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Formerly **Militant**

Fighting racism
>p2-5, 10-11



Reform or Revolt?
How was the slave trade abolished?

>p14-15



Youth without future
Fight for jobs, homes and socialism >p8-9

CAPITALISM = INEQUALITY

FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM



So Boris Johnson is going to set up yet another inquiry into racism and inequality. That's the last thing we need! It will end up in the bin along with all the others that have gone before it.

We already know about stop and search and the daily police harassment of black youth. We know all about poverty, unemployment and workplace discrimination; about poor housing and how ten years of Tory cuts, put into practice by councils, including Labour, have destroyed our local services.

We are well aware that black, Asian and minority ethnic people are more likely to die from Covid-19 - and that the Tories haven't even published the recommendations from the recent Public Health England report on BAME deaths!

We also know that the working class - black and white - is being ground down, while the super-rich and the powerful make mega-profits at our expense.

That's exactly why millions of black and white youth have taken to the streets, here and across the globe. A sea of anger against inequality, poverty and injustice - demanding action, not cheap words.

As footballer Marcus Rashford says, this system is not built for working-class people to succeed. This system is capitalism. It uses racism to divide working-class people,

so that we don't come together in a united force to fight to end the power, and privilege of the tiny minority that owns and controls the wealth in society created by the rest of us.

That's why we are fighting for a united struggle of workers and youth to organise society on an entirely different foundation. One based on need, not profit and inequality. One where big business and the banks are publicly owned, and society is democratically controlled by working-class people for the benefit of all. That's socialism!

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

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

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

Which way forward for Black Lives Matter protests?



WHAT WE THINK

Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests have continued across Britain. Boris Johnson's announcement of yet another review - revealingly into what he calls the "sense of victimisation" of black, Asian and minority ethnic people - will give no confidence to protesters that their struggle is no longer needed.

In many cases, protests have been called by young people taking their first steps into political organising. Socialist Party members have proudly participated.

Open mics have allowed protesters to discuss the issues that brought them to the movement. When Socialist Party members have the opportunity to contribute, big cheers greet the call for united working-class struggle to smash racism linked with fighting for a socialist alternative to capitalism.

As well as fighting police and institutional racism, all the issues that the Socialist Party youth charter addresses are in the minds of young people - will they ever get a job, a home of their own, an education (see p 8-9)?

Environmental catastrophe looms. The understanding that the fight for a future is a fight against being sacrificed for the capitalist crisis is gaining ground.

The need for a broader socialist programme has been highlighted this week by footballer Marcus Rashford. He echoes protesters' slogan, racism is a pandemic, saying that "food poverty is a pandemic" (see back page).

Johnson's initial rejection of his appeal to cough up £120 million to fund free school meals over the summer holidays has exposed Britain's brutal class reality. One commentator said that Johnson is worried about "setting a precedent" - of people expecting their families to not suffer malnourishment in the sixth richest economy!

Now his retreat really has set a precedent. The more we protest, the more we can win!

So it is clear that this movement must continue and grow to draw in all those angry about racism and the class inequality that always accompanies it as an integral part of the capitalist system.

This poses questions about how the movement organises, including its protests. The young people who flooded into London and other cities wore masks and gloves, but rightly

photo Judy Beishon



did not accept the undemocratic aspects of the corona laws that have banned protests and strikes.

It is collective action - by teachers' unions, for example - that has pushed the government back on its reckless rush to further open schools before it is safe. Laws that outlaw collective action by workers and young people are not designed for the safety of the public, but the safety of the capitalist class and the government that represents it.

As yet, the movement does not have a leadership, but some are now stepping forward. All will have their ideas, and the methods that flow from them, tested - now if the protests continue, or later when they re-emerge. Capitalist crisis cannot satisfy young people's need for a future, and they will have no choice but to find a way to fight on.

Strengthening the movement means building and uniting it. Any leadership must be both democratic and fully accountable to the movement. That requires the building of certain structures - starting with local youth campaigns that can both discuss and debate the issues facing young people and, crucially, unite in action.

To help this process, Socialist Party young members are linking up with young people we met on the protests in Young Socialists activity and meet-ups.

Young workers also need to organise in the workplaces and within trade unions - in defence of safety and jobs, and for the unions to play their role in the fight against racism and all discrimination.

The pandemic has exposed how society is made up of two main classes: the capitalists who currently hold power; and the working class, those key to running society who do not have a say in how it is run.

A movement on the scale of BLM expresses a widespread recognition that our lives are not safe in the hands of capitalist politicians - not one placard appealed for action by them!

Socialism would turn things upside-down - democratic socialist planning by the working class to meet the needs of all instead of the profits of a handful of billionaires. Independent working-class mass organisation - both fighting trade unions and a new mass workers' party, are needed in this struggle for socialism.

Oppose racist symbols and the racist system

Tom Baldwin,
Bristol Socialist Party

Triumphant cheers filled the air as the statue of slave-trader Edward Colston in Bristol was pulled down by a multiracial crowd of Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrators on Saturday 6 June. The toppling of Colston was like knocking over the first domino. Across the world there are now discussions about removing the statues of those involved in colonialism and the slave trade.

Colston was a Tory MP in Bristol and deputy governor of the Royal African Company in the late 1600s. During his time with the company it transported over 84,000 Africans to be sold as slaves in the Americas. 19,000 didn't survive the crossing, with the sick often thrown into the sea. Dropping his statue into the harbour was hugely symbolic.

It has been argued that toppling statues erases the history behind them. However, for 125 years the statue stood above a plinth proclaiming Colston as one of Bristol's "most virtuous and wise sons," without any mention of slavery.

Bristol has very few public displays that describe the real history of its central role in the transatlantic slave trade. Only tearing down the statue has allowed it to be placed in its proper historical context. It is likely that the schools, streets and buildings that also bear Colston's name will now be changed too.

Tory Home Secretary Priti Patel has described bringing down the statue as "utterly disgraceful," while Labour leader Keir Starmer said it was "completely wrong." Bristol's Labour mayor Marvin Rees has reflected local opinion and refused to criticise the action. The protesters

achieved in moments what his administration has failed to do in four years.

Organisations around the world are now considering taking down their statues. This doesn't represent a sudden collective pang of conscience so much as a worry that demonstrators will do what they so far have not.

European capitalism was built on the foundation of colonial plunder and enslavement. Statues celebrating its leading figures stand across the continent. That some might be removed is a victory for the BLM movement. Others, however, will be defended. For example, to remove the statues of various British monarchs because of their role in the slave trade would be too damaging to the image of Britain's ruling class.

Removing a few 'lesser' statues, however, is an easy concession by the institutions of capitalism. They can make a public display of taking down statues without doing anything to challenge the deeper issues of racism and inequality. We oppose not just the racist symbols of the past but the racist system of the present.

The Labour mayors and councillors who are reviewing statues in their areas are the same ones that have refused to stand up to Tory cuts, have slashed spending on youth services, housing, leisure centres, and cut jobs and workers' conditions.

In a survey for local paper the Bristol Post, 61% of respondents thought protesters were right to pull down Colston's statue. Polls show a majority of people in Britain now support BLM. However, Johnson has cynically tried to whip up opposition to the movement using the issue of statues.

Crowds of mainly far-right demonstrators gathered around the cenotaphs in Bristol, London and other cities 13-14 June. This 'protection' is unnecessary. Bristol's war memorial was untouched by the 10,000 strong demonstration that brought down Colston. It's an attempt to intimidate BLM protesters and frame them all as indiscriminate vandals. The violence and the Nazi salutes showed the real nature of many of these 'counter-protestors'.

In response to the threat from racist thugs, the BLM demonstration organised for Hyde Park in central London was cancelled. However, without putting pressure on anyone to take risks by attending, any BLM protest would have massively outnumbered the presence of the far right. Properly organised stewards and weight of numbers can protect demonstrators. The workers' movement needs to weigh in with unequivocal support for BLM and assistance in defending demonstrations. The far right cannot be allowed to organise openly without a response.

As well as defending against the right, the movement needs to advance its own demands. The fight against police brutality and systemic racism is gaining in impetus.

Demands like 'jobs and homes not racism', linking the fight against racism to the fight against the impoverishment of a generation of working class youth, are also gaining an echo. To completely rid society of these ills means we must smash the capitalist system which is based on the division and exploitation of working people.

Bringing down Colston and the ripple effects it has created are a source of pride for ordinary people in Bristol, but it is only the beginning.

Edward Colston's statue was toppled in Bristol photo Bristol 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.

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 an hour. 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.

- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

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Chris Newby
Hackney Socialist Party

‘Sitting in Limbo’ is a powerful and moving real-life drama. It shows the trauma of Anthony Bryan, a member of the Windrush generation, as he struggles against removal from Britain - including two periods of detention. He has lived, gone to school, raised a family and worked in Britain for over 50 years, since arriving with his mother in 1965 when he was eight years old.

It is written by Anthony’s brother, Stephen S Thompson. This drama gives a real insight into the impact this scandal had on those people directly affected. One example of this is the marks left on the wall showing where the family photos have been after they are forced to leave their home.

The Windrush generation came to Britain from the Caribbean in answer to the call from the British government to fill gaps in the workforce after the devastation of World War Two.

They faced racism throughout their lives - a point Anthony makes to his former headteacher when describing his journey to school each day. Thousands were then threatened with deportation, and at least 83 deported, after their landing cards were destroyed in 2010 by the Home Office.

