

## **VOTE SOCIALIST ON 6 MAY JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY GUIS**

COVID INQUIRY? WORKERS MUST DECIDE >>> p8-9 TUSC: WORKING-CLASS ELECTORAL ALTERNATIVE >>> p4 AND 13 TENSIONS ESCALATE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

## the Socialist Issue 1129

15-21 April 2021

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

the Socialist

## **'Covid passports' discriminatory and** questionable - fight for workplace safety

## JON DALE MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

n recent weeks new Covid infections have fallen steeply. Over 32 million people have had their first vaccination. Most of us are looking forward to activities we've been deprived of for much of the past year. But many are also anyious at the thought of sharing venues with anyone who might have the virus, so they could be reassured by the government plans for Covid immunity certificates or 'passports'.

But clearly there's a serious risk of discrimination, not least against those unable to have a vaccine - such as pregnant women - or younger people at the farthest end of the vaccination queue. They would probably be allowed to have their certificate show a recent negative Covid test instead of immunity, but this would mean very frequent testing, and not of a test centre.

Moreover, this government already restricts trade union rights, the right to protest and to asylum, etc. vent serious illness, it is still unclear Although the government hasn't yet 🗄 how much they cut infection risks to 🗄 tee of immunity. It is still unknown made clear how these certificates is other people. The results so far are is how long antibodies last for and how is

### MICHAFI MORGAN SOCIALIST STUDENTS NATIONAL CHAIR

During the past academic year students have gone through a radically changed learning environment, at great cost. There has been no reduction in already extortionate tuition fees and, in most cases, no reduction in rents.

Student mental health services are still inadequate, and our job prospects once we graduate are the least promising they've been since the 2008-09 financial crash. Capitalism has failed us again and again.

However, we have fought back. Last summer. A-level students led the way with the fight against a flawed and class-biased awarded exam results and won victories. Students have also been involved with the anti-racist Black Lives Matter protests, as well as rent strikes.

## Kill the Bil

More recently, we've been part of the 'Kill the Bill' democratic rights protests, and protests against sexual harassment and violence - including the sit-in protest at Warwick University.

Socialist Students has been to the fore in these struggles, including in Swansea, Bangor and Plymouth where our members have been organising rent strikes.

We have consistently called for an immediate refund of tuition fees for the year for all students, paid for by the government, as the first step towards abolishing them and cancelling all student debt. We have also demanded a refund for unused student accommodation, taking university halls of residence back in-house, stopping evictions, ending poor housing, and to protect rent strikers

would work, there's a danger they would be used to make ID cards more acceptable, leading to greater state powers to monitor people for repressive or other anti-working class reasons - such as increased rationing of public services.

They would also strengthen doubts some people have about whether vaccination is in their own and their community's interests, or for the benefit of big business and the state.

Since 1969, vaccination 'passports' have been required to enter countries where vellow fever is a risk. Hepatitis B vaccination is also required by many health workers. But these examples are a bit different to going to the pub.

Those with the highest risk from Covid-19 - the elderly and clinically extremely vulnerable - have been shielding most of the past year. Many see immunity certificates as allowing them to take part in social activities everyone lives within easy distance : they would otherwise feel too risky to attend

> However, although the evidence is now convincing that vaccines pre-

encouraging - and the fewer infected 🗄 effectively they will prevent new varipeople there are in public places, the : ants spreading. less risk to everyone else. But new Covid variants could make immunity short-lived Proof of vaccination in March might not guarantee immunity in October.

## **Tests**

The government is making lateral flow tests freely available to everyone, but these miss many infectious people without symptoms, especialv when self-administered. A trial in Liverpool found 60% of infected people undetected by these tests.

The tests also produce false positives, which should make people unnecessarily self-isolate while a more accurate PCR test is undertaken. Many low-paid and precarious workers can't self-isolate as they aren't paid enough to live on. Any worker isolating should receive full pay.

The government's proposed immunity certificate would be worthless if it depended on unreliable test results. Even a Covid antibody test. indicating previous infection or successful vaccination, is not a guaran-

More clinically vulnerable people could take part in activities outside their homes with other more effective measures that prevent infections spreading. Improved ventilation, extra extractor fans, air filtration units and similar measures are needed.

Big business must pay for its premises to be made Covid-safe. Trade unions need to decide whether they are in fact safe and not rely on false assurances from employers, or on supervision by cash-strapped local authorities or the Health and Safety Executive.

Government should pay for public buildings, financing councils with the money needed. Those small businesses that can't afford to make their premises safe should be subsidised by government to do so.

Even then, some places will be too small to allow safe distancing, and ventilation improvements may be limited. Some people may feel too anxious to go out for a meal or to the cinema unless reassured others present have been vaccinated, had a recent negative test or have antibodies. However, as mentioned above,

Socialist Students has called a day of action on 21 April over these issues.

While the National Union of Students has come out in support for some of these movements, a lack of real, determined leadership is apparent.

We need a democratic and fighting national students' union. A union which calls for an end to the marketisation of education now, and which mobilises to change the unacceptable learning conditions at universities. Through rent concessions and the A-level protests of last summer, we know that if we fight, we can win, so it is important that we do this!

Ultimately, we must fight to end the system which has allowed these conditions to arise. Capitalism seeks to make education a profitable product rather than a pursuit for knowledge. Commercialisation has undermined staff working conditions as well as our learning and living conditions, and will continue to do so for as long as it is profitable

We stand for free education, better housing and living conditions join the fightback and join Socialist Students

For details of protests contact Socialist Students

## Join the student fightback: join... socialist students

Visit socialiststudents.org.uk/ioi or call 020 8988 8761 or text your name and school.

college or uni to **07749 379 010** 

will be excluded.

### AMY SAGE BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

their bulging pockets.

nearly 500.

. meet deadlines.

# **Students in action: Protest on 21 April**



15-21 April 2021

## the **Socialist**



Covid certificates would inevitably discriminate against those unable to do so as well as those deciding not to be vaccinated. These may include low-paid workers who can't get time off work to go to a vaccination centre. If relying on smart phones, people who can't afford or don't want one

Some people are not convinced the risk to them from Covid is greater than the risk from vaccines. This is particularly the case as the govern-

demic while shamelessly handing big contracts to its big business bud dies (see pages 8-9), is the same government that now says people must get vaccinated.

Vaccination is a vital means of bringing the pandemic under control. Profiteering undermines confidence that vaccination is for our own and also our community's benefit. Vaccine certificates will not strengthen confidence. They could ment, having failed so disastrously to : be used to weaken workers' struggles : run NHS.

protect people throughout the pan- : and further isolate already deprived minorities

The whole process - from research to vaccine manufacture, distribution and discussion of its benefits and risks - needs to be brought under the democratic control of health care workers, trade unions and community representatives. The pharmaceutical and medical supplies industries need to be under public ownership as part of a well-funded and democratically

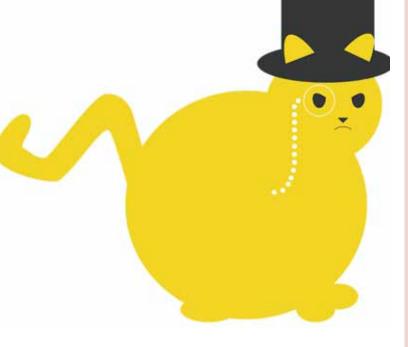
## How to deal with the tax-dodging mega-rich? Nationalise!

Global media company Forbes recently published its 'World's Billionaires List. When compared with Unicef's prediction that 140 million children will fall below the poverty line as a result of the pandemic, the global inequality it reveals is beyond staggering. While millions have been pushed into poverty and destitution, the likes of corporate bosses Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg have seen their personal wealth surge over the past year - adding \$5 trillion to

And it's not only the wealth of those existing billionaires that has expanded, the list itself has grown by

The capitalist media like to venerate these people, describing those such as anti-union Amazon boss Bezos as 'innovative' or as a 'good business man', while ignoring the fact that delivery drivers for his own company were being forced to urinate into plastic bottles because of pressure to

What Forbes doesn't mention is the millions of workers who are exploited by these so-called 'self-made' billionaires in order to allow the latter to achieve their obscene levels of wealth, some of which are comparable to the wealth of entire countries! Capitalist politicians, perhaps afraid that such stark inequality may spark anger among the working class, threatening their position, have responded with no more than token efforts to redistribute wealth



US president Joe Biden, for instance, has proposed a global minimum tax which would end the '30-year race to the bottom on corporate tax rates' and help fund basic services and investment through increased tax revenues.

This proposal would be targeted at the largest and most profitable 100 companies in the world in an attempt to stop them from shifting their profits to low-tax countries, regardless of where their sales are actually made

But even if a global tax rate were

introduced, it would not be nearly enough to address the inequalities that have been highlighted and exacerbated by the coronavirus.

What we really need is these megacorporations to be fully nationalised and brought under the democratic control of the working class, so that those who actually produce these enormous levels of wealth decide what should be done with it.

Just imagine what could be achieved for all if the wealth of the mega-rich on the Forbes' list was in our control

# Socialist party

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 CWL (CWI) which organises across the world. Our demands include.

PUBLIC SERVICES

• No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our nensions

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

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

### **VORK AND INCOME**

 Trade union struggle for an mmediate increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour without exemptions as a step towards a real living wage of at least £15. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings. Scrap zerohour contracts.

 All workers, including part-timers. temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay. employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.

An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pensior

to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion

Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled

Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.

A democratically planned, lowfare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

### RIGHTS

Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.

Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment

 Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.

For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

For the right to vote at 16.

### **MASS WORKERS' PARTY**

For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community environmental, anti-racist and anticuts 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!



## the Socialist

15-21 April 2021

NO TO AUSTERITY

**Trade Unionist &** Socialist Coalition

www.tusc.org.uk

TO AUSTERITY

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Trade Unionist &

The full Senedd TUSC list candidates

Socialist Coalition

Trade Unionist &

Socialist Coalition

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## **Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition Wales election launch Every voter in Wales has the** opportunity to vote for TUSC

he Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition's (TUSC) Welsh parliament election cam-paign got off to a cracking start when over 70 attended the campaign launch meeting online on 8 April, many of them brand new to TUSC.

In just a few short weeks TUSC has succeeded in attracting enough new supporters to stand in all five regions of Wales for the first time, allowing every voter in the country to vote for a genuine socialist alternative to the main parties.

In contrast to the stale politicians of the establishment parties, it was a real meeting of the Welsh working class. Those parties, lacklustre campaigns were outshone by this meeting brimming with enthusiasm. TUSC candidates from each region spoke as well as ordinary workers from the floor - nurses, hairdressers, council workers, social workers, teachers.

