

## Government failures fan Covid

# TORIES

# PUT PROFIT

# BEFORE LIVES

TESSA WARRINGTON  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

**O**nce again, this incompetent Tory government, intent on pursuing its pro-big business agenda of prematurely ending the pandemic lockdown, has put lives at risk.

For two weeks, health secretary Matt Hancock sat on figures showing a surge in Covid-19 infections in Leicester before finally reimposing lockdown measures for a further fortnight.

The city accounted for 10% of all positive cases in England the week preceding Hancock's announcement - three times higher than the next highest city. But many other cities, with similar populations and social conditions, could also see a big resurgence in infections.

Despite our warnings, and those of teachers and parents, the government insisted that it was safe to reopen schools. Yet, five schools in Leicester had already closed due to coronavirus outbreaks. Hancock now admits that "children had been particularly impacted" by the surge.

Socialist Party members initiated the 'Safety First' campaign of parents, linking with the National Education Union, to resist the premature reopening of schools. The

outbreaks, subsequent closures, and now recognition that Leicester schools must all return to lockdown limitations, have sadly vindicated our position.

Ivan Browne, Leicester's director of public health, said local cases were "very much around the younger working-age population and predominately towards the east part of our city".

Leicester is an ethnically diverse city with 28% of the population being of Indian origin, and a further 21% of black or other Asian heritage. Residents of North Evington, where the spike has been noted, are predominantly from a migrant background. It is an inner-city area with tightly packed terraces, illegal garment industry sweatshops, deprivation and overcrowding.

Labour's city mayor Sir Peter Soulsby, far from showing concern or advocating a policy of 'safety first' for all Leicester residents, said: "Frankly, if the virus is out of control and spreading in Leicester with the restrictions, I can't understand how extending them for a further two weeks would make any difference". In other words: 'Frankly Leicester, I don't give a damn'!

Of course, the failure to act and continuous fumbling by the government has made the Covid crisis many, many times worse. The solution, however, is not to reject out of hand all safety measures! Clearly, both the Tories and Blairites alike are feeling the pressure from profit-hungry big business to pump life back into the clogged arteries of the capitalist economy.

LINDSEY MORGAN  
LEICESTER SAFETY FIRST

"We are angry that our repeated warnings about the risk of transmission of Covid-19 in schools were not listened to.

"We warned that there should be no return to schools until the National Education Union's five safety tests were passed. And due to a Blairite mayor, who didn't even want pubs and restaurants to remain closed in the midst of this outbreak, we are now in a terrible situation.

"We will continue to fight and campaign for safety in schools as we have since the start of May. We urge everyone to fight and get organised to stop the situation in Leicester becoming the situation elsewhere in the country."



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



WHAT WE THINK

When Keir Starmer was elected Labour leader the Socialist Party warned that it represented "a qualitative step in the capitalist class's campaign to make the Labour Party once again, as it was under Blair, a reliable vehicle for their interests."

During his leadership campaign, Starmer had to hide his pro-capitalist agenda behind the banner of unity in order to win. Now, however, his claims to want unity, always risible, have been decisively ripped apart by his summary sacking from the shadow cabinet of Rebecca Long-Bailey - previously the left-backed candidate for Labour leader.

Long-Bailey's supposed crime was to retweet a long interview with Labour Party member and actor Maxine Peake which contained the claim that "the tactics used by the police in America, kneeling on George Floyd's neck, learnt from seminars with Israeli secret services."

Peake has since retracted the statement, and Long-Bailey has clarified that she does not agree with all the views contained in the interview. Regardless, however, Starmer seized on the chance to sack Long-Bailey and step up the campaign to falsely argue that antisemitism is particularly prevalent on the left, when in fact it is far more common on the right.

In reality, sharing methods of coercion is normal between the security forces of the major capitalist powers. According to Channel 4's 'FactCheck', the Israeli consulate in Chicago did run training seminars attended by Minnesota police. While there appears to be no evidence to suggest that 'neck kneeling' originated in Israel rather than the US or elsewhere, the Israeli state employs it in the occupied territories as part of its panoply of repressive measures.

Anger

The anger of many on the left, including Jewish and Israeli activists, at the brutality of the Israeli state is not fuelled by antisemitism, but opposition to its barbarous treatment of the Palestinian people.

Unfortunately, as so many times before, the Labour left has responded to Starmer's attack by retreating. Jon Lansman, founder of the pro-Corbyn group Momentum, pleaded with Starmer to "build trust" with the left, while emphasising that he had "every confidence" Starmer could maintain "party unity". This, Lansman claimed, is essential because "divided parties don't win elections".

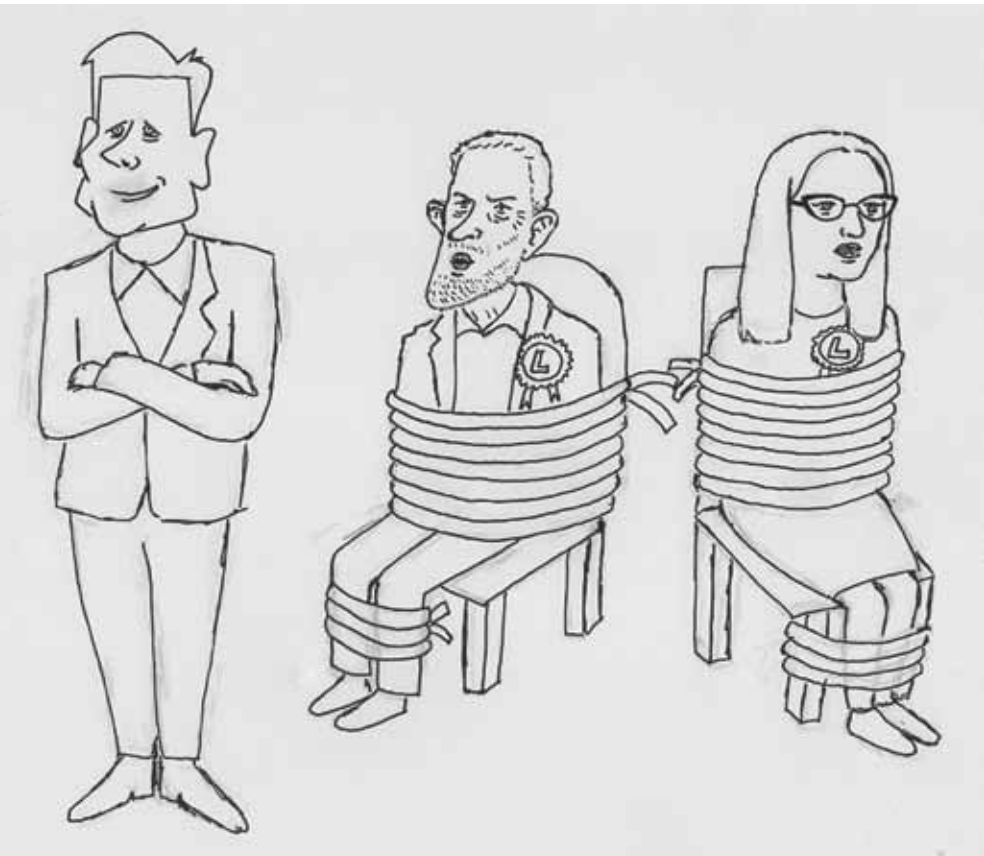
The fact that Johnson won a majority government with a completely divided Tory party passed Lansman by as he begged Starmer to leave room for the left within Labour. The pro-capitalist wing of the Labour Party, however, will only be happy with leaving room for the left if, as under Blair, the room is a prison cell from which they can do no more than smuggle out the occasional note.

The Labour right and the capitalist media spent the five years Corbyn

# Starmer sacks Rebecca Long-Bailey Workers need a new mass party to defend their interests



The workers' movement needs to ensure that it finds another route to standing candidates who are prepared to lead a fightback against Tory misery



Some Labour lefts say they will "stay and fight" // CARTOON LEAH BARON-COHEN

was Labour leader attacking him for being factional and divisive. In reality, however, he made the opposite mistake, continually making concessions to the right in the hope of pacifying them, and allowing them to continue to dominate the parliamentary Labour Party, the Labour machine, and the council chambers. The right, backed to the hilt by the capitalist class are, by contrast, entirely ruthless.

Kate Green, who has replaced Long-Bailey as shadow education secretary, was one of the organisers of the attempted coup against Corbyn back in 2016. She wrote scurrilous articles attacking Corbyn for allegedly not understanding women's oppression, and managed Owen Smith's right-wing leadership bid.

Schools

Immediately on being appointed by Starmer, Green made a statement about "getting our children back in school as soon as possible". This was a conscious signal that Labour was acceding to the demands of Boris Johnson and the right-wing press that it disassociate itself from the education unions' campaign for safety to come first. The fact that Long-Bailey was considered too sympathetic to the unions' campaign over school safety was a factor in her being sacked.

These developments pose an urgent question for all trade unionists. How are they to have a political voice? Capitalism is in crisis. It is offering the working-class majority a diet of misery. Mass unemployment, pay cuts, and further cuts to already

decimated public services are all on the agenda, alongside further risks to health as a result of capitalism's inability to deal with Covid.

The absence of a political voice for the working class is being shown graphically at local authority level. The Tory government has spent over £29 billion on bailing out the economy, but it has left councils with an estimated £6 billion shortfall, resulting in local services, including social care, facing a catastrophe (see p14).

What has been the response of Keir Starmer's Labour Party which leads a majority of these councils? Have they made a joint declaration demanding the necessary funds from central government, refusing to implement any cuts and pledging to defend their local communities? Of course not.

Instead, Steve Reed, Labour's shadow secretary of state for communities and local government, bleated inaccurately and weakly that "by law councils will be forced to make devastating in-year cuts that will see frail older people denied care, libraries and leisure centres shut for good and bins left unemptied."

Similarly, Sadiq Khan, mayor of London, despite being in an extremely powerful negotiating position given the necessity to capitalism of the London transport network, passively accepted a wholly inadequate funding package for Transport for London from central government, which will threaten safety, jobs and fare increases.

It could not be clearer that this

Labour leadership has no intention of organising a struggle to defend the health, jobs, pay, and services, of working-class people. Rather, they will do the bidding of the Tory government and the capitalist class, just as they are doing on council cuts and school reopening.

The need for the trade unions to organise a battle to defend workers' interests is clear. To do so without a political voice, however, is to fight with one hand tied behind our backs.

Political representation

That is why the Socialist Party is urgently raising the need for the workers' movement to discuss how to solve the crisis of political representation, by taking steps to towards building a new mass workers' party with a socialist programme. One vital step in that direction would be to organise the widest possible number of anti-cuts candidates in next May's local and mayoral elections.

Some socialists remain in the Labour Party. They have to draw a line in the sand and fight tenaciously for socialist policies against the ascendant capitalist wing of the party, not least for the selection of anti-cuts candidates. A strong anti-cuts campaign outside of Labour can only assist their struggle. However, it is clear that in most areas Labour council candidates will be dominated by the right.

The workers' movement therefore needs to ensure that it finds another route to standing candidates who are prepared to lead a fightback against Tory misery.

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## Come to the NSSN conference

ROB WILLIAMS  
NSSN CHAIR

The NSSN Conference is a vital forum for trade unionists to come together to discuss our experiences during these crisis-ridden times, and forge a strategy that protects our safety in the workplace, and defends our jobs and income.

