

PAY NHS STAFF 15%!

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

**VOTE SOCIALIST
ON 6 MAY**

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

100,000 nurses could quit the NHS, and two-thirds of health workers are mentally exhausted at least once a week. Our health service is in a permanent state of crisis. But the Tory government responds by offering an insulting 1% pay deal to NHS staff. Other frontline public sector workers have had another pay freeze imposed on them.

We support the health workers' demand for a 15% pay rise; after all they have suffered a 20% pay cut in real terms over the last decade. Decent pay would go some way to address the flood of nurses leaving the NHS, but it also needs to be coupled with huge government investment to ensure a shorter working week, and the resources needed to be able to deliver decent care.

Nurses, who in increasing numbers need to visit food banks, are

forced by the pressure of low pay into agency work which is often slightly better paid. One agency, owned by a Canadian billionaire, has charged the NHS over £2,000 for a 12-hour shift, more than a typical nurse would earn in a month, and no doubt nowhere near what the agency paid its staff.

This kind of profiteering, an inevitable consequence of privatisation, is leading the NHS to ruin unless there is a serious fightback. The pandemic has piled a huge burden onto NHS staff. But as it stands, beyond Covid, it isn't going to let up. There is now an enormous backlog of care that could not be delivered at the height of the pandemic.

Now is the time to back the health workers' demand for 15%. The health unions, supported by the wider trade union movement, must call a national demonstration - to prepare for strike action if necessary. To win a pay rise, but also to fight for a fully-resourced NHS democratically controlled by the staff and communities it serves. This means kicking out the privatisers and taking the wealth off the super-rich who have only got richer during the pandemic.

We need a party that fights for a socialist NHS. Labour won't do that under Starmer, we need a new mass party of the working class. Support the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the elections on 6 May, to help that party come into being.



the**Socialist**
formerly **Militant**

Issue 1128
8-14 April 2021

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The Socialist is written, read, sold and bought by ordinary workers, trade unionists, young people and Socialist Party members. We want you to write for the Socialist.

Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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Friday before publication, or Monday morning for urgent news, unless otherwise agreed with the editors.

The Socialist goes to press on a Tuesday night. We publish online on Wednesday and in print on Thursday.

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The Socialist is the weekly newspaper of the Socialist Party, the England and Wales section of the Committee for a Workers' International
socialistparty.org.uk
socialistworld.net



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ISSN 1366-9621

Published by Socialist Publications,
PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
Registered as a newspaper
at the Post Office
Printed by trade union labour
at Reach Printing Services

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

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

Racism exists! Unite to fight all inequality

ISAI PRIYA

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities has concluded that claims of institutional racism are "not borne out" and that the UK should be seen as "a model for other white-majority countries".

The commission was set up by Boris Johnson last year following the Black Lives Matter mass movement. Predominantly young and working-class black and white people took to the streets, to demand justice for George Floyd and an end to racism and police brutality. On the protests, homemade placards declared that 'the UK is not innocent'.

This is the seventh report in the last four years looking at racial inequality in Britain. However, this 264-page report with 24 recommendations is nothing short of an insult to black and Asian workers and young people in Britain. The report caused a flurry of responses criticising it. A day after the report was published, the Tories adviser on race, Samuel Kasumu resigned.

How can a government commission conclude that the UK should be seen as a model when black men are 4.2 times more likely to die from Covid-19, young black men are 19 times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, black women are four times more likely to die in childbirth, black people are nine times more likely to be imprisoned and twice as likely to be unemployed? These are just a few of the statistics. The pandemic has stripped bare the race and class inequalities that exist within capitalism.

The appointment of Dr Tony Sewell as the commission's chairman is enough to question the motive behind this report. He is well-known for downplaying structural racism. Munira Mirza, the head of the Downing Street policy unit who oversaw the appointment of the commission panel, is a long-time and outspoken critic of government attempts to tackle structural racism.

In an interview about the report, Sewell says it's concerned with "getting working-class people, poor people, people who have got disadvantage towards opportunities", and



JUDY BEISHON

that ethnic majorities are "doing better than the white majority". In 2010 he said: "Children are undermined by poor parenting... they fail GCSE because they did not do their homework, did not pay attention and were disrespectful to their teachers".

His language, like the language in the report, is divisive. It turns one section of the community against another and places the blame on individuals and their actions, rather than the capitalist system itself that doesn't provide opportunities for working-class and young people; that starves our schools and services of vital funding; that pushes working-class families into poverty and closes down youth centres, etc.

Parents are urged to be better parents, students to be better students, "more emphasis on the importance of individuals helping themselves to do better, rather than relying on others, or the state".

The report does recognise the influence of class. But it does so in such a way as to try and erase the experience of racism and divert attention from how both class inequality and racism are embedded in capitalist society.

Ending racism means all working-class people uniting together against the capitalist system. Capitalist governments across the globe are already preparing to make working-class and young people pay for the pandemic and economic crises. With its emphasis on individual responsibility, this report is yet another weapon in the hands of this Tory

government and the rich minority who own the wealth in society to divide us and maintain their profits and their system.

We want to get rid of all the obstacles preventing working-class people of all backgrounds from improving their lives. It is the capitalist system, based on inequalities of wealth and power, that creates those obstacles.

That's why the Socialist Party is fighting for a socialist society where the huge wealth that exists is controlled by the working class in the interest of the majority. Such a society would unite the working class of all backgrounds, smash racism, and harness the skills and talents of everyone.

BLACK WORKERS' CHARTER

The Black and Asian group of the Socialist Party has produced a Black Workers' Charter to start a discussion about the demands needed to fight for the rights of black and Asian people, and what programme is needed to end racial discrimination.

● **Search Black Workers' Charter: A programme to fight racism at socialistparty.org.uk**



Low-paid workers shouldn't pay for Covid crisis



FLORIAN PLAG/CC

Report condones vigil police violence Democratic community control a necessity

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE

On 13 March, Socialist Party members were among the thousands who participated in a respectful but determined act of mass defiance following the ban on the vigil for Sarah Everard. Heavy-handed policing, including arrests, ensured this became a major political event.

Shock at the images of women protesting violence against women being pinned to the ground by police was widespread.

Even vicious Tory Home Secretary Priti Patel was said to have found the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's explanation of the use of force unsatisfactory, and called for a review.

However, that report, published on 30 March, strongly defended the police's use of force and said that in their manhandling of protesters the Met Police had "acted appropriately". One of the vigil organisers has correctly said that the report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services will further erode women's confidence in the police.

The policing of the vigil - and its defence - are not isolated incidences but part of a ramping up of police powers against protests. The Tories know their plans to make the

working class foot the corona spending bill will bring mass protests.

The vigil actually turned the spotlight on the Tory plans, specifically the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which seeks to criminalise protesting. The Tories' hopes that this attack on democratic rights would slide into law without opposition, especially given Starmer's Labour intended to abstain until then, have been shattered. 'Kill the Bill' protests are spreading across the country (see page 5).

The report confirms that mass opposition to attacks on the right to protest and a programme for the police are needed. The over six million-strong trade unions have the potential organised power to co-ordinate the different struggles by workers and young people, including over the right to protest and organise.

The new bill won't stop these protests. But the report further shows that the fight to stop the attacks on workers and young people defending their rights and livelihoods needs a programme, including for the police.

At the Clapham vigil, Socialist Party members respectfully distributed leaflets - which were snapped up. As well as defending the right to peaceful protest, we called for democratic working-class and community control of policing and public safety, and a socialist alternative.

FERDY LYONS

EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 1 April the minimum wage was increased from £8.71 to £8.91 an hour for those aged 23 and over. For low-paid workers this was welcome news. However, for myself and fellow furloughed workers this wasn't the case. Our pay will continue to be based on the previous year's pay.

We were already struggling to live on the so-called 'living wage', so having to live off 80% of that for the majority of the last twelve months has been horrendous.

According to the House of Commons Library, 800,000 low-paid workers were on furlough in February. Many haven't been able to pay their bills, plunged into debts they can't repay and having to rely on the kindness of family or unaffordable loans to survive. Not including us in the increase will only exacerbate this problem.

Our exclusion is outrageous, but it's also the case that £8.91 an hour is still far too low to survive on, especially for workers living in London. The Living Wage Foundation sets a voluntary Real Living Wage of £9.50 nationally and £10.85 in London. A full-time employee on these levels would earn about £1,150 and £3,800 a year more than those on the government's so-called National Living Wage. Low-paid workers shouldn't be made to pay for the Covid crisis. We need a £15 minimum wage for all and full pay for all furloughed workers.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

editors@socialistparty.org.uk



WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working-class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) which organises across the world.

Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

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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Sexism in education: It shouldn't be like this!

JANE NELLIST

COVENTRY NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION

Reading the anonymous posts about young women's experiences on the new website, 'Everyone's Invited', of which there are nearly 14,000, is shocking and heart-breaking.

Mainly young women have posted their experiences of sexual attacks, including rape and sexual abuse, and widespread sexism in schools or education settings and in the wider community. Their experiences will have an impact on their future relationships and their mental health and wellbeing.

Many of the initial posts were from pupils attending private schools, but there are now also many from those in mainstream education.

Some highlight how they didn't understand what had happened to them and are only now realising the seriousness of the assault. It's damning evidence of life in Britain and the prevalent sexism in society today.

Pupils at Highgate School, an exclusive fee-paying school in London with fees of over £21,000, took direct action last week. They hung banners and placards outside their school and held a demonstration, demanding

that their school leaders take action to protect them.

For the last two weeks, Warwick University students have been holding a sit-in on the central university campus, living in tents, and protesting about similar issues.

'Protect Warwick Women' has made a list of demands of the university management - they feel that three years after a horrendous 'rape chat' incident, not enough has been done to keep women safe.

Helpline not enough

As the Socialist previously highlighted (see 'Fighting sexual harassment and gender violence' at socialist-party.org.uk), the 2017 National Education Union's survey 'It's Just Everywhere' exposed the huge issue of sexism in schools. What the personal accounts on Everyone's Invited reveal is even darker evidence.

In response to the outcry and shocking evidence, the Department for Education has commissioned a helpline, run by the NSPCC, dedicated to supporting those who report incidents. But this is far from enough. Young women want it to stop!

