AUSTERITY KILLS

Protest on Budget Day

Wednesday 11 March, from 1pm in Parliament Square, London SW1P 3BD

Tanking cuts to incomes and services mean workers are dying younger and suffering sickness for longer. Austerity is killing us.

In fact, overall life expectancy has stopped creeping up for the first time in a century. The upward curve started flattening out ten years ago, when austerity began in earnest. Worse - among the poorest tenth of women in the North East, and Yorkshire and the Humber, it’s now going backwards.

“Austerity has taken a significant toll on equity and health,” says public health researcher Michael Marmot, “and it is likely to continue to do so.” Professor Marmot led the new review for University College London’s Institute of Health Equity.

“Poverty has a grip on our nation’s health - it limits the options families have available to live a healthy life. Government health policies that focus on individual behaviours are not effective. Something has gone badly wrong.”

Meanwhile, in the time since the world financial crash, the wealth of the super-rich has expanded like a monstrous tumour. The number of billionaires in the UK has more than doubled, from 68 to 151.

And from 2007 to 2019, the Sunday Times Rich List recorded the fortunes of the UK’s richest 1,000 growing from £360 billion to £525 billion! But workers’ wages have only just ‘recovered’ to their pre-crisis peak in 2008 (see p11) - and our public services continue to decline.

“This is naked class disparity. In former ‘red wall’ areas in the deindustrialised Midlands and North, the more affluent long-held Tory areas can look forward to 65 years of good health. Poorer Labour and ex-Labour constituencies can expect just 61. And the report “is concerned with England, but in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the damage to health and wellbeing is similarly unprecedented.”

“From rising child poverty and the closure of children’s centres, to declines in education funding, an increase in precarious work and zero-hours contracts, to a housing affordability crisis and a rise in homelessness, to people with insufficient money to lead a healthy life and resort to food banks in large numbers, to ignored communities with poor conditions and little reason for hope…

“Austerity will cast a long shadow over the lives of the children born and growing up under its effects.” A higher proportion of children now live in poverty in the UK than in the Republic of Ireland or Poland.

It is criminal that the richest 1,000 have gained hundreds of billions while the rest of us have lost years off our lives. It is a consequence of capitalism, a system where private profit, not social need, is the motor force.

The Socialist Party demands an immediate end to all austerity. Restore full funding to the NHS and public services. Raise the minimum wage and benefits so they’re really enough to live on. Scrap zero-hour contracts and bring in free education and childcare.

And nationalise the banks and big business, under democratic workers’ control and management, to plan provision for all.

Coordinated trade union action can force the bosses to give us more. And councils must set no-cuts budgets to meet local needs, and demand that Westminster fund them (see p4-5, 12). Capitalism kills - socialist policies are a matter of life and death.
IMMIGRATION: FOR A SYSTEM THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE MAJORITY, NOT A RICH ELITE

WHAT WE THINK

The times are a plenty of conflicts between the middle class and the working class, as well as between the employers and the employees. This has led to a situation where the working class is fighting for their rights and demanding better conditions.

What is the solution? No immigration system can do away with the problems of inequality and exploitation. A system that is based on the needs of the working class is necessary. This system should be one that is democratic and recognizes the rights of all people. It should be one that is based on the principles of freedom, equality, and justice.

Working Class: We care for each other

Our society is divided between the rich and the poor. The rich get richer while the poor get poorer. The working class is fighting to change this situation. We need a system that is based on the needs of the working class and not the needs of the rich elite.

Join the Socialist Party

Support our work and help us to fight for the rights of the working class. Join the Socialist Party today and become a part of the struggle for a better future.

27 February - 4 March 2020

Editorial

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WHAT WE THINK
**Coventry: A socialist councillor who will vote against cuts**

**Leicester: We can’t take any more cuts, any more misery, and we are fighting back**

**University workers’ strike over pay, pensions and workload escalations**

**Socialist Party member Jane Neilson is standing as a candidate for Coventry council in the Upper Stoke by-election on 18 February.**

In one of the poorest cities in the country and home to huge numbers of ordinary people affected by or on the fringes of welfare cuts, Jane Neilson is standing as a socialist candidate for Coventry.

Unlike Tory Labour councillors, she would resist Tory austerity instead of pushing it on working people.