The economic and health effects of the Covid-19 pandemic is showing on a daily basis that fighting union organisation is a necessity for workers.

Come and take part in the biggest annual event that brings together fighting rank-and-file union members and campaigners, such as the parents who have organised with education workers against the Tories'

reckless re-opening of schools, and the anti-racist protesters who have exploded into action after the killing of George Floyd in the USA.

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● 10am registration opens  
● 11 am - 12.30pm - Main plenary session including financial appeal/affiliation and request for new steering committee members

- Break for 15-30 minutes

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- Young workers - organising and fighting in the workplace
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# 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!

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## Tories put profit before lives

### ►► CONTINUED FROM FRONT

It comes as no surprise, that the recent outbreaks in Leicester have been at food processing sites like the McVities and Samworth Brothers factories, which remained operational throughout lockdown.

In an article on the numerous outbreaks at meat processing plants in England and Wales, BBC journalist Anthony Reuben stated: “There is no evidence that the meat products themselves could be a source of Covid-19”, but rather the blame lies in poor working conditions. Not being able to keep two metres apart on fast-moving production lines, the absence of daylight and noisy machinery requiring people to shout, recirculating air conditioning systems, are all factors in the spread of the virus.

Back in 2016, attempts were made by the bakers’ union (BFAWU) to unionise the Samworth Brothers factory after an outcry from workers about cuts to pay and the harsh working environment (see ‘Samworth Brothers step up bullying and intimidation of workers’ at socialistparty.org.uk). The employer’s response was to victimise and sack trade unionist Kumaran Bose, and intimidate the rest of the workforce into quiescence.

A militant trade union presence in such industries today could lead the charge in standing up for health and safety rights, and combating poverty wages and poor working and social conditions - which are the cause of many underlying health issues (see ‘Black and Asian Covid-19 deaths: an indictment of capitalist inequality’ at socialistparty.org.uk).

It is a scandal that such basic rights must be fought for, but under capitalism, profit comes before workers’ lives every time.

A struggle for a £12-an-hour minimum wage, permanent contracts, sick pay at full wages, and a safe and healthy working environment, would also show how trade union action can raise the living and working conditions of the most oppressed workers.

## Plastic waste ignored

Plastic waste pollution is one of the biggest challenges facing society. So why the lack of enthusiasm by the government to curb manufacturing practices that generate tonnes of it which leech into the air, waterways, oceans and food?

Many washing machines lack simple filters that can remove microplastics. Consequently, plastic fibres in wastewater end up in water treatment plants and, eventually, reach the seas.

A petition to parliament calling for washing machine filters to be fitted as standard was ignored by the last Tory government with the blunt comment: “The government currently has no plans to require manufacturers to install microplastic filters on new washing machines.”

# BORIS’S NEW BIG DEAL

**B**oris Johnson has attempted to grab the headlines by bigging up his government’s £5 billion post-pandemic spending programme on schools, hospitals and infrastructure.

“Build back greener, build back faster”, barked the “tougher than a butcher’s dog” prime minister, before the cloud of a reimposed lockdown in Leicester darkened proceedings.

In reality, much of what’s been pledged is recycled commitments and announcements by the government. It will do nothing to prevent the economy plunging into the deepest recession in 300 years.

The PM has promised £1 billion extra for schools in England, spread over ten years. But before parents, teachers and students cheer, the National Audit Office points out that £6.7 billion is needed for basic school repairs, and a further £7.1 billion to bring schools up to a ‘good condition.’

### Decade of austerity

Indeed, a decade of Tory austerity has led to chronic underfunding in health and education. Johnson’s spending programme is hardly on the scale of President Roosevelt’s spending programme in 1930s America and, as the Socialist pointed out in a recent article (‘Roosevelt’s New Deal programme - reforms to save capitalism’ at socialistparty.org.uk), it largely failed to turn the depressed US economy around.

The PM’s investment plans in infrastructure to rebuild the economy is part of his political strategy to retain support in former ‘red wall’ Labour constituencies, which switched to the Tories in the last general election.

This is deemed necessary by Number 10 because Johnson’s standing in



Another fine mess I've got you into PHOTO CHATTHAMHOUSE/CC

opinion polls has plummeted as the government’s poor handling of the coronavirus pandemic has become more apparent.

A recent poll for the *i* newspaper shows a negative approval rating of -7 points for the prime minister compared to a positive rating of +38 in mid-April. And 76% of those polled say the lockdown was implemented too late. However, only 19% of respondents thought right-wing Labour leader Keir Starmer would make a better PM.

Johnson is reportedly insisting there must be no return to austerity, despite the massive funding crisis in councils due to government cuts. Moreover, since being elected to parliament in 2015, he has voted for all the Tory governments’ austerity measures. And there was no outcry from him when the 2010 Tory government scrapped Labour’s timid

‘Building Schools for the Future’ programme, which stopped 715 rebuild projects.

Most of the government’s largesse will go into private hands. This is despite the failure of private sector companies in building and running hospitals, and having to renationalise the part-privatised probation service, and bailing out the private train operating companies to the tune of £3.5 billion this year.

### Green investment?

The Tories support for private developers and landlords, and hostility to council housing, means that the chronic shortage of affordable housing is unlikely to be addressed. The Tories’ 2015 ‘Starter Homes Initiative’, costing £2.3 billion, produced zero new properties!

There is little sign of investment in green jobs such as public transport

schemes, energy production, insulating homes, etc. In fact, the previous National Infrastructure Strategy, aimed at tackling crucial environmental issues, has again been kicked down the road, including the manifesto commitment to a national home insulation programme. Johnson has, however, lavished spending on environmentally unfriendly new road building.

The Tory government’s bailouts and handouts to big business will do little to address the chronic social problems facing working-class communities, ie jobs, pay, housing, transport, education and other service provision.

The failed capitalist profit system, which Johnson champions, is the root cause of austerity and underinvestment in infrastructure. Only socialist policies can build better, greener and faster.

# Tory full return to school plans gamble with lives

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES  
NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION AND  
SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

The government’s plans for a full return to schools in September make crystal clear it has no interest in our safety or the genuine education needs of our children.

While the real dangers to public health are unfolding in Leicester, reports have been leaked which show that the Tories are gambling that children won’t spread infection in the classroom.

But the scientific evidence still suggests children can transmit the virus to each other - and back to their families - even when they aren’t showing symptoms themselves. It will be those most at risk - particularly working-class and BAME communities - that again stand to lose the most.

### Test, track and trace

Without an adequate test, track and trace system in place to really protect against outbreaks, schools have had to take what precautions they can to slow widespread transmission of the virus.

Most have been operating with ‘bubbles’ of the same children always being taught together. That way, if there is an infected pupil or staff member, the risk is hopefully restricted to that group and their contacts.

Up to now, those ‘bubbles’ have been limited to a maximum of 15 children, but education secretary Gavin Williamson wants that increased to a full primary class of 30 or more.

In secondary schools, they propose teaching in full year groups of perhaps hundreds of students. Simple statistics shows that massively



Education minister Gavin Williamson wants primary school class sizes increased to 30 or more pupils PHOTO LABPLUTO123/CC

increases the risk of transmission. But there are to be no face coverings, and no physical distancing that would require extra space or make it impossible for all pupils to return full-time.

The other steps Williamson is recommending just shows he has no idea about education. He wants children sat in rows, facing the front, mainly learning English and Maths. If students or parents object to this Dickensian world, schools will be expected to have a focus on



**The scientific evidence still suggests children can transmit the virus to each other - and back to their families - even when they aren’t showing symptoms**

‘persistently disruptive’ pupils, and parents will be fined if their children aren’t in school.

Staff and their unions are understandably weary after a long term of teaching in difficult conditions, and having to battle a callous government. But the coronavirus is showing that it isn’t about to give up any time soon. Nor must the trade unions!

We have to stand firm and refuse to implement plans that are so blatantly unsafe for public health and children’s wellbeing.

## Yes to self-identity: Fight for trans rights

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE  
SOCIALIST PARTY LGBT+ GROUP

The Tories are no allies of LGBT+ people. The recent leak in the Sunday Times of Johnson’s intention to dump plans to improve trans people’s rights to self-identify shows it again.

In 2016, the Tories initiated a debate about whether to review the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) 2004, and make it easier for trans people to self-identify. The then government of David Cameron hoped to cut across the hatred of the Tories with this measure. Cameron’s hopes were as doomed as he was.

The current law requires trans people to get a doctor’s diagnosis of gender dysphoria, to ‘prove’ they have lived as their gender for two years, and to seek a recommendation from an unelected and unaccountable committee. The Socialist Party opposes this medicalisation of the process, as well as the financial cost to individuals.

The Socialist Party warned that

these legal changes would not be delivered by the Tories - and that they weren’t enough. A struggle for trans’ rights is needed.

And it must also include a fight for the services required by trans people, women, BAME people and all those who suffer from capitalism’s inability to provide a decent life for all; a fight for a fully funded NHS and social care, council housing, free education, and an end to poverty pay and precarious working.

The corona crisis has revealed the Tories to be incapable of putting society’s health and needs before big business profit. With capitalist crisis threatening a million young unemployed by Christmas, and the university system in chaos, winning the political support of young people is off the agenda.

Boris Johnson, like Donald Trump in the US, is therefore largely appealing to those he can mobilise with fear and division in an attempt to maintain a base for his weak and divided party. The toxic debate the Tories opened up is undoubtedly a

factor in the recent rises in the rate of LGBT+ hate crime, including violence against trans people.

Tory hate must be countered with solidarity. That is the lesson of the Black Lives Matter protests, and of the original Stonewall protests 51 years ago. That trans’ rights are even under discussion is largely down to the courage of trans workers and young people who have had no choice but to fight.

The BLM movement is giving confidence to other oppressed sections of society to fight back. We must unite to smash the inequality, discrimination and class oppression of capitalism.

The capitalist class attempts to divide the working class along gender, race, religious and sexual orientation lines. This is in order to make exploiting us easier. But because we produce the wealth, the working class has enormous potential power.

If we strike in big enough numbers we can stop society. If we want to be able to end all forms of discrimination and oppression, we have to



Trans rights must be linked to the fight for decent services for all PHOTO PAUL MATTHESSON

remove the grip of the capitalist class from the running of society.

The fight for liberation from discrimination is part of the struggle for socialism.

## ‘Conditionality’ returns to DWP

# Benefits system being used to force return to unsafe workplaces

### A JOBCENTRE WORKER

As previously reported in the Socialist, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which oversees the payment of unemployment benefit to millions, had previously eased the requirements for claiming Universal Credit. This involved removing the obligation for claimants to sign a “claimant commitment”, outlining how they would spend up to 35 hours a week looking for work.

From July, as the government looks to increase the number of people attending Jobcentres, the claimant commitment is to be phased back in.

The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, which represents tens of thousands of staff working on the benefits system, has written to the DWP to challenge this reintroduction. The DWP has replied that it is under orders from the Tory government.

When pushed on how claimants could be expected just to revert to ‘business as usual’ in the current state of economic dislocation, the DWP merely answered that Work Coaches - staff who

work in Jobcentres - had ‘sufficient flexibility’ to take the Covid situation into account. What exactly this ‘flexibility’ was, the DWP did not elaborate.

