Thousands of jobs already destroyed. Thousands more announced almost every day. The ‘job retention scheme’ is turning into a jobs haemorrhage as the government starts to wind it down, with a view to scrapping it in October.

Now many profit-rich companies which took the furlough cash are preparing to dump thousands of workers on the dole. The scheme is being revealed as the bosses’ bailout it always was.

As speaker after speaker at the National Shop Stewards Network conference on 4 July said, trade unions must fight every job cut and every pay cut. Workers must not pay for coronavirus (see p8–9).

The Tories have shown they are not acting in the ‘national interest’. They represent the interests of big business looking to protect their profits and make workers pay the price for the new economic crisis - with cuts to jobs, pay, working conditions, benefits and pensions.

The Socialist Party calls for a mass fightback led by the trade unions to resist all job cuts. We have seen thousands join the unions in recent weeks to protect themselves at work.

With a bold lead this deeply unpopular government could be pushed back. That means fighting for clear socialist policies that can unite the working class and offer a way forward to build a socialist alternative to a new economic depression.

We call for the work to be shared out with no loss of pay to ensure full employment. Young people don’t need a few weeks’ “retraining” on make-work schemes, but real apprenticeships on trade union rates of pay. The minimum wage should be immediately raised to £12 an hour - £15 in London.

We need free education and a mass programme of public works to build affordable council housing, schools, hospitals and transport infrastructure. A ‘green new deal’ could create socially useful jobs and protect the environment, but it has to be fully funded, not the paltry sum proposed by Rishi Sunak, and democratically controlled by the trade unions - a socialist green new deal.

The financial books of any company declaring job cuts and closures should be opened to trade union and workers’ inspection, and major companies nationalised under democratic workers’ control and management to defend workers’ jobs.

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the complete inability of big business and their political representatives to keep us safe and meet the needs of working-class people.

Now the economic crisis is further revealing that the system they represent cannot guarantee us jobs, pay, decent working conditions and public services.

The fight to defend every job must be linked to the fight for a socialist plan of production. This means taking the main industries and financial institutions out of the hands of those interested only in profit, enabling democratic working-class control and decision making over how the economy and society can best be organised to meet the needs of the majority.
FEATURE
socialistparty.org.uk 9-15 July 2020

Youth revolt in defence of the working-class

New young people face rising unemployment because of coronavirus. We need a fighting trade union movement, clear strategies and fighting trade unionists, to defend young people, jobs and infrastructure. Workshops will be on a first-come-first-served basis, to provide good quality homes and local services. 

For a mass workers’ party drawing together workers, young people and women’s struggles. For a socialist future with power in the hands of all and not a tiny super-rich few. Our demands include...

MASS WORKERS’ PARTY

To end police harassment.

No to imperialist wars and environmental pollution.

Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For a powerful trade union movement, fighting trade unionists, job security and a new deal for young people. 

End police harassment.

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End police harassment.
Homerton hospital workers deserve equal pay and conditions

BRIAN DEBUS
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Management at Homerton Hospital in Hackney, east London, has outraged staff by insisting that outsourcing and inferior pay and conditions for ancillary workers will go on. The trust has decided to sign a new five-year contract with multinational privateer ISS.

This is despite a big campaign by staff and unions to bring these 300 workers back in-house. Since then, 170 doctors at Homerton have written an open letter to the trust. They call on trust bosses to rethinks and put ISS staff on the same terms and conditions as NHS staff.

The trust says the best it can offer ISS staff is a contract that guarantees the London Living Wage throughout. This is nearly £1,500 less per year than what staff would earn on the lowest NHS pay band. And that’s before you take into account enhanced rates, for weekend and night working, and so on.

Staff unions are sceptical about this. When the current five-year contract came in, ISS assured workers that pay would be at least the London Living Wage throughout. But many staff haven’t received this rate for nearly half the contract! So how can members trust ISS?

Many workers are still owed £1,100 to £2,100 back pay, depending on their contract. What has happened to that money?

