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# the Socialist

Issue 1157

25 November - 1 December 2021

formerly **Militant**

**NHS**

**Low pay**

**Social care**

**Price rises**

# WORKERS' ACTION CAN DEFEAT WEAK AND DIVIDED TORIES

**An NHS in crisis, prices rocketing and Universal Credit cuts condemning millions to hardship. Attacks on pensions and now social care funding.**

All overseen by a Tory government comprised of MPs who take

lucrative second jobs, led by a prime minister prepared to cover up illegal lobbying.

The 'levelling up' fantasy is being exposed as a farce, and fearful Tory MPs are in revolt. Now is the time, when the Tories are so weak, divided and floundering, for workers to get organised, and for the trade union leaders to go on the offensive to fight for our interests.

At the forefront of the struggle are NHS workers fighting for a 15% pay rise and to defend the NHS.

On 22 November, as Johnson

reeled from the blow of 47 Tory MPs refusing to back his social care changes in Parliament, NHS workers rallied outside. Unite the union, representing over a million workers, gathered campaigners to oppose another Tory disaster - the Health and Care Bill.

Socialist Party member, and member of health union Unison's national executive council, **Naomi Byron** addressed the rally, speaking in a personal capacity. We print an edited extract here of her speech.

"I work at Homerton Hospital, I'm

one of the outsourced staff fighting for NHS pay and conditions. I believe it is absolutely necessary to campaign to stop this dangerous bill.

"The bill threatens the potential break up and privatisation of the NHS, including attacks on national pay bargaining, just as we are entering pay ballots for all the unions in the health service. It also promises, but doesn't deliver, plans to integrate health and care. We all know what's needed to solve the care crisis - that's to nationalise care in

Britain to provide it free at the point of delivery, publicly funded - just as our NHS was set up to do.

"To save our NHS we need not only to defeat this bill, we need to fight a mass campaign for proper funding. We need to pay NHS workers a wage they can live on. Nationalise the pharmaceutical companies - that would help with the NHS funding crisis. We need to fight to bring all privatised services back in house."

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

# Coordinate the action for an NHS workers' pay rise

▶▶▶ CONTINUED FROM FRONT

"In my union branch, we have been down to support workers in another private company Serco, who work at Barts Hospital Trust. They are currently balloting for strike action in three hospitals for equality with NHS workers in terms of pay. They are also campaigning to be brought back in house. We need a national coordinated campaign to bring all outsourced workers in the health service back in-house on NHS pay and conditions.

"Almost every health union is currently balloting, and I call on health workers here tonight to vote to reject the absolute insult of 3% and to vote

for strike action. Today, the Financial Times said real inflation is closer to 6% than 3%. 3% is a massive pay cut if you include paying an extra 1.5% on your National Insurance, and a £20 a week cut in Universal Credit. 15% is really a drop in the ocean. NHS pay has dropped 20% in the last eleven years we should be campaigning for that to be restored.

"We want all the health unions to coordinate any strike action that happens. But further, there are our colleagues in the rest of the public sector and the private sector also facing pay freezes or pay cuts. We need to coordinate as widely as possible. This government is weak and divided, it can be defeated."

## 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

## Get all the latest union news



with the NSSN bulletin [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

**NHS S.O.S.**

**SINK OR SWIM - time to fight for the NHS.**

Join us 26th November for a day of protest to demand urgent action in addressing NHS pay and the staffing crisis!

12:30pm - 13:45pm  
**PROTEST @ Westminster Bridge, London**  
Banner drop and protest - bring your placards, banners and anything to make a noise!!

14:00pm - 16:00pm  
**RALLY @ Old Palace Yard, London**  
Speeches from NHS Workers, Campaigners and supporters (speakers tbc)

#NHSPAY15 #NHSSOS  
@NurseSayNo @NHSWorkersSayNo



Midwives marching in Hull PHOTO: TED PHILLIPS

# Tories responsible for NHS staff shortages

**HOLLY JOHNSTON**  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY AND HEALTH WORKER IN GMB UNION

Health secretary Sajid Javid has announced that vaccinations will be made mandatory for health service workers in England by the spring.

We cannot afford for NHS and care staff to be reprimanded or taken off the frontline for not having a mandatory vaccine in the middle of a national crisis and during the winter period. Around 93% of healthcare workers have been vaccinated. I would encourage all staff to have the vaccine, but do not agree that it should be compulsory. Staff will simply leave and we cannot take that risk on top of the staff that are leaving already and the 100,000 plus vacancies that already exist.

There are many reasons why some healthcare workers are hesitant, many are worried about feeling ill from the side effects of the vaccine and not being able to work or arrange childcare for example. There are also cultural reasons. Many are in precarious zero-hour contracts and cannot afford to take time off.

There needs to be a clear public health message about the vaccine and prevention-based management of Covid cases. Mandating vaccines is not a substitute for the management of the spread of Covid, for workplace safety and the correct PPE.

The vaccines as a whole cannot be used as a reason to act prematurely with the relaxing of social distancing and wearing masks in public spaces

for example. As a trade unionist and a campaigner, I have been fighting hard to change the government guidance and provision of PPE since the beginning of the pandemic, exposing the corrupt crony contracts and PPE provision that was based on what was available rather than what was needed.

Compulsory vaccines for healthcare workers is proving to be another dividing tactic and we need to stick together and have the backing of our unions. We cannot let the government demonise healthcare workers.

The handling of vaccinations for staff in the health and care services is another example of why we need democratically controlled, publicly owned health and care services.

If staff felt more valued, if there was more transparency and clear public health messages around the vaccine, if working conditions were less terrible and the issues of pay were less pressing, we would see more of an uptake of people having the vaccine.

The Tories will try to blame staff shortages on the unwillingness of some staff to be vaccinated. We must be clear that chronic staff shortages predate the pandemic and are a consequence of low pay and poor working conditions. That's why members of the health unions have rejected the pitiful 3% pay offer and why my union, GMB, is balloting its members in the NHS for strike action. A decent NHS pay rise would be a big step towards reducing worker shortages and improving healthcare for all.

# Midwives march against unsafe staffing and for adequate funding

## ● Sheffield

I attended Sheffield's March for Midwives protest on 21 November in solidarity with my sister, a midwife at Barnsley Hospital, and her colleagues. Having provided care to women, babies, and their families throughout the pandemic, many midwives are at breaking point as the Tory government refuses to address staffing levels. Midwives have been intimidated and even threatened with legal action by NHS management for speaking out about the crisis in maternity wards across the country.

But midwives, working through their breaks and staying on past the end of their shifts to make sure that women and babies receive safe levels of care, have reached breaking point. Hundreds of protesters came out in solidarity with midwives and listened to first-hand accounts from NHS staff and new mothers about the dangers of running maternity wards without sufficient resources.

Midwives are not asking for much, just the tools to practice their job safely. Most of their demands focus on the very basics: ensuring a sufficient number of midwives are trained and retained. With the changes outlined in the Health and Care Bill looming, the last thing maternity wards need

is another round of reforms that see further parts of our health service carved up in the interests of profit. This protest is yet another reminder of the need to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all frontline workers.

**DECLAN KENNY**  
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

## ● Hull

"Investment in our future starts in the womb" and "Stop conveyor belt care" were among the messages on placards at the March for Midwives protest in Hull, one of many around the country.

Socialist Party members joined the lively march of around fifty midwives

and young families demanding an urgent increase in funding for maternity services. A recent survey by the Royal College of Midwives found that 57% are considering leaving the profession with dangerous staffing levels and overwhelming workloads, leaving midwives unable to cope.

One mother, who joined the protest with her two-month-old baby, described how the midwives caring for her were so understaffed they regularly had to stay several hours beyond the end of their twelve-hour shifts. The underfunding of the NHS is putting our lives at risk. We call for a reversal of all cuts and privatisation, and a 15% pay rise for NHS workers.

**LUCY NUTTALL**  
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSSON



# 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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# Cricket's history of racism and elitism

GERRY WRIGHT  
MEMBER OF YORKSHIRE COUNTY CRICKET CLUB  
AND SOCIALIST PARTY

The revelations of racism at one of the country's premier county cricket clubs were shocking and damning, and resonated beyond the confines of cricket. However, to those who have followed the sport over a lifetime like me, they were not surprising. Cricket's governance has its roots in the days of the British Raj.

The influx of Asian workers into the mills and factories of the West Riding in the 1950s and 1960s led to a plethora of Asian heritage recreational cricketers. Some were accepted into the local cricket leagues, but a cordial welcome was generally lacking, and separate leagues were formed by the Asian community because of overt prejudice and discrimination.

More than just words are needed to give all working-class kids, of all backgrounds a chance to fulfil their potential on the cricket field

The county club, far from seeing rich resources within their borders at a time when the all-conquering team of the 1960s was breaking up, chose to look the other way. County bosses dismissed the issue on the basis of a so-called Asian reluctance to integrate into the wider community and the fact that quality was lacking. Their bigotry was further boosted by an observation that few West Riding Asians were finding employment at other county clubs who probably had their own issues with race. Deprived of coaching at the top level and facilities, British Asian cricketers have been unable to fulfil their potential for years.

There were players of colour in the England team from the 1970s onwards, but players were often subject to taunts in the press when results went against England. They were

accused of not exerting themselves fully because it was not their heritage country they were playing for. I don't remember white South Africans being subject to such questioning! Players like Devon Malcolm were patronised and verbally abused when they did make the breakthrough in to the test team.

Racism is endemic in capitalist society, and sport to varying degrees reflects this. Cricket, because of its imperialistic and colonial context, is particularly toxic. Yorkshire County Cricket Club is damned, not only by recent revelations, but by the wilful neglect of Asian cricketers for over sixty years.

