

NHS and social care

MAKE THE RICH PAY, NOT THE WORKERS

Social care is in crisis and needs fixing. There's no doubt about that. Over 40,000 died from Covid in care homes during the pandemic in an overwhelmingly privatised system that puts profit before safety.

Average pay for care workers is a paltry £8.50 an hour. One in four are on zero-hour contracts. With that level of pay and conditions it's not surprising that there's a shortage of 170,000 care workers.

And the NHS needs much more funding. The Tory health minister himself has said that NHS waiting lists could rise to 13 million! The Health Foundation charity says it would take nearly £17 billion just to deal with the current backlog. Three times the initial £5.4 billion that the Tories are promising!

After everything they've been through in the past 18 months, health workers have been given a miserly 3% pay offer. Taking into account inflation that's actually a pay cut! NHS workers would need a 15% pay rise just to take them back to the level of 2010 when the Tories started their austerity offensive.

Once again the Tory response is to make working-class people pay the cost of a crisis not of their making. Increasing national insurance contributions will hit working people in their pockets just as food and energy prices are going up, the Universal Credit uplift



is being scrapped, and workers are facing attacks on their wages and conditions through 'fire and rehire' and other onslaughts from the bosses.

This isn't about young versus old. It's about a system where the rich have got richer even during the pandemic and the rest of us are struggling. There should be no place for private profiteers in our health and social care system. Everyone should have access to free universal health and social care in an integrated system based on need not profit. It should not be based on ability to pay.

The Tories have shown during the pandemic that the money can be found. Especially when it comes to giving contracts worth billions to their big business friends in the private sector. They are the ones who should be coughing up to fund the NHS and social care, not low-paid workers.

The Trades Union Congress has calculated that if capital gains tax - the tax on profits from assets like stocks and property - was paid at the same level as income tax, that would alone generate £17 billion a year for funding health and social care.

But taxing the rich and big business should be just the start. They will do everything they can to avoid paying higher taxes that eat into their profits. We need to be able to plan the funding of health, social care, education and other services based on need not profit. That would be possible if the major companies and banks and financial institutions were publicly owned and democratically controlled by workers and service users.

That's what the Socialist Party is fighting for. Join us.

• See also page 5

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

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

Trades Union Congress and Sharon Graham election victory A pivotal moment for the trade union movement



This year's TUC Congress, online again due to the pandemic, will provide the first public platform for newly elected Unite general secretary Sharon Graham.

It's an ideal opportunity for her to send a clear message to both the employers and their crisis-ridden Tory government that their brutal offensive, designed to make workers pay for the Covid crisis, will be met by fierce resistance from the labour and trade union movement.

Already, in the short time following Sharon's election victory, her strategy to get Unite 'battle-ready' has seen the right-wing press alter their views on her leadership. Initially, they, and New Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer, clung to hopes that her election could strengthen the right politically. But her position of 'no blank cheques' for Labour is now seen by them as a fighting not a passive position.

The Economist predicts: "Under Ms Graham's leadership, strikes will probably become more common", and the vicious anti-union Daily Mail reported: "Labour distances itself from new Unite leader after it emerges she once vowed to break the law in fight for workers' rights".

Sharon made this declaration in her speech at the 2019 National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) Conference. On Sunday 12 September (see ad opposite), she is addressing the online NSSN Rally, that for the 12th successive year will lobby the TUC for the fighting programme that is needed for the trade unions.

Sharon won the Unite election because she was seen by members as the most combative candidate and the most likely to be able to stand up to the bosses' attacks.

This was the lesson drawn by those who have had to fight for workplace safety during Covid, and defend their livelihoods against attacks such as the vicious 'fire and rehire' (estimated by Unite to have affected 10% of workers) and the growing wave of union victimisation.

This was why workers who have fought and defeated their bosses this year were attracted to Sharon's campaign: the construction electricians, for example, who stopped deskilling after months of protests, culminating in the blockade of the Atomic Weapons Establishment; the Manchester bus drivers who defeated fire and rehire after 85 days of strike action; and the Thurrock binworkers who faced down their Tory council with a six-week stoppage.

The pandemic has also seen the right wing in Unison defeated in the elections for the national executive council. Among the left candidates



Thurrock refuse workers celebrate beating back the Tory council's attempt to slash their pay

elected were four Socialist Party members. In NIPSA, the largest public sector union in Northern Ireland, Carmel Gates, a member of the Socialist Party's sister organisation Militant Left, has been elected general secretary. These welcome developments open the door to forging a fighting 'coalition of the willing' across the unions.

The TUC Congress may be constricted because it is online, but it should still be a balance sheet of how the unions, and especially their leaders, have acted during Covid.



TUC Congress must be a decisive meeting to discuss and set out the action that is needed to force back the Tories on pay and cuts...

An honest accounting, acknowledging mistakes, is the most effective way to prepare for the impending struggles. This is totally missing from the Congress motions, but is in tune with how the union leaders responded to the pandemic. Only two motions and one amendment mention industrial action!

Even unions which had previously had fighting records retreated during the pandemic. PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka, for example, parked the union's full national pay claim before its NEC lay leadership had met.

However, the union leaders are

forced to be far more responsive to pressure from below than the heads of the TUC and Starmer's Labour Party.

As the bosses stepped up their attacks from last summer, there was a rash of disputes. At the same time as Unite was taking on British Airways' (BA) fire-and-rehire offensive, BA was shamefully joined by Tower Hamlets Labour council, provoking strikes by Unison.

Even the right-wing union leaders in retail union USDAW have been forced to sanction three strikes because of their members' anger at the employers' attacks.

Over the last year there has been a real growth in disputes, many of them long-lasting and increasingly indefinite.

In some respects, the Tories' own anti-union laws have had the opposite effect to that desired by them, convincing workers that they might as well 'go for it' from the start given the new undemocratic voting thresholds, and because they have to rebal- lot after six months.

Workers have also drawn some lessons from the last decade of the brutal character of the bosses' attacks. From the strike of British Gas engineers, for example, who faced pay cuts of over £10,000 year: individual days of strikes are ineffective if they are left as isolated action rather than quickly escalated.

These disputes, with a number winning important concessions and some outright victories, form the real balance sheet of the last 18 months, and the lessons must be taken on by the leading layer of trade union reps and activists.

This is even more necessary as we emerge from lockdown. The bosses' offensive could still be the advanced

warning of far more brutal attacks to come on jobs, pay, pensions, and terms and conditions.

To a certain extent, they and the Tories have postponed a face-off with workers as Johnson and his government have been forced to intervene on an unprecedented scale, through measures such as furlough, to stave off a total collapse of the economy and the huge welling up of anger of the working class.

Social anger

A glimpse of this mood was seen in the huge Black Lives Matter mobilisations last summer, after the racist killing of George Floyd by US police, this year's protests over the murder of Sarah Everard by an off-duty police officer, and the two London demonstrations of over 100,000 against the Israeli state's attacks on the Palestinian people.

This has also found a distorted expression in the confused outpouring of the anti-vax demonstrations, with far-right forces undoubtedly trying to exploit the anti-establishment hatred of those involved.

The social and political vacuum that has been created is to a certain extent the responsibility of the trade union leaders, who have failed to give a fighting industrial and political lead. If they were to do so, including understanding the necessity of breaking with Starmer's Labour and building a new mass party of workers, this could act as a pole of attraction to those rebelling against inequality, injustice and oppression.

They could show that the Tory assault on democratic rights, enshrined in their new policing bill, is primarily a class attack. Before and after Christmas, police in first Yorkshire and then Scotland dispersed



National Shop Stewards Network trade unionists lobbying the TUC in 2019 PHOTO MARY FINCH

legal picket lines of striking workers, falsely using Covid regulations to justify it. They used the same premise to try and break up a Manchester protest of NHS workers against the Tory pay freeze in Manchester, outrageously arresting a Unison NEC member.

Above all, it is the taking of action, and on the biggest scale possible, that will put the stamp of the workers' and trade union movement on these events.

A decade ago, TUC Congress became a 'council of war', coordinating strike ballots across 29 public sector unions against the attack on

pensions by the Tory-led coalition government. That resulted in the historic N30 two million-strong walkout that was effectively a public sector general strike.

Forced into action by members' pressure, and levered by the NSSN and left unions, the right-wing union leaders moved to call off further strikes before they could be escalated.

This sell-out opened up a decade of austerity and the pay cuts that are now creating a furious mood against the Tories' current pay insults to public sector workers.

TUC Congress takes place as

members of NHS unions are voting on the Tories' measly 3% pay offer, while teachers return to schools with exactly nothing on the table, and other public sector workers protest against below-inflation pay rises.

This TUC Congress must be a decisive meeting to discuss and set out the action that is needed to force back the Tories on pay and cuts, linking up with workers in the private sector in a united struggle to push back against the employers' onslaught.

If this isn't done, those unions which are up for the fight must come together to give a lead for the action that is needed.

NSSN TUC Rally 2021

Sunday 12th September 12 noon

SPEAKER ANNOUNCEMENT

SHARON GRAHAM

UNITE GENERAL SECRETARY

Join us on Zoom

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

Other confirmed speakers so far at this 12th annual NSSN rally at the TUC:

SARAH WOOLLEY, BFAWU General Secretary
CARMEL GATES, NIPSA General Secretary (Designate)
JOE SIMPSON, POA Deputy General Secretary
JOE KIRBY, RMT NEC and offshore worker

[nationalshopstewardsnetwork](http://nationalshopstewardsnetwork.org)
www.shopstewards.net



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, to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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- or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more today!

