

NHS PAY AND FUNDING

'IF WE FIGHT WE CAN WIN'



HOLLY JOHNSTON
SHEFFIELD ORGANISER, NHS WORKERS SAY NO!
CAMPAIGN

The impact of the pandemic on the NHS is stark.

Almost five million people are waiting for NHS treatment in England. Unions and health experts have asked for increased investment and changes to how we deliver services to get the numbers down.

I work in oncology (cancer), and

we are seeing endless lists of patients coming into hospital with delayed diagnosis and delayed treatment. The impact of confusing public health messages is clear.

People have avoided seeking treatment for worrying symptoms, and we are now seeing the fallout, putting even more pressure on an already overwhelmed, underfunded NHS.

There were already 100,000 NHS vacancies before the pandemic, set to rise to 250,000 by 2030. Without urgently prioritising staffing, the future of the NHS is in extreme danger,

as we face the backlog of waiting lists, and increased demands on mental health services and acute care.

Most NHS staff have faced up to a 20% real terms pay cut over the last decade. We need to get behind the campaigns calling for a 15% pay restoration.

The grassroots campaign, 'NHS Workers Say NO!', has successfully lobbied two unions to support 15%, and another two unions back a meaningful pay rise. Yet the government has proposed a miserly 1% in advance of the Pay Review Body.

It is predicted that the final offer by the government will be around 2%. But 1% or 2%, staff will simply leave in droves if this happens. They are already at breaking point.

We are not only undervalued, but struggling to make ends meet. Half of NHS workers are on minimum wage.

A Nursing Standard survey showed that 43% of nurses want to leave. A third of nurses will be able to retire in the next five years.

With that we will lose experienced staff, and we are not recruiting fast enough to fill the gaps. Why would people want to come into the NHS

when training to be a nurse leaves you with over £60,000 worth of debt?

We're building for the NHS demonstrations on 3 July. The Pay Review Body will be making its findings public this month, which will bring the whole issue of pay back into the media.

We want to show maximum solidarity with NHS staff, and make sure that patient safety, privatisation and the government's woeful handling of the pandemic remain clearly in the public eye.

• Continued on page 5

the Socialist
formerly **Militant**
Issue 1136
3-9 June 2021

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

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

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

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

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



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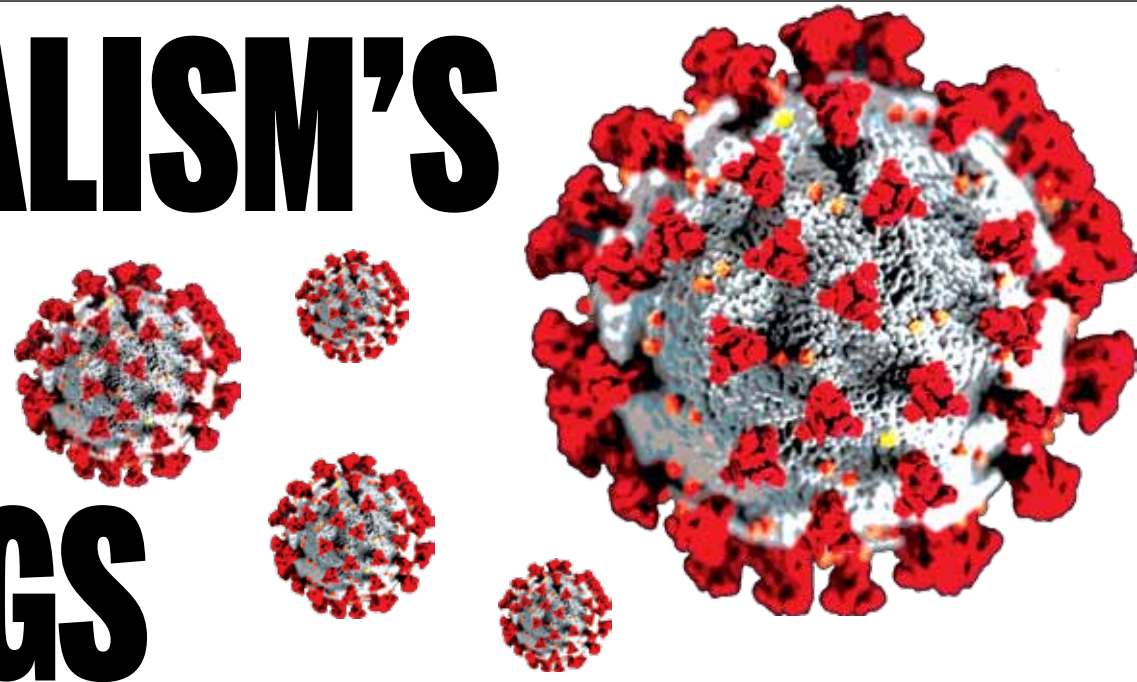
ISSN 1366-9621

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

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

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

CAPITALISM'S COVID FAILINGS



Its workers, not Cummings, who can expose them

Wednesday 26 May saw Boris Johnson's ex-advisor Dominic Cummings spend seven hours detailing the government's incompetence in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

For workers who have been forced into unsafe workplaces without PPE, put onto furlough with a 20% pay cut, or lost their family members - we don't need Cummings to tell us just part of what we already

know. Throughout the pandemic, the Socialist has published the voice of workers from the frontline - those who have been engaged in the struggle for PPE and for workplace safety. But our worker-writers didn't just list examples of the government's incompetence. Unlike Cummings, they explained that the depth and severity of the crisis is a consequence of capitalism putting the profits of big business ahead of our lives and livelihoods. Importantly, our paper puts

forward the Socialist Party's political programme, summed up in our 'Coronavirus Workers' Charter' (see 'Coronavirus - a workers charter 2020' at socialistparty.org.uk). We have consistently explained the need to take into democratic public ownership the huge wealth and resources that exist under capitalism so they can be utilised to keep workers safe. This is what the Socialist said, responding to the crisis during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic:

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4 March 2020 Coronavirus: Underfunded, understaffed - NHS is NOT prepared



An NHS worker: "My hospital is one of those taking suspected Covid-19 cases... Recently we went beyond 'black alert' - indicating a serious incident where the hospital can no longer provide comprehensive care."

On the front page: "Nationalisation

of big corporations, including the pharmaceutical industry; democratic planning by the working class, and international cooperation - in a word, socialism - could prevent new diseases like Covid-19 becoming disasters."

24 March 2020 Tests, full pay and funding for all now!



An NHS professional asked: "When are they going to test frontline staff? This has been the question across the hospital all weekend - and is it any wonder? We feel we are being put in danger."

Jon Dale, secretary, Unite union Nottinghamshire NHS branch (personal capacity) explained: "Testing large numbers is critical to bringing outbreaks under control. All patients' contacts, and health and care workers, need to know they have not become infected themselves and are passing the virus on."

"Large companies making diagnostic tests - like Thermo Fisher, worth about \$110 billion - don't invest in tests that may never be needed. They want guaranteed sales. "A socialist plan of production would combine laboratory research with modern purpose-built factories, prepared for new infectious disease outbreaks whenever they arose. "Public ownership and investment, not short-term profit-hunting, would save many lives."

1 April 2020 PPE, tests, full pay for all now



NHS worker Lucy spoke to us: "I dread to think how many patients have been infected on the ward, and how many we have sent to their homes to infect other residents, family, their community and the people who look after them. We only get a flimsy mask and apron to look after awaiting results' patients."

"Seems like not testing saves kit and just may get rid of the old and the weak. Staff may still be held accountable for spreading the virus! When concerns are raised, we usually hear: 'We will look into it.' Good luck everyone."

In the same issue an NHS supply chain worker told us: "Clinical oversight of equipment procurement must be reinstated. Massive funding for purchasing and manufacturing PPE must be made available now. Privatisation must be scrapped, and NHS Supply Chain brought back in-house, under a fully funded and democratically planned NHS."

The following week an intensive care technician told us: "I'm working in a Covid-19 intensive care unit (ICU). On the afternoon of 3 April, we ran out of body bags."

"The situation at the moment regarding personal protective equipment (PPE) is dire. I started working

in the Covid ICU on 30 March and we had plenty of PPE. By that Thursday we were running low. On Friday, we were using secondary, cheap replacement gear, which none of us thought was up to the mark."

Workers' inquiry

The government's record has been a litany of disasters, with grave consequences for hundreds of thousands of workers. It has been announced that there will be an independent public inquiry, but not until spring 2022.

No one knows the full extent of the failings better than the workers on the frontline. And we can only trust our own, working-class organisations to conduct it. That's why we need an immediate workers' inquiry, democratically led by the trade unions (see 'Covid inquiry? Workers must decide' at socialistparty.org.uk).

But the main lessons of the crisis are already clear. That capitalism has failed to protect our lives and livelihoods. That we need a system where the huge wealth and resources in society are in the hands of the vast majority of the population - the working class - with production and distribution democratically planned to meet our needs.



PHOTO: DFID/CC

Employers hide Covid workplace deaths

Greedy bosses put their profits ahead of our health. Millions of workers have been forced into unsafe workplaces during the pandemic, without PPE or effective social-distancing. In the year from April 2020 15,236 people of working age died from Covid-19, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Meanwhile, only 387 deaths have been recorded by employers as being a result of workers contracting Covid at work. In a report compiled by the TUC, figures show between March and December 2020, 600 transport workers died - only ten were recorded as work-related. In the same period, 63 food-production

workers died - just three were recorded as work-related.

The TUC claim that these figures reflect insufficient scrutiny from the underfunded Health and Safety Executive, and inadequate regulation. Undoubtedly this is true. But workers and trade unions cannot rely on regulation alone to defend safety. As we demanded on the front page of the Socialist on 3 June 2020, after teachers had forced the government to back down over the unsafe full re-opening of schools: "Stand firm for workplace safety - No return to work until safety can be guaranteed - Workers' and trade union control of workplace safety."

