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PROTEST



STRIKE



OCCUPY

TO WIN

Caroline Vincent

Leicester Socialist Party

“Whose NHS? OUR NHS!” It belongs to us, and we won’t let them take it away.

More than 100,000 people chanted this clear message to the government on the 4 March demonstration. That was just the start.

The Tories might be hell-bent on slashing, trashing and privatising our NHS, but they are going to have an almighty fight on their hands!

There is growing anger as ‘sustainability and transformation plans’ (STPs) are revealed as the con that they are. They are part of a relentless attack on our NHS that will lead to cuts and closures and pave the way for further private sector involvement.

We have to oppose this as the consequences will be fatal. People die when profit interferes with patients’ health.

Strike

We will campaign, strike and occupy to defeat the STPs. A movement is building - demonstrations are being planned all over the country to defend hospitals and departments that are under threat.

Local campaign groups are coming together, many under the ‘Health Campaigns Together’ umbrella. The next step is to coordinate these groups, and organise a nationwide action - massive local demonstrations, all on the same day.

The junior doctors have shown health workers’ willingness to take strike action against the Tories and in defence of the NHS. They received enormous support from the public.

We need the leaders of the other health unions, and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), to show the same support. A massive, TUC-organised demo and coordinated strikes by health workers could stop the Tories in their tracks.

If they try to close our hospitals, we won’t just take it lying down. Health workers and campaigners can organise occupations to keep them open.

Nye Bevan, the architect of the NHS, famously said: “The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with faith to fight for it.” Well, we have the faith, we are fighting for it - and we can win!

> Tories to hike prescription and dental charges again: p5

Westminster attack

UNITE AGAINST TERROR, RACISM AND WAR

Judy Beishon
Socialist Party executive committee

A wave of shock followed the recent terrorist attack in the centre of London, the horrific mowing down of people using a vehicle and then a stabbing. It came after atrocities using vehicles in Berlin and Nice during the last eight months, and other appalling terrorist attacks in France and Brussels.

The Socialist Party strongly condemned all these attacks and has done so again on this occasion.

The attacker's choice of Westminster - and the fact that he ran towards Parliament - suggested anger against the establishment and government, but the victims were ordinary people, especially tourists viewing the Houses of Parliament.

People of ten different nationalities were indiscriminately hit. Four people plus the attacker died and seven were critically injured. In any case, whoever is targeted, acts of individual terror like this should always be opposed. They are not an effective means to struggle against the establishment.

“

There is outrage across the Middle East at the involvement of British and US imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan

Trying to assure people that the attacker was most likely acting alone and not part of a set of attacks, Theresa May made a sanctimonious speech on 'resolve' to 'never waver' or be afraid.

Yet she heads a Tory government that is making people far more vulnerable when terrorism occurs. Huge cuts to London transport are inflicting the axing of many safety-critical staff. In addition fire stations have been closed, the ambulance service is over-stretched due to cuts, hospitals are understaffed and there are threats to A&E departments.

The government also wants to see the bosses of Southern Rail, Merseyrail and Northern Rail defeat



photo Socialist Party

the RMT union's strikes against the removal of safety-critical guards on trains.

The first doctor on the scene to treat the injured was off-duty junior doctor Jeeves Wijesuriya. Jeeves is a member of the junior doctors' committee of the BMA (British Medical Association) and was one of the leaders of last year's strikes against a worse contract being imposed on junior doctors by the government. On 4 March he was a platform speaker against government NHS cuts at the more than 100,000-strong national 'Save our NHS' demonstration in London.

The Tories' hypocrisy knows no bounds. The last thing that the likes of May will acknowledge is any link between the devastation their policies have caused across the Middle East and the threat of terrorism in Britain.

Information on the background of the attacker has indicated that while he had criminal convictions in the past, including for violent assault, he had also been influenced

by events in the Middle East. This included, after converting to Islam, spending periods of time in Saudi Arabia - a country run by a repressive, autocratic regime based on right-wing Islamist ideology.

Isis

As well, Islamic State (Isis) claimed responsibility for the Westminster attack. Isis - based in Syria and Iraq - has made it known that it is encouraging the carrying out of attacks in Europe. This is one way it is trying to fight back while being squeezed by military onslaughts against it in Mosul and north Syria.

It is a sign of its weakness, not strength, that it resorts to murderous individual acts. It doesn't seek to remove capitalism - rather it wants use its fascistic type methods and individual terrorism to attack ordinary people and aid its aim of creating a capitalist or semi-feudal caliphate in the interests of its leaders.

Whether or not the perpetrators of atrocities like the one in Westminster



photo Socialist Party

are directly motivated by Isis, there is outrage across the Middle East and globally at the involvement of British and US imperialism and other world powers in the slaughter of over 150,000 people in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This mass terror goes on - shown by the reports of 150 civilians killed in US airstrikes on Mosul on 17 March. Those wars - and also the foreign interventions in Yemen, Libya, Syria and parts of Pakistan - have generated would-be terrorists and Al-Qaida type groups across the globe.

Much of the worst suffering by ordinary people from terrorist acts has been in those countries, where regular suicide bombings have hit many hundreds of people in cities like Baghdad and Kabul.

There have been few terror attacks in Britain since the 7/7 London bombings in 2005, but it is unfortunately no surprise that another attack has occurred. The intelligence services say they have 'foiled' 12 plots in the last three years and they have called the likelihood of the threat "severe" for a long period.

Last November, MI5 head Andrew Parker stated "there will be terrorist attacks in this country" and noted

that the 'tempo' of terrorist plots and attempts during the previous three years was the highest in his 33 years at MI5.

Now the media in Britain is again asking how further attacks can be prevented, but there will be no way of stopping them based on a continuation of the government's policies. The attacker was born in Britain - as were the 7/7 bombers.

The police and intelligence services have no way of deterring all such future attackers through their methods of surveillance and 'anti-terrorism' laws.

Defend the right to protest

The Tories have previously used terrorist attacks to justify anti-democratic legislation. Now Home Secretary Amber Rudd has been talking of more powers for the police and intelligence agencies - in particular she wants them to have access to encrypted messages sent through media like WhatsApp.

But the previously enacted 'anti-terrorism' laws didn't stop attacks occurring, nor will more repressive legislation. The police had plenty of powers to arrest anyone planning or committing a crime before these laws were brought in.

Rudd's new proposal would only drive potential attackers to greater secrecy and at the same time would infringe on everyone's privacy and make communication less secure for all.

Also, extra police powers of surveillance, restrictions on move-

ment, etc, can also be used against trade unionists, anti-cuts campaigners, socialists and others who are opposing the government's pro-big business policies. They must be opposed.

Fight scapegoating

For years right-wing politicians in the three main parliamentary parties have dangerously used rhetoric that has played into the hands of racists.

Anti-immigrant talk came from leaders on both sides of the EU referendum debate. The Socialist Party's pro-working class standpoint, against division and racism and for Brexit on the basis of socialist internationalism, was not covered in the mainstream media.

Since the referendum, and the election of Trump, there has been an increase in racist attacks. Also it mustn't be forgotten that racist attacks increased six-fold in the weeks after 7/7; a similar outcome must be fought against by socialists and trade unionists following this new terrorist attack, by calling for workers' unity against all forms of racism and the far right.

This needs to include countering the far-right Britain First demonstration that has been called for 1 April.

All the racist, anti-democratic, pro-austerity and pro-war measures and policies of May's Tory government must be fought by the trade union movement with new vigour and a determined plan of action. The building of a mass movement of opposition can remove it from power - and lay the basis for reversing its policies that breed poverty, division and terrorism.

■ **Socialist Party members attended the vigil organised by Sadiq Khan on 23 March and gave out leaflets based on this article, which many attendees agreed with and were pleased to receive**

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

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For an anti-austerity, internationalist programme

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Homelessness

agencies accused of being complicit in coercive deportations

Paul Kershaw
Unite housing workers' branch

Homelessness agencies, including St Mungos, are identified as complicit in immigration raids and London's most vulnerable people "disappearing into a nightmare of indefinite detention and deportation", the Corporate Watch website reports.

Members of Unite the Union who work on the front line of homelessness believe that outreach services provide essential support for rough sleepers.

It is crucially important that a relationship of trust between outreach workers and clients is maintained. Outreach workers must not be converted into immigration enforcement workers.

Through Unite, workers have expressed concern that in recent years homelessness agencies have become increasingly compliant agencies of government policy.

They have sometimes failed to speak out on behalf of homeless people and in opposition to policies which are driving the rise in rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness.

Funding

Not only is the funding of services for rough sleepers inadequate but the method of funding can serve to undermine responsive high quality work by introducing perverse incentives and financial pressure. Previous mayor of London Boris Johnson introduced 'payment by results' as a system of funding services for rough sleepers.

In 2012 a worker posed the question "... let me be clear, me and my team are regularly threatened, abused and assaulted by disturbed

and desperate clients. How do you think they will respond when they believe we are on commission?" We think that the current London Mayor, Sadiq Kahn, should end this grotesque ideological gimmick.

Last year St Mungo's stated its position: "The starting point for our work is the belief that sleeping on the streets is dangerous and harmful to people's health, regardless of where you are from. People can have complex situations and we would always work with each person with dignity and respect to help them move away from the street for good..."

