

TORY SCHOOLS CHAOS

PAPER IMAGE: MACROVECTOR

UNIONS MUST FIGHT FOR SAFETY

SHEILA CAFFREY
TEACHER AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Schools and colleges have returned with bulging classrooms and packed corridors.

The establishment media's repeated photos over the summer - of three children sat spaced out on a carpet, or just two children in a computer suite - have been exposed as lies.

Classrooms of over 30 and corridors of 100 students, just separated with yellow tape, are the reality. School workers are calling for a mix of measures to help prevent further

cases - and a second wave, which many have predicted with the return of schools.

In June, 'bubbles' - group sizes the government suggests are safe for mixing in - were capped at 15. Many schools had much lower numbers than that.

However, the government has now lifted this. My primary classroom has 32 children in, and is joined with another the same size!

With lunchtime staff, cleaners and education support, we will have 14 members of staff who will be regularly in the classroom through the week. If one person tests positive, this could spread through the 78 people like wildfire.

In secondary schools and colleges, bubbles are containing whole year groups, which could be 200

young people, as well as the members of staff. This far exceeds the 30 we're told are safe to attend a wedding!

Social distancing in schools is a myth - and the government is still trying to portray it. Most children sit two to a desk, with desks in rows. To fit 30-plus in a classroom, there is space for narrow walkways, but certainly not one to two metres.

Contagion

Any sign of a cough or sniffle will be passed like a Mexican wave from one end to another before the child can even leave the classroom. This will only be exacerbated in winter months with the lack of ventilation in classrooms. Many only have tiny windows, and some are entirely sealed in.

Face coverings became a focus in August as the rise in cases in Scottish schools was becoming alarming. Several schools had already closed their doors after confirmed outbreaks.

The World Health Organisation says face coverings are essential. Scientists and health workers have been recommending them for some time.

But the incompetence and callousness of the government has yet again been shown. Rather than listening to the advice and evidence, the Tories put it on headteachers to decide, a week before return, trying to aim the backlash at schools rather than the government.

Education staff have been calling for testing in schools, with quick identification and then isolation of

bubbles, to prevent a second wave. Weekly tests for all staff would help find cases before symptoms show. The same should be available for children and families who can't access other testing facilities.

The government has provided tests to schools - but only a handful. This is not investing in safety! It is another attempt to create the illusion that they care. All they really care about is the profit demands of big business and getting the capitalist economy moving again.

Like everyone else, education staff can't wait for things to get back to normal. But these insufficient measures and the risk of infection put us further away from getting back to normal.

➤➤➤ CONTINUED ON P3

the**Socialist**
formerly Militant

Issue 1099
3-9 September 2020

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The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International
socialistparty.org.uk
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ISSN 1366-9621
Published by Socialist Publications,
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper
at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour
at Reach Printing Services

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

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

Demand a fightback from the TUC and unions

Come to NSSF 2020 Trades Union Congress online rally!

If thousands of students can force the Tories into a U-turn... think what 6.4 million workers organised in unions can do!

The threat to our jobs and pay means workers must demand a fighting programme from the unions and their umbrella organisation the Trades Union Congress. The National Shop Stewards Network is holding its annual eve-of-TUC Congress rally virtually - and it has never been more important.

Countless struggles by workers to make workplaces safe are being followed by trade unionists fighting attacks on our very livelihoods. Millions support NHS and social care workers demanding a 15% pay rise to start to claw back the pay stolen by a decade of pay freezes and cuts.

The pandemic has lifted the lid on the class inequalities in this profit-driven society. The anger and frustration, particularly of young people, has been shown by the incredible Black Lives Matter movement and victorious A-level protests.

The rally will feature leaders of fighting unions. There will also be an open mic for union members and reps to highlight their own struggles, appeal for solidarity and seek to link up the fightback.

Help put a fighting programme on the unions' agenda to take into workplaces and onto the streets. Join the rally! It's for all workers - it's not restricted to union reps.

The rally will be on Zoom and will go out live on social media. Full access details can be found in the NSSF weekly bulletin at shopstewards.net.

● **National Shop Stewards Network virtual rally for TUC Congress 2020**
● *Sunday 13 September, 1pm*
● *Details at shopstewards.net*



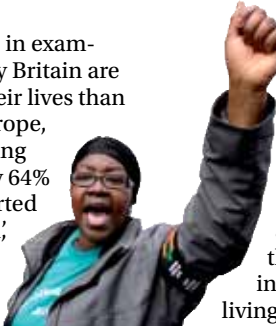
Outside TUC Congress in 2019, before the pandemic - the NSSF lobby of the TUC is the major left fringe event each year

● Just another brick in the wall

Even before Covid-19, poorer secondary school students were the equivalent of 18 months' learning behind better-off students. For disadvantaged primary kids, it was nine months, reports the Education Policy Institute.

Meanwhile, wealthy families' smaller class sizes and greater education resources mean the rich-poor gap has widened by 46% during lockdown. The National Foundation for Educational Research says even this is "likely to be an underestimate."

And young people in exam-factory, gig-economy Britain are less satisfied with their lives than anywhere else in Europe, finds the OECD - citing "fear of failure." Only 64% of 15-year-olds reported 'high life satisfaction', compared to 84% in Finland and 85% in Romania.



● Rashford's right on free meals

Man United forward Marcus Rashford has demanded the government further extend free food programmes for schools, holidays and pregnant women. In June, his stand helped push the Tories to extend free school meal vouchers beyond term-time.

Rashford says: "I remember the sound of my mum crying herself to sleep to this day, having worked a 14-hour shift, unsure how she was going to make ends meet." More and more working-class families know what he means.

The Socialist supports Rashford's call 100%. But we would caution that the big businesses in his "child food poverty taskforce" are also responsible for the poverty pay that causes hunger. He would do better advising workers to trust in their own strength, organised in fighting unions, to demand living wages as well.

● Furloughed furloughed

Job retention scheme subsidies are falling from 80% to 70% of wages, and due to stop at the end of October. The scheme still covers the wages of one in 12 workers. Arbitration service Acas reports that calls to its redundancy advice hotline nearly tripled in June and July.



● Tory tax dilemma

Treasury officials were quick to dismiss as "nonsense speculation" reports that Chancellor Rishi Sunak is considering multiple tax hikes to pay for Covid measures. Corporate profits, capital gains and inheritance were rumoured targets - but also pensions, internet sales and fuel.

Whatever happens in the November Budget, this shows the Tories' dilemma: hit their mates' profits with taxes on riches, or risk public revolt with austerity taxes? We say: tax the rich, nationalise the banks and big business - don't make the working class pay for the bosses' crisis.



JOHNSON IMAGE: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM/CC

Eviction ban extension not enough: make it longer, forgive the arrears!

JACK JEFFERY
SECRETARY, UNITE UNION HOUSING WORKERS' BRANCH

At the last minute, on 22 August, the government announced the eviction ban would continue for another four weeks, along with a temporary extension of the notice period to six months. Although this was welcome news to those at risk, it should be extended for a much longer period.

It also does little to address the underlying issues. Years of ever-increasing rents have left many tenants stretched and living month to month, with Office for National Statistics figures showing rents hitting a record high just before lockdown.

Research by Shelter has exposed the crippling financial impact of the pandemic. It has put 230,000 tenants at risk of eviction due to arrears, with 174,000 threatened with eviction by their agent or landlord.

This is only likely to increase as the furlough scheme unwinds, with a survey by the British Chamber of Commerce showing a third of companies are planning to make redundancies. If cash-strapped renters are already struggling to afford rents, there is no way they will be able to pay back arrears.

Corbyn v Starmer

That is what Jeremy Corbyn realised when he argued that all rent arrears during the pandemic should be forgiven. Unfortunately, as soon as Keir Starmer took over, he scrapped this policy, replacing it with one to allow tenants to pay back their arrears over two years.

When challenged, Labour's shadow housing minister Thangam Debbonaire said any policy to forgive arrears would be "un-Labour" as it places landlords at risk of "going bust"! But a quick look at this approach reveals it does nothing to support tenants. A tenant who has fallen just three months behind with rent would have to pay 12% more each month, on top of already unaffordable rent!



PAUL MATTSSON



All arrears accrued during the pandemic should be forgiven, with compensation only to small landlords, on the basis of proven need

All arrears accrued during the pandemic should be forgiven, with compensation only to small landlords, on the basis of proven need. Housing should be a right, not a privilege, and tenants should not have to pay for a housing crisis they didn't cause.

Short eviction reprieve is not enough

The Social Housing Action Campaign (Shac) protested on 23 August, just before the government's climbdown. A four-week extension to the eviction ban was won by action and protest. But it's not enough.

The impact of Covid and the economic crisis is going to last much longer. This Tory government has bailed out big business. If there is money for big business, then there can be money to build council homes, keep people in their homes, fight homelessness and keep housing co-ops above water.

Unsafe schools return shows need for fightback

►► CONTINUED FROM FRONT

There has been a marked increase in education staff handing in their notices, unable to return. Through the summer, internet chat rooms were full of questions over will-writing and alternative jobs. No one should have to choose between their livelihood and their life, but that is the choice many face faced with.

Schools are trying their best for their communities, wedged between a rock and a hard place. Schools have been browbeaten with conflicting messages from the government for six months.

This followed cuts to funding over many years; smaller classrooms built; outdoor spaces sold off,

preventing outdoor learning. Promises such as laptops for poorer students and money for tutoring either arrive late or not at all.

On the evening of Friday 28 August, the government sent its latest missive to schools. 40 more pages of what they should and should not be doing.

With some schools already returned, and others due to return in three days, this gave no allowance for workload over the bank holiday weekend. Instead it sent headteachers into a spin, as many desperately tried to rewrite procedures for the latest government demands.

