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Issue 1076  
5-11 March 2020



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# the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

**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

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> A world in turmoil: p12  
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# CORONAVIRUS

## UNDERFUNDED, UNDERSTAFFED

# NHS IS NOT PREPARED

**Jon Dale**  
Secretary, Unite union  
Nottinghamshire NHS branch  
(personal capacity)

**A** s 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.

**Special feature: a socialist response to the Covid-19 outbreak, p1-4**

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the Socialist  
formerly Militant

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

# A WORKERS' CHARTER FOR TACKLING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Employers are signalling that self-isolation and sickness could mean loss of pay. The Tories are responsible for vulnerabilities caused by decades of austerity. Governments in parts of Europe are beginning to stop gatherings with the stated aim of controlling the spread of the virus, but have started to use this against strikes and protests.

The National Shop Stewards Network has produced a model motion of demands for trade unionists to put forward to defend working-class interests - available at shopstewards.net. The Socialist incorporates those points below as part of a workers' charter for tackling the coronavirus crisis. More demands may become necessary as the situation develops - pick up future issues to read the latest.

## Public services

Emergency funding to provide resources to protect workers, patients, students and service users in the NHS, education, transport and public services

The government must ensure that schools and health services are adequately funded to meet needs. This should include additional budgets in schools to provide supply staff to cover absence arising from the coronavirus, and to make sure that both staff and parents are fully compensated for any loss of earnings arising from the crisis

Education workload demands on staff must be reduced, and time made available to prioritise protecting the health and safety of staff and students

No to any removal of statutory class size limits as a response to managing teacher absences arising from novel coronavirus. Schools should not be treated as if they 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. 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

Vaccines to be available for free - nationalise the big pharmaceutical companies to guarantee research, production and supply

Reverse privatisation in the NHS, remove the privateers, and fund a massive increase in health spending

## Pay and benefits

No worker to pay the price for controlling the spread of the virus. Any worker who is required not to attend work, or is unable to do so because of childcare or transport closures, should receive full pay



photo Mary Finch

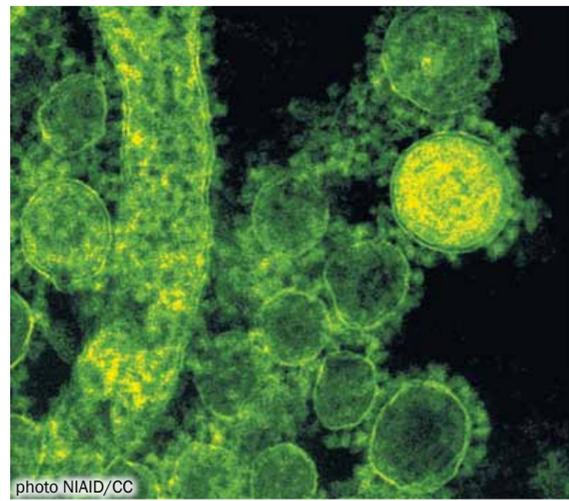


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and not be forced to take annual leave. This should include workers in receipt of in-work benefits such as Universal Credit, who should be paid their full benefits and receive no sanction. Workers who follow health advice to be absent from work to avoid potential spread should be excluded from any attendance-management procedures

All workers should be entitled to full pay from day one of isolation or sickness for as long as it is needed

Self-employed, agency, zero-hour-contract and gig economy workers required to self-isolate to be granted emergency benefits by the Department for Work and Pensions, at full pay, for the equivalent of at least a full working week of 37.5 hours, or more if they usually work longer

Benefit claimants should be believed, excused signing on and attending mandatory interviews, and have their benefit payment advanced. Claimants should not be penalised for not being able to leave their homes and not being able to undertake labour-market activities because of lack of access to transport, internet, postal services, and so on

No redundancies, lay-offs or loss of pay in manufacturing, logistics or service industries because of supply issues

## Stop abuses by the bosses

Any companies who claim they cannot comply with the necessary protections for workers must open their books to inspection by the workforce and trade unions. Small firms which genuinely cannot afford these measures to be underwritten by the government. Big firms which refuse to comply to be nationalised - with compensation only for proven need, not for super-rich bosses - to defend workers' jobs and incomes

Democratic trade union oversight over any government or private sector emergency measures taken to contain the virus, such as restrictions on public assemblies or strikes, or supermarket supply rationing

For the Trade Union Congress and the unions, the biggest voluntary national organisation with over six million members across the country, to prepare to lead national coordinated strike action to protect people should necessary measures not be taken

# Covid-19 hospital worker: protective clothing doesn't make up for lack of beds

## An NHS health professional

My hospital is one of those taking suspected Covid-19 cases. As health workers, we are well aware of the deaths from influenzas which happen every winter, and most of us get our flu jab. But there is no vaccination for this new infection.

Everything possible is being done to protect staff, but all the protective clothing in the world can't make up for the simple fact that we don't have enough beds now.

Recently we went beyond 'black alert' - indicating a serious incident where the hospital can no longer provide comprehensive care. Waiting rooms and day units were turned into wards, using trolleys instead of beds, so the NHS trust could continue to take in seriously ill patients.

We are the major trauma centre for the region, and yet we don't have the beds to properly admit patients. The adult A&E majors department has 20 bays and six 'resus' (resuscitation) bays.

This should be sufficient on most days. But now we have patients with us for way over the four-hour target - sometimes well into the following day. These patients should have been transferred to specialist wards, but they don't have the beds.

## Nowhere to go

Further patients admitted then have nowhere to go and are on trolleys down the corridor, in front of the 'sluice' and resus trolleys - things are very overcrowded. And on top of this, half those patients have coughs, shortness of breath and temperatures - all apparently potential symptoms of coronavirus!

Is it any wonder that staff are stressed? My main workload as a union rep is sickness reviews. Alongside high sickness levels, we are haemorrhaging staff. Health



photo Rob Alliday/CC

professionals can often find work in the private sector - without the stress, the shifts, the nights and the massive workload.

CT scan services are now on the risk register because we have had to cancel waiting lists. This means increasing delays in diagnosing many time-critical conditions, cancer included.

The official advice to the general public makes sense - stay home so you don't infect other people. And that's fine if your employer will continue to pay you, if you have the resources to get your food delivered and a subscription to Netflix.

But for many workers this would be a nightmare. No sick pay, nothing

to put in the meter to stay warm - it doesn't bear thinking about.

In all probability, we won't have a serious outbreak in this country. But it's our class who would suffer the most. We often have no choice about using overcrowded public transport. And the poorer you are, the more likely you are to suffer underlying conditions that put you at serious risk - conditions that affect the lungs like COPD, for example.

Many of the people I work with feel they are on their knees and can't take much more. What they desperately need is a lead from the union tops, to say enough is enough, we are willing to fight and to put forward a strategy to win.

