

Tories under fire over sleaze and rising prices

FIGHT TOGETHER

FOR A PAY RISE

A public sector strike on pay is brewing. And is it any wonder?

Fuel and food prices are rising, the Tories are putting national insurance up, they've cut Universal Credit - and most public sector workers have seen effective pay cuts of around 20% over the last ten years.

Meanwhile, arrogant pro-big business MPs are wallowing in sleaze, their snouts well and truly in the trough. The rich have got obscenely richer during the pandemic. Some of them are so rich they have decided to spend their ill-earned stash extending their playground into space.

Yet it was working-class people who saved lives and kept society functioning through the pandemic. It was nurses, bin workers, bus drivers, care home staff, cleaners and supermarket staff who were the essential workers, not bosses and bankers. It's lorry drivers and warehouse workers who once again have proven to be essential in the shortages crisis.

No wonder over the summer health workers in four different unions all voted in consultative ballots to reject a measly 3% pay offer. They're now balloting again. Unfortunately, in Unison and Royal College of Nursing it's another consultative ballot, but in Unite and GMB it's a ballot for action - a vote that will start in December.

Neither is it a wonder that university staff in UCU have just voted to strike, and in Unison a ballot of university staff will begin.

The pressure will mount again now on the leaderships of the National Education Union and civil service union PCS to join in and mount a serious fight.

Feeling the pressure, the Tories announced the end of the public sector pay freeze next year. But that's too little too late, with no extra funding promised, and a pay cut still likely to be on offer next year. If anything, that announcement should give workers more confidence to fight.

Almost exactly a decade after two million public sector workers went on strike against attacks on pensions - in reality a strike against austerity - a public sector strike on pay is possible.

And don't let the capitalist politicians and media tell us it's not fair because workers in the private sector are worse off. The gap isn't as big as they claim. And if low-paid workers like cleaners in public services hadn't been privatised, the gap would be even less.

But more to the point, a fight in the public sector can raise everyone's sights, and boost everyone's fight for decent pay. The best way to make sure pay is fair across private and public sector is for us all to stand together!

And if there's one bit of news we want everyone to know, it's that tanker drivers in Liverpool, part of Unite, have just won a 17.5% pay increase.

It can be done! Let's fight together for a pay rise.

• See also page 3



PAUL MATTSSON

the Socialist formerly Militant

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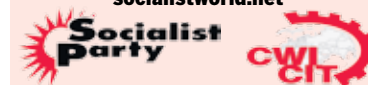
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." Karl Marx

Sleaze and pay a toxic mix for Tories



WHAT WE THINK

Is anybody in charge at No.10? This was the headline in the normally Conservative-supporting right-wing Daily Mail as Tory MP Owen Paterson resigned after Boris Johnson's latest U-turn. Paterson faced a 30-day parliamentary suspension after the standards committee found him guilty of taking £100,000 from two companies for lobbying. Johnson's response was to propose a new alternative committee that would be chaired by his wife's former boss, with an in-built Tory majority!

Johnson won the vote, after allegedly threatening to withhold funding from areas represented by Tory MPs if they voted against. But his 79-strong majority was slashed to just 18. It has been reported that furious Tory MPs were going into the voting lobbies in tears. But rather than some principled objection, this has far more to do with realisation of the storm of outrage to come.

The result is that instead of one of Boris's mates having a month out of the Commons, a Tory MP is forced out and Johnson's government has become mired in a row over sleaze. Some capitalist commentators have claimed that Johnson was motivated by the fact that he is next in line for an investigation by the standards watchdog over the extravagant refurbishment of his Downing Street flat, allegedly to the tune of £200,000. This would be the fourth time in the last three years that he was under scrutiny - more than any other MP.

This is entirely possible. But his actions were also a reflection of the arrogant overconfidence of the Tory government, and Johnson personally, unchallenged as they are by Starmer's New Labour. Before the recent spending review, Labour's Blairite shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves opposed tax rises not just to "people" but to "business" too.

Cost of living crisis

Even now, the Tories may feel they can ride out what they hope will be seen by ordinary people as 'parliamentary intrigue'. But what has added dynamite to these events is the deepening cost of living crisis facing workers and their families, and some from middle-class backgrounds. This is behind the Tory splits that have come back to the surface, reflecting the frustration and suspicion of the capitalist establishment who, in the main, never wanted Johnson as their prime minister and have struggled to control him.

Margaret Thatcher thought that she'd dealt with the opposition of Neil Kinnock's Labour and the union leaders after the defeat of the miners' strike, but complacently slumbered into the poll tax, which ultimately brought her down after Militant, the predecessor of the Socialist Party, played the leading role in organising



Before resigning, Tory MP Owen Paterson faced a 30-day parliamentary suspension after being found guilty of taking £100,000 for lobbying

a mass non-payment campaign involving 18 million people.

Similarly, Johnson's sleazy government, overriding rules that don't suit, can face the fury of millions of workers. The events of the last few days are a continuation of decades of parliamentary sleaze, involving not just the Tories but the other pro-capitalist parties too. But when workers are facing fuel increases of 10p a litre in one week, Johnson's bumbling defence of more Tory sleaze isn't so amusing.

We are seeing a rising tide of strikes by workers - either facing down the brutal attacks like 'fire and rehire' or demanding pay rises to keep their heads above the water of price rises. Many of these disputes are resulting in significant victories - some before action is taken, such as the 17% pay increase by Liverpool tanker drivers.

The excellent 53% turnout by UCU members in higher education means that significant industrial action to defend their pension rights is on

the agenda (see page 12). It shows that the ballot to strike action in local government against the miserly 1.75% pay 'rise' - effectively a cut as real inflation rises towards 5% - can also be won, as well as the fully justified 15% pay claim for NHS workers, fighting to win both statutory and indicative ballots. With a decisive lead from the union leadership, a public sector-wide strike over pay could be a real possibility.

The somersaults and U-turns this week and previously show that, despite his populism, Johnson's government, like all Tory governments, puts the bosses' profits before the interests of workers. And a government led by Starmer's Labour Party would do no different. The fight in the workplaces must be stepped up, along with the struggle to build a new mass political alternative that can take on the Tories by fighting on a socialist programme that offers a decent future to workers.

A workers' MP on a worker's wage



In the wake of the Tory sleaze crisis, Dave Nellist, former MP, national chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, and Socialist Party member, was interviewed on Jeremy Vine's Radio 2 programme about whether it's OK for MPs to have other jobs. Below are extracts from that interview. The whole thing can be found on YouTube.

Jeremy Vine You don't think they should have second jobs at all?

Dave Nellist No. I don't. I think it's a public service. And in fact, they shouldn't even get the wages they're getting today. I think we'd get a lot better MPs if they shared the same day-to-day problems as the people they represent. So I would put them on the same wage as the people they represent.

Jeremy Vine When you were in the Commons in the early 80s you would only take a living wage or a worker's wage?

Dave Nellist In my local Labour Party we looked at the wages in the ten biggest engineering factories in Coventry and averaged the skilled rate, which was a bit over 40% of an MP's wage. And for nine years in parliament that's what I took. My partner Jane wasn't working for the majority of that time and we had three children. So I like to think that we weren't isolated or insulated from day-to-day problems like MPs on three times the average wage are.

Jeremy Vine What about the argument that we need 'men and women of the world', and the best way for them to be that person is to work for someone else?

Dave Nellist The majority of men and women of the world are HGV drivers, nurses, cleaners, and I'd like to see a lot more of those in public office. I don't want to see the lawyers and company directors we have today, who once they get in there are looking for ways to make money on the side.

In the 80s there was one Tory MP, Geoffrey Rippon, who was a QC and had 63 other jobs! That sort of thing was so rife in the 1980s, and I don't think it's fundamentally changed today. I can remember Labour MP Dennis Skinner referring to Tory MPs on the other side of the chamber as the 'honourable member for Barclays Bank', or whatever company they happened to represent.

We don't have transparency and accountability. So in the last eighteen months during this pandemic loads of companies linked to Tory MPs have been allowed to get billions of pounds of PPE and other contracts. That's the reason these MPs are really there, not to represent ordinary people.

Council workers ballot on pay offer that's really a cut



PAUL MATTSSON

MIKE WHALE

HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

With inflation predicted to rise to 4.3 per cent or higher, and after a decade of Tory austerity, teachers need a significant pay rise now. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, we are 8% worse off than we were in 2011. Or, to put it another way, we are now working a month for free.

Sunak's pay freeze for this year was a further slap in the face to all school staff who kept education going through the height of the Covid pandemic. The small pay increase that might be forthcoming next year is likely to be a cut in real terms given inflation.

No wonder teachers are starting to leave the profession. If we are not careful, the 'market forces' of higher wages in some other sectors of the economy will lead to serious teacher shortages and a bigger threat to young people's education than Covid itself.

Teachers' pay is based on recommendations from the supposedly 'independent' School Teachers Review Board (STRB). But the STRB is not independent, it's a government puppet.

We have to fight for the right to negotiate a pay rise like other workers, and our pay should form part of a national contract which limits the ridiculously high number of hours teachers have to work.

BILL GREEN

UNISON MEMBER, (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

My union branch undertook a survey after 12 months of lockdown. It found that two-thirds of staff were working more than the set 36 hours a week. More than half had experienced stress symptoms, and almost half were actively thinking about changing their jobs. Bullying and inflexible managers were rife.

And that's before we even come on to pay!

After a 'final' offer from the national employers of 1.75%, Unison held a consultative ballot. The offer is, in reality, a pay cut, with inflation running towards 4%. In my branch, only eight people voted that this was acceptable. We are now gearing up for a national ballot for strike action. There is a feeling that someone, somewhere needs telling how bad things are for many of our very low-paid members - as no one is listening. This strike ballot might just be the way our employers and the government can be made to listen.

The pandemic has brought a new understanding to people of how important their jobs are. Whether you are a care worker, struggling to get around your clients every day, or school support staff, or someone overseeing vaccination and testing centres, or just back-up staff, you now know that your job is crucial to making society work. They can't do it without us. So why are they so reluctant to pay us a decent wage? Because to pay workers a decent wage cuts away at the money this corrupt government is quietly filtering away to their cronies who fund the Conservative Party and deliver worthless test-and-trace and PPE contracts.

This could definitely be the winter where low-paid council workers join with others to force a decent wage rise for their efforts.

School staff need a pay rise



Appeals to Tory MPs' better nature through petitions and postcards from individual teachers, which is what the union leadership is currently urging, are not enough. Instead, the NEU should prepare teachers for a strike ballot for a fully funded pay rise.