The education system and the services that already exist lack the funding and resources that are urgently



YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

We call for:

- A trade union and student-led inquiry into the true extent of sexual harassment and violence in schools, colleges and universities
- An urgent overhaul and funding of relationships and sex education, with training for all education workers, including in primary schools
- Students to be able to discuss and learn about sexism, to report incidents, and to take action to challenge inaction

- An increase in funding for all support services, including local councils, to ensure that victims receive support.
- Where allegations are made, ensure a system is in place so that they are properly investigated and action taken. This should involve committees involving representatives of both staff and students
- A socialist alternative to the inequality, sexism and violence of the capitalist profit system

needed. Many schools do not have adequate safeguards and procedures in place and just one in five teachers receive training for dealing with sexual harassment.

We need to challenge the root causes of this pandemic. Much more attention must be paid to children in primary schools. These ideas start to develop early on.

But schools don't exist in a vacuum. We also need to challenge the capitalist system itself and its inbuilt class and gender inequality.

Pimlico Academy protests

"Run by racists for profit"

HELEN PATTISON

WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Anger has been growing in schools for a long time. Decades of underfunding, increasing class sizes and growing pressure around exam results have created schools which feel more like exam factories than places of creativity and learning.

This is linked to the slow loss of a say in our schools as many have been converted into academies, losing democratic structures. But, in reality, we never had a real say in our education.

Protests like those at Pimlico Academy, where students carried out a sit-down strike outside the school on 31 March, are therefore more likely. The spray painting said "Pimlico academy... run by racists...for profit". The students were protesting, amongst other things, a new school uniform policy which targeted black students' hair styles and the brightness of hijabs.

This and other changes came the year after the huge BLM movement, many of which happened down the road from Pimlico outside the new US embassy in London.

National Education Union members at the school have voted overwhelmingly in favour of a motion of no-confidence in the headteacher and for moving towards a ballot for industrial action. Their grievances include unacceptable management style, not providing a safe working environment for staff, and unreasonable workload.

Racism must be challenged in our schools alongside sexism and sexual harassment, the extent of which has recently been exposed.

The students at Pimlico can already see why racist ideas have been relied upon in the uniform - it's because the school is run like a business. It isn't run to give the best education to students. It isn't run in the interests or needs of the local community. It is run to help line the back pockets of anyone who can get contracts with the school.

So if profit is part of the problem, the solution has to be kicking profit motives out of our schools. To do this we will need to build school student unions and mass struggle. Part of our fight has to be for a genuine say in how our schools are run. We want real democratic community control of our local schools so that parents, teachers and students can oppose sexism and racism and have a say, not just in dress codes but also in the curriculum and how it is taught.

ITALO SAVASTIO

SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The process of selecting a secondary school for your child can be an agonising one for many parents. In 2005 I viewed about a dozen and chose Pimlico. The headteacher seemed a nice guy and the leadership team honest. No spin doctoring from them. Nothing appeared stage managed, unlike at some of the other schools I viewed.

At Pimlico what you saw is what you got - I thought. Despite years of underfunding from Tory-controlled Westminster City Council, it didn't strike me as 'underperforming'. They were even celebrating improved exam results that year.

My son started Year 7 in September 2006. It therefore came as a massive shock when the school failed the Ofsted inspection later that year. None of the parents, teachers and governors I spoke to believed the school was failing. Weaknesses yes, but not

special measures. Some pointed out that the inspectors wanted to serve notice of improvement but were pressured by council leaders to fail it to justify conversion to academy status.

In the meantime, the headteacher resigned and was replaced for an interim period by an 'inspirational superhead', Jo Shuter, Tony Blair's favourite headteacher. So 'super' that she was expected to run two tough inner-city schools at the same time, Pimlico and Quintin Kynaston.

When she first addressed a parent's assembly in early 2007, I sat in disbelief as she slagged off the school claiming its weaknesses were even worse than Ofsted's findings. She was named headteacher of the year in 2007.

Forward to 2014 when she is banned from teaching for life over misuse of her school's funds (overturned on appeal three years later by a Department of Education panel). This included spending over £6,000

on her 50th birthday party, £8,000 on a single night's stay at a top hotel for her leadership team and £1,500 worth of furniture delivered to her home.

Despite organised protests from parents and staff and the vast majority of stakeholders opposing it, Pimlico converted to academy status in 2008. It was a done deal from start to finish. John, now Lord, Nash millionaire Tory donor, 'won' the bid.

Under his Future Academies chain we hear that kids learn about kings and queens in history lessons. It was the Russian revolution and Spanish Civil War I learned when I first viewed Pimlico for my eldest child in 1999 during a tour of the history department!

There was no school uniform. Back then, if you were politically on the left and lived in the catchment area you were likely to choose Pimlico as a school to send your child to. What happened in 2007-8 was akin to a counter-revolution in the ethos of the school.

I had witnessed a similar experience years earlier at Holland Park, the 'Eton of comprehensives', although academy status there came later. Recently walking past that school I found it unrecognisable. A posh new building that resembles the headquarters of a major investment bank, a symbol of the business ventures that academy schools have become under capitalism. Time to reclaim our schools as properly funded and democratically controlled comprehensives.



School students walk out against Trump's visit. PAUL MATTSSON

Defiance continues against anti-protest bill

● Newcastle

At least 500 people marched in Newcastle on 3 April to defend the right to protest. We began at Grey's Monument, where protestors were invited to speak. They shared their experiences of unjust policing, sexual harassment and the crippling consequences of capitalism.

There were speakers as young as thirteen years old, relaying experiences of sexual harassment and assault. It was awful hearing of these experiences from such young women, but it was empowering to see young people have a platform to voice a challenge to these issues. There was a real power behind what they were saying.

I think one important aspect of protest is that it affirms solidarity among the working class. Knowing that there are other people sharing your experiences can give the strength to keep organising. The point was made that the right to protest has been essential to struggles throughout history, such as the Bristol bus boycotts and the poll-tax movement. It was also stated that, if the proposed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is passed, it will not stop our presence in the streets. The mood was defiant. Many of the speakers were clearly and unequivocally anti-capitalist.

In comparison to last week's Newcastle protest, when the police were heavy handed, there was no trouble whatsoever. There was a small police presence, but they remained on the outskirts of the protest taking videos, not interacting with protesters.

The Socialist Party speaker who raised the need for socialism, was well received. A cheer went up when it was mentioned that Socialist Party members were standing in the local elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

MATTHEW COLLERTON

NEWCASTLE SOCIALIST PARTY

● Sheffield

As protests against the Police, Sentencing and Courts Bill continue across England and Wales, I joined Sheffield Socialist Party members at the city's second 'Kill the bill' protest on 3 April. Hundreds of protesters gathered at Devonshire Green. The anger at the murder of Sarah Everard, and the desecration of the bodies of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, was palpable, along with anger at the continued oppression of Travellers and Gypsy and Roma people.

The trial of PC Benjamin Hannam, the 22-year-old Met officer exposed as a neo-Nazi just two days earlier, had also heightened tension. Passionate, articulate speeches were well received by the crowd before we departed for a march around the city centre. The right-wing press have pushed the narrative that these protests are unwelcome, but the reaction of most of the passing crowd was positive. Supportive honking of horns accompanied the protest throughout, especially from bus drivers, who almost serenaded the crowd



Protesters march in Sheffield. BECKY PAVINE

as the protest moved up Arundel Gate.

A police presence was obvious throughout the day, but they largely kept their distance. The only unsavoury incident of the day was when a Boris Johnson supporter decided to attack some protesters, but the police were quick to remove her, and the incident was over before it began.

With the Tory party beefing up the state to try to prevent protest, and the Labour Party offering no opposition, the engagement around the Socialist Party campaign stall was very encouraging.

MATT BOWEN

SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

● London

Thousands poured past Speakers' Corner, chanting "kill the bill," on Saturday 3 April. Following scattered megaphone rallies in Hyde Park, around 2,000 marched towards Buckingham Palace and Parliament.

As well as experienced activists, clusters of young people joined the demonstration. Socialist Party members on the march sold 50 copies of the Socialist newspaper.

Many protesters expressed frustration that there was no clear organisation or plan for the day. A number of small campaign groups had separately called for protests. Given this, the turnout was impressive - showing the strength of feeling.

But even better would have been the trade unions making the call, and providing a platform, stewards, and their democratic structures to discuss the next steps. This could draw

even wider participation and develop a strategy to win.

JAMES IVENS

LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

● Cheltenham

At least 200, mainly young women, heard speeches and poems, and stood in silence for Sarah Everard in Cheltenham on 3 April. Women were angry about being targets of sexual harassment, sexualised media content, and the response of the police and justice system to recent protests.

A speaker from the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) got an enthusiastic response. She put forward a class position and reminded protesters that the last event held in the park had been a Black Lives Matter protest during the summer. What links racism and sexism is the need for the capitalists to divide us in order to maintain their system of exploitation.

She explained that the police under capitalism exist primarily to protect the property and rights of the ruling class. The policing bill is also targeting the ability of workers and trade unions to organise strikes and picket lines.

We need to take the fight against racism and sexism to the workplace and trade unions. We need women's taxis, better street lighting, and more protection. But who will give it to us? We need an end to the cuts of the last ten years, and we need working-class democratic control of the police. We won't get that from the establishment parties, including Labour. That is why TUSC is standing candidates

in Cheltenham for the elections in May. We must change society if we want safety and equality.

JAMES COLLETT

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

● Northampton

Northampton Socialist Party members took to the streets to defend the right to protest on Easter weekend. Around 150 protesters attended with chants of "Kill the Bill" and "Whose Streets? Our Streets." The atmosphere was electric but peaceful. Our nearby campaign stall was inundated with people signing our petition to end violence against women and talking about the bill, local policing and local politics.

We sold 17 copies of the Socialist and raised £52 fighting fund. Overwhelmingly the feeling of people we spoke to was that this bill is about the Tory government trying to silence dissent at a time when they have so badly let the people of this country down. Every TUSC candidate in Northampton was present with two speaking on the podium and getting cheers from the crowd when we encouraged people to vote for us.

KATIE SIMPSON

NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

● York

Socialist Party members attended the latest protest in York on 31 March. It was welcome that a representative of the York IWGB union, organising delivery couriers in

city was invited to speak, encouraging people to join the Deliveroo strike rally on 7 April.

However, far from the open way people had been invited to speak at previous demos, the organisers had hand-picked speakers to start the demo, and then restricted the 'open-mic' section to people who hadn't spoken before, with an emphasis on those from specially oppressed groups.

This meant that a 16-year-old Socialist Party member was blocked from speaking when he went up to the microphone. Unfortunately this approach encouraged very few speakers to come forward, with much of the 'open-mic' filled with chanting rather than fresh people speaking.

The protests that have taken place so far have been organised by a self-selected group. It would be a big step forward to hold open online organising meetings ahead of future protests to draw in all forces involved, including the fresh layers that have joined demos over the last few weeks.

