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Formerly **Militant**



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>pages 2-3

ROBBER BOSSSES OWN \$6TRN

■ Take the wealth off the 1% ■ Come to Socialism 2017!



Themes of discussions include the 1917 Russian revolution, capitalism today, the fightback against austerity, and what is socialism? 11 and 12 November, central London. Read more on pages 8 and 9, or visit socialism2017.net.



Andrew Cars
Salford Socialist Party

The combined wealth of the world's billionaires has now reached an eye-watering \$6 trillion. Up by nearly a fifth from last year, vast profits wrunged from the workers of the world are concentrated in ever fewer hands.

The most powerful force in the universe, Einstein is said to have remarked, is compound interest. Never before has greater wealth been accumulated.

In 2016, nine individuals owned as much wealth as the poorest 50% of the world's population, according to Oxfam. At the start of this year it was eight.

Stunning wealth inequality epitomises our generation and is a damning indictment of the capitalist system. The latest numbers come from Swiss bank UBS and financial services and outsourcing giant PwC.

Their report on what they call "value creators" demonstrates how insidiously the world's billionaires have bought influence. 109 billionaires own the top 140 sports teams. Of the top 200 art collectors, 72 are billionaires.

They set up private art galleries, ostensibly to share a small part of what they have with the public. But at best these are vanity projects - which help secure favourable tax treatment.

How long can this volatile situation be sustained? It cannot continue indefinitely. The same report shows wealth concentration is at its highest since 1905! Its lead author Josef Stadler says we are now in a second "Gilded Age."

In fact, Stadler worries wealth inequality could lead "society" to "strike back." Even the IMF - notorious for inflicting vicious, punitive austerity on the workers of Greece and other countries - has suggested tax on the wealthy should be "significantly higher."

100 years after the Bolshevik-led socialist revolution in Russia, the ruling class once

again rightly fears a dynamic, increasingly politically active and unified working class.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell's income tax proposal of 50% on earnings of over £123,000 is very welcome. But we cannot fight this system with reforms alone. Recent history, like in Greece, shows all too clearly they can be watered down or reversed.

The working class are the only real "value creators" in society. But we get back just a fraction of the wealth we create for the bosses.

The Socialist Party says the solution is a complete restructuring of society: public ownership, and democratic working class control and management, of banks, industry and top corporations. A socialist plan of production would provide for all, not enrich the gilded billionaires.



What we think

Eight years after Westminster was first engulfed by the expenses scandal a new outrage is threatening to swamp parliament.

The Tory government, already clinging to power by its fingertips, is terrified that further revelations of sexual harassment or abuse by MPs or, worse still, ministers could force them to call byelections or even a general election.

It is not yet clear how far-reaching the allegations of sexual misconduct by MPs will be. They are, however, no surprise. We live in a capitalist society which is based on a small minority - above all the capitalist class, the billionaires who own the major corporations and banks - having power to exploit the majority.

Inevitably in such a society, among those with power will be people who habitually try to use their status to sexually abuse or harass women and men with less power than them, not least their employees.

No-one should be shocked that among MPs who happily made a mint fiddling their expenses, and who have callously presided over savage cuts to public services and the longest period of pay restraint in over a century, there will be some who also use their power and status to sexually harass others.

Countless women workers have had similar experiences at the hands of employers up and down the country.

Women have also been at the sharp end of the consequences of austerity both as users of, and workers for, the public sector.

Nor should reports that the institutions of Westminster have systematically covered up such behaviour for decades (for example parliamentary whips storing up records of misbehaviour, not to report it but to use to make sure MPs vote the 'right way') come as a surprise after years of revelations about how different capitalist institutions covered up the crimes of Jimmy Savile.

Savile, we should not forget, was a personal friend of Maggie Thatcher just as Harvey Weinstein, whose horrendous crimes have triggered the latest wave of revelations, was a personal friend of the Clintons.

Beyond Westminster

That is not to suggest that sexual harassment is only perpetrated by those at the top of society. On the contrary, it exists and must be combatted at every level of society.

Over recent decades important gains for women's rights have been made as a result of struggle, but the oppression of women remains deep-rooted in the structure of society.

Male dominance stems from the existence of a class society based on the private ownership of wealth,

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Countless women workers have had similar experiences at the hands of employers up and down the country



photos Paul Mattsson and Maurice/CC

science, technique and industry. Therefore to be fully successful, the struggle to end the oppression of women has to be linked to the fight for democratic socialism.

And in order to be able to successfully unite the working class majority in a struggle for socialism it is vital that the workers' movement actively combats all oppression in society, including putting the fight against sexual harassment and for women's rights to the fore.

Labour not unscathed

Labour was in power when the expenses scandal first erupted and had more MPs convicted than other parties.

While at this stage it is the Tories who seem most affected by the current scandal it is highly unlikely that any parliamentary party, including Labour, will be unscathed by it.

However, the Labour leadership should not stop there,

Part of Jeremy Corbyn's appeal is his record of

but raise demands for Labour MPs to be held accountable to their local constituencies - and for parliament itself to be transformed into a far more democratic institution than it currently is.

The deep-seated anger at the MPs' expenses scandal is still widespread in society and is likely to be further fuelled by the current revelations regarding MPs' behaviour.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has rightly said MPs must be held to account for sexual abuse and harassment and that a culture of such behaviour has thrived in Westminster for too long.

Any measures would be welcome that make it easier for workers in parliament to report abuse by MPs, and for that abuse to be dealt with.

However, the Labour leadership should not stop there,

claiming extremely low expenses throughout his time as an MP. He needs, however, to declare that he supports the transformation of Labour into a party where all MPs are held to account for every aspect of their conduct as a political representative, including their voting record.

The reintroduction of mandatory reselection contests for all Labour MPs, so that local constituency Labour Parties can democratically choose who represents them, would be an important first step.

Labour MPs would then feel the hot breath of the membership on their necks, rather than, as has been the case, imagining they have the right to be an MP for life, regardless of their behaviour.

Alongside this Corbyn should argue for Labour MPs, as

MPs who supported Militant (now the Socialist Party) did,

to only take the average wage of a skilled worker.

Where expenses are needed, they should be strictly necessary ones only - similar to what some building workers and others are paid as they travel the country in pursuit of their work. Moreover, rather than the MPs checking and auditing their own expenses, why not scrutiny committees made up of workers, the unemployed, those forced onto benefits, and small shopkeepers and businesspeople threatened by the next recession?

Alongside fighting to transform the Labour Party into a

SOCIALISM 2017
(Saturday afternoon)
Forum: women and the fightback - 1917 revolution, 1967 abortion, 2017 against austerity

democratic mass workers' party, a campaign should be launched to transform parliament itself.

Socialists and the workers' movement fought for and defend the democratic rights that exist. Our forebears made the greatest sacrifices for the right to vote, a free press, trade union rights and representative systems at local and national level which reflect 'the will of the people'. But the present parliament is a million miles away from this ideal.

The pioneers for democracy in Britain, the Chartists - the first independent workers' party in history - demanded annual parliaments.

The election of any representative for five years to an institution like the present parliament is inherently undemocratic. These MPs are not accountable to the constituents who elect them, other than once every five years, and even then their record is never properly put under scrutiny.

Democratic rights

Socialists support all democratic rights, including voting for parliament. We would fight along with the mass of working people against an attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government as happened in Chile in 1973 and Spain in the 1930s, and is taking place now in Catalonia.

But a more representative and accountable system than we have at present is necessary. The House of Lords should be abolished; there should be a single assembly which combines the legislative and executive powers hitherto divided in Britain.

Members should be elected for a maximum of two years with votes at age 16. MPs could then be elected on the basis of democratic local assemblies with the right of recall by their constituents, and should receive only the salary of a skilled worker.

Democracy like this would lead to greater participation by the mass of the population, not least working class women who have borne the majority of capitalist austerity.

Of course, no democratic structure can, in and of itself, prevent individuals sexually harassing others, but it could ensure that they were immediately and effectively held to account for doing so. In addition, the stinking atmosphere of privilege and the right to act with impunity that pervades Westminster would be destroyed by the fresh air of workers' democracy.

