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the Socialist

Issue 1160

16 December 2021 - 6 January 2022

formerly **Militant**

TORY CUTS AND PRIVATISATION LEAVE NHS IN CRISIS

**Fund
services
fully**

**15% pay rise
- end staff shortages**

**Kick
out the
profiteers**

LYNN GUNNIGLE
DEVON SOCIALIST PARTY

Despite already losing 610 NHS beds in Devon, there are plans to cut even more.

A total of £430 million more cuts are planned and being pushed through despite the pandemic and ever-growing waiting lists. But we have nothing left to cut!

Early discharges due to lack of beds have a further impact on the crisis. Patients are readmitted time and time again.

The decades-long dismantling, selling off and privatising of our National Health Service is having its effects on families like my own.

Cancelled

My son was booked in to have an operation to remove his spleen in November 2020. It was then cancelled, rearranged, and cancelled again.

To date, he has still not had the

operation. He told me he feels like he is "a walking, ticking time bomb".

A simple wart on the hand of my 13-year-old granddaughter has proved to be an 18-month-long unresolved issue too. After various over-the-counter treatments were tried, our GP advised that removal is no longer done on the NHS.

Time passed, the warts spread and grew. Now her hand is becoming deformed with nine warts in total. Even the local private provider is not licensed to carry out the procedure.

Our town, Dartmouth, has lost all

our publicly provided hospital services, including beds. 28 ambulances queueing at our nearest main hospital in Torquay is our new normal. Patients are dying in them without ever entering the hospital building.

Tragedy

Another example of private provision in no way matching up to the National Health Service is the recent shocking death of an eight-week-old baby boy. After two contacts with the privatised 111 service, and twice being discharged from hospital despite breathing issues, the child's

mother found him unresponsive in his crib the day after he was sent home.

Now the Omicron Covid variant is adding extra pressure to the NHS. All this cannot be allowed to go on.

That's why the NHS workers fight for a pay rise needs to be supported (see page 5). A fully funded pay rise would be a first step towards solving chronic understaffing. A mass campaign of NHS workers, patients and the wider trade union movement for a huge investment in a publicly funded NHS is what is needed to keep us all safe.

The Socialist would like to wish all our readers Season's Greetings. Our next issue will be out on 7 January. See you in 2022.

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

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

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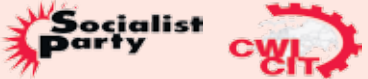
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

Split Tories and spineless Starmer

Build a new mass party for workers



It's a little like 'A Christmas Carol' meets 'Groundhog Day' - except with no jokes and no heartwarming resolution. Last year, Johnson's unclear message on Covid measures was mocked as: 'Don't go to work, go to work, don't take public transport, go to work, don't go to work.' This year it is 'Don't go to work, do go to Christmas parties'

The lives and livelihoods of millions of people are being ravaged.

In the face of the new Omicron variant, crisis continues for workers on the front line dealing with Covid - in the hospitals, care homes, GP surgeries, but also in schools, shops, refuse collection, and so on. They are among those facing service cuts, staff shortages, and money-grubbing privatisation - and are also on the front line of the cost of living crisis, prices rising quicker than pay.

No wonder there is growing anger in society - if not yet fully expressed.

It is absolutely clear, despite its parliamentary majority, that this is a weak Tory government - as the Socialist Party has made clear since the day after the 2019 election.

Voter satisfaction with Johnson is at an all-time low. 65% of those polled say they are dissatisfied with his leadership amid the allegations of sleaze, corruption and lockdown rule breaches in recent weeks.

As the Socialist goes to press, the Johnson government faces what could be its biggest parliamentary rebellion yet. And even if the Tories manage to hold their historically safe seat in the North Shropshire by-election on 16 December, a severe dent to their majority will be a further blow for Johnson. Scores of Tory MPs will be terrified for their own majorities.

Tory splits

No one can deny that the Tories are a split party now. The only debate is over how many splits - and who would win if they united temporarily to oust Johnson. They disagree on a way forward in the crisis, but they are all united by their desire to defend the capitalist system, which ultimately means attacks on the working class.

Across the country, workers are getting organised to fight the bosses' attacks, and scoring victories. Even the Christmas wonderland of Knightsbridge has seen class struggle, with chefs at Harrods winning a 25% pay increase after they threatened strike action.

The only person who seems to maintain a zen-like calm is Sir Keir Starmer, supposedly the leader of the official opposition to the government. He took to the airwaves on 13



PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC

PHOTO: CHRIS MCANDREW/CC

December to deliver his pompous speech promising his continued lack of opposition. He resurrected one of Johnson's lines from 2020 - also a lie - that it was necessary to act in the "national interest".

National unity sham

As the Socialist Party explained when Johnson used the phrase in 2020, there is no such thing as national interest or national unity. There is no single national interest, but different class interests, laid bare by the pandemic itself - with profiteering, crony contracts, and fire and rehire.

It has been made clear that there is one rule for us, and another for the rich and powerful. Most recently with the Downing Street Christmas parties, previously with the adventures of Dominic Cummings.

Starmer is reinforcing his message that he and the Labour Party will represent the interests of the bosses, not the working class. This message is being further reinforced by Labour-led councils continuing to execute Tory austerity.

However, in the absence of a working-class political alternative, Starmer's Labour can be the beneficiary of the anger and hatred of the Tories. So too could right-wing voices who seek to channel the anger into the dead-end of division.

Starmer's current lead in the polls marks the first time a Labour leader

has come out on top with the pollsters since January 2008. But this does not indicate a deep support for his reheated Blairism. A Starmer government, should it come to pass, would also quickly face the same working-class anger.

A new mass workers' party could express the anger and aspirations of working-class people. It could demand democratic trade union oversight of emergency measures taken to contain the virus and the nationalisation of the big pharmaceutical companies to guarantee research, production and supply of medicines, vaccines and treatments.

Trade union struggles for a pay rise would be strengthened by a party that backs a call for a £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions, with an annual increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

The Socialist Party will support and fight for every step towards the workers' movement founding such a party. This includes standing no-cuts candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in the May 2022 local elections. It means encouraging as many trade unionists as possible to stand as anti-austerity candidates in those elections. It means getting organised in our workplaces, communities and campuses to fight the Tories, the bosses, and the capitalist system they represent.

Unions must fight for Covid workplace safety

KATRINE WILLIAMS

HEALTH AND SAFETY REP PCS UNION AND SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The policies of the Tory government, putting profit before safety, continue to punish working-class communities with unsafe workplaces and a cost of living crisis.

It is vital that the trade union movement mobilises the strength of its six million members behind an alternative programme and demands to tackle the health risks and hardship people face in our communities.

At the beginning of the pandemic, many trade union leaders capitulated to the idea of national unity with the bosses. The last 18 months has seen a rising wave of workers' struggle for workplace safety, against fire and rehire and for pay rises. It is vital this momentum is taken into this new Covid wave.

The TUC demands for better sick pay are fine, but why should we let bosses off the hook - many of whom have raked in huge profits during the pandemic? Many companies force low-paid workers to stay in work, unable to survive on just statutory sick pay when they should be self-isolating.

Fully paid leave for anyone forced to self-isolate, needing to shield due to health vulnerabilities, or care for children and other family members, is a necessity for Covid safety.

A new, better job retention scheme that includes full pay being paid direct to workers is also needed in sectors where work has dried up because of the effects of the pandemic.

Workers have had to battle tooth and nail for workplace safety measures and to challenge employers who put profits first. It is vital that workers keep fighting collectively, but a bold alternative programme for Covid safety would help inspire resistance in every workplace, including those not yet reached by the trade union movement.

Working from home

All work that can be done from home needs to be fully supported to limit the spread of Covid and keep workers safe. This may need improvements to IT and other equipment, but trade unions must fight for this to be prioritised by bosses.

We also need to ensure that full support is delivered to workers suffering the toll and isolation of working from home. 40% of the UK workforce were working from home in early 2021, 40% of these said their mental health had worsened since working from home.



Employers have typically focused more on enhanced monitoring of their workforce, piling on the pressure, and increasing workloads rather than supporting workers.

Workers juggling working from home with childcare and other tasks should not be penalised by punitive performance management monitoring. Clear demarcation of when workers are working and not working needs to be fought for, as does a shortening of the working week without loss of pay.

During previous periods of lockdown many workers took whatever kit was offered to enable them to work from home, and have been working hunched over a tiny laptop screen ever since.

It is important that trade unions fight for all workers to have a home set up that complies with Display Screen Equipment regulations. Employers should stump up for connection costs while we campaign for everyone to have free access to superfast broadband.

Any return to the workplace must only be with the agreement of the trade unions.

Safety in the workplace

There are many jobs where workers do need to be in the workplace providing essential services. Every measure must be fought for to keep these workplaces as safe as possible.

While the penalties against individuals breaching Covid regulations have been harsh, this has been non-existent for employers (and politicians)

breaching health and safety regulations putting far more people at risk. While there have been innumerable workplace outbreaks, the Health and Safety Executive has prosecuted just one employer despite doing 316,000 spot Covid-19 checks.

Many employers, excused by the government, continue to ignore the need to ventilate workspaces. The supply of CO₂ monitors is pitifully slow, and employers realise that CO₂ monitors will provide a clear indication to workers of just how risky many workplaces are.

Action must be taken to either bring in fresh air or remove people from the space. Face coverings should be worn in every indoor workplace to protect the workers, and this includes hospitality and schools.

While demanding full enforcement of safety legislation, trade unions need to build the collective resistance on the ground to best protect workers and our communities. Unions should mobilise widespread mass action to protect safety using workers' rights under regulation eight of the 'Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999' and section 44 of the 'Employment Rights Act, 1996'.

We saw how effective this was when used as part of mass action by teachers who resisted the unsafe reopening of schools in January 2021. Regulation eight and section 44 can be used to raise workers' confidence in taking action collectively, if necessary, as the basis for industrial action to keep them safe.



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.

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Sharon Graham: 100 days as Unite general secretary - the challenges ahead

SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS IN UNITE

Sharon Graham has completed her first 100 days as Unite general secretary. Sharon's victory in August shocked many on the left across the union movement, but the Socialist Party supported and campaigned for her election. We explained that the most militant Unite members had seen "her left candidature as the most likely to build and organise the union industrially as workers face a brutal offensive from the bosses and their Tory government".