None of this should surprise us. This incompetence and disregard

for ordinary people has been shown throughout the pandemic. The situation for students in elite private schools is very different.

School workers and the children we teach are just the latest casualties in the Tories' desire for profit at any cost, and disregard for the working class. Education staff and our unions must keep on pushing for proper, national safety measures, and explaining this to parents and students. One death in our communities is too many if it could have been prevented.

● *A socialist programme for safe schools: see 'September school return must be safe for all workers and students' at socialistparty.org.uk*



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.

- Scrap Universal Credit. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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CAPITALISM CAUSE OF DISPROPORTIONATE DISABLED DEATHS AND ISOLATION

GARETH BROMHALL

SOCIALIST PARTY DISABLED PEOPLE
AND CARERS GROUP

Covid-19 has disproportionately hit disabled people. This is one of the effects of capitalist society, which is disabling, and puts profit before lives, including of the people it disables.

Around one-fifth of the population of England and Wales has its ‘activities limited because of a health problem or disability’ to some degree. But this group has represented almost three-fifths of official Covid deaths!

These figures are from the Office for National Statistics, for March to May, released earlier this summer. The analysis in that report found the mortality rate for the most disabled men was 1.9 times higher, and women 2.4 times higher, than those with no disability.

An earlier ONS report confirmed what had been apparent to everyone as the Covid crisis developed: disabled people living in care homes are particularly vulnerable. 29% of all deaths in care homes have been officially attributed to Covid. The most common pre-existing condition here was Alzheimer’s/dementia.

England’s health service regulator CQC has also published findings that show a 136% increase in deaths of people with learning difficulties



Around one-fifth of the population of England and Wales has its “activities limited because of a health problem or disability”. But this group has almost three-fifths of Covid deaths!



since 2019. Of those extra deaths, a majority were in residential care.

These studies and their findings will not come as a shock to disabled people and carers. We have suffered a decade of attacks on our wellbeing, and indeed our life expectancy, through austerity. These also make us more susceptible to Covid-19.

Cuts to local services, access to grants and disability benefits have had a huge effect on the lives of disabled people and carers. Charities and third-sector organisations are often left trying to plug huge gaps where they can. The current economic crisis and its threat of further austerity will only make this worse.

Lasting effects

On top of the coronavirus death rates for disabled people, the effect of the virus on our lives will be far-reaching and multifaceted.

In 2019, just over half of all disabled people were in employment, compared to 88% of the working-age population as a whole. The endless onslaught of redundancies and job losses means that in a job market not designed to accommodate us, disabled jobseekers face an even greater challenge.

There are studies ongoing to find the long-term effects of Covid in general, and lockdown in particular, on the mental health of disabled people. Pre-Covid there were estimates

that up to 40% of people with a learning disability also suffered from a mental illness. This number was higher for autistic people, and Public Health England has acknowledged the likely effects of the experience of the pandemic on these groups.

The capitalist system, and the neoliberal agenda that has been its status quo for decades, leave barriers in front of those who aren’t sufficiently ‘productive’ of profits. However, the crisis has meant, for example, a significant amount of office-based work being done from the employee’s home. Remote working has become the new norm for many companies.

While enforced remote working has both positives and negatives for workers, it has apparently led to higher productivity for the bosses. But the right to work remotely is something disabled activists have long been fighting for. Until it became a necessity for profit, most bosses regarded it as unreasonable.

Likewise, there are many practical adaptations and allowances that employers and services could make to allow disabled people to live fuller, more independent lives - in and out of the home and workplace.

Technology now allows for physical adaptations to the workplace, and useful aids, adapted systems of work, and different ways of accessing resources. These could make the lives of disabled people a lot easier. But they aren’t implemented - because they cut into the profits of the capitalists.

This is how we, as disabled people, are disabled by capitalist society. It’s a



Trade unions must take up the fight for the right to more adaptations and allowances for disabled people

society that is built with profit as its ultimate goal. It does not prioritise adaptations and attitudes that would allow disabled people to contribute more fully to society, and lead more equal, independent - and healthy - lives.

The trade unions must take up the fight for the right to more adaptations and allowances for disabled people. The changes forced on us by the pandemic hint at what’s possible. But ultimately, if the capitalists continue to control the economy, these reforms will not last and society will continue to disable us.

A socialist programme to transform society must include:

- Nationalising and fully funding the health and social care sectors - to provide universal care without the profit motive
- Investing in technologies and allowances to permit disabled people to participate more fully in society both in and out of work, with requirements for employers to supply them
- Democratic working-class control of work and services, as part of a democratic, socialist plan for the economy - with representation for disabled people in running and planning services: nothing for us, without us

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

September issue includes...

- No turning back: Covid, capitalism and women’s double burden
- Unity or bust? Will Covid crisis make or break the EU?
- Poll tax revisited

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Disabled during Covid: “It’s as if we don’t exist”

VIKKI WALTON-COLE

DISABLED MEMBERS’ OFFICER, UNISON
UNION SURREY (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Disabled people often shop online as this is the safest, and sometimes only, option. As a part-time wheelchair user, I can tell you first-hand of the difficulties, especially with pandemic measures. It seems that the Equality Act and disabled access have been forgotten and ignored in the rush to reopen society post lockdown.

On a recent shopping trip I found disabled toilets supposedly in use, but actually blocked off by cones, with no soap or toilet roll. I found shops where the ramp doesn’t quite meet the door, and yes, this meant I was stuck in the doorway, half in and half out.

Shops have one-way systems that have not left enough room for wheelchairs (or prams) to manoeuvre. And please tell me how I get my wheelchair in, down a flight of steps, as the ramp is out only?

Yet more shops have decided that social distancing means they will only allow one of the double doors to open - but many wheelchairs need wider entrances and both doors to open. Some shops have locked them shut, which prevents wheelchair users entering, with no staff nearby to unlock. I was physically prevented from entering.

Access fail after access fail while going around shops - and this is not new

to Covid-19 life. Some shops have removable ramps, but no way of alerting the shop that you’re outside and need to use it, even after emailing in advance.

There are many more barriers for some disabled people - such as sensory barriers from noise, lighting and smells. Very few shops, I believe, have loop systems for hearing aid users, never mind how few people can use British Sign Language. Then there’s mental health barriers that can make it near-impossible to go shopping or even leave home.

Add all these barriers together, and many disabled people shop online as it’s infinitely easier. But earlier this year, Rishi Sunak was considering a tax on online shopping to help the high street.

Clearly bosses would pass the tax onto consumers. That sounds like a tax on disabled people to me. Our cost of living is already higher - by thousands of pounds per year. Many disabled people already go without essential items due to cost.

According to Scope’s 2019 Disability Price Tag report, the average additional costs faced by disabled people were £583 per month! A new tax on one of the few things that we can easily access, online shopping, could push this even higher.

With access to benefits and services a postcode lottery at best in austerity



Disabled people are being penalised even more... we want equal rights in law

Britain, how are the majority of disabled people expected to absorb these costs? Personal Independence Payment, the main disability benefit, is an absolute joke, with many still refused what little we are entitled to.

Less than a third of new claims are approved, and so many are forced to go to tribunal to get what we are entitled to. Around three-quarters of tribunals are successful. The stress of trying to claim benefits - and reclaim them every two to three years - is astronomical. Yet still they do not meet the additional costs of disability!

The Equality Act offers very little actual protection or rights to disabled people, and a lot of protection to employers and businesses if they can prove they have made some sort of ‘attempt’. This is about penalising people who sometimes cannot work, cannot work full-time, or are in lower-paid jobs - the disability pay gap is very real.

The lack of any attempt to continue adhering to the Equality Act for businesses and employers during these current times demonstrates the disregard and weakness of the act.

Disabled people are being penalised even more, and those in power don’t even consider how this might affect us. It’s as if we don’t exist, we shouldn’t exist, or at best, we are an afterthought.

We want equal rights in law, we want to be included, and we want access.



Manctopia: billion pound property boom

REVIEWED BY CHRIS NEWBY

Manctopia is a four-part documentary about housing in Manchester, filmed over the course of one year. It is very powerful viewing. It even mentions Marx, Engels and the Communist Manifesto in describing some of the historical development of Manchester.

As the title makes plain, Manctopia shows the huge profits being made by property developers in the city centre.

It also shows the rottenness of the housing situation in Britain today. It ranges from showing the multi-millionaire property developer who stands to make £12 million profit from redeveloping part of the Piccadilly area in Manchester city centre, to Christina - a single mother of two who, despite paying her rent on time every month for five years, is evicted, made homeless, and is forced to move in with her mother.

While huge profits are made by property developers, local people are being forced out of homes they have lived in for most of their lives because they can’t afford the spiralling rents, or because their estates are being redeveloped and their homes are being knocked down.

Property prices in Manchester have increased by 50% in the last five years. At the time of making the documentary in 2019 there were 5,000 homeless in Greater Manchester and 95,000 on the waiting list for genuinely affordable housing.

Homeless charities too are being forced out. One charity highlighted, which provides hot breakfasts, a food bank, and somewhere to get a hot shower for the homeless, is forced out of premises near the city centre that it has been in for 30 years because of property development.

The charity workers turn up one morning to find the locks changed so they have to serve the breakfasts out of the back of cars. Eventually the charity finds some premises to work out of, but they are several miles away from the city centre where most of the homeless sleep.

The programme also shows up the abysmal role that Greater



Manchester Labour Mayor Andy Burnham is playing in dealing with the city’s housing crisis. Rather than launch a campaign to demand more funding from central government for council housing, he is instead relying on charity fundraising events to support housing charities across the city.

