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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ★ SERVICE CUTS ★ LOW PAY ★ JOB LOSSES

RACISM ★ COVID SAFETY ★ FIRE AND REHIRE ★ RIGHT TO PROTEST

TIME TO FIGHT BACK!

VOTE SOCIALIST ON 6 MAY

JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

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Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition Wales election launch

Every voter in Wales has the opportunity to vote for TUSC

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition's (TUSC) Welsh parliament election campaign 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, lead candidate 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.



Cammilla Mngaza, candidate in South Wales East, spoke passionately about the injustice to her daughter Siyanda, who was falsely imprisoned 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 system 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."



Labour has been in power for 22 years and yet these injustices continue

- Cammilla Mngaza



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



If people value the NHS and the care sector they must vote TUSC on 6 May

- Beth Webster



TUSC supporting sparks protest RACHEL BARWELL



South Wales West candidates



The full Senedd TUSC list candidates

South Wales West

- Mark Evans - Carmarthenshire council workers' leader
- Karen Gerrahty - Maesteg NHS occupational therapist
- Gareth Bromhall - Secretary of Swansea Trades Union Council and care worker
- Oisín Mullholland - Organiser of the rent strike at Swansea University
- Charlie Wells - Swansea University organiser of Free Education campaign

South Wales Central

- Ross Saunders - Organiser of Cardiff Against the Cuts and secretary of Socialist Party Wales
- Beth Webster - Nurse at UHW hospital
- Mia Hollsing - Cynon Valley campaigner against domestic violence
- Kevin Gillen - Barry community activist

South Wales East

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



NHS pay: reject Tories' miserly 1% 'offer'

Fight for full 15% rise

HOLLY JOHNSON

NURSING SISTER, NHS PAY 15 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 #stepupstarmar 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 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 political-legal 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

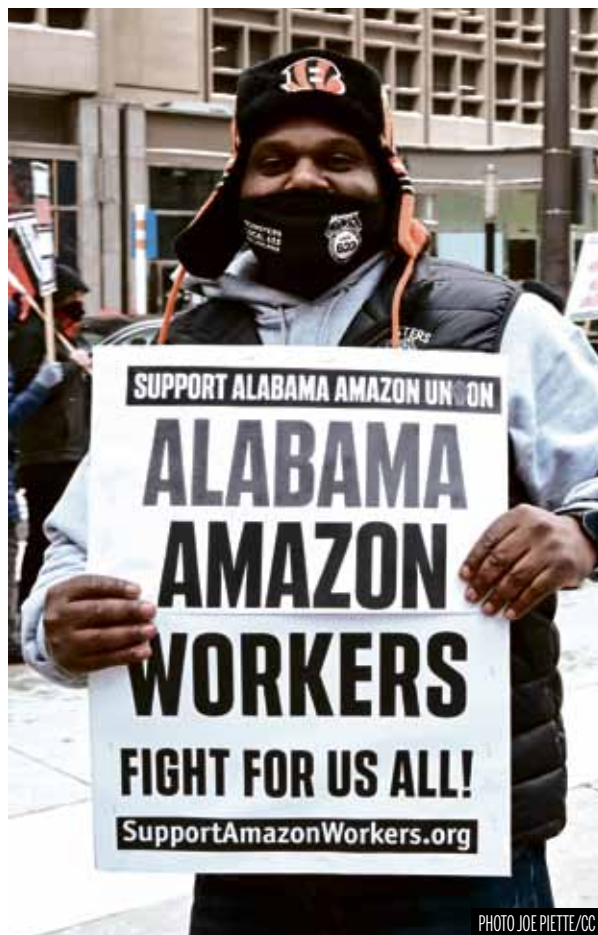


PHOTO JOE PIETTE/CC

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 £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

Deliveroo workers strike and protest for better pay and conditons

York

BERNARD DAVIES
YORK SOCIALIST PARTY

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. This action was targeted specifically



Iain Dalton speaking at the York rally

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!

SPS Technologies workers end strike after management backs down



STEVE SCORE

STEVE SCORE
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

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 fire 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 multi-billion-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

can push back even the most powerful 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!

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Thurrock Council workers strike against pay cuts



DAVE MURRAY

DAVE MURRAY
PRESIDENT BASILDON AND THURROCK TUC

In the shadow of Dartford Bridge scores of Unite members joined a

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 the 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 well as in cleansing and refuse.

