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# the Socialist

Issue 1122

25 February - 3 March 2021

formerly **Militant**

# WHERE'S THE ROAD MAP TO JOBS AND WAGES BORIS?



## ● Trade unions must fight for lives and livelihoods

**B**oris Johnson has announced his 'cautious' road map to reopen society from lockdown in England. But after over 120,000 Covid deaths and a massive hit to our incomes, we want to know if the government's 'road map' will lead to restoration and improvement in our living standards, or if it's going to be a 'road to nowhere'.

According to Channel Four news, destitution - ie a household with two adults living on less than £100 a week and a single-adult household on less than £70 a week after housing costs - shot up last year by a further 220,000 to a staggering 421,500 households. Long lines of people queueing outside food banks are now an all-too familiar sight in the UK.

Nearly six million people are struggling to survive on Universal Credit, yet chancellor Rishi Sunak is considering ending the £20 a week increase to the benefit at the end of March. And although he will extend furlough, there's no commitment to make it up to 100% of pay. With just 80% of pay, it's no wonder household debt has reached record levels.

Equally, the derisory level of £95 a week sick pay needs to be massively upped to prevent

people with Covid going back into work out of economic necessity.

But who will foot the bill to pay for the pandemic? Clearly, the Tories have no intention of hitting the super-rich friends with a wealth tax, let alone nationalising the largest companies.

Sunak may, in order to show 'fairness', impose a marginal increase in corporation tax (after decades of governments reducing it) and there may be a small digital sales tax levied on the likes of mega-rich online giants such as Amazon to offset high street business rates.

Yet the combined wealth of the world's ten richest men rose by an unbelievable £400 billion during the pandemic. In fact, the total wealth of billionaires worldwide is now \$11.95 trillion - equivalent to the recovery spending

of all the governments of the G20 major economies combined.

But instead of taking this wealth - created by the working class - off these parasites, the Tories are instead once again squeezing spending on local services and capping public sector pay, to ensure it's a road to recovery for the wealthiest.

The trade unions, representing the organised workers, must emerge from their pandemic slumber and start fighting for our jobs and incomes. Certainly, we can't expect the pathetic voice of Labour's Keir Starmer to bring about change.

The Johnson government has U-turned over 20 times in the last 12 months and can be pushed further if pressure through industrial action is applied. Only then can we begin to travel a road to recovery.

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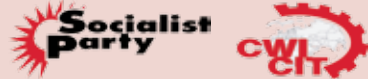
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
**Karl Marx**

# STARMER'S SPEECH A RETURN TO NEW LABOUR

## Support a workers' and socialist fightback at the ballot box



### WHAT WE THINK

Labour leader Keir Starmer's speech, supposedly setting out his vision for Britain, did nothing to counter the criticism that he is dull. It contained virtually no policy proposals. Nonetheless, it played another role, more important from Starmer's point of view, hammering home what he considers his most important message: that the Corbyn era is over.

Many of those who voted for Starmer to become Labour leader did so in the hope that he would not abandon the main policies from Labour's 2019 election manifesto. From day one of his leadership, however, it has been clear that he has no intention of standing by any policy which runs counter to the interests of the capitalist class.

### Big business

Starmer's mantra was summed up in his speech when, against the backdrop of a union jack, he said: "For too long Labour has failed to realise that the only way to deliver social justice and equality is through a strong partnership with business."

Who did he mean when he said that? Not Tony Blair, Gordon Brown or Ed Miliband. Starmer was trying to trash Corbynism: five brief years when Labour had a leadership that was at least prepared to put forward a programme in the interests of the working and middle classes, instead of the pro-big business mantras of the New Labour era.

The capitalist elite fought tooth and nail to defeat Corbyn and, unfortunately, the hesitancy and willingness to compromise of Corbyn and those around him handed them victory. The result is Starmer, now with Peter Mandelson at his elbow. Mandelson, Tony Blair's prince of darkness, who once declared that New Labour was "intensely relaxed about



JEREMY CORBYN/CC

people getting filthy rich', is back in Labour's innercircle, and Starmer's speech was no more than a New Labour re-tread.

No mention was made of nationalisation of privatised public services, or of kicking the profiteers out of the NHS. Corbyn's pledge of a programme of mass council housebuilding has disappeared, to be replaced with a meaningless aspiration of "affordable" housing. For decades now Tory and New Labour governments have promised affordable housing, but by relying on the private sector to deliver, have created nothing but insecure, expensive homes.

Starmer promised a new "partnership with business" again and again.

disaffiliation from Labour has found only 9% think that Labour is serving their interests. Faced with desperate battles to defend their jobs, wages and living conditions, the working class doesn't need a 'partnership with business', it needs its own independent political voice, to stand up against the attacks of the bosses in the political arena.

At this stage, the leaders of the Labour-affiliated left-led trade unions are focused on fighting a rearguard action within Labour, demanding that Corbyn is reinstated as a Labour MP, and that party democracy is restored.

Unfortunately, the destruction of Labour's democratic structures in the Blair era was not reversed under Corbyn, nor were the pro-capitalist MPs and councillors deselected. That leaves Starmer at the head of a party machine in his own pro-capitalist image, with no intention of allowing it to be shifted left by the affiliated trade unions. Nor do the unions have a large financial influence - just 11% of Labour funds came from trade union affiliation fees in 2019.

The left union leaders are demanding that Labour's national executive committee (NEC) calls an emergency conference. But they need to go further. If, as is very likely, the NEC refuses, the union leaders should call a conference themselves, involving all those - inside and outside the Labour Party - who oppose Starmer's move to the right and want to fight for a vehicle for working-class political representation.

### Anti-cuts candidates

If a conference agreed even limited steps, such as freeing trade union branches to stand or back anti-cuts candidates in May's elections, and setting up a trade union group in parliament (perhaps proposing Corbyn as its chair), it would do more to fight back against Starmer's New Labour than any amount of pleading behind closed doors.

It would also prepare the ground for a widespread anti-cuts challenge in May's elections. This is more important now than at any time in the last ten years, with eight out of ten councils with responsibility for social care facing technical insolvency, and Labour councils preparing to implement the resulting devastating cuts to their services and employees terms and conditions.

However, if the left trade union leaders do not act, the Socialist Party will be fighting to ensure there is a working-class anti-austerity challenge in May's elections. Socialist Party members will be standing as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition alongside other trade unionists, community campaigners and young people to fight back against the Tories and Starmer's New Labour at the ballot box.

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• **If you are interested in building the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in your area get in touch - [tusc.org.uk](http://tusc.org.uk)**

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# Johnson's 'road map' for schools: Act together to protect safety

## Safe phased return based on infection rates not politicians' dates

MARTIN POWELL-DAVIES  
SOCIALIST PARTY IN EDUCATION (SPINED)

Boris Johnson has announced his 'road map' to ease lockdown, including a timetable for full reopening of schools in England on 8 March. The youngest primary school pupils in Wales began returning in full on 22 February.

Education unions must be ready to respond with collective action to any reckless proposal which puts the government's short-term economic interests ahead of the long-term safety of our schools and communities.

In a welcome move, nine education unions and governance organisations issued a statement warning that a full return of all pupils would be "reckless", bringing "nearly ten million pupils and staff into circulation in England, close to one fifth of the population... It could trigger another spike in Covid infections, prolong the disruption of education, and risk throwing away the hard-won progress made in suppressing the virus over the course of the latest lockdown."

Even during lockdown, schools have still been open to vulnerable pupils and children of key workers. Nobody wants to stop schools opening fully for longer than is necessary. Online learning, if set to the demands of an unchanged curriculum, puts pressure on staff, students, parents and carers.

However, as the joint statement says: "It would be counterproductive if there is a danger of causing another surge in the virus, and the potential for a further period of lockdown. Wider opening must be safe and sustainable."

The warning is correct but, sadly, it will take more than joint statements to make ministers think again. It was

the action of tens of thousands of education staff asserting their individual rights under 'Section 44' - not to attend an unsafe workplace - that forced Johnson to back down in January. Education unions now need to have the courage to advise members of their rights once again.

But education unions, and especially the National Education Union (NEU), need to go further. We must prepare members to use their collective strength, including through balloting for industrial action, to resist any unsafe return, based on clear and specific demands about what constitutes a safe wider opening.

Our demands can be objectively based on the advice of experts, like Independent Sage, who have analysed the latest scientific evidence and the government's own data. For example, they have pointed out that infection rates fell just in January among primary-aged children - precisely those settings where attendance has remained high. This is yet another indication of the role schools can play in community transmission.

### What are we demanding?

*Socialist Party members in the NEU are helping to draft a motion to be debated at the union's executive on 24 February, based on the demands below.*

The NEU calls on all employers to abide by their responsibilities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees and other persons affected by employers' actions, through:

- No school opens more widely unless 'R' is less than one, and the local infection rate is below 100 per 100,000 confirmed cases a week

- No school opens with more than 50% class sizes until the rate is below 50 per 100,000 confirmed cases a week
- The wearing of masks by school students in primary, secondary and post-16 classes
- Staff who are assessed to be at higher risk of severe illness, or who live with people at high risk, being able to support teaching and learning from home.
- Measures in place to protect the welfare of students, through a focus on a recovery curriculum that recognises the impact of the pandemic on mental health, and the welfare of staff through ensuring reasonable workload
- Clear agreed risk assessments that ensure acceptable measures are in place in every workplace, particularly early years, special educational needs and disability and other settings, where students may not be able to securely follow social distancing and other mitigation measures

### Where employers fail to meet these necessary steps, the national union will:

- Advise the use of Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, where members face a serious and imminent danger to their health and safety.
- Support industrial action ballots at school, district and regional level to secure these steps

*An online meeting for NEU members on this issue has been called by Martin Powell-Davies' campaign for deputy general secretary - 28 February, 4pm-5:30pm. You can get the Zoom details by subscribing for updates at [martin4dgs.co.uk](http://martin4dgs.co.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.

### WORK AND INCOME

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

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

### ENVIRONMENT

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

### RIGHTS

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

### MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

### SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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# Garment workers and Covid: Dying for less than minimum wage

HEATHER RAWLING  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Garment workers have among the highest rate of coronavirus deaths for working women in the UK, the Office for National Statistics has revealed. Labour Behind the Label estimates that sewing machinists, in particular, had the highest fatality rate - almost four times the overall death rate for women.

I am not surprised at these shocking figures. The garment industry is largely unorganised with extreme exploitation.

Last year, during a Covid-19 spike in Leicester, the virus was most prevalent in the textile industry - a thriving underworld of sweatshops, paying between £3 and £5 an hour, well below the minimum wage.