The person he gets to run these events is the very property developer making millions out of the redevelopment of Manchester! As one of the charity workers present at one of these events says, “you can’t help but laugh” that this property developer has been put in charge of this fundraising.

One of the drawbacks in the episodes that I watched is that there is no discussion on council-house building. This is not surprising given that Labour councils have no plans to build desperately needed council housing, and are also making the situation even worse by carrying out cuts to council services and jobs with barely a whimper.

The fact that there is not this generalised call for council-house building

is probably behind the mixed comments that Anne, a resident living in Collyhurst, makes. On the one hand she is pleased that the area of Ancoats has been redeveloped, but is understandably appalled at the thought of being forced out of her own home to make way for new homes, because the developers are tearing down perfectly good housing.

As Christina says: “What doesn’t help, of course, is that social housing for families isn’t a priority, and isn’t helped by the fact that the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme didn’t lead to new council houses being built. Something has to be done.”

This series is well worth watching for showing the massive problems in housing in Britain, but you will have to look to the Socialist if you want to find a strategy to really solve this housing crisis.

- *Manctopia is available on BBC iplayer*
- *See also ‘Housing crisis: what now and after the pandemic?’ at socialistparty.org.uk*

West Midlands journalists strike against pay and job cuts

BOB SEVERN

BIRMINGHAM SOUTH EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

It’s “nepotism not journalism” said one picket. The Bullivant Media National Union of Journalists (NUJ) chapel (branch) were out on their first ever strike on 25-26 August, opposing compulsory redundancies, demanding to be paid in full and wanting to protect high-quality journalism.

Warwickshire and Worcestershire newspaper publisher Bullivant Media Limited is owned and ran by the Bullivant family. One family member has started publishing their own ‘cut-and-paste’ type stories while bypassing editorial staff and undercutting news quality.

At the same time, the actual journalists - some on minimum wage - were not paid in full for three

months. Some received next to nothing and had to go to food banks as a result. There was no warning before these pay cuts - the workers just found out when they opened their bank statements!

Also undercutting news quality will be the proposed job cuts, including a compulsory redundancy that targets an NUJ member in blatant trade unionist victimisation. These cuts will result in higher workloads for the remaining staff, who are already overworked as management demand more journalistic output. Distribution staff have already been made redundant.

On 21 August, when conciliation service Acas talks between the union and employer ended, Bullivant confirmed three jobs would go, including one compulsory redundancy. While less than the five posts

originally under threat, the chapel remains steadfastly opposed to any compulsory lay-off.

The 18 journalists produce nine weekly freesheets, including the Coventry Observer and Redditch Standard. The chapel voted unanimously for, and is 100% solid behind, the four-day strike, which continued on 1-2 September, with pickets at the company’s Redditch office.

The NUJ chapel has received solidarity and financial support from trade unionists across the UK and Ireland.

Donations, labelled ‘Bullivant strike’, can be made to the NUJ strike hardship fund: sort code 60-83-01, account number 20049274, account name NUJ Manchester.

Emails raising concerns can be sent to Bullivant’s managing director at chris.bullivant@bullivantmedia.com.

Don't blame asylum seekers for Tory cuts

Fight against capitalist austerity

ERIC SEGAL KENT SOCIALIST PARTY
AND DAVE CARR

The plight of refugees fleeing war, oppression, and poverty, was grimly highlighted by the recent tragedy of a Sudanese migrant, who died attempting to cross the English Channel in a flimsy dinghy.

Tory Home Secretary Priti Patel sidestepped any responsibility for this unnecessary death by blaming "abhorrent criminal gangs" - even though in this case the migrant, and his friend, acted alone.

But criminals can cash in on migrants' plight simply because migrants cannot apply for asylum in Britain without being physically present. Without a legal route, illegal and dangerous crossings of the Channel or the Mediterranean Sea by migrants inevitably mean more deaths.

The French authorities must also shoulder blame since the "dire" conditions in informal migrants' camps around Calais - to quote a French parliamentary report - are driving migrants into the sea. Macron's government, like his predecessors, does not want asylum seekers and have evicted them from camps and refused them state support.

Of course, obtaining residency and citizenship in Britain and other European countries is a different question if you're super-rich. A sizeable investment in a company or property will qualify for a 'Golden Visa', no questions asked.

Demonised

Hypocritically, right-wing politicians - having crippled vital public services through years of austerity cuts, while bailing out fat-cat corporations through tax concessions and quantitative easing, etc - demonise migrants by saying our crumbling welfare services will be overwhelmed by refugees.

Yet this Tory government immediately found an enormous 'money tree' to prop up British capitalism during the current coronavirus crisis



Refugees at the makeshift Sangatte refugee camp in Calais in 2017 before its destruction by the French authorities photo Paul Mattsson

- with no mention of 'how are we going to pay for it?'

Unfortunately, in the absence of a fighting alternative to austerity cuts, the 'we can't afford them' argument can resonate with some working-class people who can't get proper housing or access to inadequate public services.

The Tory leader of Kent County Council, councillor Roger Gough, stoked resentment of unaccompanied asylum seeker children by saying, "increased numbers arriving, particularly during lockdown,... has ultimately put an inevitable strain on Kent's finite social care resources...

putting the council at risk of not being able to provide their duty of care to these children."

Central government spending cuts - passed on to the public without a fightback by councils - have created huge pressures on local services such as housing and education. Without a fight to stop the cuts and fully fund services, it is easy for right-wing politicians to scapegoat refugees.

It is therefore essential that support for refugees is linked to the fight against austerity - for homes, jobs and services for all.

The Socialist Party campaigns for a mass council house building

programme, for rent controls, for a £12 an hour minimum wage, for an end to the cuts and privatisation of public services, and more besides (see page 3).

The key to such a fightback is the mobilisation of the seven million-strong trade union movement that potentially can unite the working class around such a programme.

The wealth exists to provide help for refugees. However, it should not come from those already suffering austerity but from the enormous riches of the super-rich capitalists - both in Britain and internationally.

Globally, the capitalist profit

system creates huge inequalities of wealth and health provision, inflicts mass unemployment and poverty on billions of people, destroys the environment, and creates and sustains devastating wars.

The only way to permanently end the refugee crisis is to fight for a democratic socialist world to end the wars, poverty and persecution that force people to flee, and create a world in which people can move, live and work in decency and with dignity.

● **Anti-racism demo and rally**
Saturday 5 September,
Assemble 11am,
Market Square, Dover

Nottingham: Socialists and anti-racists oppose right-wing march

NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Around 300 trade unionists, socialists, anti-racists and anti-fascists mobilised for the local trade union council counter-protest to oppose a right-wing march into Nottingham city centre on 22 August.

Organised under the main slogan of 'justice for all', and led by an organiser apparently with links to the so-called 'Democratic Football Lads Alliance', publicity for the march and a motorbike ride raised veteran mental health and child wellbeing.

But it was actually a cover for various groups, including anti-migrant propaganda with a video comparing the homelessness of

veterans (which is shameful) with the myth of 'immigrants' being put up in five-star hotels.

The composition of the event was a 'mixed bag', with a number of far-right supporters from around the country, 'God Loves Donald Trump' supporters, those who want better veteran support, and antisemitic conspiracy theorists QAnon.

The event attracted 500 marchers and a rumoured 250-300 bikers who rode around the city.

However, by the time the walking march arrived at the police-designated spot, its numbers had reduced to around 250-300. It seems that some of the marchers were uncomfortable with the people on the event,

and presumably the shouting of passers-by.

The organisers had claimed that they were going "to take over Nottingham", which did not happen as the square was held by the trade union council protest, and attempts by small groups of the far right to confront the counter-protest were seen off.

The police had allowed the event to take place, and they let right-wing infiltrators take photographs of the anti-racism protesters, saying there was nothing they could do!

Trade union council stewards were blocking their cameras and getting counter-protesters to make their views known, forcing them to leave,

although not before photographs were taken.

The march eventually made its way back to the BBC building in Nottingham's outskirts and held its rally there instead.

Role of unions

The Socialist Party was well represented on the counter-protest and we leafleted in the weeks beforehand, contacting trade unionists personally to build on the trade union council's own mailing.

However, the only two trade union branch banners were brought by Socialist Party members. There is a serious need for more trade unions to take up the struggle against racism

and the threat of the far right directly, fighting for workers' unity and for full funding of services for all.

There is a pressing need to put forward real demands, such as 'jobs and homes not racism' and opposition to all cuts, which are our trade union council policies. This can undercut any support the divisive far right may gather. Some counter-demonstrators were just shouting "Nazi scum off our streets", which is an inadequate response.

The Socialist Party and many trade unionists have consistently opposed cuts to services such as in child services and mental health. The far right have no record of doing that and need to be exposed.

Tate strike: “Coronavirus - no reason to fire us!”

Striking Tate workers in the PCS union chanted “Coronavirus - no reason to fire us!” on their strike protests as they moved into indefinite action. As visitors have queued to get into the Tate Britain and Modern galleries in London, they’ve noticed a far more realistic exhibition of the reality facing workers than any of the art showings inside.

To many, Tate has an almost progressive image, carefully cultivated by the management team. But as with many others in the culture sector over the last few years, this is a fallacy. Like the ‘independent’ Picturehouse cinemas and the National Gallery, workers have found that the management regime feels just like any other company, with brutal bosses meting out redundancies and attacks on pay and conditions.

Tate workers are facing 313 redundancies as management blame falling customer numbers because of Covid-19. But they are in line to receive a £7 million bailout from the government. The growing lines of visitors after Tate reopened shows how short-sighted this is.

But despite these pleadings of hardship, PCS now reports that management have been pressuring workers to cover the jobs of strikers, and have even looked to employ assistant visitor jobs through the outsourced contract with Securitas. This shows that money is no object to trying to break a strike.

