

HEALTH BEFORE PROFIT

WORK OR FULL PAY

Fear about catching coronavirus. Fear about being thrown out of work. Fear about being forced to stay at home without enough money to pay the bills or put food on the table.

Yet again it's working-class people who are paying the price for the Tories' mishandling of the Covid pandemic.

The government has tried to put the blame onto 'irresponsible' students - who were lured to university with false promises of a normal student experience - or onto ordinary people not following rules that nobody understands anymore. Anything to stop working-class and young people uniting together against the real culprits - Johnson's Tories.

The second wave isn't the fault of ordinary people who are doing their best in difficult circumstances. It isn't even mainly due to government incompetence - although there's plenty of that around. It's the inevitable consequence of policies that prioritise the profits of a rich minority over the health and well-being of the majority.

It was in pursuit of profits for their big business friends that the Tories simultaneously forced children back to school and workers into the factories and offices - crammed onto public transport - without an adequate test-and-trace system in place. And the testing shambles is the result both of years of underfunding and the Tories handing out contracts to private companies like Serco to make a killing, rather than fully fund established publicly controlled local test-and-trace systems.

The fear and anger from below is reaching boiling point, especially in the North, and causing the cracks and fissures above to widen. 'Red

wall' Tory MPs worried about losing their seats are openly attacking Tory MPs on the right of the party.

Even Labour leaders are feeling the heat. 'National unity' over Covid is fraying at the edges. The Labour-led Welsh government has introduced a 17-day 'firebreak' (see p3). Keir Starmer has finally, albeit timidly, opposed Johnson by calling for a mini-lockdown 'circuit breaker', although at the same time telling Labour MPs to abstain on a vote that will allow 'spycops' to infiltrate trade unions and workers' organisations, as well as murder with impunity.

Manchester

Andy Burnham, Labour mayor of Greater Manchester, reflecting local anger, verbally defied Johnson's attempts to place the area in tier three restrictions unless more money was made available to compensate workers in closed-down workplaces.

But the fact that he was pushed by pressure from below to make a

stand, and that the government was thrown onto the defensive, shows what could be possible.

Unfortunately, Burnham backed down on his initial demand that the furlough system, where workers receive 80% of their wages, be extended beyond the end of the month when it is due to end.

Working-class people can have no illusions in Labour politicians like Burnham to fight determinedly for our interests. Where was Burnham during the austerity years when Labour councillors were implementing Tory cuts and destroying local services without a whimper?

But a serious national campaign now, led by trade unions and mobilising local communities around the demand of 'work or full pay', could force the Tories into backing down over the furlough scheme. It could also lay the basis for a fight to oppose all cuts, and win the money necessary from the Tory government to fully fund local jobs and services. That fight would include standing

trade union, community and socialist candidates against pro-austerity councillors in elections as a step towards the building of a new mass workers' party that would fight for the interests of working-class people, not big business and a rich elite.

The Socialist Party demands:

- Work or full pay
- Maintain and extend the furlough scheme
- No reduction in Universal Credit. No delay in payments. Increase benefits in line with the minimum wage
- Trade union action to defend jobs and safety
- Invest in free training and apprenticeships on full pay, with a decent, guaranteed job at the end
- Kick out the private profiteers. Fully fund test and trace within the public system under democratic working-class and community control
- Socialist planning, not private market madness



Tories reduce winter homeless funding: reverse the cuts, use the empty homes!

JACK JEFFERY
SECRETARY, UNITE UNION HOUSING WORKERS' BRANCH

The government announced £12 million of additional cold winter funding to support rough sleepers on 13 October. This will be nowhere near enough.

Some will go to councils in England to provide further self-contained accommodation, and the rest will go to community groups to provide 'Covid-safe' night shelters. But it is actually less than the £13 million the Tories gave to cold winter projects last year.

The fall should be no surprise. Despite the rhetoric, spending on homeless services is down by over half a billion a year since 2008-09, according to St Mungo's and Homeless Link. This funding should be restored in full. Meanwhile, homelessness has soared.

Toxic combination

And the toxic combination of rising unemployment, the end of the eviction ban, struggling public services, and insecure private rented housing is placing many more people at risk of homelessness this winter. Shelter estimated in July that 230,000 private renters were at risk of eviction when the ban lifted, because of arrears built up since the start of the pandemic.

With the right resources homelessness is preventable. The government's 'Everybody In' scheme was one of the few positive initiatives to emerge from lockdown.

Almost 15,000 homeless people were placed in emergency accommodation, often in empty hotels. This

had a real impact in preventing the spread of the virus and saving lives. The timely response avoided 266 deaths during the first wave, as well as 21,092 infections, 1,164 hospital admissions, and 338 intensive care admissions, according to a recent study in the Lancet.

I see the effect of this in my own role as a homelessness worker in central London. However, the 'Everybody in' scheme is now ending.

Nowhere to go

People who are new to the street have nowhere to go, with limited accommodation options. The normal support network of day centres, advice services and food banks is struggling to operate under coronavirus.

Everyone should have the right to a decent, affordable home. There are over 200,000 empty properties in the UK, estimates the pressure group Action on Empty Homes.

The impact of coronavirus means that demand for hotel accommodation in cities is at a record low. An August study into hotel occupancy in London found an average of just 25%, with analyst STR reporting some as low as 10%.

As an immediate step, councils should requisition empty houses and hotels for homeless people. The government should declare that arrears accrued during the pandemic will be forgiven, with compensation to small landlords on the basis of proven need.

Combining these immediate measures with a programme for mass building of council housing, democratic rent controls, and full funding of homelessness services, we could properly tackle homelessness.

Liverpool lockdown: suspicion and anger



DAVE WALSH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The government has put the Liverpool region in tier three, the highest category of lockdown, because the infection rate was dangerously high. But most people here view with suspicion any action the Tories take in our city, and for good reason.

There are two main reasons why many workers in the city are angry about these measures, and it's not because they think action isn't required. It's because they think our city is getting both ends of the dirty stick.

First, there's anger about the reduction of furlough payments from 80% to 67% of wages. Many workers in Liverpool depend on the hospitality sector, for example, for their livelihoods. The city centre attracts thousands of tourists and revellers every weekend.

Although wages are low, it is at least a reliable source of income. But the prospect of receiving just 67% of already low, often part-time wages is causing enormous anxiety.

Second, the piecemeal approach from government, which most experts say won't even be enough to stop a severe winter crisis! Workers feel their sacrifices will be pointless.

Profit first

Many workers here are also angry at a Tory government prioritising the profits of big business and protecting its own MPs' constituencies, but this anger isn't reflected by our political leaders.

The city mayor Joe Anderson said that images of people partying in Liverpool on the day before lockdown had "shamed the city." The images were of Concert Square, an area popular with young people and students. Anderson didn't mention that the rest of the city centre was deserted, but his comments were widely covered by the right-wing media, which loves to condemn Liverpool.

Meanwhile, students who were attracted to the social scene in Liverpool now face months of virtual isolation, with their courses online but still charged £9,000-a-year fees. The government rightly points

out that hospital admissions are high here. But none of our Labour leaders make the point that the underlying health problems in the city come from high levels of poverty and deprivation.

Many suffer from poor, overcrowded housing, poor working conditions, and a virtually non-existent social care system. In fact, Liverpool had a health crisis even before the pandemic struck.

The Liverpool region metro-mayor, Steve Rotherham, was seen as a close ally of Jeremy Corbyn. He could have made these points. He chose not to, and was praised by Boris Johnson for his "strong leadership." Most workers in Liverpool see weak leaders, unwilling to speak up in their interests.

Next year, Merseyside Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition will stand election candidates with a programme putting peoples' livelihoods and lives before big business profits. It will be a real opportunity to expose Labour and its commitment to this rotten capitalist system, which is completely unable to cope with the pandemic.

World capitalism's terrified strategists abandon austerity - for now

The International Monetary Fund, evangel of austerity, has come out against austerity to pay for Covid-19!

The fund's chief of 'fiscal affairs' (state spending and taxation) declared: "Policymakers that have a choice would be well-advised to be very gradual and to maintain fiscal support." This flies in the face of the IMF stance on the 2007-09 Great Recession: "Many countries face large retrenchment needs going forward" - translation: massive cutbacks.

But the new advice relies on what the Financial Times calls "a strong bounceback in economic growth after the pandemic." There was no economic space for such growth even before the coronavirus! Really

the IMF is feeling the heat of mass anger, and fears more austerity will bring mass movements down on the capitalists.

And the advice doesn't apply to everyone. Poorer, neocolonial nations have "binding financial constraints" so should tighten their belts. However, the World Bank's chief economist says poorer nations have no choice but to borrow to solve the pandemic crisis!