Working-class youth wanting to play cricket have real difficulties getting opportunities to participate. Deindustrialisation decimated many working-class clubs. Schools that cater for non-fee payers provide limited curriculum opportunities given the dominance of national curricula, with emphasis on academic subjects to placate OFSTED and achieve an acceptable placing in the School League tables.

Many schools that became academies sold off playing fields that were previously the property of local authorities, while local authorities themselves have sold off recreational grounds to offset cuts in central government grants and funding.

It is not surprising that the England Test team is dominated by players from private schools, as indeed many county teams are. More than just words are needed to give all working-class kids, of all backgrounds, a chance to fulfil their potential on the cricket field.

Democratic control of cricket clubs is urgently needed so that they fully represent the communities they serve. Cricket administration requires root-and-branch reform to represent all those who wish to participate in playing and watching the game. Like many issues that have emerged of late, only a socialist society can provide a lasting solution.

# Working class strangled by price rises and pay cuts



Glasgow bin workers on strike for better pay PHILIP STOTT

RYAN ALDRED  
SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Few can ignore the eye-watering cost of living crisis. When even the likes of the Daily Mail are highlighting the effects of the 10-year-high inflation figures, it underlines how bad it is!

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has released a whole series of damning figures which underline just how hard working-class people are being hit. Transport prices up 9.9% from last year, an 18.8% rocketing up of electricity prices, and a giant leap in gas prices, up 28.1%. With food also rising by 2.1% in October, and fuel jumping by more than 22%, it's no wonder that people are feeling the pinch.

It is estimated that, with the Consumer Price Index measuring inflation rising to 4.2% in October, households would need to spend on average an extra £21 a week, or over £1,000 a year, just to buy the same basket of goods. This in itself is bad enough, but with the government's recent slashing of Universal Credit by £20 a week, many of the poorest households could find themselves effectively £2,000 worse off each year.

Moreover, the Tories, self-proclaimed defenders of hard-working families, have offered some of those who have worked the hardest throughout the pandemic nothing short of insulting pay increases that don't even meet inflation. This includes NHS staff, teaching support

staff and teachers who were graciously 'awarded' a real-terms pay cut!

The Bank of England has provided little hope of respite, with models projecting that inflation could continue to rise, hitting around 5% by next April as bosses aim to claw back lost profits through the pandemic by raising prices.

While working-class families struggle to make ends meet, the government has been mired in an ever-deepening scandal as Tory MPs try to account for six-figure second jobs in addition to an already-inflated £81,932 a year plus expenses. As his deputies attempt to justify lucrative second jobs, and begin to lose their grip on the economy, it's a wonder that Boris Johnson has been able to keep his first job!

It's clear that the Tories and their paymasters, the bosses, seek to make working-class people pay for the pandemic. The government and the bosses have made it clear, they won't willingly give workers a decent pay rise without a fight.

We say that the Universal Credit uplift should be restored and the minimum wage should be raised to £15 an hour without exemptions. With some victories already chalked up - like the South Wales bus drivers' strike victory, and many more unions preparing ballots for industrial action, workers will be making it clear that we want decent pay, not more Peppa Pigs at the trough!

We say that the Universal Credit uplift should be restored and the minimum wage should be raised to £15 an hour without exemptions

# Tories hammer nail in pensions triple lock coffin

ERIC SEGAL  
KENT SOCIALIST PARTY

The Office for National Statistics announced that inflation increased to a ten-year high of 4.2% only 36 hours after MPs voted to ditch the triple lock on pensions. Millions of older people will now be forced to choose between eating or heating. The Tories have betrayed over 2.1 million pensioners living in poverty.

With bills rising and in the teeth of a pandemic, the Tories have broken a manifesto promise and this year scrapped the triple lock, which had ensured that the state pension rose annually by either inflation, wage growth, or 2.5% - whichever was highest. The UK state pension can be as low as £137.50 a week, one of the lowest in the developed world.

Figures show that one in five pensioners in the UK are living in

poverty, with 1.3 million undernourished and 25,000 dying each year due to the cold weather. Pensioners aged 85 and over have the highest rate of poverty at 22%; this has risen by 6% since 2012.

While the gradual rise in women's state pension age meant the number of female pensioners in the UK has fallen by around 800,000 since 2012-13, from 7.1 million to 6.3 million, the number living in relative poverty rocketed by about 260,000 to 1.25 million.

Working people produce the wealth in society and all we want is a decent life from cradle to grave. The bosses are only interested in their profits; they don't care about our pensions which, after all, are our deferred wages. The trade union movement must fight for an immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension as a step towards a living pension.



# Poorer pensioners fleeced by social care cap



BRENT KENNEDY  
CARLISLE SOCIALIST PARTY

What a shabby and cynical trick Tory ministers pulled on working-class pensioners while everyone's attention was on the sleaze scandals. Having promised in their election manifesto that "nobody needing care should be forced to sell their home to pay for it", they diluted their September announcement that care costs will be capped at £86,000 in their new Care Act for England, blowing the idea of 'levelling up' out of the water.

The cap will only apply to people's own payments, excluding the means-tested council contribution to which those with low savings or property values are entitled. In addition, vulnerable people in care homes would now have to pay the full cost of board and lodging of £200 a week (pension

credit is only around £177), even when they had already reached the 'cap'. This is an attempt to fleece low and middle wage earners in their retirement or infirmity to save the Treasury £900 million pounds while protecting the assets of 'their people' for their heirs.

There's something of the poll tax about this. The Resolution Foundation explains: "If you own a £1 million house in the home counties, over 90% of your assets are protected. If you've got a terraced house in Hartlepool worth £70,000 you can lose almost everything."

The Tory populists claim that everyone affected would be better off, but even Andrew Dilnot, whose inadequate commission on the care system proposed a cap, spells out that "the people most harshly affected by this change are people with assets of

exactly £106,000. But everyone with assets of less than £186,000 would do less well under what the government is proposing."

First the Tories increased workers' National Insurance contributions by £12 billion a year, supposedly to finance the care system, and now they are trying to expropriate much of their savings and family homes. The Socialist Party believes that the care system should be publicly owned and integrated into the NHS, free at the point of use, with all funding paid out of general taxation. But that doesn't mean more National Insurance or income tax rises: it means taxing the billionaires, banks and big corporations.

The Tories know how to brazenly look after their class, now we need a new mass party of working people to look after ours.

Headingley cricket ground, Leeds JOHNSEB/CC



# HS2 eastern route cancelled

# Fight for a workers' plan for public transport

IAIN DALTON  
SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE

In an announcement that surprised no-one on 18 November, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced that the eastern route of HS2 from Birmingham to Leeds would be cancelled. The long drawn-out death of this part of the project will be the source of elation for some of the campaigners along the route.

Also cut was the proposed new 'Northern Powerhouse Rail' line between Leeds and Manchester. This loss will be more greatly felt, especially by anyone unfortunate enough to travel this route at rush hour. Hopes that Bradford, the UK's seventh-largest city and least connected rail hub, would be on such a new line have been dashed.

Instead, the government has proposed a hodge-podge of sections of new line, electrification, upgrades and signalling of existing lines. Many of the supposedly new proposals were simply reinstating plans previously scrapped, such as the contactless ticketing scheme.

In his forward to the misnamed 'Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands' (IRP), Boris Johnson even blurts out that the now-scrapped plans were costed at £185 billion, almost double the £96 billion the government is now going to invest.

After years of the Tories talking about the importance of the 'Northern Powerhouse', the reality is more like a Northern Poorhouse. It is becoming clear that Johnson's 'levelling up' is just yet another promise not delivered.

There will be a deep scepticism as to whether the limited genuinely new projects promised will be delivered. Leeds is promised a mass transit system, but the government's report hardly gives confidence. It can't decide whether the initial investment is worth £100 million or £200 million.

The most recent trolleybus plans were dumped following opposition - it was seen by residents to be mostly servicing park and ride for commuters outside of Leeds, with limited stops benefiting those in the

city, while local bus services would have been decimated.

The 'integration' of the plan is limited by the fragmented nature of Britain's railway system with over 20 different operators, the plethora of separate local bus operating companies, as well as the Tories' 'Covid austerity' limiting their preparedness to make major investments.

A starting point for a real integrated transport plan should be bringing the different parts of the transport network into public ownership, out of the hands of the profiteering private companies.

Elected representatives of railway workers and their unions, alongside commuters and the wider workers' movement, should be brought together to democratically discuss what investments should be made and where.

Linked to a wider socialist plan based on democratic public ownership of the decisive parts of the economy, transport could be much more closely integrated to the genuine needs of people travelling for work and leisure, and of the environment.



The Phase 2 eastern route has been scrapped

# End sexism and violence against women



PHOTO: YORK SOCIALIST PARTY

25 November is International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Below we print extracts of a leaflet the Socialist Party has produced for campaigning on the issue of gender violence and harassment in the universities and colleges.

In the UK, 97% of young women have experienced sexual harassment. This stat confirms what we all know, that sexual harassment is its own pandemic. From sexual harassment on campus, on nights out, or at work, we are fed up and want change.

From the climate to the housing crisis, tuition fees to sexism, capitalism has failed to fix any of the huge problems in society. All of these issues have been met by growing movements demanding change.

Rather than fighting to challenge sexism and sexual harassment, the only 'solution' offered by capitalist representatives such as Tory Philip Allott is that women should moderate their behaviour. But being 'street-wise' won't protect women from violence and offers no way forward to end sexism.

You could take Allott's comments right out of the 1950's. But women's rights have not stood still over the decades; we have more rights and protections today thanks to the mass struggles, organising, protests and strike action that have taken place. Including the recent action by university staff in the UCU, who have been on strike for equal pay.

The #GirlsNightIn boycotts and protests have brought important attention to safety, sexism and harassment, forcing many student unions and other venues to acknowledge the issue.

