As new coronavirus infections gather pace - in Britain and around the world - Boris Johnson claims the country is “well-prepared with a fantastic NHS.” Who’s he kidding?

NHS performance this winter was the worst on record - before a single patient developed coronavirus Covid-19. Decades of under-investment in all public services were followed by the past ten years of austerity cuts. A senior doctor told a Nuffield Trust reporter: “If this is like the 2009 [swine] flu it’s going to be very bad. We’re in a worse position than we were then. If it’s worse than that we’re going to be in deep trouble.”

A London hospital critical care consultant said the government “is dishonest. I hear them say the NHS is well-prepared. We are not well-prepared, it is media spin.”

Of the first 44,000 Covid-19 patients in China, over 80% had a mild disease, 14% suffered severe infection such as pneumonia, and 5% needed critical care.

The British Thoracic Society of chest specialists warned respiratory wards are “understaffed and overstretched.” 57% of senior respiratory medics surveyed said they had no extra staff to rely on.

There are only 15 ‘ECMO’ beds in England to treat adults with the most severe respiratory failure: 80% of the 3,700 critical care beds in England were occupied two weeks ago, and average occupancy of all hospital beds was 94%. Several hospitals reported 100% of beds already occupied.

The average hospital stay of Chinese Covid-19 patients has been eleven to 26 days. Already short of 100,000 staff, high workload means most NHS workers are on the edge. How will the NHS cope if thousands of staff catch the virus themselves and cannot work?

Waiting lists for planned surgery will grow even longer as operations get cancelled. Urgent non-surgical treatments could be delayed weeks or months if beds are filled and staff knocked out by Covid-19. Senior doctors will be forced to decide who gets treated and who doesn’t, potentially to die as a result.

Outside hospital, privatised social care companies employ low-paid workers, often on zero-hour contracts. Bullying management and harsh sickness absence policies force many to work when unwell. What a terrible way to run this vital service to the elderly and disabled - the most vulnerable to this disease!

Trade unions must demand sick pay is paid from day one at full pay rates. There must be no pressure on sick workers in any sector to continue working, threatening their own and others’ health.

Total world military expenditure was $1.8 trillion in 2018 - about $220 for every human being on the planet. Instead of defending the ruling classes’ wealth and power, such vast sums should be used to defend us all from disease, poverty and environmental destruction.

Nationalisation of big corporations, including the pharmaceutical industry; democratic planning by the working class, and international cooperation - in a word, socialism - could prevent new diseases like Covid-19 becoming disasters.

Stop the cuts
Councils must set no-cuts, needs budgets
> Reports: p5, 11

Protest on Budget Day, 11 March from 1pm, Parliament Square

International Women’s Day
Fighting sexism and capitalism
> Feature: p7-10

Socialist Party Congress 2020
> A world in turmoil: p12
> Weak British capitalism faces working-class anger: p13

Jon Dale
Secretary, Unite union
Nottinghamshire NHS branch (personal capacity)
**A WORKERS’ CHARTER FOR TACKLING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS**

**The Socialist Party supports workers' right to collective action during the pandemic.**

During the crisis, how can we meet the needs of the millions of workers out of work, angry and in despair, who are being asked to defend a system that has mercilessly sustained a system of class exploitation and in which workers are the only ones taking the pain? It has been a conveyor belt of exploitation and oppression, from the factories to the farms, and from the shopfloor to the lecture rooms.

In this article, we present a charter that gives these millions of workers the right to demand more, and the power to get it.

### Pay and benefits

- **End furlough scheme.**
- **All workers, including part-timers, should receive full pay from day one of isolation or sickness for as long as it is needed.**
- **Workers required to self-isolate should be entitled to a government benefit by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the equivalent of at least a full working week, plus any overtime, if they usually work longer.**
- **Benefit claims should be treated, wherever possible, as being for the period of self-isolation.**

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- **Benefit claims should be treated, wherever possible, as being for the period of self-isolation.**

- **Workers should be paid in full for any day because of isolation or sickness for as long as it is needed.**
- **Unemployed workers, who are on government benefit, should be entitled to claim for any sick pay that they cannot receive.**
- **If workers can’t work because of the need to self-isolate, they should be entitled to full pay from day one of isolation or sickness for as long as it is needed.**

### Safety and public health

- **No to any removal of statutory protections for workers.**
- **The point is to change it.”**