This was in contrast to the other two challengers - right-wing Blairite Gerard Coyne and assistant general secretary Steve Turner, the candidate of the 'United Left'. Coyne's attempt to drag Unite into partnership with the employers suffered a crushing defeat, losing nearly 20,000 votes compared to his 2017 candidacy. We explained that Sharon's fighting programme could undercut Coyne's anti-leadership populism, which Steve Turner was incapable of doing.

While being touted as the 'official' left candidate, it became clear that Turner didn't have the militant industrial strategy that is needed, or believe that the union's political strategy should change in response to Starmer's moving of Labour to the right.

Undoubtedly, Sharon's election has seen Unite move on to the front

foot industrially and is seen as playing a central role in the growing workers' fightback. The latest number of disputes the union is engaged in stands at over 50. In interviews given by Sharon in the last few days, it is stated that as a result of strikes, or even the threat of action, Unite members have won pay rises worth a collective £25 million.

Without question, as promised, under her leadership Unite has become far more 'battle-ready' and focused on taking on the employers. A national disputes unit is being established to identify disputes and build and support them, at the same time as combines are being developed - bringing together reps in employers and across sectors.

Changed situation

The union has reacted quickly to the changed situation that has opened up in the last few months as the economy has opened up. The cost of living has shot up with real RPI inflation at 6%, plus Johnson's stealth national insurance tax rise. This squeeze on living standards is forcing more and more workers to fight. This rising workers' pressure has even forced the moderate leaderships of the likes of Usdaw and Community to sanction action. But at the same time, labour shortages have become apparent on top of stretched supply chains, changing the balance of

forces in favour of important groups of workers.

With an estimated shortage of 100,000 HGV drivers, there have been big wins in this sector - notably pay rises secured for Liverpool tanker drivers and Wincanton lorry drivers of 17% and 24.4% respectively. Unite is now moving to step up a unionisation drive in this sector, which has been under long-term attack by the employers.

This has also been felt in other sectors as some drivers on buses and bin lorries move to what they see as higher-paid HGV jobs. No wonder there has been a flurry of disputes on the bins and buses. Just in the last few days, Glasgow bus drivers have won a pay rise of up to 21.5%. This is the real meaning of leverage - taking advantage of a more favourable economic situation enabling workers to move onto the offensive and winning victories, building confidence and strengthening the union.

There have also been continued defensive struggles that have been needed to face down the brutal attacks of the bosses, especially 'fire and rehire', often twinned with union victimisation. Scandalously, one of the first to line up with the likes of British Airways in using this vicious tactic in the depths of Covid lockdown was the Starmerite Labour council of Tower Hamlets in east London.

Given the unstable economic outlook, coupled with continued uncertainty over Covid, Unite will have to be at the fore both offensively and defensively in this period. The closure of the GKN plant in Birmingham, despite a vote for action by the workforce, shows that the most militant forms of action will be needed to save jobs and defend communities. Also, while not the leading union in the public sector, Unite can play a big role in building coordinated strike action against the Tory pay freeze. It is preparing for ballots in local government and the NHS.

It is therefore essential that the union's industrial fight is married to a political programme that, for example, raises the need to take factories threatened with closure into public ownership, as well as opposing council cuts. This political strategy is vital as Starmer shows his intent in making Labour safe for the capitalist establishment.

"New workers' politics"

The most important step taken in what Sharon has called "a new workers' politics" was at Unite's policy conference when motions initiated by Socialist Party members were passed. These mean that Unite's official policy is to call on "Labour councils to set legal, balanced no-cuts needs-based budgets". Coupled with Sharon's position to call on Unite's executive council to back only those candidates who support the union's policies, this new policy opens up a discussion in the union about the need to support anti-cuts candidates, in reality, outside of Labour, as the few who would support not passing on Tory cuts would be removed by Starmer.

Even though Unite is still affiliated to Labour, in a context where the Bakers' union, BFAWU, disaffiliated from Labour after its president Ian Hodson was expelled by Starmer, and the Communication Workers Union also cut its funding, Unite can play a central role in the crucial struggle for a

new pro-worker, anti-austerity political formation.

But those who support Sharon and her fighting programme have to face up to how this transformation will be consolidated. Those forces who opposed her candidacy and who will have baulked at her opposition to Starmer - especially her support for the no-cuts resolution - still exist in Unite, and particularly in the union machine.

It is essential that a new open and democratic lay member-led left is built that can bring together the best fighters in the union, predominately those who supported Sharon's campaign, along with others who could not be convinced because of fears of splitting the left vote and allowing in Coyne. A new left is needed to act as a check even of a left leadership or, in Sharon's own words, can hold her 'feet to the fire'. But it has to have an open and inclusive approach in which it can comradely discuss its programme and strategy, in order to reach those members who have been put off by the degeneration and bureaucratisation of United Left. There is a real danger that 'Re-form Unite', which was formed to organise the election campaign, can be too 'top-down' and repel the best activists.

Unfortunately, the steps to build the left that are needed have not yet happened. The union's rep and branch officers' elections take place in the first quarter of next year, which will be the basis for Unite's constitutional committees and delegates to the next national policy and rules conferences. The year after, the executive council elections will take place.

The Socialist Party calls for an urgent meeting of those who are determined that Sharon's victory is consolidated, to meet together to discuss the basis for such a left to be set up to ensure that Unite remains to the fore both industrially and politically.



PAUL MATTHEWS



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

Councils to make workers pay, again

SAM MORDEN
SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR SOCIALIST PARTY

Two-thirds of councils in England which responded to a BBC survey said they were considering a rise in council tax to help fund services. This comes at a time when National Insurance is also set to increase to help pay for the government's 'plan' for health and social care, with the bulk of the money going initially to the NHS.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated that a 2.8% rise (one of the most likely outcomes) would add, on average, about £40 to household bills from next April. This together with National Insurance increases would hugely impact working-class

families, especially those on precarious contracts and low wages.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which the Socialist Party is part of, has carried out a survey of Labour councils in England, Scotland and Wales. It shows that they hold £15.32 billion in General Fund reserves, £2.07 billion in Housing Revenue Account reserves, and £2.59 billion useable Capital Receipts reserves, not including the borrowing powers councils can use to add to their spending power.

Why then do they plan to raise taxes on workers? We say: use all the powers at your disposal to defend our communities. Take the fight to the weak, crisis-ridden Johnson government to demand the money!

Assange faces extradition

Imprisoned Wikileaks co-founder Julian Assange, whose publications exposed the war crimes of US imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq, faces extradition from Britain to the US following a recent High Court ruling.

In January 2020 a court ruled that his risk of suicide prevented granting the US authorities extradition. Now, pending an appeal by Assange's lawyers, he could face espionage charges

in the US and, if convicted, a prison sentence of up to 175 years.

The US administration's move on a non-US citizen represents an attempt to silence investigative journalism by criminalising the exposure of extrajudicial killings and other nefarious activities by governments.

● Read more: 'British High Court grants extradition of Julian Assange to USA' at socialistworld.net

Global inequality grows

RICHARD GINGELL
WOLVERHAMPTON AND BLACK COUNTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

In the most recent World Inequality Report, it has been discovered that the richest 10% now own more than 75% of global wealth and take 52% of all income. 2020 saw the steepest increase in billionaires' share of wealth on record.

The report also makes mention

of the "snowballing" effect of wealth accumulation and suggests measures to curtail such massive accumulation, including higher taxation. But the report does not explain how to overcome the bosses' resistance to such policies, and the necessity to build a working-class movement to fight for them. Of course, it also stops short of explaining the need to end inherently unequal capitalism.

Fighting union leadership needed to win NHS pay rise



NHS workers in Unison balloted for strike action in Mid Yorks NHS trust in 2013, winning concessions on pay PHOTO: IAIN DALTON

HOSPITAL WORKER IN UNISON

Staff in the NHS are waiting with baited breath for the results of the pay ballots for NHS staff in Unite and GMB unions, not yet out at the time of writing. Consultative ballots for strike action of health workers in the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Unison have delivered a majority for action. 89% of RCN members balloted voted for action short of a strike and Unison members voted 77% in favour of sustained industrial action.

Unfortunately, many workers and activists will be left disappointed by the low turnouts in what were the second consultative ballots, not reaching the Tories' undemocratic 50% turnout threshold. Unison's majority right-wing leadership in health has therefore refused to move to a formal ballot. However, there is still the possibility for strike action to demand a real NHS pay rise for the year 2021-22.

In addition to pressure on the union leaderships to keep up the campaign for this year, preparation must be made for 2022-23. When the 'independent' Pay Review Body reports what it thinks the pay offer for next year should be, due before 1 April, we need them to be under huge pressure to give a pay award that will help bring NHS pay back to levels equivalent to 2010, before austerity cut it by around 20% on average in eleven years.

But the only way to force the Pay Review Body or the government to listen to NHS staff is a campaign that includes strike action. The better organised this is, and the better coordinated between all the health unions, the more likely it is to succeed.



89% of RCN members balloted voted for action short of strike action and Unison members voted 77% in favour of sustained industrial action

We need to learn the lessons of this year's pay campaign. Socialist Party members understand the difficulty of getting a turnout of 50% or more. The unions are more likely to meet this threshold, and to get a vote for action, if the union leaders give a clear lead in calling for strikes.

Secondly, when you have a huge majority voting to reject the pay offer and in favour of strike action, don't waste this opportunity by calling a second consultative ballot! A proper strike ballot, with a clear recommendation to vote for strike action, is much more likely to increase turnout.

Unfortunately, the right-wing majority on the Unison Health Service Group Executive (SGE) voted not to recommend outright rejection of the pay offer in the first consultative ballot, and not to call for members to vote yes to strike action. Then, despite health having the highest turnout of any Unison national pay ballot, they voted for a second consultative vote, against the proposal of the left to move straight to a proper strike ballot.

Left unity

The third lesson is therefore that the left in Unison needs to coordinate a campaign to ensure that a left majority can be elected to the Health Service Group Executive in elections early next year. Socialist Party members are calling for a joint left slate, to avoid the problems with the NEC elections earlier this year where left candidates were competing for the same seat, allowing the right-wing candidates to come through the middle. In the national male Health seat, for example, Socialist Party member Adrian O'Malley lost by a small margin.

The left now has a majority on the Unison National Executive Council, but faces a battle with the right and a whole layer of the full-time officers for lay-member control of the union. It is vital that this left majority is replicated in the health SGE, and used to show the fighting lead for action needed to win an NHS pay rise.

Tesco strike action latest

Proposed strike action at Tesco distribution centres in the run-up to Christmas has forced bosses back to the negotiating table and resulted in an improved offer.