Many of these factories continued to work throughout lockdown. Workers, mainly women, were forced to work in unsafe and unhealthy conditions even before Covid. Social distancing, clean toilets and good hygiene are rare.

Most textile workers live in

extremely overcrowded conditions. Parts of Leicester are among the most overcrowded in the UK, outside of London, home to a large black, Eastern European and migrant population.

75-80% of these factories supply orders for online fashion retailer Boohoo. Boohoo's market value has more than doubled to £2.3 billion since 2014.

Textile workers have been let down by Leicester Labour Council, which has failed to act over a number of years despite knowing about the illegal wages and unsafe working conditions.

Unfortunately, the Midlands Trades Union Congress (TUC) has also been guilty of a dereliction of duty. Lee Barron, regional secretary, has simply called on the Tory government to "use its much-delayed employment bill to make firms liable for abuses in their supply chains."

But the Tory government acts in the interests of firms like Boohoo, not in the interests of the workforce. These exploitative firms should be nationalised under democratic workers' control and management.



## The Socialist Party calls for:

- A massive trade union recruitment campaign to unionise these workers - reduced membership rates, leaflet homes in affected areas, and use social media. Workers are afraid to speak publicly for fear of losing their jobs
- Publicise the conditions, organise campaigns among trade union members, and where

appropriate, call for action from unionised workforces, eg transport workers, postal workers etc

- An amnesty for all migrant workers from deportation, so that they are not afraid to report abuses
- Close down the sweatshops and create new, safe publicly owned and democratically run workplaces. Job guarantees for all workers. If needed,

share out the work with no loss of pay

- Pay the rate for the job. No-one should earn less than £12 an hour, as a step towards £15
- Trade union and workers' control of health and safety in the workplace
- Big retailers who buy and sell these garments know about this extreme exploitation. Nationalise the garment industry under democratic workers' control and management

## Social care: End privatisation and let workers decide how it's run

DANIEL SMART  
BRISTOL SOCIAL CARE WORKER

When Boris Johnson became prime minister in July 2019, he promised to "fix the crisis in social care once and for all". A recent government white paper shows we are yet to see any meaningful action.

The white paper is centred around the NHS (see [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)), with an intention to address "separate proposals on social care reform later this year". Beyond the rhetoric and sparse mentions of social care are alarming structural changes that must be opposed.

The government is handing itself powers to make payments directly to private care providers, rather than just not-for-profit services as currently allowed. This opens the door to central government bypassing local authorities in order to pay profiteering private companies.

### Commercialisation

The government does not intend to reverse the commercialisation of the sector, which has bloated to at least 89% of home care being provided by the private sector, from just 5% in 1993. The proposals around integration will further align the NHS with the failing social care model. For-profit care and housing providers will



be allowed, under the new proposals, onto new boards set up to link health and care.

Talk about better use of technology and data is meaningless without a major increase in funding to address the ageing population and the £8 billion-plus shortfall since 2010.

There is an urgent need for better working conditions for care workers, more social workers and the increased availability of high-quality care provision. The proposals for greater scrutiny of local authorities, via inspections from the Care Quality Commission and the possibility

of central government intervention, will also do little to address these issues. It will only put greater pressure on workers already struggling with limited resources.

Those who require care and support know their needs in depth, while workers have the professional expertise to address meeting these. It is this exchange between workers and service users that defines care.

We should be the people who have a leading role in determining policy via democratically elected bodies representing workers and people with care and support needs - giving us the power to determine what resources are required and how they should be provided.

Social care provision must be brought back in-house, out of the hands of unaccountable private interests who put profit above people. This would ensure high-quality, free social care - with decent working conditions - to be available to meet the needs of all who require it.

## Moyied Bashir death is result of violent and racist police practices

▶▶ CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

Events like Moyied's killing don't happen out of the blue. They aren't just another tragic mistake. They happen because of violent and racist practices in the forces of the state.

An independent workers' inquiry into the deaths of Moyied Bashir - and the death of Mohamud Mohammed Hassan in Cardiff on 9 January - should go beyond the details of their cases to investigate how the police operate.

It should address the failure of the police to properly investigate the death of 13-year-old Christopher Kappessa in 2019. It should demand the freeing of Siyanda Mngaza, the victim of a violent racist attack, currently serving four years in prison, simply for defending herself, while the perpetrators were not even charged.

Those who came out to protest for Moyied Bashir on 18 February in Newport, and those who have been protesting since 11 January for justice for Mohamud Mohammed Hassan, deserve a way to take their involvement further.

On 11 June last year - a weekday - 3,000 took part in the big Black Lives Matter march through Newport. 5,000 rallied in Cardiff the previous Saturday. All that passionate desire to fight for change should be channelled into a mass campaign for justice.

Young people and activists who want to fight to change society need a way to get organised. We need regular open community meetings, where people can bring their ideas and discuss what needs to be done

- a chance for everyone to make their voices heard and take part in decision making together.

### The Socialist Party demands:

- Suspend all the police officers who had contact with Moyied Bashir and Mohamud Mohammed Hassan, pending the results of an independent workers' inquiry
- Release all body-worn camera and CCTV footage for the cases of Moyied Bashir and Mohamud Mohammed Hassan to the public
- An independent workers' inquiry, including representatives of local community organisations and trade unions, into racist policing in Welsh police forces
- For the police to be brought under the democratic community control of the working class

• For more on the death of Mohamud Mohammed Hassan and the injustice against Siyanda Mngaza go to [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

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March issue includes...

- After Corbyn - the struggle still needs an electoral arm
- New Start for peace? US-Russia treaty won't end threat
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# Vaccine algorithm can't solve capitalist inequality



VPEREM/CC

**JOSH ASKER**  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

**E**leven months after coronavirus restrictions came into force in England, another 800,000 people are being informed by the government that they need to 'shield' as they are at an increased risk of dying from the effects of the virus. This is as part of a government recalculation to decide priority groups to receive the vaccine, aimed at including a greater number of risk factors beyond just age.

Many of these people will have been forced into unsafe workplaces over the course of the last year, not having been given the instruction previously. We will not know how many people have died as a consequence of not being previously considered at risk.

But even for those who have been told to shield since May 2020, it doesn't necessarily mean they have been able to do so. Many have been forced into workplaces, unable to afford to do otherwise.

## **Measly sick pay**

If you are instructed to shield and unable to work from home, this can be used as a means of getting statutory sick pay. At £95.85 a week however, this is nowhere near enough to survive on. And if you are self-employed, have an insecure contract, or earn less than £120 a week, you are not even eligible for that paltry sum.

Francis O'Grady, leader of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), has argued that workers asked to shield should be put onto furlough. But this means a 20% pay cut. What is also lacking is any strategy for how this can be fought for. The Socialist Party demands that all workers unable to attend work as a result of the pandemic should receive 100% pay. This is the way to ensure people can afford to shield or isolate, and to restrict the spread of the virus.

Action taken by members of the National Education Union in January to stop the full, unsafe opening of schools shows that, if mobilised, the trade union movement can force the government to change course in its response to the pandemic. The TUC should bring together workers in all industries, and prepare for coordinated action to defend workers' lives and livelihoods during and after the pandemic.



**Decisions about how to allocate resources and how to distribute the vaccine, should be informed by data, but must ultimately be made democratically by the working class**

The government's decision to include greater numbers in the shielding category was made using an algorithm developed by scientists at Oxford University. It seeks to account for additional risk factors, based on modelling of data from the first wave, including ethnicity and deprivation.

This is a welcome acknowledgement that the poverty and discrimination of capitalism are lethal. But inequality is a fundamental feature of a system where a few get rich at the expense of the vast majority - no algorithm can change that fact.

The inclusion of ethnicity as a factor in determining who gets access to the vaccine first could be potentially divisive. The government's own 'Race Disparity Unit' found in October last year that the increased

number of deaths of people from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds was driven mainly by social and economic factors, as the Socialist Party had argued, not genetic difference (See 'BAME Covid deaths due to capitalist inequality' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)).

Racism and inequality, ingrained in capitalism, means that people from BAME backgrounds are more likely to work in lower-paid occupations at greater risk of Covid-19 infection, such as in social care or public transport. In workplaces such as in the health service, BAME people are more likely to work in the lower grades and on the front line.

## **Government refusal**

But the government refuses to make decisions based on people's occupation as a risk factor, arguing that it doesn't have the data. One government source said: "If you start going down the route of prioritising one profession over another, where does it stop?"

The answer is, as the Socialist Party has argued, working-class control of the pandemic response. Bodies of democratically elected trade unionists can compile reports of those at greatest risk of exposure to the virus, based on their role in the workplace. Coordinating across industries, workers' own expertise can and should democratically determine what parts of industry, and what specific tasks are essential.

The use of algorithms to try to mitigate the inequality of capitalism will not work. Nothing short of taking the vast wealth of society into public ownership by nationalising the banks and big companies can address this problem.

Decisions about how to allocate resources and how to distribute the vaccine, should be informed by data, but must ultimately be made democratically by the working class.



Uber drivers strike in Paris GUILHEM VELLUT/CC

## Uber drivers win case - they are workers

### Now they must organise to implement ruling

**CHARLIE TAYLOR**  
DERBY SOCIALIST PARTY

Uber drivers have finally won their rights case at the Supreme Court. Their union, GMB, describes it as "historic".

The ruling determines that drivers are not 'self-employed', but are workers entitled to workers' rights - including holiday pay, a guaranteed minimum wage and breaks.

It went on to say that the drivers are workers from the moment they switch on their apps, and are available for work in their area, to the time they switch their apps off at the end of the day.

This means that Uber drivers are entitled to claim minimum wage - including back pay. These claims would be based upon their entire working day, not just when they had a rider in their cabs. They can also claim 5.6 weeks annual leave.

Leigh Day, the lawyers fighting the case on behalf of the GMB, says tens of thousands of Uber drivers

could be entitled to an average of £12,000 each in compensation. Uber has refused to accept this, and says only a small number of drivers are involved.

This is a welcome victory for Uber drivers who work under poor pay and conditions. One driver, who submitted a claim in 2018 against Uber for unpaid holidays, had been driving for Uber since 2016.

Since then, he hasn't had a single paid holiday, despite at times working up to 70 hours in a seven-day week. When he took a couple of weeks off, on his doctor's recommendation, to address (unsurprising) back pain, he wasn't covered, so lost income for that period.

The ruling shows that organising wins. Gig economy workers must organise to ensure the Supreme Court decision applies to all.

