

LIFTING THE LOCKDOWN... WORKERS MUST NOT PAY THE PRICE



PHOTO TU SENAN

JAMES IVENS

Who pulled society through the lockdown? The working class. Who suffered most from the lockdown? The working class. Who will pay the price as the lockdown eases? The working class?

Not if we make the bosses and billionaires pay instead!

They put those of us still at work on the front lines without paying for effective protection. NHS staff, transport workers, carers, shop workers, and many others - all are heroes; all have died in excessive numbers.

Bin workers, school workers, and more have fought back, downing tools till the job was safe. The rich had no need. They could direct their empires from country getaways while the rest of us did the work.

They robbed those of us sent home of our pay - or even our jobs outright. The Tories paid out 80% furlough subsidies to rescue their mates, the employers. But many of

those employers had their hard-pressed workers make up the 20% gap. Others just dished out P45s.

Workers made all the goods and services that generated the big bosses' profits. But when pandemic and depression hit, the bosses keep the riches - and discard us like used PPE.

They hiked our private rents to an all-time high just as lockdown began. An average of £700 a month, and twice that in London.

The big landlords and mortgage lenders are protected. But tenants have unaffordable rents on crowded homes backing up.

So it's no surprise that lower-income households are twice as likely to have shouldered more debt

during the lockdown. One in four of the UK's poorest have sunk further into the red since the pandemic, compared to just one in eight in the high-income bracket.

Sure, the boss class will tell us it's not all rosy. They've lost out on profits too. But these ups and downs are a game to the billionaires. They're life and death to us.

And all the while, the capitalists are trying to take advantage of the crisis. They are privatising services, suppressing wages, intensifying work, cutting jobs.

No wonder thousands of young people have queued to give the Socialists their details on the mass working-class protests against racism. They hear we stand for an

alternative to the capitalist system built on inequality; one where the working class controls society democratically in the interests of the majority, not the rich - and they have heard enough.

Because none of what the capitalists are putting us through is inevitable. Society produces enough to guarantee decent jobs, homes and services for all. We just have to stop the rich from robbing us - and that means taking the economy and political power out of their hands.

Join your union to fight for safety, jobs and pay as the lockdown lifts. Join the Socialist Party to fight for socialism: a society where public ownership and democratic planning provide plenty for all.

the Socialist

formerly Militant

Issue 1092

25 June - 1 July 2020

DO YOU HAVE NEWS FOR US?

The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. 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.

CONTACT US

editors@socialistparty.org.uk
020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

DEADLINES

Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

SUBSCRIBE

to the Socialist for weekly working-class news, analysis and fighting strategy
socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

- Paper subscription £4.50 a month, or £6.50 including Socialism Today
- E-subscription £2.50 a month, or £4 including Socialism Today

SOCIALISM TODAY

our monthly Marxist magazine
socialismtoday.org
● Paper sub £3 a month, e-sub £2.50

SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST

weekly on all podcast platforms

FOLLOW US

facebook.com/CWISocialistParty
Instagram @SocialistPartyCWI
YouTube - Socialist Party
Twitter @Socialist_Party

SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International
socialistparty.org.uk
socialistworld.net



BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Socialist Books: our publishing house
socialistbooks.co.uk
Left Books: Marxist classics bookshop
leftbooks.co.uk

OUR NEWSPAPER TEAM

Editor of the Socialist Sarah Sachs-Eldridge socialistparty.org.uk	Editorial staff Dave Carr
Judy Beishon	James Ivens
Circulation manager Chris Newby	Scott Jones Ian Pattison

ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications,
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper
at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour
at Reach Printing Services

Militant issue 1: October 1964
The Socialist issue 1: 7 February 1997

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

Victory for Royal Glamorgan A&E!

DAVE REID

SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Cwm Taf Health Board has announced that it intends to retain a 24-hour accident and emergency department at Royal Glamorgan Hospital. This represents a huge victory for health campaigners in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area, and a setback for the Welsh government's plans to downgrade the hospital and close the A&E department there.

The board has announced that it has successfully recruited enough medical staff to work in the department, after claiming that it was not possible to find consultants to replace the current consultant who is retiring. In a Senedd (Welsh parliament) hearing it admitted that there had not been much of an effort to recruit staff.

It's quite clear now, as Socialist Party Wales warned, that the health board had been running down the department as part of the Welsh Labour government's South Wales Programme of closing local hospital services and centering them at a few hospitals, some of which were very difficult for patients to access.

The Welsh government hoped that, faced with a staff crisis in the A&E at the hospital, it could finally force through the closure of the department which was originally planned in 2013. But the sheer scale of the campaign of opposition has forced



A PROTEST EARLIER THIS YEAR PHOTO SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

the health board and the Welsh government to retreat, and to actively attempt to recruit consultants.

Spearheaded by the Save Royal Glamorgan Hospital A&E campaign, thousands of working-class people across Rhondda Cynon Taf have thrown themselves into the defence of their hospital. The campaign has involved the active participation of hospital workers, doctors and nurses at the hospital and patient groups.

Over 1,000 hospital workers signed the Unite union petition. Communities across the Rhondda valleys were festooned with the orange bows of the campaign.

Over 500 rallied mid-week at the Senedd to pressure it to pass a motion in support of the A&E, in defiance of the first minister and the health minister. Another 500 massed outside the meeting of the health board, with over 100 pouring into the meeting itself.

Even the floods that have caused over £100 million damage in the area did not dampen the mood - they intensified the anger.

Now we must make sure that Cwm Taf Health Board comes good with its promise to keep the A&E, that it is adequately staffed and resourced, and that all the other services that have been cut or threatened with being cut from the hospital are retained or returned: maternity care, baby care and children's hospital care.

And the Welsh government must officially rescind the South Wales Programme and ensure that decent hospital facilities are readily available to all our communities.

No more health cuts!

But at the same time, many union leaders succumbed to the idea of 'national unity' with the employers and the Tory government. This saw some unions defer pay claims and call off disputes in the 'national interest'.

But the bosses and Boris Johnson only know their class interest. This has defined the slowness of the government's response in moving to lockdown, which undoubtedly cost tens of thousands of lives, and the reckless opening of lockdown - all in the interests of protecting profit at the expense of workers' safety.

This has provoked another, more positive, development - union action, often from the rank and file. Health workers forced hospital management to supply necessary PPE. Postal workers in a whole number of offices took unofficial action to protect their safety. Moe, a Socialist Party member on London buses, led a successful campaign that resulted in the front doors being closed after over 30 drivers died of the virus.

Teachers and education staff have been responsible for the biggest government retreat over the premature wider opening of schools. This saw an explosion in union activity, mainly online because of restrictions. But the National Education Union organised a massive virtual meeting of over 15,000 members! It reports hundreds of new union reps and has recruited over 20,000 new members.

There are massive challenges ahead for workers, particularly as economic crisis unfolds. We are already seeing mass redundancies and closures threatened. But if unions give a fighting lead, they can become the focal point again for struggle.

FULLY FUND SCHOOLS. STAND FIRM ON SAFETY



PHOTO TODD CROMER/CC

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES

NEU AND SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Under pressure from their own failures to make sure schools are in a position to safely open more widely, the Tories have committed to providing £1 billion for schools next year. However, the money comes with significant strings attached.

£350 million is for a national tutoring programme for "intensive catch-up support" of perhaps 15 hours of tuition for two million disadvantaged children. But some simple maths shows that works out at £175 per pupil at a cost of £12 per hour.

£2 billion funding gap

Even before the crisis, schools needed over £2 billion extra a year to reverse school cuts. After the crisis, the primary educational need for children isn't enforced numeracy and literacy 'catch-up' but a 'recovery curriculum' that focuses on their wellbeing, not an imposed test-driven curriculum.

The Tories are angry at trade unions in general and the National Education Union (NEU) in particular. Why? Because we've refused to meekly accept their reckless drive to open schools more widely. Instead,

by demanding that the NEU's 'five tests' need to be met first, we've been putting the safety of our members and school communities first.

Some scientists, like those on IS-AGE (the independent alternative to the government's scientific advisory body), have also refused to simply dance to the government tune. ISAGE has issued a new report condemning Covid-19 testing arrangements as being "chaotic and haphazard", and contact tracing as being still "not fit for purpose". It also says it is far too soon to reduce social distancing rules indoors from two metres to one metre.

That shows that the NEU has been absolutely right to demand that testing and tracing be functioning properly before schools open more widely, and that it's simply not yet safe to try and pack full classes into schools, as the Tories want for September.

Unions must not buckle in the face of the onslaught from the Tories and the right-wing media. Instead of the public being encouraged to blame the unions for simply doing their job, the unions should be encouraging the public to place the blame squarely where it lies - with the government and its failing private sector allies.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world. Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zero-hour contracts.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

- Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- 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!

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call 020 8988 8777
- or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



● Cladding off now!

On the third anniversary of the fatal Grenfell Tower disaster, a tower block fire in Canning Town on 22 June was controlled with no deaths - because the cladding was finally removed last year. However, the Tory government has reportedly spent less than a quarter of what it promised to replace remaining Grenfell-style cladding, leaving 300 high-rise buildings still vulnerable.

And the suggestion from property developer Berkeley Group that the government relax restrictions on the use of flammable cladding has been slammed by the Fire Brigades Union. The FBU rightly says it's a "shameless attempt" to protect profits over public safety, and calls for "unscrupulous house-builders" like Berkeley Group to be nationalised.

● Failure app

Health Secretary Matt Hancock - a byword for failure - has ditched the government's planned mobile phone contact tracing app in England in favour of a system operated by tax-dodging tech giants Google and Apple. But this new app won't be up and running until "winter".

The app underwent three months' trial in the Isle of Wight before being abandoned. Apparently, it wouldn't work with Apple's phone operating system.

The centralised system was also condemned by many scientists and tech experts as a Trojan horse for government surveillance. How much the doomed app has cost the public purse has not been revealed.

● Labour untogether

A belated post-mortem on Labour's 2019 election defeat by 'Labour Together' has added weight to the Socialist Party's earlier conclusions (see 'Stand firm for socialist policies to stop Tory attacks' on socialistparty.org.uk, and 'Lessons from the Corbyn experience' in the June issue of Socialism Today).

Many of Labour's organisational failings can be laid at the door of the "toxic culture created by years of infighting" says the report - ie, Labour's right wing systematically attempting to remove Corbyn and rubbish his programme. Labour's right, along with Momentum, did, however, push Corbyn into adopting a confused position on Brexit.

Significantly, the report points to "two decades of demographic and political change that hit the party's traditional base." In other words, Blairite capitalist policies, especially savage austerity measures in Labour-run councils, have politically alienated working-class voters.

DAVE CARR

● Shopping scandal

The coronavirus-prevention measures at JD Sports in Romford include a customer capacity of 116! It's not a massive shop. The store limits for other similarly sized shops was 20 to 32. Although, like the supermarkets, they'll probably start low then increase numbers to increase profits - regardless of how infectious the virus is.

Postscript: In fact, the store capacity for Next in Romford was 20 on 15 June, but 27 on 19 June!

IAN PATTISON

Black Lives Matter protests: week three

Central London

There were around 1,000 across two Black Lives Matter protests in central London on Saturday 20 June, and around 500 on Sunday 21 June.

