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Issue 1071
30 January - 5 February 2020



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the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

STOP THE CUTS
Resist austerity and set
no-cuts council budgets



> Reports: p10-11

CORONAVIRUS
Capitalism limits
response to
viral outbreaks

> News: p4



**BREXIT...
and British capitalism**
> Feature: p8-9
**Johnson's Huawei
balancing act**
> News: p5



pic Anne Burgess/CC

End health and wealth divide

FIGHT FOR



OUR NHS

Alistair Tice
Socialist Party Yorkshire

Take a ride on the 83 bus across Sheffield and it takes ten years off your life! That's how long life expectancy falls travelling just ten miles from the wealthier parts of the city to the poorest.

And 'healthy life expectancy' - that is, without serious illness or disability - falls a staggering 20 years! These shocking statistics are repeated in every city and across the country, exposing the health inequalities in Tory Britain.

Boris Johnson now talks about 'levelling up' infrastructure. But his Conservative governments have spent the last ten austerity years racing our NHS to the bottom of international healthcare league tables.

All health experts agree that the NHS needs an annual increase in funding of 4% just to stand still. But the average over the last decade has been only 1.6%, meaning Britain now has the lowest health

spending per person of the major western economies.

17,000 less beds than in 2010. 10,000 doctors short. 40,000 nurses short. 122,000 vacancies in social care.

A junior doctor writing in the Guardian says: "Without beds we can't admit new patients; without staff we can't treat patients; and without social care we can't discharge people."

"This is why our A&E departments, barometers of the overall health of the service, are on the brink



of collapse with the worst waiting times in NHS history. Patients are waiting hours to be picked up by ambulances, and queues of ambulances are waiting hours to drop their patients off.

"More people have died waiting for care in ambulances or on A&E trolleys in the last four years than have died from terrorism in the UK in the last 50 years."

So what does the Tory health secretary propose? Move the goalposts - scrap the

A&E waiting targets.

The NHS will never be safe in Tory hands. NHS staff and health campaigners must take matters into their own hands.

The same junior doctor makes the call for all A&E staff to strike and protest for five minutes a shift. This points the way for NHS trade unions to take the lead in calling significant action. Like the nurses in Northern Ireland, whose recent, historic strike of 12 hours was joined by other hospital staff walking out for 24 hours.

The strike had overwhelming public support, and won significant concessions including on funding. Imagine what united national action could achieve.

the Socialist

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

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

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

NO 'BLANK CHEQUE' FOR LABOUR LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES

Build united working-class struggle against Tory cuts and attacks on workers' rights



WHAT WE THINK

The nomination stage of the Labour leadership contest is in full swing, but without the enthusiasm within and beyond the party's rank and file that marked the surge behind Jeremy Corbyn when he stood for leader.

Only 14,700 people paid £25 to vote as registered supporters during the 48-hour period giving that option, whereas in 2016 the figure was 183,541. A certain upturn has been reported in the number signing up to become a full party member - another route to gaining a vote in the contest - but is not yet clear who most of them will vote for as leader and deputy leader, or how the hundreds of thousands of already existing members will vote.

All the candidates say at least some of what they think members who supported Corbyn want to hear - that they will continue and develop Corbyn's pledges for measures in the interests of the working class. However, for a real choice in the potential direction of the party to be seen, clear boundaries need to be exposed between candidates who will fundamentally serve capitalist interests and those who genuinely want to resist them.

No false 'unity'

All the candidates argue for 'unity'. But it can, in reality, only be a false unity, because the class interests involved can't be reconciled except on the basis of a disastrous turning away from socialist policies by the left.

Keir Starmer, a former Director of Public Prosecutions who has been declared the best candidate by former Tory chancellor George Osborne, was evasive when challenged to explain his 'socialist' ideology by a local newspaper in his constituency area. He spoke of the need to "shift power and wealth" and "do things more radically than we had envisaged in the past". These phrases



Labour leaders must oppose all cuts - in deeds, not just words
photo Socialist Party Wales

show his accommodation with the rotten capitalist system and lack of intention of breaking with it.

The Unite union is supporting the two candidates with the best record of backing Unite's policies and Corbyn: Rebecca Long-Bailey for leader and Richard Burgon for deputy (see page 3). But whether those two will succeed in attracting enough support to secure victory is far from certain at this point in time.

Both have made clear one important difference with the other candidates, by expressing support for open (mandatory) reselection of parliamentary candidates. This is a measure that would contribute to democratising and transforming the party in the right direction.

But on a number of other issues Long-Bailey has succumbed to the agenda of Labour's right and the capitalist press, partly blaming 'anti-

semitism' for Labour's election defeat, for example. Her preferred deputy is Angela Raynor, who is not a member of the left-wing Socialist Campaign Group, rather than Burgon, who is.

Whatever the contest's outcome, the anti-establishment anger in Britain and burning need for improved living standards - which Boris Johnson temporarily leant on - won't go away. Whoever is elected will come under great pressure from workers and youth to deliver policies in their interests, as well as pressure from capitalist circles to satisfy theirs.

This will be against a background of ongoing volatility across the globe and fast moving events, including more mass movements demanding deep-rooted change. No Labour leader will be static or isolated from influences around them. They will either accommodate to capitalist

interests and - if that becomes their main trajectory - further lose their working-class electoral base, or they can help with the task of building mass working-class political representation on an anti-capitalist, socialist basis.

Before the general election, an all too common sentiment in the workers' movement was to wait for the election, hoping for a Corbyn-led government. Now the type of unity that is needed is the building of trade union-led workers' unity in struggle against the Tory government, along with demands on Labour's leaders to support that struggle against cuts in services and in defence of workers' and democratic rights. There should be no blank cheque of support given to any of their candidates; only support and pressure for concrete measures to democratise Labour and arm it with socialist policies.

Labour Party leadership contest
UNITE UNION NOMINATES LONG-BAILEY AND BURGON

Suzanne Muna

Unite the Union executive council (personal capacity)

The Unite union executive council overwhelmingly agreed to nominate Rebecca Long-Bailey and Richard Burgon as Labour Party leader and deputy leader respectively at its special meeting on Friday 24 January.

All the candidates' campaign statements, widely circulated ahead of the hustings, show remarkable uniformity. They emphasise the centrality of the trade unions, the need to oppose austerity, a commitment to the radical 2017 and 2019 manifestos, and call for unity among Labour MPs. The need to respect the referendum decision on leaving the EU is now widely accepted.

The statements, however, mask very real differences between the candidates. Keir Starmer, for example, spoke on the need for public sector cuts as recently as July 2019. But his statements to Unite audiences were peppered with promises to fight austerity and promote common ownership - priorities that play directly to central planks in Unite's policy book.

Commitments to both socialism and unity were abundant in the material from all candidates, and unity particularly emphasised by candidates for the deputy post.

Avoid repeats

Any new leadership may seek to avoid a repeat of Labour Party deputy leader Tom Watson's regular and carefully timed briefings against his leader. Nonetheless, the history of some candidates suggests that loyalty is a loose concept. Both Starmer and Lisa Nandy took part in the 2016 'chicken coup', when an orchestrated series of resignations were arranged to grab the news headlines and inflict maximum damage on Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

The question for any leader, however, is 'unity at what cost?' Recent history should leave no doubt that if internal peace is contingent on pacifying the Blairite wing, the cost is too high. The policies must be defended, not bartered.

Among Long-Baileys advantages were her track record in the Corbyn cabinet, close alignment to Unite policies, and lack of taint from attempted coups.

If elected leader, Long-Bailey would need to demonstrate great strength and determination to resist attempts at derailment. The 2017 and 2019 manifestos offered the first serious challenge to some powerful vest-



How can Unite members best achieve political representation?
photo London Socialist Party



Rebecca Long-Bailey



Richard Burgon

ed capitalist interests in at least a generation. Inevitably, any leader aligned to this suite of manifesto pledges will attract sustained, personalised and dirty attacks from those seeking to maintain the balance of wealth and power in their favour.

However, Long-Bailey's rapid acceptance of the Jewish Board of Deputies' 'ten pledges', including its unqualified support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-semitism and all its examples, however, is a disappointing sign (see 'Long-Bailey in retreat' at socialistparty.org.uk). Both Richard Burgon and Dawn Butler, by contrast, refused to sign, although they pledged to fight racism in all its manifestations.

One of the most interesting con-

cepts in Unite's leadership deliberations over the last couple of weeks has been the idea that Labour councils should showcase the benefits of a future Labour government for the working class in Britain. Trade unionists, community campaigners, and constituents of Labour boroughs would indeed welcome changes aimed at drawing a clear red line between the Labour councils and the rest; it has been so lacking to date.

The new Labour leader must place demands on Labour councillors: stop passing on cuts; set legal needs-based budgets; fight collectively alongside trade unions and communities for public services to be properly funded. Crucially, they must be willing to withdraw party support from those who do not fulfil these aims.



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. 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

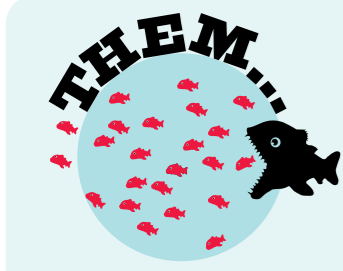
- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect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

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Bezos's billionaires' blow-out

Billionaires, chief executives, politicians and state officials gathered at Jeff Bezos's \$23 million mansion for one hell of a shindig on Saturday 25 January. Bill Gates and Trump family figures were there as well.

It was the after-party for the annual dinner of the Alfalfa Club, composed of former presidents and big business bosses - who wear gold medals to show how special they are. The Earth's 2,153 billionaires control as much wealth as the poorest 60% of all humanity, reports Oxfam.

Still in the money

Multimillionaire chief exec Mike Coupe is retiring from Sainsbury's. Coupe is notorious after being caught on camera singing "We're in the Money" to himself ahead of an interview about a (failed) merger with Asda that threatened thousands of jobs.

Last year, Coupe cut Argos workers' Christmas bonuses in half, to just £5. He earned £3.9 million in pay and bonuses the year of the collapsed merger, and will go on collecting his £962,000 annual salary until May.

