

FIGHT TO

SAVE

OUR

NHS

- **Reject the 1% pay insult**
- **Trade union action for 15%**
- **Fight the health and care bill**

HOLLY JOHNSON

SHEFFIELD ORGANISER, NHS WORKERS SAY NO! CAMPAIGN

NHS staff are angry. We face continuous mistreatment and devaluation of the essential work we do. The Tory government has shown that it has no intention of addressing the staffing crisis, and does not prioritise patient safety.

NHS staff are demoralised after years of underfunding, poor working conditions and struggling to make ends meet. On Saturday 3 July there will be over 50 demonstrations marking the 73rd anniversary of the creation of the NHS, bringing focus to three major issues - pay, privatisation and safety.

We are fighting to make sure that staff are not worked to exhaustion, and that our patients receive the best possible care, in the safest possible environment.

For many NHS workers, the pandemic has highlighted pre-existing issues we face, and people are realising that enough is enough.

We need to show we are not going away and are ready to fight alongside NHS staff when the government announces its predictably miserly pay deal.

NHS workers are becoming more organised, building power in the unions and fighting for what we are owed. We need to see bold and decisive union leaderships that give confidence to members to fight. We need united action across the health unions, and to build support across the whole of the trade union movement. This is vital in the fight to save our NHS!

We can win for the NHS, we can give confidence to the rest of our class, we can push the Tory government into another U-turn and open the doors for other workers to improve their conditions. The fight for the NHS is everyone's fight.

● Read more: 'What way forward after 3 July?' and 'Fight the health and care bill' on pages 4 and 5

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

Stop the Channel 4 sell-off!

JAMES IVENS

SOCIALIST PARTY AND EQUITY MEMBER

Channel 4 is again under threat of privatisation. The government is considering options as part of broader media reform proposals, responding to market disruption as well as Tory political and ideological anxieties.

The publicly owned, commercially funded network employs hundreds of staff. It supports thousands of production and supply chain jobs. Moving to a for-profit model would put many at risk, especially in mergers with private media giants.

It would also further impoverish cultural life in Britain. Channel 4's official remit as a public service is to be a platform for diversity in drama, comedy and film. Without stable, specialised institutions to nurture alternative voices, they will fall out of view.

And this is part of the Tories' motivation! Channel 4 News can go much further in government criticisms than the official mouthpiece, BBC News (which itself has attracted Tory attacks).

The capitalist state does own both, and the government appoints the ruling bodies of both. Ad-funded Channel 4 is hardly some anticapitalist firebrand. But the network's structure and remit give government politicians less direct control over it than the Beeb.

On top of several hard-hitting exposés, Channel 4 'empty chaired' Boris Johnson with a melting ice sculpture in a 2019 election debate. "They want to muzzle us," a senior network figure told the Financial Times.

There is also a decades-old drive to open more direct profit opportunities in Britain's media market.



Channel 4 headquarters JAMES WEST FOLLOW/CC

Channel 4's audience has grown lately - especially for its 'All 4' streaming service, a new source for advertising revenue. The network seems financially robust.

Thatcher failure

Margaret Thatcher founded Channel 4 in 1982 as a wedge to increase broadcasting competition. Then she herself was the first to try to privatise it.

But each of half a dozen attempts since then has crumbled. Squaring a diverse public service mandate with profit seems all but impossible. The wider political and industrial costs could also outweigh the private profits.

The ideological zeal remains, though. And Johnson's populist wing of the Tories is often more interested

in 'culture war' propaganda than strategy.

Meanwhile, the market is moving beneath the bosses' feet. The rise of online streaming is narrowing the traditional broadcast market to older audiences and live programming like news and sports.

This threatens the old media giants. They are belatedly joining the race - and some are successfully using their established resources and influence as nitro-boosters to catch up.

Disney+ now has 104 million subscribers - halfway to Netflix in just 20 months. ViacomCBS and Discovery have begun to outstrip Netflix in stock market value and growth projections.

But British media firms are behind the curve. Culture Secretary Oliver

Dowden's promise of regulatory reform is linked to this.

Holding streamers to the same 'standards' as broadcasters would reduce the competitive dominance of US mega-networks and tech giants. It can give the capitalist state more measures to check their political influence too.

A privatised Channel 4 would also be more commercially competitive in that framework - especially if its remit were diluted. For sure, none of this will have workers' interests at heart.

The best way to see off the threat to Channel 4 is for the unions to gear up for industrial action. Meanwhile, the real alternative model for mass media is democratic public ownership under working-class control, with guaranteed space for minority and experimental voices.

Keep private hands off NHS patient data

JOE FATHALLAH

CARDIFF EAST SOCIALIST PARTY

On 12 May, NHS England released its plans for a new system called "General Practice Data for Planning and Research". This system would scrape pseudo-anonymised patient data from GP practice records, and add them to the NHS Digital central database.

This plan has been in the pipeline for three years, but initially patients were only given a month to opt out of their data being included. A legal challenge by a coalition of groups including the Doctors' Association UK, has succeeded in delaying this deadline until September.

Of course, there are huge benefits in the sharing of healthcare data to aid research and planning, and the data would not include patients' names, dates of birth, addresses and so on. But it would include data such as sex, ethnicity, sexuality, symptoms and diagnoses, test results, medications, allergies, vaccinations, and appointment dates, as well as which clinicians carried out treatments.

Professor of Medical Informatics at the University of Manchester, Alan Rector, pointed out in an article in the Guardian newspaper "how easy it is to identify individuals from medical records, even if obvious personal details are removed."

The government claims that patients can opt out at any stage. However, that would only stop new data



being scraped, their existing data would remain in place. Patients under the age of 13 would be unable to opt out, as presumably those lacking the mental capacities to make an informed decision in this 'assumed consent' scenario.

According to NHS Digital, some organisations could "need access" to the data. "These include but may not be limited to... research organisations, including universities, charities, clinical research organisations that run clinical trials and pharmaceutical companies". Big

pharma could access the database legitimately!

The top-level management of NHS

England has form on this matter. For example, in 2015 Google DeepMind was able to access data from NHS records at the Royal Free London Trust, without patients' consent and in breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. What is more, there is no fool-proof way to protect a huge central database of this kind against cyberattacks or accidental data leaks.

To secure the future of the NHS and prevent the farming out of medical data and services to the private sector, we need to fight for a democratically controlled socialist health service, fully funded and under the control of medical professionals, patients, and the wider community.

● Hopeless Hancock replaced

As soon as the prime minister announces his 'full confidence' in a government minister in a pickle, you know they're doomed.

And so it came to pass that the now former 'totally f.....g hopeless' health secretary, Matt Hancock, had to fall on his sword.

Of course, this is of little comfort to those thousands of families whose vulnerable relatives died unnecessarily from Covid-19 because Hancock discharged elderly patients from the NHS into the privately run care sector without testing them first.

And it doesn't exonerate Hancock and Johnson for dishing out lucrative PPE and other Covid-related public contracts to Tory party chums.

And who is going to replace TFH Hancock? None other than Mr Austerity himself, the ex-chancellor Sajid Javid.

But if the PM thinks this game of musical chairs will draw a line under this farrago then he should think again. The drubbing of the Tories in the former Tory stronghold of Chesham and Amersham shows that voters don't take kindly to being dumped on by a rotten government.

Johnson's only saving grace is that HM opposition - Labour's Keir Starmer - is also TFH!

● Millionaires multiply during pandemic

There are now more millionaires than there ever has been, an extra 5.2 million of them. It turns out, if you own high-value property, or have substantial investment in stocks and shares, the economic bailout measures have suited you just fine.

Meanwhile, millions of us remain on furlough with a 20% pay cut, have been thrown onto the unemployment scrapheap, face bosses' 'fire and rehire' or a public sector pay freeze.

Global wealth grew by 7.4% in 2020, despite the devastating health and social consequences of the pandemic. It is clear where that wealth has gone. For workers to get our hands on it, we need to nationalise the banks and big companies under democratic workers' control and management. Coordinating internationally, and on the basis of a socialist plan, wealth can be redistributed to meet the needs of all, including the 55% of the world's population who currently own just 1.3% of the world's wealth.

Gateshead: Sacked electricians reinstated

ELAINE BRUNSKILL

SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

There has been a victory for rank-and-file sparks at the Amazon construction site at Follingsby Park, Gateshead. Alongside victories such as the fightback against the use of Electrical Service Operatives (ESOs) at Hinkley Point nuclear power plant, this has clearly boosted the idea that if you fight you can win!

Around 40 electricians had downed tools and walked off site because of the reckless practice by electrical contractor SIS Systems of using unskilled labourers to do the work of skilled electricians.

Rather than speaking to the workers to ensure the job was safe, the unscrupulous bosses sacked the workers for highlighting safety issues. For the hapless contractors, their profits came before safety.

Amazon has bragged that around 1,300 workers will be employed at the Gateshead warehouse. Those workers deserve a safe environment to work in.

The whole matter of who takes responsibility for the sackings, safety, and so on, is a tangled web. One worker commented: "The issue is the

client has appointed a contractor, who has appointed a sub-contractor, who uses an agency, who has an umbrella company!"

Rather than being cowed by the sackings, the rank-and-file sparks acted courageously, and often with humour.

The police turned up at the protest, clearly to ensure the interests of the bosses were upheld. The protest outside the plant was successively blocking deliveries and challenging those crossing the picket line. The police told them they couldn't stand in front of the entrance to the site

- so they defiantly began to walk back and forth across the entrance.

The sparks expressed gratitude to the Socialist Party for supporting them throughout their struggle, and were impressed with how the National Shop Stewards Network got their protest to a wider audience.



Sparks picket ahead of reinstatement ELAINE BRUNSKILL

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Socialist Party

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

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.

