested. In the last few days, Iran has been facing some of the largest protests since the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Iranian authorities have been using violent tactics to suppress the protests and have arrested hundreds of protesters.

The protests have been driven by a range of issues, including economic hardship, political repression, and the regime's response to the Afghan war. The protests have been demanding the release of political prisoners, an end to corruption, and the government's failure to address the country's economic problems.

The protests have spread across the country and have been met with a heavy-handed response from the regime, including the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition.

Despite the government's attempts to suppress the protests, the scale and intensity of the demonstrations have increased, with people continuing to take to the streets.

The government has announced a series of reforms, including promises to increase social security and improve living standards, in an attempt to quell the protests.

The strike wave over pensions - Macron government in retreat

As the strike wave over pensions continues, the French government faces mounting pressure to address the country's economic problems and to reform the pension system.

The strike wave has been led by transport workers, who have been protesting against the government's plans to reform the pension system, which would eliminate the current retirement age and introduce a new system based on points.
It’s an emergency! In November, none of England’s 118 major accident and emergency departments met their targets - the first time ever. In December the situation got worse. Most hospitals in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland also failed to treat and admit, transfer or discharge 95% of patients within four hours. The sickest patients needing admission are most likely to wait for beds to become free while lying on trolleys in corridors or waiting areas. This leads to queueing ambulances outside. Over 80,000 ambulance patients - one in six - waited at least 30 minutes before they could be handed to A&E staff during this winter’s first five weeks. Ambulance response times after 999 calls are up as a result.

So far, winter has been mild. Icy conditions immediately send casualty numbers soaring as people fall, have road accidents or arrive in hypothermia.

The never-ending list of statistics describes an NHS buckling under the strain. Every figure represents people suffering.

Stress and sickness
Knowing this human cost puts massive strain on health workers. Decisions must be made fast. There’s no time to comfort and reassure sick patients and their families when the queue stretches out the door.

Staff stagger home exhausted and it’s hard to switch off. ‘Was I right to do this? Should I have checked that?’ No wonder sickness levels are up. 200,000 nurses have left the profession since 2011. Johnson claims he’s going to persuade some to stay and others to return!

Nurses and ambulance staff in Northern Ireland are showing how to fight low pay and unsafe staffing levels. 20,000 were on strike on 8 January, including 9,500 Royal College of Nursing members - the RCN’s first strike in 103 years (see page 6).

Huge public support for their action helped drive politicians from sectarian and pro-big business parties to re-form a power-sharing government after three years’ stalemate. Unions should organise now to defend all health workers and the services they provide. An emergency conference calling an emergency national demonstration, building for national strike action, is needed. These should be the first steps to defeat Tory privatisation plans and reverse years of austerity.