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Union action needed to make schools Covid safe



PHOTO: CITY JOURNAL/CC

MARTIN POWELL DAVIES
CANDIDATE FOR NEU DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY
AND SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Staff, school students, and their families understandably want the new academic year to be a return to 'normality', without the stress and disruption of the last eighteen months. But the transmissibility of the Delta variant, and the failure of government to invest, means that won't be the case. Just as in September 2020, we are returning to the same poorly ventilated, closely packed classrooms operating non-stop throughout the day - prime conditions for spreading an airborne virus.

News from Scotland, where term started earlier, has confirmed that the reopening of schools after the summer break will inevitably drive up infection rates. In July, Independent SAGE linked a decline in Scottish infection rates to the earlier start to their school holidays. But now, young people are mixing in schools again, fuelling record case numbers. Tellingly, around a third of the new cases have been in the under-19s age group.

Vaccinations have helped ensure that hospitalisation and death rates are much lower than they would have otherwise been. But protection

is not guaranteed. A proportion of our diverse population will still suffer serious illness, and more again from long Covid - especially those who have existing conditions that leave them at greater risk. Schools have a responsibility to keep our communities safe.

Leadership lacking

In July, the National Education Union (NEU) issued a Covid-19 update, assuring members and school leaders that new advice would be published before the start of the autumn term. Union reps were also advised to remind school management that risk assessments will need to be revised in time for the new academic year. But members had to wait until the end of August, only a few days before the start of term for the majority of schools and colleges, to read the union's published guidance.

The guidance states: "We are extremely concerned that the 'indicative' thresholds for numbers of infection set by DfE in its contingency framework are too high and risk leading to the further spread of the virus". The document's stated purpose is to "help union reps to understand the current Government and DfE guidance". But it does not

explain the necessity to challenge government guidance where it is inadequate.

For example, it only asks secondary settings to "urgently consider the case" for continuing to require face coverings to be worn in classrooms, rather than make clear unions are insisting that is the case, in line with rules when schools returned in Scotland. Nor does it insist that students who live with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 be told to self-isolate, simply asking that the education setting is informed.

The union safety checklist has been issued together with three other trade unions representing education workers: GMB, Unison and Unite. It advises workplace reps to have regular meetings with management to carry out risk-assessments and regularly review safety. This is absolutely necessary. But if agreement isn't reached and workplaces remain unsafe, then what?

The collective strength of members across the school unions must be drawn upon to keep workers, students and communities safe. A glimpse of that potential strength was shown in January when school workers simultaneously used Section 44 of the Employment Act to refuse to attend their unsafe workplaces.

Fighting NEU leadership needed to tackle school funding crisis

Vote Martin Powell Davies for DGS

JAMES ELLIS
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Tories have presided over damaging cuts to school funding that have disproportionately affected the most deprived schools, a recent report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies has concluded.

Total spending per pupil was at £6,500 in 2019-20, a real terms cut of 9% from 2009-10. Even when you take into account the promised £7 billion spending boost, school budgets will still be 1% lower in 2022-23.

But within that effectively cut-based budget, the implementation of a 'national funding formula' has, just as unions warned, meant a redistribution of an insufficient overall budget away from disadvantaged schools towards ones in more affluent areas. A recent NAO report found: "Between 2017-18 and 2020-21, average per-pupil funding for the most deprived fifth of schools fell in real terms by 1.2% to £5,177; over the same period, average per-pupil funding for the least deprived fifth increased by 2.9% to £4,471".

This is all on top of spiralling school costs. The cost of SEND provision in mainstream schools has risen by £650 million in the past six years and the cost of staffing by £3.6

billion. This, of course, is in the context of real-term pay cuts for staff over the past decade, and the government's planned public sector pay freeze.

It is evident that the Tories do not care about the quality of education that working-class young people receive. With Starmer's Labour Party providing no opposition, it is essential that the trade unions take action to stop further austerity and fight for adequate funding for schools.

In January, the National Education Union (NEU) showed the potential of union action, managing to defeat the government over its unsafe plans to fully open schools. The NEU must take a fighting stance towards school funding and staff pay - organising a determined campaign which includes national strike action in conjunction with the other public sector unions.

To win such a campaign, it will require a fighting union leadership - which is why the Socialist Party is campaigning for our member Martin Powell-Davies to be elected as deputy general secretary in the upcoming union elections. Martin has the programme and experience needed to lead such a campaign and win fair funding for schools and fair pay for staff.



An NEU strike in 2019 won funding for Valentine Primary School, Southampton

Families demand rights for care home residents

ROSA
SOUTH TYNE & WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

While government guidance now allows us to go to pubs and music festivals, go on holidays, and meet up with friends, care home residents are being kept under lockdown. Private, profit-making care home companies have restricted visits, sometimes to less than once a week, and only for 30 minutes.

Many care homes are deciding their own rules, as government guidelines are just that, with no legal requirements. Many families,

after not seeing their loved ones for months, have found deterioration in quality of care as they have been unable to check on the welfare of family members.

This is not the fault of care workers who are doing their best on minimum wage, working extra shifts to cover staff shortages, and ignored by the bosses of the big care companies. Meanwhile, residents are denied the same rights as everyone else in society; the right to spend time with family and friends.

Most care homes are run by private companies looking at profit before

their resident's welfare. To increase profits they cut corners and rely on the goodwill of staff who don't want to let residents down. Most residents are paying well over £1,000 per week for care, from their life savings and selling of their homes. It suits the care companies to restrict access to the residents, as they can't then raise complaints about cost-cutting and welfare issues.

'Rights for residents' is a group set up by families who are campaigning on behalf of their loved ones, to enable them to have the same rights as the rest of us. They are demonstrating

outside Downing Street on 16 September. Families plan to travel from all over the country, many are people who have never protested or marched before. Let's show them some support.



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Socialist Party members joined the Unite day of action in Coventry against the Tory 3% offer on 25 August PHOTO: MARK POWELL



Socialist Party members joined a care workers' protest in Manchester demanding a pay rise and union recognition organised by CASWO! on 4 September PHOTO: MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SP

End service cuts and care charges

Fight for free, public, adult social care

SARAH WELCH
WEST SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

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

The council wants to cut day services and residential places. The proposals are that all adults living in residential places or supported living will no longer have access to day services.

This will mean that many people in supported living will effectively just stay in their homes, with carers coming in a few times a day. For the remainder of the day they will be left on their own, severely impacting their mental health, leaving them isolated and bored. These are the most vulnerable people in our community. As carers, we fear for their safety.

Adults living at home with family will have priority access to day care services. However, they will be

restricted to just three days per week. They will also only be able to access one provider, and most will not be able to offer services three days a week. What happens during the rest of the week? What about carers who have work responsibilities?

Postcode lottery

To add insult to injury, disabled people nationally now have to pay a client contribution towards their care. The contribution is calculated based on a financial assessment of a person's income and 'disability related expenditure'. Following this assessment the local authority sets a 'minimum income guarantee' - its assessment of the amount needed for a person to live on. Every local authority is different, an unfair postcode lottery.

The client contribution is calculated as a person's income, minus the 'minimum income guarantee' and the 'disability related expenditure'. Many disabled people are left with very little income. For some it is a choice between heating their home, eating, or paying the care charge. Many are being pushed into debt, living in a state of fear and desperation, and left to struggle without the

appropriate care and support needed to live a happy life.

The legality of this tax is being questioned. At the end of 2019, Norfolk County Council was taken to the High Court about the client contribution and lost. Norfolk County Council then had to pay all of the money back, plus interest, to all service users who had paid the charge.

We continue to fight these cuts to our service and the social care charge. We have linked up with other campaign groups around the country and it has now become a national campaign.

Our vision for social care is that it should be publicly owned, free, and funded by government, paid for by the super-rich who have only got richer during the pandemic. The best way to improve how adult social care is administered is if it is controlled democratically by service users, care workers, and the local community.

We will continue to fight these cuts, and campaign that social care should be free at the point of use. We will always fight for our people who are continually attacked by a system that sees them as surplus to requirements.

Workers shouldn't pay for health and social care plans

GLYNN DOHERTY
UNION ORGANISER IN SOCIAL CARE

As The Socialist goes to press, the Tories are in open warfare over Boris Johnson's plans on funding social care and the NHS in England.

In the 2019 Tory manifesto, Johnson said: "I guarantee extra funding for the NHS, with 50,000 more nurses. We will not raise the rate of income tax, VAT or National Insurance".

Nearly two years on and they're still almost 40,000 short of that growth promise, and the second appears in grave danger. Vacancies within social care are predicted to rocket to 170,000 - an increase of over 40% - by the year end, vastly increased by the inept law change on vaccinations. With press reports of the vaccinations law being extended into the NHS, the small growth in nurses' numbers could be halted and start to decline dramatically.

An increase in NI contributions would be significantly weighted against the youngest and lowest paid in the workforce, and many Tory MPs are fearful it would lead to an enormous working-class backlash against not only them, but their capitalist system.

At last, Labour's Keir Starmer has voiced his party's opposition, just over a month after shadow health

secretary Jonathan Ashworth answered a question on TV about the government introducing a new tax to fund social care with "Why would we oppose that?"

For a worker on average earnings of £30k a year, a 1.25% increase in National Insurance would cost them £255 annually. This would equate to a huge chunk of the 3% pay rise for NHS workers, with 50,000 more nurses. Most social care workers rely on the annual minimum wage uprating to get a pay increase. Thousands more care workers will leave the profession to go and work in Amazon warehouses. Joined-up thinking is not a strongpoint of this government!

Social care needs huge investment so where should the money come from? The top three owners of care homes in the UK are private equity companies, solely operating to accumulate profit. Social care should not only be planned as part of a national set-up with the NHS but it should be nationalised.

