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MAKE THE FAT CATS PAY

Helen Pattison
London Socialist Party

Don't put the party poppers away just yet. There's one last thing to celebrate. **Fat Cat Wednesday!** Well, it's not exactly a celebration if you're working class. In fact it's only the super-rich who actually enjoy the event.

Fat Cat Wednesday marks the point on Wednesday 3 January when chief executives of FTSE 100, the largest businesses on the London Stock Exchange, will have already 'earned' the average salary of working people for the whole year. According to research by the High Pay Centre it takes them just one and a half days to pocket the £28,000 median salary in the UK.

It's a stark reminder of the huge void that exists between the living standards of working class people and the tops of society.

Fat Cat Wednesday has become an annual event when the inequality of capitalism is really laid bare. How can Theresa May say with a straight face that there is no "magic money tree" for hard-working NHS staff reliant on food banks when in hours these executives have already pocketed thousands?

Inequality

This huge inequality and the driving down of living standards since the 2008 economic crisis is also seriously affecting people's health. 4.6 million people are living in persistent poverty which is contributing to a rise in poverty-related illnesses such as rickets. Asthma is also on the rise, in part due to the number of children living in temporary and poor quality accommodation.

Parents are struggling, with one in five skipping a meal to feed their children over the summer holidays. The right-wing rags have said that Jeremy Corbyn and anti-austerity campaigners want to take us back in time, when in reality it's capitalism that's taking us back to the social horrors of the 19th century.

Rather than allowing Fat Cat Wednesday to get us down, we should be used as inspiration to fight for a real alternative to capitalism. The wealth is clearly there - it's just hoarded by the super-rich. If that wealth was taken from the 1% it could be democratically planned and used to ensure a decent standard of living for all.



photos Riceplusrice/CC and Paul Mattsson

Heart unit rescued by campaigning saves baby with pioneering surgery

Lenny Shail
 Coventry West Socialist Party

The heroic victory of thousands of community campaigners in Leicester to defend their congenital heart surgery unit, with Socialist Party members playing a leading role, was vindicated straight away. The news arrived just before Christmas that days-old Vanellope Hope Wilkins had been saved there.

Surgeons in the rescued heart centre at Glenfield Hospital carried out a pioneering operation to correct a rare condition that caused Vanellope's heart to grow outside her body, 'ectopia cordis'.

With chances of survival less than 10%, the tremendous skill and dedication of staff at the hospital saved the baby's life in a series of procedures that started within seconds of her birth. They involved 50 staff, three operations, and the construction of an artificial ribcage over the course of a week.

NHS England bosses should be ashamed and embarrassed after their attempts to shut down the unit last year. They only failed because of the tremendous battle by local residents and workers.

Socialist Party member Steve Score, chair of Save Glenfield Children's Heart Centre, said: "Incredible skill shown by staff. It's unbelievable

that NHS England bosses wanted to close this centre until their recent u-turn.

"The Save Glenfield Children's Heart Centre campaign is enormously proud of our role in saving this centre that saves children's lives. People power can win."

NHS England's arguments for closure were flawed from the start. The targets bosses wanted to set - 125 operations per surgeon per year - were arbitrary. Closure of the heart centre would have left the East Midlands as the only region in England without a specialised unit.

Campaign

The campaign involved thousands in a large number of demonstrations and meetings, with 130,000 people signing the petition. It helped 7,500 people engage in a deliberately complicated 'consultation' exercise.

Importantly, community campaigners linked up with the trade union movement, getting backing from local and regional union bodies.

The operations to save the life of Vanellope Wilkins demonstrate even more the importance of fighting to save every aspect of our NHS.

They also give a glimpse of what more would be possible if the NHS was publicly owned and properly funded, with genuine democratic control involving the workers and users of the service.



photo East Mids Socialist Party

But of course the war is far from over. The many local struggles need to be linked up - which 'Health Campaigns Together' aims to do. And health union leaders need to listen members and call industrial action.

We need to unite the communities fighting for their local services with each other and with trade unions in the NHS and beyond, and campaign for a national fightback to save our NHS.

NHS IN ANNUAL WINTER CRISIS AS BRANSON CREAMS OFF £1BN

Claire Laker-Mansfield
 Hackney Socialist Party

The NHS winter crisis has become an established part of the calendar, both predictable and predicted. In January last year, the Red Cross went so far as to call it a "humanitarian crisis." Indications are that this winter could prove just as difficult.