"We can't and don't deport or detain anyone. We do not share information about people to the Home Office, except when an individual has given their consent, or in situations where people are at risk. We think leaving a vulnerable person to die on the streets is unacceptable. The average age of death of someone who's been homeless is 47, for women, 43."

Unite absolutely agrees that life on the streets is harmful and we should do all we can to help individuals find routes out of rough sleeping. But it is vital to this work that homelessness agencies do not undermine outreach work through any blurring of the line between their staff and enforcement agencies or through breaches of confidentiality.

Last year, the Home Office toughened the rules so that European rough sleepers can be arrested for deportation if found sleeping rough on just one night.

Rough sleeping is rising because of the impact of brutal austerity policies and it is quite clear that further benefit changes threaten further rises.

■ **Originally published at housingworkers.org.uk**

Tom Baldwin
Bristol South Socialist Party

A new report from Oxfam sheds light on the way big banks use tax havens to protect their profits. Their research shows Europe's 20 biggest banks reported profits of £18 billion in tax havens last year.

The banks claim to have made a quarter of their global profits in these countries despite them accounting for only 12% of their turnover and 7% of staff. While governments across Europe push austerity, big bankers continue to pocket money that should be funding health, education and other social needs.

The problem is even worse with UK-based banks. Between them, HSBC, Barclays, RBS, Lloyds, and Standard Chartered reported profits of £9 billion in tax havens - a massive 67% of their total.

Over £500 million of these were in six British overseas territories and crown dependencies such as the Cayman Islands and Jersey. They pay just 7% tax on profits in these UK-linked tax havens, compared to 20% in Britain. Even this is low. In the 1970s, Britain's rate was 52%.

Greed

Working class people are still paying the price for an economic crisis that began in the finance sector, partly thanks to bankers' greed and unchecked gambling. The government bailed out the banks and slashed taxes for big business and the super-rich. Partly to pay for it, we've been faced with public service cuts ever since.

This research gives us a glimpse into the murky world of tax havens. It's right to push for more transparency but these figures only add detail to what ordinary people already know - the super-rich are laughing while we get a raw deal.

We've seen the power these institutions have over our lives in the 2007-8 financial crisis and ever since. We don't just want to know what they're up to, we need to be able to control it.

They only way we can do that is if we own them. The banks and whole finance sector should be nationalised and run democratically by workers. So should public services and the biggest businesses. Only then can they be run to meet people's needs, not fill the pockets of a tiny minority.

TIMES MAKES CALL FOR TORY ENTRYISM

A senior Tory speechwriter has openly called for Conservatives to infiltrate Labour to undermine the left.

Clare Foges, rhetorician to David Cameron, wrote in the Times on 27 March that she has joined the opposition party. She wants to prevent a rule change that would make it easier for left-wing MPs to stand for leader.

"A sum of £4 a month seems small beer for the chance to help change the direction of a party that, though not my own, matters to the direction of the country."

Many socialists from expelled or excluded groups joined Labour after Jeremy Corbyn's victory. But their goal, in the main, was to back a leadership with the potential to bring together all parts of the workers' movement behind an anti-austerity programme.

Socialists and trade unionists have a right and a duty to support the battle in the Labour Party. It is a battle for the success of our movement.

Tories who secretly join - Foges has "signed up a friend as a proxy" - are indisputable trespassers. They fight for our class enemy, the capitalists.

Martin McGuinness: from IRA leader to Stormont minister

■ The funeral of Martin McGuinness, Irish republican and former deputy first minister of Northern Ireland's power-sharing executive, took place on 23 March.

See socialistworld.net for an obituary of McGuinness and comment on his political legacy.

Read more online at socialistworld.net



photo Paul Mattsson

Top banks post 67% of profits in tax havens

■ Nationalise the banks!



photos Alistair Tice

Alistair Tice
Yorkshire Socialist Party

"Yesterday we were under their spell, today they're under ours. We've taken the power back."

That's how James, one of the local Communication Workers Union reps, described the effect of the snap walkout by 300 postal workers from the Doncaster Royal Mail Delivery Centre on 24 March.

The unofficial strike - so much for the Tories' new anti-union laws - was against management bullying, which has got even worse recently.

The final straw was when a colleague with 28 years' service, who is off work sick with stress, was sacked over the phone. "Have you got a pen and paper ready? Because I'm finishing you and letting you know how much you'll get under ill-health

“**240 postal delivery staff walked out, and were joined later by up to 70 distribution and collection staff. More than one worker said they had seen grown men cry as a result of management bullying**

retirement. This is your last day of service."

240 postal delivery staff walked out, and were joined later by up to 70 distribution and collection staff.

More than one worker said they had seen grown men cry as a result of management bullying, and this was the third unwarranted dismissal recently.

This bullying management culture is a direct result of privatisation, putting profit first and piling more and more work onto posties. Over 3,200 shares of just one Facebook post about the strike shows how widespread such bullying is, both within Royal Mail and beyond.

Here's one comment: "This is fabulous news. That management team

has made my son ill. He's off work with stress cos of bullying and harassment at that place..."

By early afternoon, Royal Mail's higher-up management had caved. An external investigation will take place into the conduct of certain managers at Doncaster, as well as workloads and other grievances.

At the gate meeting, strikers gave a two-week ultimatum for Royal Mail to move these managers, or else they'll be back out on strike. And after today, the bosses know that they will strike again.

Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!

socialistparty.org.uk/join 020 8988 8777

@socialist_party text 07761 818 206 /CWiSocialistParty



Prescription and dental charges to rise again - fight for a free NHS!



photo Mary Finch

Bea Gardner
Southampton Socialist Party

From April 2017 NHS charges for prescriptions and dental treatment in England are set to rise yet again. Tory health minister Philip Dunne announced that standard prescription charges will rise by 20p, and some dental costs are set to rise by up to £10.60.

Prescription charges for many thousands of people mean the choice between going without vital medication, or of running out of money for food and bills.

People end up in hospital as a consequence of not being able to pay the cost of treatment. People with serious medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease are not exempt from paying the charges because of the arbitrary exemptions list created in 1958.

This has meant poorer quality of life for thousands of people, worsening health outcomes, unplanned

hospital admissions and the loss of livelihoods. All of which costs more in the long run.

Drugs companies continue to make billions from the NHS by hiking up the costs of vital drugs. For example, Actavis increased the price of one commonly prescribed drug by 12,000% between 2008 and 2016. This resulted in an increase of NHS spending on this drug alone from £522,000 in 2008 to over £70 million in 2015.

The NHS is in crisis. Increasing prescription charges will only make it worse. All prescriptions are currently free in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and they should be in England too.

The Socialist Party fights for a health service genuinely free at the point of use - including prescription medication and dental treatments. We desperately need the nationalisation of all aspects of the health service, including the big drugs companies, because public health is not compatible with private profit.

■ On top of this, NHS England has announced it will stop prescribing some treatments altogether. The list includes some medicines for indigestion, hayfever, coughs, haemorrhoids and erectile dysfunction, and gluten-free food

■ A £208 million subsidy cut could close up to 900 rural chemists, in spite of the Tories' assurances otherwise. A High Court challenge reveals the health secretary, chancellor and prime minister all knew the closures were likely

LABOUR COUNCILLORS RESIGN ON CUTS

■ For a movement conference on fighting austerity

Iain Dalton
Leeds Socialist Party

As Leeds Labour Council geared up to pass its latest budget cuts of £75.3 million, the cracks that had been appearing in the Labour group over the last few months finally resulted in a split.

First Mark Dobson and Sarah Field, and then on budget day itself Janette Walker, resigned from the Labour group to become independents.

In the back half of 2016, there had been a mini-revolt in the Labour group over the closure of 'The Green', a specialist dementia care home in east Leeds. This resulted in Leeds East Constituency Labour Party passing a motion in favour of a conference to discuss alternatives to local austerity measures.

At the same time, the council was planning on giving £4.5 million to Yorkshire County Cricket Club. This revolt, undoubtedly influenced by the anti-austerity mood of the thousands who rallied in defence of Jeremy Corbyn in Leeds over the summer, led to a group of councillors 'calling in' the decision

to close The Green, and a temporary climbdown by the Labour group leadership.

Dobson had been the council's executive member for environment in the past, presiding over the construction of the polluting east Leeds incinerator. But since returning to the council back benches last year, he has publicly declared support for Corbyn, speaking at rallies over the summer.

As the Socialist Party has commented, as austerity continues more Labour councillors will break under the stress.

Labour left

Momentum and others on the Labour left nationally have not taken this issue seriously. Unfortunately, this continues to include Corbyn and John McDonnell, who have gone along with the position of the right that nothing can be done.

This is why a wider struggle hasn't erupted inside the Labour group. Instead, councillors who wish to challenge the cuts have been left isolated.

Dobson and Field forming an independent group on the council did

mean the ability to put their own amendments into the budget. One amendment reversed increased bulk waste collection charges by cutting the council's advertising budget.

Due to the resignations coming close to the budget meeting there was limited time to submit amendments. But a serious challenge to local cuts in next year's budget would need to be much more comprehensive.

There are growing calls for a conference of the workers' movement to discuss how the cuts can be fought, drawing on strikes by local government workers in Glasgow and elsewhere.

