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OUT!

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■ 8 June general election

KICK OUT THE MILLIONAIRE GOVERNMENT - SOCIALIST POLICIES NEEDED



What we think

Theresa May has called a general election for one reason - not the reason she gave, but because of the government's weakness in the face of a rising tide of anger in British society.

Workers are suffering the most prolonged squeeze on wages since the start of the nineteenth century. Benefits cuts are leaving millions without enough money to feed themselves and their families. Last year a record 200,000 people were admitted to hospital suffering from malnutrition. Education and the NHS are facing life-threatening cuts. The housing crisis is acute. The new ultra-draconian anti-trade union laws are creating bitterness and frustration among trade unionists.

Far from being a strong government, May fears that, given the Tories' wafer-thin majority in parliament, she could be overwhelmed by forced u-turns. In the first year of the government alone there were eleven. Now - in order to try to prevent more - May has made the biggest u-turn yet. Having pledged not to call a snap election she has gone ahead and done so. This shows how capitalist politicians change the rules whenever it suits them.



Globally the lesson of recent elections is that voters want to punish the capitalist establishment

Cameron and Clegg introduced the Fixed Term Parliament Act in order to try to shore up the coalition government for five years. Now May is overriding it to try to strengthen a weak Tory government. She is gambling, based on current opinion polls, that she will win the general election with an increased majority and will then be more able to carry out her real programme - not the warm words about helping the 'just about managing', but vicious austerity.

High risk for Tories

Her gamble is high-risk. The real poll will take place on 8 June, and a lot can happen between now and then. She is partly posing the election as a referendum on Brexit, hoping that the third of Tory voters who supported 'remain' will reluctantly continue to support her government. This is not guaranteed however - some may well switch to the pro-remain Liberal Democrats.

Moreover, the hated Tories are very unlikely to make significant inroads in Scotland. The Scottish National Party is not yet fully exposed and is likely to largely maintain its electoral base. Winning the Copeland byelection has probably given May hope that the Tories can improve their position in the North of England. However, in both the Copeland and Stoke byelelections the Tory vote actually fell in absolute terms. The Tories only scraped victory in Copeland because the Tory vote held up better than the Labour one.

Globally the lesson of recent elections - from the US, to France, to the Netherlands - is that voters want to punish the capitalist establishment; and those parties



photo Paul Mattsson

and candidates that claim to be anti-establishment can have a mass appeal. Look at Melenchon in France, who, by standing on a left programme, has soared to 19% in the opinion polls with a possibility that he will even go through to the second round. Jeremy Corbyn has already stated that Labour will not oppose the general election going ahead. Now he needs to launch an election campaign based on socialist policies that are relevant to working class people's lives.

Policies for socialist change

It is clear that much of the pro-capitalist cabal at the top of the Labour Party will be secretly welcoming this election because they think Corbyn will be defeated and they can then replace him with some pro-capitalist pro-austerity leader. However, they could rue the day this election was called. If Corbyn fights on a clear socialist programme - for a Brexit in the interests of the working and middle class - he could win the general election.

The policies that first thrust him into the leadership of the Labour Party would be a good beginning - an immediate introduction of a £10 an hour minimum wage,

free education for all, mass council house building and nationalisation of the rail and energy companies. These should be combined with policies such as an immediate end to all cuts in public services and a pledge to immediately renationalise Royal Mail.

Jeremy should make clear that he would kick the privateers out of public services and education. He should pledge to introduce a real socialist NHS - a well-funded, comprehensive, high quality health service, under democratic control, with care free at the point of use. These demands should be linked to the need for fundamental socialist change - for a society run in the interests of the majority instead of for the profits of a few.

Such an election campaign should not be limited to speeches and election broadcasts. The campaign to defend the NHS, for example, should be linked to the mass movement which began with the national demonstration on 4 March. Jeremy Corbyn spoke at that demonstration. Now he, together with the trade union movement and health campaigners, should call a second demonstration, during the election campaign, mobilising millions onto the streets against the Tories and in defence of the NHS.

JOBSTOWN NOT GUILTY: "WE'LL PUT AUSTERITY ON TRIAL"

■ Paul Murphy speaks to the Socialist



Paul Murphy (centre) at the Socialist Party (England and Wales) national congress photo Paul Mattsson

On 24 April the biggest political trial in Ireland for a generation will begin. Seven people stand accused of 'false imprisonment' of then deputy prime minister Joan Burton during an anti-water charges sit-down protest and slow march in Jobstown, Dublin, in 2014. A 17 year old has already been found guilty of this charge in children's court and a further eleven protesters face related charges in the future. A guilty verdict would hold a maximum sentence of life imprisonment!

Among the first batch of adult defendants is **Paul Murphy**, member of the Irish parliament and of the Socialist Party's Irish sister organisation. Ian Pattison spoke to Paul a week before the start of the trial.

What are the latest developments with the campaign?

A lot has taken place in the last month or so, both in and out of the courtroom.

The prosecution went to court to try to seek an extension of our bail conditions - to prevent the defendants speaking about the case outside of court, speaking at all at an 'assembly for justice' that we organised a couple of weeks ago, to prevent any protest outside the court in the course of the trial. That was a very aggressive move.

We mobilised public support, we exposed what was happening. In the end we simply gave a commitment not to speak about the case during the assembly for justice. That was accepted and we were able to attend the assembly, which they had been trying to stop.

The event got a massive boost in terms of publicity because they attempted to shut it down. We had different campaigns represented that had faced state repression in Ire-

land and abroad. We packed out the main theatre and balcony in Liberty Hall - the historic trade union building in Ireland - and two overflow rooms. There were over 700 people there in total.

The other significant event inside the courtroom is the attempt of the prosecution to stack the jury against the defendants. They're seeking to exclude from the jury anyone from Tallaght - an area of over 100,000 people, where the protest took place - or with connections to Tallaght.

They're seeking to exclude anyone who was involved in a campaigning group against water charges, which in theory could include every member of a trade union in Ireland because the Irish Trade Union Congress is against water charges.

And they're seeking to exclude anyone who's ever expressed views about water charges on social media or elsewhere.

That's quite an incredible restriction, because in theory this is a trial not about protesting against water

charges, it's a trial about a criminal act of false imprisonment.

Why someone who has an opinion on water charges couldn't be impartial and determine whether someone had committed false imprisonment kind of gives the game away. It is about water charges, it is about austerity - what's going to be on trial is opposition to austerity.

An independent documentary has been released about the case. We're having what we hope will be a very substantial protest this Saturday 22 April, where we think we can mobilise thousands and thousands of people.

■ Watch the short documentary 'Jobstown - a protest on trial' on the 'Jobstown Not Guilty' Facebook page

What are likely to be the key points of debate in the courtroom?

The essence of our defence is going to be that there's a very fundamental difference between protesting, sit-down protests, slow marches and kidnapping, which is what we're charged with.

At the core of the case is that people have a right to protest and what is being attempted here is to infringe on that right.

Linked to that will be us attempting to put the Irish Labour Party and its austerity on trial, to expose why people were so angry at Joan Burton. Why they were right to be so angry at Joan Burton and the Labour Party. Why people on the protest chanted "traitor".

And then also to bring out the role of political policing. The defendants in the case are carefully chosen by the police. They chose to arrest and charge certain people for political reasons. So, for example, they questioned two members of Solidarity (the electoral alliance the Socialist Party is part of) who weren't even at the protest.

They targeted men in particular - only two of all the defendants are women. That's because they wanted to portray the protest - wrongly - as an anti-woman, misogynistic protest, despite the fact that probably at least 50% of people on the protest were women.

We may also bring out how unprecedented these charges are. The state has always used the police to defend the interests of the rich, to prevent protest. But the use of a false imprisonment charge is a new departure.

So we'll be able to bring out multiple examples from the past of where similar protests took place, politicians' cars were delayed, and never before have there been any charges for false imprisonment. We'll expose how this is, as a barrister in the children's court case described, "a recipe for totalitarianism".

And that's it's driven by a fear of the establishment of the growing movement against austerity, against water charges, and more generally on other issues as well.

■ Read the final part of the interview on the back page and a full version at socialistparty.org.uk



People have a right to protest and what is being attempted here is to infringe on that right

Have you got news for us? DEADLINE: Friday before publication date - urgent news: Monday

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900 CARERS QUIT A DAY - NATIONALISE SOCIAL CARE NOW

Rich Edwards

Cardiff East Socialist Party

Over 900 carers quit every day last year in England, according to the charity Skills for Care.

