

## CUTS DRAG



## TO BRINK

- Massive funding increase
- Kick out the profiteers
- 15% pay rise now

ROSS SAUNDERS

SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

**A** young woman recently collapsed near our Socialist Party campaign stall in Cardiff with a suspected stroke. We helped her father to contact emergency services but after a lengthy conversation we were told that an ambulance would take three to five hours to arrive.

The NHS Confederation, a body which brings together senior managers in the health service, has said the NHS is “at tipping point”. But these bureaucrats are out of touch: the collapse has already begun.

A few weeks ago I rang 999 about severe abdominal pain and waited five hours for them to call back, only to be told the ambulance would take another two hours to arrive. When I eventually got to A&E I waited another 30 hours in a chair before I was diagnosed with appendicitis, which by then had perforated through to neighbouring organs. The nurses in A&E were stretched beyond their limit, too busy to attend to everyone’s pain management and other needs.

I had emergency surgery at 2am and spent a week on a ward for recovery next to a patient, severely brain damaged in a car crash, who shouted with pain every time he exhaled. When I spoke to the nurses they said there was nowhere else he could go: all beds were occupied. His relatives had to say their goodbyes to him on a crowded ward surrounded by strangers.

My experience will be familiar to everyone who has had to attend hospital. 160,000 people are being harmed every year because emergency treatment they need is being delayed according to ambulance bosses. 12,000 are severely harmed, and some are dying in ambulances outside hospitals or while waiting for them to arrive.

Even the likes of Jeremy Hunt, former Tory health secretary, have admitted that the crisis is not just the result of pressure caused by the pandemic. It’s due to damage done by Tory governments, including Hunt’s, demanding cuts, and devolved governments and NHS bodies obediently carrying them out, slashing staff and services. There are half as many beds in English hospitals as there were 30 years ago and even bigger reductions in Wales.

What is needed is not simply temporary funding for the NHS, but a permanent return of the lost beds and workers.

Conditions are intolerable for NHS workers. No wonder there are 90,000 unfilled vacancies in the NHS in England, and similar figures in other parts of the UK. Three quarters are considering leaving the service. There must be a crash recruitment programme announced immediately, but that won’t work unless workers get the 15% pay rise they’re demanding to recover what’s been lost over the decade.

We need a massive increase in funding to meet the demand. The assets of private healthcare firms, which trousered huge amounts of public money during the pandemic, should be requisitioned and a real, efficient, democratically planned health service refounded, with frontline workers who know the service best controlling and managing it. We’ve got to build a new workers’ party in order to fight for that programme and end the crisis in our NHS.

• See also page 2-3



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

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

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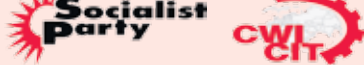
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."  
**Karl Marx**

# NHS workers must take action now to save our NHS

**STUDENT NURSE IN LONDON AND RCN MEMBER**

For many years the Tories have chipped away at the NHS, breaking off chunks to sell and pushing this vital public service to its breaking point. The Health and Care Bill, making its way through parliament, is the latest attempt to crumble and break our health service for further privatisation.

This new bill would make it easier for private corporations to be handed NHS contracts in England without other bidders even being considered. The NHS was founded on the principles of high-quality care for all, yet we can already see the impact that privatisation and budget cuts have had on care quality.

Patients are being forced to wait up to eleven hours in ambulances for admission to hospital and queues of up to 20 ambulances can be seen outside A&E. Bed shortages, budget cuts and a lack of staff are bringing our NHS to a critical point where it can no longer stay afloat.

Moreover, the Health and Care Bill seeks to create Integrated Care Boards, which set their own budgets with their own objectives - this could deepen existing regional inequalities.

On the wards and in NHS services, anger is rising among nurses over the pitiful 3% pay rise staff have been offered. Burnout and fatigue is increasing for workers who are constantly



PHOTO: PAUL MATTHESSON

bombarded with unsafe working expectations and minimal pay.

Motivation is drying up, and more and more staff are leaving as the pressure becomes too much. Prior to Covid-19, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) reported that there

were 50,000 vacancies for nurses in the NHS and almost a quarter of nursing staff were thinking about leaving their roles. In 2020 the RCN reported that 61% of NHS staff stated that low pay was a reason for them quitting.

Under pressure from workers, the unions are beginning to get organised. The RCN is currently running an indicative strike ballot calling for a fully funded 12.5% pay rise, closing on 30 November. We need decent pay, to start to address chronic understaffing, and because prices keep going up! The best way to fight for that is to vote yes for strike action, for the health unions to coordinate their formal strike ballots, backed up by a campaign of workplace meetings and protests.

A campaign like this could win big support from the public, and unite workers with campaigners against the government's Health and Care Bill. Unite, another union in the NHS, is organising a protest against the bill on the 22 November when it is next debated in parliament.

Workers must use this as an opportunity to show our opposition to the fragmentation and collapse of our NHS through backdoor policies. If left unchecked, the Tory government will continue to take our NHS apart bit by bit and NHS workers will continue to leave. Workers must take action now so that we can preserve our NHS.

## NHS workers ballot to reject 3%

- **Unison** - indicative ballot runs from 3 November to 5 December
- **GMB** - formal postal ballot for strike action runs from 10 November to 15 December
- **RCN** - indicative ballot runs from 4-30 November

# Outsourced Barts health workers in strike ballot for a pay rise

**UNITE SHOP STEWARD BARTS HEALTH TRUST**

Nearly 600 health workers employed at Bart's health trust, including Royal London, Whipps Cross and St. Barts hospitals, are balloting for strike action for fair pay, and against increasing workloads and bullying.

The workers are members of Unite and employed by private company Serco. They provide essential support services to patients as cleaners, porters, patient food catering workers, reception staff, and security guards. The workers' pay claim for 15% reflects the pay gap between these outsourced workers, and those directly employed by the NHS doing the same jobs, a shortfall of nearly £3k per year.

A porter told the Socialist: "We haven't got smaller shopping bills or rents than workers employed directly by the NHS doing the same jobs. It simply is unfair and that's why we have to take action"

Serco, that made huge profits from the failed test-and-trace debacle, has offered these key workers, who put their lives on the line over the last two years, a miserly 1% - a real-terms pay cut.

Last week, the company gave the trust 18 months' notice that it will be ending the contract in April 2023. This was received with joy and relief by the workers themselves. But the campaign to pressure the Barts Trust board to bring these workers and services back in house as soon as possible begins now. A huge Yes vote for strike action in the current ballot will greatly assist in this goal.

Barts bosses, having privatised these services, bear responsibility for the situation that has developed. They must now intervene to ensure the union's pay claim is met in full. Also, that the years of outsourcing are ended and that these workers are given full NHS pay, terms and conditions.



PHOTO: ISA PRIYA



PHOTO: LONDON SP

# Health and care staff shortages worsened by Tory vaccine sacking threat

## ● Social care

To add fuel to the fire of the staffing crisis in social care, the government's punitive 'no jab, no job policy' has now come into effect in England.

From 11 November, unvaccinated care home workers are no longer allowed to work in homes. This has meant around 50,000 staff redeployed or losing their jobs overnight, adding to the 170,000 gaps that are expected in social care by the end of the year. The measures are expected to be extended to the rest of the sector next April.

While we must do all we can to protect those particularly vulnerable to Covid-19, major alarm bells are ringing for residents going with vital needs unmet this winter. Workers should be encouraged to get vaccinated but not be forced to do so by threat of their jobs. Having severe shortages of care staff puts residents at even further risk.

Being forced to have the vaccine is also likely to have a counterproductive effect. Those who may be sceptical about the jab or have concerns about side effects, should be properly informed about the benefits and risks and be allowed to make a decision based on their own judgement.

Unacceptable numbers of Covid deaths have occurred in care homes. This was not the fault of hardworking

care staff but government ineptitude, with shortages of PPE and adequate testing.

Privatised care provision, with low pay and poor working conditions - as well as stigmatising the predominantly migrant workforce - has created the unravelling crisis in social care. Care roles could be very rewarding but because this skilled work is treated so poorly at present, it's no surprise staff are leaving in droves.

If the government really cared about the safety of people with care and support needs, they would ensure that workers were given the respect they deserve to make the job worth doing, and would therefore be better placed to encourage staff to take the vaccine. This would begin to ensure people get the care they need and are safe from both Covid-19 and the numerous dangers of not having sufficient care.

**DAN SMART**  
SOCIAL CARE WORKER, BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

## ● NHS

At University Hospital Southampton we are the first hospital Trust to make it compulsory for staff to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

As a front-line health worker it's frustrating that there are still unvaccinated people coming into hospital

very poorly with Covid. Many workers are angry at anti-vaccine propaganda.

However, being vaccinated doesn't guarantee health and care workers won't get Covid, or pass it on to our patients. It's good infection prevention and good-quality PPE that keeps Covid spread to a minimum.

With acute staff shortages, and most hospitals full and over capacity, morale is at an all-time low.

The stress and pressure on staff to get everything done is huge. Here at Southampton, an appeal to non-patient facing staff to help out on the wards was made last week as nursing levels became unsafe. In this situation mistakes are inevitable.

Vaccination against TB and Hep-C is already mandatory in our employment contracts. But if NHS bosses and the government really wanted to keep our patients safe, they would ensure adequate PPE, give us a decent pay rise and seriously train and recruit new staff.

The government and NHS England want to look as if they are doing something about the continuing high numbers of Covid cases, while at the same time blaming the spread on health and care workers.

Those who fear having the vaccine should be encouraged and supported, not bullied and sacked. We expect the leaderships of our unions to back members in this.

**HEALTH WORKER, SOUTHAMPTON GENERAL HOSPITAL**



# 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!

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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# Resisting evictions in east London



Beating the bailiffs MARTIN REYNOLDS

**NANCY TAAFFE**

WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Already twice we had stopped Waltham Forest resident Nadia Zaman from being evicted (see 'Fighting for a home for Nadia and homes for all' at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)). In June, 80 'bailiff busters' kept her in her home. In August, we organised a two-day picket of her new house to prevent her from being evicted by the council.

She was facing eviction again, this time from the place that social services had housed her.

Waltham Forest Housing Action Network, set up by the local trades union council, organised a lobby of the council's children and families committee. We applied to speak on an item on the agenda.

Three Socialist Party members spoke. We called on the councillors to immediately step in and stop the eviction of Nadia and her children.

We asked them to help her. We asked them to walk with her to the letting agents in the area. Let the letting agents say to a councillor that they don't accept people on benefits.

We asked the councillors to call a referendum on empty homes to ensure no child was in housing need whilst homes stood empty in the area. We asked the councillors to set a budget that meets people's needs, to build council houses, and work with us by fighting austerity.

You can watch our speeches on the 'Waltham Forest Socialist Party' Facebook page.