The Socialist Party supports a fully funded, environmentally friendly and cheap public transport system, with trade union rates of pay and conditions for all.

## London bus dispute against low pay, pay cuts and longer hours



### SOCIALIST PARTY REPORTERS

Socialist Party members supported bus drivers' picket lines across London on 22 February. The drivers are fighting back against low pay, pay cuts, and longer hours being imposed by their employer, private bus company RATP, which is using the pandemic to get away with attacks on key workers.

Around 2,000 bus drivers are involved in the dispute at the company's subsidiaries London United, Quality Line and London Sovereign.

Due to the proposed contracts, drivers face wage cuts of £2,500 which will reduce wages to 2015 levels, and drivers will be expected to be at work for far longer.

The company has also threatened

to introduce zero-hour contracts, which would result in drivers only being paid for when they are physically driving a bus and not when they are actually at work.

The Unite regional officer for RATP, Michelle Braveboy, said: "RATP has a long history of attacking one group of workers at a time, attempting to slash pay and conditions, before moving onto the next group. Our members are drawing a line in the sand with this dispute."

On the picket lines, strikers and supporters were also interested in the Socialist Party's campaign for 'socialists into city hall', during the upcoming London elections. They took leaflets from Socialist Party members to distribute.

## Scaffs continue walkout



Scaffolders at Scunthorpe steelworks are in their fifth week of taking strike action to win the industry Blue Book rate for the job.

A new firm, Actava, take over the contract on 1 March, so action will be suspended for talks scheduled

to begin mid-March. The 50 Unite members have been solid on the picket lines, have put two fingers up to their current employers, Brand Energy, and served notice on Actava that nothing less than the Blue Book rate will do, or else.

## UEL strike against redundancies

UCU union members at the University of East London (UEL) staged a two-day strike on 22-23 February in a fight to save jobs. University bosses want to impose redundancies. Over 230 people joined an online strike rally on 22 February.



## MAY DAY GREETINGS

### Support the working-class press in 2021

- Calling all trade union branches and committees, community campaigns and student groups!
- Show solidarity and fund the socialist press with a 2021 greeting
- Prices start at £30 for a small box - minimum price negotiable
- £55 for our most popular size, 1/16 of a page or £90 for 1/8 and £170 for 1/4, £300 for 1/2, £500 for a page
- Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/mayday](http://socialistparty.org.uk/mayday)

## HMRC: Divisive pay deal leads to expulsions

### AN HMRC WORKER

PCS members in the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are voting on a pay deal. The deal is for a 13% pay increase over three years, but if agreed would put all staff onto a new contract with a significant worsening of conditions for many members.

The proposed pay deal has created divisions on the left in the HMRC group. This has led to the expulsion of left activists, including Socialist Party members, from Left Unity - the current leadership group within PCS. These activists oppose the pay deal, are campaigning against it in the ballot and, together with other reps, are contesting PCS national and group executive elections as Broad Left Network (BLN) candidates: the BLN is a rank-and-file socialist group within the union.

The expulsions from Left Unity are claimed to be for the decision to

oppose/not recommend Left Unity candidates. But the political and hypocritical nature of the expulsions is clear.

A number of the people behind this decision refused to recommend and campaign for Chris Baugh, the Left Unity candidate in the assistant general secretary election. As a consequence he lost. No action was taken against these people, which included the Left Unity chairperson.

The national leadership of Left Unity backed the pay deal in HMRC and at group level made no recommendation. This divisive deal, which means a significant worsening of conditions for a large number of members, was negotiated in conditions of secrecy. It is being balloted on without the full details and impact of the deal being made known to members.

Those in HMRC standing as Broad Left Network election candidates

are opposed to this divisive, strings-attached pay deal and to the imposition of the new contracts on members whether they like it or not. They are opposed to the secrecy surrounding the negotiations resulting in the deal. They are opposed to a ballot which misrepresents and keeps vital information from members. Opposition to the deal is the basis of their decision to stand for election as Broad Left Network candidates.

The proposed HMRC deal, if accepted, will strike a huge blow against the union's national campaign for a decent no-strings pay increase for all PCS members.

This was already damaged by the Left Unity leadership's handling of the 2020 pay campaign, which parked the union's agreed 10% pay claim as a gesture towards national unity with the Tory government. This gesture was thrown back in their face by the Tories, leading to the abandonment of the pay campaign and to an emboldened government announcing a further pay freeze.

PCS national elections are underway with nominations to be agreed at branch annual general meetings taking place now until 11 March. The Broad Left Network candidates are listed below.

## PCS Broad Left Network election candidates - vote for the following

<b>President</b>	<b>Lloyd Marion:</b> (BEIS)	
<b>Vice presidents</b>	<b>Brittle Fiona:</b> (Scot Gov), <b>Brown Sarah:</b> (Met Police), <b>Semple Dave:</b> (DWP)	
<b>National executive committee</b>	<b>Bartlett Dave:</b> MOJ	<b>Borland Rebecca:</b> Home Office
<b>Brittle Fiona:</b> Scot Gov	<b>Brown Alex:</b> Health	<b>Brown Sarah:</b> Met Police
<b>Denman Kevin:</b> Met Police	<b>Dennis Alan:</b> DSG	<b>Foxtan Gill:</b> DFE
<b>Francis Sue:</b> BEIS	<b>Guinnane Paul:</b> DfE	<b>Heemskerk Rachel:</b> DWP
<b>Lloyd Marion:</b> BEIS	<b>Lowry Tom:</b> DWP	<b>Parker Nick:</b> BEIS
<b>Rees Dave:</b> DWP	<b>Ritchie Rob:</b> Met Police	<b>Semple Dave:</b> DWP
<b>Suter Paul:</b> DWP	<b>Tweedale Saorsa-Amatheia:</b> DWP	<b>Williams Katrine:</b> DWP
<b>Worswick Craig:</b> DWP	<b>Young Colin:</b> DfE	<b>Bridges Andi:</b> HMRC
<b>Davies Jaime:</b> HMRC	<b>Doyle Nick:</b> HMRC	<b>McDougall Rachele:</b> HMRC
<b>Rosser Jon-Paul:</b> HMRC	<b>Young Bobby:</b> HMRC	

## Hinkley Point electricians fight 'deskilling'

### ROB WILLIAMS NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK (NSSN) CHAIR

Rank-and-file construction electricians have launched a struggle against what they see as 'multi-skilling' by bosses at the massive Hinkley Point site in Somerset to build a nuclear power station, estimated to cost £22.5 billion.

At an emergency Zoom meeting on 20 February, which saw many workers unable to attend because of a limit on numbers, Unite executive council members Frank Morris and Tony Seaman reported that an agreement to employ about 500 electrical apprentices had been renegotiated on and, instead, a training course for 'support operatives' is being put on. This would mean lower-paid,

unskilled workers being employed instead of skilled electricians.

The meeting, echoing the Unite electrical and mechanical combine committee, is demanding that Unite construction officers say if they knew about this course and called on the national leadership of the union to oppose this move by the bosses and give a lead to the campaign.

But the 'sparks', as the electricians became known when they defeated the Besna contract in 2011-12, a previous attempt to deskill the trade which would have seen pay cuts of up to 35%, have a record of not waiting for the union officials. Then, a six-month struggle of walkouts, stoppages and protests forced the union to back the campaign, leading to an official ballot, which forced the bosses back.

But the employers are back,

looking again to make workers pay to protect and increase their profits. Workers know that any breaking of national agreements at Hinkley Point would be rolled out nationally.

The meeting agreed to launch a national fight, focused on Hinkley Point but ready to take on the construction bosses everywhere. I gave solidarity greetings from the NSSN and reported similar attacks on workers in many sectors, including 'fire and rehire' which has seen workers strike from British Airways to British Gas, and an increasing number of companies.

Solidarity to the sparks!

Get all the latest union news  
nationalshop  
stewardsnetwork  
NSSN bulletin: [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

## Usdaw elections - right makes gains but Broad Left builds



### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

The result of the election for president and executive council in the shop and distribution workers' union Usdaw was announced on 15 February. On the same day, serious concerns were raised by members about the drop off in turnout.

Socialist Party member and current union president Amy Murphy, was elected with 9,566 votes in 2018 with a reported turnout of 4.9%. This time Jane Jones, the preferred candidate of the right wing, was elected with 7,505 votes with a turnout of 4.3%. So even comparing the figures shows a drop in turnout, and 2,000 fewer votes returned for the right-wing's choice, and 5,000 fewer voting in the presidential election overall.

While a drop in membership goes some way to explaining the lower number of votes cast, it does not explain the drop in turnout.

That the election has taken place during another lockdown hasn't helped. Candidates were unable to reach members and campaign for support and wider participation. We warned back in September that going ahead with the elections would likely lead to a democratic deficit, and made it clear that the union leadership needed to provide support to ensure that branch democracy was fully functioning, as some branches haven't met since the pandemic began.

Guidance on how to use Zoom for online meetings only appeared in Network, Usdaw's magazine for reps and activists in December, after the nomination period for the election had closed. With, in effect, reps engaged in guerilla warfare with management over safety in stores, distribution centres, manufacturing and transport, the election will not necessarily have featured high on the agenda.

Just 1.95% of Usdaw members voted for Jane Jones, and she only

managed to secure 48% of the votes cast for president.

Despite a crowded field with five people running for president, Andrea Watts, the Usdaw Broad Left candidate, came second scoring over 1,500 votes more than the next candidate.

Socialist Party member and Usdaw Broad Left candidate Ryan Aldred, challenging the South Wales and Western seat, came within 180 votes of getting elected, and managed to secure 252 more votes than one of the incumbent executive council members.

The right wing has made gains through these elections with no Broad Left members being returned to the EC (3 sitting Broad Left EC members stood down in the election). However, the overall lack of turnout is an ongoing symptom of a membership that is less than enthusiastic about the current strategy employed by the right wing.

### Victory

A recent victory in the Scottish courts has, for now, halted the attack on conditions at the Livingston Tesco distribution centre, but workers at Litchfield, Daventry clothing and Avonmouth Tesco sites are still affected. Imagine if, instead of simply relying on action in the courts alone, Usdaw broke with the partnership approach and balloted members for strike action to decisively oppose the rolling out of these measures.

The newly elected leadership won't enjoy a long honeymoon period and will quickly be tested in an increasingly volatile situation. On the one hand, attacks will continue in the non-essential retail sector as bosses seek to make savings with tens of thousands of jobs already at risk of redundancy. On the other, supermarket workers who have worked tirelessly throughout three lockdowns will increasingly be asking where their share of the profits are in a sector that has done well.