Rich get better NHS

Analysis of 23 quality indicators found worse care across the board in poor areas compared to rich ones, say the Nuffield Trust and Health Foundation. And just 64% of poorer patients reported a good experience booking into the GP, as to 72% of richer ones.

Grenfell advisor resigns

Engineer Benita Mehra has resigned from the Grenfell inquiry after anger that the professional association she once headed previously received £71,000 in funding from a charitable foundation run by Grenfell cladding manufacturer Arconic. The conflict of interest seemed clear, but it took campaigning by survivors and press exposure to resolve it.

Councils' climate incompetence

43% of the 214 councils who replied to a green energy survey don't even know how much carbon they produce, says the Electrical Contractors' Association.

78% claim they are planning for net-zero carbon by 2050, but 47% have no strategy for reducing emissions. Each year, council HQs in England generate as much carbon dioxide as 150,000 London to New York return flights - over 250,000 tonnes.

Jon Dale
Secretary, Unite union
Nottinghamshire Health Branch

For the third time in 20 years a new virus has spread from animals to humans. It began on 29 December in Wuhan, a Chinese city of eleven million, probably crossing to humans at a live animal market.

The exact number of cases is unknown. 830 were identified by 24 January but the real number was estimated at 4,000. 26 had died - about 3%. Seasonal flu virus kills less than 1% of those infected, about 400,000 deaths a year worldwide.

So why the panic? People don't have resistance to the new virus. There is no vaccine or proven treatment. If the virus spreads, so will the number of deaths.

When Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars) broke out in 2003, the Chinese government kept it secret for months. Many more cases spread as a result.

There was a short delay at local level this time. In early January, city officials went ahead with a communal meal for 40,000 and gave out 200,000 free tickets to tourist sites.

Central government's reaction has been much more vigorous, however. As well as releasing early information to scientists and international authorities, the state imposed a travel ban to and from eleven cities with a population of 32 million. It closed tourist destinations like Shanghai's Disneyland, sections of the Great Wall, and Beijing's Forbidden Palace.

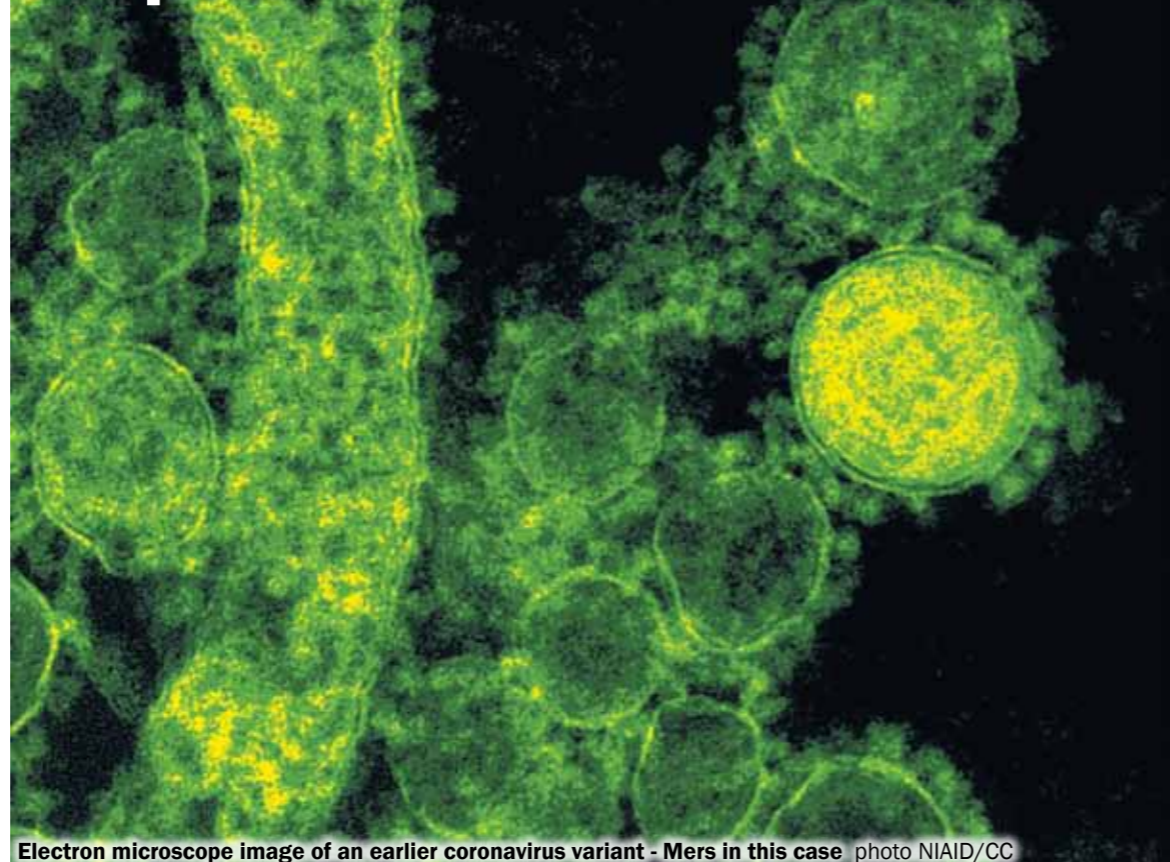
State v market

40 military doctors have been drafted into Wuhan. A new 1,000-bed hospital is planned to be completed in just ten days! Dozens of diggers and trucks were filmed working on the site and shown on TV - a contrast with snail's pace construction of new NHS hospitals by private building companies under the Tories.

President Xi Jinping wants to appear to be doing everything possible to bring the situation under control. The regime is under pressure with economic growth slowing - as well as strikes and protests, especially in Hong Kong. Speedy action is aimed at reassuring workers at home and corporate investors abroad.

Sars cost the global economy \$40-

Coronavirus: capitalism limits response to viral outbreaks



Electron microscope image of an earlier coronavirus variant - Mers in this case photo NIAID/CC

50 billion between 2002 and 2004. Tourism and air travel will be hit this time, but capitalists' confidence could be more generally damaged. It is already low - with the slowing global economy, continuing Australian fires and other climate-related factors, Middle East instability and mass movements opposing capitalist governments on every continent.

It's not bad news for all, however. Surgical mask manufacturers are enjoying demand 500 times their usual output. During the 2009 bird flu outbreak, 3M sold an extra \$100 million of masks.

Pharmaceutical companies making anti-viral drugs and vaccines also hope for a bonanza. Moderna shares rose 11% on 22 January after

the firm announced it was developing a vaccine. As US health agencies are funding the work, some, if not all, of the cost will be covered by public funds - but Moderna will keep any profits.

After the 2003 Sars outbreak, researchers developed a vaccine that made it to safety tests. But it never progressed further, "mainly due to shifting research priorities as the outbreak came to an end," said Dr Anthony Fauci from the US National Institutes of Health.

New viruses will always occur, some crossing to humans and causing new infectious diseases. Crowding, proximity to live animals and birds, and climate change will also help these spread.

We urgently need permanent, well-funded research institutes and production facilities to develop new diagnostic tests, vaccines and treatments. Profit-driven corporations won't invest in such risky projects that may not be needed for years and don't have guaranteed financial rewards.

Nationalisation of pharmaceutical and large biotech companies, with compensation only for real need, is the only way to guarantee this research and production. International socialist planning and co-operation are also vital.

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HS2 debacle: nationalise rail and construction!



Kevin Parslow
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Tory cabinet minister Stephen Barclay has a "gut feeling" that the 'HS2' high-speed rail link between London and the north of England will go ahead.

He said this in response to speculation following the general election that HS2 was in danger of being scrapped.

Boris Johnson ordered an 'independent' review of the scheme last August. It was so independent, it was led by Douglas Oakervee, former chair of HS2!

But the review's deputy chair, Tony Berkeley, a civil engineer who was involved in the development of the Channel Tunnel, recommended

a severe curtailment of the project in a dissenting report.

Berkeley concluded MPs had been misled about the true price of HS2, and that the outcome of the official review had been "unduly influenced" by the promoters of the scheme, i.e. the big construction companies.

Instead, Berkeley recommended the money saved should be used to improve the commuter network in the North and Midlands, where travel times are even worse than in the south-east of England. Oakervee has admitted that the cost of the entire project could reach £106 billion,

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Iain Dalton
Socialist Party national committee

As expected, Boris Johnson has approved Chinese tech giant Huawei gaining licences to build 5G web network infrastructure in Britain.

Huawei is currently the largest provider of 5G technology, and already provides some of the infrastructure for 3G and 4G internet. The government's own report suggested that if Huawei were blocked, it would delay 5G by two years.

5G telecoms should increase download speeds and reduce the 'latency' time phones take to connect to networks. It could also support more devices, around one million per square kilometre, opening up the possibility of increasing use of remote or autonomous technology.

The high profile of this decision reflects increasing global trade tensions and the complicated position facing British capitalism as Brexit moves forward.

Trump and the US government placed significant pressure on Johnson to join US and Australian capitalism in blocking Huawei completely.

This included threats by the US to stop sharing state surveillance data through the 'Five Eyes' intelligence alliance. Another Five Eyes member state, New Zealand, has blocked some Huawei equipment, and the final member state, Canada, is still debating the issue.

Trump doesn't want to lose further ground in US capitalism's ongoing trade war with China. Meanwhile, Chinese capitalism has been building up infrastructural control around the world - including Europe - through its 'Belt and Road Initiative', among others.

Other European states have come under significant pressure too. 70% of Germany's 4G network is provided by Huawei, with a similar decision about 5G looming there. There are reports that Angela Merkel wishes to make a similar stand to Johnson, particularly motivated by China being German capitalism's biggest trading partner.

As well as these battles for influence between the major powers, the deal has opened up rifts in thinking between different sections of the

Johnson's Huawei internet deal underlines world trade tensions



Johnson photo WEF/CC

British capitalist class. One section wishes to maintain open trade relationships with China and other world powers, reflected in the support for Johnson's proposal in both the Financial Times and the Economist, among other bosses' journals.