Nadia was subsequently sent an

offer of a house an hour away in Rainham in Essex. It was listed as £1,400 a month.

But even as she was viewing it, the price was going up. By the end of the day, the price had jumped to £1,500 a month.

On our Socialist Party campaign stalls, we highlight Nadia's case to people. She is now known in our area.

She is known because she typifies what is happening to working-class people. If you fall on hard times, there is no council housing safety net, because it was sold off, and the stock was not replaced. The flats being built are out of reach to people like Nadia.

The council tell people to go and rent privately on the open market, but Nadia's case shows that letting agencies don't want people on benefits. They ask for a guarantor, something that many people can't get.

People like Nadia also fall foul of the benefit cap, because virtually all of the private property in our area would not adhere to the cap. People like Nadia are being shipped out.

The Labour councillors have not fought Tory austerity. This has led them to policies that see community assets as something to make money out of. They see themselves as directors in companies, flogging off land, buildings and skylines in order to generate income, rather than fighting for more money from central government.

This means they literally have a policy of social cleansing the poor. They can't solve the problem, so they force working-class people out.

Some Labour councillors have even gone on to work in property development, like Clare Coghill, former Labour leader of the council.

Nadia had been told to leave by 23 November. But now we think that we have won a temporary extension until 26 January.

This would be fantastic. It would mean Nadia has Christmas with her kids. It's a vindication of our campaign against her eviction.

But obviously this temporary reprieve is not secure. Her housing is temporary, and this would only be an extension. We need to be constantly ready to defend her.

Nadia will be threatened again in January with being forced onto the streets. We will be calling on the community to defend Nadia again, this time in their hundreds, if not thousands.

Nadia has come to symbolise all that is wrong in the housing situation. However, she has also come to symbolise the fightback and the resistance to Tory and Labour policies.

We encourage Nadia, and others in a similar situation, to stand for council in May 2022, under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) banner. We are standing on a pledge of no more evictions, no more Nadias. We say build and acquire more council houses, cap rents and set a needs budget so we can fight for the money this area so desperately needs.

● *TUSC meeting to assemble the forces to challenge this cruel housing policy - Sunday 5 December, 4pm at the William Morris Community Centre, Greenleaf Road, E17 6QQ.*

# London MPs' second home swindle while workers and students struggle

**EMILY LYNDON**

SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Fourteen London MPs are renting out their homes in London in order to claim rent on their parliamentary expenses. In total, 18% of MPs have declared themselves landlords; this is compared to just 3% of the UK adult population.

I am living in London to complete a year of teacher training and had to spend around twelve weeks looking for a place to live. I was checking websites and sending out messages daily and the sheer volume of applicants meant that for every 20 or so messages I sent, I received one or two responses back, often to say that the room was no longer available.

It was a gruelling process that involved sending an 'about me' over and over again to a stranger online. During the search I found one suitable property in my price range that would accept me as a mature student living off a maintenance loan. These difficulties are not uncommon.

I now live in a guardianship, essentially as live-in security, in a room that upon viewing had eight people competing for the same 'opportunity'.

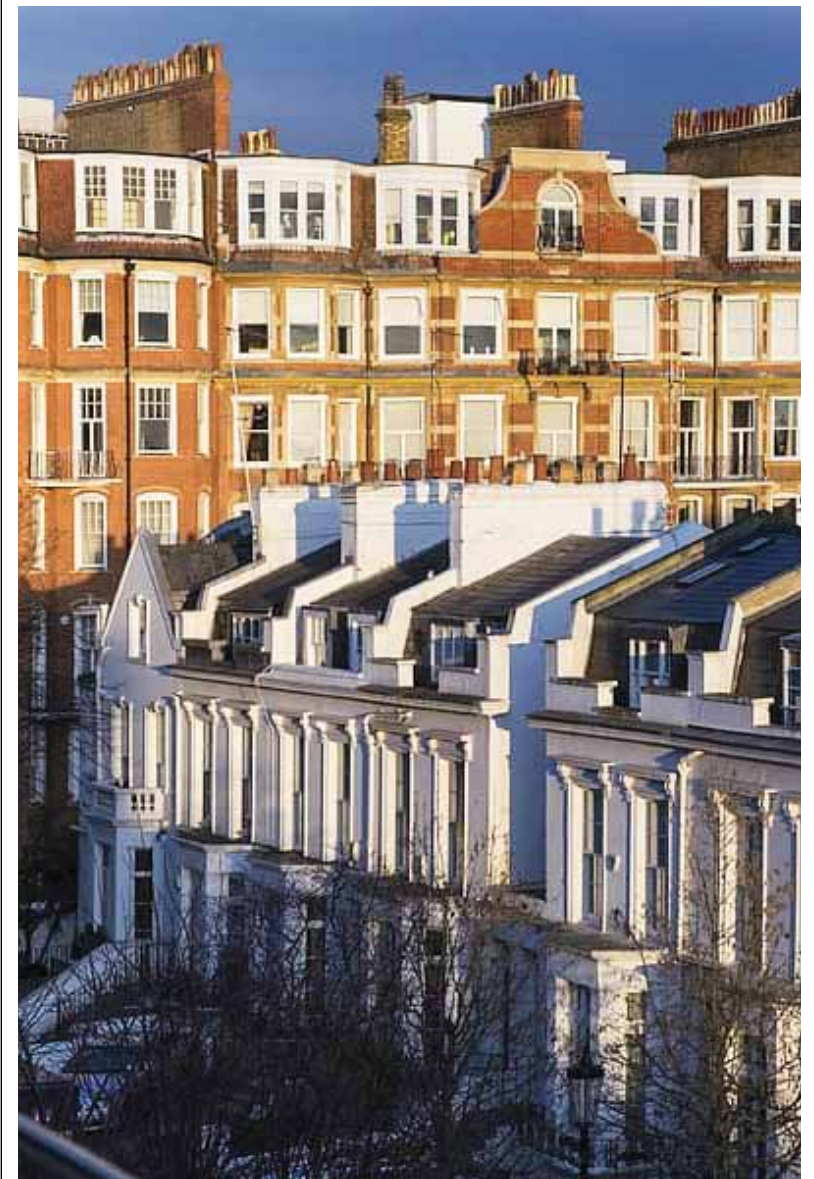
I'm now in a position where I feel relieved and grateful for even finding a room, even though that room

is higher than my budget and further away from where I wanted to be! This begs the questions: why are people forced into competing for sub-par housing in a country where members of parliament are afforded access to housing at taxpayers' expense?

Why must the most vulnerable members of our community have limited access to housing when MPs earning over double the average UK workers' salary have access to more than one home in London?

Councils have the power to make change. The majority of councils in London are run by Labour, if they chose to they could use their powers to register private landlords to prevent restrictive referencing and housing benefit exemptions. By using borrowing powers and reserves, councils could invest in building decent, safe council homes that workers and students can afford.

This is the approach that the Socialist Party fights for as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. By preparing to stand candidates in the council elections next May we will continue to engage with our communities, highlighting that the oppressive measures of landlords, backed up by councils and the government, can be fought when we work in solidarity.





# Sunak's climate finance agenda typifies capitalism's COP26 failure

**H**aving reportedly banned young climate change activists from attending his talk at COP26, Chancellor Rishi Sunak - the UK's richest MP - went on to capture the headlines with his speech on a 'Finance Alliance for Net Zero'.

This 'alliance' is meant to ensure that by 2050, 450 corporations, representing \$130 trillion of assets, will be 'aligned' with net-zero emissions.

Incidentally that's 40% of total global assets, indicating the enormous economic power these giant companies wield. Indeed, four years ago, it was pointed out that just 100 companies have been responsible for 71% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since 1988.

But only a third of the assets earmarked by the alliance will be devoted to low-carbon investments in the next decade. And while this \$43 trillion is a huge sum, it's estimated that \$100 trillion of investment is needed in the next three decades to meet the net-zero goal.

Also, to underscore the contradiction in this initiative, there are no restrictions on these corporations investing in new fossil-fuel projects.

And we've been here before. Back in 2009, US president Barack Obama announced that the major capitalist countries had pledged to provide \$100 billion a year to low-income countries in the form of climate change investment. In 2019, the G20 actually provided \$80 billion. Of this, only \$20 billion was earmarked for assisting people to adjust to the impact of climate change. And only 7% of this money went to the 46 poorest countries.

And to rub salt into the wounds, most of that money was in the form of loans which have to be repaid with interest. In other words, the countries most affected by climate change are obliged to accumulate more debt to finance the disasters that the advanced capitalist countries have caused!

Meanwhile, since 2015, the G20 countries (comprising the world's largest economies) have spent \$3.3 trillion on subsidising their fossil-fuel industries.

As Chancellor, Sunak has been accused of blocking green measures and reportedly opposed his own government's 'net-zero' agenda.

In his March budget Sunak

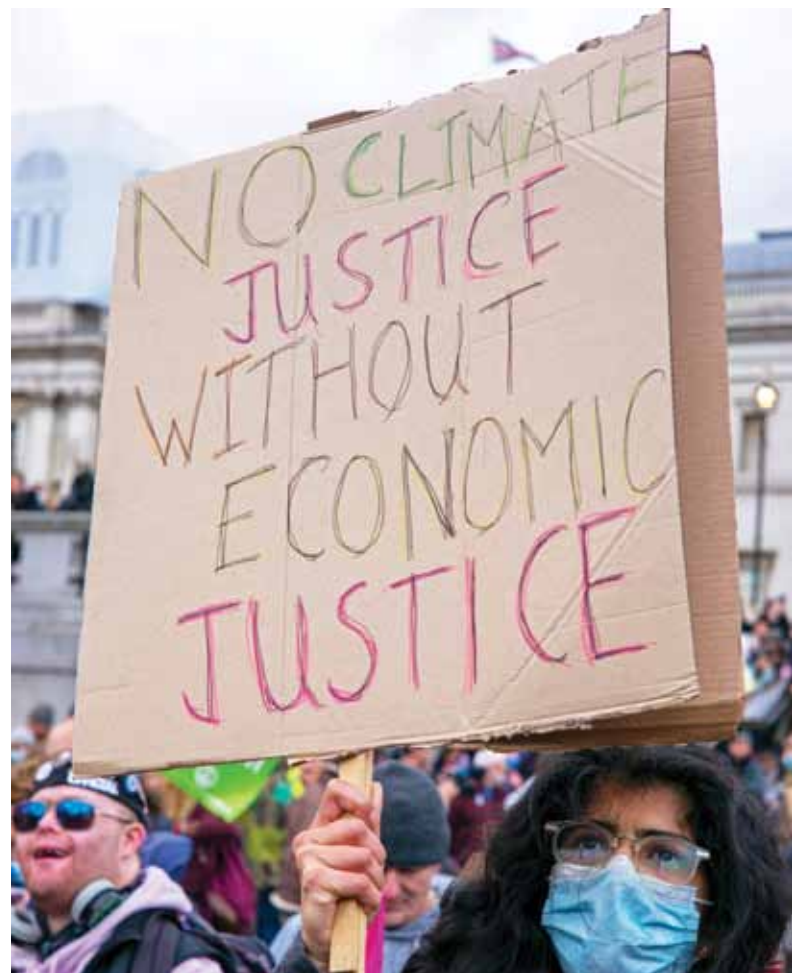
announced a 'super deduction' tax relief measure. This was seen as another tax break for fossil-fuel companies.

