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formerly **Militant**

CUTS AND CRONYISM

FIGHT THE

ROTTEN

ESTABLISHMENT

SONALI THIMMAH / CC

BUILD A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

ELAINE BRUNSKILL
SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

For workers threatened with being fired then rehired, young people facing an avalanche of job losses, people in local communities fighting yet more cuts in precious services, the choice on offer from the established parties during the elections has been woeful.

The recent 'cash for curtains' scandal has highlighted the web of cronyism and dodgy deals at the very heart of this government. Further exposures by Dominic Cummings are clearly in the pipeline. As one commentator put it: "Number 10 has started a petrol fight with an arsonist!"

Disgracefully, while an estimated £200,000 has been forked out on sumptuous furnishing for number 10, the brutal nature of this government has been further revealed. While Johnson lives in luxury compared to most working-class people, his government has pushed through a post-Grenfell Fire Safety Act, which will leave leaseholders liable for associated costs of removing potentially lethal cladding (see pages 12 and 13).

All this, alongside Johnson's alleged remarks during the pandemic, 'let the bodies pile high in their thousands,' illustrates the callousness that runs deep within the Tory party. However, amid the growing crisis around Johnson, the Labour Party has utterly failed to put forward policies to improve the lives of those facing an uncertain future. Instead, it is becoming increasingly clear that they too are prepared to act only in the interest of capitalism.

While the super-rich are raking it in, workers and young people are facing an uncertain future. But, with Starmer at the helm, the Labour Party is like a sinking ship, of no use to those wanting to fight for a decent future. Little wonder that by November last year it was estimated that the Labour Party was losing members at the rate of 250 a day.

Boris Johnson likes to portray himself as a 'cheeky chappie' libertarian, but his rotten Tory government is baring its teeth, attempting to give police even more powers to stop any protests. And remember, the Labour Party didn't initially resist the anti-protest bill.

Sometimes protest comes from unexpected sources. Fury has been unleashed by football fans over the greed of billionaire club owners. This, alongside young people involved in waves of resistance, including Black Lives Matter protests and 'Kill the Bill' demonstrations against the police and crime bill, are all indicators of future mass movements.

Alongside protests on the streets, we also need to build a mass party that represents us. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was set up as a vehicle to enable trade unionists, community activists and socialists to stand up and fight against the austerity measures being put forward by all the establishment parties. As such it can be a step towards a future new mass workers' party.

When we bring together the energy on the streets with the clout of mass workers' organisations we can begin to fight for a socialist alternative to the capitalist profit system!

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Goodlord strike forces talks - solidarity needed for crucial dispute

JAMES IVENS
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The strike at lettings tech platform Goodlord has forced bosses into talks at mediation service Acas. Members of general union Unite in the tenant-referencing department are continuing their indefinite stoppage to restore the London Living Wage.

Meanwhile, the action has compelled the Living Wage Foundation to disaccredit Goodlord. Angry strikers are determined not to let management get away with it.

Regular picket lines at the office in Spitalfields, east London have received some visits from the establishment media, but with little published. The strike marched noisily through Brick Lane on 30 April to publicise the dispute. "We say no to fire and rehire! You say Goodlord, we say Badlord! We want the living wage - when do we want it? Now!"

Socialist Students activists have collected sheets and sheets of solidarity signatures from University of the Arts London students. On the same Friday, they visited estate agents in Camberwell, south London, demanding they not use Goodlord during the strike.

Student support

Now is peak time for students seeking accommodation. Students' unions should make public statements supporting the strike and calling on estate agents to withdraw from Goodlord.

Charlotte Street Capital, an investor in Goodlord, has quibbled about the strike's opposition to 'fire and rehire'. Employment law tends to be stacked in the capitalists' favour - but the financiers need a refresher on this point.

Legally, failure to renew a fixed-term contract is a dismissal. Reengagement on inferior pay and conditions absolutely is fire and rehire.

Fire and rehire should be banned. As we go to press, just ahead of polling day, where is the backing from London election candidates?

Blairite Labour mayor Sadiq Khan is silent. But Socialist Party members standing with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition have visited the picket line regularly.

The implications for all London office workers are weighty if attacks like this pass unchallenged. The bosses argue that remote working means their London workers don't need London pay levels. This is a strike the whole London trade union movement needs to get behind.

- Sign the petition: the.organise.network/campaigns/teamup-stop-using-goodlord

- Messages of support to glrefstaff@gmail.com, messages of protest to tom@goodlord.co.uk and Twitter @sogoodlord



Goodlord strikers march down Brick Lane, east London EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Sparks block Cardiff building site against deskilling

DAVE REID
CARDIFF SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 40 sparks descended on the Bouygues site at Cardiff University on 28 April where construction firm NG Bailey is working.

The site was blockaded and the gates barred by sparks and supporters from the Cardiff trade union movement and the Socialist Party, who turned away deliveries from the site.

A line of trucks queued up the road as the red-faced Bouygues boss shouted, stamped his feet and swore. But the sparks stood firm, despite one or two trucks breaking health and safety law forcing their way through the line. Other drivers turned away in solidarity.

As he became more and more irate, the boss claimed that there were no 'umbrella' companies working on the site - not true. And when



Sparks protesters in Cardiff DAVE REID

it was pointed out that workers are having to pay the employers national insurance he exclaimed "but that's illegal!" Precisely, but that it what is happening on his site.

A great morning's work getting the message over to NG Bailey that wherever they go sparks will protest and disrupt their attempts to deskill.

Vote 'yes' in the PCS DWP ballot

KATRINE WILLIAMS
VICE-PRESIDENT PCS DWP GROUP (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Broad Left Network members are building for a strong 'yes' vote in the DWP consultative ballot for PCS Jobcentre members which starts on 5 May and runs until 21 May.

We have been campaigning hard to build up collective response to the attacks from management on our members. The government is intent on giving the impression that everything is getting back to normal, despite the risks in our communities from Covid-19.

The Tories are also intent in putting the harsh welfare system back in place to penalise the claimants. Our

members have been able to focus on paying benefits and supporting the public over the past year. And have been able to fully deliver services while keeping everyone safe, without the need to bring anyone into the workplace, while also providing face-to-face services to the limited number of claimants who have not been able to use remote channels.

The ballot will show the strength of feeling about safety and how services should be delivered with our members having the control over how best to support individual claimants. Management are intent on bringing everyone needlessly into the Jobcentres and the full strength of our membership needs to be mobilised to resist this.

PCS ballot closes 13 May - vote Broad Left Network

DAVE SEMPLE
PCS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

On 13 May the ballot closes for PCS president and national executive. This deadline takes no account of postal delivery time. So in reality just a few days remain to maximise the Broad Left Network vote.

A vote for Socialist Party member Marion Lloyd for president and for the Broad Left Network-supported national executive council candidates is a vote for a democratic union and a fighting leadership. A vote to make a stand against pay cuts and attacks on pensions and conditions. A vote to use our collective strength to protect all members.

Socialist Party members in PCS call upon activists and members to vote for these Broad Left Network-supported candidates.

BROAD LEFT NETWORK CANDIDATES

PRESIDENT: MARION LLOYD (BEIS); VICE PRESIDENTS: FIONA BRITTLE (SCOT GOV), SARAH BROWN (MET POLICE), DAVE SEMPLE (DWP); 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 GUINNANE (DFE), RACHEL HEEMSKERK (DWP), MARION LLOYD (BEIS), TOM LOWRY (DWP), RACHELLE MCDUGALL (HMRC), NICK PARKER (BEIS), DAVE REES (DWP), ROB RITCHIE (MET POLICE), JON-PAUL ROSSER (HMRC), DAVE SEMPLE (DWP), PAUL SUTER (DWP), SAORSA-AMATHEIA TWEEDALE (DWP), KATRINE WILLIAMS (DWP), CRAIG WORSWICK (DWP), COLIN YOUNG (DFE), BOBBY YOUNG (HMRC)

May Day greetings from

Yorkshire
Youth
Fight for
Jobs

YOUTH FIGHT
FOR JOBS

May Day
greetings from

Notts Trades
Council



Go Ahead offers deal to Manchester bus drivers - but workers remain on strike for now

Bus drivers employed by Go North West in Manchester have been taking all-out, continuous strike, since the 28 February. The company is trying to fire and rehire its workers on vastly inferior contracts.

Speaking at the Manchester May Day rally on 1 May, Unite branch secretary Colin Hayden said: "Today marks the start of the tenth week of our industrial action against fire and rehire. Our members decided they will not stand for the industrial terrorism of fire and rehire. Now we have had a deal from the Go Ahead group. It says fire and rehire has been withdrawn. Two sacked members will be given their jobs back. Sham, bogus disciplinaries have been stopped. But the deal is not done yet. We will return to work if and when our members vote for the deal. Until then we will be on strike."

The 400 workers have been fighting a 10% cut in bus drivers, plans to force workers to work longer for no additional pay, resulting in them being £2,500 a year worse off, and the tearing up of existing sick pay policy, which would force workers to work when they are sick or should be self-isolating during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Socialist Party calls for an end to fire and rehire, no pay cut for drivers and renationalisation of bus services.