The popularity of Jeremy Corbyn and other similar figures worldwide - like Bernie Sanders in the US - is a reflection of a profound and growing discontent with what capitalism has to offer. Endless wage restraint and growing poverty on the one side and a few at the top drowning in wealth on the other.

Alongside this is increased anger at a truncated democracy which allows unpopular and unaccountable politicians to implement policies against the interests of the majority.

The sexual harassment scandal emerging at Westminster is one symptom of a rotten system. In combatting it the workers' movement should call for its complete transformation along socialist lines.

Socialism Today
The Socialist Party's magazine



November issue includes:

■ The end of the Tories
Peter Taaffe on the Tories' deep crisis and Corbyn's current consolidation

■ Catalonia

Izquierda Revolucionaria on the revolt against Spanish state repression

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Picturehouse cinema workers strike again



photo Clare Doyle

Rob Williams
Socialist Party industrial organiser

6 November sees yet another strike by low-paid Picturehouse cinema workers across five London sites.

They make this assertion when breaks are excluded. The Living Wage Foundation believes that if a worker is due a paid break, this must be factored in, meaning that the Picturehouse London rate is still 45p an hour short of the London Living Wage, which will be increased on 6 November.

This strike has been an absolute inspiration to workers fighting for secure, better-paid employment. In the three years since Picturehouse workers have taken action, we've seen many disputes across the leisure, culture, food and service sectors, often including migrant workers.

These have included high profile strikes in the gig economy companies Deliveroo and Uber Eats and the historic McDonald's strikes in September.

Most of these have been by young workers, showing that it's possible for this generation to be brought into the trade union movement if the unions give a fighting lead.

■ Donate to the strike fund: crowdpac.co.uk/campaigns/250/picturehousestrike

SOCIALISM 2017
(Saturday afternoon)
Workers v bosses: Who will win the low pay war? > see pages 8-9

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

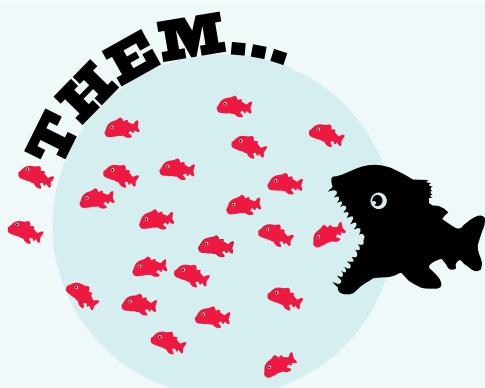
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■ £250k for sexist charity... refuge cuts for us

The Tories are still going to hand a quarter of a million quid to anti-abortion charity 'Life'.

Who will pay for 'Life' to attack women's right to choose? Women. The gift comes from the Tories' tampon tax, which defines essential sanitary products as 'luxury' goods subject to VAT.

The Socialist reported in April that some young women have skipped school because they can't afford sanitary protection. That's when May's anti-choice handout first came to light.

Capitalist 'feminists' are nothing of the sort. It's no good to women having a woman attacking your rights. Kick out the Tories and their Tampon tax. Fight for free abortion on demand. Only socialist feminism can end misogyny.

75%

Cut to London women's refuges

£250k
Tory grant to anti-abortion group

Meanwhile, one east London council has halved its funding for women's refuges since 2010.

Newham in east London, run by the Labour right, provides just more than the legal minimum refuge spaces. And even Newham's spend is 40% higher than neighbouring Barking and Dagenham, also under Blairite control.

In fact, London boroughs as a whole have cut refuge spending by up to three quarters, according to the Newham Recorder and the Bureau for Investigative Journalism.

The Socialist says: reverse the refuge cuts! Defend and extend vital women's services.

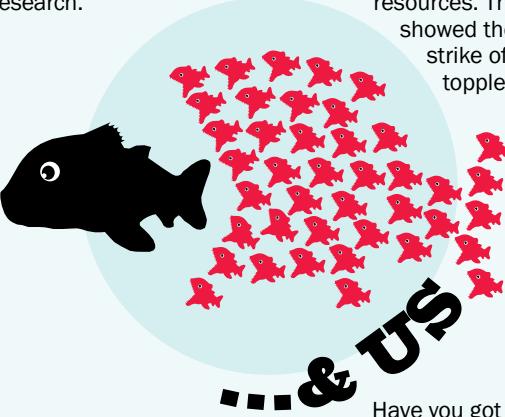
■ Big pharma's bucks...

Giant drugs firms are suing the health service over plans to ration expensive medicines. NHS England wants to limit prescriptions of drugs costing over £20 million a year.

The 'Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry' says this will "delay access to cost-effective medicines." What they mean is it will eat into their obscene extortion of the NHS.

But NHS bosses are set on passing these costs onto patients through rationing, not dealing with the problem at source.

We say: nationalise the big drugs companies. Pay compensation only on the basis of proven need. Use the bosses' profit margin for cheaper prices and more research.



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

Tories u-turn on social housing benefit cap and borrowing to build

■ Strikes can end this zombie government

Dan Smart

Theresa May's backtrack on capping housing benefit for social tenants is the latest in a catalogue of u-turns. The Tories are in utter disarray.

The proposed cap was responsible for an 85% fall in new home building for some of the poorest in society, according to a National Housing Federation survey. Uncertainty over the callous changes meant plans for 8,800 - a meagre sum to begin with - fell to just 1,350 built.

Of course, the Socialist Party welcomes the scrapping of the cap. But it really serves to show the Tories are feeling the heat following June's disastrous election result.

This followed Communities Secretary Sajid Javid suggesting the Autumn Statement could promise up to 300,000 new houses a year. The last Socialist remarked that he fears the power of young voters priced out of the rip-off housing market (see 'Fearful Tories mull borrowing to build' at socialistparty.org.uk).

This proposal was, however, quickly extinguished by Chancellor Philip Hammond, who persists down the blind alley of austerity.

Crisis

Like so many, I have suffered from the housing crisis. When I recently moved to Bristol, I was very excited about living there.

But I quickly found it is nigh-on impossible to rent affordably anywhere near the city centre. In fact, I discovered many young people are now resorting to living out of vans parked on the sides of streets!

London's housing situation is just as bad, if not worse. Blairite mayor Sadiq Khan has finally responded by requesting that the government quintuple London's housing grant to build "affordable" accommodation.

"Affordable" may be a stretch of the imagination. That can mean prices up to 80% of already sky-high



market rates. And he says this need only represent 65% of new builds.

Khan should build the whole lot as council homes, and Corbyn should tell Labour-run boroughs to halt their knocking down of working class estates immediately.

Working class and young people's willingness to vote for an anti-austerity manifesto has got the Tories on the run. This must now be harnessed. Corbyn and the trade union leaders need to go on the offensive, with mass demonstrations and co-ordinated strikes, to finish off this vicious, zombie government.

WHAT WE SAW

■ This ad for boots in a Hong Kong shopping centre is a little on the nose. It seems capitalism's not content with working us till we drop for its profits. Now it wants us to buy more stuff to deal with it too.



photo Facebook

CATALAN REPUBLIC: SPANISH STATE RESPONSE IS BIGGEST ATTACK ON DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS FOR 40 YEARS

**Izquierda Revolucionaria
(CWI in the Spanish state)**

The proclamation of the Catalan Republic by the Catalan parliament provoked an immediate, furious response from the Spanish ruling class, state, and right-wing PP government as well as from Ciudadanos (right-wing Spanish nationalist party) and PsOE (ex-social democratic party).

Through the application of Article 155 they are taking a series of measures which, in practice, mean a coup against democratic rights in Catalonia and a serious threat to workers throughout the Spanish state.

The court proceedings against Catalan president Puigdemont and other members of the Catalan government, accused of 'rebellion' and 'sedition', are the biggest attack on democratic rights in 40 years.

This attempt to crush a mass movement in favour of democratic rights undermines the Spanish capitalist regime (known as the 'regime of 1978') and underlines its authoritarian features and Francoist past.