They are leaving a badly underfunded, poorly regulated and mindlessly privatised public service. Care is on the verge of a complete collapse.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has announced plans for unpaid carers - partners and family members who are unable to work because of their duties - to receive higher benefits. This is very welcome.

But unfortunately the increase is only to the pitiful level of jobseekers' allowance. As well as a minimum wage of £10 an hour, Corbyn should pledge living benefits to really appeal to downtrodden voters.

It also does not address the lack of affordable professional care which means too many working families have no choice but to do the job themselves. The Tories are vulnerable on this issue, and Corbyn's Labour must hammer them as part of its election campaign.

The provision of social care in the UK is in a generational crisis due to attacks from successive Tory governments, passed on by Blairite councils. Bold and decisive action is required to protect the elderly and vulnerable - nationalise care homes now, and the entire social care industry!

Zero-hour contracts

5% of care positions in the UK are currently vacant, and up to 25% of those working in the industry do so on insecure and super-exploitative zero-hour contracts. Skills for Care also found that the average wage in the industry is just £7.69 an hour - far below the minimum necessary for any worker to live and work securely and happily.

Like many people, I have watched elderly family members move through Britain's social care system. I witnessed first-hand the patience, intelligence, hard work and compassion displayed by those working within the industry.

The injustice and shame of a privatised, exploitative and profit-seeking care industry must stop now. Nationalise all health and social care. Introduce secure jobs and hours and a real living wage for all carers across the UK - with £10 an hour a good first step.



photo WorldSkills UK/CC



photo Linkfuss/CC

Dave Walsh

Liverpool Socialist Party

Once again, self-styled 'man of the people' Kelvin MacKenzie is making the news with more anti-working class smears against the people of Liverpool - as well as comments about mixed-race Everton FC midfielder Ross Barkley.

In his column for the Sun, the tabloid's former editor compared Barkley to "a gorilla at the zoo" and said the only other people in Liverpool with high pay packets were "drug dealers."

The newspaper has now suspended MacKenzie and distanced itself from his comments - but only saying the article was "unfunny."

Even this suggests it was printed without the editors first checking it. Hard to believe, given MacKenzie's history with Liverpool and the fact the article was published the day before the 28th anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster.

Under his editorship, the Sun carried inexcusable lies attacking people at the 1989 stadium catastrophe which killed 96.

Of course, both the Sun and MacKenzie have a long history of reactionary views.

In his column last year, MacKenzie wrote about Southern Rail strikers: "Sack them all and get in East European drivers and guards before the Brexit door closes."

Also last year, columnist Katie

Hopkins described refugees as "cockroaches," and in 2015 the rag's front page falsely claimed one in five Muslims sympathise with jihadis.

When MacKenzie was editor, gay vicars were labelled "pulpit poofs." And after the rape of Jill Saward, he used a legal loophole to publish her photograph.

The fact is the article was timed to cause maximum outrage, and so gain maximum publicity. The Sun exists to defend the bosses and sow division, including by making racism, homophobia, misogyny and all forms of bigotry acceptable.

Murdoch

It supported Tony Blair because Rupert Murdoch knew he was one of theirs. It is now backing Gerard Coyne against Len McCluskey for Unite the Union general secretary for the same reason.

Hillsborough justice campaigners have virtually eradicated sales of the Sun across Merseyside. Many shops refuse even to stock it, and hundreds of taxis are plastered with livery saying "don't buy the Scum." Its journalists are now banned from both Liverpool and Everton football clubs.

The Socialist Party calls for democratic control and public ownership of the mass media, so ordinary people can decide editorial policy rather than billionaires and bullies. As part of this struggle, you can support a real working class newspaper, the Socialist - subscribe at socialistparty.org.uk/subscribe.



Ross Barkley photo Serg Stallone/CC

Benefits workers oppose ‘rape clause’ and two-child limit



‘John Hood’
Civil servants’ union PCS rep

The requirement for victims to complete an eight-page form in order to qualify for the so-called “rape clause” exemption from child benefit cuts - see ‘Scrap the Tory “rape clause” and all benefit attacks’ at socialistparty.org.uk - has led to a national outcry.

The Tory government’s new restrictions on child benefits were already an attack on working class women and families. This new policy puts civil servants in the position of having to explain to victims of rape that they will need a “third-party professional” to also complete the form before they will be given access to child benefit.

Workers in the civil service are

used to enacting policies they don’t necessarily agree with. But the prospect of explaining this inhumane process to women who have already experienced horrific trauma is unacceptable.

Staff will also need to explain how the policy does not allow the benefit to be claimed if the mother still lives with her attacker - a situation that, sadly, is not uncommon.

No special training on how to best deal with women who have questions about the rape clause has been provided. Civil service management seemingly doesn’t realise how distressing having to quibble with victims of sexual crime will be for staff - let alone claimants.

Additionally, workers in Northern Ireland could potentially be committing a criminal offence if they don’t report to police that

a rape took place - but would be breaching confidentiality if they do report it.

Staff expected to deal with this side of things should be given full training and support. Commitment should be given that departments will support any worker threatened with prosecution as a result of following these new rules.

Civil service unions must make it clear that they oppose the two-child limit. As a first step they should argue for the “rape exception” form to be dropped and replaced with something that supports victims, while campaigning for the two-child limit - and all attacks on benefits - to be reversed.

Corbyn too must shout this loud and clear if he is to mobilise hard-hit claimants and public sector workers to vote.

JOINT STRUGGLE CAN STOP TUITION FEE INTEREST HIKE

Theo Sharieff-Winston
Nottingham Socialist Students

Millions of students and former students will be affected by an increase in interest rates on their student loans. The increase from 4.6% to 6.1% will mean that - even before graduating - students will face higher interest charges.

The plan follows an announcement by the Department for Education in February that it will sell loans taken out by students between 2002 and 2006 to private investors, who would be free to gamble on those debts in an even freer pursuit of profit.

All this spells is disaster for future generations of young people in Britain today. As working class students are increasingly deterred from entering higher education, current students and graduates are faced with the prospect of accruing thousands of pounds of debt before even entering the world of work.

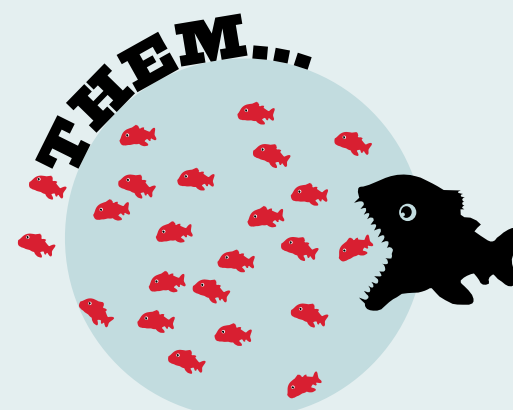


The Intergenerational Foundation think-tank has highlighted that after graduating, students will be paying back much more than they are originally given in loans. Some are expected to pay back £54,000 on tuition fees alone at the current interest rate of 4.6%.

A fighting and militant student mobilisation led by the National Union of Students, which links its struggle with workers - particularly teachers and support staff working within the universities - could push the government back.

The Socialist Party and Socialist Students demand the scrapping of all tuition fees; a halt to the privatisation of student debt and the cancellation of the debt; and free education for all students at every level.

Corbyn’s Labour must take up these demands to distance itself from the Blairites’ legacy of introducing tuition fees, as part of presenting the most effective electoral challenge to the Tories.



■ Money for cutters...

Privateers responsible for forcing disabled people off benefits have collected £578 million for the privilege.

This sum - paid to outsourcers Atos and Capita - is actually £66 million higher than originally estimated. There’s that private sector efficiency for you.

Half a billion for bullying the vulnerable into penury. A figure Corbyn should remind the Tories of in the run-up to a general election.

£578m

Sum paid to private companies for forcing disabled people off benefits

■ £15m for Hunt...

Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt picked up £14.5 million from the sale of an education database firm he co-founded.

The windfall could well have made him the richest in Theresa May’s cabinet of millionaires. Meanwhile, the Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts workers’ wages will be lower in 2021 than they were in 2008.

■ ...crisis for A&Es

At the same time, the service Hunt runs - the NHS - had to turn away ambulances from A&Es nearly 500 times last winter. This is nearly twice the number of refusals of the previous winter.