There needs to be a fight for the money to keep what are often low-paid workers in a job. And, if necessary, the galleries should be taken into public ownership to be run in the interests of the workers and the majority of society.

The strikers are determined to force management back. They have held tremendous strike rallies, addressed by Rob Williams from the National Shop Stewards Network alongside Jeremy Corbyn and many other supporters. This solidarity needs to be stepped up now as the action is cranked up.

- *Donate to strike fund at bit.ly/PCSTateStrikeFund*
- *Send messages of support to culture@pcs.org.uk*



London bus drivers poised for strike action

The Unite union is in the process of preparing to formally ballot all its bus drivers employed by Singapore-owned Metroline in a dispute over ‘remote signing on’.

Unite describes this as a huge “experiment with the capital’s vital transport system”, and designed for profits not passengers.

Affected workers have described the proposals as a massive “slap in the face” to drivers who are still recovering from the pandemic in which 29 drivers died, and many more are still unable to return to work due to the debilitating effects of the illness.

Unite represents more than 4,000 drivers at the company (16% of all London bus drivers), which dominates routes in the north and the west of London.

By introducing remote signing on, drivers would not report to a depot but would meet their bus and begin work at a location such as a bus stop.

Unite is opposed to remote signing on because of the following:

- Safety. There will be no checks to ensure the driver is fit and well to drive a bus
- Lack of access to toilet facilities, rest and canteen facilities
- Drivers will be forced to wait for their bus to arrive in all weathers, potentially harming their health and ability to drive a bus over a long shift
- Greater risk of exposure to Covid-19 in travelling to a location which has not been subject to the risk assessment and health measures
- Increase in the dangers of fatigue as drivers will be subjected to higher travelling time
- The lack of a back-up. If a driver is delayed or a bus is not operational, then at a depot there is always alternative options to provide passenger transport

In a consultative ballot at both Metroline companies, Unite members recorded a 99.2% vote in favour of industrial action at Metroline West and 97.8% at Metroline Travel.

Unite is now in the process of organising a full industrial action ballot, and if a settlement isn’t reached strikes could begin this autumn.

B&Q worker reinstated: Organised response successfully challenges unfair dismissal



A B&Q WORKER
SOCIALIST PARTY GLASGOW

After months of struggling with Covid-19, a worker at B&Q was greeted upon her return to work with a disciplinary, followed by dismissal, for failing to follow absence procedures. Swift action by Socialist Party members in the shop workers’ union Usdaw challenged what was clearly a case of unfair dismissal.

‘Jane’ was challenged for not adhering to absence procedures as it was claimed that she hadn’t phoned in before her shifts to inform of her absence. However, as she tried to point out, she phoned on two separate occasions when she did not get an answer. When her condition worsened and she struggled to breathe, no allowance was made for her inability to phone in.

Even with her extreme ill-health, she tried to keep in regular contact with her boss to ensure that the business was kept informed of her condition and her inability to return to work. B&Q then invited ‘Jane’ to a stage one meeting while still being signed off sick with a doctor’s

note. This was escalated to a stage two disciplinary when she didn’t attend, even though she was too sick to attend.

Initially, ‘Jane’ wasn’t sure how to proceed as B&Q does not even allow an employee the right to appeal a disciplinary decision unless they have been employed for 18 months. This goes completely against the accepted code of practice outlined by conciliation service Acas. However, as an employee can’t take a company to an employment tribunal before two years of continuous service, current employment law is stacked completely in the bosses’ favour.

‘Jane’ got in touch with Socialist Party members in Usdaw who helped her draft a letter of appeal. In it she outlined that B&Q had not acted in a fair manner by not giving consideration to the fact that ‘Jane’ could not call in because of the respiratory nature of coronavirus. She also challenged B&Q for acting unfairly in escalating the issue by holding it against ‘Jane’ for not attending a meeting while she was still signed off as ill. Despite B&Q’s own no-appeals policy, it invited ‘Jane’ to an

appeal meeting, showing that its unfair policy can be overturned when put under pressure.

‘Jane’ and a Socialist Party member in Usdaw then participated in the appeal meeting, in which they challenged B&Q for not following its own policies. They also disputed going through with a disciplinary action on an employee ill with Covid-19, which exacerbated her condition with unnecessary stress during her illness.

The result of the appeal was that ‘Jane’ was reinstated with pay backdated to her initial dismissal. This is not only a victory for ‘Jane’; it shows that B&Q, indeed any company, can bend the knee when shown an organised resistance. It is a victory like this that shows the vital role that trade unions can play in defending workers’ rights, and thus the need for workers to join and organise with a trade union.

As bosses look to cut back on staff, using coronavirus as a cover, the workers’ movement must coordinate action and challenge bosses to protect jobs, and ensure that workers do not pay for the coronavirus crisis.

Support Ikea workers - reinstate Richie Venton

Glasgow Ikea worker, trade union rep and Usdaw executive committee member Richie Venton has been sacked for opposing the company’s sick pay policy of removing wages from those forced to self-isolate with Covid-19, putting them on the measly £95 a week statutory sick pay instead.

Richie demanded full pay, and informed members of the new policy before management did. Ikea are also attempting to bring in lower absence thresholds.

Richie should be reinstated immediately, and Usdaw should not leave any stone unturned to defend him by mobilising members.

This should include protests outside Ikea stores, and, if necessary, strike action. Already, a meeting of Glasgow Ikea workers has voted unanimously to be balloted for strike action. This should be authorised by the Usdaw executive committee.

- *Read the full article at socialistpartyScotland.org.uk and sign the petition to reinstate Richie Venton and restore sick workers’ wages at reinstaterichieventon.com*

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A JOB CENTRE WORKER

In the months between February and June 2020, the number of claims for Universal Credit doubled from 2.7 million to 5.4 million. Universal Credit is the primary benefit available to the unemployed, those too ill to work, and those who are in low-paid work.

Millions who have never claimed benefits before were forced to do so, in response to the economic crisis. This increase doesn't capture the full scale of the crisis, as some people will have claimed other benefits, such as 'new-style' jobseeker's allowance, but it is a good indicator.

When people made their claims, evidence was gathered remotely and processed with the focus on getting the right money to the right people at the right time. Evidence was taken on trust and the whole process of claiming benefits was speedily adapted to deal with the Covid crisis.

Terms like 'sanction' and 'claimant commitment', which have embedded vicious Tory rhetoric about 'scroungers' into the benefit system, were abandoned. For a shining moment, the focus of the welfare system was ensuring that people were paid.

Under huge political pressure, Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak raised the amount payable under Universal Credit by around £80 per month - not much, but the biggest rise in benefits in living memory. Why?

It is possible the government realised that all the years of dirty propaganda by their friends in the media were about to be exposed to millions more people.

They might all see the reality of the punitive, inhuman treatment of the self-employed, the low-waged, those in unstable employment, and those too ill to work - threatening the 'national unity' line the capitalists have been peddling.

Sunak's increase is a tacit recognition of the potential social explosion that Universal Credit has been stoking up since the Tory-Liberal coalition introduced it in 2013.

Charities, NGOs involved in the welfare system, and local government organisations have all been critical of Universal Credit. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Citizens Advice, the Child Poverty Action Group and others have pointed to it as driving homelessness and poverty.

The housing component of Universal Credit does not cover full rent. Claimants have to top it up with money from the rest of their benefit payment, which is meant for food and other necessities.

If the government's emergency measures preventing landlords from expelling tenants are lifted - and landlords' organisations are actively demanding this - tens, even hundreds of thousands of people will be at risk of homelessness. This is thanks to the inadequacies of the benefit system, not to mention the 30-year-long decimation of council housing.

Calm before the welfare storm

Tory measures to get through the Covid-19 crisis have subdued angry opposition, but the crisis is far from over. Even as the R-number ebbs a little, the economic crisis which was waiting in the wings before Covid-19 gathers pace.

This is aimed directly at a working class which never recovered from a shabby decade-plus of cuts to wages, jobs and public services. Yet this

hasn't stopped Tory attempts to get back to attacking benefits claimants.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), under sharp orders from the secretary of state, has reinstituted the "claimant commitment." That's 35 hours a week of job searching, and the risk of being denied benefits if you don't do 'enough'.

What 'enough' means in the context of a global economic crisis is something that has the ordinary staff in DWP shaking our heads in despair at the stupidity of the bosses. The majority of DWP staff are trade union members and have little truck with government sermonising when they see the reality of Tory pension cuts and below-inflation wage 'rises'.

During the Covid-19 crisis, DWP staff have been prepared to walk out over health and safety. Unfortunately, the leadership of our union PCS, under general secretary Mark Serwotka, has not lived up to this militancy. Instead, the majority of the union leadership has succumbed to Tory 'national unity' rhetoric, even watering down the union's own pay claim.

Now, PCS is balloting against the employer's proposals to keep DWP offices open up to 8pm on weekdays and start opening on Saturdays, despite the Covid-19 crisis. Socialist Party members and others will be fighting hard to win this consultative ballot and build towards serious action as the best way to put pressure on the government.

The leadership does not seem to have the same campaigning emphasis, writing to branches: "This is not a strike ballot - this is a consultative ballot to get your views. A yes vote will help the union in negotiations to protect your safety."

A consultative ballot must be followed by a second, statutory ballot to authorise a strike. How will playing this down, instead emphasising a simple poll of views, help the union mobilise members to achieve their demands?

