

DEFEND THE NHS

FIGHT THE TORY PAY INSULT

PREPARE STRIKE ACTION



PHOTO NAOMI BYRON

Complacency, incompetence, cronyism, corruption and downright cruelty. As many as 150,000 deaths.

That's the real Covid record of the Tories and working-class people have paid for it. Amid criminal shortfalls in staff numbers, bed shortages and inadequate PPE - the result of years of privatisation and austerity - NHS and care staff have worked themselves to exhaustion to save lives.

Since last summer, NHS workers have

protested for a 15% pay rise. The Tories' response? After the initial 1% slap in the face they've been forced under pressure to offer 3%. But NHS workers have lost around 20% in the last ten years. For the rest of the public sector the Tories are offering between 1.5% and nothing!

But where is the opposition from the Labour Party? Right-wing Labour leader Keir Starmer has meekly nodded along with the Tories all year. He only thought NHS workers were worth 2%!

But he hasn't shown the same mildness in his party, ruthlessly driving out Jeremy Corbyn and the anti-austerity programme that demanded an end to cuts and privatisation

in the NHS. Workers need our own political voice - we need a new mass party of working-class and young people.

And we need a fightback - to take to the streets and organise in our workplaces. We call for a national demonstration in the autumn for a public sector pay rise, to defend the NHS, and to prepare the ground for national coordinated strike action.

Socialist Party members are campaigning for a vote to reject the 3% offer and vote for strike action in the NHS trade union consultations.

The Tories' Health and Care Bill (see page 2) is presented as being about integration of the NHS and social care (and who doesn't

want that) but in reality it is a plan to accelerate privatisation of the NHS, reduce the little democratic oversight that currently exists, and open the door to breaking up a national service.

It doesn't solve staffing and bed shortages, it doesn't pay decent wages, it doesn't reinstate the millions cut from social care, it doesn't take care homes out of the hands of private profiteers.

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

the Socialist

formerly Militant

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

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

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020 8988 8777 - ask for the editors

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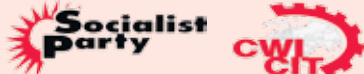
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

NHS

- Kick out the privatisers
- Fight for funding
- Build for strike action



PHOTO: GARETH BROMHALL



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHEWSON

Profit vultures descend on the NHS backlog

MICK GRIFFITHS

WAKEFIELD AND PONTEFRAC T SOCIALIST PARTY

A recent report of new deals between the NHS and private hospitals and private healthcare groups comes as no surprise. It is claimed that the involvement of the private sector in non-urgent NHS procedures will free up NHS capacity. 14 million people could be on NHS waiting lists by autumn 2022, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies. But the shortages have not come from nowhere - but from

decades of cuts under the Tories and New Labour.

Private health companies must have got a taste for government payouts throughout the pandemic. According to the Financial Times, in the early days of the pandemic, government money to the tune of £400 million a month shored up private health providers. The deal paid all their costs, including debt and interest. One company 'grew' its NHS revenues by 50% during 2020.

The Health and Care Bill due to be implemented in April 2022 will end

competitive tendering. This will effectively legalise a private sector monopoly within the NHS.

The government claims that these deals will create around 7,000 extra beds in private hospitals to do non-urgent NHS work. However, the Tories have already inflicted a loss of 17,000 NHS beds!

The private sector is only interested in profit maximisation. Service standards will be reduced as private companies seek to attack health and care workers' pay and conditions. Linked to that is a major threat to end

national pay bargaining, and therefore a massive threat to health workers and our unions.

Accountability and transparency will be out of the window as the new Integrated Care Systems boards become taken over by representatives of big business concerns.

The private sector should be kicked out of the NHS.

The Health and Care Bill needs to be defeated and reversed. It does not address the issue of acute staff shortages. It only offers more of the same and worse!

More cuts to Johnson's phony hospitals pledge

STEVE SCORE

LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY AND SAVE OUR NHS LEICESTERSHIRE

Last year Boris Johnson announced plans to build "40 new hospitals", it soon became clear that new funding was only proposed for new hospital building in six areas. Now it appears that even that funding is threatened with cuts!

The hospital trusts that have been promised funding have drawn up

plans, and initial cost estimates are at around £550 million per hospital. But the government has told them to make new plans for only £400 million each, which would mean big cuts in hospital capacity.

In Leicester, one of those six trusts, the Save Our NHS Leicestershire campaign has raised concerns about the plans which include the closure of the General Hospital, one of the three acute hospitals in the area, as well as St Mary's

Maternity Hospital in Melton Mowbray. In other words, actually fewer not more hospitals! Despite increasing the number of beds planned for the future, under pressure from the campaign, we still believe the proposals are inadequate for future needs.

Even the trust admits its own proposals, as they stand, will require more funding. We have pointed out that hospitals built for the future must be built with enough space to

be ready for future potential pandemics to allow social distancing. The trust has now been forced to recognise this fact.

It is vital that we build a campaign that not only tackles the wider issues in the NHS such as staff shortages, low pay and inadequate day-to-day funding, but also demand government put enough money into new hospital buildings that are really adequate for our future needs.

INDICATIVE
BALLOT INFO:

Opens: 06/08/21
Closes: 17/09/21

Opens: 27/08/21
Closes: 24/09/21

Opens: 30/07/21
Closes: 10/09/21

Opens: 12/08/21
Closes: 16/09/21

Vote to REJECT 3%

Vote 'no' to 3%, 'yes' for action



PHOTO: CHRIS NEWBY

Naomi Byron, Homerton Hospital worker and Unison executive council member (personal capacity), put out a video saying the following:

"I have a message for all Unison members working for the NHS. Please vote in the NHS pay ballot organised by Unison. You can do this by going to nhspay.org

"All you will need is your name and either your Unison membership number or your national insurance number. "I recommend that you vote 'No' to the offer - the insulting 3% pay offer - and for industrial action. That would mean ticking the second question on the ballot.

"If you are not already a Unison member and not a member of any other union, I appeal to you to join today in order to register your opposition to this insulting offer. If you join by 3 September, you can still vote in the ballot."

Rising against a rigged and rotten system - Socialism 2021

In a world facing crisis on every front, discussion on how socialist ideas can change the world is more necessary than ever.

The Institute of Economic Affairs, a pro-capitalist think-tank, recently raised alarm when it observed through a survey that a majority of young people want to live in a socialist society.

How could it be otherwise? Those in their teens and early 20s have spent their conscious life in a world where all they've known is climate catastrophe, economic crashes, war - all met with capitalist ineptitude at best.

The openness to an alternative way of running society is indicated by the overwhelming support among the young people polled for the re-nationalisation of various industries such as energy, water and the railways (72%). The same number also believes that private sector involvement puts the NHS at risk.

An even higher proportion (78%) blame capitalism for Britain's housing crisis and believe that solving it requires large-scale government intervention, through measures such as rent controls and council housing.

Capitalist climate crisis

Three-quarters of those polled agree that climate change is a specifically capitalist problem. And more than seven out of ten agree that capitalism fuels racism

The survey also found that, "there are no detectable differences between the economic attitudes of people in their late teens and people in their early 40s. It is no longer true that people 'grow out' of socialist ideas as they get older."

Workers and older people also face a world dominated by austerity and a struggle against the bosses and their political representatives in the Tories and Starmer's Blairite Labour.

Most of those surveyed believed that a socialist system would promote solidarity, compassion and cooperation.



How do we achieve that socialist change? What is the role of the working class in building a new society? Discussing these pressing questions is why we have organised the Socialism 2021 weekend event.

Socialism 2021 will run from Friday 19 to Sunday 21 November. It will kick off with an online opening session on the Friday evening. Then those who travel to London can attend the in-person workshops while those for whom that isn't possible can attend zoom workshops.

The main rally will run from 4 to 6pm on the Saturday so people can have the chance to travel home after if they wish. The rally will be livestreamed. More workshops will take place on the Sunday - again with the option to attend the in-person ones or those held online.

Because of the pandemic we have not yet been able to finalise all the arrangements - but we can now

confirm that both in-person and zoom options will be available.

This opportunity to meet up with Socialist Party members, trade unionist activists, other socialists, young people, community activists, student organisers, and others to share ideas, experience, to trash out a Marxist and fighting approach to the challenges we face, and to collectively learn from history and theory will be a major shot in the arm for all who attend.

Those who have already bought tickets will not be required to pay more when we confirm the details - unless it's a supplement to cover accommodation. But for those who book later, there may have to be an increase in ticket prices to meet the venue hire costs.

Book now!

- Tickets and info: socialism2021.net

NHS model motion

Can you assist in getting this motion passed in your trade union branch or organisation?

This (organisation) believes that the Tories' pay awards for NHS workers, teachers and the rest of the public sector are an insult and should be opposed.

- A million health workers have been told that they are only worth a 3% pay rise.
- A million teachers, hundreds of thousands of civil servants and many transport workers face a pay freeze. Council and Higher Education workers have been told 1.5% and Further Education staff 1%.
- These insults don't include all the care and NHS

workers employed in the private sector. They should be brought back in-house

We also oppose the Tories' Health and Care Bill which seeks to extend privatisation and threatens to break up the NHS.

This (organisation) instructs our union's (NEC/EC/SGE/NISC) to:

1. Oppose the pay offers and prepare industrial action ballots
2. Call on the TUC and public sector unions to come together to prepare to fight the pay freeze/pay cap. This should include:
 - The leaders of the public sector unions urgently meeting to plan a coordinated fight.
 - The TUC calling a meeting of its Public Services Liaison Group to name the date for a national demonstration to fight for pay justice, to defend the NHS, and help prepare for coordinated strike action across the public sector.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

Our demands include...

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.

- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join
- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206** to find out more today!

Help fund the fightback!