Coventry Council can’t go on like this. On every front we face the threat of cuts to our services, our homes, our schools, our libraries, our youth centres, our swimming pools, our health and dodgy landlords. While Sure Start centres, libraries and youth clubs are closed to ordinary people across Coventry for the next three years £86 million is set to be cut from Coventry’s services and government departments will see a further £2 billion cuts.

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Jane Neilson is someone who will fight for every possible improvement to the council housing for the long term benefit of all while properly protecting the council’s budgets and giving them budget advice. The council found £700,000 to hire a diverse, no-bullshit Browne report to cut vital funding. The council is increasing council house rents by 4% to help pay for every possible improvement to the council housing for the long term benefit of all.

The council is arguing that by using reserves strategy the 5% cut in 2013 is safe and that the selling of land and properties required a lot more than increased fees. The council wants to increase council house rents by 4% to help pay for every possible improvement to the council housing for the long term benefit of all. The council found £700,000 to hire a diverse, no-bullshit Browne report to cut vital funding.

Students and workers out together on Budget Day, 11 March

Socialist Students and Worker on Budget Day, 11 March

Socialist Students is backing the Tory budget against the Labour One Nation budget and in defence of our higher education system. Socialist Students is backing the Tory budget against the Labour One Nation budget and in defence of our higher education system.

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A meeting of the PCS union national executive committee on 19 February agreed to instruct the London Mail Branch of the union to take strike action in the first week of March, if they are not satisfied by then. The branch consists of around 2,000 postal workers who are currently engaged in a bitter dispute with Royal Mail over proposed new contracts, which would see many posties having their wages cut and their conditions worsened. The new contracts are part of a wider plan by the company to restructure the postal service, which is already facing significant financial difficulties due to declining demand for post and the rise of digital communications. The union has been calling for a national strike in response to the proposed changes, and has been conducting a series of local actions to build support for the strike action. The union is also calling for a public campaign to raise awareness of the issues involved in the dispute and to build support for the strike action.
The UK’s public broadcaster, the BBC, is facing renewed threats to funding and jobs. About a year ago, at this time, workers’ movement can defend employment and oppose the dismantling of the public media and the democratic public sphere.

See also “Is the BBC worth saving?” in the March issue of Socialist Today - read and subscribe at socialismtoday.org

Socialist

This is the BBC. Fight the Cuts - and the Capitalist Media

How can jobs be saved?

The BBC, which has 8,000 employees, is the UK’s largest news and current events outlet. The Victoria Derbyshire show, reductions at Newsnight and 5 Live, £800 million of “savings” across the system and market changes goes back years. The funding deficit arises from the licence fee’s decline, which the corporation has not been able to replace.

The main unions involved are the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), and Bectu (now part of Prospect), which negotiates terms and conditions on their behalf. The NUJ has dismissed the licence fee as not enough to replace voluntary revenue lost from newsprint, advertising and royalties. The NUJ is short of funds. It cannot meet its members’ welfare needs. It has to maintain a core team to keep things going.

The lessons is therefore that no newsroom activity is in itself management. A programme of longer, experimental projects. A series of strikes, mass call-ins to the BBC switchboard. A million signatures under the “Save the BBC” umbrella.

The question is, has the BBC been targeted for reasons of class war?
**Socialists must defend trans rights**

On 18 February, the Morning Star published a cartoon, drawn by Stella Perrett, depicting trans people as predators to deny them basic rights. These attacks are as disgusting to us as to you. There is nothing that they want to is simply cruel and unjust. Our duty is that of optimism and collaboration when I was in Belfast and one member who pays their subs - new decade, new challenges’ (the Socialist).

We work with Andrea in anti-racist campaigns, and one of the first Militant supporters - new decade, new challenges’. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don’t forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

**Socialist struggle**

Just as people deny climate change and say it’s not happening when there is clear evidence of global heating, so it is with socialism. The struggle is hard, with disappointment to overcome, so we motivate, organise and collaborate. As active socialists, we win people. This is the myth that Stella Perrett’s cartoon perpetuates. The claim is reminiscent of those made in defence of segregation and homophobic laws, painting black and gay men as predators to deny them basic rights. These attacks are as disgusting to us as to you. There is nothing that they want to is simply cruel and unjust. Our duty is that of optimism and collaboration when I was in Belfast.