While the government and its paymasters grow richer, the NHS continues to collapse. After Corbyn’s well-received appearance at the 4 March NHS demo, coming out for reversal of all NHS cuts could seriously damage the Tories.

£14.5m

Amount health secretary Jeremy Hunt pocketed from the sale of a firm he co-founded



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



Socialist Party Fighting Fund

	£ received	£ target	April to June 2017	Deadline: 30 June 2017
Northern	879	750		117%
South West	1,117	1,800		62%
Wales	911	2,300	40%	
Southern	397	1,600	25%	
North West	470	2,100	22%	
London	1,085	6,100	18%	
West Midlands	436	2,600	17%	
East Midlands	215	1,850	12%	
Yorkshire	273	3,300	8%	
South East	15	750	2%	
Eastern	10	1,200	1%	
Other	30	5,650	1%	
TOTAL	5,843	30,000	19%	



Doncaster postal workers walk out against bullying photo Alistair Tice

CWU conference FIGHTBACK AGAINST ROYAL MAIL PENSION ATTACK NEEDED

Socialist Party CWU members

This year's Communication Workers Union (CWU) conference takes place against the backdrop of the latest wholesale attack by Royal Mail on its workers' pensions.

The company recently announced plans to close the current 'defined benefit' pension scheme in March 2018. Its plan is to put members into an inferior alternative, with no certainty of what members would earn - workers could lose up to a third of their future pensions.

The consultation with the CWU and postal workers has been swept aside as Royal Mail has seemed determined to undermine terms and conditions, pay and pensions since privatisation in October 2013.

The CWU has rightly spoken out condemning the possible imposition of these pension changes without agreement, But words need to be turned into action very quickly or postal workers stand to face a future of poverty in retirement.

Royal Mail claims it cannot afford to keep paying the current pension,

even though it has found £650 million to pay shareholders dividends over the last three years.

It is pretty clear that Royal Mail has no intention of changing its objective of rewarding shareholders while punishing the workforce, so only a clear call to strike action will get Royal Mail to change course.

The need for coordinated action across all unions against the attack on our pensions and pay is stronger than ever. We have had enough of seeing the top 1% getting richer from hammering us into the ground.

Nationalisation

The ongoing attempts by Ofcom and the government to deregulate and separate Openreach from the BT Group, combined with the increasing bullying, divide-and-rule tactics and lousy pay offers from BT management, demonstrate the need for a fighting programme of renationalisation of the telecommunication industry in conjunction with the battle to renationalise Royal Mail.

All motions making this call should be supported. And the CWU should demand Jeremy Corbyn support the call for nationalisation.

Over the last year many CWU

members' local workplaces have continued to take 'unofficial' action against bullying and attacks on conditions in local workplaces. Only last month 240 postal delivery staff walked out in Doncaster and were joined later by up to 70 distribution and collection staff.

One of the Doncaster CWU union reps described the effect of the unofficial walkout: "Yesterday we were under their spell, today they're under ours. We've taken the power back."

This shows that action gets results and we urge conference to back all propositions committing the union to take action against the government's anti-trade union bill.

- **National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) CWU conference fringe meeting: 'Organise the fightback! How do unions resist the new Tory anti-union laws and fight for a workers' Brexit?'**
- **Speakers: Tony Kearns, CWU senior deputy general secretary, and Rob Williams, NSSN national chair**
- **Lunchtime Sunday 23 April in Branksome Suite, Bournemouth International Centre (BIC)**

ture pensions. It cites a 50-year-old member earning £25,000 a year and retiring at 65 seeing a loss of £4,392 a year, or £109,800 over 25 years.

Of course, there are those who have maintained and even improved their generous pension situations. Royal Mail chief executive officer Moya Greene had pension contributions of £200,000 as part of the £1.5 million she was paid in 2016.

The cause lies within the economic model which Royal Mail has now adopted. Since its priva-

tisation, the company has moved from a public service to a capitalist organisation whose raison d'être is to provide profits for wealthy shareholders.

The CWU should take a leading role with other fighting trade unions, forcing the Trade Union Congress to coordinate industrial action across the whole trade union movement.

Carl Harper, CWU delivery representative at Peterborough delivery office (personal capacity)

Mood for a fightback at education conferences

Socialist Party NUT conference delegates

The main theme at the Easter conferences of the education unions NUT, ATL and NASUWT is one of a fightback taking place.

The NUT has backed using an existing strike ballot to take action over funding cuts. Delegates from Lewisham, south London, where strike action has already taken place at Forest Hill School, moved the motion which identified areas where there can be action. In London around half a dozen different boroughs have seen action but this needs to be coordinated. As Socialist Party member James Kerr said in the debate: "We need a strategy that can win on cuts."

Lewisham delegates held a protest at the conference in Cardiff against the use of 'private finance initiatives' in education, which have contributed to cuts.

NASUWT has also threatened

action over workload, and the ATL has explained the need for action at its conference.

Socialist Party members, through the Local Associations for National Action Campaign, also took part in other debates at NUT conference, including defeating an amendment by the leadership which would have watered down a motion committing the NUT to boycott all Sats testing in schools. However the motion itself was also defeated, so the strategy is now to have an internal indicative ballot on the Sats in the Autumn term. A motion was passed calling on the NUT to demand a national contract for teachers.

General Secretary Kevin Courtney gave his speech an hour after the announcement of the upcoming general election and placed all of the key campaigns in the context of making an impact on that election.

There were also big debates on equalities issues. A full report will follow next week.



photo Martin Powell-Davies

**National Shop Stewards
Network conference 2017**

The 11th annual National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference will be on Saturday 1 July 2017 from 11am in Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. It is open to all trade union and anti-cuts campaigners. See shopstewards.net for more information and updates. The NSSN was initiated by transport union RMT and their former general secretary, the late Bob Crow, in 2006. Nine national unions - RMT, PCS, CWU, NUM, POA, NUJ, BFAWU, Napo and FBU - officially support our campaigning work, as well as many union branches, shop stewards' committees and trade union councils.



photo BL2002/CC

WORKERS SAILING TO VICTORY ON WOOLWICH FERRY

A Unite member

Unite and GMB trade union members employed by Briggs Marine on the Woolwich Ferry have scored another win in their battle to improve conditions and fight bullying and harassment.

Workers have taken two days of strike action so far to protest against appalling health and safety failures, sexual harassment and union victimisation.

The strike action had already secured the suspension of one manager, several investigations and also the installation of a temporary management structure to oversee the local management team after workers made clear that they no longer had trust and confidence in local managers.

Further strike action was planned on 18 April but prior to the action commencing, the employer announced that the senior manager on site is 'moving on' and that there will be a new wider management team with staff able to put them-

selves forward.

The union will be demanding that these positions should be filled via an election of the workforce. While this is not strictly workers' control, it is certainly an example of what can be achieved right now!

The next planned action has therefore been suspended but only on the basis that discussion continues on a list of other grievances. As we go to press, the action for 21 April is still on.

Workers control?

These workers are a shining example. A large majority male workforce has been willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with a woman union member who faced the most disgusting sexual harassment, while at the same time building a campaign that poses the question of who controls the workplace.

The fact that the action has led to the removal of the most senior manager means that a victory has already been won - now the campaign will build on this to maximise that victory.



photo Colin Smith/CC

Picturehouse cinema strike spreads

Brian Debus

Hackney Socialist Party

Dulwich Picturehouse became the sixth site in the cinema chain to take strike action for the living wage on 15 April. When the strikers walked out at 1pm they were greeted with a round of applause, and cheers from the other five sites plus 100 supporters who flooded the pavement on both sides of the road in south London.

Due to intimidation, and fear following threats from Cineworld, their trade union Bectu has only been prepared to sanction picket lines of six at one site, and only for a

period of three hours.

The union stated it did not have enough officials to cover the other sites for a longer period of time. This has only occurred since the introduction of the Tories' draconian anti-trade union laws.

Although this has limited the impact of the strike at the other sites, it allowed for the first time for a meeting of over 50 of the strikers from all six sites to take place, share their experiences, and map out plans for their future strategy.

It was agreed to encourage community support groups to adopt a site and demonstrate outside on strike days. This occurred from 5pm onwards on 15 April outside the Hackney Picturehouse to encourage

members of the public to take their custom elsewhere.

Strikers reported that there was some fear due to management intimidation at some sites. The network of union recruitment was also expanding to other sites, even as far as Edinburgh.