DONATE TODAY

socialistparty.org.uk/donate



- The Socialist is continuing its fortnightly summer schedule so that the editorial staff can take a well-earned break. The next issue will be published on 26 August. For updates see socialistparty.org.uk

Tory cuts worsened crime and Johnson ‘blitz’ won’t help

AMY SAGE
PROBATION WORKER

Boris Johnson’s new ‘Beating Crime Plan’ is nothing more than a pitiful attempt to pander to Tory voters.

Among the measures proposed:

- Expand police ‘stop and search’ powers

- Tags to monitor alcohol use of those convicted of ‘alcohol-fuelled crime’

- Make unpaid work more visible

These measures will exacerbate the already appalling discriminatory use of ‘stop and search’ - young black men in London are 19 times more likely to be stopped than their white counterparts.

I work with people who have been sentenced to unpaid work. They do not need to be more ‘visible’ and shamed into not re-offending. We do not, in the words of Tory home secretary Priti Patel, need to “make yobs clean the streets”.

Instead, they need to be given real opportunities to change their lives for the better and reintegrate back into society through fully funded

education and training programmes, well-paid work, effective mental health support and access to appropriate drug rehabilitation programmes - all have been cut under the Tories.

Community sentences, such as unpaid work, are more effective at reducing reoffending than even relatively short prison sentences. But this is not what Johnson is attempting to do with his ‘crime blitz’.

Sentences tripled

Johnson is pushing ahead with plans to spend £4 billion to construct new prisons. Under this government, the number of people serving long prison sentences has almost tripled, while community sentences have fallen by a third.

Johnson isn’t doing this because he wants to reduce crime, or because he cares about communities suffering from high levels of crime. If he did, he would fully fund public services to redirect people away from the criminal justice system.

Rather, Johnson’s ‘tough on crime’ approach is an attempt to claw back



Tories think that making unpaid work done by those on probation more visible will reduce crime PHOTO: WEST MIDLANDS POLICE/CC

votes. A recent opinion poll revealed that 60% of voters think the government handles the issue of crime badly.

Andy Cooke, former Merseyside Chief Constable, said: “Increased opportunity and reduced poverty, that’s

the best way to reduce crime.”

The Police Federation has stated that Johnson’s crime policy is “unworkable” and it has declared it has “no confidence” in Priti Patel because of the latest pay freeze.

Alongside ending the cuts to our services and fighting for decent,

secure jobs, the Socialist Party believes that the rotten system of capitalism must be removed. Capitalism produces misery, destitution and desperation, forcing people into a situation where, for some, crime seems the only option.

● Big-pharma vaccine price hike

Big-pharma bosses can’t be trusted. After many firms taking public money for vaccine development or promising to take “marginal” profits, they are now raising prices. Pfizer have raised vaccine prices by over 25%, and Moderna by more than 10% for their latest EU supply contracts.

The majority of the world’s population is still yet to receive a first dose, those who live in the poorest countries are the least likely to receive a vaccine. Vaccination for profit does not work. The big-pharmaceuticals, vaccine manufacturing and supply must be brought into democratic public ownership as part of an internationally planned socialist vaccination programme to meet the needs of all.

● Bankers’ bonanza!

The Covid cap on bank shareholder pay-outs has been lifted. Shareholders at Barclays, Lloyds and NatWest are set to benefit from £22 billion in dividends over the next two years.

While the rest of us suffer, it’s been a good few months for the banks. HSBC has seen its profits more than double to £7.8 billion in the first half of this year. This is the same bank that is midway through a ‘restructuring programme’ to axe 35,000 jobs.

To congratulate themselves for all of this ‘success’ the banks are busy stashing cash for bonus pay-outs. Barclays has just increased its bonus pool from £749 million per year to £1.1 billion. Makes you want to grow up and become a banker!

Thanks to the miners - an example of workers’ struggle and solidarity



The red flag flies over Tower Colliery in South Wales PHOTO: MARIAM KAMISH

MARIAM KAMISH
CAERPHILLY SOCIALIST PARTY

“Thanks to Margaret Thatcher, who closed so many coal mines across the country, we had a big early start and we’re now moving rapidly away from coal altogether”. These are the words of the prime minister talking about the capitalist-fuelled climate crisis.

Hearing Boris Johnson’s jeers about Thatcher’s pit closures, we should recall what he was up to, while miners were fighting for their communities in 1984-85.

Johnson was a first year at Oxford University when the miners’ strike began. At a time when working-class young people his age were being radicalised by the heroic battles of the miners and their families, Johnson was dreaming of joining Oxford’s elite Bullingdon Club, a byword for upper-class arrogance and privilege.

That hot summer, young miners were on the picket lines - arrested and chucked into police vans for defending their jobs. They were chased by the police at Orgreave - spending a night in the cells after actions like the occupation of the cranes at Port Talbot Steel Works.

Inspired by the strike, many other working-class young people were stopping on their way to work to join miners’ picket lines, attending demos, and helping to raise a million pounds every week on the streets for the strike.

Miners had that support because they were great class fighters, and

not only in their own battles. They had long been prepared to fight with courage, flair and determination alongside any section of workers who asked for solidarity. And they always encouraged the youth, taking countless young people along on coaches to demos.

When my own pit was fighting for survival in the early 90s, we produced a t-shirt with a list of our 58 struggles.

Among these were occupying and saving Aberdare Hospital, alongside NHS workers; the rescue of Rhydlafor Hospital; and a number of solidarity strikes, later outlawed by Thatcher.

In the autumn of 1984, miners’ families were living on food parcels, losing their tellies and in some cases, their homes because they couldn’t keep up the payments. They fought on.

Thatcher’s victory hung in the balance. But the crucial factor in the strike’s ultimate defeat was the treacherous, cowardly role of the trade union and Labour Party leaders, who consciously sabotaged the possibility of miners’ victory.

Thatcher closed the pits to break the power of the NUM, but the example of struggle and solidarity set by miners and their families will stand forever as a beacon for socialists.

**A Civil War Without Guns:
The Lessons of the 1984-85 Miners’ strike**

£9 including P&P

Buy now, visit:

leftbooks.co.uk



NSSN to lobby TUC

This year the Trades Union Congress (TUC) conference meets at a crucial time. Millions of workers face further attacks looming in the autumn – the end of furlough, a £20 per week cut in Universal Credit, and now an energy price hike. The bosses are unleashing an offensive to make us pay for the crisis. Already workers at British Gas, Go North West buses, Goodlord, and many others have taken strike action against the bosses’ ‘fire-and-rehire’, with many winning important victories.

Health workers have spearheaded a grassroots campaign to reject the insulting NHS pay offer, and other public sector workers face a pay freeze.

There is no organisation better placed than the TUC to coordinate the struggles of these workers. That’s

why Socialist Party and National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) activists are campaigning for the TUC, and its Public Services Liaison Group to convene a meeting of the public sector unions and to name a date for a national demonstration to fight for pay justice and help to prepare for coordinated public sector strike action.

The NSSN meets for a virtual rally on the eve of the online TUC conference on Sunday 12 September. The rally will bring together union reps from these ongoing disputes, fighting trade union leaders, workers, young people, and other trade union activists to discuss a strategy to take on the Tories and the bosses. But also to put pressure on, or give confidence to, TUC delegates to take the steps needed to coordinate workers’ action.

nationalshopstewardsnetwork
www.shopstewards.net

NSSN TUC Rally 2021
Sunday 12th September 12 noon

**United action against the Tories on public sector pay!
Fight for workplace safety! Defend jobs, pay and conditions!
Stop yet more privatisation of the NHS!**

Confirmed speakers so far:

SARAH WOOLLEY, BFAWU General Secretary

JOE SIMPSON, POA Deputy General Secretary

This is an open forum to have your say

Zoom details: Meeting ID: 861 1677 4093 Passcode: NSSN2021

The NSSN is supported by the following national trade unions



Tory government nationalises Sheffield steel plant

GARY DRABBLE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tory government has taken the decision to nationalise Sheffield Forgemasters by paying an initial £2.6 million to buy up all the shares and promising investment of £400 million over the next decade.

Forgemasters isn’t a steel producer, but uses steel to manufacture large scale castings and forgings critical to the manufacture of nuclear submarines and other parts needed in the defence industry. Indeed, Forgemasters boasts that it is capable of producing the largest and most technically challenging cast and forged components in the world.

The response of some trade union officials has been gushing. Steve Turner of Unite said: “It brings to an end years of instability for this historic 215-year-old company, but is also a sign that government is maybe finally waking up to a crisis of its own making”.

Of course, we welcome this nationalisation that protects the jobs of 800 workers at the site and others in associated industries, but we also point



The Forgemasters plant in Sheffield CHRIS/GEODGRAPH/CC

out that this measure is being taken in the interests of the boss class.

For years Forgemasters has teetered on the brink, being subject to takeovers and government bailouts. Currently, the company has a £30 million guarantee from defence giants Babcocks, Rolls Royce and BAE because it is so vital to their supply line for the defence industry.

The Tory government is not interested in saving workers’ jobs. Time

Fight energy price hike



JOHN MERRELL
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

The eleven million households on default energy tariffs will face a £139 price hike on their bills from October, £153 for the four million pre-payment meters. Two million energy customers are already behind on their bills, and six million fear being so.

Ofgem, the energy regulator, has given the green light for gas and electricity suppliers to increase their prices citing a rise in wholesale costs. After a worldwide economic shutdown in response to Covid-19, wholesale fuel prices fell. Now, as economies open up, they are rising again.

The energy price cap introduced in 2018 was supposed to stop energy companies ripping customers off. But the cap is now set at its highest ever level! One of Britain’s largest energy companies, British Gas has doubled its profits in the first half of this year, the same period in which they have attacked their workers, using ‘fire-and-rehire’. The price rise is simply profiteering at the public’s expense.