Overall, he allocated £145 million for environmental measures - a mere 0.01% of GDP (total economic output) - while committing a massive £40 billion to policies that will increase greenhouse gas emissions.

In contrast to the Tory government's green agenda bullshit, a future socialist government would recognise that 'you can't plan what you don't control, and you can't control what you don't own'.

Therefore it would nationalise the commanding heights of the economy - the fossil-fuels/energy sector, along with the banks, other major financial institutions, large-scale agribusiness, transport, etc.

Under public ownership - and drawing upon the huge accumulated resources created by the labour of the working class but presently owned by the capitalist class - a sustainable plan of production would be democratically drawn up and agreed. We could then rapidly, with no job losses or pay cuts, justly transition to a green, net-zero carbon economy.



# Tory sleaze scandal continues, an ex-workers' MP responds

*Parliament has been embroiled in turmoil surrounding Tory MP Owen Paterson's rule-breaking lobbying, and Boris Johnson's failed attempts to contain the fall out. Johnson was even compelled to tell press at the COP26 summit the UK is not "remotely a corrupt country". With public trust in parliament and capitalist political representatives at an all-time low, we print an edited extract from Dave Nellist, Socialist Party member and Labour MP from 1983-1992, from Socialism the podcast.*

Paterson was paid over £100,000 a year on top of his parliamentary

salary of £82,000 a year - three times the average wage in Britain. The Times recently revealed that one of the two companies he was working for, over the last 18 months, got £500 million of Covid contracts from the government. There's now been a new document released which names another ten Tory MPs who over the same period lobbied the government and got preferential treatment for £1.5 billion worth of Covid contracts.

It's an illustration of how Tory MPs in particular use the position of being a member of parliament, not only to make themselves lots of extra money, but to make the private

firms they're working for a huge amount of money.

Johnson's attempt to protect Paterson was such a blatant rigging of parliament that even the previous Tory prime minister John Major described Boris Johnson as "politically corrupt".

When ordinary families are facing wages that have fallen behind rising rent, fuel, energy and food prices - and MPs on three times the wage of well-paid workers, are then earning tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds a year extra - it has caused a huge amount of anger amongst working people.

In the 1980s, three Labour MPs were supporters of the Militant newspaper,

the predecessor to the Socialist Party: Pat Wall in Bradford, Terry Fields in Liverpool Broadgreen, and myself in Coventry. We all agreed with our local Labour parties before we were elected that we would not make a personal profit by going to Parliament.

We took the average wage of skilled workers in the areas we represented. The easiest to explain is Terry; Terry was a firefighter for 27 years before he became a socialist MP, he stayed on his firefighter's wage as an MP.

For me in Coventry, the engineering union used to do a survey of wage levels every three months. With them, we picked the ten biggest engineering factories in Coventry and got a quarterly assessment of a skilled worker's rate. That's what my family took as a wage. In addition, we produced five reports a year for nine years showing my income and how it was distributed, and on what I was doing as an MP.

There's the idea which is definitely promoted by capitalism and the capitalist media that somehow MPs are special, and they're better if they have outside interests. That somehow taking on directorships and consultancies, or if they're lawyers to carry on with a law practice and so on, gives them a wider view of society.

As socialists we have a different view. We actually think it would be a lot better if elected representatives in public positions, like MPs, were made up of ordinary people like HGV drivers, cleaners or nurses.

We treated getting elected as an MP like being elected as a shop steward or a union rep in a workplace where you wouldn't get three times the wages of the people you worked with! You wouldn't be insulated from their problems. You'd be sharing in those day-to-day problems.

*Dave is the chair of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which the Socialist Party is a part of alongside the RMT trade union and others. TUSC is preparing to stand candidates in the council elections in May against councillors - Labour, Tory or others - who continue to carry out austerity attacks on working-class communities.*

*We invite trade unionists and community campaigners, who are prepared to pledge to oppose the council cuts, to stand with us as part of TUSC. We hope this can be a step towards building a new, mass working-class party to fight in our interests, not those of the bosses.*



Militant MPs: Dave Nellist (left) and Terry Fields (right) PHOTO: DAVE SINCLAIR

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## An appeal to trade union members to stand as anti-cuts candidates

Working-class people need our own political voice, as part of our toolbox to help us stand up to attacks from the Tories and bosses. That includes in local councils. In May over 6,500 councillors are up for election round the country. Whether your union is affiliated to the Labour Party or not, you can stand as a candidate.

The Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), an anti-cuts electoral alliance including the RMT transport union, executive members of other unions, former Labour MPs and many individual socialists. TUSC is organising meetings to campaign for councils to set budgets to meet the needs of working-class people, not do the bidding of the Tories. These meetings will start to gather together socialists, trade unionists, community campaigners, working class and young people, who are prepared to stand in the elections.

Please consider moving this model resolution in your union branch:

1. *This [union branch] believes that despite talk of "levelling up", it is clear that the Tory government and bosses intend to continue to make working class people pay for their crises. This includes attacks on jobs, pay, conditions and services, alongside tax hikes and price rises. As part of this, we anticipate further austerity being inflicted in local government, which is responsible for over one fifth of all public expenditure.*

2. *We agree that we oppose Labour councils continuing to carry out Tory cuts.*

3. *[We acknowledge that our union is affiliated to the Labour Party/ does not currently have any political affiliation]*

4. *Nonetheless, this [branch] resolves to encourage our members to consider standing as anti-cuts candidates in the council elections scheduled for May 2022, noting that there is nothing that prevents them standing as candidates, in a personal capacity, for any party which truly supports trade unionist and socialist principles.*

## DVLA ballot turnout falls short of threshold - action on health and safety still vital



Swansea DVLA workers on strike in July SWANSEA TRADES COUNCIL

### DAVE WARREN

PCS MEMBER AND RETIRED DVLA BRANCH COMMITTEE

PCS members at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) have voted by 79% to continue their campaign of industrial action over Covid safety, but unfortunately the turnout was 39.6%, short of the 50% threshold required under the anti-union laws.

The original statutory ballot was held in March, with a prolonged campaign of targeted strikes in progress since April. With the legal mandate having expired after six months under the anti-union legislation, it was necessary to rebalot.

Understandably, members and reps are disappointed with the result of the ballot, particularly with the fact that 60% did not vote. However

the result must be understood in context. There has been a ferocious campaign from senior management aided by the media to undermine the confidence of the workforce. For example, they have been made scapegoats for the backlogs in the processing of medical licences which existed long before the start of the dispute.

While this anti-workforce propaganda may have impacted on the ballot result, the Left Unity leadership of PCS nationally cannot escape responsibility. They have dragged their feet from the start, only balloting for action three months after the mass Covid outbreak last December, refusing to escalate the action to include all members and refusing to collectively use Section 44 legislation to prevent management forcing

people back into the workplace. Their strategy of selective or targeted action was well supported by members, but had the disadvantage of being insufficient to force management into a settlement and reducing large numbers of members as spectators to their own dispute for long periods.

These concerns were voiced by Socialist Party and Broad Left Network members in the union during the course of the dispute. It was clear, especially after Tory ministers intervened to torpedo talks between the union and DVLA management, that the strikes needed to be escalated to include all members on the site in sustained action.

DVLA members have shown tremendous resilience and determination and around 1,100 members voted to continue the action after

nine months of the dispute. This is a significant statement that members are still prepared to fight, and management would be foolish to take this result as a green light for further attacks on the workforce.

In the meantime, the health and safety problems remain and are getting worse. Covid cases at DVLA continue to rise with the running total as of 11 November at 1,232 cases since the start of the pandemic, and a further 89 in the first eleven days of November alone. This amounts to almost one-in-five of the workforce so far.

This dispute is not over. The collective use of Section 44 remains an option to prevent workers from being forced to work in unsafe conditions. Nor should a further statutory ballot be ruled out.

## South Wales Stagecoach bus drivers win £10.50 an hour



### DAVE REID

SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

After 17 days of strike action Stagecoach members of Unite at Cwmbran, Blackwood and Brynmawr depots have voted to accept a deal that wins a £1 an hour rise to £10.50, backdated to April. Attacks on sick pay and rights for new starters were also fought off.

Stagecoach had offered a measly £10.10 an hour which would be paid for by the workforce themselves through cuts to paid breaks and sick pay. The company claimed that that was the final offer but over four weeks of strike action was forced by the solidarity and determination of the workforce, to make concession after concession, until the rights of new starters was the only sticking point.

The workers demanded that new starters would also get the new pay rate and retain paid breaks. If breaks were unpaid then drivers would have to wait at the depot for their next job for up to two hours without pay - in effect a pay cut of £20 to £30. Management had agreed to limit the lower rate to two years, but workers realised that that would still create a two-tier workforce. However Stagecoach caved again.

On the 17th and last day of strike action in the first phase the managing director came out of his office to discuss with pickets, obviously hoping to probe weak points. The strikers made it absolutely clear that they would stand firm.

If the manager was hoping to see cracks in the strikers' determination then he was sorely disappointed. "We are offering you £10.50, what does it matter to you what new entrants get?" he asked

"It's not just about us as individuals - that's what you don't understand", said one of the drivers, John. "It's all about the collective. The new starters should have the same pay and conditions as us. We will not accept it. Simple as that."

"I am only here for another two and a half years but I'm fighting for their rights. They are the ones who will be here for ever and a day afterwards, and we should not be selling them down the river and we are not going to do it."

"If the new starters are paid £10.30 an hour, in a few years that will be minimum wage for having the responsibility of passengers' lives in their hands", another said.

"I don't care if we are out until the new year, we won't give in on new starters", Darren told him.

## Clarks workers fight 'fire-and-rehire' pay cut



### STEPHEN BENNETT

BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Around 500 people gathered on the picket line of the Clarks distribution centre in Street, Somerset to show their support for the workers on an indefinite strike over the despicable 'fire-and-rehire' tactic being used by LionRock Capital, a situation that could see workers who have worked for Clarks for years losing £1.66 an hour, a 15% pay cut.

Around 20 different trade unions including the Bristol Trades Union Council and members of the Bristol Socialist Party attended what was

a very successful march through the main shopping centre of Street, while the support shown by locals was immense, the march being applauded by most of the people out shopping on a Saturday afternoon.