- **Benefit claimants should be paid for the time they spend off work on illness or under doctor’s orders.**
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### Jobs and workplaces

- **Workers required to self-isolate should be entitled to a government benefit.**
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### Education and care

- **Workers should be paid in full for any day because of isolation or sickness for as long as it is needed.**
- **Individuals required to self-isolate should be entitled to full pay from day one of isolation or sickness for as long as it is needed.**

### Environment

- **Workers should be paid in full for any day because of isolation or sickness for as long as it is needed.**
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### Socialism and internationalism

- **Workers should be paid in full for any day because of isolation or sickness for as long as it is needed.**

**The Socialist Party fights for a socialist Europe and a socialist world.**

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**A healthy society should face more than one crisis.**

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Who will emergency measures protect?

NHS crisis
The risk level for getting coronavirus in Europe is now “moderate to high” and deaths in Italy have risen from 18 to 52. Covid-19 now counts 90,000 cases in over 60 countries, with 51 cases confirmed in the UK as we went to press.

The government says it is “well-placed” to handle the crisis. But the Doctors’ Association UK reports just eight of 1.618 medics surveyed felt the NHS was ready. The Scottish government says that in the unlikely worst-case scenario, up to 250,000 people could be hospitalised.

Westminster’s plan should the outbreak get out of hand is to try to delay its peak until summer. This makes sense - but it is a tacit admission that the NHS winter crisis is a real and permanent feature.

The NHS 111 helpline has been promised an extra £1.7 million to give advice on Covid-19. Why is there not immediate extra money in all parts of the NHS? And if there’s money available, why are we only getting it now?

Workers’ wages

Up to a fifth of the workforce may be off sick during the peak of a coronavirus epidemic in the UK, the government warns. Bakeries chain Greggs has announced it will pay self-isolating workers their normal pay for isolation time.

This is a victory for bakers’ union BFAWU, which won recognition at the firm with an agreement including a ban on zero-hour contracts. Trade unions in all sectors should demand the same.

Weak economy

Boris Johnson has said: “Something like a mass epidemic is going to have all sorts of consequences and there is always the potential for an economic downside... and we are ready for that.”

“But don’t forget the fundamentals of the UK economy are very strong.” Not so. The Socialist has been warning for some time that British capitalism is extremely weak. It will be hit hard by an economic downturn - and one was already in preparation before Covid-19.

The FTSE 100 slumped by a huge 12% in the last week of February, with similar falls around the world. The OECD reckons world economies only democratic control by supermarket workers, unions and the local community could guarantee fair and thorough planning.

This has a 1.5% and financial markets to crash by around 20%. The EU’s economy spokesman has warned that “the idea of a V-shaped recovery, returning quickly to growth, can’t be taken for granted and could prove optimistic.”

Already, British Airways and Ryanair have suffered falling demand and cancelled hundreds of flights. Will all customers and staff be compensated? Will the government step to in investment jobs, and services, and nationalise to save jobs if firms go under?

Emergency powers

The government advises “reducing the impact and spread of misinformation by relying on information from trusted sources” - such as the chief scientist. But who trusts this caviler, anti-worker administration?

In France, hated president Emmanuel Macron has issued an unilateral decree to dismiss democratic block to his attacks on the pension system that have provoked major national strikes. The government has also banned demonstrations against this outrage under the pretext of the Covid-19 outbreak.

In the unlikely event that the outbreak reaches severe levels in Britain, the state plans to curtail public assembly, create no-go areas, put whole cities on lockdown and put teachers, responding to “low-level” crimes, and put troops on the streets.

Few would oppose temporary restrictions to contain an epidemic. But in whose interests? Democratic working-class control involving the local communities is necessary to ensure emergency measures defend workers and the public, not just the profits of big business owners.

Supply problems

Financial analyst Bruno Monteyne, former supply chain director at Tesco, has said supermarkets and suppliers must “feed the nation” contingency plans to prevent shortages and food riots.

Monteyne says these could include narrowing supply to staples only. He also claims this would not include profiteering price hikes - although the sector could face £1.2 billion losses.

But if an extreme scenario did indeed arise, who would control this rationing? Only democratic control by supermarket workers, unions and the local community could guarantee fair and thorough planning.