Supermarket workers have been

the status of key workers throughout the pandemic but receive wages close to the minimum. Casualisation remains rife throughout the retail and distribution sector, with more and more people employed on zero and low-hours contracts. All of these people will be looking for a fightback.

There is a growing disquiet in the union that not enough has been done to oppose redundancies up to this point, and members won't simply tolerate further attacks on jobs, terms and conditions.

An important gain throughout these elections has been the recruitment and consolidation of members of the Usdaw Broad Left, with Socialist Party members playing a key role in campaigning. New members have been attracted to the call for a democratic, fighting leadership in Usdaw.

With membership of the union's Broad Left increasing, we have an important role to play in challenging the leadership to push for the fight needed to defend jobs, end casualisation and demand more for key workers. This puts us in good stead to challenge future elections.

But we must waste no time in pushing to transform Usdaw now. It is vital that the Usdaw Broad Left comes together to prepare our intervention for the annual delegate meeting.

Attempting to work constructively with the Tories and the bosses will not work. Socialist Party members in Usdaw have made it clear that retail jobs need defending, including issuing calls for public ownership. Workers need a £12-an-hour minimum wage now, with hazard pay for key workers working through the pandemic and a campaign of industrial action to achieve it.

We need a sustained campaign to end zero and low-hour contracts, and we need a party that will represent workers as Keir Starmer continues to snub the unions. Support for our ideas will continue to grow, can the right wing say the same?

## "I'm here to fight for the future education of children in Hackney"

Teaching assistants (TAs) in Hackney, east London took strike action against redundancies on 10-12 February. Hackney Socialist Party interviewed two striking TAs with over 30 years' service. Read more in 'Hackney teaching assistants strike against cruel and unnecessary job cuts' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)

"We're on strike because there have been forced redundancies, and the numbers of support staff at our school, Colvestone Primary, have been cut completely in half.

So this means that the children of our school, when they do eventually come back, are not going to get the support they deserve and are entitled to.

There is no way that just five staff in this school will be able to cover all those children who have special educational needs. They have the money allocated to them through statements. They won't get the support that they deserve and is paid for.

This is just the start of it. This is going to happen across Hackney. They've already threatened to shut five schools within the next two years. That's why we're making a stand.

I've been made compulsorily

redundant. But I'm still prepared to stand and fight to show solidarity for my colleagues who have been left behind, and who will face wage cuts and increased workloads.

That's why I'm here today on the picket line. To stand and fight for the future education of children in Hackney.

The 'reason' for redundancies of support staff is the budget deficit and falling numbers of children. The governing body have a financial committee. Why have they not, before it got to this stage, looked at how they were spending money?

And furthermore, children have left Colvestone Primary to go to Shacklewell. They've increased their numbers, but we've lost children. So they need to look at why children are leaving this particular school, a small community school where every child knows every member of staff, and vice versa.

What is going wrong at Colvestone that is not at Shacklewell? It's not doing with the way the school's managed. It's management.

The picket line today was brilliant, absolutely fantastic. I'll be back tomorrow and Friday."

## GMB members continue fight against 'fire and rehire' in British Gas



### IAIN DALTON LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

British Gas workers were back out on strike from 19 February after their strike was suspended over the previous weekend for talks.

British Gas management had previously stated that there would be no further negotiations, so reps see the company as taking a step back foot by agreeing to the talks, alongside their pledge not to use hire and fire again.

But as one striking worker told us on the Leeds picket line: "It's too late to say they'll never use fire and rehire again once they've already attacked our pay and conditions!"

A new offer from the company is being finalised, but without removing the planned implementation of fire and rehire, then workers were of the opinion that 'nothing has fundamentally changed'.

The wider trade union movement must rally around the British Gas workers to defeat the use of fire and rehire. Other employers seem to increasingly be reaching for it as a tool to attack pay and conditions, and if not stopped at British Gas, its use will accelerate further.

• Donations to the strike fund can be made at: [crowdfunder.co.uk/british-gas-strike-fund](http://crowdfunder.co.uk/british-gas-strike-fund)



# HOW MILITANT TRADE UNIONISM DEFEATED THE 1971 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT

**Bill Mullins**, (pictured right) former senior shop steward in the car industry and industrial organiser of the Socialist Party, recounts the mighty struggle of shop floor trade unionists 50 years ago in defeating the attempt by Ted Heath's Tory government to legally shackle the workers' movement. Importantly, Bill illustrates the potential power of the trade unions to change society.



Not since the 'Great Unrest' of 1911-14 and the period of strikes following World War One had there been anything like it.

The decade of the 1970s witnessed a wave of strikes averaging ten million days lost in production every year; and the growth of shop-floor organisation with over 12 million workers in trade unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC - the all-Britain union federation), mainly in manufacturing industry but rapidly being replicated in the public sector and white-collar industries as well, particularly among low-paid workers.

All this ferment came to a head during that stormy period of 'workers' power'.

The most striking phenomenon, commented on almost every day by the capitalist press, was the existence of the trade union shop stewards movement - with over 350,000 shop stewards, mainly in manufacturing, which included engineering, the car industry and steel industry, plus the docks, and elsewhere.

These shop stewards were directly elected by workers on the shop floor and generally subject to instant recall if found wanting. In other words, they were answerable to the mass of organised workers and not so much to the union officialdom.

The establishment daily newspapers were foaming at the mouth about

"As 1971 drew to a close the editors [of Militant, forerunner of the Socialist] predicted that the next year would see... the gathering storm. The British workers in 1971 have not yet thrown out the Tories or their hated system. But they achieved more than in any year since the war: three mass strikes and a gigantic march of 300,000 against the Industrial Relations Act; two token strikes of 150,000 Scottish workers in support of the mass action by Upper Clyde Shipbuilders workers; the Plessey sit-in; heroic struggles by many sections of workers, notably the postal workers and Ford workers; more mass strikes around the TUC lobby on unemployment; and a landslide rout of the Tories in the municipal elections.

The early 1970s witnessed the organised British working class flexing their muscles and defeating by direct strike action all attempts by the new Tory government of Ted Heath to bring them to heel."

FROM 'THE RISE OF MILITANT' BY PETER TAAFFE

how shop stewards were running things on the shop floor and continually calling 'wildcat' strikes without the say-so of the union leaders.

For the capitalist press, and the boss class they spoke for, this was an intolerable negation of the 'managers right to manage' as they put it, and 'something had to be done about it'.

The UK ruling class was desperate to make the economy competitive with its foreign rivals, but since the capitalists had refused to reinvest sufficiently the enormous profits they had made from empire and the sweat of the British working class, they only had one option: that was to super-exploit the labour of the working class in the factories and industry in general. But to do that they had to remove their greatest obstacle, the power of

the organised workers on the shop floor manifested in the power of the shop stewards.

This was not the same as saying the national unions were not strong; they were numerically. But, dialectically, real union power resided not so much at the unions' tops, but in the accumulated experience and tight-knit organisation which existed on the shopfloor. In the better organised workplaces this allowed the working class to act with independence and confidence when it came to repelling the boss's orders.

Not for nothing did Trotsky in an earlier period comment that the trade unions, particularly in Britain, were "the schools of a future socialist society and how it would be organised".

Yet hardly any union rule book



British Leyland car workers attending a mass meeting

mentioned what a shop steward was. The TGWU transport union referred to a steward as someone who collected union dues and nothing else.

## 'In place of strife'

It was the 1968 Labour government of prime minister Harold Wilson which made the first attempt to curb this shop-floor power. But he had to rapidly retreat from his misnamed 'In place of strife' legislation.

Wilson's government, acting as the 'second eleven' of the capitalist class (it included future left-winger Tony Benn in the cabinet, who initially supported In place of strife) tried to use its influence over the trade union leaders to support its anti-working-class law.

There is no doubt that if it had been up to the overwhelming majority of the national trade union leaders, they would have gone along with Wilson's proposals - which contained the threat to imprison shop stewards if they disobeyed the instructions of the union leaders.

Wilson had based his legislation on the Donovan commission's 'investigation into industrial relations', which Wilson himself had set up not long after he became prime minister for the second time in 1966.

The political left at the time was of course aware of these developments, but the main political left party (albeit

relatively small) in industry was the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) with its daily paper the Morning Star.

The CPGB was able to play an important role in politically arming the most class-conscious militants in the shop stewards' committees at the time. They did this through a front organisation called the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU).

Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party had been founded in 1964, based on the ideas and methods of Trotsky. It was slowly building at the time and was able to comment on these developments through its then monthly paper the Militant (see The Rise of Militant).

The Labour government eventually was forced to withdraw In place of strife after a series of unofficial strikes organised by union militants.

June 1970 saw the election of a Tory government with Ted Heath as prime minister. Its manifesto had promised "to stabilise industrial relations by forcing concentration of bargaining power and responsibility in the formal union leadership, using the courts".

I had become a shop steward on the car track at the Rover (British Leyland) car company in Solihull, south east of Birmingham, the previous year. And I had been made aware of

the proposed anti-union laws through reading the Morning Star sold to me by a CPGB shop steward on the next section of the track.

We had participated in debates that were taking place in the shop stewards' weekly committee meetings about these developments. And we had attended rallies in London organised by the LCDTU.

What really struck home (and made it very personal) was the threat to imprison individual shop stewards by the proposed Industrial Relations Court.

This was no idle threat. Later on five dockers' shop stewards known as the 'Pentonville Five' were indeed imprisoned (see '1972: dockers face down the Tory government' at socialistparty.org.uk).

## General strike call

It was therefore no surprise to us when we received a letter from the LCDTU calling for a general strike against the proposed Industrial Relations Bill.

The 300-strong Rover confederated shop stewards committee, Solihull, drawn from eight different unions representing 8,000 workers on the shop floor, agreed to call a mass meeting and propose a one-day strike against the bill.

The mass meeting took place (as probably did many others at the same

time around the country) and voted almost unanimously to strike on 8 December 1970.

We had no real idea how many other workplaces were also doing the same, in fact nobody asked, we took it for granted that everybody else felt the same - which, in general, is a mistake!

As it turned out, the strike was supported by wide layers in engineering, the car industry, the docks, and other places - probably in the region of 250,000 to 500,000 workers.

Much later on I found out that this had caused quite a debate in the CPGB and the strike was disowned by its national leaders, as well, of course, by the national trade union leaders.

Nevertheless, it gives an indication of the febrile atmosphere on the shop floor and it was one of the first 'political' strikes of that period.

The effect of this unofficial 'political' strike was to put the fear of god into some of the union leaders, who saw this as another example of how they were losing control of their members.