She also warns this will worsen a gathering, huge global debt crisis. "In terms of the coverage, of which countries will be engulfed, we are at levels not seen even in the 1930s. This is why we are talking about debt write-offs."

Even capitalism's top strategists aren't sure how bad things are. "Many loan contracts have non-disclosure agreements so they are not known about." This will even force governments to "capitalise their banks and take them over, and that is already in the making."

The World Bank lends to 'develop' poorer economies; the IMF lends to 'stabilise' currency crises. Both are components of the United Nations, dominated by the leading imperialist powers. Both therefore attach strings - austerity, privatisation, slanted 'free markets' - to benefit the bosses in the richest nations. Both are now terrified.



Leicester lockdown: disillusionment and anger

LINDSEY MORGAN
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Leicester has been under some form of lockdown since March. We were the first city to go into local lockdown, and it has been difficult for lots of us dealing with periods of isolation, businesses going under, and people losing jobs.

Leicester is consistently one of the most underfunded cities in the country. Due to a combination of poor-quality housing, sweatshop workplaces, workers who can't take time off sick (especially migrants), and piss-poor financial support from the government, we have had high infection rates.

The local Socialist Party has encountered mixed moods on the streets. Various people are enraged by the hypocrisy of local politicians flouting the lockdown rules then telling us how to behave. For many who have stuck to the rules and not seen friends or family, particularly in the early stages, it has been painful.

The length of the lockdown has

meant, though, that many are making their own sense of the restrictions. They see the barefaced profit-first rules as lacking sense. The fact that the lockdown meant, basically, 'do what you like as long as you're spending money', wasn't missed by many of my friends and family, or by locals speaking to us on Socialist Party campaign stalls.

Parents who have had to send their children back to school increasingly understand how unsafe it is, but often feel they have no choice but to take the risk or lose their job.

The anger, though, hasn't always resulted in people rushing to chat with us. Over a decade of austerity and local service cuts by the city's Labour council have meant disillusionment, and sometimes a flat mood in the city. But when you do get talking to people, you find the need for proper working-class political representation and a fightback is understood.

The anger is bubbling under at the moment, but it will find expression. We are fighting to channel that into building for a socialist future.

Newcastle lockdown: stress and breakdowns

A NEWCASTLE WORKER

After the initial shock wore off, my family settled into a routine. We argued a lot. There was a cycle of us taking turns having mental breakdowns. The problem was, even in isolation, we had a constant supply of stressors.

Every time you looked at the news it was like watching a dystopian film. The virus, anti-maskers, innocent protestors facing police brutality, the recession, the list goes on and on. By August, I was the only one who had not approached the mental health services for counselling.

While this was going on, I had been forced to commit furlough fraud by my boss - who told us that doing work while furloughed was "voluntary" while holding our jobs over our heads.

One of my friends had it worse; he lost his job immediately, despite the scheme. We even had to help him out while he waited for his 'whopping' £350-a-month Universal Credit.

Worst of all had to be the worry for my grandparents. We taught them how to use video calls and called every day, but it was really tough. It felt completely awful dropping shopping off and not being able to give them a hug. But the anxiety of whether I would be the one to infect them stopped me.

Since things have relaxed, I think I am even more stressed. I am back in the office, where the virus is treated as a joke, as is following restrictions. My boss even bragged about telling his 70-plus father-in-law to "take that mask off whilst you're in my house."

Now it feels like I just have to cling onto my job. We have already had one case. I have been tested twice and been lucky - for now.

I don't know what is worse: being isolated in lockdown, or dealing with employment in this post-lockdown world. With the cases now as high as they were in April, and nothing being done other than the removal of furlough payments, it feels like we are on our own.



SOCIALISM TODAY

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● FCC dismiss Unison activist Tony Smith



Trade unionists and activists will be outraged to hear that Unison activist Tony Smith's dismissal has been upheld by FCC. As previously reported, Tony's dismissal on trumped-up charges was because of his trade union activities. It took nearly five weeks from the appeal to the outcome for FCC to confirm the sacking. Tony has faced the mental torture of not knowing whether he

has a job or not. But the time taken reflected that dismissing him was not a simple issue because of the high profile that Tony has in the local labour movement.

Unison will be seeking compensation, and the campaign focuses on Hull City Council to end its contract with FCC.

MICK WHALE
CHAIR, HULL TRADES COUNCIL

● Optare workers strike over broken 'promise' to increase pay



Unite members at bus manufacturer Optare, in Sherburn in Elmet, on the outskirts of Leeds, took the first strike in a series of discontinuous 48-hour strikes starting on 15 October, alongside a continuous overtime ban.

During pay negotiations in 2019, workers had been given a promise of a decent pay rise, if the company was given three more months to put a package together. Instead, the company has broken this promise to workers who are already paid below the industry standard for their skilled work.

The situation has been aggravated further by the company bringing in increased numbers of contractors to work on lines, paid at a higher

rate than the in-house workforce. A number of issues around health and safety during the Covid-19 pandemic have also arisen, with workers feeling the company is failing in its duty of care to keep them safe.

Despite heavy rainfall, workers kept up the picket for over 12 hours on the first day, with a confident mood, undoubtedly influenced by around 80% of all deliveries from suppliers coming into the plant refusing to cross the picket line.

Socialist Party members will be continuing to support the strike and seeking to build solidarity in the trade union movement locally.

IAIN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

● Solidarity with Deliveroo Couriers in York

As members of the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB), Deliveroo couriers in York are the latest to join the ongoing struggle in the gig economy to be classed as workers and receive workers' benefits, such as holiday pay, sick pay and their rights to a living wage.

Couriers in York are taking industrial action, and are operating a boycott of the Five Guys restaurant and take away in a struggle to receive payment for waiting times. Owing to the uncertainty and so-called 'flexibility' of their employment, Deliveroo

couriers are also under constant threat of termination of their employment. So far, the restaurant owners and Deliveroo have refused to engage with the couriers to discuss their claims/proposals.

Cristian Lee Santabarbara, Chair of the York IWGB couriers' branch says:

"We have hosted six consecutive, 12-hour boycotts with great success. The Deliveroo tablet was switched off earlier each day and we've experienced community support."

YORK SOCIALIST PARTY

Action on Covid transmission in schools now

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES
LANCASHIRE NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

At last, some opposition politicians are starting to speak out clearly about the woeful failure of the Tory government to control the spread of the virus. But words alone can be ignored.

So now it's time for the National Education Union (NEU) to back up words with action and call strike ballots in the worst-affected areas.

The publicity around the union's call for a two-week 'circuit-breaker' over half-term, including schools, has already helped to break the silence over how our packed classrooms are operating, as one of the key vectors driving the 'Covid second wave' of rising infections and deaths.

Public Health England's own data now confirms that test positivity rates

are rising sharply, and most of all among teenagers and young adults. Some of the highest incidences of Covid outbreaks are being recorded in schools. These are recorded across all sectors - nursery, primary, special and secondary.

The virus is being carried into schools, transmitted between pupils and staff, then carried back out into communities again. That's inevitable when schools are operating with full classes without any possibility of adequate social distancing, with 30 or more children and adults sharing the same, often poorly ventilated, classroom space. The risks are greatest in tier two and three areas with the highest infection rate, especially for staff at risk who are not being allowed to work at home.

Yet the government continues to ignore reality. Lancashire councillors

reported that when they spoke up in negotiations about transmission in schools and workplaces being the real problem, they were told by government officials that these were 'off-limits'.

So Lancashire is now in tier three, without adequate financial support for workers affected, but also with school safety continuing to be ignored. For the sake of staff and for the safety of our communities too, it's high time to take the action needed to make sure that ministers cannot ignore us any longer.

That's why emergency NEU members' meetings have been called in the first tier three areas of Lancashire and Liverpool. Local officers agree that escalation to a higher tier must be met with an escalation in the union's strategy. With infection rates on the rise, we must not delay.

Socialist Party in Education is calling for:

- Emergency NEU meetings to be called in tier two and three areas
- Local and national leadership to put the case for urgent action and to put full resources into winning area-wide strike ballots

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RMT: Programme to fight redundancies and cuts



PHOTO PAUL MATTHESSON

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN RMT

The RMT transport union's national executive committee (NEC) has agreed a policy on fighting redundancies, pay cuts and attacks on conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This policy is an important statement of our union's position at this time. RMT has set itself against any attempt to make workers pay for the Covid crisis at a time when, unfortunately, the leaderships of the Trades Union Congress and many unions are buying into the Tory lie that we're all in it together.

Government borrowing this year has already exceeded the annual borrowing at the height of the 2008 banking crisis. Since 2008, workers have paid the cost of bailouts to the rich and powerful. Pay has not kept pace with inflation, and public services have been decimated.

