

Corrupt politicians with their snouts in the trough are nothing new. From 'cash for questions' under Tory prime minister John Major, to 'honours' for business people under New Labour leader Tony Blair, and then the eruption of the MPs' expenses scandal under his successor Gordon Brown; the stink of corruption has long wafted from Westminster.

Now we have the Greensill scandal which reveals even more clearly the rotten character of capitalist politics. 'Fish rots from the head first' and this time it is not just backbenchers or even ministers, but the former Tory prime minister David Cameron who is centre stage, along with senior civil servants. Lex Greensill seems to have relied entirely on cronyism to build his now bankrupt company, Greensill Capital. Brought in as an unpaid 'senior advisor' to Cameron's government in 2011 - the same year he founded Greensill Capital - he used his position to argue for large companies to adopt 'supply chain financing', including a number of NHS Trusts, which his company went on to provide.

Austerity attacks

At a time when the government was driving through savage cuts in living standards and public services, Cameron's cronies were clearly doing very nicely indeed. While workers were being told they had to tighten their belts as a result of a financial crash triggered by speculation, Greensill became a billionaire via a new form of government-supported financial speculation. Cameron then got some personal payback when, two years after his resignation as prime minister - meaning the regulators could not intervene - he was taken on in a lucrative role as an advisor to Greensill Capital.

The collapse of Greensill Capital has put the jobs of thousands of workers at risk, including Liberty Steel workers. But while Greensill himself may have been knocked out of the billionaires' list, the \$200 million worth of shares he sold a year before the collapse will ensure he remains in the super-rich club.

Current Tory prime minister Boris Johnson won the last general election by distancing himself from his own party - including Cameron - and ludicrously posing as some kind of champion of the 'little people' against the elites. This scandal, however, has the potential to wreck any last shreds of that illusion; hence the media warnings to Johnson that sleaze could lose him the 'red wall' seats.

➤➤ CONTINUES ON P2

CORRUPT POLITICIANS WITH SNOOTS IN THE TROUGH



PHOTO PAUL MATTHESSON



VOTE TUSC ON 6 MAY



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

Sweep away the corrupt cronies and their system



CONTINUED FROM P1

With every passing day the avalanche of sleaze grows and threatens to engulf Boris Johnson's government. The company of health minister Matt Hancock's sister, in which Hancock has shares, has won a series of NHS contracts, including one for £300,000 just this year.

And Johnson's government is also up to its neck in the Greensill scandal. Hancock met Lex Greensill to discuss the company having access to NHS contracts. Chancellor Rishi Sunak was lobbied by David Cameron to allow the company access to the largest possible government-backed Covid loans. While that was not granted, Greensill was allowed access to a scheme allowing it to offer loans, backed by the government, of up to £50 million. Clearly this was not based on the financial viability of Greensill – just months later the company went into liquidation!

Faced with this growing tide of filth, Johnson has not set up a democratic inquiry designed to reveal what happened, but is instead attempting a blatant and cynical cover up. The private 'inquiry' that has been set up will be conducted by Nigel Boardman, himself a billionaire, who is on the board of a private bank which is chaired and majority-owned by one of the Tory party's biggest donors!

'Parliamentary democracy'

Cameron and Johnson were both Eton and Oxford-educated, and members of the elite Bullingdon drinking club. At one level this is likely to be one member of the elite seeking to look after another, despite the widely reported antipathy between the two men. But it is much more than that, it is an attempt to cover up the inherently corrupt character of British 'parliamentary democracy', and the sham of a supposedly neutral civil service.

In reality, far from being neutral, the senior civil servants and apparatus of government have always ultimately acted to defend the interests of the existing capitalist order. The Greensill revelations also show that some were also defending their own individual right to shove their noses in the capitalist trough. Bill Crothers, for example, who managed billions of pounds of taxpayers' money as the government's chief procurement officer, was both a supposedly 'neutral' senior civil servant and an advisor to Greensill, before later becoming one of the company's directors.

The Labour Party, now thoroughly reclaimed for big business under Keir Starmer, is currently languishing in the polls as a result of its failure to

offer any serious opposition to Johnson. But it may conceivably recover some ground as Johnson is damaged by this scandal. In reality, however, Blairite Labour is not untouched by the mire. While they are out of government there may be fewer lobbyists sniffing around them, but they are not immune.

In fact the shadow attorney general, Lord Falconer, works for a legal company providing advice to global companies on 'political lobbying in the UK'. And look at New Labour's record in power, not least the Blair-era minister Peter Mandelson, now Starmer's advisor, who under Blair had to resign after receiving an interest-free loan to buy a house.

The loan was from a man who his department was in charge of investigating, and Mandelson was repeatedly under fire for accepting holidays on yachts from Russian oligarchs and other similar favours. Contrast his money-grubbing to the approach of Jeremy Corbyn, whose legacy Mandelson is determined to obliterate, who had the lowest expenses claims of any MP for years.

New Labour

More fundamentally, Starmer's New Labour will never act - as a workers' party would - to expose the underlying cause of the cesspool of corruption at Westminster, because it aims to defend the capitalist system rather than build support for a socialist alternative. This is graphically demonstrated by Starmer's support for the outrageous undemocratic measures taken against the people of Liverpool.



Starmer's New Labour will never act - as a workers' party would - to expose the underlying cause of the cesspool of corruption at Westminster, because it aims to defend the capitalist system

There is a huge contrast between the cosy little private inquiry into Cameron's misdeeds and the Tory government's treatment of Liverpool.

The secretary of state for local government, Robert Jenrick - himself facing allegations of unlawfully agreeing a luxury housing development being built by a Tory donor - has used claims of corruption against the outgoing Labour mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson to justify sending Tory-appointed commissioners into a city that hasn't elected a Tory council in half a century.

At the same time, Jenrick is proposing to slash local democracy with, from 2023 onwards, the number of Liverpool councillors to be reduced



Bullingdon boys Boris Johnson and David Cameron WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM/CC

by two-thirds, and elections only every four years.

This is a punishment not of Joe Anderson, who obediently implemented every cut the Tories demanded of him, but of the working class of Liverpool with its proud record of defying the Tories, not least in 1983-1987 when Liverpool city council, with Militant (now the Socialist Party) in the leadership, took on Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

Starmer's Labour has not only backed the Tories' undemocratic attacks to the hilt, it has carried out its own brutally undemocratic measures to prevent Liverpool Labour selecting a candidate supported by Jeremy Corbyn.

Both the chaos in Liverpool and Labour's weak response to the Greensill scandal, drive home the urgent need for the working class to have its own political voice. In the elections on 6 May the Socialist Party is part of the stand by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), as a first step to creating such a voice, including standing Socialist Party member Roger Banister for Liverpool mayor.

From its inception the workers' movement has campaigned for democratic measures and defended those that exist. Our forebears fought heroically for the right to vote, trade union rights, and electoral systems which could reflect the 'will of the people'. The current scandals reveal how far the Westminster parliament is from these basic necessities and the need for the workers' movement to fight on democratic issues today.

That includes key issues like fighting for the repeal of the undemocratic Tory anti-trade union laws, and opposing the attempts to beef up repressive powers in the Police and Crime Bill. However, it also includes fighting to extend the extremely truncated and corrupt 'democracy' currently on offer.

MPs' pay

In 2015, the last year for which figures are available, only a minuscule 19 MPs had a history of doing manual work. MPs' basic salary of £81,000 a year puts them in the top 5% of earners, with no concept of what life is like for low-paid workers or the millions suffering on Universal Credit, with a basic allowance of less than £5,000 a year. And MPs, normally only elected once every five years, are completely unaccountable to their electors.

When the first Labour MP, Keir Hardie, entered the House of Commons he was not paid and nor were any MPs. Unlike Hardie the overwhelming majority were from the elite and had 'independent incomes'.

A first demand of the workers' movement today has to be for a ban on MPs having 'outside interests', in the form of directorships, major shareholdings, or advisory positions with private companies. That is not enough, however. We should also demand that MPs can take only an average workers' wage, as the Militant-supporting Labour MPs - Terry Fields, Pat Wall and Dave Nellist - did in the 1980s.

Alongside that it is necessary to fight for genuine democracy. The Chartists - the first independent workers' party in history - demanded annual elections to parliament. Today MPs should be elected for a maximum of two years, with a right of recall at any time by their constituents.

The unelected House of Lords should be abolished, with instead a single assembly combining the legislative and executive powers, currently divided in Britain. The right to vote should start at 16. Proportional representation would also be a step forward.

The fight for such democratic improvements is part and parcel of the struggle for socialism. Capitalism is a system based on production for the profits of the few rather than the social needs of the majority. The inevitable result is the cronyism and corruption we are witnessing.



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Only by taking into public ownership the major corporations and banks that dominate the economy, under the control and scrutiny of the working class, in order to allow the development of a democratic socialist plan of production, would it be possible to lay the basis for a genuinely democratic society free from the muck and profiteering of capitalism.

For millions of working-class people, for whom the pandemic has meant enormous hardship, the Greensill scandal will act to drive home that we live in a society run by and for the 1%, at the expense of the 99%. It will fuel the growing search for a socialist alternative.

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Climate change - Johnson spouts 'greenwash 2.0'

SAM MORDEN AND DAVE CARR

Boris Johnson grabbed the headlines with his announcement of a legally binding commitment to a 78% reduction in carbon dioxide gas emissions on 1990 levels by 2035 - some 15 years earlier than previously planned.

However, Johnson's 'green' rhetoric largely consists of recycled headlines. He is trying to pose as a world trendsetter on averting damaging climate change ahead of the delayed COP26 climate summit in Glasgow later this year.

Indeed, Johnson sidesteps where the necessary investment to achieve

this significant cut in greenhouse gas emissions is going to come from.

According to the government's own Climate Change Committee, £50 billion extra investment per year is needed over the next 35 years to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 - a sizeable sum. But the cost of not doing so will be even greater to the economy. Moreover, it is roughly equivalent to the £900 billion in quantitative easing that UK governments have shelled out over the last decade to keep the capitalist economy afloat.

But the amount the government has pledged is paltry - maybe £3 billion extra in terms of new money. At the same time, Chancellor Rishi

Sunak has committed to spend an extra £27 billion on expanding the road network, ie more vehicles pumping out more CO2 and toxic pollutants into the air.

