

# TAKE THE WEALTH OFF THE SUPER-RICH TO FUND:

## ● NHS and social care

## ● Pay and benefit rises

### HOSPITAL WORKER

**You couldn't make it up. As workers in health, local government and education are balloting on insulting pay offers from the government, Johnson and the Tories announce yet another pay cut: a 1.25% increase in National Insurance contributions!**

Are they so arrogant they can't see they are pushing workers into a corner where we will have no choice but to vote to strike?

Already huge numbers of workers are struggling from one payday to the next. Low pay, chronic understaffing and overwork mean many thousands of NHS workers are thinking of leaving their jobs.

The 3% offered to NHS workers was already a pay cut. Inflation is due to reach 4% by the end of the year. Many of the lowest-paid are already facing a cut of £20 per week in their Universal Credit payments from the end of September. Tory minister Thérèse Coffey thinks claimants should simply work extra hours to fill the gap!

Union members up and down the country have a chance to vote to reject the pay offers, and to push for their unions to build for strike action, coordinated across the public sector.

The Tories may act like they can do whatever they like, but they are weak and divided. A strike of the public sector - some of the key workers who have kept the country going since the Covid pandemic hit - could force yet another humiliating government U-turn.

As well as taking industrial action, our unions need to nail the lie that the money isn't there for wage rises or increasing spending to provide the public services that we so desperately need.

Instead of increasing National Insurance and hitting the lowest-paid hardest, the government should be using the enormous wealth salted away by big corporations and the super-rich for the benefit of society as a whole.

In May, the Sunday Times Rich List showed that in the first year of the pandemic the wealth of UK billionaires increased from £490.7 billion to £597.2 billion.

That extra £106.5 billion, and ongoing proper taxation of the super-rich, could pay for a fully funded NHS and social care system free at the point of use, with plenty left over to invest in council services, schools and public transport.

We need public services run for need, not for profit. That means bringing health, care and other services into public ownership to be run democratically by workers and service users, as part of a wider socialist planned economy.





# 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**

# Class anger at Tories growing...

# We need a new political party for workers and youth



## WHAT WE THINK

**B**oris Johnson's lies about plans to 'level up' working-class communities are being destroyed as the Tories post-Covid austerity is stepped up. The combination of higher national insurance contributions, Universal Credit cuts and a freeze on the income tax personal allowance will take £1,040 a year away from the average supermarket worker.

For hospitality workers, nurses and social care workers the hit is bigger at about £1,100.

Nor will the national insurance hike result in any significant steps to solve the acute social care crisis. Johnson's plan does nothing to change the way social care is currently overwhelmingly privately run, putting profit before safety.

Average pay for care workers is a paltry £8.50 an hour. No surprise then that there's currently a shortage of 170,000 care workers.

Johnson's plan will not provide any extra money for the system for two years - during which time an estimated almost 70,000 adults are expected to die while waiting for social care. In addition, the £86,000 cap on costs will still be crippling for most working and middle-class families who own their home.



Starmer has cravenly demonstrated his loyalty to the capitalist class  
PHOTO RIVENLAND/CC

This latest example of the vicious anti-working class character of the Johnson government has led to palpable anger among the majority of the population, including many who voted Tory in the 2019 election.

To date, only a few Tory MPs have rebelled, but splits in the Tories look set to deepen as backbenchers reflect both the capitalist elite's fears about Johnson's unreliability, and their own fears that they will lose their seats at the next election.

Under the impact of coming events, this weak Tory government could be forced out of office.

### Lack of opposition

Anger at the Tories has even, in some polls, pushed Labour into the lead for the first time since Starmer was elected leader. This does not reflect enthusiasm for Labour's proposals on social care - because Starmer's New Labour doesn't have any!

Even the right-wing capitalist Times newspaper ran an editorial accurately pointing out that Johnson "is a lucky politician" because he faces only the "lacklustre" Starmer with no plan for social care of his own.

They go on to comment that, in contrast to Starmer, even Jeremy Corbyn "might have put the government under some pressure with a plan to raise even more money via some kind of wealth tax, no matter how implausible".

The Murdoch owned Times might consider a wealth tax to pay for social care implausible, but - with 75% supporting it in polls - it would certainly be popular.

In fact, under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party there was a costed proposal for social care included in the 2019 general election manifesto.

It pledged an extra £10.8 billion to establish a National Care Service including free personal care for over-65s, an end to 15-minute maximum home-care visits, and an increase in the carer's allowance.

Instead of making the working class pay for their proposed National Care Service, costings which accompanied the manifesto calculated that, by taxing capital gains and dividends at income tax rates, they would be able to raise £14 billion. The manifesto also promised a £10 an-hour minimum wage, and the banning of zero-hour contracts.

Labour's 2019 manifesto policy



Workers struggling against cuts to living standards and wages and conditions need an effective political voice to fight back

would have been a step forward, but did not go far enough; it did not call for ending the social care market.

The Socialist Party calls for the bringing of all social care facilities into public ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them.

Nonetheless, Starmer's New Labour is so desperate to prove that it has broken with Corbynism, and can be relied on to do the bidding of the capitalist class, that it would far rather have no policy at all than propose these modest steps forward for 2019.

Starmer's complete abandonment of Corbyn's manifesto has been combined with a systematic campaign to drive socialists out of the Labour Party. Labour was founded by the trade unions in order to provide a political voice for the workers' movement.

### Bakers' union

Yet now the president of one of the trade unions involved in founding Labour over a century ago, Ian Hodson of the Bakers' Union (BAFU), is being threatened with expulsion for the 'crime' of opposing the expulsion of Corbyn supporters. What next? Will Labour Party members be expelled for daring to put forward Labour's 2019 manifesto?

As the pro-capitalist Starmer supporters step up their stranglehold on

Labour, the need for a party that does fight in the interests of the working class - on social care and all the other issues - is posed.

In response to the threatened expulsion of Ian Hodson, the BFAU has called a conference to discuss disaffiliating from Labour. If they vote to do so, it will send shock waves through the trade union movement. Discussion will be triggered on the need to build a new mass workers' party.

Such a party, even if it initially began with a modest number of MPs and councillors, would give huge confidence to all those wanting to fight back against post-Covid austerity.

Of course, such a party would also discuss and debate how to build a society able to meet the needs of humanity and the environment.

A wealth tax would be a start. But the capitalist class would not willingly allow their profits to be cut into. In the view of the Socialist Party, we need to be able to plan the funding of health, social care, education and other services based on need not profit.

A starting point to achieving that would be for the major companies and financial institutions to be brought into democratic public ownership under democratic working-class control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

**T**he 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.

- 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!

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# What's behind the worker shortages, and what can be done about it?

IAIN DALTON  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Job openings' went over 1 million for the first time on record this July and, at the beginning of September, stood at 1.66 million, according to the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC). There are over 100,000 vacancies for HGV drivers. But there is also a national shortage of 120,000 care workers, almost 80,000 nurse vacancies, and a lack of over 30,000 primary and nursery education teaching professionals.

The consequences of such shortages have hit the headlines, with reports of McDonalds running short of milkshakes, Wetherspoons running short of beer, and now toast and farmers giving away crops they can't manage to get picked. Meanwhile, photographs of bare shelves in supermarkets are becoming common, like at the beginning of the pandemic.

The government may hope the end of its furlough scheme will resolve this crisis, with at least a million people still receiving part of their pre-pandemic wages from the scheme. But many of those workers will have come from sectors hard hit by the pandemic and will not necessarily be able to easily transfer to sectors experiencing shortages, many of which require some level of training. For example, one of the factors in the HGV driver shortages is the backlog of testing, with around 40,000 tests cancelled during the pandemic.

## Longer term trends

These shortages also reflect longer-term trends. According to the Road Haulage Association, 2,000 HGV drivers are leaving the occupation each week, with only around 1,000 new recruits joining to replace them. This trend meant there were already 60,000 vacancies in the sector before the pandemic.

Many of the employers are pushing for measures to enable easier recruitment of EU workers to fill the shortages, pointing, for example, to the around 25,000 EU HGV drivers who have left since the pandemic and the end of the Brexit transition period. Among the measures they call for are placing HGV drivers on the skilled worker visa scheme.

A Financial Times editorial commented: "Squeezes are also being reported in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Scandinavia, and in similar sectors: hospitality, distribution, construction, health and social care." Figures show many migrants from Eastern Europe, who many companies had been exploiting in low-paid, insecure work, returning in 2020: around 1.3m Romanians returned to Romania and half a million Bulgarians to Bulgaria, according to the Economist.

But such workers are not just a tap that can be turned on and off. Last year, 70% of the 10,000 places under



PHOTO: ELLIOTT BROWN/CC

the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme were taken up. This year places were tripled to 30,000, but only 53% of them were taken up. In an interview with the Grocer, Nick Marston, head of British Summer Fruits, commenting on migrant workers being permanent, said: "If you're here permanently, you'll want a full-time job, not a seasonal one. We'll see an increasing need for people to come here on seasonal visas." Such is the addition of big farms to casualised labour.

## Low wages

What all these sectors have in common is generally low wages combined with terrible working conditions and long hours. Haulage, for example, has nine-hour days, now extended to 11 hours for two days a week, alongside a lack of facilities for drivers to comfortably wash and sleep.

Food and Drink Federation (FDF) head, Ian Wright, commented: "It's almost certainly the case that one of the main drivers in the lorry driver shortage that we're facing is that qualified HGV drivers have gone into being distribution drivers for Tesco and Amazon, because they're nicer jobs, they don't require you to get up at 4am and they're better paid."

Berry grower Hugh Lowe Farms, for example, boasts on its website that "good harvest workers can earn £400 a week..." but that translates into earning just £10,400 over six months, hardly a fantastic wage.

Does this mean that these shortages will, as a Financial Times editorial put it, "boost workers clout"?