3rd
 Britain has the EU's third-lowest number of doctors per person

One in five patients had to wait over four hours in A&E treatment in the third week of December. This compares to one in twelve in the same week in 2013, according to the

NHS and Royal College of Emergency Medicine data.

When you learn that Britain now has third-lowest number of hospital beds and doctors per person in the EU, this is hardly surprising.

Just ask any one of the dedicated workers on the front line. They will tell you our NHS is understaffed and underfunded, health workers are overworked and underpaid, and private sector vultures are making colossal profits while treating staff and patients like rubbish.

Parasitic

One of these parasitic private companies is none other than Richard Branson's Virgin. Last year it picked up a record £1 billion worth of NHS contracts - despite paying no corporation tax in the UK.

And it wasn't alone. In 2017 privateers won 69% of NHS contracts put out to tender, says the NHS

Support Federation.

Yet last year also gave us the huge demonstration for the NHS in March, which Socialist Party members played a key role in organising. This showed the enormous potential there is to build a mass movement.

69%
 of NHS contracts put out to tender last year went to privateers

And the bold strike action of health workers - like outsourced porters and domestics in Barts NHS Trust - indicated what we could achieve if health workers were to strike back together.

That's why the step taken by Royal College of Nursing - traditionally a 'no-strike' union - of organising an indicative ballot for industrial action

against the pay cap was significant. With hospital porters in Devon and Exeter NHS trust currently preparing to strike against the imposition of twelve-hour shifts, it's clear there is a mood for action among broad sections of health workers.

It is incumbent on the tops of the trade unions to offer a lead to workers and campaigners. As a starting point, this should include mobilising a huge national demonstration.

It should include organising for coordinated strike action to end years of real-terms pay cuts in the NHS and society as a whole. It should mean waging a serious fight to make 2018 the year we save our health service from the ravages of cuts and privatisation.

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photo Mary Finch

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

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RAIL: FARES UP, BOSSES' PAY UP - DELAYS AND CANCELLATIONS UP

■ Nationalise rail now!

Paul Callanan
 Greenwich and Bexley
 Socialist Party

Rail companies are ringing in the new year by inflicting yet more misery on long-suffering commuters. Fares have gone up another 3.4%. With wages only up by 2.5% this means travel continues to get more costly for workers.

Commuters in Britain now pay up to five times as much of our wages in fares as our fellow workers in other parts of Europe, according to the TUC. Since the Tories came to power in 2010 season ticket prices have jumped 32%, Labour has found.

The government and rail bosses claim the increases are to cover the costs of huge rail infrastructure and improvement projects, as well as operating costs.

So, money well spent? No. 48% of all trains were late or cancelled in the five weeks up to Christmas, the Sunday Times found.

Bosses are also attempting to cut costs by removing safety-critical duties from train guards in favour of 'driver-only operation.' As well as trains being late and overcrowded, passengers are asked to pay for a service that is unsafe and inaccessible.

Seen in this light anyone would say that the government's transport policies have been an abject failure. Anyone except the fat cats who run

Britain's railways.

Like Rupert Soames, chief executive of Serco, which runs the Caledonian Sleeper and part-runs Merseyrail. Soames stands to get a staggering £5.4 million if he meets performance targets.

Or Martin Griffiths, boss of Stagecoach, operator of East Midlands and partner of Virgin's East Coast and West Coast lines. He is due a huge pay-out of £2.5 million.

The bosses claim that 97% of fares are reinvested - that just 3% is profit.

Of course, parts of that 'reinvestment' go on leasing trains from private companies and paying interest on debts - making profits for other bosses. And the chief execs' massive handouts count as staffing costs.

But even if the majority of the money goes on maintenance and improvement, why should passengers and railway workers have to foot the bill for decades of underinvestment?

The railways should be nationalised, in full and immediately, with compensation paid to shareholders only on the basis of proven need. Only by taking rail out of the hands of greedy bosses can we end the great British train robbery.

On the basis of public ownership and democratic planning, state subsidies could guarantee cheap fares, good wages and decent service - not prop up 3% profit margins and executive excess for companies competing to run rail into the ground.



photo Paul Mattsson

Thousands live in tents and sheds - seize the 60,000 empty homes

James Ivens

Over 60,000 homes in England and Wales have been vacant for more than two years. At the same time, 9,100 people live in tents. And in London alone around 9,000 'beds in sheds' fill secret slums.

How much longer do we have to watch the market fail to sort this out? The properties are there! Just take them!