Ross Saunders, lead candidate in South Wales Central, asked: "Who was it that has kept society going during the pandemic? It wasn't the CEOs, it was ordinary workers, council workers, NHS, supermarket workers and the rest". As one worker in hairdressing explained: "We are all key workers - everyone wants their hair done".

Mark Evans. candidate lead in South Wales West, explained: "We can tell there is an election because all the main

parties are offering visions of Wales as a land of milk and honey", but behind the scenes they are preparing for more cuts. It's not just the Tories; Labour in government and Plaid Cymru in the councils have both been complicit in



austerity as well. Michelle Francis from North Wales told the story of about her struggle in organising a rent strike at Bangor University for students who were

trapped in their halls after being enticed by the Welsh government to come to university when face-to-face lectures were cancelled. She explained that the rent strike forced the Welsh government to find £40 million to allow some rebates on rents - a victory for the strikes.

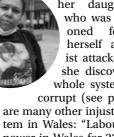
But she warned now the universities were coming back with huge cuts to courses and job cuts to university workers, so students will have to get ready to fight alongside workers to defend courses and facilities. She called for an end to the universities being run as capitalist corporations in Wales and seeing students as income streams and numbers not as students

We are not powerless the working class has enormous power

- Ross Saunders

The Tories. Labour and **Plaid Cymru** are all complicit in austerity

- Mark Evans



South Wales East, spoke passionately about the injustice to her daughter Siyanda, who was falsely impris-oned for defending herself against a racist attack, but also how she discovered how the whole system in Wales is corrupt (see page 11). There are many other injustices in the sys-

Labour has

power for 22

years and

yet these

injustices

continue

- Cammilla

Mngaza

been in

Cammilla Mngaza, candidate in

tem in Wales: "Labour has been in power in Wales for 22 years and yet these injustices still continue." Carys Phillips, chair of the Social

Workers Union, explained how in her work she had encountered the effects of cuts carried out by Labour. Independent and Tory councils. She was gobsmacked that the government is offering public sector workers a pay freeze. But what is the Welsh Labour government doing about it? "Wales has suffered more from austerity than anywhere, not because we are Welsh but because we are poor."

TUSC represents the best tradition of Welsh trade unionism, of unity to fight for the working class. Working people coming together to fight for a political solution to their problems and with solidarity for those in struggle.

This was exemplified by Beth Webster, a nurse in UHW hospital in Cardiff and candidate in South Wales Central, who was scathing of both the Tory UK government and the Labour Welsh government. The Tories insulted NHS workers by offering a 1% pay rise,



but Welsh Labour is currently wasting tens of millions on agency nurses rather than investing in improving working conditions to ensure nurses are retained by the NHS.

She declared the campaign she is leading for a 15% pay rise will continue. But also that bursaries for student nurses should be increased to cover the cost of living while studying. Social care must be integrated with the NHS. If people value the NHS and the care sector they must vote TUSC on 6 May.

Ross Saunders summed up the meeting: "We are not powerless - the working class has enormous power. And after this election these politicians will say there is nothing we can do, we will just have to cut. But the students won £40 million by putting pressure on the universities and the wider working class can win as well."

"The pandemic exposed the priorities of the ruling class and their Tory political representatives. They prioritise profits in the Covid crisis and lifted protections too early. But so too did the Welsh Labour governments and Welsh working-class areas suffered some of the worst death rates in the world. Covid has underlined why we need workers' representatives in the Senedd to challenge the system."



on 6 May

• Kevin Gillen - Barry community activist

• Mariam Kamish - Campaigner for an A&E at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr Cammilla Mngaza -Campaigning for justice for her daughter Siyanda Mngaza (see page 11)

South Wales West candidate

**日日日**日

Melanie Benedict - 18-year-old campaigner for youth rights Dave Reid - Trade union activist

## **Mid and West Wales**

• Carys Phillips - Chair of the Social Workers Union

## **North Wales**

• Michelle Francis - Socialist Students and rent strike organiser at Bangor University



If people value the

- Beth Webster

violence

council workers' leader

occupational therapist

and care worker

University

hospital

of Swansea Trades Union Council

of the rent strike at Swansea

Charlie Wells - Swansea

University organiser of Free

• Ross Saunders - Organiser

of Cardiff Against the Cuts and

secretary of Socialist Party Wales

• Beth Webster - Nurse at UHW

Mia Hollsing - Cynon Valley

campaigner against domestic

Education campaign

**South Wales Central** 

Oisin Mullholland - Organiser

South Wales East



• Gareth Bromhall - Secretary

# NHS pay: reject Tories' miserly 1% 'offer' Fight for full 15% rise

### HOLLY JOHNSON

NURSING SISTER, NHSPAY15 CAMPAIGNER AND ORGANISER, AND SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

NHS workers in England were meant to receive a pay rise on 1 April, but the whole process has experienced significant delays. We are now expecting the Pay Review Body (PRB) to make its announcement sometime in May or June. Then, the government will announce the final offer - although Chancellor Rishi Sunak has already announced a measly 1% increase, effectively a pay cut.

On 1 April, the grassroots campaign 'NHS Workers Say No!' launched a #stepupstarmer campaign. Over 100 individuals and organisations signed an open letter urging Labour leader Keir Starmer to support an immediate restorative NHS wage increase of 15%, after a decade of real-terms pay cuts.

Instead, Starmer has suggested a 2.1% rise. The Socialist Party signed this letter and has backed the 15% demand all the way. Meanwhile, in Scotland, many

Meanwhile, in Scotland, many members in the health trade union Unison are angry that its leadership is recommending acceptance of the SNP-led Scottish government's 'generous' 4% offer, when members have been demanding a full 15% increase.

Although the number of Covid hospital patients has reduced significantly, we are playing catch up with waiting lists and dealing with the consequences of delayed care.

Staff still haven't had a break or recovered, and feel devalued by the predicted pay offers. Many are considering leaving. Some are dealing with long Covid, such as myself, and unable to work the hours previously contracted to them.

As we wait for the PRB to make its announcement, we continue to build and engage health workers in the outward fight. They are realising that there is a need to organise themselves to ensure that pay is restored in order to raise and maintain staffing levels so that patients can be cared for safely.

Fighting for a meaningful and restorative pay rise is a fight to protect and invest in the future of the NHS

The trade unions have been getting ballot-ready and 'NHS Worker Say No!' is working with them to aim for a coordinated strike ballot. The unions' engagement with members is essential in being ready to strike, and we must hold firm and keep the pressure on from below.

As we move into the summer, it is important that we get out on the

streets. We have called for a mass demonstration and are working with affiliated groups to make this happen - potentially around the NHS's birthday weekend at the beginning of July. But there is no doubt that we will be out before then too.

We have made it clear that fighting for a meaningful and restorative pay rise is a fight to protect and invest in the future of the NHS. We need the public behind us and to be ready for the inevitable smear campaign against NHS workers if we reject a miserly pay offer from the PRB.

The government is already attempting to deploy a divide-and-rule tactic against workers. Ministers have pointed to a public sector pay freeze as evidence that there is no more money to spare and that demands for more than 1% are unreasonable.

We need to stand firm and smash through the public sector pay freezes all together. Teachers, local government workers, and any essential workers also face attacks on their jobs, wages and conditions.

Instead of allowing the 'race to the bottom', we must unite to demand a decent wage for all. The union leaders need to act decisively. The TUC should be organising and mobilising workers for a public sector-wide strike. We must transform our unions into the fighting organisations we need them to be.

The NHS pay campaign could spearhead the coordinated fight and give confidence to other workers in the public sector.



The trade union leaders need to act decisively over NHS pay PHOTO SP WALES

## Amazon - union vote lost

Amazon workers in Bessemer, Alabama, lost an attempt to unionise their workplace. This disappointing ballot result is understandable given the vicious anti-union campaign waged by Amazon chiefs, and the politicallegal climate in the US which militates against trade unions.

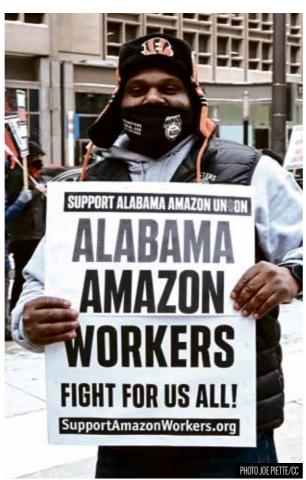
In the ballot, of the more than 3,000 total votes cast, 1,798 voted against, while 738 voted for the union. However, the Retail Warehouse and Department Store Union, challenged 505 votes. The union, moreover, claims that Amazon used tactics that were illegal, to mislead and intimidate workers and is contesting the result.

Amazon, the second largest private employer in the USA, bombarded the workforce with anti-union propaganda, including text messages and leaflets posted on doors inside toilet cubicles! Amazon also held mandatory meetings for workers on company time - "captive-audience sessions" - with videos and anti-union power-point presentations.

However, conditions determine consciousness, and bad working conditions and terms of employment will push workers at some stage, both in Amazon and at other workplaces, to collectively organise.

In recent years there have been successful unionisation drives and strikes, indicating that workers are beginning to fight back against the super-rich corporate bosses. This includes 800 nurses at St Vincent Hospital, Worcester, Massachusetts who are starting their sixth week of strike action against unsafe staffing levels that risk patients' care and staff health.

• See 'Historic union battle at Alabama warehouse' at socialistparty.org.uk



## Tory hypocrisy over housing benefit cut

Tory MPs have claimed £3 million in housing rent payments at the same time as voting to effectively cut housing benefit for low-income households in the private rental sector.

According to the Observer, at least 42 Tory MPs claim their own rent on expenses while at the same time renting out other residential properties for at least  $\pm 10,000$  a year in income. The government has not increased housing benefit from 1 April, effectively a cut.

The newspaper also reckons that in October 2020 alone, 54 Tory MPs claimed at least £2,000 each in housing rent on expenses. This exceeds the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels payable to most tenants in high rental London.

Secretary of State Thérèse Coffey, whose department runs the LHA system, claimed £1,885 a month. But she lags behind Helen Whately, minister for social care, who last year claimed £3,250 in housing rent each month despite pocketing a £113,612 salary.

## US cops shoot dead another black man

Incredibly, in the middle of the trial of white cop Derek Chauvin, accused of murdering unarmed black man George Floyd, a Minnesota white cop shot dead 20-year-old black motorist Duante Wright, who had been stopped for a traffic violation.

As angry protesters marched, in defiance of a curfew, to the Brooklyn Center police station (just ten miles from Minneapolis city centre where George Floyd died), the Minnesota police chief said the shooting was "an accidental discharge". He claimed the officer who shot Wright meant to fire their Taser weapon instead.