Trade unionists demand precautions in schools and colleges

In the last few weeks teachers and support staff have been asked to return to full-time work and ensure that the classes are all combined and to teach one teacher. Surely this is going to make the spread of the virus much easier. I can tell you now this won’t be happening.

The government’s proposal is not about caring for children. It’s about money. Education workers need to stand together and not put this into practice.

If the government is serious about our students’ health and wellbeing then it will increase school budgets and get rid of the testing regime that already makes them ill! As a parent and grandparent, I’d be seriously concerned that the government is putting money before my child’s safety.

Schools and Covid-19: class size proposal is about cuts, not health

One of the measures the government is considering in the coronavirus outbreak is to remove any limits to class sizes. What does this actually mean?

Well, if there are teachers absent, in self-isolation or because they are ill, the government is recommending that the classes are all combined and taught by one teacher. Surely this is going to make the spread of the virus much easier. I can tell you now this won’t be happening.

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Education workers ask union to campaign on coronavirus

On 2 March, the Bristol branch of the National Education Union (NEU) agreed the amendment below for the motion on workload at NEU conference.

Insert two new paragraphs:

- Conference strongly opposes any removal of statutory class size limits as a response to managing teacher absences arising from novel coronavirus, teaching schools as if there were just child-minding services.

- Increasing class sizes would damage education and heighten the risk of infection being spread further, as well as further increasing staff workload. Conference also recognises that public health advice to education workers to hand-wash regularly throughout the day will only be possible if time is provided within the school day for this to take place.

Add new instructions to the executive:

- Please ensure that the government to (1) ensure that schools and health services are adequately funded to meet needs, including providing additional budgets to provide supply staff to cover additional absences arising from the coronavirus, and (2) make sure that both staff and parents are fully compensated for any loss of earnings arising from the crisis.

- Issue advice to members, workplace representatives and local officers to ensure that workload demands on staff are reduced to make sure that time is available to prioritise protecting the health and safety of staff and students.

Trade unionists make the following demands of management in one college:

We watch the news with concern as coronavirus begins to sweep Europe and the rest of the world amid warning of a pandemic. Considering these points, we urgently demand that our concerns are addressed within the next 24 hours:

- What is the emergency protocol for staff and students if there are any identified cases of coronavirus?

- Why are events and travel still being organised to the regions affected while other organisations are withdrawing staff and students from high-risk areas?

- There must be an immediate review of EU and international travel, including work and study-related field trips, for all staff and students. The decision should err on the side of caution.

- Staff must not be expected or pressured to travel if there is any risk of infection. We cannot rely on Foreign Office advice as it provides a bare minimum and does not reflect the varied work staff do across the world.

- Are all buildings now being deep-cleaned on a regular basis as a precautionary measure, including all door handles being disinfected before being used? If not, why - and when will this begin?

- Members inform us that there are toilets where there are missing soap dispensers and there have been some dispensers without soap, which even under normal circumstances is unhygienic.

- Hand sanitisers should be made available for all staff and students and should be outside areas where students and staff congregate.

- Staff need reassurance that they will be able to work from home if there is a need for self-isolation and not be penalised in any way.

- What is the organisation doing to safeguard and avoid any coronavirus-related harassment and racist attacks against staff and students?

We want to work with the organisation on this matter, but we feel at the moment that the guidance and support offered by senior leadership are inadequate for a fluid and seriously developing scenario. It is in the interest of all staff and students that these points above are addressed immediately.
Budget Day Protest
11 March, 1pm, Parliament Square, London
See socialistparty.org.uk for more

What will we do if they cut Camden nurseries?

Hugo Pierre
Schools convenor for Unison in Camden

Camden council cuts mean four nurseries will lose all their places for two, three and four year olds. Campaigners lobbied the Labour council against the £600,000 cut to the budget on 2 March.

The nurseries are in the most deprived part of the borough. They provide a valuable opportunity for children who otherwise would start school below national average levels of achievement.

A recent report revealed that the Camden life expectancy gap between rich and poor has doubled during this austerity decade. Incredibly, the council say these cuts are an opportunity to tackle underachievement of children by replacing nursery places with drop-in services.

So working parents, anyone in education or those acting as carers for other family members can drop all this, to find time to pop into the Sure Start service with their kids? Low-income families, especially if parents work multiple jobs, will surely find a sympathetic ear from their exploitative employer!