The film’s opening credits explain the ‘hostile environment’ policy towards migrants first discussed by Tony Blair’s ‘New Labour’ government in 2007, and then enacted by David Cameron’s Tory government in 2012, as they used the tactic of ‘divide and rule’, ramping up propaganda against migrant workers.

This is a particularly relevant piece of television, coming as it does during the mass international uprising against the police murder of George Floyd, another example of the racism of capitalism.

Deportation

The film highlights the methods that the Home Office uses to intimidate and mentally torture those targeted for deportation. This is shown in the brutal removal of Anthony to the first detention centre. He is made to feel that it’s a privilege to be allowed to get dressed before he is carted off to Verne detention centre in Dorset over 160 miles away. His family has no idea where he has been taken until he phones them.

When Janet, his partner, goes to argue Anthony’s case, she can only be let out of the interview room when the interview officer presses the button. Another example of Home Office cruelty is Anthony not being allowed to wear his hat in the visitors’ room when his family come to visit as ‘it’s against the rules’.

Sitting in Limbo shows the toll that this takes on Anthony and his family - from losing their home, to the lasting trauma of the immigration raid. Anthony wakes up one night after his release from the first detention centre thinking he can hear banging on the front door from immigration officers.

What comes through clearly in this drama is the brutality of the

TV drama: Sitting in Limbo

Tears and anger over the treatment of the Windrush generation



Sitting in Limbo
Still from BBC



What comes through clearly in this drama is the brutality of the British state

British state. Compare that to the support and solidarity of Anthony’s family and friends. Faced with a legal bill of £1,500 to fight the deportation, his family and friends rally round to raise the money, including his son Gary’s workmates.

The determination to fight Anthony’s deportation, especially by Janet, clearly comes through, as well as that of Gary and Eileen, who tirelessly leaflet and poster to raise awareness of Anthony’s case.

I urge you to watch this film. As

Patrick Robinson who plays Anthony says: “When I read the script, I was in tears easily halfway through and blubbing at the end.”

I challenge anyone watching this not to be moved to tears, angry at the way that Anthony and the Windrush generation have been treated, and more determined to change this rotten system that allows this to happen.

■ *Sitting in Limbo is available on BBC iPlayer until May 2021*

Leeds: I want to join the Socialists!

There was a palpable sense of anger and optimism at the thousands-strong protest in Leeds on Sunday 14 June - largely young, diverse and working-class. The Socialist Party was very well received.

We sold 55 copies of the Socialist, received well over £100 in donations to our fighting fund, and took details of 20 new people interested in joining the Socialist Party. The first person I approached with the Socialist said: “Oh, you’re the Socialist Party, right? I want to join!”

The Labour council and Extinction Rebellion had both warned against going to the demo - not that this stopped the thousands of young, working-class people from attending. It is vital to practise pandemic safety - masks, gloves and hand sanitiser were all used. But we must not discourage young people from fighting for their rights.

Leeds Trades Union Council and Leeds Socialist Party organised stewarding to encourage social distancing and protect against the far right. The beer-soaked far-right protest was contained down the road by police, and succeeded only in embarrassing itself.

James Ellis

Huddersfield: queues to hear from Socialists

“This was amazing. I’ve never been on a protest like this in Huddersfield before” said one young protester at the protest on Saturday 13 June. Even the police gave an estimate of 1,500 people marching from St George’s Square.

The crowd seemed to grow and grow. As we reached Greenhead Park, people were leaning out of their windows to offer support. Hundreds took our leaflets, and 30 bought a copy of the Socialist newspaper.

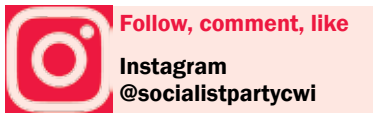
One of them was an older black man who told us he had been treasurer of a Labour Party Young Socialists branch in the 1970s. They’d played a key role in driving the National Front out of Bradford.

A young woman nearby overheard the conversation and asked “what does socialism mean?” After we answered, she told us “I agree with that!” The former Young Socialist gave us a further donation to “keep up the good work!”

Another young lad on the march told us he was a Trotskyist. He bought a copy of the Socialist and gave us his contact details. Later he came to our stall in the park and took leaflets to give out.

The Socialist Party stall was mobbed by young people wanting to get involved in the party. Queues formed as groups of young people waited for others to finish speaking to us.

Iain Dalton



Black Lives Matter: more youth protests take aim at capitalism

Tens of thousands joined a second week of Black Lives Matter protests across Britain. Here we carry short excerpts from speeches and reports from demonstrations. Other areas where the Socialist Party participated include London, Liverpool, Hull, Worcester, Northampton, Doncaster, Chelmsford, Brighton, Stafford, York, Cleethorpes, Darlington and Nuneaton...



Vauxhall on 7 June
photo James Ivens

“We need to link up with the workers”

My name’s Isai. I’m from the Socialist Party. And we have been on every single big demonstration that has taken place on Black Lives Matter.

And I’ll tell you something. It’s not an accident that it’s taking place now. This is not the first time that an unarmed black person has been killed by the police.

But it’s happening during the pandemic, which has exposed the class inequalities that exist within this system.

We - of all colours - are oppressed, as the working class, by the people who are making the profits from this system.

On the buses, it was the workers who got organised to close the front doors. On the tube, it was RMT union members who got organised to protect those workers.

How do we smash racism? To smash racism, we need to smash capitalism! And you know what? The young people who are out on the streets are out to fight for jobs, homes and services for every single one of us.

And we say that we need to link up with the workers. We say it’s us, organised - workers and young people together - who can smash this system, and fight for socialism...

Isai Priya, London



Isai Priya



Matt Whale

“While we’re fighting each other, the bosses make their billions”

My name is Matt. I’m proud to be a trade unionist and a socialist. And I’m proud to be a nurse as well.

I’m proud to work in the NHS. I’m proud to work alongside Kenyans, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Indians, Pakistanis, Filipinos, and people from all over the world.

I also speak as a socialist. And some of the greatest socialists in history were the black socialists in America in the Civil Rights movement. People like Malcolm X, who saw quite clearly that “you cannot have capitalism without racism.”

It is ingrained in a system that pits people against each other. It divides us. On black versus white. Man versus woman. Straight versus LGBTQ.

All the while we’re fighting each other on those issues, the bosses and those at the top, like the Trumps of the world, make their billions and laugh at us squabbling over the scraps.

I’m proud to say I’m a member of the Socialist Party. I believe that socialism is the answer to our problems. A system that gives everyone a house. Everyone a job. Everyone food in their bellies, money in their pockets. End poverty - and end the competition for resources...

Matt Whale, Hull

Wales: racism isn’t random

Demonstrations were thousands strong in Newport on Thursday 11 June, and there smaller protests in Cardiff (twice), Barry, Port Talbot and Pontypridd over the weekend of 13-14 June. There were also actions in Brecon, Monmouth, Caernarfon and Chepstow.

100 people expressed interest in coming to Socialist Party meetings in Newport, and hundreds bought the Socialist newspaper over the week.

The Socialist Party’s Mariam Kamish, secretary of Caerphilly Trade Union Council, was received to rapturous applause in Newport. She said: “Racism isn’t random: it’s a tool in the hands of the exploiters. It divides and weakens us all and makes working-class black people even more exploitable, even easier to stick in crap jobs, in crap wages, and in bad housing...

“Get involved in the fight to change society. We want a genuine, democratic, socialist society, where everyone has a voice, where everyone can breathe.”

Ross Saunders



Newcastle: far right outnumbered

Up to 500 were at the Newcastle protest on Saturday 13 June. Many were playing music, singing and dancing, and the Socialist Party was out in full force.

The Socialist Party’s speaker quoted Black Panthers leader Fred Hampton: “We’re going to fight racism with solidarity... We’re not going to fight capitalism with black capitalism - we’re going to fight capitalism with socialism!” Our speech was met with a lot of applause. Our leaflets were very popular.

The far right spread the lie that protesters were there to topple Grey’s Monument or desecrate war graves. This was nonsense. Grey’s Monument is a 130-foot stone column and there are no war graves in Newcastle city centre.

But as a result, up to 200 people, including some from the far right, gathered around Grey’s Monument. The only desecration, however, was the broken bottles and empty cans from far-right thugs there to get drunk and abuse anti-racist protesters.

The police had deployed around 100 officers including riot police, cavalry and dog handlers. Far-right drunks launched beer bottles and flares at the anti-racist protest.

Oisín Gourley and Elaine Brunskill

Reading: justice means jobs and homes

Forbury Gardens in Reading was full on Saturday 13 June. We walked through the crowd talking to every group of people.

All wanted to discuss ‘what next’. They wanted justice, and agreed that justice means an end to police brutality as well as jobs, homes, decent pay, a fully funded NHS, and safety at work for everyone.

The Socialist Party stall was swamped with people queuing to make donations and take away as many leaflets, posters and copies of the Socialist as possible.

Josh Asker

Richmond, North Yorkshire: racists ignored

Local young people organised this 300-strong demonstration on Sunday 14 June. The Socialist Party was the only political organisation present and we ran out of our supply of leaflets.

Despite the poor showing in London the day before, about 100 older far-right demonstrators turned out. Locals stated that many were from other towns. They occupied the town square and tried to disrupt the protest with racist chants, but were mostly ignored.