Charges

It is enough to read the content of the charges drawn up by the state prosecutor to get an idea. The charges read that 1 October (polling day for the 'illegal' independence referendum) and the days around it, were "an insurrection, a violent uprising, in which the section of the population in favour of secession, fired up by its leaders, publicly disobeyed and resisted legitimate state authority..."

"The violence seen in the voting centres was the result of the accused who would pursue at any cost the unconstitutional referendum, imposing it by force of the mobilised multitude."

This state prosecutor, appointed by the PP, says that the millions who peacefully resisted fierce repression in order to exercise their right to vote were involved in a "violent uprising". And the politicians - including from PsOE - who

support this accusation say they are defending democracy!

The accusation also refers to the general strike on 3 October. "The strike was not called in defence of workers' rights but as another act of force". They say that "the events leading up to the proclamation of Catalonia as an independent republic put in danger fundamental legal rights... which are based on the indivisible unity of the Spanish nation, common fatherland of all Spaniards..."

This is a clear warning to the whole of the working class in the Spanish state of how far the state and Spanish, Catalan or other

ruling class, is willing to go to defend their system and interests.

The events of recent months in Catalonia contain many lessons. The level of class struggle, triggered in this case by national oppression, which has tested all political forces, has been historic.

There are now only two positions put forward in prominent media:

photo Rob McDonald



those who support Article 155 and hold hands with the right wing wrapped in the Spanish flag, and those who speak of the need for "dialogue", and state that Article 155 and the declaration of the Catalan Republic are "two sides of the same coin".

The idea that the results of the 1 October referendum cannot be implemented because it was not "legitimate" is an insult to the will of the people. More than 2.2 million people expressed themselves in the referendum, facing batons and rubber bullets from tens of thousands of military police. What better example of real democracy than a people resisting state violence and the "legality" of crushing their rights?

The turnout in this referendum was higher than in the European elections of 2014! The number of votes in favour of the Catalan Republic was greater than the votes cast in favour of Catalonia's current statute of autonomy. What election could be more legitimate than one which had to be fought for against all the repressive machinery of the state?

Political meaning

The capitalists - Catalan, Spanish and European - have understood better than the left reformist leaders the political meaning of 1 and 3 October. The example of the Catalan people, showing that mobilisation can defeat repression, has won the solidarity and support of oppressed people around the world, and become a point of reference for millions of workers and youth.

Through their direct action the Catalan people, with the youth to the fore, opened up a revolutionary crisis. All sectors of the ruling class are united to close this crisis as soon as possible, inflicting a severe defeat on the movement in the process, to serve as a lesson to other peoples in struggle.

Conscious of what is at stake, the state apparatus, the monarchy, army and all parties of the regime have maintained a clear strategy. Maintain historic levels of repression, while at the same time calling Catalan elections on 21 December.

They base themselves on the terrible political mistakes of the PDeCat (Puigdemont's capitalist nationalist party) leaders, and try to resolve the situation via elections, securing their own social base inside and outside Catalonia. At the same time, they have launched a momentous campaign of fear and division.

> Continued on page 6



The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world.
socialistworld.net

> Continued from page 5

Around 1,700 companies have announced their withdrawal from Catalonia since 3 October, sending a clear message: the Catalan Republic is a threat to jobs, and could lead to thousands of redundancies. This campaign has had some effect, because the leadership of the movement in Catalonia, in the hands of PDeCat but also of other nationalist parties such as the 'left' ERC and anticapitalist CUP, has not answered it in any concrete way.

The only way to respond is by making clear that the Catalan Republic will take immediate measures against cuts, in defence of health and education, and against the sabotage of capital through the nationalisation of the banks and big companies.

None of this has been done. Since the application of Article 155, the response by the leaders of the Catalan government has been pathetic. They have accepted all the repressive measures without proposing any response based on mass mobilisation. Their cowardice has nothing to do with the heroism of the Catalan working people. They betray the cause of the republic because they don't want to break with the capitalist system.

Weak leadership

Taking advantage of the weakness of the movement's leadership, the PP and Spanish ruling class continue to take the initiative. The organisation of marches, like on 29 October in defence of the "unity of Spain", which more than 300,000 attended, has been accompanied by a media offensive aimed at winning sympathy from workers.

They stoke up fear about job losses, and criticise Catalan nationalism as an ideology of the exploiting, racist elite, against the immigrant population of Catalonia. In this dirty work, they have been able to count on the service of a section of the left, from the social democratic and Stalinist tradition, who have surpassed all precedents of political degeneration.

There is only one way to defeat this reactionary offensive: mobilising the masses on the streets like on 1 and 3 October. For this, it is totally necessary to win over the sections of the Catalan working class who initially remained on the margins of this struggle, many who were drawn into the mobilisations against repression and the PP, and who today are looking on events with a mixture of uncertainty and scepticism.

It is not that working class people are not prepared to struggle against the PP or the system. But, following the 3 October general strike, instead of maintaining the mobilisation, extending the referendum defence committees and holding mass assemblies in neighbourhoods, the masses



were sent home, and the initiative was left in the hands of Puigdemont and co.

The Catalan Republic will only triumph if it is linked to a political programme which breaks with the logic of capitalism and the domination of big capital, both Spanish and Catalan. The republic must be of the people and for the people, not left in the hands of capitalist politicians who continue to show their cowardice.

The leaders of the movement, especially in PDeCat and ERC, fear the mass movement more than the Spanish ruling class. The movement pushed them further than they wanted to go and the revolutionary process could eliminate them too. For this reason they try to limit the proclamation of the republic to a symbolic act, and demobilise the masses.

The fact that the reactionary bloc is allowed to sow division is not only down to the role of PSOE or the leaders of the CCOO and UGT union federations, who in practice collaborate with

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The Catalan Republic will only triumph if it is linked to a political programme which breaks with the logic of capitalism and the domination of big capital, both Spanish and Catalan

the Spanish and Catalan ruling classes. The fault lies also with the leaders of organisations to the left of PSOE, like Podemos and Izquierda Unida (IU).

They defend a position of "equidistance" between the regime of 1978 and the mass movement in Catalonia, and say that the republic is not "legal" or "legitimate". Far from helping the cause of the working class and youth in Catalonia or the struggle against national and class oppression, they strengthen the arguments of the Spanish ruling class.

Role of the left

At a moment like this, all organisations are tested. What should the role of Unidos Podemos (alliance of Podemos and IU) be? The answer is obvious: lead and organise the mass response on the streets. This should be against 155, in solidarity with the Catalan Republic, linked to a programme against the cuts and corruption, to remove the PP from government and defeat the regime of

1978. However, far from this, they continue to echo the attacks of the Spanish ruling class: that 155 and the Catalan Republic are a result of the lack of "dialogue" and political "responsibility".

It is as if these leaders had never heard of class struggle and do not realise that we have reached this point precisely because the Spanish ruling class will never accept a legal referendum in Catalonia. They will not accept it because the Spanish capitalists will not abandon a market like the Catalan one, which represents almost one third of Spanish GDP.

They will never allow the public to be proclaimed "legally" as this would open the door to a movement - as we are now seeing - which would sooner or later spread to the rest of the state and threaten their regime.

The argument made by some on the left is true - the turn of PDeCat towards a pro-independence position was, at the time, a political manoeuvre to distract attention from their cuts

policies and neutralise the mass opposition to them on the streets of Catalonia. It is also clear that the position of the CUP and ERC of providing parliamentary support to PDeCat to implement its neoliberal agenda in exchange for support for independence, is a complete mistake.

However, it is equally, if not more, mistaken to refuse to support a mass movement, calling it reactionary, and implore Puigdemont and Rajoy to sit down and negotiate, precisely at a time when PDeCat is being totally surpassed by the mass movement.

With who exactly should the movement negotiate? How can we demand an "agreed and legal" referendum from those who respond with police brutality against the Catalan people?

When they declared the republic, the capitalist leaders of the Catalan parliament wore funeral faces. Since the Catalan capitalists have understood that a revolutionary crisis had been triggered, they have piled

pressure on the politicians to retreat. They are now in total chaos, with speculation that Puigdemont and others will seek asylum in Belgium.