This lame excuse was met with incredulity. How can the two weapons be confused? Many protesters, who were subject to tear gassing and stun grenades by riot police, instead see the latest shooting as further evidence of systemic racism within the US law enforcement and criminal justice system.

For background reading see socialistworld.net

## WORKPLACE

## socialistparty.org.uk

**SPS Technologies workers end strike** 

after management backs down



## UNITE MEMBERS IN ST MUNGO'

the organisation

nounced soon.

pany's profits.

## **Deliveroo workers strike** and protest for better pay and conditons

## York

**BERNARD DAVIES** YORK SOCIALIST PART

On 7 April, Socialist Party and Young Socialist members showed solidarity with striking Deliveroo riders.

The Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) union called for a day of action in their struggle for a guaranteed minimum wage, safety protections and workers' rights, including access to holiday and sick pay, and an end to unpaid waiting times. The union also wants Deliveroo to allow riders to bargain collectively on pay and working conditions.

The industrial action comes after research by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism found riders earned as little as £2 an hour. Deliveroo maintains that riders like the flexibility of working as contractors and that they earn well above the minimum wage

The call for strike action involved some 400 riders from York, Sheffield, Reading, Wolverhampton, and London turning off their app (which outlets use to call for the services of an available rider), and well organised, socially distanced protests and rallies.

Riders and supporters in York also marched to protest outside a selection of retail outlets throughout the city, to raise awareness, not just with the retailers but with the public, as to the unfair pay and working conditions they are fighting to overturn.

This is not the first time that the Socialist Party has shown solidarity with members of the IWGB in York.

In 2020, we supported the Deliveroo riders in their boycott of the Five Guys burger chain outlets in the city.

at the unpaid waiting times when picking up orders from these outlets. This can be anything from 15 to 30 minutes. This means that riders are not only not being paid for that time. but the number of jobs they can complete during a shift is also affected. In York, several speakers showed their support for the strikers' action, including Iain Dalton, a member of the Socialist Party and retail union Usdaw

Iain and our Young Socialist members received the appreciation of the York IWGB Secretary, Cristian Lee Santabarbara: "A brilliant presence and immense solidarity from the York Socialist Party at the demo. Thank you to inspirational speaker Iain Dalton, Solidarity with York Socialist Party."

## Wolverhampton

NICK HART BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Deliveroo and Uber Eats workers in Wolverhampton took part in the national strike organised by the IWGB union on 7 April.

One courier who had been with Deliveroo for three years reported how his per-delivery rate had gone down by almost half in that time, the £2 fee taking no account of time spent waiting at restaurants or difficulties reaching the customer at the other end. Another talked about regularly working 80-hour weeks with less than minimum wage to show for it after vehicle costs.

It wasn't lost on them that the shareholders making a tidy sum from Deliveroo being listed on the stock market wouldn't have too much experience of making deliveries at all hours of the day and in all kinds of weather!

**Thurrock Council workers** strike against pay cuts



DAVE MURRA PRESIDENT BASILOON AND THURROCK TUC

In the shadow of Dartford Bridge

solid picket line on 13 April outside Thurrock Council's environmental services depot. This was the first day of three weeks of strike action proscores of Unite members joined a ; voked by the employer's plan to cut ; well as in cleansing and refuse

ful representatives of the super-rich! The fire-and-rehire tactic has sparked a number of disputes

around the county and needs to be fiercely opposed by the trade union movement as a whole. We are now in a period of sharpened class struggle!

## Get all the latest union news stewardsnetw with the NSSN bulletin

pay allowances (such as unsocial hours pay) to the tune of thousands of pounds

At the top end a loader could lose up to £11k. At any time this would be an act of aggression, but after literally keeping the show on the road during the year of Covid, this is seen as an act of betrayal on the part of Thurrock Council.

Speaking to assembled strikers Unite officer Onay Kasab pledged the union's support for a win in this dispute, donating his own back pay to he hardship fund.

Morale was extremely high, partly because of the sunshine and the boombox (playlist was heavy on classic reggae and ska but also included AC/DC and Village People), but mostly because of the strength of the union's organisation and an understanding of the importance of winning the dispute.

If Thurrock get away with this, many other councils will be looking at saving their financial bacon at the expense of anti-social hours payments and other pay allowances that so many rely on - in the care sector as



## STEVE SCORE EICESTER SOCIALIST PART

Unite members at SPS Technologies in Leicester have ended their strike action against the attempt by management to attack their terms and conditions using 'fire and rehire' tactics

After four initial one-day strikes and part way through the planned eight-week strike, the management backed down on much of the attack that could have left workers losing up to £3,000 a year. Union leaders, who describe it as a victory, 'strongly recommended' the management's offer and there was a 90% vote to accept.

The union did, however, make some concessions to management.

Given the intimidation involved in  $\vdots$  can push back even the most powerfire and rehire, with the potential of losing your job, and the background of economic downturn affecting the aviation industry which SPS supply, the workers showed huge courage and determination in the strike. There were hundreds of redundancies last year.

After a long period of many years without any industrial action in the factory, workers gave the boss a lesson that they would not just roll over in the face of bullying.

The company is owned by multibillion-dollar US Precision Castparts Corporation, which is in turn owned by a holding company whose CEO is Warren Buffet, the seventh richest person in the world. Workers' action

## WORKPLACE

## **St Mungo's maintenance** workers on indefinite strike



Maintenance workers in the troubled homelessness charity St Mungo's have voted for indefinite strike action. The strike concerns a failure to investigate management bullying and harassment of union reps - nearly half of Unite reps in the organisation are engaged in formal processes

regarding their own employment. The Orwellian response has been to suspend a rep who raised a grievance concerning management bullying. It seems this has been distressing for senior managers! If this move was intended to intimidate it has failed and the mood has hardened across

The belligerent approach of management raises the need for wider strike action in the organisation.

In a recent Unite survey, 68% of respondents reported that they have experienced bullying from St Mun-'s management.

One worker says: "Reps, especially health and safety reps who have been supporting members in this pandemic, have been targeted during this restructuring process within St Mungo's and now face redundancv."

Members of the Unite housing workers branch (LE1111) are committed to supporting St Mungo's workers all the way.

Concerns about St Mungo's senior

management have been raised over several years; care organisations in which staff are punished for speaking up have a record of poor treatment of vulnerable clients.

Unite believes that many of St Mungo's services are currently excellent. This is because of the commitment of frontline workers and managers.

However, the approach of the senior leadership of the organisation has been cause for deep concern in recent years and will tend to erode services over time unless corrected.

Unless management changes its position, strike action will begin from -Thursday 22 April

## **Rally for sacked RMT rep Declan**



Southampton's lockdown easing on 12 April was met with a loud and vibrant protest in solidarity with sacked RMT bus safety rep Declan Clune. Outrageously, he was disnissed for reporting a safety issue.

The rally, which included the Socialist Party, took place in front of Bluestar buses' city centre shop, was

part of the RMT campaign to win a strike ballot in the garage to fight for Declan's reinstatement

Declan is pictured with other victimised union reps, at the rally - RMT rep Gary Carney and National Edu cation Union rep Kirstie Paton NEU along with Rob Williams, National Shop Stewards Network chair.

## East London cleaners fight outsourcing and redundancies

Cleaners at the University of East London downed tools against two-tier conditions on Tuesday 13 April. Pickets blasted the Docklands campus with music, stood by 'wet floor' signs warning of "slippery labour rights."

Members of the Cleaners and Allied Independent Workers Union waved flags and danced to 'Bella Ciao' and 'Mambo No 5' Workers employed by Nyiro Cleaning have inferior conditions to direct university emplovees.

Outsourced workers want equal reatment for all UEL cleaners. The strike is demanding double pay for bank holidays and weekends, sick pay, 60% pensions, and 24 days' annual leave.

One picket told Socialist Party members that he had cleaned UEL for 17 years. But when human resources announced new 'years of service' benefits, he was only cred ited for nine

This was because he had transferred employer during that time and despite 'Tupe' transfer law protections

CAIWU will also be picketing the offices of Broadgate, a private office and restaurant complex, on Friday 16 April, Broadgate Estates is making cleaners redundant. The protest wil start at 3pm at 12 Exchange House, Primrose Street, near Spitalfields east Londor

FAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Thousands of London bus workers strike across multiple companies

4,000 London bus drivers have voted overwhelmingly for strike action over remote sign-on policy. 96% of Unite members at Metroline West and 97% at Metroline Travel voted for industrial action on routes in north and west London. Strike dates will be an-

Remote sign-on means drivers do not report to a depot to start work, but meet their bus and begin work at an alternative location such as a bus stop. Remote sign-on forces drivers to start work away from the depot, reducing costs and boosting the com-

Metroline has only "paused" its introduction of the practice. Unite points out that forcing drivers to start work away from depots is designed to reduce costs, with staff also facing a lack of toilet and canteen access.

increased working hours and waiting for buses in unpredictable weather. Regional Unite officer Mary Sum-

mers said it was "very disappointing" that the company had not ruled out introducing the policy: "London bus drivers have delivered a mas sive mandate for strike action. This unpopular policy should be jettisoned immediately," she demanded.

Meanwhile in west and south London, bus drivers for outsourced bus operating companv RATP on the London United fleet have been striking over attacks on pay and conditions.

Stamford Brook and Hounslow Heath garages have voted to join the strike, meaning all seven of London United's garages are on strike

The strike is over bosses' plans to cut pay despite the company having an annual turnover of over £4.3 hillion



## **Bristol Water workers walk out**



TOM BALDWIN BRISTOL SOCIALIST PART'

GMB members organised a lively first picket line outside the headquarters of Bristol Water on 6 April.

This group of workers are taking strike action for the first time in decades against a pay freeze that man agement is trying to impose. This vould mean the company offers the worst pay and pensions in the water sector in England and Wales.

Workers were in good spirits and buoyed by the frequent honking of car horns in support from passing motorists. Speaking to the Socialist.

one of the workers said: "Bristol Water in the last three years has been mposing pay freezes on us. Members have had enough of the way the company doesn't want to engage with us in trying to get fair pay and a cost of living rise.

Another added: "Executives' bo nuses are rising. It's so unfair, we've kept the taps on during a global pandemic, we need a pay rise to keep going. It shows how passionate our members are about it that they're will ing to come out on this freezing cold day. We've got some good camaraderie from all the guys so it's amazing. We're serious about it as well.