Alan Docherty



Battle with BT management needed to win real pay rise

A CWU member

The telecoms executive of the Communication Workers Union (CWU), is recommending a pay increase of 1.5% for 2020. This offer only just about keeps pace with inflation, but BT are stealing three months of this year's pay increase, by only paying it from 1 July, compared to the usual pay date of 1 April. It must be backdated at the very least.

The union is trying to give the impression that the only alternative to accepting this inadequate offer is taking industrial action, yet no evidence has been presented that more money couldn't be negotiated. In any case, the union's starting point must be whether the offer meets the needs of members and if not, prepare for a serious campaign of industrial action.

The executive's approach sends totally the wrong message to both members and management, at the same time as BT bosses have gone head with the compulsory redundancy of a team member grade employee.

Telecoms engineers, like postal workers, are considered to be essential workers during Covid-19, but BT have offered no recognition of their role in keeping telephone, internet and social media sites operating.

Some engineers have been verbally and physically attacked by members of the public who believed baseless conspiracy theories that Covid-19 was being spread by the telecoms network. Again, no recognition for this.

BT are claiming that they are not in the best of financial health. And while it is to be welcomed that share dividends have been suspended, many more shareholders can afford to take a dividend-free year than workers can afford to take a low pay increase.

The union should have demanded that BT's books be opened so BT could prove this, guaranteeing a dividend to small shareholders who could demonstrate financial need. Such an approach would be the basis for the CWU to seriously campaign for BT to be taken back into public ownership.

While it seems likely that this offer will be accepted, CWU telecoms members need to pressure the executive to make up lost ground with next year's pay offer and prepare for a battle with BT management.

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Resist relaxation of Sunday trading laws - retail workers need a break too!

Iain Dalton

Usdaw Broad Left chair

Since rumours emerged in the media about the government considering a one-year relaxation of Sunday trading regulations (which currently mean shops above 3,000 square feet can only open for six hours between 10am and 6pm on a Sunday), the leadership of retail workers' union Usdaw has finally started moving into action, with press releases denouncing the move and a tool to e-mail your local MP.

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, it has been obvious this could be a target, with several councils relaxing enforcement of Sunday trading regulations, including Labour-controlled councils like Wakefield.



There has been a concerted campaign among backbench MPs to relax Sunday Trading laws - predominantly Tory - but also including some Labour too!

But the most serious was the deliberate flouting of the regulations by the UK's fourth biggest retailer, Morrisons, where Usdaw is the recognised union.

Just days before the rumours of the year-long relaxation, Usdaw members received the latest issue of Usdaw's all-members Arena magazine, quoting general secretary Paddy Lillis saying "we are not going to pursue this", referring to these attacks on the legislation.

Now time must be urgently made up. We welcome the changed stance of the union since this in proactively fighting. But Usdaw needs to go further in mobilising its membership to fight these proposals.

An important way to do this during lockdown conditions would be to hold an online rally of members, as Usdaw's sister union, Mandate, did in support of Debenhams workers in Ireland. This could begin to galvanise union members for the fight ahead.

Socialist Party members in Usdaw have launched an online petition against this threat - please sign and share it. Search 'No to extending Sunday trading in retail - retail workers deserve a break' at change.org

Amy Murphy, Usdaw president (personal capacity) says:

Sunday trading has been, and continues to be a contentious topic, with the government's last attempt falling flat when David Cameron was forced to scrap a vote on plans to relax Sunday trading laws in 2015.

In the run up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Sunday Trading Laws were suspended during July, August and September. At the time, the government insisted this was a one-off and not a prelude to a permanent change. Really, I ask myself. Then how come the temporary relaxation of Sunday Trading Laws is once again being talked about?

Supporting our key workers on the frontline during this pandemic is crucial. But let's not forget the other key workers in the mix. I am referring to shop workers of which I am one.

As well as helping key workers, the other reason mentioned is this relaxation will be really important for the recovery phase for retailers when they get up and running again. This poses the question how long is a bit of string, and when does temporary become the norm?

Let's not forget that shop workers have families, and the Sunday Trading Laws are very important in society as they allow families to spend quality time together, and also rest time. Any relaxation will put more pressure on employees. All it does is favour big businesses and stop employees spending time with their families.

People only have the same amount of money to spend, so although the Sunday spend may go up, it will just come from elsewhere in the week. There is also the added risk that customer demand will be displaced from small stores to large stores, as happened during the Olympics, with convenience stores losing sales threatening jobs on the high street.

Most of the big retailers have already put in measures to allow frontline key workers and those who are vulnerable to have extra access to do their shopping.

Relaxing the Sunday Trading Laws is not the answer. The only beneficiaries would be big businesses. Let's put our workers first and do the right thing by them, while supporting the frontline workers at the same time.

Contact tracing fiasco You can't believe a word the government tells us

An NHS contact tracer

The track and trace system in England is now in its third week. Another brilliant success, if you listen to Boris Johnson and Tory ministers!

Like their other 'successes' - PPE shortages, testing failures, delayed lockdown and travel restrictions, care home negligence, escalating unemployment and more - the reality is nothing like government spin.

After many hours struggle setting up as a home working contact tracer, I successfully completed all the steps. Logging on after that I was excited to receive details of my first case. After re-reading the procedures and questions to be asked, I phoned the number - which blocked the service's 0300 number, so I could get no further!

Since then I've worked another 20 hours and had two further cases assigned to me - one of which went to answerphone. Matt Hancock claims "25,000 contact tracers are working hard". If my experience is anything to go by - and there have been similar reports in the media - many of us are waiting for any work to arrive.

When I try to book more shifts, the chart shows none available for the next month. A newsletter from the NHS assures us that more shifts are added daily. I've started checking daily - a trickle have appeared in mid-July.

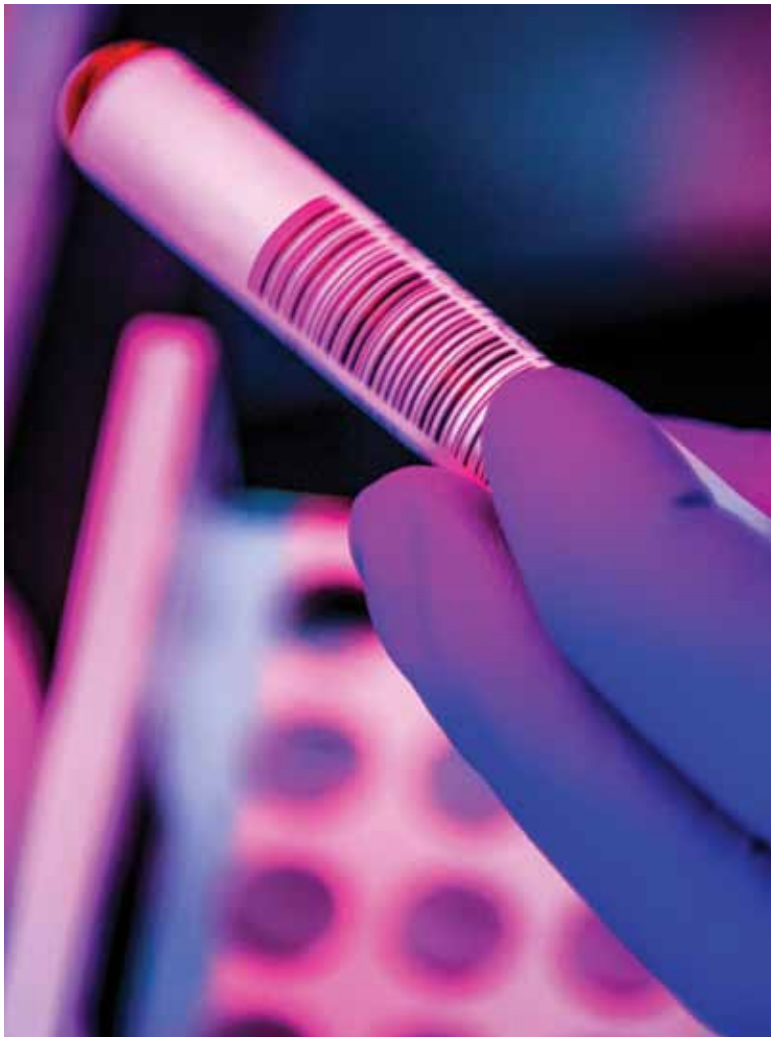
This system has been set up in a rush. The government abandoned the existing local public health contact tracing on 12 March. These have long been used for measles, TB, food poisoning outbreaks and other infectious diseases. Local services coordinating with GPs are more

likely to be trusted, have important local knowledge and - if properly funded - could have been stepped up to meet the increased need due to Covid-19.

Instead, the Tories are handing Serco up to £90 million to run the new national service. Amazon and other profit-making companies are also on the payroll. Many of the 25,000 contact tracers are part-time on zero-hour contracts, 18,000 employed by Serco and Sitel.

Telephone medical consultation recordings have recently been leaked by Babylon, a profit-making GP service, used by Matt Hancock himself. This will fuel doubts about confidentiality in the new contact tracing scheme.

A successful contact tracing scheme is vital, with full pay and practical support for anyone asked to isolate for 14 days. Investing in public health services, with democratic control by their workers and the people who use them, would be far more effective in defeating this pandemic than the Tories' big business system.