Capitalists afraid

The Catalan capitalists and their representatives in PDeCat are again betraying the cause of Catalonia and the republic.

Instead of calling for mass mobilisation against 155 and repression, and suffering the same situation as hundreds of thousands of working class fighters have, these capitalist politicians prepare to heroically flee, and become symbolic figures in exile. This does not serve the interests of the struggle, only their own image and personal prestige.

The balance of forces in Catalonia is still favourable to defeating the plans of the ruling class. The left in Catalonia and throughout the Spanish state must call a campaign of mobilisations based on a programme of social and economic demands which answer the urgent needs

of millions of workers and youth.

This programme should be clear: an end to evictions and cuts, defence of public health and education, nationalisation of the banks and big companies under democratic control to create millions of jobs on decent salaries.

The combative left must show the working class of Catalonia, especially those of Spanish descent who emigrated to Catalonia in the post-war years and whose families have suffered under class oppression, racism and humiliation from the Catalan capitalists, that the Catalan Republic we want is one of the oppressed and working people. The more time that passes without this programme being adopted the closer the forces of reaction will be to achieving their objectives.

Abstract declarations of the republican mean little in the face of a counterrevolutionary attack. The leaders of the left must be decisive and base themselves on the immense capacity to

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The only way to end the confusion, and neutralise the Spanish nationalist campaign, is uniting the workers and youth of Catalonia with their brothers and sisters throughout the Spanish state in mass mobilisation against the PP

struggle shown by the Catalan masses. They should organise a general strike, fight for a left government to build a workers' republic, and remove Puigdemont and PDeCat from the leadership of the national liberation movement. This is the task of the CUP, Catalunya en Comu (left alliance in Catalan parliament) and Unidos Podemos.

Hundreds of thousands of Catalans view the elections on 21 December as a strategy to liquidate the movement which has led to the republic. They are correct: the forces of reaction want to give their repression a "democratic" façade with these elections. However, it is now clear that these elections will take place, as PDeCat and ERC have promised to participate. Mass mobilisation and defending socialist policies is the best way to defeat the Spanish nationalist right wing and their allies, both now and in the 21 December elections.

Working class

Turning towards the Catalan working class is key. The working class must be in the front line of struggle against repression and for a Catalan workers' republic. However this can only be achieved if the republic is given social content, showing that a socialist republic is preferable to a capitalist monarchy which defends the interests of big business, corruption and Franco's political descendants.

The only way to end the confusion, and neutralise the Spanish nationalist campaign, is uniting the workers and youth of Catalonia with their brothers and sisters throughout the Spanish state in mass mobilisation against the PP. This is the task which the leadership of Unidos Podemos have before them.

The Spanish and Catalan ruling classes look with terror on the proclamation of a Catalan Republic.

This is not only because it would ruin their nationalist idea of a great, united Spain. They know that this would be the prelude to an even more intense and deep struggle in the interests of the oppressed, against capitalist domination, against the established social order and for a socialist republic in Catalonia, as part of a federal socialist republic throughout the state, based on the free and voluntary unity of peoples and nations.

This struggle is already winning the active solidarity of the oppressed masses of Europe and the world.

■ Read the full article at socialistparty.org.uk

Socialism 2017 ideas to change the world

The billionaires of the world have increased their combined wealth by almost a fifth in the last year. They now own a staggering \$6 trillion - more than twice the UK's GDP!

Josef Stadler, UBS bank's 'head of global ultra-high net worth', said that the "\$1bn question" is how society will react to the concentration of so much money in the hands of so few.

Speaking just before her disastrous Tory conference speech, Theresa May said: "A free market economy... is unquestionably the best, and indeed the only sustainable, means of increasing the living standards

today are 43% poorer than their equivalents in 1995. Workers in Britain have had their incomes drop by 10% since the economic crisis of 2007-8. Anger is growing.

Capitalist politicians and commentators have no solutions.

What he means is - how long can they get away with it? Young people

of everyone in a country." But who would believe her?

Even a former government minister and banker recently told the Financial Times: "The underlying promise of western capitalist economies - that a rising tide lifts all boats - has been broken and 'a better model' is now needed."

But it is capitalism, a system that puts profit before people, that is not just broken but incapable of meeting the needs of the vast majority of the world's populations. Instead it brings crisis, war, poverty and division.

At Socialism 2017 we won't be relying on bankers or Tories for ideas on how to defend our living standards and fight austerity.

Socialists discuss and debate the lessons of past struggles, the ideas that our movement has developed through experience, and what needs to be done now to change the world.

We discuss to learn from each other to make our movement stronger and better prepared to fight back.

We fight all cuts and austerity, but also go further. As well as supporting nationalisation of rail and mail, we say that the other major monopolies (banks, companies and businesses), need to be brought into public ownership - under the democratic control of working class people.

In this way, the economy could be planned democratically, to genuinely meet the needs and aspirations of the many, not just the few.

How can we make Corbyn's policies real now?

We can't wait until 2022 for a general election - we need Jeremy Corbyn's policies now! And the Tories out! From free education, to rent control, to nationalising the railways, to a £10/hr minimum wage - we need to build a mass movement to win these things and force the Tories to call a general election to get them out.

The Tory chancellor, Hammond, recently described Corbyn as a "clear and present danger" - a danger that is to the interests Hammond and his party represent, the capitalist class of bankers and bosses.

This means that although the Tories are completely split and very weak, they will do all they can to cling on to power to keep Corbyn out. They fear that a Corbyn-led government would unleash a movement of working class, middle class and young people to fight for Corbyn's policies and more - which would challenge their control of the wealth in society.

The Socialist Party has put forward the idea of a mass trade union-led demonstration to smash the Tory pay cap. We also back the call from Socialist Students for an 'education shutdown' on budget day. This should be part of building for coordinated strike action across the public sector. A movement on this scale could force the Tories to call a general election, and bring a Jeremy Corbyn-led government to power within months.

But the Tories are not the only split party. A threat to Corbyn's manifesto also comes from within Labour - the right-wing MPs, councillors and officials who have carried out austerity and attempted to remove Corbyn.

The Labour Party remains 'two parties in one' - the radical wing which has been inspired by Corbynism on one side and the pro-capitalist Blairite wing, which includes the majority of MPs, on the other. Although the general election result has forced some of the right-wing Blairites to eat humble pie, it would be a major mistake to imagine that they are now genuine converts to opposing austerity. We all know that Labour councillors continue to vote through cuts.

In fact, the Blairites are now trying to surround Corbyn to force him to retreat from his radical programme. A battle needs to be waged to transform Labour into a socialist and democratic party of workers and young people that can be a reliable body in the fight against austerity.

Sessions on this theme include:

- Local government - the next scene of the anti-austerity battle?
- Labour and the trade unions - introduced by RMT president Sean Hoyle, and Glenn Kelly, Socialist Party industrial organiser
- How can a Corbyn government avoid sabotage? - introduced by Sarah Wrack, editor of the Socialist
- Workers v Bosses: who will win the low pay battle? - a forum with Lewis, McDonalds striker; Richard Beddows, Birmingham bin strike convenor; and Rob Williams, national chair of the National Shop Stewards Network



Young people need socialism

Today's 18-year-olds were eight years old at the time of the world economic crisis in 2007-8. Is it any wonder that they are now ready to resist and are open to socialism?

Generation Crisis has had enough. Unless they fight back, their future is dominated by debt mountains, precarious working and housing horrors. Two-thirds of young people backed Jeremy Corbyn at the general election in an electoral revolt.

Bernie Sanders, who stood for a "political revolution", is now the most popular politician in the USA, reflecting the rejection of the neoliberalism offered up by the Democrats and Republicans alike.

In the movement against low pay at McDonald's and in the fight against the repressive Spanish state we are seeing young people to the fore.