In the short term, in some sectors, it has done so, to an extent. Some

employers are increasing wages, especially HGV companies who are in fierce competition with each other. Unite the union, however, is currently in dispute over Booker (a wholesaler owned by Tesco) increasing HGV drivers wages at one depot by £5 an hour, but not at another. Shortages in nursing and education haven't forced the government beyond a 3% pay rise in the NHS and a pay freeze for teachers.

But more common seem to be the huge sign-on bonuses offered, which hit headlines in August. HGV drivers were offered £1,000 at Asda and Tesco, and £2,000 at Arla dairies. Two jobs for registered night nurses for care homes in Scotland came with a £10,000 'welcome bonus'.

Key to ensuring that pay increases are won, and then maintained, is an active strategy from the trade unions. Unite launched a "Unite Drivers Manifesto" earlier this year, which includes some welcome demands around facilities for drivers to park access to toilets, employer funding of legally required training. Protests by Care and Support Workers Organise have called for a £15-an-hour minimum wage, among other demands.

Such initiatives should be expanded upon, with trade unions bringing together conferences of reps and activists in these sectors to discuss the issues they are facing, and to present their demands to the employers and the government, backed up with a strategy of campaigning, up to and including potential industrial action to achieve it.

This should not just be limited to patching up the broken system being currently operated, but include how

the real needs of workers and their communities could be met, in terms of decent working conditions and remuneration, and the provision of quality services. This should include not just filling up the official vacancies, but a strategy to fully staff these sectors to put a permanent end to shortages and rationing of goods and services.

## Workers' control

Moreover, in the short term, if there are services that can't be provided or goods that can't be stocked, decisions about what measures need to be put in place should be democratically decided by workers' representatives, rather than the bosses. As the FDF head admitted: "Last week, the whole of the east of England was basically unsupplied with bottled water because it was just not possible for the businesses that move that stuff around to supply that and everything else... So businesses took a decision to prioritise products with a higher margin."

The labour shortages crisis has shown that the limited 'planning' big business and the Tories engage in on the basis of the market relies on low pay, long hours and poor conditions, exploiting workers to put their 'margins' (profits) first.

We, instead, need to take the decisions out of their hands, by bringing the major companies in these sectors into public ownership. If these were run under democratic workers' control and management, as part of an overall plan of production, the supply of goods and provision of services could be planned to meet the needs of all workers.



**Key to ensuring that pay increases are won, and then maintained, is an active strategy from the trade unions**

# Hands off the Universal Credit uplift

## Fight for a system that puts need before profit

LINDSEY MORGAN  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

The government doesn't seem to want to budge on removing the £1,000 a year uplift to Universal Credit (UC). It says that it was only meant as a temporary measure. Tory work and pensions secretary Thérèse Coffey is "entirely happy" with the cut and thinks workers on UC can work an extra two hours to make up the difference. Clearly she is entirely clueless; any worker on UC who increases their income would have their benefits reduced accordingly!

The pandemic hasn't ended yet. The increases in bills and food prices aren't going away because most adults are now vaccinated. We've had letters telling us that yet again electric and gas prices are going up from 1 October. Without the minimal UC boost, many of us are going to be choosing between heating and eating again.

The Fabian Society think tank did some research and found that the worst-hit by the cut will be working families with children, which make up two-thirds of those falling below the poverty line. Throw in the pittance of increasing national insurance by 1.25%, and it's painfully clear that the Tories and the capitalists they represent want to take us for all we have and make us pay the price of Covid. We already did that when we lost



37% of Universal Credit claimants are in low paid work PAUL MATTSO

friends and family members that worked through the pandemic or our elderly relatives dying in care homes. We've paid enough. We need to force the super-rich who have gained during the pandemic to pay now.

We need an immediate increase in the minimum wage. 37% of UC claimants are in work. Work should pay enough to live on. The benefit system needs a complete overhaul. This must include keeping the Universal Credit uplift and paying the back pay to those on legacy benefits who didn't receive the increase in the first place.

According to the Financial Times, just a one-off 5% wealth tax would

raise £262 billion. Taxing the rich would be a welcome start. But we need to go further and take into public ownership the commanding heights of the economy - the top 150 businesses, including the banks - and run these under democratic workers' control and management.

Then we could guarantee the resources that are needed to really improve the lives of working-class people.

This will take a united struggle of our class, organised and ready to transform society on a socialist basis. We don't need temporary measures, but a permanent end to the capitalist profit system.

# Childcare in crisis

It's not just social care that's in crisis. The childcare system also needs a fundamental transformation. And they both have one thing in common - most of the care is in the private sector where profits come first. Government subsidies for childcare mostly don't cover the real cost and often childcare places just don't exist. In a recent survey of 200,000 working parents carried out by organisations like Mumsnet and the TUC:

- 97% of parents said childcare was too expensive
- One-third paid more for childcare than their rent or mortgage
- In 94% of cases of parents changing their work patterns childcare costs were a factor

Increasing numbers of women are having to reduce their hours, change their job or give up work altogether because they can't get the childcare they need. At the same time, one in ten childcare workers (mostly women) are living in poverty. Childcare, like social care, is a fundamental necessity. The profit motive should be removed by taking it into the public sector, where it should be fully funded and free to all who need it, guaranteeing quality care and a decent living wage for all childcare workers.

# Unite young and old to defend the pensions triple lock

TERRY PEARCE  
BRACKNELL SOCIALIST PARTY AND THAMES VALLEY NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION

The UK State Pension is £179.60 a week, among the lowest in Europe. It leaves over 2 million pensioners in poverty.

Introduced by the coalition government in 2010, the triple lock was designed to bring pensions up to the level of leading European countries like France and Germany. Now the Tories are breaking a 2019 election promise by suspending it for a year, deleting average earnings from the equation.

The triple lock would have meant pensions rising 8% next year and the Tories don't want to pay up. Pensioners can now expect a lower pension rise based on the highest of either the cost of living index, or 2.5%. This will make the 2 million pensioners already living in poverty, even poorer.

This attack on pensioners is just part of the Tory onslaught on the poor and vulnerable. The cut to Universal Credit, public sector pay freeze, and the ending of furlough, will drive more working-class families, youth and pensioners into poverty.

The Tories are seeking to drive a wedge between young workers and pensioners. The truth is that both young and old are suffering - from low wages on the one hand, and a poverty pension on the other. We must build unity between young and old.

Many young workers on low pay are facing a future with the prospect of low pensions in retirement. We must fight in the trade unions for the idea that workers today are the pensioners of the future. We need to build links between trade unions and pensioners' groups such as the National Pensioners' Convention to stop Tory plans to scrap the triple lock.

# Social care plans: A sticking plaster instead of surgery

DAVE GORTON  
CHESTERFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

Social care has been in crisis for decades. Successive governments have deliberately diverted resources from care provision into the pockets of big business through privatisation. Despite the hype, Boris Johnson's new health and social care plans won't radically alter things.

With 66 references to 'Covid' and 'pandemic' in just 29 pages of the government's plans, it's clear they are little more than a sticking plaster for current events, rather than the surgery needed for a chronically underfunded sector.

The Tories openly broke election pledges from less than two years ago by raising national insurance contributions (NICs) next year. This will hit the poorest hardest, including those already suffering Universal Credit cuts. People with an annual income above £50,000 pay much less as a proportion of their income, and NICs are not paid on unearned income, but a permanent end to the capitalist profit system.

Then we could guarantee the resources that are needed to really improve the lives of working-class people. This will take a united struggle of our class, organised and ready to transform society on a socialist basis. We don't need temporary measures, but a permanent end to the capitalist profit system.

Far from tackling the crisis, just £5.4 billion of the increased revenue from higher taxation is allocated to social care over three years. The rest goes directly to the NHS, and itself is not enough to cover the £10 billion extra for 2022-3 called for by NHS Providers.

The Treasury has acknowledged that the £5.4 billion is largely for

"implementing" the new caps, and ensuring councils pay more to private care home providers. Local authorities, unable to foot the bill, are encouraged by the government to raise council tax to plug the gap.

Social care is close to meltdown. Staff vacancies, already around 120,000, are set to rocket to 170,000 by the year end because of the mandatory vaccination in care homes legislation. 95% of providers told

ITV news they are unable to take on all new clients and 30% of providers are handing back some, or all, existing contracts to local authorities because they can no longer fulfil them. Nearly 300,000 people are awaiting social care assessments, care and support, up by 26% over the last three months.

In 1979, two-thirds of care was NHS or council-run, but now 84% is for-profit. The largest three owners of care homes in the UK are private equity companies, whose very existence is solely to accumulate profit, yet the workforce is one of the lowest paid, with good working conditions virtually non-existent. These companies must be brought into democratic public ownership, with compensation only on the basis of proven need.

We need an integrated, nationalised health and care service, paid for by the super-rich, many of whom have profited from privatised care and exploiting care workers.



Care workers in Birmingham took strike action in 2018-19 CORINTHIA WARD



# NSSN TRADE UNION RALLY REFLECTS WORKING-CLASS ANGER TO FIGHT BACK

The National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) rallies and lobbies the TUC Congress have been an annual fixture since the first in 2010. They have become the most important pre-Congress event, reflecting the demands of the rank and file of the trade union movement, putting pressure on the trade union leaders. This year was no exception. 300 trade unionists logged in to show their anger, both at the Tory government and the bosses for attempting to make workers pay for the crisis as we leave lockdown, and at the quiescence of large sections of the trade union leaders during the pandemic, despite many attacks on workers. However, there have been and will be disputes, particularly over issues like 'fire and rehire', and the minuscule pay offers to public sector and other key workers. The task of the NSSN has been to build support for and link up these struggles, and impress upon the trade union leaders that the anger of the membership could be translated into a powerful force. Each year, for both its conference and TUC rally, the NSSN invites speakers from its affiliated unions. This year the speakers included four trade union general secretaries, other elected trade union leaders, and rank and file activists. **Kevin Parslow**, assistant secretary NSSN (personal capacity), reports.