Metroline buses to face summer of strikes unless it drops 'remote sign-on'

Unite has told London bus operator Metroline it has until 10 May to permanently drop its 'remote sign-on' policy - or it will face a summer of strikes.

A rolling programme of strikes by more than 4,000 bus drivers could take place in north and west London.

96% of Unite members at Metroline West and 97% at Metroline Travel voted for industrial action on routes in north and west London. Strike dates will be announced soon.

Remote sign-on means drivers do not report to a depot to start work, but meet their bus and begin work at an alternative location such as a bus stop. This reduces costs and boosts the company's profits.

In a letter to Metroline's managing director Stephen Harris, Unite's Mary Summers said: "Our members have made clear that they do not want remote sign-on - full stop. We are asking that the employer now confirms that remote sign-on will not be implemented. This is what is required to prevent industrial action. We will need to have this confirmed by the employer by 10 May."

Four Socialist Party members elected to NEU executive

A thirst for action and a fighting leadership

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN NEU

The National Education Union's (NEU) ballot for the national executive election shows a clear thirst for action and a fighting, decisive leadership. Not only did the Socialist Party's current executive member Nicky Downes retain her seat, but three more Socialist Party members will be joining her in September.

Three regions were given the opportunity to vote for a Socialist Party member, calling on the union to fight from the front, while building from below, which allowed Sean McCauley, Sheila Caffrey and Louise Cuffaro to also get elected. In addition, Alex Moore did really well, receiving enough votes to be elected, but missed out due to the gender balance rule within the union. We stood in collaboration with other left-wing candidates from the Education Solidarity Network (ESN).

The Socialist Party stood five candidates who put forward demands such as:

- Win on workload: a national contract that genuinely limits hours
- End the pay freeze: a substantial pay rise for all
- Defend support staff: colleagues who face high Covid-19 risks must not also face low pay, unrealistic demands, and job cuts
- Stop companies exploiting supply teachers' pay and conditions: re-establish local authority-controlled supply cover

However, these were demands that many others put forward too. What made us, along with other ESN candidates, stand out is that we suggested a programme to actually win our manifesto. We attended hustings, requesting them in many areas which weren't intending to have them, to encourage union members to ask questions and put pressure on the leadership for action.

We pushed for union recognition for support staff in our union, who are currently allowed to join but not to be collectively bargained for. We pointed out the current union strategy of fighting school-by-school on

national issues can leave members isolated and reps vulnerable.

Instead, we call for the building of solid national campaigns, by giving reps and local areas the support and training so that we can win national ballots for action. And we put forward the need to talk to other unions and our sixth form sector, which regularly beats legal thresholds, and share their experiences with officers, reps and members. We also outlined fighting to defend supply staff, many of whom haven't even received furlough in the last year, with a proper national campaign and not with just press releases and webinars.

The NEU has been heralded by many in the union movement this last year for its packed online meetings and massive increase in membership, which is boasted about by the current leadership as proof that what they're doing is working. Yet we still have many schools, colleges and nurseries without reps and with many members feeling disenfranchised as they battle individually.

We are proud to have gained 1,688

first preference votes, but the highest turnout for a region was 8.5% of the membership. This shows a long way to go for the NEU to galvanise its membership to become a unified, fighting force.

Our role on the executive will be to build links with those education workers already active and engaged, but also to develop this so all NEU members see a point to fighting in their union and their workplaces. But the union elections don't end there. This autumn, NEU members will also need to elect a new deputy general secretary.

A fighting socialist in this position would ensure the union had the best chance to beat back the government on its constant attacks on education. Socialist Party member Martin Powell-Davies is running as a long-standing union activist and has already received pledges of support from branches and activists across the country. So, if you're a worker in education, get in touch to help us build the campaign for the strongest, active union in education.



Beale High School picket line 4 May JAMES IVENS

Beal High School strike against punitive sick policy resumes

EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Beal High School workers have walked out for a further five days against a punitive, two-tier sick pay policy. Dozens upon dozens of pickets at England's largest secondary - with over 2,600 students - demand: don't punish the sick! The National Education Union has more action planned if management won't do the right thing.

Talks on Friday 30 April did not resolve the dispute. Had bosses been serious about negotiating, they would have called talks on the Monday, before the first two days of post-Easter action.

However, a meeting with 70 parents earlier in the week was more productive. They were angered that management had not warned them of the strike days or explained the issues properly.

Staff employed after 2016 are entitled to a fraction of the sick pay of other employees. The NEU members are also angry that, even when the school accepts they are genuinely sick, they can face disciplinary action or being treated as poor teachers.

The cost of resolving these injustices to this privately run 'academy' school is minimal. Informed parents have now sent the union's side of things to hundreds of others.

As a result, many parents emailed the head. Chief executive Kathryn Burns responded by trying to push parents into individual discussions! These are the same isolating and intimidating tactics so many bosses try to use on staff.

The action has forced the school to begin a process of talks through mediation service Acas. But NEU regional officer Glenn Kelly says the union intends to keep the action on until there is a serious offer.

As we go to press, strikers are due to march from the school to the nearby office of Labour MP Wes Streeting, shadow education secretary.

His absence from the picket line so far is notable, but not surprising. School workers, parents and students after an electoral alternative that backs workers' struggles should look to the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Brighton anti-academisation strike



Workers at Moulsecomb Primary School in Brighton have been striking against forced academisation. NEU, GMB and Unison members took strike action on 29 April and were supported by parents and children, as well as Socialist Party members on the picket line.

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Unison national elections

We need a fighting, democratic, member-led union to stop the austerity attacks

PAULA MITCHELL
SOCIALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Unison union members want change. After over a decade of vicious government austerity cuts - during which hundreds of thousands of jobs have been cut from local authorities and pay frozen, and with Labour councils willingly wielding the axe on behalf of the Tories - Unison members have again been in the frontline during the Covid pandemic.

Despite being hailed as 'heroes' for their exceptional work in the NHS, or in care homes, or in looking after vulnerable households that were shielding, and so forth, their reward from the Johnson government has been a slap in the face, with another public sector pay freeze and a meagre 1% pay offer in the NHS.

Last year, in Labour-run Tower Hamlets, 4,000 workers were sacked and rehired on worse terms of employment as part of the council's cuts.

Throughout austerity and the Covid crisis, Unison's leadership

has failed to mobilise a coordinated fightback. Instead, branches have been left to fight alone with no national campaign. Moreover, Unison's leaders excused Labour councils passing on Tory cuts, claiming 'there was no alternative', while continuing to fill Labour's coffers with Unison members' money.

Former Unison general secretary Dave Prentis only supported Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign under pressure from the membership, and now his successor Christine McAnea applauds Keir Starmer, who has ruthlessly defeated Corbynism inside the Labour Party, as doing a good job.

During the Covid crisis Unison's leadership effectively shut down the union, refusing to call meetings, threatening disciplinary action against activists who tried to organise, and refusing to support the NHS workers' pay campaign for 15%. And McAnea's response to the NHS insult? A slow handclap!

Boris Johnson's Tories are mired in crisis. But why isn't Unison's

leadership taking advantage of the Tories' problems to press forward on members' interests? Where is the national fight on pay? Unison should be taking a lead, calling protests and action and appealing to other public sector unions to prepare together for coordinated action.

By way of an alternative to this inaction, Socialist Party members are standing in the national executive (NEC) elections - including sitting NEC members Hugo Pierre and April Ashley - to put forward the fighting programme necessary to defend jobs, pay and services.

Increased nominations for Hugo, April, and the candidates standing on that programme, show the desire for change. Socialist Party Scotland member Jim McFarlane has already been re-elected unopposed to the Scottish male seat. The Socialist Party also calls for support for other candidates who are genuinely standing on a fighting platform.

In last autumn's general secretary election, Hugo Pierre attempted to get discussion and a consensus for



Unison members protesting against spending cuts PHOTO PAUL MATTSOON

a single left candidate on a fighting programme. But other candidates who stood against the status quo - Paul Holmes (supported by

John McDonnell) and Roger McKenzie (supported by Jeremy Corbyn) - refused.

For the NEC elections, we argued that there needed to be a coordinated left challenge in order to unseat the right-wing incumbents. Again, unfortunately, the 'members' team' grouping around Paul Holmes has not been prepared to discuss, and supporters of Roger McKenzie are supporting right-wing candidates.

What change do Unison members need? We argue for a campaigning, socialist leadership - prepared to lead not just in words but in action. If the members do elect a majority on the NEC for those who argue for 'change', those NEC members will be tested.

Socialist Party members put forward a clear programme to fight the public sector pay freeze, for national action to fight austerity and end privatisation, and for democratisation of our union.

Socialist Party candidates stand clearly on a no-cuts platform, calling on Labour councils to refuse to pass on the cuts and instead to mount mass trade union and community campaigns to win the necessary funding.

They demand no more members' money should be handed over to cutting and privatising Labour

councillors, and argue for a debate in Unison and the trade union movement about how to achieve genuine working-class political representation.



Socialist Party members put forward a clear programme to fight the pay freeze, for national action to fight austerity and end privatisation, and for union democratisation

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.