WORK AND INCOME

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

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NHS after 3 July protests

Trade unions must organise serious action



WHAT WE THINK

The NHS protests around the country on 3 July should be the start of building a mass campaign for decent pay and to save the NHS. Well over a million people work in the NHS. Organised in trade unions, backed up by community campaigns, these workers have tremendous potential power.

NHS workers have campaigned for a 15% pay rise. The Tories proposed an insulting 1% to workers who have spent the last 16 months working themselves to exhaustion to save lives.

Following an NHS Pay Review Body recommendation, the Tories are due to announce what they will offer any day - potentially right at the end of the parliamentary term.



The potential to build a fightback is clear.

Workers in a whole number of workplaces... have recently been on strike, some achieving important victories

Any announcement which does not give NHS workers what they deserve should be met with immediate protests from the NHS trade unions, and they should make clear their intention to prepare for national co-ordinated strike action.

The rest of the public sector faces a pay freeze. With a bold lead from the tops of their respective unions, care workers, teachers, civil servants, council workers and so on would respond to a call for joined-up action.

And it's not only the question of pay. Despite battling away calls for a Covid inquiry, with the claim that it would be a distraction from fighting the pandemic, the Tories have nonetheless found time to produce a white paper on the future of the

NHS in England.

A new health and care bill could be published at any time (see opposite page). Even if it is delayed by the resignation of former Health Secretary Matt Hancock, the Tories' aims remain clear.

If it is based on the white paper, the bill will be a blueprint for further privatisation, a reduction in democratic checks, and the further break-up of a national service. It must be opposed.

There should be protests at Parliament when the bill is debated and a national NHS demonstration, all of which would help prepare the ground for the necessary strike action.

Fightback potential

The potential to build a fightback is clear. Workers in a whole number of workplaces and sectors, from construction and buses to housing and schools, have recently been on strike, some achieving important victories. Members of the Royal College of Nursing and GMB union voted to reject the 4% pay rise offered by the Scottish government.

Importantly, members of Unison, the biggest public sector union and the biggest union in the NHS, voted for change in the national executive elections.

The left, including four Socialist Party members, now has a majority on the National Executive Council (NEC), surrounding recently elected right-wing general secretary Christine McAnea.

Disgracefully, Unison's Health Service Group Executive, still dominated by the right wing, refused to back the 3 July NHS protests.

Socialist Party members will appeal to others on the NEC to ensure a fighting stance and plan of action is laid out urgently, to make it clear to members in the NHS and the wider public sector that the new union executive will live up to the expectations placed on it by members desperate for a fight.

Hancock's resignation is just the latest in a series of events that expose the weakness and divisions in the Tories.

A serious campaign on the NHS can be instrumental in the fight to kick them all out. It means part of the struggle has to be to fight for an alternative: a new mass working-class party that can articulate workers' anger; campaign for a programme of a 15% pay rise, full funding and to end the privatisation of the NHS; and fight for a socialist government that can implement such a programme.



PHOTO MARY FINCH

- **Fight the health and care bill**
- **15% pay rise now for all NHS and social care staff**
- **Reverse all privatisation within the NHS. Abolish the Private Finance Initiative and cancel all debts**
- **Bring all outsourced workers and services in-house on a permanent contract**
- **Nationalise the private healthcare sector, care homes, the medical supply industry and the pharmaceutical companies - integrate them into the NHS**
- **A fully publicly funded and democratically controlled NHS and care system free at the point of use**

We don't want a USA-style healthcare system

MICK GRIFFITHS
WAKEFIELD AND PONTEFRAC T SOCIALIST PARTY

The health scrutiny committee on Labour-led Wakefield Council returned on 24 June for its first physical meeting since the Covid outbreak.

A report was received from the local clinical commissioning group (CCG) to update on progress made towards implementation of the government's NHS white paper proposals to create new 'integrated care systems' (ICS) by April 2022.

NHS campaigners have concerns that these vague proposals could lead to an entrenchment of private companies sitting on ICS boards. In reality, this is already happening.

Wakefield's health scrutiny committee agreed to write to the secretary of state for health raising concerns over the proposal to end scrutiny powers to refer objections to the secretary of state. But not a single councillor questioned increasing involvement of the private sector!

The CCG representative did state that it was a contract condition that private service providers pay

employees the living wage. However, the commissioners apparently have no influence or control to enforce it!

The new local integrated care system is to cover Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield. ICS contracts may become commercially confidential trade secrets servicing private profiteering interests. Local democratic accountability - tame as it is - will be lost altogether.

Wakefield council's health scrutiny committee has only raised concerns about the perceived weakening of its role, while not raising any objections to the very real threat of a fundamental break-up of the founding principles of the NHS.

We will not sit back and rely on councillors who timidly acquiesce to the Tories' attempts to dismantle the NHS and move it into the direction of a USA-style healthcare system.

Healthcare trade unions and community campaigners need to build a mass rank-and-file movement to expose, resist and defeat the NHS white paper, and build a fully funded and publicly owned and controlled alternative.

Fight the health and care bill

STEVE SCORE
LEICESTER NHS CAMPAIGNER

The future of the NHS hangs in the balance. Nearly five million people are waiting for treatment. Covid has pushed our health services to the limit, but years of underfunding meant it was already in crisis before the pandemic. Waiting lists were already rising, as were the huge staff shortages.

But rather than addressing these problems as a priority, the government is proposing more drastic reorganisation of the NHS.

In February, plans were leaked and then published in a white paper. Inaccurate headlines suggested the government was planning to reverse previous privatisation and to properly integrate health and social care.

This was wrong. The white paper did not propose reversing privatisation nor deal with the crisis in social care. The government would divide the NHS in England into separate areas runs by boards called 'integrated care systems' (ICS). NHS England is already three-quarters of the way through its plan to create 42 ICS in advance of legislation to empower them.

The market mechanism first introduced under Thatcher, including its split between 'purchasers' and 'providers', will remain.

A new health and care bill is expected to be published shortly, having been flagged up in the Queen's speech in May. But that was vague on the detail. If the bill includes much of what was in the white paper, it will be a further threat to the NHS and must be opposed.

What confused the press was the suggestion in the white paper that the compulsory competitive tendering rules would be scrapped. However, it does not mean privatisation being abolished - just that companies

would no longer have to compete! Throughout the pandemic the government handed out private contracts worth billions for test and trace, PPE, and to private hospitals. These have been without competition or transparency, and with a heavy element of cronyism - and that's the model they want to continue.

NHS England has already created an approved list of private companies to fast-track the outsourcing of contracts. ICS with commissioning powers will be able to include private companies on their boards. So not only can private profiteers continue to carve out bits of the NHS, they can also now be part of running it!

Undemocratic practices

In fact, companies like Virgin are already being invited onto the existing fledgling ICS, like the one in Bath, Swindon, and Wiltshire. Of course, these bodies will not be democratic, with members being appointed not elected.

It is also proposed to remove the current requirement for the government's plans for the NHS to be debated annually in parliament.

Local councils, which would have their scrutiny over the NHS weakened in the white paper, are one of the 'partners' who will have representatives on the boards. But the current power of local authority Health Scrutiny Committees to refer bad local NHS decisions to the secretary of state would be removed.

On some occasions, local campaigners in the past have succeeded in getting decisions to close services reversed by putting pressure on councillors.

In fact, rather than simplifying the structure of the NHS, the plans create two tiers of ICS in every area - one with the real commissioning powers and the other (also including private companies) which appears to be

intended to act like the already existing 'health and wellbeing' boards.

Each ICS will have its own separate budget - bringing pressures to make cuts resulting from underfunding, and increasing the potential for regional inequalities in service. It also raises concerns about whether it would be used to weaken NHS workers' current national pay bargaining powers by replacing them with local bargaining.

All of this is of course not clear until the government publishes its bill. But one aspect that was mentioned in the Queen's Speech was to "innovate and embrace technology" and that "patients will receive more tailored and preventative care." Bland statements in isolation.

But the intention is to continue a process, begun with the pandemic as an excuse, of fewer face-to-face appointments with specialised staff, replacing them with more digital services, which will cause difficulties for those not able to access computers or smartphones.

In addition, there is the danger of faster discharge from hospital, but without the back up in community services.

Campaign groups such as Health Campaigns Together and Keep Our NHS Public are opposing this bill. Despite quotes from Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, Jon Ashworth, saying that the white paper proposals meant "little accountability to the public, allowing contracts to be handed out to private interests with no challenge", Labour has shown no real fight against these proposals. If Labour was a real opposition, Starmer would be hammering it in every speech!

Trade unions and campaigners will have to take up the battle to save the NHS. Stop and reverse privatisation, fully fund the NHS and pay the workers the 15% they need!



PHOTO PAUL MATTISON

Support Gary Clark for CWU executive

‘We need to organise a fightback in defence of our members’



PHOTO PAUL MATTISSON

Gary Clark (above) is a candidate for the Communication Workers Union’s (CWU) national executive and postal executive. Gary has been active in the trade union and socialist movement since 1985. For the last 25 years he has been a member of the CWU as a postal worker in Scotland No 2 branch. He started as a local rep in a distribution office and has been the branch secretary of Scotland No 2 branch for the last four years, one of the larger branches in the UK with over 3,000 members.

What is your platform and your basic core demands in terms of these election campaigns?

I will take the average wage of a postal worker. I believe that to represent postal workers you should live like a postal worker. I’m also campaigning for a £15-an-hour minimum wage. In the last deal we saw a pay rise of 2.1%, but we now need to push for more.

We can’t just sit back. A number of members have to claim benefits. With £15 an hour we can take them out of that to live on a decent living wage and not just get by.