The Socialist Party's Hugo Pierre, a member of the national executive council of public service union Unison, spoke to the Sunday crowd in a personal capacity. The biggest cheers were when he raised the need to mobilise the whole working class to fight against racism and austerity.

On the Windrush scandal, Hugo mentioned how it was trade unionists who had fought to defend their members from losing their jobs, benefits, and access to healthcare. He blamed capitalism and austerity for the disproportionately high black, Asian and minority ethnic death rates from coronavirus.

Hugo made a call to organise in the trade unions, to link up all the struggles of working-class people. To end, he said we need to fight for jobs and homes for all, for a decent future - and that means fighting for socialism.

HELEN PATTISON

Leeds

5,000 people gathered in Hyde Park, Leeds for a well-managed, socially distanced protest. Organisers provided hand sanitiser, gloves and masks, and very visible stewarding. This protest had more students from the four local universities than in previous weeks.

The Socialist Party was again well received. We sold lots of copies of the Socialist, and had a large number of people leave their contact details to find out about joining.

We support the call made by many platform speakers to draw together people fighting different oppressions. Unfortunately, none of the speakers talked about the importance of class struggle and fighting capitalism to achieve this. However, the many people who approached our stall enthusiastically agreed with us on this point.

JAMES ELLIS



EARLIER PROTESTS IN NEWCASTLE // PHOTO NICK FRAY



EARLIER PROTESTS IN DURHAM // PHOTO TEESIDE SOCIALIST PARTY



EARLIER PROTESTS IN LONDON // PHOTO JAMES IVENS

Hayes, west London

Over 200 at Barra Hall Park in Hayes, Hillingdon. The Socialist newspaper and Socialist Party posters went down well with an enthusiastic young crowd.

The Socialist Party's Wally Kennedy spoke, linking the Black Lives Matter struggle to the wider class struggle, and got a good response. Labour's former shadow chancellor John McDonnell also spoke.

STEVE HARBORD

Newcastle

A crowd of about 300 came along to the Newcastle protest. A good deal of those who came were veterans of the recent Black Lives Matter protests and receptive to the Socialist Party's ideas. We raised £50 for the fighting fund, including from a lad who liked the look of our Malcom X posters so much he wanted to buy one.

SAM MORDEN

Edmonton, north London

The demo at Pymmes Park in Edmonton, Enfield on 20 June attracted a slightly smaller gathering than the previous week in Enfield Town. Still, there were about 60 people and a lot of home-made banners.

The Socialist Party was the only left organisation to have a campaign stall. One of us was invited to speak, and our message was the clearest in terms of the movement needing a socialist programme to take it forward.

MIRA GLAVARDANOV

Reading

The 20 June protest in Reading was not as huge as the two previous ones, but 17 young people were interested in joining the Socialist Party. One of our new members - recruited on the demo the previous week - came and took part too, selling our material and raising £15.

JOHN GILLMAN

Housing: act now to cancel Covid crisis rents and debt

SUZANNE MUNA

UNITE UNION HOUSING WORKERS' BRANCH AND SHAC

Private sector rents in England hit a record high of £700 a month as the country headed into coronavirus lockdown, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Median rents in London were £1,425 per month. Six in ten renters have lost income in the pandemic, and arrears are mounting.

Tenant organisations are calling a day of action on Saturday 27 June to demand that rent be cancelled for the period of the crisis. This could prevent an avalanche of evictions when the current halt to eviction proceedings stops at the end of August.

Rent is already completely unaffordable, and tenants cannot afford back payments on top. Rent arrears built up during the crisis should be written off. "Can't pay, won't pay" is a fact, not just a slogan.

The London Renters Union (LRU) plans socially distanced protests and online events. In solidarity with the LRU, which represents private tenants, the Social Housing Action Campaign (Shac) intends to use the day of action to highlight the plight of housing association tenants. Shac was set up to unite people living and working in social housing or cooperatives to campaign on issues of common concern.

There is just no excuse for housing associations to initiate evictions on the basis of inability to pay. Before the pandemic, the sector was in excellent financial health, generating significant profits from rents and sales over a prolonged period.

Operating margins were at 25% on social housing lettings alone, and rent collection rates were 99.9%. Shac therefore demands that housing associations waive rents for those struggling financially, write off arrears, and avoid making evictions, even when courts reopen.



MARCHING FOR HOMES IN 2015 // PHOTO PAUL MATTHESSON

The size and finances of housing associations vary widely, and some co-ops and smaller associations will inevitably have tight margins. For these organisations, we should look to the government to underwrite housing association debt, as they did for the banks after the 2007-08 crash.

The government readily dipped into the public purse to provide a bailout of around £750 billion, including around £37 billion for RBS, Lloyds TSB and HBOS. This effectively nationalised the debt while allowing the banks to continue operating as distinct entities, retaining their own governance structures.



The town of Ithaca in New York state has passed a resolution calling for the power to cancel rents to prevent a social catastrophe

The same model could be used to support struggling associations and co-ops. Given the loss of social mission in the sector, any assistance must be bound to an increase in the democratic involvement of tenants, residents, and workers in the 'governance' (running) of the organisation.

The town of Ithaca in New York state has passed a resolution calling for the power to cancel rents to prevent a social catastrophe. Labour councils in Britain could do the same, and provide legal support to tenants fighting eviction. They should also implement a policy of cancelling rent during the crisis for council tenants.

Fighting racism and capitalism - fighting for a future

▶▶▶ CONTINUED FROM BACK

The underfunded, part-privatised NHS has also struggled to deal with the pandemic. And the government has been making migrant workers pay an additional tax to use it - rather than taking money back from the billionaires.

It was only after intense pressure that the government backed down from making the very same migrants who work for the NHS pay this tax. However, many others still face it. We say the NHS should be free at the point of use for all - no charges for prescriptions, dentistry or migrant taxes.

But the Socialist Party's charter for young people is not just a list of

things we want. It also describes how we can start to fight for them.

Having never seen any effective change, or even an effective political alternative, our generation is looking for a path to a better future. The 'Zoomer' generation (those born around the new millennium) is majority anti-capitalist.

Many of us are searching for organisations to support our fight against racism and injustice.

In the workplace, trade unions are the basic collective self-defence organisations of the working class. We campaign for unions to actively recruit young workers to help lead the fight against racism and capitalist exploitation.

On campus, student unions often lag behind students' demands to fight racism. And the National Union of Students has all but disappeared under a right-wing leadership.

However, Socialist Students has been an effective force for organising students on campus to fight for change. And unlike Labour Students and other societies, Socialist Students has been a visible force at these demonstrations, consistently rising to fight against racism.

And in politics, Corbyn's anti-austerity policies gave many young people a glimmer of hope. However, the failure to battle the right-wing rot which dominates the Labour Party means Labour does not represent

the demands of workers and young people.

Keir Starmer even called the pulling down of a slave statue "completely wrong." And he has failed to address racism against left MPs from officials in his own party, recently revealed by leaks.

It's clear the Labour leadership is more committed to kicking out socialists than fighting racism. If you want a party which is 100% committed to fighting racism and capitalism, for a socialist society controlled democratically by the working class - join the Socialist Party!

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

Reading workers' movement responds to knife attack



A horrific knife attack took place in Forbury Gardens in Reading on 20 June, killing three people, reportedly LGBT+, and injuring others. Reading Socialist Party shares the shock, anger and sadness felt by all working-class people at this tragedy.

We have proposed to Reading Trades Union Council that we organise a demo alongside Black Lives Matter protesters. We believe the local workers' movement must unite behind the slogans of "workers' unity to end terror, racism and war" and "jobs, homes and services for all" to combat appalling incidents like this and the social conditions which breed them.

The answer is to build a mass



We believe the local workers' movement must unite behind the slogans of 'workers' unity to end terror, racism and war' and 'jobs, homes and services for all'

working-class movement against austerity and for socialism. Whatever the causes of this crime, the capitalist establishment will try to obscure the part its system played in them.

The original BBC headline and article even tried to link it to the peaceful Black Lives Matter demo that finished three hours earlier in the same park. There was no connection, except that some protesters were still in the park and rendered first aid.

● *For announcements on the date, time and location of the event, check Reading Trades Union Council's Facebook page: facebook.com/ReadingTUC*

JOHN GILLMAN

READING SOCIALIST PARTY

THEM...

● The Bank of England has pumped a total of £745 billion into the British economy during the Covid crisis in three months. This unprecedented stimulus takes the form of 'quantitative easing' bond purchases. So that's long-term loans to the government, to finance big business subsidies, with funds created from thin air. Seems there is a magic money tree after all...

● Education publishers want to ban the free curriculum materials provided at the start of the lockdown. The British Educational Suppliers Association complains BBC web and video resources constrain its members' profits. Never mind what's best for parents, teachers and schools!

● Factory output has fallen at the steepest rate on record, says the CBI. 17% of 360 firms surveyed had increased production during the lockdown, while 74% had cut it. The 57-point gap is the largest since records began in 1975.

● The UK's gross domestic product, a measure of the total output of capitalist economies, plummeted a record-breaking 20.4% in April, says the ONS. The Bank of England expects the nosedive to total 25% in the second quarter of this year - the deepest recession in three centuries.

...& US

● Poorer households are having to run down savings and accrue debt during the lockdown, reports the Resolution Foundation. Meanwhile, richer families are saving more, as international travel and luxury experiences are ruled out.

● Young people are most likely to have lost income during the pandemic, says the Resolution Foundation. More than one in three 18 to 24-year-olds now earns less. Workers under 25 are around two-and-a-half times more likely to work in the sectors most disrupted by lockdown, finds the IFS.

● Unemployment claims soared 23% last month to 2.8 million, according to HMRC data. In March, 1.24 million signed on - so that's a 126% explosion since lockdown.

● Poverty has forced 100,000 family members carrying out care duties to use food banks during lockdown, says Carers UK. 229,000 carers reported someone in their household had had to go hungry.

● Employers shed an estimated 612,000 workers from official payrolls between March and May, says the ONS. Around 9.1 million are currently furloughed, and could start to join dole queues from August as the subsidy ends.

● Airlines and their supply chains could shed 70,000 jobs due to the Covid crisis, reports the New Economics Foundation. The think tank compares the scale of carnage to Thatcher's demolition of the mining industry.

● There are now about 20 jobseekers per vacancy in poorer parts of the UK, says the Institute for Employment Studies. Up to 50 are chasing each position in areas most hit by coronavirus. Richer areas have just five candidates per post.

RYAN ALDRED
USDAW PLYMOUTH AND DISTRICT GENERAL
BRANCH SECRETARY (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The shop workers' union, Usdaw, recently launched its 'New Deal for Workers' campaign, expanding on its previous 'Time For Better Pay' campaign, with additional demands, many of which the Socialist Party welcomes.

But it falls short of the proposition raised at Usdaw's 2019 annual delegate meeting (ADM) for a workers' charter, tailored to account for specific aspects in relation to different sectors. It was also argued that the development of a workers' charter should be accompanied by a strategy to build and gain recognition in other big retailers, particularly Aldi and Lidl.

One of the central demands is a minimum wage of £10 an hour. We of course welcome any and all increases in the minimum wage. But it's important to note that the £10 an hour commitment was agreed at Usdaw's ADM back in 2016. At the 2019 ADM it was pointed out that the minimum wage demand needed to be revisited as "it will be relatively less than when we first adopted the call several years ago."