The Tories recent announcement that any pay rise must come from existing budgets is unacceptable. Schools will face the dilemma that if they make a much-needed pay

award to their employees, they will have to make cuts somewhere else.

The union executive should be put on a war footing, organising meetings in every school and college to mobilise members. Let's not forget the collective strength of the NEU forced the Tories to back down over the unsafe opening of schools back in January. A similar campaign on pay could be an unstoppable force in winning a decent pay rise for all education workers.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
• No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
• Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
• Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!

- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
• Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

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

to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.

- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
• A 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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Capitalism's COP26 failure

Socialist planning vital

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

COP26 is one week in at the time of writing, and a set of headline pledges and agreements have been made between many of the world's capitalist nations. Sadly, and expectedly, none of them will come close to resolving the climate crisis, even if the promises are kept.

The fossil fuel industry has the biggest delegation at the summit, more than from any individual country. That sets the tone straight away. The industry's giants are there plainly to pretend to be sincere about climate change.

In recent months we've seen them continue decades of work stalling and amending legislation and reports on climate change.

Even weeks before COP26, coal and oil producers tried to water down an assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The agreements that come out of this event will have been subject to approval by the same bosses and bankers who are still subsidising the destruction of the planet.

Deforestation

The summit's first major deal was 110 leaders promising their nations would end and reverse deforestation by 2030. It's an important goal to fight climate change as trees absorb huge amounts of carbon dioxide, but it's been tried before.

A 2014 declaration promised to halve forest loss by 2020; it failed to

deliver that goal and deforestation has increased since. Far more countries have signed this new agreement including Brazil, whose far-right leader Bolsonaro has been no friend of the environment. His rule has led to a sharp rise in destruction of the rainforest, reaching a twelve-year high last year. Why is he so keen to sign such a dramatic deforestation pledge?

The main factors are probably the chance to get a share of \$19.2 billion riding with the pledge, and the fact that, like other pledges at COP26, it is unenforceable.

But funders have no easy way to tell if deforestation is actually being reduced. Without being able to verify that countries are keeping their pledges, funders are likely to part with less money. Despite all the pledges, deforestation remains

profitable to both legal businesses and illegal loggers who operate in the biggest forests. Signing up doesn't actually commit Brazil and other countries to anything.

India

The next big headline out of COP26 was a ludicrous commitment from India's Narendra Modi, another right-wing leader trying to act green. He proclaimed that India will have net zero emissions - by 2070. That's 20 years after the demand made by the IPCC to ensure global temperatures don't go over 1.5 degrees.

He also pledged to install 500 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity by 2030, but India already had a target of 175 GW renewable

energy production by 2022. It is currently at around 100 GW, putting it behind its existing target. Meanwhile, the International Energy Agency (IEA) says 20% of India's energy currently comes from renewables, disputing India's official figure of 39%. So we can't expect the third biggest emitter of CO₂ to get near its targets. The outcomes of COP26 are looking grim at this point.

Coal

India wasn't among the 40 countries that signed the summit's coal pledge neither were the other two biggest CO₂ contributors China and the United States. This pledge seeks to all but end coal power by 2040. India and China burn two-thirds of the world's coal, so the pledge looks pretty redundant even if those that did sign reach their goals.

The IEA says we should phase out 'unabated' coal plants (plants without carbon-capture or other measures to slash CO₂ emissions) by 2030 in advanced economies, with all unabated coal and oil plants gone by 2040. The technology exists, but in the US the only coal plant with carbon capture shut down last year after failing and burning \$1 billion in the process (including \$190 million of public money).

Methane

Methane has been the other headline fossil fuel as the second most harmful greenhouse gas. The Global Methane Pledge is a US-EU initiative and has not been signed by China, Russia or India, who are the three biggest contributors to methane emissions. Russia's emissions rose 32% last year. The pledge itself only asks for a 30% reduction in emissions, so there's a question over if it will lower methane emissions at all!

The IEA has stated that even if all the pledges made are met, we will still reach 1.8 degrees which will have a far bigger impact on life than 1.5 degrees. With the biggest and boldest pledges seemingly done already, COP26 has failed.

Failure of capitalism

The unenforceable pledges and deals made at COP26 rely on finance flowing round the world to spend and

invest in a gigantic economic shift. The fact is, capitalism isn't up to the task.

Globally, the wealth and technology exists to seriously fight climate change and to help deal with its effects already underway. But capitalism cannot make the necessary changes because investment is made to maximise profit, in competition with other capitalists, at the expense of all else. Governments internationally, representing the interests of their own capitalist class, are unprepared to make decisions that hit bosses' profits. The global collaboration necessary to save the planet is not possible under capitalism.

Therefore, socialist change internationally is vital. Public ownership and democratic control of the banks and biggest polluters would give the working class itself power to put the planet before profit. Investment could then be planned to develop new technology to improve people's lives and the environment. Only a socialist world can save the planet from climate catastrophe.



Thousands march in Glasgow and elsewhere to save the planet

OISIN DUNCAN
SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

Glasgow saw some of the largest political mobilisations since the onslaught of the Covid pandemic on 5 and 6 November. The catalyst was the bosses' COP26 summit, a forum to find 'solutions' to limit global warming, but more importantly, to save the capitalist system.

Friday's march, up to 20,000 strong, was an overwhelmingly youthful demonstration organised by Fridays for Future, with a huge openness to the ideas that a systemic change to the profit-driven rottenness of capitalism is necessary.

Saturday, organised by the COP26 Coalition, was a larger demonstration of around 70,000. The widespread lack of faith in COP to deliver a workable solution for the vast majority of humanity was clear to see.

This consciousness was reflected by the global figurehead of the youth climate strikes, Greta Thunberg, with her comments in George Square on Friday. Correctly, she stated that "we cannot solve a crisis with the same methods that got us here in the first place", continuing with a call for "drastic annual emissions cuts unlike anything the world has ever seen".

The question, which Greta does not yet answer, is how is this to be done if the capitalist rulers are in charge of the economy? The purpose



of Socialist Party Scotland's participation on the demos was to answer that question with our central demand - build a mass working-class movement for socialist change to end climate change.

Class struggle

Significantly, young people in the climate movement are increasingly open to the methods of class struggle, demonstrated by youth strikers joining cleansing workers' pickets, and the return of this solidarity by a strong Glasgow GMB contingent on the Friday march.

Another important step forward is the growing support for anti-capitalist and socialist ideas on both demonstrations. Our party had a colourful and well-organised impact on the marches. At our red gazebos, socialist change to end climate change flags, placards - which we sold for donations - and leaflets were eagerly sought by hundreds of young people.

Our members spoke for hours through our PA systems on both days popularising a socialist solution to the climate crisis. We explained that you can't have capitalism without climate destruction, the need to end the rule of the billionaires and big business, and argued for the building of a mass movement of workers and young people to sweep away capitalism and build a socialist world.

The enthusiasm for bold and

uncompromising socialist ideas was reflected in the 262 copies of the Socialist sold on the marches. And the £700 in donations we received at our stalls from placards, badges, leaflets and in solidarity with our ideas. More than 6,000 copies of our leaflet were also distributed. 53 people filled in cards to join Socialist Party Scotland.

The interest in socialist ideas was also reflected at our meeting after the Saturday demonstration, which was well-attended by 50 young people and workers, many of them attending their first-ever socialist meeting.

Socialist change

By raising our slogans for socialist change to end climate change we provide a marker in the discussion taking place outside COP about the best way forward. We haven't yet convinced everyone mobilised by the climate movement of our programme, but we made an important impact on the weekend's events.

The environmental crisis, wrought by unchecked capitalist greed, is just one of the clearest examples of how the capitalist system offers no future for the vast majority of humanity. The evidence from the COP26 protests is that workers and youth are increasingly drawing that conclusion. We would appeal to them to discuss with us, join our party and fight for a socialist transformation of society.

Wales

Well over 1,000 marched from Cardiff City Hall to the Senedd, and in Swansea over 300 gathered in Castle Square. Socialist Party Wales and Socialist Students had large and lively contingents shouting "Our planet is not for sale" and "Socialist change, not climate change".

Being the only organisation involved, literally flying the flag, for the need for socialist change clearly set us apart from other groups, and this was reflected when several young people, upon seeing our material, handed back other placards to take up our own.

At the Cardiff rally there were many good speeches, but it was Socialist Party member Katrine Williams, speaking on behalf of Cardiff Trades Council, who put forward the most clear course of action to avoid climate change: "We need to nationalise all the energy companies so that we transition to fossil-free energy production, insulate our homes and transition to heat pumps instead of gas boilers."

"We need to nationalise steel so we can safeguard jobs in Port Talbot and transition to hydrogen-powered steel production."

"We need the Welsh government to nationalise public transport. Instead of subsidising the profits of Stagecoach, Arriva and First who then charge sky high fares, we should use those subsidies to provide free public transport."

DAVE REID

London

Roughly 10,000 marched in London, and the Socialist Party had a strong contingent alongside young socialists and the Tamil Solidarity

campaign. While the demonstration was mainly made up of an activist layer, we successfully put forward a socialist programme.

Our chant, "When they cut back and privatise, we fight back and nationalise" went down well among the marchers because, despite what the Tories and Blairite Labour try to say, people want to fight for nationalisation and fully funded public services. People want to fight for socialist change to end climate change.

LILY DOUGLAS

Southampton

Maggie Fricker, health worker, trade unionist and Socialist Party member was cheered by the 500 who rallied in Southampton when she said: "We have a saying in the labour movement, you can't control what you

don't own. We can't trust the multinationals. It's time we took them over and ran them under workers' control and management."

"We the 99% need to organise for socialist change, so we can harness the world's resources and plan to feed and take care of everyone and our planet."

Leeds

A couple of thousand people joined the COP26 protest in Leeds. It was noticeable that important sections of the trade union movement had mobilised for the demonstration, with noticeable delegations from Unite, NEU, PCS and local trades councils on the march. Militant trade unionists, such as Bakers' union general secretary Sarah Woolley, spoke.



Dozens of people signed up to find out more about socialist ideas in Glasgow SOCIALIST PARTY SCOTLAND

Unfortunately, other speakers included those who are not friends of the workers' movement or the environment. Labour West Yorkshire Mayor, Tracy Brabin, was heckled by some attendees over her support for the expansion of Leeds-Bradford airport. Leeds Labour council, despite adopting a 'climate emergency', has supported the project with funding for an airport road link! Brabin has also failed to act so far on her election pledge to bring public transport in West Yorkshire back under public control.