But acknowledging the issue isn't enough. Private companies dominate and control the media, fashion

and beauty industries and own night clubs. They reflect and promote sexist ideas to make a profit. Such as when clubs demand female staff wear less clothing to draw in customers.

A mass movement against sexism and inequality, which challenges the few who profit from sexism, could not only win changes to give us safe nights out, but huge improvements in the rest of our lives too.

## ● Sexism in education and on campus

Outrageously, in one study nine out of ten girls said sexist name calling and being sent unwanted sexual pictures happened "a lot" or "sometimes". On university campuses, one in five students experience sexual harassment in their first week of studying.

Action by school students has already prompted the government to conduct a special report. But the government can't be allowed to hide behind yet another report. We want action now.

Instead of facing up to the scale of the problem, education managers and university bosses have turned to 'gagging orders' - clauses designed to protect business trade secrets - as part of the sexual harassment complaints process. Unsurprisingly, just 2% of students who make formal

complaints are satisfied with the reporting process.

While these procedures are in the hands of management, the bosses and the government, it is clear that reputation and cost-saving will be prioritised over staff and student welfare. We must build fighting, democratic school and student unions to achieve the protection and support we need. This should include overhauling complaints procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose and properly enforced.

Winning safe social spaces for students, will mean fighting for investment and funding, including for more support services for staff and students experiencing harassment and abuse. It means fighting for funding of shuttle transport between halls, proper public transport and decent lighting at night.

## ● Sexism on nights out

Everyone should be able to enjoy nights out without fear of harassment, racial profiling or violence. Increased policing or CCTV on its own won't solve these problems and can make some people feel less safe.

For real safety on a night out we need control over the stewarding and safety measures in place in bars and clubs. Democratically accountable and elected committees of students, young people, workers, trade unions and local authorities should oversee the implementation of safety measures in their area.

Venues should be made to increase staffing levels to ensure workers have the time to offer effective support, alongside increased training, so staff can identify and support

those at risk. All venues should be made immediately to offer free covers for drinks.

## ● Sexual violence at work

Insecurity at work can make people feel they have to 'put up' with unwanted behaviours, whether from colleagues or customers. An end to zero-hour contracts and job insecurity, including trade union rights from day one can help give workers the confidence to report harassment.

The trade union movement has a responsibility to fight to make sure every workplace is safe and free from sexual harassment and violence. This should include fighting for employers to provide safe transport for staff getting home late.

Properly funded public transport, with decent staffing levels, alongside proper street lighting, can all help to make sure people get home safe.

- Universities must invest in social spaces for students and more on-campus support services for students and staff experiencing harassment and abuse. Build democratic student unions to oversee this
- All venues should implement more safety measures - such as more training for staff to identify and support those at risk, as well as providing free covers for drinks. Staffing levels must ensure that they have time to give support effectively
- Joint elected and democratically accountable committees of trade unions, local authorities, students and young workers to oversee safety measures in clubs and bars in their area
- With clubs and bars opening much later, there should be more investment in public transport and street lighting to ensure that young people can get home safely
- A massive increase in funding for resources and support services at a national and local level for women experiencing violence and abuse
- Democratic trade union and community control of the police
- Fight for a socialist alternative to the sexism, inequality and crisis of the capitalist system

## ● The police

The Tory government's only response to reports of sexual violence and harassment has been to promise increased police powers and undercover cops in clubs. But the record of the police makes clear this won't be enough to make women feel safe, and may have the opposite effect.

The low prosecution rates for sexual harassment, and the culture of sexism and violence in the police exposed by the murder of Sarah Everard and the killings of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, mean that many victims fail to get any type of justice or support.

We need genuine accountability: local democratic control of the police through our communities and trade unions.

## ● Fight for socialism

It has now been over a decade since the NUS report into sexual violence on UK university campuses and, if anything, the problem is getting worse. Raising awareness is not enough. Education and training about sexism and consent is important: prejudices, gender stereotyping, and sexist behaviour should be challenged whenever we see them. But just raising awareness fails to highlight the systemic nature of oppression. Sexist ideas are the product of a system which aims to divide and exploit.

The huge scale of sexist ideas shows they are the consequence of a fundamentally unequal capitalist system. A small minority owns the huge majority of wealth in society. They control the media, fashion and beauty industries, turn women's bodies into commodities to make a profit and materially benefit from the exploitation of women through low-paid, precarious jobs and the unpaid work that women do in the home.

Systemic problems require systemic solutions. To eliminate gender violence we need to challenge the root cause of sexist ideas by taking economic and political control out of the small minority who profit from inequality and oppression. A mass movement of young people, students and trade unions to challenge sexism and fight for a real alternative to capitalism is a vital step in this process.

# Tesco warehouse workers ballot for strike action over pay

## Tesco warehouse union rep Max fights sacking



Tesco Dagenham warehouse pay strike 2018 RICHARD GROVES

### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN USDAW

The shop and distribution workers' union Usdaw is carrying out strike ballots at nine Tesco depots over pay. The two disputes involve Tesco distribution centres at Daventry, Goole, Hinckley, Lichfield, Livingston, Magor, Peterborough and Southampton, and run between 22 November and 6 December. If members vote for action then strike action will take place in the week of 20 December right in the middle of the busy Christmas period.

Other stand-alone sites on different contracts are also anticipating unsatisfactory offers and could strike.

Ushaw points out that workers

ensured a 16.5% increase in profit to Tesco for the first half of the year. Coupled with inflation running at 6%, then workers deserve more.

At the same time, victimised Usdaw rep and Socialist Party member Max McGee is appealing his sacking by Tesco (for 'exaggerating' an injury in the workplace), which took place while Usdaw was starting the indicative ballot for strike action in his and other warehouses.

Max is now on his second appeal against this outrageous decision.

● Max spoke at the rally of the *Socialism 2021 weekend* (see pages 8-9) about his victimisation, you can watch his speech here: <https://youtu.be/YhaKEPI3q7Y?t=5323>

# RMT to strike in London night-tube dispute

### SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE RMT

The RMT transport workers' union has announced strike action on the tube in London over the imposition of "impossible and unreasonable demands on staff" ahead of the reopening of 'night tube'.

The union says that London Underground refused point blank to consider the issues at the heart of the dispute, and that it has become clear the drive from tube bosses is all about cutting costs, regardless of the impact on staff and the services they operate.

As a result, all train operator and instructor operators working on night-tube lines (Central, Jubilee, Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria) have been instructed not to book on for any duty commencing between

4.30am on Friday 26 November and 4:29am on Saturday 27 November.

Further, all train operator and instructor operators working on the Central and Victoria lines are instructed not to book on for any duty commencing between 8.30pm and 4.29am on 27-28 November, 3-4 December, 4-5 December, 10-11 December, 11-12 December and 17-18 December.

All train operator and instructor operators working on night-tube lines (Central, Jubilee, Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria) are also instructed not to book on for any duty commencing from 4.30am on 18 December to 4.29am on 19 December.

On Transport for London (TfL) all tube workers are facing a concerted drive to attack their pensions and conditions. After 30 years of shift work a tube worker can expect to

retire on less than half their salary. Typically, this means a pension of around £16,000.

TfL is also demanding more flexible working. As if working shifts around the clock over a seven-day working week isn't enough! Tube bosses want to own staff 24/7. They want to demand changes to shift times and rest days whenever they demand it.

Therefore the RMT has also agreed to conduct a ballot of all TfL and London Underground members over pensions, jobs and working practices (so called framework agreements). The RMT ballots and strike action should act as a beacon to others. The trade union movement must refuse to allow the bosses to use Covid to force down wages, place unreasonable demands on workers and demand a casualised workforce.

To make donations to the RMT night-tube strike hardship fund:

- Account name: Terence O'Neill
- Sort code: 60-83-71
- Account number: 89481380
- Or send cheques to RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton St, London NW1 1JD



# Panasonic workers strike against pay freeze



Panasonic picket 22 November DAVE REID

### DAVE REID SOCIALIST PARTY WALES

About 100 workers at Panasonic's factory in Cardiff took their second day of strike action on 22 November for a decent pay rise. Panasonic has offered yet another pay freeze. The workers, members of the GMB union, are demanding 5%, itself a 'stand-still' pay rise, merely keeping up with cost of inflation after years of pay freezes and below-inflation pay rises.

Panasonic, which has an annual turnover of £50 billion a year, claims it cannot afford a real-terms pay increase this year. It offered the Cardiff workforce 1%, but when that was rejected it withdrew even that paltry rise.

Production workers are paid the minimum wage of just £9.18 an hour, despite having important skills. Their pay would rise by 3.5% to £9.50 anyway in April because of the rise in the minimum wage.

The company managed to keep production of microwaves going through the first strike day, but much of the work had to be binned because the work, using unskilled labour, was no good. The company would have lost thousands.

Skilled warehouse workers are currently paid £10.50 an hour, while the going rate for the Panasonic workers' level of skills is more like £13 an hour. The Socialist Party calls for a £15 minimum wage for all.

In the past, Panasonic was seen as

a good place to work, but for years workers' pay has fallen further and further behind the cost of living, with pay freezes and below-inflation pay rises every year. The company has been chasing low wages, closing down other plants in Cardiff and Newport 15 years ago, and transferring production to new factories in eastern Europe and Vietnam.

After years of pay cuts and bullying management, Cardiff workers have had enough. 40 workers have turned out to support the picket line. An overtime ban continues. The next two strike days are on 29 November and 6 December, and the strikers are looking to spread the strike through the site, with members looking to move to two-day strikes.

# Sage care home workers' pay victory

Sage care home workers in Golders Green, north London have won an 11% pay rise to at least £11.05 an hour following strike action. The dispute started at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 when workers were forced to make their own PPE, and it escalated from there.

The members of the United Voices of the World (UVW) union, who work in care, domestic and maintenance, will now earn the 'London Living Wage'. UVW described the move as a "huge win for pandemic heroes".