Members of the PCS Broad Left Network, in which the Socialist Party participates, are actively preparing material to be sent out to Work Coaches. It will advise on giving maximum support to claimants and how to avoid ‘sanctions’ - the stoppage or reduction of a claimant’s benefit for some perceived infraction of the complex rules of the system.

In-depth academic studies have proved that sanctions do not work, most recently in 2018 from the multi-university Welfare Conditionality project. The United Nations and others have decried them as ‘human rights abuses’, and there is a well-established link between strict benefit conditionality and reduced mental health, as already vulnerable people are subjected to intense stress to participate in programmes or apply for jobs, the suitability of which is doubtful.

Amid this economic crisis, a trade union-led



PHOTO JELLISSON/CC

campaign to increase the money paid through benefits to the level of a living wage, and to root out of the system all vestige of sanctions, is sorely needed.

Trade unionists need to ensure that no one is forced back into workplaces that are not safe and do not have safety measures fully implemented to stop the risk of the spread of Covid-19. We must oppose the benefit system being used to force workers into unsafe workplaces.

## Wales: Disastrous reopening of schools

ROSS SAUNDERS  
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

Reports have flooded in from teachers about the totally unprepared state of many schools as they opened in Wales, particularly the failure to deep clean in between transitioning from hub schools for key workers to schools for all children.

Others report the failure to have in place procedures to limit physical contact between children and staff, or lacking supplies of protective equipment.

But even the best preparation won’t be enough. The lockdown in Leicester is being reimposed because of a fresh outbreak that risks getting out of control after the schools reopened - and they reopened to far fewer children than Wales has.

The Welsh government should keep schools and workplaces shut, and ensure everyone is on full pay in this emergency period.

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## Reopening Jobcentres: Don’t risk claimants’ and staff safety

The PCS union will be put to the test over the DWP management’s plan to bring people back in to attend face-to-face appointments in Jobcentres. Claimants will be pressured to attend despite the safety risks posed to members and claimants.

This is likely to come to a head in the next few days. The union must actively resist this pressure to open the doors - except for continuing to give help to the most urgent cases who cannot be dealt with in any other way.

If management ploughs ahead without our agreement, the union must organise members to refuse to compromise their safety in opening the doors.

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS  
IN THE PCS

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## DAVE SEMPLE

PCS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER  
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

According to Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary, the union needs to restructure and cut staff or merge. This stark message has been put to the union's executive committee and its staff.

The PCS union represents workers doing all sorts of jobs for the government.

The announcement comes barely six months after the union's financial report for 2020 declared: "We have stabilised union finances and this will provide a foundation to grow again and achieve wins for our members."

While other unions are growing, especially those which have been clear about protecting the safety of their members during the coronavirus crisis, PCS has lost 4,000 members between January 2018 and the present.

For Socialist Party members in PCS, this is not coincidental. Where determined campaigns have won on issues of real importance to members, membership has risen. The link between campaigning, bargaining, and how we recruit union members is key.

The PCS response on key issues like pay, redundancy rights, pensions and office closures has been to offer angry words but little else. The current union leadership organised around a faction known as Left Unity has in fact shown no leadership.

## Pay

When the coronavirus crisis broke, they wrote to civil service bosses meekly asking for an "above inflation" pay rise. This replaced the 10% demand submitted just a few weeks earlier to address the 20% slashed from our members' pay over the last decade.

Faced with the watered-down pay demand, and the union showing no intention to launch any sort of campaign, the government unsurprisingly ignored the 'interim' claim. Instead, they announced a 1.5% pay limit with the possibility of another 1.0% based on cuts.

In response, the union's leadership reinstated the original 10% claim supported by publicity campaigns and petitions!

No one with an ounce of experience in fighting the Tory government's austerity of the last ten years would for a moment have believed that such a strategy would work.

Exactly the same weak approach is what has damned the union's response on the coronavirus.

Civil service bosses mouthed platitudes about keeping people safe but refused any kind of binding agreement with the union.

Instead of organising pressure through collective action to force the employer to concede, the union's leaders hid behind the anti-union laws in order to avoid giving advice to members and reps that could trigger walkouts in defence of staff safety.

Walkouts have been sporadically happening, as members reject the approach of their employers, which is often arbitrary, secretive and far from enough to allay very real concerns, especially from those staff which have vulnerable people at home.

Yet when employers make

# PCS: CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP NEEDED TO SECURE UNION'S FUTURE



PHOTO SENAN

far-reaching decisions to reopen or extend the opening of offices, as in the Ministry of Justice, the union has simply put the decision on to members to decide individually if they are facing an imminent risk.

The union will now be further put to the test over the plan to increase the numbers of people attending face-to-face appointments in Jobcentres.

## Building the union

Meanwhile, the union's leadership are trumpeting their newest campaign idea: getting 100,000 people to sign a petition demanding a pay

rise for civil servants. Even they admit this won't deliver a pay rise, but they hope it will contribute to union 'organising' efforts.

Organising is increasingly viewed by this group as a numbers-only game, where certain activities - especially those centrally run and professionally staffed, rather than based on the needs and views of reps and branches - will increase membership and union participation.

Against this backdrop, worries over the procedures being followed at the national executive committee may seem insignificant, but the current

leadership has reduced the executive committee to a rubber stamp of officer's decisions.

Despite a decision by the executive committee that it should meet every two weeks during the coronavirus emergency, President Fran Heathcote did not call a meeting for three weeks, and then scheduled a three-and-a-half hour meeting, thereby dodging important business raised by executive committee members.

Business not taken included a proposal that after weeks of prevarication the NEC should give full support to the Black Lives Matter demonstrations (amending the proposal from the union's senior officers that the union should not support these demonstrations).

It also included an important motion following revelations in the Sunday Times that the government was dropping plans to reform the Gender Recognition Act to ease the many barriers facing transgender men and women trying to change their birth certificate.

The current leadership of PCS has been far behind its own members on the question of trans rights, leading to a motion of censure passed by annual delegate conference. Socialist Party members and the supporters of the Broad Left Network will continue to challenge these poor practices and to maximise discussion and debate on the key questions facing the members and the union.

At the union's annual delegate conference in 2019, a new organisation, the Broad Left Network, was launched by socialists, including Socialist Party members, from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The purpose of this organisation was to rebuild the socialist campaigning ethos that once held sway in PCS: with elected lay reps fighting for the implementation of socialist policies, and active at all levels of the union in representing members and holding the union accountable.

The approach of the current leadership has done nothing but bring to a grinding halt the very campaigns that could help us recruit tens of thousands of civil servants and privatised workers into the ranks of the union. That has to change.

We encourage all union members and reps to join the Broad Left Network, and to join the Socialist Party as we build a fighting, democratic union.



# Sunday trading: Government blinks first

## IAIN DALTON

USDAW BROAD LEFT CHAIR

Leaked reports emerged in mid-June that the government was looking at relaxing Sunday trading legislation for a year. It was rumoured that this was being proposed very quickly in the government's Coronavirus Recovery Bill now.

The current legislation means large retail stores can only open for six hours on a Sunday between the hours of 10am and 6pm, giving many retail workers one evening they know they can spend with their family.

Until this announcement, Usdaw, the shop and distribution workers' union, officially had a position of passivity in the face of the growing undermining of Sunday opening restrictions, such as several local authorities relaxing enforcement, and Morrisons blatantly opening for longer hours.

Fortunately, since that announcement, campaigning has been ramped up, with an online tool for members to write to MPs, and a survey of members.

The survey revealed that an overwhelming 92% of members are opposed to longer opening hours for large stores, while 51% wanted to work less hours on Sunday (only 3% wanted to work longer hours!)

It is this anger among retail workers which has led to the rebellion among backbench Tory MPs, and



PHOTO NICKOLAY ROMENSKY/CC

means these proposals are not going to be in the Coronavirus Recovery Bill now.

However, given that Boris Johnson has been stating to the press that "we will keep measures such as extending Sunday trading hours under review", to declare a conclusive victory is premature.

Equally concerning is Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis' emphasis on a "tripartite recovery plan", which sounds like a new version of partnership. The experience for Usdaw members of 'partnership working' over the last few decades has demonstrated that this is a recipe for putting the interests of employers first and those of retail workers last.

Udaw must take an independent stance in defence of retail workers - demanding decent pay, terms and conditions, and backing that up with action where necessary.

Where companies enter crisis, we should demand they are brought into public ownership to save jobs, in line with Usdaw conference policy.

## Get all the latest union news

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## ● Tower Hamlets council strike

Workers at Tower Hamlets Labour-run council in east London are set to strike on 3, 6, 7 July against management plans to 'sack and re-engage' its entire workforce, in order to force them to accept worse terms and conditions.

The workers, members of Unison local government union, could face reduced out-of-hours pay, slashed severance pay, a reduced 'flexi' scheme, worse pay for some grades, and staff being asked to work anywhere in the borough with little notice, even though travel allowance is being cut.

Members voted by 89.6% for strike action, and there will be both socially distanced and virtual picket lines, with members working from home also downing tools.

## ● MoJ cleaners' covid outbreak

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and private cleaning company OCS have been accused of ignoring demands to investigate a coronavirus outbreak among workers after four cleaners fell sick with suspected Covid-19. One cleaner died just hours following a shift after being forced to work while sick, and another was sacked while self-isolating.

The worker who died, Emanuel Gomes, was a member of the United Voices of the World union, which says that he was so feverish and unwell the day he died that "he didn't know where he was. But he knew that if he didn't work he would get to the end of the month and wouldn't have enough money."

# Equity: Solidarity with Maxine Peake



Maxine Peake (right), a member of equity, with Jeremy Corbyn // PHOTO RWENDLAND/CC

The following statement by Socialist Party members in Equity sets out our view on the unacceptable attacks on the name and career of our union sister Maxine Peake. There must be no return to the days of the BBC's 'Christmas Tree' files and political victimisation of left-wing artists. An open letter of solidarity partly based on this statement is now in circulation, and we are appealing for signatories from Equity and the wider trade union movement: [tinyurl.com/MaxineSolidarity](https://tinyurl.com/MaxineSolidarity)

Members of Equity, the union for

performing arts professionals, are outraged at the completely false smears aimed at our fellow member Maxine Peake. We stand in full solidarity with her.

Keir Starmer used an interview with Maxine as the pretext to sack Labour left Rebecca Long-Bailey for spreading an "antisemitic conspiracy theory." There was no such thing in The Independent interview.

The line Starmer claims as antisemitic is this: "'Systemic racism is a global issue,' she adds. 'The tactics used by the police in America, kneeling on George Floyd's neck, that was

learnt from seminars with Israeli secret services."

Figures on the right have alleged this is meant to suggest that Jewish people secretly control the US state and international affairs, or are responsible for the police murder of George Floyd. No reasonable person could interpret Maxine's passing comment on police racism in this way. It is plainly meant only to illustrate that "systemic racism is a global issue."

The capitalist wing of Labour, which Starmer represents, has for five years instrumentalised false claims of antisemitism as a smokescreen

for a witch-hunt against left-wingers. Rebecca Long-Bailey was his target in this case; Maxine Peake, an actor and Equity member, was collateral damage.