IAIN DALTON

Birmingham

Over 1,000 protesters marched through the city centre to Temple Row, joining the ever-growing cry for immediate action against climate change. Representatives from Youth Fight for Jobs and the PCS Union delivered powerful speeches once the march returned for the main rally.

NICK HART

Plymouth

Around 1,000 people marched around Plymouth city centre before a rally. RMT regional organiser Barry West spoke about the importance of

expanded rail services, and ended by saying we need a revolution to avoid climate change.

DUNCAN MOORE

Nottingham

More than 600 people gathered at Forest Recreation Ground for the opening rally of the march for climate justice. The Nottingham COP26 Coalition, which the Socialist Party participated in, had worked for two months to organise the event.

CLARE WILKINS

Brighton

Socialist Students stood out among the crowd at the Brighton climate protest. It was a huge coming together of climate and socialist activists with a common goal of a system that needs to change. A favoured sign by a Socialist Students activist read 'Capitalism is burning our children', and this is why we fight!

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HANNAH JOHNSTON

Why I'm coming to Socialism 2021

Best thing this term

When I attended Socialism for the first time last year, I was a stressed-out student in my final year of university. With deadlines and exams looming, I remember being apprehensive about 'taking the weekend off'. But attending Socialism 2020 was hands-down the best thing I did that term.

As a new socialist and Socialist Party member, Socialism 2020 helped answer some of the big questions I had at the time: why capitalism cannot simply be reformed into socialism, why identity politics and 'privilege theory' cannot end oppression, or why capitalism can do nothing to solve the climate crisis.

One year on, and my confidence in the need for a socialist world - one that replaces capitalist competition and exploitation with the cooperation and planning required to meet the needs and wants of all - has come along leaps and bounds. But I still have so much to learn. That is why I will be attending Socialism 2021.

While more and more young people are attracted to socialism, many remain unclear as to how we could ever achieve it. Demonstrating how socialists have fought and won in the past, showing the potential for socialist victories in the future can be powerful. For instance, how did socialists organise to defeat Margaret Thatcher's cruel and hated poll tax?

It is also important to draw out conclusions from past failures. With his huge mass support, why was Jeremy Corbyn ultimately unsuccessful? Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece show the potential for new left formations outside the established social-democratic parties. What can we learn from their rise and fall? Come to 'What's happened to Europe's new left?'

In hindsight, it was ridiculous that I would even consider studying instead of attending Socialism 2020. And I cannot wait for the effect that Socialism 2021 will have on me.

ADAM POWELL-DAVIES
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Enough doomscrolling

If you're anything like me, you can easily lose hours reading thinkpieces, twitter threads, articles and reports about the state of our world. Oh, and then there's podcasts, YouTube videos and documentaries. You can wind up with a lot of knowledge, but nowhere practical to put any of it to good use.

Thank goodness for Socialism 2021. It's the chance to interact with hundreds of Socialist Party members. Socialism 2021 is the space where really interesting debate will occur. The finer points of how to actually effect change and what it should look like will be seriously discussed.

At Socialism 2021, you can say - out loud - that no one should be as rich as Jeff Bezos, you won't be told that



Socialism 2019 PAUL MATTSOON



PAUL MATTSOON



MARY FINCH



URTE FULTINAVICUTE

you're just envious of his entrepreneurial success.

If you're new to socialism, or just want to see what all the fuss is about, that's fine too. In fact, there's a whole programme - 'Introduction to Marxism' - made just for you.

I'll try to absorb everything, from 'After BLM - the fight to end racism', while getting tactical in 'How do we take the wealth off the 1%?' It's one thing to write it on a placard, but how, step-by-step, do we make it a reality?

There's 'Food production in a socialist future'. And there's a whole series of sessions on climate change. After the Saturday afternoon rally, lots of 'less structured debate', with a pint, will follow.

Sunday's line-up is no less invigorating than Saturday's with 'How to end violence against women', while I'll spend part of the day with other attendees wondering 'Why does LGBTQ+ phobia still exist?'

So enough doomscrolling, if you've not bought your ticket yet, now is the time.

KIMBERLEY CHALLIS
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Calm among the storm

With everything that has happened, Socialism 2021 is a good place to try and get a clearer picture of current events, and what we can do in our fight for socialist system change.

One of the sessions I will be attending is the Sunday workshop 'How can we fight to end violence against women and sexism?' With the murder of Sarah Everard, the threat to abortion rights in the US, and the cover-up of sexual harassment complaints against the police, young women are angry.

We do not accept the excuse that sexism is inherent in humanity. We want change.

Austerity and a social structure based on class effect women's safety, with, for example, the closure of women's refuges and the dimming of street lighting to save money.

The pay gap in society and the enforcement of gender roles in schools push the narrative that women are inferior. This session will provide

calm among the storm, showing how to fight oppression without falling into identity politics and division.

On Saturday, I will attend 'Will there always be war in Israel and Palestine?' to understand the role of the working class in other countries. I am also looking forward to the Saturday rally as it is always atmospheric and interesting hearing from experienced speakers.

LILY DOUGLAS
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Meet likeminded people

I joined the Socialist Party in the summer, so my experiences so far have been limited to the local branch meetings, weekend stalls and local campaigns. Socialism 2021 is an opportunity to meet likeminded people from the entire country and discuss the issues we face.

I'm eager to participate in the discussions and workshops Socialism 2021 has to offer. I am interested in

learning more about the foundations of Marxism, and the lessons from the 1917 Revolution as we look to build a mass workers' movement.

However, my experience at Socialism 2021 won't be limited to discussing the past. Lessons from the Corbyn experience, unionisation, and the fight to achieve workers' politics are topics that I intend to discuss alongside other attendees.

'How can the eviction Tsunami be stopped?' provides a space to discuss insecure housing, one of the biggest challenges facing workers and young people. 'Why does LGBTQ+phobia still exist?' is vital as we fightback against these insidious ideas.

If we are to overcome the obstacles we face - the ever-present threat of climate change and the erosion of our rights inside and outside the workplace - we must study the ideas of socialism.

I am looking forward to meeting everyone attending Socialism 2021. I hope to make new friends, share ideas, and discuss today's issues, and share a few drinks in the evening!

ROB THOMAS
HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Part of a weekend of socialist discussion on ideas to change the world
19-21 November
In person at Queen Mary University, London and on Zoom
Hosted by
Socialist Party
www.socialistparty.org.uk

SOCIALISM 2021

RISING AGAINST A RIGGED AND ROTTEN SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIALISM: FRIDAY 19 NOVEMBER 6-7PM
Zoom links will be emailed to all ticket holders

TOPICS TO INCLUDE:

- Why young people want socialism;
- What is the role of the working class in changing the world;
- Why climate change is a socialist issue;
- Rising against a rigged and rotten system

THEME	SAT 10AM-12	SAT 1-3PM	SUN 11AM-1PM	SUN 2-4PM
FIGHTING FOR SOCIALISM TODAY	Britain: how can workers fight back in the new normal? Speaker: Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser	How do we take the wealth off the 1%? Speaker: Helen Pattison, London Socialist Party secretary	Northern Ireland and Brexit Speaker: Niall Mulholland, International Executive, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)	Lessons from defeating Thatcher's poll tax Speaker: Nancy Taaffe, Socialist Party National Committee (NC)
TROTSKYISM - IDEAS THEY COULDN'T KILL	Is fascism on the rise? Speaker: James Ivens, Socialist Party National Committee	Anarchism and socialism Speaker: Lenny Shail, Socialist Party National Committee	Is the theory of permanent revolution still relevant? Speaker: Berkay Kartav, London Socialist Party organiser	A transitional programme - what it is and how to use it Speaker: Bob Labi, International Executive, CWI
HOW DO WE CHANGE THE WORLD?	Can workers' organisations lead a revolution? Speaker: Glenn Kelly, Socialist Party National Committee	Students and the class struggle Speaker: Theo Shanell, Socialist Party youth and student organiser	Why does LGBTQ+phobia still exist? Speaker: Michael Johnson, Socialist Party LGBTQ+ members group convenor	How can we fight to end violence against women and sexism? Speaker: Corinthia Ward, Socialist Party national women's bureau
WHAT HAPPENED IN RUSSIA?	The Russian Revolution 1917 - what happened? Speaker: Josh Asker, the Socialist editorial team	The legacy of the collapse of Stalinism Speaker: Clive Heemskerk, editor Socialism Today	Was Stalinism inevitable? Speaker: Clare Doyle, International Executive, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)	Why hasn't the Communist Party delivered a 'century for socialism'? Speaker: Roger Thomas, South West Socialist Party Regional Committee
SOCIALIST CHANGE TO END CLIMATE CHANGE	Food production in a socialist future Speaker: Mark Best, Socialist Party National Committee	What came out of COP 26? Speaker: Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland Executive Committee (EC)	Can local government play a part in fighting climate change? Speaker: Nick Chaffey, Socialist Party Southern region secretary	SNP-Green government in Scotland: will they deliver on climate, workers' rights and independence? Speaker: Philip Stott, Socialist Party Scotland EC
LESSONS FROM THE CORBYN EXPERIENCE	Modern Monetary Theory v Marxism Speaker: Hannah Sell, Socialist Party General Secretary	Forum: how can a workers' politics be achieved? Speakers include Jared Wood, RMT NEC,	Do trade unions need a political voice? Speaker: Hugo Pierre, Socialist Party National Committee	Lessons from the Corbyn experience Speaker: Steve Score, Socialist Party East Midlands Secretary
IDEAS TO FIGHT BACK	Culture war or class war? Speaker: Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party Executive Committee	Britain's broken housing model and why we need genuinely social housing Hosted by the Unite the Union Housing Branch and SHAC	After BLM - the fight to end racism Speaker: Deji Olayinka, Socialist Party Black & Asian members group	Can the NHS survive? Speakers: Naomi Byron, Socialist Party National Committee and NHS workers
INTRODUCTION TO MARXISM	Marxist economics - understanding capitalism in crisis Speaker: Iain Dalton, Socialist Party Yorkshire Secretary	The ABC of dialectics: politics be achieved? Speaker: Ross Saunders, Socialist Party Wales Secretary	Dialectical historical materialism - what it is and how to use it Speaker: Isai Priya, Socialist Party national Treasurer	Marxism, the state, and the right to protest Speaker: Nick Hart, Socialist Party West Midlands organiser
WAR AND IMPERIALISM	Will there always be war in Israel and Palestine? Speaker: Judy Beishon, International Secretariat, CWI	Youth rising in Sri Lanka Hosted by Young Revolutionaries in Solidarity and Tamil Solidarity	20 years since 9/11: lessons from the anti-war movement Speaker: Tom Baldwin, Socialist Party South West Secretary	20 years since 9/11: world relations and decline of a superpower Speaker: TU Senan, International Secretariat, CWI
A WORLD IN CRISIS	Cuba and the left Speaker: Tony Saunders, Committee for a Workers' International Secretary	The world and Covid - what is the economic outlook? Speaker: Robin Clapp, Socialist Party National Committee	What's happened to Europe's 'new left'? Speakers from the CWI in France and Germany	'Barbarism or socialism' - Africa in the 21st century Speakers from the CWI in Nigeria and South Africa

FREE CRECHE available throughout. Book by 12 November via 020 8988 8777 or socialism@socialistparty.org.uk

JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

All Saturday workshops are in person with the opportunity to attend on Zoom. The Sunday workshops in white boxes will be on Zoom only. Recordings of all workshops will be available to all ticket holders.