Another section of capitalists and their supporters wants to tie British capitalism more firmly to the US. This position is reflected by a number of Tory MPs, including grandees like Iain Duncan Smith and Home Secretary Priti Patel - and is backed by a ConservativeHome survey showing 77% of Tory members opposed Huawei's involvement in UK 5G infrastructure.

However, trade links to Washington are not the only factor for this section. Much of the furore over the Huawei deal centres on worries about 'back doors' in its systems that Chinese intelligence services could exploit.

Public concerns over the safety of digital information are legitimate. However, it is pure hypocrisy from

the UK and US intelligence services, which are already involved in similarly undemocratic surveillance.

Under capitalism there is no way to fully stop such abuse. The only way to end it would be to take both the private ownership of the technology - and the capitalist state itself, which fundamentally needs secrecy and repression to defend the profit system - out of the equation.

Balancing act

In reality, the access that Johnson has allowed Huawei reflects his attempt to balance these competing trade and political pressures - with access only to 'non-core' infrastructure such as masts and antennae; a ban from use in military bases and nuclear sites; and a cap on Huawei's market share at 35%.

And this decision is the latest in a series of tensions between the US and British governments, such as Johnson rejecting Trump's demand to re-impose sanctions on Iran.

It also follows the Tories' proposal for a digital services tax of 2% on the revenues of big tech firms, with the US threatening retaliatory taxes on car imports. The French government had proposed a 3% levy, but delayed it after mutual threats of tariff escalation between the US and EU.

While Johnson is keen to sign a new trade deal with the US, it seems this is not at the expense of keeping other options open. Journalist Annabelle Dickson reportedly said that "former ministers and officials who are familiar with the mind-set of Johnson and his top adviser Dominic Cummings say privately that modern tech infrastructure is much more important to the pair's vision for the UK's future economy than trade with the US, welcome as a quick deal would be."

What the saga shows is that there is no plain sailing for the Tory government trying to navigate the trading seas post-Brexit in an increasingly volatile period for world relations.

Debt rulings double

England and Wales issued a record 1.15 million county court judgments for debt repayment in 2019 - and rising. That's 3% more than 2018 - and more than double 2012, says the Registry Trust.

Poor air for poor

Children born in Liverpool since 2011 can expect to live five months less due to air pollution, reports the British Lung Foundation. The concentration of motor exhaust is worst in poor districts - which also have the lowest incidence of car ownership.

It's the same story in all cities. And even average UK pollution levels cause a 34% higher risk of severe nasal allergies, says the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology.

Welsh NHS wait

The NHS in Wales set a new record for long A&E waits in December. Only 72.1% of patients were seen within four hours, reports the Welsh Government.

Dementia care down

Emergency dementia admissions in hospitals rose 35% to 379,000 in five years, says the Alzheimer's Society. The increase of 100,000 from 2012-13 to 2017-18 reflects the collapse of care services.

Kids' care crisis

In 2009-10, the care system was responsible for 64,460 children. In 2016-17, this had grown to 75,420, reports Tory peer Michael Farmer. Council applications to take kids into care rose over a fifth, and numbers on child protection plans by 38%. Around 78,000 are now in the system, including 4,500 seeking asylum.

Green jobs gone

The green energy workforce fell by over 11,000 in the four years from 2014, says the ONS. There were just 235,900 workers in the sector in 2018. The Tories slashed subsidies by 65% in 2015 - and scrapped them in 2019.

38.9% of UK energy came from renewables in September, a record high. But with domestic turbine manufacturing forced out of business, the Tories are now way off course for hitting their carbon reduction targets. To get there, the UK needs to create 120,000 green energy jobs by 2030 and 400,000 by 2050, says the National Grid.

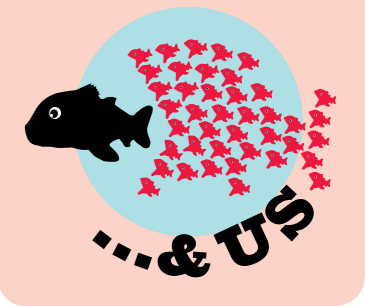


photo Roger Carvell/CC

University and College Union Pensions, pay and conditions dispute reach a crucial stage

Bea Gardner
UCU Southampton branch executive
(personal capacity)

As we go to press, a crucial meeting of the University and College Union (UCU) higher education committee is set to take place to decide the future strategy in the ongoing disputes over pensions, pay and conditions.

Before Christmas, 60 institutions, including approximately 42,000 members, took eight consecutive days of strike action and have been participating in action short of strike since then.

On 30 January the union's higher education committee will meet and decide how many further days of action to call and whether or not to continue the current strategy of combining the two disputes. Any further action will be bolstered by the anticipated addition of up to 36 other institutions when their ballots close on 28 January.

The committee will likely announce 14 days of further action across four weeks in the 'USS'

pension dispute, as mandated at the higher education special conference in December. However, uncertainty surrounds the strategy for the 'four fights' dispute over pay, workload, casualisation and unequal pay, because there is no special conference mandate.

Combining the disputes so far has maximised impact by bringing the institutions in the USS scheme out with those only balloted for the pay dispute.

As a result of the action, negotiations have resumed but confidentiality agreements have prevented negotiators from spelling out concretely what progress is being made.

Some within the union have seized this opportunity to attempt to demoralise members, undermining the dispute and even calling for a 'pause'. It is therefore vital that the left organise at all levels to defend the strike mandate and arm the rank and file with the strategy and confidence needed to win.

This means fighting to keep the disputes combined and continuing to push on all aspects of the disputes, including pay. So far, employers have refused to budge from their

current below-inflation pay offer of 1.6%. Management claims it is unaffordable to increase pay, but university income, surpluses and reserves have all increased. A victory on pay is the most concrete way of ensuring university management concedes to improving staff conditions and our share of the income.

Like the 2018 strike, members must be willing to reject an inadequate offer. In 2018 the potential sell-out of the pension dispute was halted by members on the ground. One way of preparing members for this is by electing local strike committees to lead the next round of action.

It also means electing candidates for the national executive committee who are actively building the rank-and-file network.

Whatever the outcome of the higher education committee meeting, the task will be to arm the rank-and-file activists with the confidence and strategy to win on the two higher education disputes, as a starting point for a fightback across both further and higher education destroyed by decades of marketisation and austerity.



UCU strikers on their most recent walkout in December 2019 photo Nick Chaffey

PCS union elections

Nominate candidates fighting austerity and for union democracy

Marion Lloyd
Broad Left Network candidate for PCS
President and national executive
committee member (personal capacity)

When I stood to be general secretary nearly 10,000 PCS union members voted for my campaign, to rebuild a fighting democratic union.

My vote showed that members are looking for a change in leadership that will build a national campaign to resist the Tory austerity programme.

I believe members are looking for a new union leadership and a fresh approach. I believe this is provided by the PCS Broad Left Network (BLN).

The newly formed BLN is made up of socialists from across the PCS, a union of civil servants and private sector workers on government contracts. The BLN's purpose is to put forward candidates in the upcoming PCS elections and to fight for its ideas and programme on a daily basis at every level of the union.

The BLN is supporting a diverse group of candidates in the election, all of whom are committed to fighting against austerity and for union democracy.

The Broad Left Network programme includes:

- **A national campaign on pay, pensions, redundancy rights, office closures and the growing threat to jobs.**
- **An open, inclusive discussion of how best to overcome the Tory anti-union laws and win a mandate for national strike action.**
- **A democratic union accountable to its members and elected representatives. For the election of key officials.**
- **Equal rights and opportunities for all members starting with the workplace and union branches - no discrimination.**
- **Recognising the threat of climate change and prioritising action to combat it.**
- **A strong political voice and strategy which gives support to those who back our union, our members and our policies.**

I am supported by the BLN to stand to be the union's president. I've been active in the union since joining the civil service at 16.

Currently I am president of the PCS group of the government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and for many years have been a member of the PCS national executive committee.

I have led a number of campaigns and disputes with successful outcomes and I am an experienced negotiator.

The other BLN-supported candidates in these elections have similar records to my own. All of them socialists and all respected activists in the union.

We stand for action - not words. We are seeking branch nominations for BLN-supported candidates.

Join the BLN, support our campaign to rebuild PCS and the left in the union.

For more information and to get involved visit pcsbln.wordpress.com



PCS NEC elections 2020

Please nominate the following candidates

President

Lloyd Marion (BEIS)

Vice-Presidents

Brittle Fiona (Scottish Government),
Brown Sarah (Met Police), **Holbourne** Zita (BEIS),
Semple Dave (DWP)

National Executive Committee members

Appleby Angela (DBS)
Bartlett Dave (MOJ)
Borland Rebecca (Home Office)
Brittle Fiona (Scot Gov)
Brown Sarah (Met Police)
Bryant Clive (HMRC)
Denman Kevin (Met Police)
Foxton Gill (DFE)
Guinnane Paul (DWP)
Heemskerk Rachel (DWP)
Hendry Kris (HMRC)
Lowry Tom (DWP)
Lloyd Marion (BEIS)
Parker Nick (BEIS)
Rees Dave (DWP)
Ritchie Rob (Met Police)
Semple Dave (DWP)
Thomas Roger (PINS)
Tweeddale Saorsa-Amatheia (DWP)
Vickers Dave (NPPS)
Wesley Hector (HMRC)
Williams Katrine (DWP)
Worswick Craig (DWP)
Young Colin (DFE)

Interview with a forestry worker

ORGANISE TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS AND TACKLE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The environment is near the top of everyone's agenda currently, as it should be, due to the scale of the crisis that we face now and in the future.

Something that can be far from people's minds, however, is the day-to-day experiences of workers toiling on the land.

I spoke to a friend - a forestry worker and Unite union member - who talked anonymously about some of the pressing issues in his industry and what can be done about them.

"You typically have a quota of between five and 20 tonnes of timber a day. The job is completely manual - we don't use big harvester machines - so that's five tonnes done with just you and a chainsaw.