Johnson is largely relying on the private sector to invest in green energy and technology. But it is precisely the capitalist system that puts profit ahead of the environment which has brought us to a 'climate emergency'. Tory governments' track record is one of underinvesting in green energy production while giving tax breaks and other subsidies to fossil fuel corporations.

Meanwhile, Britain's oil and gas rigs burn off enough unwanted gas to heat a million homes a year. The

resulting huge CO2 emissions from this 'flaring' are equivalent to the annual output from a coal-fired power station.

A recent report by the Cambridge Sustainability Commission shows that it's the world's richest who have the largest carbon footprint - not the world's poor.

Johnson's 'building back greener' post-pandemic hype was immediately overshadowed by news from the International Energy Agency that carbon dioxide emissions - the main driver of global heating in the atmosphere - are expected to rocket upwards this year by the second biggest annual rise in history.

This surge in emissions is the result of capitalist governments pouring investment into polluting fossil fuel energy production - mainly coal-fired power stations - in order to stimulate the global economy as it emerges from its Covid-induced recession.

Sustainable production of goods and services for all can only be achieved through democratically planned socialist economies which would eliminate the corrosive profit motive of capitalism.

● The Socialist Party is standing candidates in the 6 May local elections as part of the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC - see back page). Chris Baugh, the former assistant general secretary of the PCS civil servants' union, who held responsibility for developing the union's policies for combating climate change, has written a briefing paper for TUSC on what councils can do with their existing powers to implement a green agenda. See tusc.org.uk



PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

● See 'Building back greener - yet more Tory greenwash' by Chris Baugh - socialistparty.org.uk



Johnson's commitment to building a zero-carbon economy is yet more Tory greenwash PHOTO CHATHAM HOUSE/CC

USA: cop killings and the anti-racist movement

As the Socialist goes to the printers, the verdict by jurors in the trial of white cop Derek Chauvin, accused of murdering unarmed black man George Floyd, is expected. In this abridged article, **Ashley Rogers** of the Independent Socialist Group in the USA (co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) explains what kind of movement is needed to take the anti-racist struggle forward.

On 11 April, Daunte Wright was murdered by police during a traffic stop in Brooklyn Centre, a city bordering Minneapolis, Minnesota. Following last year's huge wave of protests over George Floyd's murder at the hands of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin - who is on trial only ten miles from where Wright was killed - this new murder of another unarmed black man at the hands of police ignited protests almost immediately.

Protests began in Brooklyn

Centre the night of 11 April and spread around the country in the following few days. The response to Daunte Wright's murder could be the start of a return to large-scale demonstrations like last year's millions-strong Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests.

When the George Floyd protests began, his was not the only name remembered at protest rallies - the movement quickly adopted other ignored victims of racist police brutality, including Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Jacob Blake.

The same is true now with the release of body camera footage of 13-year-old Adam Toledo being shot on 29 March by Chicago police. The video shows Adam Toledo was unarmed, shot with his hands up. The body camera footage was deliberately withheld from the public for weeks by Chicago's police review board, but the new wave of protests may have pressured the police to release the video.

Unfortunately, the George Floyd protests of last year faded with little to show in terms of meaningful change. Pressure from the Democratic Party and leading figures under the Black

Lives Matter banner helped take the movement off the streets and diverted any remaining energy away from protests and into backing the Democratic Party in the 2020 elections.

Joe Biden and the Democratic Party opposed many progressive demands against racism and police brutality that emerged out of the BLM movement last summer.

Since Jacob Blake's shooting on 25 August 2020, police shootings have continued non-stop. But reading through the press releases of mainstream anti-racist activist organisations, like the Black Lives Matter Global Network, the focus became less and less on the victims of police brutality and more and more on Biden's 2020 campaign.

Working class

The anti-racist movement needs organisations that can bring together workers and activists to call protests, debate and decide a programme of concrete demands for the movement, share resources, coordinate with other movements and organisations, and build a sustained nationwide movement.

Above all, we need a truly mass



Build a movement that unites the working class against all forms of oppression PHOTO GEOFFALEXANDRA/CC

movement, one that can bridge the divisions drawn between us by capitalism. A multi-racial working class movement, with the crucial involvement of organised labour, is the most powerful tool we have available.

A movement that unites workers

and youth against all forms of oppression under capitalism can also begin to take on the common enemy that keeps us all down - the capitalist system.

● Full article on independentsocialistgroup.org

Long Covid: Fight for jobs, benefits and services

JON DALE

UNITE UNION EM/NG32 NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH BRANCH (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Illness and disability lasting more than three months after Covid affects almost 700,000 people in Britain. NHS services for them are still patchy and inadequate. And on top of uncertainty about their future health, many face the grim prospect of unemployment and poverty on paltry benefits.

An Office for National Statistics survey in February estimated 196,000 people had their day-to-day activities restricted "a lot" at least 12 weeks after Covid. 70,000 were still suffering after 12 months.

Tiredness, muscle aches, tinnitus, poor concentration and 'brain fog' are common symptoms, varying from person to person. Some have significant damage to heart, lungs, kidneys or other organs.



Those unable to return to their previous jobs need retraining opportunities, with guaranteed jobs at the end

Unfortunately, 'long-Covid' sufferers are not the only people with similar problems. Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS/ME) is sometimes post-viral and sometimes has no known trigger. It has been known about for years but its causes are still poorly understood. Around 250,000 adults are estimated to be affected.

Specialist NHS services saw around 14,000 CFS/ME patients in the UK in 2016 at a cost of £14 million - nowhere near enough to really support the large number affected. Yet, NHS England has announced it will spend a mere £10 million on clinics for the many more long-Covid patients.

With fatigue a major problem, clinics need to be local to avoid exhausting journeys, with staff to provide home visits when necessary. A major expansion is needed to provide easy access for everyone who needs it.

Much more research is also needed into the causes and possible

treatments of both long-Covid and CFS/ME, which has long been neglected. This can't be left to charities and certainly not to for-profit pharmaceutical corporations.

Work or full pay

Many people experiencing long-Covid have been unable to return to work. Bosses may be on to their backs demanding performance targets they can't manage.

Anyone unable to return to work after Covid should have their jobs kept open for them and receive full sick pay (not the current measly £96 a week Statutory Sick Pay) while they

are properly medically assessed; and then receive full NHS rehabilitation programmes. Trade unions need to protect workers from dismissal.

Those unable to return to their previous jobs need retraining opportunities, with guaranteed jobs at the end. Part-time and flexible working hours should be provided. Benefits need to either make up pay to a level people can live on or full benefits should do this - not the scandalously low levels the government pays now.

Unions must fight for jobs, benefits and services for all those still suffering ill health months after Covid infection.



Covid mortality among the 'precariat' is double that of more secure occupations PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

News in brief

Spycops inquiry - end political policing

The Undercover Policing Inquiry is set to resume between 21 April and 14 May. It is set to further expose police spying on left-wing political activists. This second round of hearings will cover the activity of the Special Demonstration Squad between 1973 and 1982.

The Socialist Party participates in the Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance (COPS) campaign. Several of our members are participants in the inquiry after being spied on in the past. COPS will protest outside the hearing on 26 April.

Protest outside SpyCops inquiry: Monday 26 April, 11am, Amba Hotel, Marble Arch, London W1H 7EH

NEU election success

Sean McCauley has been elected in a by-election to sit on the National Education Union's national executive from April to August. Sean's fighting programme, for a campaigning, socialist leadership that leads a national campaign on workload, pay and education funding, won him 1,012 votes to his opponent's 931.

Sean is one of the Socialist Party members standing in the main election to the NEC which is deciding the national leadership from September. That election runs until 29 April and it is essential that everyone who voted for Sean in the by-election votes again in the main election.

Vote for Sean 'number 1' if you are in district 8: Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire.

If you are in district 12, the South West, vote for Sheila Caffrey and Alex Moore.

In London's district 16 (Newham, Waltham Forest, Haringey, Croydon, Bromley, Bexley, Havering, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham) vote 'number 1' for Louise Cuffaro.

Unionising the unorganised

Unite the Union and the DayMer community organisation in North London held the first public activity of a campaign aimed at organising Turkish and Kurdish speaking workers into a trade union.

The campaign is targeting catering, hospitality, retail and factory workers in particular, with a view to setting up a new branch of Unite. Key campaign aims include winning the London Living Wage, improved sick pay and safety at work.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: "This crucially important campaign can be summed up by our central campaign slogan 'Organising the Unorganised'. This will be a hard, long-term campaign, dealing with what are likely to be some of the most anti-trade union employers. But we are determined. We are confident. We will organise!"

The National Shop Stewards Network and Socialist Party also attended the public event in Wood Green to offer full support to the campaign.

PCS leadership ballot underway

KATRINE WILLIAMS

VICE-PRESIDENT PCS DWP GROUP
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The ballot for PCS president and national executive committee opens on 22 April and runs to 13 May. PCS is the union for government workers in the civil service and public and private sectors.

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.

Marion Lloyd 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's nominations put her in the strongest position to defeat the current president, Fran Heathcote.

Marion told the Socialist she believes: "The current leadership is out of touch and doesn't understand, let alone tackle, the day-to-day issues we all face at work." She urged PCS members to vote for her and the other Broad Left Network candidates in these elections.

The Broad Left Network was formed by socialists in response to the need to challenge and replace the current failed union leadership. 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 us

Socialist Party members in PCS call upon activists and members to vote for the Broad Left Network candidates below.

For a democratic union and a fighting leadership.

BROAD LEFT NETWORK CANDIDATES

PRESIDENT: MARION LLOYD (BEIS)

VICE PRESIDENTS: FIONA BRITTLE (SCOT GOV), SARAH BROWN (MET POLICE), DAVE SEMPLE (DWP), JON-PAUL ROSSER (HMRC)

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

ANDI BRIDGES (HMRC), FIONA BRITTLE (SCOT GOV), ALEX BROWN (HEALTH), SARAH BROWN (MET POLICE), JAIME DAVIES (HMRC), KEVIN DENMAN (MET POLICE), ALAN DENNIS (DSG), NICK DOYLE (HMRC), GILL FOXTON (DfE), SUE FRANCIS (BEIS), PAUL GUINWANE (DfE), RACHEL HEENSKEERK (DWP), MARION LLOYD (BEIS), TOM LOWRY (DWP), RACHELLE MCDONOUGH (HMRC), NICK PARKER (BEIS), DAVE REES (DWP), ROB RITCHIE (MET POLICE), JON-PAUL ROSSER (HMRC), DAVE SEMPLE (DWP), PAUL SUTER (DWP), SARA-SARAH AMATHEIA WEEDEALE (DWP), KATRINE WILLIAMS (DWP), CRAIG WORSWICK (DWP), COLIN YOUNG (DfE), BOBBY YOUNG (HMRC)

Usdaw conference 2021

Retail workers desperately need a fighting and democratic union

The Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) of Usdaw, the retail and distribution workers' union, takes place on 25-26 April. **Socialist Party members in Usdaw** take a look at the changes taking place within the union.