Another scandal: around half of ISS staff receive no occupational sick pay. This leaves them scraping around to survive on statutory sick pay. Statutory sick pay isn’t even payable for the first three days off work. After that, workers get a maximum of £95.85 a week - equivalent to wages of just £2.56 an hour.

The idea of forcing workers to choose between coming to work sick, or not being able to pay their rent and bills, is brutal. So is the financial disaster faced by anyone who has a serious illness and needs more than a few days off.

But in a hospital, this is also a public health hazard. How can you control infection when your staff cannot afford to go off sick?

The trust is apparently considering adding proper sick pay to the contract. But why is this the limit of bosses’ ambition? ISS staff at Homerton deserve equal pay and conditions with their NHS-employed colleagues.

Meanwhile, Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement have shone a light on capitalism’s institutional racism. The NHS has pledged many times to tackle this. The ISS workforce is nearly 80% black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME).

The trust could use the opportunity of the contract ending to begin addressing these very real inequalities. Instead, bosses are choosing to ride roughshod over the rights of staff, and enshrine economic inequality for a largely BAME section of the workforce for a further five years.

The reason? To save money. Instead, we say workers should be guaranteed decent and equal pay and conditions, and a campaign initiated for additional resources as needed.

Socialist Party members in Hackney stand in solidarity with all workers at Homerton Hospital. We are fighting for:

● All staff and services to be brought back in-house - end all outsourcing and privatisation
● Pay rises and NHS pay and conditions for all workers in the health service
● Reverse the cuts - full funding of our NHS and all public services

Join the fightback
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8777 or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more about joining us today!
by has there been a spike in people testing positive for Covid-19 in Leicester? It is most prevalent in areas that have a thriving underworld of sweatshops.

Investigations have highlighted just how many knew already: that Leicester’s garment industry is a murky place. Many factories employ workers on slave wages of around $4 to $5.50 an hour. £5 an hour is considered a good wage.

Many of these workers live in extremely overcrowded conditions. Parts of Leicester are among the most overcrowded in the UK outside of London, according to the 2011 census. Up to 20 factory workers can share a small terrace house.

Some homes are owned by the employers, giving bosses power over nearly all aspects of their lives. Most employees are from the black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME), including Eastern European, A number do not have documented resident status.

Much of this underbelly of the Leicester economy continued operating during the lockdown at 100% capacity. The factories were fulfilling orders. The government knew about this, and informed Leicester’s Labour mayor. Neither did anything.

Boohoo Group Ltd is a fashion company which reportedly relies on East Midlands sweatshops. Boohoo accounts for 78-80% of garment production in Leicester, and sources 60-70% of its products from Leicester, according to campaign group Labour Behind the Label. This apparently increased in recent weeks, to around 80%, as Boohoo quickly adapted to changing requirements during lockdown.

Labour Behind the Label has reported that workers who tested positive for Covid-19 were required to work throughout their sickness in order to fulfill orders. Some work in more than one factory.

Recent revelations of its sweatshops have caused some problems for Boohoo. On 6 July the company’s shares fell by 23%.

Health and safety

Garment manufacturing is a major industry in Leicester, with over 1,000 known sites, excluding homeworking. Health and safety is rarely on the employers’ agenda. Social distancing?

Forget it.

The dilapidated Imperial Typewriter building, where a famous strike took place in the 1970s against blatant racist practices, now houses a strike that used to supply companies like McVitie’s. There is no water or power. Some employees have to use large boilers to heat their workspaces, in order to keep them warm. Workers are only given one piece of bread a day. Some workers have had to sleep on the floor.

Many of these workers live in extremely overcrowded conditions. Leicester has brought this shady world into wider attention, it has been known about for a long time. The line taken by government, local and national, has been to do nothing in case it’s an immigration issue.

Poverty breeds coronavirus. 41% of Leicester’s children officially live in poverty. In 2014, the Office for National Statistics said Leicester had the lowest disposable income in the country - £5,000 a year less than the national average. No wonder people are forced to go to work in unsafe conditions.