## Northants Council: no hygiene for public contact

The "flagship" Tory local authority I work for recently sent an email to all departments, stating it is going to install hand sanitisers in all of its buildings.

All buildings except libraries. We're the one service that works directly with the public!

Northamptonshire County Council said the budget won't allow for libraries to also have hand-sanitiser dispensers. We're currently buying our own hand sanitiser.

Jac Green  
Northampton Socialist Party

## Attacks on pay could help virus spread

Wetherspoon has said workers self-isolating after travel to coronavirus areas will only get statutory sick pay - nothing for first three days! Not only will workers be out of pocket, but it could help coronavirus spread. Workers will come to work because they can't afford not to.

What's the Tories' response to coronavirus? Attack workers' rights. They plan to change the law to increase class sizes as the virus spreads. Education workers are already striking because their workload is too high. The Tories claim to have similar plans for the NHS.

Ian Pattison, East London

## A healthy society should have more than one voice

The bureaucracy running China will face a reckoning because of coronavirus.

One of the last comments of Li Wenliang, the doctor who was punished by the regime for trying to warn people about the disease, is being taken up by the masses: "A healthy society should have more than one voice."

Only a democratic socialist society could guarantee ordinary people a real voice and a say in how society is run.

Ross Saunders  
Cardiff West Socialist Party



## 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.

Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.

### 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.

### ENVIRONMENT

- A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.
- 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!

Do you agree? Join the fightback!  
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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 is also 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. Bakery chain Greggs has announced it will pay self-isolating workers their normal contracted hours.

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 economic growth will likely slip from a forecast 2.9% to just 2.4%.

However, it’s possible that a “domino effect” could cause growth

to halve to 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 in to invest in 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 government. But who trusts this cavalier, anti-worker administration?

In France, hated president Emmanuel Macron has issued a unilateral decree to dismiss democratic blocks 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, let police stop responding to ‘low-level’ crimes, and put troops on the streets.

Few would oppose temporary restrictions to contain an epidemic. But in whose interests and under whose control? Democratic working-class control involving the trade unions and 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 maintain ‘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.



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

## Nicky Downes

National Education Union national executive committee (personal capacity)

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.

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.



## 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, treating schools as if they 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:

- Call on 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 absence 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 demand precautions in schools and colleges

Trade unionists have made 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 most 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 pressurised 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 antiseptically wiped? 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](http://socialistparty.org.uk) for more



- No cuts
- No increases in council tax, service charges, council rent. No privatisation
- Use reserves and borrowing powers to set no-cuts, needs-based budgets
- Build a mass campaign of trade unionists, community activists and service users to demand the government restore the 60% funding stolen from councils since 2010

## What will we do if they cut Camden nurseries?

**Hugo Pierre**  
Schools convener for Unison in Camden

**C**amden 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 parts 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 deprived children - by replacing nursery places with drop-in services.

So working parents, anyone in education or those acting as carers



photo Hugo Pierre

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 Labours 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-hit 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.

Continuing cuts to Southampton schools mean teaching assistants and teachers axed, class sizes rising and classroom support disappearing. The housing crisis continues, but Southampton Council is borrowing £200 million to speculate in buying commercial property - enough to build over 2,000 council homes.

Brighton Labour councillors proposed £9.3 million cuts, including slashing disability and domestic violence services.

None of the Labour leadership candidates support Labour councils setting no-cuts budgets or mobilising council trade unions and the local communities to fight for government funding. It is essential that this is challenged in the local elections, and a no-cuts socialist alternative is offered to working-class voters.

I made the deputation, on behalf of the Socialist Party, to the council budget meeting. I said: "The decade of austerity has been a disaster for working-class communities, with the loss of vital services and cuts to over 1,000 jobs.

"We need to fight for the restoration of the £151 million stolen by the Tories from Southampton since 2010." This would fund "youth services, social care, libraries and Sure Start, alongside a council house building programme, showing an alternative socialist vision to the decade of cutbacks."



## 30,000 strike for the climate in Bristol - turn to page 11

photo Matt Carey

## 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.

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 retain 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 recommends ten consultants should be 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.

# Strike wave around London - this is why we need socialists in city hall

London Labour mayor Sadiq Khan has declared that he will "stand up for London?"

Nancy Taaffe, Socialist Party member, asks: "Who in London did he have in mind?"

"The property developers? The billionaires? The tech giants? The low-paying private employers? Or the working class of London - those millions of us who do the work and keep our city moving?"

We are in the middle of a mini strikewave in London. UCU members at universities around the city are taking part in a national strike. So are teaching staff at several sixth form colleges, and at schools in east London against academisation. The RMT on the Bakerloo line has been

on strike, as were cleaners, security and maintenance staff at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, members of the PCS union. Transport for London staff were on strike, as were workers on the Woolwich ferry.

Ealing parking attendants are striking (see below) - following the parking attendants in Hackney - as are baggage handlers at Heathrow. Now the RMT has announced it is balloting tube workers.

Nancy Taaffe says: "For many of these workers, the mayor of London is their boss. Why are workers forced to strike for decent pay and working hours from a Labour mayor!"

"For others, whether their employer is a Labour authority,

or Universities UK, or a private company, Sadiq Khan should make it clear that he stands shoulder-to-shoulder with them in their fights for decent pay, pensions, working conditions and against privatisation.

He should instruct Labour councillors to stop cuts and academisation, and he should demand decent wages and terms and conditions for all workers in London.

"That's what a socialist mayor would do! And that's why we say we need socialists in City Hall."

The Socialist Party believes it is vital that there is a stand for socialist policies in May's London elections.

**London Socialist Party press release**

## West London parking workers' strike



photo Helen Pattison

Ealing parking attendants are on strike 2-6 March, having pushed back the employer to stop redundancies. Serco wants them to work longer hours, with more responsibilities and fewer staff.

All this without any extra holiday pay - despite the fact Serco parking attendants in other boroughs do have more holiday entitlement.

For some workers who have been there over a decade, Serco is their fourth employer, and now it's clear they want to try increase their profits off the back of the hard-working staff.

Luckily, the staff are well organised in Unite the Union. They are picketing outside their work place but also protesting outside the council offices. Striking staff are putting pressure on Ealing Labour council, which really should have come out in support of these underpaid, overworked and poorly treated workers by now.

**Helen Pattison  
London Socialist Party**

## Charity workers' strike

As Addaction charity workers in Wigan resumed strike action on 27 February, they expressed their anger that this national charity had spent £140,000 on a relaunch, ironically renaming the organisation "We Are With You" - presumably in an attempt to distance the organisation from the strike! This sum is more than enough to settle the dispute over broken promises and to pay staff, who work with people with drug and alcohol addiction problems, at NHS rates.

Under current Tory anti-union legislation the workers had to be rebaloted by their trade union Unison, and despite the length of the dispute to date, they returned a Yes vote by over 96%!