The NSSN, including Rob Williams (second left) fighting against deskilling

## Rob Williams, Chair NSSN

Rob Williams, chairperson of the NSSN, gave his introductory remarks. The Tories have imposed a "sneaky" tax rise to make workers fund the NHS and social care. The Tories have a whole raft of anti-working class, anti-union measures in their locker,

and they will use them unless we fight back.

The contempt of the Tories was shown by prime minister Boris Johnson's remarks about Margaret Thatcher showing environmental foresight by closing pits, which devastated many coal-mining communities! But we have to learn the lessons of the miners' strike on how to take on the Tories: there must be no national unity with the Tories and

big business, either during the Covid lockdown or after.

Fighting to defend jobs, terms and conditions can pay off; look at the 'fire and rehire' disputes, or the victories this year of bin workers or construction electricians against deskilling.

What is needed, is for the trade union movement to unite and work out a fighting programme to defeat the Tories.

## Sarah Woolley, BFAWU general secretary

Sarah Woolley of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU), representing many low-paid 'key workers', called for a fight for a £15 an hour minimum wage. It was ironic, she said, that low pay causes food insecurity for many workers in food production.

Sarah thanked the NSSN for extending solidarity to the Baker's union president Ian Hodson who is faced with expulsion from Starmer's Labour Party. The union has arranged a recall conference to discuss Labour Party disaffiliation in response.



Sarah Woolley

## Joe Simpson, POA

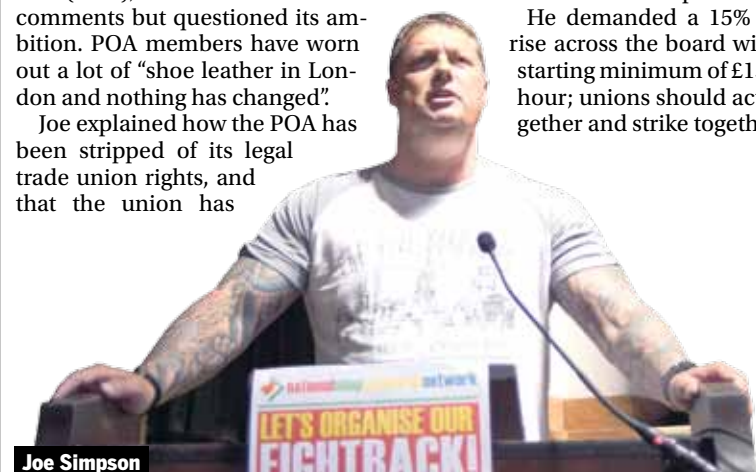
In a hard-hitting contribution, Joe Simpson, assistant general secretary of the Prison Officers' Association (POA), welcomed Dave Ward's comments but questioned its ambition. POA members have worn out a lot of "shoe leather in London and nothing has changed".

Joe explained how the POA has been stripped of its legal trade union rights, and that the union has

recently been fined £210,000 for defending members' safety.

He reminded the rally of the POA motion to Congress passed in 2012 to consider "the practicalities of a general strike" against austerity, and that it should be acted upon now.

He demanded a 15% pay rise across the board with a starting minimum of £15 an hour; unions should act together and strike together.



Joe Simpson

## Dave Ward, CWU general secretary

Dave Ward thanked the NSSN for its work over many years. He recognised that this was a most important moment for the trade union movement, and spent a large part of his speech outlining the CWU motion to Congress (subsequently carried, and which should be urgently acted upon).

He talked about 'upping the ante', as the Tories have no intention of levelling up working-class areas because they have no intention of levelling out power and wealth; such is the divisive role of capitalism.

Dave criticised the current leadership of the Labour Party for not having "the wherewithal to stand up for working people"; the working class cannot wait for political change at the next general election. For the CWU, the fundamental question is: Are we ready to fight together for industrial change?

The CWU's motion was a plan to bring together disputes in "a new deal for workers". He encouraged all unions to link their fights to an overall set of demands, to organise local and regional 'town hall' meetings this autumn, particularly in the so-called 'red wall' seats won by the Tories in the 2019 general election, with the campaign culminating in a national rally in spring 2022.



Dave Ward

## Carmel Gates, NIPSA general secretary designate

Carmel Gates, of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA), proudly announced herself as a revolutionary socialist, a member of Militant Left in Ireland, the affiliate of the Committee for a Workers' International, of which the Socialist Party in England and Wales is also part.

She outlined the challenges facing workers in Northern Ireland and how NIPSA is leading the fightback. She also referred to successes organising in other sectors, meat processing plants for example, and agreed with the necessity of organising in the workplaces. Carmel explained that all the sectarian parties in Northern Ireland are attacking working-class living standards. She raised how

coordinated strike action was important, mentioning the example of workers at Hovis and crêche workers at Queens University, Belfast, as an example of unions working together.



Carmel Gates

## Joe Kirby, RMT

Joe Kirby, offshore worker and member of the RMT National Executive Committee, had spoken at a recent NSSN-convened meeting on Freeports. Joe reminded those listening that they were 'free' only to attack working-class living standards.



Joe Kirby

## Contributions 'from the floor'

The meeting included a number of fighting contributions from rank-and-file activists that took the rally well past its closing time of 2pm!

**Billie Cooper**, a member of Unite LE1111 Housing Workers Branch, has helped to establish Care and Support Workers Organise (CAS-WO!), which is fighting for a radical transformation of the sector, where key workers are largely overworked and underpaid. They support the demands of many of their clients, of disabled people for example, fighting for their rights.

This was amplified by **Paula Peters**, one of several speakers from Unite Community branches, and also a member of Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC). They have organised a series of actions against cuts in the next three weeks, culminating in action at the Tory party conference on 4 October (full details at dpac.uk.net).

National Education Union (NEU) activist **Martin Powell-Davies**, a candidate for NEU deputy general secretary, outlined the attacks facing teachers and school staff, and how they had fought back during the pandemic by using Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act (1996). This forced the government to close schools at the height of the pandemic. However, the NEU and other unions have not built on this. Martin supported setting the date for a demo in the spring.

**Padraig Mulholland** from NIPSA called for a struggle against the anti-trade union laws, because trade unionists should build on collective action, not just rely on legal health and safety provisions.

**Hugo Pierre and Naomi Byron**, both Unison NEC members speaking in personal capacities, spoke on the battle for a genuine pay rise in both local government and the NHS.



Victorious Thurrock bin workers

There needs to be coordinated action between unions on pay. Hugo added that the Unison NEC should respond to the cuts by preparing a national strategy to fight, and not just support local branches in dispute. He called for meetings with other unions at NEC level and emphasised that having a political strategy was important for the unions.

This was supported by **Len Hockey**, secretary of Unite Barts hospital Trust branch, who welcomed Sharon Graham's election, but broadened this out to emphasise the need to fight on the political front in councils, etc. He drew attention to the headlines in the papers that day, calling the rise in taxes to pay for the NHS as 'Poll Tax 2.0', showing the fear of some sections of the capitalist class at levying a tax that affects all workers equally unfairly.

**Dave Walsh**, Unite convenor in Liverpool City Council, said that the low morale among council workers could be transformed into anger and action if union leaders mobilised against the pay 'rise' offer from government.

**Ferdy Lyons**, a Unite member in its London hospitality branch, spoke on behalf of Youth Fight for Jobs. He exposed the incredible exploitation of young workers in this and other sectors of the economy through poverty wages and bogus training, which will worsen with the end of the furlough scheme. Youth Fight for Jobs is touring trade union meetings with speakers, in building for a number of local demos on 9 October (see back page).

PCS activist **Marion Lloyd** bemoaned the absence of a campaigning PCS leadership in what used to be a fighting union. It had revoked any idea of industrial action during the pandemic and failed to give a lead to its members who were facing attacks on pay, conditions and working practices from civil service managers.

**Jared Wood**, RMT NEC member, summed up the discussion by articulating what many felt: that it is a disgrace that this TUC Congress was not convened as a council of war. He criticised Dave Ward's point for a collective fight, by agreeing with Joe Simpson that unions have to prepare to strike together against this vicious Tory government and its system.

**Rob Williams** closed the rally by saying that it had been a proper exchange of ideas between union members. He echoed that congress should do what it did in 10 years ago in the 2011 pensions' dispute: prepare the way for common industrial action to defeat the Tories and fight for a working-class alternative to low pay, the cuts and relentless attacks on our rights and conditions.

This was a rally that really reflected working-class anger at the capitalist system, and showed a way to fight back.



Lobbying the TUC in 2019 PAUL MATTESSON

## Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary

In electing Sharon Graham as general secretary, Unite members voted for a 'programme for change' to coordinate a pushback. Although Sharon came under pressure from some to withdraw from the campaign, she stood because it was important for a fightback to be on the ballot paper. She said the 'hard miles' now begin, not just in Unite, but across the movement. Workers have paid for the crisis after years of austerity and closures. She spoke in favour of working with other unions and the community to fight back.

Sharon explained that in her first hour in office, she brought together 80 representatives of Unite members in 22 disputes to discuss how to coordinate their action. She pledged never to make apologies for defending workers faced, for example, by 'fire and rehire'; employers' crocodile tears don't work for her. Her focus as general secretary will be on jobs, pay and conditions for workers. Unions have to be proactive by coordinating disputes and resources and driving through change.

Under Sharon's leadership, Unite will be campaigning against multinationals and developing an industrial structure to deal with them. She proposed one international campaign to push Amazon back, particularly in its major markets of the US, Germany and the UK. The Amazon model of exploitation is being replicated in

the public sector; the NHS is looking for Amazon managers!