Wealth

Yet the wealthiest 1,000 people in Britain doubled their wealth, and then increased it by the same amount again, in the ten years following the banking crisis. It is inevitable that the ruling elite, the 1% who control our economy, will seek a similar solution to the economic fallout from Covid.

Of course, RMT members working for train-operating companies, Network Rail, London Underground and many other employers, managed to protect our real pay levels after 2008. This was achieved by refusing to accept the bogus argument that workers needed to share the pain of the

financial losses caused by bankers. Our policy on fighting redundancies, pay cuts and attacks on conditions now sends a clear signal to all that we will resist any attempt to make workers subsidise the rich now.

The struggle between workers and the elite will be even sharper this time around. Many workers cannot afford another round of austerity and our public services have nothing left to cut.

We also have to take account though of the fear many workers have of losing their jobs and a lack of confidence that we can resist the tide of job cuts and other attacks. RMT must build support for our policy on resisting all attacks from the bosses. We must build the confidence of members in our ability to fight back.

This means branches and regions holding special meetings, on Zoom where necessary, to launch our campaign. It means looking to broaden strike calls and public campaigns against job cuts or other attacks.

Where a service is shut down or carrying very few passengers, we need to look at taking action on the employer's other contracts or take sector-wide action. RMT should demand a rail industry-wide no redundancy agreement with the government and employers, and consider balloting for action against any employer who does not agree this.

Agreeing the policy is just the first step in raising the confidence of members and outlining how we can fight back to defend jobs, pay and conditions. Now RMT must do everything possible to publicise the policy

and to take it into the TUC and wider trade union movement. We should seek alliances with other unions who are prepared to fight and put demands onto the TUC leadership.

It is unfortunate that, just as this battle for jobs and conditions is intensifying, a letter from the General Secretary of RMT, attacking the elected RMT national executive committee, has been sent to members and has found its way into the capitalist press.

Allegations

Allegations of bullying have been made in the union by and against the general secretary and others. The national executive committee has ordered an independent inquiry into the issue of harassment and bullying.

It is crucial, though, that the democratic oversight that the national executive committee exercises over national officers under the unions rules does not get diluted at this time. It is not a coincidence that similar tensions between lay member representatives and full-time officials have emerged in other unions. In a period of intense class struggle, the control of trade unions by their members is more important than ever.

These issues must be addressed so that RMT can operate its democratic structures as effectively as possible, with all members free to contribute to debates. First and foremost, all RMT branches, regions and reps must be committed to building our fightback and working to get support for this from every member.

The need for political discussion is particularly vital at the moment. All who attend Socialism 2020 will come out of it strengthened and better prepared for events ahead.

COVID, CAPITALIST CRISIS AND THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

“It's difficult to say what is so good about the annual Socialism event without sounding evangelistic, but capitalism isn't an act of god or force of nature, it has been created and developed by people over hundreds of years – and it doesn't have to be like this.

Socialism 2020, like all the previous years, will be an opportunity to hear and discuss events and experiences.

The sessions provide realistic analysis of the past, present and future and at the brilliant rallies we learn about the truly inspirational struggles and triumphs of workers in Britain and across the world.

With all that has happened, and the tragedies we have experienced in 2020, Socialism will, this year more than ever, put things into focus.

I always come away from Socialism uplifted and inspired, with a renewed understanding that another world, a socialist world, is possible and it is in our hands – can't wait!"

Alexis, trade union activist

FOR AGENDA, TICKETS, INFO:
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WHY THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS BACKING HUGO PIERRE FOR UNISON GENERAL SECRETARY

On the 28 October, 1.4 million ballot papers will go out to Unison public sector union members to decide who should be the new general secretary and lead the union.

As the second wave of Covid sweeps over the country, workers need a union leadership that is prepared to give a lead in fighting for safe workplaces, and opposing Tory cuts to jobs and terms and conditions.

Unison members in the NHS, councils and education have been on the front line during the pandemic. The Tories have ravaged public services over the past ten years through their austerity offensive. But we've seen over the last few months that when their capitalist system is in crisis, they can produce the 'magic money tree'. This is the fight we must win.

The last 20 years alone have shown the desperate need for a new, radical, fighting, democratic leadership in the union. It's no wonder that, for the first time in Unison's history, more branches have nominated left and anti-establishment candidates. An increasing number of branches, regions, and service groups have lost confidence in the current leadership.

Front line

Unison members have found themselves in the front line of public sector attacks for over 20 years, first under Labour with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, and now the Tories. Yet under Dave Prentis's leadership (backed by Christina McAnea and Roger McKenzie, two of the other candidates in this election) the union has failed to lead a national fight to defend its members. As Hugo Pierre says: "Branches have been left to fight alone, what's the point of a union of 1.4 million if you are not going to use its collective strength?"

Under the Prentis leadership over 1 million council workers' jobs have gone, and there has been the wholesale privatisation of social care and many other public services, where members' jobs have been sold to the cheapest bidder, now to be run for profit instead of need. That is why Hugo is right to demand that all privatised services should be bought back in-house, and their workers put back on national pay and conditions.

Under the Prentis leadership the NHS has been broken up, with our hospitals pitted against each other. Instead of public investment they have been saddled with billions of ongoing debts in the form of private finance initiatives (PFI).

Our schools and colleges have also suffered the same fate through the academisation process. Hugo Pierre is right to demand the cancellation of all PFI debt, with no compensation for the greedy bosses who have had their noses in the public sector trough. Hugo is also correct to call for all schools to be brought back into local authorities and under the control



Under the Prentis leadership over 1 million council workers' jobs have gone, and there has been the wholesale privatisation of public services, where members jobs have been sold to the cheapest bidder, now to be run for profit instead of need



TOWER HAMLETS COUNCIL WORKERS ON STRIKE PHOTO ISAI PRIVA

and management of democratically elected local committees.

Low pay is now endemic in the union, with members' living standards having fallen by 20% in the last 20 years. While MPs are happy to award themselves a £3,500 pay increase this year, NHS members are being told they are not worth any increase! The Unison leadership stood apart from the rank-and-file NHS protests demanding a 15% pay rise. Hugo Pierre was on the demonstrations and is the only candidate calling for a national strike ballot in the NHS to win the union's full claim.

It is women members who have suffered the brunt of these attacks, and Hugo is right to say that "while Unison boasts about having 1 million women members, it's about time it stood up and fought for them".

As if the last 20 years were not bad enough, this election will also take place under a rising tide of fear and anxiety of a second wave of Covid and its economic consequences.

One Hugo Pierre supporter in Salford has told us that her NHS Trust is predicting a new crisis point by 3 November. The employers are asking for staff to work in the Nightingale hospitals, but hospitals are unwilling and unable to release staff due to their own shortages. The current staff

are at breaking point, unable to take on anymore overtime and additional shifts, and less nurses are willing to come back to support compared to the first outbreak. It's no wonder, she said, that the service "is in meltdown".

A Unison member and school worker in Yorkshire supporting Hugo said there is a growing fear of the rampant spread of the virus in schools (with up to 25,000 school workers currently self-isolating). She said that the only place that it seems there is no need for social distancing and no need to limit contact to groups of no more than six is in our schools.

"That is why as a national schools' representative I support Hugo's call for the union to urgently call meetings of reps in the tier two and tier three areas to draw up a list of demands to protect our safety, and to prepare for regional strike ballots of union members, calling on the National Education Union to support as well."

Black and Asian workers have found themselves to be at greater risk of falling victim of the virus, often in frontline jobs, low-paid with poor access to PPE and testing. As one of the national executive committee members for black members, Hugo has not only spoken out in defence, but taken to the streets in demonstrations of health workers, and in the Black Lives



We believe that only Hugo Pierre has the serious strategy and programme needed to transform Unison into a fighting and democratic union, able to confront the current situation

is vital that the unions have a political voice that represents its members. Unison hands over £3 million a year of members' money to the Labour Party, therefore members have a right to demand that the Labour Party should defend them.

Hugo is the only candidate to state that any Labour councillor or MP attacking Unison members' jobs, wages or conditions should not receive a penny of Unison members' money. How can it be right that the Labour Tower Hamlets council, that has sacked its entire workforce to impose new, worse terms and conditions, continues to receive money from Unison to help get its councillors re-elected?

Hugo is the only candidate saying that if Labour does not want to defend Unison members, then the union should be able to use its political funds to back candidates that will.

Workers' wage

In this election, more than any other, members need to know that their elected leader knows what is like to be a public sector worker and live like a public sector worker. Hugo is the only candidate still carrying out his council job while also playing a leading role as an elected Unison officer and national executive member. He has also said that, if elected, he will refuse to accept the £138,000 a year general secretary wage, and will only take his current council worker salary, donating the rest back to the union.

Hugo believes that working for the union should be a privilege and not a career move, and that those who have the power to negotiate for Unison members should be elected. That's why he calls for all regional officers, regional secretaries and the assistant general secretaries to be elected and truly accountable to members. If some of the officials had to face election like the local reps, then they might well fight harder to defend their members or face being removed.

