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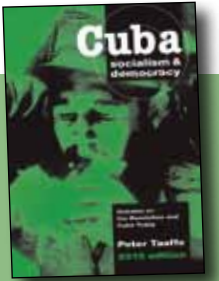


Fidel Castro dies

■ Defend gains of Cuban revolution and fight for workers' democracy > pages 2-3

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■ Worst decade for living standards since 1920s

TIME TO

FIGHT

LOW PAY

Dave Gorton
Chesterfield Socialist Party

This is the worst decade for living standards since at least World War Two.

And probably the 1920s, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) think-tank.

Years of pay freezes, rises in living costs and benefit changes mean family incomes are growing more slowly now than during the immediate post-2008 crash. Millions have never had a decent pay rise.

This is set to continue - unless challenged - with the IFS predicting workers will earn less in real wages in 2021 than we did in 2008. The biggest losers will be lower-income families.

Real average earnings - which include rising inflation - are forecast to rise by less than 5% over the next five years. Even that is a full 3.7% lower than was projected in March. The chancellor claims the government is preparing for a "rainy day". For vast numbers it's already pouring down. For young workers in particular, it's reaching flood levels.

Not everyone suffers. Recent Trade Union Congress research shows the average corporate FTSE 100 chief executive is paid 123 times the average full-time salary. Directors' pay rose 47% between 2010 and 2015.

Unions need to do more than research. Claiming workers are more interested in jobs than pay only means some union leaders are admitting failure in their ability to campaign for both.

Pay rises aren't handed out by benevolent employers or governments; they are fought for. Newly organised sections of workers such as 'gig economy' couriers demonstrate workers will fight if they see a chance of winning.

This government is weak. Now is the time to fight. Unionise the unorganised sections of the workforce; build for coordinated industrial action; fight for a £10 an hour minimum wage with no exemptions.



photo Isai Priya

Feature ★

The death of Fidel Castro, aged 90, will be mourned by millions of workers in Cuba and globally. Castro, along with Che Guevara, led the 1959 Cuban revolution, which overthrew the brutal and corrupt US backed Batista dictatorship.

At the same time, the forces of capitalist reaction and imperialism

will see Fidel Castro's death as an opportunity to drive for full capitalist restoration on the island. These reactionary forces aim to destroy all the remaining gains of the revolution and planned economy, including the historic achievements in public health and education.

We reprint here edited versions of two articles from the archives of the Socialist Party and Committee for a

Workers International (CWI) written by **Tony Saunios**.

The first article is a review of 'My Life - Fidel Castro' from 2008. The second - 'Cuba at a crossroads' is an article from September 2015, written in response to the opening up of bilateral agreements and relations between the Cuban regime and the United States. Full versions at socialistparty.org.uk

'My life - Fidel Castro'

The publication of 'My life - Fidel Castro' (in English in 2007) was extremely timely as Castro was to resign as president only a few months later, handing over to his brother Raul.

Castro justifiably explains the impressive social gains conquered in health and education. "The life expectancy of Cuban citizens is now almost eighteen years longer than in 1959, when the Revolution came to power. Cuba has an infant mortality rate under six per 1,000 live births in their first year of life, behind Canada by a slight margin."

50% of doctors fled abroad following the revolution. For every doctor who remained at the time, today there are 15! Free education is open to all who are not employed in a job.

All this, despite an economic embargo imposed by US imperialism since 1960 and a severe economic decline which followed the collapse of the former Soviet Union, in 1992, and consequential loss of economic subsidies.

These and other impressive achievements mentioned by Castro give a small glimpse of what would be possible with a socialist planned economy that was democratically controlled and managed by the working class. Another indication of this was reflected in some aspects of Cuba's foreign policy.

Apart from mobilizing over 30,000 doctors to work in over 40 countries, one of the most impressive achievements was the sending of tens of thousands of "internationalist volunteers", from 1975 onwards, to Angola and Namibia. These struggles were to play an important role in the eventual collapse of the apartheid regime.

From the very beginning, the Cuban revolution aroused the wrath of US imperialism which has sought to overthrow it on numerous occasions. The 'Bay of Pigs' fiasco in 1962 is the most well known.

Castro lists a series of other attacks attempted by US backed exiles, the US security services and other reactionary counter revolutionaries. There have been more than 600 plans to assassinate Castro himself.

The social gains of the revolution and brutal hostility by US imperialism, illustrate why Cuba is viewed with such sympathy by many workers and young people internationally, especially in Latin America.

Castro, following the disastrous

experiences of capitalist restoration in the former Soviet Union, is opposed to the same path being followed in Cuba. The fact that Cuba was able to survive without completely breaking up the planned economy and restoring capitalism is a measure of the social roots the revolution had established.

Yet Castro reveals his lack of understanding of how and what class will be able to defeat capitalism and build a democratic socialist alternative. This leads him to adopting contradictory ideas and methods.

For Castro, the working class does not play the central role. Referring to the Cuban revolution he says "for us, guerrilla warfare was the detonator of another process and consequential loss of economic subsidies."

Guerrilla

In other words, a guerrilla struggle which was then supported by the mass of the population where the working class played an auxiliary role rather than the leading role. As the CWI explained, because of a series of historical and subjective factors the guerrilla struggle successfully unfolded in Cuba and only as the guerrilla army entered the cities did the urban masses come onto the streets.

Castro gives the impression that he had a clearly formulated 'socialist' objective from the beginning.

However, as explained by the Militant/CWI at the time we did not believe this was the case. The leaders of the movement, in reality, had the objective of overthrowing Batista and the establishing a "modern democratic Cuba."

Che Guevara adopted a different attitude to other leaders of the movement. But as a consequence of the embargo of US imperialism and the pressure from the masses, the leaders were rapidly pushed in a more radical direction, which eventually snuffed out capitalism.

While the processes in the Cuban revolution smashed the old Batista regime, it did shape the nature of

the state which replaced it. Capitalism was overthrown following a series of tit-for-tat reprisals between the new Cuban government and US imperialism.

While this represented a big step forward, it did not result in the establishment of a genuine workers' and peasants' democracy, such as was seen in Russia in 1917. It brought about a bureaucratic regime (with some elements of workers' control at the beginning which have now largely been eroded) managing a nationalised planned economy.

The real character of the state is perhaps inadvertently revealed by Ignacio Ramonet in his introduction to My Life, when he notes: "He [Fidel Castro] makes all the decisions, big and small. Although he consults the political authorities in charge of the Party and the government ... it is Fidel who finally decides".

A genuine regime of workers' democracy would ensure the democratic election of all officials subject to recall, that state and party officials received no more than the average wage of skilled worker, and full freedom of expression of views and criticism. It would allow the right of workers, youth and intellectuals to form their own political parties, including Trotskyists parties, and to contest elections.

Castro's Cuba has not taken on the same grotesque features of Stalin's Russia, with mass purge trials, an unchecked cult of the personality around Stalin etc.

However, bureaucracy and an element of corruption and privileges do exist. The Cuban government admits that 15% of the population own 90% of the pesos held in bank accounts.

The problem that faced Castro during the 1990s, following the collapse of the former USSR, has been one of isolation combined with the limitations imposed by the existence of a bureaucracy and the absence of real workers' democracy.

Measures, such as a partial opening up of the economy and partial dollarisation, were introduced by the regime to try and buy time. These bought their own increased contradictions, vastly increasing differentials between those with access to the US dollar and those without and created a growth of the black market and corruption.

FIDEL

CASTRO

DIES



Defend gains of Cuban revolution

Fight for workers' democracy

Che Guevara (left) and Fidel Castro (right) photo Open Clipart-Vectors/Creative Commons



Cuba at a crossroads Gains of the revolution under threat

The Financial Times (FT) boasted in June: "There is a new entry among Cuba's roll of important dates. Alongside Fidel Castro's 26 July movement and the 1 January 1959 'triumph of the revolution', there is now 17 December 2014."

The FT is confusing revolution with counter revolution. 17 December 2014 was when US President Obama and Cuba's Raul Castro announced a series of historic agreements to restore diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Imperialism

They agreed a relaxation of travel restrictions and the first tentative steps signalling the easing of the trade embargo which has been imposed since the revolution in 1959. Since then the US has re-opened its embassy in Havana.

These developments represent a decisive shift in the policy of US imperialism towards Cuba. It also signifies a further step by the Cuban regime towards capitalist restoration.