Isolated and facing an onslaught from the capitalist press and on social media, Maxine issued a clarification on Twitter: "I feel it's important for me to clarify that, when talking to The Independent, I was inaccurate in my assumption of American Police training and its sources. I find racism and antisemitism abhorrent and I in no way wished, nor intended, to add fodder to any views of the contrary."

It may well be that US police did not learn the neck-kneeling technique from Israeli state forces. But it is a fact that state forces in the US, Israel, and all parts of the capitalist world routinely employ this tactic and other brutal violence. People oppressed on the basis of race are common targets - as is the workers' movement at times of class conflict. It is also a fact that state forces routinely share information and training.

False claims of antisemitism must not be allowed to muddy the waters. Starmer's move was an attack by the Labour right, and behind them the Tories and the capitalist class, on figures seen as representatives of socialist ideas. Maxine's comment was an indictment of police racism and violence around the world.

Equity members, and the union as a whole, should stand with Maxine. We must oppose right-wing witch-hunts against the workers' movement and left, and racism in all its forms.

● Email [jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:jamesivens@socialistparty.org.uk) to sign and see also p2

## Equity union president elections: re-elect Maureen, fight for resources for all

Performing arts union Equity is electing its president and ruling council this summer, at the same time that industry leaders are warning of widespread and imminent collapse.

There are three presidential candidates. The incumbent, actor Maureen Beattie, and stage manager Adam Burns, describe themselves as socialists. Both also pledged support for no-cuts council budgets in a branch hustings on 24 June. DJ and entertainer Dave Eager is a long-standing representative of the union's right wing.

Adam's vision for the presidency has some detail, and he promises to encourage grassroots activism. However, we have concerns that his approach on issues including the race equality controversy within the union could lack balance and result in harmful divisions.

Maureen sees the presidency primarily as ambassadorial, and has not presented as much programme for her second term, beyond important campaigns against bullying and harassment. Her record does include listening to and backing progressive initiatives. Socialist Party members in Equity are recommending a vote for Maureen.

Whatever the outcome, Equity's president will need to navigate complex internal and external challenges. We believe the key is to lead a fight for better conditions and resources for all, using the union's radical 'Performance for All' policies as a template, avoiding the divisive potential for competition between sections of members.

**SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN EQUITY**



## Mental health

Covid-19 and the lockdown have increased anxiety, loneliness, alcohol consumption and domestic abuse. Many health and social care workers are experiencing stress, and even PTSD symptoms, as a consequence of working on the front line during the crisis.

Unemployment will further worsen mental health. Preventing this needs a society prioritising solidarity over competition.

The NHS has never adequately dealt with mental illness. Victorian asylums eventually closed, supposedly replaced by care in the community. This would have been good if community mental health services, housing and other services met needs - but they didn't. Insufficient funding, then brutal cuts, resulted in big increases in homelessness, addiction and other problems.

After traditional industries were closed and public services cut in the 1980s, support networks in working-class communities fragmented. Increasing pressures at school, university, work (including PTSD among ex-armed forces) and financial pressures have all contributed to worsening mental health.

The NHS had only 18,179 mental health beds in 2019, paying £1.8 billion for a further 8,942 private

beds. US corporations like the Priory Group now run more than one in eight mental health beds.

In 2016, Priory was taken over by Acadia Healthcare from another US corporation, Advent International (which owned Poundland until 2010). Acadia paid £80 million interest over the next two years on the money it borrowed to buy Priory. However, it took £170 million interest from Priory on money it lent it.

Lending money from parent companies to subsidiaries at high interest rates, registration in tax havens, and similar dodges, suck huge sums from the NHS, its staff and patients.

Meanwhile, desperately ill patients get shunted across the country because there are too few beds. Private mental hospitals should be nationalised and integrated with the NHS, without compensating wealthy shareholders.

Mental illness needs a big increase in local hospital beds so patients are not isolated from their families and friends. There needs to be a massive increase in public funding of community mental health services, access to talking therapies (not limited to just a few sessions as now), art therapy, eating disorder and addiction services, which are essential to help people regain and maintain good health. Medication can be helpful, but if a substitute for the lack of other services, benefits pharmaceutical company profits - not patients.

Youth services, sports and leisure facilities, community centres and libraries holding free events, arts, music and drama, all help boost mental wellbeing, but have been decimated by local councils implementing Tory government cuts. Local authorities must be fully funded by central government to ensure that these vital services can be restored and extended.

The NHS needs a complete reorganisation of the way in which mental health services are delivered. Health workers, patients and the wider community should democratically decide how needs are met.



## Care of the elderly

Pressure to increase patient numbers while cutting costs meant shorter hospital stays and production-line intensity. No one wants to stay in hospital longer than necessary, but the speed patients are discharged is often due to bed shortages. Hospital infections like MRSA have spread after insufficient time to thoroughly clean between patients.

Bed shortages have been worsened by social care cuts and privatisation. Frail elderly people become stranded in hospital when they don't need further acute medical care, can't manage at home, and need rehabilitation.

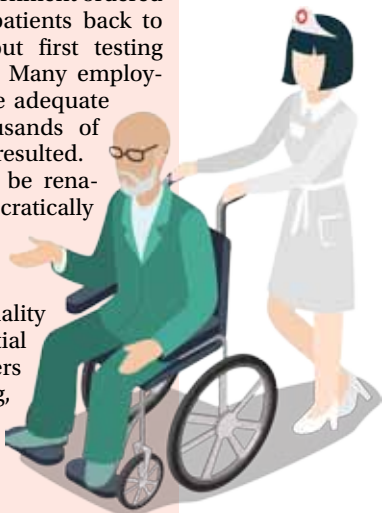
One-third of all community hospitals in England have had beds closed over the past ten years. Promised community care replacements either never materialised or suffered cuts.

Many new small community hospitals are needed - less disorienting than big busy general hospitals and easier for family and friends to visit.

Big corporations moved into social care expecting to make handsome profits, but severe council cuts have left them short. They are making workers and service users pay for cuts instead of taking the hit themselves.

Covid-19 has tragically further exposed this. The government ordered hospitals to send patients back to care homes, without first testing them for the virus. Many employers failed to provide adequate PPE. Tens of thousands of preventable deaths resulted.

Social care must be renationalised, democratically controlled, and local authorities given enough money to provide high quality home and residential care. Care workers need good training, secure employment and decent pay.



**Workers making vital contributions to all our lives are treated shamefully while bosses living off others' hard work want for nothing**

The past few months have felt like war - normal life shut down; daily Covid-19 casualty reports; widespread anxiety, insecurity and hardship; frontline workers cheered for their heroic efforts.

Covid-19 has followed class lines, despite Johnson's own experience. Male labourers are four times more likely to die from Covid-19 than professional workers. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people account for 11% of those admitted to hospital with Covid-19, but 36% of those admitted to critical care. A higher proportion in frontline jobs, less space at home, more health problems, and racist discrimination, contribute to this inequality.

Workers making vital contributions to all our lives are treated shamefully while bosses living off others' hard work want for nothing. There is a growing feeling that things must change - returning to pre-Covid-19 inequality is unacceptable.

### Cuts and underfunding

Privatisation and underfunding left the NHS in a weak state to face Covid-19. Far from being "fantastic" - Boris Johnson's foolish boast as the onslaught began - 100,000 health workers' positions were unfilled.

2018-19 was the worst winter for the NHS on record. One-third of hospital trusts hit 100% bed occupancy. A severe winter would have made that even worse. Britain has fewer hospital beds per head of population than almost every other wealthy nation. 17,000 beds were cut from the 144,000 available in 2010.

Recruitment and retention of staff became harder with high student fees, abolished bursaries, a 7.4% real pay cut since 2010, continual reorganisation, and bullying management demands to achieve impossible (often senseless) targets.

Half of student midwives surveyed in 2019 were considering leaving their course, due to average debt of £41,000 on graduation, and needing £562 a month from family and friends towards basic living costs.

In England alone, the NHS will need an extra 64,000 hospital doctors and 171,000 nurses over the next fifteen years, as part of 3.2% annual overall workforce growth, according to an Institute of Fiscal Studies/ Health Foundation 2018 estimate.

During the pandemic we have clearly seen how the NHS and care services are run on minimal pay, and staff goodwill. It's a disgrace that many NHS-employed workers' basic pay is only £9.21 an hour. Outsourced and privatised workers are often on £8.72 an hour minimum wage (even less if they are under 25 years old). Trade unions should demand an immediate 10% pay rise and a minimum wage of £12 an hour, or £15 in London.

Millions have had their health care postponed as hospitals have become Covid-19 crisis centres. Waiting lists had already been growing by 7.7% a year since 2013.

Many Covid-19 survivors of severe illness could suffer long-lasting effects. New rehabilitation services are needed. Urgent measures are needed to make up lost ground before more irreparable damage is done.

The government has boasted about the Nightingale hospitals being built and equipped in a matter of days. Similar emergency measures must be taken to ensure that treatment is

# NO GOING BACK A SOCIALIST NHS FIT FOR HEROES

Covid-19 has made the NHS more popular than for two generations. Millions of homes display window messages thanking the NHS and key workers, and most streets have held weekly claps. But the pandemic has also exposed the weaknesses and fragility of the NHS. In the first of our 'No going back' series, on the 72nd anniversary of the foundation of the NHS, **Jon Dale** looks at health and the NHS in the light of the coronavirus crisis, and what kind of NHS we should be fighting for for the post pandemic world.



PHOTO MARY FINCH

available for non-Covid related illnesses for all who need it, including during any possible future waves of the virus.

Private hospitals have been paid around £250 million since the start of the crisis to rent their 8,000 beds to the NHS, but they have hardly been used. They could not function without NHS-trained staff, NHS intensive care units and the NHS treating the patients with complex conditions they reject. They should be immediately nationalised, integrated into the NHS, and used to bring down waiting lists.

### Privatisation

Privatisation, outsourcing and fragmentation of the NHS contributed to the deadly PPE scandal and the inability to adequately respond to the pandemic.

The establishment of the NHS meant that the provision of health services was largely blocked to the capitalists as a source of making money. From the mid-1970s there have been discussions on privatisation plans within the Tory party. The idea was fostered that the NHS was 'unsustainable', with demand for new treatments growing faster than the economy could afford.

An 'internal market' was introduced in 1991 by Tory health secretary Ken Clarke, allowing private companies to get their feet in the door.

New Labour swept to power under Tony Blair in 1997, pledged to scrap this internal market and replace competition with collaboration. Instead, they soon scrapped these policies, accelerating capitalist competition.

Private Finance Initiatives were

used to build new hospitals, saddling the NHS with debts now worth £80 billion. Private companies were given contracts to provide both clinical and support services. During the pandemic the Tories wrote off the debts of the NHS trusts to the government. The same should now happen with all PFI debts.

New Labour copied right-wing Tory MP Nicholas Ridley's 1977 privatisation plan: "We should fragment the industries as far as possible and set up the units as separate profit centres."

A 2010 report estimated management and administration cost 14% of total NHS spending - doubled since 1990. Privatisation's total bill is hard to measure, but probably adds at least £9 billion a year to the NHS budget.

The ConDem coalition government's 2012 Health and Social Care Act brought new havoc. In partial recognition of this, Integrated Care Systems have been taking over purchasing and provision of NHS services in England since 2017. These decide who gets which services which are free, and which get charged for.