St Mungo's maintenance workers on indefinite strike



St Mungo's strike in 2014 PAUL MATTSSON

UNITE MEMBERS IN ST MUNGO'S

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 organisation.

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 Mungo'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 redundancy."

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 dismissed 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 Education 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 Nviro Cleaning have inferior conditions to direct university employees.

Outsourced workers want equal treatment 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 credited 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 will start at 3pm at 12 Exchange House, Primrose Street, near Spitalfields, east London.

EAST 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 announced soon.

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 company's profits.

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 Summers said it was "very disappointing" that the company had not ruled out introducing the policy: "London bus drivers have delivered a massive 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 company 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.



Bristol Water workers walk out



TOM BALDWIN

TOM BALDWIN
BRISTOL SOCIALIST PARTY

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 management is trying to impose. This would 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 imposing 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' bonuses 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 willing 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."



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 hospital was to be renamed St Philip's, and London to become St Philipsberg.

One day we will awake to the realisation 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 MALLETT, 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 than 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.

HELEN PATTISON
EALING, WEST LONDON

'A Fighting Programme for Women's Rights and Socialism'

Socialist Party new publication - £1 including postage, from leftbooks.co.uk



● 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
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."

ERIC SEGAL
FOLKESTONE, KENT

● Mr Manager: Sod off

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 said.

HEATHER RAWLING
LEICESTER

● Guerrilla gardening

During my years in the workers' movement 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



DOCTORS 4 U/CC

Why you should join the Socialist Party

NICK HART

WOLVERHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

If 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 re-hire', marching against the Tories' anti-protest 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

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 previous 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**

Worcester: Kill the Bill

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 Socialist Party campaign stall. People were talking to us about why they were there, their struggles with the police and asking about our party.

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?

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

raised from the tremendous response to our election appeal. Whatever the size of the donation, it has all helped make sure that we have enough posters, leaflets, pamphlets and banners for our election campaigns. Here are just a few of the many donations we have received:

Dave Byrom, Wakefield Socialist Party, donated £50. "A token of solidarity with those comrades standing for TUSC in the May elections."

Another person donating £10 said: "I fully support your movement towards equal pay and the right to protest among many other issues. I believe that only by collectiveness/



RACHEL BARWELL

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.

Socialist Party member Dave

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 freesiyanda.com for more about this campaign**

the election in support of TUSC candidates.

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 members 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.

**Fund the fightback
DONATE TODAY**

● Visit socialistparty.org.uk/donate or call 020 8988 8777

● or make cheques payable to Socialist Party,

PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



Lessons from history

A working-class movement fighting unemployment and capitalism

SCOTT JONES

“Realising 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



Unemployed workers from Jarrow marching to London in 1936 PHOTO NATIONALMEDIAMUSEUM/CC

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 because 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 recognition 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 financial 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.

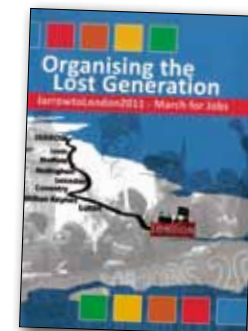
The NUWM ranks recognised that they were not only fighting for themselves and their families, but for their communities, their class, and future generations. They saw that capitalism was the problem and poverty and unemployment would always exist as long as that system exists.

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



Youth Fight for Jobs on its 2011 march PHOTO PAUL MATTHEWSON



Organising the Lost Generation - Jarrow to London 2011 March for Jobs
£10 including postage.

Available from leftbooks.co.uk

see also youthfightforjobs.com

Tensions escalate in Northern Ireland

COUNCILLOR DONAL O'COFAIGH
MILITANT LEFT (CWI IRELAND)

Images 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 Johnson negotiated a delay of three months on the imposition of 'sanitary and phytosanitary controls' (public health inspections) and a six-month 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 AstraZeneca 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 eye 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 threatened. Members 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**



SOCIALISM TODAY

Magazine of the Socialist Party

April issue includes...

- Council cuts: Is the Liverpool road still possible?
- Palace strife: Is this a new Diana moment?
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the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

YOUTH UNDER ATTACK

● **FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO PROTEST**

● **FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURE**

● **FIGHT CAPITALISM**

TOM GREEN
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

The government has postponed 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

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