Accounting for year-on-year inflation from 2016 to 2019, the figure rises to £11.20. Considering the further rises in inflation for the first half of 2020, it comes closer to £12 an hour.

It is for this reason that Usdaw members in the Socialist Party are calling for an immediate £12 an hour minimum wage, £15 in London to reflect the higher cost of living. During the current pandemic this should be accompanied by a hazard bonus for workers risking their health, both in key sectors and working for non-essential retailers that have resumed trading.

However, while this is what we would put forward as a minimum, we would argue that there is room for larger increases, particularly in the supermarket sector. Supermarkets reported record sales during the pandemic, making £2 billion extra in the month of March alone. As one Tesco worker put it, "we deserve to be on double our wages".

Some employers will try to recoup losses to their profits by cutting hours to make up for an increased hourly rate. Therefore, any new deal for workers has to raise demands for a higher minimum wage alongside

Workers need a 'new deal' - at least £12 an hour now!



PHOTO GEOFF WILLIAMS/CC

a call to end zero and low-hours contracts.

Usdaw's general secretary Paddy Lillis recently claimed that there would be a "day of reckoning" on low pay. As leader of one of the UK's largest trade unions, which organises in

one of the lowest-paid sectors of the economy, he is well placed to initiate such a reckoning.

Unfortunately, his words have yet to materialise into any serious action, beyond launching the charter, which wasn't put forward to the executive

council, or indeed any of the union's democratic structures.

Currently, none of the 'big four' (Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Tesco and Co-Op), which Usdaw has recognition agreements with, has a wage rate of £10 an hour, despite it being union policy for the last four years.

If there is to truly be a 'day of reckoning', the union should immediately enter into negotiations with recognised employers and demand wages which reflect members' status as key workers. This means taking up the call for £12 an hour for all workers.

Where supermarket bosses refuse, the union should demand that financial books be opened to trade union scrutiny while building a serious and sustained campaign of strike action to secure better pay and conditions.

In the last decade, a rejected pay offer from Tesco wasn't followed up with industrial action, and similarly, more recently when a pay offer was decisively rejected by Morrisons members.

If a lead had been given in rejecting the latest round of mass redundancies in Tesco for instance, thousands of jobs could have been saved. Despite its weaknesses, Usdaw has over 400,000 members, which is an immense source of collective strength. If that collective strength were to be harnessed through the development of serious campaigns, up to and including a programme of industrial action, it would quickly shift the balance of power out of the bosses' hands and into the hands of workers themselves.

The British Retail Consortium has said that now is "not the right time" to be arguing for wage increases. For the bosses there will never be a right time to deny them their profits by demanding decent wages. For young people on poverty wages in particular, and for low paid workers in general, waiting for a better time is not an option because the rent and bills won't wait. Now is the time to boldly demand a new deal for workers. Now is the time to demand an immediate £12 an hour minimum wage for all, and even higher wages for the key workers which through this pandemic have shown that they keep society running.

Get all the latest union news...



with the
NSSN bulletin
shopstewards.net

Renationalisation of the Probation Service: A step in the right direction

PROBATION SERVICE WORKER

My employer, one of the twenty-one private 'community rehabilitation companies' (CRCs) providing probation services to low and medium-risk offenders across England and Wales, claimed to be "surprised and disappointed" at the recent announcement that all probation services would be brought back under the publicly owned national probation service (NPS).

Partial renationalisation was proposed last year. This would have seen the supervision of all cases brought back under the management of the NPS, with some involvement of private companies in the provision of

unpaid work and accredited programmes. However, the Ministry of Justice's latest announcement means that these will now also be brought back within the remit of the NPS.

In 2014, Tory secretary of state for justice Chris Grayling's disastrous probation reforms resulted in the privatisation of 70% of the probation service, leaving the remaining 30% of cases - those deemed to be higher-risk - to be dealt with by the NPS. The government claims that the decision to reverse this was prompted by the coronavirus crisis; that the pandemic highlighted the difficulties in coordinating the effective supervision of all offenders during lockdown.

The reality, however, is that the

CRCs have been failing from the start. A 2017 report found that, while the NPS was protecting the public effectively, the CRCs were failing to properly assess offender's risks in half the cases. Consequently, rates of reoffending have risen significantly. Privatisation poses a very real threat to public safety.

Difficulties

Offenders have also suffered. As a community payback supervisor, I work with offenders daily. Many have complained to me about difficulties getting in touch with their probation officer, often having to leave dozens of messages and send numerous emails before getting a response.

This has limited their ability to enrol in educational or training courses, and meetings with probation officers have been reduced to little more than a 10-minute 'check-in'.

Probation officers are incredibly hardworking and committed, but they have reported being overworked, under enormous amounts of pressure, working in an environment which is confusing, chaotic and unprofessional. This is the reality of private provision of a public service, whereby the priority to make profit and meet targets conflicts with the needs of its users.

It is therefore clear that the renationalisation of our probation service is a victory. It is, however, just

one small step in the right direction in the fight to end privatisation. At the same time the Ministry of Justice published its proposals for probation reforms, the Tories announced that companies were being invited to bid for contracts for the building and management of a new private prison in Wellingborough.

So, while one aspect of our criminal justice system is being renationalised, another is becoming increasingly privatised.

The Socialist Party is committed to fighting to defend public institutions from destructive privatisation. All of our public services should be fully funded, fully publicly owned, and under democratic working-class control.

P&O: Defend every job - nationalise the ferries under workers' control and management!

ERIC SEGAL

EAST KENT SOCIALIST PARTY

On 11 May, P&O Ferries announced plans to cut 734 jobs in Dover and 122 jobs in Hull, after reporting a severe downturn in demand.

The cuts, affecting more than a quarter of the group's workforce, come after the firm's owner, the Dubai-based DP World, had asked for £150 million of government handouts. This was only two months after DP World said it would be paying its investors about £270m in dividends.

The RMT transport and maritime union is determined to fight P&O's threat, and is currently in negotiations to oppose the threatened job losses. But negotiations never run in a straight line.

The response by the union to a breakdown in negotiations was to call simultaneous demonstrations at the Dover and Hull ports. But at the eleventh hour the demonstrations, backed by both South East Kent and Hull trade union councils, were called off due to some progress in the redundancy consultation which ends on 24 June.

Faced with 1,000 job losses, the question in the minds of P&O workers in Dover and Hull is how to defend jobs, pay and conditions.

The threat of compulsory redundancy, together with enhanced redundancy pay of two-and-a-half weeks per year of service, and the waiving of the restriction of one years post-termination date, may tempt some workers, but the likelihood of finding further employment in South East Kent is unlikely given the Covid-19 pandemic.

P&O should step back from its plans to sack workers and remember that seafarers have a proud tradition in defending jobs and conditions.

P&O workers need to draw on the valuable lessons of the bitter year-long strike in 1988, which linked seafarers internationally against the attacks on job losses, and recall the words of Bob Crow, the late general secretary of the RMT: "If you don't fight you will lose but if you fight you may win".

SOCIALISM the podcast

The weekly Marxist podcast from the Socialist Party

• Listen and subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, YouTube, and all major podcast platforms
socialistparty.org.uk/podcast



Over 30% of children living in poverty

End capitalism and inequality now. Fight for socialism!

JANE NELLIST

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, austerity policies from successive governments had pushed an increasing number of families into poverty. Over four million children live in poverty in the UK, and that number is rapidly rising.

That is over 30% of all children in a country that is one of the wealthiest in the world!

The Tory cuts to welfare benefits and the underfunded Universal Credit scheme have left families in crisis - while the rich continue to be insulated from austerity.

Children from black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be poor: 45% are now in poverty, which makes the Black Lives Matter campaigns even more important.

Disgracefully, two-thirds of children living in poverty have at least one parent in work, many working long hours with very low pay. Rising living costs, low wages, and cuts to benefits, have created a perfect storm in which more children are falling into the poverty trap.

This will only get worse with families emerging from the pandemic with crippling levels of debt, and tens of thousands finding themselves without a job as the furlough scheme is ended.

But it's not just the lack of money that impacts on poorer families. Services that families would turn to for support are no longer there. The huge cuts to local authority funding, down 49% in the last decade, with councils unwilling to mount campaigns and use their reserves, hits the poorest families hard.

Fight back to stop Tories scrapping protections for children in care

KRISTIAN O'SULLIVAN

BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories have been using Covid-19 as a smokescreen to launch rushed 'emergency legislation amendments' to attack and water down workers' rights, public sector funding, and to relax safeguarding procedures in our frontline services.

We see this with the relaxing of safeguarding for looked-after children in care in England, with the implementation of 'The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 - statutory instrument: no 445' - more commonly known as SI445.

SI445 removes and weakens around 65 children's safeguards, without any evidence of their connection to the current serious health crisis.

Some of the most distressful



PHOTO STAFF SGT. ALEX FOX ECHOLS

Children's centres, youth clubs, libraries and other support services are either cut to the bone or have disappeared. The safety net the working class had fought for has huge holes, or has been taken away all together.

Free school meals and breakfast clubs, while not enough, have helped to ensure that children get a balanced meal during the day at school, but 'holiday' hunger takes its toll on families.

The absolute catastrophe of the government's voucher system during Covid-19 has seen more and more families turn to food banks to feed their families. The government's retreat on free school meal vouchers during the summer holidays is to be welcomed, but on its own will not be enough to end child poverty.

Housing and childcare are two of

the costs that take the biggest toll on families' budgets. But it's not just finding a roof over your head. It's the quality of housing that has the biggest impact. Energy costs for poorer families are high due the reliance on pre-paid cards. Families should not have to make choices between heating or eating!

Too many disadvantaged families are living in cramped conditions, especially in cities with no outdoor space, sometimes in just one room. It's a nightmare at any time, but during the 'lockdown' it's even worse. The lack of good quality council housing is a scandal - with private landlords making a fortune!

With schools still closed to most pupils, and a reliance on home schooling, much of it online, a national free broadband scheme and

free laptops would ensure young people could access the tools to help their learning. Yet again the government's promises have failed and educational inequalities will increase enormously.

Thousands more families are living on the edge of poverty. One unexpected setback, like redundancy or an illness, or even cuts to hours, could push them into the poverty trap.

The furlough scheme has helped in the short term to alleviate some of the risk, but as the government seeks to pull back from this, we will see a huge rise in the number of families facing catastrophe.

The storms that were already gathering because of a worldwide economic crisis, made worse by the pandemic, will mean even more misery for millions, unless a mass movement of the working class rises up.

Capitalism is designed to serve the bosses and keep the rich enveloped in their wealth. We must turn the world upside down and fight for the 99%, and ensure that every family, every child, has all their needs met through a democratically planned socialist system.

The Socialist Party calls for:

- A minimum wage of £12 an hour towards a real living wage of £15 an hour
- Increased benefits in line with the minimum wage
- A mass council house building programme and rent controls to cap rents at a genuinely affordable level
- Quality, publicly funded childcare under the democratic control of education and care workers



Cracks in the system are getting bigger by the day, as we have seen with a spike in the number of vulnerable children going missing due to safeguarding cuts during the pandemic

Rubbing salt into the wounds, the Tories state it 'had been requested' by so-called stakeholders. But strangely enough no one had come forward at the time to state they requested it. And in the aftermath, in a weak attempt to legitimise their actions via a department for education report, they listed organisations like Ofsted, which has itself said it never saw the full amendment draft!