This was the approach we took in organising an open-air Young Socialists meeting after the demonstration which 16 new young people took part in. After a short introduction, a number of people spoke, including one person from a group of skateboarders who attended, speaking about how they had been harassed by the police, including being stopped and searched.

As well as organising to take part in future protests, we'll be holding an open online organising meeting ahead of the Socialist Students day of action on 21 April (see back page).

IAIN DALTON

YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

SOCIALIST PARTY IN EDUCATION

This year's elections for the national executive of the biggest education union, the NEU, come at an important time for educators.

The last year has been dominated by the ongoing struggle to achieve Covid safety. Hundreds of new NEU reps were recruited as workplace union groups recognised that union organisation was needed to insist on measures to protect staff, students and the wider school community. Now that organisation will be needed again to face the many other serious challenges that lie ahead.

The successful mass use of 'Section 44' in January, forcing Boris Johnson to hold back on his plans for wider unsafe school opening, showed what can be achieved when workplace organisation is combined with a clear national lead calling on union members to act together across the union.

NEU members need to elect a national executive that will give that clear lead consistently in the future. We need a leadership that will have the confidence to again bring members together across schools and colleges in a united battle to oppose the attacks that are coming on our pay and conditions and on children's education.

Those attacks are coming because this government is going to try to make us pay for their Covid failures. Excessive workload, worsening pay, and budget cuts were already damaging education, and educators' lives, before the pandemic. But we face a future where those pressures are going to be even greater - unless we organise firm opposition.

Budget pressures

Schools and colleges have been under significant budget pressures for years. The pandemic has pushed some schools and some sectors, such as Early Years, into even greater difficulties. Staff in independent schools face attacks on their pension rights.

NEU branches across the union are reporting an increase in the announcement of 'restructures' as schools look to cut costs further. Support staff posts are going to be particularly at risk. If those jobs are lost, the workload of the remaining staff will be even greater and the support available for students even less.

The biggest outlay from any school budget is staff pay. So, as a 'thank you' for all the work school staff have done over the pandemic, instead of a reversal of the years of real-term pay cuts, pay awards will be held down yet again. At school level, divisive performance pay will add a further twist to the knife where managers look to reduce budgets by denying staff pay progression.

Permanent staff only have to look at the situation facing their colleagues working for privatised supply agencies to see how pay rates could be driven down if we fail to organise united action to defend salaries for all staff, and across all sectors. But the Tories plan further deregulation and fragmentation, including further academisation of schools.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson's suggestion that schools might need to operate with longer days and shorter holidays is also a clear pointer to further attacks that are yet to come.

The Tories' determination to keep schools open during the pandemic

National Education Union elections

Elect a socialist leadership to fight for national action and a united campaign



Little Ilford NEU members striking against unsafe and detrimental school expansion in 2020 JAMES IVENS

“We have to rely on our own trade union strength and elect national executive members who are able to lead the action needed

shows that they regard schools primarily as a childcare service, not an educational one. As it is, pupils in England already spend longer in school than the global average. They also get shorter summer holidays too. Instead of even more time enduring the 'exam factory' conditions imposed on our schools, school students need a 'recovery curriculum' that prioritises their well-being.

But staff also need time to recover from the intensity of the working week, to prepare and assess within the school day, rather than in the evenings, weekends and holidays. For far too long, 50-hour plus working weeks have become the norm. Excessive workload has been the main driver forcing staff out of teaching, with a third of new starters leaving the profession within the first five years.

The pressures of school life, and the bullying management regimes

that are becoming far too commonplace, have also created a torrent of individual cases that are putting an enormous strain on both lay case-workers and paid union officials. The union has to face this issue honestly and discuss openly how best this challenge can be met, including a far greater insistence on rights for paid time-off for 'facility time' for trade union representatives.

Victimisation

Over the last months, that bullying regime has also seen an ever-increasing number of NEU representatives facing victimisation. The NEU has rightly supported members in taking strike action to defend their trade union rights, and their local representatives. But the campaign to defend trade union rights will need to become a national issue for all members, bringing together those individual disputes.

And it is the question of linking local disputes into national struggles that is perhaps the central difference between candidates in April's national executive election.

Every candidate can identify members' main concerns. But which candidates have a strategy for winning those changes?

How can we defend pay, jobs and conditions? How can we get rid of SATs, Ofsted and league tables for good - and build a curriculum based on equality and the real needs of children and our communities? Lobbying alone will not succeed, especially now that the Labour Party frontbench can no longer be relied on to support NEU policy, as under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. We have to rely on our own trade union strength and elect national executive members who are able to lead the action needed to meet the challenges ahead of us.

Strategy

The Socialist Party members standing as candidates in the union's elections can help provide the strategy and determination that our union needs. They are all trade union activists with a record of struggle and organisation that has demonstrated that they can support members and bring them together collectively in their workplaces and local districts.

But they also recognise that workplace struggle alone will not be sufficient to address the pressures that face us in every workplace. They require union-wide opposition - and that has to mean preparing for union-wide industrial action.

The majority of the existing executive has opposed calls for national action, pointing to the difficulties that anti-union laws have deliberately placed in the way of building national action. But NEU members need a leadership which is determined to find a way round these obstacles.

Socialist Party in Education members have long argued that a campaign for a new 'national contract' that brings together a range of key grievances into one unified campaign can build the support needed for a united national campaign of action. Such a contract should include guaranteed trade union-negotiated pay scales for all, a genuine maximum limit on working hours, an end to performance-related pay and for trade union-negotiated class size and staffing policies to make sure that the needs of both staff and students are met.

NEU members need to elect a national executive that is ready to go out boldly to build such a campaign, and to explain to members how and why we need to prepare for national action.

Winning such a leadership, combined with a victory for Martin Powell-Davies as a campaigning socialist deputy general secretary this autumn, can make sure that the NEU is ready to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Support the following Socialist Party members standing in the NEU elections:

● **Nicky Downes, Sean McCauley, Alex Moore, Sheila Caffrey, Louise Cuffaro for the executive and Martin Powell-Davies for deputy general secretary**

Marley Tiles workers strike against bullying bosses



JOHN GILLMAN

"The highest-paid bullies in the world," was the view of a striker at Marley Tiles near Reading taking part in a 24-hour strike on 31 March.

The directors are paid £200,000 each and are attacking the workforce, attempting to force them to accept worse terms and conditions and pay. They have sacked GMB members and reps for taking legal strike action.

This is following earlier strikes, after staff rejected a 1% pay offer, despite

a company profit of £16 million last year. Talking to the pickets it's not just the pay but a culture of bullying too, and an issue with pensions that has led to them taking action.

However, the angry pickets are determined to get a decent pay rise and the other issues resolved. There were many toots of support from passing motorists.

JOHN GILLMAN

READING SOCIALIST PARTY AND READING TRADE UNION COUNCIL (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

New British Gas deadline and strike dates

British Gas engineers will continue their strike on 14 April, the new deadline set for signing new contracts being forced on workers using 'fire and rehire'.

It will be the 43rd day of strike action by GMB members who face an imposed pay cut of 15% and other changes.

Engineers were sent termination letters by British Gas CEO Chris O'Shea informing them they would be dismissed on 14 April rather than the original date of 1 April, with no explanation offered for the change in dates.

In July, British Gas announced engineers who refused to 'voluntarily accept' would be sacked. GMB members at British Gas have already taken 42 days of strike action against the pay cuts and 'fire and rehire' notices.

An official national lockout dispute between British Gas and GMB will become effective from 14 April and will include further strike action and action short of a strike.

DVLA workers on strike

DVLA workers in Swansea are striking from 6-9 April over Covid health and safety concerns after talks between PCS and DVLA failed.

Bosses refused to reduce numbers on site, meaning operational staff required on site from 6 April will be on strike.

Workers and the PCS union are demanding:

- A reduction in the capacity of the site by removing over 300 desks

- A strengthening of risk assessments which have led to a further 300 staff being sent home. This is in part due to a further consideration given to pregnant women and those who live with vulnerable people
- A commitment on how to proceed in the talks over the coming months, in terms of extending home working, safety on site and any potential increase in the numbers of staff on site when it is safe to do so

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



Sparks take deskilling protests to Hinkley Point

“They want superheroes with loads of skills, but don’t want to give us superhero wages”

Hinkley Point, Somerset

Rank-and-file Unite members protested near Hinkley Point power station on 21 March, as part of the national day of action against deskilling the role of construction electricians.

Hinkley C is one of the largest construction projects in the country and is at the centre of the dispute. It is the site where contractors first tried to bring in a new 'electrical support operative' (ESO) role which would see workers given just a few weeks' training, before doing most of the jobs of skilled electricians, on considerably worse pay.

The companies are now proposing a similar Hinkley support operative role. Workers protested on a nearby roundabout, making sure they were seen by other workers being bussed into the site.

Speaking to the Socialist, one of the workers, who didn't want to be named, said: "There should be no deskilling of the trades at all, it should be apprenticeships. Whatever happens here at Hinkley is going spread to HS2 and every major site across the UK. We can't have these rogue training standards come in and deskill us. We expect apprentices and adult trainees to be at the forefront of this job, and make sure it's proper electricians and mechanical workers that are coming out of this."

TOM BALDWIN

Newcastle

Sparks took their protest to Balfour Beatty's offices in Newcastle on 21 March - where they were met by locked doors!

As one of the sparks said: "If these companies get away with this it will take loads of lads' jobs from them and [by using unskilled workers] potentially be dangerous."

He went on to explain: "We all came out of school with the promise of a job for life, but now they're



Hinkley Point



Newcastle

wanting to take on unskilled workers instead."

Another commented about the companies: "They want superheroes with loads of skills, but don't want to give us superhero wages."

The numbers at the protests, which are being held weekly, are beginning to pick up, but one of the electricians commented: "We need to get to the sites - there needs to be a national call."

ELAINE BRUNSKILL

Cardiff

Sparks at an NG Bailey site joined the protest supported by workers from four other unions mobilised by Cardiff Trades Union Council. Each week the protests have grown.

The mood was buoyant and determined as sparks understand that if a stand against ESO is not made then skilled electricians will be forced out of the industry or employed on low rates.

DAVE REID

Bristol Water walkout



GMB members at Bristol Water took strike action on 6 April for fair pay.

The company has imposed a pay freeze and no increase to pension contributions, despite Bristol Water's essential workers risking their health and that of their families to keep the taps on during the pandemic.

75% of workers voted for action and more action is threatened.