Even the Liberal Democrats, Britain's second-best Tory tribute act, think it's an idea. It's their research which turned up the empty digs through council Freedom of Information requests.

In five years, only 19 of those councils - less than 8% - say they've taken any of these places over.

They all have the power. After six months they can issue 'empty dwelling management orders' for them. 11,000 have been empty over a decade.

And so the desperate homeless found makeshift cities of tents. Their population is booming. The 9,100

people living there represent a 56% growth between 2011 and 2016, according to Crisis.

The homelessness charity projects 11,000 in tents by 2020. Why?

Rents are up, benefits down. Tenancies are insecure and so is employment. But even families in stable work are now at risk of homelessness, according to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Losing a tenancy is the growing cause: behind 31% of homelessness in England, says Crisis. It was at 11% when the Tories came to power.

'Beds in sheds'

And it's the Tories themselves who identified 6,000 hidden 'beds in sheds' across two-thirds of London's boroughs - the majority Labour. They estimate the total number to be 9,000.

But is their real concern for the poor people living in sheds? They couldn't resist linking it to lost council tax receipts, undocumented migration - and benefit fraud.

Of course, getting benefits at

all is near impossible thanks to the Tories. Their 'universal credit' system is a disaster. The diminishing amount and extravagant lateness of payments mean four out of five landlords refuse to take claimants, says the National Landlords Association.

The Tories, Blairites and Liberals have made homelessness normal.

Nottingham is trialling a special vending machine for the homeless dispensing snack food and hygiene products. Keycards allow users three items a day.

Enough! Take those empty homes and put them to use. And build council houses now. Nationalise the land and construction companies - the market won't do it.

After Grenfell Jeremy Corbyn was right to call on the council to seize empty properties for survivors. Now he should make that call across the country.

photo Derek Harper/CC



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[News in brief]

■ Fire service victory

At the North Yorkshire Fire Authority meeting on 13 December, the decision was taken unanimously to reverse the decision made three years ago to reduce crewing of 'tactical response vehicles' (TRVs) to just three firefighters. These vehicles will now return to a minimum crew of four. This is a victory for all those who have been campaigning over this issue for the last two and a half years. Socialist Party members across North Yorkshire played a crucial part in building public opposition to these proposals when they were first announced, particularly in Harrogate where we held stalls alongside local Fire Brigades Union (FBU) activists. This decision, however, doesn't fully reverse the cuts, as the TRVs themselves were newly introduced in 2015, replacing large, more fully equipped fire engines, as well as following from a reduction of 50 firefighter posts lost between 2010 and 2015. Nevertheless, FBU members and others involved in the campaign will be celebrating a setback for the austerity agenda in this largely Tory-dominated county. **Iain Dalton, North Yorkshire Socialist Party organiser**

■ College pay protests

Following successful pay protests in November at Leeds City College further education unions UCU and Unison decided to keep the momentum going in December and planned repeat action. Staff want to show they are serious about receiving a meaningful pay award this year by holding protests every month - until the college shows it is willing to enter a constructive dialogue on the issue. Staff have not received any rise in pay over the last two academic years despite the ever-rising cost of living. At the Printworks Campus on 13 December, ten staff members braved heavy rainfall to make their presence known outside and show they were not going to back down. The following day at the Park Lane Campus around 30 staff members gathered with placards and flags, sang songs and ate mince pies. Unison members are also currently being balloted about whether or not they wish to consider strike action over the refusal of Leeds City College to accept the Association of Colleges' recommendation of a 1% pay rise last year. **Leeds City College Unison member**

Blairite Haringey council 'all ears' to rich property developers

Nick Auvache
North London Socialist Party

Hornsey Town Hall, Crouch
End photo Philafrenzy/CC



For those of you who thought that the Blairite zombie rump of Haringey councillors who have been deselected would depart the scene of history with their tails between their legs, then think again!

Although many arch Blairites have either been defeated in the candidate selection for May 2018's elections, or decided not to stand again, they seem to be hell bent on lining the pockets of as many private developers as possible before they hang up their pens.

Not content with getting into bed with multinational union blacklists Lend Lease in the notorious Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) scheme, Haringey council has given the go ahead to the aptly named FEC (Far East Consortium) to redevelop the historic Hornsey Town Hall.

This will now be turned into, yes you've guessed it... luxury flats! 146 flats are due to be built on the site but only eleven have been designated as "affordable".

Opposition

Astonishingly Haringey council has pushed ahead with this project despite the significant opposition to the plans.