This lacklustre approach has meant that only the difficulties posed by social distancing have prevented the rolling out of the whole battery of anti-claimant 'conditionality' measures introduced since 2012:

- Mandatory work activity, where claimants are forced to work unpaid for 13 weeks
- Unpaid 'sector-based work academies', where claimants are inducted into the joys of shelf-stacking (with a side helping of corporate propaganda)
- Job preparation and 'training' delivered by private providers - who were exposed as not even helping claimants come up with a usable CV, despite being paid millions of taxpayer pounds
- Mandatory daily attendance at Jobcentres - the Tory intent being to harass claimants into signing off benefits
- And last but not least, a toughened sanctions regime, with a legion of new 'offences' that could be used to deny people Universal Credit payments

Eventually, profit pressure from the capitalist class is likely to outweigh the caution of more far-sighted Tories who understand the potential depths of the anger facing them in the aftermath of their handling of the Covid-19 crisis. They will attempt to bring back all the punitive apparatus of the last ten years, to drive down claimant numbers regardless of whether or not people can find work.

If the Tories are successful in doing this, it will not stop there. It could be



NO GOING BACK WELFARE AFTER COVID-19



JJ ELLISON/CC



The first battle must be fighting to save every job, nationalisation of businesses threatening job losses, and an economic plan that creates jobs

worse, reflecting the scale of the crisis. They will try to go further and hit harder.

Civil servants working in DWP will also be hit. Despite the announcement of 13,500 new staff to help prop up a disastrously underfunded benefit system, the Tories will roll out plans for further privatisation, job cuts, wage freezes, and weakening of union rights.

Just last week, the patron saint of public sector union-busting, Francis Maude, who was cabinet secretary under David Cameron, was brought

back in to run a review of the Cabinet Office. The outline of future Tory attacks can already be seen.

Once the focus comes off the heroic efforts of key workers, including those in DWP, the establishment media will turn to talk of the national debt, 'lazy civil servants' and 'benefit scroungers'. So we need to be ready.

Unions need fighting programme

Jobs, wages and welfare are all interconnected. Recruitment freezes and redundancies are the first line of attack for bosses seeking to protect their

profits. 'Destroy jobs, withhold investment until conditions improve' will be the mantra of the capitalist class.

The future offered by capitalism involves skyrocketing youth unemployment rates and millions thrown onto the benefit system. The first battle, therefore, must be fighting to save every single job, fighting for the nationalisation of businesses threatening job losses, and for an economic plan that creates jobs.

Alongside destroying jobs, the capitalists will attempt to hold down wages to protect their profits. Fighting for fair wages - of at least £12 per hour, and £15 in London, as a starting point - must be a major focus of a national campaign across the trade unions.

This would mobilise not just those who work in poorly paid, poorly unionised sectors like retail and care, but also the young, unemployed workers who will be pushed towards unpaid labour in those sectors if the Tories get their way.

Rishi Sunak has so far soft-pedalled the attacks on young workers. The government has created "traineeships" for 18 to 24-year-olds. When traineeships were first created in 2014, they were unpaid.

The new traineeships are paid at the national minimum wage, which can be topped up by the employer, who also gets a bonus if they keep the young worker on past the end of the traineeship.

These measures make it cheaper to hire young workers, but don't alter the overall number of jobs available - so all they do is move the burden of unemployment around. But it shows the government is worried about a youth revolt.

Having created the unemployment, the capitalist class seeks to keep unemployment benefits low in order that workers will agree to take jobs for the lowest possible wages. If millions of workers were mobilised in a campaign to fight for jobs and wages, the unemployed would inevitably be drawn into the battle too.

As with the recent environmental school strikes, 'claimant strikes' could develop, allied to a militant trade union leadership that was prepared to stand up for low-paid workers - a group which overlaps with the unemployed by virtue of the shared benefit they claim: Universal Credit.

It doesn't take much to imagine the demands posed by the unemployed. A living wage for those out of work. The end of sanctions. The end of mandatory powers for Jobcentre work coaches so that supporting claimants is the one and only focus of Jobcentres.

Improvements to the support available to find work. Proper retraining and education for workers who need to transition between sectors of the economy. A system where it is easy to contact staff for help, and which is resourced to give this help. It would not take much to get DWP staff onside with all this.

Civil servants in the lower grades have found their pay so restricted that they often get (meagre) pay rises now just by the national minimum wage increasing. Thousands of workers in DWP and other departments claim Universal Credit because their pay is so low.

DWP workers and benefit claimants are therefore natural allies, separated only by the anti-trade union laws and the anti-claimant ideology spouted by the government. Both can be defeated, and a mass trade union campaign fighting for the rights of workers



DWP workers and benefit claimants are natural allies, separated only by the anti-trade union laws and the anti-claimant ideology spouted by the government - both can be defeated by a mass trade union campaign

in the current economic crisis is the straightest route to achieving this.

Abolish for-profit assessments

For years, in cities around the UK, groups like Disabled People Against Cuts have demonstrated outside the assessment centres where health assessments are held to determine eligibility for Universal Credit, Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP). These assessments are delivered for profit, by privateers Capita, Atos and CHDA - meaning the whole focus is on keeping costs down.

So reliable are these assessments that in cases disputed up to tribunal level, two-thirds of the decisions based on them are overturned in claimants' favour. It is clear that this privatised system of health assessments has to go.

Just before the crisis, the government announced plans to merge the assessments for Universal Credit and ESA with those for PIP. This is as much about salvaging a wholly discredited process as it is about cutting costs. It shows they are already under pressure.

A working class mobilised to fight on jobs, wages and welfare could sweep away these assessments in favour of something more reliable, more humane and less onerous for claimants. Disability benefits, like other benefits - and indeed the minimum wage - must be based on a real living income.

Such a campaign would also inevitably recognise that the money paid out through benefits must be supplemented with high-quality public services, and rights in both the community and the workplace, to ensure equal access and a good quality of life for all.

All workers into the unions, all unions into the struggle!

Socialists do not have illusions in the tops of the trade union movement, which tend to be heavily influenced by the capitalist class.

In respect of the traineeships for 18 to 24-year-olds discussed above, the Trades Union Congress, Britain's union federation, put out a joint statement with the bosses' Confederation of British Industry when they were first developed in 2014 - welcoming them, even though they were unpaid! We therefore do not expect more than fine words from most of the current crop of union leaders.

Socialists must actively build the unions - recruiting workers in their workplaces, linking up with the advanced layers of the working class, both in other workplaces covered by the same unions, and with the advanced layers of the class in other unions.

A union membership card should be held by every socialist, and they should participate in their union's 'broad left' grouping, if a properly functioning one exists, to form a united front that can mobilise ordinary members and force even right-wing union leaders to act.

Working-class anger can be mobilised. The capitalists can be forced back, and concessions wrested from them directly and from their state - even as socialists campaign to supplant it with a democratic workers' state that would give real meaning to welfare from cradle to grave.



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Socialism on the rise

PAUL COUCHMAN
STAINES SOCIALIST PARTY

Staines Socialist Party members are seen by many as the ‘go to’ people on issues like fighting cuts in local services, and campaigns against racism and discrimination, such as Black Lives Matter (BLM). But the branch has struggled to grow beyond a handful of stalwarts for some time.

Our large contact list, who we keep in touch via an email newsletter, increased during Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership, as more and more people became interested in socialist ideas. But we remained a very small band of Socialist Party members.

All that changed when Keir Starmer took control of the Labour Party and put it firmly back in the hands of the right wing. We wrote to all the Labour Party members we knew, asking them to consider joining us.

We energetically participated in Black Lives Matter protests, meeting more young people interested in the Socialist Party. We are meeting online via Zoom and attendance is picking up.

I took a few days off work to meet as many of the people who wanted to know more as I could - outside, observing social distancing - and to ask them all to join. I made the appointments and took my laptop, so they could sign up straightaway.

The end result is eight new Socialist Party members and the party branch is revitalised. And there are still a few people left to see!

Some new members are already building the Socialist Party. Lisa has set up a twitter account, @SurreySocialism. Nathan has put together a programme of meetings. And Louis has set up an email account and is running our Facebook page.

Below seven of our new members say why they joined.

● A party for the working class

LOUIS FELL
YOUNG WORKER AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT

I joined the Socialist Party because it has become more and more clear that there is no longer a party in the UK that truly represents the working class.

● “The only antidote is socialism”

LISA ALLEN
TEACHING ASSISTANT AND UNISON REP IN SURREY

I wasn’t too interested in politics, until I came of age during the 2010 elections. The last ten years of Tory policies, mainly austerity, have had a very real impact on my life, and many others.

When Jeremy Corbyn became

How we built the Socialist Party in Staines



Labour leader, I felt we finally had an MP representing the people rather than themselves. This inspired me to join the Labour Party and become more active elsewhere - I became the workplace union rep at my job.

When Corbyn stepped down and Starmer brought the Labour Party more to the centre, the party didn’t align with my views anymore and I left. This made me politically homeless.

I believe in socialism and socialist values. I want to be part of something that offers that.

After a quick Google, I stumbled upon the Socialist Party and sent an enquiry through. My union branch secretary, Paul Couchman, replied.

We had an informal chat over Zoom and I joined a week later. It

feels good to connect with people who have like-minded views.

The Socialist Party campaigns against austerity, job losses, privatisation and pollution - all exacerbated by the current government and their approach to the pandemic. Covid-19 has exposed the inequality in society.

It has never been more important to embrace socialism and come together as the working class to stand up for our rights, and fight for those who cannot fight for themselves.

Seeing Generation Z rise up and fight - against school shootings in USA, for Black Lives Matter, and school strikes for climate - has been a refreshing change to the apathetic attitude towards politics that I’m accustomed to.

Capitalism is poison - exploiting people through cheap labour

reinforces the class divide. It thrives on inequality and suppression of the working class.

The only antidote is socialism. We must demand a better way of life, not only for people, but for the planet as well, because if nothing changes, nothing changes.