Andrew Taylor, director of the Co-operation and Competition Panel for NHS Funded Services, told a Commons committee in May 2019: "I don't think anyone's realistically talking about removing the private sector from the NHS. What the proposals do in effect is deregulate NHS markets. They don't actually remove markets from the NHS."

### Tories

The Tories have taken advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic to spread the tentacles of private profiteers like Serco and Deloitte even further into the NHS. Huge sums of public money have been given to big business for Covid-19 PPE procurement and distribution, Nightingale hospitals, extra capacity in private hospitals, testing and contact tracing.

Each has been a failure, with no coordination with (underfunded) local public services. All these services should be publicly funded and democratically run so that care can be adequately planned.

The medical supplies industry must also be taken out of the hands of big business and integrated with the NHS. Many now threatened by unemployment could have alternative work making PPE or medical equipment.

The urgent need for new viral diagnostic tests, treatments and vaccines also shows the failure of profit-driven pharmaceutical companies to invest in infectious diseases. The industry needs nationalising, using the skills of scientists, pharmacists, doctors and engineers, combined with democratic workers' control to produce for need, not profit. International cooperation is also vital.

Because of the experience of Covid-19 the Tories will be wary of directly cutting funding to the NHS in the immediate period. But neither the Tories nor a Keir Starmer-led Labour Party, which is also wedded to the capitalist system, can guarantee a fully funded NHS that meets the needs of all. Health cannot be separated from the inequality and poverty that are the inevitable consequences of a capitalist system in crisis.

Covid-19 has shown workers need a political party and trade union leaders fighting for a socialist NHS as part of a socialist reorganisation of society. Much ill health caused by capitalism could then be prevented. This sick system must go!

**Covid-19 has shown workers need a political party and trade union leaders fighting for a socialist NHS as part of a socialist reorganisation of society**

## Prevention

Underlying health problems have increased the likelihood of suffering serious effects or dying from Covid-19.

Health care has dramatically and continually changed since the NHS was founded. Antibiotics cured many infections, while vaccines prevented others. Childhood deaths and disability - once common from measles, tonsillitis, polio and other infections - became very rare.

Life expectancy increased until the past decade of austerity and falling living standards. It has now shortened for the poorest 10% of women. The gap between the poorest and wealthiest 20% of local authority areas widened to 8.4 years for males and 5.8 years for females.

A baby born in the wealthiest areas is likely to have 18 more years of healthy life than a baby in the poorest areas.

Changes in work, play and travel reduced exercise for many. With dietary changes, especially processed foods heavily promoted by big business, obesity and its associated health problems became more common.

Abolishing poverty would greatly

improve health. Warm, well-insulated housing with an end to overcrowding would make a big difference.

Many work long hours in boring or stressful conditions. Takeaway or processed food is quick and convenient, especially after long hours at work. A shorter working week would allow more time for planning and cooking meals, and for exercise.

Access to good fresh food, with time and facilities to cook, and cheap local community cafes serving healthy food, would help prevent many health problems.

At the same time, cuts to local authority and school leisure and exercise facilities must be reversed.

Massive agribusiness and food production companies, supermarkets and catering companies should be nationalised, and run under democratic workers' control, so food can be healthy, cheap and pleasurable instead of profit-gear. The environment would benefit too.

The lockdown has shown the importance of access to fresh air and places to exercise - and how unequal this access is across society. It has also shown that air and water pollution is reversible. A socialist plan would stop capitalism poisoning the environment that damages health so widely.



PHOTO MARY FINCH

## History

During World War Two a powerful 'No return to the 1930s' mood developed. In factories, mines and the armed forces workers grew in determination that, having defeated the threat of fascism, they would then finish the job back home. Mass unemployment, the humiliation of means-tested benefits, illness and squalor endured by so many would be banished.

Chaotic and bankrupt health services - on the verge of collapse before 1939 - couldn't cope with mass casualties during the war. The state had to step in where private health care and cash-starved local authorities failed.

As World War Two dragged on, more capitalists realised the

working class would not be satisfied with hollow promises of "a land fit for heroes". Those were made after World War One but never materialised. To encourage the war effort and head off the threat of revolution, plans were drawn up for a welfare state, including a national health service.

Labour won a huge majority in 1945 to deliver these plans - the biggest reforms ever won by the working class (see p15). The NHS was launched on July 5th 1948, giving free access to medical care to all. But the capitalist structure of society was left unchanged.

Big business bided its time but then started clawing back what it had been forced to give. 25 years of increasing privatisation of the NHS by Tory, New Labour and ConDem governments began in 1985, followed by the past decade of savage NHS and public service cuts.



BARBARA CLARE  
STEVENAGE SOCIALIST PARTY

I was encouraged to watch this documentary by my daughter who has recently been motivated to go to her first protest, the Black Lives Matter demos against racism.

The documentary opens with a statistic that the US is home to 5% of the world's population, but has 25% of the world's prisoners! It has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, rising from 357,292 in 1970 to 2,306,200 in 2014.

The Bureau of Justice reports that one in three young black males is expected to go to jail or prison during his lifetime, an unbelievably shocking statistic (one in seventeen for white males). Black men make up 6.5% of the US population, yet 40.2% of the prison population!

The 13th Amendment to the American constitution made it unconstitutional for someone to be held as a slave, granting freedom to all Americans. There was an exception, however, for criminals and this 'loophole' was used in the south of the US where the economy had been based on slavery (four million people had been slaves). These former slaves were arrested, en masse, for extremely minor crimes such as loitering and vagrancy. They basically became slaves again ('convict leasing'), working to rebuild the economy while imprisoned.

Rhetoric created the image of 'black criminality', rapacious and violent, an evil that had to be banished. This was magnified with the 1915 film 'The Birth of a Nation', a major blockbuster at the time. Every image of a black person was demented, cannibalistic and animalistic. The film "was also an accurate prediction of the way in which race would operate in the United States." It was also partly responsible for the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan and another wave of lynching and terror.

Around the same time, the Jim Crow laws were created, which enshrined segregation in law and relegated African Americans to permanent second class status. The activists of the civil rights movement were portrayed in the media as criminals deliberately violating the segregation laws.

The documentary explains that up to 1970, the US crime rate was roughly flat for decades. Following a big population rise, however, crime rates rose through sheer demographic change. But politicians claimed the civil rights movement itself was contributing to rising crime rates, and that if African Americans were given freedom the US would suffer more crime.

During Richard Nixon's presidency 'crime' became a code word to refer to black political movements of the time like the Black Panthers. Nixon fought against this and other social movements: "There can be no progress in America without respect for law". He doubled federal spending on the 'war on drugs', treating it as a crime rather than a health issue. Low level offences, such as marijuana possession, were punished. The documentary quotes John Ehrlichman, Nixon's adviser: "The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the anti-war left and black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be

# TV review: 13th

## From slavery to Black Lives Matter

# RACISM AND CAPITALIST INJUSTICE EXPOSED



PHOTO MARY FINCH

either against the war or black... but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, then criminalising both heavily, we could disrupt those communities... Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."

Ronald Reagan later turned the

rhetorical 'war on drugs' under Nixon into a literal one. In 1982 he launched a national crusade, determined to define it as a problem. There was a crisis in the US economy, the worst since the Great Depression. There were cuts to the welfare state alongside tax cuts for the rich and more funding for prison facilities.

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Crack cocaine came on the market and was more accessible to the black, Hispanic and Latino population. It was distinguished from cocaine, and possession of crack carried longer sentences: "What Reagan ultimately does is take the problem of economic inequality, of hyper-segregation in America's cities, and the problem of drug abuse, and criminalises all of that in the form of a war on drugs."

One interviewee says: "Black people in general are overrepresented in news as criminals. When I say overrepresented that means they are shown as criminals more times than is accurate that they are actually criminals based on FBI statistics." The term 'super-predators' emerged, implying they are not just gangs of kids. Five innocent teenagers were put in prison in the Central Park jogger case and served between six and eleven years before DNA evidence proved they were all innocent. At the time, Donald Trump wanted to give them the death penalty and took out a full page ad to put on the pressure!

Under Bill Clinton's presidency there is the building of the prison infrastructure that exists today. His 1994 crime bill included almost 60 new capital punishment offences, longer sentences and 'three strikes and you are out'. (If a third felony is committed a person goes to prison for the rest of their life.) Mandatory minimum sentences are introduced which means judges cannot consider the circumstances around a crime. Instead, the work falls to elected prosecutors, 95% of whom are white, (throughout the US). This bill was heavily loaded towards law enforcement and incarceration and \$30 billion was given to build the necessary infrastructure.

In February 2012, George Zimmerman shot and killed Trayvon Martin in Florida. The police could not arrest him under the 'stand your ground' law. This event ignited the Black Lives Matter movement. It also exposed the role of the American Legislative Exchange Council. This is a political lobbying group which writes laws and gives them to Republicans. It is a private club and its members are politicians and corporations. This means that, through the council, corporations have a huge say in US law making. 'Stand your ground' was written by the council.

The documentary highlights how many black people take plea bargains to avoid mandatory minimums, even when innocent. They would face a far greater sentence if they went to trial and they can't afford to pay bail. Kalief Browder was innocent of a minor offence and spent two years in prison. He later committed suicide aged 22. Prisons are like warehouses, in which people experience sensory deprivation and dehumanisation. On release they are still denied citizenship, they cannot vote, many doors are closed to them.

This documentary graphically exposes the way in which the US capitalist state has criminalised the black population in particular, but also other minorities, the poor and those prepared to rise up and challenge the system. Now, in the Black Lives Matter protests which have swept the US and the world, a new generation is rising up against racism economic inequality and the crimes of capitalism. To end that system a united working-class struggle will be necessary.

● 13th is currently available on Netflix



## ● No trust in Google to control our news

On 25 June, Google announced a “new licencing programme to support the news industry”. The programme pays publishers for high-quality content in an effort to remove paywalls. A “new news experience” will be released later this year for users to consume.

While the programme is starting in Germany, Australia and Brazil, its implications may eventually also affect us here in the UK. The concept is grand: no more paywalls, so news can be accessed by anyone and anywhere. But who determines what is high-quality content and verifies these publishers? I suspect it's not the workers who walked-out in a stand against Google's culture of sexual harassment in 2018.

The programme has been launched against the background of the recent pandemic, and the Black Lives Matter protests which have erupted across the globe. Local news journalists and publishers have been strained financially, and Google is offering them “access to new markets and... additional commercial benefits.”

To boost Google's reputation, it funded the Journalism Emergency Relief Fund, and supported a \$15 million Support Local News Campaign.

Working-class people, however, do not want a large corporation paying for news on their behalf. We need a state-funded, democratically controlled workers' news broadcaster which is not manipulated by the Tories.

While not state-funded, the Socialist Party produces the paper you're reading right now. It is financed by those who pay for it, and welcomes contributions, including from non-party members.

My question to Google is: “If we put a paywall on our website, would you deem us a trusted publisher which produces high-quality content, and pay us to remove it for your new experience?”

I think we all know the answer.

**JOSHUA ALLERTON**  
WOLVERHAMPTON

## ● Join us

How many more humiliations should socialists in the Labour Party have to endure? Rebecca Long-Bailey tried to accommodate the right wing, and she was purged at the first opportunity. Who is next? Join us in a party with a socialist programme and no career prospects!