The chief executive had doubled his pay against the backdrop of not paying the workforce the London Living Wage. The aim is to have a further group of strike days, in a block of three to five days, to stretch the resources of Cineworld and to damage its public image and share price.

This is a strike not just for the Picturehouse workers, but for all those in precarious employment.

PCS elections

Ballot papers out: vote Democracy Alliance

Marion Lloyd

Left Unity chair and PCS executive committee member (personal capacity)

On 20 April ballot papers for the PCS executive committee elections will be posted out. It is vital that local reps act quickly to persuade members to vote for the Democracy Alliance slate.

If branches nominated the Democracy Alliance slate, these members should be reminded of this fact along with a recommendation to vote for the Alliance slate.

Recommend

Even if a branch did not nominate the Democracy Alliance slate, branch committees can still recommend this slate to members.

Leaflets explaining the Democracy Alliance record and programme are available. These should be used in offices where possible, or by leafleting outside offices.

Left Unity activists have been sent a ballot pack containing guidelines on how to maximise the vote for De-

mocracy Alliance candidates. That pack also contains materials to use to help make recommendations and for getting out the vote.

Left Unity membership is just under 1,000. It only takes each Left Unity member to persuade ten people to vote Democracy Alliance and this election will be well on its way to being won.

The PCS left leadership is one of the most consistent and effective critics of the Tories' austerity programme. We have launched the pay protest and campaign against the pay cap.

Linked with this are efforts to persuade the TUC and other public sector unions to take joint coordinated action on pay to scrap the pay cap. Continued support for these policies relies on the re-election of the Democracy Alliance leadership.

- **See socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25250 for the Democracy Alliance slate, and contact Left Unity at leftunity.org.uk for leaflets and other campaigning materials**

Weapons workers contiune pension strike

Nick Chaffey

Southern Socialist Party secretary

Picket lines surrounded entrances at the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) in Aldermaston and Burghfield on 10 April as Unite the Union members voted emphatically to continue their pension strike.

The private contractors here get paid by the government. They 'make' their profits, £56 million last year, by cutting our pensions. What a way to treat workers after 30 years' service! This was the angry view

of Unite members beginning five days of industrial action, including winnikes and an overtime ban.

Unite members are continuing their fight to maintain their pension that was 'guaranteed' by the Thatcher government when AWE was privatised in the 1980s. The current scheme was recently ended. Unite members are now fighting to join the Ministry of Defence pension.

Having successfully reballoted with over 80% voting to strike, workers have planned eight days of strike action into May.

Unite is growing in strength at AWE, recruiting new members and winning a significant pay increase for apprentices who have also joined the pension strike.

Other workers are battling to defend their pensions at BMW and Royal Mail, with the government increasing the age of retirement.

Coordinated action by all affected workers would intensify pressure on employers and the government to step back from these attacks and ensure profit-hungry bosses don't use workers' pensions to boost their dividends!

Claire Laker-Mansfield
Socialist Party executive committee

The NHS is perhaps the most cherished prize that has ever been won by working class people in British history. The life and death struggle for its future, against the onslaught of cuts and privatisation, has now entered a new phase.

The magnificent demonstration which took place on 4 March has acted to give a huge injection of energy and confidence to NHS workers, community health campaigns and big sections of the wider working class.

Its effects can be seen most prominently among those who work in the health service - where an increased confidence and audacity has been clear in recent weeks.

In a striking example, on 6 April, domestic staff at the Royal London Hospital took part in a walkout against their new employer - the vulture company Serco - which was attempting to remove paid breaks. In less than 24 hours the workers had won a complete victory.

This reflects not only higher morale coming out of the demonstration but the role that can be played by a fighting union branch - in this case the Barts Trust Unite branch. Health workers at hospitals in Barts Trust have taken fighting action over a number of years that has built their confidence to struggle. Socialist Party members working in the trust have played a key role in this.

Also reflecting the enormous anger among NHS workers, particularly after years of appalling 'pay restraint', the traditionally more conservative Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has initiated an indicative ballot for strike action. This is supposed to 'test the mood' of RCN members for strike action against the government's outrageous 1% pay offer - which represents a real-terms cut.

The tremendous 4 March demonstration has set the stage for what must now be a determined fight to the finish. It has brought into sharp relief the central questions facing the movement: How can the momentum generated be harnessed? What will be needed for us to defeat the devastating attacks being prepared under the guise of the so-called Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs)? How do we escalate the fightback? What programme can offer us a path to victory?

Health Campaigns Together

On 22 April, when Health Campaigns Together (HCT), the body which organised the 4 March demo, meets for its annual general meeting, these questions will undoubtedly be among those most pressing in the minds of the delegates.

The starting point for all the discussions taking place must be that it is possible for us to win. After all, March 2017 demonstrated not only the huge potential strength of working class people, but the severe weaknesses of those we are fighting.

We face a bitterly divided Tory government with a wafer-thin majority. Just three weeks after the demonstration, the chancellor, Phillip Hammond, was forced into a humiliating U-turn over the changes to National

Insurance for self-employed people he had planned in his budget. This reflected the government's extreme vulnerability to public pressure, particularly when it is exerted on its back-bench MPs.

The Socialist Party has consistently pointed out the way in which the NHS - and particularly the STPs - could become a kind of 'poll tax issue' for Theresa May. Faced with the pressure of a mass movement, the Tories can buckle. But in order for this to happen our movement needs to adopt a strategy that will be capable of leading it to victory.

HCT is an organisation primarily made up of locally based campaigns to defend NHS services, with the official support of some trade unions. It is very positive that these have begun to be brought together in a national body.

Around the country there are 44 STP footprint areas. These each represent what the government has arbitrarily decided is a 'local health economy'.

The plans vary in each area, but as the main aim of the whole venture is to find £22 billion in 'savings' from a system already on its knees, they live up to the nickname they have acquired among NHS staff and campaigners of 'slash, trash and privatise plans'. In most areas they include mergers, closures, fresh privatisation and cuts to beds and staffing.

Action

Among the ideas being raised at the HCT AGM for 'where next' in terms of co-ordinating protest is a week of action. The proposal is that this will start on 1 July and culminate on 5 July - the NHS's 69th Birthday.

This represents a longer wait for nationally coordinated action than the Socialist Party has advocated, but in the absence of a lead from the national trade union leaders, could still be a positive next step. In order to maximise this potential there should be a determined campaign for simultaneous action in every one of the 44 footprint areas on a single day.

Similarly, while the idea of 'NHS birthday parties' has an attraction, given the seriousness of the situation facing our health service, it is important our actions go well beyond celebrations. The focus must instead be on calling and mobilising for protests and lobbies which must be used to help exert the maximum possible pressure on local councils, health trusts, health scrutiny committees and Clinical Commissioning Groups to use all their available powers to reject and sabotage the implementation of the STP plans.

It is possible for many of the STPs to be defeated, or at the very least significantly delayed and frustrated, at a local level. Among those with scrutiny powers are local authorities - many of which are Labour-run.

This is a particularly important point of pressure. We must demand that every local authority uses all the powers it has available to put up barriers to the destruction of health services in their areas.

These powers include the potential to reject an STP plan and to refer it back to the secretary of state, opening the possibility for the plan to be brought before parliament. Even if a very small number of STPs were



WHAT KIND OF MOVEMENT IS NEEDED TO

SAVE OUR NHS?

STOP PRESS

■ After this article was written Theresa May announced her plan to call a general election for 8 June. This is a further opportunity for Health Campaigns Together to put the issue of the NHS centre-stage. Imagine the impact, for example, of a trade union-organised national demonstration, led by Jeremy Corbyn, during the election campaign.

referred back in this way, it would present a major obstacle for Jeremy Hunt and the Tory government.

Forcing these deeply unpopular plans to be passed through parliament - with all the pressure that could be exerted on local politicians and MPs, including the Tory back benches - could potentially mean it proves impossible for Hunt to force them through. The more plans that get referred back to him, the greater the scope for widespread parliamentary rebellion and the plans becoming simply 'unworkable', in a similar way to Thatcher's hated poll tax.

National coordination is therefore going to be important over the next period. It was positive that Jeremy Corbyn spoke at the 4 March demonstration - offering a message of solidarity to the protest.

But the Labour leadership could potentially play a decisive role in helping to defeat the STPs. If Jeremy were to instruct Labour councillors to fight the implementation of STPs using every weapon at their disposal in a coordinated way, it could rapidly force the government to back down.