Since the Cuban revolution US imperialism has enacted a strict embargo and undertaken various attempts - including armed intervention in 1961 - to overthrow the Cuban regime and restore capitalism. Despite the crippling consequences of the embargo - estimated to have cost the Cuban economy US\$1 trillion - this policy has failed.

The threat of capitalist restoration to an isolated workers' state can come not only from military

intervention. As Trotsky warned in relation to the former Soviet Union, it can come in the form of "cheap goods in the baggage train of imperialism".

The objective of US imperialism is the same but now they hope to reach it by a different route. They want to flood the Cuban economy with goods and investment with the aim of fully restoring capitalism and exploiting Cuba's resources for themselves.

The dire economic situation in Cuba has been disastrous for the masses. The massive social gains conquered as a result of the revolution and overthrow of capitalism have been eroded, particularly since the collapse of the former USSR. Wages in Cuba today are estimated to be worth only 28% of what they were then.

Yet support for the revolution and opposition to capitalism meant that the Cuban regime, incredibly, was able to maintain the planned economy and bureaucratic regime throughout the 1990s and into the early part of the 21st century. Cuba defied the laws of political gravity, despite the tidal wave of free market capitalism which dominated the world economy.

Now the Cuban regime has introduced a series of incremental steps beginning the process of capitalist restoration. The younger generation, desperate to enjoy new freedoms - use of the internet and international travel amongst others - have experienced not the gains but the regression of the revolution, economic and social crisis and the stifling dead hand of the bureaucracy.

For socialists and the working class the moves towards capitalist restoration represent a backward step.

The lifting of the embargo would represent a defeat for the past policy of US imperialism and its attempt to overthrow the Cuban regime. But a state monopoly of foreign trade, controlled democratically by a genuine regime of workers' democracy is essential to help

prevent the increasing threat of capitalist restoration.

The transition to capitalism in Cuba will not be a straightforward, uninterrupted process. The state still maintains powerful control and could choke off these steps at a certain stage and the decisive sectors of the economy have still not been privatised. Sections of the regime do not seem to want to go in this direction.

For more in depth analysis read Peter Taaffe's book: Cuba - Socialism and Democracy, which includes the following paragraphs that summarise where Cuba stands today after Castro's death and under the threat of further capitalist restoration:

"Under the conditions of new international capitalist crisis, moves towards capitalist restoration can be checked. A mixed or hybrid situation could continue for some time.

"Initially such gains from the revolution such as the health care and the education system may be maintained although even these have suffered greatly from lack of investment in the recent period.

Obstacles

"Many obstacles remain to be overcome and some resistance is likely as the reality of capitalist restoration becomes apparent. Sections of the population are already fearful of losing the gains of the revolution and of Cuba being turned into another Puerto Rico.

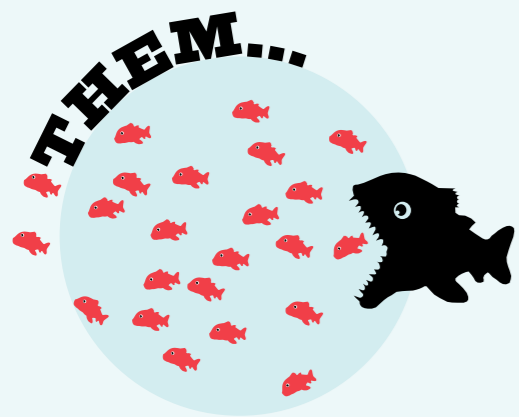
"The need to build resistance to the developing pace of capitalist restoration and struggle for genuine workers' democracy and nationalised planned economy in Cuba is more urgent than ever.

"Such a movement could link together with the working class and youth throughout Latin America which is increasingly moving into struggle to defend its interests and begin to offer a real socialist alternative to capitalism which has fully learnt the lessons of the Cuban revolution."

Cuba: Socialism and Democracy £8



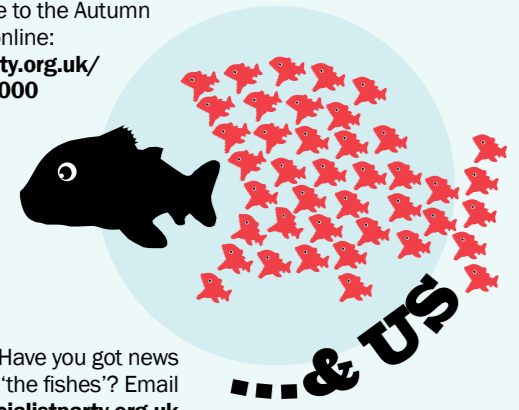
leftbooks.co.uk



AUTUMN STATEMENT SPECIAL!

Rise in over-25 minimum wage +30p an hour - not even enough to hit the Tories' pathetic target of £9 an hour by 2020	Projected cut in low-paid income due to slowdown -40p an hour (Resolution Foundation)
'Work allowances' benefit cut reversal +£700 million, reducing 'taper rate' cut from 65p to 63p a pound (IPPR)	Overall 'Universal Credit' benefit cuts -£3 billion (IPPR)
Housing Act: 'pay to stay' for social tenants Dropped - unless you're already earning above an earlier threshold	Housing Act: effect on council homes Up to 200,000 council homes will go
Investment in 'affordable' homes priced at 80% of market rate £1.4 billion, for 40,000 (un)affordable homes	Increase in council home construction 0
Letting agent fees To be banned	Schedule for introducing ban Non-existent
Total big business tax giveaways £8.5 billion (GMB)	'Just about managing' income £2,500 a year less by 2020 (Policy in Practice)
Extra investment for business £23 billion	New investment for the NHS £0
Corporate profits Highest on record - £103 billion in the third quarter of 2016 (ONS)	Real wages Below 2008 levels for at least the next five years (IFS)
Number of billionaires Highest on record - 120 in the UK (Sunday Times Rich List 2016)	Workers in poverty Six million earn below the Living Wage (KPMG 2015), seven million are in insecure employment (Guardian 2016)
2017 growth forecast 1.4% (OBR)	Reduction in growth forecast -36% (March forecast was 2.2%)

Read the Socialist Party's full response to the Autumn Statement online: socialistparty.org.uk/articles/24000



Have you got news for 'the fishes'? Email editors@socialistparty.org.uk

Hunger strikes, suicides - end detention now

Nick Chaffey
Secretary, Southern Socialist Party

Hunger strikes and suicides have increased dramatically in British detention centres.

A Freedom of Information request showed that out of an estimated 7,500 detainees over three months, 218 were on hunger strike. 109 had attempted suicide, with 649 on suicide watch.

Capitalist wars and economic turmoil have created an unprecedented refugee crisis, with 65.3 million people forced from their homes, over ten million under 18.

This human catastrophe has seen right-wing governments hypocritically scapegoat immigration as the source of shortages in housing, health and education. Meanwhile, their friends in business exploit migrants for cheap labour to boost their profits.

Far from being a refuge for those fleeing war and poverty, British governments have used increasingly draconian powers including refused entry, detention and forced removal.

The Socialist Party stands clearly for the right to asylum and an end to racist immigration laws. Over half the removals in 2015 were to Asian countries. Detention centres should be closed down immediately.

The plight of refugees and migrant workers is a product of the same economic crisis impacting the lives

of working and middle class people in Britain. A united campaign to end austerity, led by Jeremy Corbyn and the trade unions, linked to a socialist programme for housing and public works, could cut across the racist poison peddled by pro-capitalist politicians.

The continued wars in the Middle East supported by the Tory government and their Blairite allies in parliament must be opposed. So too must the arms deals with dictatorial regimes such as Saudi Arabia, carrying out its murderous war in Yemen.

218

Hunger strikers in immigration centres

The appalling crisis in British detention centres exposes the fading liberal façade of British capitalism. The horror of the capitalist crisis experienced by millions around the world condemns this system.

It is the task of socialists to show there is a way out through the mass struggle of the working class in Britain and internationally, for a new world society that works for the 99%. Where the huge wealth and resources of society, in public ownership, could be planned to meet the needs of all, to end war and poverty.



Refugees Rights and Socialist Party protesters photo Senan

Mary Finch
Private tenant

The Tories' 2016 Autumn Statement announced plans to ban letting agent fees - a move which young people and workers everywhere will surely welcome.

Resistance to Tory government and Labour council attacks on housing has been building for years - from the Focus E15 mums to the more recent victory on the Butterfields estate. Undoubtedly these campaigns have played a part in this decision.

But so has the weakness and unpopularity of the Tories in the aftermath of the Brexit vote. As housing campaigners and other groups such as the junior doctors have shown, the mood is turning against them.