There will be informal meet-ups for all those who want to find out about joining the Socialist Party at Queen Mary and on Zoom. But don't wait until then to get in touch about joining: www.socialistparty.org.uk/join

SOCIALIST PLANNING TO MEET HOUSING NEED

PAUL KERSHAW

CHAIR UNITE LE1111 HOUSING BRANCH AND
SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Over a million households sit on council housing waiting lists, and that's only those who are allowed to join the queue. Eight million people have some kind of housing need, and in 2019 only 6,338 new social rented homes were built.

Meanwhile, the UK's big house-builders are booming. Britain's second-largest housebuilder Barrett's reported profits before tax of £810 million for the year to the end of June, compared with £490 million in the previous year, and it reports that the year ahead looks promising.

Bellway reports that in the year to 31 July, revenue jumped 40.3% to £3.1 billion and pre-tax profits more than doubled to £479 million. It's a great time for the shareholders - UK house-building is a success story for them. They make huge profits building unsafe, poor-quality homes.

The real cost of a house is not just the bricks and mortar, but the land it stands on. Land prices have rocketed up by 400% since 1995. It is estimated that land accounted for just 2% of the price of residential property in the 1930s, while now it is closer to 70%. Landowners do not produce anything to get these profits. Capitalist politicians are fond of talking about their concerns for 'hard working families' but have presided over policies that give huge benefits to landowners for no work at all.

Land ownership

Land ownership in Britain is shrouded in secrecy, but it's estimated that 25,000 landowners, just 0.04% of the population, own half of the land in England. None of them will be the hard-working families that politicians claim to be interested in.

The Tories talk of getting rid of 'red tape' in the planning system regulating the use of land. They are not seeking to meet the desperate need for quality sustainable and affordable housing, whatever the noises about levelling up and 'build build build'. They are seeking to knock away obstacles to capital, to make it easier to rake in profits whatever the impact on communities or the environment.

Of course, this is no surprise when you remember that property tycoons have donated more than £60 million to the Tory party over the last ten years; 20% of its income. Under pressure, the Tories have been forced to temporarily retreat.

In reality, land is traded in the hope that planning permission will open opportunities for huge speculative profits. Developers can make

a killing simply by getting planning permission. Land values can increase 275 times over once a developer gets permission.

Secretive developers lean on planning authorities to let them build what is profitable, whether it is huge towers in suburban areas or 'exclusive' developments destined for overseas investors.

Developers hold speculative 'land banks' and profit from trading them. Around 90% of applications for planning permission are approved in England. Consent has been granted for between 800,000 and one million new houses that remain unbuilt. Builders sit on land until the most profitable moment to build on it. Red tape is not the problem.

In cities, the government promotes 'permitted development rights', which knock away planning controls to allow offices to be converted into homes. A government report found they deliver "worse quality residential environments than planning permission conversions in relation to a number of factors widely linked to the health, well-being and quality of life of future occupiers". Its analysis found that just 22.1% of the homes delivered meet national space standards. Local councils are responsible for planning decisions and, disgracefully, many Labour councils fail to put up serious opposition to these developments.

'Affordability'

In recent years, 'affordable' housing has been built based on crumbs off the table. Developers are supposed to provide some proportion of housing in any development for 'affordable' homes. When they don't dodge this requirement on the basis of 'viability', the 'affordable' housing can be built for sale and is usually unaffordable. Usually, 'affordable' refers to property being 80% of the market price, the government's own Affordable Housing Commission in 2020 concluded that most of these homes are "clearly unaffordable to those on mid to lower incomes". This is not a serious basis to meet housing need.

The lack of genuinely affordable new housing, its poor quality and lack of environmental sustainability, is not a mystery, it's a consequence of developers' drive for profit. We need a mass council house building programme based on nationalising land and the big housebuilders. By nationalising the banks, cheap low-interest mortgages could be made readily available for home-buyers. As part of a socialist planned economy, decisions about what housing to build and where could be made democratically to meet housing need.



Residents fighting back for housing safety

PETE MASON

CHAIR, BARKING REACH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
AND EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

When Barking Council got together with the Greater London Assembly to build a substantial housing project on some disused flood-plain, ex-industrial land twenty years ago, it dismissed the idea of council housing outright. One of the casualties was the safety of the residents.

Now, secretive tax-haven-based Adriatic Land owns large chunks of the Barking Riverside estate, in what has become prime real estate. This is despite the fact that some of the blocks are fire hazards, with one suffering a substantial fire. At least one suffers from black mould, others with poorly installed heating systems potentially face the same.

Elsewhere, blocks built by Bellway Homes have suffered floods which have displaced residents. Others face huge service charge bills to replace flammable balconies.

The all-Labour Barking and Dagenham council and the GLA decided to build an entirely private estate. This has allowed some of the top ten home-builders, pictured on the cover of the pro-capitalist Spectator magazine as a bunch of gangsters, to swoop in. In a mad-dash for profit, these developers have cut corners, built shoddy homes costing up to £500,000 each, sold the land and buildings on to their mates in tax havens, and then try to deny responsibility for the problems their cost-cutting created.

When the residents' association

started a survey of one block on our estate, owned by London and Quadrant housing association, we were shocked that the very first person we spoke to, pushing a pram across the courtyard, told us she has had no heating for five years, with black mould everywhere. This story was repeated endlessly.

Tenants' fightback

But residents have fought back. We've held numerous well-publicised, well-attended meetings and protests, with good media coverage. We've forced the builder Bellway to agree to remediate some parts of the estate that narrowly missed burning down completely in 2019, saved by two concrete stairwells and a lot of luck.

We've forced recognition of the residents' association in another part of the estate, and placed residents in control of their buildings in other parts, through the 2002 'right to manage' legislation.

A big online meeting recently forced Bellway to admit to poor workmanship in flats that had suffered flooding, with a promise of remediation. We've forced London and Quadrant to replace inadequate radiators throughout phase two of the development. Bellway remains intractable on this issue on the blocks they still own, and has so far refused to remediate leaking balconies.

But local struggles like these must be accompanied by a national plan. Protests are being organised by energetic and determined residents across the country, but they need to take a socialist approach.

The gangster top ten homebuilders must be nationalised, with compensation paid only to small investors and shareholders in genuine need. Then Bellway's £479 million pre-tax profits, as just one example, can go directly into remediating all the properties that suffer from multiple problems in the cladding crisis, instead of going to dividend payments.

Over decades, the privatisation of safety inspectors has left them doing a paltry job, hand in glove with the builders. And standards in the private sector have fallen drastically, as revealed by the tragedy of Grenfell and the subsequent inquiry. These services must be renationalised. But critically, all publicly owned institutions in the housing sector should have the participation of residents and the trade unions at every level. Just as we demand resident control over our estate, the home building industry should be under democratic workers' control, bringing together residents, building workers, and other working-class representatives.

The appalling health and safety record in housing shows that new standards must be set in home building. Housing the population safely and in high-standard dwellings requires a mass council house building programme with the decisive involvement of residents from the outset. Homes with concierges and caretakers, and houses with front and back gardens, are all possible if the vast wealth in society is taken out of the hands of the super-rich, including the big developers.

Homelessness: 'The solution is to build more council housing'

HOUSING SUPPORT WORKER IN LONDON

I work as part of a 'housing first' project, which involves finding permanent housing for people who have been chronically homeless. The idea is to help move people out of the hostel system, where conditions are awful.

The people that I work with are 'fortunate' in that they go straight to the top of the housing waiting lists because they are classed as vulnerable. Despite being top of the list, it still takes several months to get through and get them housed.

After assessment by the council, applicants are assigned a category based on their vulnerability. In theory, those at the top of the list get homes much quicker. How to get top priority is a mystery. My co-workers and I often talk about how people, who having already been assessed as 'high-needs' by a human, as soon as they go through the checklist still come out as a low priority.

Once in the system, applicants get access to an online portal where there is a very limited selection of homes, sometimes as few as two or three flats. You can see how many people are bidding on them, usually it is in the thousands.

Often there are no flats that meet an applicant's needs, or are only available for people over the age of 65, for example. It can take years, even for those who are assessed as being 'high-need'. Many of the properties are advertised without pictures, and without an exact location. If you are lucky and there is a picture, it will just be of the outside.

Applicants who decline an offer of a flat risk being removed from the waiting list altogether as councils try to force people into homes and reduce the length of the queue.

It is challenging to see that it is a problem which has a solution that the government and local councils are not prepared to act on. That solution is to build more council housing.

Working in the housing sector can be incredibly stressful, emotionally and physically. Things listed in job adverts and the actual reality, are very different.

Funding for housing projects is decided by councils. Different organisations bid for the contracts to provide the service. Some of the organisations are charities, some are pretending to be charities. Staff turnover can be really high. In my last workplace I worked there for five months and that was considered a long time.

It is vital that housing workers get organised in the trade unions to fight for decent pay, and terms and conditions at work. I am a member of Unite the union that now has a policy to call on Labour councils to set needs budgets, including building the council homes we need.



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

People's Budgets to meet housing need

The Socialist Party, as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), is helping to organise People's Budget meetings across the country, to bring together trade unions, activists and community groups, including housing activists and tenants organisations, and draw up council budgets to meet the needs of communities.

We call on councillors to resist

austerity by setting needs budgets in councils' upcoming budget-setting meetings. Such a move could win the mass support from communities necessary to demand the money needed from the government.

Unite policy conference recently called on councils to set needs budgets. The Bakers' union has recently disaffiliated from Labour and pledged to continue to fight

politically for its members. Where existing councillors refuse to act in the interests of workers, as they have done during ten years of austerity, we call on the trade unions to put up candidates and join TUSC's fighting stand in May's council elections. This could be an important step towards building a new mass workers' party, a vital step in achieving a socialist solution to the capitalist housing crisis.