Sharon was criticised during her election campaign for having a limited political strategy. However, she said she is not going to abdicate the political field, but thinks the 'parlour games in Westminster' haven't done anything for workers. She is interested in what a workers' manifesto would look like, and said that any conversations she has with Kier Starmer will be over the workers' agenda for change and what Labour is doing to implement that.

She concluded on a theme throughout her contribution, that collective action is important and there are no shortcuts to this. The movement, she said, loses focus if it relies on individuals; building for the bottom up will resist the offensive. In this process, Sharon said she is looking forward to working with the NSSN.



Sharon Graham

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# CLIMATE CHANGE, CAPITALISM, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

DAVE CARR

Unless you happen to be Tory Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, and therefore oblivious to what's happening in the world, you'd be aware of the recent extreme weather events claiming lives, and destroying homes, infrastructure, and even whole towns.

From the unprecedented high temperatures and drought in Canada and the US, which have sparked infernos; to the highest recorded temperature in Europe and the devastating fires in Greece and Turkey; to the deluge of rainfall and floods in western Europe, China and, more recently, New York and Louisiana.

Previously once-in-a-lifetime events are becoming the 'new normal' as the planet gets hotter. The World Meteorological Organisation recently said the number of weather-related disasters to hit the world has increased fivefold over the past 50 years.

Of course, it's those on the lowest incomes that suffer the most. Over two million people have died from extreme weather events in the last 50 years - 90% of those deaths have occurred in ex-colonial (so-called developing) countries.

It's also the case that many environmental disasters have been made far worse through funding cuts by governments in flood defence and forest management.

Apart from Donald Trump, a handful of Tory backbenchers, and a motley collection of conspiracy theorists, most people - and certainly the overwhelming majority of climate scientists - understand that this adverse climate change is the result of the heating up of the planet, due to human activity.

This heating is caused by rising CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and other greenhouse gases being pumped into the atmosphere from capitalist industry, transport, agribusiness, and so forth. The concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is now the highest in 14 million years.

The recent United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report painted a doom-laden portrait of where civilisation is heading unless drastic remedial measures are enacted on a global scale.

## Avoiding catastrophe

The question is, can this climate emergency be halted under the current world economic, political and social system - capitalism?

And make no mistake. The solution has to be worldwide. Emitted greenhouse gases don't stop at the borders of nation states.

And therein is the heart of the problem. Capitalism, and its insatiable drive to maximise profit through the exploitation of labour

and raw materials, has created an interconnected global system of finance and trade, but corporate ownership still resides within individual countries.

No capitalist government is unilaterally going to jeopardise its global share of trade and production, and therefore corporate profits, by implementing the comprehensive measures needed to halt climate change. The only feasible way to achieve sustainable levels of net-zero carbon production - and a redistribution of wealth to secure decent living standards for all - is through democratic, international planning; impossible in a capitalist system of competing companies and nation states.

Therefore, the Socialist Party unequivocally says: to stop destructive climate change we need socialist change. That, in turn, means building a mass movement for a fundamental shift in wealth and power, based on working-class people - whose class interests are diametrically opposed to the capitalists.

But before addressing the building of such a movement, it's worth taking a look at what the representatives of the capitalist class are advancing as their solution to halting climate change.

After all, most capitalists realise that the cost of not doing anything to halt climate change will cost them and their system a fortune. The economic cost of extreme weather events in the last 50 years has amounted to an estimated \$3.64 trillion.

That sum can be broken down into \$383 million per day losses between 2010-2019, a sevenfold increase on the \$49 million per day between 1970-1979.

But capitalist governments' measures to tackle the climate emergency are piecemeal, inadequate, and contradictory.

In Britain, the Johnson government is committed to achieving a net-zero carbon emissions economy by 2050 - an 80% cut in CO<sub>2</sub> levels of 1990, to limit global heating to a 1.5°C average rise.

But this deadline is deemed too late by many scientists, and even the government has conceded that meeting this target won't stop extreme weather events continuing.

According to the government's own Climate Change Committee, £50 billion extra investment per year is needed over the next 35 years to achieve net-zero carbon emissions - a sizeable sum. So far, the amount the government has pledged is paltry - maybe £3 billion extra in terms of new money.

But the cost of not investing in green policies will be even greater to the economy. Moreover, the £50 billion a year is roughly equivalent to the £900 billion in 'quantitative easing' that UK governments have

shelled out over the last decade to bail out the banks and keep the capitalist economy afloat.

Boris Johnson is also hosting the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow this November. COP is the Conference of Parties (197 nations/territories) who are signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

According to the blurb: "COP26 will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement"

The 2015 Paris Agreement - which Joe Biden made a great deal of signing up to after Trump had withdrawn from it - is a voluntary, and unenforceable, commitment to 'work towards' containing global temperature rises to under 2°C of pre-industrial levels by, roughly, 2050.

However, while Johnson intends to bask in the photo-opportunities at the Glasgow summit - posing as 'the world's leader' on tackling climate change - an analysis by the conservation charity WWF points out that, while the last UK government budget allocated £145 million for environmental measures, it committed £40 billion to policies that will increase emissions.

Moreover, a recent leaked email shows that UK government ministers Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng agreed to drop references to the targets of the Paris Agreement in order to sweeten a trade deal with the Australian government.

Also, the Tories are expected to give the go-ahead for more oil and gas extraction - including the Cambo field - off the Shetland Isles. Oddly, this follows £400,000 in donations to the Tory party from the oil and gas industry!

The Cambo field will also be a big test for the new Scottish National Party/Green Party de facto coalition in Holyrood (see below). SNP First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is hoping that a decision over the Cambo field by the Johnson government will take the political heat off her.

'Big energy' continues to enjoy tax breaks and other government subsidies. In the USA, for example, Joe Biden abandoned his election pledge to ban new drilling and fracking on federal lands, and instead his administration has granted more than 2,000 new permits.

## Carbon Trading

The principal mechanism promoted by the 2015 Paris Agreement to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is the 'carbon trading market'. This market was established following the earlier 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

But instead of adopting measures aimed at ending the use of fossil fuels, the carbon trading market simply allows high emissions industries to offset their CO<sub>2</sub> limits by buying carbon permits in low emission countries.

To date, there haven't been any measurable reductions in

greenhouse gas emissions that can be attributed to these measures. Indeed, the International Energy Agency reckons that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are expected to rocket upwards this year by the second biggest annual rise in history.

## Political alternatives

Are the Greens - the most prominent political advocates internationally of halting climate change - a credible alternative to the establishment capitalist parties?

Unfortunately, many readers will be familiar with the lamentable role of the Greens in power. In governments and councils - in Ireland, Germany, New Zealand, Scotland, and indeed in Brighton council in the recent past - the Greens have gone along with spending cuts and other capitalist austerity measures.

But even their claims of championing green policies don't amount to a hill of beans.

In Germany, in the largest federal state of North Rhine Westphalia, where massive demos and occupations of open-cast brown coalmines have taken place, the Greens, as part of the state government, voted for the destruction of the Hambacher Forest, so that the energy giant RWE can continue to make profits by mining brown coal. Brown coal produces the highest emissions of climate change gases and pollution.

In the German state of Hesse, the Greens sent a huge force of police

to clear protesters from the Danneberg forest who were trying to prevent the building of another motorway.

They also voted to extend the lifespan of deeply unpopular nuclear power plants.

Time and again the Greens have shown that they will break their election promises by adapting themselves to the pressures of capitalism.

In Scotland, the SNP-Green governmental pledge to provide "a realistic and affordable alternative through investing in public transport and active travel"... has been undercut by the SNP cutting 10% of train services from next year!

In relation to oil and gas production, instead of calling for socialist public ownership of the energy industries to transition away from fossil fuels to renewables, the Greens bluntly call for an immediate halt in production. This has left them politically vulnerable to the Scottish Tories - who disingenuously attack the Greens over the question of jobs - portraying the Greens as 'anti-worker'.

The SNP, as the main coalition party, is attempting an impossible balancing act over oil and gas extraction - which in 2019 was worth £8.8 billion or 5% of Scotland's GDP (total output), supporting an estimated 100,000 jobs.

Unable, and unwilling, to overcome the constraints of capitalism, the SNP, with the world platform

of COP26 beckoning, is attempting to position itself as champion of the 'green agenda', while supporting the highly profitable oil and gas industry. This political contortion could easily damage the SNP's credibility, especially as it falters over pursuing a second independence referendum.

In contrast to the Greens and SNP, Socialist Party Scotland fights for an independent socialist Scotland in which the commanding heights of the economy would be nationalised.

On this basis, oil and gas workers could be retrained, retooled and redeployed, in the production of wind, tidal or solar energy or carbon-capture programmes to get Scotland carbon neutral. This would be done without loss of pay, job cuts or deteriorating conditions in the workplace.

## Protest movements

The failure of capitalist parties to seriously challenge capitalism over climate change has led to a growth in 'direct action' in recent years.

'Fridays for Future' protests - involving mainly young people in school and college walkouts, mass demos, blockades, etc - came to prominence in many countries prior to the Covid pandemic. In the run-up to COP26, these protests are likely to revive.

A necessary strategy is linking up these actions by young people to the organised workers' movement, with a clear programme for change.

Many trade unions have agreed 'new deal' programmes for generating 'green' jobs. This requires pressuring union leaders into fighting for the implementation of such programmes, including through strike action.

Of course, fearful of the anti-trade union laws, under which 'political strikes' are illegal, and other new Tory government restrictions on the right to protest, the right-wing leaders of the Trades Union Congress, as well as Starmer's capitalist Labour leadership, will run for cover when pressed to take meaningful action.

But the potential power of the organised working class to halt production remains the key, and that is what must be argued and built for, linked to a programme of socialist policies for a sustainable planet of economic production.

The alternative is leaving it to the "politically non-partisan international movement" of Extinction Rebellion (XR).