Cumbria: Teachers, parents and socialists fight reckless school reopening

Brent Kennedy

Carlisle Socialist Party

Socialist Party members in Cumbria have been active as teachers and parents in the campaign against the reckless attempt to prematurely reopen schools without safety guarantees. The national u-turn is a victory for all of us and a humiliating defeat for the Tory government.

It shows how powerful workers and the wider working class (in this case, as parents) are when they are given a lead by trade unions - not just the National Education Union but all the unions involved.

But this has also revealed another reality - the baleful role played by some Labour-led councils such as Cumbria county council. It gave no lead in this and gave us no help, instead playing Pontius Pilate - "it's up to the schools."

Through the local media, Unite Community union branded this "an abrogation of responsibility which puts an unfair burden on individual head teachers and their staff".

The Labour councillors didn't even match the Tory-led Lancashire county council and make a clear statement against the government's

reckless plan. Instead, they effectively implemented government policy - drive the parents back to work, safely or not - just as they implement Tory cuts every year. Some opposition!

Rejecting public demands from Unite Community to stop the unsafe reopening, on Monday 15 June they declared in the local press: "We would like to reaffirm our commitment" to opening schools. These hapless councillors were doubling down on the government's previous order just as the Tories were abandoning it, leaving them high and dry just two hours later.

Even after the u-turn the council

published a statement, again reaffirming that abandoned position, leaving them standing to the right of Boris Johnson.

Teaching activists were dismayed that even the Tories (in their own interests) had taken more notice of the mood of opposition from parents, teachers and their unions than Labour councillors! This has caused disquiet in the Labour Party and criticism of the council leader, but there is no plan to remove him or the other Blairite councillors. With them and Sir Keir Starmer presenting the face of Labour, what chance do they have of enthusing workers to vote in the next council elections?

nationalshopstewardsnetwork
NSSN CONFERENCE
shopstewards.net VIA ZOOM
SATURDAY 4 JULY FROM 11am TO 2pm
Speakers and workshops to be confirmed soon! Email info@shopstewards.net to register for attendance

Parents' protests against Welsh schools reopening

Mark Evans

Swansea and West Wales
Socialist Party

The quiet of a Swansea Covid-19 city centre was broken by the beeping and blaring of car horns.

Parents for Safety First organised a cavalcade of eight cars to publicise the campaign to oppose the reopening of schools in Wales on 29 June announced by Kirsty Williams, Liberal Democrat education minister for the Welsh Government.

Many parents are frustrated and angry that the Welsh Government want to reopen schools putting pupils, school staff and our communities at risk so that big business can

start making profits again. Protests also took place in Cardiff and other towns and cities.

It is not safe for children to return to school at present, the R rate is still dangerously high, testing is taking too long and tracking and tracing are not in place.

The Labour Welsh Government are under pressure for making this decision. They claim to be led by the science but they lied about PPE and they can't be trusted with our children's health.

No matter how good the risk assessment, and even with a maximum of a third of pupils in attendance at any one time, schools will not be able to maintain social distancing.

Swansea photo Alec Thraves



Theo Sharieff
Socialist Party national youth organiser

Millions of working-class and young people are being made to shoulder the cost of the Covid-19 pandemic and a new economic crisis with their jobs, pay and futures. But the magnificent mass movement against racism has shown that young people are ready to fight back.

The extent of the new economic slump which has struck British and world capitalism unravels further day by day. GDP - a measure of the total output of capitalist economies - has collapsed. Production and trade have fallen off a cliff edge.

Big business and its political parties will always look towards the working class to pay when their system enters crisis. This crisis will be no different.

To prevent total collapse, the Tory government has been forced to prop the capitalist system up with measures totalling hundreds of billions of pounds. The super-rich and the Tories are going to fight tooth and nail to make the working-class majority pay for it.

Young people will be first in the firing line. Young workers have been some of the worst-affected so far by a crisis which is still unfolding. It's the consumer-facing industries where young people are mainly concentrated - such as hospitality and retail, which have naturally been hardest hit by a lockdown on public activity.

As such, more than one in three 18 to 24-year-olds are now earning less than before the coronavirus outbreak. Out of all age groups, 18 to 24-year-olds have suffered the greatest number of furloughs (read: a 20% wage cut) - and job losses.

What's clear is that this won't simply be a temporary 'blip' of hardship for young people. One think tank, the Resolution Foundation, predicts that by the end of the year, 600,000 more young people will be made unemployed, taking the total to over a million. Mass youth unemployment is posed.

And the crisis threatens to cast a long shadow over the longer-term futures of young people too. Additional research by the Resolution Foundation predicts that in three years' time, employment rates for mid and low-skilled workers who enter the labour market now, during the crisis, could fall by 27% and 37% respectively. Even for graduates, it's projected to be a 13% fall.

All young workers will suffer. But those from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, who already experience discrimination, are likely to suffer even more. The UK's official unemployment rate was 3.9% in the first three months of this year, but for BAME workers it was 6.3%.

On the basis of capitalism, the future hasn't looked this bleak for young people for a very long time. Many will be looking for how best to fight for their futures in the midst of this new crisis.

Big business and their political representatives, especially the Tory government, are also searching for potential solutions. Let's not be fooled, however - this isn't because they suddenly care about young people and our futures. Their priority will always



Young people don't need more bogus apprenticeships to do the office tea and coffee. We need genuine training and living, trade union rates of pay

be to act in the best interests of big business, and do what's best to protect their profits.

But they understand they are risking a massive explosion of anger from young people who face devastating attacks. The overwhelmingly young and working-class protesters marching against racism are also angry about the lack of decent jobs, homes and services. This mood could develop into a threat to the Tories' own continuation in government - and more broadly, even to the rule of the super-rich who they represent.

Boris Johnson at a recent Downing Street briefing spoke about providing a new apprenticeship scheme for young people facing a future on the dole. Aside from saying that young people in particular should be given an apprenticeship, Johnson remained woolly on the details of what such a scheme would look like.

It's no wonder. Tory apprenticeship schemes in the past have offered no path for young people into a decent and independent life.

Just ask the thousands of apprentices paid £4.15 an hour for their hard work, many of whom have now been left without a job. Or the thousands of young people who were forced to work for free for employers to earn their dole money in scandalous Tory 'workfare' schemes.

How to fight

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) - the umbrella organisation for all Britain's unions - has also entered the discussion, with its report, 'A new plan for jobs'. This outlines the threat of long-term unemployment facing working-class people - in particular young people, who are two-and-a-half times more likely to work in a sector which is now shut down.

The report describes the potential not only for a short-term spike of youth unemployment, but for a period of sustained, mass youth unemployment - and the potential long-term devastation this threatens for a new generation.

But apart from correctly outlining the desperate situation, the TUC completely fails either to put forward the programme necessary for providing young people with a decent future, or to chart the action necessary to win such a programme.

The report states that the economic crisis presents "an opportunity to help create good, secure jobs in all parts of the UK." It makes a series of recommendations to the Tory government. The summation is that the government should create a scheme to provide those facing long-term unemployment with new jobs - for six months!



photo James Ivens

YOUTH WITHOUT A FUTURE: FIGHT FOR JOBS AND HOMES - FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM!

The TUC hopes this will ensure young people get the skills they need to act as a stepping stone into permanent work. But what permanent work? It even goes so far as to say that ensuring a minimum six-month job would represent "meaningful and sustainable work"!

Young people don't need more bogus apprenticeships or training schemes to do the office tea and coffee. We need genuine training for the skills necessary to do skilled work. And rather than the current, pitiful 'youth rates' of pay, we need living, trade union rates of pay.

The Socialist Party demands the abolition of youth rates. We campaign for the unions to fight for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour, as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15 an hour.

And crucially, we need a full-time job guaranteed at the end of our training, not just to be left on the scrapheap after it's finished.

A key part of the struggle for all this would be unionising young workers, and fighting to establish democratic trade union and workers' monitoring and control of any training and apprenticeships schemes.

This could ensure decent wages and conditions, and that proper skills are taught. It could also stop the bosses trying to replace existing staff with newer or younger workers on lower wages and worse conditions.

These are the kinds of bold demands the so-called leadership of the workers' movement, the TUC, should be putting forward and leading a fight for. And if the TUC won't do it, the left union leaders should step up.

We absolutely cannot leave it up to the Tories to decide what young people can or can't have in terms of a future. Young people, whether in work, in study, or unemployed, need to get organised and fight them for what we need.

Yet despite the Tory track record, the TUC has said the pandemic has

revealed the need for "more collaborative working between government, employers, working people"! Who could possibly conclude, from the events of the pandemic and its aftermath, the need for more collaboration with the Tory government and the big business employers they represent?

While the rich have been given billions in bailouts, workers and young people have been forced to sacrifice our jobs - and even our lives. We need less Tory collaboration, and more fighting, collective action!

In order to ensure a decent future for young and working-class people, including the availability of a decent, well-paying job for all, control of society must not any longer be left in the hands of the super-rich and their Tory representatives.

Market failure

The coronavirus has graphically demonstrated that the market cannot deliver. It failed to deliver on the life-or-death questions of PPE, ventilators and mass testing. Why should we believe it can deliver on the issues of a job and access to decent training for all?

Despite the failures of the market, there is more than enough wealth in society to provide everyone with a decent job. But with the capitalist economy in a long-term crisis, big business has no route to making profits for its owners through mass investment and job creation. Never mind that the alternative will mean destitution for millions - on the basis of capitalism, if it isn't profitable, it's a no-go.