We believe that only Hugo Pierre has the serious strategy and programme needed to transform Unison into a fighting and democratic union, able to confront the current situation. The general secretary election is a platform to bring together all those activists who agree with Hugo's programme to build a fighting left within Unison. This can be the basis to transform the union at all levels into the fighting union that members need as they engage in the fight of their lives.

We call on all Unison members to vote for Hugo Pierre.

Rules introduced by Unison to clamp down on democratic debate in the union mean that candidates for union elections cannot 'invite or accept' support 'in money or kind' from any entity which is not provided for in Unison rules'. These articles are produced without the authorisation of Hugo Pierre, in order to comply with these requirements.

Hugo's election statement

- Transform Unison into a fighting democratic union
- A general secretary on a worker's wage

"I am standing in this election to transform our union into a fighting, democratic trade union. A union that wins for members. I want to prepare our union to resist the attack on our jobs, pay, terms and conditions as the Tory government tries to make public sector workers pay for their mishandling of the Covid crisis. No return to austerity.

My national experience

- I am the elected Male Black Members' representative on the national executive committee, and have been since 2015. I am also elected onto the local government service group executive representing schools. I, along with others, fought for our school members to have the right to take national action against school funding cuts.
- I have organised successful campaigns as a schools' convenor to fight low pay, particularly of women workers - nursery nurses, teaching assistants and school meals workers. I have successfully fought school and nursery closures, and stopped one of our schools converting to an academy (we have no academy conversions in our council).
- I represented a Windrush victim and pushed forward Unison's national policy against the hostile environment.
- I want our members' successes, like the magnificent Glasgow equal pay victory, at the bold heart of this union. We cannot afford to repeat the last ten years of failure to defeat austerity.

We won't pay for the Covid crisis

- Fight local authority cuts: Now is the time for Unison to lead a national fight against another £10 billion of threatened Tory cuts. Fight all cuts to services, jobs, pay and conditions. UK-wide action to fight council cuts - don't leave branches to fight alone. We must demand Labour and SNP councillors don't vote for cuts.
- For a real fight on NHS pay: I support Unison demanding an immediate pay rise for all workers on 'Agenda for Change' - not to wait until next April. Branches and regions must discuss an immediate 15% pay claim now to reverse the austerity years' pay cuts. Build local demonstrations (safely) and back UK-wide action, including an industrial action ballot.

Send the claim to all NHS private sector providers. Coordinate public and private sector action across the NHS.

- No to education privatisation: Full funding for early years and schools. Full funding for further and higher education.
- End low pay: For a £15 an hour minimum wage.
- For a renationalised NHS and social care sector: Bring all public services back in-house with full collective bargaining and national terms and conditions. Scrap PFI contracts and cancel the PFI debts. End continual restructures - for workers' control and management of the NHS. I support a conference of our members across service groups to campaign for social care to become a fully public service under democratic control.
- Safety first for all staff: Full stocks of PPE in all settings. Renationalise the equipment supply chain. Test, track, and trace back to local public health. Union health and safety reps must decide if it is safe to work.
- No fees for training: Bring back healthcare student bursaries and end tuition fees for all.
- Fight for jobs and homes not racism: Black Lives Matter! Unison must draw up workplace action plans to end institutional racism and discrimination in all our public services, so the whole union can fight bullying and harassment. Oppose the far right with action and policies to fight for jobs, homes and services.

Unison's National Black Members' Committee supports my campaign to become general secretary

- For a trade union fight to end environmental catastrophe: For a democratic plan to develop sustainable and green energy supply and distribution, including the renationalisation of all energy companies under workers' control and management, with compensation only on the basis of proven need. No loss of jobs, pay and conditions for any workers in the sector. Fight British Gas sacking and re-employing workers on worse conditions. For mass funding of green public transport. A public sector house-building programme ensuring green measures from the start, and refurbishments of

all properties to ensure energy efficiency.

Building strength and democracy

- Build Unison: For a national campaign to increase our workplace organisation, with financial and physical resources for branch action plans to double the number of shop stewards in the next two years. Draw young people into activity - for a democratic national young members' conference in 2021.
- For genuine lay member control of our union: Election of union paid officials starting with assistant general secretaries and regional secretaries. Our branches must have a genuine right to campaign to change and develop our union policy - let the members decide. Full financial resources for our branches.
- Support branches that want to fight: End unnecessary delay in industrial action procedures with a full review to ensure they are responsive, and allow branch ballots where there is clear support for action.

A fighting political voice

- Not a penny more of our members' money to Labour representatives who back cuts, privatisation or austerity: Unison branches should democratically decide if they support labour movement candidates for UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Senedd Cymru or local councils that put Unison policies into action, even if they are not Labour Party members.
- Let Scotland decide: For a new independence referendum determined by the Scottish people. For a trade union campaign to end austerity and invest in jobs, and services.
- Unison is proud to have a million women members. Now we must stand up by fighting to end low pay, stopping the cuts, halting privatisation and bringing services back in-house, and for the return of their stolen state pensions. We must negotiate paid time off for all our stewards to organise a stronger union.
- I pledge not to take the £138,000 general secretary salary but take only my current salary and donate back over £100,000 to Unison members' campaigns, strike funds and welfare."

Southampton: Coxford community condemn racist attack

SUE ATKINS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY AND FORMER
TUSC CANDIDATE IN COXFORD

On 8 October, two people walking in the residential area of Coxford, Southampton, were surrounded by six people on mopeds who taunted them with racist abuse, stole the woman's phone and injured her, and then stabbed the man. Fortunately he survived.

Coxford Labour councillors, Tammy Thomas and Barrie Margetts, organised an anti-racist rally at short notice in the local shopping centre. 40 people attended.

Tammy Thomas said: "It was important to us as ward councillors to send a clear message to the family: we support you and walk with you. And to the perpetrators: we will not tolerate racial hatred in our community."

"We acknowledge the underfunding and overstretched police, the lack of youth services and provisions, we want to create community cohesion."

The Socialist Party believes that 'community cohesion' between all sections of the working class can be forged by fighting for decent jobs and pay, affordable and secure housing, fully funded healthcare and free education. When these basics are denied, it opens the door to racist division.

This is not an isolated incident. Serious knife crime has more than doubled in Southampton since 2013. We're experiencing in sharp relief the effects of ten years of austerity.

The only youth club in the area is no longer supported by the council, but was handed over to a charity 20 years ago. In April, its funding will come to an end and the youth centre will close. 35% of Southampton children are growing up in poverty.

Tammy and Barrie rightly point to the cuts imposed by Tory governments, but they are part of the local administration that has cut 1,000 jobs and £124 million from the



One of the Black Lives Matter protests summer 2020

budget since Labour came to power in Southampton. The Labour council has 'saved money' by handing over local services to the precarious world of volunteers and charities.

If Tammy and Barrie are serious

about their opposition to the further cuts, they should join forces with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in demanding that the council use its reserves and borrowing powers to provide the services

we need, while building a campaign to demand the return of the millions stolen by the government. This would gain them unstinting support in the community and help cut across racist divisions that arise.

● Kent: Chaotic privatised asylum process

ERIC SEGAL
KENT SOCIALIST PARTY

Local Folkestone residents and the South East Kent Trade Union Council rallied in solidarity with 400 asylum seekers housed at Napier old army barracks. The Home Office provides basic accommodation for destitute asylum seekers by placing the lucrative five-year contract out to tender.

The contracts are eagerly snatched up by private companies like Serco, Mears, and Clearsprings, who profit from misery. Clearsprings manages the assessment centre in the run-down Napier barracks.

In the absence of public sector services, asylum seekers are thrown into a chaotic privately run system of religious groups, churches, charities and community organisations who compete with each other for grants or lottery funding to provide well-meaning but often inadequate services.

The 200 people attending our rally were confronted by a handful of far-right protesters, protected by a mass police presence. Their slogan called on the government to house veterans before refugees.

But at a recent rally in Dover, the transport union RMT assistant general secretary, Steve Hedley, said: "The far right say we don't have enough houses to cope with asylum seekers; we say build more houses."

(See 'Dover: Solidarity with refugees - applause and cheers for socialist ideas to unite working class' at socialistparty.org.uk.)

And they didn't read the slogan on the trade union council banner at this protest: "Fight for decent homes, jobs and services."

● Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire

You can meet the Socialist Party regularly campaigning in Waltham Cross. We call for a 15% pay rise for NHS workers. Each week the response is better and better. 17 October was the best yet.

When we said: "The government has refused to give NHS workers a pay rise, but MPs have given themselves a pay rise", the response more often than not was unprintable

IAN PATTISON

● Sheffield

Our best Saturday campaign stall since lockdown. And we met another three young people interested in joining the Socialist Party.