Every single Tory voted to keep the bill, whooping and jeering as they stripped looked-after children's rights away for their 'own protection'. The government says SI445 is just a temporary measure, but no one with their head switched on believes this, and sees it for the lie it is.

However, neither the Tories nor parliamentary arithmetic should decide whose lives are worth protection and security.

This is why the Socialist Party calls upon all care-experienced communities to link up with the wider labour movement and coordinate protests, days of actions and industrial action with trade unions, anti-cuts campaign groups and everyone else willing to fight back to pressure this broken government to scrap SI445.

Lessons from the Black Panthers

“WE’RE NOT GOING TO FIGHT CAPITALISM WITH BLACK CAPITALISM - WE’RE GOING TO FIGHT CAPITALISM WITH SOCIALISM”

The Black Lives Matter protests which have swept the US and the globe have raised important questions about what strategy, programme and organisation are necessary to end racism in society. There has been particular interest in the history of the anti-racist struggle in the US. As a contribution to this discussion we reprint extracts from an article written by **Hannah Sell** which first appeared in the Socialist Party’s magazine, *Socialism Today*, in October 2006, to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Black Panther Party. The full article can be read at socialismtoday.org

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense was founded in Oakland, California in 1966 and represented the highest point of the vast rebellion against racism and poverty which swept the US in the 1950s and 1960s.

It was not a coincidence that the civil rights movement erupted in the 1950s. World War Two had an effect. Not only had thousands of black soldiers fought and died for US imperialism, they were struck by the glaring hypocrisy of the war propaganda. Here was a capitalist class claiming they had to go to war against the racism of the Nazis, while in their own country vicious racism was the norm.

In addition, US capitalism was entering a prolonged period of economic prosperity. This meant that many more blacks were moving from the rural south to the cities, mainly in the north. In 1940, half the black population lived in the cities. By 1970, it was three-quarters. Becoming part of the working class - moving from isolated rural communities to massive urban centres - increased confidence and capacity to struggle.

At the same time, the increased wealth and higher living standards of the white middle class made the poverty and degradation of the vast majority of blacks seem even starker than before.

Finally, the liberation struggles of the masses in Africa and Asia, who were succeeding to overthrow colonial rule, provided inspiration.

As the struggle developed it changed the outlook of those who took part. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1965. But, while this was a legal concession, it did not alter the reality of poverty and police brutality. Even Martin Luther King, who initially saw the role of the movement as using pacifist methods to pressure the Democrats to grant civil rights, changed his outlook in the period before he was assassinated.

When King was viciously beaten by the police in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, riots burst out nationwide. Amidst the rubble, King accurately declared the riots “a class revolt of the underprivileged against the privileged”. In 1967, he was forced to conclude: “We have moved into an era which must be an era of revolution...”

what good does it do to a man to have integrated lunch counters if he can’t buy a hamburger?”

In particular, he began to raise the need to appeal to white workers and to organise a class-based struggle. He was supporting a strike when he was assassinated. (See: The Legacy of Martin Luther King, issue No.27 at socialismtoday.org)

At the base of the movement there was a ferment of discussion as activists tried to work out the most effective means of struggle. Pacifist ideas were increasingly rejected, particularly by the younger generation. Out of the turmoil of these events, the ideas of Black Power were developed.



The Black Panthers... showed in practice how consciousness develops as a result of struggle against the brutal realities of capitalism

In many senses, the Black Power movement was a step forward. It was a break from pacifism, and from an orientation to the Democrats, a big-business party. At the same time, it had limitations, particularly its separatist overtones and lack of a clear programme.

The Black Panthers saw themselves as starting where Malcolm X had left off. Malcolm X, who was killed in February 1965, had been moving away from the black nationalism of the Black Power movement, and had drawn anti-capitalist conclusions to a greater degree than other leaders, stating clearly that “you can’t have capitalism without racism...”

The two founder members of the Black Panthers, Huey P Newton and Bobby Seale, had become involved in the struggle at a time when it was felt that there was no clear way forward. A searching for ideas was underway among a new generation of activists.

Newton and Seale began their search, like most of that generation,

with the ‘cultural nationalists’, but rapidly found them wanting. Their disagreements centred on class from the very beginning.

Seale explains in his autobiography, *Seize the Time*, how Newton began to argue against the idea of buying from black businesses: “He would explain many times that if a black businessman is charging you the same prices or higher, even higher prices than exploiting white businessmen, then he himself ain’t nothing but an exploiter”.

The Panthers rejected the separatism of the cultural nationalists, and were founded with the magnificent concept: “We do not fight racism with racism. We fight racism with solidarity. We do not fight exploitative capitalism with black capitalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism. And we do not fight imperialism with more imperialism. We fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism”.

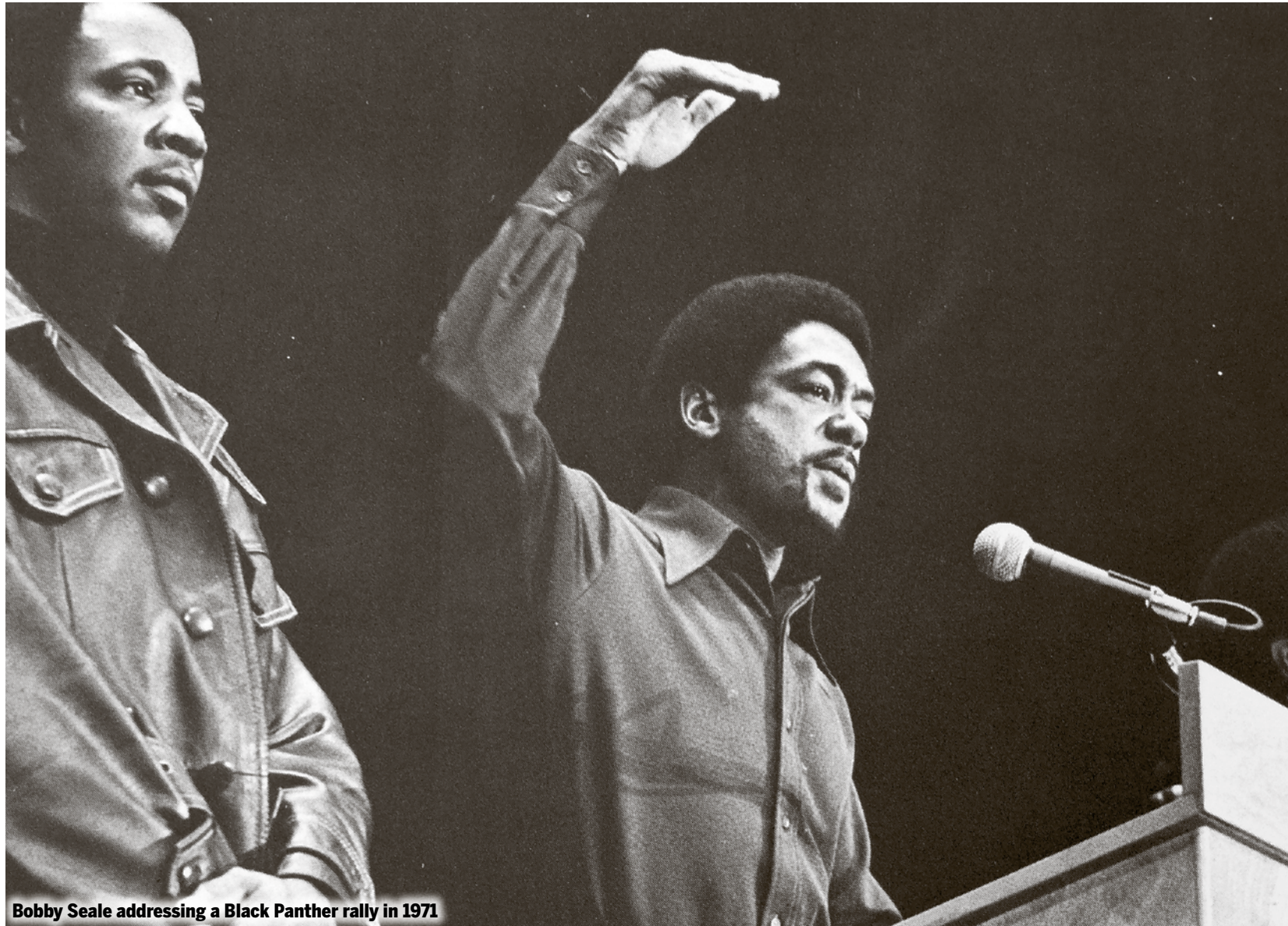
Within two years, the Panthers had spread like wildfire, from a handful in Oakland, California, to having chapters (branches) in every major US city, selling 125,000 copies a week of their paper, *The Black Panther*. But having gained phenomenal support in their first years, the Panthers went into decline just as quickly, riven by splits. Why did this happen?

Class-based solutions

The greatest strength of the Panthers was that they strove for a class-based, rather than race-based, solution to the problems of American blacks. Bobby Seale declared: “Those who want to obscure the struggle with ethnic differences are the ones who are aiding and maintaining the exploitation of the masses. We need unity to defeat the boss class – every strike shows that. Every workers’ organisation’s banner declares: ‘Unity is strength’.”

The Panthers were founded around a ten-point programme: What We Want and What We Believe. The first demand read: “We want freedom. We want the power to determine the destiny of the black community. We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny”.

The second was for full employment, the third for an end to the



Bobby Seale addressing a Black Panther rally in 1971

robbery by the white man of the black community, the fourth for decent housing and an education system “that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society”.

Other demands included an end to police brutality, for black men to be exempt from military service, and for “all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from black communities”.

At their inception, they combined campaigning around the ten-point programme with organising the defence of their local community against police brutality.

During this period, the Panthers’ chief activity was to ‘patrol the pigs’, that is, to monitor police activity to try and ensure that the civil rights of black people were respected, usually with weapons in hand. At that time, it was legal in California to carry guns within certain limitations, and the Panthers asserted their right to do so,

quoting the relevant sections of the law.

The third strand of the Panthers’ work was the establishment of free food, clothing and medicare programmes in poor black, working-class communities. The Panthers also took a clear and positive position on the rights of women, and the leadership struggled to ensure women were able to play a full role in the party.

They emphasised that the black community had to have its own organisations, and membership of the Panthers was only open to black people. However, they argued that they should work together with organisations based in other communities. In fact, a number of other organisations were founded (often initially based around ex-gang members) in inner-city working-class communities, which modelled themselves on the Panthers. These included a Puerto Rican organisation based in New York, the Young Lords, and a white

organisation, the Young Patriots, in Chicago.

However, it was the mass movements against the Vietnam war which most clearly showed to the Panthers that sections of whites were prepared to struggle.

The Panthers faced enormous police repression. At the height of their influence, J Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, described the Panthers as “the number one threat to security in the USA”. The ruling class was terrified of the Panthers and set out to crush them. It is estimated that the ‘cadre’ or core of the Panthers’ organisation never numbered more than 1,000 yet, at one stage, 300 of those were facing trial.

Thirty-nine Panthers were shot on the streets or in their homes by the police. In addition, the police carried out widespread infiltration of the Panthers.

However, it was not only brutal state repression that was responsible

for the demise of the Black Panther Party. The best of the Panthers strove heroically to find the best road to win liberation for American blacks, and came to understand that this was linked to the struggle for socialism.