Also we must fight for the demand of a 35-hour week. We’ve seen Royal Mail drag its heels on that one over the years. I am demanding that by next year we move to a 35-hour week.

Another point we should make is the culture in Royal Mail. For many, many years now, postal workers have suffered a bullying culture within Royal Mail under pressure from managers: this has to stop.

We’ve seen a new CEO come saying he’s going to change it. But we’ve seen all that before with numerous CEOs. Now is the time. Unless we see radical changes we have to fight back and defend our members. And that should include a special meeting being called by the CWU nationally. We have to discuss serious action to protect our members from this culture of bullying.

You are a member of Socialist Party Scotland and a longstanding socialist. What do you think that the role of the CWU should be in terms of building political representation for its members?

Political representation is vital. The Corbyn era is over in Labour. Starmer

has come in and we have seen public attacks on the CWU by senior Labour Party figures. Now members are asking the question, why are we still supporting Labour? I’m not saying there’s not good people in the Labour Party. But let’s be clear, the Labour Party is moving back to the days of Blair and no longer represents the interests of ordinary workers and CWU members.

My policy is, we should only support people who support us. That might be people within the Labour Party but also outside.

We should also link up with other trade unionists with a similar viewpoint to us and call a special conference about working-class representation. Because, quite clearly, there’s not a political leader inside Westminster, or inside the Scottish Parliament, that actually supports the interests of the people we represent. Let’s now have an honest and open debate on that within the CWU and take it into the wider trade union movement.

On the future of Royal Mail, one of your main demands is for the re-nationalisation of the industry. How important is that?

Royal Mail has recently announced profits of £700 million this year. The vast majority of that is going to be paid out to major shareholders; not the local postie who holds a few shares, but the multinationals. Royal Mail should be renationalised and run under the democratic control of the workers and communities who know the industry inside out. We should take control of it in the interests of the people who we represent and the people who rely on the service.



FERDY LYONS

EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Tuesday 29 June saw the start of another three days of strike action by staff at Oaks Park High School - a large community school in Redbridge, east London, - over the victimisation of a trade union rep, and against a wider culture of bullying.

This action has already secured jobs and maternity pay for several bullied workers. Strikers are preparing for a final push next term to get justice for their unfairly sacked rep Keiran Mahon.

The picket was well attended and in high spirits, with strikers chanting: “Stop bullying staff” and “What’s disgusting, union busting!” and singing

‘Solidarity forever’ and ‘We shall not be moved’ accompanied by one of the reps’ trumpet.

The strike is visibly growing in confidence and cohesion. It’s been helped by pickets sharing harrowing stories of how the leadership of the school has bullied them. They are continuing to bully and intimidate staff to break the strike and deter more members from going out. Pickets told me that the school leadership is perpetuating lies about those who are out on strike and what the details of the strike are.

For the first time the picket even saw the presence of the police who reportedly were called in by the school management, falsely claiming previous picket lines ‘hurled verbal

abuse and objects’. However, the officers were pleasantly surprised by the offer of cake and coffee from the picketers instead, much to the chagrin of the school leadership at the gates!

Bullying and unendurable workloads are problems in schools up and down the country and the National Education Union needs to unite the fightback by coordinating a national campaign.

On Monday 5 July, 5pm, there is a rally planned outside Redbridge town hall in solidarity with the Oaks Park strike. Why isn’t the council intervening to end this bullying at a school which it runs?

Legal restrictions mean the next round of strikes will be in September.

Unite members step up action against bullying Mungo’s managers

UNITE 1111 HOUSING BRANCH OFFICER

Property service workers at St Mungo’s charity are entering their tenth week of indefinite strike action against workplace bullying. This follows victimisation and sustained bullying by senior managers.

The team voted overwhelmingly for strike action. The turnout was 66.7% with a 100% ‘yes’ vote.

Three Unite union members were initially targeted by management, two of whom were Unite reps. One member was routinely criticised, shouted at, and embarrassed in front of the team he was managing

Within hours of Unite communicating a timetable for industrial action to Steve Douglas the CEO, a Unite rep within the team was

suspended for ‘gross misconduct’.

This Unite rep had made over 27 serious allegations against three senior managers, two of whom are at the highest level of management including one on the senior leadership team.

An internal hearing, however, failed to uphold any of the allegations. Furthermore, 12 staff members who had witnessed the bullying and would have supported the complainants were not interviewed as part of the investigation. Managers were unable to explain why the 12 had not been interviewed.

Management has failed to follow the ACAS (the workplace arbitration service) best practice guidelines. Moreover, it has refused to discuss

bullying with Unite on the grounds that it is ‘not a collective issue’.

To maintain pressure on management Unite, has taken up with the issue with local councillors.

Unite strikers are now doing a tour of Mungo’s workplaces outside of London to raise the profile of the strike in preparation for what could be an escalation of the dispute.

Unite reps who have been contacted overwhelmingly back the strike - with tales of their own experiences of bullying at Mungo’s.

Unite is calling for the suspension of our rep to be lifted immediately. It also demands that an independent investigation takes place into the bullying culture which exists at St Mungo’s.

Support Sandwell Leisure workers: No to ‘fire and rehire’

RICHARD GINGELL

BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

On 25 June, Unison union members working for Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT), West Midlands, organised a strike at a number of leisure centres across the borough. Their grievance is one we’ve heard too much of recently: ‘fire and rehire’.

The new contracts being imposed by the trust would see a two-year pay freeze and staff being taken out of nationally agreed terms and conditions for local government workers. This is despite the trust having maintained £4 million of reserves during the pandemic.

Socialist Party members supported

the striking workers on the picket lines, which swelled with activists throughout the day.

Over three sites (Portway Lifestyle Centre, Tipton Leisure Centre and Smethwick swimming baths), strikers met a favourable public response, with many refusing to attend the centres that day in support.

Living wage

They also received a visit from Dudley Trades Union Council and from local Labour councillor Kerrie Carmichael. But will the Labour controlled-council put some real pressure on SLT to fix this dispute?

Last year, the council offered SLT an emergency payment, which was

Socialist candidate wins NIPSA general secretary election

“Good trade unionists fight for their members every day and I am still the same person who became a branch rep in my office in 1982. We need real improvements in living standards and to end low pay. I will fight for a reduction in retirement age and to improve pensions.

“I will work to ensure that all insecure forms of employment are brought to an end across the public sector. I will reinvigorate a recruitment drive in all areas, including among agency staff and those in other forms of precarious employment.

“I will continue to be at the forefront of

challenging sectarian division and campaigning for workers’ unity.

“I want to see a growing union and a membership that democratically decides the future direction of the union

“Our conference, several years ago, decided to include the aim of a ‘socialist economy’ in NIPSA’s constitution. For me, socialism is about democratic control and the reorganisation of society in the interest of the many, not the few. I seek to raise arguments in favour of socialist change whenever I get a chance.”

CARMEL GATES

CIARAN MULHOLLAND

MILITANT LEFT (CWI IN IRELAND)

Left candidate Carmel Gates has won the election for the general secretary position in Northern Ireland’s largest union NIPSA, gaining 44% of the vote. Her nearest contender won 34%, and the two other candidates scored 12% and 10% respectively. Carmel is a supporter of Militant Left (CWI in Ireland).

The importance of this victory must not be understated. NIPSA organises civil servants of all grades, and public sector workers across health, education and other areas. With 40,000 members, it has a presence in thousands of workplaces and in every city, town and village. Carmel’s victory raises the stakes in the coming fightback against the impact of years of austerity, and is a hugely important development given the background of increasing sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland.

The turnout at 12% was lower than expected, but this is explained by the ‘Covid effect’. There were none of the hugely important face-to-face meetings, no rallies, and no leafleting of workplaces. The message still went out, however, as an enthusiastic team circulated tens of thousands of ‘virtual’ leaflets, covering both industrial and political issues, and a series of online meetings reached a wide audience.

Carmel’s campaign sought to link industrial issues with the political and raised the dangers facing the union, the wider movement, and the entire working class. NIPSA’s size and influence mean it is able to give a lead to other unions and the wider movement, as has been



The election of Carmel will embolden activists and will help the process of rebuilding the left

demonstrated on many occasions both in strikes and demonstrations against sectarianism, and in the one-day strikes against cuts in 2011 and 2015.

Anti-sectarian and socialist ideas, tactics and strategy have been put forward by Carmel and other activists over the years, and have begun the transformation of the union into a fighting body. NIPSA now stands for “independent, cross-community, anti-sectarian trade unionism” and for a socialist economy because of the efforts of the left.

Workers have lost out over ten years of austerity, imposed both by the Westminster government and the Stormont executive.

The election of Carmel will embolden activists and will help the process of rebuilding the activist layers and the left in the union. It will assist in the fight-back against further cuts, which are clearly planned as the pandemic recedes, to make up lost ground from the last decade, and to make new gains.

Victories will come through a well-organised, membership-led, and combative union. This election victory is not the end, it is only the beginning.



Carmel Gates

Support Sharon Graham for Unite general secretary: for a fighting union

The Socialist Party is supporting Sharon Graham in the Unite general secretary election. Ballot papers are posted out on 5 July.

It is vital that Unite is maintained as a fighting union, industrially and politically, as workers face a brutal offensive from the bosses and their Tory government, while Sir Keir Starmer moves Labour to the right.

It is no accident that the lead reps in the successful strikes on Manchester buses and at Thurrock bins against their employers’ attacks are supporting Sharon. As are the rank-and-file construction electricians, recently victorious in their battle against the bosses’ deskilling agenda.

They are attracted to her programme to improve the industrial organisation of Unite on the shopfloor. This has never been more important as companies threaten workers with ‘fire and rehire’ and look to victimise union reps.