## **NHS starved** and weakened

### I ONDON NHS WORKER

The NHS entered the pandemic in crisis: understaffed, underfunded, and weakened by decades of privatisation, marketisation and top-down reorganisations

Before Covid hit the NHS had an estimated 40,000 nursing vacancies, and a total of 100.000 unfilled posts. As the Socialist warned on 11 March 2020: "Britain has almost the fewest intensive care beds per person, and hospital beds overall per person, of any country in Europe."

The NHS had been starved of funding, given only a 0.4% increase compared to the increase in the cost of living since the ConDems came to power in 2010, compared to 5.9% in the decade before that.

Reorganisation schemes are a nightmare for staff and usually create more problems in patient care. The 'marketisation' in the 2012 Health and Social Care Act introduced needless and expensive new layers of bureaucracy. It forced different hospital trusts to compete against each other instead of co-operating, leading to delays in treatment.

The drive for 'centres of excellence' quickly became known as an excuse to try to cut vital services locally, such as A&E departments, or clinics like the Glenfield Heart Unit in Leicester, with the promise of better services. But many of these 'centres of excellence' are too far away for most people to reach.

For years Tory, Labour and Con-Dem governments have been privatising parts of the NHS. Privatisation drives down wages and conditions. and encourages companies to cut corners to maximise their profits.

Private company profits swallow up a greater and greater proportion of health spending, meaning there is less and less to spend on public healthcare. The long-term underfunding of the NHS will never be solved until it is renationalised, bringing all services back in-house on full NHS terms and conditions

This underfunding has led to huge

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for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes. PFI was launched by New Labour under Blair as a way of building new hospitals to increase public support, with a trick to take the debt off the public balance sheet. Instead of using public money to build hospitals etc, they signed fat contracts with private developers to build them then rent them back to the NHS.

In some trusts up to a sixth of spending is just on PFI contracts. If all contracts are allowed to run their course, an initial £13 billion investment by private companies into PFI schemes will cost the NHS an estimate ed £80 billion, according to the IPPR.

For almost a decade, a pandemic had been considered the greatest threat to Britain. 'Exercise Cygnus', a three-day simulation of a deadly flulike global pandemic in 2016, aimed at identifying weaknesses so that the UK could be better prepared for one, found that the healthcare system was likely to collapse under the strain

The exercise found a lack of PPE ventilators and critical care beds to be particular problems, and advised that these be addressed. The report was not acted on. This was the main cause of the desperate shortages of PPE at the beginning of the first wave.

Everyone working in the NHS, and those with loved ones in hospital held their breath each time we heard a report of a hospital running out of oxygen, or coming close. Patients at the height of the recent wave were having to be sent hundreds of miles to the nearest available ICU bed, hoping that no one would die as a result. All this was avoidable. We

have to organise to fight to ensure that the privatisers and profiteers are kicked out of the NHS; that the NHS is fully publicly funded, free at the point of use, and democratically run by elected committees, including NHS staff and service users who know best what kind of service we need. That is the only way to make sure that thousands more lives are not needlessly lost as they have been in this pandemic

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NHS debt, particularly in poorer are-as, with bigger health problems. £13.4 billion of this was famously reclassi-fied by the Tory government on 2 April 2020, reducing interest payments. But the government didn't touch the NHS's biggest debts, of £55 billion

the Socialist

ory Prime Minister Boris Iohn son has presided over a coronavirus catastrophe that has left over 127,000 people dead the highest number in Europe and one of the highest globally. Many people are now calling for an inquiry in order to bring him and his government to account.

The Socialist Party is in favour of an inquiry into this monumental injustice, but we believe that absolutely no trust can be placed in Johnson's Tory government and the capitalist establishment to lead it. We demand that any investigation into the disastrous response to Covid be conducted by the workers' and trade union movement.

front line, will have no confidence in the Tories or the judiciary to run have the fresh memory of how, just months before the pandemic struck, an unelected High Court judge ruled out their strike ballot. They had voted 76% turnout, smashing the draconian and undemocratic anti-union laws. Rightly, most posties understood that this was not an impartial ruling. Made in the middle of a general election and at the busiest time for mail, it clearly benefited both Johnson and Roval Mail manage ment. No establishment-led inquiry can be independent from the class forces - the minority that own and control the wealth in society - that it

Any investigation would need to bring together the experience of workers and their families, free from the pressure and intimidation of the employers. The London bus drivers who have seen their mates die because of inadequate protection: the construction workers forced

Workers, particularly those on the an objective inquiry. Postal workers 97% in favour of strike action, on a

ultimately seeks to defend.



## **Capitalist** inequalities laid bare

### JANF NELLIST COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY AND NEU

The Covid pandemic has exposed more sharply the fault lines of inequality in our society. The impact on our most vulnerable and discriminated against communities has been laid bare for all to see, especially the grotesque poverty that many are living in.

All the data on health inequalities in the decade before the pandemic, with huge austerity cuts, saw the gulf between the poorest and the richest : could all see the stories of families :

in our society getting wider. But Covid has exacerbated this. A workers' inquiry must expose

how capitalist politicians have been the cause of more deaths, more ill health and more misery for millions as a result of their policy decisions and the system they represent. We have seen those who live in the

poorest neighbourhoods more than twice as likely to be killed by the virus as those in the richest areas.

Without appropriate financial support to allow isolation, being forced to live in overcrowded, poor quality housing or compelled to work in unsafe workplaces, increased the chances of those in more deprived communities catching Covid. Even before Covid struck the mortality rate for the poorest groups in society was on the rise.

The high Covid death rate associated with race and ethnicity provoked anger which was articulated in the Black Lives Matter movements. We : in lower-paid and lower-status jobs.

nightly on the TV. Prior to the pandemic, child poverty was already at a : brunt of home schooling and childtotally unacceptable level, with over 4.2 million children experiencing food poverty.

This has increased massively with the loss of jobs, and more families forced to survive on levels of Universal Credit that are pitiful, even with the £20 a week 'uplift'.

It is estimated that those house holds in the bottom 10% of household income would have to spend 74% of their income on food to provide a healthy diet. With housing costs and all the other pressures on spending, this gets squeezed.

So more and more families have come to rely on food banks or charity to feed their families. It took a footballer to fight the corner for free school meals in the holidays!

All of the occupations with aboveaverage mortality rates from Covid are Even where homeworking was

possible, it was women who hore the care, increasing their burden of responsibilities and gender inequality.

The lack of support services and cuts to local authorities have meant that the impact of isolation and lockdowns on many people has had a serious impact on their mental health.

The 'catch up' on healthcare, such as cancer treatments, is another area that will hit communities unequally We are yet to see the impact of this.

Class, gender, race and other inequalities are the inevitable consequences of a capitalist profit system in which a super-rich minority owns the means of producing wealth in society and exploits the working-class majority. The heart of the government's policies during the pandemic has never really been about protecting communities, but about protecting profits.

The truth must come out, and those responsible held to account by the working class.

## **Social care** killing fields

### GLYNN DOHERTY TRADE UNION ORGANISER

The pandemic has exposed the previously ignored plight of social care workers in Britain. Care home workers faced an influx of dving patients transferred from hospitals, bringing the virus with them, with inadequate or non-existent PPE.

The failings of government and employers in providing safety measures meant staff helped spread the virus exponentially. Social care workers faced among the highest mortality rates by occupation during the first phase of the pandemic and sickness

and their families.

mum wage.

15-21 April 2021

## g

Put Tories and capitalism in the dock safety **STEVE SCORE** LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

> to stay on the sites: the nurses who had to fight for proper PPE, and the DVLA staff who voted to strike for safety after 500 of them contracted Covid. These are the people who have experienced first-hand the consequences of the disastrous mishandling of the pandemic.

A workers' Covid inquiry would not just put this Tory government and Johnson personally in the dock. It would need to bring out the role of Tory, Labour and ConDem governments over the last 40 years, faithfully acting in the service of big business to consciously and systematically erode and downgrade the NHS, public services, and health and safety laws and regulations.

The Covid pandemic has also laid bare the class character and inequali ties of the capitalist system. It has clearly shown the need to bring an end to the chaos and anarchy of the profit system; the need to replace it with a socialist society, based on public ownership under democratic workers' control of the main economic levers and resources. This would enable the drawing up of a plan of economic production and international cooperation the only way to safeguard workers' lives and guarantee their livelihoods.

And the pandemic has shone a spotlight on the force which can bring about such a fundamental change the working class which keeps society going. But that requires building a mass party that can unite together workers and young people and oppressed groups which have particularily suffered during Covid.

Standing candidates in the elections on 6 May as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition is a small but important step towards that goal.

ROB WILLIAMS

SOCIALIST PARTY WORKPLACE AND TRADE LINION ORGANISER

absence rates more than doubled be- : care in England alone. But even this tween February and October 2020. Social care workers are paid a pittance. Almost 60% receive an an-

nual pay increase - because their pay would otherwise fall below the mini-

While the media focused on care homes, of particular concern were the 150,000 workers now employed directly by the people they care for. What a situation: the people who need the hands-on care in their own homes were legally responsible for providing PPE and safety for those providing the care!

While the safety, pay and working conditions are, of course, pressing issues which need addressing, not least by the sector's unions, it is the wider picture of social care that is being scrutinised by workers, service users

In 1979, two-thirds of care was NHS or council-run. Now 84% is for-profit. Around 18,500 organisations provide

owned by investment management companies and hedge funds, in effect, siphoning public funds into the coffers of the rich. Any organisation which failed to provide adequate safety must be stripped of their contracts which should be handed back to local au-

mind-blowing number can't disguise

that the largest care providers are

thorities. In the longer term, all care provision should be in public hands, co-ordinated and democratically run by workers, service users and their resentatives



# **Crony capitalism**

Boris Johnson's working-class friendly, chummy facade slipped when he recently blurted out that, "greed and capitalism" delivered the UK's vaccination programme.

Realising he'd blundered, Johnson attempted to backtrack from the statement. In reality, the speedy roll-out of vaccines has been a testament to collaboration, aided by colossal sums of public money. But 'greed and capitalism' have been the cornerstone of the pandemic strategy. This has been graphically illustrated by the blatant cronvism of this Tory-led government.

As the pandemic took grip, shortages of vital PPE within the NHS and in care homes took hold. NHS and other frontline care workers were dangerously ill-equipped to deal with the pandemic. There were shortages of medical masks, gloves, gowns and : sApp message to his former customer,

aprons. But while frontline workers were battling the virus, capitalists were salivating. Workers saw shortages, capitalists saw profit opportunities.