Socialist Party Scotland member Jim McFarlane has been reelected to Unison's NEC unopposed

Socialist Party members contesting the forthcoming national executive council elections

Hugo Pierre - standing for national black members' male seat



Hugo is the current holder of the seat and in his material he says that in that time he has "fought to improve democracy in our union and to win policies that will help our members to fight to defend their jobs, pay and conditions." Hugo is Unison education convenor in Camden, London.

April Ashley - standing for national black members' female seat

April has held one of the three female black members seat on the NEC for over ten years, and is also branch secretary for Southwark Local Government Branch. In her address to members,



world last year. When this was linked to the Covid crisis, which saw the worst impact on black workers, it galvanised the fight against racism across the UK, with young people at the forefront. We need action and policies to fight for jobs, homes and services not racism."

Adrian O'Malley - standing for national health service general seat

Adrian is secretary of Mid Yorkshire Health Unison Branch which has a proud tradition of fighting privatisation, PFI, cuts and 'downbandings'. He says: "In 2018 we successfully fought off the introduction of a wholly owned subsidiary company in our trust and in 2020 succeeded in bringing Soft FM within our PFI hospitals back in-house."



David Maples - standing for national disabled members' general seat

David is chair of Merton Council Unison branch. He argues that disabled workers need strong workplace organisation and cannot rely on lobbying a hostile government. David campaigns for trade union control over health and safety, the 'access to work' service and the benefit system to make it supportive rather than punitive.



John Malcolm - standing for Northern region male seat

John is a Unison branch secretary representing over 3,000 health workers and has been a Unison activist for over 30 years working in the NHS. John says: "In 2018 my branch defeated the employer's proposal to set up a wholly owned subsidiary that would have seen hundreds of ancillary



and support workers transferred out of the NHS with no guarantee of their terms and conditions. Unison needs to step up the campaign on NHS pay. The 1% recommendation from the government is an insult. We need determined action to win a decent pay rise - we have had a real term pay cut of 20% across all public services."

Naomi Byron - standing for Greater London region low-paid reserve seat

Naomi is a catering worker in the NHS, and a joint Unison branch secretary for ISS workers at Homerton Hospital, east London. Naomi says: "Unison should be leading the fight



against the public sector pay freeze and insulting 1% (pay cut) offered to NHS staff. I led the campaign which won NHS sick pay and the London Living Wage for ISS staff at Homerton in the middle of Covid."

Tom Hunt - standing for East Midlands region male seat

Tom started working for the NHS 41 years ago as a student nurse and says he has watched the service being dismantled piecemeal. Tom initiated the #weareallchatsworth campaign, leading the successful fight to save Chatsworth Ward in Mansfield Community Hospital. He says: "Unison needs to change direction. The leadership has been found wanting on pay, pensions and fighting cuts. Unison should co-ordinate action across the union - not leave branches and service groups to fight alone."



Socialist Party members are campaigning on the following socialist manifesto for Unison:

Fight for pay, jobs and services

- National action to defeat cuts and privatisation - don't leave branches to fight alone
- Fight to break the public sector pay freeze and end low pay. Fight for a 15% pay rise in the NHS - build the fight for public sector-wide action
- Labour and SNP councils should refuse to make cuts and set no-cuts needs budgets
- A national campaign to return the billions stolen from councils by government since 2010
- For nationally-coordinated action to defeat the 'alternative care' providers, 'wholly owned subsidiaries' and 'STP' cuts plans
- End privatisation; bring services back in-house - including energy companies and probation
- Cancel PFI contracts, write off the debts and bring services back in-house - no compensation for the big corporations
- Renationalise the NHS
- Scrap academies and bring back all schools under democratic control of councils with governing bodies to be democratically elected

Union democracy

- For genuine democratic control of the union by the members and elected representatives
- Put the union's money where the fight is - more resources to the branches not at the centre.
- For the right of the union's national conference to debate any issue or rule change it chooses, including the political funds

- No to political witch-hunts and for full genuine lay control over the union by the members
- Defend the rule book right of branches to campaign to change, modify or replace union policy, including opposing pay claims, free from interference of unelected union officials
- For the election of full-time union officials on a worker's wage - an end to unelected full-time officials calling the shots

For genuine workers' political representation

- Not a penny of members' money to those MPs/councillors who fail to defend our members
- For genuine democratic control of the union's political funds by all members. Open up political funds to allow the union to support candidates who defend union members even if outside of the Labour Party
- For a full review of union political funds to ensure that we can secure a genuine political voice that represents our members

Rights

- For trade unions to lead an anti-racist, anti-austerity campaign for jobs, homes and services not racism
- Defend the right to protest, strike and picket. Trade unions must take the lead in a campaign to defeat the Tories 'police bill'
- Zero-tolerance of sexual harassment in the workplace
- Let Scotland decide. For a new independence referendum determined by the Scottish people

We need investment for a generation of trauma-affected children

RACHEL LYON
PRIMARY SCHOOL SUPPORT WORKER, WALTHAM
FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

The pandemic has had a significant effect on the health and wellbeing of children. Working as a school support worker I have seen this first hand. Children in my class repeatedly ask me things like: "Do you have Covid?" and "Will my Nan die?"

Children of keyworkers have attended school withdrawn, quiet and emotionally shaky, with a lot of questions that need to be addressed, as well as the stress experienced by being separated from many of their peers. The effects of extended social isolation for those children who have not been attending school will become increasingly apparent in the next months.

At the start of my career I was trained to implement the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework. Following this document is supposed to ensure children are safe and healthy, manage to enjoy and achieve, and can obtain economic wellbeing. These aspirations are ingrained in my practice, but have been at odds with reality during the pandemic.

The ECM looks to make parents and caregivers responsible for the ultimate wellbeing of the child. But I believe that, through the pandemic, the negligence now lands firmly at the feet of the government. Children are being driven with a constant focus on attainment, in underfunded schools, and without a plan to address their mental wellbeing.

During the period of lockdown our school timetable has a work-camp mentality and a structure that fails to consider the needs of children under stress. Without appropriate release, or means to process this stress, children can suffer long-term trauma.

The government and education secretary Gavin Williamson seem hell bent on driving children to 'catch up' academically. How can they insist on high levels of attainment, at the expense of all else, in a shell-shocked Britain? How will this government, that has let us down in so many ways, begin to address the healing that needs to take place in schools?

I believe we need to see a change in the curriculum now, to put our kids' health over assessment. I believe we need shorter core lessons, workshop approaches, positive behavioural interventions, Personal Social Education sessions, counselling opportunities, mindfulness and yoga, if we are to begin to educate what will undoubtedly be a generation of trauma-affected children.

Union pressure works

Under pressure from Marcus Rashford and the National Education Union, the government caved in and provided some funding for laptops for children, and free school meals during the holidays. We need to push now more than ever for initiatives to address our children's fragile mental health.

We need investment to increase staffing and resources. We need smaller class sizes. We need high-quality, low-rent, social housing that really gives children the chance to grow in a happy, thriving environment.

We need a new party of the working class to fight for this. As a working class we are deprived even before we leave the womb. From there we are then sent to the front line whether as a worker or a child, because the capitalist economic wheel can't stop spinning! We need a socialist society that puts children's wellbeing before the interests of the super-rich making profits.



Children are being driven with a constant focus on attainment, in underfunded schools, and without a plan to address their mental wellbeing



CC/SANDER VAN DER WEL

MAX BACHARACH
MENTAL HEALTH WORKER, HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Covid poses the "greatest threat to mental health since the second world war", according to the president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. "As many as ten million people, including 1.5 million children, are thought to need new or additional mental health support as a direct result of the crisis".

Covid-19 has caused widespread anxiety, stress, panic and depression; reactions to the fear of the virus, conditions of life under Covid-19 restrictions, and the economic consequences of the pandemic. We see more specific traumas and effects too: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in frontline staff treating patients for severe acute respiratory syndrome, the condition Covid-19 can cause; PTSD in patients admitted with this condition; grief at the loss of loved ones; and at the loss of livelihoods and of ways of life for millions.

Compounding all of this is the already existing economic and ecological crisis we're living through, which the pandemic has only highlighted and intensified, unbearably in some cases. It's no wonder a common presentation in young people today is hopelessness, overwhelm and a feeling of powerlessness and isolation in the face of the local and global situation. This often leads to self-harm, an increasingly common feature of contemporary capitalist societies, and tragically, all too often, to suicide. To this we could add addiction, substance, sexual, behavioural and a plethora of other psychosocial problems and difficulties, increasingly early in onset.

One in eight UK adults now receive a prescription for antidepressants each year according to the British Medical Journal. Stats are similarly stark elsewhere, with poverty and poor mental health closely indexed.

I have worked as a disability support worker, recovery support worker, and most recently as a wellbeing practitioner in the NHS. My role is, as part of a psychological therapies team, assessing and treating large numbers of patients for 'common mental health problems'. In my training year alone, which ended last autumn, I conducted over 400 assessments and treatment sessions - often leaving me knackered, burnt out and grasping for time at evenings and weekends.

Workers must organise

Mental health services in the NHS often overlap with those provided by third-sector and community organisations like Mind and Rethink. Sometimes these organisations are contracted to do NHS work at lower cost and because the NHS increasingly doesn't have the staff. Workers in these third-sector services should get organised in their trade unions, alongside those of us employed by the NHS, demanding a 15% pay rise. Ultimately, these outsourced services should be brought back in-house as part of a fully public, democratically planned NHS.