A local council prepared to set a budget to meet the needs of workers could:

- Use council borrowing powers to fund capital spending to build secure, green council homes, while campaigning for the government to divert its subsidies for private developers to finance a mass programme of affordable public housing
- Use councils' powers to register private landlords and set up council-run lettings agencies, as a means to tackle repair standards, high rents and overcrowding for private rented homes
- Restore full council tax benefits, funded from council reserves not council tax rises, and campaign for the government to reimburse councils that do so
- Give rough sleepers immediate, decent, and comfortable accommodation and support to transform their lives
- Act immediately on cladding and fire safety by carrying out remedial work and billing the government. They could compulsorily purchase the buildings of private and housing association landlords which do not also act immediately
- Pay council workers, and those employed in council-funded services, a minimum wage of £15 an hour and ensure trade union recognition



Britain's broken housing model and why we need genuinely social housing
Session at Socialism2021

75 years after the first new town

MARK PICKERSGILL
STEVENAGE SOCIALIST PARTY

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the New Towns Act implemented by the post-war Labour government, when on the 11 November 1946, Stevenage was designated Britain's First New Town.

The Labour Party's overwhelming victory in the 1945 general election on a radical platform represented a resounding rejection of Winston Churchill and the Tory party. The working class had defeated fascism and had endured six years of struggle and sacrifice. There was to be no going back to the 1930s.

The masses demanded a better world, and the ruling class was fearful of the revolutionary movements taking place throughout Europe. It was against this background that the 1945 Labour government set up the welfare state, the NHS, free education and nationalised vast swathes of industry.

Housing had also become a major priority because of overcrowding and shortages before the war, exacerbated by the destruction of thousands of homes due to bomb damage. In London alone, fifty thousand homes had been destroyed. The shortage of social housing was also particularly acute in London where 180,000 families were on council house waiting lists, and even before the war 63.5% of families were forced to share the same dwelling with another family.

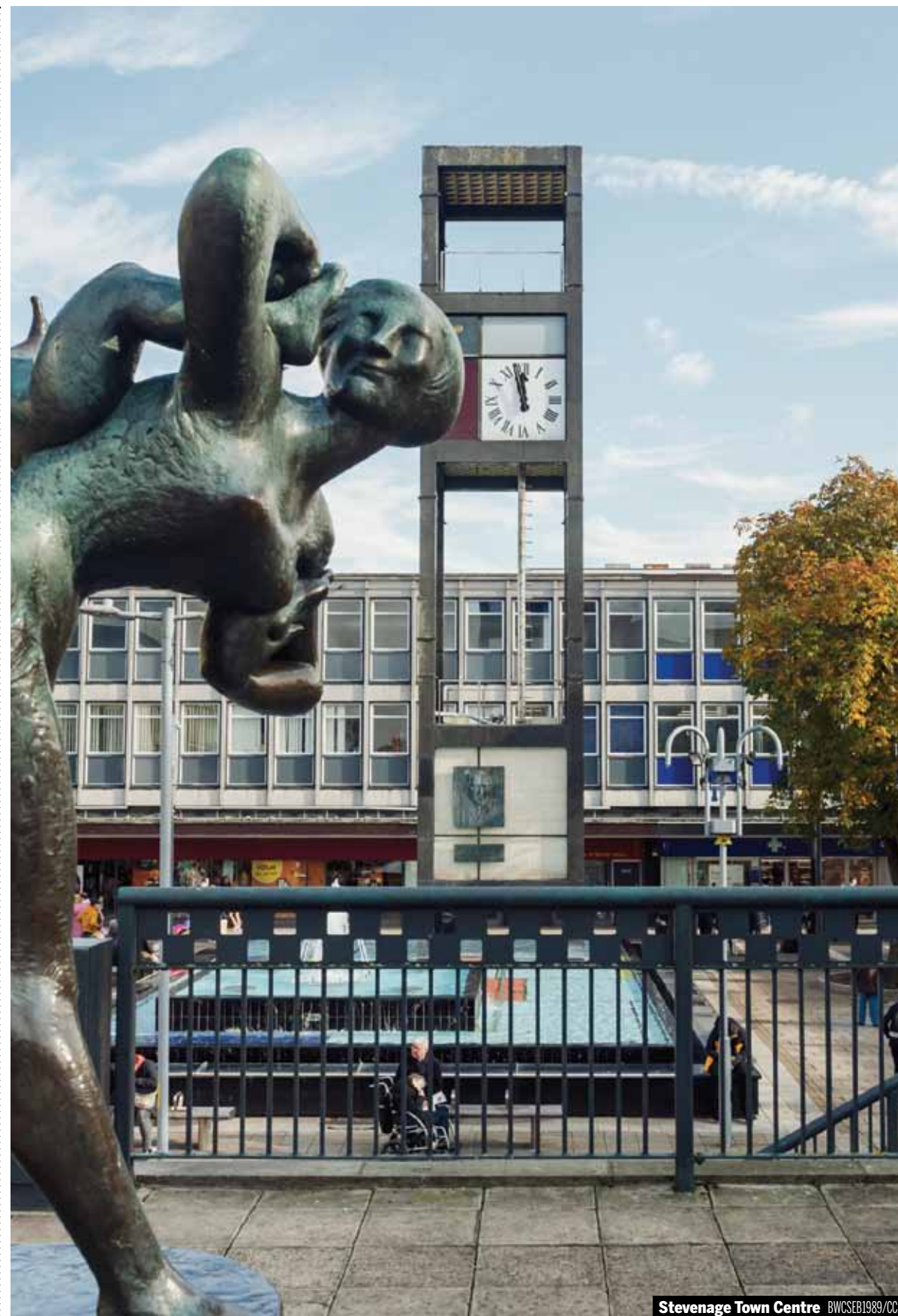
Many people with children lived in privately rented rooms or with grandparents in overcrowded conditions. The 1946 New Towns Act was part of the post-war mass social housing building programme carried out to alleviate the shortage of housing in Britain, and by the early 1950s an average of 300,000 council houses a year were being built across the country.

New towns concept

The new towns concept had been influenced by the utopian garden city movement from the early part of the 20th century. William Morris, the socialist textile designer, being one of their inspirations. The idea was that they would bring the countryside into the town, and that industry and housing would be separated. Also, the towns had to be located on the periphery of the major cities. Families with children would live in houses with gardens, only single people would live in flats or apartments.

Coinciding with the mass council house building programme, the Greater London Plan was introduced. This set out to limit the expansion of London and create a green zone of 20 miles around it. This meant that no more large-scale council housing projects like the 1930s Becontree estate in Dagenham would be permitted within London or on its boundaries.

London's new towns were to be located twenty to thirty miles outside the city, and families on London council waiting lists (if they fitted the criteria of working for a company in London that was relocating to a new town) would be offered



accommodation in one of eight towns: Stevenage, Basildon, Harlow, Crawley, Hemel Hempstead, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and Bracknell.

However, when Stevenage became designated as the first new town, there was strong opposition to the proposal, particularly from local landowners who balked at the thought that the working classes from London would be invading rural Essex and Hertfordshire. In the end the Labour government defeated those people who had opposed the new towns through legislation in the House of Lords.

The new towns were given the nickname 'Cockney Siberia' because it felt like people from London were

being sent into the wilderness. The phrase 'new town blues' was also coined to describe the experience of many young families, who had moved from vibrant communities in different parts of London, to feeling isolated in a new town.

My parents had moved with me and my sister out of overcrowded accommodation in London to Stevenage. Our mother told us that in London she lived only ten minutes away from the West End, and had access to art galleries and theatres. To come to Stevenage and be living next to a field was a culture shock to say the least.

These difficulties were overcome and most people had a pragmatic

approach to their predicament. After all, the reason workers had left London was to escape the shortage of housing. The houses people moved into were far superior to any accommodation they had experienced in London.

Only a tiny minority of people went back to London. Most people in the 1950s and 1960s who had moved to a new town realised there was no going back. Back to what in fact?

In London we were living with our aunt, uncles and grandmother in a tiny two-bed house with no hot water. The house in Stevenage was a three-bedroom house with front and back garden.

The labour and trade union movements also played a significant role in the early history of new towns. Companies that relocated from London to Stevenage for instance, already had well-organised workforces who brought their traditions of solidarity and class struggle with them. These traditions also helped to overcome the isolation of early new town life.

Development corporations

The new towns were run initially by development corporations, not handing back control to elected councils until 1980. These development corporations also managed and owned the housing stock and not the local council. The development corporations were unelected government appointed institutions. Just like the nationalised industries, workers had little say in planning, and the allocation of housing. Throughout the early years of the building of Stevenage, there were confrontations between the organised working class and these new town corporations.

The officers of these corporations were certainly not from the working class, and had a top-down approach to workers. Decisions on where people were housed and what part of London they came from were made by these unelected officers. Their attitude was sometimes condescending, as if they were doing workers a favour. For instance the idea of betting shops and pie and mash shops in a new town was frowned upon, after all that represented the seedy side of London life!

It was through the struggles of the labour and trade union movement that workers' demands were met. It was the building workers who downed tools throughout Stevenage and marched en masse to the offices of the development corporation demanding an end to the 'lump' on the building sites, when a worker would be regarded as 'self-employed' and paid a lump sum of money for the work that they did each day or week.

It was the development corporation which handed out the building contracts after all. Even some of the people in the offices of the corporation at the time thought that the revolution was coming. On another occasion, a mass strike of trade unionists took place to demand the installation of a footbridge over a main road where workers had been killed crossing it.

There was even a protest movement over the building of a road through a beautiful valley in the middle of Stevenage; again the development corporation was forced to change its plans.

New towns did offer people a new way of life, away from the overcrowded and polluted cities. They

were planned so that elements of the countryside were preserved within the town, giving the feeling of space, and being surrounded by trees and parks. However, over a million people were rehoused away from London between the 1950s and 1990s. This had a hollowing-out effect, with the loss of a skilled workforce in inner London and the breakup of established communities.

New towns can appear soulless and lack some of the character of older towns. They were supposed to be self-contained, meaning that people would live and work in the same town. This vision does not exist now. Companies that moved to Stevenage were given subsidies to begin with but now most of these companies have closed down.