The lead councillor for this project was put on the spot by parents and the staff union Unison. They are jointly campaigning vigorously throughout the borough to oppose these cuts, and call on the Labour council to abandon them.

In the rally outside, there was good support for the Socialist Party view that these cuts councillors should be replaced by fighters willing to organise the local community to demand the money for our services from the Tories.

Southampton, Brighton, Reading
Labour councils miss opportunity to stop Tory cuts

Nick Chaffey
Socialist Party Southern secretary

In the same week at the end of February, three Labour councils in the south - Brighton, Reading and Southampton - had an opportunity to use Labour strongholds in southern England to rally opposition to further Tory austerity and set no cuts budgets to defend jobs and services.

But far from putting up resistance, these councillors are privatising amenities, cutting services and putting up council tax, rents and charges. This will only further punish hard-working class communities.

Reading Labour councillors voted through the privatisation of leisure services to none other than Greenwich Leisure Limited, who attacked library workers and were beaten by strike action from Unite the Union in south London.

Cambridge council cuts mean five nursery places will lose all their places for two, three and four year olds. Campaigners lobbied the Labour council against the £600,000 cut to the budget on 2 March.

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Continuing cuts to Southampton schools mean meaning teaching assistants and teachers axed, class sizes rising and classroom support disappear ing. The housing crisis continues, but Southampton Council is borrowing £200 million to speculate on the table. But now they’ve given verbal assurances they intend to re store the A&E.

This concession follows a huge community campaign in Rhondda Cynon Taff. Thousands of working-class people have thrown themselves into the defence of their hospital. Hospital workers, doctors, nurses and patient groups have participated.

Communities across the Rhondda valleys are festooned with the orange bows of the campaign. Nearly 1,000 hospital workers have signed the petition by Unite the Union.

Over 500 rallied mid-week on 27 February. They wanted the Welsh Assembly to pass a motion in support of the A&E, in defiance of the First minister and health minister.

Another 500 massed outside the health board meeting. Over 100 poured into the meeting itself. Victory is within our grasp.

The floods have caused over £100 million damage in the area. But they have not dampened the mood, they have intensified the anger.

The health board rally took place in the shadow of a landslide that ran down a nearby coal tip. The threat posed by the hundreds of tips in the borough has reminded people of the Aberfan disaster and the fighting traditions of the mining communities our area inherited.

The health board says it can’t re main an A&E at Royal Glam because the last remaining consultant is retiring in April. It has advertised to fill the post, but claims that there have been no applicants. But who would apply for a post that is disappearing? The Welsh government and health board must withdraw the South Wales Programme of cuts and support the permanent retention of A&E at Royal Glam. The verbal assurance by the health board must be made certain - added as an option in the consultation and adopted by the board.

The A&E should be kept open while the consultant's position is filled, using temporary locums and consultants from the other A&Es. Royal Glam A&E must not close, even temporarily.

Just one consultant is not sufficient. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine requires ten consultants should available for each A&E. The health board should start a sustained recruitment campaign to bring the A&E up to the full compliment.

A glorious victory for the Royal Glamorgan campaign and for people power is entirely possible now. But the pressure must be stepped up - more rallies and marches.

Royal Glam A&E: Victory is within our grasp

Dave Reid
Socialist Party Wales

The struggle to retain a permanent consultant-led, 24/7 A&E at Royal Glamorgan hospital has entered a new, important phase.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board executives had previously announced that only two ‘minor injuries’ options for the hospital were on the table. But now they’ve given verbal assurances they intend to restore the A&E.

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Defend the right to strike! Southampton solidarity meeting

London Labour mayor Sadiq Khan has declared that he will "stand up for the rights of Londoners," but a recent wave of strikes by teaching staff at several sixth forms is just the tip of the iceberg of the National Strike Movement across the UK, which is demanding pay rises and improved working conditions.

The right to strike is a fundamental right enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter. It is a right to protect the health and safety of workers, and to ensure that they have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

As Nick Chaffey, Spokesperson for Southampton University branch of the Socialist Party, points out, the right to strike is a crucial tool for workers to defend their rights and to fight against employers who are trying to cut corners and undermine their conditions.