Self-isolation support - too little too late

Over a year into the Coronavirus pandemic, and only now are measures being piloted to support those who need to self-isolate. £11.9 million of funding will be split across nine local authorities to pay for alternative accommodation and other measures.

The news comes after figures from a Public Health England and Kings College study that showed less than 50% of people stuck to self-isolation rules. But if the rent can't wait and

you won't get paid, many workers are forced to work.

That's why we demand in our workers' charter: "Any worker who has to self-isolate or cannot go to work should receive full pay from day one and not be forced to take annual leave. Pay should be paid directly to the worker not via the employer... Workers who follow health advice to be absent from work to avoid potential spread should be excluded from any attendance-management procedures"



Thousands wait for long-Covid treatment

1.1 million people in the UK are living with long Covid, according to the Office for National Statistics. Thousands are left waiting for care. This is despite the government's promise of 69 specialist clinics operating in January. An all-party parliamentary group has found many sites not even up and running. One NHS trust had assessed only 498 patients of 2,796 referrals by the end of March, and another has not even triaged the 700

referrals it has received. The NHS remains underfunded and understaffed (see pages 1 and 5) - it needs a huge injection of funding, and a mass recruitment and training programme now. Those experiencing long Covid must receive full sick pay until they are properly medically assessed.

• See 'Long Covid: Fight for jobs, benefits and services' at socialistparty.org.uk



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

- 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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● Liverpool Uni three-week walkout

Around 1,300 staff at the University of Liverpool began three weeks of strike action on 24 May, in a fight over cuts to jobs in the faculty of health and life sciences, said the University and College Union.

Staff are on strike every working day until 11 June unless the university halts the cuts.

The strikes come after 84% of members, who voted in a ballot last month, backed strike action to fight the university's plans to slash teaching and research jobs in the faculty. The university originally intended to sack up to 47 staff. This has since been revised down to 32 after UCU threatened industrial action. (See also page 4)

● Engineers fight 'fire and rehire'

Field service engineers at Brush Electrical Machines in Leicestershire have started a three-month strike over proposed changes to their contracts. The job involves going out to sites across the world to service the manufacturer's generators.

Unite says the contracts include reductions to overtime rates, allowances, holidays and other terms and conditions that would result in a pay cut of between £10,000 and £15,000 a year, and the company is using 'fire and rehire' to try and push the changes through.

Unite regional officer, Lakhy Mahal, said: "Throughout the pandemic, these engineers have continued to travel wherever Brush Electrical needed them to be, even though they had to spend weeks quarantining in solitary confinement to do so."

The industrial action will last from 25 May to 16 August.

● Marks & Spencer distribution strike

Usdaw members have voted to strike in a dispute about the amount of redundancy pay that long-serving staff will receive when the site closes at the end of July. The industrial action affects a Marks & Spencer third-party logistics contract, operated by DHL at Long Eaton in Derbyshire.

Ed Leach, Usdaw area organiser, says: "Over 90% of Usdaw members have voted in favour of industrial action. DHL's refusal to agree that staff employed prior to July 2003, who are now being made redundant, are entitled to significantly enhanced redundancy pay."

● Pizza Express slice workers' tips

Unite has said that Pizza Express workers could lose an average of £2,000 a year if the cut to their share of tips paid via credit and debit cards or the company's app continues. It was suddenly reduced from 70% to 50% as restaurants reopened.

Waiting staff said their take-home pay had been as much as halved as the shift to contactless payments had also led to fewer cash tips, which waiting staff keep in full.

One worker said: "My wages have nosedived. The reality is everybody I'm working with is on minimum wage - so that is council tax or a dental bill."

Card tips at Pizza Express are managed via a 'tronic', in which a committee of staff members decide on how they are allocated. Workers said the members of the committee, led by a member of Pizza Express's head office team, had not been elected by staff and minutes of meetings were not available.

● London sixth form college dispute



City and Islington College Sixth Form workers in their third week of strike action against the college's merger into Capital City College Group, which has led to falling pay and staff levels, rising workload, and zero consultation from management.

● Trade union membership on the up

Between 2019 and 2020 trade union membership increased by over 100,000, the fourth consecutive year in which it has risen. The last time that happened was the late 70s.

This increase was propelled by a massive increase in the number of trade union members in the public sector of over 200,000. Almost 150,000 of these new members were employed in education, reflecting the trade union struggle for Covid safety in the schools.

Sparks force bosses to talk after blockading AWE to stop deskilling



ROB WILLIAMS
NSSN NATIONAL CHAIR

Rank-and-file construction electricians in Unite have forced NG Bailey and Balfour Beatty to the negotiating table after stepping up their fight against deskilling.

On 26 March, they converged from all areas of the country to AWE Burghfield near Reading, which assembles nuclear warheads. NG Bailey, which has a contract there, is the main company pushing the electrical service operator (ESO) grade. This would mean opening up 70% of the work of time-served skilled construction electricians to cheaper unskilled labour.

As with the Besna dispute a decade

ago, the motivation is to slash the sparks' wages and look to spread this version of 'fire and rehire' throughout the construction industry.

The sparks blockaded the main gate at AWE, pushing past the area that the police would 'allow'. The staff cars were then diverted to the other gate, where they met another group of protesting workers. Sparks on the Bailey contract were emboldened by the protests and drove round in a cavalcade, beeping their horns. Along with the sparks' blockade, this helped cause a massive tailback of traffic.

This was the fourteenth week of this struggle, but it represents a step change in the fight against deskilling. The sparks have made it clear that this and other Bailey sites are

being targeted, and the full range of tactics should be used - official Unite strike ballots, protests and unofficial action. That was the strategy that defeated Besna. In the aftermath of the AWE blockade, Bailey and Balfour contacted the rank and file for talks. The sparks have postponed upcoming protests to allow these talks to take place. But the sparks have made it clear that they aren't going away until the ESO is well and truly off the table. Balfour had already indicated that it was abandoning the ESO weeks ago but seemed to reverse this when Bailey still stood out. So the sparks won't be fooled. The protests may have been suspended but they'll be back on if the talks go nowhere.

Save jobs, save livelihoods, save GKN Automotive - nationalise the plant!

BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

On 28 January, not even a full month into 2021, over 500 GKN Automotive key workers based at the company's Erdington plant received the devastating news that their jobs and livelihoods are to be axed. The redundancy number could be doubled or tripled, with a devastating knock-on effect to others in the associated supply chain.

This is even more horrendous when put in the context of how these 500-plus skilled jobs will be gutted from the working-class community of Erdington, a constituency that has twice the national average of unemployment. And once these jobs are gone, they are gone! Workers will struggle to find new employment with similar wages, forcing workers to struggle to support themselves and their families.

Fast forward to the 19 May, and management turned down the rescue plan put forward by Unite the Union, with convenor Frank Duffy



saying: "I'm extremely disappointed in the company's response to our counter-proposal which showed we were a viable and profitable site. We don't accept the company's position

and the fight to reverse the company's decision will continue."

It is clear that whatever practical plans and viable alternatives were proposed, the notorious asset strippers Melrose was always planning from day one, back in 2018, to sell off and profit from the closure of the plant.

The Socialist Party extends its solidarity to the GKN workers and encourages Unite the Union to take inspiration from its section in Ireland. There, rank-and-file members took industrial action and occupied the Harland and Wolff dockyard. This swung the position of power over to the workers in the negotiations, not the bosses, making clear the need for government intervention to nationalise the plant to save jobs and livelihoods!

There needs to be the building of dispute committees, community support groups, cross-union solidarity campaigns and protests, both on and offsite, inviting all to attend to build up sustained pressure.

NHS: If we fight we can win

▶▶ CONTINUED FROM FRONT

The pandemic has compounded pre-existing problems of staff feeling undervalued, horrendous working conditions, people not having breaks, and staying way beyond their shifts to keep wards safe. Our workload was increasing dramatically before the pandemic.

We take on the extra responsibility, and we do it well. But this is to plug the gaps in shortages.

And it is simply not reflected in our pay. Pay is intrinsically linked to patient safety, staffing numbers and the future of the NHS.

Many staff are seeking employment elsewhere, or opting to work for outsourced companies. The NHS is quickly being privatised.

The unions are preparing to reject any offer which does not reflect their demand for a 'substantial' pay rise. They are hoping to coordinate efforts, including indicative ballots for strike action.

The government is extremely vulnerable on this issue, and has executed many U-turns in the last year when put under pressure. There is huge public support for the staff and the NHS, which can be mobilised around pay. Local campaign groups should make contact with local NHS staff and their unions.

Fighting for the NHS is a socialist issue. It's working-class people who are most affected by gaps in health-care, compounded by the extreme health inequality that already exists. We need to give confidence to NHS workers and the whole working class to fight for the right for all to access free health care.

If we come out swinging, and campaign hard, then the unions will grow. This will give us more industrial muscle for combating poor pay and conditions.

If we don't fight, then we've already lost. But if we do fight, we can win.

We can win for the NHS. We can give confidence to other workers. We can push the Tory government into another U-turn, and open the door for other workers to improve their conditions.



3 July day of protest Save our NHS from the Tories

- Reject 1% pay insult
- Trade union action for 15%
- Fully fund NHS
- End privatisation

The day of protest on 3 July - the anniversary of the foundation of the NHS - should be the launch of a fight on pay and to save our NHS. Let's build the protests around the country and demand a real fight from trade union leaders. NHS workers organised in trade unions, backed up by vibrant campaigns in our communities, have tremendous potential power. They can build a mighty movement on pay and to save the NHS from the Tories.



What's the alternative?