Hospital trusts - rocked by Labour privatisation, Tory austerity and ongoing capitalist theft from the public purse - have been overstretched and over capacity for decades. The problem of poor mental health in society has been with us for decades too. It's not rocket science: nursing shortages, now at an all-time high, especially in mental health; the steady loss of hospital beds; the increasing prevalence of pharmacological, as opposed to more expensive psychological treatments; community services shrinking and closing; social provision deteriorating; benefits tightening; and so on.

Mental health workers face a perfect storm of increased suffering and decaying provision; made worse by the sustained attacks services have faced through a decade of austerity.

COVID, CAPITALISM AND MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health services, and the NHS as a whole, must get a huge increase in funding to reverse the cuts, and expand services to meet needs. This should include access to free, high-quality counselling and therapies, without being forced to wait for months or years to get treatment.

We need a mass recruitment drive of staff to provide services, offering decent pay and a decent work-life balance. This means strengthening the unions in the workplace and, as part of that process, transforming the leadership of the health unions to lead a real struggle to defend our NHS. Training bursaries for staff also need to be re-established and extended alongside a write-off of student debt.

Things are so bad that we even have Tory MPs complaining about the state



Hospital trusts - rocked by Labour privatisation, Tory austerity and ongoing capitalist theft from the public purse - have been overstretched and over capacity for decades

of services. Ex-health minister Dan Poulter, who is also an NHS psychiatrist, said in October that "urgent action was needed to tackle the archaic state of some mental health facilities... The condition of many inpatient psychiatric wards is well below the standards that we would expect in other parts of the health service. Sometimes as many as ten patients have to share a single bathroom or toilet, and many mental health wards are in a poor state of physical repair.

"This is frankly unacceptable and needs to be urgently addressed, but a chronic lack of funding for mental health services has left many mental health providers without the funds to deal with the problem and invest in badly needed inpatient ward improvements".

What Poulter, who does not believe "striking as a doctor could ever be justified", fails to mention is that it is his party in government that has inflicted years of attacks on the NHS and the working class as a whole - increasing the social problems and suffering at the root of mental health crises.

Anxiety is a daily experience for most working, and unemployed, people in some way. Capitalism inflicts mass misery and frustration on whole populations beholden to wage slavery, debt and declining living standards; not to mention war, poverty, climate breakdown and disease.

It will be collective action, on a mass scale, that leads to the transformation of the conditions of humanity, and with it to fundamental adjustments in the human condition. It cannot be left to the somewhat futile, if occasionally successful, fire-fighting interventions of health and care workers like me, tasked with the impossible.

To end the pandemic of mental ill-health we need a fully resourced health service. But we also need to fight to materially improve the lives of the vast majority of people. This means raising the minimum wage to £12 an hour as a step to £15, with benefits increased in proportion. It means a mass council house building programme and democratically capped rents to give everyone a home they can afford. It means a transfer of wealth from the super-rich to the working class, by taking into democratic working-class control the big companies and banks as part of a democratically planned, socialist economy to meet the needs of all.

The system discriminates - we need democratic public ownership of mental health services

SIMON HORN
CARDIFF WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

I've got ten years experience working in the supported living care sector. We support people for 18 months to two years once they are released from mental health units with the prospect of entering back into the community.

The people we work with have been diagnosed with various conditions, usually have complex needs, and often have a criminal history. I've been doing this type of highly skilled work for ten years. We deal with medication and have to restrain clients, but are only paid minimum wage.

Like me, a majority of the care workers in the sector are BAME, but I look after very few people of colour. Mental health can often be viewed as a family issue and help not sought. Still, black people are four times more likely to be detained under the mental health act than white people. In February, Moyied Bashir, a young black man in Newport, was killed in his own home after his family called the police looking for assistance as Moyied was experiencing a mental health crisis.

Police discrimination

Many police officers have negative stereotypes of young black people, made worse by negative portrayals in the media. For the police officers called to Moyied's home, it is likely they already had a racist bias. This means they were less likely to see a black man having a mental health crisis, and more likely to see a young black man acting aggressively - compounding their prejudice.

In my experience, when the police respond to a mental health call,

regardless of the person's race, they are heavy-handed with their approach. I have seen clients being tasered unnecessarily. And with regards to BAME people, the approach of the police is already heavy-handed regardless of mental health.

When I worked in Splott, a diverse working-class area of Cardiff, I worked with a black gentleman with complex mental health needs, and on one occasion we had to call the police. The client was behaving in an intimidating way. The moment the police arrived, they were ready to take him down. They tried shouting at him to lie down on the floor but he wouldn't listen. If it wasn't for my colleague's intervention they would have taken him down - and this was a man in his late 60s.

I've seen in other situations, where the circumstances were exactly the same and the only difference was that it was a white client, that the police are happy for us as mental health professionals to take the lead dealing with the situation.

Apart from me, none of my workplace is unionised, so there is no workers' representation to challenge management. I see people from all over the world in agency work, abused financially with zero-hour contracts, losing their shifts at the drop of a hat.

In the past, people receiving mental health care experienced institutionalisation, now it is corporatisation. It's now not a government that abuses the system, it's the corporations doing it. The system needs an overhaul. It needs to be taken out of disgraceful bidding wars between local authorities. It needs to be back in public ownership with democratic oversight.



Black people are four times more likely to be detained under the mental health act



Students protest against exam grades scandal in 2020 PHOTO MARK BEST



Protests in response to the death of Moyied Bashir in Newport PHOTOTOM FOWLER

Unite general secretary election nomination stage

MAKE SURE THERE IS A FIGHTING LEFT CHALLENGE ON THE BALLOT PAPER

The Socialist Party believes that **Sharon Graham** and **Howard Beckett** are the best candidates of those declared. What is now the best way to ensure that Unite maintains its left position?

SOCIALIST PARTY STATEMENT

The Unite executive has finally triggered the union's general secretary election. It is a vitally important election, both industrially and politically, as the Covid pandemic persists and the stark economic prospects become ever clearer.

Len McCluskey's election a decade ago opened up the opportunity for Unite, formed out of the merger between Amicus and the TGWU, to play a leading left role in the trade union movement. It is crucial that there is no threat of a retreat from this role.

At this stage, there are four declared candidates: assistant general secretaries Steve Turner and Howard Beckett, executive officer for organising and leverage Sharon Graham, and the former West Midlands regional secretary Gerard Coyne. To get on the ballot paper, a candidate needs to win the nominations of at least 174 branches.

When he stood in the 2017 general secretary election, Gerard Coyne was backed by the Blairites in Labour. They and the employers saw his candidacy as not only an opportunity to move the union into partnership with big business, but also to win Labour's biggest union affiliate as a huge step in weakening and overthrowing Jeremy Corbyn, the then left Labour leader.

However, while that attempt was beaten back, this is the first Unite leadership election since Starmer's decisive defeat of Corbynism within the structures of the Labour Party.

On the surface, a Coyne victory could be seen by the Starmerites as the best outcome to further consolidate their position. But Steve Turner, while not a supporter of Tony Blair's New Labour, has made it clear that he would be prepared to work with the Labour right. This would mean a retreat to the position held by former TGWU leader Bill Morris who reconciled with Blair and New Labour.

In the hustings organised by the United Left group within the union last summer, Turner deliberately counterposed himself to Howard Beckett's opposition to Starmer, arguing that a general secretary isn't an attack dog but has to be in the background doing deals. Such an approach raises the possibility of Unite moving to the right both politically and industrially if Turner wins.



PHOTOS PAUL MATTSSON AND STEVE GERMAN

It is entirely possible that the Starmerites may prefer Turner to Coyne, who is seen as an open representative of the bosses. Turner, nominally on the left, could more easily carry a policy of conciliation with Starmer among Unite members wary of a revived Blairism. In fact, the BBC reports that an unnamed Labour shadow minister was urging Coyne to 'rethink' standing, presumably to not take votes away from Turner.

This doesn't mean that in a straight fight between Turner and Coyne Unite members should regard them both as the same. But it is vital that there is at least one candidate with a fighting programme who makes it

onto the ballot paper from the nomination stage of the general secretary election, prepared to build on McCluskey's record rather than move away from it.

Two left candidates

We believe that Sharon Graham and Howard Beckett are the best candidates - of those declared - to ensure that Unite maintains its left position. We have some criticisms of both, as we did with Len McCluskey, but

Unite activists have to analyse the programme and policies of the candidates and assess who opens up the best opportunity for a fighting union on both the industrial and political fronts.

Sharon Graham is seen by a big layer of members and reps as looking to strengthen the union industrially in the workplace. This means increasing union density and reps in established workplaces and building the union in new sectors that are recruiting, such as Amazon. However, some of Sharon's material can create the impression of her being non-political and even neutral in the fight in Labour.

Under either Sharon or Howard, Unite must have a fighting industrial but also political strategy. The trade unions drew this conclusion over 120 years ago after the hard experience under respective Tory and Liberal bosses' parties. The Covid pandemic

and the threats to jobs, and terms and conditions, have made it even more important that unions adopt political demands that complement strengthening the union industrially in the workplace.