"The right to strike is a fundamental right that must be respected," he says. "It is a right that must be defended, and it is a right that we must continue to fight for."
Girls and young women in research into women’s harassment say they aren’t shocked by its results (The State’s Girls’ Rights in the UK at 10). The research found that as many as two-thirds of girls and young women said harassment and sexism were part of their experience in public places. On top of that, some women felt there was no alternative but to accept harassment. The study found that harassment and sexism are a daily experience for girls and young women. The young women, but they are a source of comfort and support. The research talked about the impact of sexism and harassment on young girls, meaning these aren’t safe places for girls to spend their evenings, with youth workers they can talk to. In fact, many teachers reporting finding it hard to deal with incidents of sexual harassment. Huge reforms have been won, such as legal aid, equal pay, and other rights and services. The expectations of women have changed over the last few decades, but the harsh realities of women, such as women facing each week at the hands of an abusive current or ex-partner — still exist. On top of the contradiction between the empowering, issues, as well as promoting healthy relationships, and the lack of understanding that exists. A lot of these young women continue in their quest for justice. The frustrations of these young women grow up in society. Helen Pattison, Girls, are more often kept between the empowering message of sexism — such as two women dying of domestic violence, and continued sexism, these girls feel the same — noting that staff don’t feel the same. Allowing securing proper training and support for students and teachers around sex and sexual harassment, as well as developing an education. Students launching a fight for adequate funding of our education system, overcoming sexism and inequality. Students and teachers only be allowed to fear of women and harassment can do it now. The university has now been targeted by anti-abortion campaigners, a campaign to support the ongoing strike action that safeguards the environment. The programme’s main question is whether they will determine the destruction of the environment. Students and university employers, and won half a billion pounds in settlement payments to make sure no family or child of women who elected them. Students and other UCU members have responded angrily to the protest quickly. They don’t want to make cuts that affect women and services. They have responded angrily to some of use and under democratic control, decent sex education, means launching of research into sexual harassment, as well as ending sexism and sexual harassment, as well as ending sexism and sexual harassment. 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Underpinned by inequality, exploitation and oppression, capitalism is incapable of bringing about the liberation of women. This would require a revolutionary change in the way that society is organised and structured, so that the means of producing wealth could be transferred from the hands of an unelected elite, concerned only with making a profit, to the democratic control of ordinary working people - socialism.

Economic independence

The ending of production for profit and its replacement with democratic collective planning would enable the freeing up of resources to ensure that everybody had a minimum income and a decent standard of living. This would guarantee economic independence for women, bringing an end to poverty and allowing women real choice in personal relationships.

A planned economy would invest in the provision of public services such as childcare, eldercare and facilities for the disabled, relieving many of the burdens which individual families, and women in particular, shoulder today.

Together with a drastic reduction in the number of hours that people work, women and men’s lives would be transformed. More free time would be available for relationships, for leisure pursuits and for training and education, allowing women to reach their full potential in a way that is impossible for the majority under capitalism.

It would also enable women to participate in the democratic decision making and running of society, whether in their workplace, local community or on a broader level.

Good quality, publicly provided housing flexibly responsive to the needs of ordinary people would replace the financial and other stresses which expensive or inadequate housing place on individuals and personal relationships. It would mean that when relationships come to an end, for whatever reason, neither women, children nor men would be disadvantaged.

Under socialism, users would be able to participate democratically in the running of all public services. A democratically planned and integrated transport system, for example, would take into account the needs of all users as well as the environment.

Other services, which are currently in the hands of private businesses and often only accessible to the rich could be publicly provided and available to everyone. High-quality public restaurants would enable everyone to eat out rather than prepare meals at home, if that was what they wanted. Similarly, many household chores could be collectively provided. New technological developments could relieve the monotony and grind of many jobs, not just in the workplace but also in the home.

A real right to choose

A socialist health service would also have sufficient resources to harness scientific and technological developments for the benefit of everyone, as well as massively increasing investment in preventative care. While this would benefit women’s health in general, it would also give real choice over when and whether to have children.

In a socialist society, the companies which produce contraceptives would be taken into public ownership and integrated into the health system. By withdrawing the profit motive it would be possible to carry out research into safer contraception, both in terms of its ability to prevent pregnancy and its effect on women’s health. Similarly, it would be possible to carry out proper research into other issues associated with reproduction, such as menstrual and menopausal problems, and develop safe remedies.