This should be linked to drawing up an alternative no-cuts budget to buy time to build a mass campaign to win the money, and calling on those councillors opposed to austerity to put it forward in the council chamber.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in Leeds has written to the three councillors to offer to discuss a common approach in challenging austerity measures locally and nationally, as we have offered any councillors in the Labour group who want to fight austerity.

Join the 31 March PCS pay protest

Marion Lloyd

PCS Left Unity national chair (personal capacity)

PCS, is calling on members to turn 31 March into a day of protest against the pay cap.

Theresa May said she is looking after the 'just about managing'. Well, thousands of the government's own workers, our members, are not at all managing. We say 'scrap the cap'!

As a consequence of the pay cap imposition, the pay of 5.4 million public sector workers is worth less now than in 2010. By 2020 the value of average wages will be £1,700 lower than in 2010.

For government employees, PCS commissioned research shows the value of average earnings has fallen by 8% since 2010, a figure which will increase to 20% by the end of the decade.

Last year's

TUC conference committed the TUC to back and coordinate action against the pay cap. PCS has called upon the TUC to implement this policy.

The PCS union's Left Unity leadership will also be seeking to directly build coordinated action with other public sector unions to bust the pay cap.

This is a call that should be taken up by rank-and-file left groups in all public sector unions. Build coordinated action across the public sector to defeat the pay cap.

PCS members should join the protests. Other public sector workers should also get involved - details of events organised, and an online petition, can be found on the PCS website at pcs.org.uk



photo Paul Mattsson



photo Neil Cafferky

Ballot papers go out in Unite elections

As ballot papers go out in the Unite general secretary and executive elections, the Blairite challenger to Len McCluskey, Gerard Coyne, has shown his true colours. Unite members were shocked when he wrote a column on 21 March in the hated Sun newspaper.

But a day before voting started, he was back in the Murdoch press, this time the Sunday Times. His article "A vote for me stops Unite playing fantasy politics with Corbyn" confirms the character of his challenge.

As the Socialist Party has consistently argued, there needs to be a united front behind Len McCluskey against Coyne because his challenge represents another attempt of the Labour right to remove Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader and any prospect of an anti-austerity Labour Party.

As Len says in an interview with Kevin Maguire in The Mirror, Corbyn represents an "opportunity

to promote an alternative to the devastating austerity that the Tories are placing on the backs of ordinary working people in our communities."

But a Len victory is a vital step in this and it can't be taken for granted. It is a serious mistake for Ian Allinson to have stood in the election and needlessly risk splitting the left vote, potentially opening the door to Coyne.

We disagree with Ian's description of the union under McCluskey's tenure. As Len states in The Mirror interview, "In the past three years we've had 1,000 industrial action ballots and every one got a result with a satisfactory outcome."

There are four Socialist Party members on the United Left slate in the executive elections - Suzanne Muna (London and Eastern), Jamie Cocozza (Scotland), Jimmy Tyson (Construction) and Kevin Bennett (GEMS).



Durham TAs lead the march through Durham photo Elaine Brunskill

OVER A THOUSAND MARCH WITH DURHAM TAs AGAINST 23% PAY CUT

Elaine Brunskill

North East Socialist Party

"Who are we? Durham TAs! What do we want? Fair pay! When do we want it? Now!" The chant of the Durham teaching assistants (TAs) reverberated through the narrow streets of Durham Cathedral City on 25 March.

At least a thousand TAs and their supporters came out in a massive show of strength against the Labour controlled city council, which wants to axe the TAs' wages by 23%.



The TAs were joined by TAs from Derby who are facing a similar attack and there were also workers from Doncaster, Bolton and London who held their banners high

In a fantastic demonstration of solidarity, the TAs were joined by TAs from Derby who are facing a similar attack from a Labour administration. There were also

workers from Doncaster, Bolton, London and elsewhere who held their trade union banners high as the TAs marched.

At the end rally TA Megan Charlton recalled how, when they set up the campaign, it was "very difficult" and that "initially there weren't big numbers involved". Despite threats, they built the campaign from the bottom up. Megan told the rally: "Nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something!"

Gillian Iveson put forward: "We want payback for the 57." That's the 57 Labour councillors who voted to cut TAs' pay. She went on to explain that in Durham's May elections there's a chance to unseat these Labour councillors. She also pointed out that these cuts aren't Tory cuts - they are Labour cuts.

Durham council is now in discussion with the unions about what Unison, the TAs union, has described as a "different and better deal". This is welcomed by TAs, but Lisa Turnbull made it clear: "We will fight this until we get a resolution that is right and fair for absolutely everybody".

Durham TAs are well aware that even when this issue is sorted, the battle will go on. There are massive cuts in the pipeline for education. However, the Durham TAs have shown a marvellous lead in how to conduct a battle against attacks on working conditions.

[News in brief]

Deliveroo victory

Deliveroo riders in Leeds are celebrating the reinstatement of two riders who were sacked and the reinstatement of the regular hours of five other riders. The latter were victimised after management gained access to a WhatsApp group the riders were using to discuss what to do about their working conditions. Since the sackings around 50 workers have joined the IWW union and have campaigned not just for their reinstatement, but to end Deliveroo's exploitative employment practices. Deliveroo riders and their supporters will be holding another cycle protest on 1 April in conjunction with riders in Brighton, Bristol and Manchester.

Iain Dalton, Leeds

Fujitsu strike

Workers at Fujitsu were on strike again on 24 March across the country in their fight against job losses and pay cuts. There was a fantastic picket line outside the Manchester office with plenty of 'honks of support' from cars passing by. Strikers were talking to people entering the building (which has offices for other companies too) about their dispute and asking for donations to their strike fund. Talks are expected but Unite members are clear that it's only through strike action that Fujitsu will be forced to come to the table with a better offer. Further strike dates are likely to be announced if the talks don't go anywhere.

TUSC support

Merseyside Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) deplores the refusal of Labour-run Merseyrail to engage in constructive negotiations with the RMT and we continue to offer our full support to the union in their fight to keep guards on trains, including the decision for the next strike. We recognise that our trains need a safety critical role, to be carried out by a fully-qualified guard.

The RMT fight is the fight of all who give priority to safety rather than delivering the highest profit to shareholders. Therefore we condemn in the strongest of terms the local Labour politicians' decision to press for driver-only operation.

TUSC spokesperson on the city region mayoral election, Roger Bannister, says:

"I fully support the RMT in its campaign to defend safety on trains and call for the proposed driver-only policy to be immediately withdrawn. It's frankly unbelievable that some Labour politicians are so hell-bent on removing guards from our trains when the public clearly favours their retention, and shocking that Labour's candidate for city region mayor cannot seem to find the necessary words to condemn this unsafe, unnecessary and unpopular policy. The city region deserves far better than this."

Liverpool TUSC

Bridgend Ford overtime stoppage in sourcing dispute

Rob Williams

Former Swansea plant convenor and National Shop Stewards Network chair

Bridgend Ford workers have sent a huge statement of intent to Ford by not being available for overtime. They are telling Ford: come to the table and commit to sourcing that makes the plant viable for all those who want to work in it, or there will be action.

It is absolutely correct to tell Ford and the politicians in Cardiff and Westminster that it won't be 'business as usual' when the sourcing plans mean the plant won't have a future.

It was also necessary to show management that their outrageous behaviour in taking back union leaflets and writing letters to workers about overtime won't intimidate the shop floor.

Actually, supervisors, engineers and staff are union members and facing the dole as well and therefore must link up with the hourly-paid.

The action means that the momentum has been maintained after the 1 March plant meetings with Unite leader Len McCluskey. It was absolutely correct to give Ford a time-limit and pressure must continue to be put on them. There should be another series of plant shift meetings to discuss and set out a plan of action. This will give confidence to workers that something can be done.

A ballot for industrial action must be prepared properly to ensure that it will be clearly won. And the union must tell the company that any attempt to take machinery out of the plant, without a new sourcing agreement, would be stopped and met with a stoppage.

There must be an appeal to the communities across South Wales

that are served by the plant that closure would be a disaster to the whole Welsh economy. It's not just 1,800 Ford jobs at stake but perhaps as many as ten times that in the supply chain and the wider economy.

Why not lobby the Welsh Assembly, with the union putting on transport for workers and their families to Cardiff Bay? This would keep the fight for a future of the plant in the limelight, especially if there is an industrial action ballot going on at the same time.

There should also be plans to protest outside Ford's HQ in Essex, linking up with the other plants. Bridgend closing doesn't make them safer but more vulnerable.

Follow us on Twitter @Socialist_Party

FOREST HILL SCHOOL IN LEWISHAM FIGHTS BACK

A Lewisham teacher

Education cuts loom large all over the country. Many schools are already facing deep cuts and the fight-back has begun.

Forest Hill School in Lewisham, south London, has a £1.3 million deficit and is facing significant cuts, including potentially 15 teacher redundancies on top of support staff who have already gone.

National Union of Teachers members had their first day of strike action on 21 March. As one picket line banner read, it's 'not our deficit'. Why should students and staff suffer?

We took the demands to the council, which has so far washed its hands of the situation, despite it being a local authority school.

Demands include the local Labour council taking responsibility for the redundancy payments, not

saddling the school with it; extending and spreading the licensed deficit to give the school more time and to look at the private finance initiative contract which is sucking £1 million a year from the school coffers. A campaign involving parents, students and staff has been launched with more lobbies, two days of strike action and a march to throw itself into in the next few weeks.