It's hard manual labour and you're out in the elements all day. I'm lucky, as me and my colleagues are on contracts, but the majority of forestry workers in the country are 'self-employed' much

like construction workers. Most workers are employed through big companies and not directly by who they are working for.

Safety

Safety is one of the biggest issues for us all, in that health and safety practice doesn't really exist. Recently our boss proposed that we work in the dark and that to do so he would provide us with head torches in a bid to increase productivity!

When anyone works in the dark there are increased risks. Imagine it's been raining all day, there are branches and timber all over the ground and the fell goes wrong. Serious injury or death is around the corner. This can also happen during daylight hours.

My colleagues are not union members; it's not a done thing in this industry. However, I organised and spoke to workmates during a break. We all agreed that if the boss asked us to work like that at any time, we would walk off the job."

WHAT'S
YOUR VIEW?


editors@socialistparty.org.uk




photo Malene Thyssen/CC



Going into their ninth week of action over pay, Westex carpet strikers (pictured above) had a boost when the local BBC news programme Look North filmed and interviewed the pickets. The shop stewards were also invited to the Unite the Union HQ in London and the dispute now has national prominence. Donations can be sent directly to the branch as follows:
Account Name: TGWU, **Reference:** WESTEX Strike Fund, **Acc No.** 20175407, **Sort Code** 60-83-01
Kevin Pattison
Chair Leeds and Wakefield Unite Community



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Brexit and British capitalism

WHY JOHNSON'S JUGGERNAUT IS SET TO JACKKNIFE

Robin Clapp
Socialist Party national committee

Boris Johnson, elated by his election victory and refreshed from his Caribbean holiday, now faces, in the words of a newspaper journalist, a long-postponed "rendezvous with reality".

Having secured a predictable majority for his Brexit Withdrawal Bill, and flattered by Tory courtiers who can see no further than the ends of their noses, he seems to have spent much of the time since his return trying unsuccessfully to encourage fundraising for Big Ben to 'bong' on 31 January when the United Kingdom exits the EU.

Having a substantial parliamentary majority is one thing, but this will not be a tranquil year for the Tories. Intractable crises continue to mount in the Middle East and international geo-political relations between competing nation states and regional economic blocs are becoming more acute. This is despite the recent first phase of the largely illusory partial trade 'deal' concocted between the US and China.

Kristalina Georgieva, the new head of the International Monetary Fund has warned that the global economy faces a multitude of potential risks, driven especially by inequality and instability in the financial sector.

She reserves particular criticism for the UK where she says "...the top 10% now control nearly as much wealth as the bottom 50%... in some ways, this troubling trend is reminiscent of the early part of the twentieth century, when the twin forces of technology and integration led to the first Gilded Age, 'the roaring twenties', and, ultimately, financial disaster."

UK economy and austerity

In 2019 the British economy is expected to have grown by just 1%, the weakest expansion outside of a recession for 60 years. In the last quarter, economic growth came to a virtual standstill, paralysed by

uncertainty around Brexit and the continual stagnation in the dominant services sector. This accounts for 80% of the economy and failed to grow for the third consecutive month.

Business investment has stagnated since 2017, leaving consumption growth to fuel the economy. Much of this has been funded by a historically low household saving ratio. Put simply, cheap credit and mounting personal debt is driving consumption, but in the medium term this is unsustainable as attempting to motor smoothly with four flat tyres.

Recession threat

The Bank of England has previously warned that there is a one-in-three chance of the UK plunging into recession this year. In the event of a fresh crisis the value of financial assets might fall sharply, abruptly puncturing the present complacency of stock market traders and financiers who - despite the heightened and growing levels of global policy uncertainty - still lull themselves with the delusion that the 2007-2009 financial crash was a one-off.

The sobering news that Christmas trading on the high street was exceptionally bleak, with retailers experiencing the worst year for sales for 25 years, has prompted calls for another interest rate cut in an attempt to stimulate consumer spending and business investment. If interest rates are reduced again to 0.5%, they will be back to where they were in 2013, signifying an economy dependent on perpetual life support.

Flagship high street department store John Lewis has reported that winter seasonal sales are down 2%, issuing warnings that staff bonuses are in doubt.

Other workers aren't just at risk of seeing bonuses evaporate but are losing their jobs. 2,800 Asda workers are the latest to be told they face probable redundancy.

This bitter pill comes after the US-owned food retailer engineered new contracts at gunpoint for its UK workforce, cutting paid breaks and extra payments for working most



“”
The British economy has never recovered fully from the 'Great Recession' of 2007-2009 and is incapable of doing so, given the deep structural weaknesses that have characterised it for decades

bank holidays and some night-shifts.

The British economy has never recovered fully from the 'Great Recession' of 2007-2009, and is incapable of doing so, given the deep structural weaknesses that have characterised it for decades. Already overly dependent upon the financial sector, the last crash saw the biggest collapse in productive forces for 80 years.

Extreme poverty can now be found in shop doorways in every town and city in Britain as the scar of homelessness rises exponentially. Continuing austerity has led to families in the lowest 25% income bracket, who spend a greater proportion of their income on essentials, cutting back on household spending by a staggering £61 a week.

Under the Tories' watch, wages have fallen by £32 a week on average, while benefit levels, made more and more inaccessible by the introduction

of the hated Universal Credit benefits system, have been shredded to the bone. Jobseeker's Allowance is set to reach its lowest value ever this year, at 14% of average weekly pay, a fall of 5% since 2009-2010.

A recent shaming report has revealed that 5,000 chronically ill and disabled people have died before being reimbursed for a government error under Ian Duncan Smith's vicious time at the helm of the Department for Work and Pensions. Another 112,000 have had to wait several years for wrongly assessed back payments.

This is just the tip of a very big iceberg. The callous indifference of the British ruling class was eloquently underlined in the New Year Honours List when Duncan Smith was recognised with a knighthood rather than the P45 which his performance merited.



We need a socialist alternative to the economics of the madhouse that is capitalism in the 21st century photo TU Senan

The quagmire of a capitalist Brexit

The Institute of Fiscal Studies has recently shared the Socialist Party's view that winning the general election was 'the easy bit' for the Tories. The Economist journal has chimed in that Johnson may look like a strong leader, but that the forthcoming negotiations with the EU will quickly expose this myth.

Currently 49% of UK trade is with the EU bloc, more than three times as much as with America. Another 11% of trade is with other countries that already have reciprocal trading agreements with the EU. This translates into around 3.3 million UK jobs.

Exiting the EU will not be a straightforward process, even with the withdrawal agreement having passed successfully through Parliament.

Translating "Get Brexit Done" into successful negotiations that protect the UK's current EU trading agreements; unravelling the Gordian knot of Northern Ireland's proposed new relationship with the EU, and forging new bespoke trade deals with imperialist rivals like the US, will be revealed to be very complicated processes.

Decisive sections of the British capitalist class remain sceptical of, or continue to oppose outright, the headline Brexit strategy, and are wary of Johnson's ability to secure deals that will protect their interests.

42.6% of the UK's total foreign in-

vestment comes from the EU, and its attractiveness to foreign investors is closely tied to the ability of multinational companies based in the UK to be part of global supply chains.

Meanwhile, the US invests over \$750 billion in the UK annually, mainly in the finance sector. These companies use the UK as a gateway to free trade with the EU, which is now imperilled.

A leaked government study estimates that even if a mutually beneficial trade agreement is arrived at with the US, that would only add 0.3% at most to UK economic output. Similar deals with China, India, Australia, the Gulf countries and the nations of southeast Asia would add, in total, possibly a further 0.1% to 0.4% of GDP.

This, moreover, assumes best case scenarios and seamless bilateral or multilateral agreements. Yet, it is hardly a path to the UK's revival as a major economic player in an increasingly fracturing international geo-political landscape.

Far more likely are long drawn-out negotiations ending in stalemate, and a continual pressing by imperialist rivals for the UK to further liberalise its economy and turn the City of London into a new 'Singapore-on-Thames'.

EU comprehensive deal?

The incoming European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has already warned Johnson that it will be impossible to reach a comprehensive trade deal by the end of 2020 as he insistently demands and has now enshrined in the withdrawal agreement

as a non-negotiable red line.

The EU withdrawal transition period is scheduled to last until 31 December, when the UK is committed to formally exiting, either with a binding trade deal with the other 27 countries, or with a departure that will require the British government to begin trading with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

For the next 11 months the UK will continue to follow all the EU's rules and regulations, will continue as a member of the single market and the customs union, and permit the continual free movement of people.

Brexit has already dampened business growth for companies that trade in Europe. The manufacturing sector, particularly cars, aerospace, computers, electronics and pharmaceuticals are all waiting anxiously to assess what the impact of trade talks will have on their investment and future access to the EU market.

The Tories have already announced however, ahead of any substantive talks, that after 31 December they will not be bound by the current EU legislation on workers' rights and protections, irrespective of whether they partially or completely incorporate other EU strictures into new domestic legislation.

The discussions around trade will be extremely thorny, seeking to reach bilateral agreements on law enforcement, data sharing and security, aviation standards, access to fishing waters, energy supplies, alignment with EU rules on state aid to industry and the licensing and regulation of medicines.



In or out of the capitalist EU, the real reasons for poverty, joblessness, austerity and insecurity lie in the private profit system - capitalism

Incredibly, Chancellor Sajid Javid, ahead of negotiations, has now warned business there will be no guaranteed UK-EU regulation-alignment deals, which in essence would amount to the death knell for a frictionless trade agreement.

This provocative stance has stunned big business which now fears the increasing possibility of the UK crashing out in a hard-Brexit departure.

With the spectre of a more generalised economic slowdown on the agenda and even another recession looming which can severely affect an already weakened world capitalist order, Javid's stance, if that continues to summarise the Tory approach, means that a successful completion of a comprehensive tariff-free, quota-free deal in such a restricted timeframe is in severe doubt.

One of the most crucial issues is the role of the UK banking sector. Failure to agree a treaty would lead to British banks losing the automatic right to operate in all member countries. Any

one or a number of these issues can become a minefield.