Sacked rep Declan fights on



Victimised RMT rep and bus driver Declan Clune's battle with the Bluestar bus company continues as bosses target Declan for being an effective representative of local bus drivers.

Declan has been sacked for doing his duty and reporting a safety issue to Network Rail. This is not just about Declan, but is an attack on all trade unionists.

Declan had a 'directors' review' appeal on 29 March which has been turned down so he remains sacked and branch members are being balloted for strike action.

COUNCILLORS HAVE A CHOICE - DON'T VOTE FOR CUTS

NICK CHAFFEY

SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN REGIONAL SECRETARY

A new wave of austerity is following the Covid pandemic through working-class neighbourhoods, bringing with it further anguish and misery to families already struggling after a decade of council cuts that stripped our communities bare of vital services.

But it has also seen a new era of resistance, as workers and youth begin to strike and protest at the pro-business policies of Johnson and the Tories.

As the attacks rain down, rather than mobilising opposition, Starmer has rallied at every turn to the government, including supporting unelected commissioners moving in to 'oversee' the work of elected councillors in Liverpool. Not content with this slavish support for the capitalists' interests, he has also taken a stick to the Labour left - suspending Corbyn and local Labour Parties who dare to raise any criticism.

This has once again reinforced the urgent need for a political voice for the working class, to provide a socialist alternative to the capitalist crisis and lead a fightback against cuts. That's why the Socialist Party is standing in this May's elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), alongside the RMT transport union, the Resist movement of the ex-Labour MP Chris Williamson, and others.

Since its inception a decade ago, TUSC has established a clear fighting programme to oppose all council cuts, and a commitment that TUSC councillors will refuse to vote for

cuts. Councils have the ability to set no-cuts budgets, to 'formally' balance the books in the short term by using their reserves and borrowing powers. By taking these steps, mobilising mass action of council workers and their trade unions alongside working-class communities, and co-ordinating with other local authorities, councils taking a stand could force yet another U-turn from the Tories. This is what is required to win the funding our communities, and the council services that serve them, vitally need.

No-cuts budget

In the first wave of austerity following the 2010 general election, a heroic handful of rebels voted against cuts in Southampton, Leicester, Warrington and Hull. In 2013, Southampton anti-cuts councillors Keith Morell and Don Thomas presented a no-cuts budget to the council, showing what is possible.

Every TUSC candidate will give confidence and fan the flames of opposition over the next five weeks of election campaigning and beyond. In the 1980s, the socialist Liverpool council - led by Militant, forerunner of the Socialist Party, refused to implement cuts, and mobilised the council unions and city workers in a mass campaign that forced a retreat from Thatcher, winning £60 million.

It's in these traditions that we go forward into a new era of resistance, armed with our programme and confidence in the working class to resist and revolt against a new round of council cuts, and to promote the need for a new mass workers' party and a socialist future.



TUSC councillors will refuse to vote for cuts



Councils taking a stand could force yet another U-turn

Council workers – defend jobs and services, fight for fair pay

PAUL COUCHMAN

SECRETARY OF SURREY COUNTY UNISON (PERSONAL CAPACITY) AND TUSC CANDIDATE FOR STAINES SOUTH WARD, SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

At Surrey County Council, hundreds of low-paid care workers have recently won a major campaign, led by the Unison union, for a Covid-19 front-line bonus. The campaign got local press coverage, over 800 signatures on a petition, and allowed me to speak to the council cabinet as secretary of our Unison branch.

We were calling for 'fair pay for Covid care'. The result was a £250 one-off bonus for frontline care workers. However, the unexpected consequence for many of these workers was a reduction in benefits!

The cost of living in Surrey, and the minimum wage levels these workers are paid, mean that many rely on benefits to top up their meagre salaries. Meanwhile, the number of council officers earning over £100,000 a year has tripled in the last few years. We get austerity whilst the rich get richer. Councils have the power to set the pay of their employees. They

could implement a living wage of £15 an hour for all employees to ensure council workers don't have to rely on benefits.

Local authorities have cut hundreds of thousands of jobs in the last decade. Surrey has avoided the worst of this, but has still made cuts - workers are doing more with less. Surrey County Council also sold off and outsourced huge chunks of local services - including care homes, youth services, adult learning, children's centres and day centres.

Many of those services are now in the private sector and have been unable to make profits during the pandemic. Many are looking to close entirely. The council should bring these services back in-house so they can be run in the interest of the community, not for profit.

The council says that without a major cash injection over the next couple of years they will have to make further huge cuts. Surrey County Unison is preparing our activists and members to defend jobs and services, and to fight for a fair pay increase for our members.

Kick profit out of social care, fight for care workers' pay and rights

KATIE SIMPSON

CARE WORKER AND TUSC CANDIDATE CASTLE WARD, NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Like most carers, I work for a private care company. In Northampton, Olympus Care was brought back into council control because it was failing. Not only did this protect jobs and the service users but, with the support of the trade union Unison, the staff were able to win six months sick pay instead of just four weeks. This victory was made easier because once it was council-owned, the service needed to be in line with other trade union-organised council workers' conditions. In his 2019 election manifesto, Corbyn pledged to end outsourcing of care services and bring them back in-house - councils could do this now.

Northampton is also home to St Andrew's mental health hospital where I used to work. I left because of the way patients were being treated. If you've watched enough Panorama you've probably heard of it. Many of those I supported in one of the most secure wards should have been in community care, not locked up! If they allocated adequate funding, councils could deliver person-centred adult care support, with the priority being independent living.

Care companies often use care packages drawn up by local authorities to determine whether or not to take on a client. Those with the most funding attached are typically more appealing, but in reality often present a higher level of risk. As a result, care companies will accept individuals

into a care home who, without the staffing levels and training needed to support them safely, present a danger to staff and residents. Better funded care packages, which a willing council could deliver, would go a long way to ensuring the right people are placed in the right form of care.

I also used to be a domiciliary carer - going into people's homes for a 'care call'. We would provide medication, personal care, meals and emotional support among other care needs. I never finished any call in 15 minutes. I know many carers who are still providing 15-minute, so-called 'care calls'. Some of these carers are not even paid travel costs; they have to claim this money back as a tax break!

Many carers who do sleep-ins are also still being paid a flat rate, not being paid for hours they have to spend at work during the night. Councils could ensure an end to 15-minute 'care calls' and ensure that all care workers delivering care for their authority are paid travel time and for sleep-ins.

These are some policies Corbyn put forward in his 2019 manifesto. A Labour councillor I'm standing against put her name twice on the 2016 list of councillors demanding Corbyn step down from his elected position as Labour leader! I'm standing for TUSC to keep up the fight for decent care.



330 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates, of which the Socialist Party is a part, are standing in the elections on 6 May. 307 candidates will contest seats in 95 different local authorities. TUSC is also standing candidates for the Welsh Senedd, Scottish Parliament, Greater London Authority assembly and city mayor in Bristol and Liverpool.

• **Find out more at tusc.org.uk**

Housing - councils have the powers to tackle the housing crisis

JACK JEFFREY

SECRETARY OF UNITE THE UNION HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH AND TUSC CANDIDATE ON THE LONDON-WIDE LIST FOR THE GREATER LONDON ASSEMBLY

Key workers cannot afford to buy an average-priced home in over 98% of the UK. Although many people from my generation have now reconciled themselves to never owning a home, we are also increasingly being priced out of renting one.

Despite the economic impact of Covid, rents still rose by 1.3% in the 12 months to January 2021. This is the reason why private rental sector eviction has become the main cause of homelessness since 2012, overtaking relationship breakdown.

I work for a homeless service in Westminster and am the branch secretary of the Unite Housing Workers branch, and I see the effects of this every day. Whether it is clients at work becoming homeless through poverty, reports of housing associations moving away from social to private housing, or increasing number of members accessing our hardship fund because they cannot pay the rent - it is clear that the UK is in a housing crisis.

The 'Everybody in' scheme launched at the beginning of the pandemic proved that it doesn't have to be this way. The scheme offered many of my clients the chance to engage with physical and mental health services, tackle substance abuse, and start to practice self-care. Who would have thought that the answer to homelessness would be so simple as to give everyone a home!

However, now with hotels due to resume usual business in April, and

clients being rushed into unsuitable accommodation, it feels like we are throwing all the progress away. What is stopping local authorities continuing to house the homeless?

No faith in Labour

I have no faith in Labour to offer a path out of the housing crisis. I am fed up of hearing different reasons why Sadiq Khan has never managed to meet his self-imposed target of building 50% of new developments as social housing. I will never forgive Keir Starmer for scrapping Corbyn's policy of forgiving rent arrears accrued during Covid as soon as he came to power.

This is why in the upcoming elections I will be standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. It is clear the main parties will do nothing to solve the housing crisis in the UK. But by electing local representatives that are clearly anti-austerity and prepared to fight for their residents, we can make a difference. When Liverpool City Council refused to implement Tory austerity in the 1980s, the city built 5,000 new homes in three years from 1984-87. In stark contrast, this government's much recycled pledge to end homelessness involves creating only 6,000 new bed spaces across the entire country over a four-year period.

Local authorities have the powers, land and ability to take decisive steps to address the housing crisis. Despite years of attacks they still manage around 1 million homes, although only a small proportion are council homes. Democratically controlled,

they also have the land required to build the 340,000 homes a year the National Housing Federation estimates we need.

Local authorities in England alone own around 1.3 million acres of land. For perspective, London is a city of around 9 million and takes up around 390,000 acres. They also have the power to requisition some of the UK's 500,000 homes currently sitting empty, and to convert some of the hotels now being used into permanent supported accommodation.

Housing should be a human right not a privilege, we need councillors prepared to put forward a bold socialist programme and use all the powers at their disposal so we can begin to address the housing crisis in England and Wales.



Retail - councils should fight to defend interests of retail workers

IAIN DALTON

CHAIR, USDAW BROAD LEFT AND TUSC CANDIDATE FOR GIPTON AND HAREHILLS WARD, LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

The announcement by Tory minister Robert Jenrick, that retail stores could open from 7am to 10pm, six days a week, from 12 April will be greeted with mixed feelings by retail workers.

Some, who have felt cooped up at home for most of the last year, only receiving 80% of their contracted wages, will welcome the opportunity to try to recoup some of the income they've lost with extra shifts.

Other workers, especially those with caring responsibilities, will have real worries about being forced to work longer shifts, or hours that don't fit with their pre-existing commitments.

Although it was Tory Jenrick making the announcement, it's actually local councils - many of which are Labour-controlled - that would implement this by relaxing the enforcement of planning legislation governing retail opening hours.