**Roger Bannister  
North West Socialist Party**



photo Unison NW

# Defend the right to strike! Southampton solidarity meeting

**Nick Chaffey**  
Southern Socialist Party regional secretary

RMT transport union guards on South Western Railway (SWR) will be on strike again, 9-10 March and 12-13 March, in their fight to maintain 'safety critical' guards on the railways.

SWR publicly state: "We have guaranteed to keep a guard on every train, but it is vital that we use the most efficient means of dispatch when we introduce our new trains so that we can deliver the improved performance our customers so desperately need." So, with the intention of introducing driver-only operations!

Three years into their franchise, SWR service is woeful. Such is the

failure of SWR to deliver an acceptable service, Tory transport minister, Grant Shapps, has announced the possibility of renationalising the franchise. SWR remains an overcrowded, expensive and unreliable service where profits come first, and only 74% of trains arrive on time or less than five minutes late.

All the evidence shows the importance of safety critical trained guards; for their role in dispatching trains, where most serious accidents and fatalities happen; for the safety of passengers from physical and sexual assaults, and for emergencies where trains have to be evacuated due to breakdowns and accidents.

Passengers are overwhelmingly in favour of having guards on the train. However, for SWR the issue is not about safety or service but prof-



photo National Shop Stewards Network

## Electricians pay victory

Electricians at Sandwell Council, West Midlands have won better pay. Unison local government union members had been taking action short of striking since 6 January, after voting 100% on a 94% turnout for both action short of strike action and strike action.

Unison members were to be joined by Unite and GMB in a week-long strike from 2 March. Preparations for picket lines were well advanced, but at the eleventh hour senior management confirmed that electricians will be placed on a higher grade backdated to April 2018. Tony Barnsley, Sandwell Unison branch secretary told the Socialist: "Our members were solid and determined to win the better grade that will see their pay eventually rise by £5,000. Unity in action can secure victories.

**Socialist Party reporters**



photo Sandwell Unison branch

its.

If train operating companies (TOCs) were serious about the future of railways and improving their efficiency, they would invest the necessary funds. That is not happening. So the RMT is calling for the permanent renationalisation of the railways to guarantee investment, reduce fares and maintain safety.

The Socialist Party argues that compensation should only be paid on the basis of proven need - the profiteers should get nothing.

As this strike begins, the Tories continue their attacks on the RMT transport union, and are preparing legislation to stop strikes on the railways. An attack, if successful, would almost certainly be carried through across the public and private sector.

**Wessex RMT is holding a Defend the Right to Strike Solidarity Conference on Saturday 7 March to mobilise its members and wider trade unionists to protect our essential workplace rights. Speakers include Steve Hedley RMT, assistant general secretary, Ronnie Draper, BFAUW bakers' union general secretary and Rob Williams, National Shop Stewards Network national chair. Conference begins 2pm, Friends Meeting House, Ordnance Road, Southampton, SO15 2AZ.**

# How can we involve more women in the unions?

**Katrine Williams**  
Vice-president PCS union DWP group (personal capacity)

Women make up over half of trade union membership in the UK. It is vital that trade unions ensure that their voices are heard and the issues the union takes forward reflect what the members are angry about and want to see challenged.

Workplaces are so pressurised. Both public sector and private employers are trying to drive down costs and increase productivity from a smaller numbers of workers. Austerity has cut to the bone services which used to provide much needed support for all the work that families now have to do themselves - such as caring for children and the older generation.

While attitudes have changed, caring responsibilities still overwhelmingly fall to women who are more likely to be on lower pay. Over 40% of women work part time. The increased intensification in the workplace and home life means that many union members are very limited in how much time they can give to doing extra work. Workers are also very practical about how they use their time, and would want to make sure that there is a good reason to get involved.

We have seen a number of disputes recently where women workers have come to the fore - the equal pay dispute in Glasgow council with strike action of mainly low-paid women workers, and the Birmingham home care workers. Despite huge pressures in the workplace, women members have realised that by sticking together and building collective strike action there is a lot that can be gained.

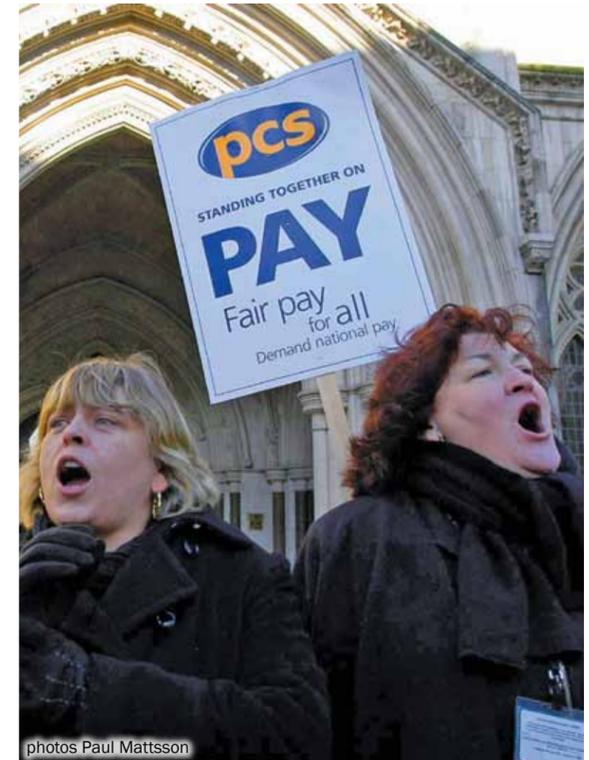
### Vital campaigns

It is vital that unions campaign on issues relevant to women members to encourage them to get more actively involved.

In my union, PCS, the attacks on pay, pensions, staffing, working hours and the threat of office closures have a major impact on all our members, but especially on women members. PCS represents civil and public servants working for central and devolved governments, as well as private sector workers on government contracts.

Despite having a majority of female members in PCS, there is no level of the union overall where women are a majority of reps, including at local level and branch level.

Increasingly, we are seeing a top-down, bureaucratic approach to addressing equality issues. Recently, we saw praise in my union for the 'step aside brother!' campaign which lays the blame on male



photos Paul Mattsson



'post blockers' rather than looking at how we can increase the involvement of women workers. I doubt there is any union where we have too many representatives!

There is also a top-down approach to pushing the idea of 50:50 for national executive committee seats, without a plan of how to increase women's involvement at all levels of the union, and how to address the barriers women face.

### Anger

A consultation on this proposal provoked a great deal of anger among women reps.

A top-down rigid quota would not address the key barriers that can make it difficult for women to get actively involved in the union at national level. These include a lack of paid time-off, and extensive travel and overnight stays for meetings which can be difficult to juggle with caring responsibilities.

There was also a reaction to the danger of this proposal leading to the removal of socialist fighters from positions. Just being a woman is no guarantee that an individual would be the best fighter for women.