Pass this motion in your local union

THE SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTS FOR:

- An immediate 15% pay rise for all health and care staff, including those in privatised sectors. Minimum wage of £12 an hour - £15 in London. Scrap zero-hour contracts immediately
- Reverse all privatisation. Scrap the Private Finance Initiative and cancel all PFI debts. Bring all outsourced workers and services in-house on a permanent contract
- A fully publicly funded NHS and care system free at the point of use. Scrap prescription charges in England, and all dental and health charges
- Nationalise the private healthcare sector, care homes, the medical supply industry and the pharmaceutical companies - integrate them into the NHS
- Reinstatement of student bursaries and scrap tuition fees in England
- We can't trust pro-privatisation, pro-austerity, anti-working-class politicians. Fight for the building of a new mass workers' party
- A socialist NHS - democratically run by elected and accountable committees, including service workers and users
- A socialist planned economy to end oppression, poverty and inequality

- We give full support to the National Health Service and NHS workers. We condemn the derisory pay offer from the Tory government to NHS staff, and agree to support any campaign from NHS unions for a substantial increase in pay within the NHS. This should apply to all NHS workers, including outsourced staff who should be brought in-house to work directly for the health service on NHS pay, pensions, terms and conditions.
- We also condemn the Tory government's public sector pay freeze and the employers' 'fire and rehire' strategy. We call on all relevant unions to campaign in preparation for national coordinated strike action to end the pay freeze and the attempts to lower wages and conditions.
- We call on our national union to work with other unions to call a national demonstration to properly fund the NHS and end privatisation.
- 'Health Campaigns Together', 'Keep Our NHS Public', 'NHS Workers Say No', and 'NHS Staff Voices' have called for demonstrations and rallies on Saturday 3 July 2021. We agree to play a role in building for a rally and demonstration in ... and calls on all shop stewards, members, delegates and affiliates to support it.

Take to streets, and organise in our workplaces

EXTRACT FROM LATEST SOCIALIST PARTY LEAFLET

Complacency, incompetence, cronyism, corruption and downright cruelty - 150,000 deaths. That's the real Covid record of the Tories, and working-class people have paid for it.

Amid criminal shortfalls in staff numbers, bed shortages and inadequate PPE - the result of years of privatisation and austerity - NHS and care staff have worked themselves to exhaustion to save lives. A 1% 'pay rise' - along with a pay freeze for the rest of the public sector - is a slap in the face.

Trashing previous pandemic preparations; booting elderly people, untested, out of hospitals into care homes; bunging billions of pounds of public money to their big business mates - at every stage Boris Johnson and the Tories have put profit before lives. Now they've fallen out, but we didn't need former Tory advisors like Dominic Cummings to tell us what's wrong.

But where is the opposition from the Labour Party, that should have been lacerating Johnson and championing workers' interests, instead of allowing him to temporarily bask in the success of the vaccine programme and pretend to stand up for the working class? Right-wing Labour leader Keir Starmer has meekly nodded along with the Tories all year.

But he hasn't shown the same mildness in his party, ruthlessly driving out Jeremy Corbyn and the anti-austerity programme that demanded an end to cuts and privatisation in the NHS. Workers need our own political voice - we need a new mass party of working class and young people.

And we need a fightback - to take to the streets and organise in our workplaces. So let's put demands on the trade union leaders. We call for a national NHS demonstration and to prepare the ground for national coordinated strike action.

The Tories are using Covid to accelerate the privatisation of the NHS, and their plans for social care don't include reinstating the millions cut from budgets, or taking care homes out of the hands of private profiteers and bringing them back in-house.

It is only through mass workers' struggle, linked to fighting for a working-class political voice, that we can establish a fully funded, publicly owned and democratically controlled NHS and social care system - a socialist NHS.

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UNIVERSITY FUNDING REFORM: FIGHT FOR FREE, FULLY FUNDED EDUCATION FOR ALL



Socialist Students marching for free education JAMES IVENS

Fees reduction must not mean cuts

TOM GREEN
BIRMINGHAM SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Potential reductions in university tuition fees are in the pipeline after the government has revealed its intent to mitigate the effects of unpaid student loans. Among policies proposed in the 2019 Auger review into higher education funding were an initial reduction of fees to £7,500, and the lowering of the income threshold at which graduates would begin to repay their loans.

A reduction of fees could be seen by some as a victory for students. However, without additional funding from government, the slashing of

fees could result in universities implementing further austerity to make up for lost revenue.

Industrial action by the University and College Union has already taken place in response to cuts and redundancies at Liverpool University and elsewhere. A reduction in tuition fees could only deepen the crisis that universities are facing unless an end to all cuts is guaranteed. The least that is necessary is to ensure that, in the instance of a reduction in tuition fees, no redundancies will be made, and no reduction in capacity of vital services will be implemented.

In an education system like ours, where institutions are run as if they

are businesses, bosses will make cuts to staff and vital wellbeing services before guaranteeing job security.

The only way to fight against austerity in education is to build a broad movement in support of a programme demanding free higher education for all under a publicly owned, democratically controlled funding model, a permanent end to cuts in the education sector, and high-quality student housing for all students.

Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join

Defending Sheffield Archaeology Department

ALISTAIR TICE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Management at Sheffield University thought that they could smuggle the closure of its archaeology department through during the exams period, at the end of term and with only five days notice. They were wrong! Nearly 35,000 people have signed the online petition, and around 130 academics, staff, students and the University and Colleges Union (UCU) protested outside the Executive Board meeting on 26 May. There has been outrage at this short-sighted, money-driven decision from the archaeology community worldwide.

On my way to a protest I heard anthropologist, TV presenter and author Alice Roberts describe on the radio how new technology has led to an explosion in archaeological discovery, finds and research.



Protesters in Sheffield ALISTAIR TICE

Yet the university management, having already cut the academic staff from 29 to 11, has voted to close the department, disperse two masters programmes to other departments “where they shall surely wither and die”, and make the rest of the staff redundant.

The campaign will continue ahead of the University Senate meeting on 23 June and the University Council on the 12 July. As the UCU has pointed out, this fight is not just about saving archaeology, but against the wider cuts on arts and humanities courses that are in the pipeline.

Tories plan to attack university arts funding

BEA GARDNER
SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST STUDENTS

University students and staff across the country have been left outraged at the Office for Students’ proposed cuts to university teaching grants as part of the government’s ‘reprioritisation’ strategy for universities.

The proposals include the slashing of the government’s teaching grant by 50% for high-cost arts and humanities, in favour of so-called “strategically important subjects”, including those in science, technology, engineering and maths. The government has indicated that this would likely be reduced further in future years.

It is clear the cuts will result in further eroding of learning conditions, and could spell the closure of some courses altogether. We’ve already seen a huge reduction in all of our learning conditions as universities attempt to spend less on staff and resources. This cut will further increase the competition for university resources to the detriment of all. University bosses will likely turn to further casualisation, employing staff on worse terms and conditions, and with less protection to save costs, all of which has a detrimental impact on student learning.

The government has tried to provide cover for its decision by highlighting that it is only a “small proportion of the income of higher education institutions”, and that the reforms only affect the “additional funding allocated toward some subjects”. While it’s true that the teaching grant now only makes up a small proportion of income, and only for some courses, this has not always been the case; there has been a 76% cut overall to the teaching grant budget since 2010.

The trebling of fees in 2012 fundamentally shifted the balance of funding in universities, placing the majority of cost onto students. Previously, government teaching grants were the main source of teaching income, with tuition fees partially contributing to the total cost of a course. After 2012, the government retained a small teaching grant directed towards high-cost courses that would otherwise not be funded by tuition fees alone, and it is this, already significant reduced grant, that the government seeks to narrow further.

The Tories are proposing to divert £20 million of funding from art and humanity subjects, and £64 million from London universities, to ‘strategically important’ subjects.

The strategic priority courses are those subjects the government deems as having “high value” including NHS courses and STEM subjects which the government suggests are

subjects that support the skills needed to “build back better”.

Socialist Students says that it should be students and staff who decide what funding is necessary for our education and futures - not the Tories or university management who have driven our universities into the ground with cuts, tuition fees and student debt. We stand for the building of united student and staff struggle to win the funding our universities need to provide a high-quality and free education for all students, no matter what they choose to study.

Youth Unemployment

Despite the Tories’ desperate attempt to frame this move as in the interests of young people’s futures, this attack will not mean more jobs and opportunities for young people - far from it. In fact, it will mean even further restrictions facing working-class young people looking to enter study in the arts and humanities.

Cuts to arts and humanities funding will not deliver better employment prospects for young people. Low pay, casual ‘gig economy’ and zero-hour working, which are particularly prevalent in the arts, are due to already chronic underfunding of these sectors, and the fact they are run for profit. Under-25s have accounted for two-thirds of all the job losses suffered over the course of the pandemic, a picture which will only get worse as the end of the furlough scheme in October approaches.

Only by scrapping tuition fees and replacing them with the full government funding our universities need can the crisis in education be ended. This would have to be accompanied with a mass programme of government investment into socially useful job creation, democratically decided by workers and young people, in order to truly provide young people leaving any line of study with a decent future, starting with access to decent jobs.

Socialist Students says that the student movement cannot allow the rhetoric of ‘high-value’ courses to go unchallenged and let our universities become divided with competition for resources between subjects. Solidarity between staff losing their jobs, students losing their courses, and communities weakened by the collapse of arts and humanities subjects is essential to build the forces that can fight back against the Tories’ capitalist vision of education.

That’s why Socialist Students fights for the building of a mass student movement to win free education - for the scrapping of tuition fees, student debt, and for the full reinstatement of teaching grants for all courses along with student bursaries.

Boycotts, divestment and sanctions – what role can these play in the struggle for a Palestinian state?

This is the first in a series of articles following on from the recent bombardment of Gaza by the Israeli state, looking at the way forward for Palestinian self-determination. **Jon Dale** considers what role boycotts can play.

Appalled at the latest gruesome round of death and destruction in Gaza, many people hope that boycotting Israeli products can help towards winning Palestinian rights and security.

The Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign was set up in 2005. It claims credit for the 2011 withdrawal of Veolia, the French giant corporation, from operation of the Jerusalem light railway that passes through occupied areas of East Jerusalem. It has attracted support as a way of actually doing something against the oppression of the Palestinians.