Strike action by Unite members at depots in Antrim, Belfast, Didcot and Doncaster has been suspended as members vote on a new, improved offer of 5.5%. Usdaw re-entered talks with Tesco and strike action by 5,000 members at nine Tesco distribution centres in Daventry Clothing, Goole, Hinkley, Lichfield, Livingston, Magor (both trunk and main sites), Peterborough and Southampton has been suspended too as members ballot on an "improved offer" thought to be 5.5% from 15 December.

Tesco is trying to force workers into a real-terms pay cut, despite Tesco predicting an operating profit of £2.6 billion for the current financial year and praising its staff as 'key workers' during the pandemic. These workers helped keep the country fed, resulting in increased profits for the bosses - a 16.5% increase in the first half of the year. 5.5% would represent a victory after the rejection of an initial 4% offer, and shows the power the workers and unions, and the threat of strike action, have.

Barts health workers to strike for a pay rise

Nearly 600 health workers employed at Bart's health trust, including Royal London, Whipps Cross and St. Barts hospitals, have voted 97% in favour of strike action for fair pay, and against increasing workloads and bullying. Strikes will be set for January 2022.

Serco Group PLC had a turnover of £3.9 billion last year but the multinational is offering staff just a 1% pay 'hike'. The staff, which include cleaners and porters, are paid up to 15% less than directly employed NHS staff.

● Search 'Outsourced Barts health workers in strike ballot for a pay rise' at socialistparty.org.uk for more

Workshop Wincanton depot strike builds

After a week on strike, followed by a week's overtime ban, 460 Unite members at B&Q's main depot in Workshop are back out on strike for another week.

Prices keep going up so a pay rise that's at least in line with inflation is essential. Workers' determination to win after years of low pay rises is high. 200 attended a union branch meeting and voted unanimously to step up the action. Instead of alternate weeks, the strike will be continuous.

Meanwhile, the drivers, employed by GLX, are going through a dispute procedure and may well be balloting for a strike in the next few weeks. It will strengthen all workers at the site if both strikes take place together.

A non-stop stream of horns blare out as traffic passes. Noticeable is that most working drivers - from ambulances to British Gas vans to lorries - are hooting.

JON DALE MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

London colleges victory

BEA GARDNER
NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY
AND UCU MEMBER

University and College Union (UCU) members at Capital City College group have agreed a deal in a dispute over pay and conditions. Reps have since told us that they are determined to build on this win, aiming to make further gains on pay and workload in next year's pay negotiations - one rep said they don't plan to 'get back in their shell'.

The group is the largest in London and covers City and Islington College, Westminster Kingsway and College of North East London (CONEL).

Earlier in the autumn, members took ten days of strike action and voted to take an additional ten days if management did not concede to their demands. Under the deal made, staff at CONEL will be put on London weighting (worth £1,700) and their conditions aligned with others in the group, adding three days of holiday

and a further £1,500 to their pay packets.

In addition, all staff across the group will receive a £700 pay increase this year. As well as pay, improvements to conditions have also been won, including the scrapping of the much-hated observation policy, which allowed management to observe any class, any time without warning.

All three colleges increased their union density and attracted new activists ready to take on roles as reps. The branches can now build on this increased confidence of members.

The victory at Capital City Colleges is the latest in a series of local deals agreed at the 15 UCU college branches which achieved mandates for strike action last summer. The victories show once again that when workers organise, they can win. The next step is for the UCU to coordinate a greater mobilisation of college branches if this year's pay offer falls short of the 10% figure voted for at the sector conference.



Sheffield couriers escalate and spread action in pay fight

Food delivery couriers working for Stuart Delivery (a subsidiary of DPD Group and a subcontractor of Just Eat) are into their second week of indefinite strike action in Sheffield.

Picket lines of striking drivers (members of the IWGB union) and supporters have blocked six McDonald's, one of Just Eat's biggest clients, from 5pm to 10pm every night. Dozens of drivers are refusing to take orders, Just Eat services have been shut down several times, and drivers in nearby Chesterfield have now joined the strike. The IWGB say this is the biggest continuous food delivery app strike in UK history.

The drivers are striking because their pay has been slashed by up to 24% just weeks before Christmas as fuel prices and inflation are rising.

One of the striking drivers, says: "Everything has gone up in the UK, even the minimum living wage has gone up, gas and electricity has gone up, petrol and diesel have gone up.

For Stuart and Just Eat to drop what they're paying us is not right at all. It's poverty pay already. With this new pay structure we won't be able to pay off our bills. It's heartbreaking."

The pay cut was implemented nationally (outside London) in October but some Sheffield drivers, already organising in the IWGB, protested at the management Zoom meeting, so the pay cut in Sheffield was delayed till 6 December, which is when the strike began.

As well as extending the strike in Sheffield, the drivers want to spread the action nationally. Last week, 20 courier drivers in Sunderland struck and marched against the pay cut without even being in the union. Contacts have been made in Blackpool, Manchester and Nottingham as well.

The IWGB, the delivery drivers union, are demanding a pay rise and paid waiting times after ten minutes.

ALISTAIR TICE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

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Coventry bin workers strike against Christmas holiday cut

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Coventry bin workers have voted overwhelmingly for strike action over low pay and an attempt by the Labour-run council to wreck the bin workers' Christmas.

At the eleventh hour the council has suddenly decided that the bin workers don't deserve a Christmas break. Previously, they always had Christmas week off. This decision was made despite the fact that they have been risking their lives working through nearly two years of the Covid pandemic. With a month until Christmas itself, the bin workers' festive plans could be ruined and family life disrupted.

The second issue is that the drivers' wages are as stale as the waste they've been collecting all year. Our bin workers have had real-terms cuts for years. Other councils have, under pressure, brought in retention payments or increased pay outright. Coventry Labour Council refuses to pay anything more.

Bin worker strikes have won in at least five other councils just this year, including Sandwell bin workers winning a 4% pay rise and £1,000 uplift in early December. Coventry council should remember the gigantic victory won by Unite's bin workers in neighbouring Birmingham just four years ago. Then, the Labour council tried its luck at firing and rehiring 113 workers - essentially cutting their

pay to cut costs. The bin workers took 12 weeks of strike action before the council caved in entirely.

The strike action follows a foul record by the council with its own workforce. Since 2010, the council has slashed over 2,000 jobs as part of carrying through brutal Tory austerity. It has repeatedly clashed with trade unions and has ignored protests against savage cuts to its services in that time, even when anti-cuts campaigners, including from the Socialist Party, have demonstrated that legal no-cuts budgets are possible.

The council increased its reserves while making cuts, and yet it wants to blame the bin workers for the strike. The council is refusing to end the dispute when it could easily stand on the side of workers in Coventry, not against them.

On pay, the council could frankly pay far more to keep its bin workers, and even hire more to make their jobs easier. With total council reserves amounting to £144 million and wide-ranging borrowing powers, far more could be done for the people of Coventry while a fightback against austerity is built.

But no Labour council has shown any interest in taking up that fight, which is why the Socialist Party campaigns for anti-cuts socialist councillors under the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), and will be standing in elections in May next year.

Uni support staff strike ballot



MARY FINCH
UNISON UNI REP

Higher education has been under attack for over a decade. The trebling of tuition fees in 2010 has been followed by funding cuts and job losses, attacks on pensions, and real-terms pay cuts for education workers.

Following three days of strike action in December by the University and College Union on pensions, pay and conditions, university support staff in Unison are being balloted for strike action as well. The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) is offering a measly 1.5% pay increase this year, rising to up to 3.6% for the lowest paid.

This is a real-terms pay cut for the vast majority of workers. After ten years of below-inflation pay rises, and a pay freeze last year during the pandemic, we have had enough.

Unison members are determined to take action on pay, rising workloads and precarious employment.

There have been rumours for several months of plans to cut tuition fees and pass on the bill to universities. Without guaranteed money from Westminster to make up the funding shortfall, this will mean even more cuts.

This ballot is coming at a critical moment for the trade unions. Elsewhere in Unison, local government workers are being balloted for strike action and NHS workers are voting in another consultative ballot.

The Socialist Party sends full support to all Unison workers balloting for strike action. A united battle of public sector workers could win a real pay rise, dramatically improve working conditions, and defeat new attacks from the weak and divided Tories.

Welcome support for striking Scunthorpe scaffolders



ALISTAIR TICE
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Scunthorpe scaffolders, now in their 11th week of strike action, were given a huge boost on 1 December by the visit of Unite the Union general secretary Sharon Graham to the picket line at British Steel.

Sharon talked to pickets and did a 'question and answer' session on the gate. The scaffs want to rebalot to continue the strike, so Sharon promised that the union will up the ante against contractor Actavo and British Steel, who still refuse to pay the national industry agreed 'NAECI' rate for the job.

This will include increasing Unite pressure inside British Steel as well as a leverage campaign targeting Actavo contracts around Britain and Ireland. The huge inflatable Unite 'rat' has appeared on the picket line which is appropriate as the R.A.T.S. rope access firm are reportedly dismantling Actavo scaffolding. In addition, a Unite leaflet distributed to incoming workers highlights an incident where "a worker was threatened with removal from site unless he undertook work for which he had no prior training... As a consequence he incurred musculoskeletal injuries to his shoulder and is off work"

Despite the mainstream and local

media blackout, this long-running strike is gaining more support within the labour movement and even internationally. A Unite organisers team travelled to Ireland to publicly expose Scrooge billionaire boss Denis O'Brien, the majority shareholder of Actavo and second richest man in Ireland.

Michael, a Danish scaffolder, brought solidarity to the picket line from the Danish scaffolders union (who first read about the strike in the Socialist), with four Actavo strikers making a reciprocal visit to Denmark.

One of those, Calvin Courtney, writes: "After talking, we discovered scaffolders in the UK and Denmark have much in common, and a Danish scaffolder came to our picket line to show support. We have also flown over to Denmark and travelled the country meeting workers across all trades and learning about their workers' clubs. Meeting them and seeing their passion and solidarity with each other is amazing and very inspiring. Our members have stepped up the pressure on the strike now, and I think meeting the Danish workers has had an impact, inspiring us to do more. I'd like to thank them for donations to help the guys on strike but also for their experience, knowledge and solidarity which will help so much."

Guards fight for their grades on CrossCountry rail

RMT SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS

Guards are putting up a robust defence of their grades as CrossCountry management attempts to train up managers to cover guards' duties.