The march finished with a few speeches from members of the picket line and South West Trades Union Congress with an amazing show of support from all who attended. It was clear to see that the entire town of Street is behind its workers in their fight to block this shameful attempt by LionRock to push their financial losses onto the working class. Best of luck in this fight comrades!

## Striking Scunthorpe steel scaffs up the ante

### ALISTAIR TICE

YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Visiting the Scunthorpe scaffolders' picket line, who are fighting for agreed trade union rates of pay, on 15 November it was immediately obvious that the strikers have upped the ante against their contractor Actavo at British Steel.

Pickets were stopping cars to hand out health and safety surveys, causing tailbacks onto the main dual carriageway. One driver didn't like this and drove recklessly, carving up and nearly hitting Unite pickets stood on the footpath. Jumping out of his car to remonstrate with

the strikers, lo and behold, it was only the works' director of the whole British Steel site!

After an exchange of words, Mr Cunningham was forced to retreat back into his car and await the police. Of course, the police didn't do anything, but the incident only strengthened the strikers resolve with a quickly improvised chant of: "We're on the gate and you're going to be late!"

Unite the Union nationally has begun to get involved, union general secretary Sharon Graham is expected to visit the picket line soon, and union organisers went with strikers to visit other sites where Actavo have

contracts to do banner drops as a warning if they don't pay up.

One of the strike committee told me: "It's week seven of the strike. Me and my fellow scaffolders know that people feel it's been a long time but to us it's flown by. Even in the cold weather, with us all sticking together, with music, fire pits and warm food, we have good spirits among brothers on the picket, it really strengthens our fight and solidarity."

"The rate of pay we are asking for is what our fellow scaffolders across all 'Blue Book' sites in the country get, including scaffs here at British Steel who work for another scaffold company. Actavo also pay the national-agreed rate on their other sites, so I find it hard to understand why Actavo are discriminating in regards to paying the same rate to all scaffold employees who do the same job day in day out. All we are asking for is to be treated equally and to be paid equally. Solidarity brothers and sisters."

## Leeds cab drivers protest against taxi rank move

### KEVIN PATTISON

CHAIR, LEEDS AND WAKEFIELD UNITE COMMUNITY BRANCH AND LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 50 taxi drivers protested in Leeds on 10 November, against proposals by Network Rail and West Yorkshire combined authority to relocate the hackney carriage taxi rank to a space beneath the station.

This is the third protest which was again supported by Leeds and Wakefield Unite Community, the Unite region and the Socialist Party.

The campaign is also supported by Leeds Access Use-Ability Group, a disabled-led campaign group who believe it will discriminate against disabled people and others.

A recent survey by Unite showed



that 70% of station users want the rank to remain at ground level.

One of the taxi drivers' leaders who spoke, said they were very

disappointed that Leeds City Council had not sided with the drivers and represented their views to Network Rail. The proposal would rely on an external lift or steps to reach the new taxi rank under the railway line and no longer adjacent to the well-lit entrance.

The external lift at the other end of the station has been out of action in the past. The space under the station, being enclosed, will trap exhaust fumes, polluting the air for taxi drivers and passengers.

Too often decisions are made with only token, box-ticking consultation. Labour councillors should engage constructively with trade unions and not blindly follow the out-of-touch decisions of Network Rail.

## Fresh strikes on East Midlands Railway

### CLARE WILKINS

NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

RMT has announced a new 24-hour strike from midnight on 4 December on East Midlands Railway.

At the end of October, agreement seemed to have been reached in the long-running senior conductor's disputes.

East Midlands Railway management had eventually engaged in discussions with RMT reps. Significant progress was made and, out of good

faith, RMT agreed to suspend all industrial action.

Since these talks have taken place the company has refused to provide any offers in writing, despite weeks of negotiations, talks and workshops.

The dispute is over reduced pay and revised contracts for new starters and the associated safety concerns that flow from that

Train managers, in an even longer running dispute with East Midlands Railway, are in the process of balloting for action in their third ballot of their dispute. The senior conductors' current ballot mandate lasts till February.

### Get all the latest union news

**nationalshop**  
**stewardsnetwork**  
NSSN bulletin: [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

## London couriers take action



Striking couriers in the IWGB union drove on their mopeds and bicycles through the streets of Hackney to the council offices on 10 November. They were taking action because delivery apps are encouraging them to wait near restaurants, particularly McDonald's in Dalston north London, but fast food management are forcing them to park in car parks with no facilities and rain cover.

They also feel harassed by police and civil enforcement officers, and have been regularly fined £65 - which

would barely make it worthwhile working. Rob Williams, chair of the National Shop Stewards Network and Socialist Party member, spoke at the rally to give solidarity.

He said: "During Covid, you showed that you were key workers but now you are ignored. You should be employed and paid as workers not super-exploited in the gig economy. Hackney Labour Council needs to get out of this town hall and speak to you and your union and agree to your demands."





HANNAH SELL  
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL  
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

At the start of October, the International Monetary Fund slightly downgraded its predictions for global economic growth, citing the continued pandemic and the slow progress in vaccinating the world as the major factors in doing so.

In addition, it raised concerns about inflation, disruption to supply chains, and growing international tensions. For China, however, they still predicted 8% growth in 2021. Nonetheless, it is clear that the next era will not be comparable to the period after the 2007-08 financial crash, when China acted as a prop for the world economy, albeit partially financed by the US Treasury's underwriting of the world's financial system.

This time around the increased conflict between US imperialism and China, combined with growing turbulence within China itself, means that China will be a factor adding to the multiple crises of global capitalism rather than temporarily ameliorating them.

Most recently, a number of major Chinese property companies have been teetering on the brink of collapse. Evergrande, the most indebted property developer in the world, was the first to hit the headlines, but it has been followed by others. Kaisa Group Holdings was the latest to suspend its shares on the Hong Kong stock market, after their value tumbled.

When the Evergrande crisis first erupted, the financial press was full of warnings that this could be a new Lehman Brothers (the US company whose 2008 bankruptcy was a trigger for the Great Recession). While the turmoil in the Chinese property sector continues, that has not, so far, come to pass. Now, the financial pages of the western press are debating a different problem. Some think that the moment of danger has passed, with China's equity markets reaching their lowest point, and therefore now is the time to invest and make a fast fortune.

Others, however, fear "that government intervention will restart and roll into other sectors", as part of, as the President of Queen's College Cambridge put it in the Financial Times, "a bigger realignment of the Chinese economic and financial system fuelled by both internal and external considerations."

### Property bubble

This latest fear of Western capitalist investors in China is not groundless. For years China has had a gigantic property bubble, but the current turmoil was not triggered by its bursting. Rather the crisis in Evergrande and now the wider property sector - which accounts for 29% of Chinese GDP - began because of the Chinese state's determination to curb the behaviour of the big property companies, trying to force them to stay behind its 'red lines', which are designed to try and reduce debt levels in the sector, and rein in soaring property prices.

The Chinese banking and finance system has strict capital controls, and is dominated by the state-owned banks, which could have bailed out Evergrande at any point. That they have not done so is clearly a decision of the Chinese regime. So, it seems, is the decision to - until now - make payments to international creditors.

So far, Evergrande has not technically gone bankrupt, making each international payment in the nick of time. In comments clearly relating to the Evergrande situation, the Chinese state's economic planning agency made clear that companies should pay what they owe globally, in order to "maintain their reputation and the order of the market". This indicates the Chinese regime's current desire to avoid causing international market turmoil. Meanwhile, behind the scenes in China, it seems that the state is moving to step in and redistribute the assets of Evergrande, which currently has 778 projects under way in 223 cities, with many would-be homeowners having paid for properties which have not yet been built.

In reality, the Evergrande crisis is one of a series of moves by Chinese president Xi Jinping and his regime to try to curb sections of the capitalist class. In 2017 the private insurance group, Anbang, was effectively shut down and forcibly restructured by Chinese regulators.

Last year the stock market listing of what was the biggest private company in China, the Ant Group, which was planned for \$37 billion, was abruptly cancelled on the orders of the Chinese state, and the company ordered to restructure. Further limits put on the education, e-commerce, gaming, and other sectors are estimated to have lopped between \$1.5 and \$3 trillion off the stock market valuations of the firms concerned.

### 'Common prosperity'

What lies behind these moves by Xi Jinping, which obviously carry risks at a time when the Chinese economy faces numerous difficulties? They are being linked to the current dominant slogan of the Chinese regime for 'common prosperity'. Pressure is being exerted on China's billionaires to give more towards so-called 'common prosperity'. The founder of Tiktok has given \$77 million to a state education fund. The founder of smartphone company Xiaomi went further, giving over \$2 billion to a fund to eradicate poverty.

Last month, huge celebrations were organised to commemorate the centenary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. This month, the annual meeting of the so-called Communist Party's central committee is discussing a resolution on the party's history, focusing on the 'crucial' role of Xi in transforming China into "a great modern socialist nation."

Yet so-called 'communist' China has not created common prosperity and bears absolutely no resemblance to genuine socialism. While individual capitalists are feeling the pressure to cough up pretty large sums of cash, and others have faced ruin, or even execution for corruption, China remains a country where the capitalist class can make vast profits. Overall, last year the total wealth of the 2,918 richest people in China increased by 24% to \$5.3 trillion. The 1921 founders of the Chinese Communist Party would be appalled at the brutal dictatorship, presiding over one of the

most unequal countries in the world, which claims to be descended from them.

Nonetheless, Xi's 'socialist' rhetoric is not just a historical overhang from the past, in the process of fading away. On the contrary, it has increased under Xi's rule, and has been stepped up again in recent months. The very peculiar character of the Chinese regime is, nonetheless, a product of its history.

The mighty 1949 revolution, based on the poor peasantry, overthrew landlordism and capitalism in China, establishing a planned economy

which led to important gains for the working class and poor peasantry; particularly the 'iron rice bowl' (security of employment) plus education, health and welfare provisions provided by state-owned enterprises and village communes.

However, unlike in the Soviet Union, where the initially democratic workers' state degenerated as a result of isolation and poverty, from the beginning the Chinese regime was not based on workers' democracy but was a Stalinist bureaucratic regime. While defending the planned economy, the state was relatively independent, not

subject to democratic checks by the working class.

In 1989 the Soviet Union began to implode. The bureaucracy had stifled every element of democracy. The dictatorship had always been an enormous fetter to the full development of a planned economy but had now become an absolute obstacle to taking society forward. The collapse of economic planning arose from the internal contradictions of Stalinism, not from the superiority of the market. On the contrary, the return to the market represented a counter-revolutionary regression to private profit-seeking

and anarchy. Far from demonstrating its superiority, the advent of the market brought the biggest slump in modern times.