● My parents suffer NHS cuts and lack of PPE

NATHAN HOLMES
SCHOOL STUDENT IN GAP YEAR

I joined the Socialist Party when it had a large presence at a Black Lives Matter protest in London. It

recognised how racism and capitalism reinforce each other.

My parents, who both work for the NHS, were suffering from continuous Tory cuts and the government’s terrible handling of the pandemic - unable to provide sufficient protective equipment. I care greatly about the climate crisis and believe it is vital for the world to take a socialist turn.

● “These are people I can work with”

MARY MOORE
UNISON BRANCH SECRETARY IN MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL

I’ve always been a socialist, even before I knew that there was such a

thing. For the first forty years of my life, I never felt the need to do more than live my life by the principles that I believed in.

Austerity made me realise that I needed to do more than that, and for the past six or seven years I’ve been searching for the right party for me.

I’ve been following the Socialist Party with interest for a while, and was invited to an online meeting. Despite this strange, detached way of holding meetings, the Socialist Party had warmth and humanity that I’d rarely experienced in other face-to-face political meetings.

It wasn’t stuffy and outdated, which I admit I had been expecting. The final push towards joining was having the opportunity to meet existing members and thinking: “Yeah, these are people I can work with”.

● These issues are impossible to ignore

KATHERINE PARKER
UNITE ACTIVIST

After attending the Socialism 2019 event in London, I wanted to know more. I enjoyed the seminars and discussions about different situations across the world, and being with people who were committed and energised for change for the better.

The ever-increasing wealth gap and the unfair treatment of workers on zero-hour contracts have become impossible to ignore. Workers are being railroaded into accepting redundancies, by companies with no consideration for the workers and the community.

I have always been a socialist, and now I am happy to be a member of the party. I joined the Socialist Party to be part of an organisation where those involved openly share their ideas, and believe that we can live and work in a better way for everyone.

● Socialists at heart

JILL AND DARREN LACEY, AND THEIR 14 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER SAM, 14

Joining the Socialist Party was a natural next step for me. I have always held socialist values, although I never realised it was called socialism.

When Jeremy Corbyn came along, I realised so many others felt the same as me, and they were prepared to speak out and act on it. Our children, communities and our planet deserve a more caring and supportive society and future.

JILL

Growing up in Nottingham, in a working-class environment, I was aware a conservative establishment was taking all the power, while the average hard-working person was just lining the pockets of the government and status quo.

My first inclination to socialist thinking was reading H G Wells as a small boy. I was a Labour Party member, because it seemed to be the only logical rebuttal to the Tory government, until the coup against Jeremy Corbyn and the Toryfication of the party.

Knowing what the problems can be should empower us to find a new way to change the world. This is why I am and always have been a socialist at heart.

DARREN



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Themes	Smash Racism	World in crisis	After Corbyn	Covid lessons	Socialist programme	What is socialism?
11am-1pm	Lessons of the Black Panthers	World economy - is a 1930s style depression inevitable?	How can a mass working class political voice be built?	Workers' control in the workplace	Friedrich Engels - are his ideas relevant for women's liberation?	Is Cuba socialist?
2-4pm	Police racism - how do we end it?	New world order: China and the US	Labour councils: a potential counter-power to the Tories?	Climate chaos - action needed but how?	Can the music industry be saved from covid and capitalism?	Is the working class still the agent of socialist change?

SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER					
Themes	Smash Racism	Trotskyism	Broken Britain	Exit from crisis	Ideas of the CWI
11am-1pm	Revolt or reform - how was slavery abolished?	Revolution Betrayed: what happened in the USSR?	Where is Britain going?	Can Keynesianism save capitalism?	Legacy of the collapse of Stalinism
2-4pm	Privilege and oppression? ideas to smash racism	How do we get from here to socialism?	What now for the fight against austerity?	Is fascism on the cards?	Lessons for today of the new left formations
5-7pm	How do we defeat the far right?	Do we still need a theory of Permanent Revolution?	Is Scotland on the road to independence?	Can green tech and AI save the system?	Poll Tax - how a mass movement won

MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER			
Themes	End oppression	Marxism today	International
11am-1pm	Is Pride political? How can LGBT+ liberation be won?	Reading the Communist Manifesto	The US after the elections
2-4pm	Are women going back to the 1950s?	Reading Socialism: Utopian and Scientific	Belarus and the crisis in the former Soviet states

FRIDAY NIGHT
INTRODUCTION
RALLY
20 NOV
5-7PM
Speakers to be confirmed

SATURDAY
NIGHT
MAIN RALLY
6-8PM

Go online phone 020 8988 8777 for info, agenda and tickets



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to find out more about joining us today!



When Coventry Socialist Party was campaigning to scrap hospital parking charges, NHS workers told us how much they had to pay - £40 a month to park at their own workplace, with no guarantee of a space. Our campaign stall was busy the whole time.

Health workers told us the charge, along with their low pay, is “disgusting and disgraceful”. We agree.

Just a month ago, the government said these workers are heroes. Now staff, patients and visitors are paying a private company that makes millions of pounds, for what should be a free health service.

WE SAY:

- Scrap parking charges
- Cancel PFI privatisation
- Integrate hospital car parks into the rest of the NHS, under democratic workers’ control

Selling the Socialist

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



● **York: U-turn Tories could cave on NHS pay**

Our 26 August campaign stall, for a pay rise for NHS and care workers, was busy. People agreed that this should be the start of pay rises across the board for workers. They supported our call to increase the minimum wage to £12 an hour.

A few people who signed the petition felt resigned to the government running the NHS into the ground and privatising it further - as it has with track and trace during this crisis. They asked: “How can we force them back?”

We pointed to the U-turn on student grades. Young Socialists helped initiate that struggle, calling a day of action, including here in York. People bought a copy of the Socialist after hearing that, to read the cover story on that issue (see

Scrap hospital parking charges



‘Students 2, Tories 0: Protest works at socialistparty.org.uk).

In York, the Socialist Party is working with NHS workers to build for more protests for a pay rise. Let’s force the Tories into another U-turn, just like the students did.

IAIN DALTON

● **Liverpool: NHS privatisation and care home closure**

On our campaign stall, people stopped to talk about a pay increase for NHS staff, and ending privatisation and the closure of Liverpool care homes. It’s an attack on the staff and a strain on elderly residents.

All care homes need to be brought under public ownership with democratic control and management by the workers. The Labour council in

Liverpool must take up this fight, say no more cuts, and reverse cuts already being made.

It is great to see a lot more young people coming to our stall.

● **Carlisle: More jobs and better pay for NHS**

Our Socialist Party campaign stall, for more jobs and a pay rise in the NHS, got a really good response in Whitehaven on 15 August. Even more NHS workers took extra leaflets for workmates or are sending them on social media.

We couldn’t have spoken to more people, with folk patiently queuing and staying for longer conversations. We learnt more about the conditions staff are working under, and the difficulties facing them, due to lack of resources across the board.

BRENT KENNEDY



No to polluting incinerator, dumped in working-class Edmonton

PAUL KERSHAW

NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A plan to build a giant new waste incinerator in Edmonton Green would produce health-threatening air pollution across north London and Essex. The current incinerator is coming to the end of its life

On 29 August, a diverse range of protestors said ‘no’. The incinerator would produce damaging NO₂ and a range of pollutants, including small particulates for which there is no safe level in the atmosphere.

Incinerators are typically built in working-class areas, and areas with large black, Asian and minority ethnic populations like Edmonton. Cambridgeshire rejected a plan for an incinerator, citing the threat to historic buildings nearby.

No such concern has been shown by Enfield’s Labour council, in an area with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the UK, and high levels of bad health. The plan is being driven through by a waste authority comprising seven boroughs - all but one has a Labour majority.

There has been next-to-no consultation about the project. The new incinerator is three times larger than the needs of the area and will import waste on a commercial basis.

Much of the waste could be recycled. But local boroughs have low rates of recycling.

It also makes a nonsense of local authority declarations declaring a climate emergency. It will add to greenhouse gases.

The Meridian Water for Council Homes campaign is challenging Enfield council’s plan to build unaffordable homes in Edmonton. Socialist Party member Mira Glavardanov highlighted the madness of constructing the giant new incinerator next to a planned new housing development, when she spoke on behalf of the campaign.

London mayor Sadiq Kahn has not tried to stop the incinerator, so currently this major threat to health is being rammed through by Labour politicians. The labour movement should spearhead moves to protect the environment and pressure these political representatives to stop the incinerator.

Another protest by Enfield Black Lives Matter (BLM) followed and added support to the incinerator campaign - an example of how black working-class communities are disregarded by politicians.

Speakers gave impassioned accounts of police mistreatment of black people, stop and search and miscarriages of justice. Enfield BLM founder, Delia Mattis, warned Sadiq Kahn not to count on continued support from the black community if he fails to deliver.

Liverpool: Support 15% pay rise for NHS

There was a bold, lively demo in front of Aintree hospital on 26 August. It’s great that NHS staff have taken a bold step and are continuing with action for a 15% pay rise.

There was great support from passersby. But it mustn’t stop there.

The demo was predominantly nursing staff, who see the quality of care they provide compromised

by NHS privatisation. The unions need to take up the 15% pay rise demand.

Workers should join unions and get organised. If the union leaders refuse to fight for workers, then the workers must make them. When workers come together, they can win.

BHARATHI SUBA

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Black Lives Matter: Fighting injustice, fighting for our rights

● **Cardiff: Racist system exposed**

Protesters marched in Cardiff on 30 August, part of the wave of international solidarity for Jacob Blake after he was shot in the back by police in Wisconsin.

The protest also highlighted the case of Mercy Baguma, a Ugandan asylum seeker who was found dead in Glasgow next to her baby.