If tax or NI increases for ordinary workers are proposed by Johnson, the TUC should be calling for united trade union opposition through action, to add to its words of opposition. If the TUC fails to act, the Left

particularly in Unite and UNISON, the two largest health and care unions - should be meeting jointly to map a way forward.



Schools funding crisis fails vulnerable children

RACHEL LYON

WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY
AND SEND WORKER

Schools face a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) funding crisis, a £1 billion shortfall in funding. The £730 million budget increase announced for 2021-22 won't touch the sides, and will see council SEND budget deficits continue to grow.

Since the 2014 Education Act introduced the change from 'statements' to 'educational, care and health plans' (EHCPs) to determine what funding is given to meet children's needs, the number of children entitled to funding has seen a 25% rise.

We are told that schools can't cope with these demands, but surely the answer is to request the government for more money? After all, the government bailed out the banks in 2008, and big business throughout the pandemic. We need an immediate injection of funding to wipeout council SEND budget deficits.

Labour councils like ours in Waltham Forest, east London, should refuse to make cuts, spend what is needed to meet children's needs, and demand the money from the government. This stand could help mobilise demonstrations of parents and staff and be the start of a campaign for a fully funded education system accessible for all children regardless of their ability or need.

In March, in partial admission of the crisis, the Department for Education announced £100 million of 'safety valve agreements', or bailouts,

for the five local authorities with the biggest SEND budget deficits, but under strict conditions of these councils making further cuts.

Waltham Forest Borough Council has a £7.97 million deficit and did not get a bailout. Our borough has decided to cut 10% from the budget for those children who have a band E or F EHCP. Our borough has the highest number of children with an EHCP, and statistics show there will be a 25% increase each year.

Waltham Forest's own SEND ethos states: "Children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) will achieve well in early years, at school, at college and lead happy and fulfilled lives"

It should read: "Prepare for a lifelong battle for your child's rights in education". The reality is that a child's EHCP plan is treated as a wish list, not a legal document. Under budget pressures, and without the same level of scrutiny as schools under direct local authority control, academies can be a law unto themselves, with high exclusion rates amongst SEND pupils.

As an education worker I am inundated with horror stories of children being excluded, not because of their challenging behaviour, but because of the lack of experienced staff and adequate training in schools.

Initially it was hard to hear parents make formal complaints that their child was not getting the 1:1 support on their EHCP, but this is now a regular complaint. I think it should be mandatory for all schools to provide a sensory room, training, provision and essential therapies.

In 2020, two families, alongside



many witnesses, took Waltham Forest Borough Council to the high court to legally challenge the 10% reduction in band E and F funding. The families argued that this level of funding doesn't meet ECHP requirements.

The courts found that the council has a legal obligation to meet accessed needs and the priority to regard the ECHP as a legal document, but failed to find that the council has acted unlawfully. The campaigners correctly point out that the councils actions are both unethical and unjust.

We need to unite whole school communities to fight for the funding young people deserve, and to fight school job cuts. We need councils to refuse to pass on cuts, and demand the funding from government. We need to address the disastrous effect of academisation for SEND children.

Parents, education workers, trade unions and young people need to stand together in opposition. This should include standing in the local elections for 2022 with a position of no cuts. Our community needs a voice!

There is never a good reason to make cuts to education. Our children deserve more and shouldn't pay the price for Covid. The disadvantages SEND children face are already huge in this capitalist society, they don't need more!

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University bosses push through pension cuts proposal



UCU members striking to fight pension cuts in 2018 GARY FREEMAN

BEA GARDNER

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER IN UCU

University bosses have pushed through their proposal to impose severe pension cuts to those in the 'USS' pension. At a meeting of the USS joint negotiating committee, the employers, represented by Universities UK (UUK), voted through their cuts with the support of the USS trustees and the independent chair.

Jo Grady, general secretary of the University and Colleges Union (UCU), has signified that the union is ready to embark on sustained industrial action in defence of members' pensions, telling members that strike action is now "inevitable". The leadership must now back up its words with deeds by allocating resources for the dispute, and building confidence that the leadership is prepared to see the struggle through.

UUK, which represents the vice-chancellors of universities in the USS, proposed the cuts to make sure workers in the scheme pay the cost of the deficit projected by the 2020 USS valuation. Under the bosses' proposals, the 'typical member' will suffer a 35% loss to their guaranteed retirement benefits, including their lump sum and yearly pension. Younger workers in the scheme will fare much worse than this.

The 2020 valuation date of 31 March 2020 has been widely criticised as it fell right at the start of the pandemic when the economic forecast was extremely unstable. USS assets have increased by £20 billion in the last few years, now valued at £80 billion, and the fund continues to grow, with contributions exceeding pensions. For example, in 2020, contributions exceeded funds paid out by 37%.

The union must fight this vicious attack, where the economic uncertainty of the pandemic is being used to slash members' benefits. Alongside fighting these latest attacks, a long-term solution is needed to resolve the persistent issues of flawed valuations, and mismanagement of members pensions.

The Socialist Party calls for the pension scheme to be run under the democratic control and management of the workers in it. That would end what has been a perpetual fight to defend USS from bosses' attacks, and would secure our pensions well into the future.

The next steps for the dispute will be formally voted on at an online special higher education sector conference on 9 September.

They will be ratified by a later meeting of the higher education committee.

Socialist Party national council - members enthused by excellent in-person meeting



Many attended their first nationwide meeting as Socialist Party members IAIN DALTON

JOSH ASKER
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Members of the Socialist Party in England and Wales had to wait 552 days from the last opportunity they had to meet up altogether in person at our congress in March 2020. After that long wait, the national council that took place on 4 and 5 September 2021 didn't disappoint!

People who have previously only met on Zoom, finally met in person. Those who attended will agree that nothing compares to the energy that comes from over 150 socialists sharpening their ideas in preparation for

class struggle, just a flavour of what is to come in the upcoming Socialism2021 event (see below).

Those 552 days have been months of turmoil for the capitalist system, and the world's working class. Introducing the discussion on perspectives and programme, Hannah Sell, the Socialist Party's general secretary, started by commending the work of our members and branches in rising to the challenges that the pandemic, and subsequent restrictions, have posed.

She explained how, although not ideal, we were quick to learn how to use Zoom as a way to maintain weekly branch meetings, and how we

have been able to continue the weekly publication of the Socialist. This meant that when the apparent quiet of lockdown was pierced by explosions of youth and workers onto the streets, like in the Black Lives Matter movement, we were well prepared to take our socialist message out and build our party. In fact, we have recruited over 500 new members to the party during the pandemic, and several of them were at the council.

Opportunities

The Covid crisis has revealed the incapacity of capitalism to keep us safe. Spending, and state intervention that was previously dismissed as impossible, has been shown to be possible. It has been laid bare to millions that it is workers, often exploited in low-paid, insecure jobs, that really make the world go round - manufacturing and transporting goods, caring for the vulnerable and more. And yet it is the billionaires that have got richer.

This stark inequality, and the instability of capitalism as it emerges from the economic lockdown experiment, gives big opportunities to build support for socialist ideas among the working class, particularly the youth. After all, a recent survey revealed that 75% of young people in Britain agree with the statement that "socialism is a good idea, but it has failed in the past because it has been badly done".

The pandemic marks a turning point for capitalism and for the working class. To correspond to the changed circumstances, the Socialist Party's political programme is in the process of being adapted accordingly. A draft 'what we stand for' document was distributed to members ahead of the meeting, starting the process of discussion in our branches about what political programme is

needed as we begin to emerge from the pandemic.

The party building discussion faced up to the organisational tasks that will be necessary to realise the potential for growth and influence of our ideas. A pressing task is to continue to fight to find ways to arrange safe, weekly, in-person discussions for our branches in order to plan our intervention in the movements to come.



Nothing compares to the energy that comes from over 150 socialists sharpening their ideas in preparation for class struggle

Another is to continue to finance our organisation by selling the paper, raising fighting fund donations and with our member's subs. Heather Rawling, introducing the finance appeal, set a target of £5,000. This was eclipsed by the final total raised: £8,655 - emulating the financial commitment shown by our members and supporters throughout the pandemic.

The autumn months could see class battles develop on any number of fronts: strikes against 'fire and rehire', on the issue of NHS pay or against the public sector pay freeze. Workers moving into struggle will be given confidence by victories for the left in the trade unions - Sharon Graham's victory in Unite and the left majority on Unison's national executive committee (see page 2 and 3).

The Socialist Party's trade union activists, backed up by all of our membership, have played an important role in these victories.

The discussion on our work in the trade unions revealed the important role our party is playing, with our members, and assisting with the transformation of the trade unions into fighting, democratic organisations.

Equally, autumn could also see a new surge of youth protests develop. Those in attendance will be confident in the ability of our young members who contributed to the youth discussion, to intervene and take a lead in these movements.

Our young members are preparing to talk to thousands of others in the next month as university term starts. Delegates left armed with socialist ideas and the determination to help build Socialist Students on the campuses. Our young members will also be preparing to take the lead in organising Youth Fight For Jobs protests on 9 October, linking the struggles of young people to the need to be organised in the trade unions (see back page).

For many, the national council was the first all-England and Wales meeting they had attended in person. One remarked on their confidence in the organisational capacity of our party to lead workers' movements in the future.

Others have a long track record of leading workers' struggles, and building the Socialist Party. Peter Taaffe, the Socialist Party's political secretary, spoke in the discussion on perspectives for Britain, and signed copies of the most recent volume of our party's history: 'The Struggle for World Socialism'.

Now the task is to begin to write the next chapters of our party's history, by preparing to take part in the class struggles of post-pandemic Britain.



Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary PHOTO: MARY FINCH

9/11 AND THE 'WAR ON TERROR' TWENTY YEARS ON

On 11 September 2001 the infamous 9/11 al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on US soil prompted the then US president George W Bush and British PM Tony Blair to instigate a Western military invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. The stated aim was to remove the Taliban regime which had been harbouring al-Qaeda bases.

Yet, after 20 years of occupation, in a disastrous historic irony, the Taliban is back in power and Islamic State suicide bombers have already killed over 100 people, including 13 US servicemen - the deadliest day for the US military in Afghanistan since 2011.

Alistair Tice examines the events of 9/11 and what the lessons are for the workers' movement today.

On 11 September 2001, later referred to as 9/11, al-Qaeda carried out the most spectacular terrorist attack in history. On that morning, 19 al-Qaeda operatives hijacked four commercial airliners on internal US flights. Two were crashed into the iconic Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, the heart of the US financial system. Within two hours both towers completely collapsed.

A third plane crashed into the side of the Pentagon building, headquarters of the US military. On the fourth plane, which was probably targeted to hit the Capitol building in Washington DC, the seat of the US Congress, passengers confronted the hijackers and it crashed into a field.

Altogether 2,997 people were killed, including 33 crew, all 213 passengers, 340 firefighters and 72 police, and over 2,000 staff in the Twin Towers, most of them office workers. Over 6,000 were injured.

It was the first attack on the US mainland since the 1812-14 war with Britain, and killed more than the Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbor naval base in Honolulu in 1941.

9/11 shattered the alleged invincibility of US imperialism, especially as it caught its intelligence and security services unprepared. But the seeds had been planted at least 20 years earlier.

In the last decade of the Cold War, the Stalinist Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 to prop up the pro-Moscow regime, which was facing a widespread rural insurgency by the Mujahedeen - who were being funded and trained by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) via Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency.

Osama bin-Laden, part of a very wealthy business family close to the Saudi royals, and subscribing to the Islamic fundamentalist Wahhabi sect, funded and trained Arab jihadists to go to Afghanistan to fight with the

Mujahedeen against the 'communists'. Eventually, Soviet troops were withdrawn in 1989 and the pro-Moscow regime collapsed, leading to a civil war between rival Mujahedeen warlords.

Other former Mujahedeen leaders, including Mullah Mohammed Omar, founded the Taliban (meaning 'student' in Arabic) who mobilised Islamic students from the religious seminaries, madrassas, on the Pakistan border.

The Taliban defeated the ethnic-based Afghanistan warlords, sweeping to power with popular support for restoring relative peace and security, but based on traditional Pashtun tribal code and their austere and repressive version of Sharia law. In 1996 they declared the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and by 2000 controlled 90% of the country.

Bin Laden supported the Taliban (who weren't initially anti-US, in fact they sought US recognition and had talks with a US energy company), but in 1988 he formed his Arab Afghan fighters into al-Qaeda (which means 'base' in Arabic), committed to continuing jihad globally.

After establishing a new training base in Afghanistan, he declared war against the United States because of their troops being on 'Islamic soil' in Saudi Arabia, for their support for Israel against the Palestinians, and for US sanctions against Iraq.

Al-Qaeda franchises initiated a series of bombings and related attacks in different countries, most notably the 1998 attacks on US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, killing 200 people.

Terrorism

And then came 9/11 - which initially bin-Laden denied responsibility for but later claimed al-Qaeda had masterminded.

Marxists have always opposed acts of 'individual terrorism', even when the targets are members or representatives of the ruling classes or the

state. This is because, as revolutionary socialists, we want to overthrow the capitalist system as a whole, not just eliminate individuals who can be replaced.

And such acts, at best, reduce the role of the masses to that of onlookers to their self-appointed 'liberators'. This reduces class consciousness in the need for collective and mass action against the system, the way capitalism can be overthrown.



9/11 shattered the alleged invincibility of US imperialism, especially as it caught its intelligence and security services unprepared. But the seeds had been planted at least 20 years earlier

Also, such terrorist actions are totally counterproductive. They play into the hands of the ruling class and state, who exploit the revulsion of people at the violence and killings to justify more repressive laws and actions.

Such measures are then used not only against the alleged terrorists, but usually against the very people that the terror acts are supposed to liberate.

Al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks were by small groups carrying out mass terror. While targeting symbols of US imperialism's economic and military power, they indiscriminately killed and injured thousands of innocent people.

The global wave of mass horror at these acts allowed a very unpopular US president, George W Bush, to initially win mass popular support for



The smouldering ruins of the Twin Towers in New York City following al-Qa'ida's attack



'War criminals' Tony Blair and George Bush continue to defend their disastrous imperialist folly in Afghanistan and Iraq

his 'war on terror'.

It enabled his administration to pass laws curtailing civil and democratic rights in the US. Similar restrictive laws were passed by governments in the UK, France and elsewhere. This climate resulted in a huge increase in Islamophobic abuse, violence and right-wing terror attacks on Muslims, the very people al-Qaeda purported to represent.

The Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International

(CWI - the international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) condemned the 9/11 attacks. But, in no way did we give support to the hypocritical and opportunistic reaction of Bush, Blair and other West-party dictatorships and bureaucratic mismanagement.

It had precisely been their imperialist and discriminatory actions at home and abroad, especially in the Middle East, that had created the fertile ground from which al-Qaeda and other such groups had gained support.

2001 was only a decade after the collapse of Stalinism, when capitalism was restored in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which had previously been based on nationalised economies but suffered one-party dictatorships and bureaucratic mismanagement.

'The capitalist West was triumphant: Communism has collapsed, socialism has failed, liberal democracy is the only system', they gloated.

This left the US as the only global

economic and military superpower. President George Bush senior proclaimed a 'New American Century'. In 1991 he won a quick military victory in the first Gulf War against the former US-backed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, who had attempted to flex his regional power ambitions by invading neighbouring Kuwait.

So 9/11 came as a huge blow to US prestige, which had to be avenged. Launching the 'war on terror' President George W Bush stated: "Our

enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them". This put Saddam's Iraq and the Islamic state of Iran firmly into US military sights.

None of the 19 al-Qaeda operatives were from Iraq, Iran or Afghanistan (15 were from oil-rich Saudi Arabia, a close ally of the US). Bush justified the bombing and occupation of Afghanistan on the grounds that the Taliban would not give up Osama bin Laden, who was holed up there.



The anti-war movement fed into the anti-capitalist and other movements... radicalising a generation of young people towards socialist ideas

Overwhelming US-UK coalition firepower ensured a quick military victory and the installation of a pro-western, US-backed president Karzai. The Taliban were removed from power, and retreated to the rural and Pakistan border areas from which they launched an insurgency against the occupying forces and stooge Afghan government.

Despite as many as 120,000 troops, the US-UK coalition could not suppress the Taliban which forced US presidents, first Barack Obama and then Donald Trump, to negotiate with them.

Trump, ignoring the Ghani regime in Afghanistan, struck a deal with the Taliban to exit the country by 31 May. Current US president Joe Biden extended the deadline to 31 August, but now he has been attacked by political friends and foes alike for his handling of the chaotic departure from the country.

Invasion of Iraq

Flush with the initial military success in Afghanistan, George W Bush quickly turned US imperialism's attention to oil-rich Iraq, where Saddam Hussein had remained in power, despite his defeat in the first Gulf War and a decade of crippling United Nations sanctions.

The 2003 US-UK invasion of Iraq was justified as part of the 'war on terror' by Bush and Blair. It was predicated on the lie that Saddam held 'weapons of mass destruction' (WMD), and his alleged harbouring of al-Qaeda terrorists. But WMD were never found and al-Qaeda and its offshoot, Islamic State, hardly existed in Iraq prior to the US occupation.

A US 'shock and awe' blitz led to another quick military victory, overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Bush on board the USS aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln declared "Mission accomplished".

But the ensuing power vacuum after the US dismantled Saddam's Sunni dominated state apparatus, led to a lengthy insurgency against the occupying US-UK coalition forces, and sectarian clashes between the majority Shias and previously dominant minority Sunni populations.

In addition, opposition to the occupation in both the US and UK increased as troop casualties mounted for an unwinnable war based on lies, securing oil, and other geopolitical aims.

Biden has confirmed that all US combat troops will withdraw from Iraq by the end of 2021, along with Afghanistan, another humiliating retreat from a disastrous war.

Rise of Islamic State

Islamic State (IS) arose as an offshoot of al-Qaeda intent on establishing a Sunni-based Islamic Caliphate. Exploiting the alienation and fears of Iraqi Sunnis against the US-backed sectarian Shia Maliki government, in the summer of 2014 IS swept through northern Iraq capturing the country's second city Mosul.

At the same time, in neighbouring Syria, a popular uprising against dictator Bashar al-Assad - initially part of the 'Arab Spring' movement - had degenerated into a protracted sectarian civil war, with atrocities on both sides.

The 'Islamic State of Iraq and Levant' (ISIL) at its height, controlled 10 million people in 40% of Iraq and one-third of Syria. Using barbaric methods against all opponents, including public beheadings of western hostages, ISIL threatened the complete breakup of Iraq, Syria, and beyond.

Due to public opposition at home and throughout the Middle East after the Afghanistan and Iraq war disasters, US imperialism did not dare to put more 'boots on the ground' and could only rely on proxy forces and air strikes, which were not enough to completely displace ISIL.

Moreover, the US administration was powerless to stop the strengthening of global and regional enemies, Russia and Iran.

Lessons

US imperialism was initially strengthened after the 9/11 attacks, exploiting the opportunities to overcome the 'Vietnam Syndrome' (humiliating defeat in the Vietnam War, which debilitated the US from directly intervening elsewhere) and demonstrate its 'full spectral dominance'.