Is this all that capitalism has to offer? Doing nothing means that people have got ill, some will die, schools have had to close, and the local economy has been shut down before it ever got to reopen.

What is happening in Leicester will happen elsewhere. It’s the direct result of successive governments cutting back health and safety inspections, failing to enforce the minimum wage, and otherwise worsening the living and working conditions of the working class.

Labour-controlled Leicester City Council is also culpable for ignoring what has been going on. It has failed to defend workers’ rights.

Larger food manufacturers have had outbreaks too: Walkers Crisps, the Pladis Biscuit factory that makes McVitie’s biscuits, and Samworth Brothers - a union-busting firm. All mainly employ migrant and BAME workers who are more vulnerable.

There are many dangers. The racist right will blame the increases in Covid-19 on BAME and migrant workers themselves. But they are the victims of a system of extreme exploitation, where there has been little choice but to work in unsafe conditions.

Work or don’t feed your family. Work or become homeless. The same employers and capitalist politicians responsible for ripping off workers in textile sweatshops have been ripping off the rest of the working class too.

The Socialist Party calls for:

- A massive trade union recruitment campaign to unionise these workers on reduced membership rates. Leafleting homes in the affected areas could be a start. Publicise the conditions and organise campaigns among members where appropriate. Call for solidarity action from unemployment forces, like transport and postal workers.

- An amnesty for all migrant workers from deportation and other punitive measures so they are not afraid to report abuses.

- Close down the sweatshops and create new, safe, publicly owned workplaces. Job guarantees for all workers. If needed, share out the work with no loss of pay. Extend democratic workers’ control and management of publicly owned industry.

- Pay a living wage! No one should earn less than £12 an hour, or £15 in London, as steps towards a real living wage.

- The big retailers who buy and sell these garments knew about this extreme exploitation. Nationalise the garment industry under democratic workers’ control and management to prevent future abuses.
Southampton UCU: election victory for combative rank and file

An overwhelming victory for rank and file activists is the result of the Southampton UCU (perSonal CapaCity) ballot. Southampton UCU: election victory for combative rank and file...
The NSSN conference was the last pre-lockdown strike to take place in Tower Hamlets, east London, with a Labour council in power and it was a story of real solidarity. A well-attended workshop of the NSSN fought back against the cuts to social care and for the needs of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) communities.

The session was chaired by Lawan Puthe, Socialist Party member, with contributions from Jared Wood, Socialist Party member; Amy Murphy, Socialist Party member; and Stuart摊, Socialist Party member, and with contributions from Howard Beckett, Unite assistant general secretary; and Amie muscle, bus driver and president of the retail workers' union, as key workers without insurance and benefits.

The conference sent a message of solidarity to Tower Hamlets council workers on the picket line, as key workers without insurance and benefits.

The NSSN conference in the current circumstances. The NSSN national shop stewards network (NSSN) brings together rank-and-file workers across the country, which is the NSSN's core business, to create a joint platform and make a plan for action. The conference was held online and was attended by thousands of workers from across the country, who are members of the NSSN.

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Socialist party.org.uk

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

- editors@socialistparty.org.uk
- or, if you're not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

Worse than useless

Anneliese Dodds, Labour’s shadow chancellor, was asked on the Andrew Marr show, does Labour support all the care workers in this country coming back under government control, to nationalise them?

Do you think they should all work for one regulated employer, i.e. the government? She didn’t agree.

Marr said Labour (Jeremy Corbyn) once supported a nationalised care sector. She still wouldn’t agree.

Privatised care workers, due to not receiving sick pay, actually carried the virus into care homes.

There’s no point in Keir Starmer’s Labour Party if, after a national scandal, it can’t simply call for the nationalisation of care. She’s useless.

NANCY TAFFE
WALTHAM FOREST, LONDON

See ‘No going back: Nationalise social care’ on opposite page.

Jobs and council homes not gentrification

Southampton one-bedroom flat £195,000. Who can afford that? Very few.

Nuffield Southampton Theatres to close with loss of 86 jobs

Why isn’t the council stepping in with its £200 million property fund? Can’t we show this useless Tory government there is an alternative to an economic recession?