Workers are getting organised, and the Tories see the danger of these pockets of resistance coming together to form a mass movement against austerity.

May calculates that a rhetorical shift towards populist policies could undercut this - and it is purely rhetorical. Both Philip Hammond, the present chancellor, and Theresa May, voted against a proposed law in 2014 that would have made letting agent fees illegal.

No date has been set for the abolition of letting agent fees. And there's been no mention of rent controls, or any other intervention to make renting affordable and stable. The Tories have no real intentions of improving the lives of workers.

But that's no reason to despair: we have the power to change that situation. This announcement shows the Tories are weak, and the wrangling over Brexit shows they are divided.

A united movement of workers and young people, including protests and strikes, could easily force them further back. With clear demands for rent controls and a mass programme of council house building - we can win!

> **Fighting the housing crisis: p8-9**

FIGHT TO MAKE LETTING AGENT FEE BAN REALITY



photo Paul Mison/Creative Commons

HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS FOR MALNUTRITION RISE THREEFOLD

Resist Victorian living standards!

Aaron Bailey
Halifax and Huddersfield Socialist Party

Hospitals have come under a new wave of pressure as the number of patients admitted with malnutrition has drastically increased.

Department of Health figures reveal that last year, 184,528 days of hospital bed use were filled with people suffering from malnutrition - up from 65,048 in 2006-7.

This is completely unacceptable

in one of the richest countries in the world.

This is what endless cuts and sell-offs from Blairite and Tory governments are doing to this country. I myself used to have to live off less than £20 a week for food due to the cost of my bills and the low wage I got at the time.

This is exactly why the demand for a £10 an hour minimum wage is so important. It would help lift millions of working people in this country out of poverty, and help them be able to provide more and

higher quality food for themselves and their families.

On the other hand, some people don't have jobs, and have to rely on the ever-depressing and ever-failing benefit system to survive. Lifting the benefit cap would go a long way to helping these people avoid malnutrition.

At the same time, there are thousands of homeless people on the streets who struggle to survive day after day.

Giving them a place to stay, and making sure they have the opportunity to work if they're able, would help alleviate pressure on the overburdened NHS.

Women bear 85% of benefit cuts

Caroline Vincent
Leicester Socialist Party

By 2020 women will have shouldered 85% of the burden of changes to the tax and benefits system, claims a new report by campaign group 'A Fair Deal for Women'. It highlights the disproportionate effect of austerity.

The UK has a female prime minister. You may think this means things could start getting better for women. You may think this heralds an end to gender inequality.

Theresa May thinks otherwise. She leads a government whose sexist policies continue to negatively impact on women's working and family lives, and increase the gender gap.

This impact can have tragic consequences. Two thirds of women's refugees are potentially facing closure due to the housing benefit cap. Junior doctors have also been enraged by the overt sexism in the

Lift the benefit cap, end austerity

new contract the Tories are trying to force upon them. The government states that "any adverse effect on women is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate end."

Discrimination against women in the workplace is rampant, with sexist dress codes commonplace, and a pay gap that will take an estimated 62 years to close!

It's bad enough to arrive at work knowing you will be earning around a fifth less than your male counterparts. Insult is added to injury if you're sent home to change into

high-heeled shoes!

The effect of benefit and tax cuts on women illustrates that fighting sexism is a class issue, and cannot be separated from the fight against the Tories' unrelenting agenda of austerity.

The way to improve women's lives is through the reversal of austerity, creation of secure jobs on decent pay, affordable housing - and free education, adult care and children's care. We need a mass workers' party to help draw women into the fight against inequality in all its forms.

Donate today!

If you agree with what you read in the Socialist, consider making a donation to the Socialist Party's fighting fund:

- pay by card on 020 8988 8777
- cheques payable to 'Socialist Party', PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD
- or socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Julie Ward, Labour MEP for North West England, tweeted support for US socialist Kshama Sawant.

Kshama is a member of Socialist Alternative, co-thinkers of the Socialist Party. She is a twice-elected councilwoman in Seattle, and spearheaded the successful campaign for the city's \$15 an hour minimum wage.

Ward heaped praise on Kshama for fronting the protest movement against Donald Trump. She hasn't responded to our email about letting the expelled socialists back into Labour - yet...



Prince William, like all of us, is concerned by rising homelessness. He is calling for donations to a new helpline.

The Socialist understands his grandma might have a few spare rooms? She owns two enormous stately homes, and the government gives her the use of another two.

Alternatively, the £369 million the Tories are handing over for refurbishes the queen can easily afford could build 3,690 homes.

Have you got news for us? DEADLINE: Friday before publication date - urgent news: Monday
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Tory Chancellor Phillip Hammond's Autumn Statement estimated the cost of the Brexit vote to public borrowing as £59 billion. Despite his change of tack in delaying when the deficit must be paid off, he still intends for it to come out of the pockets of working-class people. This is on top of the more than £100 billion cuts already unloaded onto the poorest in society.

Firstly, how accurate is this figure? The government's estimates have hardly a great track record. The same Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) that came up with the £59 billion figure last week, said George Osborne had an extra £27 billion a year ago giving an unexpected sheen to public finances. These figures have now been quietly forgotten!

Now a report commissioned by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) for an alliance of pro-EU Tory, Lib Dem and Labour MPs, including Blairite Chuka Umunna, is warning of damage to all sectors of the economy if there is a 'hard Brexit'. In reality, this is the thin edge of the wedge towards arguing for a re-run referendum.

Blow

The ultimate defender of neo-liberalism, Tony Blair, has also entered the fray. Millions of workers saw the referendum as an opportunity to strike a blow against the capitalist elite and its austerity that Blair is very much a part of. Their spin is that those who voted for Brexit fell for the right-wing racist populism of Farage, Johnson and Gove and will be responsible for plunging the economy into crisis.

The Socialist Party argued for a vote to leave the pro-business EU which has enshrined the vicious austerity that has been meted out to the likes of Greece and Ireland as well as de-regulation and privatisation which seeks to undermine workers' wages and rights. As we predicted, the vote was a massive defeat for the capitalist establishment and its political representatives, including the Blairites in Labour.

The chief architects of Tory austerity, Cameron and Osborne are history and May's administration is racked by divisions over the implementation of Brexit. These splits would be revealed if the terms of Brexit were put to a vote by another referendum or an early general election. In fact, it is the main reason for her reluctance to call one, although it may become unavoidable.

The attempted coup against Jeremy Corbyn was part of this political crisis, with the Blairites acting on behalf of the establishment to try and depose Corbyn before a possible general election. They still have nagging doubts that despite Corbyn's mistaken retreats, including campaigning for Remain despite his historical opposition to the EU, in the heightened atmosphere of an election he can be a threat.

However, his position in the EU Referendum was a missed opportunity and meant that the Labour leadership wasn't able to exploit the Tory defeat. It gave the populist right the chance to assume a leading role. Farage now intends to continue this by exploiting the genuine fear of many workers that the establishment is attempting to delay Brexit or even have a second bite of the cherry.



A Jeremy Corbyn ally argued that access to the single market is the priority for Labour in the Brexit negotiations - but this is mistaken if it means accepting its neo-liberal rules

Corbyn now needs to take the initiative but this won't be possible by merely echoing the arguments of the 'soft Brexiters'. On Sunday's Andrew Marr programme, Labour's shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry, who is seen as a close ally of Jeremy Corbyn, argued that access to the single market is the priority for Labour in the Brexit negotiations.

But this is mistaken if it means accepting its neo-liberal rules. Many working-class communities know that - to the cost of industries such as car, steel making and ship-building - the capitalist single market doesn't act in the interests of workers but the multi-nationals, who want to

Brexit spin

DEMAND A REAL
WORKERS' BREXIT



What we think



Greek workers striking against EU imposed austerity

protect their profits by manufacturing in the lowest-cost economies.

Labour must break with this consensus and demand a real workers' Brexit. This means a programme based on repudiating the anti-worker posted directives and privatisation rules that oppose nationalisation of companies and industries, demanding a minimum wage of £10 an hour with no age exemptions and enshrining rights to trade union rights, including to collective bargaining.

It should also not be confined to this country but on these policies reach out to the working-class across

Europe who are suffering from the EU's austerity offensive.