Boycott campaigns can help build international solidarity with the Palestinians and there are many that socialists can support. But care needs to be taken over exactly what and who is being targeted; and these campaigns should be viewed as supplementary to the need for mass action in Palestine and Israel, and not substituting for it any way.

Collective protests and strikes raise the confidence of workers and the poor in their own strength in the occupied West Bank, Gaza and in Israel. This is what is needed to end the occupation and to weaken and oust the Israeli ruling class - and pro-capitalist Palestinian leaders.

Workers' action

Boycotts need to be democratically agreed and implemented to be effective. During the recent Gaza bombing, the Italian dockers' union in Livorno decided it would refuse to load a ship which was taking arms to the Israeli Defence Force. The South African dockers' union in Durban blocked an Israeli ship from unloading.

In 2010, dockers in California, India, Sweden and Turkey refused to handle Israeli shipping. Such action hits profits and shows the potential power of organised workers through industrial action.

However, appeals to individuals not to buy certain goods is less effective. BDS points to past consumer boycotts of Barclays Bank (for its investments in apartheid South Africa), South African fruit and other products.

But it was mass action by South African workers and youth that eventually brought down the brutal apartheid regime. South African capitalism's existence was threatened so the ruling class had to find another way to keep their power and profits.

27 years after the regime's formal end, most black workers still live with poverty, poor housing, unemployment and repression. Replacing pro-capitalist white politicians with black ones did not end big business rule.

Workers need to build their own

parties and take independent action with a socialist programme to end poverty, oppression and insecurity. This is the case in the Palestinian territories and Israel, as everywhere else.

BDS does not promote independent working-class action, despite being taken up by dockers and others. Instead, it "calls for Israel to be held to account according to the standards of international law."

Using the 'law'

'International law' is made by capitalist governments, like domestic law, and exists to protect their system's interests.

And whenever it suits capitalist interests they ignore laws, no matter what is formally written. The US-UK invasion of Iraq was supposedly illegal but went ahead despite enormous protests around the world. General strikes and mass actions that challenged governments were needed to stop the war.

BDS has highlighted the role of the armaments industry in supplying the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) with some of the weapons and missiles rained down on Gaza and the ongoing repression in the occupied West Bank. Trade union action has the potential power to block this, as the dockers' action showed.

Trade unions like Unite and the GMB have members working in the armaments industry. Cancellation of orders for the IDF must not mean losing their jobs. Workers should not pay because their bosses seek to profit from the arms trade.

Boycott campaigns should call for those companies to be taken into public ownership, with workers planning alternative useful products for their machinery and skills. Without a programme to defend jobs it is much harder to build working-class unity on the scale needed.

BDS aims to persuade big business and governments to change their trade policies. It demands universities, pension funds and similar institutions disinvest from Israeli companies.

But capitalism will always follow the most profitable route it can, unless faced with mass working-class opposition. This raises the need to replace capitalism with socialism internationally.

Boycotting Israeli universities, cultural and sporting events can be appropriate in selective cases where the Israeli government uses these to try to promote its standing internationally.

But in many cases Israeli academics, artists, musicians and athletes do not defend their government's action. Trade unions should democratically decide on individual cases and discussions with Israeli workers

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It's important that boycott actions taken by workers internationally are carefully targeted PHOTO MARY FINCH

should be encouraged through exchange visits, with a view to building support for workers' action against the Israeli capitalist state.

Seeking to find a solution to the Palestinians' plight within capitalist confines raises fear among many Israeli workers of future eviction from their homes, living standards cut to the Palestinians' dire level, and becoming an oppressed minority - losing their right to self-determination - sharing out the misery instead of improving lives for all.

Insecurity fears

These fears grow when Israeli workers see the Fatah and Hamas elites' anti-working class policies. Their fears are then continually, deliberately magnified by the Israeli capitalist establishment and media.

"In the past, antisemites boycotted Jewish businesses and today they call for the boycott of the Jewish state, and by the way, only the Jewish state," Israeli prime minister Netanyahu said in 2014. This strikes a chord among many Israelis with family histories of pogroms and the Holocaust.

The Saudi Arabian royal family has a terrible record on human rights, executing opponents and bombing civilians in Yemen, and many other regimes maintain power by torturing and imprisoning political

opponents. China and Myanmar, among others, oppress minorities and force them from their homes. Although in some of these cases there are international boycott campaigns, none are as prominent as BDS. This reinforces Netanyahu's propaganda that antisemitism is behind it.

So it's important that boycott actions taken by workers internationally in support of the Palestinians are carefully targeted, so as to be as clear as possible to Israeli workers that they are aimed against the repressive apparatus of the occupation, goods produced in the Jewish settlements, prestige symbols of the Israeli regime, etc, rather than against Israeli working people.

Before he became Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn had supported

boycott and divestment but without calling for independent working-class action or defending Israeli Jewish people's right to self-determination as well as that of the Palestinians. This was one of the issues the capitalist establishment and Labour's right wing used to accuse him of antisemitism and undermine his support.

Trade unions in Britain should help support independent trade unions in the West Bank and Gaza. They should make links with rank-and-file trade union activists in Israel.

Discussing how to build a workers' movement across the region and the socialist programme needed to end repeated outbreaks of war, continual poverty and insecurity is the way to end the nightmare.

SOCIALISM TODAY

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- Israel-Palestine: There is no capitalist solution
- Wider impact: Repercussions in the Middle East
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US President Joe Biden has rightly described climate change as an “existential threat to humanity.” But tackling that threat will require more than just recognising it - rapid and far-reaching action is needed. Will his presidency be up to the challenge? In the second article in a series on the prospects of the Biden presidency, **Tom Baldwin** sifts the evidence.



Hopes by some that Biden would oversee radical climate action are now being tempered by reality PHOTO GAGE SKIDMORE/CC

Upon being sworn into office, Biden spent his first day as president signing executive orders. These included announcing that the US would re-join the Paris agreement, the international treaty on climate change agreed in 2015, which his predecessor Donald Trump had left.

Other measures included halting the environmentally controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline and introducing a ‘social cost of carbon’ to guide future decisions. By making immediate proclamations, he hoped to display his ‘green’ credentials and mark a clear step away from the environmental vandalism of the Trump presidency.

This change in direction is welcome but, alone, it is not a cause for excessive optimism. Trump set the bar so pitifully low that Biden almost couldn’t help but be an improvement.

A climate sceptic, Trump claimed his “natural instinct for science” led him to question the findings of virtually every climate scientist - that climate change is caused by human activity.

As well as taking the US out of the Paris agreement, his administration also attempted to roll back nearly 100 environmental protections, and green-lit fossil fuel extraction in national parks and coastal waters. However, returning to pre-Trump policies will not be sufficient, especially in the light of updated research within the last four years.

Initial hopes by some environmental activists that Biden would oversee radical climate action are now being tempered by reality. Greta Thunberg, who initiated the worldwide school strikes for climate action, had called

for people to vote for Biden in a tweet last October. However, she has since criticised his policies as being “not nearly enough in line with the science”, and urged him to treat the issue as a crisis. Unfortunately, the experience of his first four months in office reflect that.

Limitations

While there have been big steps forward, there are also still significant limitations in his programme. As an international collective of young climate activists said in an open letter to the new president: “Being better than Trump isn’t enough”.

Increased scientific understanding of ‘tipping points’ and ‘feedback loops’, where temperature rises caused by human activity will themselves increase the rate of climate change, make for worrying reading.

Each refinement of climate science demands more urgent action than the last if we are to prevent complete climate catastrophe. Reductions in net greenhouse gas emissions must be made rapidly and on a global scale.

However, the policies of individual governments can still make a big difference, especially in a country like the USA. As the producer of over 13% of global CO₂ emissions, it is the world’s second largest polluter after China, producing almost twice as much CO₂ per person. As the most powerful imperialist nation on the planet, the approach the US government takes can have enormous influence beyond its own borders.

While the return to the Paris agreement is a step in the right direction, it falls well short of what will be necessary to avoid the worst effects of climate change. The agreement aims to

keep global warming to a minimum of a two degrees Celsius rise above pre-industrial levels.

Unfortunately, according to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), even if every commitment made under the Paris Agreement is met then global warming would still rise by 3°C, with devastating consequences. Moreover, not a single industrialised country is even on track to meet its commitments.

Since the Paris Agreement was first signed, it has been discovered that it is not only its implementation that is failing, even its ambition was insufficient.

A landmark piece of scientific research published by the IPCC in 2018 shows that we must now be aiming at a maximum rise of 1.5 degrees. Achieving this would require greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 to be around half those pledged under the Paris Agreement.

Biden convened an online climate summit to mark ‘Earth Day’ in April, attended by 40 world leaders. Describing this as a “decisive decade” in the fight against climate change, he unveiled a target for a 50% cut in carbon dioxide emissions in the US by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.

He also called for other countries to improve their commitments and stressed the importance of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. However, staying within that limit would require net zero emissions to be reached before the 2050 deadline pledged by Biden himself.

Research published this year by academics at the University of Washington claimed the US would need to double its current commitments to

WILL BIDEN’S ‘GREEN’ AGENDA AVERT AN IMPENDING CLIMATE CHANGE CATASTROPHE?



Even if every commitment made under the Paris Agreement is met then global warming would still rise by 3°C, with devastating consequences



“Being better than Trump isn’t enough” PHOTO PAUL MATTSOON

give even a 50% chance of staying below 1.5 degrees.

Likewise, the return of the ‘social cost of carbon’ policy is limited by its implementation. Signed on Biden’s first day in office, this is supposed to ensure that combating climate change is a priority across his administration. It puts a nominal dollar cost on carbon emissions which is to be considered in all government decision making.

As an interim measure this has been set at \$51 per ton of carbon dioxide, the same level as at the end of the Obama administration. An updated figure won’t be set until January 2022, when one-quarter of Biden’s term in office will have already passed. Experts argue that the figure should be at least double its current level.