From the beginning of the pandemic,

and throughout it, the Tory govern-

ment's main motivation has been to

protect the profits and interests of big

business. This has been at the expense

of workers in many sectors, who have

been forced to work in unsafe condi-

tions, resulting in a far higher level

of deaths than otherwise would have

The Trades Union Congress (TUC)

says over 10,000 workers have died

so far from Covid infection in the

workplace. Many more have suffered

illness, including the effects of 'long

Covid'. This figure excludes family

members and others who were then

infected in turn as a result of at least

3,500 separate reported workplace

outbreaks. Yet the underfunded

Health and Safety Executive has pros-

The World Health Organisation is-

sued its highest possible alert, a 'pub-

lic health emergency of international

concern', on 30 January 2020, the day

after the first confirmed cases in the

UK. Yet it was not until 26 March that

The Chief Scientific Officer talked of

'herd immunity', suggesting that the

virus be allowed to spread through-

out the population. Johnson spoke

on 3 February about his opposition

beyond what is medically rational to

to lockdowns, saying that they "go

the point of doing real and unneces-

sarv economic damage." Until he was

belatedly forced to U-turn by the crisis

Despite lockdowns, many work-

places have continued to function,

not just 'key workers,' along with a

lack of safety on public transport and

Where there has been no trade un-

ion protection, the situation facing

workers has been the direst - in the

in the hospitals.

in schools

Johnson's first lockdown started.

ecuted no employers!

been the case.

As the death rate in the UK grew to terrifying proportions, serious action was needed to contain the pandemic. However, Johnson, who purports to love the free market, under the guise of emergency regulations chose not to go to established suppliers. Instead, billions of pounds of pandemic-related contracts went to chums, family members, Tory donors, even a Tory councillor and Tory peer benefited. The scale of this strategy is mind-boggling, and reeks of cronvism.

Even an ex-pub landlord was given a £30 million government contract despite never having produced medical supplies before. All it took was a What-

Leicester sweatshop garment indus try, for example. For years, thousands of workers have been paid as low as £3.50 an hour - flouting minimum wage laws - let alone having decent health and safety protection. There was a big outbreak centred on these factories resulting in Leicester having the first localised lockdown.

Many workers have been forced to go to work, fearing loss of income especially affecting those on zerohour or insecure employment. Sometimes this has been despite Covid symptoms.

Where workers are organised, they have had to fight for safety. Building workers campaigned for safety when they were told to continue to work on non-essential luxury buildings. Bus workers, especially in London, fought for safety measures after many deaths - with Socialist Party members playing a key role.

It was education unions, after cam paigning by Socialist Party members and others, that forced the govern ment to U-turn on the immediate reopening of schools at the beginning of this year. Even today, PCS members at the DVLA are having to take strike ac tion over Covid safety

Now with the further loosening of lockdown measures there is a danger of more outbreaks. According to the TUC, half of employers are not carry ing out risk assessments or have inad equate safety measures in place.

Lessons must be learnt quickly, and the trade union movement needs to do more than issue reports and press releases. We need coordinated union action to demand safety



health secretary Matt Hancock! Private companies were handed control of the calamitous test-and-trace system - no questions asked. Millions were squandered on useless 'consultants'.

This insidious web of contracts has rattled more astute representatives of capitalism. They understand a groundswell of resentment is growing against their system of profit, including angry NHS workers who the Tories attempt ed to blame for the lack of supplies saying they were overusing PPE.

Unsurprisingly, Johnson has consistently rejected calls for an inquiry into the handling of the pandemic arguing that lessons will be learnt. 'in due course'. Any inquiry instigated by Johnson, or any capitalist representative, will undoubtedly suppress the disastrous role of the bosses' profit system in worsening the consequences of the pandemic. It's this that a workers' inquiry would expose and challenge. **ELAÎNE BRUNSKILL** 

**:** SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

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10

## **DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?** Send your news, views and criticism, in not more than 150 words, to editors@socialistparty.org.uk - or if you're not online, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT • 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**

## Rise from your knees

The demise of the Duke of Edinburgh unleashed a wave of sickening sycophantic twaddle. We learnt that Prince Philip was brighter than Einstein, a better sailor than Nelson, and a superior engineer to Brunel.

Of course, the media had to report the death of Prince Philip. But they did not all have to become such contemptible toads. I was waiting to hear that every hos-

pital was to be renamed St Philip's, and London to become St Philipsberg. One day we will awake to the re-

alisation that we are not subjects, but citizens. People will rise up from their knees, and Buckingham Palace will become council housing.

**DEREK MCMILLAN** DURRINGTON WEST SUSSEX

The BBC describes the racist, sexist, homophobic and ableist comments made by the Duke of Edinburgh as 'gaffes'. Most people, who have an ounce of humanity and compassion for others, would probably describe them as hurtful, horrible and damaging.

Even if they were made by someone whose formative years took place in a 'different age', that's no excuse.

He was an establishment figure, whose inflated sense of ego and entitlement enabled him to say these awful things without repercussion. He was never challenged because he had immense privilege. He was untouchable - a state of being commanded by his high-ranking status in our outmoded class system.

Say of him what you will and mourn his passing if you must, but for me, this is his legacy. This is what he and the royal family represent. I will forever rail against it, and fight to end it, and the suffering and subjugation it has caused for so many around the world. JAC GREEN NORTHAMPTON

So a 99-year-old, on huge benefits, who lived in luxury paid for by us, has died.

I care more for the working class, who struggle all their lives to get by. I lost my mum last year aged 82. It's people like her we should be proud of, not someone who had everything handed to him as part of the outdated royalty, which should be brought to an end

Let's remember the working class and fight for a socialist republic. GARY CLARK EDINBURGH

I wonder what time the riot police will move in to attack the vigil for a dead person, like they did at Sarah Everard's vigil. All the commercial radio stations are just playing endless love songs because some old racist, benefit fraud has kicked the bucket.

I expect such nonsense from the BBC. Think I'll listen to the Socialist Party podcasts instead. DAVID MOODY

SHEPTON MALLET, SOMERSET

## Women: Media suddenly discover our medicine has side effects

I'm fuming at headlines such as in the Evening Standard on 8 April: "Risk of thrombosis from contraceptive pill far greater then blood clots from AstraZeneca". They are almost admitting that the Pill, while massively important to give women control over their fertility, just isn't good enough.

Why should we accept that a medicine used by over three million women in the UK every year, causes such side effects? On top of thrombosis, the Pill has a litany of other side effects, impacting women's mood, energy and weight, and causing headaches, nausea and more.

The Socialist Party's fighting programme for women's rights calls for "publicly funded and democratically controlled research into safe, more effective contraception". That is clearly needed. HEI EN PATTISON



Socialist Party new publication - £1 including postage, from leftbooks coluk



## TUSC excluded for spurious reasons

Election hustings are especially important for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), smaller parties or independent campaigners wanting to get their message out, to publicly challenge the big capitalist parties.

Radical Housing Network (RHN) organised an online hustings on housing for the Greater London Authority (GLA) seat of Lambeth and Southwark. However, our candidate, April Ashley, was not invited to speak on the spurious grounds that the RHN did not also want to give a platform to Reform UK, formerly the Brexit Party.

So attendees were treated once more to the bankrupt housing policies of the big four status quo parties, whereas TUSC, the only party with radical housing policies, was excluded. And by excluding TUSC, they also excluded April who is a former housing worker.

The hustings event could have been an excellent way to publicly expose Reform UK's anti-working-class policies. RHN's claim to be 'radical' does not ring true, especially when you set out to prevent trade unionists and socialists from having a voice

## **STEVE NALLY.**

OCTORS 4 U/CC

LAMBETH, SOUTH WEST LONDON

## Tories repeat Napier asylum failure

Napier barracks in Folkestone houses men seeking asylum in the UK. The recent Covid outbreak at the dilapidated barracks affected over half of the 400 men living in cramped, overcrowded conditions

South East Kent Trades Union Council (SEKTUC) responded to the desperate situation. We said that vulnerable people who have fled war and torture must be moved to safe accommodation: they must have access to medical treatment: and they should have full access to good quality legal advice and representation via legal aid solicitors to ensure that their asylum claims are processed within an acceptable timeframe.

The Home Office, in reaction to pressure from the community, emptied the unit. However, it has now emerged that it will resume placing people seeking asylum in the unit, despite the view of Public Health England: "Housing hundreds of men together, sharing dormitories, bedrooms and communal areas mean it is impossible for residents to avoid having contact with each other. Another outbreak therefore seems inevitable.' FRIC SEGAL FOLKESTONE, KENT



I was surprised to see the manager at SPS Technologies in Leicester talking to striking workers on the picket line (see page 6). I sold a copy of the Socialist to one of the strikers, so the manager came over to ask what I was doing there.

I explained that I was a member of the National Education Union (NEU) and the Socialist Party, and I was there to bring solidarity and support the strike. The person who had bought a paper asked the manager to buy one, but he said he wouldn't subscribe.

The manager told me that I wasn't allowed on the picket line, and I would have to leave. I told him that he couldn't stop me from standing on the pavement near a bus stop.

He said that the Unite regional official had said that I couldn't be there. "Oh really? Well, I'll discuss it with them then."

'You're not allowed to speak to them" he said. So I asked the strikers if they were OK with me being there and they nodded.

He walked off looking rather disgruntled. "See what we are up against", they

**HEATHER RAWLING LEICESTER** 

## Guerrilla gardening

During my years in the workers' move ment I have been involved with many activities - picket lines, flyposting and demos. But at 67, for the first time, I participated in 'guerrilla gardening' on a site where developers had planned to build.

This is a small green patch in an area of high density, mainly social housing. A well fought local campaign, featured in the Socialist, defeated the proposed private high rise development.

To ensure the space stays green, I joined a small group with spades and hoes. We planted six saplings to add to the existing mature trees.

We need more housing, but in the right places. It is important to defend green spaces, especially in inner-city areas. **KEVIN PATTISON** LEEDS

11

## Why you should join the Socialist Party

## NICK HART

WOLVERHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

you're reading this, chances are you see yourself as a socialist. Maybe you bought the paper you're currently holding after meeting Socialist Party members out campaigning for this May's local elections. Or maybe you saw us on one of the many picket lines against 'fire and rehire', marching against the Tories' antiprotest bill, or building for the day of action for free education on 21 April.

It's clear that workers and young people are facing many different attacks at the moment. And wherever you find people fighting back against the bosses and the government, you'll find the Socialist Party standing alongside them, and often helping to organise these struggles.

This isn't a coincidence. The reason we're among the first on the scene when campaigns spring up - putting forward demands and a strategy that we think can help them win - is precisely because we're organised as a party.

We work with others in the unions, in our communities and on university and college campuses to energetically build campaigns. But we don't stop there. We also point out at every turn that the root cause of austerity, attacks on workers, racism, climate change and many other problems is a decaying capitalist system.