Southampton council should get show-ready with a programme to defend jobs and services, and restore the £140 million government funding stolen from the council by the Tories since 2010, and build affordable council housing for all.

The council could show it had a different vision to Tory inequality.

NICK GUYTE
SOUTHAMPTON

NHS 72nd anniversary

The NHS is 72. The hospital my mum works at delivered the first NHS baby.

Millions since have benefited from healthcare provided for need and not on ability to pay. The NHS was founded not as a charity or a business, but as a publicly owned service paid for by everyone, for everyone.

During the coronavirus pandemic, NHS workers have played an absolutely vital role in less than ideal conditions.

Hundreds have died from the virus.

They were betrayed by lack of PPE and testing. The NHS went into the pandemic understaffed from a decade of cuts that has eroded the number of hospital beds.

We must campaign for a 50% pay rise for all NHS workers, the reintroduction of NHS student bursaries and kicking out profiteers from the health service. We cannot go back to how it was before.

BEN GARDE
SOUTHAMPTON

Breathtaking hypocrisy - Boris Johnson joins the national clap for the NHS

Healthcare workers need a decent pay rise: an investment in extra staff to ease their workload; a properly funded, publicly-run health service free of profiteers; a nationalised pharmaceutical industry that takes research and development seriously; investment in our social care system to make it fit for purpose for our loved ones.

That’s how we thank our NHS.

KAREN SEYMOUR
MANSFIELD

Leeds NHS protests were not just another clap that Boris Johnson could join in on, but put forward demands about decent pay, kicking private companies out and having a properly funded NHS.

TANIS BELSHAW-WRAY
LEEDS

Tories talk through Telegraph

Why are government ministers making announcements about lockdown changes through the Telegraph?

At the beginning of the pandemic they got called out because some of the articles were even behind a paywall. How can all people protect their health and follow the rules if you have to pay to know what they are?

The Telegraph got a backlash so made some, not all, of the articles free. Elected government ministers think its OK to make government announcements through a right-wing, big business paper rather than through the whole press. Even the BBC radio host was annoyed about it.

HELÉN PATISSON
ACTION, LONDON

Utilities sold off

All the utilities sold off by the Tories have put billions into the grubby hands of their profiteer friends. This money, in the bank accounts of the super-rich, dwarfs the piddling amount being promised by BoJo (see ‘Boris’ new big deal’ at socialistparty.org.uk).

We need to fight for the renationalisation of all our utilities, under democratic workers’ control, with compensation only given on proven need.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
GATESHEAD

COVID and PPE are big business

Business has declined no opportunity to flourish, capitalising on human misery, throughout the Covid-19 crisis and the scramble for PPE. Some firms have sourced substandard and flimsy masks in a rush to profit from people’s natural desire to protect themselves.

National retailers have been exposed for charging as much as £1 for very basic and single-use masks, which fail to conform to clinical standards. The result has been already-devastated household budgets strained further, mountains of waste littering streets, and a collective false sense of security.

The latest culprit is Tyne and Wear Metro rail, allowing its preferred vending partner Selecta to charge punters £3.70 for a pack of three masks which offer limited protection at best. Accompanied with a £5.30 day ticket, a whopping £9 for essential workers, commuting to increasingly scarce and dangerous employment.

WILLIAM JARRETT
NHS WORKER

Queen sacks government

The Australian high court has allowed the release of the Queen’s secret correspondence before the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975 (see ‘When the Queen’s representative sacked a government’ at socialistparty.org.uk).

Shows the role of the monarchy, when the chips are down, they will be used against us.

ALEX GOULEAS
PADDOCK WOOD, LONDON

When I worked in a library

All the damage done by the Tories was predicated on the Blair years, virtually all of it. The Blair ‘reforms’ privatised and smashed up the safety net; the consequences were to be felt by future generations.

When I worked for the library service, we used to have a room out the back that stocked all the books which were the basics of the housebound service. It had books for the blind, the disabled and the elderly. We supplemented it with books from the whole service.