Much has been made of the \$2.2 trillion infrastructure plan which Biden hopes to get through Congress. This is one of a series of big spending proposals which mark a significant shift in the management of American capitalism. Driven by economic necessity, it is a turn away from the neoliberal, untrammelled free-market policies that have dominated since the Reagan era of the 1980s.

Welcome climate and environmental measures are included in this ambitious spending plan. For example, there is an investment in renewable energy production to kick off efforts to reach a target of 100% clean power by 2035.

However, it falls short of the Green New Deal called for by left Democrats like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders, which in turn was less radical than the version first advanced by US Green Party 2020 presidential candidate Howie Hawkins.

Transport

Under Biden’s proposals 20% of America’s fleet of yellow school buses would be converted into electric vehicles. With transport now ahead of energy production as the largest source of greenhouse gasses in the US, there is clearly more to be done.

The package includes \$25 billion marked for airports. This will partly be directed towards environmental aims but also to expanding capacity.

Columbia University’s Adam Tooze has calculated that Biden’s climate spending amounts to just 0.5% of US GDP (total economic output), an amount ten times smaller than that required to decarbonise the economy.

One indication of Biden’s environmental ambition is the appointment of former Secretary of State John Kerry as special envoy for climate. Kerry’s approach to tackling climate change centres on the failed policy of carbon-pricing, creating a market price for pollution.

This big business-friendly approach was the sole focus of an opinion piece he wrote for The Hill since Biden’s election victory, entitled ‘How To Better Tackle Climate Change’. There

was no mention of a green new deal or of how to drive a shift to renewable energy. In fact, Kerry has a record of supporting a short-term expansion of US fossil fuel extraction under Barack Obama’s administration. Overall, US oil and gas production grew by 88% during Obama’s eight-year tenure in the White House, with Biden as vice-president.

Other appointments to Biden’s team include Cedric Richmond as a senior advisor to the president and head of the White House Office of Public Engagement, where his responsibilities will include popularising the administration’s climate change policies.

The former Louisiana congressman had previously come under fire from his own constituents for failing to engage with them or take action over the issue of air pollution when his district covered seven of the ten most polluted areas in the US. The pick has been called a betrayal by climate activists due to Richmond’s history of large campaign donations from fossil fuel sources and his perceived closeness to the industry.



Biden’s climate spending amounts to just 0.5% of US GDP, an amount ten times smaller than that required to decarbonise the economy

Embarking on a rapid shift to clean, renewable energy sources will be vital to tackling climate change. The expansion of US fossil fuel production has been driven by a rise in fracking. This is the process of pumping a high pressure water and chemical mix into the ground to break up the rocks below and allow oil or gas to be extracted. It is controversial because it continues reliance on fossil fuels, and also due to worries about the contamination of water supplies.

Fracking accounts for a big majority of US oil and gas production and almost all new extraction; it is therefore a key question of American environmental policy. In a boost to the industry and a blow to environmentalists, Biden has repeatedly denied that he would ban fracking.

He has limited himself to stopping new permits for extraction projects on federal land. This land accounts for less than 10% of current fracking and fewer than half of the existing permits are currently in use, meaning that this policy, unveiled to much fanfare, may actually have very little effect on reducing climate emissions.

Similarly, the revoking of the

presidential permit for the Keystone XL oil pipeline is welcome but insufficient. Other controversial pipeline projects remain in effect. These include the Line 3 project, which will bring oil from the highly polluting tar sands extraction of Alberta, Canada - described by National Geographic as “the world’s most destructive oil operation”.

This latter project has sparked protests, particularly where it crosses native land in Minnesota. Militarised police were unleashed against Native American and other protesters opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline while Biden was serving as Obama’s vice-president.

Big business

History will judge Biden’s action on climate change, not by a flurry of announcements in the honeymoon period of his first few months but by how his stated aims are implemented over the course of his presidency.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of his green policies will be a question of who he represents. Trump’s bonfire of environmental regulations was for the benefit of big businesses, removing obstacles to them making even more profit.

Biden represents the interests of exactly that big business class. His presidential campaign garnered donations from over 130 billionaires or their partners, around half of them giving six-figure sums.

He pledged not to take money from people associated with the fossil fuel industry, but actually benefited from almost \$1.5 million in such donations, according to the non-partisan research group Center for Responsive Politics. Millions more went to other Democratic Party campaigns.

When the drive for profits collides with the needs of the planet then Biden’s support for big business will compromise his environmental promises.

Any president, no matter how sincere their commitment to tackling climate change, would be severely constricted in what they could achieve on the basis of capitalism. Most of the decisions that govern the economy are not taken in the Oval Office but in the boardrooms of big business.

These companies operate to make a profit above all else. They will attempt to frustrate any environmental regulation that hits their bottom line by lobbying legal action and by investment decisions.

The unplanned nature of capitalist competition makes it impossible for any government to implement the urgent and sweeping changes that are needed to avoid a climate catastrophe. To do so requires a socialist government that would draw up a sustainable plan of production subject to the democratic control of the working class, within an international framework of socialist cooperation.

Waltham Forest by-elections: Council homes not unaffordable flats Vote TUSC and Independent on 10 June



WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

A by-election has been called on 10 June for the Grove Green ward of the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

Socialist Party member Kevin Parslow is the candidate for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

We are campaigning against council cuts and the selling-off of public land to private developers for unaffordable flats in monster blocks. Around three-quarters of Grove Green residents rent accommodation. Half of residents are privately renting.

Multi-occupation is high, so the need for genuinely affordable council housing is an issue here. And TUSC campaigns for the council to bring in rent control.

With two primary schools in the ward, education is important too. We have had parents queueing for leaflets outside them, with one or two asking for more information or wanting to join an online meeting.

A TUSC councillor would oppose all cuts, and propose that the council

link up with other Labour-led councils to fight for extra funding from the Tory government, with the backing of residents. A TUSC councillor would put forward a people's budget for Waltham Forest - a budget that meets our needs, that creates jobs on decent pay, and provides the services we need.

We will build a campaign to win the funding that we need. This is a rocky government that could be shaken by a mass movement of workers and their families.

The Socialist Party is also supporting independent candidate Claire Weiss in the Lea Bridge ward by-election on the same day. Claire, a local campaigner, is standing against unsustainable development in the ward, including on areas adjacent to the river Lea flood plain.

We've sold the Socialist at the two stations on the edge of the ward. We always find a number of people ready to hear socialist ideas.

What would be the point of electing another Labour councillor to do nothing for working-class people in the ward, and the borough as a whole?



Protests against anti-protest bill

The Socialist Party joined protests against the Tories' new police bill, which will curtail the right to protest if passed.

London

300-400 marched from Russell Square through the streets of west London to the headquarters of Scotland Yard. Protesters continued to draw connections between the campaign for the right to protest and the many other campaigns that continue to be fought.

Socialist Party member Camilla Mngaza and others spoke on

the injustice that is being fought against in the Free Siyanda Campaign and the Black Lives Matter movement. State attacks against the gypsy, Roma and traveller community and their homes were also raised.

There was also a strong sense of international solidarity. Brazilian flags were waved as protesters took the opportunity to show their anger against Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, and his failure to protect working people throughout the Covid crisis.

There was continued support for the Palestinian people following recent worsening brutality by the Israeli state. With UK police looking to

increase their stop-and-search powers, it's clear that these protests will continue.

DEJI OLAY

Newcastle

250-300 protesters made noise, waved flags and demonstrated. One of our members took to the open air sound system to deliver a call to action, asserting the necessity of a new mass workers' party.

Labour has failed to stand with the working class against a dangerous, calculated and deceitful Tory government, in favour of representing the interests of big business.

By not taking effective action, it all but co-signs the crackdown on workers from the capitalist class.

PETE ROBERTSON

We're often surprised by the generosity of our supporters

PAUL COUCHMAN
STAINES SOCIALIST PARTY

Given we spent most of the last year in lockdown, our election campaign was magnificent. The Socialist Party produced hundreds of thousands of leaflets, thousands of posters and dozens of banners.

We produced over 25,000 leaflets in the Southern and South East region alone. In Surrey, just a handful of mainly new Socialist Party members, and a couple of supporters, hand-delivered 5,000 leaflets over three weeks. At the same time, we also produced and distributed thousands of leaflets for Socialist Party members standing in elections in the trade unions.

Throughout the pandemic, we

kept producing and sending out our weekly paper, the Socialist, and monthly journal, Socialism Today, even though we were unable to do public sales a lot of the time. We also responded to the Black Lives Matter, Reclaim our Streets and Kill the Bill movements with new material putting forward a socialist programme.

We did all this even though we weren't able to raise money the same way - campaigning publicly on the streets - through lockdown. All this costs money. We need the resources to be able to participate fully in the class battles to come.

While Keir Starmer and Peter Mandelson are talking about cutting Labour's link with the trade unions, and moving further and further from the working class, our link to the working class is stronger than ever - where we are known.

Just look at the masses of greetings we got in the Socialist for May Day, International Workers' Day (see 'International Workers' Day - struggle,

solidarity, socialism' at socialistparty.org.uk). We raised over £400 from activists in my branch of public sector union Unison.

Over 20 union activists in that branch consciously donated to the Socialist Party. This again shows the importance of dedicated trade union work, particularly when the electoral scene with Labour looks so bleak.

But we don't rest on our laurels. Please think of ways to raise money in your area.

Quizzes, auctions, and curry nights as things open up - they are all ways to raise funds. Our local TUSC vote sweepstake raised £125 for the Socialist Party fighting fund.

But one of the most important ways we raise money is donations directly from our members and supporters. This is easier when we have physical meetings, but I make no apologies for asking for money.

Two things you can be sure of from the Socialist Party where finance is concerned:

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2021	DEADLINE: 2 JULY 2020
Northern	1,267	750		169%
South West	2,605	1,800		145%
London	5,222	4,600		114%
Southern & SE	2,439	2,350		104%
Wales	2,142	2,300		93%
North West	887	1,150		77%
Yorkshire	1,526	2,550		60%
East Midlands	963	1,850		52%
West Midlands	993	2,600		38%
Eastern	435	1,200		36%
Other	505	3,850		13%
TOTAL	18,983	25,000		76%

1) We are not afraid to ask our members to make sacrifices - time, energy and money - just look at our campaign activity before and after the election.