But 20 years on, disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have weakened US capitalism economically, militarily, in spheres of influence and diplomatically. While the US is still the strongest capitalist power in the world, it is in relative decline and is being challenged regionally and globally in an increasingly multipolar world.

The rise of China has forced US imperialism to pivot to its foreign policy towards the Indo-Pacific to try to counter China's influence. This is likely to lead to more local clashes and proxy conflicts in that region.

Al-Qaeda has not been able to repeat another 9/11-scale terrorist attack, and Osama bin-Laden was assassinated by the Obama administration in 2011.

The ISIL Islamic caliphate was territorially dismantled by 2019. But as the rapid resurgence of the Taliban and the Kabul airport bombing show, if the workers' movement doesn't build or provide organisation and leadership, then imperialism, poverty and division will fuel the re-emergence of al-Qa'ida and Islamic State or groups and individuals inspired by them, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and al-Shabab in Mozambique.

The US is now conducting 'counter-terrorist' activities in 85 countries, showing how their 'war on terror' has spread terrorism rather than defeated it.

The US Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs calculates that at least 800,000 people (500,000

civilians) have been killed from direct military violence in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, with large areas of those countries and Gaza, Libya and Somalia being reduced to rubble. US post-9/11 wars have displaced 37 million people either internally or as refugees.

The end of the Cold War 30 years ago has not brought the global peace and security heralded by the triumphalist West. Global instability, especially since 9/11, is greater than any time since World War One.

In 1915, the great socialist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg said humankind faced a future of either "socialism or barbarism". Today, there is barbarism in many parts of the world.

Yet the resources exist for socialism. Imagine if the \$6 trillion spent by the US on wars and occupations over the last 20 years had instead been spent on clean water, sanitation, housing, health and education. How the lives of millions would have been transformed!

And out of the death, destruction and misery around the capitalist world, we have seen the hope for the future in the largest protest event in human history, the anti-war demonstrations around the world in February 2003 when tens of millions marched in 800 cities. If such movements had embraced the workers' movement in a struggle for socialist change then wars could have been stopped and a lasting, prosperous peace developed.

Nonetheless, the anti-war movement fed into the anti-capitalist and subsequent global climate change movements, women's and Black Lives Matter protests, radicalising a generation of young people towards socialist ideas.

And the Arab Spring, when mass movements and mass actions overthrew dictatorial regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, showed where the real potential power in society lies, not in small terrorist groups who played no role in such uprisings, but with the working class and youth.

Even in civil war-torn Iraq, divided Lebanon, and repressive Iran, non-sectarian anti-government demonstrations have erupted in the last three years, toppling presidents and prime ministers.

But to be successful, these movements need independent, working-class organisation and revolutionary socialist policies and leadership, to ensure that in the next 20 years capitalism and terrorism are eradicated and replaced with a socialist world free of war, poverty and oppression.

● See also '2011: Libya and the overthrow of Gaddafi' - page 15

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DWP: Demand safe working and more jobs

KATRINE WILLIAMS
PCS DWP REP (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Resistance must be built to Tory attacks on the unemployed. In their drive to ramp up their harsh welfare system, they are prepared to put everyone's safety at risk. They plan to drag every claimant back into Jobcentres for even more mandatory interviews, especially 18-24 year olds.

All safety measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus and protect both the public and PCS members in Jobcentres are under threat - including using every desk to put everyone in close proximity, failing to address inadequate ventilation, and slashing the additional cleaning.

A flawed risk assessment review process was deliberately rushed through during peak summer leave. Local managers have been forced to open up all the desks previously marked as unsafe to use, regardless of their misgivings and safety reps' opposition due to the risk.

Enormous pressure is being put on PCS members in Jobcentres to work to meaningless targets on the numbers of claimants being seen, cramming in as many interviews as possible, and getting claimants on schemes which bear no relation to the support that individuals need. Many of the 13,000 extra staff recruited into the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to help people

get work are on insecure, temporary contracts themselves.

While our members are being put under unbearable pressure, and union branches are abandoned to fight on their own, the PCS DWP group leadership are devising any method to keep kicking the can down the road rather than give a decisive lead.

By contrast, PCS Broad Left Network members in DWP are encouraging branches to mobilise members to collectively challenge the employer, to utilise health and safety rights and, crucially, put pressure on the union leadership to act.

We are also promoting joint campaigning with claimant organisations to fight against the common enemy. Building support for the Youth Fight for Jobs protests on the 9 October (see back page) is an ideal way to build the pressure on the government and highlight the demands we have in common:

- Safety for all must be paramount while delivering quality, tailored support for claimants and ensuring benefits are paid on time in DWP
- Fighting for decent, safe permanent jobs on a real living wage for all, including all the temporary staff in the DWP and public sector, to directly recruit workers and stop use of agency workers
- Fight for the uplift on Universal Credit to be retained as part of a campaign for a fully resourced, supportive, public social security system

Bexley bin workers win big gains after six-week strike



Bin workers lobby the council during the dispute

ROB WILLIAMS
SOCIALIST PARTY INDUSTRIAL ORGANISER

The Socialist Party welcomes the improvements to pay and conditions that striking Bexley bin workers in Unite have won after taking indefinite action for over six weeks. They started their dispute in the South London borough in the weeks before the first wave of the Covid pandemic early last year. That action was then suspended and the bin workers showed that they were key workers, putting their health at risk during the height of coronavirus.

But all this has been forgotten by their employer, the notorious Serco, and the Tory council, with the same issues remaining. A series of different outsourced companies over the years after the service was privatised has seen workers employed on different pay and hours. This has led to anomalies with newer workers being on up to £6,000 more than some of their more longstanding workmates who have service of over a decade.

The strike was vital as the Serco contract is coming to an end next month, to be replaced by Countrystyle. The workers' union Unite reports that: "The agreement with Countrystyle Recycling will see the lowest-paid workers receive a pay rise of 11% with rates increasing to £11.50 an hour, above the real London Living Wage of £10.85, as well as pay rises for staff on other grades.

"Some drivers, previously on £22,000 a year because of Serco's failure to pay workers according to stipulated pay scales, will see their wages increase to more than £30,000 when they transfer to Countrystyle. The deal with Countrystyle also sees staff receive an extra five days annual leave as well as 12 weeks of industrial injury sick pay that was denied them by Serco."

This result was achieved by the determination of Unite and its members at Bexley, who had to face up to hardline policing at the start of the dispute. The workers welcomed

Socialist Party members and National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) supporters, who consistently went to the picket line to support their action, as well as the likes of Tony Davis Unite convener of the bin workers in Thurrock, just across the Dartford Bridge. They had also won a victory over another Tory council earlier this year after also being out for six weeks, and their successful action was an inspiration to the Bexley workers.

This result will strengthen the union in the bin depot, and the workers are fully aware of how outsourcing will always be a stick to beat them. The Tory council tried to act as 'neutral' during the dispute, as if it was nothing to do with them. But the workers weren't fooled and organised protests outside the council HQ.

DHL workers to strike against wage theft

Unite members working for DHL at Jaguar Land Rover are balloting for strike action following the company's failure to pay workers the wages owed to them. This is despite DHL making £1.3 billion profit in the first six months of 2021! Birmingham Socialist Party spoke to a shop steward at one of the sites affected:

"There were wildcat strikes at Solihull on 9-10 August, seeing over 20 people walk off the job following the company's pay errors. The way the company has handled takebacks from flexible furlough without consultation has led to some people having £800-plus removed from their wages in one go, just before the summer (shutdown) holiday. We were due to sit down and meet

about 2020 pay today for 2,000-plus hourly paid employees across the DHL/JLR contract.

The meeting was postponed because of the action trackside that was taken by employees themselves individually. Some of them are highly stressed and in severe financial difficulty after the deductions. I know of one individual who can't even afford to put fuel in his car to get into work.

Who can blame them for taking action - it seems to be the only thing the company understands. The concern from our national committee now is that the company shows more of a desire to investigate the track stoppages and cars lost than to sort out its incompetent wages department."

Workers at the GKN automotive engineering plant in Birmingham have voted to strike in a campaign to prevent the factory's closure. The ballot had a 95% turnout, of which 95% of workers voted to strike. Unite has called on interested parties, including GKN's customers such as Jaguar Land Rover, Toyota and Nissan, the government and the plant's bosses, to reach an agreement on future production and support for Erdington. See 'Save jobs, save livelihoods, save GKN Automotive - nationalise the plant!' at socialistparty.org.uk for more.

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Equity protest to save arts centre forces talks from Newham Council



PHOTOS MARY FINCH



JAMES IVENS
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY AND EQUITY NORTH AND EAST LONDON (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Equity's protest to save theatre jobs at Stratford Circus arts centre was a big success. Around 50 joined a determined and positive rally on Saturday 28 August in Newham's historic Theatre Square.

Passionate speakers explained the Circus's value to the local working-class community - and the need to defend paid work as the arts climb out of the pandemic slump. Equity's new general secretary Paul Fleming condemned the east London Labour council's attacks.

Staff members, performers and parents of the professional learning-disabled theatre company Blue Sky Actors attended in big numbers. Several spoke too - their continued existence is in question due to eviction from the Circus.

This included Linda Jordan, also a long-standing Labour Party activist who opposes the Labour council's cuts, gentrification and undemocratic regime. London Labour has suspended both Newham constituency Labour parties - in reality due to their left campaigning. Socialists in Newham Labour have defied this, meeting independently as 'Newham Socialist Labour'.

Socialist Party member Louise Cuffaro, secretary of the Newham branch of the National Education Union, also spoke. This attack will impact school theatre visits and future arts careers for local youth.