In 1997 when I began work for the Socialist, Andrea was one of the first Militant supporters - new decade, new challenges’. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don’t forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

**Bending under pressure**

Rebecca Long-Bailey told a recent Jewish Labour Movement hustings that she would “welcome” the return of Luciana Berger to the Labour Party. Berger, the ultra-Blairite and former Liverpool Wavertree Labour MP, stood for the Lib Dems in Finchley and Golders Green in December, and failed to get elected. The Lib Dems had propped up Cameron’s austerity coalition government, and as a party are totally opposed to the interests of the working class. Anybody who stands for the Lib Dems is promoting policies in opposition to everything that the Labour Party should stand for. These individuals should never be allowed back into the Labour Party.

Of course, Luciana Berger, when she was a Labour MP, used that platform to publicly slander and vilify her own party. Long-Bailey is the sole ‘Corbyn continu- ing’ candidate for Labour Party leadership, so for her to not only say that Berger should be allowed to rejoin the party, but should be “welcomed”, is utterly bizarre. In reality, Long-Bailey’s stance shows an unwillingness to stand up to the large hostile audience at the hustings. Any Labour Party leader will come under far greater pressure, from the press, from the lobbyists, from political opponents, and so on. And these pressures will pale into insignificance compared to the pressures a Labour prime minister will have to face down from the capitalist class at home and abroad.

It is not enough to have a vaguely socialist approach and to mean well. A leader of the labour movement needs to fight for the interests of the working class and stand firm against the capitalist class enemies. But she has shown an utter lack of the grit needed to defend these ideas when put under pressure.

If this is the best the Labour Party has to offer, then the fight against austerity will have to take place outside the Labour Party.

**Andrea Enissouh - a full-hearted comrade**

It’s very sad news to hear of the passing of Andrea Enissouh. I first met Andrea in the mid-1980s when we were both Militant-supporting students in the north-west of England (Andrea in Manchester and me in Preston). How you were to all teenagers! She was a force of nature.

Our working-class roots and Marxist ideas gave us confidence to take on the right wing! Andrea was a working-class fighter and one of the first Militant supporters on the National Union of Students’ national executive council. I worked with Andrea in anti-racist collaboration when I was in Belfast and Andrea in London in the early 1990s. Andrea wrote on the need for socialism to end racism in the Militant pamphlet on the legacy of US black liberation radical, Malcolm X.

In 1997 when I began work for the Committee for a Workers’ International (the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) in London, Andrea was one of the first comrades I met - still full of energy and enthusiasm for the struggle. A full-hearted comrades. How very sad her passing, but Andrea left her mark that will be remembered. Condolences to all of Andrea’s family.

**Public assets or private profit**

Capitalist production of electric vehicles is contributing to the turmoil in Bolivia, which holds one quarter of global lithium reserves, essential for battery manufacture.

Over the past decade the previous Morales government moved to create a “100% Estatal” (state) lithium industry, rather than following the ‘public-private’ model in Argentina and Chile. Without the expertise and equipment to set the industry up, Bolivia looked for international support and in 2018 surrendered a 49% stake to a Chinese consortium for just $2.3 billion.

In October 2019 a military coup, initiated by allegations of electoral corruption, forced president Evo Morales to flee the country; 17 indigenous protesters have since been killed after the interim government granted the military criminal immunity.

For now, polls indicate Morales’ Movement for Socialism retaining majority support in the upcoming elections. Will international capitalists succeed in their colonialis- t extraction of Bolivia’s lithium for profit, or will employment and education be shared with the indigenous people of Bolivia, as Morales envisaged?

Tom Ruddell

**Reclaim the unions**

Regarding your article ‘Trade unions - new decade, new challenges’ (the Socialist 13-19 February), we must remember who is the union; it is each individual member who pays their subs to the collective. It is therefore the responsibility of each member to attend their branch meetings on a regular basis and make their demands known to regional offic- ers, etc.

Should these people on high refuse to take up workers’ demands, then members can give notice of a mass “check out”. The union needs the cash from members, clearly therefore members should call the shots? Through the system, areas need to be kicked, especially that of Frances O’Grady - who is as much use as a choco- late tea pot.