But they faced all the problems arising from the fact that their movement developed before a generalised, mass struggle of the US working class. They were not able, in the short period of their mass influence, to fully work out how their goals could be achieved.

The urbanisation that had accompanied the post-war boom led to a mass migration of black workers to the northern industrial cities. They arrived to find themselves living in ghettos, in direst poverty.

In many areas, a majority were unemployed. Nonetheless, black workers formed a significant part of the workforce and, because of its role in production, the industrial working class in particular has a key role to play in transforming society.

Orientation

The Panthers’ main orientation, however, was not towards the organised black working class. They did organise ‘caucuses’ within the trade unions. This was a correct conception but, in reality, union work was a very small part of what the Panthers did. They consciously orientated primarily towards the most downtrodden, unemployed sections of the black community.



At the height of their influence, J Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, described the Panthers as “the number one threat to security in the USA”

It is correct that these most desperate sections of society are capable of incredible sacrifice for the struggle and, as the Panthers argued, that it is important to win these most oppressed sections to a revolutionary party. This was particularly the case given the horrendous social conditions most black Americans were forced to live in.

But the lack of a base among the organised working class was one element that increased the tendency towards an authoritarian regime in the Panthers.

It also added to the tendency, which always existed to some extent, to try and take short cuts by substituting themselves for the mass with courageous acts, such as the armed demonstration at the California state parliament.

The difficulties of the Panthers

led some, particularly those around Eldridge Cleaver, to turn to the dead-end road of terrorism, although Newton and others attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to reorientate the Panthers.

Later, Newton reflected on their mistakes: “We were looked upon as an ad-hoc military group, operating outside the community fabric and too radical to be part of it. We saw ourselves as the revolutionary vanguard and did not fully understand that only the people can create the revolution. And hence the people ‘did not follow our lead in picking up the gun’.”

The existence of the Black Panthers, despite their limitations, showed in practice how consciousness develops as a result of struggle against the brutal realities of capitalism.

It remains a tragedy that no round-out Marxist party existed which could have offered the Panthers, and the hundreds of thousands who were touched by them, a way forward.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the Panthers, they show the determination of the advanced layer of thinking workers, once they are engaged in struggle, to find a route to genuine socialism.

Just as Newton and Seale stood on the shoulders of Malcolm X, the new generation of black workers and youth can take all the great strengths of the Panthers and build on them to create a party capable of ending capitalism and racism through the socialist transformation of society.



A Black Lives Matter protest in London earlier this month PHOTO JUDY BEISHON

It's time to join the Socialist Party

New members explain why they have



QUEUES TO JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY AT THE BIRMINGHAM ANTI-RACIST PROTEST PHOTO LENNY SHAIL



HACKNEY PHOTO CHRIS NEWBY

Covid-19: Everyone I know hit by Tory failures

ERIC RICKARD
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

I've always been driven towards political activity by an aversion to injustice.

I concluded as a young teen that me and my loved ones' suffering was as a direct result of capitalism. Injustices were interwoven in my area, and I noticed the material impact that right-wing policies were having on the people around me.

At university in Cornwall I was involved with anarchist factions and the Green Party. After graduating I moved back to Plymouth, but became too ill to work or to assist the party, and had to put all my time and energy into recovery. While recovering I saw the political situation around me crumbling and my anger only rose.

During the Covid-19 crisis, everyone in my life has been negatively impacted due to the inadequacy of the government. One of my dearest loved ones became trapped in lockdown in

an abusive household. Local services were completely powerless to help them under Tory regulation.

Another explained the mistreatment they were facing from their employer. They had no alternative but to put up with it. Everything their employer was doing was technically legal, and they couldn't afford to lose their job.

Others told me about healthcare they desperately needed but were unable to access. After years of seeing the NHS brutally underfunded, I felt I needed to do more to make material change.

I volunteered for the Albert Kennedy Trust, that helps young LGBTQ+ homeless people, joined climate change protests, and finally became a Socialist Party member. The imperative impulse to help improve life for everyone, not just an elite few - for all humans to coexist peacefully and prosperously - is the most significant motive I have in life. I recognise that involvement with the Socialist Party can help build a better future.

"We can only do so much alone"

PHILIP NOLAN
HUDDERSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

I joined the Socialist Party to strive for equality that does not exist in the UK. It is a regular perception that those who happen to earn less, those who are born into families that did not have the luck to be richer, are 'lesser'. Therefore, they should not be granted the basic requirements of life - daily nutritious meals and a roof over their heads.

They are forced into an unfeeling and uncaring bureaucratic system that fails to provide them with what they need. I saw the Socialist Party as a mechanism to work against this.

We can only do so much alone.

I saw the Socialist Party as a group of people who could support me in our goal - to create a better society, not just for the rich or the politicians, but for everyone. To make sure that the working class and impoverished children are not seen as tools to wring dry, but as people with lives and souls that should be brought up and allowed to live out their potential, free from the restrictions imposed upon them.

The Socialist Party has proved to be an organisation fighting for the betterment of society. Rather than step back from politics, and only engage by voting every election, I chose to step forward and help make a better society.

We're back!

Selling the Socialist

social distancing

Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

Waltham Forest

A very happy return to campaigning in Walthamstow. Our members were also on the central London demos (see page 4) and some remain shielded. We campaigned on the issue of Black Lives Matter.

There wasn't the usual footfall, lots of people are still not sure about going out. Those who had ventured out to the shops for the first time in months seemed a little anxious and apprehensive having to deal with the new social-distancing measures put in place by the shopping centre staff.

We did use our sound system for those queueing to go into the shops. It was enjoyable being out campaigning, despite being a little nervous at first.

I would encourage people to start going out campaigning, although wear a face mask and latex gloves, and keep some hand sanitiser on the table.

MARTIN REYNOLDS

West London

Selling the Socialist in west London for the first time in over three months

was great. More people bought a copy of the Socialist than usual.

We were all so happy to be out campaigning again. We were discussing with people about the growing movement against racism, but also the impact of coronavirus.

One person we spoke to worked for British Airways, which is threatening to cut thousands of jobs and reduce pay, terms and conditions.

Lots of people also wanted to discuss housing - Grenfell Tower is in our area. It's a clear example of how capitalism kills too.

HELEN PATTISON

Hackney

Outside the old Stoke Newington post office, the Socialist Party was campaigning on building a movement to smash racism and defend the NHS. People were pleased to see us there.

Another three people said they were interested in finding out more about the Socialist Party. One of the Socialist Party's new members in Hackney was on a local stall for the first time.

CHRIS NEWBY

Birmingham

As we were setting up, members of the public came over, joined in with the conversation, and aired their views and concerns. Some shared their own personal experiences.

People agreed capitalism needs to be stopped in order to see real change. We discussed the Black Lives

Matter protests and what the Socialist Party can do.

Others talked about the protests they have been to, or touched on the government's role in why the country is in this state. We discussed how the Black Panthers ran their organisation, and united with other movements and trade unions to show solidarity and apply even more pressure.

We spoke about going out to other local areas in Birmingham. A lot came up on what will be done after the protests die down, and everyone agreed that having more meetings to keep up discussions would definitely help.

LEANNA GRANT

Derby

The Socialist Party campaigned for no redundancies at Rolls Royce. We also campaigned for jobs and homes not racism.

CHARLIE TAYLOR

Park meetings

Thousands of people have contacted the Socialist Party during lockdown or met us on the anti-racist protests, interested in joining. In Tooting Bec Common there were two brand new members, and another who wanted to find out more, at our park meet-up.

We discussed everything from Black Lives Matter to Jeremy Corbyn to the environment. We have agreed to do regular park discussion groups.

THEO SHARIEFF

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?

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

● Horrific alienation

Capitalist society is now like a tinderbox internationally as the economic depression engulfs us. The alienation of the youth - working-class but also large swathes of the middle class - is profound and deep-rooted.

It is the most visible explosive element in the Pandora's box the ruling class has created. But it won't be the only or even the most powerful element that will develop.

Positively, we see the social mass revolt against racism and the system, and a layer of youth getting organised in

trade unions.

There are also inchoate outbursts. In Stuttgart in Germany on 20 June, 500 youth rioted or protested against police searches for drug possession.

Most negatively, the horrific stabbings in Reading, seemingly by a young mind fanaticised and poisoned by imperialism's Frankenstein monsters in Libya.

Different roads are possible for alienation. Either organised in class struggle with discipline and allied to the workers' movement, or rioting and, most dangerously, terrorism, which only reinforce capitalist oppression.

MATT DOBSON
GLASGOW

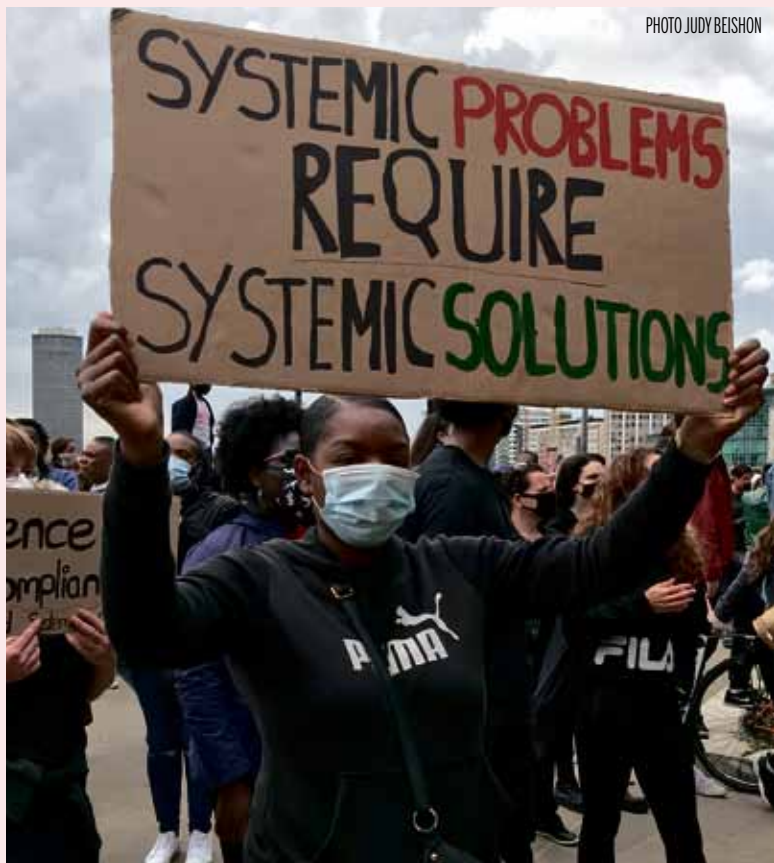


PHOTO JUDY BEISHON

● NHS forgets black skin

The Black Lives Matter movement has empowered many black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people to speak up about the struggles they face, and to seek equality in a system that disadvantages us.

One of the most basic outcomes of equality is representation - to see yourself and those that share your skin colour and culture in all aspects of public life. Some of the more insidious consequences of a lack of representation appear in a part of the system that we believe to be

egalitarian and fair, our excellent NHS.

Consider the following scenario: You notice that your child has a rash. You take them to your nearest doctor's surgery for advice. The professional looks at the rash, ask about other symptoms, and diagnoses your child with X.

Imagine if in this scenario, the doctor has almost never seen what condition X looks like on skin as dark as your child's. That despite five to six years and thousands of hours of intense training, they can count on two hands the number of reference images with black skin.