The City earns about £205 billion a year from EU demand for financial services. By April 2019, banks had transferred more than \$1 trillion out of Britain. The EU is refusing to offer London a bespoke deal for financial services, as Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Paris compete for larger shares of this lucrative market.

WTO and chlorinated chicken

Although, in theory, failure to agree a trade deal might not see the EU slap high tariffs on the UK in the manner that currently applies with trade between Brussels and Washington, Tory intransigence could see steep tariffs, non-tariffs and quotas imposed in quite a short time frame. According to a 2018 government report, having to trade under WTO rules could lead to GDP being between 4.9% and 6.7% lower than maintaining open trade borders with the EU.

A complicated question will be 'freedom of movement'. The Tories, while conceding the right of residence for current EU nationals living in Britain, have made clear that the doors will be slammed shut on low-skilled workers arriving from Europe after December.

This has led to a storm of protest from employers whose profits rely on using unorganised, migrant workers.

In a possible concession, Johnson has said he'll scrap the new £30,000 minimum salary threshold on migrant workers, despite the grumblings of many Eurosceptic Tory MPs.

The US will not be the new trade sanctuary for British capitalism. Any deals will be on Trump's terms, with chlorinated chicken, Britain's political subservience to US political interests in the Middle East and elsewhere, and a suspension of Chinese Huawei 5G technology on the menu just for starters (see page 5).

Explosive class struggles

In or out of the capitalist EU, the real reasons for poverty, joblessness, austerity and insecurity lie in the private profit system - capitalism.

The Tory government, despite its large majority, is not a stable one, nor necessarily a long-lasting one. Huge struggles are likely to explode as workers fightback against plunging living standards, rising prices and joblessness.

The future months and years will be stormy with many new opportunities arising for reaching millions with a socialist alternative to the economics of the madhouse that is capitalism in the 21st century. Then a real socialist Europe based on international workers' solidarity can be constructed.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

February 2020 issue includes...
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Scotland: Time for a new workers' party?
Capitalism alone? The system that ruins the world



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STOP THE CUTS

■ Fight the closure of Royal Glamorgan A&E

Health board bosses have announced the closure of the A&E at Royal Glamorgan hospital in Wales. It serves the people of Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT).

Emergency cases in all these valleys face a long journey to Merthyr or Cardiff, by an already overstretched ambulance service. People in the Rhondda will have especially long journeys.

Waiting times at Welsh A&Es are at an all-time high. For the first time this is not just a winter crisis. All the under-resourced A&E departments are struggling to cope, all year round.

The Cwm Taf health bosses claim that the closure of Royal Glamorgan A&E has nothing to do with the cuts. They claim the closure is caused by the impending retirement of the sole A&E consultant at the hospital.

Long-planned cut

The truth is this cut has been long-planned by the health bosses.

It was first threatened in 2013 in the South Wales Programme of cuts presented by then Welsh health minister Mark Drakeford, now first minister of Wales. That report was authored by Marcus Longley, current chair of the Cwm Taf health board.

The programme planned to reduce the number of A&Es in south Wales to just five. (See 'No cuts at Royal Glamorgan Hospital - United campaign against the South Wales Programme needed' at socialistparty.org.uk).

There was a very strong reaction against the programme, and a series of marches in RCT. While other cuts were carried through, the closure of the A&E was put on the back-burner.

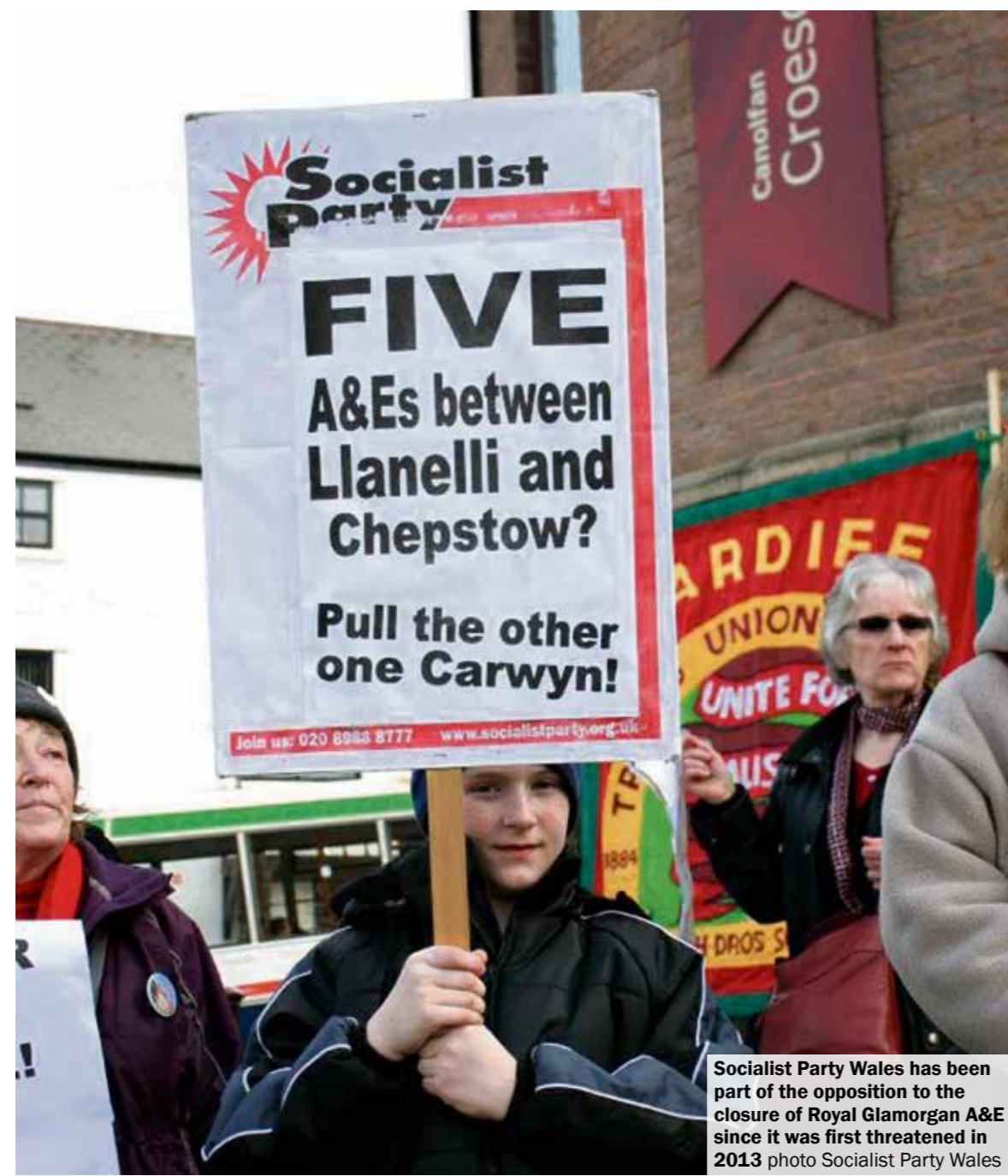
The health board had seven years to find new consultants for the A&E but did nothing. Instead it has run down the service until announcing its closure now.

Welsh Labour has been in charge of the NHS in Wales for over 20 years. They have had ample time to train new doctors and other health professionals.

It is hardly the case that there is a shortage of young people who wish to be trained as doctors. The cuts to the Welsh health budget - instigated by the Tories and implemented by Welsh Labour - are the biggest reason for the shortage.

But working people in RCT will not take these cuts lying down. The fight goes on.

Dave Reid
Socialist Party Wales



Socialist Party Wales has been part of the opposition to the closure of Royal Glamorgan A&E since it was first threatened in 2013 photo Socialist Party Wales

■ Socialist voice needed in London elections

At the London mayor's 'People's Question Time' in Haringey on 24 January, Sadiq Khan was met by angry local people who are fighting so-called 'regeneration' plans in the borough. People came to question the Labour mayor about plans to demolish the much-loved Latin Village and redevelop High Road West.

This battle is replicated all over London. The city faces an historic housing crisis, with record levels of street homelessness and families in temporary accommodation.

There are 56,280 homeless families and over 9,000 people on the streets. House prices are

unaffordable and people have to pay up to 70% of their income in private rents. 100,000 families have been forced out of London and many more suffer overcrowding.

Yet Khan's London plan involves building high-density blocks of expensive flats around London - with a general aim of only 30% 'affordable' - and handing public land over to private property developers.

Council homes

Socialist Party members attended and gave out a leaflet demanding an immediate moratorium on these schemes and 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.

Sadiq Khan has joined the front

ranks of the right-wing Labour Blairites attacking Jeremy Corbyn. He actually said that in the general election voters "got it right".

He has not actively fought austerity or used his powers to build council housing. Who will fight for socialist policies in May's London elections if Khan goes unchallenged?

In 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; the assembly through a form of proportional representation.

The Socialist Party believes it is vital that there is a stand for socialist policies in this election. And with the preference vote system, there is no risk of letting the Tories in by using your first preference vote to send

a message to Sadiq Khan.

We are prepared to put forward Socialist Party member and long-standing campaigner Nancy Taaffe and others as potential candidates for mayor and the assembly.

But we want to work with any other forces - trade unionists, socialists and anti-austerity campaigners inside and outside the Labour Party - to ensure socialist policies are fought for in this election, and discuss potential candidates. The Socialist Party has, for example, been part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition alongside transport union RMT since 2010.

Paula Mitchell
London Socialist Party secretary

■ Donate to our fund to help the fight for socialist policies in the London elections

These elections cost money. It is £20,000 to stand for mayor and appear in the booklet. It is £5,000 to stand a list. It is £1,000 to stand as a constituency candidate.

Please donate to the Socialist Party's fund to enable a socialist programme to be fought for in the London elections. However much we raise, we will use the money to assist the fight for a socialist manifesto in these elections.

■ Go to socialistparty.org.uk/donate and mark your donation 'Socialists into City Hall'

■ Anti-cuts London councillor wins Unite union backing

Unite the Union in the London and Eastern region voted to support anti-cuts Enfield Labour councillor Tolga Aramaz and a campaign in the borough against cuts to jobs and local services. The union's regional committee passed an anti-cuts motion against the advice of the top table.