The Chinese regime watched the catastrophic and chaotic restoration of capitalism unfold in the Soviet Union and concluded that they would not make the same mistakes as the Soviet bureaucracy, which resulted in them being swept away and the once all-powerful Communist Party being banned. The Chinese regime also went down the road of introducing capitalist relations - on an enormous scale - but it attempted to do so

in a controlled way, with the Chinese Communist Party state keeping its hands on the reins.

Three decades on, the Chinese state has - so far - been able to keep large elements of control. There is now an enormously wealthy capitalist class. China is home to 626 billionaires, second only to the US. The regime's economic base is a unique form of state capitalism, in which the regime is not simply the repressive agent or servant of the, historically speaking, newly formed, Chinese capitalist class. The Chinese state has had a large degree of autonomy in fostering and steering the development of capitalism in a way that best preserves its own power. The ailing character of Western capitalism over recent decades has further encouraged the Chinese regime that they have a superior way forward.

### Hybrid character

There is no exact historical comparison for the peculiar hybrid character of China today. However, Marx and Engels described the complex relationship between the state 'superstructure' and its economic foundations, and how, under certain conditions, a state power balancing between social classes (a 'Bonapartist' state) can for a period play an autonomous role in sponsoring the development of capitalist industry and fostering the development of a capitalist class.

However, the current situation cannot last indefinitely. Over recent decades the rapid growth of the Chinese economy has allowed the Chinese state to manage the tensions between different class forces in society.

Many of the relatively new capitalist class are literally the children of Communist leaders, and almost all are members of the Communist Party. Nonetheless, their continued development could destabilise and undermine the current power of the Chinese 'communist' state. The developments of recent months are an attempt to prevent that. The curtailment of the private finance sector, for example, was primarily to prevent it beginning to undercut the role of the state banks. The measures against the property developers are an attempt to deflate the property bubble in an organised way and to cut across growing discontent about the unaffordability of housing.

The Chinese working class, now the most powerful in the world, has not yet made its voice heard as an organised force, although there have been important strikes. The development of capitalism in China has led to a gigantic increase in inequality. The reforms introduced after the revolution - such as security of employment and state provision of health and education - have been destroyed or, at best, massively undermined. However, unlike the capitalist west where workers' wages have been squeezed for decades, overall living standards have increased up until now, which has enabled the regime to maintain a basis of support.

As the Chinese economy faces greater difficulties, not least as a result

of US imperialism's attempts to block its further development via trade barriers, class tensions are bound to increase dramatically. These will also be reflected within the giant Communist Party, with around 90 million members.

Even now, as the Economist magazine put it: "On the party's left wing are neo-Maoists who have long agitated for a restoration of their hero, and have criticised Deng, whom they blame for such problems as corruption and inequality. On the right are those who worry (very privately) that China is sliding back towards a Mao-style dictatorship." Xi currently seems to be balancing between these different wings of the Communist Party, at the same time as stepping up Chinese nationalism, particularly on the issue of Taiwan, and whipping up prejudice, especially homophobia.

### Working class

At a certain stage a section of the capitalist class could move to openly mobilise against the Chinese regime's limiting of their freedom to make profits unencumbered. They would attempt to mobilise the middle and working classes around demands for democracy and, for example, LGBTQ+ rights. In such a situation the Chinese regime, or a section of it, could be pushed to strike further blows against the capitalist class in order to try and shore up its base among the working class. Such a crisis may begin at the top, but would certainly lead to mass revolt below, although its character in the first stages may be confused.

Whatever the character of the coming revolt in China, long-term stability is, however, ruled out. Evergrande may not be the next Lehman Brothers moment, but it does point towards the future storms which will engulf China and will further destabilise capitalism worldwide.

The only force able to take Chinese society forward is the working class. The crucial tasks for the Chinese working class will be to develop its own organisations - including further steps towards the development of independent trade unions and of a mass party of the working class, armed with a programme for workers' democracy, including defending the rights of all oppressed groups, linked to the socialist transformation of society.

This will require fighting for the nationalisation of the big private corporations and banks, combined with a programme of democratic workers' control and management drawing together the state sector in a real socialist plan of production, and opening up a new chapter in the struggle for genuine socialism worldwide.

## SOCIALISM TODAY

Monthly magazine of the Socialist Party

November issue includes...

- How to save the planet
- Talking hot air - COP summits have not led to action
- Len McCluskey - The life of the recently retired Unite leader

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“  
So-called ‘communist’ China has not created common prosperity and bears absolutely no resemblance to genuine socialism

“  
The only force able to take Chinese society forward is the working class





# Leeds solidarity protest says stop Sudan coup

IAIN DALTON  
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Chanting “down, down, Al-Burhan”, over 100 people from Leeds’ Sudanese community rallied on 13 November in support of the mass protests taking place on the same day in Sudan. The protest condemned the military coup led by Al-Burhan, right-hand man of the former dictator, Al-Bashir, whose 30-year rule was overthrown in 2018 by mass struggles.

The protesters welcomed the support of a Leeds Labour councillor, Abigail Marshall Katung, to the protest. However, she asked protesters to put their faith in British MPs persuading the military that they should go back on their ‘illegal’ coup, as well as encouraging protesters to keep “peace and reconciliation” as their goal.

I spoke on behalf of the Socialist Party at the demo, pointing out there can be no reconciliation with

the tops of the military, who carried out the coup and were ordering the killing of protesters in Sudan as our event was taking place.

To overthrow the coup leaders requires deepening the current resistance to the coup. This includes rebuilding and linking up the Neighbourhood Defence Committees and others, such as those of workers striking against the military regime. An appeal to rank-and-file soldiers, and replacing the coup leaders with a revolutionary government of workers and the poor, is also necessary.

After I spoke, the organisers thanked the Socialist Party for our ongoing support of the protests. Many on the protest took copies of our leaflet outlining the lessons of the 2018-19 movement that brought down Al-Bashir, and a programme to take the struggle forward today.

● Read ‘Sudan - mass protests and general strike against coup’ at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)



# Fund the fight to defend our NHS Fund the fight for socialism

ISAI PRIYA  
SOCIALIST PARTY TREASURER

The Today programme, on BBC Radio 4, has been examining the state of the NHS, and looking at its history. The pressure on NHS and social care is unsustainable and untenable.

Richard Brown, from Glasgow, died after waiting five hours for an ambulance. Almost six million people are waiting to start treatment in England, more than 300,000 of those have been waiting for more than a year.

In the programme’s own words: “Health services, whether run by the government in Westminster, Edinburgh, Cardiff or Belfast, are struggling to cope.”

But the programme offered no solution to the current crisis. No pro-capitalist, pro-austerity politician, or the right-wing media, have any alternative. We shouldn’t trust them with our NHS, our lives or our livelihood.

The Socialist Party has a clear strategy to defend the NHS. We say the unions should coordinate action.

We need a public sector strike to defend our NHS and public services, and to fight for at least a 15% pay increase for public sector workers. Private contractors should be kicked out of the NHS, and the pharmaceutical companies should be nationalised.

At Socialism 2021, we will have a session ‘Can the NHS survive?’ discussing how we can build a campaign to successfully defend it (see page 12).

The Socialist Party campaigns

every week on the streets to save our NHS and for more - free education, council homes and a new mass party of working-class and young people.

To carry on this vital socialist campaigning work, we rely on the continued financial donations of workers and youth. We need your donation.

For Socialism 2021, we have a target of £30,000 for the financial appeal. This fundraising enables us to fight for a socialist alternative to the profit-driven system that is causing environmental chaos and human misery. Capitalism has nothing to offer but class exploitation, insecurity, poverty, low pay, unemployment, war, hunger and disease.

We therefore urgently need your donations to fund the struggle for socialism. 20% of your donation will go to fund the international the Socialist Party is affiliated to the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI).

● Fund the international working-class fightback

Donate to help fund the campaigning work of the CWI and the development of socialistworld.net, so that our Marxist ideas can reach many more workers and youth.

For over 20 years, socialistworld.net has provided detailed Marxist analysis and commentary on the world situation and national events. It has served as a political guide for



workers and youth who are seeking an alternative to capitalist barbarism.

We report first hand on the struggles of workers, youth, students, communities and oppressed minorities. But we do much more than that. We offer a socialist programme to take the workers’ movement forward.

While building the forces of the CWI, we actively take part in all the struggles of the working class, youth, poor and oppressed, including the struggle to transform trade unions

into combative, democratic mass organisations of the working class. And let’s create new mass political parties of the working class, poor and youth, based on socialist policies, independent of the bosses and their political parties.

Help fund the fightback  
**DONATE**  
[socialistparty.org.uk/donate](https://socialistparty.org.uk/donate)

## Birmingham People’s Budget to end cuts and housing crisis

JOE FOSTER  
BIRMINGHAM NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

One Birmingham family - two adults with three children - one with ADHD who needs their own bedroom, are trying to survive in one-bedroom flat. The parents and a child sleep on a sofa bed, with a baby in the cot next to them.

They turn the lights out at 7pm to settle the children down! The council says people have to be “realistic”.

There are 500 applications a week to Birmingham’s council house waiting list. Less than half - 225 - are deemed eligible.

It took six months for one family to have their claim assessed. The average is 22 weeks.

The council owned 123,000 properties in 1981. Now it has less than half that.

The council plans to build 2,708 homes by 2029. This is not realistic!

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is hosting ‘People’s Budget for Birmingham’ - an open forum for trade unionists, community and resident groups and anti-cuts campaigners.

Here we will be preparing a budget that we can fight for. A budget that could meet the real needs on homes, jobs and public services - a realistic fighting alternative.

● Saturday 27 November, 12-2pm, Kings Norton Ex-Servicemen’s Club, 1853a Pershore Road, Cotteridge, Birmingham B30 3DJ  
● 0797 4493525  
● [tusc@birmingham.org.uk](mailto:tusc@birmingham.org.uk)

# Why I joined the Socialist Party Starmmer dismissing BLM made me quit Labour



ISABELLE FRANCE  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

In July last year, I was laid on my sofa doing my daily doomscroll when I stumbled on a video of Keir Starmer dismissing Black Lives Matter. Starmer, in his usual high and mighty centralist tone, nearly made me throw my phone across the room in frustration.

He then went onto to describe BLM as a ‘moment’. It was then and there I decided to cancel my ten-year-long Labour Party membership.

I had been a Labour member since I was 17. I wasn’t even out of school before decided to pledge my allegiance to this party - volunteering, voting, organising, supporting and cheering along their victories.

But in that swift moment, the accumulation of the years of Labour denying its members and the left wing our voice became unbearable. So I left. No pun intended.

Summer 2020 had been difficult enough - the desperate desire to be on the streets to connect with and protect one another during the Black Lives Matter mass social movement, yet simultaneously needing to stay apart in order to protect one another from a deadly pandemic.

When I left Labour, I felt alone in a different way. But looking around, I could see others were too.

So many people I knew were homeless politically. We were all angry, but had nowhere to direct that to.