I am a student at the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at Cardiff University. I am halfway through my course.

I can count on a single hand the number of reference photos for skin conditions on black skin. I regularly must refer to other unverified sources to access reference images, despite my cohort consisting of at least 25% BAME students.

This is the reality facing black people in the UK in 2020. Representation isn't just about optics, and seeing more people in various positions in society, as much as it would be welcomed. But making sure that BAME people are considered in every aspect of life that white people are, and especially so when lives depend on it.

IBRAHIM YASSIN
NEWPORT



Black and white patients skin showing measles infection

● Anti-union and patronising

A Telegraph headline said: "Teaching unions accused of 'breathing fear into parents' that schools are coronavirus 'death traps'". The unions are doing their jobs and keeping children safe by ensuring that measures are put in place for a safe return.

The headline implies that parents don't know what the current situation is with Covid and can't make up their own minds. How patronising.

Just look at the figures of deaths in this country and compare with anywhere else. It's quite obvious where any blame should go - this nasty government that has put business before people's lives. Teachers want children to return - when it is safe!

NICKY DOWNES
NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION EXECUTIVE
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

● Pensioners' pay

The state pension in the UK is among the most miserly in Europe. The plan to make pensioners pay for the coronavirus crisis is the action of a skinflint and a bully.

There are enough billionaires who ought to be paying their whack, but instead employ accountants so they can dodge tax. The government plans to do nothing about them.

The working-class movement ought to be moving heaven and earth to defend pensioners against this disgraceful attack. I am a pensioner, how did you guess?

DEREK MCMILLAN
WORTHING

● Money not clean air

London's Congestion Charge has just been upped in price and the hours it operates increased, to cover the cost of a government 'bailout' for the city. It is plainly and clearly not about clean air or the environment, but just a way to get money out of drivers.

It's an indirect, regressive tax. In fact, Transport for London would be disappointed if more London workers did switch to electric cars, public transport, or cycling, because it would hit their new source of income.

In Coventry, the Socialist Party launched a massive campaign against a proposed congestion charge, getting over 10,000 signatures. Half measures brought in by the council will not address clean air properly.

With council budgets being squeezed further, the fight may come back - not just here but nationally.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY

● Biased BBC reporting

Every Monday, I get a breaking news notification from the BBC. It always says how 'low' the coronavirus death toll is.

Coronavirus figures are always lower on a Monday, because of delayed reporting over the weekend. I don't get a notification from the BBC for the rest of the week, when the death toll is much higher.

Is this the definition of propaganda? Only promoting one side of the story to strengthen the government's argument that the economy and schools should

be prematurely reopened - profit before safety?

Also, the government has announced that as many people now, during a partial lockdown, are catching coronavirus as before lockdown when everything was open. How is that anything but a failure on the Tories' part?

IAN PATTISON
EAST LONDON

● Battle of Soho

Just watched the documentary, Battle of Soho, about the gentrification of Soho. It deals with the destruction of shops, pubs, music venues, and the sanitisation of London.

It covers the earlier gentrification of Notting Hill. I grew up just off the Portobello Road and I am saddened at the way the area has lost its soul.

Camden, Kings Cross, Lambeth, Brixton, Vauxhall and Elephant and Castle are also slowly being destroyed by the big corporations. London is becoming a theme park for corporations and billionaires that know the price of everything and the value of nothing, and refuse to pay their taxes.

London has already lost hundreds of pubs, music venues and clubs, and has lost the edge that made it exciting. Post-Covid the trend will be accelerated.

The documentary showed how the local community can win when it fights back. The demise started under the mayoral reign of Boris Johnson, who unsurprisingly sold out to corporations, using New York as a model.

JOHN REID
LONDON

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

● editors@socialistparty.org.uk

● Mum refused housing

A letting agency refused to let me go any further with my application to rent a property.

This was because it would not take into account the Universal Credit I've been receiving since going on maternity leave.

Even though I've never paid my rent late, and said I could provide references from previous landlords and a guarantor,

it made no difference.

According to statistics, a third of people receiving housing benefit have been stopped from renting a home because letting agencies and landlords won't accept tenants who receive benefits.

This ends up impacting women and people with disabilities the most, as both groups are more likely to need help with their rent.

Always fun to be a statistic!

JULIETTE
ROMFORD

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

Fiction: The Scarlet Plague

A timely read about a pandemic that overwhelms society

ROB WILLIAMS

It's timely to read Jack London's short story, 'The Scarlet Plague'. It's about a virulent pandemic that overwhelms society, sending human civilisation into the abyss.

This is an all too familiar tale now. But what is startling is that it was originally published in 1912. In this case, the 'Red Death' is a rampant virus. Once a person shows symptoms, the main one being the face and body turning a scarlet colour, violent death occurs within hours.

The story begins with an old man and a young boy, who we discover is his grandson. They both wear clothes made from animal skins, and the boy has a bow and arrows. They are then confronted by a wild bear which they skilfully avoid, on their way to meet his two other grandsons on the beach. While eating crabs that his grandsons have caught, the old man recounts to them the events he lived through, some 60 years before.

This could have been a kind of Iron Age scene, but the existence of mangled rails give a clue to the catastrophe that has laid waste to society.

In 2012, James Howard Smith is a university academic in San Francisco. Capitalism has developed into a despotic global system, where society is highly polarised on class lines, and power is concentrated in the hands of oligarchs.

Later, when Smith searches for

other human life in California, he comes across a group of people led by the former driver of one of the oligarchs. Appropriately the tribe that develops is called the Chauffeurs. Smith's children and grandchildren originate from his integration into this tribe.

The chauffeurs' former boss wasn't just fabulously wealthy, but one of the all-powerful elite - seven of whom ruled the world! He was the president of the Board of Industrial Magnates and ruler of America.

As with Covid-19, the Red Death lifts the lid on the class polarisation in society. In his academic post, Smith was relatively privileged. In fleeing the mayhem in the city, he desperately tries to avoid the poor, who sought vengeance on those above them: "In the midst of our civilisation, down in our slums and labour-ghettoes, we had bred a race of barbarians and savages and now, in the time of our calamity, they turned upon us like the wild beasts they were and destroyed us."

Actually it is the capitalists that have pushed society into barbarism, only for the pandemic to plunge the world into catastrophe. Smith catalogues a whole number of viruses that scientists were able to constrain, until the plague developed in an unstoppable fashion. As now, the irrational capitalist system, run for private profit over public health and economic security is incapable of dealing with such pandemics.

Jack London

Jack London led a tumultuous life. His exciting, rollercoaster novels about the gold rush in Canada and sea voyages were written from personal experience. But he was also a socialist and put himself on the standpoint of the working class. This came from his experiences of poverty and as a worker, including at sea and in canneries.

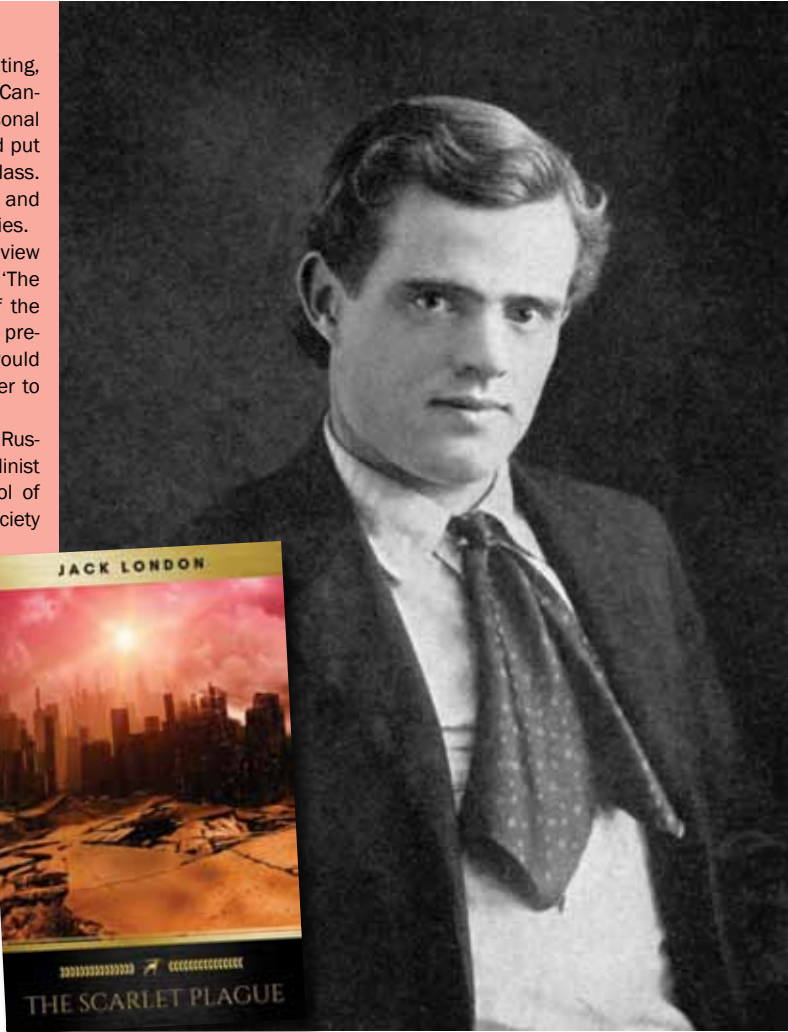
He also had a realistic, even visionary view of brutalising capitalism. In 1903, he wrote 'The People of the Abyss' about the poverty of the East End of London, and five years later he predicted in 'The Iron Heel' that capitalism would rather resort to a fascist nightmare in order to prevent socialism.

London died in 1916, a year before the Russian revolution. Despite its subsequent Stalinist degeneration, this still stands as a symbol of revolutionary optimism that a socialist society can replace the barbaric chaos of capitalism, and provide a future for the working class and poor masses - one that can protect our health, jobs and income.

LEFT BOOKS

The bookshop of the Socialist Party
New and second-hand
Marxist classic books and pamphlets

- Visit leftbooks.co.uk
- or call **020 8988 8789**
- PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



Fighting fund: £45k at the halfway stage - help us smash our target!

PETE MASON

SOCIALIST PARTY FINANCE ORGANISER

The Black Lives Matter protests gather young people looking for far-reaching solutions to the problems they face, and donations to the Socialist Party from these protests include £33 raised during the Port Talbot protest, £50 in Leeds, and in London, £154.26 in Hackney, £40 North London and £10 from a Waltham Forest campaign stall.

Susanne sent us £30 with the message: "I would like to donate to making more posters".

That's precisely why we appeal for money - without it we could not put out socialist ideas on these protests, with the weekly production of posters, leaflets, newspapers and placards.

Donations, large and small, are very welcome. During this period of lockdown our local branch Zoom meetings are hugely appreciated by members and those interested in joining our party, and we always appeal for - and receive - many donations from these meetings.

These include Liz, who gave £2, Joe and Julie gave £3 each, Oliver £5 and special thanks go to John Hoare, who

donated £50.

Our special coronavirus appeal was launched to ensure the Socialist Party can keep campaigning despite the lockdown. The appeal has helped our fighting fund to reach £45,505 so far, which is a marvellous total as we approach the half way mark for this campaign.