Instead of just implementing this Tory directive, councils could help empower retail workers by refusing to relax enforcement until any shops' proposals for extended opening are agreed by the workers' trade union representatives. This would mean that the unions are in a position to negotiate proper overtime pay, and prevent any undermining of existing terms and conditions.

Unfortunately, during the pandemic Labour councils have marched to the beat of the retail bosses and Tory government, with many councils relaxing enforcement of Sunday trading.

That's why a number of Usdaw members will be standing for local councils as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - prepared to back up workers 100% of the time.

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• We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. For legal reasons, we need your full name, address and phone number - but confidentiality will be respected if requested

THE SOCIALIST INBOX

● Peanuts for lockdown Mum

I work in a shop. In the first lockdown, my workmates were furloughed on 100% pay.

But I was on maternity leave. Even though I'd been working there for two years when our son was born, I was still not entitled to the company's maternity policy.

I was on statutory maternity pay - £151 a week. Then nothing for the last three months of maternity leave.

In the second lockdown, even though the shop was closed, inexplicably, the company decided not to furlough staff and we had to go into work each day.

They couldn't get away with that in Lockdown 3. But staff were still expected to spend half our time going into work, and the other half working from home.

We were not provided any resources to work from home. And most of the work seemed to be just pointless training.

SHOP WORKER
ESSEX

● Frozen

I got a letter to say that our council tax is going up by about 5% and the energy bill by 8%. There must have been some kind of mistake!

My partner Nina is only getting a 1% pay rise and my pay is frozen. I'll let them know - they'll be so embarrassed when they realise.

JAMES ELLIS
LEEDS

● Long history of police power

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) - elected people who became renowned because... nobody knows what the hell they do! They replaced Police Authorities, which have a long history.

They were originally Watch Committees, composed 50% of elected councillors. They had the power to hire and fire any police, determine their pay and promotions, question and direct their activity.

This was before the working class got the vote. When they did, Watch Committees lost more power, and the police were more under central government control.

In 1964, committees were replaced with Police Authorities, which still had panels with elected councillors. Some Labour councillors did clash with police forces over their activity, especially over racism. Even with power stripped from them, Police Authorities still could make forces somewhat accountable.

The PCC - one directly elected individual we are discouraged from giving a damn about - replaced Police Authorities. Now a panel can scrutinise PCC actions.

They are mostly councillors. But the National Audit Office says they're basically useless, provide "few checks and balances" and "lack power".

The very little control ordinary people had over police before 2011 has been extinguished.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY

● Child poverty: Welsh Labour's failed strategy

Almost one in three children in Wales live in poverty. Even before the pandemic, the Equality and Human Rights Commission estimated that UK government tax and welfare 'reforms' would add another 50,000.

But this has happened on the Welsh Labour government's watch. Its Child Poverty Strategy boils down to little more than advice, raising awareness of existing inadequate programmes, and improving take-up of free school meals for those who are already eligible.

Free school meals are mostly restricted to children of parents earning less than £7,400 a year. Shamefully, every Labour member of the Senedd (Welsh parliament) present voted against widening access to free school meals.

No amount of welfare advice, the best energy deals, benefits of a smart meter, or begging for a slice of the discretionary assistance fund, will address the root issues: low pay, housing costs, and the shameful way this country treats unemployed people, ill and disabled people, and unpaid carers.

After twenty years of Welsh Labour 'managing' capitalism and capitulating to Tory cuts from London, we need a real socialist strategy for eliminating poverty in Wales.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates, including Socialist Party Wales, believe that the Welsh Parliament should be leading a fight today for the resources we need in society, for universal free school meals, a mass council house building programme, rent controls, pay rises, and more. Follow our campaign at tuscwales.org.uk

BEN GOLIGHTLY
CARDIFF

● Housing companies bend profit

The Stevenage Comet had two articles highlighting the deregulation of building control and its impact on Vista Tower, a



MIKE LUFF

high-rise building converted from offices to flats in 2016. JGA fire consultants found "non-compliant" foam insulation in the walls that could "provide a route for fire to spread around the external envelope of the building".

This was not a post-Grenfell breach. Regulations were broken "during the time of conversion". This defect should have been mitigated, in part, by cavity barriers and fire stops, but neither were found.

There was no communal fire alarm. Leaseholders are being charged £12,000 a week for a walking watch - £600 a month per leaseholder.

In the other article, chartered surveyor and fire safety expert Arnold Tarling says that firms eager to secure continuing business will offer low prices and little interference. "If people are looking at the bottom line the whole time, and how much they can rake in, they bend."

Despite regulations demanding cavity barriers and fire breaks in changes of use, inspectors "are not required to check."

"It's on drawings." But "planning drawings are public records, building regulations drawings are not."

"In the old days, the local authority had all the drawings, but now these things are all over the place. Private companies have them."

"What happens when the private companies go bust? All the information disappears."

This shows the madness of capitalism. Where building companies can choose their own inspectors, it is no surprise that corners are cut, and profit comes before people's lives.

BARBARA CLARE
STEVENAGE

● Labour joke

Some great comedic writing on Labour's London election leaflet. "Rejecting Tory cuts - the Tories are underfunding TfL, the Met Police and local councils at the worst possible time."

Surely if Labour's Sadiq Khan has been mayor for the past five years, they're no longer just Tory cuts? It's time for genuine no-cuts and anti-austerity representatives

in city hall. Vote Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

FERDY LYONS
NEWHAM, EAST LONDON

● Racism commission concludes...

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, set up by Boris Johnson, concluded that there is no institutional racism. And it wasn't even April the first.

Commission chairman Tony Sewell denied that the report said that there was no racism, but he quibbled with the term 'institutional'. Black people account for 3% of the population, but 8% of deaths in police custody. Is that "institutional" enough for you, Sewell?

DEREK MCMILLAN
DURRINGTON, WEST SUSSEX

● Tory cruelty

Priti Patel's new plans state that asylum seekers who are deemed to have arrived in the UK illegally, even if their claim is successful, will only be granted temporary refugee status and face being indefinitely

liable for removal. She also raised off-shore asylum processing, leaving asylum seekers locked up in a ship, for their documents to be processed.

Those who travel to the UK through 'illegal' means are usually the poorest, unable to pay their way into the already biased immigration system.

If the Tories prioritised the safety of those travelling in often dangerous conditions, why don't they tackle the real issues such as war, persecution and poverty where the asylum seekers often flee from?

We need to fight against the divisive rhetoric put forward by the Tories. What we need are jobs with decent wages, fully funded public services and free education for all, not oppressive immigration laws.

AKHALYA
BIRMINGHAM

● Welcome Eugene!

Socialist Party members Iain Dalton and Tanis Belsham-Wray would like to announce the birth of Eugene Luthien Dalton on 28 March 2021.

A special thank you to the NHS staff, who through their fantastic care, have once again demonstrated why they fully deserve a 15% pay rise.



Childcare in crisis - a socialist solution

CORINTHIA WARD

NORTH BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

Over the last year, Covid-19 has magnified the vast deep-rooted inequalities in the capitalist system. One problem which has been felt most acutely by working women is that of childcare.

The pains of arranging childcare - be it changing working hours or patterns, relying on family and friends or having to budget for private childcare costs - have always been a weight on working-class families.

The childcare dilemma is often the reason why some women decide to wait longer to have a child or feel torn between having a baby and a career. The economic and social conditions around childcare have a huge influence on when women feel they can have a baby, if at all, even though it might be something they may really want.

The capitalist system today relies on the inherited oppression of women and traditional gender roles, so that women provide childcare unpaid in the family and the state doesn't have to do so. The burden of domestic labour, such as cleaning, cooking and childcare, has historically fallen on the shoulders of women. The Office for National Statistics estimates this unpaid labour to be worth £140 billion to the UK economy!

However, as more women have gone into the workplace the demand for childcare has become an even greater issue. In 2019, 75% of mothers with dependent children were in work compared to 66% in 2000.

Privatised

Neoliberal attacks on already inadequate publicly provided childcare over decades has resulted in a huge dependence on privatised nursery providers. The sector has become increasingly dominated by international chains such as 'Busy Bees' and a profit-led £4.7 billion industry.

98% of childcare workers are women and unsurprisingly are underpaid: one in eight childcare workers earn less than £5 an hour and are some of the lowest-paid workers in the UK, despite families spending over a third of their earnings on childcare. The average cost of sending a child to nursery is either £131 part-time or £252 full-time a week - £6,800 or £13,100 a year! This is the second most expensive childcare in the world in relation to income.

Now the instability of privatised childcare is really being exposed. Covid-19 has hit the sector particularly hard, with providers losing on average £1,176 a week in fees. One quarter of private childcare providers are uncertain about their future post-Covid, and we are already seeing the use of redundancies or cutting staff hours to save costs.

It has been the poorest areas which have been affected the most, with nursery providers on the brink of closure because they are unable to increase fees to maintain profits as providers can do in more affluent areas. Even if these nurseries are able to remain open, what's not



certain is how their quality of care will be affected. Even before Covid, UK childcare was not something to be praised, coming in 35th position out of 50 OECD countries in terms of service.

Due to an almost total absence of local government-run nurseries, the government's go-to solution is to use tax-payers' money as a subsidy to private nurseries for low income families. Labour-led Birmingham City Council, the largest council in the UK, provided 26 free nurseries in 2010. By 2018 this had fallen to 14, and by the end of that year these had either been sold off or closed down as part of the council's austerity measures. These nurseries were in some of the most deprived areas of the city, and a similar picture is painted across the country.

During the pandemic the government and capitalists have been getting sweat on their brows about the looming childcare crisis. The Tories have included childcare providers in the 100% tax relief along with other struggling industries such as hospitality.

The real reason behind the eagerness of both Boris Johnson and Keir

Starmer to fully open schools when they were still not safe was in order that they could be used as childcare so that parents could work, rather than a service to help develop and nurture children. The guise of 'worrying about the children' would have been a bit easier to swallow if it hadn't been for decades of both Tory and Labour cuts to school funding, closure of youth centres and a complete lack of adequate mental health services for children.

What's needed?

Covid has revealed that the need for the nationalisation of privatised childcare has never been starker. The way forward should be fully publicly funded, affordable, flexible nursery and childcare services, under the democratic control of elected committees of parents and childcare workers. A flexible childcare network should be available from birth and include pre- and after-school, and holiday care. To guarantee quality of care, all those working in the childcare sector should be fully qualified and paid a real living wage.