Bile, a senior care worker at Sage, said: "We went above and beyond to stand for what we deserve. We know that none of us acting alone can

achieve success and we understand that there is still a way to go."

UVW anticipates that this strike will be a historic turning point for carers. The courage of these workers could certainly act as a lesson and inspiration.

But for this strike to lead to more widespread industrial action, as the Socialist said in February: "It is vital that not just UVW, but other major unions - Unite, GMB and Unison - develop a plan to popularise these demands and link workers up throughout the sector. This could inspire some of the lowest-paid workers to join a union, and fight for a radical set of demands."



Sage care workers picket line UVW

# Socialism 2021

## A STEELY DETERMINATION TO CHANGE SOCIETY

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE  
SOCIALISM2021 ORGANISER

Socialism 2021 brimmed with determination. Determination to overcome the obstacles of time, resources, technical hitches, and the pandemic; to meet and discuss socialist ideas and Marxism. Determination to build workers' and youth struggles, determination to build our party, and determination to fight to transform society in a socialist direction.



Isai Priya PHOTO MARY FINCH

The proof of this was the response to the weekend's appeal for financial support for the fight for socialism. The ambitious target of £30,000 was dwarfed by the £47,221.79 pledged in response!

A special clap went up to acknowledge the donation from one of the venue staff who is also now among those convinced to join the Socialist Party by what they heard and discussed at the weekend.

Last year, Socialism2020 was 'virtual'. This year, around 400 met in person, with a similar number joining online. The weekend comprised an online introduction on Friday evening followed by 39 workshops on ten themes, with a major rally on Saturday afternoon.

Everywhere you went there was a buzz of discussion - from the workshops, to the bookshop, to the bar. Being back in person, for those of us who could, felt fantastic.

This was not the first in-person activity for the Socialist Party since the pandemic - far from it. Many members and branches were coming fresh from leading campaigns in the workplaces and communities, from organising and supporting strikes and protests, or from building support for socialist ideas among young people in colleges and on campuses.

All of that experience fed into the discussion, which in turn will strengthen our ability to offer a way forward in those struggles - and the even bigger ones to come.

The new elements - masks, covid tests and uniting 'roomers and Zoomers' in the discussion - are the visible expressions of the 'new normal' of 2021. So was the need to discuss the new level of attacks on all the past gains of the working class, such as the bosses' 'fire and re-hire' and the threat of lowering the threshold for student debt repayments.

But even more expressive of the new era was the large number of people attending their first Socialist event, their desire for an alternative to the rigged and rotten system sharpened by the experience of the pandemic, and all the ways the capitalist crisis impacts lives and the environment.

The main rally on Saturday brought all of the themes of Socialism 2021 together. Isai Priya, Socialist Party national treasurer and rally chair, opened up welcoming the hundreds in the hall and those watching on YouTube.

The theme of the rally, as she explained, was 'Our future at stake - what now for the struggle for socialism?' Isai pointed to the fightbacks against exploitation and oppression breaking out all round the world as the backdrop to the rally.

Oisín Duncan, a youth organiser for Socialist Party Scotland (SPS), reported how, in recognition of the failure of the capitalist representatives at COP 26, Greta Thunberg's 'blah, blah, blah' line is now posterised all over Glasgow. He described the interest among young people on the protests, and workers on the picket lines that SPS supported, in the call for building a working-class movement for socialist change to end climate change and capitalist chaos.

Judy Beishon from the Socialist Party's executive committee, explained how it is the capitalist system itself that means the 26th COP, like the 25 summits before, was incapable of agreeing anything more than small, inadequate steps.

Capitalism's inbuilt workings make it incapable of the urgent action, investment and cooperation, including internationally, that is necessary to halt climate change - because it's based on the competition between nation states and capital accumulation for private profit through exploitation of workers and natural resources.

But Judy's was an optimistic contribution because she pointed to another accumulation - that of all the factors that can contribute to the



The rally platform joins in the singing of the Internationale (the socialist anthem) PHOTO PAUL MATTSOON

very rapid building of mass working-class organisations with socialist programmes. The conditions are also developing for an international expression of this, given the very rottenness of capitalism everywhere in the world.

Militant working-class organisation was the theme taken up by the next two speakers, well placed as trade union general secretaries, both elected recently on fightback programmes.

Carmel Gates is a longstanding member of the Socialist Party's sister party in Ireland (Militant Left) and the general secretary of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (Nipsa) trade union.

Carmel expressed confidence in her greeting in workers' growing willingness to fight including, and importantly, young workers. She pointed to what's needed to organise in Northern Ireland, explaining that Nipsa stands for a socialist economy and for cross-community, working-class, non-sectarian trade unionism.

Speaking to the rally via video, Unite the Union general secretary, Sharon Graham said that in order to defend jobs, pay and

conditions, the union is involved in more industrial disputes than at any time in its history; that she stands with striking workers on the picket lines (where she had just come from); bringing reps together across industries, like road haulage, to build practical plans to push back on suppression of pay; instructing the union's lawyers to fight for reps so they can defend members; and building a disputes unit that will triple in size over the next months.

Like the Socialist Party, Sharon argues for the trade unions to play a central role in working-class struggle - coordinating across unions and internationally as well as organising in communities to take on the landlords and the councils.

The president of the bakers' union (Bfawu), Ian Hodson, spoke of the conclusions his union had reached on the Keir Starmer leadership of the Labour Party. Ian very effectively compared the political landscape today to that which existed when the union joined the recently founded Labour Party in 1902.



Sharing a joke; live streaming; listening intently PHOTOS PAUL MATTSOON

Then, the Liberal Party claimed to be the only option for the working class, but its only offer was 'to raise workers' expectations'; while the King's charity was feeding half a million poverty stricken people.

But after 121 years of having a party that was representative of our class, today a footballer is feeding workers' kids and Starmer can't even stick to his promise to the unions of supporting £15-an-hour minimum wage!

Ian outlined the programme of workers' demands to fight for - as well as a £15-an-hour minimum wage, permanent contracts for all, like the McDonald's workers won through strike action, and building a million council homes.

How can anyone who claims to be the leader of Labour, of the working class, be a 'sir', asked Peter Taaffe, the political secretary of the Socialist Party.

In his contribution, Peter laid bare the complete incapacity of those in charge today, the lords of finance and capital, the capitalist class,

to solve the problems of the world.

Their system is based on lust for profit; a barrier to taking society forward today. He encouraged all in attendance to study Marxism and all the lessons of the struggles of the Socialist Party, including the history of our party.

Peter made the case for internationalism compellingly - of working-class internationalism, with a programme for collaboration, negotiation and cooperation through voluntary confederations of socialist countries. That's why we build the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), the worldwide socialist organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

Peter was followed by a short greeting from Abbey Trotsky, a CWI member in the Socialist Party's sister party in Nigeria, the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM).

Capitalist crisis in Nigeria threatens the unwinding of society and demands a socialist fightback, which Abbey and our comrades are heroically fighting to build. A DSM member, a student activist, was recently murdered and Abbey himself is facing numerous



Unite general secretary Sharon Graham and Ian Hodson, Bfawu president PHOTOS MARY FINCH

court cases to intimidate him and others from fighting to defend workers against casualisation and exploitation.

Max McGee from Nuneaton Socialist Party branch is one of the growing number of trade union reps facing victimisation as bosses in Britain try to weaken workers' ability to fight back.

Max is under attack because in the warehouse where he worked he fought to demonstrate socialist trade unionism: to represent workers as he would want representation; to encourage branch participation; and by showing that when we fight we can win, beating back unsafe working practices with collective organisation.

Max's unfair dismissal coincided with him delivering an indicative ballot for strike action for the first time in the warehouse's history. He is enjoying solidarity from those workers who recognise his role.

Hannah Sell, Socialist Party general secretary, gave the final keynote speech of the rally, pulling all the many important threads together.

The fact that a big majority of young people in Britain today consider themselves socialist is no accident, but nor is it only down to Jeremy Corbyn. The main driver is the experience of brutal capitalism and its inability to offer a future for people or the environment.

Hannah referred to Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of scientific socialism with Karl Marx.

Engels had drawn out how the very contradictions of capitalism and the resulting crisis, objectively raises the need for socialist policies, the "invading socialist revolution."

The rapid development of Covid vaccines disproved the capitalist lie of the 'free market'. Government intervention - to the tune of billions - was key.

However, as Hannah explained, while socialism is lodged in the situation, a new socialist order is not pre-ordained. It is certainly necessary and also possible - and the working class collectively is the force capable of ending capitalism and introducing that new socialist order.

But right now, largely as result of right-wing trade union leaders' inaction, many workers feel powerless to fight back in their own workplace, let alone to change society. The lack of a mass party that is fighting on our side is also a key factor.

Nonetheless, we are at the start of a new phase of struggle and increased confidence and combativity of many workers - as indicated by the strike waves across the US, the victory of farmers in India against Modi (see page 15), determined strikes here in Britain, and also the election of left trade union leaders.

These examples of workers' struggles are not only a response to the bosses' offensive, but also reflect how the pandemic created an increased understanding of who really runs society - the working class.

Another vital role of the Socialist Party, alongside fighting to increase militancy in the workplaces is to fight for a voice in the political field. Such are the sleaze and splits that the Tory government is drowning in, Hannah argued that we can't rule out, despite Starmer's uselessness, a Labour government being thrust into power.

Obviously, millions would be relieved to get rid of the Tories - but 'Sir Kier' has made it abundantly clear, including through his resuscitation of Blairism at the same Labour conference where he rescinded his £15-an-hour minimum

wage commitment, that he acts in the interests of the capitalist class.

But unlike Blair, in this era of capitalist crisis, big business would expect him to make far more savage attacks on the working class, and very soon Labour would face mass disillusionment and opposition.