The rolling back of the reforms that were introduced by the 1945 Labour government has had a major impact on the new towns. When they were planned, the children of the first generation were guaranteed housing and the waiting time for a house was only six months, even in the early 1980s. Now with the sale of council housing and the lack of any new social housing, the prospect of getting a council house has diminished. Property prices have risen in Stevenage, meaning that young people face the prospect of having to move further away to find affordable accommodation.

The issue of housing is as stark now as it was after World War Two. Tory and Labour governments since the 1980s have abandoned the idea of council house building. Overcrowding and homelessness are rife, and people are forced into private rented accommodation. Families face being separated because they are being offered accommodation in other parts of the country. This is particularly the case again in London.

We demand a mass council housing building programme and an immediate reform of privately rented accommodation, giving people the right to a fair rent and secure accommodation. Only under a democratic socialist planned economy can the housing issue be properly resolved though.

The question of building on the green belt around London because of an increase in demand for housing will have to be confronted. Under capitalism there is unplanned economic growth, which results in congested and overcrowded cities. The concept of new towns will again be on the agenda, giving people the right to live in decent housing. Under socialism they will be run democratically with the full cooperation of the working class.

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Harsh Tory regime for benefit claimants and workers - we need a union fightback

PCS MEMBER IN DWP

The Tory government is driving a harsh regime; both for those on benefits and for our PCS trade union members delivering these vital public services.

Throughout the pandemic PCS members delivered services remotely and safely, as well as providing a face-to-face service for any claimants who could not use the remote channels. PCS health and safety reps pushed tirelessly for everyone's safety to be paramount.

Since April, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ministers have ignored safety and instigated rigid targets on seeing claimants face to face. This has meant dragging both our members and the public back into the jobcentres for no genuine purpose.

People are being crammed into Jobcentres using all the desks, regardless of the Covid-19 risks. The pressure on our Work Coach members (staff who provide one-to-one support for claimants) has been ramped up since April, with now up to 20 mandatory interviews being booked in each day.

There is no scope for our members to tailor the support to what each claimant needs. Many interviews are just ten minutes, which is more about making the individual travel into the Jobcentre and hit a statistical target, rather than allow time for any meaningful support.

The impossible targets bear no relation to what the claimant register is like in the local area and what support is needed. The government is attempting to mask the failure of the money it has thrown at private sector



ALAN PARKINSON/CC

Tories under pressure in bid to remove pension triple lock

KEVIN PATTISON
CHAIR, LEEDS AND WAKEFIELD UNITE COMMUNITY,
RETIRED

In the recent budget the Tory government chose to cut taxes on champagne and on banks rather than keeping the triple lock on state pensions. Millions of pensioners have only the state pension to live on, but it is one of the lowest in Europe.

The triple lock meant that state pensions increased by whichever is the highest - wages, inflation, or 2.5%. After promising in their manifesto to keep the triple lock, the government has decided to do away with it this year because, it claims, average wages have gone up so much this year.

This will come as a surprise to NHS workers who have been offered only 3%, ie less than inflation, and other public sector workers who have been told that their pay freeze imposed last November will end next April, but have been offered nothing yet.

There has been a 'revolt' in the House of Lords about the ending of the triple lock, and there will be a further vote in parliament on 15 November. The National Pensioners Convention is encouraging people to write to their MPs about this,

hoping for yet another government U-turn.

There are around 20,000 hypothemia-related deaths of pensioners each year. To take away the triple lock just as gas and electricity prices are going through the roof will cause more pensioners to have to choose between heating and eating. The Department for Work and Pension's £200 per household seasonal fuel payment will make only a small dent in this winter's bills.

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RMT AGM: Delegates focus on the looming battles over jobs, pay and pensions

RMT AGM DELEGATES IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The highlight of the 2021 RMT annual general meeting (AGM) was being able to accept a pay offer from Abellio ScotRail that must open the government's pay freeze for 2021.

The AGM had already rejected an offer that tied an increase in 2022 to unacceptable productivity strings, which delegates from ScotRail felt would lead to job cuts. This was the second time that ScotRail's 'final' offer had been rejected after the executive had thrown out an inferior offer the previous week.

Finally, an offer was made for a no-strings offer of 2.5% for 2021, with new negotiations to start for 2022. This is the first time a train-operating company has made an offer of a pay rise without productivity strings since the government imposed a pay freeze on the rail industry, along with the public sector.

This victory on ScotRail can now act as a springboard for RMT's national ballot of workers at train operating companies and Network Rail to break the pay freeze across the board.

The battle to keep guards on our trains was also discussed, with delegates supporting the position of the executive to put an offer to resolve the dispute on South West Railways (SWR) to a referendum. The offer had been overwhelmingly supported by members. The SWR deal did not secure the role of the guard



PAUL MATTSOON

in train dispatch to the extent RMT had sought, but it does guarantee a safety critical guard on every train, and came following 72 days of strike action by RMT guards on SWR.

AGM delegates rejected a number of organisational resolutions that had been coordinated by the so-called Broad Left. These resolutions sought to begin a review, to be conducted by the general secretary, of RMT branch, regional and executive structures. Rightly, delegates preferred to focus on the looming battles

secretary to consider this matter the AGM agreed a resolution to consult the Black and Ethnic Members Advisory Committee on the issue of encouraging more diversity in leadership positions as a first step.

A number of political, and other items did not get taken, as the AGM was attempting to cover items outstanding from the Covid-truncated AGM in 2020, as well as the items for 2021. To further complicate matters, RMT staff walked out on Friday lunchtime, further shortening the AGM by half a day. Staff stated they were unhappy with the AGM decision to overturn an executive decision regarding protests held at RMT headquarters following the use of compulsory redundancy to deal with a member of staff working on the Union Learner Fund when government withdrew funding.

It is essential that the AGM remains the sovereign body, and that means the AGM decision to overturn the executive position must stand. Contrary to reports carried by the BBC, ITV and Morning Star, among others, staff were not called scabs by delegates, many of whom sought to offer a statement in support of our staff after the vote had been taken.

RMT staff are valued by AGM delegates, branches and members, and it is important that this is clearly stated, while we also uphold the democratic structures of our union.

A Special General Meeting will most likely need to be convened now to finish business but delegates have made one thing clear: RMT members will not let the government and bosses use the Covid pandemic as cover to attack our pay and conditions or to impose massive job cuts.

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS AT CWU CONFERENCE

One of the most heated debates at the Covid-delayed Communication Workers Union (CWU) online conference was over the union's political strategy, and particularly its relationship with the Labour Party.

Undoubtedly, this session was affected by the tumultuous political developments over the last two months. Keir Starmer used Labour's conference in September to show that his party was safe and reliable for big business. In the face of this rush to the right, and the auto-expulsion of its national president Ian Hodson, the Bakers' union BFAWU voted to disaffiliate from Labour. Weeks later, at the first Unite conference under the leadership of Sharon Graham, the union passed motions calling on Labour councils to move no-cuts needs budgets. This at the same time as Sharon has called on Unite's executive to only back candidates in elections that support Unite's policies.

A number of motions from branches wanted the union to face up to the reality of Starmer's Labour Party. Unfortunately, two motions initiated by Socialist Party members, from Scotland No.2 branch and the United Tech and Allied Workers (UTAW) branch were placed down the agenda, with a high chance of being knocked off by a long executive motion placed before them. This resulted in the two higher-placed motions becoming the key battle ground on political strategy of the CWU.

First up was the Kingstons motion calling for "funding to the Labour Party should cease with immediate effect... until such time as a future CWU annual conference decrees that the Labour Party has returned to its traditional values and is in alignment to promoting trade unionism and workers' rights in this country".

Socialist Party members supported this motion despite its limitations, and the three members who spoke used their time to explain the need for such steps, but to also go further by taking up the demands and proposals in the later motions that called for the "other Labour-affiliated trade unions to convene a conference of affiliated and non-affiliated unions, trade unionists, socialist organisations and individuals to discuss the need for a political vehicle that fights the Tories on socialist anti-austerity policies and can provide a future to workers, rather than the pro-business agenda of Starmer and his cutting Labour councils".

Scotland No.2 branch, whose secretary is Gary Clark from Socialist Party Scotland, highlighted how the Labour Party has been busy expelling trade unionists and left wingers, while in Aberdeen forming a coalition with the Tories. He pointed to the RMT transport union which, although expelled from the Labour Party, has been free to support only candidates in their members interests.

Judy Griffiths from Coventry boldly stated the clear facts of how, with Starmer's new rules and its repealing of policies like nationalisation that are key to the CWU, Labour has become even more incapable of being reclaimed by the union. Judy explained what Liverpool City Council did with a no-cuts budget in the 1980s as an example of what Labour is not doing now.

CWU conference debates the union's political strategy

Workers need their own political vehicle to fight the Tories with socialist policies



PAUL MATTSOON

Deji Olayinka, UTAW branch, embarrassed a number of the speakers who oppose any changes to the union political policies, by reminding conference of their current or former status as Labour councillors.

The motion was lost, and the executive motion was passed after a curtailed debate. Nevertheless, the executive motion had to reflect the changing mood of anger toward Starmer and the Blairites. It stated that Starmer's Labour Party is disconnected from the working class "and seems more concerned with factional infighting". It resolved "to suspend any donations outside of our affiliation fees to the national Labour Party. Any additional funding outside of our affiliation fees will instead go to specific Labour candidates and campaigns that support CWU industrial and political aims and to support the selection and election of such candidates."

While this will be seen as a step in the right direction by many CWU members, the executive motion tried to claim that Labour is making

progress in areas where it enjoys strong links with the CWU. Yet every Labour council is carrying out massive cuts. The truth is that the union has no influence among Labour councils. But this proposition will still allow local branches to fund Labour councillors who carry out cuts.

While the vote was heavily in favour of staying affiliated to Labour, in reality, more and more CWU members will move into opposition to Labour-inspired austerity. The left in the CWU must continue to campaign for a real political alternative that can fight for CWU members, their families and the wider working class.

This means a party that stands on a political programme that includes the renationalisation of Royal Mail and BT, refusing to pass on Tory council cuts, and the repeal of the Tory anti-union laws which go back to Thatcher and were maintained by Blair and Brown, that have been used against CWU members.

A motion from Manchester, which was supported by the executive, wasn't reached but would have

Sheffield bin workers strike and say: "End rubbish pay!"

"End rubbish pay!" was the chant outside Lumley Street depot as around 150 Sheffield bin workers, members of the GMB union, began strike action on 8 November for an above-inflation pay rise.

Employed by multinational Veolia on the council's outsourced waste management contract, the workers have rejected two below-inflation offers, the last one being 3% a year on a two-year deal. At a gate mass meeting, they voted unanimously to serve notice of all-out strike action from 22 November if their demand for a one-year 6% rise is not met. But it's not just about pay, it's about erosion of terms and conditions, and especially

about bullying management, 'Nasty Nick' mentioned by name!