While important victories can be won on these individual issues by mass campaigning, it's clear that defeating these age-old problems once and for all requires fundamental :

150 people, of all ages, protested

against the Tories' anti-protest law

(see back page). Lots of people signed

the Kill the Bill petitions on our So-

cialist Party campaign stall. People

were talking to us about why they

were there, their struggles with the

police and asking about our party.

Worcester: Kill the Bill

socialist change. And achieving that requires a party ready to organise and fight for it.

By discussing together as a party what issues face the working class, and the socialist solution to them, we're better prepared to go out and argue for socialism and win support for it. By learning the lessons of pre-vious struggles that our organisation has taken part in over several decades, we're ready for whatever present-day capitalism throws at us.

This clarity of ideas, and a shared determination to put them into action, is what marks us out as a party. But you don't have to be superhuman to join us! Our organisation is made up of ordinary workers, alongside students and those unable to work

Everyone who joins the Socialist Party is supported to find a role, big or small, that they can play in helping to build the struggle, and given the political grounding and confidence that they need to do that. How much each member can offer in time, money and skills will vary depending on their own circumstances, but whatever they can is valued, and helps us achieve far more together than any of us could as individuals.

So whether you've been thinking about getting involved in fighting back against capitalism, or you're already active with your union or local community, if you want to get organised with other socialists, now is the time to join the Socialist Party

Go to socialistparty.org.uk/join or text JOIN with your name and postcode to 07530 429 441

ANDA #BLM

## **Cardiff: Hundreds protest to free Siyanda**

### JOE FATHALLAH CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

300 people attended a demonstration in Cardiff city centre on 10 April in support of Siyanda Mngaza, organised by Young Socialists Wales. Siyanda is an innocent black woman

serving a four-and-a-half-year prison sentence. In May 2019, Siyanda was brutally attacked by a group of three people, two of them male and all three much bigger than her, while also being racially abused. Siyanda is disabled and struggled to defend herself. She was left with awful facial injuries, which are documented in her medical records, and even in Dyfed-Powys Police's own custody photos.

None of Siyanda's attackers were arrested, but instead she was charged and convicted of GBH, based on the testimony of her attackers and their friends as witnesses! Her recent appeal was dismissed by a single judge, who failed to even offer a retrial despite overwhelming evidence that

prosecution witnesses had lied in the original trial.

Cammilla Mngaza - Siyanda's mother and a Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate in May's Wales Senedd elections (see page 4) - spoke passionately about her fight for justice for her daughter.

Speakers at the rally spoke about institutional racism in the police in Wales; how, for example, Siyanda's complaint of racism against her attackers was not followed up properly by Dyfed-Powys Police.

The case of Mohamud Hassan, who died after release from the custody of South Wales Police earlier this year, is still being protested. Mohamud, who had previously met Siyanda, suffered terrible injuries in custody, and no answers have been forthcoming as to what happened to him. At least five police officers are being investigated, but none have been suspended, let alone charged, over his death.

Bartlett spoke to give solidarity greetings to the campaign from Cardiff Trades Union Council. Trade union branches and bodies across Wales, all the way up to the Wales TUC, have passed motions in support of the Free Siyanda campaign.

Dave explained the need to build class solidarity against racism and police brutality, and for democratic community control of the police, to hold them accountable for injustices and institutional racism.

South Wales Police kept a low profile on the protest, no doubt aware of how their past actions are now coming under scrutiny. But many passers-by stopped to listen to the speeches and learn about Siyanda's case.

We will keep fighting for justice for Siyanda, and to remove this rotten capitalist system, which needs racism to keep working-class people divided.

Visit freesivanda.com for more Socialist Party member Dave : about this campaign

### **CHRIS NEWBY**

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND NATIONAL ORGANISER

Socialist Party members and supporters have done brilliant work in making sure we smashed through our fighting fund target for the last quarter.

We raised £39,948 out of a target of £25,000. This means that Socialist Party members, part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), will have the resources we need to have the best possible election campaigns.

Much of the fighting fund has been

The protest went off peacefully with a low police presence. The protest was good natured, and the atmosphere was encouraging. I feel Worcester will be seeing more of these protests during the coming months. **CALVIN FOWLER** WORCESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

## Fighting fund target smashed. Can we do it again?

for our election campaigns. Here are

just a few of the many donations we

Party, donated £50. "A token of soli-

darity with those comrades standing

Another person donating £10 said:

"I fully support your movement to-

wards equal pay and the right to

protest among many other issues. I

believe that only by collectiveness/

for TUSC in the May elections."

Dave Byrom, Wakefield Socialist

have received:



TUSC candidates spoke at the

Northampton Kill the Bill demo against the Tories' anti-protest law. There, £10 was donated by the son of an ex-miner.

He praised Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) for the activity that was done during the 1984-85 miners' strike. He will be joining the next Socialist Party meeting in Northampton. Socialist Party members in Ealing,

west London, received a £50 donation while campaigning on Kill the Bill, and £23 was raised for the fighting fund in Leicester at a campaign stall to defend the right to protest.

We must make sure that our mempers don't let up in raising fighting fund during this new quarter. It is important that we plan now how we are going to raise the money, and continue with the brilliant fundraising achieved so far. Please email in plans to the Socialist Party as soon as possible



raised from the tremendous response working together we can bring these to our election appeal. Whatever the changes. size of the donation, it has all helped £200 was sent in by local TUSC make sure that we have enough posters, leaflets, pamphlets and banners

supporters in Staines towards the Socialist Party's election campaign. Regular readers of the Socialist in Nottingham donated £45.

Mia Hollsing in Caerphilly donated £170, and Dave and Jane Nellist in Coventry donated £100. We also received a £1.000 donation from Wakefield, and £1,000 from Chris Huggins in Essex

With the partial easing of lockdown, Socialist Party members have been able to hold more campaign stalls, particularly around

the election in support of TUSC candidates.

## **PCS** elections **Support the Broad Left Network for a** democratic, fighting union leadership

The ballot for PCS president and national executive committee opens on 22 April and closes 13 May. PCS is the union for government workers in the civil service and public and private service workers. The PCS left rank-and-file group, the Broad Left Network, is standing Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd for

president and candidates for vice-presidents and the national executive committee.

Our coverage of this important election includes an interview with Marion Lloyd along with the full Broad Left Network slate and an outline of the Broad Left Network programme - more details about the Broad Left Network are available at pcsbln.wordpress.com.

The Socialist urges support for the Broad Left Network in this election for a democratic, fighting union leadership.

Marion Llovd has received 42 branch nominations. She is currently BEIS (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) group president and on the union's national executive committee. Marion is in the strongest position to challenge the incumbent, Fran Heathcote, Marion spoke to the Socialist and explained why she believes PCS members should vote for her and the other Broad Left Network candidates in these elections.

## Why are you standing for

We need change at the top of the union. We desperately need a leadership that is serious about tackling the very destructive attacks that PCS members are facing and will continue to face if our employers have their way.

The current leadership is out of touch and doesn't understand. let alone tackle, the day-to-day issues we all face at work.

On the Covid-19 epidemic their whole approach to keeping members safe has been based on individual members making their own minds up about what is safe and acting on their own when it's not. Right at the beginning when we discussed our approach at the national executive committee, it was clear the current leadership was too cautious and was not prepared to organise a serious campaign to keep members as safe as possible.

and other Broad Left Network members called for a collective response to the Covid-19 threat. Only months later, in the face of the most serious of situations in DVLA, did the current leadership finally act.

This cautious approach became even more apparent when, out of the blue, the general secretary Mark Serwotka, supported by current president Fran Heathcote, informed the employer that they had 'parked' our national pay claim. This was without any discussion with the elected leadership of the union and before we had even met. I can't interpret the as anything but bowing down to this idea that we should all pull together during a crisis - 'national unity' with the Tories.

But the Tories have not stopped their attacks against workers and PCS members in particular. In fact, the current leadership has given a : to defend jobs, pay and conditions. green light to the employer that there : The Covid-19 pandemic has made will be no struggle on any issue, organised and led under the current : class issue and a workplace issue for : trade union - not an extension to the : gether to fight the employer

leadership - at least during the period of this pandemic. The national executive committee

majority slavishly went along with all this - exactly why PCS members need a leadership prepared to confront the very serious challenges we face.

The government has now announced a further pay freeze with a fair degree of confidence that the current leadership will do little to organise the response required to win on pay. Members feel isolated and left to fight alone. Poverty pay levels within our membership are appalling. 10% of civil servants earn below the living wage.

In our privatised areas many members barely scrape the minimum wage. This is scandalous. We need an almighty campaign for proper pay rates in these areas so that people can make ends meet.

The insistence of our current leadership to have a campaign on pay and only pay is wrong. Surely the most sensible thing to do is to link everything together and include issues such as pensions and a safe working environment. Members are already being forced back into the workplace - Jobcentres, courts, areas of the Home Office, on the back of the Tories 'roadmap' out of the pandemic

This is on top of those who have been in the workplace throughout the lockdown. But in some areas cases are yet again creeping up and the union must organise collectively to respond to any forced return. We must develop a campaign that everyone can get behind and have confidence in. I would build that, working with reps. and go out to the heart of our membership.

That's why I'm standing - to work with members and reps to build that campaign. One which inspires confidence and gets members involved.

### What are the key challenges ion and its facing the un

The Covid-19 threat and the issues we must address will not go away overnight. A safe working environment and the massive mental health and wellbeing issues will be our priority. As will opposition to the pay freeze.

Tackling the huge inequalities faced by members at work is a vital part of building our campaigns

trade unions. Black and Asian people have been hard hit by Covid-19 in large part because of low-paid, exploitative work and poverty housing. Similarly, sexual harassment and LGBTO+ discrimination are workplace issues - we must campaign for zero tolerance in the workplace. We all have to fight together, so that it's not just left to black people to fight racism, women to fight sexism and so on - it's a collective struggle. I am determined to root equal-

ity properly into our bargaining and campaigning.

Running through all this is the need to build our membership and therefore our strength. Well over 60,000 members have been lost under the current leadership's tenure. We must campaign to organise the most effective response to win. It is this, in my whole experience, that will encourage people to join.

We must give resources to branches and groups to support them in this work - not centralise power and resources as is happening under the current leadership. The National Education Union recruited 50,000 new members because it took a tough. approach to the Covid-19 threat in schools

Our reps are key to this - and that's why we must give proper resources to our reps on the ground.

## t's your position on the hcoming local elections?

Like many of our members I want to see people elected who stand on a programme to reverse pay decline and job cuts. I have no faith in the Labour Party under Keir Starmer to do that. It leaves a particularly nasty taste in my mouth to see so many Labour councils implementing cuts.