The union needs to campaign at local and national level on a fighting programme, as we did against the cuts after the election of the ConDem government in 2010. This programme should include:

- An end to low pay and for equal pay
- Fight office closures and service cuts
- Fight job cuts
- Fight for full staffing
- Shorter working week with no loss of pay
- Fight attacks on flexible working and working hours
- Fight attacks on terms and conditions

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# Young women: “We’ve been given the destination but no way to get there”

**Helen Pattison**  
London Socialist Party  
youth organiser

Girls and young women involved in research into sexual harassment say they aren't shocked by its results (The State of Girl's Rights in the UK at [plan.uk.org](http://plan.uk.org)). The research found that as many as two thirds of girls and young women aged between 14 and 21 had experienced sexual harassment in public places. On top of that, as many as 37% had experienced harassment in school, and around one quarter report being touched inappropriately at school.

It's not just girls and young women who face sexual harassment in their day-to-day lives. In London, 55% of all women said they had been sexually harassed on the underground. Closing ticket offices, driver-only operated trains on national rail lines, and other cuts mean fewer staff to deal with incidents.

These statistics might not shock young women, but they are a source of huge anger and frustration. The research looks into lots of different areas, from uniforms to sex education. The frustration of these young women comes across in their quotes. They talk about the huge contradiction between the messages of empowerment and equality in advertising and media, and their actual experiences of sexual harassment and sexist ideas: “We've been given the destination but no way to get there”.

And despite the idea that they can ‘do anything’, students reported still feeling that courses are divided into girls’ subjects and boys’ subjects. Girls, are more often kept from playing sports in the rain than boys, and girls’ uniforms are discussed on the basis of whether they will distract the boys. Young women’s frustration is

understandable. Women and working-class people have fought for well over a century against inequality, sexism and poverty. Huge reforms have been won - such as legal equal pay, and other rights and services. The expectations of women have changed over the last few decades. But the harsh realities of sexism - such as two women dying each week at the hands of an abusive current or ex-partner - still exist.

On top of the contradiction between the empowering message and continued sexism, these girls and young women are growing up in a time of cuts and austerity. The research talked about the impact of 61% cuts to local government services, meaning there aren't safe places for girls to spend their evenings, with youth workers they can talk to.

At school, many teachers report feeling unable to deal with incidents of sexual harassment, with only one in five receiving training. And students feel the same - noting that staff don't seem confident about these issues. Securing proper training and support for students and teachers around sexism and sexual harassment, as well as decent sex education, means launching a fight for adequate funding of our schools, and against privatisation of our schooling system.

These changes and reforms only take the fight against sexism, harassment and inequality so far. Today, politicians and the establishment try to give capitalism a feminist veneer. But this has been exposed by huge cuts to vital women's services, growing poverty and inequality. A battle must be launched, involving women's organisations and trade unions, to defend these services, against austerity and for no-cuts budgets.

But as long as capitalism continues these reforms will only be temporary. For lasting gains and, to put an end to sexism and inequality we have to challenge the system of capitalism which relies on and perpetuates sexism and inequality.



## A programme to fight oppression

### 1. End austerity now

- Build a mass movement against all cuts. No to cuts in jobs, benefits and public services
- Call on Labour councils to reject Tory cuts and set budgets based on need, using their reserves and borrowing powers to fund them

### 2. Homes, health, education for all

- A mass building and renovation

programme of decent, affordable council housing to ensure homes for all and make it easier for women to leave abusive situations. For councils to use their existing powers to introduce rent control now

- Save our NHS. Invest in publicly owned, democratically run, high-quality and free adult, social and children's care
- For a socialist NHS - free at the point of use and under democratic control, providing all necessary services including mental health services. Kick out the privatisers
- End the schools funding crisis. 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

### 3. Defend living standards

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £12 an hour without

exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay. Scrap zero-hour contracts. For employment rights from day one at work

- Reverse the pension attacks. Increase the state pension by 50% now as a step towards a living pension
- Scrap Universal Credit. Labour councils should use their existing powers to implement payments to make sure no family or individual suffers as a result of this cruel Tory measure. Reverse all benefit cuts

### 4. Stop sexual harassment

- Build campaigning student unions that challenge sexism. For democratic and accountable elected committees of students and workers to have a say in how incidents are dealt with so decisions

are not left in the hands of overpaid and unaccountable university vice-chancellors or boards. Free education would free women from the vulnerability student debt creates

- For trade unions to organise and campaign against sexual harassment including organising strike action to stop sexual harassment in the workplace. Support unions taking action to defend safety measures such as the RMT union's campaign to keep the guards on trains. Scrap zero-hour contracts
- For workers and young people to fight for zero-tolerance to sexism at all levels of society: For quality and informed sex and relationship education which challenges all forms of prejudice, discrimination and harmful gender norms and action to expose and challenge state sexism

### 5. Fight workplace discrimination

- For trade union organisation to stop bosses sacking pregnant women and to ensure that women's pay, and terms and conditions, are not cut on their return to work after maternity leave
- For a trade union campaign to win improved working conditions, including the right to time off work for symptoms of the menopause, and for training of trade union health and safety reps to help enforce this
- End period poverty. For free, quality sanitary products to be provided in schools, workplaces and relevant public services. Period dignity requires an end to austerity

### 6. Real justice for victims of domestic violence

- Fight for fully funded council-run services specialised to suit the needs of those fleeing domestic violence, with

democratic accountability to and by service workers and users

- Increased and improved services to help women affected by domestic violence, rape and abuse, including paid time off from work to access support
- Reinstate access to legal aid. Increase the threshold for legal aid so that all women can access it for divorce cases. No to enforced mediation
- Take the courts out of the hands of the 1%! Campaign for police accountability and the election of judges under democratic control by the working class
- For the right to choose
- Mass struggle, led by the trade unions, to defend the right to free, safe and legal abortion. End the need for two doctors' signatures.
- Access to free fertility treatment on the NHS for all who need it. Nationalise

big Pharma and fund research into safer, more effective contraception and the right to fertility treatment on the NHS - no to rationing of IVF

- End maternal and child poverty. Reinstate pregnancy grants, maternity and child benefit for all and end the government's two-child policy on tax credits and Universal Credit. Raise benefit levels to reflect the real cost of pregnancy, childbirth and bringing up a child. Fight for free, flexible childcare. For the right to paid parental leave

### 9. Build fighting mass organisations

- 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. Organise militant trade unionists with the National Shop Stewards Network
- For a mass workers' party - drawing



# International Women's Day FIGHTING SEXISM AND AUSTERITY



In 2019, 13,000 low-paid women council workers in Glasgow took strike action and won an end to the gender pay injustice they had suffered for over a decade  
photo Public Services International/CC

# Students and university workers unite against anti-abortionists

**Lucy Riglin**  
Cardiff Socialist Party

Cardiff University has been targeted by anti-abortion (so-called ‘pro-life’) campaigners from an organisation outside the university - Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform UK. The group displays large graphics of abortion-related images in an attempt to shock and cause distress.