Sessions on this theme include:

- How the Student Union defeated education attacks in the state of Spain - introduced by Coral Latorre, general secretary of the Student Union in Catalonia
- Can free education be achieved? How?
- Mental health and young people - how would socialism be different?
- Social media - the good, the bad, the ugly and the revolutionary potential

Workshops will include plenty of time for everyone to contribute, raise disagreements and ask questions

Sessions on this theme include:

- What is the legacy of the Russian revolution? We have invited all the so-called experts and 'sovietologists' who go on the BBC to denounce the October revolution to debate with us but none have even replied! Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary, will introduce this session
- We will also discuss: Was Lenin a dictator? Lessons of October: the relevance of Leon Trotsky's ideas today. From Russia 1917 to Scotland 2017: why do socialists talk about the national question? What can 1917 tell us about the fight for LGBT+ rights? Women and 1917, and more

Working class internationalism

The leaders of the 1917 Russian revolution, Trotsky and Lenin, were clear that the success of the new workers' state depended on the spreading of the revolution to other countries. They were internationalists - and so is the Socialist Party. We are part of the Committee for a Workers' International, a world socialist organisation in 45 countries.

Our internationalism can have nothing to do with international organisations that pursue war and austerity. For example Nato, which has the push towards military intervention written into its foundations. Or the EU, which bans nationalisation of industries and has pushed the living standards of the Greek people crashing through the floor. Working class internationalism means standing and fighting in solidarity with workers and young people across the world against repression, austerity and war.

That is why the situation in the US, where the election of Donald Trump has provoked huge protests and growing hunger for an alternative. And in the Spanish state, where the movement for a Catalan socialist republic is moving to the next stage. Other examples will feature at Socialism 2017.

Sessions on this theme include:

- Revolution and counterrevolution in the US - introduced by Kshama Sawant, the US's most prominent and effective elected socialist
- How can the struggle for an independent socialist Catalonia win? - introduced by Juan Ignacio Ramos, general secretary of Izquierda Revolucionaria, the Socialist Party's sister party, which fights austerity and repression across the Spanish state
- Can the EU be reformed in the interests of the working class?
- Will there always be war in the Middle East? This session will be introduced by Judy Beishon, elected member of the International Secretariat of the CWI (the world socialist organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) who will be recently returned from a visit to the CWI in Israel/Palestine
- We will also have a workshop co-hosted by the Refugee Rights Campaign on the role of trade unions in the fight against racism and for refugee rights



On Sunday 12noon - 12.45 there will be readings by renowned writers Meena Kandasamy and Edward Wilson. Room tbc



The Russian revolution and Marxism

At Socialism 2017 we will discuss the Russian revolution 100 years ago. But Socialism 2017 will not be a history lesson!

1917 provides a powerful example of how it is possible for the working class and poor to take their destiny into their own hands and transform the world. We will be discussing the impact of the revolution, and also why the Soviet Union degenerated into dictatorship.

The leaders of the Russian revolution used Marxism as a guide to answer the same questions we face today - how can the working class organise to end injustice, repression and exploitation? Leon Trotsky, a leader in 1917, described the revolutionary party, as the Bolsheviks were, as "the memory of the working class" in that they carried all the lessons and understanding of workers' struggle and experience to aid the movements they participated in.

The onset of a deep-going world economic crisis, beginning in 2007-8, which capitalism has still not recovered from, has opened up a new period of social and political instability as the opposition of the working class and the youth has grown. These lessons and ideas will be invaluable to these new movements.



AS WELL AS THE RALLIES AND WORKSHOPS, WE WILL HAVE THE FOLLOWING EXTRA EVENTS:

BOOKS Socialist Books will host launch events to celebrate its first two publications.

Socialism bookshop, lower ground floor on Saturday 11 November:

- 2-2.30pm: Peter Taaffe will introduce his new book, *From Militant to the Socialist Party*, which details the Blairite takeover of the Labour Party and the processes which prefaced the world economic crisis of 2007-8

- 5-5.30pm: Judy Beishon who wrote the introduction to Socialist Books' new edition of Trotsky's essential *Lessons of October*, will introduce the central ideas of the book and be available to sign copies

300,000 A YEAR FORCED TO LEAVE WORK

Unions must fight workplace mental health crisis



Jac McAllister-Green
Northampton Socialist Party

Workers with mental health problems are leaving their workplaces at a rate of up to 300,000 a year.

For those of us who have suffered with poor mental health, the findings of the government's 'Thriving at Work' report are unsurprising.

Work is becoming more stressful. The financial uncertainty and instability of poverty pay, zero-hour or other insecure contracts, and bullying management is becoming more apparent.

Too many of us cannot cope with conditions in our workplaces. We are effectively forced into leaving jobs, finding ourselves at the mercy of a punishing 'welfare' system.

I have experienced this first-hand in more than one previous workplace. I can state with conviction it has a deleterious effect on your confidence. It makes you question your ability to do the job.

Mental health and young people - how would socialism be different?
(see pages 8-9)

SOCIALISM 2017

I was subject to workplace bullying in a public sector role. I was forced to explain bouts of absence to my colleagues - the presumption being my mental health issues were insignificant.

I was forced to explain bouts of absence to my colleagues - the presumption being my mental health issues were insignificant

At the time, I was homeless, having been made redundant from another public sector job and unable to keep up with increasing living costs. I was sofa-surfing at friends' houses for a number of months.

My story is by no means unique. This is an all too common occurrence in austerity Britain. After five months, I was out of work once more.

6% of people with long-term mental health conditions move from

employment to unemployment each quarter. For long-term physical conditions it's 3.5%.

On top of the huge human cost, the report attributes an economic cost of up to £99 billion a year to failure to support those with mental health problems.

The Socialist Party fights for full funding for the NHS, including massive expansion of mental health facilities, and an end to bullying and insecure work. There can be no doubt the rapid deterioration of morale in workplaces across the country is due to the draconian policies of the Tories and Blairites.

Increasingly, people have to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. Sometimes even that is not enough to cope with rising living costs. Claimants of in-work benefits are also on the rise. It is simply unacceptable that we are forced into this situation.

The Socialist Party campaigns within trade unions for effective action against poor pay and conditions, and for coordinated strikes to bring down this bosses' government.

The situation will only improve with a leadership willing to bring workers together to fight, demanding decent conditions and the right to real support at work.



photo DFID/CC

No to 'Carebnb' privatisation of hospital beds

Nancy Taaffe
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

In the week of Halloween, a truly chilling proposal haunted the NHS under Theresa May's zombie government. Start-up company 'Care Rooms' set up a stall in the canteen at Southend University Hospital to find Airbnb-style 'hosts' to take in recovering patients.

It was looking for people who live locally and have a spare room to house hospital users for £50 a night. Hosts would be asked to welcome patients recovering from minor procedures, cook three microwave meals a day, and offer conversation.

According to CareRooms, the scheme targets patients who do not have a family to care for them at home.

Southend Hospital pulled out of the pilot as soon as the story broke. But the supposed justification for the scheme was a 40% increase in so-called 'bed blocking' - peaking at up to 6,000 a day, and blamed by one research team for up to 8,000 deaths.

However, the villains of this horror story are not vulnerable people stuck in hospital beds. It's vampire-like cuts and sell-offs that are sucking the lifeblood out of the NHS and social care.

The Tories and Blairites have

Can NHS privatisation be stopped before it's too late? (see pages 8-9)

SOCIALISM 2017

drained the whole system of resources, from the moment you walk through the door at A&E to the after-care at home. Gig economy models like Airbnb are part of the problem, not the solution.

CareRooms is part of the NHS 'clinical entrepreneur programme'. The very existence of that government project reveals the spreading tentacles of private interests in public healthcare.

The chair of one of the Tories' 'sustainability and transformation plan' cuts schemes, Mike Bewick, is an unpaid advisor to CareRooms. Bewick is also NHS England's former deputy medical director. There's a revolving door between management overseeing cuts and privatisation, and firms seeking to profit from it.

What the NHS truly needs is a stake through the heart of all privatisation. The Socialist Party campaigns for an NHS fully funded, fully staffed and free at the point of use. Only a socialist programme can end the Tory and Blairite nightmare in our NHS.

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COORDINATED STRIKE ACTION ON FIVE RAIL NETWORKS AGAINST DRIVER-ONLY OPERATION

Socialist Party RMT members

Rail workers' union RMT has announced coordinated strikes on five different networks to defeat the threat of driver-only operation (DOO).