But there was also a developing layer of newish left union leaders who had come to the fore in the preceding years. These included Jack Jones (who had fought in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War), who was the leader of the biggest union, the TGWU, and Hugh Scanlon,

the president of the AJEUW (both unions are now part of Unite). Together, they were dubbed by the capitalist newspapers as "the two most powerful men in Britain".

Later on, when the Industrial Relations Court was in use, the TGWU was fined twice - £10,000 and £50,000 - for defying the law and not bringing its shop stewards to heel.

The AJEUW was also fined but refused to pay the fine on the casting vote of Hugh Scanlon, who instead called a one-day strike of the union's 1.5 million members against the fine.

The fine was paid secretly by a group of businessmen to save the embarrassment of the Heath government, otherwise it was likely that the AJEUW would have continued to refuse to pay any fines handed down by John Donaldson, the president of the Industrial Relations Court. Undoubtedly, the bosses feared that the situation could have escalated into a general strike.

12 January 1971 saw a TUC organised 'day of action' against the Industrial Relations Bill (it didn't become law until March 1971).

The day of action included the biggest-ever TUC demo up till then of 300,000 and was dubbed a 'Kill the Bill' demo, with placards depicting a shop steward imprisoned behind bars.

There have been bigger demos

since, but the difference with, for example, the huge demo against the Iraq war in February 2003, was the composition of those participating.

The anti-war demos of the early 2000s, taking nothing away from them, were mainly individuals outraged at the actions of their governments.

However, the January 1971 TUC demo was primarily made up of shop stewards from industry who had been delegated by their members to go to London and tell the Tories where to put their anti-union legislation.

I was there as part of a 100-strong delegation of shop stewards from Rover Solihull. Most of the factory had gone on strike for the day of action.

The demo was a forceful reminder, not just to the Tory government but to the TUC leaders, that there was no way the organised working class on the shop floor would accept from the Tories what they had rejected from the previous Labour government ie any attempt to curtail their painstakingly accrued rights on the shop floor by legal sleight of hand.

There were four unofficial days of strike action between December 1970 and March 1971, including one backed by the AJEUW.

But the TUC leaders steadfastly refused to countenance strike action. Consequently, TUC general secretary Vic Feather was continually heckled when he addressed a 10,000-strong union rally in Glasgow against the bill on 7 March.

## Inoperable law

Eventually the bill became law, but it was made inoperable from the beginning despite all the huff and puff of the judges and the legal establishment.

Part of its provisions included the 'right not to be in a union'. This saw a number of attempts, including at my factory, by right-wing individuals to rip up their union cards. They were dealt with summarily by the shop floor who refused to work with them (we were a 'closed shop' ie 100% obligatory union membership) and management was forced to get rid of them.

In September 1971, the TUC conference voted for a resolution forbidding affiliated unions, on pain of expulsion from the TUC, from registering with the act. This resulted in a number of smaller unions being expelled from the TUC.

This was replicated at local level

where, for example, SOGAT, a print union, was expelled from Birmingham trades council. I moved the resolution at that meeting.

Later, when the 1974 Labour government repealed the act, the expelled unions were readmitted into the TUC and the local trades councils.

A number of important lessons from that period were being drawn at the time as the pulse of events opened up new perspectives. Inherent within the whole situation at that time was a general strike.

It was debated quite a lot, and even though I had not yet met Militant or its small number of supporters at that time, I remember vividly discussing 'what next?' on the shop stewards committee.

Our convenor was a member of the CPGB and he was putting forward the demand for 'all power to the general council'. This was the leading body of the TUC.

It seems this was an echo of what the CPGB called for at the time of the 1926 general strike. That was heavily criticised by Trotsky as wholly inadequate when it was clear that both the left and the right wing on the general council in the days and weeks leading up to the general strike were preparing to abandon the struggle before it even began.

It seemed that the CPGB of 1971 had not learnt much from the CPGB of 1926.

Unbeknown to me, the Militant paper and its supporters were addressing what was needed to advance the struggle at the time. It argued for a 24-hour general strike as a warning shot to Heath followed by escalating action if needed.

The battle against the Industrial Relations Act was won by the organised working class, and it would take the political defeat on the electoral plane in the 1979 general election, which brought to power Maggie Thatcher, for the capitalist class to get their revenge.

Only after the experience of a failed Labour government, which politically disarmed the working class, were the Tories able to gradually reintroduce anti-union legislation again.

Yet there were many opportunities throughout the Thatcher years that with the right leadership, the working class could have once again defeated the bosses.



History repeats itself. Lobbying the TUC conference in 2015 against the new Tory-Lib Dem anti-trade union bill PHOTO PAUL MATTISON

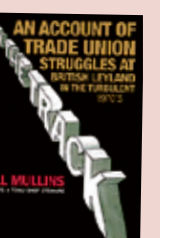
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# West Sussex children's centres on the chopping block

ROBERT SOMERTON-JONES  
BRIGHTON AND SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Conservative West Sussex County Council is planning to axe 32 children's centres and twelve youth centres. The council is facing a massive budget shortfall, as much as £105 million over the next three years, according to its own figures. This is due to the devastating economic fallout from the coronavirus crisis and huge cuts in funding from central government. And rather than demanding more money from government, they are putting services onto the chopping block.

In the hope of saving a paltry £1.95 million a year, the council is planning to close 32 out of 44 award-winning early help children's centres in the

county, as well as all of the 'Find It Out' youth centres which give advice to teenagers and young adults.

The Socialist Party Brighton and Sussex branch is campaigning to stop this act of social vandalism. We aim to join with local people, staff at the centres organised in the union Unison, as well as any local Labour Party councillors who will vote to oppose cuts.

A petition signed by at least 500 local people, calling for a halt to the cuts, has already been dismissed out of hand by the Tory council and their Lib Dem collaborators. We need to build wider support for the campaign, including organising protests and supporting workers if they decide to take industrial action.

Our demands are simple and straightforward - no cuts and no job losses!

It's not just these centres under threat; we know that this is the first shot of a much bigger attack aimed at our public services. We know the same councillors are planning to make 50% cuts to day and respite care, which help struggling parents or parents of neuro-divergent children. We know that centre closures only account for less than 2% of the planned cuts.

Working-class people did not cause this crisis, and so it should not be us who pay for it with higher taxes, job losses, and reduced access to services.

Councils in England hold billions in reserves. This money must be used immediately to prevent further austerity. Meanwhile, a battle must be waged to fight for the Tories to replenish local authority funding that has been slashed in the last decade of austerity. After all, we now know that the 'magic money tree' does exist when it comes to bailing out big business.

With local elections on the horizon, the Socialist Party plans to stand as part of the Trade Union and Socialists Coalition (TUSC). At the centre of TUSC's election platform is the demand for no more cuts, and a pledge from all candidates to vote against all cuts in the council chamber.

We are holding a public TUSC meeting in Brighton and Sussex on Sunday 7 March at 3pm via Zoom, and we urge all who want to resist cuts and austerity in West Sussex to join us.

● Zoom ID: 898 2687 3717



# Liverpool Unite branch supports 'no cuts' budget strategy

MEMBERS OF UNITE LIVERPOOL 0538 BRANCH

On Friday 19 February, the branch meeting of Liverpool Unite union voted to refuse to endorse any of Labour's prospective Liverpool mayoral candidates. We pointed out that all the candidates - Anna Rothery, Wendy Simon, and Ann O'Byrne - have long histories of obediently implementing Tory cuts on Liverpool City Council.

The branch's decision will now be reiterated in a letter to Unite's national leadership. This letter will also note branch members' dissatisfaction with the decision of the union's national leadership to endorse the Liverpool Labour mayoral candidature of serial voter for Tory cuts, Anna Rothery, without first consulting our branch.

At the meeting we also moved a motion calling on Unite to support an alternative, legal, 'no cuts' budget for Liverpool City Council. In the subsequent debate, we defended the Socialist Party's ideas regarding the need for - and feasibility of - legally balanced 'no cuts' budgets. These ideas and arguments are so strong that even the sitting and prospective Labour councillors present chose to abstain, rather than vote against.

Despite the strength of our arguments, Labour's prospective candidates for Liverpool mayor and city councillors will almost certainly not endorse the fighting strategy laid out in our legal no-cuts budget proposal. But there is one candidate who already has endorsed the fighting strategy - the Socialist Party's Roger Bannister - who will be standing for mayor as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Unlike Labour's candidates, Roger is a determined class fighter who will do whatever is necessary to stop cuts.

Below are some key points from our legal no-cuts budget proposal for Liverpool City Council:

- Liverpool City Council has total usable reserves of £63 million. These should be drawn down to £35.4 million in order to reverse the Liverpool Labour group's planned budget cuts of £15 million, 5% council tax rise, and pay freezes for many council workers.
- Liverpool City Council should launch a campaign - in collaboration with trade unions, other local authorities, and community activists - demanding that the Tory government reverse cuts in central government funding for local councils, and provide relief funding for those authorities that have had to deplete their reserves or adopt other temporary budget balancing measures to maintain vital public services.

# Save John Carroll Leisure Centre

GERAINT THOMAS  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

John Carroll Leisure Centre, in the working-class Radford area of Nottingham, is threatened with closure in the latest £15.6m of cuts proposed by Nottingham Labour Council. Radford has seen most of its local services disappear, the leisure centre is virtually the only community amenity left.

Many services and groups operate from the centre, and the sports facilities provide local people with an alternative to street life. But over the years services have been run down, the last real investment in the centre was 15 years ago.

The 'Save John Carroll Leisure Centre' campaign (savejohncarroll.co.uk) has been founded by local residents and users of the centre in a determined bid to stop the closure, planned for June.

The closure would especially hit schools and older users who will struggle to travel to the next nearest leisure centre. The campaign is heaping pressure on councillors to oppose the closure in the March council meeting, but that will not be the end of it.

The council says that it is consulting on the closure proposals, but so far that has proved a sham. In a meeting with campaigners, the council leaders claimed that the centre is the least used, and that saving it would mean closing another two. It has clearly decided in advance that the centre will close.

We reject the attempt to pit working-class service users in the city against each other. Services should and can be protected. Councillors need to take serious action to block the cuts, using their remaining reserves and borrowing powers to defend services instead of propping up failing commercial ventures.

Passing on Tory cuts and removing services from the people of Nottingham is a political choice. The Tories are weak; even two or three councils taking a stand, and demanding funding from central government, could well result in yet another government U-turn.

There are no elections in Nottingham this year, but the Socialist Party is prepared to stand as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition against any councillors voting to impose cuts in future elections.