XR's three demands are: "Tell the truth; act now; and go beyond politics". We can all agree and do concur with the first two demands. But its third 'non-party political' demand - which also calls for a 'Citizens Assembly' without saying how that will come about, let alone

how it will be constituted, and what policies it will implement - ducks the question of what policies are required to build a movement for fundamental change. If capitalism is the problem - which it is - then 'tell the truth; act now' and build a movement to overthrow it!

That means mobilising the majority in society, not confining the movement to small numbers of activists, in order to fight against the profit system. And through that process, build a new, mass political party based on the working class and embracing a socialist programme.

Socialist Party members have always been to the fore in organising and defending the democratic right to protest. But XR's 'shock and awe' tactics of street and workplace blockades is limited - and on occasion can even be counter-productive eg XR activists gluing themselves to the roof of an (electric-powered) DLR train during the London rush-hour in 2019.

Equally, not engaging beforehand with workers inside XR-targeted workplaces can lead to unnecessary antagonisms with the very people who, ordinarily, would be sympathetic to fighting climate change.

The Socialist Party argues that the most effective action is not simply blocking Oxford Circus or Parliament Square for hours or days, but strike action by workers.

This 'traditional' method of working-class struggle - hitting the bosses where it hurts, in their profits - retains its validity today, often winning full or partial improvements in pay, health and safety, and working practices. Just imagine the galvanising political effect of a 24- or 48-hour general strike demanding the employers and government implement a worker-friendly, green plan of production?

Such a demonstration of workers' power, if the start of a genuine movement for socialist change, would be an unstoppable force to halt catastrophic climate change.

**Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) facebook live e-rally**

**Capitalist Climate Catastrophe - the socialist solution**

26 September - 2pm (BST)

Join us live to hear from socialist activists around the world who are fighting for socialist change to end the climate catastrophe.

The CWI is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.



# Solidarity to the striking workers at Charité and Vivantes hospitals in Berlin

Socialist Party trade unionists in the NHS have sent the following message of support to striking health workers in Germany.

By fighting for equal and better pay you are standing up for public services and all who depend on them; for low-paid and exploited workers everywhere; and against the profit system which only sees opportunities to make money, where health workers see people who need help.

We stand with you in your fight for equal pay. It is an absolute scandal that workers doing the same job can have such different pay and conditions.

In Northern Ireland, health workers went on strike and won equal pay with health workers in England just before the Covid pandemic began. Privatised workers at a number of hospitals in Britain have won NHS pay and conditions, and in some cases they have also won their fight to be brought back in house and directly employed by the NHS. These victories have been won because workers were prepared to strike.

We wish you every success and victory in all that you are fighting for. Your strike is an inspiration to us, and we hope will launch a wider movement demanding better wages and proper funding for healthcare.

We are members of the Socialist Party, the sister organisation of Sozialistische Organisation Solidarität. We are fighting for a 15% payrise for NHS workers, an end to privatisation and for all workers to be brought back in house.

We are fighting for the health, local government and education unions in Britain to take coordinated strike action demanding a proper pay rise and funding for public services.

We are fighting for working-class people to take control of society and run it democratically for need not profit - a genuine socialist society. Workers do the work that keeps society running and produces the wealth - we should use that wealth to benefit all, not just the super-rich.

Victory to your strike!  
Victory to the workers!

# Putting socialism on the map in Chichester



CHRISTINE ARCHER  
CHICHESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

A new Socialist Party group has started in Chichester, which is, as anyone who knows the city would understand, a challenge to say the least! However, although starting with just four women, real progress is being made, and there is a lot of interest.

The group has set up a stall in the city centre on a Tuesday afternoon on a regular basis, attracting interest from socialist-minded people, some returning more than once to chat with us.

Many from all generations are very concerned about what is happening in this country run by this corrupt and asset-stripping Tory

government. The younger generations are very worried about their future, and the middle age group have concerns about their children's future, as well as their own and often their elderly parents too!

The over-70 age group are perhaps a bit more set in their political views but have concerns about the future of the NHS and social care.

A lot of interest has come from Labour voters who are desperately worried about the Labour right-wing takeover of the party, and feel they need to stay true to their socialist values.

These people are searching for a new political party which can closely replicate the Jeremy Corbyn-era of Labour.

This is where we can pick up new members for the future, especially with furlough coming to an end and the country going into an even bigger slump. One man has already joined and will add further to the group.

Anybody interested in coming to chat or join us more permanently will be given a warm welcome. We are outside one of the closed shops near to the Cross in Chichester City Centre from 1-3pm on a Tuesday. At the current time we are campaigning for higher NHS wages and against privatisation, and on help for the people of Afghanistan. Future campaigns will be for social care and housing, reflecting very current social issues.

# Fighting fund target reached

## Help us continue to raise our banner and programme

HEATHER RAWLING  
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

At our recent Socialist Party national council (see socialistparty.org.uk) members were set the challenge of raising £5,000 to help reach our quarterly target of £25,000.

And they did not disappoint - a total of £8,655, including the pledges was raised. This was a tremendous endorsement of the ideas, programme and strategy of the Socialist Party.

Throughout the week members have been redeeming their pledges and with two weeks to go we have already hit our fighting fund target.

We are confident that class battles against Tory attacks will increase. We need to be ready with the resources to raise the banner of our party and our programme.

With our strategy of no-cuts budgets, linked with organising mass campaigns to demand more money from the government, we are offering workers, youth and students an alternative.

We have the programme to solve the housing crisis. The Socialist Party's new leaflet on the housing crisis and against evictions will help us campaign in towns and cities around the country.

Print materials for our factory cost £345 per week. We produced 90,000 Socialist Party leaflets and 10,000 youth election leaflets in the last month of this year's council elections.

So far we have printed 50,000 leaflets for student freshers at a cost of £850. 15,000 public sector leaflets on pay cost £300.

If you have pledged money to the national council fighting fund appeal, please donate as soon as possible. If you haven't already pledged, can you make a donation? All donations, large and small, are valued.

Help fund the fightback  
**DONATE**  
socialistparty.org.uk/donate

AREA	RECEIVED	TARGET	PERCENTAGE
South West	2,818	1,800	157%
Wales	3,393	2,300	148%
Southern & SE	3,084	2,350	131%
Northern	929	750	124%
Yorkshire	3,110	2,550	122%
East Midlands	2,244	1,850	121%
London	4,973	4,600	108%
West Midlands	2,448	2,600	94%
North West	902	1,150	78%
Eastern	274	1,200	23%
Other	919	3,850	24%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25,095</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

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# Stop the arms trade



Jeremy Corbyn addresses hundreds of protesters against the arms fair in Liverpool. Socialist Party members participated in the protests. (see also Liverpool: Stop the arms fair at socialistparty.org.uk)

Around 200 marched against the ongoing 'DSEI' arms fair in east London on 12 September. Local streets are crawling with police, intimidating local residents to protect the arms trade. Meanwhile, working-class communities cannot get investment in services to tackle antisocial behaviour and crime. East London Socialist Party

joined the march. We say: end austerity - invest in public services, not more repression. For democratic community control over police policy and hiring. And stop selling arms to oppressive powers like the Israeli regime - retool factories to produce socially useful goods and protect jobs.  
JAMES IVENS

# Reclaiming Pride as protest in Nottingham

CLARE WILKINS  
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

3,000 overwhelming young people from all over the East Midlands marched round Nottingham for Pride on Saturday 11 September.

The event had been postponed and 'pared down'. In effect, this meant much of the commercial element had been removed. Pride as protest as well as statement was reclaimed.

Nottingham Socialist Party was the only political organisation to have a dedicated Pride-focused intervention. Our leaflet was very popular and sought after, as was our LGBTQ+ workers' charter.

There was agreement that the questions of jobs, pay, housing and services were integral to LGBTQ+ liberation as well as the issues of specific oppression faced by LGBTQ+ people.

Some young women said that they considered themselves to be socialists. Others asked us to explain what socialism is.

A number of people were interested in finding out more about the Socialist Party and coming to our meeting on how to achieve LGBTQ+ liberation.

# Scrap tuition fees - end university marketisation

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES  
OXFORD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the marketised tuition-fee model under which UK universities are operated.

This time last year, students across the country were being lured back to campuses under the false promise of 'mixed-mode learning', only to be faced with hastily prepared online classes from the confines of their family bedrooms and university halls.

This situation was, of course, not the fault of teaching staff - staff who, just like students, were forced to adapt to the challenges of remote learning, and the clear detriment this had on mental health.

The blame instead lies with a broken higher education system that can only exist through the imposition of tuition fees. Under this system, universities receive only a small fraction of their funding directly from the government. This pushes universities to the market, causing them to compete like businesses to secure tuition fees as their major source of income. And like businesses do, universities cut jobs and services deemed to negatively affect cashflows.

As a result of this marketised system, students become viewed as cash cows, valued above all for their contribution to universities' finances. It is for this reason that universities brought students back to campus en masse last year, all the while charging UK undergraduates upwards of

£9,000 a year (and more in the case of postgraduates and students from overseas).

In protest, rent strikes were organised at over 45 universities, with tuition fee rebates featuring as a prominent demand from campaigners. Socialist Students has fully supported this demand, but we have also called and campaigned for the scrapping of tuition fees every year, not just during Covid.

Some think that the current fee system is fine as it is, because 'anyone can apply for a tuition fee loan, and no one ends up repaying their loans in full anyway.'

However, the government now forecasts the value of outstanding student loans to reach £560 billion by 2050. It will be ordinary working people who are made to foot this bill.

Socialist Students calls for the higher education sector to be run as a fully publicly funded service, free to all in society. In his Labour Party manifesto, Jeremy Corbyn made the same demand, by proposing an increase in corporation tax. In doing so, he reached a new layer of politically engaged young people. His demand has only been strengthened by the massive state spending witnessed over the pandemic.