● Union elections

Although the right wing in Usdaw has made gains in recent union elections, the results do not represent any enthusiasm for them, as shown by the fact that the right wing's preferred candidate for president, Jane Jones, received over 2,000 fewer votes than Socialist Party member and incumbent Amy Murphy when standing three years ago.

The new executive council (EC) is going to be very quickly tested as the current pandemic has churned up a whole number of issues. The Usdaw Broad Left has attracted new membership throughout the election campaign showing that there are members looking to get organised to fight back collectively, frustrated by the lack of lead at the top.

● Industrial

The pandemic has seen the accelerating deterioration of the high street with hundreds of stores closing and thousands of workers being made redundant. Union members, and those not yet organised in a trade union, are crying out for a bold campaign to defend jobs and call for nationalisation of struggling retail chains to protect livelihoods. General Secretary Paddy Lillis's 'tripartite' or partnership approach of trying to work constructively with bosses and the Tory government must be abandoned.

Even in Usdaw-recognised Tesco distribution centres, bosses have tried to implement fire and rehire tactics. Likewise, in Sainsbury's/Argos, where



RICHARD GROVES

Usdaw is recognised, 3,500 job cuts are threatened. They wouldn't be able to get away with this if the membership was mobilised to face down such threats with strike action.

Also, with the massive profits reported in the supermarket sector, Usdaw is well-positioned to demand that workers rather than shareholders should be rewarded for working unflinchingly through three lockdowns. If, instead of piously trying to work with the bosses, the union leadership used the strength of the

membership to demand £12 an hour for workers - recognised through this pandemic as key workers - members would gladly back up the demand with a preparedness to take industrial action.

Similarly, trying to work with the Tories is folly when already they have attempted to extend Sunday trading hours, have now allowed shops to open from 7am to 10pm, and have even refused to strengthen legislation protecting shop workers from abuse on the job.

That said, the overwhelming mood at the moment is to support the CWU and vote yes for strike action. Instinctively, members understand that without the union, management would have free rein across all workplaces and BT groups. It is clear that the new BT senior management and board are in no mood to offer concessions. BT management appears to simply want to smash the CWU.



PAUL MATTSOON

challenge under the anti-union laws. The problem is they've taken so long doing this that members in WhatsApp groups are reporting that managers are raising their heads and, along with spreading misinformation, are sending individual messages to young engineers warning that to vote for a strike will breach contract and they can be sacked. Others are reporting that the drawn-out process of the CWU has led to managers putting pressure on members affected by site closures to accept voluntary release in advance of any ballot.

In short, CWU procrastination is allowing BT management the chance to dominate the narrative. On social media the telecoms and financial services section say they have imaginative alternatives that they would like to propose in negotiations. A small but growing section of members are responding with a definite silence to this as it hardly inspires confidence given the issues at stake.

● Political

Paddy Lillis and the right-wing majority on the Usdaw EC have consistently led members into a blind alley, backing the Blairite wing in Labour and seem increasingly out of step with the rank-and-file membership politically. Paddy Lillis reportedly resorted to ejecting three Usdaw EC members from a decision meeting to tip the balance in favour of backing Keir Starmer ahead of the 2020 Labour leadership election.

The right wing has also backed millionaire Blairite Anas Sarwar for Labour leader in Scotland, who has a position of ruling out another independence referendum for a lifetime.

Although there are those, even in the Usdaw Broad Left, who at this stage would not be prepared to back the building of a new workers' party, there is certainly growing support for this. One thing that is clear among members is the growing anti-Starmer mood that exists, combined with the record of the Usdaw right wing attacking Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, at a time when many members supported him.

At the very least, Usdaw members should be demanding that Labour candidates commit to policies which support the members or risk having union funding and support withdrawn. Labour councillors can stop implementing cuts and can empower union members by refusing to relax local trading hours without agreement from the workers' trade union representative.

It is vitally important that the developing anti-Starmer mood does not translate into the union being pushed in a direction away from political representation but instead looks to use the strength of the 400,000-strong membership to help any steps towards building a party that will represent the interests of the working class. The news that Amy Murphy, Usdaw president, joined the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee, was generally warmly received, which shows the potential that exists for supporting working-class political representation when a lead is given.

To build on the existing momentum that has been built across all BT groups by the union, it is absolutely essential that the CWU telecoms and financial services section announces a timetable for an industrial action ballot. Any further delay risks a growing sense of disillusionment setting in.

Announce a timetable! Vote 'yes' for industrial action! No job losses, no cuts in work locations!

Scotland No2 CWU branch secretary and Socialist Party Scotland member Gary Clark has been unanimously nominated by his branch as a candidate for the CWU national executive and postal executive in upcoming elections.

Gary says: "I will be standing as a clear socialist and on a fighting programme on behalf of the membership. I will only take the average wage of a postal worker and will put the rest back into the movement."

Fight back against British Gas bosses' 'fire and rehire' offensive

ROB WILLIAMS

SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

On their 43rd day of strike action on 14 April, hundreds of GMB members in British Gas were facing the sack after refusing to agree the imposition of new contracts. Car transporters were filled with blue company vans - a sign of the brutal fire and rehire bludgeon of the bosses of British Gas and its privateer corporate owner Centrica. Behind each van there is a worker with a family.

The workers will now discuss the way forward, and what further action can be taken, but GMB members, mainly 7,500 service engineers out of a total workforce of 20,000, have fought hard to defend hard-won terms and conditions from attack, which could see some lose up to £15,000. This is even more impressive after the other three unions - Unison, Unite and Prospect - had accepted a negotiated settlement, to leave the GMB to fight alone.

The highpoint of the dispute was at the beginning of March, when members rejected the company's 'offer' by a massive margin, up to 80% in some sectors, despite the union mistakenly not giving a recommendation. That could have been the moment to escalate the dispute, possibly to all-out action.

The imposed new contracts will mean full-time engineers forced to work 40 hours a week, an increase of three hours, and lose premiums when needed to work weekends and public holidays. Yet as strikers have said, how can the management justify these attacks, when the lockdown has meant more demand for gas as people have had to work from home? They know this is about boosting profits.

Like so many other companies such as British Airways and British Telecom, British Gas bosses think that the Covid crisis has shocked workers and sense an opportunity to use 'fire and rehire'. It won't be lost on workers in these companies that they were all once publicly owned, and were privatised by the Tories. The unions must campaign for them all to be



STEVE SCORE

renationalised as part of their disputes. This is particularly important given the scale of the Covid crisis.

To this infamous list should be added the Labour council of Tower Hamlets, who provoked a Unison strike last summer through the same vicious methods. And in all these companies and many others, including Go Ahead buses in Manchester currently on indefinite strike, workers have fought back with determined action.

However, what has been lacking is the unions involved in these disputes attempting to co-ordinate across all the employers, in order to develop a united front that builds workers' confidence as well as leveraging pressure on the Tories on 'fire and rehire' - rather than just parliamentary petitions.

Action has often pushed management back or at least won significant improvements. And it is always better to have fought an attack rather than immediately agree concessions. It issues a warning to management about any further offensive, and even if workers suffer a setback, if action is taken, at least it has more chance of keeping the union intact and creates a fighting record in the workplace. Whatever happens now in British Gas, the action that has been taken will force the bosses to think very carefully about more attacks.

Ballots to defend reps on Woolwich Ferry

Unite members working for Transport for London (TfL) at the Woolwich Ferry site in London began a ballot for strike action on 16 May.

The straw that broke the camel's back was the employer beginning disciplinary procedures against one of the reps and also changing the shifts of other reps, in what is little more than an act of spite which has the aim of taking on and breaking the union. TfL recently insourced the contract from Briggs Marine, promising a bright future that included better work-life balance and access to an improved pension scheme. The work-life balance turned out to be little more than a pay cut, and last week

workers received a letter stating that the promised TfL pension scheme was not appropriate after all.

The attack on trade union representatives is a calculated one - the union has a proud record of defending and winning better conditions, fighting and winning a safer working environment and fighting discrimination.

The union has responded as any union should when reps are under attack - not by relying on grievance, internal disciplinary procedures or a lengthy legal process through the anti-worker courts, but instead through collective action by balloting members for strike action. If Greater London Assembly (GLA) members from the Labour Party will not step in to defend workers, then they should stand aside - instead, this is a role that Trade Unionist and Socialist

The GMB has done well to build the dispute during Covid-19 and its restrictions as well as the practical challenges that have been presented, because most, if not all, the depots have been closed over time. This has often seen workers pick places where they can protest and be visible. However, the deadline day marks the critical stage in the dispute.

The union recommended that workers should sign the new contracts, to protect themselves from dismissal, but continue the action. However, this had potential risks in leaving some workers isolated, if not properly explained and members sufficiently prepared.

The GMB has said that action will continue, through strikes and action short of strikes. But it is essential that it calls a national meeting of the British Gas reps and then one for the members, where there can be an open discussion about how the fight continues. This is needed to keep members together.

On 14 April, the union called protests of striking workers outside British Gas offices. This could be developed, particularly as Covid restrictions lift. They could call another national strike, with regional protests, including outside parliament. This could be used as a platform to escalate the action.

Coalition (TUSC) candidates for the GLA will take up without hesitation.

This comes at the same time as Hackney parking wardens prepare to be balloted. Unite members employed by APCOA who run parking services in Hackney are again preparing for strike action after the employers failed to tackle long outstanding pay issues. Now the employers have begun disciplinary proceedings against the Unite rep based on trumped-up charges. Just as with the Woolwich Ferry, Hackney parking wardens have a record of industrial militancy and campaign wins - the last of which was the decision by the council to insource the service in April 2022. But with a further ballot pending, the union is demanding that the council bring forward the date of the transfer back into council control.