This would illuminate the class character of the EU and differentiate Corbyn's Labour from the pro-market opponents inside and outside his party. It would also be a weapon in exposing the pro-capitalist reality of Farage in the eyes of pro-leave workers and lay the way for real workers unity to defeat the anti-immigrant right-wing populism of Ukip. This is the basis to fight for a government that can challenge austerity capitalism in the UK and throughout Europe.

Support the campaign to readmit expelled trade union militants

Hannah Sell

Socialist Party deputy general secretary

For months the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) 'away day' on 22 November, 2016 had been billed as a meeting to discuss the Labour Party's currently undemocratic structures. Momentum (Corbyn support group) ran a campaign called 'Your Party', spearheaded by Fire Brigades Union general secretary Matt Wrack, for the away day to agree to increase the number of NEC members representing the Labour Party membership.

Unfortunately, the meeting on 22 November did not discuss party democracy. One NEC member described the meeting as "tranquil" with "nothing faintly controversial on the agenda". However, this surface calm does not hide the fact that the Blairites remain determined to undermine and remove Jeremy Corbyn. In order to consolidate his leadership victory it is urgent that action is taken to democratise the Labour Party and end the Blairites control of the party machine.

Essential

An essential part of this is campaigning for the re-admittance to the Labour Party of all expelled or excluded socialists. Earlier this month a joint application for Labour Party membership was submitted to the Labour Party NEC. It was from 75 people, with a combined Labour Party membership of over 1,000 years. A petition in support of their application has been signed by hundreds of trade unionists and activists.

You can sign the petition at socialistparty.org.uk/main/Readmit_expelled_socialists

All the applicants have previously been expelled or excluded from the Labour Party because of their socialist ideas. Among them were many leading figures from the trade union movement including Chris Baugh, PCS assistant general secretary,

Jane Nellist, NUT national executive and Roger Bannister, Hugo Pierre and Dave Auger, all members of Unison's ruling national executive committee. Trade union representatives on the Labour Party NEC should urgently argue their case.

Chris Baugh explained why he had joined the collective application: "From my teens I was a Labour Party member for over 20 years before being expelled in 1995. For PCS members, Blair and Brown meant widespread privatisations, job cuts and attacks on pay and conditions. Blairism nearly destroyed Labour as a voice for working people. The election of Jeremy Corbyn is a chance to change things. In a personal capacity and alongside those who were unfairly expelled for our socialist ideas, I hope the Labour Party will agree our application to rejoin."

Roger Bannister added: "I want to be re-admitted to the Labour Party so I can help transform Labour into a party that opposes cuts at national and local level. Since 2010 almost 700,000 local government workers, including many Unison members, have lost their jobs as vital services have closed. That is why Unison's local government service group executive has now called on Labour council's to implement no cuts budgets."

"I was one of those expelled from the Labour Party in the 1980s because I had the temerity to support the struggle of Liverpool City Council against Maggie Thatcher, which succeeded in forcing the Tory government to give £60 million worth of extra funding to the council. Today, Liverpool and other Labour councils are implementing eye-watering cuts."

"I hope that trade unionists on the Labour Party NEC, particularly the Unison members Keith Birch and Wendy Nicholls, will support our re-admittance to the Labour Party in order to further the discussion on how the Labour Party can best defend local government jobs and services."

Also see Eric Segal's comment on page 12



photo Paul Mattsson

■ Conference to debate TUSC's role now and the 2017 elections

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) national steering committee has agreed the agenda for the TUSC conference to be held in London on 28 January.

The main session will be a forum about TUSC's role now and the 2017 elections, to explore how TUSC should operate in the welcome new political situation opened up by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party. There will also be a conference session on TUSC's campaigning tasks in the battle against council cuts, as local authorities prepare to set their 2017-2018 budgets.

The conference is on Saturday 28 January from 11am to 4.30pm at Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY.



Labour Party branch votes for reselection

Last week, the Socialist reported that a motion backing the mandatory reselection of Labour MPs passed at Chingford Labour Party branch. We are pleased to report that at a meeting on 25 November the Leyton and Wanstead constituency general committee also voted to endorse mandatory reselection, this time proposed by the Wanstead branch:

Wanstead Labour Party branch welcomes the reselection of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader as a reflection of the general mood in the Labour Party against austerity.

MPs have not got 'jobs for life'. They represent their constituency but ultimately they are selected by and accountable to their Constituency Labour Party. To ensure democratic accountability and the rights of party members to select candidates that reflect their views, this branch supports the need for mandatory reselection of Labour MPs in each Parliament as essential.

We call on the General Committee of Leyton & Wanstead CLP to support a rule change to the Labour Party rulebook to reintroduce mandatory reselection of MPs before each general election.

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR COUNCILLORS VOTE THROUGH MORE CUTS



Anti-cuts councillor Keith Morrell who Southampton Labour have refused to work with photo Paul Mattsson

Southampton Socialist Party

Southampton Labour Party recently held their AGM as the councillors in the cabinet voted through a further round of budget cuts.

Southampton Socialist Party members leafleted the meeting calling for Labour councillors to fight cuts or resign. Labour Party members who attended the meeting said:

"What is the role of the left in Labour? Surely it is to mobilise the thousands of new members around

Corbyn's anti-austerity demands and organise to take control of the Labour Party.

"But Momentum in Southampton have excluded experienced fighting socialists from meetings and refused to work with local anti-cuts councillors, Keith Morrell, Don and Tammy Thomas."

Speakers put questions to council leader Simon Letts about the impact on Labour voters if they continued carrying out Tory cuts and demanded a campaign to oppose cuts, to applause from members.

THE HOUSING CRISIS - A TOXIC ISSUE FOR THE TORIES

Almost everyone acknowledges there is a major housing crisis in the UK. As **Paul Kershaw** (Unite housing branch LE1111) explains, a chronic lack of affordable housing has been made worse by the government's attack on social housing. Millions of households find themselves at the mercy of the private sector, where landlords and property developers are making vast sums. Worse still, as the two companion articles show, is the plight of homeless families. But workers and tenants are fighting back and have forced some concessions out of the Tories.

The government has retreated from enacting the 'tenant tax' or pay to stay proposals of their misnamed Housing Act. This is a relief for social housing tenants who could have been pushed out of their homes and represents a real victory for campaigners.

In a further sign of weakness the government has also delayed 'right to buy' for housing associations until at least 2018. It's clear that the hated housing act is in deep trouble.

The Tories understood that the housing crisis is a toxic issue for them. House building is at an historic low, private rents continue to rocket upwards and homelessness is rising by any measure and the benefit cap is clobbering families.

The potential for a grass roots movement resisting pay to stay around the call 'can't pay, will stay' is dangerous for them.

Unaffordable

However, many damaging measures in the act are still moving forward. No new secure tenancies will be issued for council homes creating more instability in working class communities. And changes to planning regulations will make life easier for property developers.

In an important move housing associations will be deregulated 'freeing' them to serve the banks and investors without restraint; tenants beware!

Housing associations own a majority of social housing in England. Deregulation means they will now be able to sell social housing on the market or change it to market rent without seeking 'consent' from a regulator.

In the Autumn Statement they pledged an extra £4.7 billion for affordable housing. For most of us that sounds like a lot of money but it is hopelessly inadequate for people struggling to find an affordable home.

The Tories have slashed spending on 'affordable' housing in recent years and only £1 is spent on affordable rented homes for every £20 spent on subsidies for home ownership initiatives such as the misnamed 'help to buy'.

Help to buy is unaffordable to most young people, although Tory MPs have used the scheme to buy investment properties. It pushes up house prices and acts as a support to private house builders.

In 2012 there were almost 40,000

social rented homes completed in England, a terribly low figure in historical terms, but in 2016 just 950 social rented homes were started.

Last year housing associations actually transferred 4,406 social rented homes out of the sector, and that is before deregulation. Associations justify their record surpluses of £3 billion last year on the basis that surpluses help them build homes; but what kind of homes?

The new Clarion housing association, (a merger of Circle and Affinity Sutton housing associations), announced a £1.1 billion land buying programme to build 50,000 new homes. But they say that the proportion of affordable homes built will fall from 85% or 90% now to just 65%

'Affordable' can mean unaffordable home ownership schemes such as 'help to buy' or rents as high as 80% of market rent.

For decades investment in social housing has been cut. Private builders were supposed to fill the gap but this has not happened. Big house builders have been increasing their profits (see fact box) but not the number of homes built.

Meanwhile they say that they cannot afford to meet local authority requirements to build a proportion of social housing in new developments. On top of this, they complain about a shortage of skilled labour.