2) We never ask members for more than they can afford. Every single penny is important to us.

A student digging deep to give us a fiver is as important as a worker

earning a reasonable wage donating £100 or more. We are often surprised at the generosity of our supporters.

Socialist Party member Helen Couchman and I recently donated £100 from the money we have saved by working from home over the past year. Is there anyone else who can do the same?

Stop Israeli state terror: solidarity protests continue



Worcester: How we organised a protest

After people showed support for the Socialist Party demands on our campaign stall against Israeli state terror, we left some of our posters up so the message would remain visible. A few days later, we received a phone call.

The person was aware of a protest planned, but he and others wanted to protest earlier. He had seen our posters, and tracked down our contact details.

We decided to move the location of our 22 May stall to outside the Guildhall, and welcomed him and others to come along and show solidarity. It was one of our most successful stalls - 30 people joined us, over 20 bought a copy of the Socialist, and we raised almost £100 fighting fund.

The 29 May protest was an order of magnitude larger. The day before, people were worried it might be cancelled as the authorities tried to make someone liable for the event.

300 people heard speeches, including from the Socialist Party. Our call for a socialist intifada received an enthusiastic round of applause.

On both protests, people were cynical about the messages from establishment politicians. On the latter protest, 30 people bought a copy of the Socialist, and we raised over £100 fighting fund.

MARK DAVIES

Coventry

Although it was a smaller protest than the previous week, around 100, the Socialist Party supported the protests for the third week in a row. Many on this demo had not been to the others.

The smaller event raises the question of how to keep the momentum going. The first person we met on the protest asked us: "What can I do to help?" We pointed her to our West Midlands online meeting, and said to raise the issue in her union branch with the demands on our leaflet.

The second person we met accused us of supporting Hamas, because our placards only mention Israel. We showed him our leaflet. As well as explaining how to take the Palestine struggle forward, it criticises counterproductive Hamas rocket attacks and its failure to fight for an independent working-class alternative. He came to us ready for an argument, but left thanking us for being the only left group he had met to take the issue seriously.

ADAM HARMSWORTH

Leicester

The demo of 300-400 people on 30 May was strong, youthful and lively. Steve Hedley, assistant general secretary of transport union RMT, highlighted the need for new mass workers' parties both here and in Palestine. We discussed with loads of protesters. We talked with some of

the organisers of the Elbit demo in Leicester about our article in the Socialist on that protest (see 'Leicester protest against arms supplies to Israel' at socialistparty.org.uk), and what can be done to take that struggle forward. We sold 21 copies of the Socialist, and raised £16 fighting fund.

Towards the end of the demo a young student came up to the Socialist Party campaign stall, and said she wanted to volunteer with us. We had a great chat about education, and the incident in a Leicester school where students were told to take down pro-Palestine posters.

The mood has really changed in Leicester. A significant number of youth are frustrated by over a decade of austerity and endless wars, and understand the need for socialism and working-class unity.

LINDSEY MORGAN

We thought we were going to do a campaign stall near Leicester University on 27 May. We had just finished handing out leaflets to students at QWE College when we came across a group of sixth formers carrying the Palestinian flag.

A brief chat revealed they were on their way to protest in Leicester city centre. We joined them in a lively and noisy demo against Israeli state brutality. The protesters were keen to point out that they were not anti-Jewish, but anti-Israeli state brutality and oppression.

Students eagerly took our posters and leaflets, and signed our petition. We raised over £23 fighting fund, and sold eight copies of the Socialist.

HEATHER RAWLING

Birmingham

Hundreds of young protesters were welcomed with food. However, they were angry that they had had zero support from Labour councillors and MPs. One speaker spoke about the protests at Elite KL in Tamworth, which is selling arms to Israel.

The Socialist Party was thanked for attending, and was invited to address the crowd. We spoke about further austerity that Boris Johnson and Benjamin Netanyahu are preparing for British, Palestinian and Israeli workers alike.

We marched to the city centre to meet up with hundreds more protesters. Protesters donated £53 to help us pay for even more placards.

JOE FOSTER

Birmingham Uni

The demo was called in response to the £4.5 million investments by the University of Birmingham in companies tied to the Israeli military and occupation of the West Bank. The demonstration reached 300 people, many chose to check out our Socialist Students stall. Over 100 people were interested in Socialist Students, and 16 bought a copy of the Socialist.

LUIS BERTOLINI



Unite general secretary campaign: LEFT CANDIDATES SPEAK TO THE SOCIALIST

The nomination stage of the Unite the Union general secretary election campaign ends on 7 June. The Socialist Party invited the two left candidates, **Sharon Graham** and **Howard Beckett**, to outline why they are standing, and their articles are printed here. For the Socialist Party's statement on the election see 'Make sure there is a fighting left challenge on the ballot paper' at socialistparty.org.uk

The movement needs a revolution

HOWARD BECKETT
UNITE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

There is a need for revolution within our movement. In this regard there can be no doubt. Unite, under Len McCluskey, has much to be proud of, playing such an enormous role for the left at such an important time; almost achieving the election of Corbyn and a changed society, supporting leverage where needed, having almost 1,000 ballots for industrial action in the last three years, a strike fund of £40 million and always standing with members in struggle - allowing the legal department to never repudiate unofficial or official industrial action.

I, along with Sharon Graham, have played a key role for Len. I led on Visteon, Blacklisting, Waterford Crystal, Birmingham Bins, British Airways (from start to finish) and gaining recognition back at Ineos. And, yes, I led the legal challenge to get Jeremy on the second ballot paper.

It is important we all speak of these achievements, our collective successes. But, nevertheless, we must all accept that the narrative of the past has not grown our union: we have not defeated the trade union laws, we have not moved the TUC to the left, and we have not prevented the advance of precarious work.

Yes, we want to organise in the workplaces, give shop stewards the tools to support them, organise precarious workers in order to defeat precarious working practices. But the question is how do we achieve this? We need our own revolution not a repeat of past ways or narrative.

I am running to be general secretary with a manifesto that talks of our revolution being through our modernisation. Yes, I expect every candidate to now be talking of workplace and community apps. Apps that give our shop stewards and members immediate access to their rights, to be empowered by knowledge. Apps that allow members to know when they are working with other Unite members, allowing them to be part of a collective, even when the workplace does not promote collectivism.

But I am going much further now and saying the time is right for us to launch Unite TV.

A TV channel hosted on YouTube, but one that is 24/7. Each region and nation with a studio. Our telling our own story of trade unionism and collectivism, no longer reliant on mainstream media.

I place my head in my hands at our



Howard Beckett, Unite assistant general secretary PHOTO MARY FINCH

success never being told to the wider union, let alone wider society. We can change that by being ambitious.

Imagine telling students in London now of the struggles of our members in Goodlord. Imagine the consumer response we could create. Or telling the world of our successes in defeating fire and rehire. Would wider society not then want to be part of our collective?

Imagine Unite TV streaming live from Palestine, Hong Kong or Mexico? Again, telling our own story of internationalism and collectivism. A TV channel educating, teaching, giving our members their own platform. I firmly believe that once we tell the story of collectivism that youth will flock to us.

Modernisation is our revolution, it is only a modern union that can defeat capitalism.

With modernisation comes decentralising the union. Our resources and power must go to the regions and nations. Decentralising means democracy, an end to gatekeepers. It sees branch activity. It sees debate about elected positions. Society is moving to federal structures and the union must be there first.

is failing our movement, that under Starmer's leadership Labour is moving away from being the voice of workers, making itself irrelevant.

A Labour Party that does not advance the rights of workers or the working class, that does not speak for socialism, should not receive Unite money.

But the narrative of our being more concentrated in the workplace, of the workplace dictating our politics or of members not wanting to hear about politics, is a mistake. It misunderstands that class struggle is happening in front of our very eyes.

As the Labour Party fails and creates a vacuum so it is Unite that must fill that vacuum. We must recommit to the politics of class and socialism. Yes less Westminster, but no to less politics.

We must ensure departments do not work in silos - industrial working with organising, with education, with legal, with political.

We must explain that a workplace derisory pay offer is because of the politics of society, the 1% to the NHS is because of the society we live in. Fire and rehire, precarious work, zero-hour contracts, and now freeparts - all because of the politics of society and a drive to the normalisation of in-work poverty.

It is our responsibility to explain this, not to wait for workplaces or communities to come to this conclusion.

Finding champions - in the workplaces and communities. Candidate schools, development schools. Taking members on a journey from an activist to a rep, to an officer or organiser, to a rep in wider society.

And equality and anti-racism must be part of everything we do. Not a separate department but Unite organising in sectors where we know there is racism and gender pay gaps. Protecting the NHS by recruiting in the NHS - free student nurse and pandemic membership.

These are my commitments to you. I refuse to use the word 'pledge', that is Starmer's word now, and consequently no longer a word to be trusted. Commitments.

Taken together this is my commitment to build a union that is modern, decentralised and democratic, one that does not step back from being political, one that puts equality and anti-racism central to everything we do, and one that organises precarious work places in order to defeat the normalisation of precarious work. One that rejects the status quo and tells wider society our own story of collectivism.

An executive in Wales as we have in Scotland and Ireland. Finding our champions of regional workplaces and communities.



A Labour Party that does not advance the rights of workers or the working class, that does not speak for socialism, should not receive Unite money

And as your general secretary there will be no stepping back from Unite's society role. The debate as to whether a union must be political or not was had a hundred years ago, and the answer then was as it is now - of course workers' voices must be heard in the corridors of power.

Politics is in the workplace and society. It is true that the current direction of travel of Labour is one that



PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

What policies can advance Unite members' interests?

We need power to drive the politics - and that must start in the workplace

SHARON GRAHAM
UNITE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

For those of us that believe unions must be progressive and transformative, this is a dangerous time. If we fail to focus on winning at work and people's material issues, we will lose our members' ears and defeat will follow.