Blairites

Unfortunately the defensive posture Corbyn has adopted in the face of the right-wing Blairite opposition he faces within his party, including most Labour councillors, means he has so far not taken any such stand. In fact, on the crucial issue of council cuts - which of course include the devastating attacks on social care which have created a knock-on crisis in the NHS - he has, so-far, capitulated to those right-wing councillors who falsely claim there is 'nothing we can do'.

This weak stand is contributing to confusion among a large section of working class people as to how Jeremy Corbyn is different to the Labour politicians who have preceded him - including those who carried out many of the policies contributing to the destruction of our health service, such as PFI privatisation.

Nevertheless, even now, if the Labour leadership were to lead a concerted fight in defence of our health service and social care, it could electrify the political situation in Britain and decisively alter Labour's electoral fortunes.

As well as continuing to build the campaigns at local level, it is essential that the momentum built by this is used to escalate the action that is organised nationally. In particular, the Socialist Party has consistently raised the demand for the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to call a national demonstration in defence of the NHS.

The 4 March protest was largely organised in spite of the right-wing trade union leaderships. While more left-wing union leaders, including Len McCluskey of Unite and Mark Serwotka of PCS, addressed the rally on the national demo, the largest union representing health workers - Unison - gave only grudging support to the protest under pressure.

This was despite the huge numbers of Unison members who took part in, and in many cases helped to organise, the protest. But if HCT were to initiate a call for the TUC to organise a mass demonstration to defend the NHS it would rapidly gain the support of tens of thousands of health workers and union members. Under such

pressure, the TUC could be force into calling such an action.

This would not just be a replication of the very successful demo that took place in March. The resources and authority of the TUC mean, given the overwhelming strength of the public mood on the issue, they should be able to put more than a million people on the streets.

Such an action would be of a qualitatively different character to the already successful protest that was organised last month. It would represent a major escalation of the struggle.

The most crucial group of people involved in the fight to defend our health service are NHS workers themselves. If the unions were prepared to organise coordinated strikes of NHS workers it could break the pay freeze and defeat plans for cuts and privatisation of the service.

This, in turn, could help workers gain confidence to carry out other action to defend services. In the past, hospital occupations by NHS staff have prevented closures. As the STPs begin to be implemented, these could rapidly be placed on the agenda once again.

Ultimately, a mass movement built in this way would need to go on the offensive. We need to fight not only for an end to the latest attacks on our NHS but for a comprehensive programme to restore and improve it.

Public ownership

This must include bringing back into public hands all of the privatised parts of the service. It should include scrapping the PFI contracts which are ravaging the service and refusing to pay back money to the vultures making mega-profits by bleeding the NHS dry.

It would include fighting for huge investment in health. It would mean nationalising the pharmaceutical industry to end its scandalous profiteering from ill health. And it would mean fighting for a fully funded, publicly owned social care service to provide an end to the indignities inflicted on elderly and vulnerable people, as well the unnecessary pressures on hospital care.

The 4 March demonstration has opened up the opportunity to build such a movement. But now we must fight tooth and nail to ensure that it is taken full advantage of.

The Socialist Party says:

- No cuts, closures or jobs losses
- Stop the Tory 'STP' cuts plan. Councils should refuse to cooperate with STPs
- Big business out! Scrap all privatisation schemes. Renationalise our NHS
- Reverse council cuts to social care
- Decent pay for NHS staff. No attacks on NHS workers' pay and conditions
- Mass protest action to defend the NHS including strikes and occupations - a day of action in all STP areas as soon as possible
- Labour and trade unions to organise a massive national demo
- For a comprehensive, high quality NHS, under democratic control with care free at the point of use - a socialist NHS



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TRUMP ESCALATES GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS ON KOREAN PENINSULA

From the editorial of Socialist
 (the magazine of Socialist Action,
 CWI China, Hong Kong & Taiwan)

Donald Trump's cruise missile attack on a Syrian airbase on 6 April, during a round of "beautiful chocolate cake" with China's president Xi Jinping, marks a reckless and dangerous escalation of tensions in the Syrian conflict.

It was also intended as a warning to the North Korean regime and Trump's dinner guest Xi of possible US military action to stop Kim Jong-un's nuclear weapons programme.

Prior to Xi's arrival for talks, Trump warned in a Financial Times interview that he was prepared to take "unilateral action" to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons if China was not willing to increase its pressure upon Kim's regime.



Decades of US warmongering have reinforced the 'strategic paranoia' of the North Korean generals

Within days of the Xi-Trump summit the US moved its carrier battle group to the Korean peninsula, increasing tensions further.

These moves, while possibly intended only as psychological warfare to wear down the Kim regime and press Beijing into imposing stiffer sanctions against it, represent a dangerous escalation of one of the world's most complex and potentially deadly conflicts.

The Kim regime, a peculiar mix of Stalinist remnants and militaristic nationalism, has for reasons of self-preservation perfected the art of calculated irrationality - doing the unexpected or 'crazy' in order to shock and extract concessions from the imperialist powers and from South Korea.

It is ironic that the politician who most imitates Kim Jong-un's way of doing things is Trump himself.

The US strategy, if such exists, seems to be modelled on the 2013 Iran nuclear deal, whereby economic sanctions led to a negotiated end of that country's nuclear weapons programme. Note that during his election campaign Trump criticised the Iranian deal as a failure.

North Korea has faced a succession of sanctions since 2006 and these were tightened further in February this year in response to ballistic missile tests by the regime. China then decided to ban all coal imports from its neighbour, a significant step affecting around one-third of North Korea's total exports.

The Trump administration wants to crank up sanctions. To succeed this strategy requires the full cooperation of the Chinese regime.

Conflicting interests

Beijing has grown increasingly uneasy with North Korea. But there are limits to how far Beijing and Washington can pursue a common strategy given what are fundamentally antagonistic interests in the Korean peninsula.

Japanese imperialism's use of the Korean crisis to push forward its own positions is a further complicating factor for Beijing. So too is the US decision this year to base the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Device) anti-missile system in South Korea.

China is currently applying unofficial trade 'sanctions' against the Seoul government in protest over the THAAD deployment.

China fears the collapse of Kim's regime, which increased sanctions could trigger. The fallout from this could be colossal, including a refugee crisis spilling into China and even the possible fragmentation of the current North Korean state into warring factions laying hold of nuclear or chemical weapons.

The South Korean capitalists also, for their own reasons, do not want to see the collapse of the North Korean regime.

It cannot be ruled out that Kim Jong-un will again call Washington's bluff and engage in nuclear brinkmanship with further underground nuclear explosions or ballistic missile tests. This of course would ramp up the pressure on the Trump administration to react or risk being exposed as a 'paper tiger'.

Furthermore, an election clock is ticking in that South Korea will elect a new president on 9 May, in the shadow of previous president Park Geun-hye's spectacular fall from power - impeached and imprisoned after an estimated 10 million people took to the streets to remove her last year.

The two front-runners in opinion polls both represent a softer stance towards North Korea than Park's party, advocating negotiations and economic concessions in return for a security agreement (a so-called 'Sunshine policy').

Neither is the Iranian nuclear



Key Korean players - presidents Xi Jinping and Donald Trump
 photo white house/CC

agreement necessarily a template for a deal with Pyongyang for the simple reason that the latter already has nuclear weapons.

However scary that Kim - and Trump - possess weapons of mass destruction, it is the policies of successive US administrations that are responsible for this situation.

Decades of US warmongering, such as George W Bush's "axis of evil" speech on the eve of invading Iraq (singling out Iran, Iraq and North Korea for US-sponsored regime change), have reinforced the 'strategic paranoia' of the North Korean generals.



It is ironic that the politician who most imitates Kim Jong-un's way of doing things is Trump himself

The grisly end that befell the dictators Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi, who were on the receiving end of US-engineered regime change, convinced Pyongyang of the need for a nuclear insurance policy. Trump's strike on Syria will only have bolstered that view.