They are concentrating on 'high end' homes and pleasing their shareholders, not on building desperately needed affordable homes and not on investing in decent apprenticeships.

Profiteering house builders are part of the problem not the solution. They should be nationalised and re-organised to provide quality affordable homes and train directly employed workers.

Mass council housing

A significant part of the enthusiasm generated by Jeremy Corbyn's first leadership campaign came from his call for mass council house building.

But Labour's right wing shadow housing minister John Healey commissioned Peter Redfern, boss of house builders Taylor Wimpey, to produce a report on house building. Not surprisingly the report does not identify the house builders as a problem and he calls for a 'bi partisan' approach to housing.

Far from making Labour more electorally attractive Labour is missing opportunities to apply an anti-austerity approach to housing.



Opinion polls show overwhelming support for rent controls. Labour should link with private tenants to campaign for real rent controls, setting a realistic level for rents not just restricting the rate of rent increase



photo Paul Mattsson

- Buy to let landlords earning returns of 1,400% since 1996 outperformed shares and bonds
- The average landlord can expect almost £60,000 a year from rent payments, more than twice the average wage of £27,174
- Over the past three years the revenues of the top nine housebuilding firms grew by 76% and profits by 200% and profits for the five biggest firms rose from £372 million in 2010 to over £2 billion by 2015, a 480% increase
- Almost half of this went to shareholders rather than being re-invested and just eight directors working for major house builders together 'earned' £230 million in the last five years

Labour local authorities should halt 'social cleansing' regeneration schemes that result in reduced social housing. They could use reserves to set legal 'needs budgets' and build council homes. They should also demand no loss of social housing through housing association disposals or tenure transfers.

Opinion polls show overwhelming support for rent controls. Labour should link with private tenants to campaign for real rent controls, setting a realistic level for rents not just restricting the rate of rent increase.

There can be no housing crisis solution that does not start with a massive programme of council house building. This call should be a central demand. The casino banks will not be an adequate source of funding for this; they must be nationalised.

Butterfields Didn't Budge:
How tenants on one east London estate saved their homes

Pamphlet by **Waltham Forest Socialist Party** on the lessons of the victorious anti-eviction campaign by tenants of the Butterfields estate in Walthamstow. **£2.50** (inc postage).

Special offer for Socialist Party branches - **10 pamphlets for £10** to be sold or distributed in local housing campaigns, trade union branches, tenants' associations and anti-cuts committees.

email sarahwrack@socialistparty.org.uk to order

Fight the cuts - Victims of domestic abuse depend on it

After my mum's first abusive partner, we had to move. But before you are eligible for council housing you have to be living within the region of a local authority for some time. For domestic violence victims this is a dangerous rule.

Those fleeing abuse need to be able to move away from a perpetrator otherwise they are likely to remain trapped in a cycle of abuse.

Fleeing is also a time when women and children are most likely to be killed by partner or ex-partner.

Like many women with children we were not street homeless, we were put up by a family member - a single room and a single bunk bed which we had to share for six months.

This is 'hidden homelessness' and is often not acknowledged as homelessness. However, it carries many physical and psychological effects. It's hard to get into schools, you don't have your own possessions, and can't have control over your life.

This is where my mum met her second abuser. He was in the army and therefore was entitled to low priced, good quality housing on the army barracks if he is married. Looking back it is clear he took advantage of our situation.

It took us three and a half years of hell to escape. In this time, the battalion had also moved over to Northern Ireland and so physically we were cut off from support networks.

My mum had contacted a women's shelter in England but it could only offer us an emergency bed for a few days because of the financial strain on their services. I know now this strain had come from a Labour council.

At this stage my mum tried twice to end her life. We had nowhere to go and yet again we did not qualify for any social housing.

A relative kept us off the streets until we qualified for council housing.

Homelessness - capitalism is destroying people's lives

My partner and I are living in what's known as emergency accommodation. It's a small room which costs the council £150 a week. The building is old and falling apart. It's dusty and often we have to wipe the walls with bleach to get rid of black mould.

The only reason we have been housed is because my partner is pregnant, otherwise the council would have no responsibility to help us.

The cramped conditions aren't very good for her and we have been suffering ill health for the last two months. Whenever she needs to rest I take my books and read in the communal kitchen, otherwise I'd make too much noise and wake her up.

Yet I consider us extremely fortunate. Why, you might ask? Because it could be worse. I have seen the poor mental health and desperate situations of other residents in the same building.

One tenant, a pensioner, who has severe chest problems and can barely walk, has been told he must leave next month because he is deemed not to be a priority any longer.

A couple have just been told by their council that they have until January to find their own accommodation. He suffers multiple mental and physical problems and his wife



He suffers multiple mental and physical problems and his wife is still recovering from a recent brain tumour. I asked where will they go. The answer I got was that they will live in their car

is still recovering from a recent brain tumour. I asked where will they go. The answer I got was that they will live in their car.

Keeping positive in all this is difficult. We could be on the streets. That's not so unlikely, with the demand for housing, even emergency housing, much higher than the supply, I am under no illusion that our situation is secure at all. I prepare myself every day for the worst.

What is the cost to fix this? Councils spending billions on emergency accommodation is a huge waste of money, unless, of course, you're a landlord.

I won't tar all landlords with the same brush. Some are decent, some are not. But in general, it's become a big investment pot for property owners. Many of the politicians who carry through austerity cuts have properties and gain in this way.

It's clear that the majority of politicians have no answers for our problems. We need policies and a party that will fight for working class interests.

I am living in a situation where I can see the effects of neoliberalism, of capitalism, literally destroying families and single people. A fight-back is now more important than ever. And it can be won. United, we are stronger than those that oppress us.



Those fleeing abuse need to be able to move away from a perpetrator

At this point me and my sister were teenagers but they still put us in a small two bed flat, where we lived for two years with cardboard boxes for curtains and no carpets - safe but with our food being provided by the salvation army and mostly without heating.

We need affordable social housing, services that can offer both refuge and therapeutic outreach services to help survivors rebuild their lives. Instead we are met with complex and soulless procedures.

The call for Labour councillors to fight the cuts, or stand aside if they won't, could not be more urgent.

My family survived by lucky acts of kindness, but every week two women do not.

Disgustingly, local authorities are leaving women and children's lives to chance and they are dying at the hands of their cuts. Alternatively they are being left trapped in abuse and if they get out they are left with not much of a life at all.



[News in brief]

Sanctuary salaries

Unite Housing Workers branch LE1111 are collecting signatures for a petition to force Sanctuary Housing Group to reverse its decision to cut the salaries of its workers...



Deliveroo dispute

In a test case that follows a court victory by Uber cab drivers, a legal challenge to demand workers' rights is being made by the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) union...

Fast Food strike

On 29 November fast food workers in 340 cities across the USA took strike action again for \$15 an hour and the right to join a union.

Get the latest union news... with the National Shop Stewards Network bulletin Available every week at shopstewards.net and by email subscription

LONDON CROSSRAIL WORKERS WALK OUT

Socialist Party and NSSN supporters on the march photo Paula Mitchell



Rob Williams NSSN national chair

Hundreds of electricians walked off construction sites on the massive Crossrail job in London on 25 November demanding that management adhere to the Joint Industry Board (JIB) agreement...

They protested outside Crossrail's head office, in the belly of the beast of capitalism itself, Canary Wharf. They then went en masse to the Oxford Street office of one of the major contractors - Laing O'Rourke/Crown House - near the Tottenham Court site.

Members of the Socialist Party and the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) supported the workers and suggested taking the demonstration inside the office, which saw the reception crammed with protesting electricians chanting 'Crossrail pay up!'

I spoke at the Oxford Street protest, reminding workers about the

2012 victory over the Besna contract that would have seen wages cut by 35% and this year's £75 million compensation won from bosses by blacklisted workers.

The stoppage was a timely warning as Unite launches a campaign of demands they want from Crossrail and the electrical contractors. A consultative industrial action ballot will start this week.

Safety

As well as the second tier payment, workers are calling for project-wide agreements on a safety committee, redundancy terms, stewards committee and full and unfettered access of union officers to workforce, and a working party on working hours.

As the trade union movement marks the fifth anniversary of the massive two million strong 30 November public sector pensions strike it also awaits the implementation of the Tory Trade Union Act. This action, along with the unofficial walkout of prison officers two weeks ago, is a sign of the potential power of the organised working-class!