ALISTAIR TICE

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the NHS. Private companies made £7 million profit off the people of Coventry and Warwickshire last year from hospital car parks. A healthcare assistant told us they used to tailgate to ensure they could get into work, because they could not afford the charge.

ADAM HARMSWORTH

● Waltham Forest, east London

People were angry. They were angry at the lack of support, sick pay, healthcare and jobs.

They were angry, and the Socialist Party reflected that anger and articulated a way out - proper sick pay, a programme of public works to create jobs, good jobs. Build council homes with rents workers can afford.

And come to our protest on 24 October, 1pm, Walthamstow Town Square.

We said if Boris Johnson is going to lock us up, he's going to have to pay up. That went down well.

NANCY TAAFFE

Truth about Zane: Cover-up Tories crack

JOSH ASKER
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Cracks are beginning to appear in the state's cover-up of the death of seven-year-old Zane Gbangbola. Flooding in 2014 led to high concentrations of hydrogen cyanide entering the Gbangbola family home - killing Zane, and paralysing his Dad, Kai.

For seven years the family and supporters have campaigned for justice. The state has continued to deny hydrogen-cyanide poisoning as the cause of death.

In September, Spelthorne borough council faced a vote on a motion, moved by the campaign, calling for an independent inquiry into Zane's death. The Tory-led council had, for the last seven years, been part of the wall of denial from the establishment.

The council continued, until the last moments before the vote, to deny hydrogen cyanide as the cause of Kai's disability. Faced with hundreds of viewers on Zoom, 110,000

signatures on a petition, and overwhelming medical evidence, they could find no way out.

The council voted unanimously to lobby the government for an independent inquiry. The council now formally agrees that the coroner was part of a cover-up.

The case shows the length that the capitalist state will go to protect the interests of capitalists and the rich. But they didn't factor in the determination of the campaign, or the support from the wider trade union and workers' movement.

The Tory representatives of the capitalists on Spelthorne borough council have cracked under pressure. This pressure must continue and the fight goes on for an independent inquiry.

21 October 2020 would have been Zane's 14th birthday. There is a meeting from 7-8pm on Zoom in commemoration. A recording can be viewed by visiting truthaboutzane.com.

Selling the Socialist: Local lockdowns only increase NHS anger

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

● Coventry

On 17 October, the Socialist Party brought two campaign stalls to campaign to end hospital parking charges. One resident came over infuriated. He has to pay up every time he visits his mum dying of cancer.

Another signed as soon as we told him the money doesn't go back into



Students: Give us our money back

● Southampton

Students are dissatisfied, frustrated and angry. Socialist Students decided to make a stand.

We agreed that a demonstration on campus was the best way to make ourselves heard. On 16 October, we met at one of the busiest spots on campus.

Naturally, due to the Covid-19 measures, it couldn't be a full-blown demonstration - we kept a distance between each other and wore our masks.

Lots of students stopped to speak to us about what we are fighting for,

which unsurprisingly resonated with many of them. We collected signatures of people wanting to join the socialist movement in fighting for free education, which ultimately is the end goal.

Students getting a far-from-complete university experience need a fee refund. The pandemic has exposed the problems of a capitalist society that prioritises profit over people.

Our demonstration was part of our campaign for a socialist society. We demand a nationalised education system that prioritises the welfare of the people. We demand to be heard.

EVA PAPADOPOULOU

● Birmingham

Great Socialist Students meeting on 7 October on what campaigns on

campus need to be launched asap to fight back against student and staff exploitation, stripping away our resources, and funding and welfare for students.

We will have a socially distanced protest on 21 October for an immediate refund of this year's tuition fees, repayment of accommodation rent, and a national campaign for free education.

We got a great response on our 14 October campaign stall, with lots of support and sign-ups from students and staff. We appreciate all the support we have been receiving for the fightback for free education.

● Cardiff

Socialist Students was out campaigning on 15 October for a refund of fees and free education, ahead of our meeting. Just a couple of weeks into term, and 1,300 Cardiff Uni students are isolating already.

All this was totally predictable given the government's failure to defeat the virus. Students fees should be handed back, and we deserve a rent rebate too, with students allowed to cancel tenancy agreements and be given the resources to go home safely, if they wish.

Fight for your future at the online rally

Youth unemployment has reached 13%. On 25 October, students and young workers will be come together from across the country in an online rally hosted by Young Socialists and Socialist Students to discuss how to fight back.

Alex Hutchinson, youth officer of Hull Trades Union Council, said: "Young Socialists warned the bosses and Tories about making young people pay the price for the new economic crisis. The government's Kickstart Scheme, supposedly designed to help young workers find work, is there to give big business a source of cheap labour."

"Just like after the last financial crash, they're selling our futures down the river. Young Socialists campaigned for trade union action to fight for a decent future for young people - real apprenticeship and training schemes, and a mass programme of

government investment in socially useful job creation."

Michelle Francis, Bangor Socialist Students, said: "The approaching avalanche of job losses will be felt by students. Many rely on part-time work to supplement the pathetic student loans we receive."

"The fiasco of the rushed return to campus has highlighted years of cuts and underfunding of education, jeopardising our health. Socialist Students is out campaigning to scrap tuition fees and for democratic staff and student oversight of health and safety measures on campus."

Young Socialists, set up by the Socialist Party, involves young people who have protested with Black Lives Matter, defended the policies promised by Jeremy Corbyn against the Tories and Labour's right wing. We are now gearing up to fight for our futures - real jobs, education and training.

CLASS OF COVID V CAPITALISM

National rally over Zoom Sunday 25 October 1pm

Scan QR code or find Socialist Students on Facebook to get Zoom link

Young Socialists

youngsocialists.org.uk

socialist students

socialiststudents.org.uk

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join

Socialism 2020: Will you help our finance appeal?

CHRIS NEWBY
SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND ORGANISER

We are asking you to make a financial donation to our Socialism 2020 Fighting Fund appeal.

This appeal is vitally important. The Fighting Fund provides the money for our campaign material - it enables us to get our ideas out to as wide an audience as possible.

Covid-19 and the new economic crisis have dramatically changed the world. The majority of the world's population is paying the price with their lives, jobs and living standards,

while the richest continue to increase their wealth.

Workers and young people have not taken this lying down. There have been mass revolts against pro-capitalist governments in a number of countries, and the tremendous Black Lives Matter uprising.

A-level students forced governments U-turns. NHS workers have protested for a 15% pay rise.

Socialist Party members have participated in these struggles, and many more. We put forward a programme for how these movements can win.

In workplaces, Socialist Party members have played an important role in building campaigns that have won improved safety.

We also fight for working-class political representation. Many Labour

members have left the party in disgust following the election of Keir Starmer. They are now looking for a political alternative to fight austerity.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) - made up of the Socialist Party, transport union RMT and others - decided to resume standing anti-austerity candidates in elections, starting next May.

Can you give the Socialist Party £5, £50 or £500? And ask others to donate?

Every donation, no matter how small, will make a difference, and all of it will go to building support for socialist ideas.

Online forum 20-23 November
socialism2020.net
...for agenda, tickets, info

Teignmouth hospital threatened with closure... again!

SEAN BROGAN
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

Teignmouth Hospital was the first hospital to be rebuilt by the NHS, in 1954. Over the years, local residents have raised millions to buy equipment and beds, and refurbish large parts of it. It is a prime site, and part of the proposal is to sell it to developers.

Under the cover of Covid, a new 'consultation' is taking place to close the hospital and replace it with a part-privatised 'medical hub', without beds, physiotherapy or operations facilities.

The last few years have been the story of resistance by residents to the closure. First they came for our Minor Injuries Unit, then they took away the beds, then they mothballed the wards. They are the Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

unelected with sham consultations. So far, they have closed 21 community hospitals in Devon.

As in the past, the CCG have been met with fierce resistance to defeat the closure. New banners and window posters have been placed around town.

A battle is being fought on social media, airwaves and many letters in local papers. Exeter Trades Union Council and Unite Community have passed motions in support.

The reaction has been so strong that the opportunist Tory MP and Lib Dems have climbed on board, conveniently forgetting that the Con-Dem coalition government set these closures in motion.

● Like 'Hands of Teignmouth Hospital' on Facebook and sign the petition



Hemingway in Spain CASSWAR/CC

Books that inspired me: For Whom the Bell Tolls

SCOTT JONES
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

“I have fought for what I believe in for a year now. If we win here we will win everywhere. The world is a fine place and worth the fighting for and I hate very much to leave it.” With these words in ‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’ Ernest Hemingway captures the spirit of the tens of thousands who travelled to Spain to fight against fascism during the revolutionary years of the 1930s. (See ‘The Spanish Civil War’ at socialistparty.org.uk) His character Robert Jordan is a fictional example of these men and women.

‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’ is fine tribute and account of their struggle, and that of the Spanish workers and peasants. Every sentence is important and wonderfully crafted. Each chapter is full of action and feeling, the story and message inspiring.

Hemingway is one of the 20th century’s iconic writers, and ‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’, published 80 years ago this October, is one of his great works. It’s the product of his own experiences in Spain during the civil war, documenting, writing and supporting the republic and the Spanish people against Franco’s fascist coup.

The only thing that matches the adventure and action of his novels is his real-life experiences and, as ever, the book is based partly on them.

Jordan is sent behind enemy lines, into the hills around Segovia to team up with a band of Spanish peasants and guerrillas, with the aim of blowing up a bridge as part of an offensive.

Among the group are characters that leap to life from the pages. María, a young woman is the survivor of a fascist atrocity, and Pilar, the strong matriarch is completely loyal to the cause - unlike her husband Pablo who is accused by another loyal

fighter, the old man Anselmo, of being “another capitalist” after profiting from raids on the fascists.

The bravery, solidarity, and determination of the guerrilla band - reflecting the new solidarity and confidence in the country following the revolution, as well as heroism during the war - mirrors the solidarity and internationalism of all those who travelled to Spain to fight. All of which is portrayed throughout the novel.

Popular front mistake

Hemingway also uses the novel to attack both the Stalinists and anarchists, whose roles played a large part in the failure of the revolution and defeat in the war. The Stalinists allied themselves in a ‘popular front’ with enemies of the revolution throughout, and then during the war, carried out repression against those on their side who they deemed a threat.

Hemingway reflects the latter, with the appearance of the real-life French Communist leader André Marty, who has two guerrillas arrested when they were trying to deliver an urgent message, accusing them of being fascist spies. “He has a mania for shooting people”, says a guard when Marty is out of earshot, something the Stalinists like Marty did to many genuine socialists and fighters who opposed them.

As for the anarchists, who played a baleful role at several key junctures of the struggle, Pilar contemptuously says during a transfixing passage about how the revolution started in her village: “If we ever have another revolution I believe they should be destroyed at the start”.

Hemingway includes poignant scenes set in Madrid, where he was based during his time in wartime

Spain, but the book’s only omission, if you can call it that, isn’t his fault. He wasn’t present in Barcelona during the earlier, heady, revolutionary days where, as another combatant, writer George Orwell, put it, “the working class was in the saddle”.

Blacklisting

After the war, the 3,000 ‘real-life Robert Jordans who returned from Spain to the USA faced persecution and blacklisting from their own governments, even during World War Two. They’d fought against fascism ‘at the wrong time’.

The novel actually won the Pulitzer Prize in 1941, 12 years before Hemingway’s ‘The Old Man and the Sea’, but due to its left-wing politics this was overturned and no award was given. The film adaptation, unfortunately, played down the film’s politics too.

Hemingway wrote the novel in Cuba, where his circle of friends included many Spanish exiles after defeat in the war. The defeat didn’t dampen the writer’s political conviction - he went on to support the Cuban revolutionary movement and the revolution itself in 1959. This led to the FBI keeping tabs on Hemingway.

I first read ‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’ over a decade ago because I wanted to read more about the Spanish Civil War. I have since learned more about the thousands of inspiring working-class people from across the world, including many from my hometown in south Wales, who went in solidarity with the Spanish revolution - to fight fascism and fight for socialism. The inspiration and lessons remain vital to this day.

● *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Ernest Hemmingway, £7.99, Charles Scribner’s Sons

Football: Beware billionaires bearing gifts

JOHN REID
NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

‘Project Big Picture’ - a plan initially put forward by Manchester United and Liverpool, and discussed by the Premier League - is a plan put forward ostensibly to offer the football industry stability, at a time when the coronavirus pandemic has closed football grounds and put many clubs in financial meltdown. Macclesfield Town have already been wound-up.

Premier League clubs spent £1.2 billion in the latest transfer window. This sum could have solved football’s financial worries.

Big clubs such as Arsenal have spent heavily in the transfer market and on wages. They recently rewarded Mesut Özil with a reported £8 million loyalty bonus despite him not playing. At the same time, Arsenal have laid off 55 workers, mostly low-paid staff, including their mascot. Similar lay-offs have happened up and down the country.

The proposals put forward by the billionaire corporation-owned clubs should be discussed, not behind closed doors but at meetings of fans, local community representatives, the players’ union the PFA and the fans’ organisation the FSA, at every club in the football pyramid, and in the women’s game.

My book ‘Reclaim The Game’, first written at the outset of the Premier League, warned of the dangers of the ‘greed is good Premier League’; even though my club, Queens Park Rangers, was a founder member.

The depth of football in England and Wales needs to be safeguarded. Football clubs are an integral part

of working-class communities. 49 clubs have played in the Premier League. There is life outside the Premier League. The English Football League Championship attracts huge attendances. Only the German Bundesliga, the English Premier League and Spanish La Liga attract bigger attendances.

Big clubs like Portsmouth, Ipswich Town and Sunderland all play in the third tier of English football.

We need to reclaim the game from the control of the billionaire owners who want to dictate how football should be governed and financed. We cannot tolerate nine clubs dictating how hundreds of other clubs in the men and women’s game should be run.

Already supporters’ organisations at Liverpool and Manchester United have come out against the proposals, and issued a joint statement with supporter organisations at the other ‘big six’ clubs.

The billions in the game should be used to keep clubs afloat who rely heavily on gate receipts, as well as to invest in grassroots football and facilities owned by us.

Clubs should be collectively owned, and run by delegates elected from the supporters, the players and employees’ unions, and from the local community. This should be emulated in the ruling bodies of the game too.

Supporters have a common cause to reclaim our game. We want football that we can afford to watch, football that we run, and facilities that we own!

● *‘Reclaim the Game’ - a socialist programme for football by John Reid - available from leftbooks.co.uk*



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● Criminal Police

Just 35 Labour MPs opposed the ‘Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) bill’ - legalising normally illegal activity by police informants. Now, the only prevention to stop these state informants from committing crimes are senior police and intelligence staff - who previously authorised illegal activity that has still not been acted on!

Before ‘CHIS’, undercover police stole identities of dead children, and used false identities to form sexual and long-term relationships with female activists, who they did not suspect of criminal activity. Worse, some police encouraged illegal activity!

I heard an account of an officer, unsuccessfully trying to encourage supporters of Militant to ‘molotov’ a shop, based on his ‘word of mouth’ that a fascist ran it. Encouraging actions that could kill! The Tories wrote the bill, Labour let it pass. Neither stand up for the interests of the working-class majority.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY



WOITUNSKI/CC

● Laid off by corporate greed

I got laid off yesterday by a company that does domestic appliance repairs. They’d been a good employer; keeping me on through lockdown on full pay. They didn’t have to do that, but they did. I got a month’s notice on full pay, and was told it would be best for me if I spent my period of notice job hunting. So I’m already at home.

Most of the company’s work comes from Samsung, who called a meeting last week and demanded a 30% cut in the usual amount paid for each job. They had wanted a 40% cut but as rates hadn’t gone up in 5 years, the company said “no way”. My boss told me 30% is the margin to cover wages and overheads, hence the cuts.

I was laid off when I returned from my holiday, on the basis of last in, first out and because I was employed part-time. The remaining office staff will have their hours cut. The owner and his wife will now work a seven-day week to keep the business going.



SOCIALISTPARTY

This might be a smart business move for Samsung, which saw its profits fall a lot from 2018, but it will probably finish off this small company, destroying more jobs. Corporate greed is behind a scorched-earth policy. In 2019 Samsung made an operating profit of over £14.5 billion.

A LAID-OFF TECHNOLOGY WORKER

● Private bus rip off

The fact that buses are run by private companies, whose driving force is making profit rather than providing a good service, means a ridiculous situation for me and my partner every Sunday. We both buy a weekly bus pass, but neither of our two local buses run on a Sunday. Instead, a different bus company runs a bus, which is a mix of the other two routes.

So every Sunday we use the bus. When I need it to get to work, for instance, we have to pay for another ticket, even though we have a weekly bus pass! Also, the buses don’t run late enough on the weekend for me to get them home from work, so I have to fork out money for taxis. All in all it costs me three hours pay.

JULIETTE FOGELMAN
NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

● Re-nationalise Rolls Royce

The Tory party conference saw another hare-brained scheme from the prime minister in the form of a promise to increase off-shore wind. Yet a generation of the best turbine experts and manufacturers (namely Rolls Royce) are facing job losses, due to the impact of the stop in global air traffic.