The university has now been targeted several times by the group since last November, when the Students' Union voted at its AGM to take an official pro-choice position. Students have responded angrily to the anti-abortion protests - many appalled by the apparent need to defend rights which were won half a century ago.

At the same AGM students voted to support the ongoing strike action by the University and College Union (UCU). One of the anti-abortion protests occurred on a UCU strike day last December, which enabled students and staff already communicating because of strike activities, to be alerted to the protest quickly.

Students and other UCU members were promptly dispatched to the protest, where they blocked the graphic images from the public with homemade UCU and Socialist Students placards and banners. This demonstrates some of the advantages of organised networks of students and

workers, who can respond immediately to defend each other. As with all our campaigning work, we're stronger when we fight together.

The UCU is striking over issues including pay, inequality, insecure work and excessive workloads - all issues which can play a part in a women's decision about whether to have children. It's important that pro-choice campaigns include fighting for decent pay and working conditions, as well as affordable housing and childcare, so that people can decide whether to have children, without worrying about whether or not they can afford to feed and house another person.

The struggle for women's right to choose must also include the right to fertility treatment as part of the right to decide whether to have children. Of course, the ‘pro-life’ campaigners are not interested in better lives for mothers, but instead campaign to increase women's oppression.

As other universities are also targeted by anti-abortion campaigners, Socialist Students can play an important role in holding open meetings for students to discuss how to organise so that they can mobilise quickly in response to these campaigners. Students should also appeal to the trade unions, including UCU, to support these struggles, as well as supporting union struggles for better conditions. Together, students and workers will be stronger in the fight for equality and against oppression on campus.

## Women's Lives Matter

### Women's Lives Matter activists

It's council budget setting time. Across the country you will hear the splash-splash sound of Labour councillors' crocodile tears hitting the floor. They will say they don't want to make cuts but they don't have a choice. Is there a gun to their head? Will their children go hungry if they refuse?

These are instances where choice is limited - but not for councillors deciding whether to obediently pass on savage Tory austerity or to actually defend the services and living standards of the people who elected them.

The Women's Lives Matter campaign (WLM) is calling for protests at council budget-setting meetings and online campaigning to say they do have a choice.

WLM was born in Doncaster. In 2017 socialists and others campaigned to save the domestic violence service there. Doncaster Labour council said it had no money due to government cuts. The service cost £30,000 to run. It had millions in reserves. WLM warned that this meant the council would be responsible for damage to women's lives.

It therefore wasn't a surprise, given the vicious cuts in this area, that Don

Valley was one of the largest swing votes to the Tories in the general election. Labour had shown in practice that it didn't stand up for working-class people.

Labour councils should refuse to implement one more cut and set emergency budgets based upon what people in their communities need - they should do this using their reserves, their borrowing powers, but most importantly by building a movement of working class people to fight for the money the Tories have stolen from our services.

Liverpool City Council did it in the 1980s, and won £60m back off, the Thatcher government to build council homes, nurseries and more - so we can do it now.

Working-class women know by experience that we have to fight for what we need. But throughout history that has been most effective when uniting with the rest of our class to win the NHS, council housing, equal pay, the right to choose and, more recently, when low-paid mainly women workers in Glasgow went on strike, inspired solidarity from other workers, and won half a billion pounds in money owed to them by the council.

See more at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk): 'Join the fight to defend women's lives'

# Women's rights - what's socialism got to do with it?

**U**nderpinned 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 relieve 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,

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. This 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.

Here we print extracts from the Socialist Party book 'It doesn't have to be like this - women and the struggle for socialism' by **Christine Thomas**

It doesn't have to be like this



Available for £6 from [leftbooks.co.uk](http://leftbooks.co.uk) | 020 8988 8789 | PO Box 1398 Enfield EN1 9GT



photo Paul Mattsson

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

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# Why I joined the Socialist Party I resent 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 my late teens I started to feel very resentful of the 1%. These people that could solve various issues around the world, with but a click of their greasy 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.

**WHAT'S  
YOUR VIEW?**

editors@socialistparty.org.uk



## Socialist Party Fighting Fund

|               | £ received    | £ target      | January to March 2020 |  |  |     | Deadline: 1 April 2020 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|--|--|-----|------------------------|
| Southern & SE | 2,978         | 2,350         |                       |  |  |     | 127%                   |
| Northern      | 895           | 750           |                       |  |  |     | 119%                   |
| Wales         | 2,572         | 2,300         |                       |  |  |     | 112%                   |
| North West    | 1,204         | 1,150         |                       |  |  |     | 105%                   |
| London        | 4,646         | 4,600         |                       |  |  |     | 101%                   |
| East Midlands | 1,811         | 1,850         |                       |  |  |     | 98%                    |
| South West    | 1,470         | 1,800         |                       |  |  |     | 82%                    |
| Yorkshire     | 2,013         | 2,550         |                       |  |  |     | 79%                    |
| West Midlands | 1,070         | 2,600         |                       |  |  | 41% |                        |
| Eastern       | 337           | 1,200         |                       |  |  | 28% |                        |
| Other         | 5,755         | 3,850         |                       |  |  |     | 149%                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>24,751</b> | <b>25,000</b> |                       |  |  |     | <b>99%</b>             |

# 30,000 strike for the climate in Bristol

**Dave Moody**  
Bristol South Socialist Party

The weather was torrential rain. But this did not stop 30,000 demonstrators turning out to hear Greta Thunberg address a Bristol climate strike rally, the only place she was going to be speaking publicly on this visit to Britain.

Greta said: "This emergency is being completely ignored by the politicians, the media and those in power. Basically, nothing is being done to halt this crisis, despite all the beautiful words and promises from our

elected officials.

"We are the change, and change is coming whether you like it or not.

"So what did you do during this crucial time? I will not be silenced when the world is on fire... we will not be silenced."

The Socialist Party moved between the mainly young crowds handing out 3,500 copies of our leaflet, which gave real meaning to the chants of "system change not climate change". The Socialist Party leaflet called for the socialist change needed to end climate change.

We discussed with the young pro-

testers how the current capitalist system has brought about the climate crisis by putting profit before people and the planet.

At the very start, an eager young person wanted to buy a copy of the Socialist and learn more about our ideas. He said that in his bag he had a copy of the Communist Manifesto.

Greta only spoke for a short time and restricted her message to putting pressure on elected politicians to do more to resolve the climate crisis. The Socialist Party is on these demos to promote socialist ideas in the generation who will take the struggle forward.

# Secret cuts meeting couldn't prevent protests in Newham



The council kept the details of their £45 million cuts meeting a secret, until very late, to prevent protests outside. But that didn't stop the Socialist Party, Newham trade union council and others on 2 March.