Thurrock bin workers solid in strike against pay cuts

DAVE MURRAY

ESSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

Thurrock refuse workers' action against drastic cuts in pay completed its first week in fine form. Workers are taking daily strike action from 9am, returning refuse vehicles to the depot and joining the picket line.

For the moment, the employers, Thurrock's Tory council, are trying to play hardball, insisting that cuts to unsocial hours payments are going to happen. This might have something to do with alleged losses that the council has made in its speculative investments in the 'green energy' sector - which the council was in court recently trying to keep secret.

The strike is solid and seems like it will stay that way. Whatever the reason, the employer's current stance

and tactics reflects weakness, with petty measures such as threats to fine pickets for dropping cigarette ends (actually everyone is very careful not to litter) and on 19 April sending for a police officer to somewhat sheepishly remind organisers of the need to socially distance. Obviously, such distancing does not apply when workers are travelling in the cabs of the refuse vehicles four at a time.

The weather has been kind, and morale is high, so there is an almost festive atmosphere on the picket line as workers who normally wouldn't be spending time all together get to swap experiences outside the gate. The sound system helps (the Pina Colada song though? Really?) and the barbecue is due to arrive soon, but what really shines through is the determination of this workforce not to be walked on.



ELEANOR DOWNIE

Bus workers protest Go-Ahead's 'fire and rehire' attacks

ANDY BEADLE

RETIRED GO-AHEAD LONDON BUS DRIVER AND UNITE SHOP STEWARD, TUSC CANDIDATE FOR LEWISHAM COUNCIL, NEW CROSS WARD, SOUTH EAST LONDON

The Go-Ahead group runs bus services in Manchester and is currently using 'fire and rehire' to cut drivers' pay and conditions. Go-Ahead is also a big operator in Transport for London (TfL).

We joined other Unite members outside London City Hall on 15 April to oppose these plans and in solidarity with the Go North West strike. Unite is calling on mayors Sadiq Khan and Andy Burnham to publicly back a declaration to outlaw the practice.

Unite's demands on the mayors are fine but we need much more to protect all bus drivers' livelihoods.

We can't rely on Khan and Burnham. Both were right-wing Blairite ministers who took the chance to become mayors and cynically keep their career options open when the Corbyn surge appeared a threat to them.

Five years ago Khan addressed striking bus workers' shop stewards. Repeatedly telling us his dad was a bus driver, he promised he'd give us equal pay scales at all bus companies across London.

After Unite voted to back him, he boasted he'd stopped strikes and was backing big businesses and City

millionaires! He has delivered little for bus workers or for any London workers but, unfortunately, most unions are backing him for re-election as mayor.

Unite has a good approach to industrial trade unionism compared with many unions. But Unite's political strategy is weak because it follows on the coat-tails of Labour politicians. What if all bus firms competing for TfL contracts try to use 'fire and rehire'? Who's going to replace them? The tendering system in London encourages competition among firms to reduce pay and conditions. Not that they needed encouragement.

These contracts last at least five years. Smashing pay and conditions (and removing unwanted individuals like good shop stewards) can be seen as a much quicker process which would severely undermine our strength.

Unite should be loudly demanding renationalisation of public transport. It's in Unite's rule book and mustn't be forgotten.

Trade union activists were right to set up the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) a decade ago, to stand anti-austerity candidates. It's clear now that however strong we are industrially, we also need to build a political voice to defend workers and unions.

TUSC's message is getting growing support.

West Sussex Tories want to cut adult services by half

SARAH WELCH
PORTSMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Tory West Sussex County Council is proposing to cut adult services by 50%, from £10 million to £5 million. It says that these cuts will not take place until 2022-23, but many community projects have already had their funding cut. This will be the third round of cuts to adult services since 2011.

It is proposing that all adults living in residential places or supported living will no longer have access to day care. This will mean that many people in supported living will just stay in their homes, with carers coming in a few times a day.

For the remainder of the day, they will be left on their own. This will severely impact on their mental health, as they will become extremely isolated and bored.

These are the most vulnerable people in our community. As carers, we fear for their safety.

Adults living at home, with family, will have priority for day care services. However, they will be restricted to three days a week, rather than four or five.

They will only be able to access one provider. This doesn't just limit their choice, but providers do not have many spaces. It is unlikely that they would be able to provide three days a week. What happens during the rest of the week? What about carers who have work responsibilities?

To add insult to injury, since 2018 there has been a nationwide charge called the 'client contribution' or Minimum Income Guarantee. The local authority decides how much a person needs to live on, generally less than a £100 a week! Anything that you receive on top, other benefits for example, is taken to 'pay' for your care.

West Sussex council is reassessing everyone without notifying carers. My son was paying out £37.70 a week, but now has to pay £77 a week.

The legality of this tax is being questioned. Norfolk County Council was taken to the High Court about the client contribution and lost.

The campaign against these cuts has been difficult, mainly because of Covid rules. The council has used this to its advantage.

Council meetings have been secret, and not open to the public. We have tried to obtain minutes and recordings.

But they send documents that are clearly not minutes, and tell us meetings have not been recorded or they have had technical problems.

The council says there will be a consultation about the cuts. But it will not tell us when, how and where the consultation will take place.

Cuts already

We know cuts have been made already. Many providers had their budgets cut by 20% at the end of last year, and are now unable to provide many of the activities that people enjoyed. People who are about to go into supported living have been told that they will not be able to access day care.

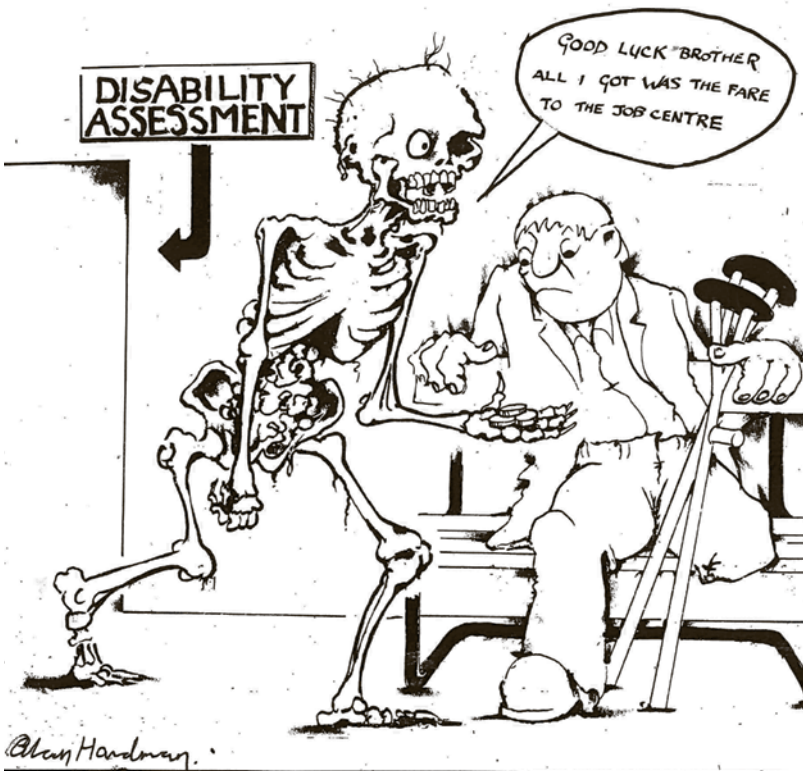
Many people have been fobbed off by councillors and MPs. The media have taken some interest, but articles in the press and programmes like South Today have been weak, and have not got our message across. We started the campaign with a petition, which got a really good response.

Anger at the client contribution, or 'disability tax' as we call it, is rising. Many people are so incensed by the huge increases only to have a lesser service. The idea of mass non-payment of this tax is becoming increasingly popular.

We will continue to fight these cuts. We will always fight for vulnerable people who are continually attacked by a system that sees them as surplus to requirement.

CAPITALISM DISCRIMINATES AGAINST US

Disabled people fighting for our rights



DAVID MAPLES
MERTON UNION, CHAIR (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

The recent, rather brief, disabled workers' conference for the Trades Union Congress (TUC), with just three hours of debate, gave a sharp focus to the experiences of disabled workers during the pandemic.

Six in ten of all Covid deaths are from disabled people. If you are disabled and male, you are 6.5 times more likely to die from Covid than a non-disabled man. For disabled women, it's 11.3 times more likely than non-disabled women.

In the 2008-09 recession, disabled workers were more likely than non-disabled workers to experience negative changes to our terms and conditions and working practices, such as wage freezes, reduced overtime and the reorganisation of work. Research has revealed that during economic upturns disabled workers are the last to gain employment, and during downturns we are first to lose our jobs.

Office for National Statistics data

shows that redundancy rates are 62% higher for disabled than non-disabled workers. In 2015, the Tory manifesto pledged to halve the gap between the employment rates for disabled and non-disabled people. At the time it was 34%. It is still almost 30%.

Disabled workers face double discrimination. Not only are we less likely to be in work, but when we are, we are paid less than non-disabled workers. TUC research shows that disabled workers face 20% lower pay. This is equivalent to earning £2.10 less an hour. The TUC is calling for mandatory disability pay gap reporting.

Covid

40% of employers say that they are discouraged from hiring disabled job applicants, because of concerns around supporting them properly during the pandemic. 20% admitted they would be less likely overall to hire someone with a disability. 71% of disabled workers were affected by the pandemic, either through a loss of income, being put on furlough or having been made redundant.

Until the pandemic, most employers were reluctant to allow home-working. But a Unison survey found that 73% of disabled workers were more productive or just as productive when working from home.

It reduced pain and fatigue, due to less commuting and the ability to work more flexibly, with additional breaks or a later starting time. The survey found fewer disabled workers took sickness absence, as they were able to manage their condition better.

Mandatory homeworking has had a negative impact on some disabled workers. However, homeworking should be the worker's choice, not something imposed.

Changes to the welfare system over the past ten years have left disabled adult claimants four times worse off financially than non-disabled adult claimants according to Disability Benefits Consortium. TUC research found that disabled people were more than three times as likely to use food banks as non-disabled people. Nearly half of people in poverty, 6.9 million

people, are from families which include a disabled person.

Sanctions do not move disabled workers closer to paid work. Instead, they often worsen many disabled workers' existing illnesses and conditions, particularly mental health conditions.

The pandemic has worsened accessibility, isolation and barriers to disability rights. Disabled women were already twice as likely as other women to experience domestic abuse.