**SEAN BROGAN**  
EXETER

## ● A party for the 99%

Since Keir Starmer sacked Rebecca Long-Bailey, I have never had so many

positive responses to my Facebook posts about the need to build a new workers' party.

The trade unions need to call a conference of all interested trade unionists, campaigners, and working-class people to democratically discuss how a party can be built.

The working class has suffered long enough. Young people coming into political action for the first time in the anti-racist protests deserve it. The post-Covid world of economic crisis, precarious and unsafe work, and unemployment needs it.

The working class cannot be made to pay for this crisis as it paid with austerity for the banking crisis of 2007-8. Working-class people need a party that fights to improve their lives. A party for the 99% not the 1%!

**CLARE WILKINS**  
NOTTINGHAM

## ● Real alternative

Child poverty; holiday hunger; an epidemic of job losses and closures; lack of PPE for key workers; a shambolic response to the pandemic; council budgets strained to breaking point; care homes in crisis; crocodile tears about racism from the people who gave us Grenfell Tower; Windrush and all manner of racist legislation... and a Labour Party seeking co-operation... surely now is the time for a real alternative!

**SUE POWELL**  
GLOUCESTER

## ● Campaigning party needed

Ironically, Rebecca Long-Bailey went out of her way to appease the Jewish Board of Deputies during her uninspiring Labour Party leadership campaign. The cold truth must be dawning on all by now. The ruling class unleashed major forces to stop Corbyn from coming to power. The opposition front bench is now just another wing of capitalist executive management. Starmer welcomes the reckless Tory lifting of the lockdown. Labour-run local councils routinely pass on central government cuts, with barely a whimper. Yet, in the midst of a public health and economic crisis, a mass campaigning party of the working class and youth with socialist policies is urgently needed.

**NIALL MULHOLLAND**  
NEWHAM, LONDON

## ● Bournemouth beach

All this nonsense about selfish people on the beach in Bournemouth. We used to

process... you may have a new home to escape the pandemic in paradise.” Can't wait!

### Deeper in debt

Unsurprisingly, given the rise in unemployment and the effects of pay cuts through furloughing, etc, the number of people unable to pay their bills continues to increase.

Last month, mortgage repayments were down 14%; rents by 11%, and

Google workers on strike against sexual harassment in 2018 Grendelkhan/CC



have five lidos just in my area of London alone, along with numerous public swimming pools, on top of loads of paddling pools in parks. Virtually all of them have gone.

When it's 35 degrees in the city, where are working-class people meant to swim but the beach? A day at the beach for a family of four can be a much cheaper option than anything else.

**NANCY TAAFFE**  
WALTHAM FOREST, LONDON

## ● Civil servants attacked

Civil servants are regularly described in negative terms. We're bureaucrats, we're a drain on the state, we live in ivory towers.

As austerity was implemented, we were rewarded for our hard work with ten years of pay restraint. Last year I compared my pay slip with one from January 2014, and my net pay over five years had increased by £20.

I saw so many colleagues made

redundant, and many offices in the West Midlands were closed to implement budget cuts. In the next 12 months the offices in Brierley Hill, Coventry, Solihull and Wolverhampton will be closed. This was demanded to pay for the bailout of the banks.

Now it seems civil servants are needed to revive the High Street. Well it's ten years and innumerable attacks too late.

**JOHN-PAUL ROSSER**  
COVENTRY

## ● Defend the triple lock

State pensions are far too low at present, yet the Tories are planning to scrap the triple lock that at least gives some protection to the value of the pension.

If we allow the Tories to scrap the triple lock they will next come for our free bus passes and winter fuel allowances.

As the virus recedes, the Tories will intensify their attacks on workers and their families. Remember, the workers of today are the pensioners of tomorrow.

We need a united working-class fight against any attacks on state pensions. In our area pensioners have been in the forefront of campaigning against cuts to local services such as libraries and community centres. We cannot allow the Tories to divide us along age lines, workers' pensions are a class issue.

**TERRY PEARCE.**  
THAMES VALLEY NATIONAL  
PENSIONERS CONVENTION

## ● Tax the rich

Benefit fraud costs the UK around £1.2 billion annually. Tax avoidance costs the UK around £120 billion annually (Tax justice and PCS estimate). There are 54 billionaires in the UK not paying their fair share, yet we are led to believe the folks on welfare are costing us.

**NEIL ADSHEAD**  
ROTHERHAM

**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**  
editors@socialistparty.org.uk



## News

### Billionaire paradise

Are you considering taking a long-delayed holiday? Try the pacific islands of Fiji. In an enticing tweet, the country's prime minister says: “Say you're a billionaire looking to fly your own jet, rent your own island, and invest millions of dollars in Fiji in the

process... you may have a new home to escape the pandemic in paradise.” Can't wait!

### Deeper in debt

Unsurprisingly, given the rise in unemployment and the effects of pay cuts through furloughing, etc, the number of people unable to pay their bills continues to increase.

Last month, mortgage repayments were down 14%; rents by 11%, and

council tax by 9%, compared to pre-pandemic levels.

### Food insecurity

Latest government figures from the Food Standards Agency show that declining incomes during the pandemic have forced millions to go without food or rely on food banks. The FSA reckons up to 7.7 million cash-strapped adults reduced meal portion sizes or skipped meals. And

up to 3.7 million adults had to use a food bank.

### Councils' crisis

A £6 billion shortfall in council funding in England during this financial year by the Tory government will mean more savage cuts to local services and council tax/service charges increases. Extra financial pressures and revenue falls because of the pandemic mean that an estimated eight

out of ten councils face bankruptcy. Trade unions and the wider working class communities must get organised to stop jobs and services being slashed.

Help fund the fightback  
**DONATE**  
socialistparty.org.uk/donate







## ● Bristol

The Socialist Party returned to campaigning for the second week on June 27. We set up two stalls, one on building a movement to smash racism, the other focused on other issues that are affecting young people.

While bad weather meant that there was not the usual footfall, people seemed particularly receptive to these issues, and the youth campaign was met with a really positive response.

We discussed mass youth unemployment, job insecurity and the disproportionate impact upon young people as a result of the impending economic crisis caused by coronavirus.

We got quite a few signatures for our petition and handed out copies of the Socialist Party's 'charter for young people' (socialistparty.org.uk). We plan to do the same next week as part of our plan to build Young Socialists and the Socialist Party.

AMY SAGE

## ● Carlisle

The Socialist Party finally resumed our public campaigning on the streets of Cumbria with a stall in Carlisle city centre. After three months of lockdown we continued our campaign for more resources for the NHS - but now with additional demands to meet the needs of the new situation.

An article announcing the relaunch of our campaign appeared in the local paper, News and Star, including quotes from our leaflet and petition. Although the numbers on the streets were less than 'normal', we got a very positive response from the public who signed the petition, took our leaflets, bought the Socialist and stayed for a chat.

We called for a rationalised NHS, with the profiteers kicked out, and a national care service. One woman, working in the care sector, took a handful of leaflets to hand out to workmates and put up in homes.

BRENT KENNEDY

## ● Worcester

We're back! After three months, the Socialist Party finally did our first stall of the summer on Broad Street. We had a lot of interest in the Black Lives Matter protests

and how the Socialist Party was involved in the Worcester protest. If this is anything to go by, the Worcestershire Socialist Party has a few busy stalls ahead.

CALVIN FOWLER

## ● Liverpool

Back to our weekly Socialist Party campaign stalls in Liverpool city centre. Although there weren't many on the streets, people were interested to see what demands we were putting forward - especially our youth and workers' charters. The workers who bought a copy of the Socialist were enthusiastic for the front page, 'capitalism = racism'.

BHARATHI

## ● Gateshead

Alongside socialist ideas, we had hand sanitiser and kept socially distanced. Socialist Party back on the street in Gateshead.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL

## ● Leicester

The Socialist Party campaigned for jobs and homes for all, and also supported the demo for justice for Shukri Abdi, a young girl who drowned after racist bullying at school.

There was no proper police investigation. We fight for democratic community control of the police.

STEVE SCORE

## ● Swansea

The struggle doesn't stop, and neither have we. Our members - socially distanced and safe - back out on the streets. We're still meeting virtually and attending demonstrations safely when we can.

## ● Southampton

Socially distanced socialists safely campaigned for a pay rise for NHS and council workers and a minimum wage of £12 an hour. It was really good to be out discussing the crisis with workers in our community.



photo Carlisle Socialist Party

# Target smashed by half time £50,671 in three months

PETE MASON  
SOCIALIST PARTY FINANCE ORGANISER

"The sinews of war", a cynical Roman statesman famously observed, is "abundant money." That we don't have.

We battle a capitalist class blessed with that 'magic money tree' they say doesn't exist. But we've hit a marvelous milestone in our fundraising activity.

Just halfway through our six-month campaign, we have already beaten our £50,000 target for the full six months - thanks mainly to your donations to the Socialist Party's coronavirus special appeal. Keep it up!

In addition, over £9,000 has been donated for special memorials for life-long socialists Mick Cotter and Ken Douglas.

The Black Lives Matter protesters have shown enthusiasm for our socialist ideas. Protesters wanted to make a contribution for Socialist Party placards. We raised £45 at a Bradford protest, £11 in Corby and £13 in Chelmsford and Hertford this way.

In Newcastle, someone bought a copy of the Socialist for £20, and another donated £10 for a poster. Amelia from Cardiff donated £15 after reading one of our articles, writing "because we have to keep fighting".

We face many costs. An array of good video equipment has cost us thousands of pounds, which will help us to upgrade our weekly Facebook broadcasts. Computer equipment and Zoom subscriptions are a few of the bills that are due.

Our weekly newspaper - the Socialist, so vital on the recent protests

- costs money to produce and print every week. So we need to keep up the fundraising efforts.

Yorkshire is on 107% of its six-month target of £5,100. Adrian Hook from Wakefield, a Socialist Party member on benefits, has given a second special appeal donation of £60.

Thanks also to Razina Bostan in Bradford for £20. All but three regions of the Socialist Party have made their target - special mention goes to the North West, who are on 156%.

Thanks to Paul Couchman from Staines who has received a donation for an "old 45rpm single originally made and sold for Militant Fighting Fund. It is still raising money!"

We cannot mention all the donations we've received, but every single one counts. Thank you.

● [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)

# I left Labour and want to end capitalism - join us in Socialist Party

THEA EVERETT  
SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

I feel fortunate to have been raised by socialist parents. In my house in the 1990s and 2000s, Blair was as dirty a name as Thatcher.

Mistrust of Labour and the Tories was instilled in me. I knew they did not represent the interests of 99% of people.

Growing up in Lewisham, south London, I watched good schools become academies, local services get cut to the bone by Labour councils and, over the last ten years, the rapid gentrification of the area I call home.

Until 2015, when Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party, I had lived my entire life with no mainstream political party representing my views. Corbyn becoming leader jerked me into action.

It filled me, and tens of thousands of other young people, with excitement and optimism. I joined the

party I thought I never would, and canvassed for Labour in the 2017 and 2019 general elections.

Knocking doors in Eltham, Putney and Stevenage, it was obvious what we were up against. The establishment media had presented Corbyn so abominably.

My dad is Jewish. I was further disgusted by the right wing of Labour demeaning antisemitism by using it as a political tool to tarnish Corbyn, and by the media giving this so much more airtime than policy.