Unite local government workers have borne much of the brunt of the cuts. Councils have shed 800,000 jobs under austerity.

Many delegates felt enough is enough, stating that a breakdown of trust between communities and right-wing Labour councillors was a factor in Labour's general election defeat.

A Unite submission to the Association for Public Service Excellence

FOR NO-CUTS BUDGETS

Cuts to women's services cost lives



Women's Lives Matter protest, against cuts to domestic violence services, on International Women's Day 2019 photo Socialist Party

commission on local government said that councils should set "legal, balanced, no-cuts, needs-based budgets" and "work with Unite in a joint campaign."

It will now be down to local campaigners in Enfield, including trade unionists and Labour Party activists, to come together with the Unite region to launch a campaign against austerity.

A Unite member

■ Read the full report and the anti-cuts motion at socialistparty.org.uk



Anti-cuts councillor Tolga Aramaz photo Mary Finch

■ Save Hampden Nursery in Camden



The campaign in the local paper

Public sector union Unison has protested with parents against the closure of Hampden Nursery in Camden, London. Already two other nurseries have closed in the area.

The Labour council is cutting its early-years budget by £600,000. The campaign says: "We believe the council can best support low-income families by providing low-cost, council-subsidised places for children from the end of maternity leave."

They call on councillor Angela Mason "not to agree to options 1, 2, or 3 in the consultation" and local MP Keir Starmer "to support our campaign" and "raise our opposition in the local Labour Party."

■ Sign the petition 'Save Hampden Nursery' at change.org

Open letter to Labour leadership candidates COMMIT NOW TO END THE DESTRUCTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES AND REFUGES

Women's Lives Matter statement

Women cannot wait.

In 2018, 173 people were killed in domestic violence-related homicides - an increase of 32 deaths on 2017 and an average of more than three murders a week.

Refuges and domestic violence services can offer the chance to escape, but these vital lifelines are being cut off. Even Theresa May's extremely limited and inadequate domestic violence bill has been stalled.

We need you to commit now to stand up for women's lives - to say women's lives matter. Please sign this pledge and give confidence to all those fighting for the services women need.

60% of those seeking a refuge are unable to be housed, most commonly due to lack of space. One in four domestic abuse refuges have lost all government money for therapeutic support.

State funding is at its lowest ever levels. The number of support groups available fell by a fifth in the year to May 2018.

We need action now! And councils have power.

We call on Labour councils to reject the Tory cuts that deny women these essential life-saving services and to refuse to make the cuts to this funding.

Women's Lives Matter calls on Labour councils to set budgets based on need, using their reserves and borrowing powers to fund them, and launch a fight for the billions stolen by Tory governments from the services women in domestic violence and abuse situations require.

A clear pledge from you would give confidence to those Labour councillors who really want to defend women.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call on you, the Labour leadership and deputy leadership candidates, to demand that Labour councils take a stand, refuse to make cuts and fight for the money the Tories have stolen from our councils.

This is urgent. Let's act now to defend women's lives.

■ The pledge can be signed at socialistparty.org.uk

WOMEN'S LIVES MATTER MEETING: NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT CUTS

Amy Cousens
Bradford Socialist Party

Boris Johnson may chuck some morsels our way in the next budget. But there should be no uncertainty - the next years under Tory rule will bring devastation and hardship for women.

On 18 January, Women's Lives Matter campaigners met nationally to discuss how our campaign should be put into action following

the Conservative election victory.

The Tory-engineered benefits system saw a disabled woman die from cold in her own home in a coat and scarf because she couldn't afford to turn the heating on. Women simply cannot wait for Labour to act as the leadership candidates rapidly capitulate to the right.

This was the sentiment of the meeting. There is no room for Women's Lives Matter campaigners to do anything but lift our heads into the storm and ramp up our

action. And the Socialist Party will join in.

Women's Lives Matter is holding a fortnight of action from 24 February, ending on International Women's Day. The focus of this fortnight is to take our campaign programme and put it to Labour councils through protest and lobbying.

Not a single further cut can be afforded by women. We demand Labour councils set budgets based on need in order to save women's lives. In Leeds, we are calling on the

council to create an emergency budget for those in debt because of Universal Credit, alongside no evictions and no prison sentences for those who cannot pay council tax.

These are concrete things councils have the power to do, alongside setting needs budgets. We put this to councils. We demand that they act to save women's lives, or face electoral challenge from working-class women in particular, who Labour councils continue to turn their backs on.

SOCIALIST SELLERS: OPPOSING THE TORIES AND FIGHTING THE CUTS



Southampton

There seemed to be a new mood among the people who stopped at our stalls in Southampton over the past week.

Gone were the concerns over Brexit, the Labour leadership and whether the Labour manifesto was deliverable. This was replaced by outright anger at the Tories.

Repeatedly people said that the Tories would break their election promises and that the NHS was certainly not safe in Tory hands.

There was not a discernible increase in the numbers of people who stopped to talk to us, but those who did were very angry at the thought of five more years of Tory rule - which would inflict more suffering on the poorest in society.

There were calls to action. One person said: "We need a revolution!" Another talked about the growing

number of homeless people on the streets of Southampton. They said that the tourists who come here on cruise ships must think they are visiting a third world country. And it could only get worse under another Tory government.

Some very generous donations were made to our fighting fund and people wanted to buy the Socialist paper too.

58 people got a copy, we raised £73 fighting fund and five people left their details to join the Socialist Party.

Jane Ward

Bradford and Leeds

Campaigning in Bradford city centre to renationalise bus and rail services.

The government has announced it will strip Northern Rail of its franchise and nationalise it.



We say that's good, but it needs to be run under the democratic control of elected representatives of rail workers and passengers.

Campaigning in Leeds on the same issue, we sold 12 copies of the Socialist, raised £14 for the fighting fund, and met three people who are interested in joining the Socialist Party.

Newcastle

It was biting cold, so Newcastle was a bit desolate on 18 January.

But people liked our message 'stand firm against the Tories - fight low pay.' One woman commented how committed we are, being out on the street on a "day like this".

The people who stopped were interested in our take on



developments in the Labour Party. Two young people expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party. Others took our number and are going to read our material and might get back to us.

Good response on our 25 January Socialist Party stall. Lots of anger against low pay, attacks on our NHS, and a recognition that we need to build a mass campaign against Boris Johnson and his rotten Tory government.

Elaine Brunskill

Leicester

It was a busy day of campaigning for Leicester Socialist Party on 21 January.

We started with a Socialist Students stall on De Montfort uni campus,

our bus station Socialist paper sale was from 5pm until 6pm, then our Socialist Party branch meeting, where we discussed the huge strikes and protests in India. And getting organised for the week ahead.

Another good campaign stall on 25 January. Councils do have the option to fight the cuts, but they clearly need a little encouragement!

Trade unions need to lead the way forward for their members, organising to pressure councils to save jobs and services by fighting for a needs-based, no-cuts budget.

Organise. Strike. Resist.

Brighton

The fight continues to stop council cuts and defend jobs and services in Brighton. Lots of angry people, still not happy, looking to get active. Acorn housing campaigners were out too, fighting evictions.

Exeter

People were glad to see us campaigning on the streets. They bought our Socialist paper and donated £50 to aid the fight against the Tories.

Swansea

Our members out in force today, taking on council cuts and low pay in our city!

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

| | £ received | £ target | April to June 2019 | | | | Deadline: 1 April 2020 |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|--|------------|--|------------------------|
| Northern | 596 | 750 | | | | | 79% |
| Southern | 820 | 2,350 | | | 35% | | |
| South West | 615 | 1,800 | | | 34% | | |
| North West | 260 | 1,150 | | | 23% | | |
| London | 1,023 | 4,600 | | | 22% | | |
| East Midlands | 312 | 1,850 | | | 17% | | |
| Wales | 339 | 2,300 | | | 15% | | |
| Yorkshire | 341 | 2,550 | | | 13% | | |
| West Midlands | 163 | 2,600 | | | 6% | | |
| Eastern | 53 | 1,200 | | | 4% | | |
| Other | 530 | 3,850 | | | 14% | | |
| TOTAL | 5,050 | 25,000 | | | 20% | | |



London protest against Modi's racist law



Tamil Solidarity photos London Socialist Party

Sara Rajan
Tamil Solidarity

Tamil Solidarity called a London demonstration, involving various organisations, to protest the racist, anti-Muslim Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) imposed by the Modi government in India.

Nearly 1,000 people participated in solidarity with the people who are protesting in the streets of India. There was a huge range of speakers.

But speaking from Tamil Solidarity, I was the only one to mention the 8 January 250 million-strong general strike in India. This showed the potential power of the working class.

I pointed out that this is the aggregated anger against Modi's repressive policies. I also mentioned the need for a strong coalition of trade unions and left organisations

to build a mass working-class movement. People cheered from the crowd on hearing this.

The Socialist Party also participated. The Socialist paper featured a report of the general strike and a strategy on how to defeat the racist law, written by New Socialist Alternative - the Socialist Party's sister party in India - as well as a report of Tamil Solidarity's annual general meeting. 25 people bought a copy.

From Downing Street, the protestors marched to the Indian High Commission. Our Tamil Solidarity contingent was energetic and loud. Our member Mathan grabbed the crowd's attention with our demands and slogans.

Read 'India: Huge general strike but a missed opportunity' and 'Building Tamil Solidarity with youth and the trade unions' at socialistparty.org.uk



Sara Rajan (right) on the protest with the Socialist paper and the article on the general strike in India



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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■ 'Aspiring' leader

"Quite often we talked about handouts and how we would help people rather than providing that broad positive vision for the future."

This was Rebecca Long-Bailey talking about the Labour's 2019 general election manifesto in a BBC interview. She said Labour should have delivered positive messages about its manifesto, while "talking about aspiration".

Long-Bailey was hailed as the 'continuity Corbyn' candidate, though no one seems to mention Corbyn at all any more. She is also the 'socialist' candidate.