However, the political vacuum that would leave, in the absence of a new mass workers' party being built, poses the real danger of right-wing racist forces trying to step in to harness workers' anger.

Hannah commended Ian and the bakers union for the principled stand they've taken - recognising that disaffiliation from Labour is necessary, but also new forms of workers' politics, something Sharon has also raised, is needed. How that's built will need discussion, but in the view of the Socialist Party, it means stepping outside the moribund Labour Party.



Hannah Sell PHOTO MARY FINCH

Hannah offered trade unionists wanting to represent their class against the bosses in elections, as they do in the workplace, to stand under the no-cuts banner of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition which the Socialist Party, along with the RMT transport union and others, participates in.

She pointed to the motion voted through at Unite conference to call on councils to set 'needs-based, no-cuts budgets'. This commitment needs to be linked to a fighting campaign to get the money needed off the Tory government.

Hannah concluded by making the case for joining the Socialist Party, the hardest fighters in the workplaces, communities and in the steps towards the working class having its own political voice - but also for a socialist programme that will be necessary for the mass movements coming down the line to successfully transform society in a socialist direction.

Join the fightback  
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to find out more today!



# Newham: Durning Hall - another shameful act of Labour gentrification

NIALL MULHOLLAND  
EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

On 16 November, a Newham Council committee unanimously approved the demolition of the iconic Durning Hall community centre in Forest Gate, east London - another shameful act of gentrification by the 100% Labour-controlled council.

We were given just 48 hours' notice to request a speaking slot at the hearing. Nine people attended to oppose the application, given just 15 minutes between us to speak.

I was one of six objectors able to address the hearing, speaking in a personal capacity as chair of a local housing coop. The vast majority of the flats that developers Aston-Mansfield want to build on the site will be

unaffordable for local people, and 90% of the community space will be lost. The remaining space will only be available at Aston-Mansfield's discretion, i.e. not for public use.

To justify the loss of community space, Aston-Mansfield was required to demonstrate "realistic proposals for re-provision that continue to serve the needs of the neighbourhood and wider community". But Suz Hu, from Durning Hall Redevelopment Community Action Group, told the hearing that the closest alternative venues listed were "not feasible, being too small, not accessible, already booked out to existing clients, too expensive, or not available to hire at all."

Aston-Mansfield's 'consultation' was a farce. They never made it

clear that the new community space would prohibit user groups.

Suz was only the seventh objector to the plan. But after she told others, objections rose to over 200. One councillor admitted this was "the highest number of objections we've seen in any application."

The decision has to be formally ratified by London mayor Sadiq Khan. Although the odds are heavily stacked against us, the campaign to stop the Durning Hall redevelopment will continue.

● 'Newham Resists - United against cuts, poverty and gentrification' launch meeting, Saturday 27 November, 1.30pm, Durning Hall, Earlham Grove, E7 9AB (near Forest Gate station)

## Slough: Adult service cuts will leave vulnerable homeless

Organised by GMB union, 50 people protested on 16 November against the closure of adult services in Slough. These cuts by the Labour council will make 58 workers redundant and leave many vulnerable adults without services or homes.

The council intends to hand over some of these services to the charity sector, which will not have the resources to run them in the way they have been.

Just last month, government commissioners were sent in to partially run the council after it went bankrupt. This is the result of the Labour council not having had a fighting strategy to protect jobs, homes and services to get the money back the Tory government has stolen off the council since 2010.

Socialist Party members put forward to other protesters the idea of standing anti-cuts candidates in the coming elections.

JOHN GILMAN  
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

## Northampton: Phoney consultation to mask cuts

On 27 October, West Northamptonshire Council held a "spatial options consultation", a convoluted way for the local council to describe the housing crisis. It was promoted as an opportunity for the community to get involved with decisions.

Unfortunately, it was a one-way presentation. There was no option to ask questions or engage in a discussion.

It would be more appropriate for the council to work cohesively with the local community by refusing to

implement central government cuts. Northampton Socialist Party and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) are working with trade unionists in bakers' union BFAWU and local groups such as Togetherness and Northants Save Our Services.

With the community's help, TUSC is creating a zero-cuts budget. We will be present it as an alternative to the anti-working-class strategies proposed by the Tory council.

We are campaigning for a massive council house building programme in suitable areas, with adequate parking and democratic consideration of local needs. Northampton TUSC's People's Budget conference is 7:30 pm, Monday 29 November, Abington Community Centre, New Hall.

GEORGIA DE LA BERTAUCHE  
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

**JOIN THE SOCIALISTS**

● Visit [socialistparty.org.uk/join](http://socialistparty.org.uk/join)  
● or call **020 8988 8777**  
● or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**  
to find out more today!

## Selling the Socialist

Just some of the events where the Socialist newspaper was sold in the past week...

## ● Newcastle: Workers and youth look to socialism

On 13 November, the Socialist Party was campaigning on fighting for decent jobs and apprenticeships to end low pay.

One man, after buying our Socialist paper, then saw our back page, and spotted that Unite the Union general

secretary Sharon Graham was speaking at our Socialism 2021 event on Saturday 20 November (see page 12).

He is a Unite member, and likes what she is doing. He agreed that Unite members fighting back against the Tories could light up the sky.

Another young man who stopped by our campaign stall was a qualified music teacher, but could only get temporary work.

We went for a coffee afterwards. When the young woman behind the counter saw our Socialist papers, she asked if she could buy one.

It's definitely the case that young people are beginning to look towards socialist ideas. If capitalism cannot afford to give young people a decent future, then young people cannot afford capitalism.

ELAINE BRUNSKILL

## ● Mansfield: Why we do what we do

The kind of conversations Socialist Party members had with people on 13 November confirm why we do campaign stalls and make sure our leaflets and paper are accessible.

Some people wanted political discussion around socialism, and we were able to give them that. Some people had questions. Some people needed hope, hope that there was a way to fight this rotten rigged system.

Working-class people need to see those campaigning on the streets, with information and a clear name. We need to make this society fairer



Campaigning against council cuts in Leeds

# West Sussex: Payouts for council bosses, cuts for us

SARAH WELCH  
WEST SUSSEX SOCIALIST PARTY

In 2019-20, the former chief executive of the Tory council in West Sussex received a £265,000 exit package. Financial statements for 2020-21 reveal three more large payouts.

The executive director for adults and health received £110,473. The former director for communities received £88,358. And another received £34,000.

In total, 43 exit deals cost the council £1.1m in 2020-21. The cost for 2019-20 was roughly the same for almost double the number of exit packages at 81.

There have been large payouts to recruitment agencies. Hampsons Resourcing received £173,400 and McLean Partnership received £249,423.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Millions of pounds of taxpayers' money just wasted.

We are waiting to hear what cuts are being made to our service, adult social care. We think it will be over

£2 million. The council constantly tells us that it has no money, and has "difficult decisions to make".

In 2018, I was part of a campaign group fighting to keep my son's centre open. We attended one of the council committee meetings. When they adjourned for lunch and we walked through the dining area, we saw their five-star buffet, including waiter service and wine.

Our local paper, Chichester Observer, has pointed out that the only other West Sussex residents in receipt of free food are some school children dependent on their parents' benefit levels. They only receive £15 supermarket vouchers a week in school holidays.

The council's gluttony is an insult to the people who have just had their Universal Credit cut, and all those that have been forced to use food banks. It's yet another example of the greed and mismanagement at the top.

We need an end to cuts, and democratic workers' control to run the services that we all need.

for those of us that are struggling under austerity and cuts.

People have asked about joining the Socialist Party. It's all down to the work we do, whether we are on stalls, attending our meetings, supporting our paper, supporting our party on social media or just supporting each other.

PAUL TOOLEY-OKONKO

## ● Coventry: 5,000 signatures and rising oppose hospital parking charges

We now have over 5,000 signatures opposing the parking charges at

University Hospital Coventry. At our Socialist Party campaign stall on 13 November, we met more NHS staff who signed the petition. They're sick of being treated like dirt while being called "heroes" by the hypocritical Tories.

With support from Coventry and Warwick Socialist Students groups, we collected well over 100 signatures that day alone. We sold the Socialist newspaper, with the headline - "Fight together for a pay rise".

Sign the petition online at [change.org](http://change.org). The Socialist Party says:

- End all hospital parking charges
- End all PFI schemes and privatisation, renationalise the NHS
- A 15% pay rise for all NHS workers
- For a fully funded, socialist NHS

ADAM HARMSWORTH

# Victory! Hackney children's centres saved!

The campaign to save Fernbank and Hillside Children's Centres in Hackney, east London, has won (see [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)).

Hackney Unison, the union representing many of the staff, said: "This was only achieved by a massive campaign by the parents and staff against these closures and the loss of over 100 children's places and over 30 jobs."

"This is a significant victory, but is only one battle in what may well be a war against other cuts. We do not just want a pause, but a commitment to no closures."

"When asked to send a written apology to all staff for the stress and anxiety caused over the last two months... [the council] refused. This has created widespread mistrust in the council."

This stress and anxiety will now be transferred to eleven children centres, with a wider review next year. Hackney Unison, along with the parents' campaign, will continue to call for no cuts to take place in children's centres provision. This is a vital and valuable service that is irreplaceable.



Brian Debus, Hackney Unison chair, spoke to the Socialist in a personal capacity. He said:

"It's the view of Hackney Unison that central government cuts to council spending should not be passed on. We acknowledge that the cause of the council to even consider cuts is ten years of Tory government austerity. But we believe there is an alternative."

"This would be to draw up a legal,

needs-based budget, bringing in contributions from the local community as to what that should include. If several councils did this, they could then present a united front to this government - stating this is what we need and this what you need to provide."