We all had our regulars. We sent notes to them and they sent notes to us about what books they liked or didn’t.

I remember one Christmas, one woman had missed the doorbell and missed her 48(!) books over Christmas.

She was crying down the phone as she needed her books like others need medicine. She was on her own and never had a tele. When I was sorting books out the back, I used to get visited by a middle-aged woman - a trade unionist for the home care workers. She too loved her job and felt important in her work.

She administered day care for people in their own homes who came out of hospital. We were both trade union organisers, fighting to defend the most delicate of services under the then Blair government.

Time for a new workers’ party.

A LIBRARY WORKER WHOSE JOB WAS CUT BY A LABOUR COUNCIL.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

July-August issue includes...

- #BLM rising - a movement for system change
- The origins of racism
- A new era begins

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Paper subscription £3 a month, e-subscription £2.50
The anarchic free-market capitalism has been brutally exposed to millions through its inability to combat the Covid-19 pandemic in the richest countries on the planet. This is highlighted clearly - and tragically - in the social care sector in England and Wales. The lives of thousands of the most disadvantaged in society have been sacrificed in the pursuit of maintaining private profits. Always the poor relation to the NHS, this has been devastatingly confirmed by events.

While health settings received a third of the number of eye protectors from central government, care homes received 5%: hospitals received three-quarters of gloves required from central stocks, care homes received 8%; and care homes received no gowns from central stocks.

By May, central government’s online PPE system was catering for about 1,400 providers. There are over 50,000 primary, social care and community care providers across Britain!

The shortage of PPE meant some care homes were paying more than £1,000 a day for masks! Others - without such resources - just forced staff to continue unprotected. One care home I came across set its own ‘rules’ so staff were only provided with PPE if residents displayed separate Covid-19 symptoms - one symptom was insufficient!

Testing, which should have been mandatory for all care staff from day one of the pandemic, was virtually non-existent. It may never be known how many people have died - and continue to die - through this failure of the Tory government.

Public funds

The trade unions need now to take stock of their failures over decades to significantly organise social care workers. The lack of planning in social care is its stand-out characteristic. In 1979 two-thirds of care was NHS or council-run, but now 84% is for-profit.

No one seeking to run a comprehensive, joined-up service would start from suggesting there be tens of thousands of different employers! In 2018 there were around 18,500 organisations across 39,000 care-providing locations in England alone. And yet, big business with all its money-grabbing has a firm foothold.

Health and Social Care Workforce plan, for 17,000 residents, has 62 companies, including 19 registered offshore, with the parent company based in the Cayman Islands. It paid a £6 million dividend to shareholders in the year to September 2019 - down from a total of £48.5 million in 2017 and 2018 - though only some accounts are publicly visible, making it impossible to tell whether more money is flowing out of the company.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy chief executive Rob Whiteman said: “It’s time for the government to stop treating social care like the poor relation and provide this critical sector, which cares for the most vulnerable people in society, with the resources and long-overdue reform it needs.”

While the Chief Executive at the Health Foundation, Dr Jennifer Dixon, called on the government “to ensure that those who already face most disadvantage do not continue paying the highest price [by seizing] this moment to implement a national health inequalities strategy.”

Not all are as demanding. A Guardian editorial on the government edict to move patients from hospitals to care homes without the necessary safeguards, which caused a great number of the 20,000 more deaths than would normally have been expected in care homes, simply said: “Boris Johnson needs to say sorry for this deadly failure to protect the elderly”. Millions will say he needs to resign not just apologise.

Integrated health and care

But none of these demands will tackle the root of the problem. While social care, and health services in general, are run for profit, most of the failings exposed during this pandemic will recur.

Journalist Polly Toynbee, hardly a left winger, recently concurred: “After this, care needs to be renationalised, locally run with a single seamless NHS/care profession... the service needs to be free for rich and poor alike by the time they use it... There is no better time for brave reform, with care newly valued by all who have stood and clapped.”