Adrian Rimilian

East Grinstead
Average wages recover to pre-crisis levels - but we’re still over a decade behind

Joe Fathallah
Cardiff East Socialist Party

Average wage levels in the UK have, for the first time, recovered to the level they were at before the financial crisis. In the last quarter of 2019, the Office for National Statistics says weekly pay averaged £512 - the highest level since March 2008 with inflation taken into account.

For the Tories in their Westminster bubble, this is a statistic to shout about. (Under)employment minister Mims Davies hailed “a record-breaking jobs market and business confidence on the rise.” For ordinary working-class and many middle-class people, however, the reality is very different.

Today’s average wages would have been £500 a week had the pre-crisis trend continued, according to the Rowntree Foundation think tank. So really we’re still behind. And any average figures are artificially skewed upwards by a small number of people receiving obscenely high salaries.

The minimum wage is currently set at £8.21 an hour for workers aged over 25, due to rise to £8.72 in April. A 2019 report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates that a single person needs an annual wage of £18,800 (plus public services and benefits) for a minimal living standard.

However, the same person working full-time on the £8.72 rate would make just £15,870 before deductions. And that’s not even taking the reduced rates for workers aged under 25 into account.

Above: average UK weekly earnings, adjusted for inflation data from the ONS

While the bosses try to make the working class pay for the crises of capitalism, the rich continue to line their pockets. Just since 2014, shareholders of the largest 100 companies in the UK have received a 56% increase in dividends, according to the Trade Union Congress.

If the minimum wage had increased at the same rate over that period, it would now be £10.14 an hour. Even this would not be enough.

Big business will always put its own profits ahead of our living standards, but workers are fighting back! McDonald’s workers in London are striking for a wage of £15 an hour. Workers at Uber, Deliveroo and TGI Friday have also organised action.

University workers in the University and College Union are currently striking over a number of issues including low pay and insecure contracts (see p7). Posts in the Communication Workers Union could soon join them (see p6).

The Socialist Party fights for:

- Trade union struggle to restore the wage shortfall from the ‘lost decade’ - and for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to at least £12 an hour, as a step towards a living wage of £15 an hour
- A mass campaign to organise workers into the trade unions - especially young, low-paid and migrant workers
- End age discrimination! For the minimum wage to apply to all workers from day one of employment regardless of age or status
- End precarious employment! For full employment rights from day one on the job. Stop zero-hours, ‘permanent, full-time work for all who want it, with flexibility on workers’ terms, not the bosses’

Bezos gives $10bn for climate - nationalise the rest!

Adam Harmsworth
Coventry Socialist Party

A $10 billion ‘Bezos Earth Fund’ is the biggest ‘giveaway’ yet by owner of Amazon and world’s richest man Jeff Bezos. He has claimed the fund will go to “any effort that offers a real possibility to help preserve and protect the natural world.”

Perhaps the Socialist Party should bid for the fund, having a far more sincere programme to protect the planet than any billionaire! Bezos might not be so fond of us, not least because he has repeatedly featured in the Socialist for his immense wealth and greed.

$10 billion equates to 8% of Bezos’s current wealth. Losing even 8% would be ruinous for most ordinary people. But Bezos has been a billionaire for over 20 years and has been worth over $10 billion since 2010; he could have poured billions of dollars in to fight climate change years ago!

But the capitalist system grants Bezos and the rest of the capitalist class the right to choose when and how they spend ‘their’ money. This is despite the fact that his private fortune was made by the hard work of hundreds of thousands of Amazon employees - and could benefit all humanity and help save the planet right now.

Meanwhile, the group ‘Amazon Employees for Climate Justice’ has said the company threatened to fire employees when as many as 1,800 of them called on their employer to do more to fight climate change during the September climate actions. And Bezos has fought tooth and nail to avoid taxes on Amazon’s profits to fund socially useful investment!

It seems this Earth Fund is little more than a publicity stunt. There is no serious intent from Bezos, Amazon, or any of the biggest polluting businesses to change their practices and risk their profits to take action that would prevent global catastrophe.

The resources exist to fight climate change right now; billionaires like Bezos are in the way, hoarding money and holding the planet to ransom. Preventing warming of more than 2°C will require expenditure of $2.15 trillion every year, according to the Economist - about 2.5% of world economic output.