Gerard Coyne and Steve Turner

are also standing. Coyne is a direct representative of the employers. He was backed by the Blairites in 2017 when he stood against current general secretary Len McCluskey, because they saw his challenge as a way to go for Jeremy Corbyn’s left Labour leadership.

He is falsely trying to pose as ‘a voice of the ordinary worker’ against the ‘union machine’, when in reality he would take Unite into partnership with the bosses.

Combative programme

The most effective way to take on Coyne is through a combative programme that can appeal to the broader layers of Unite members, who don’t normally vote in the union’s elections.

It is Sharon not Coyne who seeks to mobilise Unite members to take action in defence of jobs, pay, terms and conditions.

In contrast, Steve Turner would represent a retreat from Unite’s

record under Len McCluskey and passively accept Starmer’s Labour leadership. Turner is on record as saying that a Unite general secretary isn’t an ‘attack dog’ but has to be in the background doing deals.

But the thousands of Unite members facing ‘fire and rehire’ from the bosses are absolutely looking for an ‘attack dog’ to give a lead against these attacks.

Where such a lead is given, workers are showing every week that they are prepared to fight, often securing victories. There can be no going back from this.

We agree with Sharon’s desire to make the union more industrially organised and ready for action, including building and extending shop stewards’ combines.

We also support her promise that Unite should “oppose any local authority, including Labour, if they attempt to force through cuts to jobs and services after Covid-19 and beyond... and support candidates who

oppose cuts to Unite members’ jobs and services and councils and councillors who fight against them.”

These are welcome pledges. In our view, it is important that Sharon’s campaign does not attempt to avoid the political issues, but instead confronts the reality of Starmer’s pro-capitalist leadership of Labour.

This will pose the need for a left, anti-austerity political vehicle for workers that will be attractive to Unite members as they come into collision with the ‘Westminster brigade’ of Starmer and the cutting Labour councillors.

A militant programme is needed and can win this election. That is why the most fighting members in the

union must unite around Sharon’s campaign. This should include those who were attracted to Howard Beckett’s campaign, particularly his opposition to Starmer.

Such an election campaign must become a pole of attraction to all those who want to build on Len McCluskey’s leadership rather than retreat from it. It must be the basis for a new fighting and open and democratic left within Unite, which will be necessary whatever the outcome of this election, to help build the combative union that is required to meet the challenges of a system in crisis.

● A socialist programme for Unite, see socialistparty.org.uk

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CAN BIDEN REFORM THE POLICE?

In the fifth and concluding article in our series on the new Biden administration, **Hannah Sell**, the Socialist Party's general secretary, looks at one of the most contentious issues in the USA today - policing. What is the new president's response to the demands of the anti-racist Black Lives Matter movement for wide-ranging change?

In the run-up to the 2020 US presidential election, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement swept the US and the world. The brutal murder of George Floyd by white Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was the spark for the movement.

Newly elected Democrat President Joe Biden promised that his 'George Floyd Police Reform Bill' would pass by the anniversary of his murder on 25 May. The deadline was missed.

Meanwhile, there have been more police killings, including a 13-year-old Latino boy, Adam Toledo, shot dead by the Chicago police in March 2021. At this stage the BLM movement has subsided, as protesters hope that Biden will be pushed into taking effective action. If he fails to, however, a new wave of struggle will erupt.

What are the prospects for Biden successfully reforming the police? No meaningful reform was carried out under the last Democrat president, Barack Obama. In 2016, the last year of his presidency, there were still over 1,000 police killings, with black men nine times likelier to be killed than other Americans.

It was under Obama's rule that BLM demonstrations erupted across the country in 2014 in response to the police killings of two black men, Michael Brown and Eric Garner. No one was prosecuted for either crime. Under the pressure of the 2020 movement, however, Derek Chauvin was found guilty of murdering George Floyd.

Does this indicate that under Biden some change will actually take place?

The final contents of the George Floyd Police Reform Bill are not yet clear, nor whether it will ever pass in any form. It has been passed by the House of Representatives twice, but has failed to pass through the Senate to date. The last time it went to the Senate not a single Republican voted for it, and it would take the support of all 50 Democrats, plus ten Republican Senators for it to pass.

Senate bipartisan negotiations between Democrats and Republicans are currently taking place. But if any agreement is reached, it will undoubtedly dramatically water down the already limited bill.

The original bill that was passed through the House of Representatives did include some reforms, including banning choke holds, changing the threshold for use of force from "reasonableness" to being "necessary to prevent death or serious bodily injury", and increasing the powers of the Federal Justice Department to investigate police forces. It also promises to limit police departments' supply of military grade equipment.

However, even if every one of these measures was to make it onto the statute books, something that would clearly be welcomed by BLM campaigners, it would not transform the deeply engrained repressive, racist and violent character of American policing.

Britain's police force is certainly 'not



In 2016, under the last Democrat president, Barack Obama... there were still over 1,000 police killings, with black men nine times likelier to be killed than other Americans



Mass protests, with widespread support in all communities, erupted after the cop murder of George Floyd PHOTO TED EYTON/CC

innocent', as BLM protests here rightly proclaim. But to give an idea of the greater levels of police violence in the US, between the start of 2015 and June 2020 a horrific 6,451 were recorded as killed by the police there. This compares to 23 over the same period in Britain - a killing rate 56 times that of Britain accounting for population size.

Of those killed in the US, 3,353 were white, 1,746 were black, and 1,152 were Latino. Given the make-up of the US population, those figures show that you are far more likely to be killed by the police if you are black. The rate of killings is 7.9 per million for the black population compared to 3.3 per million for whites and 3.5 per million for Latino people.

Social class factors

There is also another important factor in whether you are more likely to face police violence: social class. One study divided local communities into five categories based on poverty levels, and showed that in the poorest fifth the likelihood of being killed by the police was 6.4 per million, compared to 1.8 per million in the richest fifth.

So, if you are working class you are more likely to be killed. But if you are black and working class you are at even more risk.

The same story can be told about other aspects of the US state. The US has the highest level of incarceration in the world. In 2016, 2.3 million people were imprisoned in the United States; a rate of 698 people per 100,000. African Americans make up 13% of the population but 40% of those locked up.

As the levels of people imprisoned have rocketed, so has the proportion of prisoners who are from the poorest sections of society. One indication of

this is that in 1970 someone from the least educated section of the population was seven times more likely to be imprisoned than someone in the most educated quarter. By 2017 the disparity had soared to 48 to 1!

The racist character of the US state is intertwined with the racist character of capitalism, including the specific characteristics of US capitalism, which developed with a large black population making up a significant minority of the rural poor and working class, suffering vicious institutional racism.

As Malcolm X famously said: "You can't have capitalism without racism." The mighty US civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s - with Malcolm X prominent in the struggle, followed by the Black Panthers at its high point - was able to win important gains, but it did not overcome racism.

In the wake of the civil rights movement, the US capitalist class set out to create a black elite, in order to increase the stability of their system by giving some African Americans a 'stake' in the American dream. A black US president and now vice-president,



Community policing? Tooled-up cops in Pittsburgh PHOTO KATESHEETS/CC

unimaginable at the time of the civil rights movement, is an indication of how much has changed.

At the same time, however, the US overall is more unequal than ever. In 2019, the last year for which figures are available, the gap between rich and poor was the widest ever recorded.

Since then we've had the Covid pandemic, with the impoverishment of millions while the wealth of the richest soared, creating 56 more US billionaires in 2020 alone. African Americans remain overwhelmingly concentrated in the poorest sections of the working class, with racism endemic in the structures of society.

State apparatus

Racist police killings are not just a question of a few bad apples. It is true that there is considerable evidence of white supremacist and neo-Nazi groupings within the police, and that they have been given more confidence by Trumpism.

However, the root cause of the 'institutional racism' of the police is that they are part of a state apparatus which is not neutral, but ultimately exists to defend the existing capitalist order, based on the exploitation of the working-class majority by a tiny, highly privileged elite. This is true in Britain as well, but is particularly starkly posed in the US.

One of the demands adopted by many in the BLM movement is 'defund the police'. This has been a response not just to police brutality, but to the vast sums spent on the police compared to the amounts spent on other aspects of the public sector, such as social welfare. In Milwaukee, for example, 58% of all city funds are spent on policing!

In Britain, in the past, the existence



Far more than at the time of the civil rights movement, the possibility exists today for a mass united struggle of black, white and Latino workers

of a mass workers' party - Labour - albeit with a capitalist leadership, was an important factor in aiding the working class in winning important reforms, including the NHS and a raft of social benefits. These have been dramatically undermined over the last decades by pro-capitalist Labour governments as well as the Tories.

In the US, however, where there has never yet been the development of a mass workers' party, the capitalist state has always delivered far more repression against minorities and the labour and socialist movement, and less welfare.

After four years of Trump, millions of Americans are hugely relieved at the election of Biden. There are also hopes that his stimulus packages can improve the lives of working-class Americans. Nonetheless, the Democrats are a capitalist party, and Biden's goal is not to act in the interests of the working-class majority but to strengthen US capitalism.

Biden's record

Historically, he has supported an increase in police repression. For example, when Clinton was the Democrat president, Biden helped author the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which deployed and trained more police officers, increased prison sentences, and built more prisons.

Now, having nodded to the BLM movement with the Police Reform Bill, he is concentrating on emphasising how he wants more, not less, funding for the police. It is clear that the fight against police racism and brutality cannot rely on the Biden presidency, but on the kind of magnificent mass mobilisations that we've seen in BLM.

To win victories, however, it will also be important to discuss what programme should be adopted. When the massive BLM demonstrations erupted in the wake of George Floyd's murder, they had very high levels of popular support. According to one Washington Post poll, an overwhelming 74% of Americans supported the movement. This pointed to the potential for building a powerful movement, able to win decisive victories.