The Socialist Party argues and embraces the demands of a publicly run, fully integrated health and care service, where resources, expertise and experience can be shared to the benefit of all, rather than the privileged few. It must be funded to the level where it can be run as a professional service, with staff health, safety and wellbeing properly protected through full training, with a career structure that would encourage staff to specialise and, of course, where decent living wages would be paid.

Charles Tallack, an assistant director at the Health Foundation, has said “Social care professionals are clearly undervalued and underpaid”.

He correctly predicts this “might create pressure to professionalise and improve pay and conditions.”

It’s often said care workers can take home more pay with a side-job career move into supermarket shelf-stacking. It is not intended as a put-down of shop workers, but to publicise the appalling pay levels social care work attracts. It highlights what capitalist society will get away with if workers’ organisations allow it. The unions - Unison, Unite and the GMB - need now to take stock of their failures over decades to significantly organise social care workers, specifically those working for private employers or in the voluntary sector.

Political change

Yes, they need to launch campaigns for more pay, for better conditions, for shorter hours. But they also need to mobilise social care workers into a much larger campaign for political change – for nationalisation, an integrated health and care service, and an end to big business and hedge fund profiteering on the backs of deteriorating health and ageing.

When the neoliberal think tank, the Adam Smith Institute, feels the need to comment in a recent report that “making social care free to everyone as part of the NHS is a non-starter and would be the largest nationalisation ever”, you know its time has come!

Millions are learning through bitter experience that capitalism can’t protect them. They need socialism. Social care workers will be a key force in transforming society.

If union and Labour Party leaders don’t listen, those workers will strive to transform the unions and build a new party of the working class, as a step towards ridding us of capitalism and building a socialist future.
Baldwin faced the familiar problem of being watched and followed. He knew that others, especially women, had to be very careful about where they went. He had been told that he was followed even into a New York cinema. His friends were very concerned about his safety. He had to take precautions to avoid being trapped in a place where he thought he might be recognized.

Baldwin was articulate and able to articulate this pain, but he was also aware of the hypocrisies of Christianity, as well as the way in which many white people in the US and the UK would deny the existence of racism or that there would be no possibility of a real change in attitudes. He spoke about a personal journey and a personal struggle, but also about the need for a wider movement.

Baldwin highlighted his experiences with people who understood and shared his experiences. However, he recognized that many people did not understand, and that he had to work to educate them.

Baldwin knew that the struggle against racism was not just about him, but about the struggle of entire communities. He saw the struggle against racism as a struggle for justice, equality, and dignity.

Baldwin also recognized the importance of community and solidarity in the struggle against racism. He knew that the fight against racism was not just a personal struggle, but a collective one.

Baldwin was aware of the ways in which racism was institutionalized and embedded in society. He saw the need for a fundamental change in the way society operates.

Baldwin was also aware of the ways in which racism was embedded in the legal system. He saw the need for a fundamental change in the way the law operates, and for an end to the institutionalization of racism in the criminal justice system.

Baldwin was a visionary, and his words continue to inspire those who fight against racism today. His legacy lives on, and his work remains relevant more than 50 years after his death.
Covid powers to close health and social care services without any formal consultation. This can only be interpreted as a power grab to better deliver a programme of closures and privatisation, which has been delayed as a result of grassroots and trade union campaigns for over a decade. The threats posed to Northern Ireland’s economy are stark. The aviation sector is under huge pressure. Flybe, the mainstay of Belfast City Airport, collapsed - casting a shadow over that airport’s future. Hundreds of jobs have been lost in the other major airport, Belfast International, with cutbacks by Easyjet and Jet2. The hugely significant aerospace and defence industry has already suffered major layoffs and remains under huge threat as the sector faced a potentially permanent global contraction.

The other two pillars of the economy, agriculture/food and pharmaceuticals, are hugely exposed to any adverse headwinds from Brexit. Should a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic reemerge in the context of a breakdown in trade negotiations between London and Brussels - an increasingly likely prospect - they too will face tremendous pressures.