The question should be: who owns and controls society's vast wealth? We stand for taking the top 150 biggest businesses and banks into democratic public ownership, controlled and managed by the working-class majority. Workers and young people could start to plan society's resources to provide the majority with what we need, not to enrich a tiny handful at the top.

Such a plan could start with a democratic discussion throughout the whole of society about what kind of work needs doing, and from that which kind of socially useful jobs need maintaining or creating.

Part of that discussion would have to be focussed around a massive programme of job creation in green energy and an environmentally sustainable economy. Workers in the fossil fuel industries could be reskilled and redeployed without loss of pay.

From there, working-class and young people could direct the mass investment necessary into a programme of socially useful job creation. In the process this could provide young people with appropriate apprenticeship and training schemes, under the democratic control of the working class itself - not the lying and hypocritical Tories.

This would ensure that trainees are paid a real living wage with decent conditions, linked to a job guarantee at the end of training. And on this basis - a socialist basis - the economy could not only could guarantee a livelihood for all young and working-class people, but a free and quality education, access to affordable housing, quality public services, and more.

Working-class people, as the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated, are the ones in the best position to make decisions about how society should be run. In a new era of capitalist economic crisis - with the back-drop of a killer virus, and a climate crisis which threatens the future of all humanity - the task of reorganising society to meet the social needs of all becomes an ever-more-urgent task.

To achieve all these gains and make them permanent, the fight for every improvement - higher wages, more jobs, better homes - must be linked to the fight to overturn capitalism, and transform society in a socialist direction. That fight can begin with young people saying that we are not going to pay for this crisis with our futures.

A socialist charter for young people

- **No to job cuts.** Open the books of companies threatening cuts. Any firm that declares redundancies or closures should be nationalised, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid to former owners only on the basis of proven need
- **No to poverty pay.** Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour, without youth exemptions, as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15 an hour. Increase benefits to match and abolish delays in payment
- **Scrap zero-hour contracts.** For all workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment
- **No to bogus apprenticeships and fake training schemes.** For a decent job guaranteed at the end of training
- **For a massive government programme of investment in socially useful jobs,** and public works and research in green

- tech and renewable energy, under democratic workers' control
- **Take the wealth off the 1%!** For an immediate 50% levy on the hoarded wealth of big business. Nationalise the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, under democratic working-class control and management
- **Free, fully funded, democratic education.** Scrap tuition fees and debts, reverse the cuts, and kick the privatisers out. For democratic, collective oversight of the curriculum by teachers, students, and school parents
- **Homes for all.** For a mass programme of council house building, and democratic rent caps in the private sector
- **Restore our public services.** For councils to refuse to make Tory cuts and fight for the funding to reinstate youth clubs, social services, libraries, and other essential services
- **End discrimination and bigotry.** Build a mass, working-class

- movement to unite young people and workers around socialist policies to end inequality, austerity and oppression
- **End police harassment.** For democratic community and trade union control of police policy and hiring. Defend the right to protest - scrap anti-union and anti-democratic laws and practices
- **Join a union.** The best defence for workers is acting together. When collectively organised, workers can take strike action to shut down the workplaces - and with big enough numbers society as a whole - to fight back against the bosses and their political representatives
- **For a political voice.** For the right to vote at 16, and a new mass workers' party with socialist policies as an alternative to the big business politicians

Read the Socialist Party's full youth manifesto - see 'A socialist charter for young people' at socialistparty.org.uk

20 days. One town. Four domestic violence murders. “We want deeds not words”

Amy Cousens
Women's Lives Matter
and Socialist Party

400 people attended the vigil held to mark the murders of four women in Doncaster. The vigil, organised by Women's Lives Matter, was initially to mark the domestic violence murder of Amy Leanne Stringfellow.

In the days leading up to the event, campaigners learnt of three more women that had also been murdered by their male partners or other men known to them. All within 20 days of each other in one town. This is an horrific increase in the rate of domestic violence.

This is in the same town where four years ago the local Labour council cut its funds to Women's Aid - twice. I spoke from the campaign and the Socialist Party about domestic violence and its rise. While deeply personal, it is also political.

Austerity

Domestic violence has risen in line with austerity, not because men have become more violent, but because austerity traps women in abuse. Low pay, low benefits, lack of affordable housing, little to non-existent legal aid and lack of refuge spaces - all make it hard or impossible for women to leave.

During the lockdown, the government has paid only lip service to the danger domestic violence victims face by being stuck in their homes. They have given minuscule crumbs, and only to charities, to help cope with the increase in demand for support and safe refuge.

This has without any doubt contributed to the increase in women's and children's murders in the last three months.

Other speakers, which were members of the crowd, raised their disgust at the cuts and spoke about the need for support, and particularly counselling. They said, as a community they needed to talk about domestic violence, talk to their sons and daughters.

Never again

Amy Leanne's mother, Jacqui, bravely climbed up to the fountain platform, and said that she would not, as long as she is alive, "allow another woman to go through this".

There was not a dry eye in the park. But people were not just sad, they were angry.

Louise Harrison, founding member of Women's Lives Matter (WLM), said: "It's about time politicians in this town started listening to us, we want deeds not words. We don't want them to tell us they are sorry, we want them to put their money where their mouth is and start funding our services." This was met with cries of "Yes" and huge applause.

The WLM campaign page has been swamped with messages and comments from attendees wanting to get involved and campaign. One of them commented about their experience of domestic violence and how the speakers have "highlighted what needs to happen in society to tackle this".

The last words of the protest were: "This is the beginning, not one woman more." WLM will be building a campaign to fight for what is needed to keep women safe.



Da 5 Bloods photo 40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks/Rahway Road Productions/Netflix

Film: Da 5 Bloods Entertaining but politically constrained

Niall Mulholland
East London Socialist Party

Spike Lee's new film 'Da 5 Bloods', featuring four black American army veterans of the Vietnam War who meet up again in modern-day Ho Chi Minh City, has been released on Netflix just as racism and the class system that ferments it are in the forefront of the minds of millions of people. The film is likely to attract many viewers: Black Lives Matter even gets a brief showing at the film's end.

The movie is foregrounded with footage from the 1960s and 1970s US civil rights and anti-Vietnam War struggles, including excerpts of speeches by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King.

Fallen comrade

The four 'Bloods' return to Vietnam in search for the body of their fifth soldier comrade, 'Stormin' Norman', who was their charismatic commanding officer and radical inspiration - "our Martin and our Malcolm". They are also seeking to find gold bars they buried after the firefight in which Norman was killed.

Present-day Vietnam is intercut with scenes from their days of combat, with Lee choosing to show the four surviving GIs as the old men they are today, while Norman remains a youthful radicalised GI, fated never to grow old or sell out.

The first part of the movie moves at a leisurely pace as they travel by boat, vehicle and foot to the iso-

lated countryside to locate their quest. The dialogue, however, is fast, often humorous, and sometimes insightful.

Reference is made to how those from an Afro-American and poor background were more likely to be drafted into the US army and to die in Vietnam, while rich white college students were able to avoid the conflict.

The four vets drink in the 'Apocalypse Now' bar - both a reference to the iconic Francis Ford Coppola Vietnam War movie and an ominous indication of what lies ahead of them.

Lee runs several subplots. Paul (played by Delroy Lindo), who suffers from untreated PTSD and guilt over the death of Norman, is volatile, self-loathing and angry. He declares he voted for Trump in 2016 because immigrants were "taking the jobs of black people", but he is roundly taken to task by the others.

Otis (Clarke Peters), the calm organiser of the expedition, meets up again with his former Vietnamese girlfriend, with profound personal consequences. Others in the growing ensemble include David, the son of Paul, who shows up uninvited on a quest to make peace with his semi-estranged father and Hedy, who runs an NGO sweeping the country of landmines, in apparent atonement for her French bourgeois family's inherited fortune from colonial plantations and mining in Vietnam.

Most of the depictions of the Vietnamese, however, are one dimensional, even stereotypical. And we

learn little about the decades' long heroic resistance of the Vietnamese to imperialism.

Eventually they find the gold. Norman had stipulated that the bullion, which was intended to pay off South Vietnam forces loyal to the US, should be instead invested among the poor black American community, as "reparations". However, the riches bring about rifts among the four Bloods and also with a money-laundering middle man.

Gunfire

Unfortunately, from there the movie mutates into a fairly standard (and implausible) action movie. Any further social and political commentary is difficult to hear above the sound of gunfire.

Lee has shown a tendency to limit himself to regarding politics and history through the prism of race. This is unfortunate as the premise of Da 5 Bloods could have lent itself to a more rigorous examination of racism, war and social class.

The mass movement of black and white working-class and student activists, along with the most radical sections of the labour movement in American and globally, seriously undermined US imperialism, and helped forced withdrawal from Vietnam.

And a striking feature of today's mass protests over the killing of George Floyd is that both black and white youth are joining together on the streets and articulating anti-racism and opposition to the profit system.

■ Young footballers speak for a generation

These young black footballers telling their truths - of mums struggling to make ends meet; of estates that feel like open prisons and the police beating you back in; of hunger, real hunger through the summer holidays, and a desperation to escape the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

Some make it out, most don't. These words are the clenched fist salutes of a generation who grew up under the spectre of the foodbanks and feel the truth of the Black Lives Matter movement.

They are doing what no Labour MP can do - use an external movement to force change. Johnson could lose on free school meals if the opposition pushed forward now. This could be a real tangible victory for hundreds of thousands of hungry children.