The four-hour strike kept all the bin wagons behind locked gates, and the strikers marched to the town hall, drawing noticeable support from honking vehicles and shoppers clapping. There, GMB regional officer Pete Davies said about the Labour cabinet: "Its time they get off their arses and show that it's the dog that wags the tail, not the other way round."

The Socialist Party goes further - the Veolia contract should be brought back in-house now.

ALISTAIR TICE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY



ALISTAIR TICE

Support for all-out scaffs strike spreads

News of the all-out strike by 60 scaffolders employed by contractor Actavo at British Steel in Scunthorpe is spreading, with Danish scaffs sending solidarity. Into the sixth week of industrial action, the strikers' resolve remains high, with gazebos, tents, braziers, and kettles in place for winter, if that's what it takes. The hot noodles delivered by Hull Trades Council's Unity Shop were especially well received!

But the key to winning Unite's demand for the scaffs to be paid the national industry (NAECI) rate is inside

the British Steel plant where hundreds of other Unite members work. The strikers have taken the initiative this week of producing a health and safety survey that they are handing out to British Steel workers going into work, asking them to report on safety concerns over scaffolding on site. This can be a step towards appealing for their support on a 'solidarity with the scaffs day', which would put far more pressure on Actavo and British Steel to pay up.

ALISTAIR TICE
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Weetabix workers escalate action in crunch dispute

Workers at two Weetabix factories launched four-day strikes from 8 November in a dispute over pay and conditions.

Members of Unite in Kettering and Corby have been on strike every Tuesday and Wednesday since September over 'fire-and-rehire' imposed contract changes that could leave them up to £5,000 a year worse off.

In an escalation of the dispute, strikes are to take place every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

"Weetabix is making bumper profits, so there is no justification for these 'fire and rehire' attacks on our

members' wages and conditions," Unite's general secretary, Sharon Graham, said. "They are just not swallowing what in reality is a serving of corporate greed."

"Unite will not accept attacks on our members' jobs, pay and conditions, and Weetabix should expect this dispute to continue escalating until fire and rehire is dropped."

About 80 engineers have been taking part in the Tuesday and Wednesday strike action since September at the Weetabix Mills factory in Burton Latimer and at its plant on the Earlstreets industrial estate in Corby. The two factories also produce Alpen, Weetos and Oatibix.

University workers vote for industrial action in two disputes

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UCU

University staff have voted in favour of industrial action in two disputes, paving the way for strike action in the coming months if management does not agree to improvements to pensions, pay and conditions.

In the 'USS pension' dispute, 76% of members voted for strike action, and 88% for action short of a strike. In the 'four fights' dispute which covers pay and pay-related issues including casualisation, workload and inequalities, the 'yes' vote for strike action was 70% and 85% for action short of a strike.

Overall, more than 50% of the membership voted in both disputes, beating the Tories' imposed strike threshold. The results mean that had the ballots been run on an aggregated basis, the union would be in a position to call every university out on strike.

However, the ballots were run on a disaggregated basis, meaning each individual branch needed to hit the threshold to be legally able to take action. This strategy has led to more patchy results. In the USS dispute, where only pre-1992 universities are included in the scheme, 37 out of 68 university branches hit the threshold. In the 'four fights' dispute, 54 out of 164 hit the threshold.

Still, it is a significant victory that the union membership collectively delivered the mandates it did. It is a strong indicator of the mood which

exists among university workers to fight. It is no small feat to achieve these results on two national disputes run side by side, with a short ballot window of just under three weeks. The success of the ballot is even more impressive considering many campaigns were coordinated remotely. The results will surely give confidence to workers from other sectors.

The number of branches hitting the threshold is less than in 2019-20, but the overall turnout was higher. This is because some branches delivered exceptionally high turnouts. These were noticeably those branches that have played a fighting role in local disputes during the last year.

Additionally, many branches were within a handful of votes of hitting the threshold. Given many branches reported problems with receipt of ballot papers, these branches could easily get over the line in a rebalot. For example, 22 branches in the USS dispute had a turnout between 40% and 50%, with multiple branches hitting 49%. These branches should be rebalotted while the momentum is high, so that they can join action in the new year.

Critical discussion is now taking place in the union about the best strategy for taking the disputes forward. Branches are being consulted and a decision will be taken at a Higher Education Committee on Friday 8 November.

In 'four fights', the general secretary is posing an aggregated ballot



PAUL MATTSOON

in the new year, with action in the spring and into the summer. Strategically, both options would strengthen the dispute, with the timetable enabling action through the summer exam period.

However, there is a danger of not achieving the mandate if the membership loses confidence over whether the leadership is seriously prepared to back up the fight. For example, some see general secretary Jo Grady's proposal as a cynical opportunity to delay struggle and put the dispute on hold in favour of USS.

Therefore, the union should call out branches that are ready and prepared to initiate strike action now, while coordinating days of action and protest in the branches not yet over the

threshold. This would not only launch the dispute but also build the momentum for achieving an even better aggregated ballot result next year.

This is a clear opportunity to build the union and attract new sections of workers who want to fight, including postgraduate researchers and staff on temporary and insecure contracts. These make up a significant portion of the university workforce.

As more unions also prepare to ballot for industrial action, the possibility for coordinated action with other unions is also raised. Cross-union action would pose a serious threat to government and employer attacks, and raise the sights of workers more broadly for better pay and working conditions.

Portugal's government falls: Left must adopt a new course

ROSS SAUNDERS
SOCIALIST PARTY WALES AND
NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Portugal is facing a snap general election, two years early, after the ruling minority Socialist Party (PSP - an establishment party) government headed by António Costa failed to get its budget passed through parliament.

Right-wing President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa dissolved parliament on 3 November. With new elections on 30 January, and damaged after six years of propping up Costa, the left must urgently move onto a war footing.

A new direction must be declared immediately, breaking with the mistaken policies of the past, and offering a bold socialist programme and the abolition of the capitalist system.

Despite twice failing to gain a majority in parliament, this is the first time in six years that Costa's budget has been voted down.

Unlike previous years, the left parties - Left Bloc (BE) and the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) - were pushed by growing working-class anger, and electoral losses, into refusing to support or abstain on the budget vote.

Separate strikes on the railways, in hospitals, schools, the civil service and more, are rippling through Portugal, meaning that BE and PCP representatives in parliament could not get away with repeating their previous votes for Costa's budgets.

They were boxed in by their support - in reality never more than verbal in the past - for demands like the lifting of anti-trade union laws left on the books by Costa, free childcare, and for using European Union (EU) bailout money to fund improvements to public services and increases to pay and pensions.

Widespread poverty

Outside Portugal, the PS government is widely represented as a 'left government' which ended austerity, and is contrasted with the neoliberal leaders of, for example, France and Germany.

But in reality only a tiny handful of the previous attacks by the right-wing Coelho government have been reversed, and new ones added. The living standards of working-class people in Portugal have continued to decline while Costa has ruled.

More than 2.6 million of the approximately 10 million inhabitants live in poverty. Wages are at less than half the European average, and have fallen every year Costa has been in power.

What relief has been provided to workers - some reversals of cuts to pensions for example - was bought by starving public services of investment as Costa cut spending in obedience to EU demands. This meant, among other things, that Portugal faced the Covid pandemic with the lowest ratio of intensive care beds per person in Europe.

Through the pandemic, the Portuguese government has prioritised profits over the safety, incomes and broader interests of Portuguese

workers (See 'Portugal: Right-wing incumbent wins presidential elections as far-right makes gains' on socialistworld.net).

Before the rising tide of militancy, paltry concessions offered by the PSP government would have been enough to buy the support of the left in parliament, but in the raised political temperature, Costa's offer to increase the minimum wage from €665 to €705 before the election (and more afterwards) cut no ice.

Left leaders are also being pushed by internal crises which have broken out in both parties as a result of losses in elections.

Electoral losses

In the 2019 general election, the PCP had its worst result since the fall of dictatorship in 1974, losing almost one-third of its MPs, although their more solidly working-class base has held together better than that of the BE (see 'Portuguese elections - new class battles loom' on socialistworld.net).

And in council elections held earlier this year, the Left Bloc was reduced to just five councillors in the whole country, winning a mere 2.8% of the vote.

The PSP lost control of Lisbon council in the same elections. However, opinion polls currently predict PSP will emerge as the biggest party, although still in a minority.

But it would be foolish to rule out in this confused situation, and with no credible lead being offered on the left, that right-wing forces can advance.

The opposition capitalist Social Democratic Party (PSD) is distracted by a leadership election, which will finish just weeks before the snap election. But it could make gains, particularly if it imitates Isabel Diaz Ayuso over the border in Spain.