New coronavirus rules effectively free local authorities of some of their duties to provide social care under the Care Act 2014, and reduce protections enshrined in the Mental Health Act, so it takes fewer medical professionals to detain someone.

Between 2014 and 2016 over half of union reps reported that they had dealt with disability-related issues. In a recent survey by public sector union Unison, half of respondents said they face barriers to doing their job that could be removed through adjustments.

Over two thirds who requested

reasonable adjustments had some or all refused. 23% who requested adjustments waited a year or more to receive what they needed.

Unemployment

In 2019, the TUC found that one in ten disabled workers, 391,000 people, had dropped out of work over the previous 12 months. Government research found that disabled workers are twice as likely to fall out of work as non-disabled workers. Figures like this point to one of the reasons that the disability employment rate continues to persist at around 30%.

The TUC is calling on the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to improve its employment code of practice which provides a detailed explanation of the Equality Act 2010. This could be useful as long as it is accompanied by trade unions encouraging disabled workers to get organised and enhanced training for union reps on disability issues.

However, the EHRC has most recently shown itself as a body to put the boot into Corbynism, with false

allegations of antisemitism, rather than a campaigning body to improve conditions in capitalist society.

The TUC approach is largely limited to lobbying government and the employers. The TUC disabled workers' committee comments that it will campaign to amend the Equality Act 2010 "when it has confidence a government will reform the Equality Act to make the positive changes requested." This raises the question, will a Labour government be better than the Tories?

Labour didn't repeal the Tory anti-trade union laws. As often with TUC conferences, it was left to the transport union RMT to point out that Britain's anti-union laws - restricting strike action to narrowly defined 'trade disputes' and barring strikes against wider issues that affect disabled people - hamper disabled workers in fighting for our rights.

Disabled workers need strong workplace organisation. They cannot rely on lobbying a hostile government. The struggle for LGBT+ rights

My experience has been a humiliating financial nightmare

DISABILITY BENEFIT CLAIMANT

I first tried to claim disability benefits in the 1990s. It was the most humiliating experience.

I filled in a form detailing when the problems had started, but they clearly didn't want to cough up the back pay. I was given an interview appointment, and interrogated by a doctor there.

He didn't stop to give me a chance to answer the questions, trying to keep me off balance, switching the subject in the hope of catching me out. I left in tears. I rang up to complain, but his report had me so far from meeting the criteria that I just felt hopeless and gave up.

Not accessible

My phone interview with Capita last October wasn't much different. They really take the piss.

The assessment centre is on the fourth floor, and the lift doesn't always work. There are double yellow lines outside, and the nearest car park is further than their walking distance limit for you to qualify as unable to work!

I refused to attend in person, but they would repeatedly cancel my home appointments and reschedule for the centre. The whole process took six months.

Having to continually revisit all the pain and trauma is so harrowing and upsetting. I emotionally dread completing those applications. When I have asked to see my records, they include errors and things I would never have said - like being able to stand on my tiptoes.

I was given a lifetime award on Disability Living Allowance. But when it

changed to Personal Independence Payment, I had to start all over again.

The level I qualified for was reduced twice. It was a massive financial blow. I lost the motability allowance towards an adapted car, which has been key to me maintaining a degree of independence.

The struggle for a wheelchair was also fraught. The ones available on the NHS are either too heavy or painful to sit in. If you want something that actually meets your needs, you inevitably have to pay out of your own pocket.

During the Covid pandemic, the usual support I would receive has not been available. Due to NHS cuts, the staffing and resources are not there to cope with the crisis.

Isolated

The lockdown has shown the possibilities for flexible working. Yet I can feel so isolated and useless sometimes.

When I did my Open University degree, I could take breaks when I needed. They even sent an invigilator out so that I could take the exams at home, with a lie-down part way through.

But the flexibility of working in this way has never been an option from employers. I had to accept that I would be unable to contribute income to our household or have financial independence.

When you are a disabled woman, with little income, you need a will of steel to keep fighting and not be fobbed off. But it does wear you down.

You feel like you cannot complain or disagree with official opinion because it will count against you. It shouldn't have to be this hard. I just want to get off the roundabout.

80,000 people when presenting medals at the Paralympics in 2012.

Disabled people will return to the methods of protest. We have more than enough to protest about.

● This article deals with some of the issues facing disabled workers. The Socialist would welcome more contributions on this subject

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
editors@socialistparty.org.uk

The Socialist Party demands:

- Trade union control over health and safety and the 'access to work' service
- 'Reasonable adjustments' should be a collective issue
- A supportive benefits system

based on the real cost of disability, extra support for higher costs during the pandemic, and compensation for restricted employment opportunities

- Trade union control over the benefit system to make it supportive rather than punitive
- Full pensions with no reductions because of lower pay or a shorter working lifetime

Don't trust the Labour right's empty promises

Vote TUSC for a strategy and programme to defeat Covid austerity

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

What would you put on your election leaflet if you were a candidate for the Tories or Starmer's Labour? Would you offer your party's programme of cuts to jobs and services, privatisation, and prioritising the interests of big business and not working-class and young people? Probably not.

The 300+ candidates standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), including many Socialist Party members, have a no-cuts programme - and record of fighting for it in our workplaces, campuses and communities. But there has been an echo of some elements of this programme from unexpected quarters.

Despite the lockdowns there have been many movements and protests: Black Lives Matter, NHS workers fighting for a pay rise, the struggle to end violence against women, defending the right to protest, and more. TUSC candidates have participated in all. These movements have already made an imprint on society, the election included.

But this is not straightforward. There is no mass party that has the programme and organisation to offer protesters a political voice in opposition to the injustices and inequalities, including class inequality, they seek to challenge. But many parties are opportunistically attempting to claim that role.



Keir Starmer RIVENLAND/CC

Labour under Corbyn remained 'two parties in one' - a pro-capitalist party, and a potential anti-austerity party based on Corbyn's supporters. But that era is now over with Starmer's takeover. The building of a new mass workers' party remains an urgent task for these and future movements.

Nonetheless, some of the ideas raised by the movements and workers' struggles over the last year have found their way into the election material of pro-capitalist candidates. What does this mean?

It is important that the workers' movement assesses all parties and candidates on what they put forward in the election - but it must also judge them on their wider programme, their leadership and membership, their structures, and how decisions are made and programme formed, as well as their record and origins.

Starmer's Corbyn purge

Keir Starmer has spent the last year purging socialists from the Labour Party, including Jeremy Corbyn. But the Starmer-imposed candidate for Liverpool mayor, Joanne Anderson, declares it a "socialist city" and talks about being a socialist in hustings.

However, her candidacy rests on the barring of locally selected candidates by Starmer's HQ. Her record is being part of a council that has cut an estimated 63% of the council's budget, including 3,600 jobs, without a challenge to Tory austerity.

Despite her words, she has nothing in common with the socialist history of the city when Militant, the Socialist Party's predecessor, led the council and instead of making cuts, won back millions of pounds stolen by the Tories, to build council homes and more.

Defending council housing has always been in the Socialist Party's programme. Now it's being mentioned by many - including Anderson - but without a plan to make it happen on the mass scale needed.

What sets TUSC candidates apart is not just what we say we want to deliver for the working class and young people who have suffered a decade



Campaigning in Waltham Forest, London WALTHAM FOREST TUSC

of austerity and decades of privatisation. TUSC candidates are committed to voting against all cuts. And that requires a programme to fund the needs of the community.

TUSC candidates have pledged to support councils in the first instance using their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to avoid making cuts. But we argue that the best way to mobilise the mass campaign that is necessary to defend and improve council services is to set a budget that meets the needs of the local community and demand that government funding makes up the shortfall.

Fight for funding

TUSC candidates are committed to using any elected position to build a mass, united struggle for that government funding. That includes support for all workers' struggles against government policies which make ordinary people pay for the crisis; and the fight for a united working-class struggle against racism and all forms of oppression.

In London's mayoral contest, Labour incumbent Sadiq Khan appears to have had a Damascene conversion on the road to the electoral offices when he delivered his submission to the candidates' booklet. Council

homes, rent control and 'rejecting government cuts' to Transport for London all feature. This bears no resemblance to his record in office. Private rents in London are sky-high and very few council homes at a 'social rent' have been built in London in the last five years. London's transport system is already horrendously expensive, yet Khan's recently commissioned independent review looks towards "three groups to provide additional funding: residents, consumers, and drivers." In short, they expect working-class Londoners and transport workers to pay for the transport financial crisis.

In 2018, Socialist Party members, including a pensioner, were physically removed from a public Question Time event in London's City Hall after raising the need to build council homes in a project over which Khan had a decisive say.

Last week, the Unite union organised a lobby of City Hall, calling for an end to 'fire and rehire' on London buses. Not only could those trade unionists not rely on their demands being taken up by the politicians with a say over what happens in London, they have no say over the programme on which Khan stands, despite their union being a major donor to Labour.

Liverpool hustings – only TUSC has a strategy to take on the Tories

NEILL DUNNE
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Liverpool mayoral candidate Roger Bannister for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) took part in the first online hustings of the election campaign on Tuesday 13 April.

Six out of the seven candidates showed up, only the Tory candidate did not make an appearance. The gulf between the five other candidates, united in their acceptance of Tory austerity, and the only real socialist candidate - was clear to see.

In his opening statement Roger outlined the need for an anti-austerity challenge to Liverpool Labour council "which has passed on Tory cuts virtually without protest, and certainly without action to oppose them." This has meant £420 million of cuts in the last decade, including to vital services for children, disabled people, the elderly and other vulnerable groups.

Other candidates used the recent arrests of Labour politicians as a stick to beat the Labour council with. But only Roger put forward a strategy to fight back: "I want to use council reserves to produce a balanced budget, in order to buy time to build a campaign amongst trade unions and the working-class people of Liverpool, to fight for more resources from the Tory government for this city."

It was clear from Joanne Anderson, the Labour candidate, that a vote for the right-wing led Labour Party in this election would be a vote for more

of the same cuts, privatisation and managed decline that has already taken place in Liverpool.

Stephen Yip, the well-resourced independent candidate who has marketed himself as an alternative to the politics of the council, came unstuck when questioned on how he would stand up for the people of Liverpool. His only answer was that he would employ (likely highly paid) experts and advisers, a clear indication of appeasement with the impending Tory commissioners entering the city, who are likely to advocate privatising and stripping bare anything they can get hold of. Only TUSC has a clear position of no trust in the right-wing Labour councillors, or unelected commissioners, to run the city in the interests of the working class.