The special appeal has now received 515 payments, and it is clear that many more members and supporters will donate to it when they are asked. We have recently received several £100 donations, including

from John Dolan for whom £100 is the equivalent of a day's pay.

Finally, Socialist Party members in the Unison public sector union held a Zoom 'not the conference fringe meeting' at the time that conference was due to take place (had it not been cancelled by the union leadership).

Donations from this meeting pledged over £585, with special mention to Paul Couchman who paid £100.



Call for an increase in PIP due to Covid-19

Disability Campaigners in Chesterfield have launched a campaign following our members' experiences on public transport (or lack of availability), and the increased costs this means if people travel at all.

People living closer to the centre of our town who are disabled are having to resort to the use of taxis or just stay at home. Because of the bus limit of ten people, buses are generally full when nearer the town centre, and sail past the people at the stops. Clearly, there is little point in having a bus pass if you cannot get on a bus, and then have to pay taxi fares to get to appointments, social distance visiting and shopping.

Disability Campaigners are campaigning for an increase in personal independence payments to offset the increased costs of travel to disabled people.

DISABILITY CAMPAIGNERS, NORTH DERBYSHIRE

Fund the fightback

DONATE TODAY

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



Like, comment, share
[facebook.com/CWISocialistParty](https://www.facebook.com/CWISocialistParty)

TOWARDS AN ANTI-RACIST SCHOOL CURRICULUM



CHRIS HOLMES
NORTH LONDON HISTORY TEACHER

The Black Lives Matter movement has quite correctly posed the question of black history in our schools and public life. It is a question that has been taken up by many teachers. Nationally, 2,000 members of the National Education Union (NEU) attended a Zoom meeting to hear the Reverend Jesse Jackson and Labour MP Diane Abbott speak on the issue of building anti-racist schools.

Later in the same week, 130 NEU members in Haringey met online to share their experiences of trying to change the curriculum in their own schools.

For example, generations of Bristol's black community have had to grow up in the shadow of the legacy of notorious slave trader Edward Colston. Not just with the statue that was torn down during the recent protests, but also with his name on public spaces, housing blocks, and even schools. Yet generations of the community will not have seen the same kind of public celebration of Paul Stephenson and the Bristol Bus Boycott.

In the 1950s, a black youth worker, inspired by the actions of Martin Luther King in Montgomery Alabama, led a boycott in protest at racist employment practices on Bristol's buses. It was an important turning point, but not just for Bristol's black community. It also transformed how the question of racism was taken up in the British trade union movement.

Black history

Similar accounts of black history have been white-washed from the national story, and all too often this has been perpetuated in schools. In recent years, Black History Month has been established in schools. But it has become reduced to a tokenistic gesture celebrating the individual achievements of characters largely taken from American history such as Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King and Mohammed Ali.

For many years, students studied US Civil Rights at GCSE, while remaining uninformed about the role of immigration, empire, and racism in shaping our own society. The national curriculum has ensured that all students will learn about the Atlantic slave trade. However, frequently the emphasis of lessons has been on the horrors of the Middle Passage and the victimhood of enslaved Africans, rather than of their resistance and its role in abolition.

The history of Africa before the Atlantic slave trade receives little or no attention, and the Victorian stereotype of a 'dark continent' is maintained, with no reference to the great civilisations of Africa such as the Kingdom of Ghana, Great Zimbabwe or Songhai.

Historians such as David Olusoga and his popular book and TV series, Black and British: A Forgotten History, have gone some way to address this. Not just in terms of the role of empire, slavery and immigration, but also in telling the previously untold story of the black presence in Britain since Roman times.

In schools, many history teachers have similarly tried to redress the issue of establishing these untold histories in the curriculum. It is not simply a question of 'teaching black history', but of embedding black

stories into all history.

For example, the Elizabethan 'Golden Age' is often seen as the start of a glorious period of exploration. But this cannot be separated from the beginning of the slave trade, and the growth of a free black presence in England as a result of trade around the Mediterranean.

Similarly, the Industrial Revolution cannot be understood just in terms of inventions and entrepreneurs, or even when the experiences

of the working class are included, without reference to the slave trade and the massive accumulation of capital that made possible Britain's industrial take-off.

Constraints

However, teachers trying to redress the imbalances of the curriculum are doing so under the constraints of the current education system, and Tory education policies that have actually reversed some gains.

Unlike almost every other country in the world, history has never been a compulsory school subject in Britain. However, the recent 'reform' of GCSE specifications has seen many schools adopt a three-year GCSE curriculum. As a result, many students will now stop studying history at the age of 13. At the same time, citizenship has been removed from schools, so an alternative avenue for exploring these issues has been removed.

At GCSE, the new specification from exam board AQA does offer the opportunity to study a newly created module on 'Empire, Migration and People'. This is an excellent opportunity to explore the issues of black history. However, only just over 50 schools in the country so far have taken up this option, largely because of the austerity-imposed budgets that restrict the buying of new text books and other resources.

And of course, the effect of any attempt to improve how history is taught is severely limited by the growth of academies which are not actually obliged to adhere to the national curriculum.

It goes without saying that the expansion of academies, the adoption of three-year GCSEs, and budget constraints, are all most likely to be found in those areas with the highest level of social disadvantage, and the largest BAME communities.

Any attempt to reform the curriculum must acknowledge the limits imposed by the school system in general, and society as a whole. BAME students may feel empowered when the history of their communities takes its rightful place in the curriculum. But this is largely nullified if schools still exhibit institutional racism in behaviour policies that result in black students being three times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their white counterparts.

School exclusion

Permanent school exclusion is the single most important determinant of social and economic life outcomes.

The effect of the curriculum is not simply constrained by what happens within the school gates either. No amount of awareness of the wonders of the biggest library in the world at the University of Timbuktu in the 16th century Kingdom of Mali will obliterate the reality that, once school is over, black boys are 40 times more likely to be stopped and searched on the street by police.

In 1971, the Caribbean educator Bernard Coard wrote his groundbreaking pamphlet 'How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System: The Scandal of the Black Child in Schools in Britain'. Scandalously, much of the institutional racism that he identified still prevails in our schools, despite some of the progress that has been made in terms of the curriculum in the last 50 years.

In terms of taking up the important issue of black history and culture in our schools, it is important to acknowledge that this is simply not enough. We cannot build anti-racist schools in a racist society. And as Malcom X said, you cannot have capitalism without racism.

LEFT BOOKS

The bookshop of the Socialist Party
leftbooks.co.uk



DAVE REID
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Mark Drakeford's Welsh Labour government has made much of the "four nations approach" to tackling the Covid-19 crisis, claiming to plot a different course to the Tory Westminster government. But the reality is that the Welsh government has been more like a small boat being pulled in the wake of an ocean liner. And in the case of the Johnson government, the liner resembles The Titanic.

Initially, the Welsh government implemented the same disastrous policy as the UK government, abandoning testing, and relying on 'herd immunity' to develop (which, if continued, would have led to 10,000 Covid-19 deaths in Wales) and then followed the Johnson government in drawing back from it. The result is that so far there have been 2,300 excess deaths in the pandemic in Wales, one of the highest rates in the world.

It is true that the Welsh government has been more cautious in lifting some lockdown restrictions than the UK government, but there the differences end. Wales has had the same testing failures, the same PPE fiasco, the same catastrophic neglect of care homes as England. And in attempting to return all school pupils back to class on 29 June it is actually endangering people more than Boris Johnson's failed attempts in England.

Kirsty Williams, the education minister, announced that all school pupils will return for at least one day a week at the end of this month, and the school summer term will be extended by a week. This would mean that many teachers would be in contact with 150 school students a week - in contact with 150 families in effect - even if each class is smaller than normal.

The hubs that have been used to teach the children of key workers cannot operate any more, and on-line teaching will be scaled down as teachers will be in class at least four days a week.

The government is trying to impose this ill-thought-out plan with no consultation with the trade unions about the change, and no explanation as to how the teachers and other education workers' contracts would be ripped up. Williams attacked the teaching unions when they had the temerity to point at that her plans risked the lives of pupils, parents and teachers. So much for the 'social partnership' approach claimed by the Welsh government.

The approach of tamely imitating the policies of the Tory government in the Covid-19 crisis is a continuation of the parallel path followed by Welsh Labour governments with regards to UK Tory governments.

Welsh governments have dutifully implemented the cuts to spending on devolved public services in Wales imposed by Tory governments. This failed policy has been cruelly exposed by the crisis that has engulfed the NHS during the Covid-19 crisis. Successive Welsh Labour governments have carried out a conscious policy of cutting hospital services in Wales.

They have closed or downgraded dozens of hospitals and centralised services in just a few 'super-hospitals'. It was trying to force through the closure of the A&E at Royal Glamorgan

TORIES SINKING IN WALES BUT NO ENTHUSIASM FOR WELSH LABOUR



WELSH FIRST MINISTER MARK DRAKEFORD (LEFT) HAS GENERALLY FOLLOWED JOHNSON'S (RIGHT) WESTMINSTER GOVERNMENT IN HANDLING CORONAVIRUS PHOTO OGL V.3

Hospital just as the pandemic hit (see page 2).

The result of this cutting back on hospital services is that Wales entered the coronavirus pandemic even worse prepared than England, with less hospital beds and ICU beds than any other part of the UK, and the lowest in western Europe, with just 153 critical care beds for the whole of Wales.

The fact that NHS Wales under Labour is even worse prepared than the NHS in England, which has been subjected to the deepest austerity programme in history by the Tories, should give Welsh Labour supporters pause for thought.

Welsh Labour denies that reduced spending is responsible for these cuts - it says that the governments have centralised and cut resources for clinical reasons. But the reality is that Welsh Labour has cut the suit of the NHS to match the cloth of Tory UK spending levels.

Instead, Socialist Party Wales has

called for the Welsh government to refuse to carry out spending cuts on the Tories' behalf, and organise a national protest led by the trade unions to force the UK government to return the money stolen from Welsh services.

The effect of the Welsh Labour government implementing Tory cuts on behalf of the UK Tories is that Labour has justifiably taken much of the blame for austerity, and devolution itself has been undermined to a layer of workers. Labour politicians in Wales have claimed that they are implementing a dented-shield policy. But the reality is that by taking the blame for Tory cuts, they have acted as a heat shield for Tory austerity.

Significant change

The most significant change in Welsh politics in recent years has been the eroding of support for Welsh Labour in its traditional heartland seats in the South Wales valleys and the 'red wall' in North Wales.

In an opinion poll in April, the Tories had a lead over Labour for Senedd (Welsh parliament) elections of between 6-8%. If there had been a Welsh Parliament election then, the Tories would have won the most seats in the Senedd. Undoubtedly some of that was a knock-on from the 'rally-to-the-flag' effect as the Johnson government confronted the Covid-19 crisis.

However, the increasing unpopularity of the Johnson government is eroding support for the Tories in Wales. The Cummings scandal has undermined the false claims of Johnson that he stands against the elite.

Welsh Labour has gained in the polls, but only because the Tories in Westminster look so bad. A month later the Tories were down 11% in Wales. But the poll was hardly a ringing endorsement of the Welsh government, with Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru gaining as much as Welsh Labour.

There has been a certain

polarisation on the national question. Support for independence has increased consistently over the past period, especially among the young, but there has been an increasing disillusionment with devolution amongst a layer of older workers. Both positions arise from the alienation of voters from the political establishment following the failure of the Welsh government to maintain public services, and the Westminster gridlock over Brexit.