As demonstrators gathered, Socialist Party members started a street meeting to discuss how racism is used under capitalism to divide the working class and weaken its opposition to exploitation.

Campaigners for the family of Christopher Kapessa joined the march. Christopher tragically drowned in the Cynon Valley last year, but his death prompted no adequate investigation by the police.

Camilla Mngaza spoke powerfully about the treatment of her daughter Siyanda. She was jailed for four years for Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) after she defended herself in a racist physical attack.

The Socialist Party call for democratic control of the police by workers’ organisations was very well received. Campaigners know that they must harness the anger of the movement to radically change the way society is run, or racist police violence will continue.

ROSS SAUNDERS

● **Wokingham: This is political**

This was the first Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest organised in Wokingham. Speakers gave many personal accounts about the effects of racism. 200 people attended, including a significant number of black youth.

The Socialist Party was the only organisation to produce material. And

we had an excellent response - lots of people wanted to know more and what needs to be done to build an effective campaign to smash racism.

But we were disappointed that two of our black members taking part were not allowed to speak because they were “too political” in the opinion of the organisers. This fight has to be political - to take on the system that leaves black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) workers four times more likely to die from Covid, and hit hard by austerity and the housing crisis.

For the BLM movement to develop, we need a democratic and inclusive debate about what we are fighting for and how we are going to achieve it. A united working-class movement involving the trade unions, fighting for socialist policies of jobs and homes not racism, has the potential to do this.

NICK CHAFFEY

● **Liverpool: Fighting for BAME workers, fighting for everyone**

On the Black Lives Matter protest on 22 August, even 13 and 14-year-olds were picking up our placards and signing up to come to our youth meeting. To win the demands of the movement, we need to be organised around a programme to tackle racism.

The unions must fight for the whole workforce, including BAME workers - for better pay, terms and conditions and against racism. The struggle for decent living conditions - jobs, homes, youth centres, libraries and a public NHS need to be taken up by the unions.

Follow, comment, like

Instagram

@socialistpartycwi



Fundraising: An example to follow



The contents of Vi's 'subs jar' collected in just four months

I just collected the latest membership subs payment off Vi John from Maesteg, south Wales. £447 raised in four months during lockdown.

This 83-year-old socialist puts her subs in a ‘subs jar’ every week, because she recognises the vital importance of finance in building the Socialist Party. What an example to follow.

ALEC THRAVES

SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

● Follow Vi's example and donate too - socialistparty.org.uk/donate

12 September: Youth day of action No Covid penalty on our future



THEO SHARIEF

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL YOUTH ORGANISER

Young people are being asked to pay a Covid penalty on our futures. And the steepest collapse in income.

We’re more likely to be concentrated in the service sector, hit incredibly hard by lockdown. A pitiful number of apprenticeships - 1,850 in May - are available. Not to mention the crisis in further and higher education.

Youth unemployment is expected

to skyrocket to over one million by the end of this year. That’s why Young Socialists and Youth Fight for Jobs will be out once again, up and down the country, on Saturday 12 September, ahead of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) on 14-15 September, campaigning for trade union action to fight for our futures.

We’ll be collecting signatures to an open letter demanding that the TUC calls a ‘council of war’ - to discuss how unions can launch a campaign

Lincoln: Save Drill Hall

JACOB CORR

LINCOLNSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party condemns the decision by Lincoln council to cut support for Drill Hall. The Labour-controlled council voted to fully end funding, after years of cuts, placing the service in jeopardy and jobs under threat.

Drill Hall is a vital public service, which provides access to a range of activities for the community. It’s a jewel in the crown of local culture.

Labour councillors have decided to act as agents of austerity and make ordinary people pay for Tory cuts. Many residents feel betrayed. What’s the point in voting Labour, if they carry out Tory policies?

There is an alternative to endless austerity. Set an emergency no-cuts budget, based on the needs of local

people for decent jobs, homes and services. And build a campaign for the missing money, united together with the community and the trade unions. Link up with other areas facing similar cuts.

Our public services have already faced ten years of austerity. Enough is enough. It’s time for Labour councillors to fight back, or be prepared to face a challenge at the ballot box.

Trotsky online rally - watched across the world



CWI members in Nigeria watch the rally

Over 6,000 people have watched our rally - Leon Trotsky: Why couldn’t his idea be killed? - commemorating the 80th anniversary of his assassination. It was organised by the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), the international socialist organisation the Socialist Party is part of.

On 23 August, some watched on their own, some in pairs and others hosted watch parties. Here you can see socialists in Nigeria gathered together to watch the rally. It was truly an international event, and the speakers illuminated Trotsky’s ideas.

You can rewatch it at ‘Socialist World - CWI’ on Facebook or ‘CWI Media’ on Youtube. The contribution by Socialist Party political secretary Peter Taaffe, ‘the role of Trotskyism’, suffered the most technical issues. But you can now see it in full on the CWI’s Youtube channel.

TV: ONCE UPON A TIME IN IRAQ

DAVE MURRAY
ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

No one could watch this five-part documentary series about the Iraq war and come away with the feeling that the war was anything but a catastrophe for the people of Iraq, the Middle East and humanity as a whole.

The film is composed of a series of direct-to-camera interviews with Iraqi civilians, US soldiers and members of the western press corps - interwoven with footage of the incidents that are documented and clips of news coverage from the belligerents' news outlets.

Towards the end of episode five you will hear Tony Blair pontificating that "removing Saddam will be a blessing to the Iraqi people". Everything you will have seen and heard up to that point will have confirmed that this is a wicked deception.

The most affecting, and valuable, part of the programmes are the interviews and footage in which Iraqis are given the chance to recount their experience of

their country's descent through the circles of hell. We meet people like chain-smoking, wise-cracking Walid, Metallica fan and heavy metal singer turned translator, who eventually fled to Canada, having become a target thanks to his work with western journalists.

We meet Alaa, who took a piece of shrapnel in the face aged 12, on her way home from an exam. She lost an eye. Her closest friends lost their lives in the same attack. It is hard to watch the footage of the immediate aftermath showing the horror, grief and rage of the families of the casualties. "I hope what happened to us happens to America," says Alaa, with the benefit of 15 years hindsight, expressing herself flatly, without emotion.

The series is trailed on PBS America as: "The story of the Iraq war from the civilians who lived it". This is not quite true. We also hear from Colonel Nate Sassaman of the US army, who now earns a crust lecturing on 'leadership' to wannabe managers, but who unleashed a reign of terror on Iraqi villagers when the first man under his command was killed.

We see his troops torture and humiliate civilian Iraqis. "It was a dehumanisation deal..." he says, as his eyes flick around the studio. His methods were taken up by his superiors for use against Iraqis who "openly defied American authority". An Iraqi elder who saw the reign of terror first hand says "Sassaman lost his mind".

This is part of the problem with the programmes. There is more than a hint of the narrative which emerged after the Vietnam war - which centres on the damage done to the 'grunts' who were tasked with laying waste to an entire nation. Rudy Reyes, US Marines reconnaissance soldier, claims that he killed many people at a checkpoint his unit set up because the illiterate Iraqis couldn't read the warning signs to stop. This is highly questionable since illiteracy was virtually unknown in Iraq before the war. When asked if it was all worth it he says, somewhat unconvincingly: "Yes. What's the alternative?" He's looking for work as an actor now.

One of the most telling sections of the series deals with the New

York Times men on the spot, Dexter Filkins and Ashley Gilbertson - "Dex" and "Ash" to the soldiers they were embedded with during the 2004 assault on the city of Faluja in which 600 civilians were killed. Ash identifies so strongly with the mission that he decides he needs to get a picture of a dead insurgent sniper in a mosque. He tells us that he wanted to get evidence that would justify the US targeting of mosques (he doesn't say so but also schools and hospitals) on the grounds that Isis fighters were using them as military positions.

During the course of the attempt to photograph a dead fighter a US soldier is killed. We learn this soldier's name, and meet his buddies in the unit and his parents and sister back home. We see childhood home movies. None of the 600 civilian dead is named. 75 US troops died in the assault, out of an attack force of 8,000.

The series is undoubtedly worth watching - but with enormous caveats. It seems strange that a BBC documentary makes almost no reference to the British role in instigating and prosecuting the war, let alone war crimes committed by British troops. The Kurdish population of Iraq are mentioned once, despite their enormous significance to the politics of Iraq since the independence of the country.

You get a somewhat simplified, overarching narrative of Iraq's experience of war and the dismantling of the public infrastructure of schools hospitals and utilities, the rise of the Iraqi insurgency and Isis/Daesh, the degeneration of civil society into generalised sectarian conflict, and the capturing of the state by epically corrupt sectarian politicians.

It's not that the programme makers absolve the western leaders of responsibility. The Bushes, Clinton, Blair, Obama and Trump are all implicated - quite correctly - but the narrative strongly suggests that, despite the obvious humanity of the Iraqis we meet, the nation is a pressure cooker of irrational sectarian hatred.

John Nixon, CIA intelligence analyst and Saddam expert, opines that "Saddam had his hand on the lid". Dexter Filkins, who confesses that he is "finished" with Iraq, makes a similar point when he says, of the hearts and minds efforts of Colonel Nate Sassaman: "For a long time I thought it could work," but, he says with a shrug, "it's the Middle East."

The series ends as mass protests against Iranian influence, corruption and sectarianism erupt across Iraq. In the narrative presented by the programme makers, I think this is supposed to show that the cycle of upheaval and violence will never end.

For us socialist internationalists, who can never duck out of our duty of solidarity to the victims of our ruling class, it is a sign that the struggle for democratic rights, national liberation and decent lives for all will always find a way to assert itself.