Workers will walk out on Southern, South Western Railway and Greater Anglia for 48 hours from 8 November and will be joined by those on Merseyrail and Arriva Rail North for 24 hours on the same date.

The RMT has been in dispute with Southern for over 18 months now with strike action spreading to Merseyrail, Arriva Rail North and most recently Greater Anglia. South Western Railway will be taking action for the first time.

Train drivers' union Aslef has held talks with Southern and is currently balloting members on a deal to end the dispute there. Though Aslef rejects DOO, the deal would accept the argument for train guards becoming non-safety critical and for

trains to run without them under various operational circumstances.

The result will be known on 8 November - the same day as the RMT strikes. Aslef members on Southern should reject this deal. If they do DOO extension will suffer a fatal setback.

It's clear the government is using Southern as its battering ram to begin the final destruction of the guard grade on Britain's railways. Any settlement which allows a passenger train to run without the second member of staff - under any circumstances - will open up a breach in the battle to retain a safety-critical second member of staff on trains.

The Socialist Party supports the RMT's strike action. DOO should be totally eliminated from the railway, not extended.

(Saturday afternoon)
Workers v bosses: Who will win the low pay war? >see pages 8-9



photo Lobster1/CC

Arriva bus workers' dispute continues - coordinate the action with rail strike

photo Hugh Caffrey



Hugh Caffrey
North West Socialist Party regional organiser

The bus drivers' strike at Arriva remained completely solid on the third day of action on 30 October. Big turnouts by Unite the Union members on pickets across the region defied the management's increased attempts to encourage scabbing.

The company's real agenda is clear from their new pay 'offer' - it's worth less in April to July next year than a previous offer! The new offer is of £12.04 an hour backdated to April 2017 and £12.10 from January next year, until the deal would expire in July.

This compared to a previous offer of £12.32 from April next year - so agreement to the new offer means agreeing to work for less in April to July next year.

A 3% rise and then a levelling up of the lower-paid Greater Manchester and Cheshire areas, to the Merseyside rate, is what Unite wants and can be won.

Arriva is immensely profitable. A Unite member said that its British operations are sending £26 million a year to Germany. There is no shortage of cash for higher wages (and lower fares), and further industrial action can force the company to cough up. We need the buses restored to public ownership so that

profits are no longer siphoned off and stashed away, but reinvested in improving the service.

Understandably some drivers will be looking at the run-up to Christmas, and worrying about the cost of sustained strike action. But so will Arriva!

Solid action has already inflicted big losses on the company. Stagecoach backed down in the face of strike action. Drivers at the Firstbus Manchester garage, also in Unite, are on strike every Monday in November.

Unite has announced further strike action at Arriva, on Mondays through to Christmas.

One additional strike day has been added, on 8 November when the RMT rail union strikes on Arriva Rail North and Merseyrail (see article above). Unite and the RMT are both confronting Arriva and co-ordinated action can strike a serious blow.

Linking the disputes is an obvious tactic. An RMT members' meeting on Merseyside resolved to organise a public lobby of the transport committee to demand they keep guards on Merseyrail. This is on 7 December, 1-2pm at the Cunard Buildings in Liverpool.

Having coordinated industrial action, the two unions should come together to mobilise in force for joint mass action including lobbies and demonstrations to tap into the huge public support.



[News in brief]

■ North east England blacklisting conference

Historic Wallsend, with its strong traditions of trade union militancy in mining and ship building, was the scene for an excellent conference of regional and national anti-blacklisting activists on 28 October. Supported by the National Education Union, general union Unite, and public services union Unison, it brought together activists and campaigners who've fought bitter battles against bosses and even some union officials who break the law to prevent trade unionists from being hired. Tony Seaman was elected this year to Unite's executive committee. He explained that he was unable to secure work in his home area of Teesside for 28 months as a result of construction firms seeking to prevent him fighting for compliance with sectoral agreements.

National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) and Socialist Party activists from Unite and the RMT supported the meeting and made contributions from the floor.

William Jarrett
Newcastle Socialist Party

■ PCS pay cap ballot

The civil servants' union PCS is stepping up its pay campaign by holding a consultative ballot, timed to coincide with the autumn budget.

The average pay of a civil servant has fallen by 20% since 2010.

The decision to ballot follows the union's correspondence to the prime minister after the general election demanding an immediate end to the 1% cap. Damian Green, minister for the cabinet office, in a complacent and dismissive response to the union, claimed that "the civil service offers an exceptional package of benefits which are among the best available".

Despite 120,000 jobs cut, there is a "trade-off" between pay and jobs, he added. PCS is sending a message to the government - scrap the pay cap and fund inflation-proofing pay increases. PCS is demanding a rise of 5% or £1,200, whichever is greater. The ballot ends on 6 November.

1926 general strike workers taste power

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TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS DEMAND AN END TO THE SCHOOLS FUNDING CRISIS

Southampton head teacher and NEU member

Over 1,000 teachers, staff, parents and students put the question to MPs on 24 October: "What are you going to do to end the school funding crisis?"

Schools are facing further cuts due to a change in the government funding formula. But what came across at the National Education Union (NEU) rally was the severity of the crisis right now - a combined attack on schools of underfunding, a squeeze on teachers' pay, draconian testing regimes, a narrow curriculum and privatisation through academies and free schools.

This financial squeeze means that schools are shedding staff, both teachers and teaching assistants, with growing class sizes and no-one to teach subjects such as music, IT and other core subjects. As older more 'expensive' teachers are pushed out or jump under the calamitous pressure of a huge workload and squeezed pay, schools are finding it hard to recruit and retain younger and less experienced staff.

To cheers, John McDonnell gave his and Jeremy Corbyn's commitment: "If Labour had won in June we would have ended school cuts and introduced free school meals. Restored education maintenance allowance for sixth form students. Lifted public sector pay for all. Scrapped tuition fees and restored grants. To provide education from



photo Glenn Kelly

the cradle to the grave, free at the point of need."

His speech was followed by a standing ovation from most sections of the hall. It was a glimpse of the mood of anger across the country and the potential for a fighting campaign linked to Corbyn's manifesto, in mobilising a mass campaign to back Labour councils, with demonstrations and strike action to back their stand.

This was what was missing from the lobby. Rather than a launch pad for such an offensive, the opportunity to spell out what needs to be done was missed.

Given the enthusiasm towards John McDonnell's speech, imagine the impact if he was to call on every Labour council to use its powers to fund schools using 'licensed budget deficits' which an incoming Labour government would reimburse. It would rally teachers and parents to build a mass movement to back Labour councils, with demonstrations and strike action to back their stand.

Such is the severity of the schools crisis, battles at a local level are inevitable. The left of the NEU and Unison, alongside other unions, must push a clear strategy forward to ensure these battles are not left isolated but are linked together in a country-wide movement alongside others entering the struggle against this weak, divided and hated Tory government.



photo Nick Chaffey

Anger over plan to build housing on Yorkshire flood plain

Peter Robson

Todmorden resident and Bradford Socialist Party member

One resident at a recent meeting in Todmorden shouted out at Tory MP Craig Whittaker: "We know who you are Whittaker - a friend to the builders!"

The government currently requires local councils to produce a local plan which identifies land to meet their requirements for new housing and economic development, over the next 15 years.

The latest estimates indicate that Calderdale, West Yorkshire, will need over 17,000 new houses by 2032. Calderdale council wants to build somewhere in the region of 7,000 homes on local green belt land in the near future through this plan.

Whittaker and the council representatives failed time and again to recognise the housing crisis in this community, which of course, is

mirrored around the country. These will not be affordable homes and will also be built on a flood plain as well as placing a heavier burden on the town's roads and services.

Whittaker said of the Labour-run council: "The council has serious questions to answer about the way in which this consultation process has been managed and publicised and they urgently need to take steps to rectify this." This is true but it is the Tory government and Communities Minister Sajid Javid who are creating the proposals in the first place.

The whole process has been a farce from day one, with forms to submit objections being delayed by a system that clearly could not cope with the number of objections to these plans.