Today, even in countries which have relatively liberal abortion laws on paper, a woman’s right to abortion is threatened by economic cuts and by moral objections. In a socialist society, access to abortion as safe and early as possible would be available for any woman who needed it. At the same time, women and men with fertility problems would no longer be denied the right to have children because of insufficient resources or moral objections.

A planned economy would enable resources to be allocated towards developing technology to aid fertility and massively increasing spending on research into environmental and other causes of infertility.

Social attitudes

Capitalism is organised around the private ownership of the means of production and motivated by profit and competition. It is a system based on exploitation and inequality. This is in turn reflected in social structures, in the values and culture of society and in personal relations.

Socialism, in contrast, would be based on collective ownership and democratic control of the economy. Exploitation, inequality and hierarchy would be replaced by cooperation and negotiation. That would inevitably impact on how people relate to each other and influence social attitudes.

In a society which did not rest on private property and hierarchies of wealth and power the basis would be laid for the total elimination of violence against women. When women have real economic independence and the profit motive no longer reigns supreme, women’s bodies will cease being reduced to commodities to buy and sell. How we look and how we behave, how we express our sexuality, will no longer be constrained by capitalist double standards and moralising.

But ideas and attitudes which have become deeply embedded can endure long after the material basis for them has been removed. A conscious campaign would therefore have to be waged under socialism, through a democratically controlled education system and media etc, to challenge and change ‘hangover’ attitudes from capitalist society, such as sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia.
Why I joined the Socialist Party

I present the 1% and the system that allows them to exist

Ronin Green
Exeter Socialist Party

During my childhood we were always a poor family. I enjoyed a myriad of poverty food while living with my father in a small flat. We indulged in cheese on toast very regularly, rice and beans were a dietary staple and we even once tried pasta and gravy, much to both of our disappointments.

I thought that we were a very poor family, under exceptional financial strain, whereas this is the increasing reality that millions of people face in Britain every day. Even those who are slightly better off don’t enjoy a fraction of the luxury that the 1% do.

In late teens I started to feel very resentful of the 1%. These people could solve various issues around the world, but with a click of their greedy fingers. Instead they live lives of decadent luxury, while workers and the poor slave themselves to an early grave.

But the real direction for my resentment and subsequent anger lay with the system that allows these people to exist, while exploiting the working class for personal gain.

Greedy dragons

This disgusted me and still disgusts me to this day. I didn’t really know where to turn and had never really considered socialism.

Looking into the idea more, it began to really resonate with me. Why is it fair that the lucky few with the right connections, or born into the right family, should be able to just exploit workers and hoard their millions like greedy dragons? It isn’t.

How and what can I actually do to help? It’s hard being such a small voice, especially when you’re fighting against powerful forces that control the media and influence public opinion.

The Socialist Party offers me a chance to unite with an organised group of like-minded people to actually try and make a difference. It feels great to have a cause, something that we can all work toward together, to try and make society a better place for the 99%.

The more of us that band together, the harder we’ll be to ignore; the easier it will be to dispel the stigma that surrounds the term socialism, as if it’s a dirty word.

There’s nothing really radical in believing that people should earn what they’ve worked for, and not feed into the ever-deepening pockets of their employers.

Starve to death

I don’t want to live in a world where potential scientists, humanitarians and people that could make a real difference starve to death because they happened to be born in the wrong country or in to the wrong family.

I don’t want students to live in poverty or drop out just because their parents didn’t have the capital to support them through education.

I don’t want homeless people on the streets having to beg for food and money because the system they were born into is inherently flawed and abandoned them the moment they drew the wrong card.

Everyone deserves a chance to make whatever they want of their own lives, to pursue dreams they’ve had since childhood, unhindered by social class or hierarchy.

I joined the Socialist Party because I want to learn more about what I can do to put a stop to the socio-economic prison that is capitalism. I don’t want our planet to splutter and choke to death on the fumes and gasses of corporate greed.

I just want to make a difference, in the best way I can.
The Socialistic: 5-11 March 2020

Socialist Party Congress 2020: A World in Turmoil

Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party, opened the first session of the Democratic and Trade Union Congress entitled: ‘A World in Turmoil’. The following excerpts touch on the main points:

T his discussion of exorbitant

...continued on page 14

Socialist Party Congress 2020:

The Socialist national congress on 29 Febru-
ary and 3 March was a big success. 300 branch
delegates and visitors attended and participated in the democratic discussion and debate.