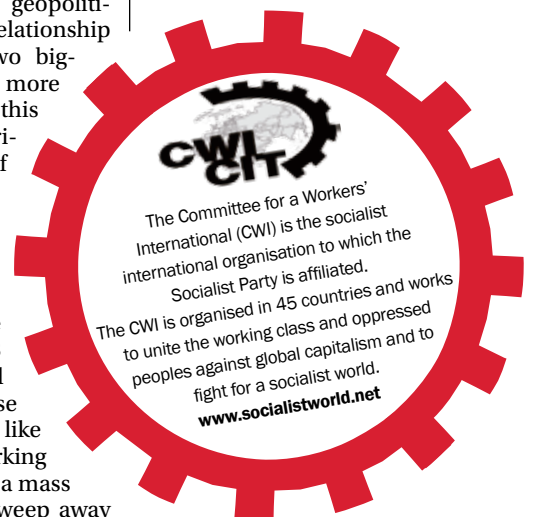
'Strategic paranoia' - Kim Jong-un photo petersnoopy/CC

The "great chemistry" Trump claims between himself and Xi Jinping has done nothing to reduce national tensions or stabilise an increasingly dangerous geopolitical environment. The relationship between the world's two biggest powers is in reality more strained than ever and this can face new tests and crises even in the space of the next months.

Conflicts and economic and political shocks are rooted in the global capitalist order, which since the worldwide crisis of 2008 has entered uncharted territory and seen the rise of dangerous populists like Trump. Only the working class, organising around a mass socialist alternative to sweep away

the rule of the billionaires, can offer a way out.

■ **Full article can be read on chinaworker.info**



TUSC backs RMT Save Our Guards campaign, while local Labour Party blocks debate

RMT guards on strike on 8 April
photo RMT



The RMT transport workers' union has made a direct appeal to Steve Rotherham MP, the Labour candidate in the Mersyside 'metro-mayor' contest, to guarantee that there will be a second safety-critical crew member aboard every Merseyrail train if he wins the election on 4 May.

Pointing out that "the travelling public are behind our campaign", Mick Cash, the RMT general secretary, said that "now is the ideal moment for Steve to say he is with all sections of the community that use the rail network, who overwhelmingly want a guard on every train."

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate

Roger Bannister, a former member of public sector union Unison's national executive council, welcomed the RMT's call: "Merseyside TUSC has been pursuing Steve Rotherham ever since he was selected as Labour's candidate to find out where he stood on the RMT's Save Our Guards campaign."

"As Mick Cash has said, Steve Rotherham has the opportunity to show that he is on the side of Merseyside's traveling public. The truth is that Liverpool Labour could stop the introduction of driver-only operation on Merseyrail now, but instead they are pushing it through and Steve Rotherham has still not said where he stands."

Meanwhile a recent meeting of the Garston and Halewood Constituency Labour Party was blocked from voting on a resolution that supported the RMT's Save Our Guards campaign.

The meeting on 31 March heard from an RMT official about the importance of guards to passenger safety. But according to social media reports, when it came to agreeing a resolution of support, the chair ruled it was "against Labour policy and might damage Steve Rotherham's campaign!"

■ Public meeting: Come to the TUSC pre-election public meeting on 2 May, 7.30pm, the Liverpool Pub, 14 James Street, Liverpool L2 7PQ

ENERGETIC START TO CAMPAIGNING IN SWANSEA

Gareth Bromhall
Swansea TUSC

Swansea TUSC has seen an energetic start to our local election campaigning in the city this year with activists from the Socialist Party, RMT and residents from across the city coming out most evenings over the past few weeks to spread our anti-austerity message.

Well known socialists Alec Thraves and Collin John, candidates in Castle ward, have had a great reception on the doorsteps with our

posters now up in several pubs. Claire Job, an NHS worker also standing in Castle ward, has spoken of the number of local residents who have told us about the effects of council cuts on the care and quality of life of some of the most vulnerable people in the city.

All of our Castle candidates along with Owen Herbert in Townhill and Mark Evans in Upper Loughor have been putting pressure on incumbents and candidates to act against the devastating cuts that have been stripping our city of jobs and services.

The Labour administration passed a three-year projection this February that laid out a massive £61 million cut over the next three years.

Despite the local media sitting firmly in the pocket of the Labour Party austerity makers, our message that there is an alternative to the current onslaught is starting to gain the ear of local communities and our material has been used to challenge pro-cuts councillors online.

■ See facebook.com/tuscswansea for more updates and news



Owen Herbert and Claire Job photo Gareth Bromhall

TUSC AGAINST CUTS

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is an anti-austerity electoral alliance including the transport union RMT, the Socialist Party, leading members of other trade unions and non-affiliated socialists and community campaigners. TUSC is standing in May's local and mayoral elections.

See tusc.org.uk for more

Doncaster mayoral election: Socialist Steve campaign diary

10 April:

Steve interviewed by Trax FM. 10,000 A5 colour flyers arrive. Campaign stall in Mexborough on market day.

11 April:

Steve interviewed by BBC Radio Sheffield - five clips of 30-second sound-bites. Two campaign stalls in Doncaster town centre. Six new people attend Socialist Party branch meeting including Karen, an independent council candidate from Thorne who gives Steve her public endorsement.

12 April:

Early morning leaflet drop, over 500 flyers given out to council staff.

13 April:

Martin, "I've been a keyboard warrior too long", joins us on his first campaign stall. In Bentley outside the local Tesco, store manager brings us mugs of tea and biscuits.

14 April:

Mick, a postie, joins us on his day off for his first stall in Doncaster town centre. Phone call from Michael, who has resigned from the Labour Party after 40 years because of the Blairites, applied to join the Socialist Party and is attending our next meeting.

15 April:

Rikki, who asked for more info on the TUSC website after getting a flyer, meets us to discuss getting involved - he's bringing two mates to the next Socialist Party meeting.



TUSC campaign stall in Doncaster
photo Alistair Tice

TUSC candidate vows "never to go to the dark side"!

Matt Clarke, the TUSC council candidate for Staines, was approached on 13 April by the Surrey Advertiser for an electoral statement ahead of the election and was also asked which Star Wars character he would be!

Surrey is one of the wealthiest counties in one of the richest countries in the world. Yet apparently we cannot afford street lighting, adequate flood defences, school places, good roads or public transport or safe levels of fire and rescue services.

TUSC believes in providing excellent public services available to those who need them. Good quality, free, comprehensive health, education, fire and rescue, social care and recycling facilities owned by the community.

If I am elected I intend to make the socialist case for standing up to the government and refusing to cut and privatise our services. I will work with any other elected councillors prepared to do the same.

I will stand with the local community and trade unions in defending our public services, using my position to publicise their campaigns and donating all my councillor's al-



Matt Clarke out campaigning
photo TUSC

lowances into those campaigns. **If I were a character from Star Wars:**

I will never go to the dark side, so I'll say Obi Wan Kanobi. Like the Jedi ways in the film, socialism is seen as a thing from days gone by but it is seeing a resurgence and ultimately could snatch victory from the dark overlords in power for the working class.

Non-fiction review

WHY I AM NOT A FEMINIST

Mass movements, not ‘fringe cultures’, can win feminist change



Millions of women and men have marched against Trump photo Fibonacci Blue/CC

Helen Pattison
East London Socialist Party

When I picked up a copy of ‘Why I am not a feminist: A feminist manifesto’ I thought it was just what I needed to read. A book that calls for the “total dismantling of the system of oppression” sounded appealing.

It sounded appealing because - as its literary critic author Jessa Crispin identifies - the establishment portrays feminism as simply being about getting more female executives, or the first female president of the US, at the top of sexist capitalist structures.

This is opposed to socialist feminism, which fights to end inequality and oppression for all women, as well as the system that prolongs sexism.

But unfortunately this book isn’t a useful tool for taking up different ideas about what feminism is and should be, partly because it’s quite a confusing read.

Crispin uses very few direct quotes when attacking ideas she

disagrees with, so it’s often unclear which strand of feminism she is arguing against. She prefers to write imaginary dialogues between her ideas and “other feminists.”



This is where I disagree the most. We have seen and will see mass movements of women and men against capitalism and sexism. But sadly, this book, concludes that we are not up to the task

But I don’t want to read her rebuttal of what she imagines other feminists might say. I want to know what other feminists are actually saying, and why she thinks they are wrong.

Crispin’s own ideas are also unclear and contradictory.

‘Why I am not a feminist’ is an

attempt to attack what she sees as mainstream feminism taking the focus away from the massive institutions which maintain sexism, and instead blaming the individual. But ultimately her own “radical” feminism isn’t very different.

While feminism shouldn’t have a “condescending attitude” towards women in less developed countries and the sexism they face, Crispin takes a condescending tone when she asks the reader to “do something difficult... Look at what you are participating in when you are engaged sexually or romantically with a male partner... Think about how you are contributing to these imbalances through your own personal choices.”

She is nostalgic for a time when she believes feminism was “a fringe culture.” She equates feminism growing beyond a small group of radicals with it ‘selling out’ and becoming ineffective.