I've been aware of the Socialist Party for as long as I can remember. My Dad is a member of 37 years.

I would read articles in the Socialist around the house, and attended the November Socialism conference a handful of times. Everything I heard I agreed with.

After the hurt of the 2019 election result, I knew that the Labour Party was not, and never could be, a route to ending capitalism. I decided

to turn my attention to the Socialist Party, which had predicted that Corbyn's failure to purge the right wing of the party would be his downfall.

Since joining two months ago, I have learnt more and been more politically involved than I ever was in Labour. Until joining, I had no idea how active our members are in the unions, and what a difference we make in the movement.

The recent sacking of Rebecca Long-Bailey is for some the final straw. The need for a new workers' party is now brutally apparent. If you too have left Labour and want to end capitalism, please consider joining us in the Socialist Party.

If you felt electrified by Corbyn's politics, I can tell you being surrounded by a whole party of people fighting for a society run for the needs of all is truly invigorating. You will feel at home.

● [socialistparty.org.uk/join](https://socialistparty.org.uk/join)



Wolves

# Black Lives Matter has not stopped Protesters flock to Socialists

## ● Stoke

After months of lockdown, Socialist Party members were out in the city centre to support the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest in Hanley on 27 June. The 100 protesters were well organised, with two-metre distancing adhered to very well. Socialist Party members wore face masks.

Rory, one of the speakers, explained that he had been stopped by police more than 40 times because of the colour of his skin. And that police officers were responsible for the death of a local black worker, but have still not been charged for their crime. He directed protesters to our "Socialist stall" so they could pick up leaflets and more.

As soon as the protest finished, 30 protesters converged on the Socialist Party campaign stall to get leaflets, copies of the Socialist and BLM bracelets. Most signed up to help build the movement to smash racism, and five expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party.

## ● London

27 June marked the one-year anniversary of the death of Shukri Abdi, a Somali refugee who drowned after being bullied and threatened to "get in the water". Thousands of working-class young people took to the streets again on that weekend.

Protesters demanded justice for Shukri and a proper investigation into her case. It was later revealed after her death that she was severely bullied and no action was taken.

You too can donate at [socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate).

In remembering Shukri, we also remember all the refugees that are suffering in silence, abused by the hostile immigration system, and left with no help by right-wing governments.

Such an abusive situation cannot continue. The Socialist Party also supports the Refugee Rights Campaign - run by refugees themselves, fighting for their rights here in Britain.

The Socialist Party participated in the protests, and gave out leaflets linking the need to build a mass movement to smash racism with the fight for jobs, homes, services, and a decent future for all. A socialist world could finally end all oppression and exploitation of the working class.

## ● Wolves

Organised by local young women, with support from Windrush generation campaigners, 400 turned out to a protest on 28 June. The Socialist Party's ideas were warmly received. One protester carried a homemade placard quoting the closing line of the Communist Manifesto: "We have nothing to lose but our chains!"

NICK HART

## ● Brighton

4,000 people attended the Black Lives Matter march. But the press only reported 1,000. Black Lives Matter is supported brilliantly in our city. There is no room for racism. We need to stand up and fight for what is right and to smash this evil government.

STEVE DEMPSTER

# Cardiff community fights nursery closure: Council must step in

DANI SMITH  
CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

The Little Fishes nursery has served the St Mellons community from the church premises for 30 years.

On 29 June, Socialist Party members gathered with local residents outside St Mellons Church of the Resurrection to protest its eviction and closure. It is widely recognised as one of the only affordable and quality childcare facilities in the area.

A petition has gained nearly 600 signatures. It could affect the

all-important start to education for many local children, and leave numerous nursery staff facing redundancy.

The church has responded to pleas to reconsider its decision by explaining that it is inappropriate to house the nursery in a church which is open to the public. However, steps can be taken to ensure children's safety within the church - a separate creche facility within the church is still permitted to run.

Local grandmother and campaigner, Georgina, told the Socialist

Party that the decision has caused uproar: "This left the nursery staff shell-shocked. Not only entering a time of great uncertainty with the coronavirus pandemic but also facing redundancy. It also left multiple parents questioning where they could place their children in affordable childcare."

The Socialist Party argues that all parents should be able to access decent and affordable childcare, and that all children are entitled to a solid start to their education.

A survey by Coram family and

childcare trust found that childcare costs have risen by 5% in the last year alone, and the current systems of childcare support, such as Flying Start in Wales, are complicated and difficult to navigate. This feeling was echoed by parents who attended Wednesday's demonstration.

All childcare services should be fully funded and run under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users. Therefore, the Socialist Party demands that Cardiff Council work with the nursery

workers and concerned parents to find a solution to this problem.

Several councillors have responded to emails regarding the nursery closure saying that they will investigate the situation and 'try' and find an outcome that satisfies all parties. Parents and workers must not be fobbed off!

If the church will not reconsider the eviction, then the council must find alternative premises so Little Fishes nursery can continue to serve the parents and children of St Mellons.



# Capitalism and corruption go hand in hand



Maurice/CC

DAVE CARR  
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Can a leopard change its spots? Can a Tory MP stop taking cash for favours?

Not if allegations against government housing secretary Robert Jenrick prove correct.

Jenrick approved a planning decision in January, overruling inspectors, to allow former Daily Express magnate Richard Desmond to build 1,500 luxury homes on an old print works site in east London.

The timing of the decision avoided a surcharge (Community Infrastructure Levy) being imposed by Tower Hamlets council. 12 days later Desmond bunged the Tory party £12,000 - a paltry sum from a billionaire who had just dodged paying £40 million.

## Thank you

In an apparent thank you email, Desmond told Jenrick: "We appreciate the speed as we don't want to give Marxists a load of doe [sic] for nothing!" A bizarre description of cuts-making Tower Hamlets Labour council.

In a later twist to the story, Desmond claimed that Labour's London Mayor Sadiq Khan had earlier promised to fast track the development if Desmond agreed to 35% affordable housing.

And it has been reported that back in 2010, Boris Johnson, when London Mayor, was initially approached by Desmond about obtaining planning permission - "without spending loads of money" - at the east London site. Apparently, Johnson obliged.

Jenrick, of course, has denied impropriety and has refused to resign. The Cabinet Secretary Mark Sedwill (who in a behind the scenes run-in with Boris Johnson's eminence grise, Dominic Cummings, has now 'stood down') dismissed Labour's call for an inquiry, and Boris Johnson considers the matter "closed". But instead of

campaigning for Jenrick's removal, Labour leader Keir Starmer sacked his shadow education spokesperson Rebecca Long-Bailey, and agreed to Johnson's call to support the premature opening of schools.

Meanwhile, it's also been revealed that Jenrick, when exchequer secretary, had met with 'family friend' Israeli billionaire Idan Ofer, who was lobbying for government support for his ailing mining company. Ofer later donated £10,000 to the Tory party.

But Jenrick's reportedly dodgy dealings are not unique. Health secretary Matt Hancock too has 'questions to answer' after intervening on behalf of Tory party donors to block a housing development near Newmarket racecourse in his constituency.

## Scandal after scandal

None of this comes as a surprise. Readers may remember the 'cash-for-questions' political scandal of the 1990s involving Tory MPs, and the 'cash for influence' scandals involving Labour peers and Labour MPs in 2009 and 2010, as well as the 2007 'cash for honours' scandal involving Tony Blair. And not forgetting of course the cross-party MPs' 'expenses scandal' in 2009.

Capitalism and corruption go hand in hand. That's why the workers' movement needs working-class representatives, subject to recall and paid a worker's wage, with all necessary expenses open to scrutiny.

Socialist Party member and former Militant-supporting Labour MP Dave Nellist used to regularly circulate to trade unions and labour movement bodies his full parliamentary expenses record to ensure political accountability.

● See 'Ending MPs' expenses scandal requires socialist change' and 'For workers' MPs on a worker's wage' on [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)



# Leeds City Council in danger of bankruptcy

## How the trade union movement should fight back

IAIN DALTON  
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

The Covid-19 crisis has pushed councils up and down the country into a new financial crisis. The Centre for Progressive Policy thinktank expects eight out of ten tier-one local authorities to face the threat of bankruptcy. Labour-led Leeds City Council is the biggest of the councils to publicly raise this possibility.

With business rates suspended for the year, and drops in council tax payments likely due to job losses and pay cuts under furlough schemes, as well as charges for parking and gyms suspended at present, the council faces a big drop in income.

Despite pledging at the outset of the crisis to 'do whatever is necessary', the little over £40 million pledged in emergency government funding comes nowhere near meeting the projected shortfall which is just shy of £200 million. While this year the budget is estimated to have a £60 million shortfall, the 2021-22 budget is currently projected to have a £120 million shortfall!

This comes on top of a decade of cuts, with the council already planning to make £80 million in 'savings' over the next few years. According to the council's own figures, the cuts

in central government core funding amount to £1.7 billion in total over the last decade. If, instead of implementing these cuts, the council had fought them, it would be in a far better place to deal with this crisis.

The cuts have been painful, with around 3,200 full-time equivalent jobs going. One council shop steward explained how, in the last five years, the team he was part of in the council has halved, while still expected to carry out the same work, receiving no, or below-inflation, pay rises.

## No campaign

The council has made a number of demands on the government, including £59.9 million of additional funding to help balance the budget. But these have just been confined to letters to the government, with no strategy of mobilising a campaign to achieve this demand. Instead, the council is talking about the chief financial officer issuing a section 114 bankruptcy notice, calling for an immediate stop to non-statutory spending, and passing an emergency budget this summer. New notices of redundancies have been issued to local government unions.

Instead of looking at a new cuts budget, the council leadership should instruct officers to look at all options available to defend jobs,

terms and conditions, and services, including reserves and borrowing powers, if necessary. Labour councillors who are serious about fighting austerity should pledge not to vote for any cuts.

Given the huge numbers of councils finding themselves in a similar position, those Labour-led councils like Leeds should convene a conference to discuss a strategy of how they could fight for the funding they need to protect jobs and services.

Leeds Socialist Party members hold important positions within Leeds Trade Union Council, the local body bringing trade unions together in the city. We will be arguing to build on the struggle we have developed in recent years linking up with community campaigns - such as a successful parents campaign to stop cuts to 16+ special educational needs and disability student school transport.

A campaign to fight this new round of cuts, drawing together local government trade unions, in particular, alongside the wider trade union movement and community groups, is necessary. This should start with a mass lobby of any council meeting discussing a new cuts budget, preparing for strike action against redundancies if necessary.



## 75th anniversary of the Attlee Labour government

# PIONEERING REFORMS UNDERCUT BY ADHERENCE TO CAPITALISM

TOM BALDWIN

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

**T**he end of World War Two left behind a world in upheaval. Demobilised troops and a war-weary population demanded a better future. Resistance movements in Europe published programmes demanding nationalisation. Workers' strikes broke out across the capitalist West. Former colonies struggled for freedom. The Stalinist USSR emerged from the war strengthened and, despite being controlled by a dictatorial bureaucracy, provided a model for those looking to break with capitalism. Virtually no part of the world was untouched by a revolutionary mood.

It was against this backdrop that Labour won a landslide election victory in 1945. Workers were determined not to return to poverty, poor housing and health. Despite being posed as 'the man who beat the Nazis' - and saying Labour "would have to fall back on some form of a Gestapo" to impose socialism - Churchill was decisively booted out of office at the first opportunity.