Durham TAs strike 24 November photos Durham TAs/Twitter



Durham teaching assistants determined to win

Alan Docherty Teesside Socialist Party

Durham teaching assistants (TAs) successfully took another two days of strike action on 23 and 24 November. A hundred schools were picketed. On 23 November over 1,000 teaching assistants descended on Durham with

public street protests and a march. The TAs are continuing industrial action by working to their contracts.

Despite these strikes the Labour council remains adamant that it has no choice but to cut the TAs pay by 23% in order to prevent the costs of equal pay claims which they say would amount to millions of pounds and cause hundreds of redundancies. The council has been employing new TAs on the reduced



contracts since June 2016 and it boasts that it has had no problems filling these posts.

The council has now agreed to meet with Unison who have made it clear that Durham council must commit to meaningful negotiations and abandon its plans to sack and re-engage the TAs, before it will cease industrial action.

The TAs have received massive public support which has been carried over into the Labour Party. Despite attempts by the council's Labour group to suppress debate, Durham City Labour Party has unanimously passed, at an all member meeting, a motion in support of the Durham TAs.

It asks Durham council to seek a solution to the dispute which involves a pause to the threat of dismissal and a collective regrading

where no TAs are left in a worse financial position.

Similar motions have been passed by other Labour Party branches and constituency Labour parties. It is still not clear what the official negotiating position of Unison is.

There appears to be a reluctance to press for the reopening of job evaluation to regrade the TAs because of an acceptance of the council's negotiating position of a fear that increased salary costs could result in job and service cuts elsewhere.

Despite Tory central government cuts, Durham council is running a budget surplus this year of over £2 million and has useable reserves in the region of £300 million. The council can afford to pay the TAs more. It should not be accepting Tory austerity to bash the workforce, but instead be fighting the government to demand adequate funding for local services.



Southern lobby of parliament photo Paula Mitchell

Strike action across London and South East rail network

Combined strike action by up to 400 train drivers and other rail workers is set to bring Southern and London Underground to a standstill.

There will be further Southern strike action, which will coincide with disruption to the Piccadilly and Hammersmith & City lines on the tube.

Drivers in Aslef voted 87% in favour of joining the dispute on Southern with the strikes to take place on 13, 14 and 16 December. Another three-day walkout by Southern RMT guards is planned for 6-8 December.

The RMT has also announced 24-hour walkouts by train drivers on the Piccadilly and Hammersmith & City lines from 9.30pm on 6 December.

Mick Whelan, the Aslef general secretary, said: "Our trade dispute with the company is that there should be no introduction and/or extension of new driver-only operated routes on Southern without the agreement of Aslef."

Both the Piccadilly and Hammersmith & City line walkouts follow a breakdown in industrial relations. The RMT reports "heavy handed and aggressive management" on the Hammersmith & City line, and "ripped up" policies and procedures on the Piccadilly line.

TSSA station staff on London Underground have also announced action, over staffing levels, voting 67% in favour of a strike.

PROTEST TO DEMAND PAY RISE FOR SHEFFIELD

Alistair Tice Sheffield Socialist Party

Sheffield is the city region with the highest proportion of people on low incomes. Between 2010 and 2014, Sheffield's average wage was £50 a week lower than the UK average.

When the misnamed government living wage was introduced in April, it was estimated that 28% of the city's workforce would get a pay rise by 2020, more than in any other large city and twice as many as in London.

That's why Sheffield Trades Council, on the initiative of the bakers' union BFAWU and with the support of Unite, GMB and Usdaw trade unions, has launched its Sheffield Needs A Pay Rise (SNAP) campaign and is building for a demonstration in the city on 17 December.

With the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) reporting that average wages in the UK will be lower in 2021 than they were in 2008 (see front page), Sheffield's SNAP campaigns to end zero-hour contracts, for a £10 an hour minimum wage and re-

cruting people to trade unions. It is generating an enthusiastic response from local trade unionists and unorganised workers alike.

Over 200 attended the SNAP launch meeting last month, held while Veolia bin workers were taking strike action for a pay rise. Since then, volunteers have been touring stores and shops in the city's high streets to map out the area and introduce the campaign to mainly young and almost always non-unionised workers.

Enthusiastic

Gareth Lane from the bakers' union explained the enthusiastic response from two stores. At a women's fashion store, the manageress said that workers already knew about the demo and had been discussing it on their internal email.

At Iceland, leaflets were eagerly taken by staff who promised that while half of them would be working on the day of the demo, they'd make sure that the other half were all there.

BFAWU members at Pennine Foods took two rounds of 48-hour

strike action earlier this year to stop the company making massive pay cuts. Now shop stewards there are actively promoting the SNAP campaign among the largely migrant workforce.

New shop steward Florin said: "Our campaign on the Pennine site has had excellent feedback, very positive and enthusiastic from most of our workers. Monika [another steward] is doing a great job discussing with people, especially with the Polish and Slovakian workers. And I'm trying to bring our Romanian community from Sheffield and surrounding areas onto this demonstration."

The recent victories of Deliveroo and Uber workers in London show the potential for low paid workers to get organised and win pay rises. The Sheffield campaign is tapping into that mood and is the sort of action that should be rolled out by trade unions across the country.

Sheffield Needs A Pay Rise demonstration: Saturday 17 December 2016. Assemble 1.00pm at Devonshire Green



Pennine Foods strike in Sheffield, 6 June photo Alistair Tice

Young workers in Leeds socialise and mobilise at Unison young workers gig

Kieran Herbert Leeds Socialist Party and Unison member (personal capacity)

Around 50 people turned up to enjoy a Unison-sponsored gig for young and potential members at the Fenton pub in Leeds on 25 November, an event which was about more than just music and comedy.

This evening was filled with entertainment, speeches, and political discussion. Starting the night off was comedian Mabel Flattery, followed by acoustic acts Rose Kincaid and Dan Noble, and then rounded off with the bands Too-

dles and the Hetic Pity and the Daves.

Speeches by Leeds Unison young members officer Ben Mayor, and Iain Dalton from the Yorkshire and Humber TUC Youth Forum added to the political debate.

The main focus of the evening was to promote the need for people to join trade unions particular-

ly for young people.

With more jobs being based on zero-hour contracts and exploited self-employed workers, unions are very important for young workers to fight back for their employment rights and fair pay.

Events such as this gig are great opportunities for young workers to socialise and mobilise.

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

socialistparty.org.uk/join 020 8988 8777

@socialist_party text 07761 818 206 /CWISocialistParty



Labour: readmit expelled socialists! Comment - a proven record of fighting back



Militant placards on an anti-poll tax demonstration photo Steve Gardiner

Eric Segal
East Kent Socialist Party, expelled from Labour 1991, Labour Party member from 1976

I've been asked why socialists like me should be readmitted to the Labour Party now Jeremy Corbyn has been elected leader. I became involved in the campaign to save the local hospital in the 1970s, and local left-wing councillors invited me to join the Labour Party. I subsequently became a supporter of Militant, a Marxist newspaper which organised to defend socialist ideas in Labour.

I became the Labour Party youth officer in Folkestone, and we had one of the largest and most active branches of the Labour Party Young Socialists in the South East. This was true wherever Militant supporters took the lead.

We stood shoulder to shoulder with workers on strike. We built support for Liverpool's socialist Labour council, which won tens of millions back from Thatcher, creating thousands of homes and jobs.

Together with other socialists, I campaigned in Brighton Kempdown for Labour's Militant-supporting parliamentary candidate Rod Fitch, under the banner of 'a workers' MP on a worker's wage'.

Our campaign did not win the seat - but it was the only constituency in the south to hold the Labour vote. Liverpool and Brighton Kempdown cut across the lie that socialist policies don't win votes!

We organised and campaigned to build support for the miners in their 1984-85 strike. The Kent branch of the National Union of Mineworkers sent me to Holland and Belgium to resolve problems that arose concerning picketing.

We built local, national and international support for seafarers during the bitter P&O dispute. We drew attention to the weak and ineffective national - and, with some honourable exceptions, local - leadership of the National Union of Seamen.

Poll tax

During the campaign to build mass opposition to Thatcher's poll tax, which Militant organised and helped lead nationally, I was elected as secretary of the Kent Anti-Poll Tax Federation. The Folkestone anti-poll tax union alone had a membership of 2,400.

The local Labour Party leaders, together with help from Peter Mandelson MP, began the process of expelling lefts who were embarrassing Neil Kinnock's failed leadership. Kevin Blake, my wife Robbie Segal and myself were targeted. The process destroyed the local Labour Party.