RMT has taken the correct decision to call out our senior conductor and train manager members on 24 and 31 December, and refuse to carry out coaching and shadowing duties in defence of the role of the guard.

Members delivered a massive 82% yes vote for action which clearly demonstrates strength of feeling on the issue. Other train operating companies have trained up other grades in an attempt to build a dependable army of scabs to be used to undermine any future action by RMT members.

West Midlands Trains management used 'contingency conductors' to attempt to run a train service during the 2019 senior conductors' driver-only operation dispute.

With the bosses planning massive cuts to rail workers jobs and conditions, it is no surprise that Cross Country management want to build a strike-breaking workforce - they want to defeat any future attempts by RMT to defend our members using industrial action.

● The RMT is to ballot all members at Network Rail and train operating companies in England for strike action over pay, pensions and cuts to jobs. Socialists in the RMT welcome this important decision and will campaign for the biggest turnout and yes vote as possible

South Wales Stagecoach victory Union rep speaks to the Socialist

LEE HUNT
BLACKWOOD STAGECOACH UNITE BRANCH
SECRETARY SPOKE TO MARIAM KAMISH

When the strike started, we had nothing. We were just individuals - standing on our own under our umbrellas. But people had got sick of being on £9.50 an hour. There was no way you could get more without becoming a superhero. Some even used to 'cleck' on each other to try to climb the ladder.

On the picket line, people worked together. They built up a bond and I stepped back and let them sort it out. By the end, they had barbecues going.

And we had support. One day, nurses came down from Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre where they were doing jobs and gave us cash from a whipround they'd done for us.

We did 17 days on strike. We had 300 drivers in Brynmawr, Cwmbran and Blackwood, and not one crossed a picket line. It was hard work. Every day I'd get up at 3.30am in the morning to be on the picket line from 4am to 4pm.

The strike really brought up the morale. When we balloted on the offer, only two voted against. They just liked being on strike!

We won £10.50 an hour, backdated to April. And drivers are prepared to do whatever they have to in the future. Because now they realise they run the union as members - it's not

just the secretary and the chair. We're stronger than we have ever been before.

The manager tried to make us pay for our own pay rise. One of his tricks was to offer existing drivers a pay rise - but new hires would be on the old rate. If we'd accepted that, he'd just have got rid of us over time.

Now he's trying to roll back what we've agreed. He wanted to take our Sunday break time off us, because it wasn't specifically named in the agreement. In Brynmawr he wants to change their hours. But our ballot is good until January, so I've told him we can come back out on strike tomorrow if need be.

Part of the problem is Stagecoach has different agreements for each council area. So, they've been taking routes off us and sending them to depots where they settled for less.

National Express is currently in talks to buy Stagecoach, but they won't want the local routes we do. The Welsh Government would like a Transport for London style arrangement and just set fares and pay levels.

But Unite's position is for Transport for Wales to take buses into public ownership. Then, we could have investment in green transport. And it would be good for passengers - with one ticket across the bus and rail network.

The latest is - the manager wants to revisit all issues in January, but we can ballot again. These days, what runners say goes!"



Yorkshire Stagecoach strikers confidence growing

YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY REPORTERS

"We've got them by the bollocks" and "we're in charge now", expressed the mood on the Unite picket line at the Stagecoach Holbrook depot, as bus workers in Sheffield joined Barnsley and Rotherham drivers in a second week of strike action over pay. On 10 December, Unite members across

Stagecoach South Yorkshire rejected the latest company offer (which wasn't really different to the previous one) with 95% voting no!

Word reached the picket line that the managing director is panicking to end the strike by recocking the figures, but the empowering effect of strike action (the first ever at the two Sheffield depots) and demonstrable

Stagecoach workers have demonstrated how we build the union: We organise. Next, we take action. Then we build on an industrial level to bring union actions together. After that, we take struggle onto the political plane.

The workers won a £1 an hour rise to £10.50, backdated to April with attacks on sick pay and rights for new starters also fought off.

Drivers and passengers shouldn't be at the mercy of private companies with their sky high fares and contempt for drivers' pay. We demand that Welsh Government takes the bus companies into public ownership - and creates an integrated public transport system owned and run by Transport for Wales.

With decent pay rates for all public transport workers - and reasonably priced tickets that passengers can use across the bus and rail network.

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THE LEGACY OF THE COLLAPSE OF STALINISM

December 2021 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the official dissolution of the USSR. This year's Socialism event in November included a session on the legacy of the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe, introduced by **Clive Heemskerk**, editor of Socialism Today, the Socialist Party's monthly magazine. Below is an edited transcript of his introduction.

This year's Socialism is taking place one month short of the day 30 years ago, on Christmas Day in 1991, that Mikhail Gorbachev announced the dissolution of the USSR - the 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' - which had been founded five years after the October revolution of 1917, in 1922.

The end of the USSR did not have the same iconic imagery as the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 or the execution of the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. But Gorbachev's announcement was the culmination of the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR, events which opened up a new era and gave a renewed impetus to capitalism for a whole historical period.

Firstly, it led to an ideological disarming of the workers' organisations - both the trade unions and their traditional political parties - consolidating the idea that there was no alternative possible to capitalism.

And secondly, it created a new world order - globalisation under rules set by the USA including the opening up of China - in which the countries of the ex-colonial world, both the masses and the elites within those countries, also no longer saw an alternative model of economic development.

But that 'post-Stalinist' era is ending, with the factors that gave capitalism a new lease of life turning into their opposite, opening up another new period - of the system showing once again its inability to solve the problems of society (economically, socially, and environmentally too); generating a new mass awareness of the need for a different way of organising human relations; and therefore creating the conditions for a mass revival of socialist ideas.

Those themes show that understanding the legacy of the collapse of Stalinism in Russia and Eastern Europe is not just an historical discussion, but sets the parameters for the events that will unfold in the years ahead.

Ideological defeat

There is an irony in discussing the legacy of the collapse of Stalinism at the Socialism weekend, because for us the totalitarian Stalinist regimes were not models of socialism but a grotesque caricature.

Leon Trotsky, whose ideas we base ourselves on, was actually the first Russian 'dissident' against Stalinism, defending the ideals of the 1917 October revolution which he led alongside Vladimir Lenin, against a regime headed by

Joseph Stalin which emerged and then consolidated itself in power in the 1920s, before Trotsky was assassinated by an agent of Stalin in 1940.

Trotsky defended, as we do, the 1917 revolution as the greatest democratic movement in history, transferring power from the landlords, the factory owners, the judges, the elite civil servants, the police chiefs, the army tops, the owners and editors of the means of communication, the university directors, and so on, to committees of the people, of workers and peasants - the soviets - democratising every aspect of economic and social life.

But the revolution took place in a relatively underdeveloped country, mainly a peasant economy, with mass illiteracy, facing armed intervention from 21 different countries, including Britain, which sent troops to Archangel, Vladivostok, and the oilfields of Azerbaijan.

And because the revolution did not spread to the West - above all to the more economically advanced Germany where a series of revolutionary opportunities were lost from 1918 to 1923 - mass participation in the running of society was under constant pressure and increasingly replaced by the rule of the officialdom, the administrators, the bureaucracy as Trotsky termed it, which consolidated itself as a system of rule in the 1920s.

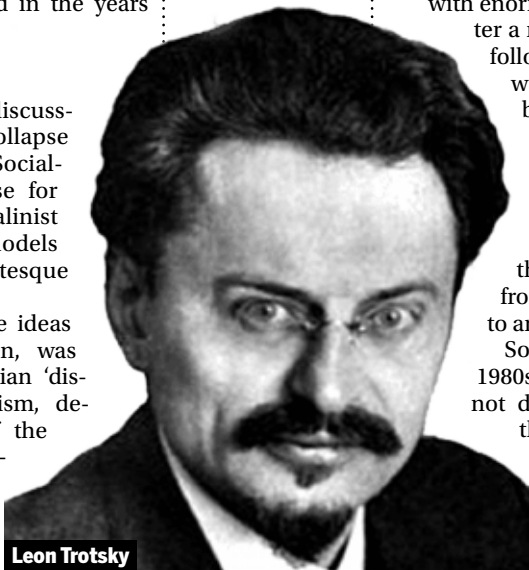
Initially, with the removal of the old owners, state direction of the economy still saw enormous economic progress made, even under the rule of the bureaucracy. There are many different figures but even the ideologically pro-capitalist Economist magazine, on the hundredth anniversary of the 1917 Russian revolution, pointed out that manufacturing output in the USSR grew by over 170% from 1928 to 1940 while "the rest of the world wallowed in the Depression". (11 November 2017)

But without the check of either workers' democracy or the price signals of the capitalist market, this came with enormous overheads. So, after a new spurt in the period following the end of world war two, the economy began to stagnate, unable to incorporate new technology, for example, or be flexible enough to meet new consumer needs, with the bureaucracy moving from being a relative fetter to an absolute fetter.

So what failed in the late 1980s and early 1990s was not democratic planning of the economy by the mass of the population - but the unchecked, top-down, bureaucratic planning of an unaccountable elite.



Leon Trotsky, whose ideas we base ourselves on, was actually the first Russian 'dissident' against Stalinism, defending the ideals of the 1917 October revolution



Leon Trotsky



The totalitarian Stalinist regimes (left) were not models of socialism but a grotesque caricature, and were hated by many workers, including in Hungary where they toppled Stalin's statue (above), because they betrayed Lenin and the Russian Revolution (below)



The Labour Party in Britain was a 'capitalist workers party', with a leadership which still reflected the outlook of the capitalist class but with a working-class base, including the Militant, predecessor of the Socialist Party, and a structure through which the unions could move to challenge the leadership and threaten the capitalists' interests. But starting with the expulsions of Militant members (above) and following the fall of the Berlin Wall (right) and Stalinism, the 'socialist' Clause IV was replaced and Labour transformed into a completely capitalist party.



Yet still the collapse of that system - not socialism but Stalinism - was used to 'prove' that socialism was unworkable and that the capitalist market was the only viable way of organising society.

It was an objective defeat, ideologically, for the international working class that led to a period of capitalist triumphalism - a torrent of propaganda about the 'end of history' - summed up in a headline in the Wall Street Journal, 'We Won'.

Impact on working-class organisation

The first consequence was the impact for a whole historical period on the confidence of even the most active, politically conscious workers in the possibility of socialism. This had its effect on working-class organisation in the 1990s - on the combativity of the trade unions and workers' parties - exemplified in Britain as the leader of an international trend with the transformation of Labour into Tony Blair's capitalist New Labour.