Private companies, like previously publicly owned British Gas, cannot be left to run the industry. The energy companies must be nationalised under democratic workers’ control and management, with compensation only to those proven to need it. Only then can energy prices and

production be decided in the interests of the working class and environment rather than greedy bosses.

Meanwhile, the Tory government, representing the interests of the bosses, has announced plans for a carbon reduction scheme to push gas bills up further to try to incentivise heat pump installation.

The TUC conference convenes next month when furlough and the Universal Credit £20 per week uplift end, and many public sector workers face a ‘pay freeze’ in a period of rising inflation. The trade union leaders must reverse the Tory message of ‘make the workers pay’. Instead, put people before profits by adopting a fighting socialist programme to make the bosses pay!

disruption to its raw materials, trade and markets.

Steve Turner is wrong to describe this as “waking up to the crisis”. It is a state capitalist response to the need to preserve the defence industry.

In the 1970s, the Tory government of Ted Heath nationalised Rolls Royce, again to protect British capitalism’s strategic interests, so it’s not a new action.

The workers’ movement should, of course, be arguing that if jobs can be saved by government takeover at Forgemasters, the government

should also be nationalising transport, construction, energy, financial institutions and other large companies that directly impact on ordinary people.

It is clear how wary the government is of people making this link - it claims that the company has been nationalised by the Ministry of Defence, as though there is some distinction between the MoD and the rest of the state!

While this is nationalisation, it is a far cry from the nationalisation that the Socialist Party calls for. The same management structure from the

private sector is to remain in place. We demand nationalisation with workers’ control and management of the industry, where decisions about what and how products are produced are determined by workers and communities, with an end to business secrets and the opening of the books - not just of individual bankrupt capitalists but of whole branches of industry. Compensation should only be paid to shareholders on the basis of proven need.

An example was shown by the Lucas Aerospace workers in the 1970s, who democratically discussed and put forward a plan for converting their production lines to the manufacture of electric wheelchairs and kidney machines (see ‘The Lucas Plan’ at socialistparty.org.uk).

Nationalisation of the whole steel industry, under workers’ control, would allow diversification of the sector away from arms to socially useful production, while maintaining workers’ jobs, raising pay and expanding the number of jobs, providing a glimpse of what could be achieved with democratic socialist planning.

RMT strike solid on East Midlands rail



Nottingham picket line GARY FREEMAN

GERAINT THOMAS

NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

On Sundays throughout August and September, the RMT union is taking two coordinated strikes on East Midlands Railway. Senior conductors, striking over attempts to implement a two-tier workforce, managed to comfortably win their rebalot. They were also joined by the East Midlands intercity lines' train managers (guards), who are striking over staffing and passenger safety.

East Midlands Railway has imposed new working arrangements on the multi-unit, 12-carriage Class 360 Trains which means that although two trains are joined together, there will only be one guard who will not have access to the other train.

We understand that there have been multiple instances on the intercity lines where incidences happened on the part of the train they

couldn't reach. These ranged from toilets being blocked to a mugging taking place.

Operating company owner Abellio has happily profited from government support during the pandemic to the tune of £4.4 million. However, it is now preparing systematic imposed attacks on its workforce.

They have been stonewalling the union in refusing to negotiate. It was even remarked at the Nottingham picket line that a manager had travelled to Kettering to attempt to intimidate the (new) depot members there, but was rebuffed by the members.

The strike was solid with managers being conscripted to cover the work. However, as assistant general secretary Steve Hedley noted on the picket line, this is a prelude to more general attacks across the rail industry in the coming months on pay, staffing and pensions.

Night tube strike suspended to allow talks - scrap compulsory duties!

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN RMT

Strikes by drivers on London Underground (LU), that were due to take place between 3-6 August, were suspended to allow more talks on resolving the dispute at conciliation service Acas.

In 2016, London Underground, as part of pay talks, wanted to bring in the night tube, incorporating it into rosters for a premium payment. RMT has a policy of a 'clean' wage structure and a proper work/life balance, and alongside drivers' union Aslef went on strike to protect both. We won, and a separate TO23 grade (night tube train operator) was set up which states that no full-time train operator will work night tube duties, to protect our work/life balance and also to provide a proven promotional pathway for station staff to progress into the trains grade.

Roll on five years and London Underground opened talks to consolidate night tube into the TO21 Grade (full-time train operator) destroying our work/life balance and steam-rolling through our terms and conditions. Unfortunately, Aslef has accepted this, but the 2016 agreement was made with all unions and the RMT must defend the agreement made. Removing the TO23 grade threatens to force full-time drivers to work more nights and weekends, more fragmented rosters, removes the pathway for promotion and raises the possibility of up to 200 jobs lost.

After LU management implemented night tube consolidation, our members were rightly outraged and we were left with no option but to ballot. Despite the anti-trade union laws, we successfully beat the thresholds and armed with a mandate for strike action, we called four days of

strike action in August over two pay packets.

Action between 24-27 August remains on and talks are still ongoing at Acas, where RMT negotiators are pushing LU to recognise our 2016 agreement, guarantee that there will be no job losses, and find a way to make night tube duties a choice and not compulsory for drivers.

London Underground has spent more time putting out misleading propaganda than they have talking with RMT. That's why RMT has no option but to strike. LUL claims, in a press release, that contrary to their position up to now, no jobs will be lost and no one is forced to work night tube. If they put that in writing to RMT then it would be reasonable to suspend strike action to talk about detail. But in the absence of any such guarantees, the strikes must go ahead.



You need a union when the time comes to fight. Join one today!



SEAMUS MAC AN GHABHAIN

NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

I recently left my job for another, and my previous employer wanted me to pay back full training costs. A cost they wanted me to pay back before I got my month's wages, and higher than what I would get anyway.

So I phoned my union and they've helped me out so much.

I told my rep that they wanted me to work overtime (70 hours extra a week), pay for training I haven't even gained, and training that was not only statutory, but also mandatory. The rep who backed me up was calm and polite, and when I was talking off track he got me back to the point.

So I raised a grievance and had a meeting. I was so nervous that I was shaking. The rep got me to relax and told me to remember that we're not letting them get away with this without a fight. And we didn't.

Long story short, my cost decreased and every time my rep spoke

or asked a question, the manager and HR couldn't give him a straight answer or give a proper reply. He had them shaking in their boots, but they had to stick with their objective, ie to get me to pay back as much as I can. So the terms and conditions after the grievance for paying back my training was better but still absolutely awful. So my rep said that we have a right to appeal and we could get more out of this. So I happily agreed.

At the end of the meeting my supervisor had to come to me and ask me to leave my work for the foreseeable future (being paid of course) because my managers didn't have the balls to tell me themselves.

I phoned my rep and we both laughed.

Join a trade union or you will wish you had one behind you when it's too late. Unions do so much more than offer car insurance and other benefits. When you tell your union what to do when the time comes they'll fight for it. Join a union!

Ballot majority essential to continue DVLA strike action

DAVE WARREN

SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY AND FORMER DVLA WORKER

The industrial action over workplace safety at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has now entered its fifth month. The PCS union has operated a strategy based on targeted action, bringing out groups of workers at different times and paying them strike pay of £40 a day. Currently, members in the Drivers Medical Group are on strike for the whole of August.

Having members on selective strike for a month represents a certain escalation of the action. However, with an intransigent government looking over its shoulder, questions remain about whether targeted action will be enough to force DVLA management back to the negotiating table.

DVLA made an offer back in May which the union would have recommended to members. But ministers vetoed it in a clear political decision to take on the union rather than reach a settlement.

In these circumstances, Broad Left Network members (which includes

the Socialist Party) in PCS advocated a further escalation to involve all members in strike action. It was the threat of such action that led to the offer in May, but the idea was never actioned. Faced with continued government and management intransigence targeted action must be linked to a move to an all-out strike if members demands are not met.

DVLA have been steadily increasing the number of workers required to attend the workplace over the summer, paying no heed to the union's demand for the option to work from home given the risk of a further mass Covid outbreak. To date, there have been around 650 Covid cases at DVLA with one fatality.

Under the Tory anti-union legislation, there must be a new ballot to renew the strike mandate after six months and this is due in September. There will also be a consultative ballot from 11 August to build for the statutory ballot. It is essential that there is a big majority for continuing the action.

● Please send messages of support to responseteam@pcs.org.uk and donations to Fighting Fund Levy, ref DVLA, sort code 60-83-01, account number 20331490.



The DVLA in Swansea ZWEIFEL/CC

Unions protest at exploitative Leicester company Food Attraction



HEATHER RAWLING

LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Leicester is in danger of being named the sweatshop capital of the UK. BooHoo hit the headlines last year for using Leicester suppliers that paid their workers around £4 an hour, way below the current £8.91 minimum wage.

On 5 August, the BFAWU union exposed another company for extreme exploitation of its workforce. Food Attraction Ltd, it is alleged, has a bullying culture where workers are

given contracts for only four hours' work a day, but often forced to work 60 hours a week without overtime pay. They worked throughout the pandemic, classed as key workers, but received only minimum statutory sick pay. One worker was sacked by email because he spoke out against the conditions.

The factory is on an industrial estate, only a stone's throw away from SPS Technologies whose workers struck earlier this year against 'fire and rehire'. The BFAWU has members inside the factory but the company is

refusing to recognise the union. But they do seem rattled. When protesters arrived at the factory, company signs had been taken down and there were hardly any workers inside the factory.

There was no sign of the company directors' cars inside the car park. The BFAWU intends to protest outside companies that are supplied by Food Attraction. These include Sainsbury's, Coop and UK airports with Virgin Atlantic flights to India.

We brought solidarity messages from the Socialist Party and the National Shop Stewards Network.