This was clearly demonstrated at the packed public meeting with 200 people in attendance. Fair to say Whittaker did not have an easy time, struggling to respond to fears and concerns.

Skipton show proves draw of socialist art

Peter Harris

Lancashire Socialist Party

One in six people have never visited an art gallery according to a recent survey for gallery Rise Art, no doubt due to feeling intimidated.

So how did we manage to attract nearly 100 people and local press coverage to a political arts event, the 'Bad Art' Skipton exhibition?

We stressed that all ten artists are socialists and internationalists - and as supporters of the Bad Art campaign we are not just another art group. We are active in the fightback against austerity, and the struggle for a society of freedom for artists and all workers: socialism.

As socialists, involvement in the arts can be an extension of our main day-to-day political campaigning. The Bad Art project, initiated by members of the Socialist Party and its sister organisations around the world, aims to help further that.

For future events and more about 'Bad Art', visit badartworld.net

of our political aims.

In the exhibition itself you were immediately confronted with a diversity of artworks. Some made overtly political points. Others were more surreal, but nevertheless presented another world view.

This diversity of work was underpinned by our stressing the primary need for the socialist transformation of society. It made the show a vibrant success, particularly for the young people who attended. We raised money through programme sales and donations.

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■ 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	October to December 2017	Deadline: 1 January 2017
South West	501	1,800	28%	
Northern	206	750	27%	
Yorkshire	855	3,300	26%	
Wales	546	2,300	24%	
West Midlands	577	2,600	22%	
East Midlands	407	1,850	22%	
North West	419	2,100	20%	
Eastern	223	1,200	19%	
London	917	6,100	15%	
Southern	140	1,600	9%	
South East	7	750	1%	
Other	31	5,650	1%	
TOTAL	4830	30,000	16%	

Lessons of the school students' victory in the Spanish state (see pages 8-9)

SOCIALISM 2017

DERBY: EXPENSES FOR COUNCILLORS, CUTS FOR EVERYONE ELSE

Ian Hunter

Derby Socialist Party

The recent publication of the allowances and expenses of Derby city councillors for 2016-17 should cause

more than a few raised eyebrows. At a time when the council continues to make severe cuts to local jobs and services, the total of £812,749.45 will seem excessive to many in more straightened circumstances.

The figures show that the total each councillor receives consists of a basic allowance of £10,076 a year plus certain allowances such as a special responsibility allowance, travel, subsistence, and carer's allowances. Over half a million pounds is spent on councillor's basic allowances.

In the last four years the council has made cuts of £116 million and intends to make further cuts of £45 million by 2019. Planned cuts for 2017-18 will be £15 million.

The council continues to weekly and slavishly follow the Tory government's austerity policies even though this always affects the most vulnerable in society as local services have been axed and working people's wages have consistently fallen in real terms for over a decade. Simply to say you are anti-austerity is not enough, action is required.

A 'no-cuts' budget could be prepared using council reserves and by borrowing money to restore essential and key services.

Local government – the next scene of the anti-austerity battle? (see pages 8-9)

Services the council is legally obliged to fund like education support services, libraries and so on, have been cut to the bone.

A range of discretionary services, which carry no legal obligation but have traditionally been funded, include leisure, entertainment, grants to local organisations. These have either been severely reduced or cut altogether.

As an example, Derby Women's Centre, which for years has provided valuable assistance and support for victims of domestic abuse and violence, and is now no longer funded by the council. The support is required as much as ever but the centre and its supporters have to scuttle around constantly trying to raise funds wherever they can in order to maintain some semblance of vital support.

The march on 28 October ended with speakers - the sons, daughters, mothers, nephews and others related to those who had died. It linked to the wider unnecessary deaths of working class people in Grenfell Tower.

The daughter of one of the Hillsborough victims also spoke of how she had been taken into care after her mother was killed and fought to defend her mother's name due to the vile ways in which the media and state attempted to undermine those who seek justice.

All those who spoke faced massive barriers getting information over what had happened and any attempt at justice. Some have become aware of also being spied upon by undercover police surveillance, including those seeking justice for the murder of Christopher Alder from Hull.

Family after family not only showed the ways lives were being stolen by the state but also how families and friends can and will stand up for justice, despite the trauma they are facing.

Solidarity and practical support was encouraged, inviting families to meetings, sharing information online and backing up calls for change:

- Suspension of officers until independent investigations take place
- Officers responsible to face criminal charges
- Families provided with legal aid

What is the socialist approach to the state? (see pages 8-9)

SOCIALISM 2017

THE "CLUB NO-ONE WANTS TO BE PART OF" - MARCH BY FAMILIES OF THOSE KILLED IN POLICE CUSTODY

Arti Dillon

Southwark Socialist Party

It was heart breaking to take part in the annual march of Unite Families and Friends Campaign (UFFC), made up of those affected by deaths in police custody, prison and similar situations as more families joined the club, no-one wanted to be part of it.

UFFC was originally set up to network black families affected since the death of Leon Patterson in 1992. The campaign includes people of all ethnicities who have been hit by police abuses. They particularly affect working class people.

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Health campaign groups come together in Barnsley to protest closures and downgrades in the NHS

Michaela Bower

Huddersfield Socialist Party

Around 150 people came together from across the north of England in Barnsley to protest against NHS cuts on 28 October. With campaign groups from Lincoln, Huddersfield, Chorley, Liverpool, Leeds and many more, these campaigners long ago realised that, while they must campaign for their local services, this is a widespread threat to the entirety of the NHS across the country.

The strength of the campaign groups will depend on linking up and coordination. As we chanted on the demo: "One fight, we all unite!"

The decision to demonstrate in Barnsley was taken due to the impending closure of the Mount Vernon hospital by the end of this year



photo Huddersfield Socialist Party



The Socialist Inbox

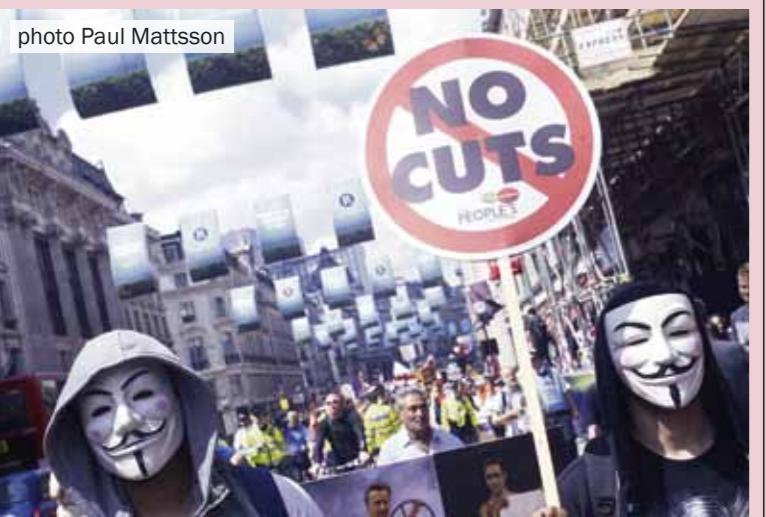
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Gunpowder plotted

The 'Gunpowder' trilogy on BBC has drawn criticism for the violence and cruelty it portrays. This is understandable. However, the tortures shown in such shocking detail are historically accurate. So was execution by hanging, drawing and quartering.



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.

He's our neighbour

Everybody knows it, but what a lie it was that austerity cuts wouldn't affect front-line services. Our next-door neighbour was a long-distance driver and removal man. He's done heavy work all his life. He's now retired and lives alone, but has friends and neighbours. And thank goodness he has. He suffers from a range of medical conditions. Most pressingly, he struggles to breathe. He can't walk anywhere anymore so he drives to the local shops. He eats his dinner every day at the café at the top of our street.

Periodically he is taken off to the local hospital in an ambulance because of his breathing. But more and more often, he is discharged in the night, into an empty house.

Gentrification means that the café at top of the street has closed down and will become a 'bistro'. So Geoff and his friend now drive a mile away to another café every day.

But then he had a prang in his car which has put him off driving. Now his friend is away for a couple of weeks.