The Labour Party had been formed in 1900 as the result of the working class and its organisations coming into conflict with the capitalists and their political representatives in both the Conservative and Liberal parties, and drawing the conclusion of the need for their own independent party - which in turn developed their class consciousness by bringing workers together to discuss collectively their different sectional interests and their common struggle.

The party was a 'capitalist workers party', with a leadership which still reflected the outlook of the capitalist class but with a working-class base, and a structure through which the unions could move to challenge the leadership and threaten the capitalists' interests. This meant that, until Blair, Labour governments, while reluctantly tolerated as a means of holding the working class in check, were simultaneously undermined and eventually brought down by the capitalists when they could no longer accomplish that task.

That dual character of the party meant that when - in 1960 - the right-wing Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell tried to abolish the socialist Clause Four of Labour's constitution adopted in 1918 for "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange", he was met with a storm of protest in the workers' organisations.

Even Harold Wilson, who went on to become prime minister in 1964, opposed the move, saying at the time that "nationalisation is to socialism what Genesis is to the Bible - it is the fundamental opener". While Michael Foot, who also later became Labour leader in 1980, said: "Like it or not, one of the most spectacular events of our age is the comparative success of the communist economic system".

Contrast that with 35 years later, in 1995 - just five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall - when Tony Blair was able to replace Clause Four with a new clause supporting the dynamic "enterprise of the market and the rigour

of competition" with barely a whimper of opposition. And then back that up with organisational changes massively reducing the role of the unions within the Labour Party, to change its character into the completely capitalist dominated New Labour.

That process - of changing workers' parties into capitalist formations, which was an international trend - would not have been possible without the new conditions created by the collapse of Stalinism.

New world order

The collapse of Stalinism in Russia and Eastern Europe was an ideological defeat but it had material consequences in creating a new world balance of forces, no longer shaped by the 'clash of systems' that had defined the post-war period after 1945.

US imperialism had emerged from the rubble of world war two as the overwhelmingly dominant power among the capitalist nations. But the other victor was Russian Stalinism, with the war against Nazi Germany being effectively won on the Eastern front - there were 454,000 deaths suffered by Britain in World War Two, military and civilian, but at least 20 million by the USSR. The strengthened prestige of Russian Stalinism was especially dangerous for capitalism as a model in the former colonial countries, exploited and underdeveloped by the imperialist powers. But generally it presented a systemic challenge as a non-capitalist society.

The fear this generated was revealed in one incident, which only came to light after the release of government papers under the 30-years rule in 1991. In 1960, the Russian premier Nikita Khrushchev had gone to the UN and boasted that the USSR would 'catch up and surpass' the West. The then British prime minister Harold Macmillan sent a memo to the Foreign Office asking, "do you suppose this is true?" - to which the reply was 'Yes', may be by 1980!

This actually shows that they didn't understand the inherent contradictions of a planned economy without the check of workers' democracy, how the grip of the bureaucracy meant that it was doomed to stagnation.

But that fear explains the US intervention in Korea, in Vietnam, the propping up of the military in Pakistan, the attempt to overturn the Cuban revolution, and so on.

And it also explains the common interest that was created between the different national capitalist powers, a 'glue' to patch

over their conflicting interests. Tensions certainly persisted between them throughout the cold-war period - erupting openly on occasions - but a lid was kept on them by the check made on world capitalism by the very existence of the non-capitalist, Stalinist, states.

It was this international order that ended with the collapse of Stalinism in Russia and Eastern Europe, leaving the US as the world 'hyperpower'.

The post-1945 international institutions were remoulded in the 1990s under US direction - GATT, set up in 1947, was re-launched as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995, for example - and under presidents George HW Bush and then Bill Clinton a 'Washington Consensus' was inaugurated of unrestrained access for US capital to the world markets - 'globalisation' - so that 85% of the global capital stock (in real terms) of the world's multinational corporations has been generated after 1990.

This included the opening up of China, which was admitted to the WTO in 2010 - actually on stricter terms, on paper at least, than the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe.

This was a period of 'capitalism unleashed' - of US capitalism in particular - backed up militarily: between 1989 and 2001 the US intervened abroad once every 16 months, more frequently than in any period in its history.

Things turn into their opposite

But things turn into their opposite. The era of 'unleashed capitalism' - with the ideological and organisational weakening of the check that workers' organisation imposes on the capitalists - saw an explosion of inequality.

The share of national income, including capital gains, going to the top 1% in the US has doubled since 1980 from 10% to 20% (while the share of the top 0.01%, 16,000 families, went from 1% to 5%), back to 19th century levels of inequality. But this was not just in the USA. In Britain wages' share of gross domestic product fell from a peak of 65% in 1976, to 53% in 2008.

However, the consequence of this shift in power to the capitalists over the working class was to weaken demand and deepen a fundamental contradiction of capitalism. As The Economist wrote in 2012, noting the irony, "a high share of GDP for profits results in a low share for wages and thus may eventually be self-limiting - a positively Marxist outcome".

And things turned into their opposite in world relations too. Without the 'glue' of the 'clash of systems' pushing the capitalist nation states together, inter-imperialist rivalries resurfaced and deepened.

There has been a 'block-isation' of the world economy, with no new global trade round completed for twenty years - there are now over 300 regional trade agreements compared to just 70 in 1990.



The new era that is opening up will create the objective conditions once again for Marxists to boldly intervene - as we have done before in our history



The US was, and still is, the greatest military power - accounting for 35% of global military spending. But there are new flashpoints, not least between the US and the rising world power of China - which has brought capitalist relations into its economy over the past 30 years but under the direction of the state, and which therefore continues to be officially classified by the WTO as a 'non-market economy', still not compliant with the 2010 entry terms.

And the Iraq war was a moment of 'imperial overreach' by the US, producing a global movement of opposition with possibly 30 million demonstrating in over 600 cities in February 2003 - which the New York Times said showed there "may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion".

That movement was largely an elemental tide of protest - the 'potential superpower of the street' lacked organised form and clear political aims. It showed both that the effects of the collapse of Stalinism had still not been fully overcome, but also how they will be.

The 2007-08 financial crash was a further turning point in shifting mass consciousness, in undermining both the ideas and the institutions supporting the capitalists' control of society, and responsible for the revival of basic socialist ideas - as shown in the Corbyn waves, the support for the Bernie Sanders' US presidential campaigns, particularly in 2016, the initial Syriza victory in Greece in 2015, the rise in just a matter of years of Podemos in Spain, and so on.

Even if those movements didn't realise their potential this time because of the weakness of their programmes, they show that 'capitalism unleashed' will generate mass opposition that looks to 'socialism' - because socialism is not just an idea but the reflection of the common, collective interests of the working class.

Thirty years is a long time in the life of an individual but a brief moment in history. We still need to answer the fear that socialism will inevitably lead to dictatorship - the lasting baleful legacy of Stalinism - but the main point is that events are showing that the idea of socialism can again become a mass force, a 'fresh idea' for millions.

And that the new era that is opening up will create the objective conditions once again for Marxists to boldly intervene - as we have done before in our history, as in Liverpool or the great anti-poll tax non-payment campaign - and begin a movement that could challenge the capitalist system itself and adopt a full programme for the socialist transformation of society.

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Save St Mary's Leisure Centre in Southampton

And make it fit for the future

NICK CHAFFEY

SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Southampton Council says its priority is our health and wellbeing, but it seems St Mary's can do without. During the pandemic, poor health and poverty have been key causes of serious health complications and death. Access to leisure is a lifesaver.

Council cabinet member John Hannides says St Mary's Leisure Centre (SMLC) must close because "the condition of the building will require significant repair". Isn't it the job of the council to run and maintain services we have built and paid for over the years, and secure them for the next generation?

Solent University paid the council to use the leisure centre. Was this money used to maintain it? Why not keep it open and make it fit for the future?

Councillor Hannides says he wants "modern, accessible facilities". What is old-fashioned about the weights room, squash courts, climbing wall and sports hall at St Mary's? How is it inaccessible?

Hannides says: "There is not enough use". But has he stopped for a minute and asked himself why?

For ten years, Solent University dominated use of the centre. Having left, what has the council done to rebuild community use?

How has Covid impacted leisure centre use? Thousands have used St Mary's over the years, and will do if it is kept open.

This council is fast becoming an



NICK CHAFFEY

asset stripper, shutting down services, selling land to developers for housing no one can afford, or office blocks no one can fill.

We are constantly paying more and getting less. That is unless you're a property developer, or a billionaire getting tax breaks, tax cuts and government contracts.

Council cuts must stop. We need a council that will develop community facilities, provide affordable council

housing for all, care for the elderly, and youth centres. Restoring the £160 million a year in grants stolen from Southampton by central government since 2010 would provide much of the resources we need to get the job done.

We have fought successfully in the past to keep St Mary's Leisure Centre open. We will now do so again.

Join the campaign today. Contact 07833 681 910 for more information.

Why we joined the Socialist Party

Socialist paper is my weekly antidote to press barons

I was overwhelmed when my hopes for united workers' action against the Tories failed after the last general election. I was thinking 'there is no future for a workers' party in England'.

I attended Pride with my branch of public sector union Unison. There I found out that Paul Couchman, my Unison branch secretary, was a Socialist Party member.

A brief discussion later, now I am a proud Socialist Party member. I can't wait to read the Socialist paper every week, and hear an alternative to the manipulation of the mass media by press barons like Rupert Murdoch, Richard Desmond, Viscount

Rothermere, the Barclay Brothers and others.

The Socialist is a brilliant paper. It doesn't hide the truth of workers' struggles or the reality of Tory government attacks on working-class people.

I am also going to get more active in the union and become a workplace rep.

IOANNIS KOURATOS
STAINES SOCIALIST PARTY

My whole life has been a series of capitalist crises

I joined the Socialist Party after reading our 'what we stand for'. I liked demands such as nationalisation with democratic workers' control

and management, and I could see capitalism's inability to solve any crisis, because of its aim of short-term profit.

I realised that we need a new socialist system, where profit is not the main driving factor, and human need comes first. My whole life has been one major crisis after another - 2007-08 financial crisis, the pandemic, climate change.

I see capitalism barely scraping along, and making the working class pay for it all. Joining the Socialist Party sounded logical to me.