● *Once Upon a Time in Iraq* is available on BBC iPlayer for ten months

MASS PROTESTS IN ISRAEL DEMAND NETANYAHU'S RESIGNATION

AMNON COHEN AND ISRAELI SOCIALISTS

Every weekend evening, in Israel's biggest protest movement since 2011, angry protesters have besieged the official residence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanding his resignation. The loudest chants are "Big business and government are mafia!"

On 31 July, over 30,000 demonstrated around Netanyahu's residence. Small groups of demonstrators held banners from 200 bridges across the country, waving Israeli flags alongside black flags. Other demonstrations have taken place in Tel Aviv and Netanya, where Netanyahu has his second luxury home.

On 21 August, in Jerusalem, 5,000 protesters demanded Netanyahu resign, and over 10,000 the next night, when police made unprovoked attacks and 30 arrests.

Netanyahu faces trial over three separate corruption charges concerning his dealings with Israeli and foreign billionaires. Weekly demonstrations have been held for years in the town of Petach Tikveh, opposite the home of the Attorney General (who is responsible for the conduct of the investigation of Netanyahu's crimes) demanding the prosecution of Netanyahu and his resignation.

Changing protests

Employers' organisations started funnelling money into the protest movement in an attempt to depoliticise it and channel it to their interests. They built stages with expensive PA systems, on which small businessmen made speeches demanding increased government aid to save their firms from bankruptcy. When this infuriated the demonstrators, they brought striking social workers onto their stages.

These demonstrations were led by a retired general and composed of middle-class, pro-establishment older people who despaired at the damage being done to the Israeli government by the right-wing populist Netanyahu regime.

But the ranks of these protests have been massively swollen over recent months by young people, many of whom have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus epidemic.

Unemployment has risen to 20%. And many young people are officially self-employed victims of the gig economy. This group has been given no financial support to survive the crisis.

They have been infuriated by Netanyahu's lavish expenditure - constructing the largest cabinet in Israeli history, with 36 ministers - all with their own drivers and bodyguards - while the coronavirus crisis throws hundreds of thousands of Israelis into destitution. This younger group now dominates the demonstrations,



Every weekend evening thousands of Israelis have demonstrated to oust the prime minister PHOTO UZI D

which have become much more assertive, marching around the prime minister's residence and blocking key road junctions.

The initial response of Netanyahu, who denounced the demonstrators as leftists and anarchists, and sent police to attack them with water cannon, backfired. It provoked an increase in the defiance, the anger and the size of the demonstrations.



Last month, the nurses went on strike for one day and won their main demand for an increase of 2,000 in their staffing levels

Faced with increasing opposition, Netanyahu tried to rebuild his social base by ordering stimulus payments of NIS750 (\$220) to be made to every adult. This attempt to buy off popular opposition did not go down well. One million Israelis are now unemployed and two million are living in abject poverty.

In the past, Netanyahu attempted to divert attention from social movements at home by fomenting conflict with the Palestinians. But this time

he has attempted to divert attention by announcing a peace treaty with the despotic feudal regime in the United Arab Emirates.

This has also given him the opportunity to jettison his commitment to annex parts of the West Bank - a commitment made during the last general election to pander to the hard-right ultra-nationalists, but which he had no intention of implementing, as the status quo is far more advantageous to Israeli capitalism.

While this took the news headlines away from the protests, it has not impressed the demonstrators. So Netanyahu attempted to escalate the conflict in Gaza.

Realising that repression of demonstrators has been counter-productive, the police have ended the policy of wholesale attacks on demonstrators, attempting to let the demonstrations run their course.

These demonstrations have had a carnival-like atmosphere, with the only clear demand being Netanyahu's resignation. But the demand for "anyone but Netanyahu" does not provide a way forward for the movement.

The Blue and White Alliance was set up last year with a programme of "anyone but Netanyahu". It won 25% of the votes in the March 2020 elections and then proceeded to go into coalition with Netanyahu! The coalition faced collapse in August over failing to agree a financial budget,

but a new election was avoided by extending budget negotiations for 100 days.

Netanyahu's right-populist government is not the cause of the crisis of Israeli society, but a symptom of it. This crisis of Israeli capitalism cannot be solved by a change of personnel at the top. It is the capitalist system which needs to be replaced.

Last month, the nurses went on strike for one day and won their main demand for an increase of 2,000 in their staffing levels. A 16-day strike uniting both Jewish and Arab social workers won NIS200 million worth of pay increases, and increased protection of social workers from attack, after the leader of the Histaduth trade union threatened to bring other public sector workers out on strike. This shows the power of workers and the weakness of the government during this crisis.

Strike announced

The independent union, Workers Power, announced in mid-August a general strike of all its members, starting on 1 September, against the mass sacking of 1,300 teachers who teach young people who have dropped out of the mainstream education system. This group of teachers are members of Workers Power, and not of the Histaduth which organises 250,000 teachers.

Unfortunately, neither the Histaduth nor Workers Power have

taken part in the recent demonstrations. The leader of Workers Power said that this was because of the demonstrators' failure to raise the class questions. But workers' organisations intervening in such protests can highlight the class issues at the root of such struggles.

The workers' movement needs to link up with the anti-Netanyahu protest movement and put its stamp on events. The movement needs to demand not just the removal of Netanyahu but the entire rotten capitalist establishment, and an end to its policy of making the working class pay for the Covid crisis.

Bringing down Netanyahu will change nothing if he is replaced by one of the other rotten pro-capitalist politicians. A workers' government with a socialist programme is needed, and this makes the construction of a workers' party an urgent necessity.

Israeli society is in crisis and is facing the biggest wave of protests since the social movement of 2011. But this movement needs to arm itself with the lessons of the experiences of that movement, the Arab Spring, and the 1987 Intifada.

The spontaneity of the movement in itself is insufficient. It needs to forge a democratic leadership, fused with the developing workers' movement, and needs a clear political programme, aimed at not only bringing down Netanyahu, but also the crisis-ridden capitalist system he represents.

Latest US police shooting outrage...

FIGHT RACISM, TRUMP AND CAPITALISM



PHOTO JUDY BEISHON

The recent police shooting of unarmed black man Jacob Blake in Wisconsin is a brutal reminder of the oppressive policies of Donald Trump's administration and also the toxic racism built into the 'DNA' of US capitalism.

An outpouring of angry, predominately young black and white people onto the streets of US cities following the shooting has been cynically twisted by Trump into a 'law and order' issue, to whip up reactionary forces and further his presidential election ambitions.

The **Independent Socialist Group** in the USA, co-thinkers of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, argues below for a socialist programme to unite the working class and fight back against division arising from the profit-driven capitalist system.

On 23 August, Jacob Blake was shot in the back seven times by police in Wisconsin. The shooting has left him paralysed.

Why was Blake shot? Because he was walking away from a fight he tried to de-escalate until police arrived. Yet when the police arrived, the situation became tragic.

On the night of 25 August, amid protests denouncing the shooting, a member of a pro-police militia, Kyle Rittenhouse, shot three protestors, killing two of them.

Trump has publicly defended his actions and other violence by far-right militias.

Despite being thanked for his armed presence by officers before the shooting, and attempting to turn himself in after, Rittenhouse was not arrested until the next day. Further information released shows Kenosha Police Department actively collaborating with the right-wing militia group during the protest, including Rittenhouse.

The police's kid-glove approach

to Rittenhouse and other right-wing forces committing actual violence stands in stark contrast to the numerous acts of racist police violence that sparked the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

This movement has faced repression from local police as well as federal agents. It has raised demands to slash bloated police budgets and enforce real civilian control over public safety.

Both the Republicans and Democrats continue to utilise racist 'law and order' rhetoric, and to collaborate to increase mass incarceration and expand police presence in many communities of colour, even in the midst of this historic BLM movement.

From the constant criminalisation of poverty and workers of colour, to continued extra-judicial murders during a national anti-racist uprising, it is clear that the role of the police - and corporate politicians - is to enforce racism in the interests of the capitalist class.

The capitalist class and its

politicians are terrified of the current movement that has united workers and youth of all backgrounds in a common struggle to fight against systemic violence and injustice. They fear the momentum of this movement may lead working people and youth to fight for more far-reaching change.

This is a major reason why many cities under Democratic administrations are responding so brutally to the current protests. We cannot rely on the Democrats or Republicans for meaningful change.

We must ditch the two-party system and organise a party of our own that can help initiate and unite mass protest movements, including an unshakable commitment to fighting police brutality and systemic racism.

The Independent Socialist Group enthusiastically supports the ongoing anti-racist movement, including justice for Jacob Blake, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and all victims of police and racist brutality.

We call for the following:

- Demilitarise the police
 - End 'no knock' raids
 - Remove police from schools
 - Slash bloated police budgets and fund housing, healthcare, and education
 - Decriminalise poverty and ban racist police practices
 - Solidarity between organised labour and the anti-racist movement. Unions must mobilise to fight systemic racism. Turn out membership to protests. Use resources to help protesters. Adopt the movement's demands and organise workplace actions to win them
 - Elected community committees to organise protest support, medical treatment, legal responses, community self-defence efforts, and responses to police or right-wing escalation
 - Community control and oversight of all aspects of public safety, including hiring, firing, training, priorities, and budgets
- See also BLM protests - p12



HUGO PIERRE,
UNISON NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

"What have been significant in response to the latest US police shooting of an unarmed black man, are the actions of sports professionals - striking in support of Black Lives Matter (BLM).

But what if the millions-strong trade union movement got together behind BLM and campaigned to unite working-class people across the USA to fight racism and Trump? This means the unions fighting for a programme of jobs, pay, healthcare, safety, and all the things that matter to the majority.

I believe that here, in the UK, the trade unions must also show a way forward by ending their 'lockdown' on activity and give full support to BLM around the demands of 'jobs, homes, safety - not racism'."