Black Lives Matter could chalk up a class victory, why not? The Black Panthers fed children.

They reckon the amount of hungry children could fill Wembley stadium many times over. I feel like organising a march myself.

Join the Socialist Party and fight for a way out for everyone. All our boats should rise together.

Nancy Taaffe
Waltham Forest

■ Beautiful mural destroyed by Blairite austerity

The Chartist mural in Newport, a beautiful 200,000 piece mosaic in memory of working-class struggle, was destroyed in October 2013. But unlike the hated Colston statue in Bristol, Newport's mural was destroyed completely legally - not by any protesters, but by Newport's Labour council.

This disgraceful act of vandalism sneakily pre-empted a planned protest to save it later that day. It was destroyed to build a new shopping centre.

The mural was built in 1978, a 35-metre wall depicting an 1839 march from the Valleys to Newport by Chartists - the world's first mass working-class movement. They rose up to demand democratic rights for the working class. The mural also depicted the moment the march was fired upon and 30 workers were massacred by the army.

The council could have saved and moved the mural. They pleaded the high cost, but the council had spent millions on the new shopping centre. I remember seeing and learning from the mural many times as a child on trips to Newport, likes generations of others.

The authorities, capitalists and



England and Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford said: "I don't claim to have the education of an MP in parliament, but I do have a social education. I am clued up on the difference

a u-turn decision would make on the 1.3 million vulnerable children across the UK who are registered for free school meals, because 10 years ago I was one of them. photo Kirill Venediktov/CC

defenders of statues of slave traders and racists like Churchill scream blue murder about 'vandalism and destruction'. But in Newport in 2013, they happily destroyed a beautiful and visible expression of working-class people and struggle. In the same way they have destroyed our services.

Scott Jones
Loughton, Essex

■ Capitalism conscience?

What's this, capitalism developing a conscience? International bank Standard Chartered has expressed support for America's black community and re-vulsion at George Floyd's death.

But they are facing the other way over human and democratic rights in China and Hong Kong. Standard Charter has praised the national security law because "it will maintain the long-term economic and social stability of Hong Kong."

The Financial Times says these double standards are perfectly logical from a business point of view. "To make capitalism work in a more divided society, where climate change threatens the world for future generations and racism inflames large sections of the population, bosses have twigged that they must look like they care.

"Hiring the best staff and attracting decent investors will depend on it. Backing Chinese repression is less uplifting but similarly expedient."

Big business say what is necessary, to keep governments and investors outside, but don't mean a word of it. They don't care about us and won't let anything come in the way of their profits if they can help it.

Time to sweep these hypocrites aside,

nationalise their companies and run them democratically in the interests of the masses.

Heather Rawling
Leicester

■ Ten years prison

I didn't think there was much more Labour could do that would shock. Ten years prison for vandalising a war memorial!

That's more than people get for sexual assault or manslaughter. If you are a company giving evidence at the Grenfell Tower enquiry, you get immunity from prosecution. You'd get less for hate crime and assault.

Evidently property is more important than human life.

Sue Powell
Gloucester

■ ‘Peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must’

People have been asking Bristol council to remove the statue for decades. Nothing had been done. It has now.

The Chartists had a slogan: 'Peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must.'

Removing the statues is a start. Removing racism will take longer but as the song says, we shall overcome.

Derek McMillan
Worthing

> Do you have something to say? Send your news, views and criticism in no more than 150 words to editors@socialistparty.org, uk or Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT. We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.



photo Natalie Oxford/CC

Three years on: No justice for Grenfell, no peace from Black Lives Matter

Three years ago 72 people died in Grenfell Tower, in the richest borough of London, due to profit-over-safety seeking companies. Cheaper flammable cladding was used so the wealthy neighbours had a more pleasant view of the tower which, predominantly housed working-class black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) residents.

There was a 'stay put' policy in place in case of fire, as originally the block was built to contain a fire in one flat. But after the cladding was put in place, no new risk assessment had been done and the stay-put policy was maintained.

These deaths were totally avoidable and happened because of cuts and profiteering. Still to this day around 1,500 buildings with similar cladding house working-class people living in constant fear.

Mayola Demmenie
Basingstoke

What has happened to avert such a tragedy in the future? The answer, precious

little. Still hundreds of tower blocks, thousands of homes, clad in what amounts to solidified petroleum.

72 people murdered in their homes and dozens made homeless by decisions made by people in the local Tory council, contractors and suppliers of inflammable cladding. Yet, not a single conviction, not even one prosecution.

The prime minister at the time, Theresa May, promised that all the residents would be rehoused in three weeks, yet some were still in temporary accommodation two years later!

Incredibly, in the London borough where this happened, Kensington, over 1,000 homes lay empty and unused - a mockery to the families in cramped bed and breakfast hotels.

Mike Cleverly
Waltham Forest

Grenfell Tower remains a statue, to British institutional racism.

Tim Jones
Sheffield

Two-metre rule under ‘review’ - Another case of safety before profit

The Tories all sat in their posh homes behind computers now want to put our lives at risk through the relaxation of the two-metre rule. After making a mess of the run up to lockdown, this is the exit strategy to open up the economy

John Malcolm
Teesside

...and in Northern Ireland...

The same Northern Ireland Executive

which took weeks to introduce workplace infection controls, weeks more to enforce them, and is now looking at weakening the two-metre social-distancing rule in workplaces - put laws into place hours before imposing fines on participants on socially distanced anti-racist protests.

Donal O'Coifagh
Cross Community Labour
Alternative councillor and Militant Left member

track is where he is allowing schools to re-open at the end of June, despite safety warnings from education unions.

The "loud demands" Drakeford refers to, come from big business prioritising reviving the economy over safety. Actions speak louder than words, and Drakeford's actions show that he does indeed listen to the loud demands of capitalism - despite being elected as Welsh Labour leader with the support of the Labour left.

Dave Warren
Swansea



photo Amy Cousens

Scotland and coronavirus

A catalogue of government failure

Philip Stott
Socialist Party Scotland

The devastating impact of coronavirus in Scotland was underlined on 11 June when National Records of Scotland reported that 4,000 people had so far died from confirmed or suspected Covid-19.

Scotland's 'excess mortality', while slightly less than the UK as a whole, is higher than any other nation in Europe.

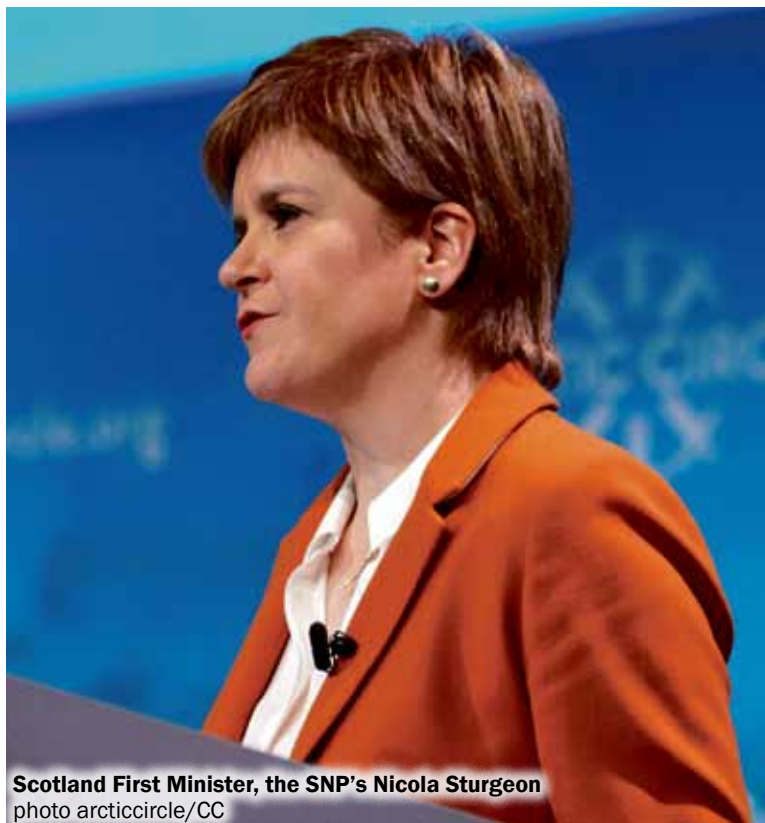
Against that backdrop, a series of growing scandals is applying pressure on the Scottish government's handling of the pandemic.

As the pro-independence columnist of the Herald newspaper, Neil Mackay, pointed out: "Lockdown came too late here - just as it did in England. Testing and tracing have been inadequate. It's been a catalogue of one failure after another."

A decade of austerity meant there has not been the capacity to "trace and protect" as an essential way of containing the virus. Scotland is currently only utilising one-third of its testing capacity. A decisive factor is shortages of staff to test and process the results quickly enough.

Scandalously, care home workers had to wait until 18 May for the government to agree that they could be tested - at least in theory. This was after the virus was already in 58% of Scottish care homes, with half of all deaths taking place in the care home setting.

Incredibly, the former chief medical officer for Scotland, Catherine Calderwood, said on 2 April that testing was a "distraction" and its use on a mass scale to contain the spread of the virus was a "fallacy".



Scotland First Minister, the SNP's Nicola Sturgeon
photo arcticcircle/CC

It's clear that this prejudice against testing - against WHO advice - has crippled the Scottish government's ability to deal with the virus.