A victory at Forest Hill would give education campaigners all over the country confidence that the Tories' decimation of education can be pushed back.

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



Picket line on 21 March photo Lewisham Socialist Party

Dispute against backdoor privatisation of mental health services

NHS mental health worker

Jobs and services are at risk in a London mental health trust as a result of a planned restricting of the psychological therapies 'IAPT' service. These therapists provide intensive treatment to resolve post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mental health guidelines recommend that people suffering symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder such as nightmares and flashbacks require 'step three' high-intensity therapy if they are to recover.

In spite of the dire need for this therapy reflected in the lengthy waiting lists, there are plans to slash the step three service by removing five posts.

GMB union members do not agree with the restructuring proposals put forward by management. The trust plans to divert more service users who are on poverty wages or benefits, to a pri-

vate counselling service as part of a 'mixed model of service provision'. This private counselling service costs £10-15 a session and offers a lesser level of support.

Our members do not accept that there is no money. GMB has discovered that money is coming from NHS England that can secure those jobs.

Cuts are being proposed in face-to-face services while highly paid management posts are not being threatened as part of the planned restructure. The trust is prepared to increase its investment in the private counselling service.

We can clearly see that the IAPT service is being cut back and shaped to carry less staff and offer less to patients in order to make it more profitable for private providers.

Our members have organised themselves, encouraged others to join our union and in doing so are giving a clear message to management that if these cuts go ahead we will enter into a dispute.



photo Paul Mattsson

The Socialist's series on the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution

APRIL 1917: HOW THE BOLSHEVIKS REORIENTATED

Paula Mitchell
Socialist Party executive committee

On 3 April 1917, Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin returned to Russia from exile. Lenin's arrival turned the Bolshevik party upside down and changed the course of history.

Just weeks earlier, demanding an end to the bloody slaughter of World War One, the masses of working class and poor in Russia had risen up in a revolution and driven out the Tsar and government.

But they were not yet conscious of their own power or of what to do. While Bolshevik members were in the workplaces and streets alongside their fellow workers making the revolution, the leaders of the party were still, by necessity, in exile.

Within days of the euphoria of sweeping aside the old regime,

instead of the working class and poor taking power themselves, a situation of 'dual power' arose.

Capitalist parties stepped into the vacuum to establish a provisional government - not in order to take the revolution forward in the interests of the majority of the population, but in order to look after their own interests.

Workers' councils - soviets - had arisen in the revolution, and the two main parties that won the leadership were the Mensheviks (the original minority of the workers' movement in Russia) and Social Revolutionaries (a party based on the middle class in the towns and peasants in the countryside).

Even though the Soviets had majority support, the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary soviet leaders voluntarily handed power over to the capitalist provisional government. This included support for the government's continued prosecution of the World War, on the grounds that it was

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now, they said, a war in defence of the revolution.

Ordinary working class Bolsheviks instinctively knew this was wrong. They thought that the class which had won the victory in February should be the one that took power. But when some of the Bolshevik leaders, including Stalin, returned from exile in March, they took the Bolshevik party sharply to the right and similarly declared support for the provisional government.

Meanwhile, still in exile, desperately seeking ways to return, Lenin was urgently sending telegrams saying what needed to be done: "absolute lack of confidence; no support to the new government".

Lenin calls for socialism

On his arrival in Russia, Lenin was greeted at the train station in Petrograd by dignitaries from the Soviets, expressing the hope that he would join them in their support for the provisional government - one naval officer even suggested he join it.

But Lenin turned away from them. Instead he addressed the thousands of workers, soldiers and sailors who had assembled to greet him. To the horror of the worthies behind him, he declared: "The Russian Revolution achieved by you has opened a new epoch. Long live the world socialist revolution!"

The next day he presented his 'April Theses' to the Bolshevik central committee. This short, terse document, little more than a list of bullet-points, was one of the most important of the revolution.

In it, Lenin argued that the provisional government was a capitalist government and the war was an imperialist war. The working class, leading the peasantry, should take power and begin to carry out a socialist transformation of society.

This threw the Bolshevik party into crisis and at first Lenin was in a minority of one or two.

Up till then, the view of most Marxists, following the model of the capitalist revolutions that had happened in western Europe, was that capitalist democracy needed to be established before socialism. Since there were still substantial feudal elements in Russia, they argued that the revolution had to be a capitalist democratic revolution. To the Mensheviks this meant supporting capitalist parties. Socialism was for the distant future.

After the defeat of the 1905 Russian Revolution, Trotsky had written his theory of 'permanent revolution'. Building on the Marxist understanding of uneven and combined development, he realised that the growth of capitalism and imperialism in the west inevitably impacted on economic and social progress in other parts of the world.

The Russian capitalist class was tiny, frightened by defeat in 1905, and tied to the big landlords and imperialist powers. Most industrial development

had actually been driven from the top by the Tsar in order to build up his massive military state power, was reliant on western investment and mostly foreign-owned.

This meant that it would fall to the working class and poor to carry out the tasks that the capitalists had done elsewhere - to distribute land to the peasants, bring about capitalist democracy, and establish a stable nation state.

The Bolshevik party had drawn the same conclusion, and put forward the idea that a government of 'workers and peasants' would be necessary to carry out the capitalist democratic revolution.

But Trotsky drew further conclusions. The peasantry - though the majority in society and the poor sections of it were extremely oppressed - was a disparate, scattered class without a collective outlook.

The working class on the other hand, though numerically smaller, had been thrown together into massive factories and had the ability to organise with a more collective consciousness. It would take a strong lead by the working class to convince the poor peasants that their interests lay with the working class, otherwise they could be pulled behind the ruling class.

Trotsky's permanent revolution theory argued that inevitably the working class wouldn't stop at distributing land to the peasants and democratic measures. In order to satisfy their own interests - a shorter working day, decent wages, etc - the working class would need to press on to socialist tasks, including taking over the factories and the banks. Vtally, the revolution would then have to spread internationally.

Relevant today

These ideas are as relevant today as ever. The brutal, exploitative system of capitalism has created a nightmare that destroys the lives of masses of people in Syria, Iraq, Libya - killing hundreds of thousands and displacing millions, who then face an additional horrific ordeal as refugees. Starvation again ravages East Africa.

The capitalist classes in the neocolonial world are as weak and as tied to landlordism and imperialism as ever. Capitalism's inability to improve the lives of the masses is stark.

In April 1917 Lenin came to this same position. He said the old formula of the Bolsheviks was obsolete. He argued it was dangerous to create illusions that the capitalist provisional government would end the war, or meet the demands of the peasants for land or the needs of the workers.

Instead, an independent working class position was essential. It was necessary to wage a struggle to convince the soviets to take power.

By the end of April Lenin had successfully convinced the party. Worker Bolshevik members found Lenin's arguments made sense of their ex-

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Re-arming the party in April was fundamental to the ability of the working class and poor to take power into their own hands in October 1917



Trotsky's and Lenin's (from left) views converged, ie the aims of February's revolution could only succeed if the workers took power in a socialist revolution. However, the old Bolshevik leadership, which included Kamenyev (right) and Stalin, clung to an outmoded position which meant tacitly supporting the capitalist provisional government



The February revolution, which overthrew the Tsarist autocracy, created a political power vacuum into which stepped the capitalist parties, led by Kerensky (above with cane)

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“ ”

Even though the Soviets had majority support, the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary soviet leaders voluntarily handed power over to the capitalist provisional government

perience of the previous few months and of events as they developed every day. The truth of this was shown in the growth of the party just in those few weeks.

Lenin understood that at that stage the Bolsheviks were in a minority in the working class. They had only 1-2% of support in the soviets in February and about 4% in April.

Just as Socialist Party members do today, although of course in much more heightened circumstances in 1917, the job of the Bolsheviks was to live and fight alongside the best layers of the working class and the masses and "patiently explain".

They developed a programme to appeal to workers, peasants and soldiers with demands and slogans - 'bread, peace and land'.

The masses of working and poor people would learn through experience that the provisional government could give them neither peace nor land.

No dogma, living theory

None of what Lenin and Trotsky were arguing was abstract theory but was a result of real living forces and developments. There was an upsurge of workers and peasants in the next few weeks and months. Workers were struggling on their own demands - to end the war, for shorter working hours, for better pay, for bread.

Under the provisional government, very little was changing. The war continued, workers were still being sent to die. In fact, in April, foreign minister Miliukov ordered an offensive by Russian troops.

Soldiers refused to comply and masses of people demonstrated. The factories remained in the hands of the capitalist bosses, the land remained in the hands of the big landlords. Workers struck, peasants seized the land.

On the demonstrations, workers demanded "Down with Miliukov!" Some also chanted "Down with the provisional government!" While the strongest proponent of the idea that the provisional government needed to be overthrown, Lenin also understood that this was premature.

While sections of the working class were starting to draw this conclusion, the majority still had illusions in the provisional government. It was necessary to still "patiently explain".

This serious approach, in tune with the level of understanding of the masses, working to win people over rather than issuing empty phrases, was a key reason why the Bolshevik party was able to grow, and is an essential lesson for socialists to learn today.

The truth was, as Lenin warned in April, that to attempt to stick to the Menshevik position of support for the provisional government would have meant undermining the working class. In practice it would have led to bloody counter-revolution.