Already, only a small minority of members are engaged in this debate. Make no mistake, we are moving in ever decreasing circles and we need fundamental change.

For many years, conversations within the left have often been reduced to considering the merits - or otherwise - of the existing leadership of the Labour Party. But decades on from Thatcher, this discussion is increasingly detached from the concerns of working people. Instead of putting forward concrete plans to build working-class power, general secretary elections are being fought as proxy wars, far removed from workers.

When you are a trade unionist you have to face some hard truths. And the first is this: if you have limited industrial power you can take whatever political position you like, but outside of the cheque book and the committee room, your ability to make change is compromised. You end up forced to rely on the fortunes of others and the ebb and flow of the electoral tide.

There is simply no time left for short-termism. The primary instruments of class struggle - the trade unions - are on life support. Collective bargaining coverage continues to decline, the shop steward base is declining, non-union employers like Amazon continue to erode and undercut our pay and terms and conditions.

We must rebuild our industrial base and bring workers from outside our traditional industries into our union. We can't afford years of drift facing a Tory government and sustained only by short-term tactical manoeuvres. We can't fiddle while Rome burns. We have to start doing it ourselves: this is not 'workerism' - this is the reality of our moment.

We need an industrial programme that moves decisively beyond the empty rhetoric of 'partnership' and which is also supported by our industrial activists; the vast majority of whom agree on the need for power in the workplace and strong organisation, with the ability to take strike action if and when required.

That principle shows the path to our renewal and it presents the opportunity to build a genuinely progressive and powerful culture that is so much deeper and stronger than anything we have currently.

To drive progressive politics within the union we must move beyond fighting internal battles within



Unite executive officer, Sharon Graham PHOTO UNITE

Labour. I fail to get misty-eyed about the link when often our members' jobs and services are cut at their hand. I would unashamedly reduce the emotional context of our relationship and instead focus on 'payment by results'. And yes, that means that I would call out councils or mayors if they attack or fail to support Unite members. I make absolutely no apology for that.

Of course, we still need to seek influence in parliament - laws matter. They can dictate our lives. But we must now reform the way we influence legislation. If anything, I will push hard for policy, but I will base this on a workers' manifesto that is decided by our reps and activists.

I will pursue its priorities by actively campaigning, as well taking our priorities into the structures of Labour. I will also refuse to support future candidates for parliament that have not represented working people. We need more working-class voices in Westminster and I will turn this soundbite into reality.

Progressive platform

But critical to our political work will be a long-term strategy to build a sustainable progressive platform across our workplaces and communities. I will not just hand over our political fund to Labour, I will use it to build political power.

I believe that we need to do politics from the base up, not the top down. Our political class has failed and it has to be workers that now drive the issues, not politicians. To build power we need to do the hard work of organising in our communities as well as the workplace. Big policy platforms have their place, but so do the hard miles of organising.

To win people over to our cause, to become credible in the eyes of working people, the left has to deal with where we are, not where we would rather be.

So many agreed with the Corbyn platform yet failed to support it. We can all rattle off our version of history, but I am more interested in how we change it - how we build a broad base of support that can be sustained outside of the fortunes of individual leaders or single parties. And the only way to do this - the only method we have failed to adopt - is to organise on a grand scale. We need to start with the issues that people can feel and touch - the material issues that impact on people's daily lives. We need to build a bridge to the left.

When I look at the work being done by groups like Helping Hands in Edinburgh and their mantra 'Solidarity not Charity', I ask why is the trade union movement not at the forefront of this work? Why are we not engaged in mutual aid? Why are we sponsoring food banks and not running them? Because that is where the journey outside of the workplace will start. That is the bridge for the left - the beginnings of a movement won through action.

We now have to earn the right to speak on behalf of ordinary working people, and as general secretary I will organise in our communities, as I organise in the workplace. Identifying, training and resourcing a cadre of leaders to move issues and build confidence.

Ultimately, as a trade union we have to return to the workplace. Not because we are avoiding politics, but because we need to win the battles workers face and build the power to move the politics. There are no shortcuts. As a trade union, our members only stay with us if we defend jobs and improve pay and conditions.

Lose sight of this inalienable fact and the road to reaction and ruin lies in wait. Inside trade unions, left politics dies without the industrial. We can't avoid it, or pretend otherwise. It's time for a serious industrial programme. It's time to build Unite.



I will also refuse to support future candidates for parliament that have not represented working people. We need more working-class voices in Westminster and I will turn this soundbite into reality

Pimlico Academy protest demands elected governors

HELEN PATTISON
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Parents at Pimlico Academy have picked up the fight against racism after students protested last term. The movement forced the resignation of the head teacher, among other concessions, but what happens now? The parents are demanding provisions such as proper training and support for teachers to help them deal with racism and sexual harassment in school, so that that all students at the school feel supported.

The parents also want a voice. As one put it, the head teachers might be gone, but the rest of the governing body remains. She went on to say: "We want proper engagement from the school and wish to elect two parent governors to ensure our voices are heard by the principal and the SLT (Senior Leadership Team)."

The school's very small governing



Parents protest at Pimlico

body does not currently include representatives of parents, teachers or students. But it does include Lord Nash, who has threatened students with punishment if there are any further protests. The parents chanted 'Students, parents and teachers - unite and fight!' It was really clear on the protest that Pimlico Academy is an important part of the community.

One of the protesters attended the school herself and now her child attends the school. She spoke about how much the school has changed in just a few years. A representative from the National Education Union came down to support the protest, and the parents will be supporting teachers taking strike action at the school.

York students protest to demand democratic control of schools

YORK SCHOOL STUDENT

On Wednesday 26 May, York Young Socialists organised a 30-strong protest campaigning for reformation of the school system. The protest in St. Helens Square called for the creation of a York school students' union, for sexual assault allegations in schools to be dealt with independently of school management using council safeguarding powers, to scrap school league tables, and to return academies to local authority control, with democratic oversight from students, parents and education workers.

There were numerous passionate speakers discussing not only the wider issues, but also some personal anecdotes of schools ignoring sexual assault cases.

A further speech was given by Lee on the issue of trans students and toilets in schools, including how trans students either have to walk to the other side of their school to use

the only gender-neutral toilets or, in their words: "Share toilets with fully grown adults" by using staff toilets. They talked of the many issues trans people already face, and how these students are being marginalised.

If nothing is done about the points raised at the protest, the school system will continue to worsen, with further students experiencing sexual assault and the offenders being excused, unaccountable for their actions.

This protest was the first of its nature and has planted the flag for further campaigning on this issue. Now is the time to pressure the education system to adhere to these demands. We need democratically controlled schools to better handle problems such as sexual assault allegations. By creating a school students' union this can be changed and our voices can be heard, which is what York Young Socialists are planning as our next step.



Protest in York YORK YOUNG SOCIALISTS

● Columbia: General strikes continue

For over one month, Colombia's workers and poor have taken to the streets against the repressive capitalist government of President Ivan Duque. And although the initial cause of the unrest, a deeply regressive tax hike, has been withdrawn, the combination of over 75,000 deaths from Covid-19 amidst growing mass poverty and widening class inequalities, continues to fuel the protests.

Many protesters have paid a high price at the hands of repressive state forces, which have deployed lethal

firepower. According to human rights groups, over 40 protesters have been killed by the police and, according to the government, two police officers have also been killed.

At the epicentre of the protest movement - the city of Cali - the Colombian army has been sent in by Duque to smother the opposition.

The trade union movement called workers out for a second general strike last week. Negotiations for meaningful government reforms - conducted on behalf of the protesters through the National Strike Committee, comprising major unions and student groups - have moved at a snail's pace.

Colombia has experienced two years of unrest on top of decades of

civil war. Clearly, a weak capitalist ruling class tied to the apron strings of imperialism has utterly failed the impoverished majority. Only the building of a mass revolutionary party, based on the working class, and with a programme for socialist change, can offer a way out of this impasse.

SIMON CARTER

● Eviction ban ends

The government's Covid eviction ban has ended. 400,000 renters have had eviction notices or expect to receive them, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. With hundreds of thousands living with a 20% pay cut

Hillsborough crimes go unpunished



Scarves left in remembrance of those who were killed

DAVE WALSH

LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

During more than thirty years of campaigning, the families of the 96 killed at Hillsborough and the Hillsborough Justice Campaign uncovered the truth: that 96 football fans were unlawfully killed. There was a cover-up, with hundreds of statements altered before they were presented to the public inquiry. But they have exposed more, that in the British legal system the truth is not enough.

At the inquest in Warrington in 2016, Hillsborough Police Chief Duckenfield admitted for the first time that his failure to close the tunnel to the packed terraces was the direct cause of the deaths. And he admitted lying to the original inquiry when he said that fans had smashed their way in. But that was a public inquiry, not a criminal court, so no sentence could be passed. In the criminal trial that followed in 2019, thirty years after the crime was committed, the first trial resulted in a hung jury, the second jury acquitted Duckenfield; justice delayed is justice denied.

That there was a cover-up is a matter of fact, but at the trial of two accused officers and a solicitor that concluded on 26 May, the judge ruled

on a technicality that the three could not be found guilty of a criminal act because the statements they tampered with were being prepared for a public inquiry and not a law court; therefore this could not be regarded as perverting the course of justice. The court case exposes the fact that police are free to mislead a public inquiry.

The collapse of the trial leaves questions about the role of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Mike Benbow, the former director of the Independent Office for Police Conduct, said that the CPS was given evidence of misconduct in public office and could have pursued these charges. But, inexplicably, it chose only to pursue the charge of perverting the course of justice.

What confidence can those seeking the truth about the Grenfell disaster have, now they've seen the reality of British justice? Or those seeking the truth about the government's handling of the pandemic? It will only be possible to have justice for working-class people when we have democratic control of the system, and the ruling capitalist class has been swept from power. Only then can we be safe from such crimes, with a socialist system designed to meet the needs of all the people, and not the obscene profits of a privileged few.

on furlough, or having lost their jobs during the pandemic, the effects of the pandemic are not over yet.