What she said could just as easily have come from any neoliberal or pro-austerity politician.

The policies in the manifesto were popular. What was lacking, among other things, was trust in Corbyn and a Labour government to implement them, given that Labour councils have carried out cuts for years.

For the potential left leader of the Labour Party to refer to measures to address low pay, precarious work,

poverty, housing and homelessness, education and healthcare and all the other policies proposed in the manifesto as "handouts" is deeply worrying. The idea that these policies prevent "aspiration" shows a complete lack of understanding of working-class people's lives. Without addressing inequality in society there can be no 'aspiration' for the majority of the population.

It is disappointing that Long-Bailey attacked her own party manifesto at the moment when it was revealed by Time magazine that 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people on earth. Clearly, the 4.6 billion are suffering providing handouts so the billionaires and the rich get richer.

The leadership election finishes on 2 April. There is little chance of 'continuity Corbyn' if even Long-Bailey cannot speak to the working class or support the 2019 manifesto as policies to end austerity and improve lives, especially if Labour councils continue to make cuts.

Clare Wilkins
Nottingham



Rebecca Long-Bailey addressing the Durham Miners Gala in 2019 photo Paul Mattsson

■ Cuts crime

On BBC Question Time, 23 January, in answer to a question on knife crime, the former Durham police chief constable Mike Barton replied: "We are never going to arrest our way out of this problem. Of course the police have got a role to play, of course we've got to investigate crime... but the cuts since 2010 have had an impact. There's got to be a grown-up debate about drugs. So what's the answer? The answer has got to be youth and social provision..."

Sadly, the cuts to policing are a mere shadow of the cuts to local authority budgets over the last ten years."

Yet what has been the response of MPs and councillors? More austerity and more cuts!

As the Socialist Party has consistently argued, we need a mass campaign to mobilise working-class people to reverse austerity and to fight for the necessary resources to rebuild our communities.

Chris Newby
Hackney

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

TV review: The Trial of Christine Keeler



photo BBC: The Trial of Christine Keeler

Tory organised hypocrisy

Derek McMillan

Benjamin Disraeli, two-time Tory prime minister in the nineteenth century, once said: "A Conservative government is an organised hypocrisy". The Christine Keeler story on BBC1 would seem to bear out that analysis.

I will avoid spoilers, but all the main events are in the public domain already. The politicians, press and police all come out of this disgracefully tarnished.

On the one hand, John Profumo, the defence minister (played by Ben Miles), lost his job in the Macmillan Tory government, in 1963.

On the other, of course, he remained a millionaire who did a bit of charity work on the side to salve

his conscience. He received a CBE in 1975. You will be astonished to learn that Christine Keeler did not receive any such honour!

Christine Keeler, then a working-class 19-year-old aspiring model (played by Sophie Cookson), and her showgirl friend Mandy Rice-Davies (played by Ellie Bamber) both got jail time. Christine Keeler was accused of perjury.

Yet the series suggests that the police pressured both of them to give fake evidence against Stephen Ward, the society surgeon who introduced Keeler to Profumo. If that isn't perjury, what is?

The racism of the Met Police is also a feature of the series. If only things had changed!

The press routinely referred to them (without evidence) as

"prostitutes". Prostitution was not a criminal offence. They were vilified in the media and the Conservative Party has never forgiven them. The scandal contributed to the Tories losing the 1964 election to Harold Wilson's Labour Party.

Stephen Ward (played by James Norton) found the ruling class closing ranks against him. The extraordinary waste of police manpower in 'gathering (very little) evidence' against him caused his patients to go elsewhere. He was driven to suicide and, for many people, his blood is on Conservative Party hands.

All of the performances are superb and bring this bit of history to life. But is it history? Or is the Conservative government an organised hypocrisy to this day?

■ Fight cuts

Liverpool's mayor Joe Anderson and the Labour group have carried out the cuts for the Tories over many years, without any serious attempt to organise a mass campaign to recover the resources stolen by them.

The city has lost over £460 million in the last ten years with the consequent reduction in service provision, which has had a devastating impact on our communities.

The lack of any organised fight-back has only emboldened the Tories to step up these attacks, as we can see with the communities secretary Robert Jenrick scrapping the excellent landlord licensing scheme to protect tenants; and the public health budget is to be cut by more than £2 million pounds!

This will affect some very vulnerable people with alcohol problems and other addictions, sexual health issues, and some dental provision

will also be lost.

The council intends to raise council tax by the maximum allowed - 4% - yet again, to compensate for these government cuts in funding. Yes, another £30 million pounds of cuts for 2020-21!

No amount of pleading by Anderson will have any impact on the Tories. They just see this as weakness; they will only respond if the council is prepared to mount a mass campaign to recover the funds we need to sustain our services.

If you fight, you can win. If you don't fight, you never win. French workers have shown us how we can win and they have forced Macron to retreat over the retirement age and pensions' issues.

No more cuts! Fight for the resources that we need for a decent life.

Frank Bowen
Liverpool



Paris Metro workers striking against pensions' attacks photo James Ivens

LIBYA: CIVIL WAR AND CHAOS FOLLOW INTERVENTIONS BY WORLD AND REGIONAL POWERS



The mass uprising against Gaddafi's regime in 2011, in the absence of an independent, revolutionary workers' movement, was derailed by the West photo wikipedia/CC

It is almost nine years since the Nato-led military intervention in Libya, and the country is still a mess, split between conflicting forces, backed by western capitalist powers, Russia, and regional powers Turkey and Saudi Arabia. An ongoing series of 'peace' summits hosted by various world powers have failed to resolve an increasingly violent civil war. In the second of our series on the Middle East, **Tom Baldwin** explains how imperialism brought about this chaos and why the current conflict can only be resolved by a independent revolutionary movement of workers and the poor.

Barack Obama has described failing to prepare for post-Gaddafi Libya as the worst mistake of his presidency. But as described in our article, on 'Iraq - A brutal legacy of imperialist intervention', Libya is one of a long list of countries where imperialist intervention has ended in disaster for the local population.

In March 2011, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution backing military intervention in Libya, ostensibly to protect civilians from the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. MPs backed Prime Minister David

Cameron's proposals for the UK to join the action by 557 votes to just 13. Shamefully, sections of the 'left' supported this intervention, arguing that it was the only way to protect the Libyan people from Gaddafi's repression.

At this time the 'Arab Spring' was at its height. The revolutionary wave had seen the overthrow of dictators Ben Ali in Tunisia in January and Mubarak in Egypt in February. Western powers had been taken unawares by the movements and lost these allies. In Libya they now saw the chance to stamp their authority on the situation and try to ensure

the revolution would be diverted and would lead to a new regime that was amenable to their interests. No small consideration was the fact that Libya was the world's 12th largest oil producer, sitting on Africa's largest oil reserves.

At times, Gaddafi had claimed Libya was socialist, but it couldn't accurately be described that way. A redistribution of oil wealth had improved the lives of many Libyans, which until the 1960s had been one of the poorest countries in the world.

After the 1969 Gaddafi-led overthrow of the British-backed

monarchy, the oil industry was nationalised.

However, workers had no control over the running of society. Gaddafi wielded dictatorial power and enriched himself and his children. The oil industry began to be re-privatised in 2003, just before Gaddafi announced the end of Libya's nuclear and chemical weapons programmes. This was part of an attempt to make a deal with the Western powers and get sanctions lifted.

However, without an organisation around which workers and youth could organise their struggle, the leadership began to be assumed by defectors from the old regime and pro-Western politicians.

Uprising

The uprising against the Gaddafi regime began in the east, around Libya's second city Benghazi. Inspired by the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the overwhelmingly young and educated population sought their chance to do away with Gaddafi and the ruling clique.

The international organisation that the Socialist Party belongs to, the CWI, described at the time the

as they were doing nothing about attacks on civilians in Bahrain and Yemen which their allies, including Saudi Arabia, were responsible for. Instead, they were seeking to further their imperialist interests.

After 2003, European powers had largely rehabilitated Gaddafi, and Libya was an important trade partner and oil supplier.

In 2010, the EU had signed a deal to restrict the number of refugees reaching Europe, resulting in up to two million sub-Saharan Africans being trapped in Libya, many in detention camps.

American intelligence service, the CIA, had a close partnership with its Libyan counterparts, described by a senior US official as "especially productive".

Now that Gaddafi's rule was threatened, imperialist powers were hypocritically trying to pretend that they'd always opposed him. They looked to burnish their democratic credentials by claiming to support the revolution and thereby divert it in the hope of establishing an even 'friendlier' government.

Nato action included establishing a no-fly zone, airstrikes and the deployment of small numbers of special forces, including Britain's SAS. The tide of the civil war turned against Gaddafi, he was driven from power and eventually killed.

Revolution derailed

However, in the absence of an organised independent movement based upon the Libyan working people, Western intervention had further polarised the population and split the anti-Gaddafi forces. Previously posters had been put up by revolutionaries in Benghazi stating: "No to foreign intervention - Libyans can do it by themselves".

The revolution had been derailed and the chance for workers and youth to take control of their destinies had been lost. The country fractured into areas controlled by opposing forces.

A damning UK parliamentary inquiry in 2016 concluded that the result of intervention has been "political and economic collapse, inter-militia and inter-tribal warfare, humanitarian and migrant crises, widespread human rights violations, the spread of Gaddafi regime weapons and the growth of Isis in North Africa".

The images of slave markets have become emblematic of the desperate state of the country. People attempting to reach the Mediterranean in order to cross to Europe are at risk of capture and extreme exploitation by criminal gangs.

One former captive, speaking to Time magazine last year said: "The Libyans understood that if the EU doesn't want blacks to come, it means we are not valuable as humans. The EU is essentially rewarding these militias for abusing us, for raping us, for killing us and for selling us."

A second civil war began in 2014 between rival governments - the General National Congress based in Tripoli in the country's west and the House of Representatives based in Tobruk in the east, which is backed by the Libyan National Army (LNA) of General Khalifa Haftar.

A peace deal in 2015 officially saw the formation of a 'unity' government, the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, which is recognised by the UN. However, Haftar's LNA remains hostile to it and the conflict is still ongoing.