He was discharged again a few days ago into a completely empty house - hardly able to walk from the kerb to his door, his breathing was so bad.

He's been assigned a social worker, but so far all she has been able to do is ring us, his next-door neighbours.

We have cleaned his kitchen and bathroom. We have shopped for him, and take milk in most days.

At least until his friend is back, we are taking him a dinner every day. We were going away one weekend - so had to get him stocked up with dinners before we went.

We don't mind. He's our neighbour. But he's embarrassed. A bit humiliated really.

It makes you so angry. He's worked all his life and this is what it has come to.

**Paula and Ken
Walthamstow, east London**

Any depiction of royalty which gives a romantic, fairy tale view of the splendour of the court - and ignores the methods by which the autocratic rule was maintained - is frankly dishonest.

In the second episode, chief conspirator Robert Catesby (Kit Harrington) witnesses the burning of two "heretics" in Spain - Jews in this case. This is a fair indication that the methods of autocracy did not vary much between England and Spain.

The persecution of Catholics in England was clearly depicted as a means by which the aristocracy, and in particular Lord Robert Cecil (Mark Gatiss), enriched themselves. Religion was used as a means of social control and a pretext for torture and murder.

The interchange between Father Henry Garnet (Peter Mullan) and Cecil in the final episode is particularly telling. Cecil accuses Garnet of causing the gunpowder plot.

Although he is not named by any conspirator and is depicted opposing the plot, his preaching is enough to hang him. Garnet responds by drawing attention to Cecil's role in causing the conflict. You cannot expect that people so persecuted will not respond in kind.

Anne Vaux (Liv Tyler) plays a strong woman in a period when society kept women firmly 'in their place'. I wouldn't dream of giving the plot away - no pun intended! - but for most of those involved it was unlikely to end well.

Although gruesome, this is a very good series and well worth watching.

**Derek McMillan
Worthing**

Forty years ago, super-exploited workers at Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in London were on strike. Most were migrant Asian women. They demanded trade union recognition and the reinstatement of sacked colleagues.

The Socialist spoke to actor **Medhavi Patel**, and actor, writer and Socialist Party member **Neil Gore**, about Townsend Productions' new play 'We Are the Lions, Mr Manager'.

So why the Grunwick strike?

Neil: It was a watershed moment, really. It was a major event in the mid-1970s. A battleground between the right and the left.

The 'National Association for Freedom' [a

right-wing anti-union front] and the right wing of the Conservative Party saw it as

an opportunity to start their assault on the trade unions.

Between them, this small event in north London became a massive national campaign on both sides, a way to build up their respective stances on the future of this country. There was a great debate about what the role of trade unions should be.

The union rank and file, as always in these events, showed its vast difference with the leadership. There was a massive difference when it came to supporting the Grunwick strikers. The strikers did feel let down in many ways by the trade union leadership.

It lasted two years, 1976-78. It was astonishing really. It was led mainly by Asian women, and that's what made it

more extraordinary. There were a handful of strikes led by immigrant workforces, like Imperial Typewriters in Leicester. But this was the first major strike by Asian women in this country. Grunwick was instrumental in changing attitudes to race and migrant workers within the labour movement.

And Medhavi, you play one of the strikers?

Medhavi: I play Jayaben Desai. She was the first woman on the picket line, along with some of the others who walked out in support of her, and so she led the strike.

And you're 'Mr Manager', Neil?

Neil: I'm Mr Manager, yes - a fellow called Malcolm Alden. He's still alive.

The pressure of the work, the pressure of upper management or middle managers to get the work through as quickly as possible. Because they were undercutting big companies like Kodak and so forth.

They paid poor wages, insisted on compulsory overtime. The workers were ruled

Interview: We Are the Lions, Mr Manager

GRUNWICK: NEW PLAY CELEBRATES WATERSHED MOMENT FOR WORKERS' STRUGGLE

with an iron rod by the mail order department, his department.

They would have to put up their hands if they wanted to use the toilet. They couldn't leave their seats. They couldn't talk with each other.

A lot of commentators, a lot of MPs, said they were Dickensian conditions. They weren't: this was the future of industry. We now see it, in glorious Technicolor, with Sports Direct and Amazon and so on.

Alden had the foresight to see the potential, taking on immigrant workers and treating them badly - and thinking they wouldn't answer back. He picked on the wrong person this time!

[During the strike] they bought a double-

decker to get his 'loyal' workers in so they didn't have to face the pickets. And Malcolm Alden used to drive the bus.

Is the story still relevant today?

Medhavi: Oh my god, yes! Immigrants get the blame for the state of the country. There's zero-hour contracts; the gig culture. But where does it go to? How quickly does it get swept under the rug? Who knows about the Grunwick strike today?

These sorts of things should be taught in schools. Young people can fight for their rights.

Townsend Productions is known for creative staging. What can audiences look forward to this time?

Neil: It was a big challenge this one, it's a big story. We always try to reflect the period. There's a rock concert in there. Medhavi: You're not supposed to say that, that's meant to be a surprise!

Neil: I also play Jack Dromey [then president of the local trade union council and a key supporter of the strike; now a right-wing Labour MP].

I play John Gouriet [of the National Association for Freedom] - an ex-army officer-type chap. I play a copper - all those aspects of the strike, I tend to play. Medhavi gets the easy option and just plays one. Medhavi: I play two, thank you very much! What's really cool is we use projection on the set to put ourselves in different periods. It becomes part of marches, part of pickets.

It sounds like great fun.

Medhavi: I think there's a really bad rap for political theatre, it can be dreary, but this is a proper show. It will keep you entertained, engaged - emotionally engaged as well.

Neil: There's songs as well, songs from the time.

Medhavi: I think it's a great piece. I think it's fantastic that Neil's written this play not just about the strike but about strong Asian women. You don't often hear about strong Asian female leaders.

It's a fantastic way to engage different audiences and show them that everyone's struggle is the same, regardless of what colour or caste or creed you are.

'We Are the Lions, Mr Manager' is touring Britain until April 2018 - see townsendproductions.org.uk

■ Read the full interview online at socialistparty.org.uk



Medhavi Patel as Jayaben Desai photo Townsend Productions

FORUM:
SOCIALISM 2017
Can art & literature provide a voice for the left? Just one of the discussions at Socialism 2017 (see pages 8-9)



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:

ENVIRONMENT

■ Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and un-recycled waste.

■ Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.

■ A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

RIGHTS

■ Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.

■ Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.

■ Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.

■ For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

■ For the right to vote at 16.

MASS WORKERS' PARTY

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

■ Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites.

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.

■ An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.

■ Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.

■ Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the National Shop Stewards Network.

■ A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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FIGHT FOR FREE EDUCATION

JOIN THE BUDGET DAY PROTESTS!

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Iain Dalton
Yorkshire Socialist Students
organiser

Ever since June's snap general election, the Tories have been running from one crisis to another, after Jeremy Corbyn's radical manifesto proved far more popular than their brutal austerity

policies. Key in this was Corbyn's pledge to end tuition fees from September 2017 if Labour won, winning the support of many young people who face a lifetime of debt.

Socialist Students has met thousands of students over the course of this year's freshers events interested in making that pledge and others in the manifesto a reality.

That's why Socialist Students has written to Labour's shadow

education secretary Angela Rayner calling for them to put a free education amendment to the Tory budget. And we're also organising for direct action to take place across the country on budget day, 22 November, in support of this demand.

Maddy Steeds from Leeds University Socialist Students said: "We believe education is a right not a privilege. Increasing tuition fees are pricing people out of education

and saddling students with tens of thousands of pounds of debt. This paired with the cuts to all sectors, means university graduates are increasingly sucked into a debt trap. We need change now."

On 22 November, we'll be marching in Leeds for free education. In the meantime we're lobbying our local Labour MPs to get them to back a free education amendment, with an online petition and

campaign stalls on campus.

But we also see the need to link up with others fighting the Tories' austerity - which is why we're linking our demonstration with the fight to smash the pay cap, including with unions in the education sector. A defeat on any of these issues has the potential to bring May's rotten government down - let's fight to make 22 November the end of austerity.