Along with strikes to stop 'fire and rehire' at British Airways, or action against closure threats in the steel industry, it is necessary to raise re-nationalising these companies. This poses the need for a political force for workers, on a socialist programme, that faces up to the reality of the defeat of Corbynism in Labour.

Howard Beckett has led the political opposition to Starmer within Labour, including on the party's national executive committee (NEC). He has been a central figure in fighting the moving of Labour to the right - fighting for Corbyn to be restored to membership of the Parliamentary Labour Party, calling for Labour's national conference to be recalled, and supporting Anna Rothery's candidacy as Liverpool Labour mayor before she was debarred from standing by Starmer's Labour machine.

But like much of the Labour left, Howard appears to be restricted in his fight against Starmer to what is possible within the confines of Labour. This can leave the left, including in affiliated unions such as Unite, neutered by the bureaucratic dead hand of Starmer.

Instead of calling for Unite members to join Labour, as Howard is currently doing, it would have been far better, for example, to have called on Anna Rothery in Liverpool (and Jeremy Corbyn in London against Sadiq Khan!), to have stood independently for mayor on a fighting socialist, anti-cuts programme. This would have meant a clash with the Labour right, but would have given workers a fighting lead and the prospect of a left political vehicle.

Our criticism of both candidates has been made constructively, to give Unite members the best possible programme to vote for. Sharon has raised only supporting Labour candidates that support Unite members and policies, and recently said in relation to Sadiq Khan and Andy Burnham: "The Labour mayors of Manchester and London must lead the way by using their powers to outlaw fire and rehire on their watch" on the buses. These are positive steps in the right direction. In Manchester, Unite bus drivers are taking indefinite strike action against their employers' attacks.

In contrast, the Huffington Post on 28 April quotes Steve Turner as saying: "I want to see Labour councillors elected on May 6. I want to see Labour mayors. And it frustrates me, it angers me sometimes, that some of the union's campaigning right now is pitched against our mayors, against Sadiq and Andy Burnham."

What's that all about? I find that incredible that we would do that! ('Unite's Steve Turner warns a split left vote could hand union to centrist rival').

Prevent move to right

We believe that the best chance to take on Turner and to prevent a move to the right in the union would be for Howard and Sharon to agree for one left candidate to stand. We would be in favour of discussions that would bring out the best militant industrial and political programme from their policies. Such an agreement could transform the election, creating

real momentum for a joint fighting candidacy.

An agreement hasn't developed at this stage but we believe it is important to continue to raise this as the best way forward. However, it would be disastrous, if by both candidates standing, they cancel each other out, conceding branch nominations to Steve Turner. This is possible under the union's rules, which stipulate that branch decisions are made by a simple majority. So there could be situations where Howard and Sharon supporters together outnumber Steve Turner backers, but by splitting the vote they hand the branch nomination to Turner (or Coyne). This could threaten them getting on the ballot paper.

Therefore, with the situation as it stands at the moment, for the forthcoming nomination stage in the Unite general secretary election, we call on left members in each branch to come together in pre-meetings to discuss whether it is Howard or Sharon who has the best chance of winning their particular nomination and to unite behind that candidate. This process itself can bring together many of the best activists in the union as a necessary step in the building of a new left.

The United Left candidate selection meeting last summer saw Steve Turner narrowly win the selection - by three votes - in a highly contested and controversial ballot.

But the fact that he could win with his position of 'lesser-evilism' regarding Starmer, and that valid objections to the ballot process were brushed aside, shows that the United Left, under the current leadership, cannot now be considered to be a democratic, fighting left organisation of Unite members and a new one is now needed. This has been confirmed by the decision of the United Left leadership to summarily expel members who are not supporting Steve Turner.

It is clear that a new left needs to be built in Unite, with a fighting political and industrial basis, that can attract the best fighters in the union. This is essential whoever wins the election, either to act as a check on a left general secretary or to challenge one that wants to move Unite to the right.

The Socialist Party calls on Unite activists to ensure that, after the nomination process, there is a fighting candidate on the ballot paper.

• This article should be read in conjunction with 'The Battle for Unite' (Socialism Today, November 2020), see socialistparty.org.uk



The election timetable:

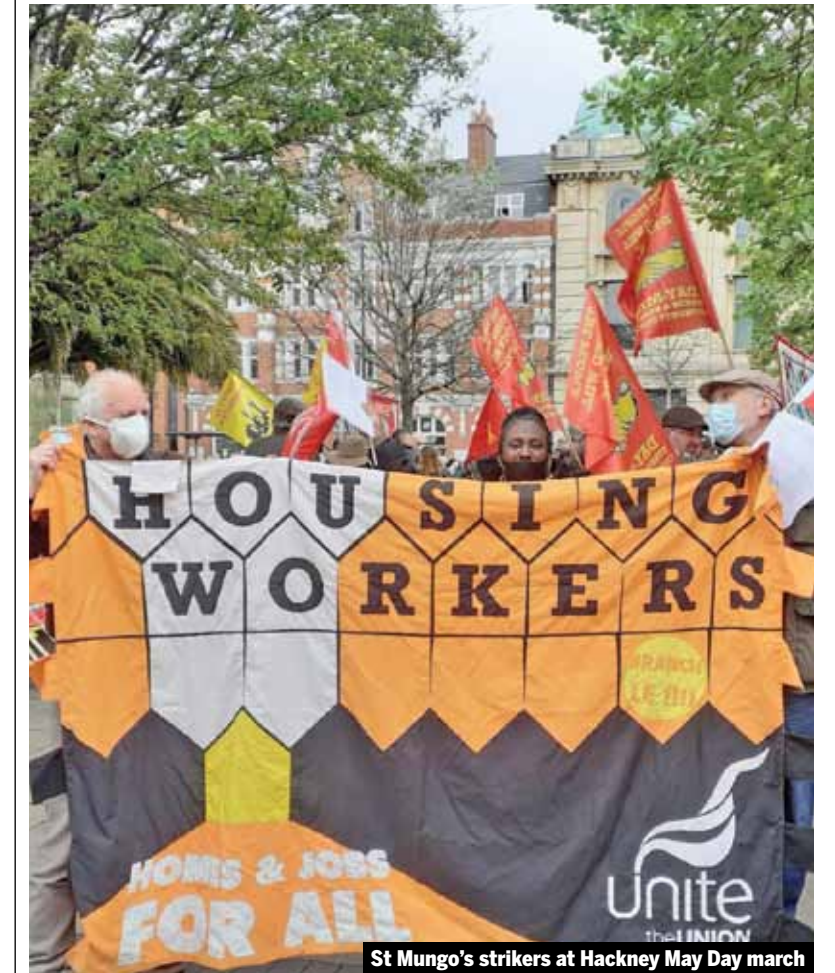
- Nomination period: Thursday 6 May 2021 - 7 June 2021
- Deadline for receipt of nominations: Wednesday 9 June 2021 at noon
- Voting papers dispatched: From 5 July 2021
- Deadline for voting papers to be returned to the Independent Scrutineer: Monday 23 August 2021 at noon
- Declaration of results: Thursday 26 August 2021

A socialist programme for Unite

- No return to partnership with the bosses - maintain the position of not repudiating unofficial action.
- Workers must not pay the price for Covid. Fight for our lives and livelihoods - for workers' control over workplace safety.
- Fight to prevent workplace closures and redundancies - including for union inspection of company accounts. Let's see where the profits have gone.
- Nationalise, under democratic workers' control and management, company plants threatened with closures and widespread redundancies. Integrate these into a socialist plan of production.
- Unite must take the lead in fighting for coordinated action against the Tories, their cuts and anti-union laws.
- Use the union's industrial strength to build links and solidarity between its different industrial sectors.
- Democratised the union - extend the election of officers from just the general secretary, beginning with assistant general secretaries, national industrial sector and equality officers and regional secretaries.
- For an annual policy conference on a branch delegation basis; biennial elections throughout the union from shop stewards to the Executive Council.
- The election of full-time union officials. Union officials to receive a wage no higher than the average workers' wage
- Unite should support council candidates inside or outside Labour who commit to refuse to pass on Tory cuts, and urge Unite members in councils to move no-cuts budgets in Labour-run authorities.
- No to Starmer's revival of New Labour - fight for a new political vehicle for workers with a socialist programme.



"Victimised, bullied and discriminated" St Mungo's strikers fight on



St Mungo's strikers at Hackney May Day march

PAUL KERSHAW
CHAIR, UNITE LE 1111 HOUSING WORKERS BRANCH

St Mungo's strikers had a warm welcome when they addressed the Hackney May Day march on 1 May. Jackie and Vicko spoke at the start of the march. The property services workers have been on continuous strike since 22 April demanding an end to bullying and victimisation.

Marchers heard how a St Mungo's worker had returned from sick leave after surgery for cancer. Rather than being allowed to return gradually, she was expected to work through a backlog of tasks that had accumulated during her sick leave. This was contrary to advice given to the charity by its own occupational health practitioners.

When St Mungo's failed to properly investigate a grievance about bullying in the workplace - refusing to speak to twelve witnesses - the workers had no option but to strike. Far from seeking a solution, the management have put the rep who took out the grievance on a gross misconduct charge, which means he could lose his job.