"If Labour councils don't do this, we will lead a mass campaign, involving all those in the local community

from trade unions to community groups and the wider population. This may require a mass demo of tens of thousands to Downing Street to deliver what we need."

"This victory was on the back of a lively and enthusiastic lobby of the full council in October, including

parents, children, staff and trade unionists on the town hall steps. Such was the publicity that the campaign

generated, nearly 900 completed consultations were sent in to the council, with the overwhelming majority opposing cuts.

"Alongside the massive public campaign by parents, Hackney Unison was starting to ballot its members at Fernbank and Hillside to take strike action, if the council did not stop these closures."

"In the run up to the local elections in May 2022, Hackney Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has organised a People's Budget meeting for Wednesday 8 December. Natalie Aguelia, one of the parents leading the children's campaign, will speak alongside myself."

"Together with Socialist Party members, who will stand as anti-cuts candidates, we would like to invite campaigners from the local community to also join us to ensure a voice is given to all those fighting against any proposed council cuts."

"Over the last six weeks, staff and parents have bought scores of copies of the Socialist. They have appreciated the coverage the newspaper has given to this campaign."

## Obituary: Ted Austin - 1940-2021 Working-class socialist stalwart

ROGER KEYSE, SOUTH EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY, NIALL MULHOLLAND, EAST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members are saddened to hear about the loss of Ted Austin, aged 81, who died on 11 November, following a short illness. Ted was a working-class stalwart of the Socialist Party in south east London over four decades. Ted was known for his deadpan humour and independent mind.

Ted grew up during World War Two, and its aftermath, in a large working-class family in a small flat in Elephant and Castle in south London. Like many of his generation, Ted faced serious hardships in his early years and young adulthood.

After school, he worked at various jobs, including as a photo-finisher for horse races, and he often lived by his wits. In later years, Ted's removal van was a ubiquitous sight in south east London. Many financially hard-up Socialist Party members benefitted from Ted's generosity, as he moved their house belongings for a nominal fee or for free.

Ted's political instincts were always on the left. During the 1970s and early 1980s, he vocally supported the civil rights struggle in the north of Ireland, and attended Tony Benn public meetings.

After his daughters, Lois and Caroline, joined the Labour Party Young Socialists, Ted also became a supporter of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party), and his political understanding and activity quickly took off.

He regularly went to show support to striking print workers at Wapping. He helped set up Bexley anti-poll tax union, and became its chair, organising protests against bailiffs and acting as 'McKenzie Friend' to non-payers in court.

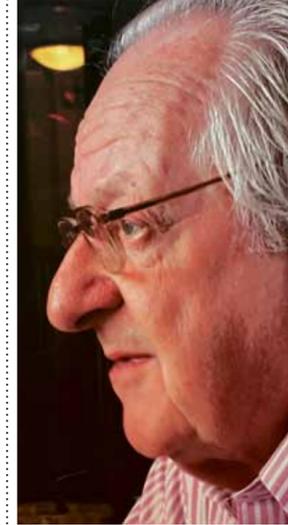
He played a key role in the successful campaign to kick the far-right British National Party (BNP) HQ out of Welling, which was very near to where he lived. He helped to organise meetings and protests against the BNP, and was never afraid to confront its members, accusing them of "skulking around the back streets".

Ted also fought tenaciously against the right-wing witch-hunts in the local Labour Party, including political attacks against him and his family. He expressed healthy class contempt for the "trendy middle class" and careerists in the movement.

Press reports of all these activities saw Ted become well-known locally as a principled socialist fighter. He stood for the Socialist Alliance in local elections, coining the slogan, "homes not domes" in response to the construction of the highly contentious Millennium Dome in Greenwich.

Ted's anger at injustices everywhere burned strong. He stoically bore the heavy burden of his son Edward's wrongful conviction, and closely followed the related justice campaign ([appeal.org.uk/freshwater-five](http://appeal.org.uk/freshwater-five)), confident that the truth will eventually be brought out.

A keen Spurs supporter, Ted played indoor football for many years, raising fighting fund for the Socialist



Party, until only weeks before he passed away.

Ted will be hugely missed, but very proudly remembered as someone who overcame many early disadvantages to leave his footprint at some of the epic working-class battles of the last decades.

The Socialist Party sends condolences to Ted's wife, Doreen, his children, Edward, David, Lois and Caroline, his grandchildren and wider family, and to all his good friends in the party.



Socialism 2021 MARY FINCH

## What did you think of Socialism 2021?

An inspiring and optimistic weekend. So great to be with so many Socialist Party members, especially in person. Great to see so many young members there too.

The workshops were great, and the Saturday rally had really good and rousing speakers. The message from Sharon Graham, Unite union general secretary, and the rousing speech from Ian Hodson, Bfawu president, on his bakers' union disaffiliation from Labour, and plans for political engagement in the future, signal an important shift and a way forward for the trade union movement, and for the fight for a new mass workers' party. I feel energised to carry on the work and the fight for socialism.

CLARE WILKINS  
NOTTINGHAM

I lost my Socialism virginity this weekend. Two days of education, friendship and fun. Brilliant venue, great contributions from Socialist Party members in the workshops, and the Wombat hostel accommodation wasn't bad either. Great job by

the organisers, cannot wait for next year.

MARK GEE

GRIMSBY

I have just finished another brilliant political Marxist educational weekend at Socialism 2021 on Zoom. I attended the Marxist analysis of modern monetary theory; world economic perspectives; what has happened to the European 'left', and how to use the transitional method and programme. Absolutely brilliant discussions. The Socialist Party - especially the social media tech team - should be congratulated on its organisational acumen in managing this educational event.

JIMMY HADDOW  
EDINBURGH

What a fantastic day, and what an inspiring rally. MARK PEARSON WEST CHESHIRE

● Read the full report of Socialism 2021 on pages 8-9

# The struggle for accessible workplaces and an inclusive society

NEURODIVERGENT SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN THE SOUTHERN AND SOUTH EAST REGION

The pandemic has shown the possibility for flexible work and greater independence for workers. By allowing workers to carry out their roles from home, all kinds of accessibility barriers can be removed, and people can work in a way that suits them.

We have seen that workplaces can easily be made more accessible for workers who are disabled, struggling with their mental health, or neurodivergent - a difference in cognitive processing, for example autism.

However, it's clear in which direction the Tories are heading. Universal Credit, that many young people rely on, has been cut. They aim to tackle youth unemployment with low-paid, short-term Kickstart Scheme jobs, many of which will be inaccessible to us.

Any disabled or neurodivergent person who has experienced discrimination in the workplace, who has struggled to find work that is compatible with their needs, or who has suffered the nightmare of applying for disability benefits and dealing

with the DWP, will know full well that the Tories and the capitalist class they represent do not care about us.

We are viewed as either incapable, or simply not worth accommodating, because we do not fit the one-size-fits-all model of work that is tailored to exploit the neurotypical and non-disabled majority of workers.

The only value the capitalists understand is economic. To them, the measure of the value of our lives is the amount of profit they can extract from us. They will always consider our lives as being only as valuable as we are exploitable.

It is important that we organise, unite with other workers in the workplaces and trade unions, and make our voices heard. We must demand real living wages, an end to job cuts, accessible workplaces, and disability benefits that allow us to live well, not merely scrape by and barely subsist.

And we need to fight for a socialist society which functions on the basis of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need', regardless of what those abilities and needs might be.



# A day in the life: fighting for work and benefits



AARON SMITH  
NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

I have found it hard to find work. I am autistic and one of the main challenges is with communication. I have found that I have applied for dozens of jobs and have not heard back, which I found hard to take. I have a masters in History from the University of Bristol, I know now that I enjoy research and writing, but finding a job like that is not easy.

I have mainly had agency work as a kitchen porter in the past, but the demands in the workplace were too much. I found that there were not enough breaks, the bosses treated us like robots and expected us to work for ten to twelve hours which was exhausting. My disability means that I was unable to recover as quickly as some of the other workers. The pay was bad, £8.25 an hour, which was just above the minimum wage at the time.

I was on disability living allowance when I was younger. When this was then changed to Personal Independence Payment I was reassessed and they decided that I did not qualify. I am in the process of appealing the decision. I don't believe they are qualified to look at mental health conditions. The whole process is dehumanising. The whole system doesn't seem to be designed to help people, but to force people to go away. It puts a lot of people off and has been designed to be like that.

I need more specialised support in the workplace. There is a lot that is misunderstood about autism. There needs to be an understanding of the condition in the workplace and in Jobcentres. It's like I am a bird, one of my wings is broken and I am flying around in circles.

Sometimes simple changes like being able to take five minutes break every hour would make work more manageable. Remote working would really benefit the disabled. I think a key demand should be the right to much more flexible working conditions, as it's been proven to be successful in the pandemic.

From my perspective, any conversation around our work culture should emphasise a good life balance and a job should be there to help make the enjoyable things like leisure and hobbies and learning happen, not like now where work hardly makes ends meet, and a welfare system makes people fall into poverty and despair.

Pay and workers' rights are important, but for me the workplace needs to be actually accessible in the first place to even get to that point. A well-funded and humane welfare system with actual disability specialists is very important to help bridge the gap from welfare to work. There is no logical reason at all why specialist help should stop once school is finished. Those who can't work, whether temporarily or permanently, shouldn't fall into poverty.



In the first of an occasional series on the history of working-class struggle in Britain, **Scott Jones** looks at the world's first working-class mass movement, the Chartists.

**O**n a November night in 1839, 10,000 workers marched through heavy rainfall and darkness from the South Wales Valleys into Newport, flooding down Stow Hill to demand the release of their comrades they believed were imprisoned in the Westgate Hotel. Within an hour, dozens were dead and wounded after soldiers opened fire. The workers, the imprisoned, the dead and the wounded were Chartists.