These measures alone would ease many of the economic and social

pressures on women and families. Alongside the right to flexible parental and carers' leave on full pay, it would massively support families to have a work-life balance which suits them. While a shorter working week with no loss of pay would allow all parents more quality time with their children.

To win these demands it will take a movement of the working class to fight for them. Women make up 60% of essential workers and a majority of trade union membership. Childcare is clearly a workplace and trade union issue and should be central to a fighting programme of the whole trade union movement.

Fighting for childcare and the local services that working-class families need will also be a focus of the Socialist Party's election campaigns as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (see pages 8-9).

We live in a system where the richest 1% own a quarter of the UK's wealth. The money is there to meet the needs of working-class people, but only if we have democratic ownership and control of the means of wealth creation and can plan society in our interests and not those of the 1%.

Life in lockdown

Our son hasn't properly seen his family, or been able to play with other children, for two-thirds of his life. Lockdown put a break on our growing confidence as new parents.

The childcare rules have constantly shifted. They've been as clear as mud.

All childcare was initially banned. When our parents see us on Zoom, they often say: "You look like you need a break."

In September, the Tories reaffirmed the ban on childcare. But they were in a much weaker position by this point, and had to quickly U-turn.

Initially, at the start of last year's lockdown, even children of separated parents were forced to choose who they would live with, before the Tories quickly backed down. One of their first U-turns.

The rules state only one household can help you with childcare. And that they're only allowed to babysit your children, no-one else's.

This just isn't realistic. The same person isn't always able to look after our son.

Costs

We want to send our son to nursery to give him a chance to mix with other children.

Theoretically, we're entitled to claim for 85% of the costs. But we've tried every nursery in the three nearest towns.

We haven't found a single place with spaces where we'd be eligible to claim the money. Two nurseries want to charge us £70 each just to be on the waiting list.

Once our son turns two, we are eligible for free childcare, due to our circumstances. However, you can only claim from the beginning of term after your child turns two.

The timing of our son's birthday means we wouldn't be allowed to claim it for the first four months. This is ridiculous.

It's impossible to work from home with a toddler. The Tories and employers are deluded when they say otherwise.

Trying to take part in a Zoom meeting when your son is screaming in the background, and keeps trying to hang up the call, is a nightmare.

IAN AND JULIETTE

NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

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GMB general secretary election: A fighting, socialist leadership needed

GMB MEMBERS IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The GMB general trade union has begun the election process for a new general secretary. It is a year since the toxic environment around previous general secretary Tim Roach was exposed, and it is no accident that his regime opposed Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party.

This did not reflect the broad opinion of the activists within the union. The union bureaucracy's complete control was shown in the weeks after the GMB conference that endorsed Corbyn unanimously, yet GMB headquarters provided organisational support to the right wing in undermining his leadership.

In 2011, the GMB leadership, along with those of the Trade Union Congress and Unison, played the leading role in ending the public sector pensions struggle, just weeks after two million workers went on strike together.

No lessons learned

The three candidates in the election are senior officers: Rehana Azam, national secretary; Giovanna Holt, senior organiser; and Gary Smith, Scottish secretary. It would appear in the statements of all three candidates that no lessons have been learned. They speak of promises of change but have no strategy or politics to explain how we got here, where we are now and how we move into the future.

The union needs to democratise in order to enable transparency and accountability of the leadership. This means that there should be a healthy internal environment for debate providing the determination to follow through on decisions made at every level. The undemocratic ban on broad lefts within the GMB must be lifted.

It is clear that the bosses have used the crisis of the pandemic to attack our members' pay and terms and conditions, attempting to remove at a stroke gains that have taken decades to achieve - for example with the infamous 'fire and rehire'.

This is clearly only the beginning - the bosses and their allies in the Tory government will make our class pay for the pandemic and the mountain



of debt that is accruing in the years to come. Simply hunkering down and waiting for some kind of 'boss-friendly' Starmer-led Labour party in 2024 is no way forward.

But with a fighting programme, with over 600,000 members, GMB could have a huge impact across the union movement, both industrially and politically. The tenacious struggle by GMB members in British Gas in taking over 40 days of strike action against fire and rehire shows the potential. The union must raise the demand that British Gas be brought back into public ownership.

This raises the need for a political vehicle with pro-worker policies, including demanding that councils refuse to pass on Tory cuts. Union branches should have the right to support candidates who fight on an anti-cuts programme.

The GMB should:

- Oppose all cuts. Withdraw political and financial support for MPs or local councillors who advocate or who are prepared to

implement these cuts at national and local level, and support anti-cuts candidates instead

- Demand that Labour local authorities table no-cuts budgets
- Oppose our members paying for the Covid-19 crisis. We must campaign for workers' control over workplace safety. The whole union apparatus should be mobilised to defend local representatives who are victimised by their employer
- Fight all workplace closures and redundancies and call for nationalisation under democratic workers' control to protect jobs and livelihoods
- Democratise the union with an annual policy conference of branch delegates to set national strategy, and district and regional committees of lay representatives to forge links locally between the different sections of the union
- Recognise that the union is an important part of the broader labour movement and should seek to coordinate united action with other unions to enhance industrial power



London: #BuhariMustGo protests are back

HELEN PATTISON
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

'Hypocrisy' was probably the most used word on the recent #Buhari-MustGo protests in London. Having pledged to end the need for medical tourism, hated Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari has once more left the country to seek treatment abroad, again in the UK.

Covid has exposed the deep crisis of healthcare in Nigeria. Having struggled on low wages and in dire conditions, doctors are now on strike to try and force the government to listen. They need decent pay and funding for resources.

While ordinary people worry about getting sick, getting treatment and losing family to Covid, Buhari has none of these worries. Thanks to his wealth, he can fly away whenever he wishes for healthcare, sometimes using public funds to fund the travel.

Hundreds protested in London. Socialist Party members at the protests were asked what Boris Johnson is going to do about Buhari being in London. We responded - very little. Boris Johnson can't be trusted to stand with working-class and poor Nigerians against Buhari's hypocrisy or corruption.

In the UK, the Tories have been responsible for the last decade of underfunding in the NHS. They tried to blame 'healthcare tourism' for problems in the NHS, but actually it's a product of their austerity.

None of the problems faced by ordinary people in Nigeria - accessing education, healthcare and decent jobs - have been solved. Movements, like last year's #EndSars against the corrupt armed wing of the police, will resurface as young people have no option but to take on the Buhari regime, and fight for a real alternative to corruption, oppression and poverty.

Former Labour parliamentary candidate to stand for TUSC

James Osben, Labour's parliamentary candidate for Newton Abbot in the 2017 and 2019 general elections, has resigned from Labour and is standing as a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate on 6 May. Below is his statement:

"I have resigned from the Labour Party. I can't continue to support a political party that has moved away from its core values and principles, the values on which it was founded. The party, under the leadership of Keir Starmer, is trying hard to fit in with the neoliberal establishment, in a desperate attempt to win an election at any cost.

In the pursuit of power it has sold its soul and I won't be a part of it. I will stick to my values and principles. I will campaign and fight against austerity. I will represent the people

Labour was created to represent. I have not joined another party but I have applied to stand under the banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the May Elections for the Kingsteignton and Teign Estuary Council seat.

I hope to stand as a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Newton Abbot at the 2024 general election, and at the moment this would be in the capacity of an independent candidate. Thank you to each and every one of you for your support in the 2017 and 2019 general elections.

There are still some brilliant hard-working socialist MPs and many brilliant socialist members within the Labour Party. I wish them all well for the future and hope they are able to hold Keir Starmer to account for the damage he has caused to the Labour Party."

Fighting Fund: An amazing £39,948 raised

Congratulations to all Socialist Party members and supporters who helped us smash through the Fighting Fund target for this quarter - reaching a fantastic £39,948, 160% of the target.

This has helped make sure that we have the necessary resources so that we can have the best possible election campaign. Let's continue this excellent fundraising, and get the new quarter off to the best possible start.

CHRIS NEWBY

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND ORGANISER

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q1: JANUARY-MARCH 2021	FINAL CHART
Wales	6,039	2,300		263%
Eastern	2,050	1,200		171%
South West	3,054	1,800		170%
West Midlands	4,137	2,600		159%
London	7,162	4,600		156%
East Midlands	2,722	1,850		147%
Yorkshire	3,227	2,550		127%
North West	1,415	1,150		123%
Southern & SE	2,846	2,350		121%
Northern	857	750		114%
Other	6,439	3,850		167%
TOTAL	39,948	25,000		160%

Right-wing Labour and Tory commissioners out!



The platform at the Liverpool TUC demo against the Tory commissioners PHOTO LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

DAVE WALSH

LIVERPOOL TRADES UNION COUNCIL CHAIR
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

After the arrest of Liverpool's Labour mayor Joe Anderson over allegations of corruption, the Tory communities minister Robert Jenrick ordered an investigation which was chaired by Max Caller.

It found that financial malpractice had resulted in a loss of £100 million to the city and the report concluded that it was as if the city had been run by a "small cabal of its enemies".

He also found evidence of widespread bullying of management when they tried to challenge what they knew to be malpractice. None of this we would disagree with, but the solution to the problem proposed by Caller is that government commissioners take control of those areas of local government which have been affected, ie highways, property management and regeneration.

After this announcement, Liverpool Trades Union Council received two branch motions calling for an emergency executive to discuss a response. We agreed to organise a public meeting via Zoom on 30 March which attracted over 70 participants.

At that meeting, people expressed anger at the idea that a Tory

government, responsible for dodgy deals over multibillion pound contracts for their corporate backers who failed to deliver on track-and-trace and PPE, could be trusted to solve the problems in Liverpool.

Tory hypocrites

It was also pointed out that Jenrick had abused his ministerial position to rush through a property deal for Tory donor and pornographer Richard Desmond to avoid paying £45 million in taxes to Tower Hamlets council, which has some of the worst social deprivation in the country. Desmond later made a £12,000 donation to Tory party coffers.

The public meeting agreed to call for a static protest in Liverpool city centre on 3 April so it could be made Covid-safe, and about 150 people attended. We had many speakers take the mic and most were just as critical of the Labour council as they were of the Tory government and their commissioners.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for Liverpool city mayor, and Socialist Party member, Roger Bannister spoke.

Roger got a good reception when he argued that we must build resistance to Tory plans to reduce the number of councillors from 90 to 30.

But, he added, we must get councillors elected who are willing to fight austerity cuts.

Alex Smith, a TUSC candidate in the local elections, also spoke, saying that working-class people must build a new party to give themselves a voice. And Neil Dunne another TUSC candidate said people must be offered an alternative to austerity cuts.