Later in 2020, however, popular support did ebb to some extent. Trump cynically whipped up allegations of violence by demonstrators in an effort to mobilise his base for the presidential elections.

In reality, protests were overwhelmingly peaceful, and it was BLM protesters who were victims of violence both from the police and from armed right-wing vigilantes egged on by Trump.

Reactionary, frenzied denunciations of the BLM movement are inevitable from Trump and his ilk and protesters should not give an inch to them, or step back from struggle on the basis of the level of support they have in opinion polls at any particular moment. No oppressed grouping ever won its demands by passively waiting for other sections of the oppressed to support their cause.

Nonetheless, far more than at the time of the civil rights movement, the possibility exists today for a mass united struggle of black, white and Latino workers.

One factor in this is the greater anti-racist conscious of big sections of the working class, reflected in the multi-ethnic character of the BLM demonstrations. But most important is the ongoing crisis of capitalism which is

threatening the future of all working-class young people.

Given that 63% of the US population is non-Hispanic white, winning large sections of the US white working class is an important step to victory. As capitalist crisis develops, even some sections of white workers who have currently swallowed the capitalist lies that it is black workers rather than capitalism that are responsible for their misery, can potentially be won to an anti-racist mass united struggle.

Achieving this requires linking the fight against racism to the vital economic and social questions of jobs, homes and public services, and raising demands that point to capitalism's responsibility for the impoverishment of all sections of the working class.

It also requires taking a skilful approach to the question of the police. Biden has repeatedly denounced the 'defund the police' slogan, ultimately because he does not, in reality, have any intention of making fundamental changes.

However, it is also true that it is a slogan that is easily picked up and deliberately misinterpreted by the right in order to discredit the movement.

The police force plays a dual role in society. It is a repressive apparatus, but it is also all that is available to deal with the crime and violence from which the working class in particular suffer.

According to the Financial Times: "Murders in New York rose last year by 43% - and are on track to be higher this year than last. The situation is even uglier in Chicago, which is close to its 1974 peak when almost 1,000 people were murdered. Ditto across urban America."

A call to 'defund the police' can create fears that the demonstrators want to abolish all law enforcement. As a result, even among African Americans polls show that only around a quarter supported the slogan.

An overwhelming majority could be won, however, to the meaning many BLM protesters would give to the 'defund the police' slogan, such as demilitarising the police, ending violent and repressive measures, and increasing spending on social services and affordable secure public housing.

Democratic control

There would also be support for the key demand of democratic control over the police. Raising demands such as the formation of community control boards for each precinct, composed of democratically elected residents with the ability to hire, fire, subpoena, investigate, and charge police officers, along with setting police budgets, would point towards the entirely different character the police would have if it operated under the control of and in the interests of the working class, rather than the capitalists.

The battles for such a programme could win important concessions. Who can doubt, for example, that Chauvin would not have been sent to prison were it not for the BLM movement?

However, to fully achieve these demands it will be necessary to overthrow capitalism and build a new democratic socialist society, based on meeting the needs of all rather than the profits of a few.

The building of a mass party of the working class, independent of the Democrats - bringing together all the different struggles against injustice in the US - will be an important first step.

Pride is a campaign, not a business opportunity

● London Trans+ Pride

Thousands of trans and non-binary people, and supporters, marched in London on 26 June at Trans+ Pride. The mood was determined and militant, with anti-Tory chants to the fore.

Ten years of austerity have included vicious cuts to services for trans and non-binary people. As soon as he became PM, Johnson dropped proposed reforms for self-certification of gender to replace the expensive, bureaucratic and medicalised gender recognition certificate process.

The Tories are using the lives of trans+ people as part of their reactionary ‘culture war’ agenda. Disgracefully, this has been given misguided support by some who claim to be on the left. Starmer’s Labour has not put up any opposition. The Tories seek to divide workers to cut across a united fightback, so the struggle of LGBTQ+ communities is an issue for the whole class.

Fighting together for liberation is empowering and inspiring. Trans+ Pride was utterly unlike depoliticised and demoralising Pride parades which are controlled by big business ‘allies’, falsely offering up individual consumption as an escape from oppression.

Socialist Party members at Trans+ Pride got a good response to our ideas. Mass struggle for LGBTQ+ liberation is needed to oppose attacks and build a world without discrimination and prejudice, replacing capitalism with a socialist society. We will be building for the Reclaim Pride demo called for 24 July in London.

GREG RANDALL

● Loughborough

The LGBT+ groups for Loughborough University staff and students held their annual Pride rally and march around campus. 70 people marched, mainly students with some staff.

The event focuses on issues facing LGBTQ+ people, and highlights the progress that has been made since 1970, which is being pushed back, as shown by the recent homophobic attacks in Liverpool, and the backlash against trans rights.

Loughborough Socialist Party was the only political group on the march. We handed out leaflets with a programme for working-class unity to fight discrimination and the class oppression of capitalism, and for socialism.

When talking with young activists, we brought up the discrimination trans people face when looking for employment, and the alarming rates of homelessness among LGBTQ+ people. People were interested in the link between class and LGBTQ+ oppression, that is underrepresented in the narrow and legalistic interpretation of LGBTQ+ rights.

It was fantastic to talk to so many passionate young people about the struggles ahead, and the Socialist Party’s platform to secure economic and social justice.

DAMIAN COSGROVE

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“You can’t trust Starmer’s Labour Party - we need a new mass workers’ party”. Young members of the Socialist Party in London led a loud and colourful contingent at the People’s Assembly demo on Saturday 26 June.

We called for jobs and homes for young people, industrial action for a 15% rise in the NHS, and a new party of the working class to draw all the struggles together. Young people on the

protest left their contact details with the Socialist Party, and some joined our end-of-protest discussion in St James’s Park.

Called on a myriad of issues, the central London march lacked a unifying slogan and next steps. Placards and rally speakers demanding a ‘new normal’ and ‘Tories out’ left mostly open what is needed and how to win it.

Unfortunately, this, and a lack of union

mobilisation, led to a modest turnout for a national event - perhaps a few thousand. This underlines the point we took part to make.

Workers and young people need fighting trade union leaderships, and clear demands for a working-class political alternative. Our members campaigned energetically for those ideas on the march. If you agree and want to help - join the Socialist Party.



Brighton: Moulsecoomb strike against academisation again

NICK CHAFFEY
SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN REGION

Deaf to the overwhelming opposition of parents, students, staff and their unions, the local community and council, Lee Mason-Ellis and the Pioneer Academy chain are intent on taking over Moulsecoomb Primary School in Brighton in September. With Gavin Williamson reasserting Tory policy to push academisation further, Lee Mason-Ellis sees rich pickings in Brighton for his academy chain, with other schools their target.

Determined to resist, school staff and their unions - the National Education Union (NEU), Unison and GMB - have voted to go on strike again on 6 July. They reject the academy model, and wish to remain a local authority school.

Academy chains are private companies, who seek to make profit

through cuts to children’s resources and staff numbers, while removing any accountability to parents and the local community. They have nothing to do with raising education standards. Even Ofsted, in its most recent inspection, criticised academisation as a distraction from the good work being carried out by the school.

With the threat of a new wave of academisation, schools must not be left to fight alone. A new national campaign needs to be launched by education unions to oppose academies, and to link it to the fight on post-Covid school funding, teachers’ pay, workload and league tables.

The basis exists for such a campaign to prepare for national strike action to take on this deeply unpopular policy, and take advantage of the weak and divided Tory government. Just recently the Tory education tsar, Sir Kevan Collins, resigned over the

failure of the government to fund school recovery plans, with growing demands for Williamson to go too.

The wide support for Moulsecoomb’s resistance was shown in the recent 1,000-strong march and rally in Brighton. This support needs to be built on, with the call for a one-day education strike in Brighton to oppose academisation and demand the full funding of local schools. And an occupation of the school, with the support of Brighton Council, would escalate the dispute and put this vital issue into the national spotlight.

This community has fought for three years to keep the wolves from the door. The fight is not over yet.

- Join the strike rally at Moulsecoomb Primary at 8am on 6 July
- Send emails of support to info@neu-campaigns.org.uk

MIKE CLEVERLY
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

It was the day Nadia had been dreading. On 29 June, the bailiffs were coming to put her, her three children and her belongings out on the street.

She has lived in Walthamstow, east London, for 38 years, and her children attend a local school. Every avenue to protect her home and children has been explored. Originally, the best Waltham Forest Labour council offered was a temporary home in Stoke-on-Trent, where this single mum of three has no family, friends or support.

On 29 June, we were outside Nadia’s home to resist the bailiffs. Our 80 ‘eviction resisters’ were pensioners, disabled people, young renters and Socialist Party members. The protest was called by the Socialist Party and supported by Waltham Forest Trades Council, the body that coordinates the unions in the borough.

The landlord’s agent came to inform us that the eviction would not happen that day, because of the number of people outside. Nadia will get a new eviction date, but we said we will be back with similar numbers whatever day they choose.

We will not be moved. We will not let the bailiffs pass.

A Labour councillor said the best the council’s housing department can now offer Nadia is one bedroom in a shared house in another London borough, Redbridge. Nadia rejected this as it’s unsuitable for her and her three children.

Many people are shocked that this can happen in one of the world’s

Protesters halt Nadia’s eviction



richest cities. But Nadia’s case is not unusual.

Thousands of families, with their roots in London, are being transported miles away. This is the result of decades of austerity by Labour and Tory governments.

The sale of council homes, and the stock transfer of council housing to housing associations, has decimated housing that families like Nadia can afford. It is horrifying to realise that this Labour council treats such families no different from neighbouring Tory councils like Redbridge.