ADAM GILLMAN
READING SOCIALIST PARTY

Do you agree?
JOIN THE SOCIALISTS
socialistparty.org.uk/join



Protests in Serbia GUERRILLA FOUNDATION/CC



London solidarity protest: Rio Tinto out of Serbia

MIRA GLAVARDANOV

NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The Serbian diaspora in Britain protested in front of the London headquarters of mining multinational Rio Tinto on 11 December. The protest gave a clear and direct message to Rio Tinto: there is no place to hide.

We were supporting the large protests in Serbia against the lithium mining rights given to this company. This was not the first solidarity protest in London, but it was the largest.

People came from Brighton, but other cities too, such as Birmingham. The plan is for the protests to continue and get bigger.

The main demand was 'Rio Tinto, out of Serbia!' Short speeches said that Serbian people in their history have defeated much larger empires than Rio Tinto, and that we will be successful this time too.

However, Rio Tinto is not the only culprit. The priority of the corrupt Serbian government is profits of big business, rather than the interests of ordinary people in Serbia or the environment.

Every mention of the name of Serbian president Aleksandar Vucic was accompanied by loud booing.

Rio Tinto has a long history of environmental destruction and human rights abuses.

In Serbia the expropriation law was passed recently. It would have allowed the government to appropriate land or property for "the common good".

It is widely believed that this law was passed in direct connection with the needs of Rio Tinto. The area rich with lithium is also agricultural land owned by small farmers.

This law has now been revoked following the big protests, which reveals cracks in Vucic's stronghold of power.

The anti-Rio Tinto protests are strongly anti-government, because it is recognised that the government is the accomplice of the dirty extractive industry. The Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) take this further.

We argue that any capitalist government will bend under pressure from big business. Only by breaking with capitalism altogether can we ensure that the interests of working-class people and peasants are respected, and the environment is looked after. This must be the next step.



Marching against evictions in Waltham Forest in 2016 SOCIALIST PARTY

Nana's eviction: Community vs heartless Labour council

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

On 7 December, a bitterly cold and rainy morning, bailiffs left Nana Yaa and her autistic son Jason on the streets with nowhere to go. Unfortunately, like many others, Nana felt that she alone was responsible for her situation. This was quickly answered by kind acts of solidarity from staff at the school where she works.

Waltham Forest Labour council in London was not so quick to respond to the needs of a working-class woman and her disabled son. The council officer, who had been abreast of all the developments over months, was unreachable by phone.

The housing office was closed. Only pressure mobilised by supporters, including socialists, roused the council to provide a hostel room that night.

The next day, Nana and Jason waited in the hostel, with no facilities even to make a cuppa, to hear what would befall them. That night they learned they had a temporary flat in a neighbouring borough.

It was bad enough that it would take Nana an hour and a half to get to

the Gam school cleaning job she has worked in for seven years. But, on arrival, the neglect of the council was once again apparent - no furniture, no beds, no kettle or cups.

We were approached by one of Nana's sons about her eviction threat in July, when Waltham Forest Socialist Party was playing a leading role in the campaign against the eviction of another working-class mum, Nadia Zaman (see socialistparty.org.uk).

So far, a community and labour movement fightback has managed to keep Nadia in a home in the borough. That struggle continues.

Resistance

The Socialist Party is working with Nana, her sons, and others in the local Eviction Resistance Committee. Some are now coordinating the offers of furniture, bedding, and kitchen equipment.

Others have been mobilised to support the fight for the services that Jason needs and deserves. Some are working to get Nana in a home that doesn't mean she will lose her job.

The campaign has called a protest at the upcoming housing scrutiny committee on 15 December to help expose the council's rotten housing policies, and raise a programme to

really deal with homelessness and housing need.

The community response contrasts sharply with the hard-hearted approach of the Labour council. What an expression of the need for a new party of the working class!

The need for this is underlined by the departure of the previous council leader. After Clare Coghill drove through deeply unpopular plans to build unaffordable tower blocks on public land, she has now become a property developer herself.

The Socialist Party is standing no-cuts candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in the May 2022 local elections. We're inviting housing campaigners and trade union fighters to also stand.

We demand rent control, investment in council housing, not in for-profit unaffordable towers, and that the empty homes across our borough be used to house the homeless - a working-class socialist alternative to the heartless Tory axeman in the Labour council.

● **Protest at the housing scrutiny committee, Wednesday 15 December, 6.45pm, Waltham Forest Town Hall**

Posters, car boot and socialist guided tour - some ideas to raise funds

New fundraising ideas Northampton Socialist Party has for the new year include a 'socialist tour of Northampton'. For a small fee, a Socialist Party member will give a guided tour of Northampton working-class history. This will encompass a visit to the street where the first bailiffs were prevented from entering the home of a person who refused to pay the poll tax.

Despite the pandemic, Northampton branch has raised over £1,000 for the Socialist Party fighting fund this year. Beginning the year on Zoom in lockdown, we asked members to contribute £1 or £2 that we would normally spend on a drink or room hire.

We raised money by putting forward our socialist message at the

protests against Israeli state attacks on Palestinians, and at the demos against the anti-protest bill. We restarted regular campaign stalls in the spring, where people bought our pamphlets alongside the Socialist paper.

During the summer, we held a car boot sale raising £47.47, helping us smash our quarterly fighting fund target. We sold posters at the university fresher's fair in September. In November, we raffled a handmade jumper at Socialism 2021, raising £55.50. On 16 December, Northampton Socialist Party will discuss more ideas for raising fighting fund.

KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

● socialistparty.org.uk/donate



SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q4: OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2021	DEADLINE: 3 JANUARY 2022
South West	6,260	1,800		348%
Northern	1,809	750		241%
East Midlands	4,324	1,850		234%
Eastern	2,784	1,200		232%
London	8,011	4,600		174%
Wales	3,627	2,300		158%
Yorkshire	3,617	2,550		142%
North West	1,608	1,150		140%
West Midlands	3,168	2,600		122%
Southern & SE	2,403	2,350		102%
Other	18,177	3,850		472%
TOTAL	55,789	25,000		223%

Selling the Socialist

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

● Waltham Cross - workers' victory boosts confidence

A care worker told the whole street to sign our petition for a 15% pay rise in Hertfordshire. Initially she said there was no point, because carers never get a rise.

But after we told her about the victory of Sage workers in north London (see socialistparty.org.uk), it boosted her confidence. Then we had a small queue at our stall, including a trainee paramedic. Together people donated over £40 to help our campaigns.

BEA GARDNER

● Boscombe - turning curious pedestrians into new members

After a slow response to our Socialist Party campaign stall in Boscombe, in Bournemouth, momentum started to gather. Curious pedestrians became potential new Socialist Party members.

Eight people wrote their information down to find out more. This



Waltham Cross JOSH ASKER

included a teacher who taught their students about socialism; a legal practitioner; and an individual who was struggling through benefit cuts. The mood was deep anger.

There was also frustration with the

Labour Party. People felt that they had no political voice. It is encouraging that people are out there that can join us if we keep up our consistent approach.

ALI COOK

JAMES BOYES/CC



- 12) When the last US troops left Kabul airport, what was the estimated financial cost of the 20-year 'war on terror'?
- 13) Which country became the first to accept Bitcoin as an official currency?
- 14) What colour designation describes the new German government?
- 15) Name the latest batch of revealed secretive financial documents incriminating the world's tax dodging capitalists and politicians.
- 16) Which three-word phrase did Greta Thunberg use to describe 'greenwashing' by the world's leading politicians?
- 17) Name the military chief who headed the coup in Sudan this October?
- 18) Who announced the scrapping of three agricultural laws?
- 19) Name the PM who succeeded Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest serving premier?
- 20) Who said: "You'll never take back our country with weakness. You have to show strength"?
- 21) At COP26, Chancellor Rishi Sunak said that by 2050, 450 corporations, controlling \$130 trillion of assets, will be 'aligned' with net-zero emissions. What percentage of total global assets does that represent?
- 22) Name the two Socialist Party bus transport workers and union reps unfairly sacked by bosses

- 23) What did the newly launched libertarian right TV channel GB News achieve in July?
- 24) Who said: "We've transitioned away from coal in my lifetime. Thanks to Margaret Thatcher, who closed so many coal mines across the country..."
- 25) Name the group of workers whose nearly 50-year-old convictions for 'conspiracy' were overturned.
- 26) What is the title of home secretary Priti Patel's anti-protest bill?
- 27) According to Boris Johnson's former special advisor Dominic Cummings, how did the PM describe his then health secretary, Matt Hancock?
- 28) Former Tory PM David Cameron lobbied for lucrative government contracts on behalf of which now bankrupt company?
- 29) What dividing line was agreed 100 years ago?
- 30) Name the group of workers who defeated the bosses' 'fire and rehire' ultimatum after 85 days of strike action?
- 31) What was Tory minister Thérèse Coffey's helpful advice to claimants losing the £20 a week Universal Credit uplift?
- 32) In May, where was an attempt by immigration officers to deport two



migrant workers thwarted by a mass blockade?

33) Who said: "The one thing I object to in this whole farrago of nonsense is I love John Lewis"?

34) What was Labour's majority in the Batley and Spen by-election on 1 July?

35) Which trade union disaffiliated from Starmer's Labour Party?

36) Where was the then Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab during the Afghanistan crisis in August?

37) In May, the government announced a botched railways reorganisation. According to the RMT transport union, how much have the train operating companies paid out in shareholder dividends since privatisation in 1997?

38) Which politician's memes were



Answers

(30) Manchester bus workers, Unite members, employed at Go North West
(31) Work longer hours! Coffey claimed £201,000 in parliamentary expenses between 2019 and 2020.
(32) Glasgow. Attempts to detain chef Sumit Sehdev and mechanic Lakhvir Singh prior to deportation provoked a massive community mobilisation.
(33) Boris Johnson when confronted with a possible expenses scandal over the lavish refurbishment of his 10 Downing Street flat
(34) 323. Compared with 2017 under Corbyn, Labour lost 16,500 votes
(35) Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union
(36) For two weeks, on holiday at a 5-star luxury hotel in Crete
(37) £3.2 billion
(38) Disgraced former health - 'death' - secretary Matt Hancock, beating Bernie Sanders' US presidential inauguration pose into second place

super-concentration of capitalist wealth.
22) Moë Muhsin Manitr and Declan Clune
23) Zero viewers after presenter Guto Harri's on-air gesture of taking the knee in solidarity with England's racially abused black footballers
24) Boris Johnson, disingenuously claiming the Tories are ideologically 'green';
25) 'The Shrewsbury Pickets' unjustly convicted and jailed following a national building strike in 1972.
26) 'Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill', under which police can ban protests on the grounds of being a "public nuisance"
27) "Totally F***** hopeless"
28) Greensill Capital, headed by his former senior advisor Lex Greensill.
29) On 6 December 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty, it created a border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.

b-Unprecedented floods in Europe and China; c-Hurricane Ida in the USA.
(12) \$8 trillion according to Brown University, as well as 900,000 deaths.
(13) El Salvador.
(14) "Traffic light, ie Red for the SPD, Yellow FDP, and Green, the Green party.
(15) The Pandora Papers
(16) "Blah, blah, blah";
(17) General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan
(18) India's right-wing Hindu nationalist PM Narendra Modi, following a year-long mass protest struggle by unionised farmers.
(19) The equally reactionary Natalli Bennett. Extra point if you named alternate PM, Yair Lapid.
(20) Defeated US president Donald Trump, addressing his motley crew of supporters before they stormed the Congress Capitol building in Washington DC on 6 January.
(21) 40% - illustrating the

the most searched for on Google in 2021?