I knew we needed organised direct action. But where was I meant to find that?

I thought about joining litter-picking groups, but would I scare off the old folk with my anti-capitalist rants? I thought about joining theory groups. But would we ever do anything?

Luckily for me, someone had been putting up Socialist Party posters. It wasn’t long until one caught my eye. I’d had no idea of the Socialist

Party. I found them on Twitter, and immediately followed them.

Shortly after, local member Alex contacted me, asking if I fancied coming to a meeting. I think my answer was fairly obvious.

I joined after a couple of branch meetings, and a few meet-ups at protests. But I’d have probably joined then and there after receiving that first Twitter message.

I feel calm to be part of a group which is outspoken in its beliefs, and unafraid to name the beast of capitalism. The Socialist Party doesn’t shy away from fighting for reforms, and we have an outright commitment to dismantle capitalism, and in its place rebuild a better system - socialism. A breath of fresh air.

It’s a million miles away from Starmer telling me ‘BLM is just a moment, and soon the status quo will be restored’. Why should we be asked to put more energy into propping up this failing status quo when, instead, together, we could tear it down?



# Why am I coming to Socialism 2021?

Best event to bring us  
together to fight for socialism

JULIJA RUSEVICA  
SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

You might have heard a lot about the Socialism 2021 event - 19-21 November. We talk about it at every Socialist Party meeting.

We’ve had many different flyers and posters for Socialism 2021, and my partner has heard me saying “Socialism 2021” so many times that it is slowly becoming an inside joke. However, it’s an inspiring event, and I’m looking forward to going there, learning new things and sharing my thoughts.

One workshop which resonates with me is ‘Why does LGBTQ+phobia still exist?’. Michael Johnson, Socialist Party LGBTQ+ members’ group convenor, will kick off the discussion on this at Socialism 2021.

Every day when I open my Instagram feed, I immediately see news about LGBTQphobia in Britain and around the world, and ask myself why does it still happen? Why does LGBTQphobia exist at all?

People trying to flee Afghanistan after the Taliban came to power, vandals setting on fire the monument to the victims of the shooting at the LGBTQ+ nightclub, Pulse, in the US, transphobic laws in Britain, laws about ‘LGBTQ+ propaganda’ in Russia, Hungarian anti-LGBTQ+ laws, LGBTQ+ free zones in Poland etc.

These are only the stories that I can think about off the top of my head! LGBTQ+ people are tired of feeling

threatened; we are tired of not having basic human rights!

Another important topic that will be discussed at Socialism 2021 is ‘How do we take the wealth off the 1%?’ introduced by Helen Pattison, London Socialist Party secretary.

While we were, and still are, struggling financially because of the pandemic, the billionaires became richer. They pay minimum or no tax, and the law is on their side, while working-class people struggle every year.

The CEOs of giant companies are growing their wealth while abusing their workers around the globe. These people have the financial means to end world hunger and still be rich. But instead of doing this, they are playing in their sci-fi fantasies by creating over-expensive private space projects.

The existence of such a significant difference between the incomes of the working class and the wealthiest is not normal. There should be a way to change this situation.

But capitalism will not come up with a long-term solution to any of the problems humanity is facing. We need to fight for an alternative today to have hope for a tomorrow without oppression. And attending Socialism 2021 is one step to bring people together in this fight for a better future.

● Find all the details for Socialism 2021 on page 12 and at [socialism2021.net](https://socialism2021.net)



# SOCIALISM 2021

A weekend of socialist discussion on ideas to change the world, 19-21 November  
In person at Queen Mary University, London  
London E1 4NS  
and on Zoom  
(Zoom codes emailed to ticket holders)  
[www.socialism2021.net](http://www.socialism2021.net)  
Hosted by the Socialist Party

## INTRODUCTION TO SOCIALISM: FRIDAY 19 NOVEMBER 6-7PM

Zoom link and ID in email for ticket holders

**Lily Douglas**, London Young Socialists, on why young people are increasingly open to socialist ideas

**Rob Williams**, Socialist Party industrial organiser, on why the working class remains the agent of socialist change

**Mark Best**, Socialist Party national organising department, on why socialist change is needed to end climate change

**Bob Labi**, CWI International secretariat, on why we need a worldwide alternative to the rigged and rotten capitalist system

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## OUR FUTURE AT STAKE WHAT NOW FOR THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM?

**SATURDAY RALLY**  
SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 4-6PM  
PEOPLE'S PALACE  
TO WATCH THE LIVESTREAM:  
**SOCIALISM 2021 RALLY - YOUTUBE**

Speakers include:

**Sharon Graham**, Unite the Union General Secretary  
**Ian Hodson**, BFAWU Bakers Union President  
**Carmel Gates**, NIPSA general secretary  
**Judy Beishon**, Socialist Party Executive Committee  
**Oisin Duncan**, COP 26 protest organiser, Glasgow  
**Peter Taaffe**, Socialist Party Political Secretary  
**Hannah Sell**, Socialist Party General Secretary  
**Max McGee**, victimised young trade unionist  
**Helen Pattison**, Socialist Party London Secretary  
With **Isai Priya**, Socialist Party national treasurer, in the chair

THEME	SATURDAY 10AM-12	SATURDAY 1-3PM	SUNDAY 11AM-1PM	SUNDAY 2-4PM
<b>FIGHTING FOR SOCIALISM TODAY</b>	<b>Britain: how can workers fight back in the 'new normal'?</b> Speaker: Rob Williams, Socialist Party industrial organiser Chair: Alison Hill Room 202.	<b>How do we take the wealth off the 1%?</b> Speaker: Helen Pattison, London Socialist Party secretary Chair: Julia Leonard Room 101.	<b>Northern Ireland and Brexit</b> Speaker: Niall Mulholland, International Secretariat, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) Chair: David Maples	<b>Lessons from defeating Thatcher's poll tax</b> Speaker: Nancy Taaffe, Socialist Party National Committee (NC) Chair: Dan Smart Room 205.
<b>TROTSKYISM - IDEAS THEY COULDN'T KILL</b>	<b>Is fascism on the rise?</b> Speaker: James Ivens, Socialist Party National Committee Chair: Reece Lawton Room 604.	<b>Anarchism and socialism</b> Speaker: Lenny Shail, Socialist Party National Committee Chair: Amanda K Room 203.	<b>Is the theory of permanent revolution still relevant?</b> Speaker: Berkay Kartay, London Socialist Party organiser Chair: Lucy Nuttall	<b>A transitional programme - what it is and how to use it</b> Speaker: Bob Labi, International Secretariat, CWI Chair: Alex Brown
<b>HOW DO WE CHANGE THE WORLD?</b>	<b>Can workers' organisations lead a revolution?</b> Speaker: Glenn Kelly, Socialist Party National Committee Chair: Bea Gardner Room 203.	<b>Students and the class struggle</b> Speaker: Theo Sharieff, Socialist Party youth and student organiser Chair: Alex Smith Room 604.	<b>Why does LGBTQ+phobia still exist?</b> Speaker: Michael Johnson, Socialist Party LGBTQ+ members' group convenor Chair: Maddy Steeds Room 222.	<b>How can we fight to end violence against women and sexism?</b> Speaker: Corinthia Ward, Socialist Party national women's bureau Chair: Heather Rawling Room 222.
<b>WHAT HAPPENED IN RUSSIA?</b>	<b>The Russian Revolution 1917 - what happened?</b> Speaker: Josh Asker, the Socialist editorial team Chair: Scott Hunter Room 205.	<b>The legacy of the collapse of Stalinism</b> Speaker: Clive Heemskerk, editor Socialism Today Chair: Tanis Belsham-Wray Room 201.	<b>Was Stalinism inevitable?</b> Speaker: Clare Doyle, International Secretariat, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) Chair: David Hofman	<b>Why hasn't the Communist Party delivered a 'century for socialism'?</b> Speaker: Roger Thomas, South West SP Regional Committee Chair: Mick Whale
<b>SOCIALIST CHANGE TO END CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	<b>Food production in a socialist future</b> Speaker: Mark Best, Socialist Party National Committee Chair: Ali Cook Room 114.	<b>What came out of COP 26?</b> Speakers: Matt Dobson, Socialist Party Scotland EC, and Dave Nellist, Socialist Party National Committee Chair: Ben Robinson Room 222.	<b>Can local government play a part in fighting climate change?</b> Speaker: Nick Chaffey, SP Southern region secretary Chair: Joe Mott Room 202	<b>SNP-Green government in Scotland: will they deliver on climate, workers' rights and independence?</b> Speaker: Philip Stoll, SPS EC Chair: Lluís Bertolin
<b>LESSONS FROM THE CORBYN EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>Modern Monetary Theory v Marxism</b> Speaker: Hannah Sell, Socialist Party General Secretary Chair: James Collett Room 201.	<b>Forum: how can a workers' politics be achieved?</b> Speakers include Jared Wood, RMT NEC Chair: Michael Morgan Room 205.	<b>Do trade unions need a political voice?</b> Speaker: Hugo Pierre, Socialist Party National Committee Chair: Jaime Davies Room 203.	<b>Lessons from the Corbyn experience</b> Speaker: Steve Score, Socialist Party East Midlands Secretary Chair: Adam Powell-Davies Room 201.
<b>IDEAS TO FIGHT BACK</b>	<b>Culture war or class war?</b> Speaker: Sarah Sachs-Eldridge, Socialist Party Executive Committee Chair: Greg Randall Room 204.	<b>Britain's broken housing model and why we need genuinely social housing</b> Hosted by the Unite the Union Housing Branch and SHAC Room 603.	<b>After BLM - the fight to end racism</b> Speaker: Deji Olayinka, Socialist Party Black & Asian members' group Chair: Chris Newby Room 201.	<b>Can the NHS survive?</b> Speaker: Naomi Byron, Socialist Party National Committee Chair: Tessa Warrington Room 203.
<b>INTRODUCTION TO MARXISM</b>	<b>Marxist economics - understanding capitalism in crisis</b> Speaker: Iain Dalton, Socialist Party Yorkshire Secretary Chair: Katie Simpson Room 101.	<b>The ABC of dialectics</b> Speaker: Ross Saunders, Socialist Party Wales Secretary Chair: Dave Bartlett Room 204.	<b>Dialectical historical materialism - what it is and how to use it</b> Speaker: Isai Priya, Socialist Party national Treasurer Chair: Amy Sage	<b>Marxism, the state, and the right to protest</b> Speaker: Nick Hart, Socialist Party West Midlands organiser Chair: Adam Harmsworth Room 202.
<b>WAR AND IMPERIALISM</b>	<b>Will there always be war in Israel and Palestine?</b> Speaker: Judy Beishon, International Secretariat, CWI Chair: Sue Atkins Room 603.	<b>Youth rising in Sri Lanka</b> Hosted by Young Revolutionaries in Solidarity and Tamil Solidarity Room 114.	<b>20 years since 9/11: lessons from the anti-war movement</b> Speaker: Tom Baldwin, Socialist Party South West Secretary Chair: Ryan Aldred Room 205.	<b>20 years since 9/11: world relations and decline of a superpower</b> Speaker: TU Senan, International Secretariat, CWI Chair: Sheila Caffrey
<b>A WORLD IN CRISIS</b>	<b>Polarisation and revolt in Latin America</b> Speaker: Tony Saunio, Committee for a Workers' International Secretary Chair: Ian Pattison Room 222.	<b>The world and Covid - what is the economic outlook?</b> Speaker: Robin Clapp, SP NC Chair: Ted Woodley Room 202.	<b>What's happened to Europe's 'new left'?</b> Speakers: Virginie Pregny, CWI France, and from CWI Germany Chair: Dave Nellist	<b>'Barbarism or socialism' - Africa in the 21st century</b> Speakers: Weizman Hamilton, CWI South Africa & Hassan Soweto CWI Nigeria Chair: Denise Tooley-Okonkwo

ROOM OR  
ZOOM?