Chartism was the first mass movement of the working class in the world. It took its name from the 'People's Charter', a list of demands drawn up in 1838 by the London Working Men's Association because property qualifications prevented workers from standing for parliament or even from having a vote. It was only the preserve of the wealthy.

The demands were: suffrage for all men aged 21 and over; equal-sized electoral districts; voting by secret ballot; an end to the need for a property qualification for parliament; pay for members of parliament; and the annual election of parliament.

All but one of them has now been met. The concrete demands for working-class political representation, weren't simply demanded for democracy's sake, but formed the basis of a movement designed to give a voice and platform to the working class to fight to change society for the better.

## Industrial revolution

The industrial revolution had been characterised by class struggle, with clashes at Peterloo, Pentrich, Merthyr in 1831 - when the red flag was first flown in struggle by workers - and elsewhere.

Friedrich Engels, and Karl Marx were both in contact with the Chartists. Engels wrote in his book *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* that Chartism was "the compact form of the proletariat's opposition to the bourgeoisie". Chartism represented the working class's fight with capitalism and the establishment.

He says that the struggle reached its height between 1838 and 1842, with the summit of that struggle being events in South Wales especially the Chartist uprising in Newport in 1839.

This reflected the rapid industrialisation of places like South Wales, the north of England, the Midlands, Scotland and so on at this time, where areas were transformed into industrial powerhouses employing thousands of workers. These new conditions determined the consciousness of these

# Chartism: The world's first working-class movement



workers. And there was mass participation of workers in Chartism.

In the lead up to the Newport uprising, branches sprung up in 42 towns and villages in South Wales, with an estimated 25,000 workers involved, in the space of a year following the drawing up of the Charter.

Membership cards were issued, and some meetings were attended by half the population of some villages. It had its own press in the North of England and elsewhere.

Some of these branches had women's branches, despite the fact that the Charter only called for votes for men, this shows the movement went beyond the question of suffrage.

Like their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, life was extremely tough, wages were low, and work was back-breaking in dangerous mines and ironworks, and in the cotton mills of northern England.

As William Price, a Pontypridd Chartist leader, said: "Oppression, injustice and the grinding poverty which burdens our lives must be abolished for all time."

Workers were forming the first trade unions and the increasingly bitter battles with the employers convinced them they needed to change society through political means.

A nationwide petition was launched to send to Parliament in the hope of winning the demands. It was signed by a million workers

**ABOVE**  
The mass Chartist demonstration on Kennington Common, London 10 April 1848

**“**  
The first broad, truly mass and politically organised revolutionary movement  
**”**  
Lenin, Russian revolutionary



Many of the workers wanted to go beyond winning the original demands, and wanted the insurrection to give them control of the mines and ironworks, as well as expropriating the banks.

One Chartist branch declared: "The ironworks do not belong to the present proprietors but to the workmen and they will very shortly have them."

While their husbands marched on Newport, two women had the following conversation in Gelligaer: "I want some coal and I don't know what to do now the colliery has stopped."

"Oh don't worry, go and take some coal off the trams on the tram road."

"What will Mr Powell [the colliery owner] say if he should hear of it?"

"Oh never mind him, the Gelligaer colliery will be my husband's tomorrow when Newport is taken."

The authorities later discovered the owner had been marked down to work as a coal cutter if the miners had taken power.

Despite painstaking preparations, on the day itself the element of surprise was lost as the earlier sections waited for hours for the slower detachments to arrive. Soldiers were waiting to gun them down.

Following the defeat, South Wales was placed under martial law and hundreds of Chartists arrested or forced into hiding. 82 were sent to trial and five leaders were sentenced to be hung, drawn, and quartered (the last people to be given that sentence).

The executions were commuted to transportation to Australia because of the outcry and threat of further unrest.

## Struggle continues

The struggle for the Charter continued through the 1840s and 1850s with a mass movement of further petitions, demonstrations, and general strikes. There was also internationalism as they supported and were in touch with other movements in other countries, like in the 1848 revolutions.

This included a new, mass demonstration announced for 10 April 1848, to be held on Kennington Common, London. After the meeting, a planned procession would carry another petition to Parliament.

In anticipation of the announced march, Parliament revived a statute dating to the time of Charles II that forbade more than ten people from presenting a petition in person.

The authorities knew that the Chartists were planning a peaceful demonstration, but still wanted a large-scale display of force to counter the challenge.

100,000 special constables were recruited to bolster the police force, and the military threatened to intervene if working people made any attempt to cross the Thames.

The planned procession to Parliament to present the petition was cancelled.

The meeting was peaceful and

**ABOVE**  
The Chartist mural in Newport depicting the 1839 uprising, later destroyed by the city's Labour council

**“**  
Oppression, injustice and the grinding poverty which burdens our lives must be abolished for all time  
**”**  
William Price, Chartist leader

finished without incident, after which the petition with its many signatures was sent to Parliament in three cabs accompanied by a small group of Chartist leaders. Again, this was rejected by parliament.

Eventually the vote was conceded to male workers between 1884 and 1918, due to a period of increased workers' struggle in the new unionism movement, the founding of the Labour Party and revolution in Russia. But not to all women until 1928.

It took the threat of that revolutionary movement before they were even willing to grant those!

The Chartists rightly fought for pay for MPs so that not only the wealthy could afford to go to Parliament and workers could represent other workers.

Now, the state system pays MPs huge sums to ensure they live lives removed from workers and are not under workers' control. That is why the Socialist Party demands that MPs must be paid a workers' wage, continuing in the spirit of the Chartists.

The Labour Party's transformation into capitalist New Labour - and the retaking of the party by the right after the Corbyn years - means that, once again, the working class needs a mass political party.

An example of Labour's degeneration was the smashing up by Newport's Labour council of the beautiful 200,000-piece mosaic on a 35-metre wall cleverly depicting the march of the Newport Chartist uprising of 1839 - to make way for a shopping centre.

The demand for a new workers' party continues the Chartists' struggle for democratic rights as a step to a workers' democracy and socialism. And it was working-class struggle and threat of revolution that won these rights in the first place and is needed today.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, the coalition the Socialist Party takes part in, has stood in elections, and will do so again next year, standing in the best traditions of the Chartists.

One of the leaders of the Russian Revolution, Lenin, described the Chartists as the "the first broad, truly mass and politically organised revolutionary movement." The task now is to take the lessons and inspiration from struggles like those of the Chartists to build a similar movement today: with the benefit of the writings of Marx and Engels, the example and experience of the Russian Revolution, and also our own history of struggle in the Militant and now the Socialist Party, to fight for socialism today.

## SOCIALISM: THE PODCAST

The Marxist podcast from the Socialist Party

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socialistparty.org.uk/podcast



# USA: Right-wing vigilante Rittenhouse acquitted - capitalist courts will not defend the working class!

REPORTING BY THE INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST GROUP (USA) AND THE SOCIALIST

Protests have taken place in many US cities following the outrageous acquittal of shooter Kyle Rittenhouse on murder charges.

Rittenhouse shot three protesters, killing two, during the Jacob Blake protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin, last year. He claimed to have acted in 'self-defence'. The police shooting of black man Jacob Blake on 23 August 2020 had sparked protests in Kenosha.

Self-styled right-wing vigilante Kyle Rittenhouse had travelled to the protests from his home in Illinois, armed with a semi-automatic rifle, looking for people he saw as looters.

Presiding judge Bruce Schroeder prohibited the prosecution from referring to Rittenhouse's murder victims as "victims". At the same time, he allowed the defence to refer to them as "looters" and "arsenists".

He refused to allow evidence showing Rittenhouse's far-right ties, prevented the prosecution from enlarging video evidence, and barred them from probing Rittenhouse on his violent intentions in coming to Kenosha.

Rittenhouse's acquittal mirrors that of George Zimmerman in 2013, a similar vigilante figure who murdered black teenager Trayvon Martin as he was walking home. Zimmerman also claimed self-defence, despite the fact that Zimmerman was following Martin home and Martin had no weapons.

The precedent of using 'self-defence' to excuse murder was set by the 2013 acquittal, and no doubt played a part in Rittenhouse's



Rittenhouse supporters and Black Lives Matter activists gather outside the courthouse LIGHTBURST

acquittal. Zimmerman's case caused national outrage and helped spark the first wave of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests.

The BLM movement erupted into a new wave of multiracial protests, involving predominately young people, following the murder of black Minneapolis resident George Floyd by white cop Derek Chauvin in May 2020.

However, many in the amorphous leadership of the BLM movement rather than linking up the anti-racist struggle to the struggles of organised labour for jobs, pay, housing and decent services etc, and tying it to the demand for building an independent working-class party, backed Democrat Joe Biden's presidential campaign.

Yet, Biden is hardly a friend to the movement. He has ignored BLM demands, instead giving millions more in police funding, and promising a 'tough on crime' administration. During the election, Biden's campaign described Rittenhouse as 'a white supremacist'. Now in office, his reaction following the verdict was "the jury system works."

The acquittal of Rittenhouse will undoubtedly give succour to the far-right to step up their provocative and intimidatory actions against anti-racist campaigners and the labour and socialist movements.

This must be countered by re-energising and democratising the anti-racist movement. Not only to mobilise defence against the far-right, but to discuss how to build a mass, diverse workers' party with a socialist programme to put forward an alternative to racism and austerity - which arise from the capitalist profit system - and to do away with capitalism altogether.

● See 'Kyle Rittenhouse, right-wing vigilante who killed two at Wisconsin protests, acquitted of all charges - Capitalist courts will not defend the working class!' at [independentsocialistgroup.org](https://independentsocialistgroup.org)

# Sudan: "Hamdok has sold the revolution!"

## Revolution can only go forward if entire capitalist ruling class is overthrown

"Hamdok has sold the revolution," chanted protesters in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, after a deal was announced following military leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Abdalla Hamdok, the ousted civilian leader of the country's 'transitional government'. Thousands also rallied in Khartoum's twin city Omdurman, and in other cities.