I was one of the 34 Militant supporters imprisoned for refusing to pay the poll tax, and was sacked a few weeks after coming out of prison.

I had to retrain, and studied law. I worked for ten years in criminal law, then ten years at the Refugee Legal Centre, and became senior shop steward. We fought hard during those 20 years to defend the continual and conscious cuts to legal aid by successive New Labour and Tory governments.

The South East Kent Trades Union Council, of which I am secretary, was set up with the support of the late Bob Crow of transport union RMT. We have built a strong, campaigning, autonomous and vocal trades council.



I was one of the 34 Militant supporters imprisoned for refusing to pay the poll tax

We have campaigned in defence of Sure Start centres, care and respite centres, traffic control at schools; for workers' rights at Sports Direct, for a £10 an hour minimum wage, to unionise Saga; and most recently, the magnificent campaign to defend Pent Valley School.

It's time for all socialists to stand up and be counted. This is not the time for compromise and 'partnership', but for bold, clearly defined socialist policies, carried out by determined representatives of our class.

Sign the petition to readmit the expelled socialists here: socialistparty.org.uk/main/readmit_expelled_socialists

Socialists and trade unionists blocking bailiffs photo Onay Kasab



Bully bailiff

A local friend contacted me on the morning of 14 November, and was clearly upset. His elderly parents were alarmed, he stated.

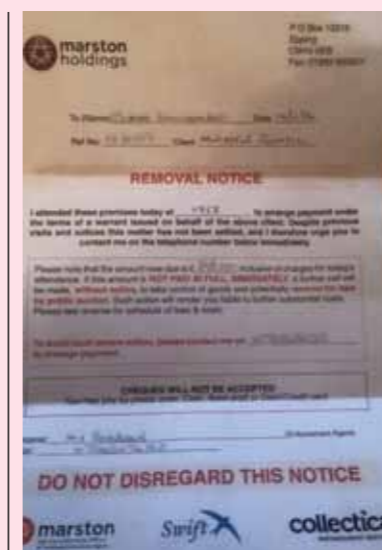
Wearing only a jacket with the word "ENFORCEMENT" on the back of it in oversized print, someone was prowling the family home, stalking from front to rear, peering through and rapping on windows, pounding on doors, and shouting.

Why became clear only after this mystery character left the premises, much to the relief of my friend's parents. They discovered something in their post box.

It was a demand notice from a company called Marston Holdings. A quick search of Marston Holdings on Twitter yielded an account, @MarstonGroup, describing itself as follows: "The UK's largest judicial services group with c. 2,000 staff & self-employed agents recovering £300m+ per year on behalf of taxpayers, businesses & individuals."

So, who was the company collecting for? Newcastle City Council is named as the client on the document discovered at the door following the unhappy episode.

I asked my friend how he and his family felt about the situation. He said: "They



obviously have no concept of empathy for the alarm and distress they are causing. If this is a local Labour council's way then God help us all."

Even though the demand is for someone else, and was served mistakenly at the wrong address, he added: "I pity the poor sod who's next."

William Jarret
North Shields

Writers' wages

Class struggle is everywhere every day, even in a seemingly idyllic holiday destination. Meeting and observing three waiters while on a week's holiday in northern Italy brought home this truth.

One night we met a 22-year-old American, Tom, from Michigan. He had just finished working for a restaurant back home where he was paid \$3.50 an hour - that's around £2.85. He spoke eloquently about the strain on waiters each working day, wondering whether they will make enough in tips to pay the bills.

Tom was interested to hear of the election and re-election of Kshama Sawant in Seattle, and the \$15 Now campaign which had won a \$15 minimum wage in that city and others across the USA.

Arriving at Genoa Airport for the flight home, we noticed a woman serving at a snack bar, doing the jobs of three people. With unbelievable good grace, panache and a good grasp of several languages, she took orders, made the coffees, warmed up the food and served it up while the queue grew and grew.

After touching down in the UK, we encountered another barista at a motorway services. Again, he was doing the job on

his own while the queue snaked back towards the door. In contrast to our Genoa Airport woman, he seemed ground down by it - maybe having had to endure these conditions for longer.

All three waiters were young, full of life, full of potential and - unless the working class organises in its own interests, facing a future of low wages, insecurity and exploitation.

Rob Rooney
Cornwall

Super seventies?

I am fed up with the BBC constantly referring to the 1970s as grim. It wasn't like this at all.

My great grandfather used to eke out a living in the pre-war years in Bristol selling stores to ships on the river, while his sister-in-law was forced to live in a caravan on a fairground site or be in the work-house. That was the 1930s, with workers being told to know their place.

In the 1970s, on the contrary, the unions had the bosses by the short and curls. In 1980 I obtained an apprenticeship at Rolls-Royce, who offered free training. This was gained by the unions, as previously you had had to put up £100 to be an apprentice, out of your own pocket.

The 70s were good years for the poor compared to today, and there was nothing wrong with being down the pit, on the docks or in a factory which put hard cash in your pocket.

I have complained to the BBC about its constant decrying of this decade and the unions. The specific complaint was about the 'Coast' programme. The presenter had said that the unions manipulated their workers into strikes.

I pointed out that this was complete fantasy, as before the unions and the National Dock Labour Board, workers had to stand in a cage and be picked for work. The woman at BBC complaints, who lived in Scotland, said the system of zero-hour work is reminiscent of that era.

Mick Comys
Bristol

Tram tragedy

The recent Croydon tram derailment killed several passengers. It was a further major tragedy since privatisation of public transport.

The media have rushed to blame the driver who seems to have fallen asleep. Now another man has been suspended after video evidence showed him sleepy while driving a tram. Public attention should focus on policy, not just the failings of individual drivers.

Unite the Union recently conducted a safety survey aimed at all London bus drivers and received thousands of responses. The results are still being collated, but it is already clear that fatigue is a big concern. In some senses bus driving which had won a \$15 minimum wage in that city and others across the USA.

Croydon trams are operated by First Group on behalf of Transport for London. Trams are few nationally, but about five firms, including First, run the bulk of buses and trains for profit.

My experience as a bus driver is that shift work, including very early starts and some finishing after 2am, is compounded by long hours at the wheel. Many drivers work overtime to bring home enough wages for their families.

Safety regulations, such as up to five and a half hours driving before a thirty-minute relief or minimum overnight breaks, are seen more as targets than extremes to be avoided as far as possible! If you show them the Highway Code recommendation of a tea or coffee break after two hours driving, bus drivers laugh.

If Jeremy Corbyn's call for renationalisation of the rail companies was developed into a rounded-out public transport policy it would be a clear winner.

Bus driver
Lewisham, south London

Stop Sainsbury

Lord Sainsbury has donated over £20 million to the Labour Party over the last two decades. But as well as donating to the Labour Party, since 2004 Lord Sainsbury has been effectively bankrolling the Blairite faction of the Labour Party, Progress, to the sum of £260,000 per year.

Progress claims to be Labour's "moderates", but its members have played a leading role in the undemocratic coup against the current leadership.

This is not the first time that Lord Sainsbury has used his enormous wealth to steer the development of the Labour Party, however.

Back in 1981 - when, much to the chagrin of Labour right wingers, Michael Foot was the leader of the Labour Party - David Sainsbury (not yet a peer) used his financial resources to bankroll the Social Democratic Party (SDP) - a right-wing split from Labour.

The key objective of the SDP was to keep a left-wing Labour Party from power by splitting the left vote. They succeeded in this task, and Sainsbury, who donated £750,000 to the SDP between 1981 and 1987, played no small part in this.

Given his history of funding the right, maybe it is about time the 'compliance unit' took Lord Sainsbury's membership under review?

Tom Barker
Leicester

I, Daniel Blake

'I, Daniel Blake' finds Daniel (played brilliantly by Dave Johns), a 59-year-old joiner, recovering from a major heart attack. His consultant is concerned that Daniel's heart may begin to beat irregularly, and tells him he is at risk if he continues to work.

Daniel can do light work and is eligible for a few points towards the 'employment and support allowance' benefit. But unfortunately, his points do not tally up enough for him enough to qualify, and he is declared fit to work.

I won't give anymore of the plot away. I found the film very poignant. It shows the day-to-day struggle of people who, through no fault of their own, are systematically being failed by a government which puts up every obstacle to stop the working class from getting a decent life.

Meanwhile, they let the bankers get ludicrous bonuses, instead of building affordable houses and helping hard-working people who are willing to graft like they used to but injury and illness prevents.
Calvin Fowler
Worcester

Sheffield for sale!