An amazing 600 objections were lodged against the plans and public outrage reached such a pitch at the July planning meeting that the Labour councillor chairing the meeting threatened to exclude the public.

One woman present at the meeting neatly summed up the fiasco when she shouted out: "You could do so much better for Haringey. You could build a decent amount of social-rented houses, not line the pockets of a tax haven developer."

It seems that the Blairites running Haringey council are deaf to the criticisms of local people but when it comes to rich property developers they are all ears!

All three sitting Labour councillors for the ward where the development is taking place have withdrawn as candidates for next year's council elections.

We say good riddance to these councillors who have welcomed the

measly provision of eleven "affordable dwellings".

This will do nothing to alleviate the misery of the 3,000 families on the country. The manifesto is being debated this January. The newly-selected candidates should pledge that they will not be bound by decisions of councillors who now have no mandate from their local party.

We are calling on the newly selected anti-HDV Labour candidates to publicly condemn this scheme and commit themselves to a mass council house building programme instead, free from the profiteering of private developers.

It would seem the outgoing Blairite councillors are conducting a 'scorched earth' policy, trying to set in stone as much privatisation and

cuts as they can, including pushing ahead on the HDV.

In May, Haringey is set to be the first Corbyn-supporting council in the country. The manifesto is being debated this January. The newly-selected candidates should pledge that they will not be bound by decisions of councillors who now have no mandate from their local party.

It is not only the Socialist Party but also many Labour Party members who say that councillors have a choice. If they use their reserves and borrowing powers, they could resist the cuts onslaught in deeds as well as words, while building a mass movement that could force the Tories to call a general election.

Waltham Forest: Stop the rotten redevelopment plan, demand residents

Sarah Sachs-Eldridge
Waltham Forest Socialist Party

What was the point? That's what the hundreds of people who attended Waltham Forest council's planning committee (discussing regeneration of the town square) on 13 December will have been thinking when they left - after 10.30pm!

The officers basically said that councillors must dance to the developers' tune because Tory legislation and Sadiq Khan's plan for London demand it. The Socialist Party rejects this 100%. We want councillors who stand up for us - not for the spivs and speculators gathering like vultures over our borough.

Social cleansing of London's poor and working class.

The planning committee meeting was farcical but it showed that there is enormous anger in the borough over this plan which will reduce the open space at the top of the street market by a third.

Some buildings around the proposed 29-storey monster blocks will get two hours of daylight (deemed good). One report said that the wind created by these buildings will mean that some seating areas will not be suitable for prolonged sitting!

And in a borough with approximately 2,000 people in housing need, in this development of new homes the councillors voted that only 20% will be affordable. Except it's not even that good! 20% will be available for shared ownership - available to single people or couples

with a combined income of up to £90,000! We need homes - council homes.

Socialist Party member Nancy Taaffe said this and it got a big cheer in the hall. A number of objectors called for a rethink, for homes for those in need, not this "land grab of public space to expand the profit of a private company" as campaigner David Gardner so eloquently put it.

Campaigners and residents came to present their objections in good faith. They and the 948 people who had taken the time to respond to the council's consultation and the 2,015 people who have signed the petition, represent the majority in the borough who oppose this scheme.

By the end of the meeting the audience was in full rebellion mode. Angry laughter, heckling and rebuttals of every claim rang out around the room.

A Socialist Party member had earlier made the call for a 'people's vote', which was taken after the councillors voted 4:1 in favour of the rotten pro-profit, anti-housing provision plan. Our vote was unanimous in opposition.

Two nights before, local campaigners from the Housing Action Network (HAN), set up by the trades council, and the Stop the Monster Block and others who organised the lobby, discussed what they would do if the meeting went against us.

We decided to launch an appeal, investigate a judicial review, and build the campaign. HAN distributed a leaflet inviting everyone who wants to fight on to reconvene on 11 January at 7.30pm in the William Morris Community centre. It ain't over!

Read more at socialistparty.org.uk/articles/26628



photo Mary Finch

Peter Taaffe
Socialist Party general secretary

"Biggest fall in living standards for a generation." "Sharp rise in child poverty as cuts bite."

"700,000 young people and pensioners join ranks of Britain's poor in four years." "Stoke proposes £1000 fine for homeless using tents."

"Budget signals longest squeeze on living standards since 1950s." "OECD: Britain state pension is worst in the developed world."

"Nursing 'in peril' as number of student applications falls below 18%." "Food banks stock up as reforms to welfare aid to fears of cold winter."