In the streets around where Nadia lives there are plenty of empty homes. On 27 June, Waltham Forest Socialist Party publicised the scandal of empty homes with a ‘pave-ment walk’ to blocks of flats standing empty in mockery of families living in cramped, damp accommodation.

In some cases, they have been on the 9,000-long waiting list for many years. We heard about families pushed around temporary accommodation for years, with children not knowing which school they will attend from one term to another.

We held an ‘open mic’, then walked the short distance to the nearest group of tower blocks. Our demands - ‘house the homeless’ and ‘take over empty homes’ - were echoed by the people we met.

Nadia will not be moved

At the eviction protest, Nadia spoke to particularly thank Socialist Party member Nancy Taaffe. Nadia met

Nancy on one of our Socialist Party campaign stalls a year ago.

She remembered Nancy as someone with a fighting record locally. Nadia turned to her after getting nowhere with the councillors and Walthamstow Labour MP Stella Creasy.

This struggle is for Nadia and her children, but we know that there are thousands of cases pending, many in Waltham Forest and across every city in the country as the eviction amnesia is brought to an end. These families must not be left to fight on alone.

York residents demand land for local community needs

MAURICE COOPER YORK SOCIALIST PARTY AND
IAIN DALTON SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE

70 people gathered to protest the violent eviction of a group of squatters on 26 June. The group was trying to reclaim deserted land near the Barbican Centre in central York as a community space.

The land has been empty since the swimming baths and car park were demolished in 2004. Replacement swimming baths were consulted on, but never developed.

Instead, the land was sold to housebuilding company Persimmon Homes. Rather than building on the site, which Persimmon has twice got planning permission to do, 17 years later it still remains derelict.

It has become part of Persimmon’s ‘land bank’ - holding onto the land while its value gets higher and higher. A Guardian report in 2015 showed that developers were hoarding 600,000 plots of land. The biggest four housebuilding companies, including Persimmon, sit on three-quarters of those.

Around ten years ago, with no progress being made to develop the land, local residents made a request to use it as a community allotment. This was denied. The reason Persimmon Homes gave was that it planned to build student housing there “in the immediate future”.

This was the story until June 2021,

when a group of locals occupied the land, calling it ‘the Barbican Community centre’. They cleared 15 bags of rubbish, erected raised beds, and sought a dialogue with local residents about what the plot of land should be.

In the early hours of 25 June, bailiffs hired by Persimmon stormed the site, putting one of the squatters in A&E with a neck injury after dragging him out of the site. The bailiffs illegally covered the licence plates of their vehicles to avoid being traced.

Our protest sent a very important message - this is our land. One occupier said: “It’s amazing to see so many people out here today.”

“Today has shown that the people of York want and need this centre. We care about each other, we want to unite, we want our community to thrive, whereas Persimmon Homes cares about nothing but profit.”

The protesters demand the council compulsorily purchase the land for the token sum of £1. Although several councillors, including the council’s Green Party deputy leader, attended the protest, they did not respond to this demand.

At the demo, the Socialist Party raised that to end land banking requires bringing the big housebuilders, banks, and the land into public ownership, so local working-class communities and construction workers can decide democratically the best use to put such land to.

Dalian Atkinson - police found guilty of killing ex-footballer Democratic community control of police needed

CAMMILLA MNGAZA
BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

PC Benjamin Monk was found guilty on 23 June at Birmingham Crown Court of the manslaughter of ex-Aston Villa footballer Dalian Atkinson, in a trial lasting six weeks. This is the first time in 35 years that a police officer has been convicted of a death in police custody. Since 1990 there have been over 1,700 such deaths.

Dalian died at the hands of PC Benjamin Monk in August 2016. Suffering a mental episode, he was tasered three times, the third time lasting for 33 seconds. Dalian was kicked in the head so hard by the police officer he left marks of his shoe lace.

PC Monk has been sentenced to eight years in prison.

It was discovered that the policeman was on a final written warning for gross misconduct for 18 months from 2011. While going through a vetting process it was discovered that he failed to disclose a

caution for theft in 1997 and drunkenness in 1999. Not only was he not sacked, he was still allowed to carry a taser after his gross misconduct hearing.

It has taken nearly five years of fighting for this case to come to trial, during which West Mercia police have not been forthcoming with this information.

We should not have to fight so hard and so long to bring corrupt police to account for crimes they have committed. We are fed up with the police being protected by this capitalist state. As socialists we want and need to promote democratic trade union and community control of the police.

- End police brutality. Demilitarise the police. Stop the use of horses, tear gas, rubber bullets and tasers
- Independent workers’ and community inquiries into police violence to identify and remove corrupt police officers

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● Who says workers aren’t appreciated?

In these days of deskilling and constant attacks on workers’ pay and conditions, it came as an unusual surprise when our shift supervisor informed us that management would like to thank us for our efforts in hitting the monthly budget for the first time ever (production is still in its early stages).

So much so, the same production manager would like to buy us all a fish and chips meal on Friday. Lovely to be appreciated for the hard work we were all putting in. However, when the production manager saw the cost of his generosity he said: “Too expensive, tell them they can have a bag of chips!” He eventually agreed to a breakfast and drink from the works canteen. Very nice, and appreciated, eventually.

GATESHEAD FACTORY WORKER

work either. People have got much worse examples, so if we don’t fight now, guess what is going to happen?

MIKE MARX
SOUTHAMPTON

● Money May buy you love

I worked at a wedding in leafy Buckinghamshire at the end of June. The venue itself was tightly packed, and there were another 60 guests watching online next door. A total of 200 or so.

We wondered how on earth they could have so many guests in that space! The cap on guest numbers had only just been lifted that week, and there are still strict limits on social distancing.

There were absolutely huge floral displays. The whole venue smelled beautiful.

We were outside watching everyone arrive. The guests were beautifully and extravagantly dressed. Obviously a very moneyed crowd.

I noticed a very large bald man in a suit with a discreet earphone, then saw two more similarly dressed. Wondered who on earth the security detail was for!

A slim, tall woman walked by wearing a gorgeous dress and a large hat, accompanied by her husband, security detail hovering around her.

I suddenly understood how the obviously extremely wealthy couple were able to swing all this. It was Theresa May.

ANONYMOUS
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

● Proud sponsors

More and more adverts talk about companies being ‘proud sponsors’ of this, and ‘proud supporters’ of that. Pride is first and foremost of the seven deadly sins. It is the sin of Satan.

The full list is: pride, sloth, gluttony, pretending you know what ‘woke’ means, going to Eton, avarice and capitalism.

Or am I describing the Prime Minister?

DEREK MCMILLAN
WEST SUSSEX

● Healthcare on the brink

Waiting for healthcare is a throw of the dice. The health system is on the brink of collapse, just what the Tories want. I was at my surgery, talking through a window, and got told: “No appointments this way”. So I called on the phone and: “No appointments this way, call at 9am”. Did that and was told: “No doctors, call tomorrow at 8.30am or use online”, that didn’t

WHAT’S YOUR VIEW?

● editors@socialistparty.org.uk

or, if you’re not online, write to the Socialist Inbox, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



LEON NEAL/CC

TV Review: GB News



DAVE MURRAY
BASILDON SOCIALIST PARTY

You know when you switch on Freeview just on the off-chance that with all those channels there will be something good on? It’s always disappointing isn’t it? The launch of the GB News channel has done nothing to change that.

Although the channel employs 120 ‘journalists’, it will not actually report the news. Instead, opinions will be aired via a series of studio-based discussions, interviews with selected guests, viewer phone-ins and vox-pop interviews with the public. If you watched Steve Coogan as Alan Partridge presenting spoof daytime TV show ‘This Time’, you will be familiar with the format.

There are certain differences between GB News and other sofa-based TV shows. For a start, it’s dark.

Studio backgrounds are black with some blue neon detailing - like the corridor of a multiplex cinema or the small meeting room in a death star. Which is entirely appropriate; the chair of Liberty Media, which has links to GB News, was once called “Darth Vader” by Senator Al Gore.

Presenter Andrew Neil, who is already ‘taking a break’, said the mission of the channel is to “inform, inspire and entertain”. Its success or failure must be measured against that.

I’ve certainly learned something - did you know that Jeffrey Epstein was not a paedophile but an ‘ephebophile’? Me neither.

For entertainment, you’d be churlish not to give the GB News crew at least half a point. Technical glitches there were a-plenty, with loss of audio and video, interviews cut across

by jingles and station idents, drilling noises from next door, and phone-in calls from ‘Mike Hunt’ and ‘Mike Oxlorg’.

It’s low and unedifying entertainment though, like watching someone you don’t like have a very minor accident. Because it’s unscripted, the fun unfolds very slowly.

At least Alan Partridge manages to combine gags, oblique social commentary and the comedy of toe-curling awkwardness in half an hour flat. It would take days of viewing to get the same entertainment value from GB News.

“

It’s low and unedifying entertainment... like watching someone you don’t like have a very minor accident

And there is the evil thing. Despite Andrew Neil’s opening statement on GB News that they would “empower those who feel their stories, their opinions and concerns have been ignored or diminished”, the list of presenters does appear to include a high percentage of what I would think of as ‘wrong’ uns’.

Former senior Sun journalist Dan Wootton

Ultra-conservative Tom Harwood, an ex-member of Turning Point UK and the Guido Fawkes Tory gossip site

Ex-MEP Alexandra Phillips. In 2017, she assisted Uhuru Kenyatta to win a general election in Kenya,

despite his indictments for crimes against humanity. To be fair to Phillips’s former client, the indictments did fail due to lack of evidence, albeit following the deaths of key witnesses

Trouble ahead

Happily GB News seems already to be in trouble. Vodaphone, IKEA, Kopparberg, Nivea, Pinterest, Specsavers and Octopus energy have all pulled their ads, calculating that they might actually be damaged by associating with the notion that “lockdown has been the biggest single mistake in human history”, espoused by the GB News in-house historian Neil Oliver.