Socialist change is urgently needed to rid the bosses of their power, taking their money and big business into public ownership under democratic workers’ control so these resources can be planned to genuinely combat climate change now.
Housing cuts cost lives

Jonzan Mace
Social Housing Action Campaign (Shac)

We gathered outside Peckham Head Office on the evening of 10 February to say our goodbyes to the London Borough of Southwark. Our campaign for housing justice and the community and neighbourhood services we love has been done away with. The council are betraying us. They have lost confidence in the community and anti-social behaviour is on the rise.

The origins of Peckham - a working class, multi-racial community, made up of migrants and asylum seekers. It is now a region of vacant cars, with less issues, fewer resource, and less support for essential services, tenants, residents and users services.

One person said: “We are calling on our branches to support this call. We are aiming for a 10% increase overall in membership. We are aiming for a 10% increase overall in membership. What is really happening? There is a lack of engagement and a lack of action. What are we doing to support this call? Without the necessary support, the council will not change. What is really happening? There is a lack of engagement and a lack of action. What are we doing to support this call? Without the necessary support, the council will not change. What is really happening? There is a lack of engagement and a lack of action. What are we doing to support this call? Without the necessary support, the council will not change. What is really happening? There is a lack of engagement and a lack of action. What are we doing to support this call? Without the necessary support, the council will not change. What is really happening? There is a lack of engagement and a lack of action. 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Germany: Right-wing terror attacks - fight racism, fight capitalism!

The murder of nine people in two shisha bars in the German town of Hanau by a fascist gunman is the third fatal right-wing terrorist attack in the country in just nine months. But as Sasha Staničić (SAS, CWI, Germany - national spokesperson) explains, recent elements of establishment politicians ever such attacks will not eradicate the far right threat. On the contrary, their anti-working class policies have created a fertile soil for the growth in racist attacks like the MTD.

T he racist murders in Hanau are part of a chain of racist attacks in recent months which are in no way isolated from one another. They are not caused by the individual perpetrator, but by a capitalist society that produces racism and right-wing terror on a daily basis. And a state in which racism, fascism, and right-wing populism can operate. However, a recent racist terror wave was discovered - the so-called "Gruppe S" - which involved a police working group that had been discovered - the so-called "Tobias R" - committed the Hanau crime alone or as part of a group. The investigation of the murders and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism.

The racist murders in Hanau are part of a chain of racist attacks in recent months which are in no way isolated from one another. They are not caused by the individual perpetrator, but by a capitalist society that produces racism and right-wing terror on a daily basis. And a state in which racism, fascism, and right-wing populism can operate. However, a recent racist terror wave was discovered - the so-called "Gruppe S" - which involved a police working group that had been discovered - the so-called "Tobias R" - committed the Hanau crime alone or as part of a group. The investigation of the murders and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism.

The investigation of the murders must not be left to the state which, especially in Hanau, is itself beleaguered in the "terror" scenario. Sed demands the formation of an independent citizens' initiative in Hanau to get to the bottom of the murder and the violent attacks on left-wing and social activists. The investigation of the murders must not be left to the state which, especially in Hanau, is itself beleaguered in the "terror" scenario. Sed demands the formation of an independent citizens' initiative in Hanau to get to the bottom of the murder and the violent attacks on left-wing and social activists.

Divide and rule There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. There is no equivalent without racism. 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It is time for students to coordinate action with striking staff, as our struggles against casualisation, the commodification of education, and attacks on trade unions are a struggle against the same enemy - the Tories, the bosses and their system.

The trebling of tuition fees, which came alongside a cut in government funding to universities, has taken its toll on university workers and students alike. On the one hand, it has meant increased workloads and attacks on pay, pensions and conditions for staff. On the other hand, it has meant student debt, spiralling housing costs, and cuts to courses and student services.

This strike is a significant step towards building a united student and worker struggle that fights for the abolition of tuition fees, for an end to the marketisation of higher education, and for a fully-funded education system where the objective is the pursuit of knowledge rather than making profit.

Join your teaching staff and support workers in the University and College Union (UCU) on the picket lines, and let’s build a movement to resist Tory austerity and defend our right to protest on the campuses!

See reports from the picket lines on page 5 and read more about the strike at: ‘UCU: Striking to fight education cuts and marketisation’ at socialistparty.org.uk