This is where I disagreed with her the most. We have seen and will see mass movements of women and men against capitalism and sexism. But sadly, in this book, Jessa Crispin seems to conclude that we are not up to the task.

The Socialist Inbox

Do you have something to say?
Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk

■ Poverty is pricey

I need a rant. The fifth car in two years has just broken down on me as I try to drive to Dawlish to pick up my stepson. This is a journey I always fear, in cars where I’ve scraped the barrel to replace the last piece of machinery. So I’ve had to cancel work appointments - again - losing vital wages, so I can stumble somewhere close and call out the RAC in the faint hope it will be a small problem they can fix.

It’s always something massive like the head gasket. I’m just the unlucky sod whose job it is to get his hopes up, drive about for two or three months and then have to scrap it, falling into another period of crippling anxiety and feeling low because I’m failing my family, even though I really am trying my best with what I have.

So now, as always, it’s a choice between throwing £200 at a potentially bad car - or paying the council tax. It’s been almost impossible to ever get properly on top of money on a zero-hour contract - in a job I love, but which is grossly underpaid. I am a socialist - not for intellectually lofty reasons, wanting to know more about Marx or Lenin - but because capitalism costs poorer people far more than super-wealthy people. The way the game is rigged all in their favour is a fact I just can’t stomach.

I could have taken a better-paid work route, into something like advertising, but chose working with families and children who struggle as it’s all I can really do. But this kind of career isn’t valued by a heartless government, so I’m still just the schmuck sat waiting for the RAC mechanic over and over.

Poorer people, often very good people, are being forced down into horrible situations simply because they can’t afford to escape them. There needs to

be decent jobs and decent pay available for everyone.

Nick Slater
Torquay

■ Term-time trips

Sue Lee hit the nail on the head with her view on taking kids out of school in term time (Liverpool Echo, 8 April) which is in the main driven by the pressure on household expenditure.

It’s obvious that the practice disrupts the educational rhythm of the classroom, but I can’t recall a single criticism in the media debate of the rip-off being perpetrated by the travel companies who charge top bat during the school holiday period. This drives parents to look for options - particularly during a period of Tory cuts and wage freezes - which they can afford. Sue poses the question: shouldn’t action be taken against the travel companies to stop this profit-driven rip-off? The answer is a resounding yes.

Instead of government ministers riding their high horses and talking about parental irresponsibility, they should be tackling the irresponsibility of the travel companies and introduce immediate legislation to outlaw the excessive charges of the school holiday period. The operators will claim it would result in the bankruptcy of the industry. In that case, a future socialist government should promise to take the operators into public ownership.

Tony Mulhearn
Liverpool

■ Syria scandal

The Blairites Labour MPs have once again confirmed their true warmongering colours by speaking out in support of bombing Syria.

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photo Cedric Gerome

Clearly they have learned nothing from previous disastrous military interventions. This conflict, which has been raging since 2011, has already claimed the lives of around 500,000 Syrians, and caused the displacement of more than ten million - over half of the country’s population.

How will more bombs solve the problem? But this time the Blairites are not just supporting the Tories, who are themselves reprehensible. They are supporting the racist, sexist billionaire Donald Trump - a man so volatile and unpredictable that even the Republican establishment blushes whenever he opens his mouth.

What clearer indictment of the Blairites’ political views could there be? Among those supporting Trump’s attack are Hilary Benn, Tom Watson, Michael Dugher, Mary Creagh, Angela Eagle, Wes Streeting, and Stella Creasy.

This is the same crowd who were leading calls to bomb Syria back in December

2015. It is also the same crowd who have been itching to remove their democratically elected left leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Calls for reselection contests should begin with those who have, once again, spoken in favour of bombing Syria. Hundreds of thousands are already dead. Millions have been displaced. This cannot go unpunished!

The stakes are high and time is running out for Corbyn. Labour needs to be transformed into a party fit for the 99%.

If the Corbyn project fails and the capitalist warmongers are allowed to remain in control of the party machine, Labour will be cast into the dustbin of history, like Pasok in Greece, Psoc in Spain, Labour in Ireland, and the Parti Socialiste in France.

Workers will be forced to look elsewhere for political representation.

Tom Barker
Leicester

We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Don’t forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.



Reader’s comment: public transport

Buses and buggies: a driver speaks

‘Alfred Babcock’
Bus driver, London

Angry letters in free London newspaper Metro this January asserted the rights of bus passengers with baby buggies. Other irate letters demanded priority for wheelchair users. This cacophony echoed the real arguments I hear on the bus I drive.

Wheelchair user Doug Paultley originally went to court after he was refused entry to a Yorkshire First-Group bus in 2012 when a mother with a pushchair refused to move. The Supreme Court eventually ruled that bus drivers are responsible for pressuring other passengers to move if a wheelchair user can’t get on.

Heated

A dispute between a wheelchair user and a person with a buggy can generally be resolved amicably - especially when passengers realise my bus isn’t moving until it is. But when things get more heated you really need a quiet word with the people involved to calm things down and resolve the matter.

Ironically, the people who could do that - conductors - were phased out as low-floor, wheelchair-accessible buses came to London.

I’m not allowed to leave the cab and I’ve no powers of enforcement - so how am I expected to sort out a dispute five metres behind me which I may not even be able to see?

Once the argument’s over, if I still can’t fit the wheelchair, I have to call the controller before I leave the stop. This seldom elicits a rapid reply from the controller. But understandably, it does provoke rapid enquiries from passengers as to why the bus is not moving.

And at a later stage I’ll get questions from the controllers about why my bus is late. Meanwhile, management forces us to drive busy buses in heavy traffic up to the legal



photo David Hawgood Party/CC

maximum five and a half hours without a break.

It’s time to look at the bigger picture. Workers and poor people who use public transport shouldn’t have to squabble with each other. Wheelchair users, parents with buggies and bus drivers are not enemies.



Conductors, who could calm things down and resolve the matter, were phased out

What we need is a massive expansion of public transport so there’s room for all. Public services should be taken away from the private profiteers.

We need a party that represents the 99% which can fight against budget cuts and for public ownership.

The lorry driver unloading cases of burgers outside McDonald’s and blocking my bus stop is another example of unplanned capitalism blindly setting workers against each other. It’s not the lorry driver’s fault.

In a planned socialist society, pensioners wouldn’t need to get on buses with big trolleys they can hardly lift. They wouldn’t need to go miles to the nearest supermarket because local shops have been pushed out of business and the ones that are left cost the earth.

A socialist society could bring many workers a shorter working week with no loss of pay so people wouldn’t have to rush about so much. Then passengers and transport workers wouldn’t be constantly put in situations where they find themselves in conflict.



London bus drivers on strike in 2012 against super-exploitation during the Olympics photo Socialist Party

Turkey: Constitutional referendum result a pyrrhic victory for Erdogan

Statement by Sosyalist Alternatif (CWI Turkey)

On Sunday 16 April, Turkey went through the most controversial and questionable referendum in its history. Officially the 'Yes' side narrowly won with 51% of the vote, giving President Recep Erdogan dictatorial powers including the authority to dissolve parliament. Erdogan was seeking these powers in order to keep himself in office.

The referendum was conducted in a grossly undemocratic manner. After an unsuccessful military coup in July 2016, hundreds of thousands of employees, including high-ranked soldiers, judges, prosecutors, police officers and academics, were - and still are - sacked from their posts, and many journalists, political activists, trade unionists and even some MPs were jailed.

State pressure and intimidation marked the run-up to the referendum. It took place under a state of emergency and Erdogan and his lapdogs did their best to suppress the 'No' campaigns.

Campaigners for No were physically attacked and detained by the police. Erdogan and his allies hysterically condemned the No camp as "traitors", "dividers" and "terrorists". And the No campaigns were largely ignored by the mainly pro-regime media.

But while the No campaigns were suppressed, the Yes campaigns were, in effect, conducted by the state itself. All kinds of state resources - billboards, media, state budgets, police force, etc - were used for this purpose.

While the MPs of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) - a pro-Kurdish left party which was the only political organisation to organise a No campaign in northern Kurdistan - were locked up in jail, speeches by officials of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) were broadcast live during prime time evening news.

Rigged
Yet, all of these measures were not enough for the Yes camp. On the day the referendum took place, the High Court of Elections announced that it was going to recognise unstamped ballots for the outcome of the referendum.