I will vote for any candidate that stands against austerity and opposes all cuts. In my area that means the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which is standing in many areas across Britain.

I oppose affiliation to the Labour Party. Blair and Brown did us no favours: we remember the Blair and Brown governments that cut 100,000 civil service jobs; privatised jobs and gave our members away to rotten companies which ruthlessly attacked our members' jobs, pay and conditions

Many of the MPs who supported these policies and moved against Jeremy Corbyn are still around - why clear that the fight for equality is a would we support them? We are a

Labour Party - and both my opponents in this election would do well to remember that.

Instead, we should influence politicians to benefit us, not just throw money at them and let them off the hook. This is of little benefit to what PCS members need.

### What do you say to evidence of government/big business of govern etration?

The spycops revelations and the case of the Shrewsbury 24 pickets (see Shrewsbury Pickets win: Convictions overturned' at socialistparty. org.uk) are in my opinion just the tip of the iceberg. At last it's out in the open! Although this confirms what many of us suspected, it is key that we continue to demand justice including public, uncensored inquiries such as in the case of spycops

My former union was CPSA (forerunner of PCS). We learnt from the release of the Thatcher government papers how security forces intervened and worked hand in hand with the Tories and the right-wing union leadership. For example, preventing Militant supporter John Macreadie from becoming general secretary after winning the membership ballot.

The government has exposed its agenda by its recent moves to limit the right to protest. Like the antitrade union laws, they are there to be used against workers, including PCS members. The right to protest, the right to strike, the right to picket were fought for to help us struggle for decent pay, jobs and conditions. All this is to stop us and we must defend our democratic rights.

## low will you be different from the current president?

I will actively build a campaign to tackle the issues I have already highlighted. I will ensure that no group of members is left isolated, and develop an approach which inspires confidence and a belief we can do something

I am a working mother. I know the daily challenges our members face because I too have faced them - including in recent years the threat of losing my job.

I passionately believe in the potential our union has to solve our problems at work. I know what to do and how to do it. I will work with reps and members to build the confidence we need so that members will join to-



"I am proud to support Broad Left Net work in the national elections as I believe we need to go back to being an activist and member-led union. I believe that Broad Left Network has the programme that can achieve this and gain the successes our members deserve. SARAH BROWN

MET POLICE GROUP PRESIDENT - PERSONAL CAPACITY

"Covid-19 has a disproportionate impact on our disabled members. PCS states that equality is at the heart of everything we do, vet in the move to a predominantly virtual organising world, where the needs of disa bled members and activists should have been at the forefront of protecting and promoting our members interests during the pandemic. PCS was found wanting. am supporting the Broad Left Network in this year's elections. I have seen first-hand the leadership and dedication its activists have shown in landing agreements to ensure that every safeguard that was needed for disabled members, whethe they were working remotely or from their offices, was put in place. **ROB BOWERS** DSG GROUP

"Marion has provided invaluable suppor by listening and discussing through issues I have faced as a rep and negotiator to find the best means to defend members and make real progress. It is refresh ing to have someone prepared to discuss and who considers all avenues, including how to mobilise our members' anger to bring maximum pressure on manage ment in talks to get results." **KATRINE WILLIAMS** PRESIDENT, DWP GROUP

failed union leadership

PCS SOCIA		
and memb		
President		
Vice presid		
National ex committee		
Brittle Fior		
<b>Denman</b> K		
Francis Su		
Lloyd Mario		
Rees Dave		
Suter Paul:		
Worswick		
Davies Jair		
Rosser Jon		

15-21 April 2021

the **Socialist** 



The Broad Left Network was formed by socialists in response to the need to challenge and replace the current

- The key issues it is standing
- candidates on include: • A national campaign for a safe

working environment. Address mental health, stress and wellbeing as a priority. We won't pay for the

Covid-19 crisis Stop the pay freeze. For a 10% pay rise. A national campaign on pay

and pensions End privatisation, bring services

back in-house

Protect and improve lay democracy • Protect the future of our

union with campaigns that can recruit, organise, build and win improvements, not by mergers and restructures

Fight the Tory attacks on our right to protest, strike and picket

• A strong political voice - PCS

should support candidates who back

## list Party members support the Broad Left Network and call upon union activists ers to vote for these BLN supported candidates in the ballot 22 April - 13 May.

	Lloyd Marion: BEIS	
lents	Brittle Fiona: Scot Gov, Brown Sarah: Met Police, Semple Dave: DWP, Rosser Jon-Paul: HMRC	
xecutive	Bartlett Dave: MOJ	Borland Rebecca: Home Office
na: Scot Gov	Brown Alex: Health	Brown Sarah: Met Police
evin Met Police	Dennis Alan: DSG	Foxton Gill: DfE
e BEIS	Guinnane Paul: DfE	Heemskerk Rachel: DWP
on: BEIS	Lowry Tom: DWP	Parker Nick: BEIS
: DWP	Ritchie Rob: Met Police	Semple Dave: DWP
: DWP	<b>Tweedale</b> Saorsa-Amatheia: DWP	Williams Katrine: DWP
Craig: DWP	Young Colin: DfE	Bridges Andi: HMRC
me: HMRC	Doyle Nick: HMRC	McDougall Rachelle: HMRC
-Paul: HMRC	Young Bobby: HMRC	

## TUSC: Launching a working-class electoral alternative in London

## RFRKAY KARTA\

OUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On Friday 9 April, over 70 attended the online campaign launch rally organised by the London Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) gearing up for the London elections on 6 May

The rally was chaired by James lvens, a London Socialist Party organiser. He opened the rally by reiterating the point that "TUSC candidates standing for the Greater London Authority (GLA) are standing to be the hot breath on the back of the necks of cutter-Khan, Starmer the abstainer, and their resurrected New Labour project".

We heard from a wide range of peakers who are standing as TUSC candidates in London, including a school worker, a college student and a Black Lives Matter activist.

The first speaker was Lewis Peacock, an RMT member who is standing as a TUSC candidate in the Iubilee ward council by-election in Enfield. He spoke about the crisis in Transport for London funding which has been exacerbated during the pandemic, and the attacks on the militant workforce from both the Tories and Sadiq Khan.

Nancy Taaffe, Socialist Party member and chair of the Save Our Square campaign, was the second speaker. She explained why she is standing for the GLA seat covering the London

boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Waltham Forest. She said: "There is a layer of people who will be reflecting on what we have just lived through And TUSC is standing in an attempt to reach those people and offer a socialist solution, particularly in the absence of other forces standing."

There were also speakers from oth er constituent parts of TUSC. And Walker, an independent member, is standing as a TUSC candidate for the Redbridge and Havering constitu ency seat for the London Assembly.

He spoke about how Redbridge has given too much ground to big developers: "Every vote for TUSC is challenging the status quo of the three main parties who want to give in to big business". We also heard from Jonathan Cooper, an organiser for Resist in London

Other TUSC candidates spoke bril liantly about why they are standing Naomi Byron, NHS shop steward and a Socialist Party member, said that the 1% pay rise is a kick in the teeth for NHS workers.

Lewis Baker, a member of the bakers' union BFAWU, who took part in the 2017 McDonald's strike, is stand ing on the TUSC GLA list.

He said that under the current leadership the Labour Party is failing to connect with working-class com munities. He concluded by saying workers need an alternative, and that TUSC is the only organisation that offers a real political alternative.

## London housing crisis: vote TUSC to fight back

## JAMES IVENS

EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Misery. That's what renting in London means for millions. But with elections coming up, Londoners can oush back against profiteering developers and politicians - by voting THSC

Overcrowding, dilapidation - even slum conditions for many poorer workers. Is it any wonder Covid ripped through working-class neighbourhoods like the Great Fire of 1666?

It's workers, not London's superrich socialites, who have kept the city running at the cost of their own wellbeing. But now over one in seven private renters is in rent arrears, says Citizens Advice. Some even face threats of eviction.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) says: never again! TUSC is an anti-cuts electoral alliance including transport union RMT, the Socialist Party, and others. In the London elections on 6 May, TUSC is standing to cancel the debts.

All rent debt accrued during the pandemic must be dropped. This includes claims like the belligerent case against refugee campaigner Lawanaya Ramajeyam for a room she'd already left!

Small landlords can receive compensation based on proven need but make the big landlords and banks cough up! Economic evictions must be banned.

And what about London's money-for-nothing rent racket itself? TUSC says enough with extortion for mouldy matchbox homes. For democratic controls on rents, with compulsory landlord registration and quality checks. Fire safety for all now - bill the government!

And why should parasitic developers hoard the housing supply at all TUSC says: stop the land grab. London's Labour mayor and councils are flogging every last scrap. We stand for building council homes for all, and 100% council housing on public land.

Each vote for TUSC on Thursday 6 May is a warning shot across the privateers' bows. But that's not the end of the fight. Tenants can take a leaf from the Covid students' books rent strikes showed that action gets results

In the run-up to the election, housing activists have called a day of action on Saturday 17 April. Socialist Party branches will be campaigning on housing across the capital. And we'll be joining the march from the Boundary Estate, London's first social housing scheme, at 1pm

13

## **Lessons from history** A working-class movement fighting unemployment and capitalism

### **SCOTT JONES**

ealising only by the abolition of this hideous capitalist system can the horror of unemployment be removed from our midst, I here and now take upon myself a binding oath, to never cease from active strife against this system until capitalism is abolished and our country and its resources truly belong to the people."

With this oath running through their minds, thousands of unemployed workers set off in November 1922 from all parts of Britain, with every main road carrying marchers, braving snow and rain to descend on London. Cheer after cheer arose in Hyde Park and it seethed with excitement as contingents arrived. News spread that Scottish marchers had linked up with their comrades from the North of England and were approaching. The sound of Welshmen could be heard singing as a London band and East End dockers led them into the park.

Numbers swelled to 70,000 as they descended on parliament - to be met with row after row of police - to protest mass unemployment in the first hunger march organised by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM).

## **Turbulent period**

This was a time of mass unemployment, industrial unrest, capitalist crisis and the scars of a recent flu pandemic. A hundred years on, the situation facing the working class is relatable.

Following the slaughter of World War One, Prime Minister David Lloyd George promised a "land fit for heroes", but by spring 1921, millions were unemployed, some 23.4% of Britain's workforce.

But it was also a period of revolution, with the workers and rural poor in Russia, led by the Bolsheviks, taking power in 1917, and the end of the carnage of WW1. There followed revolutionary movements across Europe, including strikes, mutinies and the formation of communist parties



modelled on Russia's revolutionaries. The Communist Party of Great Britain, which had only been formed in 1920, set about organising the country's unemployed with the formation of the NUWM on 15 April 1921.