# Getting the Socialist out in lockdown

## ● Coventry success building subscriptions

ADAM HARMSWORTH  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

The latest lockdown has had an impact on raising sales and subscriptions to the Socialist across the country. Back in late December one of our weekly campaign stalls in Coventry sold ten papers, we definitely felt the pinch when lockdown returned.

Our branch hasn't taken any dramatic steps to react, but we did carry on the work we were doing as best we could. Several of us have paper rounds delivering the Socialist by hand to supporters, often stopping for a chat. We share the paper and encourage subscriptions on social media, and aim to build key articles into our programme of political discussions in branch meetings.

We have been continuing paper deliveries throughout the pandemic, adopting safer methods as required - like not going in for a coffee! Those deliveries and conversations about articles in the paper have raised subscribers' interest in political events and the working-class struggle that the capitalist press refuses to report.



That work has led to a new member, who has already written for the Socialist. We can now say with pleasure she is no longer our newest member, because the paper brought another supporter into our ranks.

A long-term supporter has continued selling the paper at his workplace. There he had a regular buyer, who went on to contact us about meetings, and within weeks had joined with a

subscription to the Socialist. And now two more supporters who were buying the paper on the doorstep have also agreed to take up subscriptions.

So we have seen that consistent work selling, delivering and discussing the Socialist has great results. Getting more subscriptions is vital for recruitment to the Socialist Party and education of our members.

## ● Selling the Socialist

MICK GRIFFITHS  
WAKEFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Our branch has around 20 - 30 regular paper sales in normal times. Five of the regulars are within walking distance for me, and have their papers hand delivered each week. A core of regulars are contacted and arrangements made to meet up to deliver papers.

Most days, between four and six days a week (except when I have to isolate), I have to visit the town centre. On all occasions I have a bag of papers. Wherever I go, when opportunities arise, I attempt to engage in political discussions and offer the paper to taxi drivers, shop assistants and so on.

At the end of the week when the new paper is due, I drop off copies of the previous paper at various locations such as on buses, trains and in cafes. This can lead to new sales. In the past I had people coming to our campaign stall and asking to buy the paper after having picked one up that I had left on a bus.

Like what you've read?  
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socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe

# Scottish TUSC election campaign launch

SEAN ROBERTSON  
SCOTTISH TUSC CANDIDATE FOR THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS REGION

On Saturday 20 February, the Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) launched our election manifesto for the Scottish elections in May.

More than 40 attendees, including socialists, trade unionists and community activists, took part. It was announced that Scottish TUSC would be standing to offer working-class people a genuine socialist alternative to challenge the pro-big business, pro-cuts mainstream parties like the Tories, the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Scottish Labour.

Chaired by Sinead Daly, the conference kicked off with a discussion on the need for a socialist alternative for workers. Michael Hogg, a Scottish regional organiser for the RMT transport workers' union, opened the discussion. He explained that, while he and his union support an independent Scotland, independence alone is not enough for workers. The pro-independence SNP government has backed big

business, including in the rail and ferry sector, and does not back workers in struggle. Meanwhile, Labour's rightward turn and position on independence makes it unelectable.

Lynda McEwan, a candidate for TUSC's West of Scotland regional list, speaking on behalf of Socialist Party Scotland, said that the queues of hundreds of people waiting in the snow in Glasgow for food hand-outs is a true picture of 21st-century capitalism in Scotland under the SNP government.

Brian Smith, lead TUSC candidate in Glasgow region and Glasgow City Unison branch secretary, who has a proud record of fighting for low-paid workers, said that Scottish TUSC was a step towards building a desperately needed new workers' party in Scotland.

He added: "As socialists we fight for all reforms to improve the conditions for workers, but reforming capitalism won't be enough. We socialists want to change the world. We can use this election as a platform to expose the limits of capitalism and fight for a socialist future."

In the second session, Philip Stott, of Scottish TUSC's national steering

committee proposed TUSC's election manifesto. The document lays out the broad commitments that TUSC candidates must agree to in order to stand under the TUSC banner.

The manifesto, which was unanimously passed by conference, calls on socialists to fight for a socialist recovery for the working class and for an independent socialist Scotland. At

the heart of these policies is a call for the major sections of the economy to be brought into public ownership under democratic workers' control, and for all jobs threatened by the pandemic to be saved, including by nationalising companies threatening redundancies.

Scottish TUSC standing will mean at least 1.5 million people throughout Scotland will have the choice to

vote for a genuine working-class, socialist alternative in May's Scottish election.

● Do you want to join the fight for an Independent Socialist Scotland? Could you stand for socialism as a Scottish TUSC candidate in your local area? Contact Scottish TUSC via email at scottishtusc@gmail.com or find us on twitter @ScottishTUSC or facebook.com/ScottishTUSC.



# Keep the fighting fund rushing in for a TUSC stand in May

The relaunch of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition with the plan to stand widely in the forthcoming elections, has really inspired Socialist Party members and supporters. Following the launch of the Socialist Party election appeal we have received some excellent donations.

At the Socialist Party Wales conference a further £1,360 was paid in, on top of the donations already received. At the East Midlands Socialist Party conference £1,000 was raised for the election appeal. How is the appeal going in your area? Are

you asking everyone you know to make sure we have the resources to stand as many TUSC candidates as possible?

In addition to the election appeal our members and supporters are taking every opportunity to make sure we smash through our target. Our members in the North East and Carlisle held a successful online

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

Socialist Party lockdown get together with music provided by one of the local members. Those attending were asked to pay a donation based on what they would normally spend on a night out in the pub. Over £155 has been raised so far. Linda Thraves from Swansea raised over £74 by selling clothes on eBay, and Barbara Clare from Stevenage branch has donated £280 from her NEU honoraria. Please keep the fighting fund rushing in to make sure we can get our socialist message out as widely as possible.



SOCIALIST STUDENTS SOUTHAMPTON

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q1: JANUARY-MARCH 2021	DEADLINE: 31 MARCH 2021
Wales	3,777	2,300		164%
South West	1,909	1,800		106%
East Midlands	1,087	1,850	59%	
Southern & SE	1,343	2,350	57%	
London	2,535	4,600	55%	
North West	621	1,150	54%	
Eastern	585	1,200	49%	
West Midlands	1,158	2,600	45%	
Northern	313	750	42%	
Yorkshire	1,063	2,550	42%	
Other	5,677	3,850		147%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,069</b>	<b>25,000</b>		<b>80%</b>

# Film Review: The White Tiger

AKHALYA  
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

• Contains spoilers

The White Tiger, a film based on the bestselling novel by Aravind Adiga, depicts the story of a young man's bid to overcome caste and social oppressions to become a self-made person.

The protagonist, Balram, narrates his life as it unfolds from when he is a child. He is a studious and ambitious child who reads books under an oil lamp, while the rest of his family sleep cramped in one small room. When his father is unable to pay the local goon - the 'Stork' - Balram is forced to leave school and join his brother working at the tea stall.

The film highlights the financial responsibility males can be expected to take on, not only in rural India but all over the world, to be able to provide for their family. A gender role that capitalism has embedded, especially in South Asian culture.

In order to get a job working for the Stork's family in the big city, Balram has to endure prodding questions of his caste, religion, and family place of residence. He lands himself the job for 1,500 rupees a month, equivalent to £15. In order to improve his position, Balram exposes the Muslim identity of a colleague, whom he is envious of, to get him fired.

## Divide and rule

The current Hindu nationalist government of the BJP, under the leadership of President Narendra Modi, carry out similar divide-and-rule tactics against Muslims. They blame them for the problems in India, to hide the greed and corruption of the bosses and government; the root causes of the stark poverty in India.

Throughout the film the narrator refers to the rooster coop analogy, where roosters are caged together in large numbers but do not revolt even when they see that slaughter is ahead. This is compared to the working class in India which has the power to overthrow the bosses, but through systematic conditions put



**The harsh reality of the issues facing India are brought into the limelight by the film.**

in place by capitalism, the working class lacks the confidence that it is possible to do so at this stage. And so, workers carry on acting as slaves to their masters.

The film introduces "The Great Socialist" who comes from a lower-caste family and rises to be the next president. But like many of the leaders of opposition currents in present day India, the Great Socialist helps the capitalists evade taxes, while

lining her own pockets. This can be compared to other liberal capitalist parties around the world, who use identity politics to give the hope of reformation for the lives of the working class, but in reality do not fight for a political programme that can have a positive impact.

The film takes a turn when Balram is forced by his bosses to sign a confession taking full responsibility for manslaughter; he feels like he has "served his duty by the master". The detachment from one another within the capitalist system is stark, as the film reminds us. Although Balram has more in common with the little child from a poor background who was killed, he chooses to defend his employers, who abuse him, verbally and violently, throughout the film.

The harsh reality of the issues facing India are brought into the limelight by

the film. We see glimpses of the Hindu nationalist views in India, the objectification of women across classes, the corruption that runs rife in any capitalist system but is prominent among the Indian ruling class, and the caste-based oppression that is evident in everyday society.

## Capitalists vs workers

Balram correctly points out that although there are more than 1,000 castes in India, there are only two that really matter: those who have a big belly and those who have a small belly. The capitalist class, and the working class.

Balram's story resonates well across India. Often young people leave their village with hope for a better life in a big city, only to find that there are few jobs available and they are threatened with unemployment

when they get poorly paid work. Unlike films that tell the story of a person from the slums who, through intelligence and hard work, can become successful and escape their situation - this film indicates that the reality of success for anyone not born with a silver spoon is far more horrific.

The film ends alluding that Balram has escaped the coop - no longer the rooster, but the master. However, it does not point out the obvious: that the masses can overthrow their masters, and even capitalism if they struggle in solidarity on a mass basis. To fight oppressions of any kind we must unite on a class basis, fight for and defend our rights, to defeat nationalism, racism, and divide-and-rule tactics which are all products of this wretched capitalist system.

• *The White Tiger can be viewed on Netflix*

## Tories admit guilt for asylum seeker neglect

ERIC SEGAL  
KENT SOCIALIST PARTY

Today I received a letter from the Home Secretary Priti Patel. The letter is a weak and pathetic attempt by the home secretary to deflect criticism away from her government's negligent policy of confining over 400 people seeking asylum to the derelict Napier barracks in Folkestone. This is a policy that is fuelled by the need to cut costs and make the weak and vulnerable pay for the pandemic.

The subsequent and predictable outbreak of Covid-19 in the overcrowded camp infected over one in four of the inmates. This resulted in the forcible incarceration of 400 desperate and vulnerable people locked

behind barbed wire fences and gates secured by the police.