The comments section of the on-line stream was a battleground of policies and conjecture about other candidates. But even many supporters of other candidates couldn't argue with Roger's points, backed up by Socialist Party members engaging in the debate, some opponents even admitting to agree with him.

As Roger said in his closing remarks, after clearly outlining the anti-austerity strategy we need: "If elected I would use the office of the mayor to fight for the working people of Liverpool." A vote for Roger Bannister and all TUSC candidates is a vote for the working class to fight back against the cuts, in Liverpool and everywhere else we are standing on 6 May.

SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

The April edition of *Socialism Today* 247, includes a major article on Liverpool's 1980s struggle and an update article, 'Is the Liverpool road still possible?'

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Carlisle campaign day success

BRENT KENNEDY
CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY

We had a very productive day of action in our Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition election campaign in Carlisle. The local paper had carried an article announcing our street meeting in the Morton housing estate. It got a lot of interest from shoppers, with our banners, placards and megaphone. A big number of the shoppers signed our NHS petition, took election leaflets and bought copies of the Socialist.

We then moved on to the Raffles estate and did the same. Some of us

ran the stall, talking to the residents, and meeting some young people who are now interested in joining the Socialist Party, while others delivered leaflets to half of the estate. Given the good weather, we were able to chat to residents in their gardens. One guy said he agreed with us on the need for a party for the working class, said he'd definitely vote for us, and asked his next-door neighbour if he would too. "Yeah, let's give the politicians one in the eye", he replied.

A big thanks to Graham Calvin, formerly Labour, now an independent socialist councillor, who came all the way from Copeland to give us a hand!

Join the fightback

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PHOTO BRENT KENNEDY

Why I'm standing for TUSC - cuts to vital services have to stop



IAN PATTISON
TUSC CANDIDATE FOR WALTHAM ABBEY

The Tories in Essex County Council want to cut £46 million from public services. There's nothing left to cut!

It wouldn't be any different if Labour got in. Labour control three district councils in Essex - Basildon, Colchester, and Harlow. And they have been passing on Tory cuts for a decade. Waltham Abbey library could be next on the chopping block.

Labour refused to oppose the Tories' 1.5% council tax hike. We can't afford that! Meanwhile the Tories are pretending this council tax rise isn't happening.

The bus services in Waltham Abbey

are too expensive, and Sunday services are run by a different company that won't accept our weekly ticket, forcing us to pay again. Why do we have to fork out again for an unreliable service?

Who does this hit the most? Key workers who work at the weekend and people who want to see their families, just so private companies can make more profit. The councils in Essex and Epping Forest should step in to stop this happening, or run the service themselves.

And like many parents, I'm struggling to find a nursery place for my child. The cuts to vital services have to stop. That's why we're standing Trade Unionist and Socialist

Coalition (TUSC) candidates in the Essex County Council elections. Socialist Party members Scott Jones, Paul Lenihan and Dave Murray are standing in Buckhurst Hill and Loughton South, Harlow South, and Basildon Westleigh Heights respectively, and I'm standing in Waltham Abbey. If elected, we will vote against all cuts and council tax rises.

The Tory government has spent £280 billion during the Covid pandemic. It shows the money is there. But we have to stand up to the Tories and Labour to fight for the funding our local community needs.

The far-right 'For Britain' party is also standing against us. Some would say TUSC shouldn't stand, in case we

splitted the vote and let the far right in. But this racist group already occupies a seat in the poorest part of Waltham Abbey.

This area would have traditionally been Labour, but working-class people no longer trust it. Only our message of working-class unity for jobs, homes and services for all can undermine the far right's support.

There's another very local issue on my street. A landowner has blocked off the public footpath to the woods behind our houses. We're demanding the council reopen it. Working-class residents should democratically make decisions on issues like this, including saying 'no more cuts'.



LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY



LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Unison union elections

Socialist Party members - part of a left challenge for Unison's leadership

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNISON

Despite the recent election of 'Keir Starmer-friendly' Christina McAnea as the Unison General Secretary in January, the elections for the national executive council (NEC) could see the union executive swing to the left. The nomination period has ended and there will be eight Socialist Party members standing in the election.

After ten years of austerity, Unison members are again on the frontline, fighting for their lives and livelihoods as the Covid pandemic turns into economic crisis. But throughout, Unison's leadership has failed to defend members, caving in to pressure for national unity with the Tories. They refused to call meetings to debate and plan a strategy, and even threatened disciplinary action against activists who sought to organise.

McAnea is already proving she's the 'continuity' general secretary. She declared that Keir Starmer - who is driving Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity stance out of the Labour Party - is doing a good job. Her response to the 1% NHS pay insult was a slow hand-clap and window poster displays.

But Unison members are clearly looking at how the union can best organise a fight to keep them safe, defend their jobs and break the public sector pay freeze.

In Scotland, Socialist Party member Jim McFarlane was nominated by 27 branches, over a third of all Scottish branches. Socialist Party member Tom Hunt, who is standing for the first time, won the nomination of the Notts county branch where his opponent, ex-president and sitting NEC member Chris Tansley, is a branch member. This is even more remarkable as Tansley was elected unopposed in the last round of elections.

Socialist Party members April Ashley and Hugo Pierre both received well over 100 nominations to stand for the national black members' constituency. Hugo's 147 nominations is his best ever total, following his campaign as a candidate in the general secretary election. And Socialist Party member David Maples, standing for the first time, received over 30 nominations to stand for a national disabled members' seat (see centre pages).

The nomination process has meant that there will be challengers for the NEC seats where right-wingers have won seats unopposed in recent elections. With members looking for a fighting lead, those challenges could be successful.

However, the nomination process also poses problems for a successful challenge to the right wing. A grouping called the 'Members' Team', based loosely around Labour left activists and the Socialist Workers' Party, voted for the closing down of



Unison Action broad left, just before the nomination process started. This broad left which was initiated by and included Socialist Party members, had agreed that it would come back together to agree a slate for the 2021 NEC elections after failing to agree by consensus one candidate for the general secretary.

The Members' Team brought together a slate with no regard to decisions they had previously made when part of Unison Action. Socialist Party members made clear their support for all existing left NEC members and called for their nomination in branches.

The Members' Team, however, refused publicly to call for support for sitting Socialist Party NEC members Hugo Pierre, April Ashley and Jim McFarlane, and it is clear from

the list of nominating branches that leading Members' Team activists did not call for their nomination in their branches.

This sectarian attitude persisted in supporting other candidates in opposition to Socialist Party members.

In the 2019 NEC elections, they, as part of Unison Action, nominated Socialist Party member Adrian O'Malley, a well-known and leading health activist, for the national male Health seat and Socialist Party member John Malcolm for the Northern region seat. Adrian nearly defeated a past president in that election.

In Greater London, Unison Action agreed to nominate Socialist Party member Naomi Byron, who led a major campaign for full sick pay in a private sector NHS provider, for the low-paid members' seat in a

by-election that was abandoned because of the pandemic.

All three now face a battle to win those seats for the left, by fighting both a right and a Members' Team candidate. Supporters of Roger MacKenzie, who was backed by Jeremy Corbyn in the general secretary election, are also standing against left-wing incumbents.

Unfortunately, the Members' Team refused to meet or discuss a way forward following calls by Socialist Party members and others. Undoubtedly this refusal to meet was based on a move away from the programme that is needed to transform Unison into a fighting democratic union. They say they stand for "change" - but what change is needed?

The Members' Team supported Paul Holmes' general secretary election campaign, which dropped key aspects of the agreed Unison Action policy programme. The Members' Team has moved further away and dropped the call on Labour councils not to make cuts and instead to fight austerity, and for an immediate 15% NHS pay rise.

They call for "a relationship with the Labour Party based on a willingness to fight the Tories, not socialists", whatever that means! This change in particular must have been made to accommodate sitting Labour councillors who haven't opposed cuts, to stand under the Members' Team umbrella. This is something the left have been extremely critical of in the past; when right-wingers like John Gray and Chris Tansley vote as Labour councillors to make cuts but then sit on decisions our union conferences make to oppose cuts and to defend members' jobs, pay, terms and conditions.

If the make-up of the NEC does shift left and those standing for 'change' are in a majority up against a right-wing general secretary, they will be tested.

Socialist Party members will be putting a clear programme to members for Unison to fight the public sector pay freeze, for national action to fight cuts and end privatisation and for democratisation of our union. We say not a penny more of members' money to cuts-making and privatising councillors and MPs, and argue for a discussion about how to achieve a genuine working-class political voice.

The ballot opens on 4 May and Socialist Party members will be campaigning to transform Unison.

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

● **Current Socialist Party NEC members Hugo Pierre and April Ashley will be standing for re-election. And Socialist Party Scotland's Jim McFarlane has been re-elected unopposed.**
● **They will be joined by Adrian O'Malley for the national health service seat which he came close to winning last time, along with Naomi Byron in London, Tom Hunt in the East Midlands and John Malcolm in the North East. David Maples is standing for election in the disabled members' seat.**

MATT WHALE

LIVERPOOL FAN AND HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

The plan to set up a new 'European Super League' has met with frustration, anger and dismay. The proposals have also met with universal disdain, and have managed to unite normally partisan fans across Europe in opposition to this new league.

The proposal is to replace the existing European competitions with a new twenty-team competition. 15 places will be permanently filled by the founding clubs, including the 'big six' in England - Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur.

Only 12 founding clubs have been named so far. As yet unclear process, supposedly related to performance, will decide the remaining five places.

The motivation of the 12 founding clubs is unapologetically money. The biggest two clubs in Spain - Barcelona and Real Madrid - are €1 billion and €900 million in debt respectively.

Capitalists in charge of the 12 teams see the new league as a way of ensuring higher revenue, richer TV deals and a selection of 'bigger fixtures' to market the league worldwide, following the disruption caused by the pandemic.

Rich and poor

Since the 'breakaway' Premier League, and the influence of Sky and its TV money, the gap between the richest and poorest clubs has grown, and continues to grow. Football clubs are increasingly owned by venture capitalists with no loyalty to the club, the fans or the league they play in.

The likes of the Glazers who own Man United, FSG who own Liverpool and Stan Kroenke who owns Arsenal, all own franchises of other sports in the US. They see their football clubs as nothing more than part of their portfolio.