Trees protest 26 November
photo Save Sheffield Trees/Twitter

Jeremy Short
Sheffield Socialist Party

Residents of Rustlings Road in Sheffield were awoken by the chainsaws of Amey contractors at 5am on 17 November, protected by police. They were cutting down eight trees as part of a £2.2 billion PFI contract. Residents were told to move their cars or have them towed away.

Three protestors were arrested - under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act!

Only five days later, the council

announced a plan to allow a Chinese developer to turn the much-loved 90-year-old central library into a 5-star hotel, ruining the public space of Tudor Square.

These closely followed the closure of 'consultation' on new flood defence plans, involving damming river valleys much used by local walkers, and flooding major parks in the city in order to release land elsewhere for development.

All these events stem from the Labour Council's failure to stand up to Tory Government cuts and their desperation to get money from the private sector.

The council proposes a £40 mil-

lion cut next year and a total of £120 million over the next five years. This is after £352 million of cuts and 1,000 job losses since 2010. The council admits it cannot balance the budget by slicing percentages off departmental budgets. Instead there will be the closure or privatisation of whole chunks of council services.

Last year, TUSC gained the support of local unions such as PCS, GMB and the trades council and others to develop an alternative legal no cuts budget linked to a national campaign. Despite no elections in 2017, we will be mounting the same campaign in 2017.

REPEAL THE 8TH PROTEST FOR ABORTION RIGHTS

Embassy protest photo
Sarah Sachs-Eldridge



Helena Byrne
Camden Branch Socialist Party

The Socialist Party in London organised a demonstration outside the Irish embassy on 26 November in solidarity with a protest in Dublin to 'Repeal the 8th' amendment to the Irish constitution restricting abortion rights.

The demonstration was called as this was the first time that the newly convened Irish Citizens Assembly met to discuss the possibility of proceeding with a referendum to repeal the 8th amendment.

This was a delay tactic employed by the current government in Ireland to block any debate on the issue for at least another year. Meanwhile, people are forced to endure more undue financial stress and

trauma for having to procure an abortion outside of Ireland.

Attendees at the demonstration signed a petition calling for support for the referendum which was handed into the embassy. The demonstration marked the beginning of a series of solidarity events that will take place in 2017.

See socialistparty.org.uk for more and the text of the petition

Hands off HRI charts the way forward

Over 120 people turned out to our latest Hands off HRI (Huddersfield Royal Infirmary) public meeting in Huddersfield town centre which was initially addressed by our solicitors who detailed the chances of a legal challenge to the hospital management proposals.

Residents hung on every word, hopeful we can beat them in court.

The solicitor felt we have a 'more than reasonable success' of victory. However they would not launch a legal challenge until the full case for closure is drawn up which could take another nine months.

This presents the campaign with the challenge of maintaining momentum for another year and raising more money for legal costs. So far, over £43,000 has been raised.

However, the route to victory has many paths. The meeting was also addressed by local GP and Socialist Party member Jackie Grunsell who explained that the local GPs' union is seriously considering a vote of no confidence in the local management board.

The looming threat of the sustainability and transformation plans were taken up in the debate afterwards and everyone was urged to join the national NHS demo on 4 March. Overall there was a feeling of optimism and determination that this battle can be won.

Mike Forster, chair of Hands off HRI (personal capacity)

Leicester playground protest

Leicester's adventure playgrounds are used by over 10,000 children citywide. They provide children and young people with supervised access to play, sports, and arts facilities, as well as providing educational support. Around 100 campaigners, including parents and children, lobbied Leicester City Council on 24 November to oppose cuts to the adventure playgrounds across the city. Many, particularly poor, families depend upon these services.

At the lobby, the noisy protestors chanted "save our playgrounds" and carried placards reading "say no to Tory cuts"! However, will Leicester's Labour-led council heed this sensible advice?

Leicester recently saw over a 1,000 people take to the streets in defence of a local heart unit and mass opposition also recently saved a library from the chop.

If the local council was prepared to take a lead in building a campaign against Tory cuts, it would receive widespread support across the city. Leicester's Labour-led council is currently consulting on whether funding for the adventure playgrounds should be cut by 50% over the next four years. Socialist Party members supported the lobby, and leaflets advertising a public meeting on how Labour councils can resist all Tory cuts were well received.

> Leicestershire Against the Cuts public meeting: Can Leicester's Labour council oppose Tory cuts? Saturday 3rd December, 2-4pm at St Matthews Community Centre, Malabar Road, Leicester.

Tom Barker, Leicester Socialist Party

Reclaim the Night solidarity march

Fifty determined women and men marched through Leicester on 24 November as part of international action in support of the 'Reclaim the Night' campaign.

This was organised locally by the University of Leicester Feminist Society to raise awareness of the prevalence and normalisation of rape in society. Enthusiastic students took part, marching through the streets chanting 'yes means yes, no means no!'

Many young people are drawing socialist conclusions and seeing the link between the global crisis in capitalism and worsening conditions for women.

Socialist Party members took part in the march by distributing leaflets and selling the Socialist, the only political material on offer, and were welcomed by demonstrators.

Tessa Warrington, Leicester Socialist Party

Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ received	£ target	October to December 2016				Deadline 4 January 2017			
Northern	1,566	750								209%
South West	1,976	1,800								110%
Wales	2,495	2,300								109%
West Midlands	2,719	2,600								105%
North West	2,136	2,100								102%
East Midlands	1,618	1,850								87%
Southern	1,169	1,600								73%
London	4,338	6,100								71%
Yorkshire	1,987	3,300								60%
South East	451	750								60%
Eastern	682	1,200								57%
Other	3,459	5,650								61%
TOTAL	24,602	30,000								82%

SPAIN: MILITANT STRUGGLE BY STUDENTS UNION SUCCEEDS



photo Sindicato de Estudiantes

On 25 November the government of conservative prime minister Mariano Rajoy - under pressure from the large-scale student strikes of 26 October and 24 November organised by Sindicato de Estudiantes (SE - Students Union) - has withdrawn the reactionary LOMCE decree that includes big education cuts (see the Socialist 2 November). It has also scrapped the revalidation exams. These exams introduced under General Franco's dictatorship were used to discriminate against working class students. However the SE remains vigilant. If the government reneges then the Students Union will take to the streets again.



More in a future issue of the Socialist



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), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war 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! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!

www.socialistparty.org.uk 02089888777

@Socialist_party Text 07761 818206 /CWSocialistParty



Stop the Tory cuts

HANDS

OFF

OUR

NHS!



Sean Brogan, Exeter Socialist Party

Exeter will be the scene of a major county-wide demonstration by campaign groups against the huge government cuts to the National Health Service (NHS)

On 3 December.

As well as billions of pounds of cuts - re-branded as "efficiency savings" in England - the Tories' misnamed 'Sustainability and Transformation Plans' will force through billions more cuts, with closures to A&Es and other hospital services.

Okehampton, in west Devon, will lose its community hospital. In the south, Paignton will see its hospital close. In the east the proposal is to close Honiton hospital.

The district hospital at Barnstaple, in the north, will lose its maternity and stroke services, leaving a pregnant mum a trip of over an hour - and that's on a good day. These - and many other cuts - mean the loss of hundreds of beds and the downgrading of services.

This is all part of a grand plan to replace these massive losses with 'social care'! The latter is supposed to be supplied by local authorities. But central government grants to local authorities have been cut by a third. And in the recent Autumn Statement there was not a whisper of extra funding for this vital service.

In South Devon, the 'preferred' private group to provide this service has been found to be totally unable to meet this care. It was inspected by the Care Quality Commission and they found a raft of failings: failure to turn up at clients' homes; no idea of the clients' care plan; not listening to clients and their relatives; staff untrained and demoralised as they rush from one client to another.

In the rest of Devon, those who have attended 'consultation' meetings are beginning to see how inadequate all the 'options' are as set out in glossy reports. There's a public groundswell to oppose cuts and closures and to reject the proposals, as they have more to do with money-saving than our health services.

In the background to the cuts sit the vultures of the privateers. The NHS in Devon is already sending patients for operations in private hospitals in Torbay and Exeter.

Virgin is poised to take over even more health services. This is putting the profit motive before our needs. How much longer will it be before we pay for GP appointments?

Those with the wealth can already jump queues for operations taking place in our NHS hospitals. Once we lose our community hospitals we will never get them back!

■ **Hands off Huddersfield Royal Infirmary**
- see page 14

4 March
2017 national
NHS demo -
London