For 30 years, support for independence oscillated around 10% in polls (falling to 5% at the time of the Scottish Indyref in 2014). But in September 2019 it reached a high of 24% in one poll, and the disgust with the chaotic Westminster parliamentary crises has been a factor in the rise in support.

More 18-24 year olds (42%) supported independence than opposed it. However, increased support for independence at this stage has not come so clearly from working-class people as it has in Scotland. There was slightly larger support for independence in the higher ABC1 social groups than the working-class C2DE social groups.

Much of the increased support has come from Remainers who see Welsh independence, possibly alongside Scottish independence, as an exit from Brexit. Support was highest among Lib Dem voters (55%), even higher than with Plaid Cymru voters (51%).

As dissatisfaction with the established parties and the incompetence of the governments are exposed, this polarisation might increase with a larger, more working-class layer supporting independence.

A mass workers' party, if it existed, could channel this dissatisfaction in a socialist direction. As well as vigorously defending the interests of the working class against the onslaught of both coronavirus and the economic crisis to follow, it could explain how a lasting solution will only be possible by fighting for socialism.

Socialist Party Wales calls for:

- Reverse all the cuts - for the Welsh government and Welsh councils to set legal no-cuts budgets, pool reserves, and build a mass campaign to force the UK government to return the funds robbed from Welsh services
- For a Welsh parliament with a socialist government
- For a socialist Wales as part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland

SUBSCRIBE TO the Socialist

socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

- E-subscription £2.50 a month, or £4 including Socialism Today
- Paper subscription £4.50 a month, or £6.50 including Socialism Today

or call 020 8988 877

- or make cheques payable to Socialist Publications, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD (3 months £20, 6 for £35, 12 for £60)

Subscribe by direct debit and choose from a range of free books!





EPWP workers mobilised behind the banner of the Marxist Workers Party PHOTO MWP

SOUTH AFRICA: BUILDING JOBS AND LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

MARXIST WORKERS PARTY
(CWI, SOUTH AFRICA)

On 17 June, hundreds of workers marched in Johannesburg, South Africa, demanding permanent jobs and a monthly living wage of R12,500 (£580).

Earlier, on 31 March, the ruling African National Congress (ANC)-run Gauteng Provincial government, and its Department of Infrastructure Development (DID), terminated the contracts of 3,000-plus workers on their Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). Gauteng is the economic hub of the country, containing the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria.

A nationwide programme, the EPWP employs 900,000-plus, as a shadow public sector slave-labour force. It was originally promoted as a 12-month training programme to “impart” skills and training. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, South Africa had an official conservative unemployment rate of 29%.

Exploitation

The reality is different. The workers who marched were part of a 5,000-strong cohort brought into the DID seven years ago. In that time they received no serious training. Instead, they were loaned out to other government departments and performed essential work.

But EPWP workers are not regarded as workers but ‘participants’, or even ‘volunteers’. This sleight of hand is used to exclude workers from the (limited) protections of labour legislation. This means EPWP workers are denied the national minimum wage of R3,500 a month (£153). Instead, they are paid a ‘stipend’ of just R2,000 (£93).

In the townships, corrupt ANC councillors use the EPWP to bolster their patronage networks. They agree to find placements for the

unemployed on the understanding that they will campaign for them door-to-door in elections.

In collusion, ANC-affiliated trade unions have refused to organise EPWP workers, just as they refuse to organise outsourced and contract workers in the public sector.

There is enormous pressure on South Africa’s public finances due to its stagnant capitalist economy (which never recovered from the 2007-09 world economic crisis), massive looting of public money by corrupt politicians, and widespread tax-dodging by big business and multinationals.

Trying to manage this situation, for years, an unofficial public sector recruitment freeze was in place. In February, the ANC government announced its intention to tear up the three-year wage deal struck with public sector unions, refusing to pay the final year salary increase.

In these conditions, the EPWP programme is a valuable sticking plaster for the ruling class, used to try and mitigate the disastrous impact of its policies on public services. Workers understand this, referring to it as the ‘Exploitative Public Works Programme’.

After seven years, it was time to raise the stakes and demand permanent jobs. Organising as the Gauteng EPWP Workers Forum, months of tireless mobilising took place across Gauteng’s ‘five corridors’ - Johannesburg, Pretoria, Ekurhuleni, West Rand and Sedibeng. Each corridor elects five representatives to the provincial Forum.

The Marxist Workers Party (MWP - CWI South Africa) has played an important role in supporting the EPWP workers struggle. The Provincial Coordinator of the Forum, Executive Mukwevho, is a leading member of the MWP.

Central to the campaign’s strategy is building a broader working-class alliance. Agreeing to unite the

campaigns, in February, the EPWP Forum and public sector union Nupswa led two days of protest in Pretoria.

But the DID dug its heels in. It was determined to defeat the workers. On 9 and 10 March, workers mobilised again and organised a sleepover at the DID’s Johannesburg HQ. As a result of the massive disruption, the protest caused the management to make a concession, and agreed to negotiations on workers’ demands.

Pandemic

However, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown came as a saviour to the DID and ANC Gauteng Provincial government. Despite the televised promises of ANC president Cyril Ramaphosa that no worker should lose their job as a result of the health crisis, ANC politicians cynically used the crisis to push the remaining - and increasingly troublesome - 3,000-plus EPWP workers out the door.

This cruel move left the workers and their families in poverty. Despite the EPWP workers’ weakened position, they are determined to continue their campaign for permanent jobs.

The ANC government’s attack on public sector pay poses the need for a public sector general strike. This must unite all public sector workers irrespective of union or federation affiliation. A mass movement of the working class, uniting workers and unemployed, is the only way to stop the deepening of the social disaster in South Africa.

The Gauteng EPWP Forum also supports the MWP’s call to the Saftu union federation to reconvene the working-class summit to implement the resolution adopted at its first meeting in 2018 - ie to establish a mass workers’ party on a socialist programme.

• Read article in full on socialistworld.net

Aid: Johnson’s pie in the sky



UK governments have consistently used overseas aid to benefit capitalism

Prime Minister Boris Johnson side-stepped another humiliating government u-turn - over extending school meal vouchers - by announcing in parliament the merging of the Department for International Development (DfID) into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

Playing to his cheering audience of right-wing backbenchers and the Daily Mail, Johnson chimed: “For too long, frankly, UK overseas aid has been treated like a giant cashpoint in the sky, that arrives without any reference to UK interests.”

In fact, most UK government aid does not go to the world’s poorest countries. Much overseas aid has long been used to secure trade deals and further the geopolitical interests of British capitalism. Johnson wants to use aid as a political tool to counter China’s growing influence in the neo-colonial world.

Scandal

The DfID was established in 1997 by the Blair government to separately administer aid following the Pergau Dam scandal. This scandal involved the 1980s Thatcher government committing to spend an eventual £234 million of aid to build an electricity generating dam of dubious economic value in Malaysia, in exchange for a lucrative arms deal. In 1994 the High Court ruled the deal “unlawful”.

The Blair governments used the aid budget as ‘soft power’ to pursue the economic and political ambitions of British capitalism. Under the Cameron Tory-led governments the aid budget was formally re-focused to promote ‘Britain’s national interest’.

Currently, a quarter of the DfID’s £15.2 billion budget is spent by other government departments, including the FCO, and used to advance trade deals and so forth.

The UK government is spending an increasing amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA, ie aid) on domestic refugee support, which has risen

sharply from £7 million in 2009 to £378 million in 2017. ODA rules are so vague that the government can expand temporary refugee ‘sustenance’ to longer-term ‘integration’.

Moreover, as the aid budget is set at 0.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP - total economic output), the sharp fall in GDP, due the coronavirus pandemic, is likely to cut aid by £2.5 billion.

Aid in reverse

Aid, or international charity, is only one side of the equation. Away from the headlines, huge amounts of financial resources are drained from poor countries into the advanced capitalist countries.

Debt and interest repayments, repatriated profits and incomes, as well as unrecorded capital transfers, and false accountancy measures by big business, means that on a global scale, for every \$1 of aid that so-called developing countries receive, they lose \$24 in net outflows.

Illegal capital flight wouldn’t be possible without the existence of tax havens, and the biggest network of tax havens is centered on the City of London, operating through the British Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

While complaining about the “giant cashpoint in the sky,” Johnson is presiding over a system that organises mass theft from poor countries.



£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

Issue 1092

25 June - 1 July 2020

formerly **Militant**

Young people fighting back

JOBS AND HOMES, NOT RACISM



DEJI OLAYINKA

BIRMINGHAM SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

The last few weeks' Black Lives Matter demonstrations have brought young, working-class people onto the streets, enraged by racism and police brutality - but also by all the problems facing young people. The Socialist Party has most often been the only organised political force on the protests. So what is the Socialist Party fighting for to improve things for young people?

Many young black people have taken to the megaphone and shared experiences of racism in Britain. This has included police raids on family homes, family members who have suffered in police custody, and racism from bosses in the workplace.

Our 'socialist charter for young people' demands democratic, collective, community and trade union control of police policy and hiring, as a way for working-class people to fight for control over how our communities are policed. And more than this, it calls for a

mass movement to unite working-class people against discrimination, to fight for decent jobs, homes and public services for all.

Many on the protests have linked the issue of police racism to wider issues. The generation to the fore has spent its teens under austerity. Now we are facing possibly the greatest economic depression in recent history because of the pandemic.

Young people were among the worst hit by the 2007-08 financial crash, and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people even more so. Unemployment among young black men doubled to 56% in three years.

The capitalist elite will attempt to make working-class and young people pay for their economic crisis again. Even many of those lucky enough to get to university and receive a graduate job offer have already seen those offers rescinded as companies announce hiring freezes.

The Socialist Party's youth charter demands mass creation of decent jobs, and a £12 an hour minimum wage - without youth

exemptions - as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15. And we call for fully paid training schemes, for socially useful work, with guaranteed jobs at the end.

A previous article in the Socialist newspaper described how BAME people have been particularly affected by the coronavirus (see 'Black and Asian Covid-19 deaths: an indictment of capitalist inequality' at socialistparty.org.uk). We are more likely to be essential workers - and more likely to be living in cramped housing.

And it's been three years since the Grenfell Tower tragedy. There has still been no justice - and no improvement in the housing crisis. Young people are all too familiar with the disregard that most landlords have for their tenants, forced to pay huge rents for poor quality housing.

Most of us have no prospect of being able to own a home or get a council house. If we want to move out of the family home, our only option now is to be exploited by private landlords.

The Socialist Party's youth charter demands councils introduce rent control with democratic oversight by the local community and trade unions, and start a mass programme of council house building.

A decade of austerity has severely weakened public services. Our youth charter addresses the need to provide young people with somewhere to go: youth clubs, libraries, leisure centres.

We demand that local councils restore these services, and lead a fight for the funding they need. And our call for a right to a job for all would play an important role in preventing a vulnerable minority from being trapped in a life of crime.

The charter demands free education and the cancellation of all student debts too. And at every level of education, a say in what we learn: democratic control of the curriculum by school workers and students. This is a vital step in 'decolonising' the education system (see p13).

▶▶▶ Continued on p4

A SOCIALIST RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS

▶▶▶ socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS

▶▶▶ see column on p3



9 771366 962103

ISSN 1366-9621