Over 3,000 votes for fighting socialist programme in CWU

Gary Clark, a candidate for the Communication Workers' Union's (CWU) national executive and Socialist Party members, received 3,382 votes. Gary, who is branch secretary of Scotland No 2 branch says:

"I have never been prouder in my life with the election campaign. I have not been elected to the executive but put forward a clear socialist programme which has got an echo from thousands of CWU postal members all over the country. We

put forward a strategy to advance the idea of a fighting programme and improve the conditions of postal workers. So I'm asking you all, if you agreed with what I have been putting forward, now is the time to get more involved in the CWU and support CWU Forward, the new left group in the union. And if you believe in my socialist message then take the next step and join me in the Socialist Party. Forward to socialism and solidarity to you all."

Bexley bin workers still out



LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Bexley bin workers are taking their fifth week of indefinite strike action, forcing the current employer Serco, and future bosses Countrystyle, who take over in October, to the table. As we go to press, talks are continuing with the workers' union Unite.

August 1991 - The aborted military coup in the ‘Soviet Union’

How the defeated putsch opened the floodgates to capitalist restoration

30 years ago, an ill-fated military coup against Mikhail Gorbachev, head of what was still known as the Soviet Union (USSR), was launched. By the end of 1991, the USSR no longer existed and its state-owned, bureaucratically planned economy was on the road of capitalism through a massive privatisation programme. **Clare Doyle**, who was working for the CWI in Russia during this turbulent period, explains the historical significance of this event.

From early morning on 19 August 1991, as was the tradition during times of trouble, TV channels across all the USSR's six time zones, carried nothing but classical music and endless performances of the Swan Lake ballet.

At 5pm the ‘gang of eight’ - top military and civilian leaders - held a press conference chaired by a visibly shaking vice-president Gennady Yanayev.

He explained that Gorbachev was ill and they had to maintain order. They were pre-empting the signing of a ‘New Union Agreement’ which would decentralise power to the 15 republics of the USSR. They would not be halting the move towards full-scale privatisation, they maintained, but simply slowing it down.

The very sight of troops on the streets, and threats to the fragile elements of democracy that had grown up in the late 1980s under Mikhail Gorbachev angered the mass of the population.

Strikes broke out across the country. Barricades were thrown up to block the path of tanks and soldiers in Moscow, where three were killed, and in Leningrad. On 21 August a huge crowd filled Winter Palace Square, where the mayor, Anatoly Sobchak, declared the local military command was already on the side of ‘democracy’.

In Moscow, the then popular politician, Boris Yeltsin, famously stood on a tank outside Russia's White House among workers, soldiers and police who had refused to support the old guard's attempted coup. He was the elected head of the newly established parliament in Russia - the biggest and most populous republic in the Soviet Union.

Yeltsin dispatched armed men by plane to Crimea to rescue Gorbachev, who had been put under house arrest in his holiday home with all communications cut off under orders from the coup leaders. The head of government in the USSR returned to Moscow - a man who knew his days in office were numbered.

Within the space of three days, the coup attempt was over. The leaders were arrested apart from Interior Minister Boris Pugo, who had already committed suicide! The ruling Communist Party was banned and the door was thrown open for the speeding up of the re-establishment of capitalism in Russia and across all the republics of the USSR.

By 25 December 1991, Gorbachev was announcing his resignation and the dissolution of the ‘Soviet Union’. He was accepting the reality that most republics had already declared independence - the Baltic States before the coup and the rest in quick succession

in the following four months.

The defeat of the 1991 August coup raised the hopes of working people after Gorbachev's experiments with Glasnost (‘Opening-up’) and Perestroika (‘Restructuring’) had failed to breathe new life into the vast bureaucratically run economy.

By the end of the 1980s workers and their families were suffering severe hardship. Queues of people with ration tokens stood for hours outside ‘supermarkets’ whose shelves were all but empty. A 20 million-strong bureaucracy, mostly card-carrying members of the ruling ‘Communist’ Party, continued to live in luxury.

Gorbachev was General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 until 1991. From 1988 he was also at the head of the USSR - the ‘Union of Soviet Socialist Republics’.

Stalinism

This body had not been run democratically by elected Soviets or workers’ councils since the mid-1920s when Josef Stalin and the nascent ruling bureaucracy carried through a political counter-revolution after the death of the Communist Party's leader, Vladimir Lenin, in 1924.

The failure of subsequent revolutions in developed industrialised countries and later the active sabotage by Stalin and the ruling bureaucracy clique of attempts in France, Spain and elsewhere to carry them through, meant the rapid degeneration of the workers’ state in the ‘Soviet Union’.

Stalin held onto power through the suppression of democratic control and, increasingly, a brutal reign of terror - forced collectivisation of agriculture, the extermination of all opposition through purge trials of leading Bolsheviks and others, gulags (concentration camps), and the assassination in Mexico of Leon Trotsky - the co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 socialist revolution, who politically led the Marxist opposition to Stalinism.

What had developed in the Soviet Union was a one-party dictatorship; it bore no resemblance to socialism or communism, but officially ruled in the name of the working class.

The impressive economic growth figures achieved in the USSR - 250% increase in industrial production between 1929 and 1935 - were due entirely to the planning of a state-owned economy, however bureaucratically run, and by the enormous sacrifices imposed on the working class. The 20 million-strong bureaucracy continued to live off the backs of the working class in considerable luxury.

As Leon Trotsky argued in his

marvellous book ‘Revolution Betrayed’ (1936), without the necessary oxygen of democratic workers’ control and management, the vast planned economy would begin to slow down as it became more complex.

An ‘either/or’ situation would be starkly posed. Trotsky wrote of “two opposite tendencies ... growing up”. The log-jam could be broken in one of two ways. Either the working class would move to reclaim control and management in society by carrying through a political revolution against Stalin and his clique.

Alternatively, elements within the bureaucratic elite would move to carry through a social counter-revolution - establishing capitalism beginning with taking the banks and major industries into their own hands, possibly using co-operatives as a “transitional form of property” to provide initial cover for stealing the state owned assets.

‘Either/or’

In ‘The Rise of Militant’, Peter Taaffe - political secretary of the Socialist Party - cites a speech by Terry Fields, the late Labour MP and supporter of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist), who addressed a meeting of 600 workers from across Russia, including many striking coal-miners, in Novokuznetsk in the spring of 1990.

Terry was warmly received by the conference as he expressed the widespread solidarity of the international working class. He turned to the question of the market, with the aim of dispelling illusions that capitalism for them would be like that in Britain, Sweden or the US.

Terry explained it would be more



Bemused soldiers block access to the Kremlin and Red Square on 19 August 1991. Within days, the attempted coup collapsed PHOTO TOVE KNUITSEN/CC



Boris Yeltsin (centre) ushered in a brutal ‘gangster capitalism’ PHOTO ITAR/TASS/CC

like that in Latin America bringing mass unemployment, hyperinflation and dictatorship. Then he was interrupted by a worker saying, “We’ve had enough!” Many miners in the new independent union at that time had the idea that selling their coal on the world market would be more profitable for them than providing the party bosses in Moscow with a good life.

Many compared their dire straits with that of workers in an apparently still booming Europe. They compared the indecisive Gorbachev with the ‘Iron Lady’ Thatcher, without knowing what she was inflicting on the working class in Britain.

Thatcher had defeated Britain's miners using massed forces of the state against their year-long strike

failure of General Jaruzelski's 1981 Stalinist coup.

Turning point

In the ‘Soviet Union’ of 1990, a few hard-line Stalinists had been arguing for a return to the military-police methods of the past. A certain Colonel Alksnis advocated a ‘Committee of National Salvation’ to replace Gorbachev but also block the path of Boris Yeltsin. But those already well in the ascendancy were the proponents of the ‘transition to the market’.

The Friedmanites (disciples of American right-wing ‘monetarist’ Milton Friedman) around Yegor Gaidar, Anatoly Chubais and Grigory Yavlinsky, who advocated capitalist ‘shock therapy’, were understandably not popular.

But the hopes of many were now invested in the Secretary of the Moscow Communist Party, Boris Yeltsin. He broke the mould, riding on public transport rather than in the limousines of the party bureaucracy, and campaigning in support of the abolition of ‘article 6’ of the USSR constitution that allowed only one party to operate.

Thousands packed into meeting halls to hear him speak and thousands more would listen on loudspeakers in overflow gatherings outside.

By summer 1991, cooperatives had long been breaking into the monopoly of state enterprises. Groups of independent trade unionists were discussing how shares in industry could be ‘held fairly’.

Commercial banks and joint ventures were tolerated by the regime of Gorbachev and his prime minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov. But the days of

Gorbachev and the Soviet ‘Communist Party’ were numbered.

Meaning of the coup

The idea that the eight party and army veterans who announced an ‘emergency situation’ in August 1991 did so in order to prevent capitalist counter-revolution in the ‘USSR’ is totally mistaken.

They admitted as much when they said they only wanted a more managed capitalist restoration, perhaps along the lines that the Chinese ‘Communist Party’ leadership would later follow, creating a state capitalist economy.

However, a few members of the leadership of the CWI who parted company with the majority in the course of 1991, did not recognise this.

Those members who lived in Russia had made perfectly clear their opposition to capitalist restoration and to its leading proponents such as Boris Yeltsin. We had been on the barricades in Moscow and in what was known as Leningrad (now St Petersburg).

We had witnessed workers overturning buses to block the way of the tanks in Moscow, the fraternisation of soldiers, the building of barricades in Leningrad and the massing of thousands in Winter Palace Square and at the White House in Moscow.

The approach of the CWI socialists at the time was ‘Down with the coup!’ ‘No to the capitalist market,’ ‘Yes to workers’ democracy and genuine socialism!’

We warned of the dangers that, as already seen in central and eastern Europe, pro-capitalist elements would try to exploit workers’ anger and demands in order to open the way to capitalist restoration.

Eyewitness reports were carried in Militant and other publications, and we maintained our warnings of what capitalism would mean. We also pointed to the inevitable re-eruption of national conflicts, as very soon witnessed in Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine, the Caucasus.