The most important lesson of April

1917 is the role of a revolutionary party and of leadership. The main feature of a revolution is that the masses of the working class move centre stage and make their own history. In 1917 it was the masses that drove events. But it was the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, and the Bolshevik party, that ensured victory in October. In the course of 1917 the Bolshevik Party became a mass party, the most democratic in history.

A revolutionary party is necessary to organise, generalise, point the way forward, say what needs to be done. The working class is made up of all different kinds of people: different genders, ethnic origins, ages, levels of understanding and experience, etc. The ruling class tries to exploit these divisions - the role of a revolutionary party is to unite workers. And in that party, a leadership with authority, experience and determination is needed.

The next few months saw huge twists and turns. But by the autumn the Bolsheviks had won a majority in soviet after soviet.

The re-arming of the party in April was fundamental to the ability of the working class and poor to take power into their own hands in October 1917, to end Russia's involvement in the murderous world war, and begin to build towards a new, socialist society.

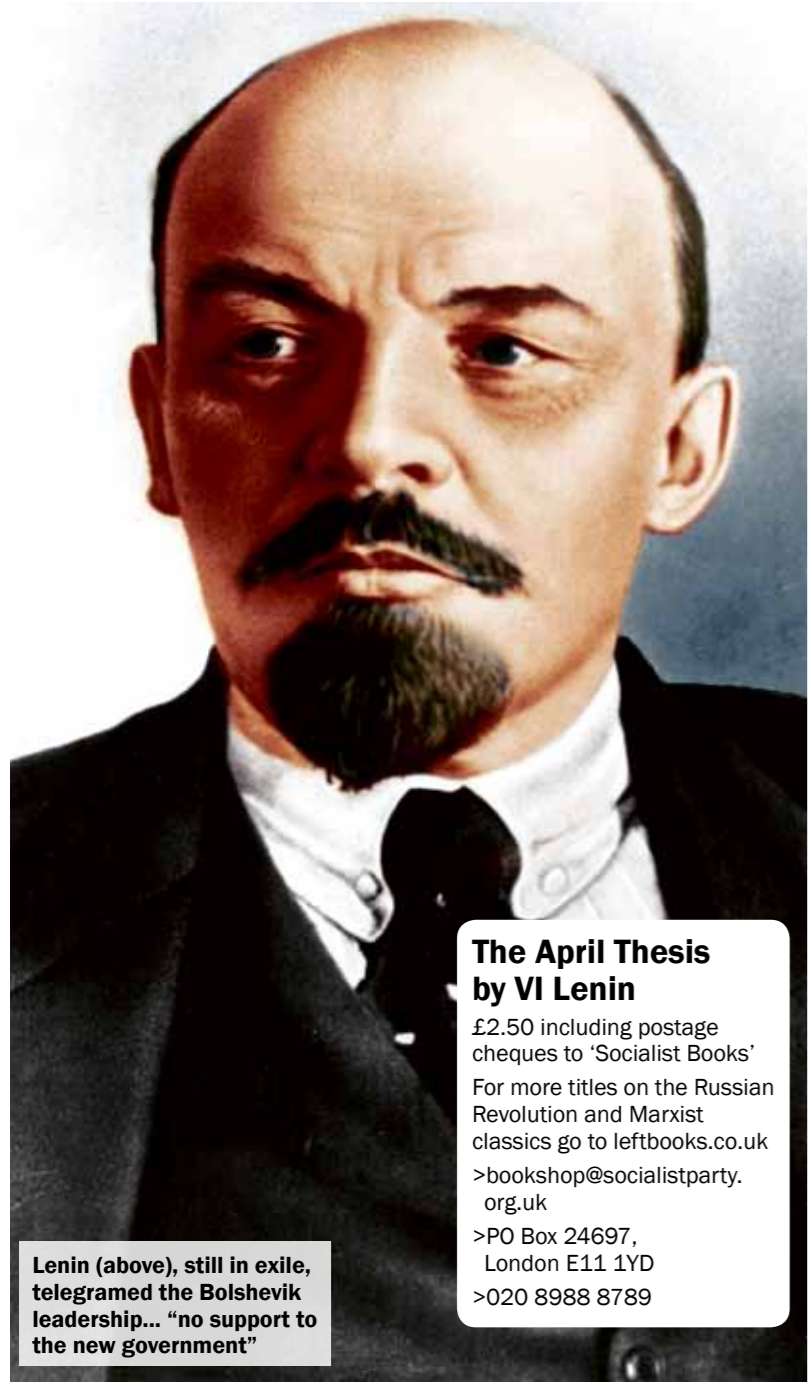
The world today is not the same as 1917. But the gap between rich and poor around the world is greater than ever before. Even in wealthy Europe, Tory austerity, passed on by right-wing Labour councils, kills and inflicts poverty in Britain, while EU-enforced austerity drags Greek people in particular through the dirt.

A rebellion against the establishment, austerity and the rich, has begun - expressed in the Brexit vote, the rejection of the 'lesser evil' Hillary Clinton, the rise of left (and right) populist organisations such as Podemos in Spain, and the support for anti-austerity policies when they were espoused by Jeremy Corbyn's election campaigns.

The lessons of the Russian Revolution are essential today. In Britain we see an attempt by liberal pro-capitalist forces to lead and shape the first shoots of rebellion against austerity by trying to bring people together behind right-wing Labour, Lib Dem and even Tory 'leaders'.

Meanwhile in the Labour Party, instead of making a stand against Blairite pro-capitalist MPs and councillors and putting forward a clear socialist programme, the people around Jeremy Corbyn conciliate in the vain hope of achieving 'unity'.

A clear independent working class position, boldy but "patiently" arguing a socialist alternative, is essential. ■ **The Socialist is carrying a series of articles to celebrate the Russian Revolutions of 1917. The article on the February revolution and more to follow can be read on socialistparty.org.uk**



The April Thesis by VI Lenin

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Lenin (above), still in exile, telegraphed the Bolshevik leadership... "no support to the new government"



photo Mary Finch

WHY I JOINED: “I JOINED SOCIALIST PARTY TO CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE NHS”

Walter Allsopp
Coventry Socialist Party

I was first attracted to the Socialist Party by the ongoing campaign to save the NHS. In my opinion the Socialist Party is the only party currently mounting an ongoing campaign to prevent the NHS from being privatised.

The idea of NHS privatisation is not a far-removed idea, but one that is gradually becoming a reality. I recently had to visit a Coventry walk-in centre, due to the fact that I was unable to secure an

appointment at my local GP practice.

While completing the necessary paperwork at the walk-in centre, in very small print, obscurely at the bottom of the form, it became apparent the facility was being managed by a private provider.

I am passionate about the NHS and do not want to see it privatised. I want to make a difference and my route to this is with the Socialist Party.

We all have a choice between watching and doing, between moaning and complaining or doing something about it. My doing something about it has been to join the Socialist Party.

May Day greetings in the Socialist

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Jobstown Not Guilty: defend the right to protest

An international day of solidarity with the ‘Jobstown Not Guilty’ campaign took place on 23 March with protests organised by the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) in dozens of cities around the world. This included a noisy protest outside the Irish embassy in London where protesters handed in hundreds of letters in support of Jobstown defendants.

The Irish state plans to try 18 peaceful protesters for ‘false imprisonment’ of Labour former deputy premier Joan Burton. They were part of a sit-down protest and slow march around Burton’s car during the successful campaign against water charges in Ireland.

Establishment

The establishment wants to criminalise protest and take vengeance against the movement’s leadership, especially Socialist Party Ireland. Paul Murphy, a member of Ireland’s parliament and the Socialist Party, could lose office if convicted.

Many trade union branches around the UK support the Jobstown campaign. The latest addition is Unite Community in Newcastle after Socialist Party member John Hoare moved a motion.

Join the list of supporters! Email your name, address and postcode, plus any workers’ movement position, to:
jobstownnotguiltygb@gmail.com

Supporters include:
Noam Chomsky, academic and activist; **Jean-Luc Mélenchon**, French presidential candidate of the left;



photo Socialist Party

Yanis Varoufakis, former Greek finance minister; **Angela Davis**, US civil rights campaigner; **Jason Manfred**, comedian; **Sean Hoyle**, president of transport union RMT; **Ian Hodson**, president of food workers’ union BEAWU; **Chris Baugh**, assistant general secretary of civil servants’ union PCS; **John McNally**, vice-president of civil servants’ union PCS; **Luis Mesina**, general secretary of the Chilean bank workers’ trade union confederation; **Tassia Christodouloupoulou**, Syriza MP and vice-chair of the Greek parliament; **Catarina Martins**, parliamentary leader of the Left Bloc, Portugal; National executive committee

of **Die Linke**, German left party; Executive committee of the **Party of the European Left**; **Ertugrul Kürkçü**, People’s Democratic Party MP, Turkey; **“Long Hair” Leung Kwok-hung**, member of the Hong Kong legislative council; **Ged Grebby**, chief executive of Show Racism the Red Card; **Meena Kandasamy**, novelist and poet; **MPs and MEPs** from Belgium, Cyprus, France, Ireland, Greece, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Brazil, Turkey, Israel, Romania, Hong Kong and more; **Trade unionists** from across Ireland, Britain and elsewhere...