Yet young people must realise that the Starmer-led Labour Party is now no vehicle for change. As well as campaigning to scrap fees and end marketisation, Socialist Students supports the building of a new political socialist alternative for workers and young people.



# Returning to campus Students need to stand up and fight

STANLEY HARRIS  
UAL SOCIALIST STUDENTS

As we progress through the month of September, students and young people across the country will be preparing themselves to return to their respective studies.

For some beginning their studies at university this year, it's looking like in-person freshers' events and considerably less restrictions in place regarding the more social aspects of university life are on the cards.

The outlook for many students, however, especially those returning for their 2nd and 3rd years of study, is dogged with anxiety and uncertainty. Where promises of in-person and practical learning on campus are concerned, frankly for many of us returning or finishing our studies this year we have simply heard it all before.

It would be foolish for any of us to think that the negligence and lack of understanding shown by management in many universities during the pandemic last year is simply going to go away. The fact is that due to brutal Tory cuts we are returning to institutions that are as up against it now as they were before.

The effects of staggering cuts of up to 50% in funding to many courses, such as in the arts, that have in the past provided huge opportunities to working-class young people seeking work in creative industries, will doubtless now be felt.

These changes in funding to courses now deemed 'unnecessary' by the capitalist class to the economic recovery of the country post-pandemic, will put immense strain on both students and staff.

Last year student campaigns, including rent strikes, which Socialist Students were involved in, resulted in some gains for students.

This year it is as important as it was last year for us all to stand up and fight. No to more false promises. No to cuts and tuition fees.

# Campaigning for socialism at Oxford Brookes Uni

Socialist Party members held a stall at the Oxford Brookes freshers fair on Monday, raising the need for a new, fighting Socialist Students society on campus.

We made contact with about twenty students and had wide-ranging discussions on issues such as free education, the fight against racism, climate change, and the oppressive role of gender under capitalism.

Many students said that they had become interested in socialist ideas through Jeremy Corbyn, but

criticised his capitulation to the Labour right following his leadership victory.

One student was outraged at the plans to increase national insurance contributions, following a period when UK billionaires have increased their wealth by 35%.

Another student told us that he was already planning to start a new socialist society at Oxford Brookes, but was looking forward to instead joining Socialist Students, as an activist group with links to campuses across the country.

Join the student fightback: join...  
socialist students  
● Visit [socialiststudents.org.uk/join](https://socialiststudents.org.uk/join)  
● or call 020 8988 8761  
● or text your name and school, college or uni to 07749 379 010

# Youth Fight for Jobs launches campaign in Brighton

ROB SOMERTON-JONES  
BRIGHTON SOCIALIST PARTY

11 September marked the beginning of Brighton's role in the national Youth Fight for Jobs campaign. Ten members of the Socialist Party took part following our successful first in-person meeting the previous Tuesday - a hugely productive and energising experience!

Setting up at 11.30 at the main shopping centre in Churchill Square, we flyered with specific Youth Fight for Jobs leaflets, and asked people to sign petitions about

low pay and casualised work. Nick, a Socialist Party organiser, spoke on the megaphone, explaining our purpose - a fight for a living wage of £15 an hour, secure contracts and decent working conditions.

At first, the response was muted, only a few stopped to chat and sign petitions. But as the morning turned into afternoon, the young people we wanted to reach began to appear and their interest in the stall was evident. Many took our flyers, stopped to chat and sign petitions.

A carpenter and his partner were new parents, and bemoaned the

fact that his work took him away from home for days at a time. His self-employed partner is not allowed to claim maternity pay, a measly £90 per week for self-employed people, and do work in her business simultaneously without facing losing her maternity pay. So she must choose between the stress of raising a child and letting her business rot, an unenviable position for both of them.

Later we went 'guerrilla leafletting' staff in big chains with poor reputations for treating their staff like animals. In these shops we

found people willing and interested in taking our flyers, while one of us distracted the manager by posing as a customer.

The day was a great launch, the Socialist Party raised over £60 in donations to the fighting fund, the most we have raised on any day yet this year. We have been seeking support for the campaign from local trade union branches and the trades council. But although important, it is not a prerequisite for our members to get stuck in and take effective action to further this vital campaign!





# On the frontline, and still fighting for the NHS

SPECIALIST DIAGNOSTIC RADIOGRAPHER

I've been working in medical imaging for eight years now. Even before we were struck by a global pandemic, we were struggling to keep up with the number of patients needing imaging, and waiting lists were increasing.

To be fair to my superintendents, they were quick to respond. As the only fully trained FFP3 mask fitter in our department I was required to re-fit fifty staff members before the pandemic hit. I managed it quite well, only to learn that the trust could no longer acquire these masks and we were going to use another supplier. This meant that all our staff would have to be fitted again. This is just one of many examples of government failings.

Leading epidemiologists have warned for years that we need to stockpile protective clothing, and had a plan ready for an upcoming pandemic, but they were ignored. Then the inevitable happened. As the first deaths were being recorded, our prime minister stood in front of business leaders and promised he would do everything he could to protect the free market. Seeing this video was the last straw. The next day I tracked down a colleague I knew was

a member of the Socialist Party and asked to join.



**Our leaders didn't call us heroes because we're people to look up to, they called us heroes because heroes make sacrifices**

I've always believed strongly in the NHS, and frequently joked that if I was in it for the money I would've been in banking. I can't deny that it was inspiring to see people clapping us, especially as I walked to work. But while the politicians stood outside and applauded us, they were awarding themselves an eleven percent pay increase. Now they offer us three percent, which won't cover the rate of inflation.

It feels like the government is actively underfunding the NHS. If they keep missing targets and making mistakes, they hope public opinion will turn against the NHS and they can justify continuing to sell it

off. Most of the logistical aspects of hospitals are already privatised. The parking, catering, cleaning and security, to name a few, are all owned privately.

Due to a lack of reporting radiologists, all trauma CT scans done at night or the weekend are reported by a private company. The change is already well under way, and the government intends to make it easier with its new health and care bill.

We are still learning about the long-term effects of Covid. However, there is growing research that people who have suffered and recovered from Covid are at greater risk from blood clots that could cause pulmonary embolus or even strokes.

It's reflecting on this, and the risks I have taken over the last year to image sick or dying patients, that made me realise something: our leaders didn't call us heroes because we're people to look up to, they called us heroes because heroes make sacrifices. I'm witnessing an increasing number of my colleges needing to take time off due to stress or just leaving the trust because they can't handle it any more. I myself have considered leaving the hospital, but I still believe the NHS is worth fighting for.



# Deaths of despair Health crisis - capitalism in the dock

PETER TAAFFE  
SOCIALIST PARTY POLITICAL SECRETARY

Under the colossal weight of the worldwide pandemic, health services on every continent and in practically every country have struggled to stem the rising numbers of Covid victims. However, it is not just the poorer countries which have been found wanting. The richest, strongest capitalist society and economy on the planet, the USA, has utilised the crisis to line the pockets of big business, but has utterly failed the American people.

In an article in the Financial Times, the organ of big business, a piece by a practising surgeon in San Francisco highlights spiralling hospital costs "as the real US healthcare scandal". As is well known, the US under Trump had at one stage the highest death rate from Covid. He writes: "The parallels between banks' skyscrapers in downtown Manhattan and today's hospital behemoths are striking: sparkling glass windows, vast marble lobbies and expensively maintained greenery, with skyrocketing executive bonuses and global brand recognition to boot.

"Similarly, they have both been large-scale recipients of federal support. As hospitals struggled with Covid-19 last summer, the country's largest and richest health networks absorbed billions of dollars of stimulus. The picture is reminiscent of Wall Street in 2008: much of America's healthcare sector has become too big to heal."

## Unaccountable

Over the past 20 years, the price of US hospital services increased by more than 200% compared with average inflation of 60%! Yet large hospital networks, which contribute three times more than drug prices to the total US health spending, have largely remained outside of public scrutiny.

One consequence has been that unpaid medical bills totalled an estimated \$140 billion last year. The writer comments: "The unabated rise of healthcare prices threatens to plunge more patients into financial despair". Indeed, books, pamphlets, and articles like this serve to warn us of what can happen in Britain if the rotten Tory government pushes for even more privatisation of the health service.

A recent book, 'Deaths of Despair' by two economists, Angus Deaton and Anne Case, exposes the full horror of the failed US health system and what awaits British working people if they allow mass privatisation of the NHS at an increased pace.

It is not an accident that some spokespeople from the private sector refer to themselves as 'health providers' - mostly they represent sections of the private health sector, much of which is funded with public money, and leech off the NHS. Nye Bevan confronted a similar conflict



**Patchwork solutions are no longer capable of restoring either capitalism itself or the peoples of the world to health, including economic health**

as health secretary when the Labour government of 1945 established the NHS. He was only able to do this by, in his words, mollifying the private sector, including doctors, by "stuffing their mouths with gold".

## Privatisation

Various governments - Tory and Labour - have sought to extend this principle by providing ever more opportunities for privatisation. Where this could lead is spelt out in 'Deaths of Despair': "Given the great costs, we might hope that Americans have superior health outcomes. Not so... American healthcare is the most expensive in the world, and yet American health is the worst among rich countries, something that has been true for a long time, well before the recent epidemic of deaths and the decrease in life expectancy".

This led the authors to conclude how the American healthcare system is "a good example of reverse Robin Hood redistribution, what we have called Sheriff of Nottingham redistribution". And why is this happening? They answer: "Hospitals that used to be run by doctors are now run by corporate executives - some are doctors who have turned in their white coats for business suits - who are paid CEO salaries to build empires and raise prices."