All Saturday workshops are in person with the opportunity to attend on Zoom. The Sunday workshops in black boxes will be on Zoom only  
Recordings of all workshops will be available to all ticket holders. See final programme with maps and info: [www.socialism2021.net](http://www.socialism2021.net)



## Readers' opinion

### ● No place for racism in cricket

As a Yorkshire cricket fan I was appalled that Yorkshire County Cricket (YCC) felt there was no action necessary against the staff and players that its own report found had subjected Azeem Rafiq to racist abuse.

There has been no place for racist 'banter' in trade union-organised workplaces in Yorkshire and elsewhere for decades. What is funny about calling someone you work with a racist name? Has anyone using such language ever asked the subjects of the abuse how they feel about it?

Since the 1950s there have been working-class communities in Yorkshire from cricketing nations in the Indian subcontinent and Caribbean. When they were made to feel unwelcome or excluded by white cricket clubs, they set up their own clubs and leagues. Why has YCC not recruited more players from these leagues rather than sticking with the old middle class and public school clubs? Some ethnic minority Yorkshiremen have had to go to other counties for a cricketing career.

KEVIN PATTISON, LEEDS

### ● UK homes shrinking

Average space in UK homes is the lowest in western Europe - but the trend is to get worse. There has been a five-fold increase in 'micro homes' in the last five years. Between 2011 and 2021, one in 15 flats in London fell below the national minimum standard of 37 square metres.

Builders and landowners profit, but the housing crisis gets worse. We need to build council homes, and nationalise land and the speculative building developers. (See 'Socialist planning to meet housing need' at [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk))

PAUL KERSHAW, ENFIELD

### ● 'Not a corrupt country'

I expected young Boris's announcement that the UK is not a corrupt country to be followed by China announcing that China is not a dictatorship and Biden announcing Americans do not chew gum.

DEREK MCMILLAN, EAST SUSSEX

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

[editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk)

# St Mungo's report fails to address bullying and victimisation of workers



Workers at St Mungo's have taken strike action in defence of victimised rep PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON

#### ST MUNGO'S UNITE MEMBERS

A new 'independent' report - compiled by a long-term associate of the CEO - has failed to address workers' concerns in homelessness charity St Mungo's. This follows a twelve-week solidarity strike. Unite has committed to stepping up its campaign.

Vicko, an employee of troubled homelessness charity St Mungo's,

following a record of over twenty years unblemished service for the employer, has been suspended for eight months on 'gross misconduct' charges for calling out senior managers bullying. The central charge is that senior managers were distressed at the suggestion. Other charges include eating a biscuit during an on-line team meeting!

Unite reps say that other staff have left because their concerns are not listened to, and a staff survey by

Unite showed 68% of respondents had experienced bullying by senior managers. At the same time as this suspension, a staggering 44% of union reps faced formal HR processes and Vicko is a Unite rep. This is more than a nightmare faced by one staff member. St Mungo's workers are deeply committed to the important services they run but are increasingly frustrated by the damaging intransigence of executives and board members.

Unite has called for CEO Steve Douglas to stop the nightmare but he has refused. Unite has also approached the board of trustees to discuss the suspension and the culture of silence in their organisation but they have refused point blank. It would seem they see their role as burnishing their CVs and networking rather than talking to representatives of their employees about the crisis in their organisation.

#### Councils must act

Unite members in St Mungo's are calling for local authorities to insist that this suspension is lifted and a review of governance be implemented in the charity; the senior leadership clearly do not understand their responsibilities in relation to bullying. Unite branches and trades councils should pass resolutions calling for this, and supporters should put pressure on local councillors and London Assembly members.

The CEO has criticised Unite for giving publicity to the suspension and issues of bullying. Rightly, he says that publicity about management behaviour is damaging the organisation but he has the solution in his own hands. Unite is committed to stepping up its 'leverage' campaign until management takes the very easy steps needed to end the dispute. To allow the culture of silence to go unchecked would be far more damaging to the organisation.

● For more detail and updates see: [housingworkers.org.uk](https://housingworkers.org.uk)

● Keep in touch with the campaign at: [info@housingworkers.org.uk](mailto:info@housingworkers.org.uk)

# University bosses' pay piles up while workers are forced to strike

#### NOAH EDEN

SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Ten university vice-chancellors earn over £400,000 a year. As a second year university student paying £9,250 a year, I would like to think the money is being put to good use giving me the best possible quality of education. I realised my expectations were a little naïve when I learned how grossly overpaid university bosses are - earning ten times as much as the average member of university staff. It turns out a lot of the funding for universities just goes into the pockets of those at the top.

Meanwhile, students' learning conditions are being squeezed, and staff pay and pensions are under attack. Sheffield Socialist Students recently welcome a representative from the University and College Union (UCU) to one of our meetings to explain the developing university strikes.

In two ballots over pay-related issues and pensions, workers have

supported strike action, with over 70% of members backing action in both disputes. Staff at 54 universities will now be able to take industrial action over unfair pay and working conditions. Staff at 37 universities have backed strike action over pension cuts. At the time of writing strike dates have yet to be announced.

Since 2009, university staff's wages have fallen 20% in real terms effectively meaning they have received a pay decrease, which is unjustifiable, especially when compared to the university bosses' over inflated pay increases. A recently published report also showed that almost a third of university staff feel emotionally drained from work every day following a mental health and workload crisis in universities.

Socialist Students will be right behind university workers taking action. It is the university bosses and the government to blame for overcrowded lecture theatres, rip-off fees and attacks on staff pay and pensions.



Socialist Students members supporting UCU strikes in 2020 CARDIFF SP



# Ten years on - where has Podemos's radicalism gone?

Pablo Iglesias - one of the founders of the Podemos party in the Spanish state and its most prominent representative - announced his resignation from politics earlier this year, the tenth anniversary of the movement of the Indignados (the 'outraged') which gave birth to the new party. **Ross Saunders** - Socialist Party Wales and national committee - looks back over the processes which gave birth to the new party, its development and the mistakes of its leaders which have put its future in jeopardy.

The revolt of the Indignados erupted as a protest against brutal capitalist austerity. The capitalist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and the misnamed Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) demanded that ordinary working-class people pay the bill for the economic crisis, which convulsed the world in 2007-08.

While Spanish banks received huge no-strings-attached bailouts, Zapatero savagely cut back public services, pensions and welfare and held wages down. Jobs were slaughtered and new attacks were launched on trade union rights in order to obstruct the efforts of workers to fight back.

Workers had the power to repel these attacks, but only token resistance to austerity was offered by the conservative leaders of the major trade union federations.

By the beginning of 2011, five million were out of work, including half of all young workers, and evictions were taking place on a mass scale.

With no lead from the organised working class, the anger erupted into spontaneous protests on 15 May 2011 (thereby giving the movement its other name - '15M') and raged throughout the summer of that year.

Tens of thousands marched to public squares, like the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, and occupied them. Tent cities grew up and were sustained for weeks in a score of cities.

In protest assemblies, voice after voice was raised against the corrupt capitalist establishment, especially the banks and the existing political parties which submitted to them.

But the anger on display was not focussed by any organisation. Disgust at the role played by former workers' parties like PSOE and the Communist Party, together with the



Podemos's co-founder and former leader, Pablo Iglesias (centre) PHOTO PODEMOS/CC

failure of the tops of the trade unions to give a lead, led to distrust of political parties in general and even suspicion at the idea of organisation.

In the short term, it was the right wing which advanced: the People's Party (PP), a conservative capitalist party to the right of PSOE, won the council elections held in the midst of the protests and would go on to win the general election later that year.

Many of the record numbers of voters who spoiled their ballot papers and the millions who stayed at home in those elections were not apathetic, but there was no political party capable of channelling that rage.

The United Left (IU), which was dominated by the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), had increased its support, but it was too rigid and bureaucratised to capture much of the enthusiasm of the tempestuous movements which were developing.

## Meteoric rise

This was the context in which new party Podemos ('we can') was created in 2014 and grew meteorically. Less than a year old, Podemos gained 8% of the vote in the European elections in 2014.

Pablo Iglesias, one of its founders, was addressing crowds of 150,000 at rallies in Puerta del Sol as the year closed.

In the 2015 general election Podemos came third, gaining over five million votes - 20% of the total. That election announced the end of stability for the capitalist class in the Spanish state. Four general elections were held in four years and none of them returned a majority for any party or coalition.

The most important factor in the growth of Podemos was its radical programme. It pledged to ensure everyone had a decent income and the right to housing. It promised to raise wages, lower the retirement age and nationalise key sectors of the economy, saying it would defy the EU and refuse to pay Spain's enormous debts.

At a time when many were disgusted by the austerity that PSOE had carried through, it gained popularity with a combative approach, proclaiming its intention to replace

PSOE as the main opposition party.

Podemos also promised to give ordinary people control of the organisation. It offered new methods of participation - including through innovative online methods. Its election candidates were also selected online in primaries and it offered to link up with IU in a united front.

Podemos' initial gains were impressive, but in the years since it has failed to live up to the expectations of workers to fight the capitalist establishment - which could only have been met by a revolutionary socialist programme that breaks with capitalism.

A setback in the second general election fought in 2016 provoked a crisis in the party, now in an electoral alliance with IU as Unidas Podemos ("United We Can", or UP).

The dominant idea in the leadership of the party at the time was that, having won the support of those who wanted radical change, it would be necessary to create a more 'respectable' image in order to broaden its appeal.

Its leaders stopped talking about nationalisation and other radical policies and began describing its politics as 'social democratic'. The result was that UP lost a million votes in 2016.

Following the losses, at Podemos' second national conference in 2017, co-founder Íñigo Errejón argued that Podemos should turn even further to the right.