■ **Jobstown Not Guilty on facebook**

GMB SHOULD SUPPORT ANTI-FRACKING CAMPAIGNERS IN FYLDE

Lucy Nuttall
Lancashire Socialist Party

The GMB union has issued a joint statement with the Chamber of Commerce calling on police to crack down on anti-fracking protesters in Fylde, Lancashire, where Cuadrilla is currently drilling for shale gas.

Attempting to justify their position, the GMB leadership claims that “protesters should not be al-

lowed to prevent workers from getting to and from their jobs.”

This is a divisive tactic meant to pit sections of the working class against each other. Instead, a trade union should be leading the struggle to unite workers and protesters against the common enemy of big business, and capitalism’s ruthless drive for profit regardless of the environmental destruction involved.

The serious risks of shale gas extraction, which receive no mention

from the GMB, such as water supply contamination and heightened earthquake risk, could have potentially devastating consequences for working class communities.

The Socialist Party calls for an end to fracking and investment in alternative renewable energy sources to provide long-term, secure, skilled jobs. Only by establishing a socialist planned economy can the world’s resources be utilised for the needs of all.

Save Plymouth’s libraries!

Ryan Aldred
Plymouth Socialist Party

To show our opposition to the planned closure of ten of Plymouth’s 17 libraries, Socialist Party members will join community campaigners and concerned members of the public in attending the last in a series of consultation meetings on 5 April.

The plan by the Tory-Ukip coalition outlines the need to invest in

more digital services to make the library services more accessible. We certainly wouldn’t disagree with the need to invest in these services but they should not come at the cost of public service jobs and spaces which are used by residents and community groups.

Since these library consultation meetings began there has been a wave of opposition and protest. Local residents have expressed their anger at drop-in sessions, and Pe-

verell library, one of the ten marked for closure, has been flooded with a mass ‘read-in’ of over 200 people.

In a previous consultation meeting, Conservative councillor Glenn Jordan said: “It is not about money, bricks and mortar.” When grilled he had no answer for how shedding jobs and closing spaces used by all manner of community groups is meant to be a good thing for Plymouth residents. If money isn’t an issue then keep the libraries open!

Angry march against Bradford council-approved incinerator

Peter Robson
Bradford Socialist Party

Between 500 and 600 people showed a palpable level of anger not only to the proposed building of a waste incinerator in Keighley, Yorkshire, but also the decision by Bradford Labour council to pass the plans.

Conversations we had with people at the protest on 25 March soon turned to anger towards the council with one protester saying: “Where was the consultation for this plant? People are still not aware that it will even be built and they have rail-roaded this through!”

Pollution

If this site is built we can expect a 180-foot-tall stack and toxic smoke covering the district. Around 60 wagons a day are expected to add to the pollution. All of this contravenes Bradford council’s own environment project and plans. Clearly, cash speaks louder than the health of people.

People on the inspiring march into Keighley town centre engaged with us on the route, applauding us for making a stand. Motorists and passengers sounding their horns.



At the rally in the town centre one speaker put the facts straight about employment at the plant saying the initial estimate of 500 jobs to be created was now actually 79 at best. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition banner was unfolded and drew a lot of attention

with people linking cuts, poor life chances and the building of this plant.

We will now become more active in this campaign and hopefully the local community can push Bradford council back on the horrendous decision taken.

MEMORIAL MEETING REMEMBERS BERNARD ROOME

“This memorial is to celebrate the memory of Bernard Roome, not just to mourn”, National Shop Stewards Network chair Rob Williams told 120 people from all parts of the UK at a memorial meeting on 25 March to remember Bernard who passed away in early January.

He was a longstanding member of the Militant and Socialist Party for over three decades and played a leading role in the Communication Workers Union (CWU), including on its executive council, and as part Swansea Trade Union Council.

Speakers brought Bernard’s history in the socialist, labour and trade union movement to life with emotional and inspiring speeches and contributions. Tony Kearny,

CWU senior deputy general secretary, reminded the meeting that it was Bernard who moved the union’s opposition to Blair’s bloody Iraq War. Andy Kerr, the union’s telecoms deputy general secretary, also spoke.

Indispensable role

Jeff Richards and Alan Lloyd remembered his indispensable role in his CWU branch and Ronnie Job talked about his leadership of Swansea Trade Union Council.

Swansea Socialist Party organiser Alec Thraves told the meeting about Bernard’s contribution to taking on the right wing at Wales Trade Union Congress. But above all he was a revolutionary socialist. This de-

termined his approach to trade unionism and the working class, such as in the magnificent anti-poll tax movement in which Bernard played a key role in Wales.

This was a meeting of comrades, friends and family. Bernard’s two daughters and grandson listened to the speeches. His fiancée and former CWU national officer Grace bravely ended the meeting with an emotional but funny tribute.

As others had said, he was honest, headstrong and didn’t suffer fools...but was usually right! He made many of us better trade unionists.

The financial appeal reflected this sentiment by raising over £1,200.



photo Phil King

South Yorkshire Freedom Riders celebrate three years of fighting

Phil King
Sheffield South Socialist Party

South Yorkshire Freedom Riders celebrated our three-year anniversary on 20 March. We came together to fight against cuts to free train travel in South Yorkshire for pensioners and disabled people. Since then, by demonstrating and organising mass ‘freedom rides’ on trains and refusing to pay, we have won free travel for the disabled and half fare for pensioners!

There was a great turnout at the rally at Barnsley interchange, with 70 people attending. 40 boarded the

train to come through to Sheffield and at the rally outside Midland station around 80 people turned up to hear some passionate speakers.

We celebrated but also looked ahead - South Yorkshire passenger transport has the money to give free train travel back to pensioners. They underspent by £2 million last year and are predicted to underspend by £1.2 million this year. That’s why we’ll keep on fighting - for free travel for pensioners and disabled people in South Yorkshire and beyond!

You can sign our petition for free local transport for pensioners and disabled people everywhere in the UK here: tinyurl.com/lqzlwj6

“Save our Nurseries”, Tower Hamlets campaigners tell the council

Tower Hamlets Socialist Party

“Save our Nurseries!” This was the chant of local campaigners, mostly women and mothers, who lobbied a full council meeting in Tower Hamlets town hall, east London, on 22 March.

They presented a petition against the privatisation of state-maintained nurseries in the borough.

This is one of the attacks on local services after Labour-led Tower Hamlets council voted through millions in cuts last month - see ‘There is an alternative Mr Biggs’ at socialistparty.org.uk.

Tower Hamlets Socialist Party members supported the protest and are organising a meeting on how to build a campaign to fight these cuts on Thursday 30 March, 7.30pm at Oxford house, Bethnal Green, London, E2 6HG.

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
or socialistparty.org.uk/donate

■ cheques payable to ‘Socialist Party’, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD



Socialist Party Fighting Fund									
	£ received	£ target	January-March 2017				Deadline 31 March 2017		
Southern	3,044	1,600							190%
West Midlands	4,482	2,600							172%
Northern	1,273	750							170%
North West	3,304	2,100							157%
East Midlands	2,668	1,850							144%
Yorkshire	4,482	3,300							136%
Wales	2,638	2,300							115%
South West	1,971	1,800							109%
Eastern	1,165	1,200							97%
London	4,724	6,100							
South East	438	750					58%		
Other	899	5,650					16%		
TOTAL	31,088	30,000							104%

UNIVERSAL CREDIT IS MAKING THE HOUSING CRISIS WORSE



photo Paul Mattsson

David Fenwick-Finn
Manchester and Trafford
Socialist Party

The roll-out of the ‘Universal Credit’ benefits system seems to be making an already desperate social housing situation a whole

lot worse. Figures from the housing organisation 24 Housing are shocking. 86% of all social housing tenants on Universal Credit are in rent arrears, compared to 31% of all social housing tenants. These numbers, from January 2017, are up from 79% in March 2016.

And 59% of Universal Credit claimants in social housing have arrears that amount to more than one month’s rent. This is a result of sanctions, the 42-day gap between the

86% of social housing tenants on Universal Credit are in rent arrears

initial claim and receiving money, and mistakes made in payments due to an unfit-for-purpose IT system.

As if this wasn’t enough, the average amount of arrears across all households in social housing has risen from £321 in March 2016 to £615 in January this year.

To this toxic mix we can now add people in work who are presently in receipt of tax credits, but are to be switched to Universal Credit, in the process of the ‘roll up’ of all the

various benefits into one.

One of the pilot schemes for this is, in Ashton-under-Lyne, Greater Manchester. I’d recommend a brilliant blog by Charlotte Hughes called ‘The Poorer Side of Life’, which documents the weekly demo she and her helpers hold outside Ashton-under-Lyne Jobcentre.

So what’s the situation in Greater Manchester? For a start, we have 80,000 across the ten boroughs waiting for social housing, according to the Housing the Powerhouse campaign.

It has proven difficult to obtain figures for evictions due to problems with Universal Credit. But anecdotally, talking to professionals in the homelessness service, a lot of the people they’re seeing seem to have got into debt and arrears due to problems with Universal Credit.

Councils and social housing providers claim they are doing all they can, but it is becoming increasingly clear that this is wholly inadequate. There must be a lot more pressure, involving residents and workers, exerted on councils and the government. The only way things are going to change is through collective action.