The tensions inside the camp following the locking of the gates led to inevitable demonstrations and a significant police presence following a fire in one of the buildings on Friday 29 January.

The letter from Home Secretary Patel is an admission of guilt over the negligent Napier policy of this government. This has led to four suicide attempts by asylum seekers at Napier barracks.

The demonstrations and fire have caused an outburst of anti-asylum seeker and racist comments on social media demanding that the asylum seekers should be sent back across the channel or worse. This resentment is fuelled by suffering

in substandard rented accommodation, inadequate council housing, low-paid jobs and failing public services. The letter from the home secretary failed to answer concerns caused by the austerity policies of successive governments.

The government is finally being taken to judicial review in court over their negligent handling of the accommodation of people seeking asylum. However, anti-asylum seeker and racist sentiments must be countered by a mass programme of building council houses, jobs at trade union rates of pay with proper training for young people, and for the provision of public services. With all this we say defend the right to asylum. We demand the resignation of home secretary Priti Patel.



## DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

# THE SOCIALIST INBOX

### Do not stay silent

The suspension of Jeremy Corbyn from the Parliamentary Labour Party could be an historical turning point. If the whip is restored to Jeremy Corbyn, the left would still be on the back foot.

If Keir Starmer succeeds in permanently excluding Corbyn, then the Labour Party would be finished as a vehicle for substantial social change for a generation. Tens of thousands of members have already resigned from the Labour Party since Starmer became leader.

I would be pleased if Corbyn wins his court case. But I would be far, far happier if he was reinstated as a result of pressure exerted by members of Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) and affiliated trades unions.

Can we really be happy about the internal affairs of our party being decided by the state? Would we really want a (metaphorical) police officer attending every meeting to ensure that the rule-book is observed?

If Corbyn can only be reinstated on the instructions of a judge, then we will have lost. The left in the Labour Party is beset by weakness of spirit.

We are too frightened of what may happen to us if we speak out. The roads in Harlow named after Nelson Mandela and Salvador Allende are a reminder that in some parts of the world, in certain periods, our comrades have faced imprisonment, torture, and execution.

What is the worst thing that could

happen to a CLP officer if he or she spoke out in support of Jeremy Corbyn? Suspension from the Labour Party is a lot less dangerous to your health than suspension from a gallows.

There is nothing to stop Labour councillors speaking out in defence of Jeremy Corbyn. There is no rule under which they could be disciplined for doing so.

When people ask us what we did to support Jeremy Corbyn, will we have to shamefacedly admit that we kept quiet, and condemned yet another generation to suffer the slings and arrows of unconstrained capitalism?

**JOHN WAKE**  
HARLOW LABOUR MEMBER

### Tories make the most vulnerable pay

Tory-led Wokingham Borough Council has decided to increase the care costs for my severely autistic son. Originally there was no charge, then around £25 a month, but now it's gone up by a whopping 436%. Another reason to vote for anti-cuts candidates in the coming elections. Why should the most vulnerable in society pay for a funding crisis created by the banks and the super-rich? The increase in wealth these people have had since the start of the pandemic could pay for social care many times over.

**JOHN GILLMAN**  
WOKINGHAM



CC/RWENDLAND

## Tories target universities in free speech shakedown

ADAM CALVERT  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The government recently announced plans to introduce a 'Free Speech Champion' to the board of the Office for Students to regulate the approach to free speech on England's universities campuses. This role would regulate the actions taken by universities regarding free speech, and how they promote it.

Universities found guilty of not promoting freedom of speech could

be fined. This also includes allowing all guest speakers to have a platform, with risks of punishment if they are refused. New legal measures mean individuals could sue if they feel they've had a breach of free speech thrust upon them.

The Russell Group of universities believes these measures will in fact restrict freedom in universities, and instead threaten their internal autonomy.

The National Union of Students also said there is no evidence of



LESLEY ANNE FINLAYSON



SUK SETHI

### Tory and Labour foodbank shame

Look at this. Shame on Waltham Forest Labour council. This is a photo of a food bank queue at Wood Street with over two hours to go before it opens, that was shared in a local Facebook group.

I'm heartbroken to see it, but that's not enough. What are we going to do

about the do-nothing council, which insist that it's helpless in the face of cruel cuts? We need an alternative, and that absolutely isn't the Tories. A no-cuts alternative.

**SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE**  
WALTHAM FOREST, EAST LONDON

This is a queue for the soup kitchen round the corner (the blue shop). It's never been that long before. A sure sign that things are only getting worse.

**SUK SETHI**  
HOUNSLOW, WEST LONDON

### Small parties priced out

Dave Warren, TUSC Wales secretary, penned this complaint to Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales.

"I am writing as secretary of the Wales steering committee of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC). TUSC is a registered political party and will be standing candidates in the forthcoming elections to the Senedd (Welsh parliament) on 6 May.

We note the current legal prohibition on door-to-door leafletting for the election and wish to lodge our protest at what we consider to be an attack on a fundamental democratic right - namely the right of political parties to campaign and disseminate its policies.

We are fully aware of the need to restrict the spread of coronavirus, but we note that leafletting by commercial organisations, such as Royal Mail and others, is permitted under current rules.

For some reason leafletting by volunteers is deemed to be unsafe, whereas the same activity on a commercial basis is deemed to be acceptable. A hand pushing a leaflet through a door carries exactly the same risk whether it belongs to a volunteer or a paid worker.

This state of affairs is clearly discriminatory against smaller parties who do not have the financial resources to take advantage of commercial leafletting or advertising, but rely on volunteers. This could be

seen as an attempt by the Welsh Government to limit the effectiveness of opposition parties and to silence criticism.

We do not want to be forced into a position where we have to break the law in order to defend a democratic right, but we shall not be deterred from doing so if necessary."

• Turn to pages 10-11 for more on TUSC or go to [tusc.org.uk](http://tusc.org.uk)

### Recruiting to the union from a hospital bed

One attendee at the National Shop Stewards Network meeting (see 'Online workers' rally: Taking fight to the bosses' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)) said: "I'm in hospital recovering from surgery, but still attending this meeting. Every single member of staff who has come to see me today has been given a round-up of this meeting, and I have urged all to join a union."

### Crony Tories

The Advanced Research and Invention Agency is a branch of Dominic Cummings. It will be free from any freedom of information requests.

This raises a legitimate suspicion that the only questions it will ask are: a) Are you a Tory? and b) How many millions do you want?

### Praise for the Socialist!

Just wanted to say that I thought the article by Gary Clark, an appraisal of the Royal Mail and Communication Workers Union (CWU) dispute, was excellent. It was one of the best assessments of a dispute in our paper. It was very readable and measured.

**HEATHER RAWLING**  
LEICESTER

• See 'Royal Mail management forced to make concessions' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)



PAUL MATTSOON

abysmal handling of the Covid-19 crisis. They are aiming to distract from their faults by appearing as champions of free speech, a hot topic within the UK in recent years, in order to shore up sections of their limited support, and to scrape up votes for the May council elections.

Join the student fightback  
**JOIN** socialist students  
[socialiststudents.org.uk/join](http://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)



# LGBT+ history month

## Tories tout toilet tensions

MADDY STEEDS  
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tory government has opened a call for evidence regarding the availability of men's and women's toilet facilities. The call suggests that women have been disadvantaged by the removal of gendered toilet facilities in favour of gender-neutral facilities. The call further suggests that the use of non-gendered language in signage causes 'public confusion'.

The lack of appropriate facilities that this call is aiming to address is not the fault of trans people and the movement towards more inclusive infrastructure, but is in fact due to the years of austerity we have faced in Britain. Councils have cut public restroom facilities, rather than fighting the Tories for the funding they need for these essential facilities and the rest of our public services.

Councils have got away with such cuts by instead getting private businesses to allow members of the public to use their facilities - if they are willing to buy from them.

For many working-class people, it is not feasible to buy a snack in a café just to gain access to essential facilities. For those with children, or medical or hygienic needs that require more frequent access to toilets, this can become very costly. In 2017, figures suggested that one in five people will avoid going out due to a lack of public toilets.

### National meeting for LGBT+ members of the Socialist Party

SUNDAY 14 MARCH, 2-5PM

Contact your branch secretary for the details

International Women's Day 2021

**FIGHTING TO END WOMEN'S OPPRESSION**

A socialist and internationalist approach

Hosted by the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International

Broadcast live on Facebook with speakers from across the world

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March  
3 - 4.30pm GMT

www.socialistparty.org.uk

CHAIR: ISAI PRIYA, SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE; SPEAKERS: RASHMI, NEW SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE INDIA, MEMBER OF THE CHENNAI COMMITTEE; CARAH DANIEL, MILITANT LEFT, IRELAND, CENTRAL COMMITTEE; SHERI HAMILTON, MARXIST WORKERS PARTY SOUTH AFRICA, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE; PAMELA MEZA LOBOS, SOCIALISMO REVOLUCIONARIO, CHILE; CLAIRE BAYLER, INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST GROUP, US, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE; LEILA MESSAOUDI, GAUCHE REVOLUTIONNAIRE GENERAL SECRETARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLOR; CLARE DOYLE, CWI INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT; HELEN PATTISON, SOCIALIST PARTY LONDON REGIONAL SECRETARY

Trans people have long fought for the right to use bathrooms that match their gender identity. Many trans people have faced abuse when entering the bathrooms for being trans, and as a result may avoid using public restrooms for fear of attack. While at times there are gender neutral, disabled facilities available, many trans people would prefer not to use those facilities when others may need them.

#### Gender-neutral

This problem becomes more complicated for non-binary people, as neither male nor female facilities can feel appropriate.

For this group, gender-neutral facilities are essential, as they allow all people to feel comfortable using the bathroom and avoid feelings of displacement and dysphoria that can arise from using gendered facilities.

Overall, while the government consultation suggests that the lack of public restrooms is due to the increase of gender-neutral facilities, it is in fact years of austerity that have caused a lack of facilities across Britain.

We need councils that will fight to reverse the cuts to public facilities and will fight to use the local council's reserves to set no-cuts budgets. We also need to fight against the scapegoating of trans people in society, and fight for a socialist society that meets the needs of everyone.

## PRIDE FLAG IS ABOUT UNITY IN STRUGGLE

PHOTO IAIN DALTON



RACHEL GAMBLING  
ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

'Rainbow capitalism' is the term given to the corporate bandwagon-jumping of brands using the iconic gay pride symbol - the rainbow flag - to decorate their products during 'Pride season'. In 2017 Skittles chose to "give the rainbow" back to the community by selling white sweets instead of their usual multi-coloured ones.