Meanwhile, the council is aiding and abetting publicly run schools becoming for-profit 'academies'.

Hannah Sell spoke for the Socialist Party, pointing out all these campaigns have a common enemy in Newham Labour austerity. East London Socialist Party proposes all the campaigns and unions meet this autumn to draw up a 'people's budget' for the needs of all local workers and residents.

If Labour won't fight for the resources needed, Newham trade unionists and campaigners should form an alliance to stand against them in May 2022. The local Greens who attended the protest would be welcome at those discussions if their candidates will commit to 100% no-cuts budgets.

It took the perceived threat of protests for the council to offer talks with Equity in the first place. Having then dismissed the union's demands, this initial protest has pushed the council to reopen and then bring forward talks.

Even before then, the official tendering process that will 'repurpose' the arts centre was delayed. Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz has also withdrawn from Labour conference's left fringe event 'The World Transformed'. We believe this campaign is part of the pressure that caused both.

With local and national media coverage already, and plans to call a second, larger protest action, Newham Council should take note: the arts are no longer a soft target for austerity.

The street I live on

JAMES COLLETT
GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

A man was stabbed in the back as he walked along Barton Street, the street I live on in Gloucester, recently. The sight of police cordons is not unusual here. As the Tory council pours money into (ineffectually) gentrifying the city centre, the consequences of austerity are increasingly pushed into poor areas like Barton and Tredworth.

Incidents like this will only increase as more cuts are made to drug rehabilitation, mental health, homeless shelters, benefits, jobs and social services. Capitalism is destroying our communities, with the poorest hit the hardest.

In Gloucester the public toilets have been closed and Barton Street has become a latrine. I've seen homeless people defecate on the pavement outside the pharmacy, and my front door is regularly used as a urinal. I've seen families arrive at night to go through the bins, their kids helping, looking for anything they might be able to use or sell. Prostitution is commonplace; women will offer you their bodies for a fiver, years of pain and desperation etched on their faces as they do so.

In November last year, Barton had the highest Covid infection rate of any area in the South West. This was not only because of the overcrowded, low-quality housing and underlying health problems associated with poverty, but because many residents here work low-paid jobs which put them at risk of infection: factory



There is a rage growing in the working class

work, retail, transport, etc. In other words, they are key workers - people who kept the country running throughout the pandemic while the super-rich sat in their mansions getting richer, and their lackeys in parliament cut them dirty deals.

It was working-class people from this area who came in their hundreds to the Black Lives Matter protests last summer and the protest against Israeli state terror this year. Over 40% of residents in Barton and Tredworth are Black and Asian, with a further 10% white non-British. There was a cathartic element to those events, especially the Black Lives Matter protests, where people finally had a chance to speak publicly of the crimes committed against them and the conditions inflicted on them.

There is a rage growing in the working class. We're sick of being ignored, sick of being cheated and lied to by the Tories, by Labour, by all of them. The capitalist system is failing, and we're expected to pay its debts. We've already paid enough. It's time for us to build a party of our own, a workers' party with workers' MPs on a workers' wage, who do what they say they'll do.

We need a party of and for the working class, demanding nationalisation of the banks and big companies, including the parasitic pharmaceutical companies, so that we can have a real, socialist NHS, decent housing, fully funded services; so that we can take society into our own hands and run it democratically in our own interests; and so that the people, not just of Barton and Tredworth but all oppressed and exploited communities, can be liberated and allowed to fulfil the potential which capitalism would crush without a thought in the interests of profit.



Bin workers in Sandwell walked out on 31 August against an endemic culture of bullying from management that has seen workers forced to take annual leave while self-isolating and sacked for shielding during the pandemic. Bosses Serco also won't pay workers on the Sandwell Council contract the same as others get for doing the same job in neighbouring areas. Time to kick out profiteers from our public services and ensure a living wage and safe working environment for all workers!



Striking London Royal Parks workers and supporters marched through Hyde Park on 30 August, amplifying the cleaners' struggle for equality and marking the end of their second week of strike action. Royal Parks cleaners working for Just Ask Services are fighting for an end to the two-tier workforce which sees workers employed on the Just Ask contract getting worse terms than their colleagues working directly for Royal Parks. PCS members are demanding improved workplace health and safety, a commitment to no redundancies, and sick pay parity with in-house staff, among other things.



Barton Street DAVID STOWELL/CC

Socialist change, not climate change

Dave Nellist - Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition chair and Socialist Party national committee member - wrote the following letter to the Observer in reply to the Green Party Baroness Natalie Bennett's call for capitalist reforms to halt catastrophic climate change.

Natalie Bennett calls for 'system change, not climate change' (Your Letters, 22 August) but then proposes solutions that hardly challenge the vested interests of the existing economic system and its owners.

To move climate heating industries to zero-carbon emissions requires urgent national and international planning and significant investment. There are two problems. Firstly, we can't plan what we don't fully control, and we don't fully control what we don't own. Secondly, private

investment in a market-based system is constricted by the expectation of its owners making a profit.

The fundamental system change needed is public ownership and rational economic planning in a democratic socialist system. Unfortunately, we don't yet have a major political party arguing for that.

Leaving society in the continued control of millionaire politicians being told by billionaire business owners not to threaten their profits won't fundamentally change anything.



The fundamental obstacle to stopping catastrophic climate change is the profit system PHOTO PAUL MATTSSON

Save the planet - make capitalism extinct

HEATHER RAWLING
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Listening to the radio the other day, I heard a grandmother's account of why she was on the recent Extinction Rebellion protest in London.

The interviewer asked her what she thought the solution to climate change was. This question would've been a gift to a socialist.

We would have explained that there is no solution under capitalism, even if the capitalists genuinely want

to find a solution.

Capitalism operates on the short-term drive for profits, with owners and nations in competition with each other.

Until the working class and poor of the world own and democratically control the world's resources, we will not have a satisfactory solution.

Instead, the spokesperson for XR said that they weren't 'solutionary', they were just alerting people to the problem.

I think the majority of us know that

climate change is happening and it's urgent that humanity addresses the threat.

I appeal to people concerned about the threat of climate change to fight for socialism, as the only way we can tackle the threat, democratically, on a world scale.

The Socialist Party says socialist change to stop climate change: Take over the major corporations so we can democratically plan the use of the world's resources, for need and not profit.

Obituary: Roger Henshaw, comrade and class fighter

19/8/1943 - 22/8/2021

DAVE BEALE
CHAIR UNITE NW/11500 LANCS COMMUNITY BRANCH.

Wonderful tributes are pouring in following the sad death of my great friend and comrade, Roger Henshaw.

Unite's new general secretary, Sharon Graham, who Roger strongly supported, has expressed her sadness, great respect and thanks for all he did for the movement, as has Unite executive council chair, Tony Woodhouse.

Roger started work on the shop-floor but soon became a draughtsman and union activist. He saw what the left could achieve in his union TASS and joined the Communist Party, playing a key role in the union's broad left.

He was elected to the TASS national executive, and was a full-time official by his early 30s, first in London then Manchester and Kendal. He took a leading role on the union's left, especially in the North West, and in providing invaluable training to young union reps.

I first came across Roger in the 1980s, although his immense reputation went ahead of him. In the last

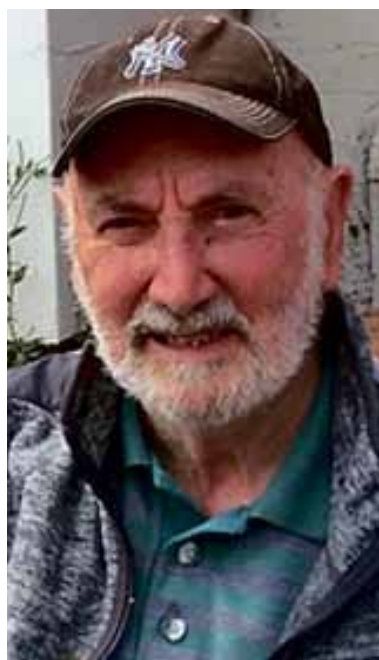
four years, I have been privileged to work closely with him in the Unite Lancashire Community Branch, in which he played a central role, and was branch secretary in recent months.

Roger had been an important player in Unite's 'United Left', but thought a fundamental change was needed in Unite from top to bottom to fight the current employers' onslaught and capitalist crisis. He decided that backing Sharon Graham rather than Steve Turner in the 2021 general secretary election was the key to the situation and courageously campaigned for her.

Roger continued to read the Morning Star, but told me he was increasingly critical of it. He also read the Socialist the last few years and joined the Socialist Party a few months ago. He made a great contribution in meetings from the outset and read the party material with enthusiasm.

He died shortly before Sharon was declared general secretary and would have been delighted by the possibilities her victory opens up for the left and the wider workers' movement.

Roger was a genuine class fighter



Roger Henshaw

of the highest order. We will miss him greatly but his example and influence will truly live on, inspiring so many of us. In this very difficult time, our thoughts are with Roger's family, friends and comrades.

TV Review

Vigil: A nuclear sub murder mystery



DEREK MCMILLAN
WORTHING

'We are here to start a nuclear war. Don't waste our time with one bloody death', is the attitude of the officers on HMS Vigil towards the hapless detective DCI Silva in the opening episodes of this BBC series.

The contempt of the military officers towards the police and towards the people of Scotland and civilians in general is made clear.

On paper, the nuclear subs are there to defend the public. In practice, the sinking of a trawler is just a nuisance to be hushed up, and who

cares if the rank and file die?

The people of Scotland resent the fact that the Westminster government has pinned a nuclear target on their backs. Any government and any terrorist group which wants to attack the Trident subs will endanger Scottish lives. Perhaps that is just the way the Tories like it.