Protests and action by unemployed workers had already taken place. It was common for groups to march separately along places like Oxford Street in London, demonstrating and collecting money. But the NUWM was set up to organise the unemployed into a mass, organised movement.

The NUWM adopted the principle of 'work or full maintenance at trade union rates of wages.' A national headquarters was established, and national officials elected.

Wal Hannington, who was national organiser for most of the NUWM's existence, later described it: "There is no other organisation in Britain which has crammed so much intense and persistent agitation into the period from 1921 to 1936 as the NUWM."

As well as fighting for demands for real help for the unemployed and an end to the variation in the meagre relief that was available, the organisation also recognised what Marx and Engels described as capitalism's need for a "reserve army of labour". The NUWM argued that the unemployed were being used to drive down wages and conditions of those in employment.

This is exactly what the British government and the bosses were doing. This whole period was one of struggle between the working class and its organisations and the government representing capitalism and the bosses.

## Mass strike movement

Huge strikes took place in 1919, 1921 and 1925, culminating in the almighty 1926 general strike, when workers tasted their own power, and revolution was on the cards in Britain. Mass hunger marches organised by the NUWM took place in 1922 and 1927 and then continued in 1930, 1932 and 1934, as well as the famous Jarrow crusade in 1936, during the Great Depression.

"The scene was of chronic poverty and human degradation in a setting of slum housing. They were scenes not unique to South Wales, but common throughout the distressed areas of the country," described South Wales miners' union leader and NUWM activist Will Paynter. The welfare state did not exist and the means-tested 'dole' (unemployment benefit) was insufficient and degrading.

The hated 'means test' was introduced in 1931 by the National Government. It required unemployed workers to sell possessions before receiving any benefit. And if there was a working member of the household, that too disqualified the applicant. These conditions drove workers into action.

One day of action against means testing in South Wales saw 300,000 march - over 10% of the Welsh population at the time! The situation was the same in the other coalfields, in the docklands of London and Liverpool, the shipbuilding areas of North East England and Glasgow, the industrial areas of the Midlands, and elsewhere.

The role of the organised working class and the trade unions was vital in the movement of the unemployed, combined with the leadership of the Communist Party.

The leadership of the Labour Party, despite being in power twice during the 1920s and 1930s, followed the lead of the Liberals and Tories and either simply ignored the pressing needs of the working class or worse, openly sided with the bosses and attacked workers living conditions.

Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald even joined a national government with the Tories, and hunger marches on his watch were met with police violence and prison for the NUWM leaders.

However, all the struggle and potential were also squandered be-cause of the political degeneration of the Communist Party (CP) and the Communist International under its Stalinist leadership. This mirrored the process in the Soviet Union after Leon Trotsky's Left Opposition was defeated by Stalin and a growing

bureaucratic caste within the Soviet state and the Communist Party.

For example, between 1929 and 1934 the CP adopted an ultra-left policy, denouncing the Labour Party in Britain as 'social fascist'. This sectarianism placed an enormous obstacle in preventing official recog-nition of the NUWM by the workers' movement. Equally, the CP's political volte-face after 1934 led to class-collaborationist policies which blunted the struggle against capitalism.

## **Global fianancial crash**

Years of austerity inflicted by the Tories and the modern heirs to Labour's MacDonald and the Liberals' Lloyd George, combined with the Covid-crisis, have seen unemployment rise again, with the potential for it to get much worse.

Following the global economic crisis in 2008, the Socialist Party launched Youth Fight for Jobs, taking inspiration from the heroic and determined hunger marches and unemployed workers' activists of the NUWM in the 1920s and 1930s.

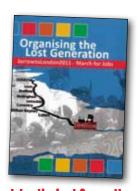
Youth Fight for Jobs recreated the Jarrow march on its 75th anniversary in 2011, as young people and socialists, with the support of trade unions, walked in the footsteps of the NUWM.

Mass unemployment, especially among young people, is back on the agenda, and so is Youth Fight for Jobs and the lessons of the NUWM.

The NUWM ranks recognised that they were not only fighting for themselves and their families, but for their communities, their class, and future generations. They saw that capitalism was the problem and poverty and unemployment would always exist as long as that system exists.

Today, we must fight for a mass political alternative to accompany the day-to-day trade union and unemployment struggles, built by working-class people and fighting for socialism - which will banish unemployment and all of capitalism's other ills, for good.

See also: "Struggle or starve!" 1932 - when Birkenhead workers beat the means test' by Peter Taaffe at socialistparty.org.uk



**Organising the Lost Generation -Jarrow to London 2011 March for Jobs** £10 including postage. Available from leftbooks.co.uk see also vouthfightforiobs.com



Youth Fight for Jobs on its 2011 march PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

15

# **Tensions escalate in Northern Ireland**

### **COUNCILLOR DONAL O'COFAIGH** MILITANT LEFT (CWI IRELAND)

mages of young people rioting in Belfast and elsewhere, countered by police using water cannon, conjured up scenes from the period of the 'Troubles'. From the point of view of international audiences, Northern Ireland appears to have moved overnight from stability to imminent disintegration.

Of course, this is not a true reflection of reality on the ground. But the very fact of an appearance of such a rapid transition from one extreme to another belies the truth that political arrangements established under the Good Friday Agreement, and subsequently, have not resolved and cannot resolve the national question.

Tensions in Northern Ireland reflect the underlying change in demography that appears to be moving to a tipping point when Protestants will become a minority, and therefore threatens Northern Ireland's position in the UK. Alongside this, the continued failure of the Northern Ireland Assembly to deliver any real improvements in the economic and social conditions of the population has created an explosive mix. Social deprivation among the working class in both unionist and nationalist areas remains stubbornly high.

## Hard sea border

While demographic changes underpin the latest crisis, the imposition of the 'hard sea border' and the Northern Ireland (NI) Protocol, which in effect separates Northern Ireland from the UK, is the trigger for the latest street confrontations.

To avoid an immediate 'sea border' crisis, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnston negotiated a delay of three months on the imposition of 'sanitary and phytosanitary controls' (public health inspections) and a sixmonth delay on extensive customs declarations. But even these were not enough to avoid a political crisis.

Hard-line voices within unionism put pressure on the Tory government to suspend the protocol unilaterally. But the Tory government was not for turning. However, it was the Astra-Zeneca vaccine shortage which led to the European Union (EU) threatening to prevent EU-produced vaccines entering Northern Ireland. While EU ministers quickly retreated, the threat raised tensions further and exposed the duplicity of EU concerns for the region.

Tensions continued to mount. Posters, murals and graffiti went up across unionist areas against the hard sea border. Scrambling to recover authority the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP, the main unionist political party led by Arlene Foster), which had initially welcomed the NI Protocol as an opportunity for business - met with the Loyalist Community Council, representing Loyalist paramilitaries, to agree a common campaign against the protocol.

The spark for riots was the investigation by the Police Service of Northern Ireland into the attendance of senior Sinn Féin politicians, including



A hijacked bus set alight during the recent riots. Bus workers walked off the job in response to threats and intimidation, as did port workers weeks earlier

deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill and executive ministers, at the funeral of IRA leader Bobby Storey, during Covid lockdown restrictions. The announcement that the Public Prosecution Service would not prosecute these politicians deepened unionist anger.

The event became totemic among unionists as exposing the willingness of the police to turn a blind eve to Republicans breaking Covid safety laws that were strictly enforced on everyone else.

## Sectarian football

The reality is that Covid has become a sectarian football with both sides feeling aggrieved; nationalists demanded action when hundreds of Glasgow Rangers football supporters celebrated on the streets of Belfast earlier this year, apparently breaching Covid restrictions, while unionists were largely silent.

The initial riots were restricted to areas controlled by Loyalist paramilitary groups more openly associated with criminality and drug-dealing, but quickly spread. Riots reached a height on 7 April as rioters exchanged stones and petrol bombs over 'peace walls' in West Belfast.

As the situation began to spin out

of control the nationalist and unionist political parties and paramilitary organisations sought to put a cap on the riots. Unionists used the death of Prince Philip to call for people to come off the streets. Their appeals clearly impacted, and while there were still some riots, they were markedly less extensive.



## From the point of view of international audiences, **Northern Ireland appears** to have moved overnight from stability to imminent disintegration

For socialists, the recent events should act as a warning. Neither capitalist nationalism or unionism offer a way forward to workers. On the contrary, both camps threaten a return to division, violence and even the prospect of repartition.

An alternative must be built. A

glimpse of what is possible has been shown by the action taken by Metro bus drivers and port workers who, united across sectarian lines, walked off the job when they and their colleagues were Members threatened. of the Committee for a Workers' International in Northern Ireland -Militant Left - played an active role in supporting the workers' action. The fact that attacks had

targeted essential workers who had worked throughout the lockdown, increased wider working-class support against sectarianism and cut through the tensions, striking a chord for class unity with many across the board.

Yet again, recent events have confirmed that, even with small forces, principled socialists putting forward a platform of workers' unity can rally workers and cut across the rise of reaction.

To profoundly change the situation would require action from the trade union movement and the building of a mass party for socialist change.

For background writings, see socialistworld.net



socialist organisation which the Socialist Party is affiliated to. The CWI is organised in countries across the planet. We work to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against capitalism, and to fight for a socialist world. socialistworld.net

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TOM GREEN **BIRMINGHAM SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY** 

he government has post-

poned the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill until later in the year. But there is still an ongoing movement to completely kill this authoritarian legislation.

Waves of protests have been sweeping the country for weeks since

the bill was introduced. It would net offenders up to ten years in prison for minor 'offences' related to protesting.

Since the Covid pandemic, the Tories have become embroiled in scandal after scandal, exposing further the true nature of capitalism. The Tories feel the need to quell criticism and prepare for any movements that threaten to expose and undermine their profit system.

The protests have been full of

young workers and students. And people are planning to take to the streets against the bill again on 17 April.

We young people have taken much of the brunt of recent policies. Two-thirds of the people who have had jobs cut during the pandemic are under 25. Unemployment among black youth has reached the level it was when the Brixton Riots happened in 1981!

It follows that those who have been negatively impacted by the most exploitative capitalist policies would come out in numbers against the same government trying to limit their freedom to protest.

This includes students, angry about paying tuition fees to watch online lessons and rent for accommodation that many haven't used. That's why Socialist Students is holding a national day of action on 21 April.

Our bold agenda includes eliminating tuition fees and student debt, full rent rebates for the duration of the pandemic, and creating an education system which would function for all young people, outside the control of capitalist market forces. This should be part of a fight to replace the capitalist system - which curtails our right to protest, crushes our living standards, and denies us a future - with socialism.

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