The aftermath

Within three years of the attempted coup of 1991, the warnings of the CWI, voiced by Terry Fields in Novokuznetsk, had proved correct.

As the commanding heights of the economy, including the major banks, were marauded by former party bureaucrats now transformed into gangster-capitalists, unemployment rocketed. Inflation reached 2,400% in 1992-93 and, in autumn 1993, Boris Yeltsin was sending tanks against the White House to bombard his own parliament.

After the bloody weeks’ long battles that followed that attack in Moscow, at least 147 people, including members of the armed forces, were dead. Anger



Within three years of the 1991 coup... the commanding heights of the economy, including the major banks, were marauded by former party bureaucrats now transformed into gangster-capitalists

and shock at these dramatic events were expressed at a public meeting of over 100 people in St Petersburg with Tony Saunois, Secretary of the CWI, speaking.

Tony pointed to the rapid collapse in the economy that was taking place, the dramatic fall in life expectancy and the rise in general poverty. These were what had followed the 1991 ‘August Putsch’, not a rosy future of democracy and plenty for all.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, despite it having become a grotesque caricature of socialism, was accompanied by triumphalism on the part of capitalist representatives arguing that there was now no alternative to their system.

It had a profound effect on the workers’ movement as the right-wing leaders of the unions and the social democratic and ‘communist’ parties abandoned any talk of socialist alternatives, in some cases dissolving themselves.

There was a sharp decline in the idea that socialism was a realistic goal. In the 1990s, demands for nationalisation or even state intervention on behalf of workers fell out of favour. However, the ideas of struggle and democratic socialism, as tenaciously fought for by the Socialist Party and the CWI, have been rekindled, especially by the crisis of capitalism of 2008-09 and today.

Perspectives

Today's autocratic ruler of Russia, Vladimir Putin, who first came to power in 2000, is a direct political descendent of the latter-day dictator, Boris Yeltsin. Last year Putin manipulated a change in the constitution to be able to remain in power almost indefinitely.

He and the handful of super-rich oligarchs around him have too much to lose if they are forced out. Putin's vicious treatment of bourgeois opposition politician, Alexei Navalny, brought an explosion of anger, especially of young people, in towns and cities across Russia in January of this year.

This September will see a new, rigged parliamentary election and nothing resolved for the long-suffering people of Russia. A struggle for basic democratic rights - freedom of speech, assembly, organisation and protest - must be engaged. Truly democratic trade unions are vital for renewing workers’ struggles - free from interference by the state or by the oligarch owner-thieves.

The re-birth, after generations, of a genuinely socialist mass workers’ party in Russia, and in all the former republics of the USSR, must be fought for. Only then, through struggle against capitalism and all the misery brought with it, can the prospect of a new confederation of genuinely socialist republics open up.



Save Newham's theatres from Labour council cuts!

Join Equity's protest on Saturday 28 August



Stratford Circus ANDY ROBERTS

JAMES IVENS

SECRETARY, EQUITY NORTH AND EAST LONDON
GENERAL BRANCH

Big cuts to arts jobs and community cultural provision are threatening Stratford, east London. Performing arts union Equity is fighting the Labour council's attacks.

Stratford Circus arts centre is owned by the borough. For years, it ran professional, community and youth arts - a vibrant cultural hub in a working-class community.

But under cover of the pandemic lockdown, the council issued legal threats to the arts centre, forcing it out of the venue - and later out of business. Labour mayor of Newham Rokhsana Fiaz declared the closed-down arts centre would become one of her new "Youth Zones."

Youth services are badly needed in Newham - but there was already youth arts provision in the Circus. By cutting professional job opportunities, the council is also selling out the future careers of young people who use the service.

Stratford Circus arts centre, moreover, had built a prestigious national reputation. It received £300,000 a year from Arts Council England.

Newham Council's decision has lost the borough this national public funding, which represented about a third of the arts centre's budget. It is offering only £200,000 to run the venue as a youth-only service.

That £700,000 gap saves the council nothing. But it represents a big loss of arts jobs and local cultural provision.

The council made the Circus's resident groups homeless after no meaningful consultation with them - and no contact whatsoever with the unions.

In fact, the council ignored three emails from the professional learning-disabled theatre company Blue Sky Actors. After Equity finally got

talks, the council dismissed our demands and reneged on a second round.

Meanwhile, buried in budget documents from February was a promise to cut the council's entire £256,000-a-year grant to the next-door venue! Theatre Royal Stratford East was made famous by the great socialist theatre-maker Joan Littlewood. Today it is a major platform for black artists and alternative voices.

Presumably this funding cut - due from 2023-24 - is where the council will 'find' the £200,000 it is 'offering' to fund a youth centre at Stratford Circus. So it's paying for the destruction of arts jobs at one venue but cutting the funding for arts jobs at another!

Stratford East is now the interim management at the Stratford Circus youth arts service - asked to do more with less.

But Newham Council has actually increased its usable reserves during the pandemic - to a whopping £616 million. Its balance sheet exceeds £1 billion.

Equity is demanding that the council commit to restoring full-spectrum professional arts alongside the youth service, and use its reserves to guarantee full funding for both venues. The council should then build a campaign to win the money back from Westminster.

We also demand permanent, professional homes for all the displaced groups. Further, the council should convene a conference of the local unions and residents to set the agenda for management and programming at the venues.

● *Protest: Saturday 28 August at 1pm in Theatre Square, Stratford, London E15 1BN*

● *Sign and share the petition:*

change.org/p/save-stratford-theatres
● *Messages of support and further info: north-east-london-general@equitybranches.org.uk*

London Pride cancelled

Pandemic shows protest Pride is necessary

MARK BEST

WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The organisers of London's Pride event, postponed from July to September, have announced it will be cancelled this year, citing concerns over the ongoing pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the response of the Tory government has had a massive impact on LGBTQ+ people. And the Tories are trying to whip up a 'culture war' to divide workers against each other to deflect anger away from themselves. The response to this situation is clear - not postponing it again but building a fighting political Pride protest movement now.

Socialist Party members took part in recent protests including Reclaim Pride initiated by Peter Tatchell. At these we have found an appetite to

fight and organise, and openness to a socialist alternative to capitalism. These ideas go against the material interests of the corporate sponsors of many official Pride events.

The Socialist Party has developed an LGBTQ+ workers' charter, a programme to fight against attacks on our rights, jobs and services (see 'Build a mass movement for LGBTQ+ liberation and socialism' at socialistparty.org.uk). In it, among other demands, we call for a mass council house building programme to deal with the situation where many of us are trapped in unsafe or unsupportive living conditions.

We call for the resources and legal changes necessary to realise the right of trans people to self-identify, including non-binary identities. And ending and reversing austerity for

the jobs and services that we need. This includes protecting existing LGBTQ+ venues and providing funding to develop additional venues.

All of these issues and demands are linked to the need for another way of running society, a socialist society where we can democratically discuss and plan what services and resources we all need instead of deciding on the basis of the profits of a few at the top.

We need an organised democratic movement to fight for LGBTQ+ rights and for the resources and services that we need. The Socialist Party seeks to build such a movement in collaboration with other groups of workers and young people. This needs to be linked to the trade unions launching campaigns to fight back against the Tory government, against austerity, discrimination and divide and rule.

A united working class movement with a socialist programme to fight oppression can push back the bosses and cut across attempts to divide us.

The pandemic hasn't dampened the need for Pride but shown why it is necessary. If you would like to organise with us, discuss what demands and tactics we need to fight for, and join us, then get in touch.



PAUL MATTHEWSON

London: Hundreds protest for trans rights

SCOTT HUNTER

HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

On 6 August, a protest for trans rights took place at Downing Street. The organisers named their main grievances as the government's failure to sufficiently reform the 2004 Gender Recognition Act to genuinely allow for self-identification by trans people.

The crowd was very engaged. A few hundred people turned out, many of them young, and the overall mood was angry (and rightfully so) but confident and ready to fight for the

rights of trans people. In this crowd, we found a great response to our platform. Socialist Party leaflets were popular, with many people coming to us to ask for a copy the Socialist paper.

One thing we heard again and again is that the protesters had little faith in capitalism to solve their problems. Many in the crowd were receptive to our message that a mass movement of the working class is necessary to defeat all forms of bigotry. From our conversations with protesters, I can also say that it has

not gone unnoticed by the LGBTQ+ community that the Labour Party, especially under Kier Starmer, has not taken a clear position on fighting for trans rights.

The protest, opposite Downing Street, featured several trans speakers. Overall, it was an energising event. I felt that, for some of the younger attendees, this may have been their first time attending a demonstration and I hope that the experience - and our intervention - will give them the confidence to get more involved.

Waltham Forest: Fighting for a home for Nadia and homes for all



Waltham Forest Socialist Party members, along with local trade unionists and others, in a bailiff-defying vigil outside Nadia's home PHOTO MARTIN REYNOLDS

A major housing eviction crisis, involving hundreds of thousands of private renters, is looming as various pandemic lifelines are ended by the Tory government on 1 October. Waltham Forest Socialist Party member **Nancy Taaffe** explains how her branch is fighting back.

I first met Nadia Zaman Attaria while selling the Socialist. Our Socialist Party branch was petitioning for the tens of thousands of homes being built in Waltham Forest to be council homes to end the homelessness crisis - not the for-profit model our Labour-led council pursues.

A year or so later Nadia rang me. She faced imminent eviction and needed help. Every other avenue to stop eviction had been closed - councillors, the local MP, etc.

This is a hard one to win. Nevertheless, I said to Nadia, "I don't know what we can do and I don't know if we can win. But if you want to fight, Waltham Forest Socialist Party is with you!"