Low pay and high rent blight millions of worker's lives. All rent arrears accrued during the pandemic should be forgiven, with compensation only to small landlords, on the basis of proven need (see 'Eviction ban extension not enough: make it longer, forgive the arrears!'). But other measures are needed too to end poverty and housing insecurity. We need an increase in the minimum wage to £12 an hour as a step towards £15, and decent benefits we can live on. We need democratic rent controls and a mass programme of council house building.



PHOTO: RAGAVAN

Belarus: Lukashenko's desperate attempt to silence opposition

CLARE DOYLE
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

Dramatic recent events saw a Ryanair flight from Greece to Lithuania forced to land in Belarus. The military operation has been described as an unprecedented 'hijacking', and has seen European Union leaders move quickly to impose serious sanctions against Belarus and its clearly illegitimate president, Alexander Lukashenko. The US government under President Joe Biden has also condemned the escalating actions of both the Minsk and Moscow regimes.

This brutal kidnapping, arrest and blatant torture of Roman Protasevich - a Belarus opposition blogger living in exile - and his Russian companion, Sofia Sapega, have been a sharp reminder of the nature of Lukashenko's dictatorship.

Defeated in elections last August, he continues to hold hundreds of oppositionists in prison. Many are tortured and a number have died. A brutal state machine enables Lukashenko to remain in power, still maintaining that he won majority support. The whole team of oppositionists who stood against him in the election, headed by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, now lives in exile.

But, as a statement by Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) supporters in neighbouring Ukraine explains, there is a side to the struggle against the Lukashenko dictatorship that is a closed book to most journalists and commentators - the struggle of the working class.

The statement points clearly to the need to fight privatisation and

class oppression as well as for an end to the brutal rule of one man and a clique of henchmen:

"The outcry of the world's capitalist press about the capture of the well-known Belarus opposition leader, Roman Protasevich, is perfectly understandable.

"The Lukashenko regime has once again demonstrated its dictatorial character to the whole world. However, we must point out that we did not see such a sympathetic reaction on the part of the world's media and international governments when workers and trade union activists were suffering brutal repression at the hands of the regime.

"We have always campaigned for the establishment of a workers' alternative to the regime of Lukashenko. However, in doing so, we have always made clear and continue to make clear that our socialist alternative has nothing in common with the capitalist, pro-Western position of the main opposition groups, aiming to step up the privatisation processes in Belarus.

"We demand not only the immediate release by the Lukashenko regime of the opposition leader, Protasevich, but also the cancellation of all the illegal sentences meted out against hundreds of workers and trade union activists."

Unfinished struggle

Articles on socialistworld.net last year explained that elements of a revolutionary situation existed, with hundreds of thousands of demonstrators turning out time and again and facing Lukashenko's brutal state machine. The middle layers in society, including artists, musicians and media workers were in revolt.

Famous critics like Protasevich,



The Western establishments' focus on the kidnapped oppositionist Roman Protasevich (Inset) conveniently ignores the wider struggle of the Belarus working class against the Lukashenko dictatorship MAIN PHOTO ANDREASTROJAK/CC

as the Ukrainian message above points out, were clearly against the Lukashenko dictatorship, which is still based on large elements of state ownership. But he, like the main opposition leaders, imagined they could replace it with a 'clean' form of capitalism, something which has never existed.

At the height of the movement, workers began to take strike action, telling Lukashenko at mass meetings to "Get out!" Without a clear call for all-out general strike action to bring the country to a halt, the protest movement exhausted itself. The lack of a party based on the working class and fighting for a truly socialist alternative, meant the workers' efforts came to nothing.

The unresolved struggle continues against the Lukashenko dictatorship backed, so far, by that of Vladimir Putin in Russia. The Financial Times reports how Lukashenko was targeting dissidents abroad back in April with the help of Russian FSB spy agents, who arrested two opposition figures in Moscow and handed them over to Belarus.

The Kremlin came to the defence of Minsk's mid-air antics last week by referring to planes being diverted in the past by western nations. Specific reference was made to the case in 2013 of President Obama sending orders to a plane carrying Bolivia's president, Evo Morales, from Moscow to make an unscheduled stop in Vienna. Other European countries had refused to let it land on

suspicion that US whistleblower Edward Snowden was on board!

The FT also reports that last week, in an "apparent attempt to intimidate political opponents", the Belarusian authorities deliberately released footage of the final hours in a prison cell, just days before the Ryanair hijacking, of another of the country's dissidents, Vitold Ashurak.

Significant sanctions?

How much backing Lukashenko continues to get from Vladimir Putin, after talks in Sochi on 29 May, is unpredictable. The so-called democracies of Europe and the US are forced to condemn the actions of both dictators, but it is also uncertain how far they will go in imposing sanctions and risking their own interests in terms of trade, energy supplies and so forth.

But if significant sanctions are imposed by the Western powers it will be because of larger strategic competition with Putin's Russia, not any genuine defence of democratic rights. This is shown in their sweet-talking with the murderous Saudi dictatorship.

Even if Lukashenko's days as supreme ruler in Belarus are numbered, the workers and young people need a fight to the finish. They need to demand the freedom to assemble and protest, to speak, write and broadcast

without fear of reprisal, to organise parties and unions, to strike, and to stand in elections. All these must be inscribed on the socialists' banner.

The CWI has consistently argued that a fight against dictatorship in Belarus or anywhere else means not only a struggle for basic democratic rights but also for a programme of taking into public ownership the commanding heights of the economy, and democratically controlled and managed by elected representatives of working people. This is a prerequisite to building a socialist society in which human rights are guaranteed. This means building a revolutionary and socialist party, and an international organisation.

● See earlier articles on socialistworld.net.



Western governments' hypocrisy over kidnapping of oppositionist Protasevich

The brazen skyjacking and kidnapping of Belarus opposition journalist Roman Protasevich by the Lukashenko dictatorship has been roundly condemned.

But the chorus of western governments' condemnation reeks with hypocrisy given the notorious kidnapping of 'terrorist suspects' - principally by previous US administrations and assisted by the British government and others - known as

'extraordinary rendition'.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, US president George Bush ordered this policy, which resulted in hundreds of prisoners being held without charge in CIA prisons in third countries and in the notorious US-run Guantanamo Bay military camp in Cuba.

It was reported, in late 2005, that the then Blair Labour government allowed secret US

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) extraordinary rendition flights to land at UK airports.

Later, former Libyan dissident Abdel Hakim Belhadj took legal action against British security forces and former Labour Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw.

Belhadj said Britain's MI6 spies provided intelligence which allowed the CIA to detain him and his pregnant wife in Thailand in 2004.

US and Thai agents reportedly tortured them before returning them to Gaddafi's Libya where they received further abuse.

At the time, both British and US governments were seeking to repair relations with the Gaddafi dictatorship and both saw Belhadj as a threat to this rapprochement.

Jack Straw was accustomed to dealing with dictators. When home secretary, in 2000, he allowed Chile's

General Pinochet, who was in London at the time, to return home after the ex-dictator - whose regime murdered thousands of left-wingers in the 1970s - had been indicted by a Spanish judge for complicity in torture.

In May 2018, British Prime Minister Theresa May issued an official letter of apology for MI6's role in tipping off the CIA and paid Belhadj £500,000 in compensation.

£1/£2 solidarity price

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Issue 1136

3-9 June 2021

formerly **Militant**

CLADDING DANGER



PROTEST 5 JUNE!



PETE MASON
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The tragic Grenfell Tower fire, which killed 72 people, is approaching its fourth anniversary on 14 June. Yet the fire at New Providence Wharf on 7 May was just 'minutes' away from being another Grenfell Tower disaster, a report claims.

Nothing symbolises the deep housing crisis more than the millions of people who sleep each night in fire-risk buildings. Defending the profits of the big building companies, the government has just voted down a cross-party amendment which aimed to ensure that homeowners are not made to pay for remediation.

Decades of government cuts, relaxation, deregulation and privatisation of the building

inspections and safety regimes are to blame for the housing crisis.

Bellway Homes announced pre-tax profits of £237 million in 2020. The drive for profits cuts across concerns for safety. Our homes should not be in the hands of profit-driven building firms. The big builders should be nationalised with compensation paid only to those in proven need, all unsafe buildings immediately remediated, and a mass high-quality council housing programme established to set new standards in the building industry and end homelessness.

While millions of tenants in the private rented section are forced to move so often they are "nearly nomadic", as Shelter puts it, leaseholders, having sunk their life savings into a flat, find that they are trapped in unsafe homes. Unable to move or sell, some face bankruptcy.

After the successful protests on the Barking

Riverside estate in East London, joined by New Providence Wharf residents and three groups from other estates, the Barking Reach Residents Association raised the call for nationwide protests outside builders' and developers' sales offices on the 5 June.

This has received a big echo. Confirmed protests on the 5 June are taking place in Beckett Parkside, Royal Greenwich, Canary Wharf and Newham in London, Chipping Barnet, Hayes, Southend-on-Sea, Ipswich, Stevenage, Birmingham, Manchester Town Hall and George Street, and Cardiff. In some cases this will be residents' first step onto the streets, their patience having run out.

The New Providence Wharf fire shows the urgency of stepping up the campaign. Campaigners must look further than cross-party support. The Socialist Party calls for the independent political organisation of the working

class and its allies as the only way to ensure workers across all sections of society - both tenants and leaseholders - resolve the housing crisis in our interests. Cladding and leasehold campaigns should join with tenants and residents associations, the Fire Brigades Union and other sympathetic unions, housing organisations and campaign organisations, in organising a national delegate conference to debate a path to success, including proposals to build a national Saturday demonstration and participation in local elections in the spring.

The campaign says:

- The government should pay
- Builders and developers must immediately remediate
- No costs to residents
- Join the protests on 5 June

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