While the notion of white Skittles might be riveting for some, this and widespread 'rainbow washing' is a hollow attempt at trying to cover up big businesses' true intentions: to sell more products during a period that is meant to commemorate the Stonewall riots and the rainbow symbol that is about the true, diverse, working-class history of LGBTQ+ struggle.

Corporations never address the real history behind Pride, but nor does the British education system. Only last year did the government decide it should be compulsory to teach LGBTQ+ inclusive Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in schools. But at the same time they banned the use of anti-capitalist materials within the curriculum.

To understand the history behind LGBTQ+ oppression, and why (in pre-Covid times) people protest, march and party in the streets of Soho and across the world, it is essential to have some understanding

of the struggles that have taken place, including the 1969 Stonewall riots. It is impossible for the true lessons to be drawn from these events without looking at the links between the oppression of LGBT+ people and capitalism and class society.

There are attempts by the capitalist-owned media to re-write history and undermine our collective memory, including of Stonewall.

#### Commercialised

Like Pride, the Stonewall story has become commercialised and sanitised. The involvement of queer and trans people of colour, poor queers, and non-queer people of colour is often obscured.

But this was also the period of the civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam war protests in the US. In France, the May revolutionary strike movement had taken place the year before.

The class divisions within the LGBT+ population were highlighted to an extent by these events. Richer LGBT+ people were reported to "characterise the events at Stonewall as 'regrettable,' as the demented carry-ons of 'stoned, tacky queens' - precisely those elements in the gay world from whom they had long distanced themselves."

Many people are unaware that the Stonewall Inn was a bar in New York owned by the mafia. Marc Stein reported: "Most of its patrons were working- and middle-class whites in their teens, twenties, and thirties,

but there was a significant presence of African Americans and Latinos as well. Gay men, drag queens, street queens, transsexuals, sex workers, and others who transgressed gender and sexual norms frequented the bar, as did a small number of lesbians.

The riots were an outburst of stored-up anger. They also marked a watershed moment in the public visibility of LGBT+ repression and conflict, and a wave of organisation and political struggle followed.

The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was quickly formed, directly challenging politicians, the police and media on LGBTphobia on a regular basis. The GLF had anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-establishment politics.

STAR, the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, was founded by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson.

If the Stonewall riots are reclaimed from corporations profiting from rainbow capitalism during Pride, and instead reintroduced into collective memory as a show of unity between the working class against police brutality, there is an opportunity to use it as a chance to unite not just the queer community, but the black community, and the wider working class too.

Improving our knowledge on queer history and the organisations and individuals who contributed to these revolutionary moments can allow for greater solidarity against capitalism.

## Nigeria: Abbey Trotsky on trial for assisting workers' struggle



Socialist Party members solidarity protest outside the London Nigerian embassy

Socialist Party members protested outside the Nigerian Embassy in central London on 22 February to protest against the 'show trial' of Abbey Trotsky - a leading member of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM - CWI in Nigeria) - that was taking place that day.

Abbey is charged with criminal conspiracy to commit a breach of the peace, unlawful assembly, assault and malicious damage. These trumped-up charges arise from solidarity action in support of striking casual/contract workers at Sumal Food Ltd on 2-3 October 2018. If convicted, he could face a jail sentence of up to 13 years.

The authorities are hoping that a prosecution will act as a deterrent for future solidarity action in support of oppressed workers.

#### Background

In 2018, Abbey and DSM helped striking Sumal food workers win a 30% pay rise, a reduction in hours and the working week, overtime pay, more lenient sick leave, and the reinstatement of sacked employees.

Sumal accused Abbey of 'inciting' the workers against management. But it was the workers who invited Abbey to help, after the terrible role played by the rotten union leaders who collaborated with management.

The Sumal workers' victory inspired a wave of protests for better pay and conditions among other Sumal workers and at other factories in Ibadan city in Oyo state.

Abbey was arraigned on 7 June 2019 following over three weeks of repeated harassment by the police and state secret service, known as DSS.

Between 19 December 2018 and 9 June 2019, Abbey was arrested five times by the police and secret service. Then, between 28 May and 7 June, he was forced to report weekly at the office of the AIG Zone 2 in Osogbo, Osun State, a neighbouring state.

If Abbey is convicted, the Socialist Party in Wales and England along with other sections of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) will be stepping up solidarity protests all over the world.

## Facebook v Australian government: nationalise the bosses' media!

JAMES IVENS

In a fit of pique, tech baron Mark Zuckerberg purged all news from Australian Facebook feeds. But while Australia's right-wing Liberal government poses as defender of the little guy, this is really a battle between competing media billionaires.

The code before the Australian parliament could force online platforms to pay news firms for their content. Facebook's hostage tactics won amendments: it can avoid compulsion by making enough of its own deals. But either way, the power to decide which outlets get funding rests with the capitalists.

Traditional media has suffered losses in the shift from print to web - both sales and ad revenue. Tech

giants like Facebook and Google need that content to drive traffic so they can sell ads, and have exploited it for free.

Capitalist news media, now reliant on those platforms for circulation, shoulders all the cost of production. Obviously media billionaires like Rupert Murdoch cannot tolerate this.

For all the talk of levelling the playing field, almost all the benefits of this reform would accrue to the likes of Murdoch. It's not so much 'David and Goliath' as 'Goliath and Goliath'.

Google had already done a back-room deal with his conglomerate, the perfidious News Corp, to avoid state intervention. Facebook preferred shock and awe to diplomacy.



DSM members holding an open mic discussion during protests against police brutality last year

## Tollgate protesters arrested and tortured

A peaceful protest called by activists on 13 February 2021, against the decision to reopen the Lekki tollgate to business was openly and brutally repressed.

This new repression, following widespread protests against police brutality last year, has unmasked the Buhari government in Nigeria as a major enabler of police brutality and repression. In fact, repression has actually increased since the end of the #EndSARS protest in October 2020 (see 'Nigeria: Mass protests force government to disband killer corp unit' at socialistparty.org.uk).

The decision to reopen the tollgate was taken by the Lagos State Judicial panel of inquiry set up in the aftermath of the #EndSARS protest, last year, particularly the alleged shooting and killing by the army and police of multiple protesters occupying the Lekki tollgate.

This decision split the panel, with at least one youth representative, Rinu Oduala, quitting in protest and another, Barrister Ebon Adegboruwa, announcing he is "consulting with civil society to take a decision".

A few days before the protest, the police authorities issued statements

warning of brutal consequences. A faceless group called #DefendLagos also attempted to organise a counter-protest based on stoking sentiments alleging that any protest would lead to destruction and violence similar to that which occurred last year after state-sponsored thugs took over the streets following the October 20 Lekki tollgate killings.

#### Undeterred

Despite this, scores of protesters showed up on 13 February at the tollgate and were promptly rounded up and arrested, along with some passers-by. They were equally subjected to beatings and torture while in custody.

They were arraigned before a mobile court on a three-count charge of conspiracy, on conduct likely to cause a breach of public peace, and violation of Covid-19 rules. They were subsequently granted bail and ordered to reappear in court on 2 March.

One of those arrested is Moshood Oshunfurewa, Ajegunle (Lagos) branch organiser of the DSM and leading member of the Youth Rights Campaign (YRC). He is also the

Lagos state secretary of the broad-left Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN).

He spoke of his ordeal: "Following my arrest while videoing others being arrested, I was able to secretly distribute leaflets to other detained activists right under the noses of the trigger-happy police. Some were inspired and asked questions on how to join the organisation. We were about 40.

The police were very vicious and violent towards the arrested protesters. Their agenda appeared to be to inflict as much damage as they could on us, knowing they cannot really prove any case of breaking the law against us.

They subjected us to torture. I was severely beaten in Adeniji Adele police station and sustained injury to my right eye. My phone was also damaged by the police who used their gun butts to smash the screen. Some other detainees had their phones smashed in similar manner.

Our statements at the police station were forcibly collected with the aid of blows and canes."

• See [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net) for full report and updates.



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# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

# JUSTICE FOR MOYIED BASHIR

## WORKING CLASS NEEDS DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF POLICE

**MARIAM KAMISH**  
CAERPHILLY SOCIALIST PARTY

**F**or the second time in just over a month, a young man has died at the hands of south Wales police. Moyied Bashir's family asked for help for their son, who was suffering mental health issues, after being stabbed three weeks earlier.

Moyied's brother, Mohamed, has publicly described the harrowing events he witnessed. Police forced Moyied face down, handcuffed him and put a restraint on his leg directly over his stab wound. The family made officers aware of Moyied's mental health problems and injuries. They pleaded for police to bring an ambulance, but had to call one themselves. Moyied began to have breathing problems, but it was two hours before paramedics arrived. By then it was too late.

The next day over 200 mainly young people responded to the call put out by Moyied's brother. Angry and looking for a way to make their voices heard, they marched to the police station in the centre of Newport.

In response, the police locked the doors and retreated inside, while the demonstration occupied the steps and blocked the road. Protesters felt bewildered and frustrated. The mood of the crowd was: 'What happened to George Floyd was happening here. It's always been happening. How can we get justice?'

I walked up to the demo with a group of very young women. Like almost everyone there, they knew the family, and felt



The protest march reaches Newport police station TOM FOWLER

an intense sense of personal outrage. They seized upon the leaflet the Socialist Party had produced at an hour's notice.

"That's brilliant", one protester said, as she began to eagerly read our leaflet.

"Which bit?" I asked.

"All of it" replied her friend. "Do you have any more of these?"

They took a pile of leaflets and began handing them out in the crowd, explaining what we'd been discussing. When they ran out of leaflets, they came back for more.

The response was overwhelmingly positive, because we were putting a clear way forward. A few turned up to the snap meeting we called that night.

The Socialist Party demands that all the police officers involved on the night of Moyied's death be suspended immediately.

Gwent Police say they cannot release bodycam footage, because it's now the property of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). That's not good enough.

We can have no confidence in the IOPC. No IOPC investigation has ever resulted in the successful prosecution of a police officer.

The local community is demanding answers - but not another stitch-up produced by an inquiry headed by establishment figures with a vested interest in concealing the truth.

We need a workers' inquiry, headed by a committee that includes representatives of the local community and trade unionists, whose only interest is in getting justice for Moyied's family and all ordinary people.

▶▶▶ CONTINUED ON 4-5

A SOCIALIST RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS

▶▶▶ [socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus](https://socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus)

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

▶▶▶ see column on p3



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