These are just some of the recent headlines gleaned from the capitalist press, as they regale us daily with a blizzard of facts which unconsciously indict their profit-driven system and their callous political representatives, the Tory government of Theresa May.

It is also a fitting testimony to the failures of capitalism in 2017, in Britain and worldwide,

as well as a pointer of what is to come unless this system is seriously challenged in 2018, laying the ground for system change to socialism.

Worldwide capitalism is still in the grip of the enduring economic crisis, resulting from the meltdown of 2007-08. Sure, the capitalist soothsayers seek to reassure us that the 'worst is over', that a 'recovery' is underway which they claim, if not guaranteeing a return of the economic sunny uplands of yesterday, indicates significant improvements in the position of working people.

It is true that some countries have experienced an increase in the number of jobs - such as the US, here in Britain and a few countries in Europe. But contrary to the propaganda that the future looks rosy, this recovery is not broad-based and certainly has not significantly improved living standards.

They have been largely concentrated in low-paid, part-time and precarious jobs. In Britain this means that the working poor are so low paid, increasing numbers are forced to resort to food banks - a confession of bankruptcy by capitalism. It is also a criticism of right-wing trade union leaders in particular, who still fail to

effectively fight for desperately urgent and substantial increases in wages.

It is no accident that retail trade has been flat - spending is therefore down - because of the limited purchasing power of the working class, in turn due to chronically low wages. In other words, the working class cannot buy back the goods that it produces, one of the inherent contradictions of capitalism that Karl Marx drew attention to 150 years ago.



Worldwide capitalism is still in the grip of the enduring economic crisis, resulting from the meltdown of 2007-08

The capitalist economists and their institutions - the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank - are actually bemoaning the lack of 'demand'. They are 'theoretically' urging the bosses to increase wages and, in some instances, even urging the trade

union leaders to fight harder for increases.

But individual and groups of capitalists and governments resist this 'advice' and continue to viciously oppose workers fighting even for small increases. Witness the ferocious resistance of Serco, one of the numerous 'privateers' who leech off the NHS, to Unite hospital workers in the Barts Health Trust for an increase of 30p an hour!

They are not likely to respond to the demand of the unions in the public sector - including nurses and other hospital workers - for wage increases beyond the 1% 'limit' without trade union mobilisation and effective unified action.

So it has always been and will always be under capitalism. Even a wage increase of 2%, given the remorseless rate of increase in the cost of living, will leave most working people with continued reduced living standards.

This requires bold and decisive leadership from the trade unions, which is unlikely to be forthcoming from right-wing trade union leaders. Their policies amount invariably to 'compromise' and endless postponements of struggle in the hope that the anger of low-paid workers will be

dissipated and resignation will set in.

Yet the anger of working people is at boiling point - as the rash of small strikes indicates. These include civil servants in the PCS, RMT rail workers and more. They have brushed aside the recent anti-union legislation by taking action after record turnouts and majorities in strike ballots. This can mean that if the union tops are not prepared to lead, then they can be pushed aside to make way for those militant leaders who are prepared in this urgent situation to fight the government and the employers.

However, this struggle - as with all the other battles on housing, education, etc. - is closely connected with the current crisis of capitalism. In the past, the capitalists were prepared to give reforms - crumbs off their very rich table - to the working class. But those days have gone, with boom conditions having been replaced by an organic drawn-out crisis of capitalism. In order to safeguard their profits and interests they have conducted an offensive against all the gains of the past.

The capitalists and their governments do not resist demands for change just because they are greedy and cruel - which they

are. They see no alternative but to savage living standards in order to safeguard their system. This means endless poverty - disguised by the anodyne word 'austerity' - which will be inevitably resisted by the working class. May herself, in the honeymoon period after she became leader of the Tories, appeared to sympathise with the left behind and with poor families, and promised an end to austerity.

But the demands of those she represents, the capitalists, dictate otherwise even if she did 'sincerely' want to lessen misery and suffering. This is a system based upon production for profit not social need.

Surplus

It is founded on inequality by virtue of the fact that, individually and collectively, the capitalists exploit the labour power of the working class to create what Karl Marx called 'surplus value' - which is then divided among the different exploiters into rent, interest and profit.

The struggle over the surplus between the capitalists and their governments on the one side and the working class on the other drives the class struggle and is the key to understanding history.

Historically, the capitalists used this surplus value to reinvest in industry, create new means of production - the organisation of labour, science and technique - and drive society forward.