39) Who told the CBI conference: "Yesterday I went, as we all must, to Peppa Pig World. Hands up if you've been to Peppa Pig World!"

40) Which group of workers defeated the bosses' attempt to deskill their trade?

41) What is the estimated cost of extreme weather events in the last 50 years?

42) Why did Netflix's smash 'Squid Games' prove expensive?

43) What will be the national minimum wage rate in April 2022?

44) How much did former Tory MP Owen Paterson pocket for moonlighting as a consultant for two companies?

45) How many US dollar billionaires are there in China's National People's Congress (parliament)?

46) How much was the Tory party fined by the Electoral Commission for failing to report a £52,000 company donation for Boris Johnson's 10 Downing Street flat refurbishment?

47) What did President Joe Biden say after white supremacist Kyle Rittenhouse was acquitted over the murder of two Black Lives Matter protesters?

48) How many patients were awaiting NHS treatment at the end of October?

Stonewall attacked by the establishment

The fight for LGBTQ+ equality must be part of the struggle to liberate society from capitalism

MICHAEL JOHNSON

LGBTQ+ SOCIALIST PARTY CAUCUS CONVENOR

In recent months, the LGBTQ+ rights organisation Stonewall has faced increasing attacks. For example, BBC Sounds produced a ten-episode podcast investigation into Stonewall's lobbying and influence, primarily to attack trans and non-binary rights, including the right to self-identify.

Organisations such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Ofcom and the BBC have decided to exit Stonewall diversity schemes to which they had previously subscribed. They say that being part of these programmes damages perceptions of their impartiality or was not "good value for money."

The BBC director general Tim Davie (a former Tory party council candidate) argued that the treatment of trans people in society was an "impartiality topic" in the eyes of the BBC, unlike gay rights or climate change.

Stonewall has been targeted as part of a sustained campaign by right-wing journalists and politicians, with mistaken support from some in the women's and labour movement, to present trans and non-binary people's rights as conflicting with women's rights.

Class society

The real conflict is between the need to end oppression, austerity and discrimination on the one side, and a capitalist system in crisis and unable to provide a decent standard of living for the overwhelming majority of society on the other. The recent World Inequality Report found that since 1995, the richest 1% took 38% of all additional wealth, whereas the bottom 50% captured just 2% of it.

The working class, because of the economic exploitation it faces, and the role it plays in production under capitalism, has a collective interest in ending the system which is the root cause of exploitation and oppression, and it has the collective power to do so.

The capitalist class, fearful of possible challenge to its rule, has an interest in dividing workers along lines of gender, race, religious and sexual orientation.

Stonewall does not aspire to unite the working class in struggle, but is nevertheless victimised by the whipping up of division, being picked on as a warning against standing up for oppressed sections of society.

Stonewall was founded in 1989 on the back of the mass campaigns against 'Section 28' legislation introduced by the Thatcher government as part of (and as a divisive distraction from) attacks on council services and budgets.



Trade unionists participating in a Pride event

Section 28 banned the "promotion" of homosexuality in schools. Fighting against it, tens of thousands of LGBTQ+ people, trade unions and supporters took to the streets, with new forces taking up the fight for LGBTQ+ rights. Stonewall merely advocated patient lobbying of political parties, big businesses and the establishment, to make changes to law and policy over time.

As a result of the anti-Section 28 movement giving LGBTQ+ people an increased confidence there was an improvement in their position in the post-Thatcher era, and legal gains were made.

Stonewall continued to push for reforms to LGBTQ+ rights via court cases, reforms to the law, such as the repeal of Section 28, equalisation of the age of consent and introduction of civil partnerships; and, in the absence of a mass workers' party, was able to present itself as a key organisation.

It launched a 'Diversity Champions'



The Tories have sought to use division as a distraction from austerity, targeting trans people...

scheme for government bodies and businesses to join for a fee, to be listed as 'Proud Employers', and receive Stonewall's advice and guidance on policies for LGBTQ+ staff in the workplace.

However, capitalism will always use division as a tactic. New Labour abolished Section 28 without replacing it with positive measures to address the impact of LGBTQ+ phobia on students and education workers.

While the legal reforms have undoubtedly been positive for the LGBTQ+ community these did not

happen solely because of Stonewall or the kindness of politicians it lobbied. Indeed, radical groups such as the Gay Liberation Front and campaigners taking on the AIDS crisis had demands on the age of consent and marriage equality in the 1970s and 1980s. As with the history of workers' rights, the history of LGBTQ+ rights are a history of struggle to secure and extend rights.

In many ways, Stonewall has served as a pressure valve for the LGBTQ+ community, diverting the community towards 'respectable' lobbying, away from the activism of the fight against Section 28, which included abseiling into parliament, storming news broadcasts and taking to the streets in mass demos.

Stonewall operates without democratic structures. Its leaders decide what Stonewall does, to the point that it didn't campaign on, or even mention, trans rights until 2015 when growing pressure forced them to take up the issue.

So why the attacks on Stonewall now? These attacks are focused on Stonewall's position on trans rights and legal reforms such as the Gender Recognition Act (GRA).

However, they must also be seen in the wider context of over a decade of austerity.

The Tories have used LGBTQ+ rights in an attempt to paint themselves as something other than the 'nasty party' tainted by the legacy of Section 28. They held garden parties to celebrate the Stonewall Riots, with Stonewall happily in attendance.

Tory party attacks

As the Socialist Party predicted, the Tories proved to be untrustworthy, carrying out GRA reform consultation in a divisive way, helping to whip up the attacks Stonewall is now facing, and not introducing any actual reforms.

Austerity itself has played a role. After more than a decade of cuts, services are past breaking point. By 2017, around 200 domestic violence victims were turned away from support each day.

Without a labour movement organising united working-class opposition to these attacks, the Tories have sought to use division as a distraction from austerity, targeting trans people, who are in no way to blame for the lack of women's services. That blame lies with the Tory governments and Labour councils that dutifully pass on Tory cuts.

In this context, Stonewall, and the LGBTQ+ people more broadly, have been targeted for 'going too far' in fighting for trans rights. But, unfortunately, fighting is not what Stonewall has been doing. Even this year, Stonewall's chief executive Nancy Kelley attended the Tory party conference and Carrie Johnson spoke at their fringe event.

Stonewall's appeals to employers' morals cannot do what trade unions can achieve in the workplace by bringing workers together to fight the bosses, be that over 'fire and re-hire' or discrimination. Look at the UCU higher education union's current dispute which brings workers together to fight low pay, attacks on pensions, and discrimination on race and gender lines.

We need a fighting movement, bringing together the LGBTQ+ community with other oppressed groups and the wider working class. This can cut across the division capitalism promotes in order to make exploitation easier.

Only by removing the grip of capitalism and fighting for the socialist transformation of society can we bring an end to divide and rule and discrimination and win true liberation for LGBTQ+ and all working-class people.

Sudan: End military rule and poverty - fight for real ‘People’s Power’ in Sudan

Build a genuine revolutionary socialist party

Mass protests across Sudan have continued in response to the recent sell-out deal between Abdalla Hamdok - the deposed former civilian Prime Minister appointed by the overthrown Sovereignty Council government - and the military tops led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. Under the deal Hamdok was released from house arrest, where he had been detained following the 25 October military coup, and reinstated as Prime Minister under a new military regime that says it will restore civilian democratic rule at some unspecified future date.

Nick Chaffey, Socialist Party national committee, reports on the resistance to the coup, and what political programme can achieve a genuinely democratic Sudan that eradicates repression, poverty and inequality.

Continuing demands for ‘Power to the people’ show this mass movement is determined to end the rule of the military, and is angered at the betrayal of Hamdok in willingly acting for the military.

This mass opposition of workers and youth across Sudan has forced other parties such as Umma, the Sudan Professional Association (SPA) and the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), previously involved in the governing council, to echo the streets with a rejection of the deal.

The mass protests across Sudan have been organised by the Resistance Committees (RCs). They have been at the forefront of mobilising the revolution since 2019 and were involved in vital community work before and after the fall of former dictator Omar al-Bashir.

Under mass pressure, the 25 October coup leaders have been forced to retreat behind the fig leaf of a Hamdok government. They overestimated their power to repress the revolutionary movement organised by the RCs.

The United Nations and the imperialist governments of the US and UK, along with the Norwegian government, are now attempting to pressure all opposition forces to accept the new Hamdok regime installed by

the military.

This must be firmly rejected. Their aim is to strangle the revolution. Only an independent movement of the masses, of the workers and poor, can establish a new revolutionary government and real ‘people’s power’.

Statements from protesters indicate that the masses have lost their fear of the regime and understand there can be no compromise. They are determined to end military rule with a democratic, civilian government.

The discussion across society, and especially those in the forefront of leading the protests, is how can that be achieved?

Only a new government of the masses, of the workers and poor, based on the developing movement led by the Resistance Committees, can end military rule and open up the prospect of a new revolutionary democracy in Sudan to end oppression, poverty and tribal conflict.

Resistance committees

Despite the resources of the army and their brutal militias, the independent mass movement in the streets is demonstrating its potential power to end the rule of the military.

It is essential that the RCs develop if they are to play a decisive role in

the struggle for power. Part of this is to learn from the experience of some ‘leaders’ being prepared to sit alongside the military tops. This shows the importance of all representatives being both regularly elected, and subject to immediate recall by those who have elected them.