Lockstep with Tories

The ruling Scottish National Party's (SNP) first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, went in 'lockstep' with Boris Johnson's delayed approach to lockdown.

Yet the Scottish death rate could have been reduced by 2,000 with an earlier lockdown.

The SNP's health secretary, Jeanne Freeman, belatedly admitted that in March almost 1,000 elderly patients were transferred from hospitals to care homes without

testing - a recipe for mass infection.

The policy was to clear hospitals of as many patients as possible in order to increase intensive care unit (ICU) capacity.

The lack of ICU beds is also a consequence of an NHS run down by cuts, which the SNP-led Scottish government carry a major responsibility for.

Sturgeon, sensing a coming storm, is on the retreat. She has now admitted that "in hindsight" these transfers were the wrong approach and will "haunt" her.

So why is Nicola Sturgeon not suffering the same dramatic falls in public support as her counterpart in

Westminster, Boris Johnson?

In part, Johnson's calamitous handling of the crisis, his defence of Dominic Cummings included, has allowed Sturgeon to appear more capable, and certainly a far better communicator. But this is not a high bar of comparison. As one worker told us: "It's like offering up a choice between Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair".

But while Sturgeon's support is wide, it is not deep. And can turn into its opposite as the full consequences of the SNP government's failures become clear.

Jobs tsunami

A jobs tsunami is set to hit Scottish workers over the summer. 10% of all jobs are predicted to be lost, especially in hospitality and tourism which employ big numbers of young people.

Scottish councils are racking up huge debts. The SNP finance minister blurted out recently that without support from the UK government "the only way the Scottish government will be able to fund our ongoing response would be to make deep cuts to other services."

This has been precisely the 'pass the buck' excuse that the SNP has used throughout the last decade of austerity as it has passed on Tory cuts. Any attempts to do so now, given the growing mood of working-class anger, is likely to provoke a huge backlash.

The anti-worker policy of the SNP was also witnessed recently when it voted with the Tories in the Scottish parliament to deny care workers in the private sector the right to collective bargaining on pay, and terms and conditions.

Thousands of young people have come out to protest the death of George Floyd and systemic racism in

defiance of the Scottish government.

Another avenue for class anger following the Covid-19 crisis will be the national question. Support for independence is still at a record high, at just over 50%.

The SNP leadership called off the demand for an indyref this year - their focus is on winning a "pro-independence" majority in the 2021 Scottish elections.

However, an insurgent mood for independence among workers and young people facing an economic catastrophe could develop.

Mass protests and anti-capitalist social and economic demands would clash with Sturgeon's pro-business policies. Her strategy of seeking a negotiated agreement with Boris Johnson for a second referendum will be exposed as incapable of overcoming the intransigence of the capitalist class.

Scottish Labour's recent decision to adopt a cast-iron commitment to oppose a second referendum and Scottish independence will finish the party as far as the working class in Scotland is concerned. The building of a mass workers' party, based on the trade unions and young people, to fight for a socialist society, is an essential task.

Socialist Party Scotland demands:

- » A workers' and trade union inquiry into the Covid-19 disaster
- » Bring the care homes and all care services into public ownership under democratic working-class and community control
- » Trade unions must demand no return to work until safe. Full pay for all workers facing job losses
- » Nationalise those companies threatening closures
- » For an independent socialist Scotland and a voluntary socialist confederation with England, Wales and Ireland

Celebrating a decade of building a fighting, socialist internationalist party in Scotland



The historic 2018 Glasgow equal pay strike photo PSI/CC

Socialist Party Scotland is celebrating its tenth anniversary. Launched at a public meeting in Glasgow on 10 June 2010, we have over the last decade continued the pioneering work of our predecessor organisations, which includes Militant, Scottish Militant Labour and the International Socialists.

Over those ten years there have been many highlights, including helping to build and popularise a fighting no-cuts policy throughout the decade of austerity. We have:

- » Stood in various national elections on a 100% no cuts platform as part of the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition throughout the decade.
- » Backed Jeremy Corbyn against the Blairites but continued to call for the building a new, mass workers' party in Scotland.
- » Participated in, and in some areas, helped lead the historic 30 November 2011 pensions public sector strike.

- » Organised a school strike in Dundee in 2011 against cuts to education.
- » Led the Youth Fight for Jobs campaign and organised the March for Jobs in Scotland in 2012 from Stirling to Glasgow.
- » Played a leading role in the anti-Bedroom Tax campaign, which eventually saw the tax fully mitigated in Scotland.
- » Helped pioneer the socialist campaign for independence during the 2014 indyref, fighting for an independent socialist Scotland.
- » Played a leading role in the trade union movement in Scotland and helped to shape a fighting policy for workers.
- » Supported scores of workers' strikes over the decade, including the Dundee hospital porters and Glasgow homelessness case workers.
- » Been centrally involved in the inspiring and historic strike for equal pay in Glasgow in 2018 - which saw working-class women win a huge victory for pay justice.
- » Helped to organise a series of events against violence against women.

- » Took part in all the major climate protests in Scotland with the slogan - 'Socialist Change not Climate Change'.
- » Produced many pamphlets and publications, that included the 'Red Flag Over the Clyde' to mark 100th anniversary of Red Clydeside.
- » Throughout the coronavirus crisis we have championed the demands for full pay for all workers, no return to work until safe, full PPE and mass testing.
- » Just a few days ago, we participated in the inspiring Black Lives Matter protests in Scotland, receiving huge support for our socialist and anti-racist demands.
- » Together with the Committee for a Workers' International, we fought to defend Marxism and Trotskyism under challenging conditions. But these ideas are now essential to face up to the unprecedented economic and social crisis facing world capitalism.

■ Forward to the next decade and to a socialist world!

Reform or revolt?

How was the slave trade abolished?

The toppling of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol by Black Lives Matter protesters has ignited a debate about Britain's role in the slave trade and how those involved are remembered. In the Socialist in March 2007, to mark two hundred years of the passing of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, **Hugo Pierre** asked: 'Reform or revolt? How was the slave trade abolished?'

The slave trade between the west coast of Africa and the Americas over a period of 300 to 400 years was probably one of the most barbaric periods of exploitation in history. The capture and sale of Africans made the traders and their sponsors wealthy; the buyers used the labour of their slaves to make themselves rich.

The accumulation of this wealth played a major part in the development of capitalism in Europe. But the suffering inflicted on the slaves was immense and the legacy of this trade is still with us today. This brutal forced migration was very different from the forms of slavery that existed in Europe and Africa in the middle ages or even in ancient civilisations.

There is evidence that the slave markets that existed in different parts of Europe and Africa at that time were primarily used as a method of punishment, particularly of debtors, or for prisoners of war. In the Caribbean, European slaves were first deported to work on the plantations that produced crops and commodities for European consumption.

This proved very problematic for their owners as they would escape and not be found or would not work. Even the use of indentured servants, people who would exchange a debt or their release from service for a period of work in the Americas, proved to be a problem for their 'owners' as often the contracts were broken.

The use of slaves from West Africa by the Portuguese was almost accidental, but during the 17th century this turned into the preferred method of providing labour for the plantation system in the Americas.

The plantation owners developed a system of violence to suppress the spirits of their already disorientated and easily identifiable captives, and an ideology, racism, to confer on themselves superiority and justification for their actions. It is estimated that the British slave merchants made £12 million in profits (the equivalent of £900 million today) on the sale of 2.5 million Africans.

The lives of the captured Africans were seen as perishable 'goods' by the traders and the plantation owners. Many died in the 'middle passage' between Africa and the Americas, in some cases as many as

45% perished on a single ship, but on average it was 30%.

Life expectancy on the plantation was little better. In 1764 Barbados claimed 70,706 slaves and 41,840 more were brought on slave ships up until 1780. The count of slaves in 1783 was 62,258 less than it was nearly nine years earlier.

Deadly trade

This human trade was not universally supported in Britain even in the 18th century, but the wealth created powerful advocates for its continuation. As a result of this trade it is said that Bristol became a city of shopkeepers.

Liverpool was transformed from a fishing village into an international commercial city, with a population of 5,000 in 1700 growing to 34,000 by 1779. In a period of sixty years, 229,525 Africans were enslaved by ships from this port. Ownership was often not just by single wealthy individuals, but by share ownerships of small traders and merchants eager for a piece of these profits.

The trade was not without perils for those who took part in it. The captives themselves did not take enslavement lightly. There were many reports of ships being sacked by slaves, in one case capturing a whole ship and throwing the crew overboard.

The slave system practised on the plantations required the formation of local militia to keep it in check, and often the use of the navy to stop serious disturbances. One of the earliest slave revolts in Barbados in 1683 included a written appeal in English for other slaves to unite in rebellion.

In Jamaica, hardly a decade went by without a rebellion that often threatened the entire plantation system. On some occasions, peace had to be made with the rebels by allowing them to run their own communities.

For the successful overthrow of slavery, the fightback of the slaves had to be reinforced by other class forces back in the imperial centre.

In this, the 200th year since the abolition of the slave trade, much will be made of the role of William Wilberforce as the campaigner who abolished the slave trade through tireless and diligent parliamentary

Slaves rose up in France's Caribbean colonies in the 1790s leading to revolution on the island of Saint-Domingue, the abolition of slavery and the creation of Haiti



work. Recently, BBC broadcaster Melvin Bragg proclaimed him as the greatest English politician because of this work.