Economic outlook
Northern Ireland’s economy faces a period of grave instability. Like everywhere else in this global downturn, there is an ever-growing ‘reserve army of labour’. The likelihood is, if the trade union movement does not take the lead in a fightback over jobs and living standards, then workers will struggle to avoid a sharp downward turn in conditions. Covid will be used by employers to further depress workers’ conditions and the neoliberal establishment will push forward with attempts to cut back on the vestigial public services. Running contrary to that is the growing numbers of workers turning to the trade unions - in part a new generation but also new sectors of the workforce. It seems likely that this will result in widening and deepening struggle in trade unions between militant workers and a conservative officialdom.

What seems even more likely, is that demands for nationalisation of industries will reinvigorate the demand for socialist politics which transcends the divisions which have marked previous politics. While it represents a colossal challenge, Covid has accelerated underlying trends in society, opening open the door to working-class politics which can prepare the way to build a mass party of workers with a socialist programme to challenge capitalism.
Thousands of protesters took to the streets of Hong Kong on 1 July on the 23rd anniversary of the handover of the city from the UK to the People’s Republic of China. The protest was called in response to Beijing’s decision to impose a new national security law on the city, which has been condemned by the international community as a violation of the “one country, two systems” principle that guarantees Hong Kong’s autonomy.

The new law, which came into effect on 1 July, gives the Chinese government the power to establish and administer a mechanism for investigating and prosecuting cases of secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces. The law also allows for the extradition of suspects from Hong Kong to mainland China.

The Chinese government has defended the new law as necessary to maintain national security and stability in Hong Kong. However, many people in Hong Kong and around the world have expressed concerns that the law will be used to suppress freedom of speech and other democratic rights.

The new security law has sparked a wave of arrests and detentions, with hundreds of people being held in custody. Many of those arrested are young activists and community leaders who have been involved in protests against the government’s policies.

The situation on the streets of Hong Kong has continued to escalate, with reports of clashes between protesters and police. The Chinese government has dismissed calls for dialogue and has instead increased its efforts to suppress dissent.

The international community has condemned the new security law and called for the release of those arrested. The US, UK, and other countries have imposed sanctions on Chinese officials and companies in response to the law.

The situation in Hong Kong remains volatile, with the risk of further violence and instability. The future of the territory’s democratic institutions and freedoms is uncertain, and the international community will continue to monitor the situation closely.

**Brave fighters persecuted by the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have shown enormous resilience and tenacity in refusing to accept dictatorship.**

Not long ago, Trump was calling Xi Jinping the “greatest leader in Chinese history.” According to his former security adviser, John Bolton, Trump considered that the herding of a million Uighurs into Chinese prison camps was “exactly the right thing to do!” That was when Trump was seeking a truce in the trade war between the world’s two major powers, so that China would buy more US products.

Now, in his battle for the White House, Trump portrays Xi as “the greatest enemy of the US.” Under US pressure, WhatsApp, Facebook and Telegram are ‘pausing’ cooperation with data requests from Hong Kong authorities.

China’s president Xi Jinping is not immune from criticism at home. The economy is experiencing its slowest growth for three decades, and a big rise in unemployment. Discontent is accumulating over both the state’s handling of the pandemic and the failure to eliminate mass poverty.

An aggressive policy over Hong Kong can be an attempt to galvanise support at home, as China’s naval exercises in waters around Vietnam, the Philippines, and the Paracel islands in the South China Sea.

China’s move to clamp down on Hong Kong may not go to the lengths of a full-scale military clampdown or ‘ Tiananmen solution’. If Beijing’s move to threaten maximum use of force succeeds in eliminating opposition on the streets of Hong Kong, and paralyses the struggle for even minimum basic democratic rights, the Chinese regime may not need to implement all the clauses of the new security law.

Just the very real threat has seen a number of leaders of the democracy movement emigrate. However, setting up a ‘parliament in exile’ will not solve the day-to-day problems of working people in Hong Kong. Appealing to the reactionary US or British ‘democratic’ governments will not take the movement forward.