All are billionaires, and all have seen the value of the teams increase since buying the clubs. The Super League is pure greed, and an attempt to further increase profit.

While clubs in the lower leagues have had to furlough players and face bankruptcy, the richest clubs have put into action a plan that is nothing more than a money grab.

The fact that the same 15 teams would play in this Super League every season brings into question the very basic ideals of sporting merit

No to Super League - reclaim football from billionaire owners



STEFFEN PROSSDORF/CC

and fair play. At the time of writing, four of the 'big six' in England sit outside of qualification spots for Europe's current 'elite' competition, the Champions League. This shows that the Super League has little to do with the most deserving, but is about the richest keeping their place.

Football's governing bodies and TV broadcasters appear to be echoing the views of the fans. But let's be clear, their issue is the money and control in football moving from themselves to the Super League clubs.

The Premier League itself was set up to ensure that more money would be concentrated in the hands of the elite clubs in England. Europe and world football governing bodies, Uefa and Fifa respectively, have been embroiled in accusations of corruption.

The 2022 World Cup has been

awarded to the dictatorship in Qatar, where many construction workers have died. Add to this the farce around tickets for major European tournaments. These are just a few examples of Fifa and Uefa acting in favour of big business.

No trust

The Champions League itself was set up to protect the TV rights for the major markets. The Super League is a natural progression of the influence of money and capitalism on football. Fans should have no trust in the billionaire owners of clubs, but equally have no trust in the current leaders of the game.

There is mass opposition to the Super League and protests have already happened at grounds. Building the protests, and linking them up across the country, can defeat this Super League threat. But that alone

will only temporarily hold back the march of money and capitalism in football and sport.

Football is now not affordable to many workers. Opposition to the Super League needs to be linked to other issues in football, including the price of tickets. Premier League ticket prices should be £10-£20, and free or very cheap for children.

The Super League is an attempt by the rich owners to monopolise football and increase profits. Capitalism today is short-term greed, over long-term planning and people's need.

The owners are ruthless big business people who got their wealth and influence by exploiting workforces. The likes of the Glazers and FSG see football in the same way an investor in Amazon sees their money, they want maximum profit no matter what the cost.

The Super League - fans don't want

it, players don't want it, and I've yet to see anyone apart from the owners indicate this is anything other than damaging to football. The protests and campaigns are an opportunity to discuss the alternative ways football should be organised.

Fans should be in charge. No more leeching capitalists, no more finance capital. Only democratic fan-run clubs can ensure that football clubs and the sport in general remains the beautiful game.

Socialist Party online meeting

with John Reid, author Reclaim the Game

- Friday 23 April, 6:30pm
- Zoom ID: 816 2566 2720

Super League: readers of the Socialist react

The proposed Super League is a disgrace. It further entrenches the economic divide between clubs, and takes the game further away from ordinary supporters.

You can't easily change football allegiance, but I would struggle to cheer on Liverpool if this happens.

Football clubs should be owned and controlled by their supporters.

They belong to the community, not to the super-rich.

JAMES ELLIS
LIVERPOOL FAN

Former players, now TV pundits, Gary Neville and Jamie Carragher were full of class contradictions when discussing the Super League. Both are working-class people

operating in a millionaires' world, but reminded by these events of their roots. They aren't entirely removed, despite their wealth, from the mood in Bury and Bootle.

Neville was grief stricken. He apologising for not resisting the Glazers, and called them "scavengers".

Carragher called for fans to drive out owners and march on stadiums. Millions will be watching and digesting.

MATT DOBSON
CARDIFF FAN

In the 13th edition of Reclaim the Game in March 2019, I wrote: "Yet again there is talk of a breakaway European Super League. It should be named the Corporate Greed League. A number of clubs, including... Real

Madrid and five Premier League teams have discussed forming a 16-team European Super League, that could begin as soon as 2021."

Reclaim the Game outlines that the seeds of football greed were sown in 1992 with the breakaway Premier League, which my club QPR were part of. But at least the Premier League retained promotion and relegation, and some money did trickle down to the lower leagues, the football pyramid and grassroots football.

Uefa laughably criticises the Super League as an exercise in greed, but it was Uefa that encouraged and cultivated this greed by abandoning the European Cup and introducing the Champions League, which formed the framework for this breakaway.

Fan groups, footballers' union PFA, and the Football Supporters Federation must organise, including strike action.

Football belongs to the fans. We must fight to reclaim the game. Let us kick out the billionaire corporate owners from our game.

JOHN REID

QPR FAN AND AUTHOR OF RECLAIM THE GAME

Reclaim the Game

By John Reid

- Visit leftbooks.co.uk
- or call **020 8988 8789**
- PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



Protests continue against proposed anti-protest laws

● Southampton

SUE ATKINS

Guildhall Square in Southampton rang out to chants of "Kill the Bill" for the second time this month. The turnout was smaller, but made up for it with the defiant spirit of the young people who organised it.

This was the day of Prince Philip's funeral and the police had asked that a minute's silence be observed at 3pm. The response of those present was to observe a minute's silence, with fists raised, but more appropriately in remembrance of all those killed at the hands of racists and the police, and those who have died due to Covid-19.

Socialist Party member Larry Kazingizi spoke on the problems facing young people and the need for socialist change. Sacked bus driver Declan Clune explained how the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill could be used to prevent the sort of protest that RMT bus drivers have organised in his defence. These and other fighting speeches were enthusiastically received.

Southampton Trades Council advertised their May Day march and rally on 1 May. The young organisers agreed to combine their own event with the Trades Council and will provide speakers, and so an important new link for solidarity was forged. We will work together to defend our right to protest.

● Newcastle

LIAM BIRCH

Socialist Party members joined around 200 others at Grey's Monument in Newcastle to protest against

this horrific anti-protest bill. Various groups came together to denounce the blatant attempt to suppress protest. It was widely agreed that this bill is an attack on our civil liberties by a vicious ruling class.

There were a number of speakers, all furious and disgusted, including a fifteen year-old. Speakers were followed by chants of "Kill the bill" and "Whose streets? Our streets!", as well as a performance by a rock band. All in all, the mood was peaceful with a real current of anger running just below the surface.

A member of the Socialist Party, Matty Collerton, took to the mic and was met with a great response just for mentioning socialism - he had to pause on occasion to allow for cheers of support. Police were present, but this did not stop our voices being heard in the slightest. Newcastle will not be silenced!

● Sheffield

ROBERT SIMPSON

The protest in Sheffield brought together at the very least 300 people - the majority of them young people. Chants included things like "Whose streets? Our streets!", "Tory scum", and "Tell me what democracy looks like."

The protest had a positive atmosphere, but with a little less energy than the 1,000 that protested in previous weeks. It still got a positive response from the public, and since the Covid restrictions are being rolled back, more people were out and about to hear the message. The Socialist Party flags and banner were prominent on the demo and seven people left their details and indicated that they are interested in joining.

Housing activists storm multi-million pound rental firm's offices



PHOTO RAGAVAN

SCOTT JONES

EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

A lively and energetic day of action on housing swept through East London on 17 April. Socialist Party members, Refugee Rights activists, housing campaigners, striking workers and others protested outside and inside the offices of property management firm City Rooms in Stepney Green. The action was called by the Unite housing workers' branch and the Social Housing Action Campaign in response to the housing crisis which has plunged to new depths during the pandemic. The protesters put forward the slogan 'stop the evictions, drop the debts'. At the same time, further protests took place outside offices in Stratford.

City Rooms has told Socialist Party member Lawanya that she owes thousands of pounds after she was forced

to break her contract because she could not afford their exorbitant rent.

The protest in Stepney Green followed a march from the country's first ever council housing estate in Shoreditch which garnered big support from passers-by as it made its way through the East End.

At the same time, in Newham, the London Renters Union picketed the office there, and earlier, Socialist Party members took part in a protest on the Carpenter's estate demanding that empty homes are filled with people who need them and that those homes should be 'social' and affordable.

Speaking at the opening rally at the Boundary estate, Lawanya said: "I spent three quarters of my wages on rent to City Rooms, a multi-million pound company which is now chasing me for rent for time I did not live there. This is a situation faced by many."

City Rooms - the trading name of

Oliver Walton Ltd - last year filed a turnover of almost £21 million for 2019, with reserves of over £978,000. Its total profit was just shy of £895,000, with shareholders receiving £850,000 in dividends.

Workers must unionise

By picketing, occupying, protesting and handing in a letter to City Rooms, we sent a message that Lawanya has a campaign behind her that will not stop until the outrageous demands placed upon her are dropped. In occupying the City Rooms office, we also urged workers there to join a union, a call led by Unite assistant general secretary Howard Beckett who spoke at the rally and marched with us right into the City Rooms offices.

Other speakers included Paul Kershaw and Jack Jeffrey from the Unite housing workers' branch and Ferdy Lyons, a Social Housing Action Campaign committee member, all of whom are Socialist Party members and candidates for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition on the London-wide list for the Greater London Assembly. Athena Parnell, a striking worker at Goodlord tenant referencing agency spoke, as did Doug Holton, from Equity entertainment workers' union and Hackney Trades Union Council. A solidarity message was also received from the London Renters Union.

The Socialist Party is standing as part of TUSC in this May's elections on a programme which includes solving the housing crisis. For mass building of council homes and democratically set rent caps. Secure tenancies for all, and the right to leave tenancies without extortionate debt claims.

Socialist Party northern region meeting spurs on election campaigns

MATTHEW COLLERTON

NEWCASTLE SOCIALIST PARTY

On Wednesday 14 April, the Socialist Party northern region held a public meeting to discuss the need for socialists in our local councils. Hannah Sell, the Socialist Party general secretary, introduced the discussion with a fierce critical

analysis, demonstrating how even a single councillor putting forward a socialist, working-class alternative could act as a catalyst to build a mass movement for change.

After Hannah spoke, a fighting fund appeal was made. This galvanised attendees who generously pledged a total of £710 in donations, including five people who matched

a £50 contribution made by Socialist Party member Wilf. The speaker spurred a mood of resilience at a crucial time as we continue with our local election campaigns, and the money raised will go towards building this movement and providing materials so our campaign can be as effective and far reaching as possible.