It wouldn’t take much to change their focus from jet engines to energy-producing turbines for both water and wind energy production. In my opinion, this opportunity will be wasted on outsourced contracts made out to Tory party donors lining their



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THE SOCIALIST INBOX

pockets. Any responsible government would nationalise the likes of Rolls Royce, and convert them into the world-class energy production force they could be!

JAMES CAMERON
SOMERSET SOCIALIST PARTY

● “Left outside”

In March 2016, a 63-year-old homeless man died after being thrown out of a police station. Four years later, the police officers involved have been ‘excused’ by a west London coroner’s court, because he “would probably have died within a day anyway” due to “a pre-existing illness” which the court stated was “accelerated by hypothermia from being left outside in

-1C temperatures”. There are obvious humane questions.

If the man was so seriously ill, why did the police not take him to hospital? If the man’s health was being seriously worsened by his homelessness in winter, why did the local council not provide housing assistance? But the phrase used by the coroner’s court that stands out is “being left outside”.

If a dog was treated like that and suffered fatal consequences, the RSPCA would certainly consider prosecution of the dog’s owner. But for a homeless man in desperate need of refuge, the police, the local council, and the Home Office are ‘let off’ without a word of censure. This is because of the deliberate denial of any form of democratic accountability.

JOHN MERRELL
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY



DAVAGH/CC

Disabled students let down by “rotten education system”

MARK SAYERS
KEIGHLEY

The UK’s capitalist university system is rotten to the core. Universities’ prime aim is not to provide education for students - but to generate income for their vice chancellors and management who make millions by ripping off students. For the past three years, I’ve endured an experience which many disabled students in this country have faced. Many like me have a bitter taste in their mouth regarding how we have been treated.

I chose to study an online history degree at the University of Birmingham because I worked full-time shifts - like many working-class people, I was unable to attend university in person. I thought it was the right choice for me. How wrong I was. Because I have dyslexia, I needed extra help with writing essays.

Universities in the UK now use private contractors to provide disability support. They will inform you this is to provide appropriate help for

disabled students - this is a blatant lie. The University of Birmingham, like the majority of UK universities, use companies such as Clear Links, which seek to make profit from supporting students. This support is paid for by Student Finance England, who pay them millions of pounds of public money. And in my experience they were useless.

I found myself completing course work - without support - which I knew was not up to standard. As a result of going through two months of hell writing the first essay, I informed the history department that I was thinking of withdrawing from the degree. But before I decided to withdraw, I was charged for the second module, before it had even started. By now I had come to realise they had no interest in their students, apart from exploiting them for financial gain - charging extortionate fees for their online degree.

I went through a complaints process with the university, and then with an independent adjudicator. Ultimately, my case was rejected and

I found myself unable to get my fees refunded. Because I had withdrawn from the University of Birmingham without being granted ‘compassionate personal reasons’, I am now unable to get financial support from Student finance England for future studies.

My experience is a clear reflection of how disabled students are treated in our rotten education system. It is not unique or unusual - there are literally tens of thousands of disabled students who have had a similar experience as me - if not far worse. And the underlying reason is that the education system serves capitalism rather than providing genuine education for students (search “What would socialist universities look like?” at socialistparty.org.uk).

Birmingham’s vice-chancellor earns £440,000 a year. Meanwhile, the university will not return a measly £3,500 to a student who was treated with contempt. This just shows where universities’ priorities are - and it’s certainly not providing education for their students.

Horrific murder in Paris: fight intolerance and racism!

Gauche Révolutionnaire (GR - CWI in France) issued the following statement on 17 October (extracts reproduced here) after the beheading of a teacher outside his school in the Paris region. The teacher had shown controversial cartoons of the prophet Mohammed, reproduced from the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, as part of a lesson on free speech. The GR statement, produced as a leaflet, was well received on demonstrations around France, as was the GR poster: "Against racism, against fundamentalism. For a fraternal and tolerant society. For socialism!"

The brutal assassination of history teacher Samuel Paty fills us with great sadness and disgust. Whatever we may think of caricatures of religious figures, it is important that freedom of discussion, criticism and expression remain at the heart of teaching and in society. A cartoon can never warrant assassination. However, unfortunately, there are many who stir up hatred and intolerance, whether in government, in the media, or on social networks.

This intolerance is combined with a stifling situation in society since the Covid-19 pandemic, and the arbitrary measures of isolation and repression against those who oppose president Macron's policies.

"It is the republic that is under attack," says education minister, Jean-Michel Blanquer. Such hypocrisy on the part of a minister who continues to support the dismissal of four teachers for helping students in an unfair baccalaureate exam test, or whose ministry ignored for months the cries for help from Christine Renon, head of one Pantin school, who ended up committing suicide.

The great 'republic' of Blanquer is bereft of justice, tolerance and equality. What hypocrisy on the part of people who claim to defend freedom of expression, but take offence and walk out when a student wears a hijab headscarf at a parliamentary meeting on the Covid pandemic's impact on young people. A former minister from Sarkozy's government said: "She is the one who needed to leave the room!"

How hypocritical that this government, which, according to President Macron, wants schools to help create "free citizens", but is destroying conditions in schools by cramming students into overcrowded classes, and forbidding them to challenge the selection method that excludes thousands of young people from access to higher education.

This government is now trying to sympathise with the education workforce that it spends its time deriding and underpaying.

"They will not pass!" says Macron, explicitly taking up the slogan of the antifascists during the 1930s Spanish revolution. The leader of the far-right

National Rally, Marine Le Pen, only had this to add: "We must drive it (terrorism) out of our country by force!"

Undoubtedly, this horrible event will be used as a new justification for the so-called law against 'separatism', which will reinforce discriminatory measures against Muslims in general.

As always, terrorists play into the hands of the ruling class, and this will rebound against the vast majority of Muslims.

We have had enough of people in government and in the media throwing fuel on the fire by constantly attacking Muslims, and then exploit the pain of the victims to make Islamophobic attacks.

We have had enough of this government that despises students and education workers, and then uses their sorrow as an opportunity to pretend that everything will be done to protect them, when everything is being done to destroy working and studying conditions.

We are fighting for teachers to have a maximum of 20 students per class - enough to be able to conduct classes and debates and discussions with the students. But this will require a break with Macron's politics.

The real separatism is that which condemns millions of people to poverty and low wages, while the billionaires and capitalists get richer and richer.

It is the basis of intolerance and racism, among ever-growing inequalities, while public services are constantly being run down by the policies of Macron and others.

We have to fight for a different society - one where the economy will be publicly owned and where public services (health, education, etc) will be managed by the workers in these sectors, democratically, in conjunction with the population.

It is by fighting for such a democratic society - socialism - that we will eradicate intolerance and racism, which are used to divide workers, young people and the majority of the population against each other, instead of fighting our real common adversary: the ultra-rich and the governments which are at their service.



GAUCHE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE

South Africa: Mass day of action for permanent jobs and a living wage

MARXIST WORKERS PARTY (CWI SOUTH AFRICA)

Hundreds of workers on the ANC government's 'slave-labour' Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) took part in a day of action in their struggle for permanent jobs and a living wage. The action on 12 October was initiated by the National Union of Public Sector and Allied Workers (Nupsaw), an affiliate of the Saftu trade union federation.

The day began in Johannesburg at the Office of the Gauteng Premier. The ANC-led Gauteng provincial government (covering the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria) was responsible for the dismissal of over 3,000 EPWP workers at the end of March.

The final destination of the day was the Department of Public Service and Administration, responsible for the management of the public sector

payroll. Workers anger and frustration was reflected in the cheers that went up every time the demand for permanent jobs and a living wage was raised in speeches.

Weizmann Hamilton, general secretary of the Marxist Workers Party (MWP - CWI South Africa), addressed workers, calling on Saftu to implement its resolution in favour of creating a socialist mass workers' party.

It is nearly one year since this phase of the EPWP workers' struggle began. The workers have had to fight repeatedly for the renewal of their annual contracts.

The MWP has played a leading role in mobilising and organising EPWP workers. The provincial coordinator of the Gauteng EPWP Workers Forum - the structure created by EPWP workers to organise themselves - is a member of the MWP.

Nupsaw has signed-up over a

thousand EPWP members, retaining them as members in spite of their dismissal, and has taken their case to arbitration.

Instead of combining mass action with legal challenges, as Nupsaw has done, in sharp contrast, Cosatu's (union federation aligned with the ANC) approach has been to demand the abolition of labour broking (agency work), for example, while doing absolutely nothing to organise precarious workers in both the public and private sector.

This cowardice has encouraged the ANC government to ignore commitments to fill hundreds of thousands of vacant posts, instead of employing workers in the various slave-labour schemes, like the EPWPs and CHWs (Community Health Workers), who have been in the frontline of community testing for Covid-19.

In August, Nupsaw achieved an



MARXIST WORKERS PARTY

important breakthrough in the struggle of the CHWs. The Gauteng government finally agreed to give them all permanent jobs and more than doubled their salary.