The channel, with a £60 million start-up fund - £20 million each from a hedge fund and a media corporation based in Dubai, plus another £20 million from US-based Discovery channel - is unashamedly “proud to be British”.

A possible fate is that of satellite channel ‘LIVE TV’, which became extinct in the 1990s, despite its offer of topless darts, the News Bunny and the bounciest weather reports on TV. Look it up, it’s actually worse than you think.

GB News is ‘right leaning’ in the same way that the Titanic was ‘forward leaning’. At its launch, GB News gained just over 300,000 viewers - narrowly beating BBC’s rolling news channel, but looking a bit sad against the 3 million who tune in for the BBC news at six.

Its breakfast show attracted 78,000 viewers - slightly less than the number of Conservative Party members who gave Boris Johnson the leadership of the Tory Party. The demographic is the same, skewing heavily towards the elderly. There is no future in GB News’s dreaming.

Post-pandemic railway battles loom

Rail unions must prepare for action

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN RMT

Britain’s railway network has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. Passenger numbers plunged by 80% as a result of the first lockdown and have only recently reached 40% of pre-pandemic levels.

The collapse in passenger fare revenue has led the government to suspend the franchise system and instead pay the private Train Operating Companies (TOCs) a fee to keep the wheels turning, eliminating all risk to their shareholders.

The government is currently bailing out the railway companies to the tune of £800 million a month to make up for the shortfall.

This is the opportunity the government and the railway bosses have been waiting for - the chance to get their hands on our hard-won terms and conditions.

Bosses’ attacks

Under the guise of reducing the life support payments, the ‘Rail Industry Recovery Group’ (RIRG) has been set up by the government to look at ways to get the industry back on its feet and adjust to post-Covid passenger numbers. However, a brief look at its latest document, the ‘Enabling Framework Agreement’, reveals what they are really after.

Just a few of the headlines: a two-year pay freeze; more ‘modern employment practices’ ie more flexibility from the workers and more power for the bosses; ‘agile working practices’ ie less stability for workers; and to ‘ensure pension arrangements are affordable and sustainable’ - expect attacks on pensions, particularly for new starters.

The two-year pay freeze is definitely not our contribution towards the recovery of the railway industry. It is simply a gift to the private firms who will take over the running of the railway in the future as it will permanently reduce their wage bill and further boost their shareholders’



Railway workers’ relatively good pay, terms and conditions are the consequence of union-organised struggle PHOTO: PAUL MATTESON

“

We are now about to confront one of the biggest onslaught of attacks on what our predecessors fought for and won in living memory

profits. The railway pension scheme is one of the few remaining final salary schemes in the private sector. It

offers a slightly more dependable income than inferior defined contribution schemes so common elsewhere. We must not allow the race to the bottom in terms and conditions to let rip in our industry!

The document proposes offering voluntary redundancy (VR) and re-deployment as a way to reduce the wage bill. While many older workers might consider taking VR, we must argue against the selling of jobs. Once workers start to accept VR it becomes more difficult to build a campaign to defend all jobs - which are not ours to sell anyway. They are decent jobs that should be available for young people to take when they

decide to start their railway careers in the future.

RMT has not signed up to the proposals contained within the document, despite the impression given by reports in the press. The union leadership has already launched a campaign to smash the two-year pay freeze, which is welcome. However, it is important that the RMT leadership makes it absolutely clear to members that by participating in the RIRG it will not endorse or even consider the atrocious proposals within their framework document.

Despite RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch emailing members explaining the union’s opposition to the



Socialist Party members visit Nottingham picket line PHOTO: GARY FREEMAN

East Mids train guards strike

Senior conductors on East Midlands Railway are striking every Sunday until at least 15 August as part of a long-running dispute over contracts and Sunday working arrangements.

Members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) are refusing to book onto shifts between 00:01 and 23:59.

Inferior contracts are being issued to new workers with around £5,500 less salary, and commitments to Sunday working.

Shift patterns are being drafted at the last minute, making it difficult for workers to plan ahead and have a reasonable work/life balance.

The company is also trying to get

the senior conductors to work additional hours in breach of terms and conditions. This would be for nothing, as the company claims the time is owed, despite the fact there is an agreement that takes account of the complexity of rotas.

Either there is a deliberate attempt to take on the union or management cannot understand the reality of working in the industry, or both. Good reasons for democratic workers’ control and management of the industry under public ownership.

On 20 June, the RMT set up a ‘negotiating table’, outside the main office in Nottingham as the company won’t come to the table to negotiate.

proposals, we cannot overestimate the potential for the capitalist media to twist reality and confuse members into believing otherwise. Therefore, the leadership must redouble its efforts to ensure that it is made clear to the bosses, and the membership in particular, that we will not tolerate any attacks on our members’ jobs and living standards.

Legacy of struggle

Many railway workers enjoy considerably better pay, terms and conditions than workers in other industries, thanks to trade union organisation and struggle. But it hasn’t always been this way. Towards the end of the 19th century, most railway workers worked very long and unsocial hours on very low pay. The private railway company bosses fought a vicious battle for many decades to stop the workforce joining unions and steadfastly refused to recognise unions when they did join. It has taken the blood, sweat and tears of generations of railway workers who stood up and fought the bosses in order to win decent pay, pensions and shorter hours.

It is only over the last thirty years that railway pay and conditions have significantly improved, while many middle-class and university educated people have seen their pay stagnate and decline. The Tories and the bosses have never liked that and, if given the chance, they would knock us down a peg or two and see us scrabbling for work on zero-hour contracts like workers in so many other industries.

We are now about to confront one of the biggest onslaught on what our predecessors fought for and won in living memory. It is time for us to not only flex our muscles, but to show the bosses that we are prepared to ballot all of our members across the railway, and call national strike action across the whole network, if they come after our jobs, pay and conditions.

The railway workers’ unions - RMT, ASLEF, TSSA and Unite - must lead a massive struggle in defence of all railway jobs and our pay and conditions.

Israel/Palestine national question

Can the Israeli working class play a progressive role?

The Socialist Party has consistently argued that the working class is the only force which can solve the enormous social and economic capitalist crises in the Middle East, and end the occupation and repression of the Palestinian people.

We call for a new socialist Palestinian intifada (uprising), and for splitting the Israeli state along class lines; issuing a class appeal to Israeli workers to support the Palestinians’ right to have their own state and to join the struggle against the Israeli capitalist class.

In the last of our series on how Palestinians can achieve self-determination, Socialist Party member **Amnon Cohen** asks: Given the deep racism in Israeli society, is this approach realistic?



Only last month Palestinians were lynched by far-right Israeli groups who rampaged through the mixed cities in Israel torching Arab-owned businesses.

While the Israeli military forces were carrying out atrocities against Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere, the protests against the latest war by Jewish Israelis were fairly small (a few thousand), mainly middle-class, and were met by hostility from the majority of Israeli society.

In Israel, the education system, the army, and the media carry out a relentless barrage of racist propaganda, which is unfortunately reinforced by the mistaken methods of Hamas (see ‘Who represents the Palestinians?’ - at socialistparty.org.uk). Can a socialist movement overcome the racism in Israeli society?

Class divisions

Until the 1980s, the Israeli state bought a degree of support from the Jewish working class by providing a decent standard of living. Workplaces were unionised and provided tenure, the state provided public housing, and basic goods were subsidised.

This social contract, where Jewish workers would be compensated for military service by having more or less guaranteed living standards, was torn apart by the advent of neoliberalism.

Today, Israeli workers suffer from casualisation, low pay and high prices. Accommodation is unaffordable and large numbers of young Israelis emigrate to seek an easier life abroad.

In July 2011, inspired by the Arab Spring, a mass movement demanding social justice erupted in Israeli society. The movement was started

by a Facebook call from Dafni Leef (a young video editor) for people who could not afford Tel Aviv’s extortionate rents to set up tents in Rothschild Boulevard.

Within a week hundreds of tents were set up, not only in Tel Aviv but in every Israeli city. These tent encampments became organising centres, with round the clock political discussions, and became a focus for demonstrations which swelled to hundreds of thousands.

The largest demonstration came on 4 September when a total of 460,000 people (7% of the population) marched chanting “The people demand social justice”.

The demands of the movement were initially limited to the unaffordability of housing. Demonstrators occupied empty buildings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

But as the movement grew in size and confidence, it developed more general demands such as free education; an end to privatisation; a fairer tax system; investment in public housing and transportation; the resignation of the government and an end to the rule of the oligarchs.

A mock guillotine was erected in the Rothschild encampment as a warning to the politicians. The movement cut across national lines with demonstrations in Arab towns such as Baqa al-Gharbiya, as well as in the Jewish West Bank settlement of Ariel.

The Israeli government was terrified by the Arab Spring and this movement, and set up a committee headed by Professor Manuel Trajtenberg to propose a solution to the problems raised by the demonstrations.

The leaders of the movement, in return, agreed to demobilise the demonstrations.

The Trajtenberg committee deliberated for months. But its recommendations were inadequate and were mostly not implemented. The following year, Dafni Leef, realising that she had been deceived, attempted to restart the movement, but faced immediate police repression and did not get much support beyond the core of activists.

Most people felt that the movement had achieved nothing and a second mobilisation would have similar results. But the experience of collective struggle did have an effect on consciousness, with a unionisation drive organising many unorganised workplaces.