Protest in Sheffield TIM JONES

With public campaigning back in full swing - now is the time to raise fighting fund



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2021	DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2021
North West	413	1,150	36%	
Northern	260	750	35%	
South West	601	1,800	33%	
London	1,120	4,600	24%	
Southern & SE	480	2,350	20%	
West Midlands	286	2,600	11%	
East Midlands	152	1,850	8%	
Wales	157	2,300	7%	
Eastern	50	1,200	4%	
Yorkshire	40	2,550	2%	
Other	50	3,850	1%	
TOTAL	3,609	25,000	14%	

With the gradual easing of the Covid restrictions, more and more Socialist Party branches are able to hold campaign stalls and are getting a good response. Socialist Party members in Manchester report that they have started their campaign stalls again after Manchester's "permanent" lockdown. While they report it is still much quieter than usual, they have nevertheless managed to raise £26.85 in the first week and £20.07 in the second week. In Staines, £25 fighting fund was raised at their Saturday campaign stall. Socialist Party

members in east London raised £30 on the 'Stop the evictions, drop the debts' housing demo. These are just a few of the examples we've had in the last week.

Looking at different ways to raise fighting fund, Southampton Socialist Party has raised £30 from 'Save our NHS' badges.

Are you paying - and asking for - the solidarity price for the Socialist? Our members report that we have received a lot of donations from people this way. Every Socialist Party branch should make sure they have a card

reader on all their campaigning activity. Many of the donations we received on the Kill the Bill demos last Saturday were through card readers. Make sure your branch doesn't miss out!

Fund the fightback

DONATE TODAY

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

Left candidate, Pedro Castillo – surprise of Peruvian elections

PATRICIO GUZMÁN
SOCIALISMO REVOLUCIONARIO - CWI CHILE

The second round of the presidential elections in Peru, which takes place on 6 June, will see left candidate Pedro Castillo contest right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori.

On 12 April, Presidential, National Congress, and Andean Parliament elections were held in Peru.

The big winner of the day was the left-wing socialist party, Peru Libre. Its presidential candidate, Pedro Castillo, came first with about 19% of the votes, in an election with a large number of presidential candidates. His party also came first in the Peruvian Congress and in the election of members to the Andean Parliament, with a similar percentage of the vote. Peru Libre will have 28 congress representatives.

No analyst foresaw the exponential growth of support for Pedro Castillo, a socialist and trade unionist from the most militant wing of the teachers' union, along with the growth of his party, Peru Libre.

Covid and poverty

An important layer of the electorate has politically expressed its indignation and desperation about the permanent political crisis and the lack of effective action by the state, especially in the midst of a coronavirus pandemic. This has led to over 55,000 deaths and impoverished the population.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, for example, has warned that poverty will increase from 20.2% to 30.3%. Among those under 18 years of age, poverty will increase by 13%.

The country was already in a situation of permanent political crisis before the arrival of Covid-19. Since the dictator Alberto Fujimori fled Peru in 2000, every president has been involved in cases of notorious corruption

or been impeached by Congress.

The depth of the institutional political crisis in Peru is such that the traditional parties have virtually disappeared.

In the recent elections, the so-called political centre has been the great loser; in Congress, there will be eleven different blocs. To this division must be added an even greater polarisation.

Keiko Fujimori, who has been indicted for corruption and many Peruvians believe deserves jail, has gone into the second round to face Pedro Castillo. She is the daughter of the former dictator, Alberto Fujimori, once convicted for multiple human rights crimes.



The central slogan of Peru Libre is “no more poor people in a rich country”. The party was founded in the region of Cajamarca, the poorest of Peru’s regions

Keiko Fujimori leads the Popular Force Party, which claims the legacy of her father's dictatorship. For some time, she has been under investigation for corruption. The state prosecution submitted evidence in an 18,000-page document and demanded a 30-year prison sentence for her.

The right wing went to the elections divided, with several presidential candidates.

In the second electoral round, Keiko is likely to be successful if the groups of diverse conservative voters regroup and vote for her, out of fear of reforms or social revolution should Pedro Castillo win. This could block the path for Pedro Castillo and the Peru Libre Party. However, even if this is the case, both the next government and Congress will be very weak.

The state abandoned all its social responsibilities as a result of the dictatorship of Alberto Fujimori. He privatised everything he could, and together with his henchman, Vladimiro Montesinos, plundered all they could.

The lack of state services has probably never been more

noticeable than in the midst of the Covid pandemic. The public health system cannot guarantee oxygen to patients whose families cannot afford to pay.

Peru has been one of the countries most affected by the coronavirus pandemic in terms of both health and the economy, with the country's GDP (total output) falling 17.4% during the first half of 2020.

Who are Peru Libre?

The central slogan of Peru Libre is “no more poor people in a rich country”. The party was founded in the region of Cajamarca, the poorest of Peru's regions, despite being a region of great mining wealth.

In its ideology and programme, Peru Libre claims “to be an organisation of the socialist left (...) To be of the left it is necessary to embrace Marxist theory and with its light interpret all the phenomena occurring in the world, continent, and national society, its causes and effects, and from this diagnosis propose criteria for solutions that lead to the satisfaction of the majority of the people. Likewise, the Mariateguist ideas [those of left-wing, inter-war writer and activist, José Carlos Mariátegui] are of vital importance with respect to our national, Latin American and even world reality”.

In the same programme, they denounce the left that lives in permanent opposition without a governmental programme. They attack the left that has given up its historical mission and whose figures opted for the path of banking, becoming ‘labour-business’ friendly. They accuse NGOs of ‘vile treason’.

A central political objective of Peru Libre is the convening of a Constituent Assembly to replace the 1993 Constitution that was imposed by Fujimori's coup d'état.

In its programme, Peru Libre also proposes ‘robust participation of the state in the economy’, the nationalisation of strategic sectors, increasing the current 3.5% of GDP allocated to public education, and the 5.4% of GDP spent on public health to 10% for each of them.

For health provision, Peru Libre proposes the creation of a universal, free, quality system. They propose to strengthen the national pension system and gradually eliminate the private pension system.

Pedro Castillo

Peru Libre's presidential candidate, Pedro Castillo, emerged as a national labour leader from his role as a union member of the teachers' union Conare. The largest union in Peru numerically is the Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores en la Educación del

Perú (Sutep) which organises teachers from state schools.

A sector of the union, frustrated by the constant agreements made by the Sutep leadership with various governments, formed the National Committee for the Reorientation of Sutep-Conare.

Conare led a national strike in 2004. In June 2007, it led an indefinite strike to fight against ‘teacher evaluations’ that ended job stability enjoyed

by Peruvian teachers and the municipalisation of public schools in a way similar to the measures used in Chile to privatise education. Sutep joined the strike in July 2007.

The electoral gains of Peru Libre, which in the course of the campaign grew and strengthened, opens the possibility to build a workers' party in Peru based on mass organisations, with a genuinely socialist programme.

Superpowers' tensions continue to ratchet up

A further deterioration in relations between the US administration, and its allies, with Putin's regime in Russia has ratcheted-up tensions between the two blocs.

This follows a massive build-up of Russian forces on the borders of Ukraine, followed within days by Washington's imposition of widespread sanctions against Moscow for alleged serious cyber and hacking attacks on US institutions, and the US electoral process. Then, on 16 April, Russia expelled ten US and three Polish officials in retaliation for US and Polish sanctions.

And although a proposed Biden-Putin summit has sought to de-escalate the crisis, the expulsion of Russian officials from the Czech Republic over Russia's alleged sabotage of an arms storage depot in that country back in 2014, has added fuel to the fire.

Meanwhile, protests are set to reignite this week within Russia against Putin, as the health of the jailed opposition figure, Alexei Navalny, deteriorates.

None of the beatings of the war drums and other machinations of the competing ruling classes of Washington or Moscow serve the interests of the working classes on either side of the Atlantic, who continue to suffer from the oppression and exploitation of capitalism.

● Read Clare Doyle's analysis of the situation on socialistworld.net



£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

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22-28 April 2021

formerly **Militant**

6 May elections

FIGHT TO STOP CUTS

FIGHT FOR FULLY FUNDED SERVICES

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

In the run-up to the 6 May elections we have an opportunity to build the fight against austerity and the damage it has done to our lives.

The Johnson government is eager to pass on the cost of the pandemic to us. A big part of that is through cutting yet more funding to councils and allowing council tax to be raised by up to 5%. We have to oppose this.

We have lost so much over a decade of savage council cuts. Across the country, funding has been decimated for our schools, social care services, housing services,

public transport, refuges, youth clubs, waste collection, cultural facilities and so much more. Every community has lost services that they hold dear.

Between 2010 and 2018, spending on housing was cut by 48%, transport and culture by over 40%. Those cuts have had a severe impact.

School funding cuts have left teachers overstretched, working with limited resources, and even resorting to buying school supplies themselves. Some schools have begged the community to help them buy essential equipment, including toilet rolls!

Refuge closures have left abused women incredibly vulnerable.

Horrendously, 64% who apply to shelters are turned away, leaving many trapped in a violent home.

Coventry is the UK's 'City of Culture' this year, yet most of its libraries have suffered cuts, while Sure Start centres and youth clubs have been lost. The famous Transport Museum now has entry fees, as does the Godiva Festival.

Thousands on thousands of council jobs have also been lost. The livelihoods and futures of a whole generation have been damaged to make us pay for the 2008-09 financial crash caused by the capitalist class and their system, and now by the Tories making us pay for the pandemic. We cannot lose any more.

The passing on of Tory central government cuts in spending has included all councils where Labour is in power. But council cuts aren't automatic. Each closure, downsizing, restructuring that has torn our vital services apart is approved and carried out by elected councils.

Yet councils can make a stand and refuse to implement cuts. They can buy time, using their reserves and borrowing powers, and build a campaign mobilising working-class communities and the trade unions together to force the government to restore full funding. On its own, socialist-led Liverpool council in the mid-1980s secured significant additional funding from the Thatcher

government by taking this fighting road.

Moreover, the money is there in the country for us to have good quality services. It's more obvious than ever. Billionaires in the UK are now £44 billion richer than a year ago. Ineos's tax-dodging billionaire boss Jim Ratcliffe alone increased his wealth by over £5 billion.

However, we can't get that money without fighting for it. Part of that fight is in the local elections, where the Socialist Party as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing on a clear anti-cuts platform, unlike Labour or any major party. Let's get socialists elected and begin to end this carnage.

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