The Greater Manchester ‘Devo Manc’ deal allocates £300 million for housing - but this can only go to private developers. What is needed is a massive public house-building programme. Nationally and regionally, this must be the central demand of any housing campaign.

photo Save Womanby Street



Save Cardiff’s live music venues

Scott Jones

Cardiff, Wales’s capital city, is also Wales’s capital of ‘going out’.

And if you’re into live music, then Womanby Street, wedged between the castle and the Millennium Stadium, is the place to go. Particularly since other live music venues in the city have been forced to close.

But now Womanby Street is threatened too.

The street is full of live venues such as the legendary ‘Clwb Ifor Bach’, important to both music fans and Cardiff’s Welsh-speaking community - and Fuel, Cardiff’s only permanent rock venue (where I used to DJ when it was in a different location).

The street is full of live venues such as the legendary ‘Clwb Ifor Bach’, important to both music fans and Cardiff’s Welsh-speaking community - and Fuel, Cardiff’s only permanent rock venue (where I used to DJ when it was in a different location).

Other live music venues in Cardiff have been forced to close for similar reasons, either due to hotels or luxury flats opening nearby. One pub which put on live music at the end of Womanby Street has closed already in favour of a trendy sports bar.

Hardly anyone lives near Womanby Street, and other hotels are a fair distance away.

The ‘Save Womanby Street’ campaign is lobbying the council to recognise it as an area of cultural significance for music.

Late alcohol licensing and live music are vital to the venues’ survival. Campaigners are calling on Cardiff Council to designate Womanby Street a “cultural night-time economy area” as part of the its local development plan, which designates the usages of different parts of the city.

Coming for our fun

On the weekends, Cardiff’s bars, pubs, clubs and restaurants are home to not just people from the city itself, but also Newport, Bridgend, even some from Swansea, but especially the Valleys. Coming from Blackwood in the Gwent Valleys, going “out out” always meant heading down to Cardiff for the night.

Millions of pounds have been spent redeveloping Cardiff in recent years. However, at the same time the council has cut essential public services and facilities, and attacked other cultural institutions such as the library. Now the council is coming for our fun as well.

Instead of inappropriately placed hotels, Cardiff needs suitably placed affordable housing. But zero council houses have been built either.

Read more and join the campaign at the ‘Save Womanby Street’ Face-book page



photo Steve Chapple/Creative Commons



photo Ilias Bartolini/Creative Commons

WOMEN NEED SECURE JOBS AND EQUAL PAY, NOT PATRONISING ‘RETURNSHIPS’

Laurel Fogarty
Recent parent

The Tory government has announced £5 million of investment in ‘returnships’: internships targeted at women who left work to raise a family.

The scheme exploits experienced women who have been out of work for a number of years, giving them between two and 12 weeks of ‘work experience’ at lower pay, often on a part-time basis. There is no guarantee of full-time employment at the end of the scheme.

This represents an increasing devaluation of women’s labour as well as the continued casualisation of the workforce in every domain.

Returnships further entrench the nonsense idea that women who have chosen to raise families have somehow become unskilled, less effective workers, and liabilities who should not be employed on full-time contracts or at their previous rate of pay.

This is blatant super-exploitation masquerading as opportunity. It allows companies to take advantage

of women: using their skills and expertise and paying them less.

Patronising internships are not the answer for women who choose to take a break from work to raise a family, or for those who are forced out of work after having children due to the high cost of childcare and entrenched sexism.

Nor are they the answer for thousands of working class women who do not have access to the scheme - which is aimed at executives and managers - but are equally devalued in the workplace.

Capitalism

Capitalism thrives on the free domestic labour of women. At the same time it labels women who have chosen or been forced to do this work as ‘risky’ employees - preventing them from re-joining the workforce on an equal footing with men.

We must fight this system and fight for the rights of women to work, for affordable childcare, and for an end to all exploitation. Public ownership and democratic planning of the economy could lay the basis to make any improvements women win permanent.

Bedroom tax trap

I have a relative who rents a two-bedroom flat from Worcestershire Council. Her son moved out over two years ago, and she has been bidding for a one-bedroom flat as she cannot afford the vicious ‘bedroom tax’ the Tories imposed.

She works, but only on the national minimum wage, and her council tax is far too high. By the time rent, utility bills and council tax are paid, she struggles with grocery shopping.

She is stuck in a vicious circle as she wants to downsize but because she is a widow with no dependants, she is not a priority. She’s a ‘Jam’ (just about managing). She would love a young family to have her flat, but with a bidding system that is so complicated, and a lack of affordable housing being built or existing properties being rejuvenated, I sense the problem will worsen before it gets better.

Calvin Fowler
Worcester

Mansions v evictions

Two articles in the Observer on 5 March highlighted the Britain we live in today. On the one hand over 200 wealthy oligarchs choose to pay £218,200 in tax rather than to declare which £20 million-plus mega-mansions they own. There are 210 properties worth more than £20 million owned for these people by offshore companies. On the other hand, for the many who have to work to survive, housing benefit has been frozen by the Tories. George Osborne, previous Tory chancellor, capped housing benefit payments as part of the Tory aim to cut welfare. Shelter, the housing charity, has warned that families will have to find hundreds of pounds extra every month to avoid eviction. Shelter found that in one in four areas of England the combination of rising rents and the benefit freeze means families with one or two children living in a two-bedroomed home and claiming housing benefit will have to find at least £100 extra rent a month over the next year!

Evictions will rise significantly as a result of these vicious attacks, and as a result local authorities will have to provide emergency accommodation, which is often unsuitable. We are in a housing crisis where working class people are forced into expensive rented accommodation and then evicted when they can’t afford increased rents.

We need a massive programme of



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building council accommodation. We demand that Labour and Plaid Cymru councils and the assembly implement no-cuts budgets using their reserves and borrowing powers, linking up with the trade unions to build a campaign of mass resistance to kick out the Tories.

Mark Evans
Gorseinon, west Wales

Tory terror hypocrisy

News of the 22 March attack in London shocked the country. It also sent establishment politicians clamouring for the media spotlight, seeking to define the narrative which came out of the events. The prime minister, Theresa May: “We will all move forward together. Never giving in to terror and never allowing the voices of hate and evil to drive us apart.” Lib Dem leader Tim Farron: “At times like this, we must remember who we are. Britain is an open, tolerant country and we will never let those who spread terror and threaten our values win.” Labour’s Hilary ‘Bomber’ Benn: “As we grieve for the fallen and the injured, let us honour them with renewed resolve to uphold our way of life and our democracy.” We’ve heard a lot of this stuff about unity over recent days, and we’ve heard it all before. And each time one of these platitudes passes through their quivering lips, it is not comfort or pride which overcomes me. It is sickness.

It sickens me to hear appeals for unity from the very people who cynically use race, religion, gender, sexuality to divide us. From the very people who, through their wars and austerity, make terror attacks inevitable.

This ‘don’t let them divide us’ is the language of the international working class. It is the language of solidarity, cynically coopted by establishment politicians for short-term gain.

In reality, there is no “we” which includes both the working class and the



photo Paolo Margari/Creative Commons

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photo Paul Mattsson

representatives of big business. Our interests are fundamentally opposed. If we are to overcome the perpetual state of war, terror, poverty, and suffering which engulfs the world, the working class must forge an independent path. This means real solidarity with the victims of the attack, by refusing unity with the architects of human suffering, be they Isis or the capitalists. And this is just one more reason why Jeremy Corbyn, Labour’s anti-war leader, urgently needs to break with the warmongering Blairites who continue to dominate the parliamentary Labour Party.

Tom Barker
Leicester

Thanks to the Socialists

I would just like to extend my thanks to Salford Socialist Party member Paul Gerrard, who took the time to meet with me on 20 March to discuss me potentially joining the party in the near future. While I have previously attempted to get active in the local Labour Party and Momentum, I have seen my efforts ignored. Paul, however, was quick to respond to my interest in the Socialist Party with an offer to meet up, and thoroughly and enthusiastically answered all my questions about membership and the party’s ideas.

If you are willing to donate time, effort and money to the politics you feel passionate about, then I believe the organisation in question should respond as Paul and the Socialist Party have. I now feel more than ever a strong solidarity with the Socialist Party, and predict either joining, or at the very least exploring the possibility further, in the near future.

Thank you again Paul.
Jordan Lee Smith
Manchester/Sheffield

SOUTH AFRICA: UNITY AGAINST POVERTY, CRIME AND XENOPHOBIA



WASP played a pivotal role in organising working class unity to cut across a developing wave of xenophobia photo WASP

Shaun Arendse
Workers And Socialist Party
(CWI South Africa)

Over recent months a new wave of xenophobic violence has threatened to engulf South Africa. Isolated attacks against foreign residents and foreign businesses took place in the south of Johannesburg and the west of Pretoria.

But the swift action of immigrant groups and organised South African communities, with the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP – CWI in South Africa) playing a leading role, for now at least seems to have prevented the sparks from catching fire.

Even so, for several weeks there was near panic among foreign residents. They feared a repeat of the 2008 violence – which saw 62 murders and the destruction of large numbers of small businesses – or that of 2015, which led to six killings.

The counter-campaign led by WASP, founding the Coalition of Civics Against Xenophobia in Pretoria, culminated in a 400-strong march to Union Buildings (seat of the presidency) on 9 March under the slogan “Unite against poverty, crime and xenophobia”.