This is the background to a story which has all the hallmarks of 'Line of Duty' and it is every bit as gripping.

The idea of a murder mystery set on a submarine is the ultimate 'locked room' mystery and this is an excellent detective story.

Vigil is well worth a watch.



Socialist Party members campaigning in Mansfield town centre MANSFIELD SP

Building Youth Fight for Jobs in the South West

DAN SMART
BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Young people face attacks on all fronts - sky-high rents, astronomical tuition fees, and the threat of mass job losses when furlough ends in September. We increasingly realise that we have no future under capitalism - a system which puts the wealth of a tiny minority, the super-rich, ahead of the basic needs of the overwhelming majority for decent housing, public services and jobs. Not to mention the existential threat of climate change.

But there is hope for a better society when we get organised. In preparation for the Youth Fight for Jobs day of action on 9 October, young Socialist Party members in the South West got together to discuss our plans to fight back.

Our WhatsApp group gathered a lot of interest for our meeting, so we had a good turnout. At the meeting,

one suggestion was to build a petition and march to deliver it to Tory MP Chris Skidmore's office. Skidmore's office was 'empty plated' after he voted against giving kids free school meals over the summer; apparently he doesn't want to be found. We agreed to organise an event in Bristol and another in Devon.

We agreed to set up social media events, utilising the artistic skills of our young members to create engaging promotional material we can disseminate by leafleting, poster, and online. We will approach other organisations across the city to seek their endorsement.

We're also joining another march later in October, organised by Bristol Unemployed Workers Centre, with the involvement of the trades council. This connection of youth to the trade union movement will be essential for our struggle for well-paid, secure, fulfilling employment for all.

Why I joined the Socialist Party

PHOEBE COX
MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Mainstream politics can feel like an anchor to the chest. I once walked the streets, and delivered leaflets for the promise of a socialist government in 2019.

Many staunch socialists tried to do their best inside Labour, before either leaving of their own accord or being thrown out. There was only so much 'fighting from within Labour' talk that I could stand before I realised that nobody was fighting for our communities.

I was left with the question: what happens now?

Do we just call it a day? Do we think: "Socialism isn't happening anytime soon, and the Tories will stay in power for years, so what is the point in doing anything?"

I did not want to jump into anything new straight away, and it took me a few months to even consider joining the Socialist Party. I was apprehensive about falling into yet

another toxic and disheartening environment.

However, joining the Socialist Party was the best decision I have made. It has enabled me to harness all the energy and passion that I had before.

Fighting spirit

I have not lost my fighting spirit or my interest to know and do more. I just found a place where it was represented and appreciated.

In the Socialist Party, I found an accessible group of like-minded people. I am part of a growing conversation, actively learn about national and international issues, and have mutual respect with people from all walks of life.

It is so refreshing to be in a safe and supportive environment, that simply allows you to just be, listen and learn. Your energy is reciprocated in abundance.

There is no pressure or expectation. You just give what you can, and you find how you fit.

Whether you want to contribute to

the Socialist paper, make a donation - according to your financial means - to the fighting fund, join the local campaign stalls, or just call in and listen to the meetings. There is no contribution too big or too small.

Your presence alone is enough, and your involvement is invaluable. To me, that is the most refreshing and rewarding part of being a Socialist Party member.

The Socialist Party does not have all of the answers, and neither does it profess to. But it offers a space to mobilise, organise, inform and educate - providing helpful resources about ways to support our communities from the ground up. There is a level of authenticity and awareness that is exactly how politics should be.

The Socialist Party is accessible, self-aware, and constantly adapting to real issues that people face every day, whether happening on our doorstep or across the ocean.

It could be for you too. Socialism is the solution that we seek, and it is within reach.

Whipps Cross hospital workers reject the 3%



Workers protest at Whipps Cross Hospital, east London ISAI PRIYA

LILY DOUGLAS
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

80 plus Whipps Cross hospital workers, Unite members and Socialist Party members came out in protest against the humiliating 3% offered pay rise for all NHS workers on 25 August. The Tory government left the NHS completely unprepared to handle the Covid pandemic through austerity cuts, bed shortages, and their campaign to privatise the health service.

Instead of providing proper PPE, they chose to clap once a week for the hospital's brave sacrifices. By putting profit before people, the government has time and time

again abandoned the NHS. And the Labour party under Keir Starmer is not doing any better, standing by the Tory regime.

The protest outside the hospital was lively and energetic, with music playing and chants of "you say cut back, we say fight back!" Many took our leaflets and discussed the importance and need to fight for a 15% pay rise instead of the laughable 3%. We also put forward the need to campaign for a nationalised NHS and care system for all. The seven speakers set the tone for all the NHS protests around the country, highlighting the mood that none of us are going to back down from this fight.

SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND		AREA £ RECEIVED £ TARGET		Q3: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2021		DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2021	
South West	2,674	1,800					149%
Wales	3,022	2,300					131%
Northern	879	750					117%
Southern & SE	2,688	2,350					114%
Yorkshire	2,848	2,550					112%
East Midlands	1,827	1,850					99%
West Midlands	2,316	2,600					89%
London	3,743	4,600					81%
North West	772	1,150					67%
Eastern	251	1,200					21%
Other	661	3,850					17%
TOTAL	21,681	25,000					87%

Fund the fightback
DONATE TODAY

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- or call **020 8988 8777**
- or make cheques payable to Socialist Party, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT



Libya - ten years after Gaddafi's overthrow

While the US, British and other western governments lick their wounds following their ignoble retreat from Afghanistan, after 20 failed years of 'nation building', another 'failed state', Libya, marks ten years since the West helped overthrow the Gaddafi dictatorship. **Tom Baldwin** examines the legacy of this imperialist intervention.

Muammar Gaddafi was deposed following a popular movement in 2011 that rose up against his rule, inspired by the revolutionary movements of the 'Arab Spring' which swept North Africa and the Middle East.

At the same time, Libya faced Western military intervention through Nato, and from other countries seeking to stamp their influence on the events unfolding in the region, and to further their own interests.

In the ten years that have followed, Libya has largely remained fractured and in a state of conflict. This has been primarily a struggle between two power blocs - backed by France, US, Britain, Russia and Turkey and others - which coalesced around rival governments based in the west and the east of the country.

However, throughout that time there has been a complicated and shifting patchwork quilt of control by different militias and tribal forces.

For the vast majority of Libyans, life has become a nightmare - facing militia violence and an absence of security, internal displacement, as well as widespread unemployment and a descent into poverty.

Oil production has been disrupted by power struggles and blockades, while oil revenues are fought over by the rival groupings and siphoned off by armed militias.

Desperate migrants and refugees seeking a route through Libya to Europe have been robbed, sold into slavery, or stuck in terrible transit camps. Some have been murdered. Those that manage to secure boat passage from people smugglers risk drowning in the Mediterranean Sea or being caught by European Union naval patrols and sent back to Libya.

There is currently a fragile ceasefire and attempts at political unification. The truce came about following the collapse of a 14-month long offensive by the eastern-based Libyan National Army, led by General Haftar, aimed at taking the western capital Tripoli.

There is a rocky road to travel between now and proposed elections on 24 December. The main difficulties are around attempting a reconciliation after years of conflict, and overcoming differences and distrust between different political and regional forces. However, even the practicalities of organising a poll will be a challenge in a country which still has well over 250,000 internally displaced people.

The framework for elections is supposed to be agreed by the 75-strong Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in talks mediated by United Nations officials. However, the last round of negotiations in Geneva were mired in acrimony and described as "out of control".

None of these 'delegates' represent

the working class and poor of Libya.

One of the stumbling blocks has been the continued intervention of international and regional powers, which have been pursuing the rival interests of their own ruling classes. Last year's ceasefire agreement calls for the removal of such influence, but it still persists through the backing of local forces and the deployment of mercenaries and foreign troops.

This has been an issue for over a decade, since a military intervention led by Nato began in March 2011. The UK government joined the aerial and naval bombardment, with just 13 MPs voting to oppose. The intervention fulfilled a UN Security Council resolution and was ostensibly to protect civilians from Gaddafi regime.

Gaddafi had been in power since 1969 when he led the overthrow of the British-backed monarchy.

At times he claimed Libya was 'socialist', but it couldn't accurately be described that way. The oil industry was nationalised and a redistribution of that wealth had considerably improved the lives of many in what had been one of the poorest countries in the world.



Far from protecting civilians, Nato intervention laid the ground for a decade of chaos and conflict

However, workers had no control over the running of society. Gaddafi wielded dictatorial power and enriched himself and his children. The oil industry began to be privatised in 2003. After that, the European powers' had largely rehabilitated Gaddafi, and Libya became an important trade partner and oil supplier.

However, when the 2011 uprising began against him - inspired by the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the so-called Arab Spring - Western imperialist powers turned against him again.

While Western airstrikes were supposed to be protecting Libyan civilians from Gaddafi's armed forces, the imperialist powers were doing nothing about attacks on civilians in Bahrain and Yemen which their allies, including Saudi Arabia, were responsible for.

In reality, they were seeking to further their imperialist interests. They hoped to divert the flow of the Arab Spring and that it would lead to a new regime that was much more amenable to their interests.

No small consideration was the fact that Libya was the world's 12th



largest oil producer, sitting on Africa's largest oil reserves.

Without an organisation with a clear revolutionary programme, around which workers and youth could organise their struggle, the movement against Gaddafi began to pull in different directions. Defectors from the old regime and pro-Western politicians began to try and push themselves into positions of leadership. Nato intervention further polarised the population and split the anti-Gaddafi forces.