The protests had originally been called by the main opposition movement, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) following a new bloody crackdown by Sudan's armed forces.

Sudan's masses have been continuously demonstrating on the streets and striking following al-Burhan's coup d'etat on 25 October, when he declared a 'state of emergency' and ousted the two-year-old transitional government.

Under the new agreement Hamdok, appointed as prime minister

after the overthrow of dictator Omar al-Bashir in the 2019 revolution, will again lead a civilian 'government of technocrats' for an unspecified 'transitional' period. In reality, the military will continue to rule. Indeed, the signing ceremony was attended by military leaders associated with the former al-Bashir regime.

### "Tracherous"

The Sudanese Professionals Association, a leading opposition group, called the agreement "treacherous". In its statement the FFC said: "We affirm our clear and previously announced position: no negotiation and no partnership and no legitimacy for the putschists."

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) had warned that the compromised transitional government would allow the



Abdalla Hamdok OLAA ALSHEIKH

military chiefs time to prepare the ground to stage a coup.

The revolution can only go forward if the entire capitalist ruling class is overthrown and socialist measures introduced by a government of workers and the poor to eradicate poverty and unemployment and rebuild collapsed services.

To that end the neighbourhood resistance committees formed during the 2019 revolution, and other bodies, should link up to lead a movement that sweeps away military rule and the whole rotten system.

● For background material see 'Sudan - mass protests and general strike against coup' on [socialistparty.org.uk](https://socialistparty.org.uk)

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# Historic victory of India's farmers

NEW SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE (CWI INDIA)

On 19 November, India's PM Narendra Modi announced the repeal of the three farm bills passed last year by his BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) authoritarian government.

It is truly a historic victory, specifically of India's farmers but also of the larger working masses against the BJP regime.

These laws were a savage neoliberal attack to facilitate the takeover of India's agriculture by corporate capital.

### Protest movement

The farmers' agitation that began last year was a historic development: perhaps for the first time in the past seven years any such movement had pushed the authoritarian regime of Modi onto the back foot.

The regime that could in other instances mobilise chauvinist hysteria to quell any opposition to its policies did not bear fruit this time.

The grand spectacle of the struggle captured the imagination of the masses and evoked massive sympathy and support across the country.

That the Modi regime was acting as an agent of corporate capital - symbolised by the two capitalist tycoons Mukesh Ambani and Guatam Adani - was generally understood by the masses.

The fundamental antagonism between the interests of capital and that of the working class and poor masses manifested itself starkly in the farmers' struggle.

Such a movement arose at an historic juncture, namely the Covid crisis. The pandemic only exacerbated what had been otherwise brewing up as a structural crisis of capitalism. The pandemic pushed the economy, already reeling under a series of blunders by Modi over the past few years (demonetisation, Goods and Services Tax, etc), off the cliff.

While the plight of migrant labourers became the symbol of the misery caused by Modi's reckless pandemic lockdown, it was by no means limited only to it. A whole cross-section of society, including the petty bourgeoisie (small traders, farmers, etc), was deeply impacted by the economic turmoil and could see no end to it.

The long-term pent-up discontent among the working class and masses is the primary reason that the farmers struggle could evoke mass sympathy and support.

### Daring struggle

The BJP regime, banking on its majority in the parliament along with the so-called personal charisma of Modi, expected to crush the resistance of the farmers. Belying such arrogance of the ruling regime, the farmers' protests consolidated into an historic and long-sustained massive sit-in strike by hundreds of thousands of farmers at Delhi's borders.

The agitation that started on 26 November last year, far from waning, would only get stronger over the coming months. After initial talks, when it became clear that farmers unions would take nothing less than



The year-long farmers' struggle defeated the neoliberal agriculture plans of PM Narendra Modi's right-wing BJP government

complete rollback, the Modi regime resorted to all kinds of dirty tactics.

The farmers call of 'Chalo Delhi' (march towards Delhi) itself marked the showdown. Thousands of farmers braved police water cannons, batons, and barricades made to stop them from reaching the capital.



**It is necessary to take the momentum gained by the victory to consolidate the ongoing struggles by various sections of the working class into a larger political force**

As thousands of farmers encamped at the outskirts of New Delhi, with thousands more joining them over the following weeks, the agitation grew stronger, making the central government yet more desperate.

Later, with an army of internet trolls and a bunch of media houses controlled by the regime, the BJP waged a massive smear campaign to discredit the farmers' agitation. It went even to the extent of barricading the whole protest site with a heavy deployment of police and security forces.

Lakhimpur Kheri in the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) was another graphic display of brutality unleashed on protesting farmers. Here the son of a BJP federal minister drove his car into protesters, killing eight of them in the process.

So far, at least 700 farmers have lost their lives during the agitation. However, such brutal measures aimed at intimidating the protest would only

prove counterproductive; they created more determination among protesters to continue the struggle.

Modi's BJP party is facing state elections in UP and Punjab in the coming months and this is another reason behind the government's somersault. However, this may not help them regain enough support, particularly in Punjab.

The Modi regime is the most vulgar form of capitalist rule seen in India in recent times. It has carried out a reckless neoliberal assault at the behest of corporate capital.

The passing of the farm laws and new labour codes last year were a savage attack aimed at reducing the working class to slavery conditions and bringing agriculture - which employs 60% of the country's labour force - under the domination of corporate capital.

New labour laws undermined existing labour laws, which already failed to meaningfully protect workers. Aggressive neoliberal measures adopted by the Modi government - like the large-scale privatisation of key sectors of banking, railways, and opening up of the public sector to private investment - are aimed at dismantling whatever meagre public control existed over the means of production.

But more importantly, it was a savage attack on the working class at its strongest link. The trade unions in private factories and private service sectors have been consistently weakened over the last three decades. The sheer fragmentation of the production process, outsourcing, and neoliberal onslaught, had resulted in weakening the bargaining power of workers in the private sector.

In comparison, the public sector trade unions are still strong. However, the measures of privatisation and so forth were a direct assault on these workers. In response, there were trade union struggles as well as

general strikes called by the central trade unions.

In sectors like banking, the sheer pressure of workers pushed BMS (Bharatiya Majur Sanghatana - a trade union affiliated to the ruling BJP) to participate in a strike called by bank workers. The 26 November 2020 general strike upheld the demands of the farmers' movement along with those specific to workers.

### Way forward

The momentous victory of the farmers has, at least for the time being, successfully repealed the attempted takeover of agriculture by corporate capital.

The victory holds the promise that sustained movements by the working masses could defeat the brutal force - under the domination of corporate capital.

However, it is necessary to take the momentum gained by the victory to consolidate the ongoing struggles by various sections of the working class into a larger political force. One that challenges the prevailing capitalist system and the rotten political class which oversees capitalism.

Back in December 2019, a massive anti-Citizenship Amendment Act/National Register of Citizens struggle had opened up a new movement, in particular, of young people. The liberal sections of the middle class were pushed out of their comfort zone to take part in the agitation.

The BJP regime, by mobilising communal chauvinism, was able to quell this movement in the short term. But in the longer term it only further frustrates the working masses reeling under the ongoing crisis.

The very objective conditions in

society have thus paved the way for a larger political movement against capitalist order. This of course could be done only by the working class under the leadership of a revolutionary party.

The farmers' agitation and the acute objective situation offered an opportunity to build a wider political agitation. And while the rise in trade union struggles is a welcome step forward, they are insufficient in themselves.

Established parliamentary left parties, namely the CPM (Communist Party of India - Marxist) and CPI (Communist Party of India), have failed to provide such a leadership.

And although the political landscape continues to look bleak, and the opposition forces too weak to capitalise on the current momentum, nonetheless, the working masses have shown the courage to push aside these restraints and lead their own struggle.

It is out of these rumblings of discontent that we could see an alternative socialist force emerge offering a programme to lead the struggle forwards.



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# the Socialist

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formerly **Militant**

# SUPPORT UNI WORKERS' WALK-OUT ON PAY AND PENSIONS



## Why I'm striking

**KAT**  
STRIKING UCU MEMBER

**S**tarting on 1 December, University and College Union (UCU) members at 54 universities will strike for three days. I am currently a third-year PhD researcher who is also employed as a postgraduate tutor, delivering teaching to undergraduate students. As a UCU member, I'll be joining them.

Why am I striking? I love teaching, it's often

the best part of my week. I love getting to talk with students about a subject that I care about deeply, and to see them begin to discover what I love for the first time. My PhD, which is funded, has also allowed me to continue researching my interests and keep a roof over my head.

But it's easy to look through rose-tinted glasses and ignore the systemic issues, largely a part of the marketisation of universities, that are at the heart of higher education, and impacting those who work there.

Casualisation of workers is rife at universities. Most academic staff are employed on short-term contracts or even hourly like me, with no job security, and yet are expected to

deliver 'world-class' education to undergraduate students. Other issues of pay discrimination, and pay cuts due to inflation, remain key issues for UCU members and higher education workers.

Growing the number of students, without employing more staff to compensate, has led to dangerous workload increases (53% of university staff are showing signs of depression due to excessive workloads). Yet still university management has done nothing to address this - beyond the mandatory wellbeing email. These are serious concerns for strike action before even addressing the issue of pensions.

As a PhD researcher, I am also concerned with universities' growing exploitation of

postgraduates. Despite producing new research and producing original data for these universities, we are not afforded ownership over it. We also make up large portions of the academic workforce, yet are often relegated to student status rather than recognised as staff with the rights, protections, and pay that come along with this.

This denies us access to state pensions, benefits and childcare despite working the same hours (and frequently more) as a traditional full-time job.

We must take a stand against the degradation of our universities. Trade union struggle and supporting the forthcoming strike action is one concrete way we can take action.

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



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