The 1945 government, led by Clement Attlee, remains the most radical reforming Labour government ever. Unfortunately, that says as much about the competition for that title as it does for the Attlee government itself.

While the Labour Party at the time declared itself to be a 'socialist party', and had a working-class membership and base of support, its leaders were drawn mainly from the right of the party, and were wedded to maintaining capitalism. Reforms by the Attlee government went as far as they did because of pressure and struggles from below.

### Reforms

Nonetheless, the reforms were massive achievements for the working class and improved the lives of millions. Large sections of industry were nationalised, council housing was built, and the welfare state was constructed, with the NHS as its jewel in the crown.

However, the refusal of the Labour leaders to break with capitalism meant that the gains made were constrained by the demands of the profit system. Most of the reforms have now been taken back, a process that began even while the post-war Labour government was still in power.

Britain in 1945 was faced with a multitude of economic problems. Large swathes of housing and industry had been destroyed by bombing. The supply of goods from the US

through their costly wartime 'Lend-Lease' policy came to an end. War had been expensive, driving a rise in the national debt from £760 million to £3.5 billion (the equivalent of £152 billion today). Great expense was poured into maintaining a crumbling empire, while the country was unable to compete with the US as a global power. The economy only recovered to pre-war levels in the 1950s.

Labour nationalised key sections of the economy, including coal, steel, the railways and the Bank of England. These measures were popular with the working class, who wanted to be able to get rid of greedy bosses, and to direct the economy in their own interests.

The intense drive for profit in the private coal industry meant miners were exposed to extremely dangerous conditions. The hope was that public ownership would bring an end to such abuses.

### Rescuing capitalism

Labour's leadership however viewed these nationalisations differently. State intervention was needed to rescue important parts of the capitalist economy and help rebuild after the devastation of war. They were also pushed into carrying out reforms in order to try and prevent a movement for revolutionary change.

They ensured that reforms remained within certain limits. Nationalised industries were not controlled by workers but by the former heads of private firms. The public sector remained a minority of the economy and was dictated to by the needs of the privately-owned majority.

Had the largest parts of the economy been taken over and placed under the control of workers, production could have been democratically planned. All the wealth of society could have been used to improve people's lives, without the capitalists taking their pound of flesh.

As it was, the economy was left at the mercy of capitalist profiteering, and shortages remained. The immediate post-war period was known as the 'age of austerity'. Rationing continued (until 1954) and was even tightened; bread was rationed which hadn't been the case during the war.

Hemmed in by its adherence to capitalism, the government was unable to afford what was needed to fulfil the popular desire for change. Income tax for workers stayed high to try and plug the gap.

The government borrowed \$3.75 billion from the US and received a further \$3.2 billion from their Marshall Aid programme (see 'A new



Labour PM Clement Attlee (right), along with right-wing Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin (centre) in 1946 photo archives.gov.nz/CC

world order - global reconstruction after World War Two' at socialist-party.org.uk), at the cost of removing trade barriers for American firms.



**Had the largest parts of the economy been taken over and placed under the control of workers, production could have been democratically planned**

House building, while huge by today's standards, was not fast enough to meet demand. There was a shortage of 1.5 million homes by 1951, and slum conditions still remained in major cities.

The idea of an NHS that was completely free at the point of use began to be eroded as early as 1951, just three years after its foundation. The introduction of charges for glasses and false teeth led to NHS founder Nye Bevan and other left-leaning ministers walking out of the government.

While the 1945 government made big domestic reforms, its foreign policy more clearly revealed its capitalist credentials. Despite its dwindling empire, Britain continued to pursue an imperialist agenda.

Forced to concede independence to India, it oversaw the bloody partition of the subcontinent. Troops were sent to crush movements in different parts of the world, including the communist-led resistance in Greece.

Britain became increasingly subordinate to US imperialism, joining the Korean War at its behest in 1950, and helping to found Nato. Labour began pursuing nuclear weapons almost as soon as it entered office, diverting enormous resources away from the fledgling welfare state.

Labour was reelected in 1950 with a reduced majority, but was forced to call another election the following year after the resignation of Bevan. It was defeated by Churchill's Tories despite having won more votes. In fact, its 48.8% remains the highest share of the vote achieved by any party in Britain.

Because the reforms made by the Attlee government remained within a capitalist framework they have been susceptible to attack from the bosses and their representatives.

Some were quickly reversed by the Conservatives, such as iron and steel privatisation in 1955. The NHS still exists, but has been battered by successive cuts and privatisations (see pages 8-9).

While the 1945 government ultimately protected capitalism, it was forced to concede huge reforms by Labour's working-class base, and by struggles in wider society. Today, Labour members don't have the same degree of influence over the party's leadership.

The undemocratic constitutional reforms made by Blair were not fundamentally changed under Corbyn. Keir Starmer is now taking Labour back to being an out-and-out capitalist party (see page 2).

We need a new mass party that represents the working class. But it must learn from the past. Accepting the logic of capitalism restricts the scope of changes that can be made, because profit for the bosses comes first.

The desire for change that workers expressed in the 1945 election could only have been realised in a complete and permanent way by socialist planning of the economy. 75 years on, with capitalism deep in crisis, the Socialist Party's socialist programme is needed more than ever.



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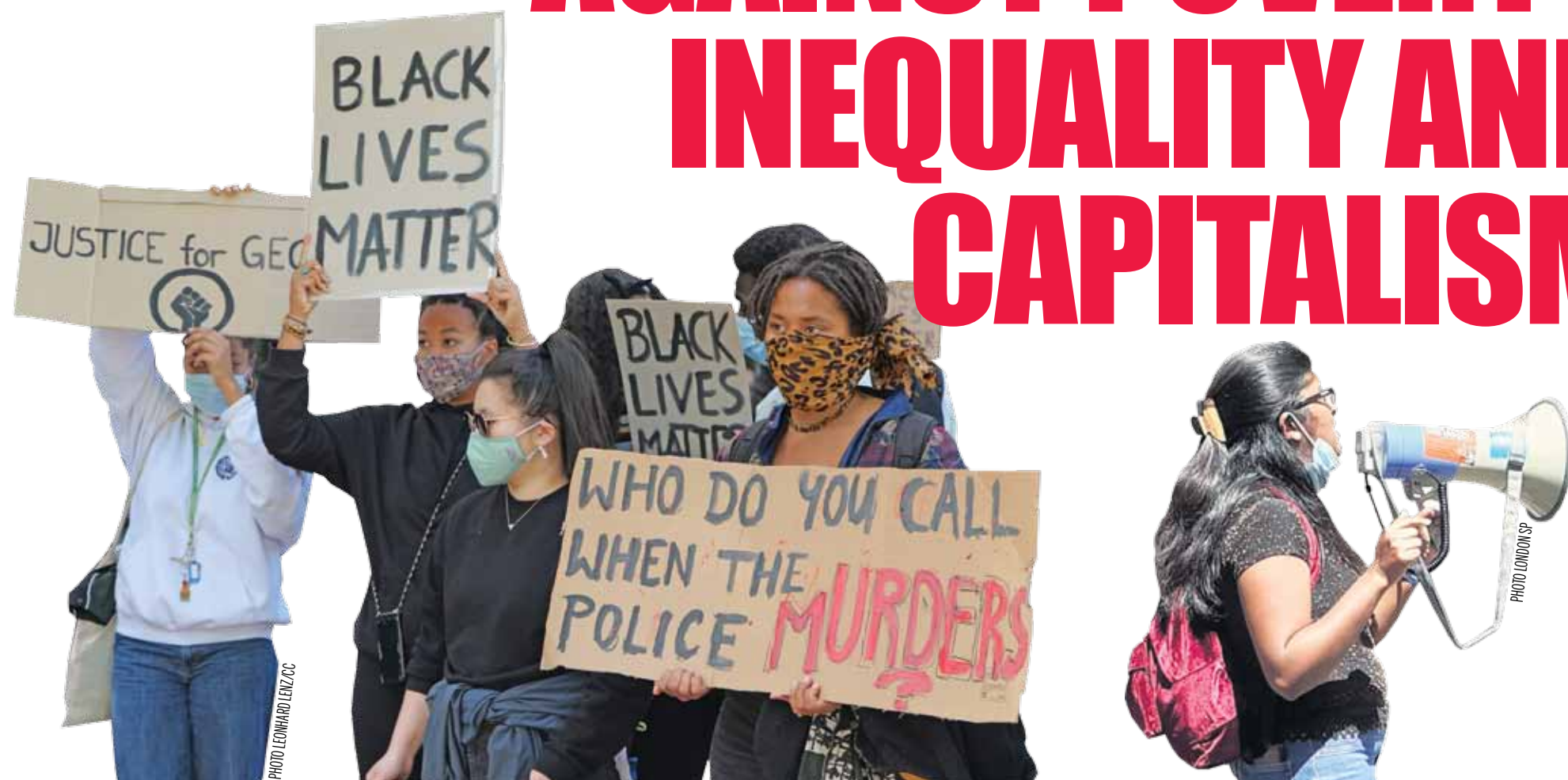
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formerly **Militant**

## Protests and gatherings are not a crime

# BUILD A MASS MOVEMENT AGAINST POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND CAPITALISM



**STEVE SCORE**  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

**A**mid confused messages as the government further eases the lockdown (but not in Leicester), police chiefs reportedly fear mass social unrest.

The huge tensions over inequality, job losses and lack of future prospects - especially for young people - could feed into further mass protests following on from the Black Lives Matter ones, and also the possibility of riots in some cities.

After Tory MPs such as Priti Patel called for a police crackdown on Black Lives Matter protests, some police chiefs who, let's be clear, haven't hesitated to use force against

protesters in other circumstances in the past, pushed back.

The Tories are preparing the way to crack down generally on future protests and strikes. But police bosses understood that attacking the demonstrations at this time would massively ramp up tensions and result in protests on an even bigger scale. However, there is likely to be further pressure from the Tories to get tough on what they call 'disorder'.

The media has been full of reports of raves, mass street parties and violence at various public gatherings, many of which have been broken up by police action. This is partly an attempt to shift blame for continued coronavirus outbreaks onto demonstrators and

working-class young people who have responded to the overall government message that the lockdown is ending.

This is utter hypocrisy considering the fact that millions have been sent back to work, often in unsafe conditions; commuters are forced to take public transport in close proximity with others; air passengers will be allowed to sit in a small cabin for hours with hundreds of others; and schools have been opened up to more pupils against the advice of education unions.

Professor Tim Newburn from the London School of Economics, quoted in the Guardian, appropriately compared today to the 2011 inner city riots: "Young people felt very much that their lives were being very heavily

constrained and surveilled and policed, and they saw more privileged people getting away with all sorts. It was a morally divided world. And we see with Covid, that social and racial injustice doubles down - that it's the poorest with least choices who are the ones people make negative moral judgments about or criminalise."

As the furlough scheme ends, even more people are likely to be thrown on the dole to add to the poverty exacerbated by the Covid crisis. We need to build a mass working-class movement, including young people and trade unions, that can tackle those injustices and inequalities, demand democratic community control over the police, and end capitalism.

**A SOCIALIST RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS**  
▶▶▶ [socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus](https://socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus)

**WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS**  
▶▶▶ see column on p3



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