Yet despite the mountain of facts, figures and real examples of capitalist failure, the authors still staunchly defend capitalism: "The economy does not need to be run this way. Capitalism does not need to be abolished, but it should be controlled and regulated in the public interest, not solely in the interests of stockholders or profitable businesses". They

completely fail to understand that capitalism is a system whose sole aim is producing a surplus, i.e. profit, flowing from the exploitation of the labour of the working class.

What the authors of 'Deaths of Despair' object to is not the capitalists themselves garnering the surplus, but what they - and before them Adam Smith, the great bourgeois economist - call 'rent seeking'. This represents the parasitic layer stealing from the poor on behalf of the rich and playing no role in developing industry and society, but seeking merely to amass wealth. They are 'illegitimate' as far as these capitalist theoreticians are concerned.

## Marx was right

They ignore and discount the laws of capitalism itself, as analysed by Karl Marx, which remain highly relevant to explaining the current crisis, including the global health catastrophe. There could be no greater demonstration of the correctness of Marx's analysis than the devastating economic recessions, and the major and mini-slumps of the recent period. We have fully analysed these ideas in our recent publication 'The Struggle for World Socialism', which underlines the need for socialist planning on a world scale.

The authors show that life expectancy in the US in 2018 has fallen for three years in a row. "In 2018, moreover, 158,000 Americans died from avoidable 'deaths of despair' - equivalent to three 737 Max jets falling out of the sky every day with no survivors!"

These damning figures, and many more, are a terrible indictment of US capitalism, although the authors

themselves amazingly defend this system, with their enduring faith in private enterprise which is criminally failing the US population.

Yet they willingly concede that the areas of highest addiction leading to early death, are linked to economic and social conditions. The risk of dying in midlife from suicide, accidental drug overdose or alcoholic liver disease was in 2017 a third higher in poor states like Kentucky than the national average. Other 'left behind' states also experienced the greatest economic decline because of deindustrialisation - itself a failure of US capitalism.

Moreover, it is the poor and less educated who have borne the brunt of the catastrophic loss of high-paying jobs, as the authors demonstrate. The extent to which addiction has taken hold in the US is shown by the fact that "a third of all adults, 98 million people, were prescribed opioids in 2015". Moreover, "huge sums from legal opioids are generated by the US healthcare system, by far the most expensive in the world... [which] is failing to prevent the decline in life expectancy but is actually contributing to its fall".

## Capitalism's failures

The authors make an astonishing admission: "The US is different to other rich countries in having several million extremely poor people, who arguably have living conditions as bad as poor people in Africa and Asia!" This leads the authors to pose the question: "Why is capitalism failing so many?"

Yet their conclusions are as astonishing as they are contradictory. They conclude: "We are not against capitalism. We believe in the power of competition and free markets." However, the description of the collapsing healthcare system in the US powerfully refutes their arguments.

The only realistic conclusion to be drawn from this exposé is that the system of capitalism has had its day. Patchwork solutions are no longer capable of restoring either capitalism itself or the peoples of the world to health, including economic health.

This would only be possible through the socialist reorganisation of society on a national and international scale. This in turn will inevitably pose the question of the coming together of the workers of the world in a democratic socialist confederation. Then the idea of profit being made out of suffering and ill-health will be a bad dream of the past!



## TV review

# Grenfell: The Untold Story

MIKE CLEVERLEY  
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Recently, my partner and I watched 'Grenfell: The Untold Story'. We watched footage of tenants, ahead of the 2017 tragedy, battle with 'the suits' over their living conditions: lifts out of order for days, water cut off, no heating in flats in January. The film footage was taken as part of what Kensington and Chelsea Council seemingly hoped would be a good PR exercise for their Tenant Management Organisation (TMO). But the obvious contempt these officials had for the tenants shone through. The tenants felt that they were seen as animals not humans!

During the 2015 'refurbishment' of Grenfell Tower, tenants explained that there were enormous gaps between the new window frames and the window aperture, one woman said she could get her whole arm through the gap. Clearly, the window frames were the wrong size, but instead of getting the right size, the gap was filled with silicone. Later this silicone would play a terrible role in the tragedy.

As the programme went on, we saw tenants raise further problems, only to be pushed aside by the TMO

officials. The Tory MP at the time, Victoria Borwick, attended some of those meetings. Her response was: "I am only an MP, I don't have any power!" Those watching in my borough of Waltham Forest must have thought: "I have heard those words somewhere before!"



**As the credits ran we sat in stunned silence**

Several times, the tenants were assured that all the fire safety measures were in place. Another familiar refrain we hear from local councillors acting as apologists for developers and construction companies.

Towards the end we realised that most of the men, women and kids we saw speaking at these meetings are now dead. We heard their voices again on their telephones, begging for help, imploring their families not to worry. We heard hapless switchboard operators talking to desperate people whose homes were filling with toxic smoke.

As the credits ran we sat in stunned

silence. I was so angry I had to stop myself from starting a Facebook rant, landing myself another ban.

The show didn't hear much from the Kensington and Chelsea councillors. After all, many of these TMOs were set up to keep tenants' problems out of councillors' in-trays!

We all know that where profits are the main concern, all sorts of 'savings' get made. Cheap window frames, inflammable silicone and insulation panels that burn like petrol - all the result of cost-cutting by a Tory council.

Many homes workers live in are death traps; hospitals prop up their ceilings with pit-props. Yet when the government needs to bail out big companies, the NHS needs a cash injection, or flammable cladding needs removing, it is working people who are forced to pay. The poorer you are, the bigger percentage of your money will be snatched away.

How much longer must we tolerate this horrible profit system, and the Tory and Labour parties that support it? This is why I am a member of the Socialist Party, and proud of it too!

● 'Grenfell: The Untold Story' is available to stream on All4 until 8 October 2021

Order now  
**The Struggle for World Socialism**  
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## Goodlord dispute Labour's leadership weasled out of backing strike action



PHOTO JAMES IVENS

In April this year, **Scott Hunter** (right), a member of the Socialist Party and a striker at Goodlord, in east London, wrote to his local Labour MP, Emily Thornberry, asking for support for the workers fighting against 'fire and rehire'. Scott finally received a response on 2 September, six months after the original email asking for support, and several months after the dispute had ended. The email still does not give the support asked for. Below we print Scott's response to Emily Thornberry's reply.

Dear Emily Thornberry,

I find this to be a condescending and insufficient response. I wrote to you nearly five months ago, when my colleagues and I were fighting to keep our jobs and stay in our homes. Not only have you responded to me so late as to have completely missed the chance to support us in our struggle, your response does not even contain an offer of support! You have instead seen fit to talk down to me and spend half your email explaining the definition of fire and rehire and the second half talking about how you've supported a bunch of failed bills. It looks to me like you've done very little at all!

Is this all the Labour Party can offer to working people? I know it may seem remote to you with your MP's salary, but we working people are fighting for our lives out here. Our strike went on for 12 weeks and you did nothing, nor did any of the Labour MPs in any of my colleagues' constituencies, nor the Labour MP of the constituency where our employer is based, nor our Labour mayor of London, nor did one damn councillor lift a finger to help us.

The only elected politician from the Labour Party to actually show up and support us was Jeremy Corbyn, and he was (and still is) suspended from the Parliamentary Labour Party! We live in constituencies with Labour MPs, in wards with Labour-majority councils and in a city with a Labour mayor, but it seems that all the Labour Party can do is pass on cuts from Westminster.

I've voted Labour all my adult life, but, tell me, why should I ever vote Labour again now when the party is apparently unwilling or unable to support the struggles of working people?

The people who did show up to support us were the trade unions, the local community, the renters' unions and housing associations, and the local Socialist Party. It is clear to me now, through your conduct and the conduct of your colleagues, that the Labour Party is beyond hope. It is vital that we build a new mass workers' party that will fight for the interests of working people rather than collaborating with the Tories in Westminster.

SCOTT HUNTER

## Redbridge Labour backs strike-breaking bullies

JAMES IVENS  
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Illegal strike-breaking, a dossier of testimonials about management bullying, and victimisation of a union rep who fought for Covid safety. Why is the Labour council in Redbridge, east London, still backing bosses at council-run Oaks Park secondary?

Steadfast strikers were back on the picket line from the second week of the new academic year. The National Education Union (NEU) rally on 11 September was even bigger than last term's protest at Redbridge Town Hall.

The strike last term forced the head to call repeated 'sports days' - even enticing former students to cover them with a free lunch. She has now stooped to a new low.

The school apparently called in agency staff to cover the strikers' classes, which is against the law. The NEU alleges that management also falsified the records. The police have received a crime report from the union. No peep from the Labour council.

That same council has received a dossier with harrowing accounts of management bullying, including:

"I had staff almost daily come into my office crying..." "The staff turnover rate is alarming, staff morale at an all-time low..." "I was physically sick on the way to work most days due to anxiety..." "I have never experienced as toxic an atmosphere as the one at Oaks Park..."

These stories - and worse - can be heard on emotional Oaks Park picket lines. It is outrageous, but sadly inevitable, that some stories feature students as well as staff.

Strikers cornered the council's director of education, Colin Stewart, on the 8 September picket line. He denied the avalanche of testimonials amounts to a pattern of bullying!

This is after the chair of governors stood next to bosses accused of bullying and demanded bullied staff explain their allegations.

Meanwhile, sacked union rep Keiran Mahon has still not received justice. He faced dismissal within months of his election.

He and other NEU members had invoked 'Section 44' health-and-safety law at the height of the pandemic. They protected lives by refusing to enter unsafe, packed classrooms and instead taught remotely.

The union makes a clear argument that the supposed case against Keiran is grossly overstated and contradictory. But there has been no serious engagement with this by a school management which put lives at risk during the pandemic.

At the rally on 11 September, Labour was warned. NEU executive and Socialist Party member Louise Cuffaro, said: "There are elections coming. Watch out!"