Now the struggle continues for the insourcing of CHWs in the remaining eight provinces of South

Africa, and the raising of the Gauteng CHWs to a genuine living wage. This victory has shown the EPWP workers that it is possible to win permanent jobs and that the struggle must continue.

● Read article in full on socialistworld.net

Nigeria protests: 'This movement needs to fight the whole rotten capitalist system'

In Nigeria, a spontaneous protest movement, of mainly young people, against police brutality - which has braved water cannon, tear gas, live rounds, and at least 15 deaths - succeeded in forcing the government to disband the notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). But almost immediately, the police chief said SARS members would be reincorporated into the police, and a new militarised SWAT unit established. This has reignited the protests. **Soweto**, a leading member of the Democratic Socialist Movement (CWI Nigeria), from Lagos, spoke to the Socialist about the current turbulent events.

Soweto explained that the spark which lit the protests was video footage from 3 October that went viral. It showed a young man being arrested and then shot dead by a SARS member. The police then drive off with the young man's car!

Young people being targeted by police is, however, not new - SARS has been around since the early 1990s. But today, if a young person is driving a car, carrying a laptop or smartphone, they are automatically branded a criminal and face extortion, arrest, and even extrajudicial killing by the police.

Soweto pointed out that there have been previous protests against SARS and police brutality, but the movement has ignited now because of a wider social, economic and political crisis in Nigeria.

In these protests, issues like lack of jobs, corruption, bad roads, and no electricity, have come to the fore. A recent employers' organisation report stated that 102 million Nigerians, nearly half the country's 205 million population, live in "extreme poverty". For youth, the situation is dire. Just 14.7 million of the 40 million 15-34 year-old Nigerians eligible to work are employed.

The Buhari government, despite its pledges on first coming into office in 2015, has utterly failed to tackle these and other pressing social issues, such as the chronically underfunded healthcare and education systems. To make matters worse, the government has recently hiked fuel prices and electricity tariffs. All this while wealth inequality between rich and poor has massively widened.

This latest assault on living standards led to widespread anger among the masses, which pressured the leaders of the Nigerian Labour

● A new session on the struggle in Nigeria has been added to **Socialism 2020** socialism2020.net



DSM members on a recent mass protest in Lagos PHOTO DSM

Congress and Trade Union Congress to call a general strike in September in opposition to subsidy cuts, price and tax hikes, and delays in minimum wage implementation. But, at the last minute, the leaders called off the strike and accepted the capitalist government's argument that Nigeria's 'dire financial circumstance' meant the 'inevitability of deregulation'.

As the Socialist reported at the time: "In Benin City and Ibadan, trade unionists and others rapidly took to the streets to protest at the national leaders' decision. In other cities there were stormy meetings of activists."

Soweto pointed out that this leadership sell-out (and previous ones) has meant that among young people there are suspicions about, and even hostility towards, the labour movement, alongside widespread rejection of the main political parties.

The Democratic Socialist Movement has taken the initiative to launch the Youth Rights Campaign (YRC), that has a political programme to end police brutality, and also addresses wider questions about fighting unemployment, poverty, etc. The YRC is active in the protests, distributing leaflets and participating in debates.

The YRC is calling for a 48-hour solidarity general strike as the next step. And if the bureaucratic leaders of the trade unions won't act, they say an appeal should be made to the rank-and-file members to strike.

Soweto explained that part of the problem of this spontaneous movement is a lack of democratic structures to enable participants to debate what programme of demands is required to fundamentally change the situation, and also to make the movement democratically accountable.

Role of military

For example, Soweto mentioned that members of the military have been posing on the protests as supporters of the youth and the people, and against the police.

He pointed out that since the country achieved independence in 1960 the military has played an anti-democratic role through coups and repression. But now the government combines offers of concessions with hints of threats. The information minister is claiming that the "protests had been hijacked by hoodlums and people with an ulterior agenda".

A programme that deals with repressive state forces automatically challenges the rule of the capitalist

elite; an elite that is rotten and corrupt, and has siphoned the wealth generated from the country's oil revenues.

Thus, the fight for democratic rights is linked with that for socialist policies to transform Nigeria from a hugely unequal capitalist society to a democratic socialist one, that can utilise the vast human resources and natural wealth to benefit all.

However, Soweto emphasised that such a transformation can only come about through a mass socialist movement leading to the coming to power of a government representing the working class and poor. This is why the DSM helped initiate the broad Socialist Party of Nigeria to raise support for socialist ideas and the building of a workers' party that struggles for them.

● The Socialist Party is encouraging Socialist Students, Young Socialists, and trade unions in England and Wales to show solidarity with the Youth Rights Campaign in Nigeria. Email YRC: youth_rights@yahoo.com

Solidarity protests - Coventry

In Coventry, hundreds of mostly black youth gathered in solidarity with protests against police brutality in Nigeria. We marched across the city centre with chants like "End SARS!" and slogans in regional languages like the Yoruba phrase "Soro Soke Werey" - I was told the polite translation is a rallying cry to "Speak up, idiot!".

I brought leaflets from the Youth Rights Campaign in Nigeria, which calls for a 48-hour general strike with mass protests, and for "an equitable, safe and democratic socialist society where everyone, old or young, can live and go about their daily legitimate activities without fear of molestation, illegal arrest and detention, extortion and extrajudicial killing."

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

London

On 18 October, a large and lively demo in London, mostly young, marched from Marble Arch to the Nigerian embassy, to protest police brutality against young people and workers in Nigeria. Some protesters were holding placards that read "capitalism is a racist system."

Passionate speeches were delivered at the beginning of the demonstration, which reflected the anger of Nigerian youth and their determination, not only to scrap 'Special Weapons and Tactics' police units, but also to bring an end to the Buhari government and the corrupt capitalist system with it.

Socialist Party members sold copies of the Socialist, and distributed leaflets from the Youth Rights Campaign, a platform launched by CWI members in Nigeria.

BERKAY KARTAV



NHS WORKERS

FURIOUS AND FIGHTING

• **For a 15% pay rise**

• **For a fully funded NHS**



The Socialist Party demands

- An immediate 15% pay rise for all health and care staff, including those in privatised sectors. A minimum wage of £12 an hour - £15 in London. Scrap zero-hour contracts immediately

- Reverse all privatisation and cancel PFI debts. For a fully nationalised and publicly funded NHS and social care sector, with full collective bargaining and national terms and conditions

- For a mass hiring programme. Bring outsourced workers back in-house and on a permanent contract. Reinstate student bursaries, and scrap all tuition fees and debts
- Scrap prescription charges in

England, dental charges and all health charges

- A socialist NHS - democratically run by elected and accountable committees, including service workers and users

Failed by a Covid testing catastrophe. Left to face the pandemic in underfunded, understaffed hospitals. NHS staff have been handed a real-terms pay cut, by the same Tory MPs that have given themselves a pay rise. As hospital admissions rise in the developing second wave, it is vital more than ever that we fight for a fully funded and fully public NHS.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the government has handed out billions to private companies making a profit from the health service. A mass recruitment campaign is needed, with workers employed in-house and with a substantial pay rise. NHS workers are furious and fighting back, organising with their trade unions, and with the support of their communities and Socialist Party campaigners.



Xylina Hogan has been campaigning with Suffolk NHS Pay Justice Hub

We were all angered by the news that MPs would be due a pay rise of over £3,000, while NHS staff are left with nothing but claps. These claps soon turned into contempt when we asked for public sector pay equality from the government.

NHS staff under 'Agenda for Change' have suffered a real-terms pay cut of 20% over the past decade. Due to ever-rising housing costs and inflation, we are now seeing NHS staff struggling to cover the basic costs of living, and burning out. We are expected to care, as that is our code, but who will care for us? Who will care for our beloved NHS?

Tory health secretary Matt Hancock has said that, although he is "sympathetic" to our cause, now is not the time to discuss a pay increase for NHS staff. I would ask Matt: Why is it acceptable to discuss your pay if now is not the right time for us? Didn't he say we are "in this together"?

We attempted to visit Matt Hancock's office last month. However, the land owner of the property threatened to have us, a small group of six hard-working, dedicated NHS staff, arrested. These are the very same people who clapped for us. Now they threaten us with the police. It's absolutely mind-blowing how quickly this government has turned on us.

MPs do not understand just how furious we are. Covid, awful working conditions, and a total disregard for the sacrifices NHS staff have had to make during the pandemic, have now caused staff to question whether or not this is a profession they would like to remain in.

We cannot sit back and do nothing while MPs continue to line their pockets. Some of our staff are having to visit food banks to get by. This is totally unacceptable and we, with our unions, will not stand for it. The majority of our group's members are willing to strike if the government refuses to engage. We simply cannot go on like this.