Eventually, he was overthrown and killed but the revolution had been derailed, and the chance for workers and youth to take control of their destinies had been lost. The country fractured into areas controlled by opposing forces.

Like many colonies Libya was actually created by the colonial power, in this case Italy in 1934, amalgamating geographically separate regions which had their own tribal and clan identity and traditions. However, against a background of rising living standards, the sense of being Libyan strengthened during Gaddafi's rule.

But in 2011 - in the absence of independent workers' and popular organisations that could unite the working people and youth - Nato's intervention, far from protecting civilians, laid the ground for a decade of chaos and conflict as the country split apart.

Barack Obama has described failing to prepare for post-Gaddafi Libya as the worst mistake of his presidency. But four successive presidents over 20 years also failed at 'nation building' following the western invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. These are just two countries on a long list where military intervention has ended in disaster for the local population.

The forces of imperialism will

directly intervene only to pursue their own strategic interests. Their 'support' for the uprising was really an attempt to control and limit the Arab Spring.

Recognising this, revolutionaries in Benghazi had put up posters saying: "No to foreign intervention - Libyans can do it by themselves".

Now we have the situation where the Turkish regime is trying to strengthen its position as a regional power by militarily backing the Tripoli based 'government', while the Russian state-approved Wagner mercenaries support General Haftar's forces.

Only through self-organisation can workers and poor people take control of their own lives. This means



Revolutionaries in Benghazi had put up posters saying: "No to foreign intervention - Libyans can do it by themselves"

building independent workers' organisations and a party with a socialist programme - including calls for international solidarity - that can actually deliver on their aspirations.

What the CWI said in 2011

Shortly after Gaddafi's killing, the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) wrote: "Now, more than ever, the creation of independent, democratic workers' organisations, including a workers' party, are vital, if working people, the oppressed and youth are to achieve a real revolutionary transformation of the country and thwart the imperialists' plans, end dictatorship and transform the lives of the mass of the people. Without this other forces will step into the gap."

Unfortunately, they did. But, although it will not be an easy task, a revival of a genuine mass movement, one that can unite working people in struggle, is still possible.

However, for lasting success, this would need to develop a programme that defends all democratic rights, is against oppression, and can organise democratic self-defence, involving minorities and migrant workers, against sectarian attacks.



US SUPREME COURT REFUSES TO CHALLENGE TEXAS ABORTION BAN

Build a socialist fightback!

JANE NELLIST
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY (ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY THE INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST GROUP, USA)

The US Supreme Court, in a five-four vote, allowed Texas's new anti-abortion law to take effect on 31 August. Even though surveys across the country, including Texas, show that support for abortion is still a majority-held view.

It means abortions are illegal in the state after six weeks - before most women even know they are pregnant. Currently, 90% of abortions in Texas happen after the six-week mark.

Although the court did not rule on the 'merits' of the Texas law, the five-four majority indicates that the Republican-packed Supreme Court is likely at some stage to overturn the 1973 Roe v Wade ruling, which established a woman's right to abortion in the US.

The Texas law allows anyone, anywhere, to sue people involved in providing abortion care or practical support to patients in Texas, after a foetal 'heartbeat' has been found, and win judgments of \$10,000 or more. In effect, it's a licence for vigilantism.

Working people were told that electing Joe Biden would be the only way to protect abortion rights - despite Biden's previous support for the Hyde amendment which bans federally funded programmes from paying

for or subsidising abortions.

Abortion rights have been eroded under Republican and Democratic Party regimes alike.

Under Bush, Obama, and Trump, access to abortion clinics drastically declined across the US, with a record 205 abortion restrictions passed by states between 2011 and 2013. None of these administrations made a serious attempt to counteract these trends.

Across the world, where abortion is illegal, or there is a lack of safe services to support women, abortions continue to take place at roughly the same rate, according to the World Health Organisation.

When safe abortion services are denied, and medical practitioners are forced to turn to unsafe practices and 'backstreet' abortionists.

In countries where abortion is illegal, 30,000 women each year die from botched abortions.

If they have the financial means, women can travel to access proper medical care for an abortion. It will be the poorer women who will suffer the worst consequences of this injustice.

The right wing in the US has declared war on women's rights to safe abortion. The huge inequality between the social classes in the US has meant that more women seek abortions because they don't have the means to raise children due to low wages and lack of affordable housing and healthcare.



Texas's anti-abortion law is effectively a licence for right-wing vigilantism PHOTO ADAM FAGEN/CC

Programme

The Independent Socialist Group (US co-thinkers of the Socialist Party) says:

Some activists mistakenly believe that going through the entire judicial system is the best way to fight laws like the Texas abortion ban. But only a mass movement of working people can defeat the Texas abortion ban and countless other restrictive laws against abortion.

Roe v Wade was decided in the context of a militant women's struggle arising out of other mass movements of the time - the movement against the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and movements for environmental protection.

The fight for women's rights does not just include lifting legal restrictions on abortion. We must also fight

for free, universal health care with guaranteed reproductive health coverage and family planning services, higher-paying jobs with paid time off, free public and affordable housing, equal pay through expanding union membership and democratising unions, free mass public transportation, guaranteed paid parental leave, fully funded and free childcare, and so much more.

The fight for women's rights is the fight for socialism, where the majority of society has control over the economy and political system, so we can ensure that everyone's needs are met.

Unions, women's and LGBTQ rights groups, socialists, and other activist groups in the US must mobilise for marches, protests, occupations, and strikes to repeal repressive

anti-abortion laws.

- **Defend the right to choose whether and when to have children. Provide free reproductive services, including all forms of birth control and safe, accessible abortions**
- **Teach comprehensive and inclusive sex education in schools**
- **Guarantee at least 16 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all**
- **For universal, high quality, affordable, and publicly run child and eldercare**
- **For a mass, diverse, workers' party drawing together workers, unions, youth, oppressed communities, and activists from environmental, anti-racist, women's and other movements, to provide a fighting political alternative to the capitalist parties**

Keep fascists out of Portland: Build a mass movement to fight the right

INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST GROUP, US

The danger of violent far-right hate groups has not disappeared along with Donald Trump. In Portland, Maine, members of the Proud Boys - a white supremacist hate group - have been meeting in Mathew's Pub for months. These meetings are bringing the threat of far-right violence to our city and beyond, and must be opposed.

The Proud Boys meetings in Mathew's Pub became known after a worker was fired for refusing to serve members of the far-right group in order to oppose their hateful beliefs.

The decision by Mathew's owner to fire instead of supporting this worker puts the owner on the side of the Proud Boys and against the interests of working people in Portland, especially LGBTQ workers and workers of colour.

If not stopped, far-right groups threaten everyone's civil rights and liberties. We've seen time and again the horrifying actions of far-right and fascist groups. These include the murder of anti-racist activist Heather Heyer at a Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017, violence against Black Lives Matter protests last summer, the right-wing militia



Far-right groups threaten everyone's civil rights and liberties

shootings in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in 2020, and the recent shooting and other attacks by the Proud Boys against anti-fascist protestors in Portland, Oregon.

We can organise to push the Proud

Boys - and any other far-right hate groups - out of Portland. Working people and youth in this city have the power to shut down the fascists by publicly opposing them, protesting against them, and denying them space in which to organise.

Working people and youth in Boston showed a new generation how to stop the far-right when 40,000 anti-fascist protesters went onto the streets of Boston and onto Boston Common and chased off the tiny Charlottesville-inspired far-right rally in 2017.

Three million people marching nationwide for women's rights seriously

challenged the stability of Trump's first months in office. Protests and job actions defeated Trump's initial Muslim Ban attempt by occupying airports and organising taxi and Uber drivers to withhold their labour.

More recently, hundreds of thousands of anti-racist, Black Lives Matter protesters forced concessions from local, state, and federal government, including the arrest and conviction of the cop who murdered George Floyd. When working people and youth move into action the far-right can be stopped.

● **This article can be read in full on independentsocialistgroup.org**

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the Socialist

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ORGANISING TO DEFEND OUR FUTURE



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

9 OCTOBER

YOUTH FIGHT FOR JOBS DAY OF ACTION

REECE WILSON

YOUTH FIGHT FOR JOBS

Workers are under attack. Those who will suffer the most are young workers: we are less likely to have full-time, stable jobs, to own homes, and less likely to have any savings to fall back on in a crisis.

Those of us who get Universal Credit face a cut of £80 a month,

while public sector workers suffer a pay freeze. Young workers that were furloughed are more likely to have lost their jobs, and with the scheme coming to an end at the end of September, thousands more will follow.

Young workers will pay the price of the pandemic. Meanwhile, the world's 2,365 billionaires increased their wealth by 54% in the first year of the pandemic alone.

The way to stop being attacked is to defend yourself - that is why we have

relaunched Youth Fight for Jobs.

Recent workers' struggles have shown that if we sit back, the attacks will grow greater. But if we organise, we can stop the attacks on our living standards.

Young workers must join a trade union and organise to fight against all job cuts; and if firms say they are unable to keep people on, then open the books and show us where the money is going! We must fight against low-paid unstable jobs, and

instead demand the creation of socially useful jobs that benefit everyone, not just the capitalists.

In response to the shortage of skilled labour, we need real training and apprenticeship schemes, with a job at the end, rather than a scheme that benefits only the bosses by providing dismal pay for hard work.

It's workers that really run society: we drive the buses, stack the shelves, care for the ill, and more.

Six million workers are organised in the trade unions, with membership rising. If we organise, we can improve our lives and our futures.

Youth Fight for Jobs is working with trade unions, students, and others with these aims. If you also want to fight back, then join us at your local protest on 9 October.

• For more information and to join visit: youthfightforjobs.com/get-involved

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



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