"We won't be voting for you. We'll be voting for people from the community, from the trade union



PHOTO GLENN KELLY

movement, who are prepared to stand up and fight back."

● NEU members at Valence Primary school in Barking and Dagenham borough have voted to end their dispute with management over the withdrawal of TLR payments - rewards for additional leadership and management responsibilities undertaken by classroom teachers.

The agreed settlement follows pressure applied by six days of strike action in July.

## Carmarthenshire Unison: 'Recognise our union, now!'

Union members in Plaid Cymru-run Carmarthenshire Council, Wales, are demanding a Trade Union Recognition Agreement (TURA) at Cwm Environmental, which is wholly owned by the council.

To drive home its demand, Unison and GMB members, supported by Swansea Trades Council and the Socialist Party, protested outside County Hall on 9 September.

In its press release, Carmarthenshire Unison said:

"During the protest we didn't see one Plaid councillor. But that is no surprise because they clearly think they can hide behind senior management and put their heads in the sand, hoping the campaign fritters out and doesn't have political ramifications for them and the council they lead.

We have news for them; the campaign will continue until we get a TURA, and if we have anything to do with it there will be political consequences if they maintain what in effect is an anti-trade union stance..."

We are not going away until they sign on the dotted line. If you haven't signed our online petition yet please do."

Online petition: [bit.ly/3z9fuX7](https://bit.ly/3z9fuX7)

## Save jobs and services - nationalise rail



Socialist Party members and supporters of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) joined the RMT transport union's protest outside Waterloo station, London, against cuts to South West Rail services.

The RMT and others have highlighted that cutting rail services won't help with the vital task of encouraging people out of their cars and onto public transport.

People don't want to be crammed like sardines on commuter trains.

SWR say it is prudent to cut the number of trains because the public already subsidises the railway with billions of pounds. But why should we be paying any of their big wigs' wages?

We will continue to fight for a reliable, affordable and publicly owned transport network, which protects jobs and ensures full safety for passengers.

HELEN PATTISON  
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

## Weetabix - workers have had enough

Engineering workers, members of the Unite union, will walk out for 48 hours from 21 September at two sites - Kettering and Corby, both in Northamptonshire.

This action will be followed by strikes on Tuesday of every week until 30 November.

New contracts pushed by the company will mean changes to engineers' shift and working patterns, which would result in some workers being up to £5,000 a year worse off.

These changes were rejected by 82% in an industrial action ballot.

Sharon Graham, the newly elected general secretary of Unite said: "If Weetabix decide to go down this route and overstep the line, then I will absolutely defend members."

## Non-fiction review: Nuclear Folly: A New History of the Cuban Missile Crisis

by Serhii Plokhyy

SCOTT JONES

The Cuban missile crisis in 1962 is far from underrepresented in books and media. But 'Nuclear Folly' uses fresh material provided by newly declassified files from the KGB archive, shedding light on the Soviet side of events and giving Serhii Plokhyy's account authority.

The book is as fast-paced and gripping as the real events. The background to the crisis is the 'Cold War', when the United States and the Soviet Union emerged from World War Two as rival superpowers. The US based on capitalism and the Soviet Union on a bureaucratic, top-down planned economy - two opposed systems, and both had nuclear weapons.

In 1945 the US dropped two atomic bombs on Japan and the horrors of nuclear weapons were revealed. Both countries developed and stockpiled enough bombs to effectively destroy the world. But such a deadly scenario was unlikely in the aftermath of World War Two. If one country launched its weapons, then the other would have immediately retaliated, resulting in 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD).

The book quotes Kennedy's speech, warning of a possible nuclear war, when he said: "Our history demonstrates that we have no desire to dominate or conquer any other nation or impose our system upon its people."

This is laughable, as US foreign policy has shown before and since. In fact, the US had actively intervened to overthrow the Cuban government ever since the revolution in 1959, which nationalised US businesses, and broke with capitalism.

This hostility and fear of 'socialism' on its doorstep, albeit in a bureaucratic distorted form, culminated in a disastrous US-backed invasion of Cuba known as the 'Bay of Pigs'.

The potential nuclear armageddon seems a world away, as the train of events leading to the missile crisis start off in the incongruous surroundings of the US embassy in Vienna.

Newly elected young US president John F Kennedy is tested by wily old Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in an ideological and geopolitical parlour game.

Events take a comical turn as Soviet missile specialists disguised on this secret mission as 'agriculturalists' are flown out to Cuba but are forced

to stop over in the Bahamas during a storm. The Russians exited the plane into tropical heat and high humidity still dressed in Russian clothes, and were instantly gawped at and photographed by hundreds of American tourists!

This is all colourfully described in the book and belies the seriousness of later events, which are vividly recounted.

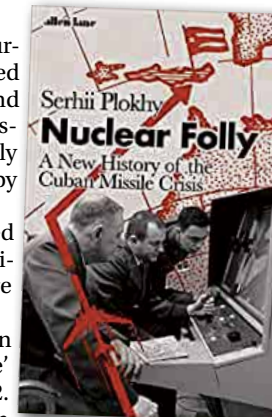
A new US-backed invasion called 'Operation Mongoose' was planned for October 1962. Both Cuba and the Soviet Union knew of it, and in May Fidel Castro had accepted the offer of the Soviet Union to provide Cuba with nuclear weapons to defend the country and government from US intervention.

In Washington DC there were long debates about what to do. The US military inevitably wanted to bomb the Soviet bases and push ahead with invasion. Kennedy feared that the Soviet Union would retaliate by seizing Berlin, provoking another European war. They compromised on a naval blockade.

Kennedy is sometimes praised for his actions in averting nuclear war, but the reality is he and the US did not know that at this point there were in Cuba, skilfully transported and concealed, 43,000 Soviet troops, nine armed nuclear bombs, and warplanes all ready with orders to deploy against an invasion force.

The book quotes defence secretary Robert McNamara, who found this out 30 years later, saying: "It meant that had a US invasion been carried out there was a 99% probability of nuclear war"

On 24 October, six Russian ships on course for Cuba turned back



published by  
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£16.26  
(hardback)  
at Amazon



Capitalism  
has spent  
almost 60  
years either  
downplaying  
the crisis,  
blaming  
the Soviets  
or wrongly  
praising  
Kennedy



Comrades-in-arms. Castro and Khrushchev embrace, against a background of nuclear armageddon



US president John F Kennedy took the world to the edge of oblivion

rather than run the blockade, and by 26 October negotiations between the Soviet Union and the US were underway.

There is also hypocrisy from Kennedy and the US. Khrushchev asked why it was alright for the US to have nuclear weapons in European countries next to the Soviet Union but not Soviet weapons in the Western hemisphere.

In fact, the Soviet Union benefited from the negotiations to de-escalate the crisis as, behind the scenes, Robert Kennedy delivered a message to the US Soviet Ambassador saying that US Jupiter missiles would be removed from Turkey if the Soviets removed theirs from Cuba. An agreement was reached on 28 October. The missile crisis was over.

Capitalism has spent almost 60 years either downplaying the crisis, blaming the Soviets or wrongly praising Kennedy.

But Nuclear Folly argues that in 1962 there were two powers that didn't want all-out war, especially nuclear, but very nearly had it. Now there are several nuclear powers in an increasingly unstable and multipolar world.

Although MAD, and the potential power of mass pressure from the working class, stays the hands of the nuclear states at this stage, as long as capitalism exists internationally the possibility of future nuclear armageddon is still with us.

As our forerunners did in the 1960s, the Socialist Party opposes nuclear weapons and continues the struggle to replace capitalism with a socialist society which would mean a world free of the horrors of war and destruction.



The  
background  
to the crisis  
is the 'Cold  
War', when  
the United  
States and  
the Soviet  
Union  
emerged  
from World  
War Two as  
two rival  
super-  
powers



A pro-Cuba regime demonstration in Hyde Park, London, in 1962. PHOTO DON O'BRIEN/CC



# WE WON'T PAY FOR CAPITALISM'S FAILINGS

ALEX SMITH  
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

**T**here are massive attacks against young people on the immediate horizon. The end of the Universal Credit uplift, due at the end of September, is expected to hit young people hardest. Rent outside of London continues to rise, and the Tories' national insurance hike shows that they want to make workers pay.

With 20% of employers reportedly planning redundancies post-furlough, youth unemployment is set to increase. This is totally unacceptable. Workers and young people must not be made to pay for capitalism's sickness. A determined fightback is needed.

That's why Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) marches are taking place in 13 different cities on 9 October, to coincide with the end of furlough. On these marches, young workers, students and trade unionists will mobilise to make it clear that it must be the super-rich, not the working class and youth, who pay for the Covid crisis. The demands being raised will include calls for rent controls and council homes, a £12-an-hour minimum wage as a first step to £15, and proper training, under trade union control, on a full wage, and with a guaranteed job at the end.

### Trade Union support

Many of the YFJ marches already have the formal support of local trades councils and trade union branches, and the campaign nationally has won the support of seven trade unions. In Merseyside, we recently won support from the remaining members of the heroic 'Liverpool 47' - the socialist Labour councillors who defied Thatcher in the 1980s.

The solidarity shown by the 'Liverpool 47' to the YFJ campaign cuts across capitalism's efforts to drive a wedge between younger and older generations of the working class. A new generation of class fighters in the YFJ campaign should take heart and pick up the baton of class struggle - and begin to wage our own fight against capitalism.

The trade unions represent potentially the most powerful force in society: the organised working class. It is for this reason that YFJ fights ferociously for the unions to lead a coordinated fightback against the youth jobs crisis, and for a future with decent jobs and decent pay.

Join Youth Fight for jobs in this fight, to help free ourselves from the low pay, poverty and exploitation of capitalism.

• For more information and to join visit: [youthfightforjobs.com/get-involved](http://youthfightforjobs.com/get-involved)



# Join Youth Fight for Jobs protests 9 October