Labour in Liverpool is in chaos, with both councillors and MPs saying the commissioners are only here 'to offer advice and guidance'. This is patently untrue, as they have executive powers. But what Labour apologists really mean is that they have no intention of challenging the commissioners' authority. This is nothing new, as Labour has slavishly implemented Tory policy for the past ten years.

Genuine Labour lefts are giving up hope that Labour can ever provide worker representation and are leaving the party in droves. In these conditions TUSC can grow even faster than it did between 2010 when it was created.

A huge political vacuum exists on the left that must be filled. Socialists must ensure that whatever form a new workers' party takes, it is armed with the correct policies and strategy to lead us away from this rotten, corrupt, capitalist system.

'We need more democracy, not less'

Socialist Party members helped build for and participated in the protest called by Liverpool Trades Council (TUC) on 3 April (see above).

Dave Walsh, Socialist Party and TUC chair, told the rally: "This Labour council over the past ten years has collaborated to put this city into managed decline. That's the reality, so we're not going to defend them... [They] have rolled out the red carpet to the Tories, they've said they're [commissioners] coming in to support and advise. Well, we don't see Tories as supporters or advisers to this city we see them as enemies..."

They will only compound corruption and what they intend to do is to reduce democracy.

"But if we're going to change things in this city we need more democracy not less. The people of this city can change things by electing councillors and electing people who will stand and fight."

Roger Bannister, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate for Liverpool mayor, said that the people of Liverpool have an opportunity to use the elections to send a message to the right-wing Labour council - that we are fed up of cuts,

privatisations and need a socialist alternative.

Other speakers included members of the UCU, RMT, and Unison unions, and Liverpool 47 councillors who stood up to the Tories in the 1980s.

The watchword of the Militant-led socialist Labour council of the '80s was "Better to break the law than break the poor." Today, councillors could set a legal 'no-cuts' budget and build a mass movement to demand the necessary funding from the Tory government.

MARK BEST

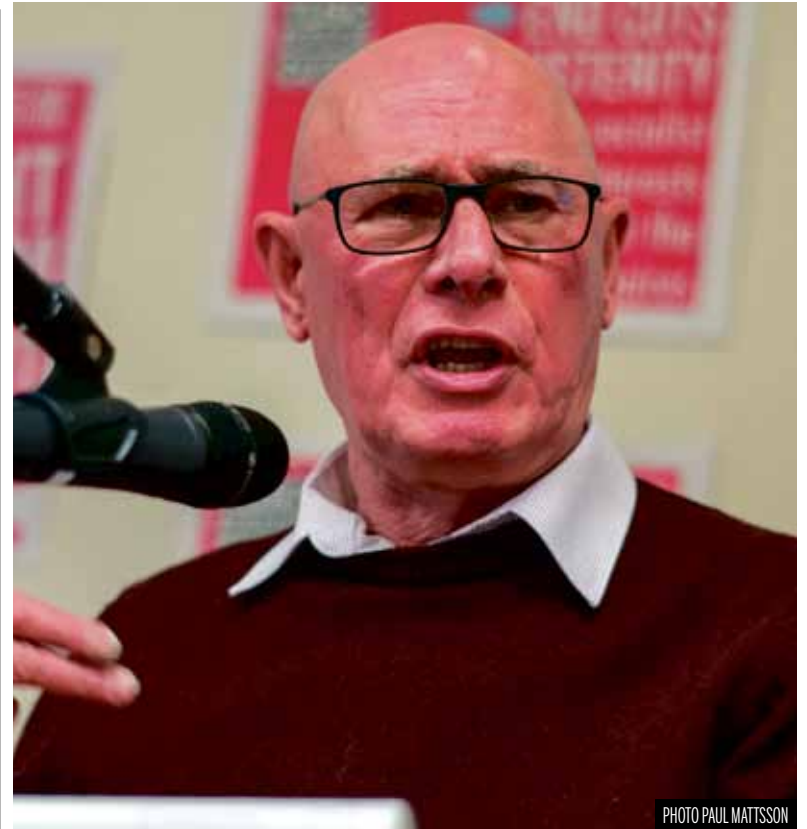


PHOTO PAUL MATTSOON

Liverpool needs a socialist mayor

Socialist Party member **Roger Bannister** (above) is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for the Liverpool mayoral election on 6 May. Roger explains why he is standing.

"The Tories have left working-class people suffering during Covid, while UK billionaires increased their wealth by a third!

Liverpool can't take any more. The Labour council has willingly passed on the government's savage austerity - £420 million cuts, 3,600 jobs lost, and another £15 million cuts and a council tax hike this year!

Instead, Liverpool needs a socialist mayor like me to stand up for local people, and use the position to help build a mass campaign against austerity, greedy landlords, privatisation and closures.

I am a member of the Socialist Party (formerly Militant) which helped lead Liverpool's socialist council in the 1980s. That council led a mass movement against Thatcher's Tory government - successfully winning £60 million back, building 5,000 council houses, five sports centres,

and three parks, creating thousands of well-paid council apprenticeships and jobs, with rents frozen for five years... and much more!

I spent over 40 years working in local government, and was active in my trade union Unison, as a branch secretary and member of its national executive council. Day in day out, I helped organise working people to defend and improve their jobs, pay and conditions.

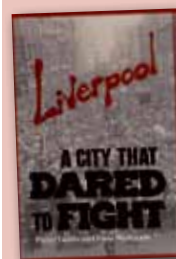
In the 1980s, Militant-supporting Labour MP Terry Fields took only a worker's wage. We were both expelled from Labour for being socialists. If elected, I will take only the salary which I earned as a council employee."

- Facebook - @rogerfor socialistmayor
- Instagram - roger4socialistmayor



The socialist-led Liverpool city council in the mid-1980s built an unequalled 5,000 new council homes in the teeth of Tory government cuts PHOTO D SINCLAIR

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1981 Brixton riots

RACISM AND POVERTY - THE ANGER EXPLODES

April 2021 marks the 40th anniversary of the riots in Brixton, south London, against police racism, unemployment and poverty. Today, the report from the Tory government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (see page 2) dismisses systemic racism and exonerates the government's 'equal opportunities' policies. But as last year's Black Lives Matter mass protests show, acute social problems continue to adversely affect many Black, Asian and minority ethnic people. As such, the same combustible material that ignited youth in Brixton and many other working-class inner-city parts of the country in 1981, still exists today. Here we reprint an abridged article from the Socialist by long-standing Socialist Party member **Clare Doyle**, written on the 30th anniversary of the Brixton events in 2011. Clare was a prominent participant in the uprising, dubbed by the capitalist press at the time as the agitator "Red Clare".

On Friday 10 April 1981, a heavy-handed police incident in Railton Road, Brixton sparked an explosion of pent-up anger that engulfed the area for days. Psyched-up police in full riot gear, many of them openly racist, went into battle with local residents, mostly black. Pelted with bricks, stones and petrol bombs, the police were forced to retreat, some with their riot shields on fire. 300 police were injured as well as hundreds of their opponents, many of them too scared to seek medical help in the hospitals. Hundreds were being arrested and summarily charged with 'rioting' and 'looting'. The most intimidating noise and sight was that of the 'Nightson' helicopter with its searchlight and infrared camera peering into housing estates and side streets, on the hunt for new victims to put in the police cells. By the Sunday afternoon, however, an eerie calm had descended on the centre of Brixton. The police had set up blockades around the area with the help of massive reinforcements bussed in from outside - a total of 7,445 policemen had been mobilised for the operation. But a traffic-free and police-free zone now existed, stretching from the west of the Town Hall down to the notorious Brixton police station (whose windows had also been smashed in!). The people of Brixton - white as well as black - wandered around to see the damage and discuss the significance of the events. They were joined by a growing number of sightseers and well-wishers. Not so well-received were the Tory Home Secretary, Willie Whitelaw, and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, David McNee, as they

attempted a walkabout to assess the situation. Their talk of 'outsiders' fomenting the violence did not wash. Michael Heseltine, then Tory environment secretary, also visited Brixton (and later Toxteth in Liverpool where riots also took place) with a mandate to find solutions. But he told reporters that not one extra pound of public spending would be provided by Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. In contrast, in 1984, mass action by workers in Liverpool forced the same Tory government to concede millions of pounds to the defiant Labour council, led by the Militant Tendency, the forerunner of the Socialist Party. **Unemployment and racism** The anger that had exploded in Brixton had deep roots. It was born of years of police harassment and outright brutality on top of decades of neglect and deprivation in terms of jobs, housing and social facilities. The previous April, there had been 'riots' or mass disturbances in the St Paul's area of Bristol, another run-down and predominantly black community blighted by unemployment and poverty. The hated 'Sus' laws, which gave police powers to stop and search merely on 'suspicion', were being used against black youth far more than white. Raids on factories and homes with the aim of deporting immigrant workers were a daily occurrence. Resentment smouldered in the black communities of south London over a number of recent racist incidents. 13 young black party-goers were killed in a fire in Deptford on the night of 18 January 1981. The police had done little or nothing to find anyone responsible for what was

obviously a racially motivated attack (see the Socialist '13 dead and nothing said', by April Ashley - socialist-party.org.uk).. Unemployment among black youth had reached over 50% nationally; it was rising four times faster than among white youth. There were 27 school-leavers for every job vacancy in Lambeth. 12,000 people were registered as unemployed at the Brixton dole office in April 1981. A generation of black youth saw themselves already thrown on the scrapheap. Thatcher's policies were obviously going to do nothing to improve their lot; in fact, they were guaranteed to make things worse. In Liverpool, where the Toxteth 'riots' took place, the Liberals, under David Alton, had built not one house, whereas when Labour, under the leadership of Militant, came into power, 5,000 homes were built! In Brixton, the Railton Road area had been due for redevelopment since 1928, and with Thatcher's housing policy, there would now be no prospect of new homes replacing the slums. She was the real criminal, not those she blamed for inflaming the situation in the inner-city areas. On the very Saturday of the escalation of clashes with the police in Brixton (11 April), the Militant-led Labour Party Young Socialist (LPYS) and Militant had organised a mock trial of Thatcher in nearby Stockwell Hall. The charges against the prime minister were: "Obtaining votes under false pretences; bribery and corruption; fraud; GBH (grievous bodily harm); murder!" As the police were battenning down the hatches in the area, two socialists who had been putting up posters had been arrested and then the organisers of the courtroom farce were ordered to bring it to an end!