This is a clear violation of the law regarding electoral procedures, and an undeniable indicator of fraud. Allegedly, 1.5 million un-stamped votes were taken into account and, if true, it is safe to say that the referendum was rigged. No wonder Erdogan thanked the High Court for its decision during his speech in the aftermath of the vote.

Despite the atmosphere of a



A united workers' movement is the only antidote to Erdogan's polarising poison photo Sosyalist Alternatif

“Under the veneer of victory, these results confirm that Erdogan is losing social support

dictatorship, half of the country voted against Erdogan's will. This is a clear expression of their anger at him and his regime, including from some traditional conservative AKP voters.

In Turkey's three biggest cities, Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, a majority voted No. This is all the more significant since in both Istanbul and Ankara the AKP won previous elections. The loss of the two biggest cities of Turkey is a big disadvantage for Erdogan ahead of local elections in 2018.

The situation among Kurdish voters was another important factor in the outcome of the vote. That is why Erdogan targeted and paralysed the HDP at the beginning of the electoral campaign.

At the beginning of the electoral campaign, the HDP MPs, including the co-chairs, were detained; many HDP members in northern Kurdistan were taken into custody, and many local HDP mayors were removed from their posts on trumped-up terrorism charges.

By means of this referendum, Turkey's de facto (in effect) dictatorship has turned into a de jure (in law) one. But under the veneer of victory, these results confirm that Erdogan is losing social support, and that a subterranean anger has penetrated deeper in society.

In places like Istanbul, Northern Cyprus and other areas, spontane-

ous demonstrations burst out on the very evening of the referendum, an encouraging sign that a layer of society will not tolerate the descent into a dictatorship without a fightback.

These are the seeds of what needs to become a mass resistance against the regime's enforcement of the new constitutional changes. Such resistance needs to be organised to immediate effect, and must also reach out to Yes voters among the poor, young people and workers.

Crisis

The economic situation is worsening fast, and the reinforcement of authoritarian measures is aimed at helping the regime to crush the growing dissatisfaction and potential explosions of class anger.

In such a period, the 'social democrat' opposition of the Republican People's Party (CHP) represents no genuine alternative. Although this party opposes Erdogan and campaigned for a No vote, it is a nationalist party defending an economic programme very similar to the AKP, based on the continuation of capitalism, ie the economic exploitation of the majority. The major difference is that the CHP represents a different wing of Turkey's capitalist class.

The political polarisation between the AKP and the CHP is seemingly based on lifestyles - conservative or secular. But they are both based on the prevailing system

and social structures.

A united workers' movement is the only antidote to these two pro-capitalist poles and to Erdogan's polarising poison.

What we need is an alternative party, for which the HDP can be a very important conduit. A party which mounts a class struggle both against the descent into dictatorship rule, and for decent jobs and living standards, public services, social justice, the rights of Kurds and other minorities, and for workers' unity and socialism.

Under the dim light of dictatorship we have no one to trust but our own strength!

■ Full statement can be read on socialistworld.net



French presidential election



Mélenchon campaign gains momentum

Terry Adams
Tarn, France

European capitalism is in crisis. It is failing to deliver the basic requirements for the working class on jobs, pay, pensions, housing, health and education. In this situation choices emerge on the right and left. Such is the case in France today.

The presidential election first round ballot takes place on 23 April. There are eleven candidates which in practice narrows down to four, two of whom will go through to a second ballot on 7 May.

The four are Marine Le Pen (Front Nationale - far-right) François Fillon (Républicains - conservative right), Emmanuel Macron (En Marche! - neoliberal) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (La France Insoumise - 'France Unbowed' - left).

Le Pen is almost certain to go through to the next round. Fillon has faltered, engulfed by a sea of financial scandals. Macron, who until a few weeks ago looked like a shoe-in, has been exposed as grammatically weak and he too has

stalled. This leaves Mélenchon who, with a week to go, has developed momentum.

Enthusiasm for Mélenchon and his anti-austerity programme was evident at his rally in Toulouse, Prairie des Filtres, on 16 April. The 70,000-strong crowd included a large number of young people. There are parallels here with the Sanders and Corbyn campaigns.

Rally

Mélenchon's hour-long speech was punctuated throughout with cries from the crowd of "résistance" and, addressed to the liberal elite political class, "dégagez" (make way!). Any mention of Le Pen, Fillon or Macron was greeted with a loud chorus of boos.

The rally concluded with a huge rendition of the French national anthem, La Marseillaise, accompanied by much waving of the tricolour.

This seemed to be a conscious act of reclamation of the symbols of the French Republic from Le Pen ("La reine de l'extrême droite" - queen of the far right) who has sought to

appropriate these symbols as her own.

Mélenchon's social programme is a solid set of radical reforms. But there is a weakness in his overall programme and that is the economy. Proposed measures like 100% tax on annual earnings of over €400,000 will, if implemented, go some way towards financing his reforms, eg increased minimum wage and a retirement age of 60 with pension of €1,000 a month.

But bringing down the scandalously high unemployment levels, especially among the youth, will require the planned use of resources, which in turn poses issues of control and ownership of capital.

Moves in this direction, even his limited bank nationalisation programme, will bring Mélenchon into direct conflict with French business interests. Is he really prepared to take the French capitalist class head on?

It's anybody's guess which of the four principal candidates will go through to the second ballot. But Mélenchon is in with a good chance - the momentum is with him.

Relaunch of socialistworld.net

The website of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) - the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated - has undergone a makeover.

Major changes and improvements, including up-to-date layout and design, have been made to socialistworld.net. This includes more use of videos and other media to argue the case for socialism.

Fittingly, the relaunch is in the year of the 100th anniversary of the Russian revolution and has prominent links to the 1917revolution.org site, which was launched by the CWI earlier this year to celebrate and defend the socialist revolution and the genuine Marxist ideas of Lenin and Trotsky.

The website editors extend special thanks to the comrades from Izquierda Revolucionaria (Spanish state) who provided expert assistance for the relaunch.



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.

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

Join the fightback!
Join the Socialists!

www.socialistparty.org.uk 02089888777
@Socialist_party Text 07761 818206 / CWISocialistParty



PROTEST IS **NOT** A CRIME

Back Jobstown Not Guilty

> Trial starts 24 April

London protests - 24 April

> 2-4pm, Irish embassy, 17 Grosvenor Place, London SW1X 7HR, called by the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

> 'Jail bankers not protesters,' 6-6.30pm, head office Allied Irish Bank (GB), Saint Helen's, Undershaft, London EC3A 8AB

> If you're outside London show your support on social media #JobstownNotGuilty

> Email jobstownnotguiltygb@gmail.com for a campaign pack, including a model trade union motion, posters, leaflets, etc, and for the online newsletter



On page three **Paul Murphy** speaks to the Socialist about the trial starting in Ireland on 24 April of Jobstown protesters. Read more on the background and campaign inside. Here Paul explains the importance of international support.

International solidarity is really important, for two main reasons. The first is it's an expression of support for the defendants who are facing a very serious attack on them and their families. Getting messages of support, seeing it trend on Twitter etc, is important for lifting morale. It lets them know that they're not alone - that they're backed by their community in Jobstown and Tallaght, the wider movement in Ireland, but also internationally.

And the second reason is to embarrass the Irish state. Imagine if this were happening elsewhere in the world - an opposition politician and a community who had protested against the government's policies had engaged in very basic, peaceful civil disobedience and were then facing conviction, removal from parliament, and significant jail time.

Obviously, if the regime that was doing it was not in favour with Western imperialism generally, the condemnations would be coming thick and fast. Exposing that hypocrisy by having people condemning what is happening here internationally, speaking out about it, getting into the media internationally, it would be quite embarrassing for the Irish state.

When people look at it in any way objectively from further afield and see precisely what's happening, they can talk about it in such terms that would be devastating for an Irish state that thinks it's very democratic, defends civil liberties, etc.

Action

So there will be an international day of protest where we'll be calling on as many people as possible to protest outside Irish embassies and consulates or any other appropriate location. People taking pictures of crowds with Jobstown Not Guilty signs, using the hashtag #JobstownNotGuilty on social media. All of that is very useful.

We're on 92 or 93 MPs and MEPs internationally who have supported the campaign. We want to get to the 100 mark in the course of the trial. Also raising it within the trade union movement - passing resolutions and where possible raising finance - is particularly important because we think this is an attack on everybody's right to protest, including the trade unions' right to have effective pickets.

■ Read the rest of the interview on page 3

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