Socialist Party member Lois Austin said: "Newham is one of the poorest boroughs in the country. There's nothing left to cut."

The Labour council has gentrification plans too - pushing working-class residents out. A council bid for funds to 'improve' Queen's Market could be the thin end of the wedge and put in doubt the future of the market.

And they've refused to guarantee the future of sheltered accommodation - Hamara Ghar in Upton Park and Terry Waite House in Canning Town.

But councils have a choice. Newham council is sitting on £576 million in useable reserves.

They should refuse to make cuts - with the support of unions and local people - and demand the money back that has been stolen by the government.

## Anti-academy strikes kick off in Redbridge

The snow didn't stop staff, parents, children and supporters turning out on the picket line. St Bede's in Redbridge took their first day of strike action against the school becoming a privatised academy.

After the picket line, parents and teachers went for a rally with other east London schools striking against academisation. National Education Union (NEU) organiser Glenn Kelly said: "Workers hearts were lifted to see homemade banners done by children."

And Jeremy Corbyn sent the strikers a message of support. Next they're planning a protest march in the area.

**Ian Pattison**  
East London Socialist Party



photo Glenn Kelly



photo Ian Pattison

# Socialist Party Congress 2020: A world in turmoil



Peter Taaffe addressing congress photo Mark Best

A strikewave in France followed the Macron government's attacks on pensions and workers rights. More protests could erupt after PM Édouard Philippe's edict pushing the pensions bill through parliament without further debate. And working class struggles will not be confined to France but will resonate in other countries, including Britain photo James Ivens

Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party, opened the first session of discussion and debate at the party congress entitled: 'A world in turmoil'. The following excerpts touch on the main points Peter referred to.

This discussion of momentous events already occurring should be used as preparation for those events which will happen on a colossal scale in the future. World capitalism has entered a new period, perhaps a decisive period, of stagnation and decline. The whole world is in turmoil - some countries catastrophically so.

There are multiple enduring crises as the economy takes a downward turn. There are increased tensions in international relations and conflict between major powers. Imperialist appetites have accumulated and been stimulated. There is a looming environmental catastrophe, not the least decisive factor in ratcheting up class conflict.

As always, the situation in the world economy will be decisive. If the capitalists could deliver relative growth, they would expect a certain amount of social peace. But the first quarter has shown negative growth in China - the 'world's factory' - because of the enormous fallout from coronavirus.

We have entered a new era of what capitalist economists call 'deglobalisation', a term the Socialist Party and the CWI have previously used to predict that globalisation

would reverse at a certain stage.

Recent weeks have seen a profound change in the economic situation. Nouriel Roubini, who along with us predicted the crash of 2007-08, has written articles in the Guardian and Financial Times warning of a downturn that confirms our analysis, but from a capitalist position.

The shine of 'emerging markets' has been tarnished while in the US and Europe manufacturing is in trouble. The effects of the coronavirus are as much economic as a health issue. It could have the same destabilising effect as the 'sub-prime' mortgages scandal.

From intensified economic competition follows the ratcheting up of conflict in world relations. There is a certain interdependence between the US and China but this will not stop world conflict or even small wars involving the US.

China is now the biggest telecoms manufacturer but also the most advanced. This is the real reason why Trump and US imperialism complain about Huawei, not primarily 'security' concerns.

Economic commentator Joseph Stiglitz has said the US economy is far behind the standards of other countries despite Trump unbelievably claiming most

Americans feel better off.

Not just the political fates of the US, but also the world, to some extent, are tied to developments there and particularly this year's presidential election. If Trump wins then there will be a colossal crisis with an administration even more slanted in favour of the rich, which will face the accumulated anger of the masses.

'Gig jobs' amount to one-third of the jobs in the US. Most income gains have been swallowed up by debt and the increased cost of living, particularly affecting millennials and younger layers of the population, with the colossal accumulation of student and other forms of debt.

### Political earthquakes

If Sanders wins the Democratic Party nomination - by no means certain - he could have the same effect as Corbyn in 2017, if he is bold. He will face a colossal scare campaign and mass antisocialist rhetoric, but even that may not work. The social composition of the US is changing against the right, particularly as it becomes less rural, more secular and younger.

The spectacular victory of Sinn Féin in the recent elections in Ireland reflects the desperate social situation there. Europe as a whole is facing its biggest crisis - particularly the workers' movement - probably since the 1970s. The collapse of two-party politics - especially support for classical social democracy - has been a continental phenomenon,

including in Germany.

In Europe there is economic stagnation, with permanent mass unemployment - youth unemployment stands at 19.3 million - precarious work and poverty, particularly in the weaker economies like Greece.

At the same time, clashes reflect the increased tension and struggle over resources, as between Turkey against Greece and Cyprus over energy.

However, France has shown the colossal conflict between the classes as President Macron battles with the organisations of the working class over pensions, even with middle-class professionals like lawyers. The resistance to Macron can intensify involving movements of general strike proportions. If it develops in this way it can resonate throughout Europe.

Both Germany, with the resignation of the heir apparent to Merkel over collaboration with the far-right Alliance for Germany (AfD) in Thuringia, and France, with gains for the former National Front, now the National Rally (RN), raise theoretical and practical issues over fighting the far right.

But there is no possibility of classical fascism coming to power, even with right-wing populist leaders in office like Trump, Bolsonaro in Brazil and Modi in India - where the fascist RSS has 100 million members used against Muslims and the labour movement.

Sometimes the whip of counter-

revolution spurs the labour movement to react. The colossal general strike recently in India is perhaps the most important single development in Asia and the world.

As important are events in the Middle East. The recent Iranian election saw the hardliners in the regime come out on top. Trump is preparing for regime change and there may even be conflict, not necessarily classical battles but perhaps cyberwar.

Whatever follows, American imperialism will reap a whirlwind. The end of the Syrian civil war in Idlib is causing headaches for Erdogan and the Turkish regime. This is just a guarantee for further and bloodier continuation of the war in the region.

### Mass struggles

Just months ago mass movements - which were non-sectarian at the outset - in Lebanon, Iraq and other countries rocked the region. These are anticipations of the emergence of the working class as the unifying force which could put its stamp on society.

Latin America remains a powder keg with the recent battles in Chile and other countries, as does Africa which is entering a very crucial new phase.

The Socialist Party will face to the working class and particularly the youth, to build the base for the construction of a mass international and a socialist world.

# Socialist Party Congress 2020:

The Socialist Party national congress on 29 February and 1 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 struggle 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 struggle - but so too is its determination to fight. This was reflected in the financial appeal which raised an excellent £17,129.

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 among young people who are at the sharp end of capitalist crisis, in the workplaces and trade unions, and in local communities.