Labour Party Young Socialist/Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) supporters campaigning outside the Home Office against Tory racist policies in 1981

Tension in the area was mounting by the minute. Once the April flare-up began, the LPYS and Militant supporters moved into action. They did not consider burning and looting as the way to combat the policies of Thatcher, but they understood what was behind the rage that was unleashed. They worked rapidly to organise a mass meeting at the town hall for the earliest possible date. They got out a leaflet giving their explanation of what had happened and why, and also formulated a programme of demands to express the needs of the hour. As the meeting began, someone stood up to insist on an amendment to the very first phrase of the resolution. Instead of "This meeting declares", it should read, "We the people of Brixton, declare..."! That was agreed with a roar of approval. The confidence and enthusiasm of the meeting was palpable. Many young people signed up to come to an LPYS meeting. Within the next two days 100 were visited and phoned. 45 came to the meeting that weekend. **Benefit gig** Little more than a month later, there were 700 youth packed into a benefit gig, also at the town hall, with a bar and the popular band Aswad playing. The group UB40, along with MPs and many local organisations, including the trades council, made contributions towards a fund for assisting the hundreds of arrested people being dragged through the courts. The Labour Committee for the Defence of Brixton (LCDB) was rapidly set up, involving local black residents' representatives, shop stewards, councillors, lawyers and Labour Party members. Among them were Bob Lee, secretary of the People's National Party

black socialist youth organisation, Tony Saunois, then on Labour's National Executive Committee from the LPYS, Anne Beales, chair of the London region of the LPYS, local solicitor, Mike Fisher, and two members of Militant's editorial board who lived in the area - Lynn Walsh and myself. The LCDB came out immediately against the government's proposal for a police inquiry into the Brixton events to be led by Lord Scarman. Why? Firstly, it was precisely that - a police inquiry! Secondly, it was set up by the Tories who were the ones to blame for all the problems that caused the 'riots'. Thirdly, no one giving evidence to the inquiry would be sure not to find themselves incriminated and under arrest! The LCDB called for a totally independent labour movement inquiry as a launch pad for a socialist campaign to solve the major social problems behind the outbreaks of violence. On the Labour Party National Executive Committee, the LPYS rep pushed for a national demonstration against Tory policies and rising unemployment. Instead, they organised demonstrations around the country, which turned out to be massive. The most important task of socialists at that time was to expose the real causes of the uprising in Brixton. We demanded radical changes in policing practice as well as an end to the Thatcher government. We also campaigned for a Labour government on a socialist programme to take its place - something unthinkable today! Socialists warned that, unless the cuts and attacks on public spending were reversed and the harassment of black and Asian communities by the police was stopped, there would be more flare-ups - in Brixton and in other inner-city deprived areas.

In early July, while tens of thousands of activists were marching in Cardiff on one of the Labour Party protests against unemployment, the Liverpool area of Toxteth exploded, then Salford, then Bristol again and Birmingham, and 20 or so other towns and cities across Britain. **Militant** Towards the end of July, Brixton kicked off again. Police decided to raid eleven households in the Railton Road area on the pretext that they were where Molotov cocktails had been manufactured and stored. They wrecked people's homes and terrified whole families. A new uprising was in the making. The Labour Committee for the Defence of Brixton was still busy with the work of taking evidence from victims of the April conflagration and monitoring the level of police activity in the area. It moved into action immediately - condemning the action of the police thugs and demanding compensation for all those affected by the raids. The events of 1981 - the levels of police violence and racism that were revealed and the 'findings' of the Scarman Inquiry - led to the stepping up of attempts to introduce 'community policing'. Militant and the LPYS took the idea further, calling for democratic control over the police and policing, and the right of the police to organise in unions and to strike. Looking at the dramatic events of 30 years ago is a timely reminder of just how vital it is to forge a united workers' struggle to end unemployment, poverty and racism. Trade union action and the building of a mass party of workers with a socialist programme, including mass job creation, is now the only way ahead.

Brazil: Bolsonaro regime plunges into a deeper crisis

TONY SAUNOIS SECRETARY, COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

Ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic, Brazil's far-right government has been plunged into a deeper, far-reaching political crisis. President Jair Bolsonaro, a right-wing former military officer, sacked the foreign minister, Ernesto Araújo, along with other members of his cabinet. He then dismissed the commanders-in-chiefs of the army, air force and navy before they could announce their planned resignations. These developments have triggered an even bigger political storm than the one which was already battering Brazil. In an echo of what his friend Donald Trump did to try and cling onto power, these explosive actions are attempts by Bolsonaro to prepare the ground for some type of coup, aimed at securing himself in power in the run-up to the elections scheduled for 2022 and beyond. Bolsonaro's presidency has represented a human catastrophe for the Brazilian masses. Dismissing the threats of Covid-19 as nothing worse than a "little flu", he has refused to take any measures to protect people's health, in order to secure the economic interests of the ruling elite. The result has been a tsunami of deaths. The official death toll is well over 300,000. Day after day, record numbers of deaths from Covid-19 have been broken - a death toll higher than any other country apart from the USA. **'Hit by nuclear warhead'** State governors have described the situation as like being hit "by a nuclear warhead". Those states which have enacted some measures and announced a lockdown have been threatened with being denied federal funding, which has aggravated the tensions between some states and the federal government. Bolsonaro's far-right government has introduced repressive measures. He has praised the military dictatorship in Brazil which lasted from 1964-85 and the Chilean dictatorship of general Augusto Pinochet. Bolsonaro's government has been stacked with military and ex-military officials. There are more serving military officers involved in government departments than there were under the military dictatorship! Although at the time of writing the situation is not fully clear, it seems Bolsonaro was intending to use the military as a type of Praetorian guard to defend himself in a 'state of siege'. This is against the background of growing splits and divisions in his government, which was largely made up of a coalition of numerous parties and groupings representing particular state and local fiefdoms or dynasties. Yet he still retains a hardcore electoral support of up to 30% according to recent polls - a combination



Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's 'hard man' president, is facing an existential crisis PHOTO ISAC NOBREGA/PR/CC

of far-right elements but also, like Trump in the USA, drawing upon those angry and disillusioned with corrupt establishment politicians. The catastrophic situation facing the country - with commentators warning of the 'collapse of Brazil' - means that the ruling class in the main wants Bolsonaro out. Even when he was elected in 2018 he was not the preferred presidential candidate of the Brazilian capitalist class, whose candidate, Ciro Gomes, was knocked out in the first round of voting. Bolsonaro was elected against the background of a collapse in confidence and trust in the traditional parties of the ruling class and disillusionment in the former Workers' Party (PT)-led government of Dilma Rousseff (2011-18), which was embroiled in corruption and failed to carry out policies in the interests of the working class. His election indicated that the Brazilian ruling class and its parties had lost credibility and legitimacy, and opened up a massive political vacuum in society. The onset of Covid-19 and the crisis which has followed, turned a defeat for the capitalists into a catastrophe. Now it appears that the attempts to consolidate the military behind him provoked the tops of the armed forces, who have been critical of his handling of the pandemic. Neither the capitalist class nor, apparently, many top layers of the armed forces want or need a

return to military rule at this stage. It was not an accident that these events have taken place following the acquittal of Lula, the former PT president, of all corruption charges, which allows him run again for the presidency in 2022. A highly polarised situation is gripping Brazilian society. It is uncertain how events in the short term will unfold or what base of support Bolsonaro enjoys among other layers of the armed forces where divisions exist. It is not excluded that he may attempt to further militarise the situation and concentrate more repressive powers into his hands. But it is uncertain if he has the support to do so. Such attempts will undoubtedly lead to big social upheavals and a deeper crisis. On the other hand, it cannot be excluded that the ruling class may take other steps to remove him. Should Lula run for the presidency against Bolsonaro, a massive polarisation would undoubtedly take place. Lula and the PT have moved to the right and do not pose a threat to capitalism. Sections of the ruling class may even opt to allow Lula to return to power as a means of holding the masses in check and trying to stabilise the situation.

Socialist alternative The crucial question facing the working class is preparing for a struggle against Bolsonaro and any attempts at a military or semi-military regime being imposed. It is also necessary to prepare to build an alternative to a future Lula government which would not have a programme to break with capitalism. There is a debate in the broad-left Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) of what position it should adopt in such a situation. Some argue that it should not present a candidate. This would be a mistake. PSOL in this situation should enter into the struggle and present its own candidate in the first round of the election. The party made big electoral gains in the municipal elections in 2020 and has a base to build on. In a second-round battle between Bolsonaro and Lula, a vote against Bolsonaro and building a socialist campaign to prepare for future struggles will be necessary.



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the Socialist

Issue 1128

8-14 April 2021

formerly **Militant**

THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN... YOUTH UNITE AND FIGHT BACK



BECKY PAVNE

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
OXFORD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Covid-19 has brought a sense of crisis especially for young people. Workers under the age of 25 have accounted for two-thirds of job losses over the past twelve months. And university students have remained stuck in limbo between their childhood homes and halls of residence on campus, paying eye-watering tuition fees and rent.

This is a generation that has grown up in an age of Tory austerity, now facing the deepest crisis of global capitalism since the 1930s. Not surprisingly, an ever-growing number of

students and young workers have reached the same conclusion: the system is broken.

It's no coincidence that the younger generations have been the ones spearheading mass movements for change throughout the pandemic.

Young people came out in droves to oppose systemic racism in the Black Lives Matter protests, while the recent vigils for Sarah Everard, which highlighted an entrenched culture of sexism and violence against women, saw a resolute outpouring of young women in particular.

Both sets of demonstrations also singled out the oppressive role of the police in opposing social change and perpetuating inequality.

This idea has been central to the 'Kill the Bill' protests, which have seen a considerable youth turnout. We must also not forget the rent strikes launched by university students across some fifty-odd campuses.

The fundamental sickness underpinning all forms of systemic oppression is capitalism. It must alarm the British capitalist class to see a new generation fighting en masse against the forms of division and institutions that prop up their rotten system. Young people must be organised on a united, socialist programme that connects all of these issues in the fight to end capitalism.

With the A-Level results U-turn last summer, scattered rent strike victories, and the

heroic efforts of school students at Pimlico Academy (see page 4), young people have shown time and again that when we organise, we can win.

This is why Socialist Students will be out in over twenty locations on 21 April as part of a national day of action, demanding tuition fee and rent refunds as a first step towards winning free education for all. Young people are well and truly on the move.

- **Join the Socialist Students day of action 21 April**
- **See socialiststudents.org.uk for action near you**

A SOCIALIST RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS
▶▶▶ socialistparty.org.uk/coronavirus

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



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ISSN 1366-9621