From the end of January, the Mamelodi Concerned Residents (MCR) group, from the huge township to the east of Pretoria, distributed leaflets across the city blaming “foreigners” for unemployment, crime and drugs and calling on residents to march against “illegal immigrants”.

This followed xenophobic statements by the new mayor of Johannesburg, Herman Mashaba. In December, using Donald Trump-like

rhetoric, he put the blame for crime in the city on “illegal” foreigners, demanded they leave, and called on the national government to restrict immigration.

Mashaba is a member of the Democratic Alliance (DA), a white middle class-dominated neoliberal party, but one that presents itself with a socially liberal face. Mashaba made these comments with zero consequences within his party. Indeed, former DA leader Helen Zille recently caused outrage by tweeting that colonialism was not all bad.

Capitalist politicians find xenophobia and other reactionary ideas useful to divert attention away from the failures of their rotten profit system.

Xenophobia is able to have some influence over some sections of the working class, and especially the unorganised poor and unemployed because of the grinding poverty that the crisis of capitalism means for the majority.

Initiative

The MCR march was granted permission without any questions raised by the DA-controlled Tshwane (Pretoria) municipality. It went ahead on 24 February. The ANC-controlled Department of Home Affairs agreed to meet the leaders of the march.

In this political vacuum WASP was able to take an initiative.

We organised hundreds of worker activists under the #Outsourcing-MustFall campaign to distribute leaflets in their townships countering the MCR's lies and calling for organisation and struggle to deal with the very real issues of poverty, crime and unemployment.

At a public meeting we organised

on 19 February over 50 attended, representing more than a dozen communities. The meeting agreed to found an anti-xenophobia coalition.

On 22 February, two days before the planned MCR march, the coalition went ahead with a press conference with Mamelotwe Sebei and Themba Ncalo (both leading members of WASP), alongside a leader of the Congolese community, acting as spokespeople.

Over the next two days these WASP leaders dominated the media. This played an important role in giving confidence to the vast majority of South Africans who are opposed to xenophobia, and the tide began to turn against MCR and its march.

We put forward a clear call for the organisation of community self-defence patrols to defend foreign residents and businesses in the run-up to the march.

In a major victory for the campaign, Mashaba was forced to ‘clarify’ his xenophobic statements as having been misinterpreted!

President Jacob Zuma finally made a public comment the day before the MCR march, but this was only because the South African cellphone operator MTN's Nigerian offices were attacked in retaliation to violence targeting Nigerians.

Disgracefully, his message was one of irritation that anti-immigrant sentiment is also normal in Europe but it does not get labelled as ‘xenophobia’!

When the possibility of withdrawing permission for the MCR march began to be debated in the media, the ANC-led South African National Civic Organisation and ANC-led Congress of South African Students



Democratic Alliance Johannesburg mayor Herman Mashaba, using Donald Trump-like rhetoric, blamed “illegal” foreigners for crime in the city and demanded they leave

intervened to mediate between the organisers and the Pretoria West police to ensure it went ahead as a ‘peaceful’ march – albeit still a xenophobic one!

The Somali community in particular responded to the call to organise community self-defence. On the night of the MCR march WASP leaders attended a community meeting in Pretoria West and played a direct role in organising patrols.

In one area at the heart of the violence, WASP members reported that known ANC Youth League activists were trying to organise and incite looting against foreign businesses.

Marching forward

In the end, the MCR march was a dismal failure. The organisers themselves blamed WASP for this.

The anti-xenophobia coalition decided to go ahead with its own march that would put the issues of tackling crime and poverty at its heart.

By now the coalition had been joined by an organisation of hawkers and small traders from Mamelodi itself who marched under slogans including “the mall is taking our jobs, not our African brothers”.

In stark contrast, however, to the tacit support of the authorities for the MCR march, the coalition's march was obstructed at every turn. In the end it went ahead as an ‘illegal gathering’.

While the immediate threat of widespread xenophobic violence appears to have receded, the task of organising communities – uniting foreign residents and local – is just beginning. With the successes of the campaign under the coalition's belt, the strategic task of forming a country-wide socialist civic federation can take steps forward.

Belarus: Movement developing against regime

Riot police viciously attacked anti-government protesters in Minsk and other cities across Belarus on 25 March. Protests over President Alexander Lukashenko's ‘law against parasites’ and his repressive regime have been taking place for the last two months. This law – a new tax on the self-employed – was ‘the straw that broke the camel's back’ of a long-suffering, oppressed population. And even though Lukashenko has announced withdrawal of the measure, the protests continue. **Daniil Raskolnikov** (translation of article from the Russian CWI website socialist.news) reports on the gathering storm.



Belarus strongman president Lukashenko has been feeling the hot breath of workers' opposition in recent weeks photo kremlin.ru/CC

Ten years ago, former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice dubbed Belarus the ‘last dictatorship in Europe’, and ever since Western powers have treated the country like a pariah. Until, that is, President Lukashenko adopted a ‘neutral’ position, even criticising the Kremlin for supporting the pro-Russian self-proclaimed republics in Ukraine.

Hit by economic crisis, Lukashenko is looking desperately for help. He declared that EU citizens no longer need visas to visit the country. This is of huge significance because Belarus and Russia had a common visa regime, with no passport controls between the two countries.

Now Russia has restored its border guards and passport controls. This is a big step towards the break-up of the union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Lukashenko reckoned that by introducing a new tax on the self-employed – most of whom are small-time traders forced into this situation after being made unemployed from industry or the retail sector – he could find money to fill gaps in his budget.

In response, ignoring the requirement to seek official permission to protest, people came onto the streets. These protests are dominated by working people.

Discontent at the new law was soon transformed into political

demands, with calls for the resignation of the government and the president.

The state-controlled media quickly declared that the protests had been whipped up by “external forces”, by which they mean Russia. Opposition leaders who have called for action have been tarred ‘Putin's agents’.

Recession

After the crisis in 2011, the economy slipped into recession. Forecasts for growth in the next few years are all negative. This means that many state and semi-state organisations, and even whole sectors which are dependent on state subsidies, have to cut expenditures, cut wages and sack workers.

Lukashenko just keeps loading the economic problems of the government onto the shoulders of working class Belarusians. Opinion polls suggest that since the crisis in 2011, there has been a sharp drop in his support; 60% now say they have no confidence in him.

Practically all the opposition forces who want to take power from Lukashenko are pro-capitalist and will try to take over leadership of these new protests.

A programme is needed that offers an answer not just to oppose

Lukashenko and the pro-capitalist right-wing opposition, but also against any attempt at imperialist intervention, whether by Russia or by western interests.

This should be based on the understanding that the only way to guarantee a genuinely independent Belarus is through socialist measures and solidarity in struggle with workers in Europe and the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (which succeeded the Soviet Union) against their own governments.

■ For updates on Belarus events plus a report on the large anti-corruption protests in Russia on 26 March, see socialistworld.net



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.

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!
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UNITE AGAINST TERROR, RACISM AND WAR

- No to racist scapegoating
- Oppose the far right

Simon Carter

In the wake of the horrific Westminster terrorist attack, far-right groups are attempting to divide communities by stepping up their scapegoating of Muslims.

Far-right bigotry and racism is being assisted by divisive and counter-productive government anti-terrorism measures such as 'Prevent', which Tory prime minister Theresa May now wants to expand.

Prevent is clearly discriminatory as it largely targets people from Muslim backgrounds. Prevent pressures staff in public services, including teachers, to effectively act as government spies, stifling democratic debate on issues such as war, terrorism and racism.

Yet, according to police chiefs, the main growth in extremism is not Isis-inspired groups but that of far-right organisations and far-right websites. It was only ten months ago that a neo-Nazi shot and stabbed to death Labour MP Jo Cox.

Trump and Brexit

The election of billionaire bigot Donald Trump and his racist policies - such as a travel ban on six Mus-

lim majority countries and building a 1,000-mile wall along the Mexican border to stop migrant workers - has fuelled race hatred and given confidence to far-right groups to go on the offensive, in the US and across the world.

In the UK there has also been a rise in racism and racist attacks on minorities and migrant workers in the run-up to and since the Brexit referendum.

Unfortunately, Jeremy Corbyn mistakenly supported a Remain position, allowing the anti-EU campaign to be dominated by right-wing Tory and Ukip xenophobes, like Trump-supporting Nigel Farage.

This is despite most working class people's anger over the EU being about austerity and being economically left behind by capitalist globalisation.

It is also despite Corbyn's long-held position (like the Socialist Party's) of left opposition to the neoliberal EU.

Scapegoating minorities and migrant workers won't reverse the massive government austerity cuts in services, such as education, the NHS, and public housing. Nor will it lead to new investment in industry and decent paying jobs.

These pressing social problems

flow from the failure of the capitalist system - a system that exploits all workers for profit, increases wealth inequality, and which, since 2008, has been bailed out to the tune of trillions of pounds by successive governments.

Fightback

Millions of people worldwide have marched in recent months against Trump's bigotry, in defence of the NHS, and against EU and Tory government racist policies over refugees.

The fight to defeat austerity is also a fight to stop racism and division in the working class.

We need unity and mass movements to roll back Tory government and capitalist attacks on our living standards, and to eradicate the conditions that breed terror - poverty, war, oppression and exploitation.

■ See pages 2&3 on Westminster attack

■ See socialiststudents.org.uk to join planned student walkouts in if Trump comes to Britain



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