Patchwork

While most of Libya is split between these two main forces it is a complicated and shifting patchwork quilt of control by different militias and tribal forces. For a time, this included significant territory held under the brutal, right-wing religious rule of the so-called Islamic State, although their influence is now severely diminished.

Despite the strength of Libya's regional and tribal conflicts, reflecting the fact that the country was only created in 1934 by the then Italian fascist colonial occupiers, the country's oil wealth also means that there is a continual struggle over who controls its oil exports.



The recent past is a stark warning however that the forces of imperialism will intervene only to pursue their own interests

Nato-led operations may have ended in 2011 but military intervention in Libya has not. The country remains a battleground between different, mainly regional, powers seeking to exert their influence.

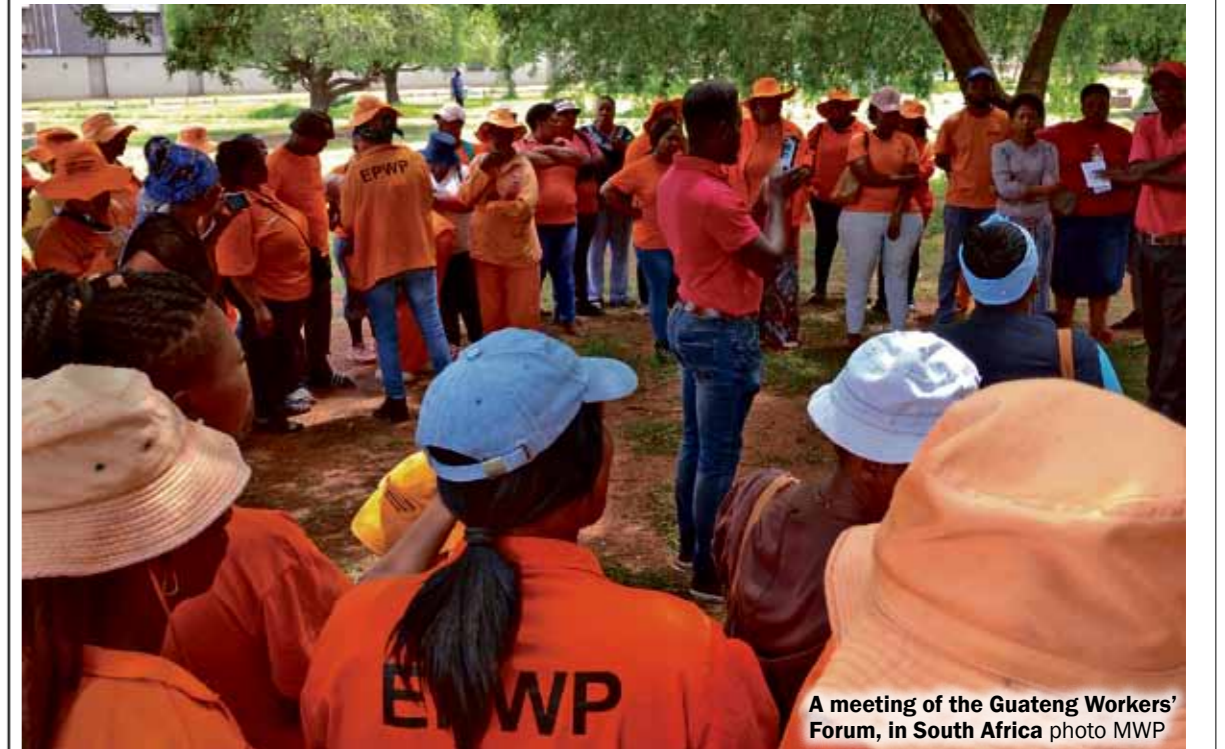
The GNA has been backed by Qatar, Sudan, and Turkey while the LNA has had the backing of Egypt, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Haftar, who once lived in CIA-supported exile in the US, has been backed by the French government, and recently had friendly contact with Trump.

This year there have been peace talks in Moscow and Berlin where the governments of eleven countries were represented, including the UK, as well as UN secretary general, António Guterres. However, General Haftar has not signed the ceasefire and his forces have now blocked oil exports.

Speaking at the Berlin conference, Boris Johnson hinted at possible further British involvement in the future, saying: "There's a case for us... sending experts to monitor the ceasefire."

The recent past is a stark warning however that the forces of imperialism will intervene only to pursue their own interests. Their 'support' for the uprising was really an attempt to control and limit the 'Arab Spring'.

Workers and the poor can only rely on their own class, including calls for international solidarity. If they are to take control of their own lives, they must be organised themselves, including building a workers' party with a socialist programme that can actually deliver on their aspirations.



A meeting of the Gauteng Workers' Forum, in South Africa photo MWP

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party in England and Wales is affiliated. CWI members here in Britain, those in other countries are involved in workers' struggles and developing socialist ideas in order to fundamentally change society. Below are a few examples of this work. More reports and socialist analysis can be read on socialistworld.net

Nigeria

Abbey Trotsky of the Democratic Socialist Movement (CWI, Nigeria) faces four cases against him in separate courts. Abbey suffered regular arrest and detention throughout 2019 for supporting Sumal food workers win pay rises and other improvements in conditions in 2018.

In one trial against him, he has even been denied his choice of legal representation! But Abbey is defiant. And the protests outside the trials will continue.

South Africa

The government's Expanded Public Works Programme gets workers to do jobs in the public sector, but without permanent contracts or decent pay. Some earn as little as £105 a month. Gauteng Workers' Forum, an initiative of the Marxist Workers' Party (CWI, South Africa), has organised five mass meetings demanding permanent contracts and decent pay.

The biggest meeting so far was in Soweto where 400 attended on 27 January.

Nearly 200 workers came to the Boipatong meeting, led by Marxist Workers' Party member, Executive Lungisani Mukwevho, and over 100 to the meeting at Careltonville Hospital. Nupswa trade union is now working with the Workers' Forum. They're jointly organising a protest march at President Cyril Ramaphosa's state of the nation address to a joint sitting of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces on 13 February. The Marxist Workers' Party has already produced three bulletins for the Forum.

Germany

150 activists participated in the launch of a new Network for Fighting Unions on 26 January. This initiative was the result of collaborative work between Sol (CWI Germany) and other activists and included representatives of important recent workers' struggles, including Amazon.

France

Strikes and demonstrations organised by France's trade union movement are continuing in order to press back against the Macron government's attacks on workers' pensions (see socialistparty.org.uk for eyewitness reports), the main planks of which are still going through the national assembly.

The Le Harve demonstration on 24 January, in which CWI members participated, was huge. Here, Val De Seine high school students joined in. They built a human chain to protest the imposition of unfair university entrance exams. Teachers, furious at job cuts, surrounded the academic-inspection building.

Ireland

A protest in Balbriggan in Dublin successfully disrupted the election rally of the far-right racist Anti-Corruption Ireland. One of the speakers was prevented from getting into the meeting.

The CWI Ireland leaflet called for a united trade union and working-class struggle for jobs and homes, and against cuts, poverty and racism.

CWI Ireland member Carah Daniel addressed the protest. She said Balbriggan "has a proud record of pushing back against racism." She blamed big landlords, property developers and capitalist TDs (MPs) in the Dail (Parliament) for the housing crisis, and called on young people and workers to get together and "fight for socialism."



Trump's trashing of the environment

DUMP THE CAPITALIST PROFIT SYSTEM!



photo michael vadon/CC

Simon Carter

At the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, US president Donald Trump attacked those calling for meaningful action to halt catastrophic, capitalist-induced climate change as “prophets of doom”.

It's easy to dismiss such drivel as the ranting of a billionaire, birdbrain bigot. But Trump's one-line attack on environmentalists is driven by his association with the fossil-fuel industries, who bankrolled his 2016 presidential campaign, and more generally by his unqualified embrace of the capitalist profit system.

Since elected, he has rolled back environmental protection measures, allowing landowners, agribusiness, mining companies and coal-fired power stations, and so on, to dump more toxic waste in the waterways, rivers, streams and aquifers of the USA.

That means more arsenic and carcinogenic heavy metals being poured literally down the drains. Indeed, Trump's administration has removed federal government oversight of at least 60% of US waterways. This, despite the fact that millions of Americans are already exposed to unsafe drinking water.

And Trump's trashing of the environment goes on. He issued an order allowing a huge increase in logging of public forests on the spurious 'scientific' grounds that thinning forests would prevent more damaging fires. So instead of tacking global heating - which is driving more extreme weather events such as droughts, leading to more intensive fires - he promoted the financial interests of the logging industry.

Trump's pro-mining and logging messages are dressed up as 'job creation' measures in order to appeal to working-class communities suffering high unemployment. However, a genuine workers' government could create

millions of new jobs through investment in sustainable alternative energy projects.

Trump's removal from office is urgent but the Republican majority in the Senate will ensure that the Democrats' impeachment of him will fail.

The Democrat leadership - with its neoliberal, Blairite policies, representing another branch of capitalism to the Republicans - failed in 2016 to defeat Trump with Hillary Clinton, their establishment candidate. Polls, then, suggested that that only Bernie Sanders with his left-leaning platform could have beaten Trump by attracting enough support from the working class and oppressed. But Sanders, having been outmanoeuvred by the Democrat establishment, backed Clinton instead of running as an independent.

In the upcoming presidential election primaries, Sanders is repeating the same mistake of running for the capitalist Democratic Party nomination. Although enthusing tens of

thousands with his campaign, and polls showing once again that he is frontrunner to beat Trump, he faces an uphill struggle to defeat establishment candidate Joe Biden and liberal Elizabeth Warren.

Whether he wins or loses the Democratic nomination, it's imperative that Sanders uses the platform he has built to mobilise the working class - particularly organised workers in the trade unions and those left activists currently supporting him - to break with the Democrats and forge an independent, mass working-class party, based on socialist ideas, to seriously challenge Trump and end capitalism.

That's the only way the pressing issues of climate change and organising sustainable production can be resolved in the interests of the overwhelming majority.

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