## Role of working class

At that time, Iglesias opposed such a strategy. Errejón was decisively defeated, but Podemos had not built a stable base of support in the working class or strong democratic structures, which would have assisted it to weather the storms ahead and opportunistic pressures that would inevitably arise again.

The working class, because of the crucial position it occupies in production and the functioning of society, as well as its ability to cripple capitalism through strike action, plays the key position in the movement to replace capitalism with socialism.

As Podemos was developing, the

Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) called for the setting up of structures that would enable working-class people - including those who worked long or unpredictable hours - to participate in the party and determine its direction.

It was difficult for workers with limited time to participate meaningfully in unfocused discussions that could continue indefinitely. Discussions should have been focused around resolutions about the way forward for the party.

Instead, the supposedly 'horizontal' lack of structure of the party and the reliance on online referenda meant that the organisation was dominated by those who have the most time and resources to make their case to the membership, but not necessary the firmest opposition to capitalism.

## Turning point

The political terrain on which Podemos was operating changed radically in 2018, when PSOE leader Pedro Sanchez successfully ousted PP leader Mariano Rajoy and replaced him as prime minister.

Given the powerful desire of workers to be rid of Rajoy, it was correct for Podemos to enable Sanchez to form a government and help to end the reign of the PP government, while always working to expose the real character of PSOE.

But Podemos went much further than this - offering Sanchez, even at times pleading with him, to let Podemos join PSOE in government, even as Sanchez was exposing himself more each day as a reliable tool for capitalism against the workers.

This mistaken attitude to PSOE lost another sixth of their seats at the 2019 elections, under half of its peak votes and seats.

After two elections in 2019 failed to give him a majority, Sanchez gave Podemos what they asked for, and Iglesias and several other leaders of Podemos and IU joined the government and were given ministerial portfolios.

Despite vague promises to serve

workers' interests Sanchez kept in place the cuts budget he inherited from the PP and obediently carried out more austerity demanded by the EU.

This absorption of Podemos's leaders into the capitalist establishment struck at the heart of what had made Podemos popular. This has particularly damaged Podemos where the relation between powerful local national identities and the Spanish state have not been resolved.

## Catalan national question

The powerful upsurge in the Catalan independence movement from 2017 - which included some features of revolution - was an important test for Podemos, which it utterly failed.

After Spanish state forces brutally repressed those who tried to take part in the referendum for independence in 2017, Podemos's response was to sit on the fence, and merely bleated that there should be a referendum "mutually agreed" by both sides.

The damage was done not just in Catalonia itself, where it was pushed from having won the election in 2016 to sixth place. It was also virtually wiped out in Galicia and lost half its positions in the Basque area.

No left force will be able to build support in Catalonia in this period unless it respects the right of self-determination of nations.

The rise and fall of Podemos is full of lessons for the global movement of the masses against austerity. Its formation with, initially, a radical programme was a step forward from the capitulation of the former workers' parties because it offered a political resistance to capitalism.

But its failures to adopt or orientate to the methods of the workers' movement meant that it succumbed, in a similar way to the social democratic parties, to the pressures of the capitalist political system.

The meteoric rise of Podemos demonstrated the appetite that the Spanish masses have for a new mass workers party, which, with a clear socialist programme and a leadership democratically accountable to a mass membership, could provide a real alternative to the capitalist parties.

# Belarus refugees - caught between a rock and a hard place

DAVE CARR

The political sparring between the regimes in Belarus and Russia on the one side and Poland, the EU, USA and Nato on the other, is squaring up for a bruising fist fight.

Pressured by Western sanctions, Belarus dictator Alexander Lukashenko has upped the ante by threatening to cut off two important pipelines which run through Belarus territory and supply natural gas from Russia to the EU and the UK.

This threat appears to have the backing of Russia's authoritarian president Vladimir Putin who, in a show of 'solidarity', dispatched Russian military aircraft, capable of carrying nuclear bombs, into Belarus airspace. Russian paratroops have also begun 'exercising' in Belarus.

The trigger to this escalating geopolitical conflict is the 2,000 or so mainly Iraqi Kurdish refugees trapped on the Belarus/Poland border.

The refugees are very much political pawns in a wider struggle between Lukashenko and Poland, the EU and other western powers.

With the backing of Putin, Lukashenko has been facilitating the trafficking of Iraqi and other refugees through Belarus into Poland in retaliation for western-imposed sanctions. Those sanctions followed the fraudulent 2020 presidential election. They were stepped up after the hijacking in May 2021 of exiled oppositionist Roman Protasevich, whose Ryanair aircraft en route from Greece to Lithuania was forced to land in Minsk by a Belarus MiG fighter jet.

Putin is also hoping that the flood of refugees will help destabilise the EU and Western governments as he too has had Western sanctions imposed on his regime. These followed the assassination attempt on exiled former Russian agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, in March 2018, and in August 2020 on Russian oppositionist Alexei Navalny, who is currently languishing in a Russian prison.

Putin is also still under Western pressure following the military annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and backing for the breakaway Russian-speaking enclave in eastern Ukraine, from which a Malaysian civilian airliner was shot down in 2014.



Belarus dictator Alexander Lukashenko PHOTO OSCE/CC



Razor wire and Polish armed forces preventing the mainly Iraqi Kurds seeking asylum PHOTO IREK DOROZANSKI/DWOT/CC

Many of the desperate refugees are fleeing the sectarian implosion currently taking place in Iraq - a legacy of the imperialist war and invasion of the country in 2003. Putin, with his own tarnished history of armed invasions, has cynically used this fact to counter Western claims of contriving the refugee crisis.

Meanwhile, the refugees are literally pressed up against razor wire and confronted by Polish troops. Several of them have already perished in the freezing, unsanitary conditions of their makeshift forest camp.

## 'Fortress Europe'

No capitalist government is prepared to accept responsibility for its role in backing the wars and civil wars that have created the global refugee crisis. There is no 'legal' route for refugees seeking asylum in the West.

Western governments, including the Tory UK government, spend vastly greater sums keeping out refugees, including climate change refugees, from their territories than they allocate to fighting climate change.

The Turkish government of Recep

Erdogan, under pressure from the EU and Nato, has now said that it would ban Syrian, Iraqi and Yemeni citizens from flying from Turkish airports to Belarus.

In Poland, the right-wing nationalist and increasingly authoritarian Law and Justice (PiS) party-led government of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has used thousands of troops and police to push the refugees from its territory back into Belarus, illegally refusing to process their asylum claims.

The Polish government is using the crisis to ease pressure on it from the EU political establishment in Brussels, which has sanctioned the regime for undemocratic interference in Poland's judicial independence. As a member of the western capitalist military alliance Nato, the Morawiecki government is insisting that Nato takes action against Belarus for threatening Polish sovereignty.

Donald Tusk, leader of capitalist opposition group Civic Platform, urged the Polish government to consider triggering Nato's Article 4 - which allows Nato to take action if "the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened".

If Nato has accused Minsk of attempting to use illegal migration to destabilise the bloc in revenge for sanctions, PiS is also using the refugee crisis to cut across domestic opposition to its authoritarianism, including its banning of abortion rights.

On Polish Independence day last week, the PiS-led government overturned a city-wide ban by the opposition Mayor of Warsaw and allowed far-right and fascist groups to demonstrate against the refugees using virulent racist slogans.

The trapped refugees should immediately be allowed safe passage and given the right to asylum in their countries of choice.

Instead of spending vast sums of

public finances on armaments and military forces, the UK, and other governments, should instead use these resources to fund public housing and to provide health and other public services to deal with shortfalls in these areas, and thereby avoid the festering of divisiveness and racism.



**The refugees are very much political pawns in a wider struggle between Lukashenko and Poland, the EU and other western powers**

The scandalous treatment of asylum seekers in the UK meted out by home secretary Priti Patel - with many having to sleep on floors and then often housed in unfit hostels by unscrupulous profiteering private companies - must be ended. A proper resettlement programme with full support services must be provided.

The labour and trade union movement must reassert its support for, and assist in, the building of independent workers' movements throughout eastern Europe and Russia, as well as in the war-torn Middle Eastern states. It must assist them to fight for democratic workers' governments carrying out socialist policies to end poverty, sectarianism and injustice.

Socialists will be to the fore in campaigning for such policies and will also strive to build socialist revolutionary forces throughout the world to fight for democratic socialist societies to end capitalist wars and economic and environmental crises for good.



Indignados fill Puerta del Sol, Madrid, in May 2011 PHOTO JESUS SOLENA/CC



£1/£2 solidarity price

socialistparty.org.uk



# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

## After COP26 failure

# YOUTH FIGHT FOR WELL-PAID GREEN JOBS AND SOCIALIST CHANGE



PHOTO: PAUL MATSSON

LUIS BERTOLIN

BIRMINGHAM SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST PARTY

**A**n agreement has been reached by the world's capitalist leaders at COP26. An agreement that does not take the measures needed to halt catastrophic climate change.

Based on nations' actual policies and measures, not their 'goals', global heating is set to reach 2.7C. At the beginning of the summit, world leaders said they hoped to agree to limit capitalism's heating effect to 1.5C. The consequences, without radical change, will be disastrous for millions of workers and poor.

After all the empty words and promises in Glasgow, the leaders of the world are travelling back to their countries to kiss the hands

of polluting businesses and corporations. A promise of a cosy post at the corporation's administration council, or of some nice handsomely rewarded speaker's fees when they retire, often does the trick in making them forget what they said at these COP meetings. These are the very same corporations that use every trick in their playbook to exploit their employees.

Meanwhile, the future of young people is threatened by brutal shifts in the climate, precarious employment, low pay and unaffordable housing. Youth Fight for Jobs supports the creation of jobs that are well paid and socially useful; that means stable jobs in green industries.

And yet, the direction of this government is the direct opposite of that. They spent billions

on furlough paying the employers' wage bill for them and imposing a 20% cut on workers. The Kickstart scheme is similar, 25 hours a week on minimum wage, paid for by the government, with no job at the end of it. Meanwhile there is a green skills shortage - training for green jobs just isn't readily available.

### Green jobs

Instead of putting up public money to fund underpaid exploitative jobs and apprenticeships, the government could be funding the training of young people for green initiatives such as the creation of new woodland, re-forming our heating and energy infrastructure, refurbishing and expanding public transport, or manufacturing parts for electric cars.

We just can't trust a system that demands profit above all else. Capitalism is unable, and the bosses unwilling, to take effective action to stop climate change. No sweet words at COP26 are going to change the nature of capitalism, even when it threatens to make the Earth unliveable.

To ensure we have a future, it is necessary to bring production and distribution under democratic public control, taking the wealth off the 1% that have profited from stealing our future and damning us to misery. Then the Earth's resources can be used not for the profits of a select minority, but for the benefit of humanity. There is no capitalism without climate change. Young people must unite and fight for our future, by joining the struggle for socialism.

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