Covid crisis

Although the Israeli economy was one of the first to recover from the Covid pandemic, the conditions of Israeli workers have significantly worsened, with 800,000 officially unemployed at the beginning of 2021. Around 150,000 lost their jobs during the most recent lockdown.

The Palestinian population in Israel has the highest poverty rate, but it is also the case that 1.2 million Israeli Jews live below the poverty line.

Before the recent elections, weekly demonstrations took place outside Netanyahu’s residence demanding his resignation.

Netanyahu’s attempts to use the pandemic to ban the demonstrations and suppress them with mass arrests and water cannon failed, only causing the demonstrations

to swell to tens of thousands, with smaller bridge-top protests organised at hundreds of places around the country.

In July 2020, nurses took strike action demanding higher staffing levels and better pay. After one day’s strike action, the government conceded thousands of new positions and a pay increase.

Social workers also took strike action on the questions of pay, workload and safety in the workplace. After a 16-day strike, they reached an agreement with the government which acceded to most of their demands. Both of the strikes involved workforces which included both Jewish and Arab workers.

Gaza war

During the recent bombardment of Gaza, gangs of far-right Israelis attempted to attack and lynch Arab bus drivers in Tiberias. The Jewish and Arab bus drivers took immediate strike action and closed the bus garage to ensure the safety of the Arab drivers. They organised a convoy of vehicles to escort the Arab drivers back to their homes and ensure they reached them safely.

Their union, Power to the Workers, issued a statement saying that just as the union defends the jobs and condition of workers in normal times, during war it also defends the safety of all its members, both Jewish and Arab.

The statement explained that while the workers as individuals are powerless, collectively they can effectively defend each other.

Workers’ committees in hospitals and universities also took action to

protect the safety of their Arab members and issued similar statements.

Israeli propaganda claims that it is the ‘Jewish homeland’. But experience teaches Jewish workers that Israel is a capitalist state which does not serve their interests, but those of the billionaires.

Israeli capitalism is dependent on the crisis-ridden world economy and is incapable of offering working people, whatever their nationality, a decent future. Working people are forced to struggle to defend their conditions and, in workplaces where there are mixed workforces, these struggles inevitably cut across the national divide.

Whatever prejudices workers bring from wider society, it quickly becomes clear that all workers must strike together as a united force, irrespective of nationality, otherwise the bosses will exploit these divisions and defeat strikes.

And this experience of united action shows the workers in practice who their real allies are - ie Arab and Jewish workers - and who their real enemy is: the employers and the capitalist government that serves them.

The ongoing brutal occupation of Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and its resulting cycles of bloodshed, is also showing to Israeli workers that the Israeli capitalists have no solution to the national conflict.

It will only be through workers organising independently against capitalist interests - Palestinians in the occupied areas and Jews alongside Palestinians in Israel - that peaceful, socialist, co-existence will become possible.

German Greens: The image and reality

Stopping destructive climate change requires socialist change

SOZIALISTISCHE ORGANISATION SOLIDARITÄT (CWI GERMANY)

In Germany, the Green party is riding a wave of popularity. Following the selection of Annalena Baerbock as its candidate for Chancellor (Prime Minister) it hit 28% in the opinion polls.

Currently at 26%, it is leading the polls, ahead of the conservative Christian Democrats/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU). At present, Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) heads a governing ‘Grand Coalition’ comprising the CDU/CSU and the Social Democrats (SPD). After the elections in September a coalition government without the Greens is all but ruled out.

This support for the Greens is due to the failures of the CDU/CSU, which is tied up in corruption scandals, and of the SPD, which has completely lost any separate profile as the junior partner in the grand coalition with the conservatives. The Greens have also been able to present themselves as a credible alternative in recent years through their socially progressive rhetoric.

Mass movements like ‘Fridays for Future’ - mainly school student strikes demanding climate action - have placed climate change at the centre of political debate. The Greens have profited from this, because they still have a radical image on the issue. But the capitalist establishment no longer needs to fear the now tamed Greens.

Having thrown overboard the last remnants of opposition to capitalism, the Greens now carry out ‘normal’ everyday politics on behalf of the banks and big business in several state governments. Their draft programme for the coming parliamentary election makes it absolutely clear that they are prepared to implement policies at national level in the interests of the capitalists.

‘Germany. It’s all there’ is the title of their manifesto. And everything is in there too! They call for climate-friendly prosperity for all. They want to give the market economy a social-ecological framework and provide decent jobs and fair wages. They want fairness between the genders, affordable housing and much more - all packaged in the feel-good rhetoric of some corporate diversity and sustainability report. And that is the reality of their programme.

At the centre of their programme stands the “social-ecological transformation” of society. Above all, this is an offer to the ruling class which promises to modernise capitalism and make it more competitive. The system should become carbon neutral and for that it will get €50 billion investment a year.

They simply ignore the reality that serious, urgent intervention into economic production to prevent unsustainable climate change, while at the same time maintaining capitalist interests, is maximising profits, is incompatible.



Students take to the streets of Cologne over climate change. Unlike the Greens, the banner identifies the chief culprit as capitalism PHOTO MARCO VERCH/CC

The Greens hardly dare touch the wealth of the super-rich, who have made record profits during the Covid pandemic. All they ask for is a 1% wealth tax on assets above €2 million.

Their vague social demands therefore appear to be just a fig leaf. For example, they want to replace the current strict benefits system with some “security guarantee”.

Overall, their manifesto is vague and mainly offers openings for a coalition with the CDU/CSU, with which any remaining social demands can be negotiated away. The Greens are throwing sand in the eyes of their voters, who really hope for meaningful social and environmental change, and who will be inevitably disappointed.

‘Practical politics’

You don’t need a crystal ball to predict that; just a look at the Greens’ record in office. Their participation in a coalition under the social democrat Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (1998-2005) is almost forgotten, but together with the SPD the Greens carried out the biggest social and benefit cuts since the reunification of Germany in 1990.

Since then, poverty levels of benefit recipients (‘Hartz IV’), agency jobs and precarious work have been the sad reality for many people in this country.

The Green party, which

partly emerged from the mass anti-war movement of the early 1980s, then became co-responsible for the first foreign military deployment of the German army since Hitler’s Reich, firstly in Kosovo, and then in Afghanistan. Recently, the Greens joint chair called for weapons to be supplied to the Ukraine.

“

The Greens are throwing sand in the eyes of their voters, who really hope for meaningful social and environmental change

produces the highest emissions of climate change gases and pollution.

In the state of Hesse, the Greens sent a huge force of police to clear protesters from the Dannenröder forest who were trying to prevent the building of another motorway.

Nationally, the Greens pose as leading opponents of the far right and call for more transparency and accountability from the state. But recently they voted in the Hesse state parliament to prevent the publication of documents exposing the long-time failure of the security services to prevent murders by the neo-Nazi NSU.

And in Baden-Württemberg the Green first minister, Winfried Kretschmann, continues politics in the interests of the big car companies.

Time and again the Greens have shown that they will break their election promises by adapting themselves to the pressures of capitalism, and then carry out pro-capitalist policies against the interests of workers to the disappointment of their voters.

Halting catastrophic climate change, while creating millions of new sustainable ‘green jobs’ and decent living standards for the majority, requires

removing the capitalist profit system and constructing a democratic socialist system.

The resources and technology currently exists in society to provide a long-term green economy. But achieving such a democratically planned future means taking wealth and power out of the hands of the capitalist establishment. In other words, halting climate change means the struggle for socialist system change - something the Green party is incapable of doing.

● Thanks to Brent Kennedy for the translation



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formerly **Militant**

Royal London Hospital STRIKE ACTION SHOWS THE WAY



JAMES IVENS
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Striking workers at the Royal London Hospital are showing the way forward for the NHS unions.

Privatised catering workers in Whitechapel, east London have had enough. There's too few staff and no respect.

Tight, inflexible rotas mean child-care and college courses become impossible to arrange. Workers no longer get a proper weekend, with days off separated. Bosses imposed this new rostering system with no consultation.

And outsourcer Serco, the employer, deals with problems by bullying the staff. Workers can expect to be punished in the already brutal rota, or face aggressive use of sickness absence policies.

These are workers who prepare and distribute food throughout the hospital. It's one of countless crucial jobs for the health service. And like for so much of the working class, it's put them at risk in the pandemic.

It is the working class in all sectors that has carried society through Covid. In workplaces on the front line of the pandemic short staffing, poverty pay, intolerable workload

and management bullying are everywhere.

"We're not asking for much" said Unite union rep John, rallying pickets on Friday 25 June. "We're not even asking for pay" - although that could be the next fight, with outsourced workers' wages 15% behind directly employed counterparts. "We want proper rosters, an end to bullying, and Serco out!"

Like the government, Serco has offered all its workers in the Barts health trust, which includes Royal London, St Bart's and Whipps Cross hospitals, a derisory 1% pay offer. Unite is consulting all Serco members on whether they

too are prepared to take strike action.

Early morning picket lines have reminded management of the workers' presence, with deafening blasts on vuvuzelas and protest songs on the sound system. The first round of stoppages, Monday 21 to Friday 25 June, was rock solid. More action is planned for Monday 5 to Friday 9 July.

Serco management has tried to intimidate workers by filming picket lines and standing, sneering by their strike rally on Thursday 24 June. Strikers and supporters put them in their place with loud chants of "shame on you!"

The Royal London strike shows once more that when union leaders are willing to lead, workers are willing to fight. NHS union leaders nationally should take a leaf from the catering workers' book.

Protests against Tory ruination of the health service are due on Saturday 3 July. A good start from the union leadership would be building towards national industrial action to win a 15% pay rise across the board.

NHS workers are tired and angry. A serious, fighting programme of action could give us a thousand Royal Londons, and rescue our health service from the Tories.

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