These bodies can become the democratic forum around which discussion can be developed on how to build the movement, and defend the protests and activists from repression. They can outline and help the implementation of the programme of a new government that addresses the issues of poverty, jobs, housing, health and education. But such a government needs to be completely different from all previous ones.

The building of new workplace and community organisations, electing their own representatives, is not just a sign of the developing mass movement. Most importantly, it shows the potential to create, alongside the RCs, a genuine ‘people’s power’, the basis for a new democratic government that represents the interests of the workers and poor.

Clearly, such a new government would have to remove the threat of future military repression and counter-revolution, and deal with the urgent economic, social, and political issues facing the mass of Sudanese.

Popular defence

While the military has been forced to retreat, arrests and suppression continue. So long as the military remains in place, a new repressive clampdown is certain, unless the mass movement succeeds in carrying through the revolution.

Popular defence forces need to be developed, forces democratically controlled through the Resistance Committees and other popular bodies. Such defence forces would need to be able to both act and, at the same time, exploit divisions within the state and militia forces.

Throughout the revolution, the army has also shown some critical



Sudan’s masses have continued to resist the coup of 25 October

weaknesses. Divisions have developed within the tops of the army over how to deal with the revolution; whether to step up repression or to make concessions and who will come to dominate in a new regime. It is clear that tensions exist between different wings of the army and militias, which could come to the fore as the situation escalates.

As the masses poured onto the streets in the 2019 revolution which overthrew Bashir, lower ranks in the army in significant numbers came over to the side of the protests or remained passive when called on to shoot at demonstrators.

An appeal to the lower ranks of the army to join the revolution and carry out a purge of the army by arresting the coup plotters and officers would gain a big echo. The lower ranks, who share none of the riches held by the tops of the army, come from the poorest sections of Sudanese society and can be won over to the revolution. Then, electing their own representatives, they could join the RCs and assist with the defence of demonstrations, factories, trade unions and activists.

The use of militias under the guidance of some of the army tops is also a threat that needs addressing. These militias have been built by recruiting young children and criminals, desperate for food and shelter, maintaining them through regular payments.

Other rebel forces and their leaders have been drawn to the military by promises of sharing in the economic spoils of the military regime. Support for these militias can be undermined by a programme for a new Sudan that ends repression but also can meet the needs of all.

A revolutionary socialist Sudan would also put an end to the repression of religious and ethnic minorities and guarantee the rights of all, including the right to self-determination, thereby undermining the support for separatist rebel and tribal leaders and the basis of their militias.

It is unclear how events will unfold, but already the outline of how this movement could take power can be seen. The military and pro-capitalist parties that have propped up the ruling council have been undermined and are divided on the way forward.

National assembly

If the RCs elected representatives to a national body, calling for trade unions to send delegates and lower ranks of the army to elect their own delegates as well, the outline of a new civilian government of the workers and poor would be in place.

Only such a government could guarantee that the Sudanese people could freely decide their future; any interim government which based itself on retaining the essentials of Sudan today, namely the repressive state and capitalism, would be a smokescreen for the ruling class to continue in power.

Decisive action in the form of an indefinite general strike needs to be prepared, alongside the dissolution of the Sovereign Council and Hamdok’s new ‘technocratic’ government. Military and militia leaders should be arrested. The power of the National Resistance Assembly should then be consolidated by establishing a democratically run and controlled RC militia, drawn from the ranks of the RCs to defend the new government.

In power, what kind of measures would be necessary to establish the aims of a new Sudan? With the economy and government budget in the hands of the military, up to 80% of the budget ends up in the hands of the military tops, with the remainder unable to meet the costs of providing food, fuel, housing and healthcare to the masses.

All the assets and business interests of the military tops must be immediately confiscated and nationalised. The accumulated wealth of Sudan should be placed under the direct control of the revolutionary government through the nationalisation

of the banks, mines, and foreign-owned corporations that dominate the economy, with compensation based only on proven need. It would be the basis on which a democratic plan could be drawn up through the local RCs to address the needs of all, and provide the basis for an end to the poverty and insecurity of the masses.



The transformation of the economy on socialist lines is the only way to meet the needs of the masses and break the power of the military

The transformation of the economy on socialist lines is the only way to meet the needs of the masses and break the power of the military and the elites in Sudan.

Such bold measures would inspire solidarity from workers, the youth and poor across North Africa, the rest of Africa, and beyond, support that could help prevent any attempts at military intervention, sanctions or blockades, etc, from pro-capitalist governments.

It would be a revolutionary government that would reignite the ‘Arab Spring’ and have an impact within Africa, with a revolutionary democratic socialist model to follow. This could become the basis for a socialist confederation of the region that could rapidly utilise the wealth, resources and productive potential to develop the economy through democratic planning to transform

society.

Debate on the way forward in Sudan is reaching all corners of society. But this revolutionary movement of workers, youth and the poor has no party of its own.

Mass socialist party

While the Communist Party has opposed the military, it has not provided a clear programme of action to take power, despite its rich history. It has not drawn on the historic revolutionary experience of the working class, especially the lessons of the Russian revolution, encapsulated in the writings and actions of its leaders, Lenin and Trotsky, and the Bolshevik Party that led the successful struggle for power in October 1917.

Instead, its leaders follow the exact opposite of Lenin’s approach in 1917, as they seek alliances and coalitions with capitalist forces which will lead to the trapping and eventual defeat of revolution.

But an independent revolutionary party is a vital element in the current situation. Such a party would grow very rapidly in the favourable situation that currently exists. Without it, there is the grave danger that this revolutionary opportunity will be lost.

● **this article can be read in full on socialistworld.net**



Vaccine Wars: The Truth About Pfizer



Nationalise the pharmaceutical giants

BARBARA CLARE
STEVENAGE SOCIALIST PARTY

This Dispatches programme reveals the enormous profits made by pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, the lack of vaccines sent to poorer countries, and how Pfizer money helps spread misleading claims about rivals.

Pfizer’s Covid vaccine made it one of the most powerful companies on the planet. Its jab is on course to be one of the most profitable pharmaceutical products ever.

Pfizer estimates an income from the Covid vaccine of \$36 billion this year - the largest annual revenue of any drug in history.

This could rise to \$55 billion next year. Analysts put this down to prioritising selling to rich countries willing to pay higher prices.

For the booster rollout, the Tory government has decided to go primarily with Pfizer. But in the summer, Pfizer raised its price from £18 a dose to £22.

Dr Zoltan Kis estimated the cost of a single vaccine - including raw material, wages and production facilities - to be between 80 US cents and \$1.40. Pfizer claims this does not include clinical studies, increased manufacturing and global distribution. Anna Marriott from Oxfam says the NHS has paid £2.6 billion to Pfizer, over £2 billion more than the cost-price warrants.

If there is a legal dispute between Pfizer and the government, it goes to a secret arbitration panel, instead of a UK court. The UK isn’t even allowed to say it’s in a dispute with Pfizer. The Department of Health refused to say why this was agreed, or comment on the amount it paid Pfizer.

Pfizer refused to share its vaccine recipe or license its technology to

give poorer countries greater access to its jab. Dr Tom Frieden ran the Centres for Disease Control, America’s top public health agency, from 2009 to 2017.

He said: “People all over the world are waiting for vaccines. Because of that, people are dying today, and there is a higher risk that we will have new forms, new variants, new mutants of the virus that causes Covid that could evade this or future vaccines.



Pfizer should not dictate who gets the vaccine first. Selling only to richer countries only prolongs a pandemic.

“If you’re just focusing on maximising your profits and your vaccine manufacture, you are war profiteering.” Of the two billion vaccines delivered, only 16% have gone to lower-middle-income countries, and less than 1% to the very poorest nations.

‘Vaccine Wars’ highlights evidence that Pfizer money helped spread misleading claims about rivals. A slide from a presentation to Canadian health professionals lists a couple of advantages and a long list of disadvantages of viral vector technology, used by Astra Zeneca (AZ).

The slide suggests that the AZ jab might turn a healthy cell cancerous. And that the AZ vaccine cannot

be used in immunocompromised subjects.

The slides were partly funded by Pfizer. The key speaker has received Pfizer funds.

One of the slide’s authors was a former Pfizer advisor. Pfizer claimed they did not edit or influence the presentations.

Brook Jackson was a regional director for Ventavia, a company running trial sites of the Pfizer jab in Texas. She noticed many irregularities - inconsistency in signatures, missing dates and logs of suspicious looking blood samples

She believes somebody falsified or fabricated data. And information about whether the vaccine or a placebo was administered was written on patient charts, which is misconduct.

She reported this to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), who supervise the trials. Ventavia fired her several hours later. The FDA contacted her after a few days, but she never heard from it again.

All this information about Pfizer demonstrates the need for the nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry, where the motivation would not be one of profit, but concern for all of humanity.

Pfizer should not dictate who gets the vaccine first. Selling only to richer countries only prolongs a pandemic. It is morally wrong and scientifically impractical.

The production of vaccines should not be a ‘war’ as the programme’s title suggests, but one of mutual cooperation by all nations and the sharing of technology. This can only be achieved under a democratic socialist federation of nations.

● **Vaccine Wars is available on channel4.com**



Sudan’s military ruler Abdel Fattah al-Burhan PHOTO KREMLIN.RU

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SUPPORT TUBE WORKERS FIGHTING BACK



“We kept the tube running during the pandemic”

Workers on the tube in London, members of the RMT transport union, have been striking against the imposition of “impossible and unreasonable demands on staff” over the reopening of the ‘night tube.’ Workers have been striking weekly, refusing to work night duties on the Central and Victoria lines, as well as all duties on Jubilee, Northern, Piccadilly at the end of November and on 18-19 December.

“The disruption is entirely down to bosses and them abolishing the ‘night tube’ driver grade. The tube network has been hit financially, but management are using that as an excuse to attack us, even though they sat at home when we kept the tube running during the pandemic, risking our health,” one striking driver told the Socialist.

In addition to the imposition of night tube duties, all tube and Transport for London (TfL) workers are facing a concerted attack on

their pensions and conditions.

“After 30 years of shift work a tube worker can expect to retire on less than half their salary.”

Workers see the action as the opening stage of this bigger battle.

The RMT has also agreed to conduct a ballot of all and London Underground members over pensions, jobs and working practices (so-called framework agreements), amid looming cuts threatened by both London Mayor Sadiq

Khan and the Tories.

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.

● **If the dispute goes unresolved, all train operators and instructor operators in the RMT on night tube lines will strike for 24 hours from 4.30am on 18 December.**

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