Over these last two months the Socialist Party, Waltham Forest Trades Council, Unite Community and the London Renters Union have worked together to build support for Nadia in her refusal to be another part of the story of socially cleansing the working class out of London.

We resist this abomination of working class people - usually on low incomes or no jobs (disgracefully, many single parents) - being forcibly displaced from their homes and their support network.

On 3 August we spent the day outside the one-room temporary accommodation Nadia had won through refusing to go. Her refusal to budge forced the local council to find her temporary accommodation - they say for two more weeks.

This is an initial victory for Nadia and the campaign. She's not been

moved 170 miles to Stoke-on-Trent, which the council said was her only option. And she's not in a B&B, which is where they wanted to send her and her kids at the start of the day. She is in a two-bed place, safe with her children, as it should be. Now the fight goes on to make that permanent.

People have criticised us for 'fighting for just one woman'. The truth is the Socialist Party was fighting for Nadia long before we met her. We're fighting for all the Nadias (men, too), across our borough and beyond, who have been forced out by the privatised, pro-developer, austerity housing model.

This is a story of 30 years of privatisation of housing stock, of right-wing Labour's collusion in the Tory benefit cap, of a forced displacement policy. It's also a story of resistance.

Butterfields Didn't Budge

How tenants on one east London estate saved their homes

Socialist Party pamphlet £2.50, including postage

Available from Left Books - leftbooks.co.uk 020 8988 8789



Fight for a socialist housing programme!

Don't move!

In echoes of the poll tax bailiff-busters 30 years ago, communities are mobilising to physically defend their neighbours from eviction. Socialist Party members have assisted residents to organise such resistance.

Five years ago tenants on the Butterfields estate in Walthamstow resisted eviction as a whole group - and won, with the simple message: 'Butterfields won't budge'.

Even when people's homes are not safe and they need immediate rehousing, we must still demand that we will not move from our communities.

Don't pay

In an organised, collective way. In Newham, key workers in One Housing housing association defeated a 40% rent increase when they organised and refused to pay. When homes are not safe and the council is slow to act, as was recently exposed in Croydon over mouldy, damp, and dangerous flats, why should people still pay full rent?

The same applies to service charges - around the country, through the campaign group SHAC (Social Housing Action Campaign), housing association residents are preparing a 'service charge strike'.

Trade union and community action

Get organised. Set up democratic tenants and residents associations. Trade unions and trades councils should work with local communities, building collective strength to mobilise for eviction resistance and demonstrations.

In the 1940s, so desperate was the housing crisis that the community in West London occupied luxury houses. Local people may need to return to those traditions!

Working-class political representation

Keir Starmer's Labour Party has ruthlessly driven out Jeremy Corbyn and the programme he stood for, of council housing, rent control and anti-austerity. Working-class people need our own political voice.

The Socialist Party stands in elections as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which offers a banner to enable anyone who wants to fight to stand together in elections.

The Socialist Party stands for a new, mass party, based on working-class and young people that can fight for a socialist housing programme.

- No Covid evictions - write off Covid-related arrears
- Build council homes with lifetime secure tenancies. Take over empty property for council housing
- End all housing privatisation
- Regeneration, without the loss of social housing. No more handing over public land and homes to property developers. Residents' right to vote on all regeneration schemes
- Rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions
- Reverse the cuts to housing

benefits - end evictions due to austerity cuts

- Landlords must act now on dangerous cladding and fire safety - and councils seize buildings where they don't. Councils and housing associations should do the work now and bill the government
- Decent pay, conditions, and safety for all housing and construction workers, including stopping the use of blacklisting firms
- For genuinely independent, democratic tenants and residents associations. Genuine accountability and control, including over repairs
- 'Sell-back' option and 'portable discounts' for current leaseholders and shared-ownerships to escape being financially trapped. End any future leasehold and shared-ownership - we need council housing and cheap mortgages instead!
- End the commercialisation of housing associations and registration of for-profit providers, run in the interests of big business and hedge funds. Take housing associations into democratic public ownership. This could include the option to return to council ownership with independent tenant democratic control, or co-ops
- Nationalise the large building companies, land, and banks to ensure enough good standard council housing and cheap mortgages
- A democratic socialist society to plan and provide good quality homes, jobs and services for all



Don't privatise Dudley libraries

RICHARD GINGELL
BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Outsourcing is the scourge of public services. It is the twisted idea that a company with no ties to the community could step in and do a better job than the public sector. That is demonstrably false. Library workers in Dudley, in the West Midlands, are the latest victims.

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) is known for low-balling contracts, and then gutting pay and conditions. They are a 'social enterprise', but happily implement dodgy zero-hour or near-zero-hour contracts.

GLL will not hesitate to pay under the national living wage. Some staff report being paid under the national minimum wage.

They regularly refuse pay rises that match inflation. And understaffing

puts immense strain on the workforce. The money they are paid to supposedly provide public library services is used to prop up their failing leisure business.

But the trade unions are fighting back. Unite and Unison organised a public meeting on 29 July via Zoom. Onay Kasab, a Unite officer in London, outlined the tactics used against GLL in the past - picketing their national headquarters, and letting their partners know about the despicable company that they work with. Strike action by the workers can force GLL back.

Onay also made it clear, rather than privatising, local authorities can legally pass needs-based, no-cuts budgets. They can then use reserves and borrowing powers to fill the funding gaps in the short term, while campaigning to win back the money from central government.

Review: The Struggle for World Socialism "For me it was a page-turner"

CLARE WILKINS
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The third part of the history of the Socialist Party is a must read. Not only is it a history of the party and the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) from 2007 to 2019.

It also provides a history and Marxist analysis of events in Britain and the rest of the world, and the central role of the working class and workers' movement in shaping and reacting to them.

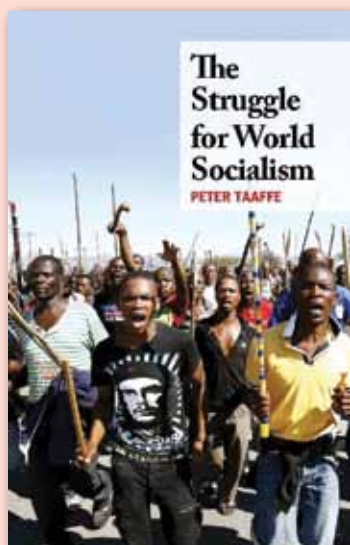
The Covid crisis is the 'great accelerator,' because it has speeded up processes already at play in capitalism.

For me it was a page-turner. It is equally good to dip in and out of chapters and groups of chapters.

The book provides a unique and vital context for the world we live in, the tasks facing us, and how to fight back and build for socialism. Reading it now, I found it the best of the three books.

• Read our substantial review by Alec Thraves at socialistparty.org.uk

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STEVE MERRIMAN
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

I'm a retired accountant, Unite member, NHS campaigner and was a Jeremy Corbyn supporter in the Labour Party from 2016 to 2020.

Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership - there is little evidence of adherence to these standards in the echelons of the major parties. To this extent, our so-called 'democracy' is a sham.

There are endless examples of institutional corruption in Westminster, such as false expense claims and 'cash for questions' lobbying.

So what to do? Answer - find a party and comrades that actually welcome new members, a party that is constantly active, gets things done, is on top of every issue, educates its members, and motivates them.

How joyful then to find these essential characteristics alive and blossoming in the fast-expanding Sheffield branch of the Socialist Party. My first few weeks in the Socialist Party could not be further removed from the stultifying existence I suffered in the Labour Party.

In Labour, few meetings took place, debate was not welcome, or worse, it was shut down. The objective seemed to be to do nothing.

The contrast has been seismic. My motivation is sky high in the Socialist Party.

How great it is to have something to look forward to 24/7. I learn new stuff every week - Marxism, internationalism, trade unions, NHS

Why I joined the Socialist Party Labour v Socialist Party - my experience is seismic



Keir Starmer PHOTO UK PARLIAMENT

privatisation, or what's happening in the world with US and China.

The revolutionary Che Guevara said: "If you tremble with

every injustice, then you are a friend of mine". In the Socialist Party I am much better placed to tackle injustice.

Socialist Party: Solely funded by the working class

Lamley Naa Amoako-Atta joined the Socialist Party last year in west London. She explains how she's now helping us in our fundraising efforts.

The Socialist Party has a long-standing history of defending the working class. We fight day-to-day to oppose every cut - protesting, campaigning and spreading awareness. If the working class is organised, it has the potential power to stop the cuts and change society to benefit everyone.

The Socialist Party is funded solely by donations from our members and other working-class people. Those donations go towards making leaflets and placards, and other fundraising resources - collecting tins and card readers. These vital resources help us pass information to the public when we're campaigning, along with keeping our members informed.

To ensure steady finances for the party, each quarter we set a 'Fighting Fund' target. The current target - due to end on 30 September - is £25,000. We have already raised over £10,000 (40%).

Socialist Party members have also organised bake sales, held quiz nights and even sold their used clothes online to help raise funds. Every penny helps keep the party alive and fight for a socialist society.

The Socialist Party is not financed by big businesses, but by ordinary people who like what we say, believe in what we fight for, and kindly donate to the cause. It's because of you we can keep on fighting for the rights of the working class.



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	JULY-SEPTEMBER 2021	DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2020
Southern & SE	1,648	2,350		70%
West Midlands	1,778	2,600		68%
Wales	1,488	2,300		65%
South West	1,135	1,800		63%
East Midlands	959	1,850		52%
London	2,339	4,600		51%
Yorkshire	968	2,550		38%
Northern	260	750		35%
North West	345	1,150		30%
Eastern	178	1,200		15%
Other	203	3,850		5%
TOTAL	11,301	25,000		45%

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Socialist Party young members summer school

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
LANCASHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party held its national youth summer school in London on 7-8 August, bringing together over 40 young organisers from branches across England and Wales.