Management argue that raising concerns about bullying had caused this constitutes gross misconduct!

Another charge is that his reluctance to conduct a 'back to work' interview with the worker who was recovering from surgery amounted to insubordination.

Half of Unite reps at St Mungo's face formal HR processes about their own employment and 68% of respondents to a Unite survey said they had experienced bullying from senior management. St Mungo's management have refused to discuss this survey on the grounds that they do not see bullying as a collective issue.

One worker told us: "I just feel that I've been so grossly mistreated by management that I had to speak out and express to them how unhappy I was. I followed the processes in place at St Mungo's and as a result I was treated despicably! I am not happy and this is a reason why I've gone out on strike."

"I'm a union rep and I'm here to support our members. But they are targeting us. We have been victimised, bullied and discriminated. St Mungo's you are a bully! Do better!"

Unite believe that senior managers are attempting to intimidate the workforce and has appealed to Chief Executive Steve Douglas to rethink his position.

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DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

• Send your news, views and criticism, in not more than 150 words, to editors@socialistparty.org.uk - or if you're not online, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT

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

THE SOCIALIST INBOX

● I'm in a non-union workplace

For the first time in my working life, I'm in a non-unionised workplace. The difference in health and safety, pay and conditions is stark.

In the three months I've been there, I know of at least four bad accidents. Like most companies, they are more interested in looking like they care about the safety and welfare of their employees than actually improving these things.

This company is probably about 75% agency labour, which makes you a second-class citizen at work. Training is watching someone for a week or so then getting stuck in. I'm talking about my job in a factory, but it could be almost anywhere in Britain today.

The race to the bottom for working people is now at a frightening pace. Almost no employment rights, and certainly no voice in the workplace.

Everyone I speak to would join a union if the opportunity was there, but agency labour makes this impossible. Unions must take this up politically. Agency labour and zero-hour contracts must be made illegal.

TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

● Amazon profits triple while its workers suffer

While millions of workers impacted by Covid are struggling to make ends meet, spiralling into debt and poverty, Amazon is still making eye-watering profits. The giant made £5.8 billion profit just in the first quarter of this year, triple what it made that time last year. That's against revenue of £77 billion, up by nearly half, so it's used a chunk of that money to expand even more.

But very little is going towards improving the lot of its workforce. Horrendous stories are coming from workers in the company.

Alongside workers urinating in bottles, GMB union say workers are frightened of not going to work while waiting for Covid test results, and that managers cut corners on social distancing to meet targets. When workers in Alabama tried to unionise, Amazon launched a vicious campaign against the effort.

Amazon is the biggest company in the world, headed by the richest person. It could easily solve these problems, and pay staff a decent wage, and give good work conditions.

But Amazon epitomises how capitalism operates; even with gigantic profits, even when it is unmatched in its industry, it won't give up a bit more wealth than it needs to. Over and over Amazon shows us exactly why we need socialism, why

the working class should run giants like Amazon.

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY

● Johnson's lavish flat refurb

Boris Johnson has been under the spotlight for his lavish expenditure on the refurbishment of 11 Downing Street, his luxurious four-bedroom apartment. As if it wasn't already outrageous that prime ministers are entitled to £30,000 a year from taxpayer's money for refurbishing their flat, Johnson has spent over £200,000 in refurbishment.

It's alleged that the funding for this was provided by Tory party donors. Many assume that this is so that more public contracts can be handed over to their sketchy friends.

NHS staff have been denied a 15% pay rise due to "insufficient funds", and there is high unemployment across Britain. Johnson has spent approximately £14,000 on wallpaper. That's almost equivalent to what a full-time worker on minimum wage takes home to pay for rent, bills, food and travel in a whole year! The working class doesn't get generous grants to cover their living expenses, they just have to stand in hour-long food bank queues.

We need a working-class representative in Downing Street, living off an average workers' salary, to truly understand and fight with the working class for the NHS, education and housing - actual necessities of everyday people, not luxuries.

AKHALYA
BIRMINGHAM

• See 'Sweep away the corrupt cronies and their system' at socialistparty.org.uk

● Barclays makes billions - what about the rest of us?

Jes Staley, chief executive of Barclays, has forecast the country is poised for a "spectacular" recovery, and predicts the biggest economic boom since 1948. Barclays revealed its profits for the first three months of this year had more than doubled from a year earlier to £2.4 billion. The disparity of who has profited out of the pandemic is clear.

Patients are suffering every day, due caused by lack of funding and low pay. We know the government can afford it.

It could decide to take the wealth off rich corporations that have benefited from this pandemic. The Tories have wasted billions on the privatised and failed test-and-trace system, and dodgy PPE contracts.

The richest in this country have

profiteered from the pandemic, juxtaposed to frontline key workers who have kept the country going. They have seen cuts, below-inflation pay rises, privatisation, fire and rehire, and worsening safety and terms and conditions.

We need to see the profit made during the pandemic in the hands of the working class.

HOLLY JOHNSTON
SHEFFIELD NURSE

● The government has stolen miners' pensions

A parliamentary inquiry into the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme has unanimously agreed to recommend an immediate financial uplift be given to miners. This follows the government taking more than £4.4 billion in 'surpluses' from the scheme since 1994. The committee concluded: "Government shouldn't be in the business of profiting from miners' pensions."

Ex-miners have been fighting for decent pensions since the government closed the pits. Many miners paid into it over decades, but are now living in poverty.

One south Wales miner and campaigner said that before the pandemic he "visited every village and town in south Wales drumming up support, and has met those in situations far worse than his own", including one widow of a former miner in Abertillery who only gets £7.50 a week.

Some former miners, who spent lives down the pit, risking their lives carrying out dangerous work in often grueling conditions, are being forced to live on just £60 a week. Many have chronic health conditions. More than half the scheme's members receive less than the average pension, which is already too low.

The report's conclusions are welcome in recognising the government's robbery of these workers. Mineworkers and their families should receive the money stolen from them, and an increase in their pensions to what they deserve.

FRANK ALLEN
LOUGHTON, ESSEX

● Overcrowding and low pay: Covid rising in working-class areas

It's reported that there is a drop in Covid cases, but the disparity between various areas is striking. Bradford, Manchester and Sheffield haven't escaped high infection rates.

Many workers rely on public transport to zero-hour contracts and low-paid jobs, where they are unlikely to get sick pay, putting them at risk to work to keep a roof over their head. High rents don't help the overcrowded housing situation.

Trade unions should recruit unorganised workers on zero-hour contracts, and ensure the rollout of the vaccine reaches them. Local councils should defy austerity measures imposed by the Tories, and invest in more affordable housing and transport.

BHARATHI SUBA
LIVERPOOL

Cladding: Tories refuse to protect leaseholders again

£200,000

Cost of Boris Johnson flat refurb and cost to install sprinklers in Grenfell tower

Socialist Party member Paul Kershaw, chair of the Unite housing workers' branch, spoke to Ed Spencer. Ed has been campaigning to get his housing association, One Housing, to provide decent services since before the cladding scandal emerged.

MPs have now rejected attempts to protect leaseholders from post-Grenfell fire safety bills on five occasions. Thousands of leaseholders face crippling bills of up to £100,000 to make their properties safe, and many are paying weekly bills for fire watches.

Boris Johnson had pledged that leaseholders would not pay for safety issues that were no fault of their own but, as expected, this pledge has proved worthless.

Ed is concerned that there is a real risk that residents will be driven to suicide.

He believes government proposals will be simply unaffordable, particularly after residents have been furloughed or lost their jobs. Some

may be able to borrow from family or friends, but not all.

Many have suffered bereavement and distress during the pandemic, and others cannot sleep because they are aware of the fire risk to their property. Ed believes the real solution would be to buy back the shared ownership properties, releasing residents from mortgage prison.

Flats should be made safe and used for genuine social-rent housing. Ed points out that the big building companies responsible are big donors to the Tory party.

The Tories have received more than £11 million from property developers since Boris Johnson became prime minister. But Ed also says that the process of dodgy deals and deregulation carried on when Labour was in office.

In the same week that MPs rejected help for leaseholders, around 40 firefighters and six engines were called to a blaze at Crystal Court in Croydon, south London. Residents and neighbours were evacuated as fire tore through the cladding on the block.

The housing association that owns the block, Orbit Group, reportedly refused to reveal what cladding system was used. This is a reminder that lives continue to be at risk, and lessons of Grenfell and previous fires have not been acted on.

• See also opposite

New law ignores economic barriers to escaping domestic abuse

SUE ATKINS
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Domestic Abuse Act has become law. Violence against women and girls has been on the increase during the pandemic. Between March and June 2020, police recorded 206,492 domestic abuse offences - a 9% rise on the same period in 2019.

While the act introduces some positive changes, it is silent on the many significant economic barriers that women in particular face when trying to escape an abusive partner - such as the benefit cap and two-child limit on Universal Credit, access to affordable childcare and a genuine living wage.

Women whose immigration status doesn't allow them access to public funds are still left relying on charities or forced to remain with an abusive partner. The right to paid leave for employees facing domestic abuse is also absent. The government has also refused to introduce a domestic abusers register for serial perpetrators.