# British capitalism: Weak, divided, and facing the wrath of the working class



main photo Paul Mattsson

Hannah Sell  
Socialist Party  
deputy general secretary

In the aftermath of the general election, the capitalist class in Britain is, in the main, sighing with relief after the nightmare of 2019. It is hoping that a Tory majority government - even led by an untrustworthy character - will result in a bit more stability.

Their hopes will be shattered - if not immediately, in the relatively near future. The resignation of a top civil servant threatening to take the government to an employment tribunal reflects the splits that exist.

In 1987, Thatcher was elected with a majority of 102 and seemed unassailable. But a year later we began the campaign against the poll tax with 18 million people refusing to pay. By the end of 1990, Thatcher and her tax were history.

The Tory Party of those days had far stronger social roots and popular support than is the case today.

Johnson won the election on the basis of promises that he will not be able to keep. The British economy is slowing - even before the consequences of coronavirus which might be the trigger for a major global economic slowdown.

For a decade, we have been told to tighten our belts on the understanding that at some time things will 'go back to normal'. So a new economic crisis, regardless of its depth, could have a seismic effect on the consciousness of working-class people.

The first crisis rehabilitated 'socialistic' ideas - in the form of Corbyn and Sanders. The next crisis will be a central factor in working-class people seeing the need for fundamental socialist transformation society.

But even without a world crisis - or the consequences of Brexit - the



**Movements that have erupted globally have sometimes done so over seemingly secondary issues**

British economy is expected grow by only 0.8% this year. With divisions over taxation, spending and balanced budgets, the can might be kicked down the road, and the main decisions taken later in the year - by which time the economic and political space for manoeuvre will have shrunk further.

On top of the global economic problems there is Brexit. It is guaranteed that Johnson will disappoint those workers who voted for him 'to get Brexit done'. Whatever the outcome of the negotiations with the EU, it will result in further undermining workers' living conditions.

Events will be buffeted by eruptions of working-class anger. We have to be prepared for France and Chile 'coming to Britain'. And struggle could come from unexpected directions. The movements that have erupted globally have sometimes done so over seemingly secondary issues such as WhatsApp charges in

Lebanon or metro fare increases in Chile.

France has just had a movement of the organised working class over pensions, but that was preceded by the inchoate uprising of the gilets jaunes.

Given the break of the right-wing trade union leaders, and the absence at this stage of a mass workers' party, we have to be prepared for all kinds of revolts on social issues, such as the youth protests on the environment.

Currently, the trade union leaders - many of those on left as well as the right - are generally reeling from the defeat of Labour in the general election.

The rank-and-file trade unionist National Shop Stewards Network can play a very important role in the next period as a lever on the trade unions - putting forward a strategy for building fighting trade unions, ...continued on page 14

# Socialist Party Congress 2020:



Congress delegates listen intently to the discussion and debates photo Ian Pattison

...continued from page 13



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

including the building of a 'coalition of the willing' to fight any attempts by Johnson to introduce new anti-union laws  
Younger workers see the need to fight. Most right now are not in trade unions but could be drawn in as struggles erupt in their sectors. Even now though, there are over a million trade union members under 35.  
Worried about the road Johnson is going down, and considering him an unreliable representative of capitalist interests, a section of the capitalist class is clearly looking to try and ensure a safe 'second eleven' in the post-Corbyn era.  
Former Tory chancellor George Osborne has now twice recommended Keir Starmer as Labour leader in the London Evening Standard. Starmer won't reveal who has funded his campaign because it would expose his big business backing.  
There is not, however, widespread enthusiasm for Long-Bailey who is widely seen as lacking in backbone;

bullied in minutes in a radio interview into saying she would press the nuclear button; signing up to conservative Jewish Board of Deputies pledges and opening up the road to future witch hunts against the left. And nothing at all on the question of fighting council cuts!  
At the moment, Starmer is the frontrunner in the race - winning the nomination of 369 constituencies compared to 161 for Rebecca Long-

Bailey. It is still possible, however, that she could win. In that situation it would be necessary to call a mass conference of all those, inside and outside the party, who want to fight to transform Labour into a workers' party. This should be led by the left trade unions.  
If Starmer wins, this will represent a right-wing 'counterrevolution' in the party, regardless of the more 'left' face he has been forced to present in order to try and win the contest. With Starmer as leader it would be necessary to find another route to the building of a mass workers' party in England and Wales.  
Capitalism is in crisis, the ruling class is split and there is enormous discontent among working-class people.  
The protests in Latin America, Middle East and across the channel in France have shown that the missing ingredient is a mass party tested in struggle, with an authority among the working class and a clear programme to give direction to those struggles and bring about a revolutionary change in society.



If Keir Starmer succeeds Corbyn as Labour leader then this 'counterrevolution' will mean the working class seeking an alternative route to building a mass left party photo Paul Mattsson



## The Socialist Inbox

**Do you have something to say?**  
Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT or phone 020 8988 8795, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

### Low pay doesn't mean low skill

The Tories don't know what they are on about when they class care work as 'low-skilled'. I was a support worker for people with learning difficulties and challenging behaviours for 20 years.  
First I worked in the public sector - the NHS - and then transferred over to the private sector, which was a lot worse. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my work helping people, although it could be stressful at times.  
Support work is not just about helping people with personal care - doing their shopping, washing, and so on, and taking them out to educational and cultural activities, medical appointments, and organising their holidays.  
It also involves drawing up important care plans for residents, filling in communication sheets, attending meetings, liaising with doctors, nurses, social workers, the families. You need a wide range of skills.  
You go on countless courses and take mini-exams. I already had a BSc (Hons) in psychology before I started, but I learnt loads as a support worker, which added to my knowledge.  
Even in the NHS, the pay was low, the shifts 12 hours long, and you had to work two weekends in the month. When I was transferred over to the private sector it was more weekends in the month, no weekend enhancements, and no overtime pay. My holiday weeks were also cut. If you worked extra hours, you got the same rate.  
A support worker does a valuable, skilled job. It is poorly paid, but it is certainly not 'low-skilled'. I would like to see Boris Johnson try and do a 12-hour care shift.

**Chris Fernandez**  
Former support worker

### Retail unions - stand up and be counted

Sainsbury's recent derisory pay award for Band 2 and 3 workers equates to a 1% increase - 1.5% below the current rate of inflation. It's the first pay rise since September 2018 and, as always, non-negotiable.  
"Non-negotiable?" I hear you say, "but doesn't the retail sector have some of the largest unions in the UK, representing shopworkers?" Yes it does, but these unions still accept and dutifully work within, longstanding, outdated, sweetheart agreements that are excessively in favour of the employer.  
Recently, I received a message emphasising the point that a union is only as strong as its members; and I agree that this point has some merit. However, the agreements I have described totally undermine union members' efforts to fight for change. Since these agreements were introduced, as all retailers like to tell you, "retail is changing and we have to change with it".  
The only thing that has not changed and neither the bosses nor the unions seem to want to change them, are these worthless agreements!  
These existing agreements continue to diminish union members' ability to make a stand on pay or conditions; and have increased the margin of inflexibility shown by employers.  
It is strong, capable, union leadership that, on behalf of their members, has to demand a review of outdated agreements. I'm confident that, when unions have leaders who prove they are there to serve and fight for their members, who secure agreements that are not heavily weighted in favour of bosses, workers will then show their support and fight for their rights!