Arguments were made to Wilberforce by his close friend, William Pitt the Younger, the prime minister, that the trade should be abolished, especially as it was more expensive than using workers. Pitt argued this case as a student of the original free market economist Adam Smith, following the loss of Britain's colonies in America after the War of Independence.

In reality, Pitt's immediate concern was that British slave traders were selling a large percentage of their slaves to French colonies, particularly Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), thereby strengthening a rival power. Wilberforce joined the campaign already in existence, the Abolition Society in 1787, essentially a pressure group.

Wilberforce spent most of his energies drafting parliamentary legislation. The mood of the early working class and poor in Britain was for radical change. Among them were approximately 10,000 blacks - ex-slaves, servants and runaways. Pitt's government had failed to bring forward reforms of the constitution, particularly electoral (at that stage only a small minority of the population had the right to vote) - he saw abolition as a diversionary reform.

But within a year, the launching of a petition coupled with mass meetings in towns and cities to hear the first-hand experience of ex-slaves, such as Olaudah Equiano, articulated the general concerns of the working masses and the poor.

In Manchester, 10,000 men (women were not encouraged to sign the petition although they often sought to) signed - over half the adult male population. Despite this, Wilberforce's first motion to parliament was defeated in the commons in 1789. But greater events would intervene.

French revolution

By the 1780s the French colony of Saint-Domingue had become the most prosperous of the Caribbean islands. It produced more sugar, coffee and tobacco than any other, not just in terms of quantity, but also quality. This enriched France and those traders involved with the island.

Just as Liverpool, Bristol and London had grown out of the slave trade - so too had Nantes, Bordeaux and Marseille. By 1789, the underlying tensions between the wealth of this new class of merchants and the monarchy was exploded by the masses, with the storming of the Bastille and the beginning of the French Revolution.

The revolution signalled the end of feudalism in France and laid the basis for a modern capitalist society. This was a bourgeois, not a socialist, revolution but it was the poor masses, the sans-culottes, who drove the revolutionary process forward again and again.

In the colonies, the revolution broke the whites into different camps. The free and sometimes wealthy Saint-Dominguans of mixed race (known at the time

as mulattoes) took sides and pressed for their rights. The whites unleashed terror and violence against them and the majority population of blacks. But the splits among whites gave all others the opportunity to grab the banner of liberty.

The 'mulattoes', in particular, appealed to the Constituent Assembly in France to be treated as equals with whites at the end of 1789. They still wanted labour on the island and therefore did not call for rights for the blacks.

The Assembly was dominated at that time by the right wing of the revolution, who wanted to gain rights for the new wealthy capitalists but were terrified of the potential of the masses who had stormed the Bastille. After much procrastination only a tiny minority of those of mixed race were granted rights.

But the splits between the ruling classes - royalty and the aristocracy against the new emergent capitalists - as in all revolutions would give confidence to the masses. This was true both for the workers and peasants of France, and the blacks in Saint-Domingue, who had the self-belief to press for their demands - but this time to the very end.

By 1791 Saint-Domingue exploded, and a class war, which also separated whites, blacks and those of mixed race, began. Very quickly Toussaint L'Ouverture emerged as the leader of the slaves. His army took many different routes and sides to fight for their emancipation.

But revolutionary France was also under attack internationally. In particular British imperialism, which vied for supremacy in the Caribbean with the French, launched a war for the colonial possessions of France, and in particular Saint-Domingue. Pitt, Britain's prime minister, had second thoughts about abolishing the slave trade when he could see the potential for a captured British Saint-Domingue.

With Saint-Domingue effectively split under the control of three forces and facing capture by the British, the new governor faced no option but to declare the total abolition of slavery in 1793, and bring Toussaint L'Ouverture's army under his control. The masses in France too had moved to defend their interests, and the Assembly in 1794, now controlled by the left-wing Jacobins, abolished slavery.

Caribbean in revolt

Revolutionary drama was played out in Saint-Domingue. But the effects of the French Revolution shook the entire French Caribbean: slave revolts took hold in Martinique, Guadeloupe and Tobago. The banner 'Liberty, Fraternity and Equality' inspired the slaves.

In Saint Lucia, between 1795 and 1796, the slaves took over the island after expelling the British troops. When the British eventually took back control they made 'peace' by agreeing to form the slave's army into a West African regiment. The Marseillaise was still sung by youth in the villages in the 1930s and 1940s!

British workers and radicals also took up the banner of the French revolution, and supported Tom



Black Lives Matter protesters removed the statue of Bristol slave trader Edward Colston sparking a debate about Britain's role in the slave trade photo Caitlin Hobbs

Paine who wrote the Rights of Man. The war with France weakened the parliamentary support for abolition. Then as now, parliament brought in repressive legislation in order to suppress opposition to the war among the working class and poor. In 1795, three demonstrations in the space of three weeks of over 150,000 each marched to the slogans of 'Down with Pitt!', 'No War!', 'No King!'

Wilberforce backed Pitt's foreign policy against France and his home policy of repression. During this time, he only went through the motions in keeping the abolition debate in parliament.

The revolution in France had not ended its twists and turns. Ten years after it began, Napoleon Bonaparte came to power. Many of the gains of the revolution for the sans-culottes were reversed, but the change from a feudal property system to a capitalist one remained.

Napoleon reestablished slavery, but Toussaint L'Ouverture had predicted the reaction of the slaves of San Domingue as early as 1797 in a letter to the French Directory:

"Do they think that men who have been able to enjoy the blessing of liberty will calmly see it snatched away? They supported their chains only so long as they did not know any condition of life more happy than that of slavery. But today when they have left it, if they had a thousand lives they would sacrifice them all rather than be forced into slavery again."

The black masses of Saint-Domingue began an insurrection that would lead to the end of French rule and independence. The colonial jewel of France, which Britain tried to steal, would remain free from slavery.

The radical movement in Britain moved back onto the parliamentary road. By 1806, more radical MPs (although of a capitalist variety) were elected to parliament. British imperialism, without the competition of Saint-Domingue, increasingly turned to making its riches in India rather than the Caribbean.

Furthermore, the French navy, decimated in Saint-Domingue, no longer posed the same threat to British policy or interests. In the Caribbean, it was clear that the constant threat of revolt would be increased by the continuing import of new slaves from Africa. The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was passed in

1807 to be implemented by 1808.

Tens of thousands of Africans continued to be captured and traded for decades more. Loopholes in the Act were found, and illegal activities - smugglers, foreign fronts for British traders and a host of other devices - were used to fulfil the colonists' desire for plantation labour.

But the slave trade and slavery itself was finally abolished in Britain in 1833 by the activity of the working class and the continued uprising and resistance of blacks held as captive labourers.

Today, the ruling class cannot even bear to apologise for the atrocities of slavery for the fear of being caught up in claims for reparations.

Back in 1833, £20 million (equivalent to £1.5 billion today) was given in compensation to the slave-owners. Slavery's devastating legacy - racist ideology, the destruction of African civilisation and communities, the death or transportation of between 10 and 30 million people, the destruction of black family life in the colonies - has left its mark today.

However, the legacy of the abolition movement is that the masses, particularly the working class and the poor - black and white - can struggle together for decisive change. Now, only the socialist control, distribution and democratic use of the enormous wealth of the world can decisively end their exploitation and division.

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Tories retreat on free school meals

THE MORE WE PROTEST THE MORE WE CAN WIN



The Tories have made another u-turn. This time over taking free school meal vouchers away from poor children during the summer holidays photo usaf/CC

Lindsey Morgan
Leicester Socialist Party

Against the backdrop of mass anti-racist protests and growing anger against inequality, the Tories have made another u-turn. This time over taking free school meal vouchers away from poor children during the summer holidays.

One minute the Tories were proclaiming concern for vulnerable children being stuck at home and not at school, then they were proposing to remove the free school meals safety net from at-risk and vulnerable families! It was part of their usual penny pinching from the working class while the rich keep their

hands in their pockets.

The government retreat for this summer is welcome. But it is a result of pressure within the context of the mass protests rather than a sudden concern for children.

Some 1.3 million children are currently entitled to the vouchers for any family earning less than a measly £7,400 a year. In previous summers, parents on these tiny incomes were expected to foot the bill for children's lunches over the summer, leading to many parents starving to feed their children, reliance on food banks, and widespread holiday hunger.

Marcus Rashford, Manchester United and England footballer, has spoken passionately about the need for free school meals vouchers to continue during the holidays. Highlighting his own experiences in a single-parent family

of five children he said: "The system is not built for families like mine to succeed, regardless of how hard my mum worked".

A survey carried out by the National Education Union in 2018 asked teachers about holiday hunger. They said that holiday hunger was affecting children more in that year than three years previously, that food banks were struggling to meet demand, and that children were returning to school after the holidays malnourished.

The threatened removal of vouchers, during a pandemic killing working-class people, was nothing less than a disgrace, particularly for those low-paid workers having to go without nutrition so that their children don't go without. The government should continue to provide free school meals in holiday time after

the pandemic too.

The free school meal provision should be extended to include households in need with incomes above the £7,400 threshold. There also needs to be an immediate increase in the minimum wage, to at least £12 an hour, and benefit increases linked to the minimum wage, to enable parents to provide for their children more easily.

The education unions could play a key role in pressuring the government to extend provision. We have secured a victory. Now we must continue to ramp up the pressure and fight for a more equal society where none go without.

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