Brave fighters persecuted by the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have shown enormous resilience and tenacity in refusing to accept dictatorship in any form. There are young people who are absolutely determined to stay in Hong Kong and carry on the fight.

Of course, there are times in history when the leadership of forces persecuted by the state have to seek refuge abroad, to live to fight another day. But the flight of the leaders of the pro-democracy movement indicates a lack of determination to conduct a fight to the finish.

**Struggle**

There have truly been elements of a revolutionary situation in Hong Kong in the past year. A few short strikes have taken place in the course of the battle for democracy among workers, including in the Health Service, on the docks and the transport network. But the independent unions have failed to make a clear call for general strike action.

The brave fighters on the streets have fought relentlessly in pursuit of democracy. How much more worthwhile if their bravery and preparedness to fight to the end was channelled by a workers’ party into a struggle against capitalism in Hong Kong, across the vast country of China and beyond.

The situation is crying out for a party wedded to the idea of state ownership of the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy, with truly democratic workers’ control and management of enterprises, the economy and of society as a whole, through democratically elected and controlled committees, and for genuine workers’ democracy.

Unless such a struggle is engaged, the Chinese dictatorship and US imperialism will continue to fight out their disagreements to the detriment of the wellbeing of all working-class and poor people.

*This article can be read in full on socialistworld.net*
Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak promised us all that the government would give the NHS “whatever it needs.” Now he’s refusing to stump up the cash.

NHS England has reportedly requested £10 billion to stay afloat during the next wave of Covid-19 and the hard winter months. Really, this should be a minimum, given the years of austerity and privatisation that emaciated the service before coronavirus. Sunak says no.

And what about frontline workers themselves? Health Secretary Matt Hancock has promised a “reward” for NHS staff. But he refuses to commit to the reward they most need and deserve - a decent pay rise and more staff. Meanwhile, Boris Johnson ineptly tried to blame mass deaths in care homes on care workers (see p3).

NHS workers spoke to the Socialist about the Tories’ treachery. “Yet another betrayal from this government of liars,” said one ancillary worker. “They will hand over billions to their mates in private companies like Serco - who fail again and again. The NHS ever since, and are doing everything they can to sell it off today.”

“The promised additional hiring was conducted through the back door, on a casual basis. We haven’t gained the reinforcements we need,” said porter William Jarrett.

Temporary contracts have lapsed. Workers who sacrificed their safety and fought valiantly alongside permanent staff have been sent home for good. Student nurses who cared for patients have been dismissed as worth a fraction of the value of their colleagues. Workers are burned out and exhausted, and totally demoralised by the prospect of an imminent second wave.

“We are tired but we are also angry. We’ve stood together as workers to fight this pandemic, despite the idiot behaviour of our government,” said radiographer Maggie Fricker.

“It’s made us aware of our strength, and we won’t be taken for granted. They think they can brush aside what we’ve been through and offer us nothing. They need to think again.”

“Shame on this Tory government - now trying to blame its sham-bolic response to Covid-19 on care workers,” said nurse Tom Hunt.

“How low can the Tories get, promising funding then trying to wriggle out of it with their smoke-and-mirror tactics? All care homes should be publicly owned, fully funded, democratically controlled, with decent pay and conditions for all workers.”

“Health workers had the NHS winter crisis - trying to treat patients with dignity, but without enough staff, beds or resources. Then Covid-19 hit like a bombshell, causing upheaval, anxiety, many to become ill and 300 to die,” said Jon Dale, secretary of the Unite union Nottinghamshire NHS workers’ branch.

“After all that, this year’s pay rise for an experienced Band 5 nurse is £42 a month - after a £400-a-month real-terms pay cut since 2010. Meanwhile, MPs have given themselves (yet another) £200-a-month pay rise.”

Health workers haven’t gone through what we have to be treated like this,” said porter Len Hockey. “We are angry at being put at risk and patronised. We are part of the six-million-strong trade union movement.

“This now needs to be met with preparation and organisation by our union leaders for national industrial action.”

Trade union action can force full funding.