They included members with decades of class struggles under their belts, and members who have taken the important step of becoming a party member more recently, all as one young branch secretary put it, went away “politically refreshed” and more ready to play a role in the struggle for socialism.

The three main discussions at the congress were ‘A World in Turmoil’, ‘Britain post-election’ and ‘Building the Socialist Party’.

A party’s ideas are tested in events and struggles – but so too is the determination and fight. This was reflected in the financial appeal which raised an excellent £13,250.

Building the struggle demands clear ideas and an understanding of society, and this was shown by members spending over £2,000 in the bookshop buying Marxist literature.

Importantly, the discussion on building the Socialist Party revealed that a new generation of members are becoming organisers and ambassadors for the party and the working class; selling the Socialist and raising finance, campaigning against the Trump administration, and fighting the sharp end of capitalist crisis, in the workplaces and trade unions, and in local communities.

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The British economy is slowing - even before the consequences of coronavirus which might be the trigger for a major global economic slowdown

The economic downturn, offsetting all the other sources of economic growth, is already hurting the British economy. The rise in mortgage moratoriums, particularly among working-class people, is a clear sign of the economic downturn. Capitalism is in crisis, the ruling class is stepping up the containment and repression. But that repression is not enough to control the economic crisis. What we need is a socialist revolution to transform Labour into a workers’ party in the UK, and to organise a socialist revolution in the world. It is urgent that we organise a mass movement to bring down the capitalist class. It is urgent that we organise a mass movement to bring down the capitalist class.

Retail unions - stand up and be counted

In the run-up to the 2020 general election, the retail sector is facing a major crisis. The sector has lost thousands of jobs and the minimum wage has been frozen. Workers are facing a crisis of living standards and the need for a massive campaign to defend their pay and conditions. It is urgent that we organise a mass movement to bring down the capitalist class.

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India: Bloody pogrom fuelled by Modi’s sectarianism

Catching up with US president Don- ald Trump’s divisive prime min- ister, Narendra Modi, India’s prime minister, is leading a new campaign of communal violence. It is fuelled by a surge of hate speech and hate crimes. The campaign is aimed at targeting and intimidating Muslims, Christians, and other minorities. It is a clear violation of the Constitution of India, which guarantees equal rights and protections to all citizens.

The Modi government has been systematically targeting and intimidating Muslims, Christians, and other minorities. It has been systematically targeting and intimidating Muslims, Christians, and other minorities. It has been systematically targeting and intimidating Muslims, Christians, and other minorities. It has been systematically targeting and intimidating Muslims, Christians, and other minorities.

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Well over 100 strikers and supporters rallied at Leeds University on the fifth day of strike action on 28 February. One of 14 universities joining the strike action nationally in this latest round of 14 days, taking the number in total to 74.

Both Leeds Trinity and Leeds University have been taking part in the latest round of strike action over the ‘Four Fights’ on pay, inequality, workload and casualisation. Leeds Uni has also been part of the USS pension scheme dispute.

Strikers at Leeds Uni are proud to have maintained all 17 picket lines at entrances to the university through terrible weather, with driving rain and snow. One picket commented: “If they weren’t sure how serious we were about these issues, the picketing in sleet makes it really clear.”

A Leeds Uni striker said they felt lucky compared to others that they had a contract up to September! At Leeds Trinity one striker had had seven jobs at one point to make ends meet!

Cutbacks have been a factor too. The entire history department at Leeds Trinity was cut mid-term, with students forced to change courses.

Cutbacks have meant a new layer of activists have had to come forward to rebuild the University and College Union (UCU) branch and get over the 50% turnout threshold on their strike ballot at the second attempt.

While several strikers were optimistic that both sets of employers had asked for talks with the UCU to take place, others were more cynical about whether even these 14 days would result in substantial concessions.

Therefore, several pickets had already begun to discuss what comes next after this round of strike action, especially as further action would likely be during an exam period rather than regular teaching.

Socialist Party members have visited both Leeds University and Leeds Trinity during this round of action and will be continuing to mobilise support within the trade union movement locally, including Leeds Trade Union Council which has donated £250 to the hardship fund and is mobilising its members to join a planned demonstration through the city on 13 March.

Iain Dalton
Leeds Socialist Party