Passing an act and enforcing it

are entirely different. The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, but battles are still being fought over its implementation, most recently the historic strike and victory of Unison women employed by Glasgow City Council.

The trade unions will have to fight to ensure that effective domestic abuse policies are implemented by employers. We also need to take this up in the council chambers, to fight for the resources that will provide the council housing and safe refuges for the survivors of domestic abuse and their children. Otherwise, this act will be an empty promise. This is one of the reasons why we stood under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) banner in the local elections to provide a fighting socialist alternative.

• See 'Domestic Abuse Bill: So much still to fight for' at socialistparty.org.uk



Bellway must pay! Make our homes safe!



Protesters at Caspian Quarter PETE MASON

RUTH MASON
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 1 May more than 60 residents of the Caspian Quarter gathered outside Bellway's Barking showrooms to protest about the property developer's failure to replace flammable balconies. Local Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate and Socialist Party member, Pete Mason addressed the crowd who were shouting: "Bellway must pay!" and "Make our homes safe!" Pete has led the campaign against flammable cladding and balconies since the Samuel Garside House fire in Barking, 2019.

Just two years after the Grenfell fire, a fire on one of the balconies of Samuel Garside House turned the whole front of the building into an inferno within seven minutes. Samuel Garside House is a modern block

of flats built within the last decade by the developers, Bellway Homes. The Caspian Quarter is a group of several blocks of flats which Bellway built even more recently. Only about a quarter of a mile from Samuel Garside House, the blocks of the Caspian Quarter also have flammable balconies.

In the immediate aftermath of the Samuel Garside fire, Bellway agreed to replace the balconies at no cost to the residents, but they have so far made no effort to do so.

The government's recently passed Fire Safety Act does nothing to assist leaseholders in the Caspian Quarter. The £5 billion pledged by the government to remove dangerous cladding incomprehensibly only applies to buildings over 18 metres tall, and lets the big property developers like Bellway off scot-free to continue to rake in billions in profits.

Election campaign sets Socialist Party fundraising into motion

The Socialist Party's election campaign, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, has been a big boost to help kickstart our public campaigning work after lockdown. It is clear from the responses we have been receiving on our campaign stalls that people are pleased that we are out campaigning, and happy to donate to the Socialist Party's fighting fund.

Carlisle Socialist Party raised £80 campaigning in defence of the NHS on their second city centre campaign stall since lockdown ended. Our branches in Birmingham held a 'super Saturday' in the city centre and raised £39. Socialist Party members in Manchester and Salford reported they had an excellent stall in Eccles

where they raised over £53. In Sheffield our local branch raised over £55 on its campaign stall, and South Yorkshire Socialist Party raised over £97 campaigning in Rotherham and Doncaster. In west London, Hillingdon Socialist Party members raised £25 petitioning against low pay.

We are not like all the other parties. We will not stop campaigning after election day on 6 May. Socialist Party members will still be out on the streets campaigning in defence of the NHS and public services. We will still be supporting workers on their picket lines, protesting for better pay and conditions, and against trade union victimisation. We will continue the struggle for a socialist society to end the horrors of capitalism.

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2021				DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2021
Northern	976	750					130%
South West	2,082	1,800					116%
Wales	1,226	2,300				53%	
London	1,866	4,600				41%	
North West	438	1,150				38%	
Southern & SE	763	2,350				32%	
Yorkshire	812	2,550				32%	
East Midlands	464	1,850				25%	
Eastern	159	1,200				13%	
West Midlands	343	2,600				13%	
Other	292	3,850				8%	
TOTAL	9,420	25,000				38%	

Police attempt to intimidate Newcastle protesters

T35, NEWCASTLE PROTESTER

I was arrested at one of the 'Kill the bill' protests at Grey's Monument in Newcastle for trying to help a fellow protester. She was in great distress, and was being held onto forcefully and pulled by a police officer. I attempted to intervene out of concern for the younger girl, however this resulted in me being arrested for assaulting an officer by beating. My solicitor agrees this is a complete exaggeration, and

that I am not a violent person. I acted out of concern for the girl - not out of aggression towards the officer, and I did not hit the officer.

During questioning, they asked me questions about the writing on our monument as people had expressed what democracy meant to them using chalk. I refused to answer these questions as it was not related to my charge, their intentions were to arrest people and give them a criminal charge for graffiti. Chalk is advertised

as "washable" and commonly used by children, showing it is not the chalk that they have an issue with, but the messages that were written.

I was in police care for twelve hours, nine of which were spent in my cell alone. My solicitor was concerned for my welfare and unhappy with the lack of police cooperation. I was not allowed to talk to my Mam, and at night when I had asked for a blanket I was never given one... I am a juvenile.

Nottingham NHS pay protest



Members of two Unison Nottinghamshire health branches and Unite, RCN and GMB health unions held a lunchtime pay protest outside the Queen's Medical Centre on 1 May.

Despite different details between the unions' pay claims, all agree there must be a substantial deal. The government's 1% and Starmer's 2.1% don't begin to reverse ten years falling living standards.

Tom Hunt, chair of Unison Nottinghamshire Health branch, told the rally that events like this can build the confidence of NHS staff to take action on pay and build support from the public. A growing campaign of national joint trade union action is needed before the Pay Review Body reports in the next few weeks.

JON DALE
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Establishing factory sales of the Socialist in Leicester

Leicester Socialist Party members have consistently given their support to the picket lines at SPS Technologies in Leicester, and the Socialist had regular reports on their successful strike against 'fire and rehire'. That solidarity was returned by their Unite branch sending May Day greetings to the paper (see issue 1131).

Since the strike ended we have

regularly sold the Socialist at the factory gates: 15 copies have been bought over those three weeks. Some of the workers have the money ready to buy the paper when they drive in or out of the factory at shift changeover times.

We hope to continue the links with them by organising a local group of the National Shop Stewards Network, initially linking workers who have

been in, or are going into, dispute locally. That could include the GMB British Gas engineers, who we also built links with through their strike action, and the UCU members at Leicester University. There are others potentially going into action soon, including Unite members at First Bus who also face fire and rehire.

STEVE SCORE AND HEATHER RAWLING



Striking St Mungo's worker addresses Hackney May Day rally LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY



May Day march in Chesterfield DAVE GORTON

CAN THE 'PRESTON MODEL' BEAT THE CUTS?

ADAM GOULCHER
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

It is clear that we are at the start of a new period of austerity, where the ruling class will try and make ordinary people pay for the costs of the pandemic and for the crisis in the neoliberal capitalist system which has been fully exposed by the pandemic. For all socialists and trade unionists, the key question is how can this growing crisis be arrested and reversed?

Local councils are in the frontline, having suffered a 40% cut in real central government funding over the last ten years, a period of rising poverty and growing population when need has increased. What can be done?

In recent years some on the left have pointed to the possibility of implementing what is sometimes called 'municipal socialism', based on the strategy initiated by Preston Council in Lancashire, which in turn draws on a similar programme in Cleveland, Ohio.

Some advocates of the Preston model suggest that new local economic policies can arrest the decline of towns and cities struggling with years of austerity, job losses, poverty and precarious work. The danger of this approach is that it could take the emphasis away from a fighting strategy based on a total rejection of austerity and forcing the government to pay.

Is there an alternative?

Maybe there is an alternative to the building of a mass campaign for the funding necessary? Could the Preston model defeat austerity?

So what is the Preston model? At the start of the decade Preston was a town with economic and social problems.

The decline of industry in the 1970s and 1980s had contributed to rising rates of joblessness and poverty. By the early 2010s these issues were compounded by public sector austerity which followed the crash of 2008 and by the post-crash recession itself.

Consultants and think tanks were beginning to come up with strategies for this new period and were looking for councils willing to test out their ideas. Preston Council leaders were attracted by the idea of 'community wealth building' which was showcased at conferences.

This 'community wealth building' strategy basically involves four areas of reform:

1. Increasing investment within local economies by using existing local wealth and resources locally. This involves, for example, local authority pension funds being encouraged to redirect their investment into local



schemes rather than remote global stocks and shares.

2. Fair employment and just labour markets - job recruitment would come from lower-income areas with a commitment to paying the living wage.

3. 'Progressive' procurement of goods and services by local institutions through the development and prioritisation of local supply chains over global suppliers. These local institutions include big spenders such as local authorities, NHS trusts, universities and colleges, housing associations, large local businesses, trade unions and the combined activities of the community and voluntary sector.

These local supply chains would be built around local small and medium-sized businesses, employee-owned businesses, social enterprises and cooperatives which would be encouraged and supported, including through mutually owned banks.

4. The use of land and property assets owned by local institutions to ensure that any financial gain is harnessed by citizens and that they are used for the benefit of the community.

During the 2010s this approach was implemented by Preston. The main impact reported by the council and its consultants was in procurement.

By 2017 the procurement spend by major institutions located in the Preston area which were retained within Preston (as opposed to being spent elsewhere) rose by £74 million compared with 2012. Within Lancashire, including Preston, the rise was £200 million. This change in supply chains generated additional economic activity in Preston and Lancashire.