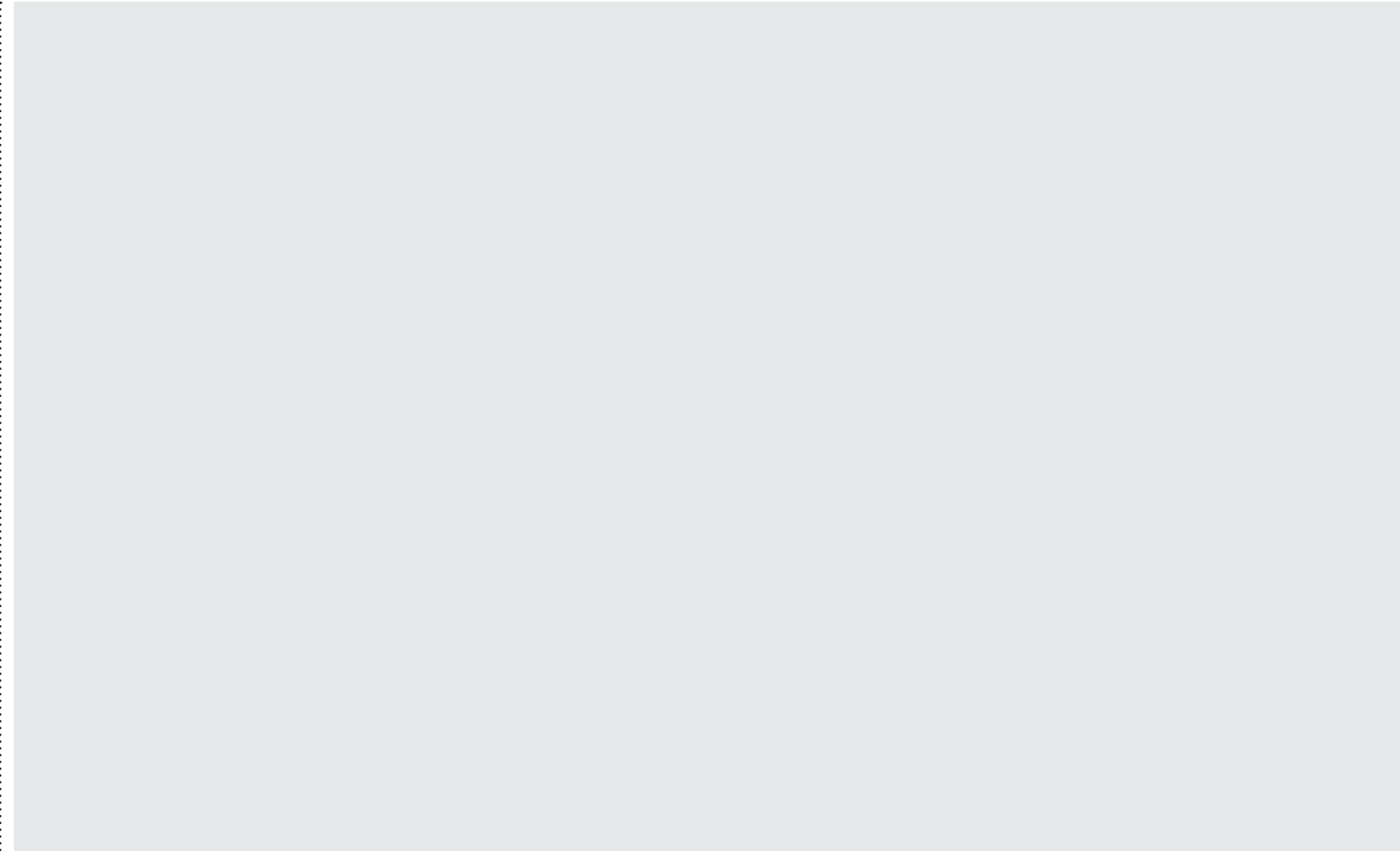
Ayuso won the elections to Madrid's parliament this year on the basis of right-wing populism which - thanks to Podemos joining the government - wasn't exposed by a credible anti-establishment left challenge (see socialistworld.net 'Right-wing Partido Popular wins Madrid elections - a warning to the working class').

Portugal's left parties have little time to learn the lessons of this defeat. They must urgently re-examine their strategy and approach before taking a new road.

As the CWI previously explained (see 'Portugal: Right-wing government brought down' on socialistworld.net) it was not wrong, in the situation which confronted them after the 2015 election, for the Left Bloc and the PCP to use their votes in parliament to allow the PSP to block the return of the hated right wing.

PSD leader Coelho was confronted by five general strikes before his eventual defeat in 2015, and there was a burning desire to be rid of him. With the PSP in a minority, if the left had failed to use its votes to permit Costa to

workers (See 'Portugal: Right-wing incumbent wins presidential elections as far-right makes gains' on socialistworld.net).



Striking rail workers, members of the Sinfra union, in June. They were demanding higher wages and improved conditions

take power, the PSP would have been spared the test of government. In opposition, and blaming the left for it, illusions in the PSP would have been strengthened, not weakened.

But, as we explained at the time, it was a fatal error to sign up to a 'gerinçonça' pact - the 'bizarre contraption' as the press called it - which guaranteed Costa stability without winning commitments to stopping attacks on the living standards of the working class.

As soon as Costa was in position, the left should have immediately gone on the offensive - with street protests and trade union action - to demand bold socialist policies which could begin to solve the problems facing working-class people.

This would have started a process of clearing the immense political confusion which exists, and demonstrated whose side the different political forces in Portugal are on.

Either concessions would have been forced from the PSP, or workers' illusions in it would have been dispelled and, at a time favourable to the left, new elections forced.

Instead, while Costa used anti-trade union laws to break the strikes of nurses, tanker drivers and airline workers, the left continued to prop him up.

On paper, both parties were in favour of reversing austerity, but none of these policies were laid before parliament as a

challenge to the PSP. Effectively, in the minds of the masses the left parties stood not for socialism but for the policies of the capitalist government.

That's why it's necessary that a declaration be made now of the intention of taking a 'new course' - the heart of which should be a bold promise of socialist transformation to finally halt Portugal's economic descent.

United front

The Left Bloc and the Communist Party should discuss collaborating in the election campaign ahead, and form a united front to fight it and to prepare for the fight that will be necessary whichever of Portugal's capitalist parties forms the next government.

Workers' anger is boiling over in the workplace and onto the streets. A call should also be made for the rash of strikes which have broken out to be gathered together into generalised action involving the CGTP (the largest trade union federation) and the new unions; starting with a one-day general strike, so that a demonstration of workers' power forms the background to the elections.

With Covid-19 cases rising again, and healthcare in the spotlight, a call for private healthcare to be nationalised should be made, along with the biggest organisations which dominate the economy - run under workers' control and management and coordinated according to a plan drawn up democratically.

This would have to include the banks and the financial system so

as to defend Portugal against threats that have already been made by the EU to repeat the economic terrorism they unleashed against the left Syriza government in Greece (see 'Greece the rise and fall of Syriza' on socialistworld.net).

The left has nothing to lose: as things stand, polls predict they will sink even further. It is not clear whether the Left Bloc will even survive.

Currently, far-right party Chega, whose candidate came very close to coming second in the presidential elections this year, is able to pose as anti-austerity without being challenged credibly by the left.

However, it is a period of sharp twists and turns in the situation, where a long-overdue radical correction could make a profound impact on the result.

Class struggle

Capitalism's failure to find a way forward is stark in Portugal. There is no 'Keynesianism' (ie a programme of publicly financed economic stimulus) on the agenda.

Costa has announced that he plans to continue the hopeless and destructive attempts to cut Portugal's deficit and clear its mountain of debt - now a colossal 133% of GDP (total output) according to the latest figures.

He is bashing the head of Portugal's working class against the brick wall of the rigged capitalist system. Even optimistic projections predict that GDP will be below pre-pandemic levels for decades. Class struggle, in that context, is inevitable, and building a political vehicle to direct workers' anger is essential.

Book review: The Uncomfortable Truth About Racism

John Barnes on class and capitalism. What's missing?

DAVE WALSH
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

The Uncomfortable Truth About Racism, by former footballer John Barnes, makes some valuable points. It deals with discrimination, linking it to class and capitalism, but ultimately it fails to put forward a meaningful alternative.

Barnes warns black footballers that the establishment will try to make a special case about racism in football, while ignoring racism across society. Barnes recalls meeting David Cameron, when he was Tory prime minister, about the 'Show Racism the Red Card' campaign.

Cameron dismissed Barnes for saying that there should be a focus on eradicating racist discrimination against all black communities. Barnes says black footballers should link their protests to the main issues affecting the majority of working-class black people.

On police racism, Barnes says most officers, who are disproportionately white, and have been conditioned by society to have negative feelings towards black people, should be encouraged to face their own bias.

This is undoubtedly true, but he doesn't look deeper at the structures of the police force, with a hierarchy which reflects the views of the ruling capitalist class, that ensures police resources are directed, for example, against working-class strikes and protests.

Class structures

Barnes is conscious of class bias in policing. He argues that George Floyd's murderer Derek Chauvin kept his knee down to show the working-class people around him, in a deprived black and white area, who is boss.

Barnes argues that the racist establishment has two sets of allies among black people. Those who want to join the establishment, and those who condemn all white people, even working-class white people who are marginalised themselves.

He says that all those who suffer discrimination should unite and support each other against their oppressors, and that you can't get rid of racism without getting rid of capitalism. But Barnes claims that people are too selfish for socialism to work.

He says he has been influenced by philosopher Noam Chomsky, which may explain his pessimism. He would benefit greatly from reading the Socialist Party's clear programme of policies that provide socialist solutions to discrimination (see 'Black Workers' Charter' at socialistparty.org.uk).

Barnes readily admits that he enjoyed a very comfortable, upper-middle-class childhood. He was even conditioned to feel superior to his poorer, darker-skinned classmates.

He says that racism from opposing football fans had no effect on him, because he felt superior to those chanting from lower down the social scale. Later he came to understand the effect it had on his working-class



Socialist Party members in London on one of the many BLM protests in 2020 protesting the killing of George Floyd

black teammates.

Barnes was only the second black player in Liverpool's history when he signed in 1987 aged 23. Liverpool fans regularly racially abused black players from visiting teams. But Barnes says that if you asked many of these individuals if they were racist, they'd say 'no, I'm just abusing the opposition'.

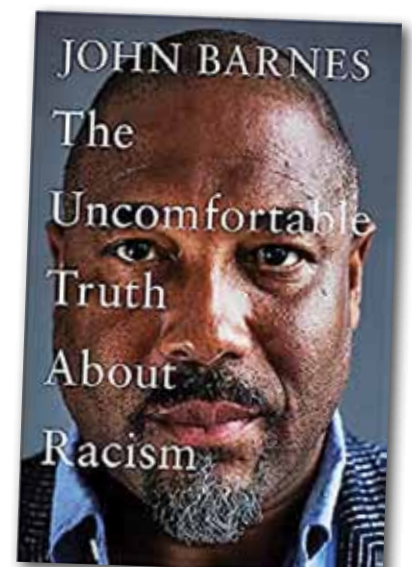
A small hardcore of racists among Liverpool's crowd were determined that Barnes wouldn't last. During his home debut at Anfield, this racist hardcore threw bananas on the pitch and booed every time he touched the ball.

When Barnes scored in that game, the racist rump booed him still. But by this time, the vast majority of fans had had enough, and the whole stadium roared out John Barnes' name. The racists were silenced, and their campaign was over.

Two years later, in April 1989, the Hillsborough disaster killed 97 fans, and shook the city. Liverpool people discovered what it's like to be on the receiving end of establishment abuse. Barnes did a lot to make

football fans question racism and discrimination.

His book provides an interesting analysis and point of view, but lacking a Marxist perspective, it is unable to fully explore the underlying causes of racism. It concludes that the best we can achieve is a kinder, fairer capitalism, which, in reality, would not undermine the root cause of racism.



'The Uncomfortable Truth About Racism' by John Barnes, published by Hachette UK



Wages are at less than half the European average and have fallen every year Costa has been in power



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OUR FUTURE AT STAKE

WHAT NOW FOR THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM?

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AT SOCIALISM 2021
SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 4-6PM
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