**Bernard Davies**  
York

### Open up Labour

I was very interested to read the letter 'Bending under pressure' (the Socialist 27 February) by Amnon Cohen.  
When Luciana Berger was shadow health minister I found her to be the most self-serving person on the planet!  
Were Rebecca Long-Bailey to "welcome" Berger returning to the Labour Party, it would in my view, as a party member, be open season on Labour Party admissions. I believe if such a situation were to occur then every member of the Socialist Party should have an automatic right to become Labour Party members.  
I would prefer you all as members than fighting austerity as a small but active unit.  
**Adrian Rimington**  
Chesterfield

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

# International Women's Day A LEGACY OF WOMEN WORKERS AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE



International Women's Day, with its history of being rooted in struggle, has, in recent years, been diminished - much like the Pride marches for LGBTQ+ rights, have. Big business increasingly uses it as a cynical opportunity to give the illusion of being progressive and inclusive. **Sinead Daly** looks at the real history of International Working Women's Day and the socialist ideas it inspires today.

This year's main global sponsor of International Women's Day is the notorious tax-dodging, union-busting, billion-dollar company, Amazon, whose CEO Jeff Bezos has a personal wealth of \$110 billion!  
This is a company renowned for its appalling working conditions, has a shocking track record on dealing with sexual harassment at work, and sacks employees who raise concerns about Amazon's failure to take appropriate action to tackle the climate emergency.  
What a mockery to the memory of the giants of history, upon whom the true legacy of International Working Women's Day rests. The women garment workers from New York City, who on 8 March 1857, went on strike demanding an end to horrific working conditions, poverty pay and child labour.  
They were attacked by the police, but continued with their struggle. It was from their movement that the first women's trade unions were established. Inspired by the garment workers, women took to the streets of New York on 8 March 1908, demanding better pay, shorter hours and the right to vote.  
It was an international socialist conference in Copenhagen in 1910, attended by over 100 women from

17 countries, which unanimously passed a motion establishing International Women's Day. Indeed, the mighty Russian Revolution in February 1917 (Julian calendar) was ignited by a strike and demonstrations of tens of thousands of women textile workers in Petrograd celebrating International Women's Day demanding 'Bread and Peace' and 'Down with the Tsar'.  
It was struggles of working-class women that have won us the rights we know today, the welfare state, shorter working week and the legal right to equal pay - although we know through bitter experience that these rights are limited and temporary on the basis of capitalism.  
**Women hit hardest**  
The last ten years since the global crisis of capitalism and the implementation of austerity have hit women hardest. Our public services have been decimated.  
Women make up the majority of public sector workers and we rely more heavily on these essential services because it's us who fill the gaps, for example, in the provision of care, when these services are withdrawn.  
However, we have seen some significant and important struggles of women. Over two million workers took strike action over pensions

in 2011 in a massive public sector strike. In Scotland, there was the historic, victorious equal pay strike in October 2018.  
In Northern Ireland, members of the nurses' RCN union took industrial for the first time in their history to defend the NHS, alongside trade unionists from Unite, Nipsa and Unison.  
In the last few months we've witnessed the uprising of the Chilean youth and working class against the oppressive regime of Sebastián Piñera, fighting against the increased cost of living, privatisation and inequality.  
Women, young and old, have been to the forefront of these struggles.  
As a 60-year-old Chilean woman reported: "We are here because we support the movement. As women, we support the fight and what Chileans are calling for - for better pensions, the minimum wage. We feel that every day the Chilean people are going out on the streets and we have a government that isn't listening."  
Already in the first weeks of 2020, mass protests have returned to Chile, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Hong Kong, France, India and more. Global unrest is likely to continue because this system is incapable of delivering equality and a decent



For CWI International Women's Day statement - see socialistworld.net

photo Paul Mattsson

life to the majority of people, most particularly women.  
Ending austerity, inequality, discrimination and the oppression of women means getting rid of this rotten, parasitic system of capitalism. It means replacing it with a genuinely equal society - socialism - that uses the massive wealth, resources and talents for the benefit of the majority, not for the profits of the 1%.  
On 8 March 2020, rather than look to Amazon or any other of the

billionaire-owned multinationals as allies in the struggle to free women from oppression, we are far better drawing inspiration from the historic struggles of the New York garment workers, the Russian textile workers and today's French pension uprising.  
Working women, as has been the case in the past and today, can and will forge working-class unity with male workers and all the oppressed to create a socialist world.

## India: Bloody pogrom fuelled by Modi's sectarianism

Coinciding with US president Donald Trump's official visit to India, Hindu nationalist mobs - fired up by ruling party BJP agitators - carried out a bloody pogrom in Muslim neighbourhoods of the capital New Delhi.  
Dozens of people, mainly Muslims, were killed in the violence as the police stood aside or collaborated, and the capitalist politicians and city authorities did nothing to halt the attacks. A Delhi high court judge, critical of the government and police handling of the pogrom - who said he wasn't going to accept a repeat of the 1984 pogrom which killed 3,000 Sikhs - was quickly removed from his post and sent to

another part of the country.  
Trump praised India's prime minister Mahindra Modi calling him, "a great leader and somebody who works for his people". Yet Modi is responsible for repressing the majority in Jammu and Kashmir by ending the area's nominal autonomy, and sending in thousands more Indian troops.  
His BJP-led government has also passed a sectarian citizenship law which deprives many Muslims of Indian citizenship. Indeed, it was the latter law which attracted a demonstration in the capital immediately prior to retaliatory attacks by Hindu nationalists.  
Under Modi's rule, the last six

years have seen an onslaught of aggressive, neoliberal economic attacks, mixed with non-stop majoritarian Hindu communalism.  
But Modi has only been able to get away with these attacks because of the weak Congress and left opposition parties in parliament, and the reluctance of the left parties and trade union leaders to launch an all-out struggle to his rule.  
In January, a limited one-day general strike call by ten major trade union organisations attracted the support of 250 million workers. But this potential has not been built on. As New Socialist Alternative (CWI India) recently explained: "It is very clear from the course

of events that the left in general has been found wanting. The general strike meant it had an opportunity to change the scenario from one of helplessness to an all-out struggle against the Modi regime."  
New Socialist Alternative acts with a perspective of struggle and a combative programme to unite the masses against Modi.  
**Read the article by Jagdish Chandra 'India: Huge general strike but a missed opportunity' at socialistparty.org.uk**



**The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)** is the world socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in many countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net)