The weekend was one of lively and inspiring discussion, with a range of commissions aimed at raising members' political level and confidence to organise in the workplace, at school and in universities, and within our own Socialist Party branches.

For most, it was also the largest in-person gathering of genuine, like-minded young socialists they had been in since the beginning of the pandemic - or ever, in the case of newer comrades like me!

Perspectives

The weekend opened with a speech on political perspectives for Britain by Socialist Party general secretary, Hannah Sell, who stressed the instrumental role to be played by young people in this coming period of class struggle.

Throughout the pandemic, young people in Britain have spearheaded social movements against racism, sexism, and state oppression - all tools that the capitalist class relies upon to prop up its crisis-ridden system.

As young socialists, we must continue to throw ourselves into mass

movements, while making links to the workers' movement in general.

The youth school also came at an important time following the re-launch of Youth Fight for Jobs last month. In a dedicated organisational commission on the Sunday, members shared their plans for building locally ahead of the Youth Fight for Jobs marches on 9 October (see right).

We discussed the need to target young workers on the question of jobs and homes, with a clear socialist programme - including demands for rent controls and council homes, £12 an hour minimum wage as a first step to £15, and proper training, under trade union control, on a full-wage, and with a guaranteed job at the end.

We also discussed the need to put pressure on trade unions nationally, to demand a coordinated union fightback on the youth job crisis. With one-in-five employers planning redundancies post-furlough, youth unemployment is set to worsen as part of a wider attack on working people in general.

Trade unions should affiliate with Youth Fight for Jobs as part of a mass movement, to show young people what can be achieved through the power of the organised working class.

Everyone attending agreed that the meeting was a success, and those young members who couldn't make it this time should definitely attend future such events.



PHOTO PAUL MATTSOON

March for jobs on 9 October

Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) is a youth organisation fighting for good jobs for all, and to make the super-rich billionaires pay for this deepening capitalist crisis.

YFJ was initially formed in 2009 in response to the rise of youth unemployment caused by the 2007-09 financial crash. We won the support of seven national

trade unions, and organised a 330-mile march for jobs from Jarrow to London.

Today, the need for a fight against youth unemployment and underemployment is huge. We want young people to get involved with the campaign in your local area, and help build local marches for jobs on 9 October.

If you're a trade unionist, can you help get support for the campaign from your trade union branch, youth body or any other forum?

● Visit youthfightforjobs.com to get involved with the campaign, and for resources such as model motions and letters.

West Midlands: austerity and capitalism offers no future for young people

JAMES LEACH
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

After a decade of Tory austerity and a global pandemic threatening millions of jobs, young people are more vulnerable than ever.

In Birmingham young people

have been hit hard by Covid-austerity and the anarchy of the capitalist economy.

In June 2020, unemployment had risen 14.5% - a spike higher than any other English city.

Whether we pursue apprenticeships, and face the insult of £4.30

an hour wage, or choose university, where we can rack up masses of debt, before entering a job market dominated by the instability of zero-hour contracts - it feels as if there is no way forward.

Rich landlords are profiting off charging extortionate rents for small,

dilapidated living spaces. There is a capitalist ceiling hanging low over our futures, and it will take a determined socialist programme to smash it.

The Youth Fight for Jobs campaign has the programme to secure youth a brighter future. In towns and cities, we are organising youth marches for

9 October.

The Socialist Party, Young Socialists, Socialist Students and Youth Fight for Jobs, will be organising a march in Birmingham on 9 October, campaigning to stop the billionaire class robbing the future from working class youth.

A day in the life of a young hospitality worker

I like my job, the people I meet and the service we provide, but why should we accept exploitation and insecurity each shift? Hospitality bosses make enough money, the industry generates more than £75 billion a year.

Hospitality workers are mainly students and young people - most aren't in a trade union or know much about them. Bosses take advantage of this.

When it gets quiet, we get sent home early, without pay. Officially, we are allowed to say 'no'. But in a non-unionised workplace, with several managers on your back demanding you go home, what are we supposed to do?

Sometimes our holiday days are used, without permission, to get our pay to what we would normally

get from our 'guaranteed minimum hours'. This means we get even less holiday of our own choosing.

The rota can change just days before our shift, wrecking plans previously made with friends or family.

It's always a struggle to try to get the shift covered or swapped. And, of course, it depends on the temperament of the manager. If they're in a bad mood, or simply don't care, then no chance.

Recently at my work, a student was put down to do a shift at the time he was meant to be sitting an exam! And there's no collaboration over the rota whatsoever.

Even though we have been vaccinated against Covid-19, there's still concern about catching the virus as we come into possible contact with

hundreds of new people in each shift.

Yet, the pub manager advised us to delete the NHS test-and-trace app, as "too many" of his workforce were self-isolating! They want us to come in, no excuses, to make sure the pub makes enough money for the big bosses, regardless of our health.

If we're understaffed and overworked, it's incredibly difficult for us to keep up with hygiene and cleanliness.

In another bar, breaks were scrapped. Managers admitted they cut hours and staff to simply save money.

Many of my workmates want to find another job, but there are simply no jobs out there. The jobs that are on offer, offer so little wages, what's the point in moving?

Under-18s get paid £3 less an hour than over 18s, for literally doing the exact same job. Living costs aren't magically cheaper for younger people. The hospitality industry is the perfect nightmare example of zero-hour contracts and the gig economy. There's anger bubbling away under the surface.

Furlough is being scrapped in October, and the jobs slaughter will follow. Many hospitality workers are still on 'flexi furlough'.

That's why Youth Fight for Jobs is restarting. We're giving out leaflets to precarious workers, and talking to them about getting involved and joining a union to fight to permanently change the industry for the better.

BAR WORKER, CARDIFF



Tottenham, London 2011 PAUL MATTSSON

Starmers faithful Guardian

As part of its anniversary coverage of the 2011 summer unrest, The Guardian newspaper conducted a survey of council funding of youth services in the years since, looking at the five areas of the country where 49% of recorded crimes during the 2011 events took place.

All of the areas had seen a cut equal to or greater than the national average 73% reduction in youth services funding, which informed the article's heading, 'A tinderbox of tensions still in place, ten years after riots.'

As the national election agent of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), I wrote to The Guardian's letter page pointing out that "all the councils are Labour-controlled and have been since 2011".

Responding to the justification for cuts that some Labour councillors make when they say 'there is nothing else we can do' (which they never put on their election leaflets of course!) I argued that they were wrong: "councils can refuse to implement Tory austerity and we need councillors who will do so".

That really would "give a voice to the voiceless and provide hope that 2011 won't be repeated" the letter concluded. But it was never published.

That the Guardian shields right-wing Labour politicians' complicity with Tory austerity will be less surprising to readers of The Socialist than news about bears' toilet preferences. But there is no harm in recording yet another example.

CLIVE HEEMSKERK

TUSC NATIONAL ELECTION AGENT

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

Olympic 'success' masks cuts and inequality in sport

LENNY SHAIL

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Every Olympics reflects the sad contradiction of the world we live in, but Tokyo 2020 took this to a whole new level.

On the one hand, millions of people enjoyed and were inspired by the exhilarating displays of speed, skill, elegance and endurance of Kipchoge in the men's marathon, British BMX rider Beth Shriever powering to gold, and Charlotte Worthington becoming the first woman to land a 360-degree backflip.

But on the other hand, the games took place against the backdrop of protests in Japan. The games went ahead purely to preserve the mega-profits of exploitative companies. Meanwhile, Covid infections and deaths in Japan continue to rise rapidly. While all Olympic athletes and team staff were sure to get vaccines, roll-out has barely got going in Japan.

Working class participation

And there is another aspect still, Team GB's success in the medal table, hides a rapidly growing crisis of access and participation in sports and exercise.

According to a recent presentation by Sport England, in the last decade about half of Team GB medallists attended a private school, while only 6% of serial medallists attended school in a city, compared with 39% of the UK population.

This reveals serious problems with how sport is funded and organised - who controls the funds, and what objectives sporting organisations seek to achieve.

Millions, young and old, will have been inspired in the last two weeks, but the opportunities for working-class people in Britain to take part in basic sports - let alone those requiring equipment and facilities - are worse than ever.

In May, a report highlighted how one third of children now leave primary school unable to swim, with 40% not given swimming lessons



Olympic rings in Stratford, London. The so-called 'olympic legacy' for east London is sky-high rents and austerity ALISON HILL

even though it is part of the national curriculum.

This is a consequence of years of cuts, austerity and attacks to school and public swimming facilities. A similar fate has met most other public sports and exercise facilities.

Previously, the Sports Council, with its motto 'sport for all', directed and governed sport in the UK. In 1994 the Tory government replaced it with UK Sport, which concentrates funding on top-end professionals.

The idea behind this came from

former Olympian and Tory, Sebastian Coe. He saw financial support for elite sport as the overriding priority, putting local authorities in charge of grassroots sport.

But over many years of Tory and New Labour attacks on public services, funding for mass participation has been one of the first victims. This has excluded the majority from ever getting the opportunity to try out many sports.

Sports funding elitism has even reached a stage where some athletes

were denied selection for Rio and Tokyo, despite having qualifying times, because they weren't deemed 'medal winners'.

The Socialist Party campaigns for the funding, facilities and time for everyone to take part in sports. Reverse cuts and sell-offs of school and community facilities, we call for the nationalisation of all sport and exercise facilities for the benefit of everyone and for investment in free, high-quality sport aimed at participation at every level.

Working-class athletes blocked historically

Throughout recent history the ruling class has attempted to block working-class people from sports. The infamous 'mechanics exclusion clause' was adopted by many early amateur sports bodies in the 19th century, including rowing and even athletics. Its job was to keep out the successful new breed of working-class professional athletes.