A second area of benefit reported by the council is that 4,000 more employees were receiving the real living wage than had been the case before the initiative. The council also reports that unemployment improved relative to other comparable areas, and that deprivation was reduced as a result.

So does the 'Preston model' offer a way out of the crises caused by a decade of austerity and several decades of industrial decline?

All socialists would support more progressive procurement, for example requiring contractors to pay the

living wage. Social enterprises can also sometimes, though not always, be beneficial to workers with better wages and conditions, service and environmental standards etc - at least for a time - and again, this is of course welcome.

'Islands of socialism'

This type of approach - sometimes called 'islands of socialism' - is very old indeed. Proponents of this approach were often known as utopian or ethical socialists.

One of the earliest was Robert Owen who built his New Lanark community in Scotland in the early 19th century, where housing, education, health, leisure and cultural services were provided by a benevolent employer, and wages, hours and conditions were better than the norm.

Worker-friendly model communities like Bourneville in Birmingham, created by the Cadbury's, and Port Sunlight near Liverpool, built by Lever Brothers now Unilever, are other examples. These experiments, as with the Preston model, delivered some improvements, for some people.

The key questions for socialists



This strategy of localism is really just transferring jobs and expenditure from one area to another. The main benefits of the Preston model identified by the council and its consultants are in the area of procurement where economic activity that was previously undertaken in other areas of the UK has been shifted to Preston. Good for Preston, not so good maybe for Blackpool, or Yorkshire or the South West.

As well as being a zero-sum game, the approach also has the danger of playing into the 'divide-and-rule' strategy of capitalism if it does not become the launchpad for a struggle for more resources for local councils and communities across the country and the goal of a socialist reorganisation of society.

Setting communities or groups of workers against each other forces them to compete for scarce resources and ultimately leads to a race to the bottom. Ireland's low corporate tax regime and the proliferation of 'freeports' and 'special economic zones' are examples of this tendency.

Instead of this age-old and failed strategy, socialists argue for planning and organising production democratically so that resources are available for all to meet needs, rather than fighting for scraps within a failing system. And to achieve this, socialists know that unity of working-class communities is required if the fight against austerity and capitalism is to be won. We need a collective strategy and to reject divide and rule.

Don't pass on cuts

So while supporting all improvements such as the living wage, ethical standards etc, the only effective strategy to defeat austerity and the cuts in local services implemented by central government is to refuse to pass them on. Councils have the ability using their reserves and borrowing powers to set needs budgets and prevent cuts in the short-term.

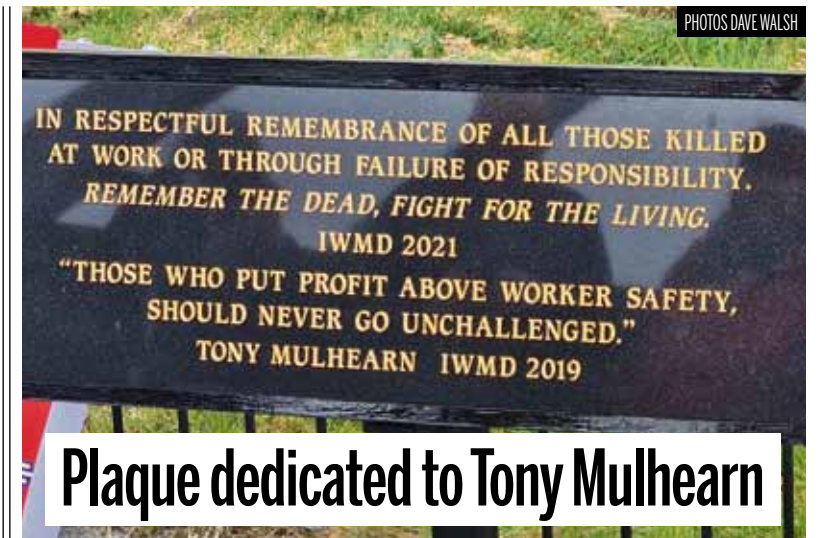
But what is required is the restoration of funding, and that can only be achieved by putting massive pressure on government. It requires a mass mobilisation of working-class communities, linking up across towns, cities and regions in a democratic campaign of demonstrations, strikes and other actions.

Is this possible? The fightback of Liverpool City Council in the 1980s shows what can be achieved.

In that struggle, £60 million of additional funding was won through a socialist leadership that had confidence in local workers' willingness to struggle, and organised to win, despite Liverpool standing virtually alone in fighting Tory cuts.

Imagine what could be achieved with a campaign across multiple councils if they were committed to fight back and organised to win. The benefits of Liverpool's struggle can still be felt today, with 5,000 council homes, nurseries and leisure centres built as a result.

Longer term, of course, gains like those achieved in Liverpool, or indeed by the post-war welfare state, will eventually be taken back by the ruling capitalist class as the crisis of their system deepens and their profits are threatened. Ultimately, only the end of capitalism, democratic public ownership and control of the major parts of the economy, and a democratic socialist plan to meet needs, can transform the lives of the mass of ordinary working people.



Plaque dedicated to Tony Mulhearn

DAVE WALSH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

On International Workers' Memorial Day (IWMD), 28 April, a plaque dedicated to Tony Mulhearn was unveiled in Liverpool with his family present.

Tony was one of the Liverpool 47 who beat Thatcher, and a lifelong member of Militant and the Socialist Party.

Inscribed on the plaque are Tony's words when he spoke at the IWMD event in 2019: "Those who put profit above worker safety should never go unchallenged." Tony announced at that meeting that he was suffering with pulmonary fibrosis, which is an incurable lung disease.

The likely cause was his exposure to chemicals when he worked as a



printer. He passed away in October that year.

Tony's family were presented with a copy of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist by the event organiser John Flanagan. The plaque will be permanently erected later in the year at St Georges Dock Building near the waterfront.

• See 'Tony Mulhearn 1939-2019: Courageous fighter for the working class and socialism' at socialistparty.org.uk

Why you should join the Socialist Party

ALEX BROWN
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Some of our readers may be too young to remember the 2008 financial crash - but you will certainly have felt the effects. Fast forward 12 years to 2020 and there's another global crisis, the coronavirus pandemic, which is made so much worse by the capitalist structure of the world's economies.

It's worth taking a moment to reflect on how events on the global stage ripple down to your workplace, to your housing estate, or to your educational setting. The bankers and the ultra-rich elite who cause the damage never want to pay to put things right. Why would they?

Labour

Here in Britain, the Labour Party has given up every inch of progress it made under Corbyn. And let us remember, while Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies offered hope to millions, his leadership failed to transform the Labour Party... the capitalists in the party maintained control, as they have for decades.

The Labour Party is no longer a working-class organisation, and it certainly isn't socialist. This is why the Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - a vehicle for anti-austerity candidates at the ballot box. Labour simply cannot provide this; even their left candidates are handcuffed to the right-wing bureaucracy, who

represent the interests of your boss and your landlord.

The pandemic has led more and more people to realise that capitalism is rotten, and that tweaking round the edges is pointless. That's one reason that the Socialist Party is growing - here in Sheffield we have new faces at each and every weekly meeting. The Socialist Party understands that under capitalism a tiny minority of people - the capitalist class - control society including the economy and our democratic structures. That tiny minority will never let us vote all of their wealth and power away. Again, ask yourself, why would they?

Transform society

Yes, it's absolutely correct for socialists to stand in elections, to fight for immediate improvements in living conditions. But that is just one strand, woven into the long-term fight for socialism. That fight will be won by understanding how society can be transformed, and then building a movement capable of forcing through that change! Those forces will be built in workplaces and our trade unions, on the estates, in communities and on the campuses.

The Socialist Party has a proud history of building movements which win. We are an experienced party that fights on all fronts. We are a party that understands the need for class-based analysis. We are a party that has absolute confidence in our class - the working class. The time is now! Join the Socialist Party and join the fight back!

£1 / £2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST TO RESIST BOSSES' ATTACKS



Bin workers on strike in Thurrock, Essex DAVE MURRAY

Bosses' fire and rehire, an end to the eviction ban, a public sector pay freeze, hiking council tax, the impending end of furlough: attacks on young people and workers are raining down. After more than a year of pandemic, with the rich prioritising their profits over our health, and 'bodies piling high in their thousands' - beneath the surface people are seething with anger at the bosses and their politicians.

That is why they want to restrict our right to protest using the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. But they do so from a position of weakness, not strength. The Tory cabinet, and the whole of the capitalist establishment, is rotten through with cronyism, corruption and sleaze - and this is becoming clearer for all to see. Ministers and advisors are breaking ranks, dropping leaks, and trying to distance themselves from the Covid-disaster government.

They are terrified at the prospect of all of the anger and discontent being expressed as an organised force. The trade union movement - bringing together millions of workers, and armed with the weapon of strike action - is uniquely positioned to organise and lead the resistance. The coming together of local trade union councils and 'Kill the bill' protesters to organise events on May Day was a step in the right direction.

To ensure that workers and young people do not foot the bill for Covid, we need to defend our democratic right to protest. We need trade unions led by fighting, combative leaderships, and we need a new, mass political voice for workers. If you are prepared to struggle for this, and to fight for socialist change - then join the Socialist Party.

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join



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

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

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