These rules excluded not only those who made a simple living from sports, but also anyone "who is or has been by trade or employment for wages a mechanic, artisan or labourer." Later these

sports, predominately Olympic, allowed workers to take part - but banned 'professionals', allowing those with the luxury of an independent income, and not having to work, the time to train and travel to compete. This gave these 'amateurs' huge advantages over working-class athletes who toiled each day at work.

While cricket allowed amateurs and professionals to play together, it wasn't until 1962 that the distinction between amateurs (aka the Gentlemen) and professionals (aka the Players) was ended.

Despite this, many workers

throughout the 20th century continued to pursue their chosen sport to the highest level. This often involved training multiple hours a day around full-time manual work.

Many working-class athletes smashed the obstacles the ruling elites put before them, and many still do today, as has been shown over the last two weeks. BMX rider, and gold medal winner, Beth Shriever had her funding withdrawn, unlike the male BMX riders.

Today, low wages and long working hours are still an insuperable barrier to many aspiring athletes.

A socialist society could see a

complete change in how sport is organised and run. All sports and facilities could be opened up, and hugely expanded, for enjoyment by everyone. This could be run democratically by fans, athletes, coaches and the local community.

It could be based around workplaces, schools, communities, and local clubs, as part of a nationally planned set-up sharing expertise and resources.

This would allow everyone to play and take part to whichever standard they wish - just for fun, to keep fit or to become a professional athlete.

Beirut's devastating port explosion one year on

Justice can only be served by ending corrupt capitalism

IAIN DALTON

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

One year ago in Lebanon, a huge devastating explosion of illegally stored ammonium nitrate at Beirut's port resulted in the loss of over 200 lives, 7,500 injured, and around 300,000 people made homeless. That evening of 4 August 2020 will continue to be seen as the moment when the rank corruption of Lebanon's sectarian political system and capitalist rule caused an avoidable tragedy.

No one has yet been prosecuted for the tragedy. Instead, the past few months have seen the families of the victims of the explosion, and their supporters, lobbying the Interior Ministry. They are demanding that the judge inquiring into the explosion interrogates the Director-General of Public Security - among others currently protected under immunities.

The already dire economic and social situation, at the time of the explosion, has careered even further out of control.

Alongside the further decline of the Lebanese currency have come huge price rises and massive shortages of almost everything, including basic essential medicines. Wildfires have also been raging in the countryside.

As the Guardian highlighted: "In the year since Beirut began picking up the pieces, the Lebanese currency has plunged 15-fold in value. Hyperinflation has put staple foods out of reach of much of its population.

"Vital medicines can no longer be found - a four-year-old girl died from a scorpion sting because antivenom was out of stock. And there is not enough fuel to supply the undergunned electricity sector or the private generator mafia that plugs the gap, charging exorbitant prices to do so."

Although the 'technocratic government' of Hassan Diab was forced to resign as a result of the explosion, no replacement has been formed. The prime minister overthrown by the mass protests of October 2019, Saad Hariri, was initially selected as prime minister-designate.

But after ten months of wrangling over ministers' portfolios - particularly with Lebanese President Michel Aoun of the Christian Maronite Free Patriotic Movement, and the Shia-based Hezbollah - Hariri finally resigned, unable to form a government.

His replacement as prime minister-designate is Najib Mikati, also a former prime minister, as well as being the richest man in Lebanon with a wealth of around \$2.5 billion.

Mikati is perhaps one of the few people who could fill the post, which is mandated to be filled by a Sunni, according to Lebanon's sectarian-based constitution, who would be acceptable to both Aoun and Hezbollah, having formed a previous government with them in 2011.



Part of the destroyed port of Beirut following the explosion of illegally stored ammonium nitrate, and known to the authorities PHOTO MAHDI SHOJAEIAN

He aims to form a government and thereby unlock some of the aid from various foreign governments, much of which has been verbally predicated on the formation of a government.

The western imperialist powers may content themselves with imposing sanctions on some leading politicians (especially Hezbollah-linked), as the US has done.

But, a Mikati government, as the Socialist previously said of the formation of a government under Hariri, "offers no solution to the Lebanese masses. They will be expected to suffer further for the stabilisation of the profits of the Lebanese capitalists and imperialism."

What way forward?

A Mikati government, formed on this basis, would perpetuate the patronage and corruption that has preceded it, including under governments he has headed in the past.

Moreover, the 'reforms' demanded by imperialism would include cutbacks and privatisations, which would attack the living standards of the working class and poor of Lebanon even more.

Such attacks are bound to lead to mass opposition movements again developing on the streets of Lebanon, as working people refuse to be

made the scapegoats.

Given Lebanon's history of sectarian division and civil war, the threat of new sectarian conflicts is implicit in the country's unstable situation.

Worryingly, there have been some tit-for-tat sectarian killings recently in the south of Beirut between those from Shia and Sunni backgrounds, with the latest incident being the murder of five people at a funeral for a member of Hezbollah.

However, many of the mass demonstrations of the past two years have been marked by a distinct anti-sectarianism. The last year has also seen shifts develop in student unions and among the syndicates (unions) of professionals.

This has included defeats for candidates' lists led by or combining many of the major sectarian parties (including the Future Movement, Free Patriotic Movement, Hezbollah, and Amal) in the Bar Association, last year.

In the Order of Engineers and Architects elections, in July, the 'Order Revolts' candidate won 72% of the vote, following significant wins at lower levels of the association, including in Beirut, where the lead candidate was one of the parents of a child killed in last August's explosion.

Alongside the development of new independent unions, there is the possibility of re-forging the workers' movement in the country. The pressure developing from below will have been a key factor in the calling of a one-day general strike in June by the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers.

Working-class representation

But rebuilding fighting organisations among workers and youth is only one part of the problem of how to break from the sectarian-dominated situation confronting Lebanon. Equally important is the question of independent working-class political representation.

While parliamentary elections are due under the current sectarian system in May 2022, a key demand must be the convening of a revolutionary constituent assembly, based upon elected representatives from workplaces and communities, and fully accountable and recallable by those who elect them.

The assembly should fight to replace the current sectarian status quo, with a government representing the working class and poor.

A number of new parties and formations have sprung up in recent years on a non-sectarian basis.

However, many are dominated by ideas of 'cross-class collaboration'. Several are led by wealthy business people, who would be probably even more likely than the sectarian parties to attempt to carry out the savage attacks on working-class living standards demanded by imperialism in return for aid.

In contrast, the policy of an independent non-sectarian workers' party must be not only to tear up Lebanon's sectarian constitution, but the repudiation of the national debts run up by the sectarian parties and the rotten capitalist system they depend upon.

A mass workers' party should adopt socialist policies, including a monopoly of foreign trade, nationalisation of the banks and other major monopolies under democratic workers' control and management, among other key demands.

Capitalism in Lebanon offers nothing but more misery and an increasingly desperate situation for the working class.

Only a bold socialist alternative put forward by the workers' movement, and drawing the rest of the poor and oppressed of the country behind them, can offer a real way out of the sectarian nightmare in the country.

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formerly **Militant**

CAPITALISM = CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO SAVE HUMANITY



A raging wildfire (above) destroying a swathe of countryside in Turkey. Extreme weather events are accelerating due to climate change

DAVE MURRAY

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

First the good news - it is still possible to avoid a climate apocalypse. And the bad news? It is already too late to avoid climate catastrophe!

This is the verdict of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) latest report published ahead of the international climate summit in Glasgow this November.

The IPCC's 2018 report gave us the handy slogan "1.5 to stay alive" - pointing out that even a 1.5°C increase in global average temperatures above pre-industrial levels would result in disastrous effects on the eco-system, but would still allow global warming to stabilise and human life to survive.

The latest report shows that we are already at +1.1°C, set to smash through 1.5°C, and headed for the 3°C - beyond which you get a

series of 'tipping point' events. These would set the planet on a course for a runaway greenhouse effect, which would be irreversible and could make human life unviable.

This year's IPCC report tells us that no matter what carbon reductions are carried out we are going to hit 1.5°C by 2030.

This tells us what we already know. We've seen the deadly floods that tore through communities in Germany, Netherlands and Belgium, the wildfires that have laid waste to swathes of California, Australia, Russia, Greece and Turkey, and the unprecedented heatwave in America's Pacific North West. Thanks to the lack of action by capitalist governments to reduce emissions, more of such events are expected.

Of course, our rulers are not silent. With the UK government hosting the UN's 'Conference of Parties' (COP26) talks, we can expect to see plenty of photo-ops at wind farms and the announcement of ambitious new targets for

carbon reduction. What we will not see is any meaningful action to meet those targets.

COP26 should be facing up to the fact that the system of 'cap and trade' - selling the right to pump greenhouse gases in to the atmosphere - has been a complete failure. Canada has actually increased its carbon emissions since agreeing the 'Paris Accords'!

The British government's performance fares little better. True, there's been a 29% reduction in carbon emissions in the last decade (mainly due to continuing deindustrialisation), but this still leaves it about 20% short of its target for 2030.

Boris Johnson's response is to announce ambitious new targets, while also giving the green light to further oil and gas exploration, a new coal mine, and a big expansion of the national road network.

The 'good news' aspect of the IPCC report should be a call to action. But although it's in capitalism's overall strategic interests to avoid

climate catastrophe, its political leaders seem determined to soldier on with profit-friendly climate change schemes that have already failed.

For meaningful action, we need to fight for a change of direction. But it's not enough to ask the villains of this story to change their ways. Capitalism is the climate crisis.

Only the working class, which has no stake in capitalism but whose collective power can halt capitalist production, is the key to changing society. Armed with a programme for the socialist transformation of society, it can bring about the global reconstruction that can save us from a climate inferno.

It can replace the chaos of capitalism with democratic socialist planning of the economy, to meet the needs of humanity and the environment.

● See also 'Global Warning: Not adapting, won't survive' in **Socialism Today**, March 2021 - socialismtoday.org

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on page 3



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