This is largely what happened in the upswing of capitalism, when it was a system which was relatively progressive in laying the economic foundations for a new social system of socialism. This, Marx wrote, was the historical mission of capitalism - to drive forward the growth of the productive forces.

But today it is betraying this 'mission', failing to invest. The capitalists are now more interested in piling up their own personal wealth through the massively inflated salaries of CEOs, stoking up 'shareholder value' rather than retooling and investing back into industry. This also undermines productivity - which is

static, if not falling, in Britain and throughout the advanced capitalist countries.

In the US for instance, a colossal total of \$2.7 trillion from investments abroad is kept 'off-shore' - outside of the US and not invested in US industry itself. Following Trump's so-called 'tax reforms' - a bribe to big business, together with the loosening of some state supervision of the banks - some or all of this could be 'repatriated' to the US.

But it is unlikely to be reinvested into industry and therefore will not reward Trump's base of unemployed industrial workers and others with improved job prospects and living standards. It will inevitably go into the pockets of the rich, pushing up shareholders' wealth, the loot of the 1% and, in particular, the fabulously rich 0.001%; the plutocrats who ultimately call the shots under capitalism. Eight individuals control the same wealth as half the world's population!

This indicates the increasingly parasitic character of modern capitalism in Britain and worldwide. The earlier Panama Papers and now the aptly named Paradise Papers - which means hell for the rest of society and heaven for the super-rich - have revealed this in great detail. The Financial Times aptly described such tax havens as "getaway cars" for the super-rich.

And capitalism has demonstrated beyond all doubt that it is incapable of taking society as a whole forward. Another economic crisis in the manner of the 2007-08 - which only genuine Marxists, like the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International (the international organisation that we are part of), fully anticipated - could take place at a certain stage. The timing of such a crisis is impossible to predict but the inevitability of an economic breakdown is inherent in the system.

Moreover capitalism has not fully recovered from this crisis which, we should recall, resulted in the loss of ten million jobs in the US and Europe alone and the wrecked lives that flowed from

this.

As Jeremy Corbyn said at the Labour Party conference - echoing the analysis of the Socialist Party - 2017 was the year when this crisis saw a delayed political expression of the crash. The political earthquake of the general election, as well as many other recent upheavals such as the Scottish referendum in 2014, Brexit in 2016 and Trump's accession to the US presidency, were rooted in this.

Trump

Subsequently, Trump has rampaged on the US and world stages, breaking the crockery of world capitalism in the process. Rather than the usual 'official' role of US presidents as an international 'stabilising' force, he has acted as a firebug, fanning the flames of already inflammatory situations. His 'recognition' of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel promises to reap a whirlwind in the Middle East and worldwide among Palestinians and Muslims in particular.

He has proved to be a disaster for the American ruling class as he bypasses the normal channels of capitalist democracy, preferring to rule by tweet in a special expression of US parliamentary Bonapartism.

Even the New York Times has used unprecedented language by describing him as the "liar-in-chief". The growing opposition to Trump has resulted in an open discussion about his removal from the US presidency, similar to that which preceded the overthrow of Nixon in the 1970s. Even a right-wing commentator like Anne Coulter can write: "Who isn't in favour of his impeachment?"

The Republican Party is split, which may result in a complete split between Trump and his out-riders like Steve Bannon on one side and the Republican establishment on the other. This could lay the basis for a new right-wing nationalist Trump party and the increasingly alienated 'moderate' Republicans organised in their own party.

The Democratic Party may also split between the right-wing and the supporters of Bernie Sanders - the 'Berniecrats' with their 'Our Revolution' movement - resulting in a new mass radical left formation. Socialist Alternative, our cothinkers in the US, has played the role of a catalyst for the left. This was shown by the electrifying effect of the election and re-election of Kshama Sawant - the first socialist councillor in 100 years in Seattle - and now with the spectacular performance of Ginger Jentzen in Minneapolis, who led among working class voters after the first round of the recent election.

Therefore, the US

2018: MORE UPHEAVALS LOOM



Socialism 2017 photo Mary Finch



Jeremy Corbyn photo Paul Mattsson



Catalonia photo Rob McDonald



Ginger Jentzen election campaign in the US photo Socialist Alternative

could be faced with an unprecedented four-party set up, which would have colossal repercussions not just in the US but worldwide.

The ideas of socialism are spreading like a prairie fire among young people in the US in particular, at a faster rate than even in Europe at this stage. The earlier emergence of Podemos in Spain, the Corbynista surge in Britain, a similar movement around Mélenchon in France, and the Sanders revolution in the US are all part of the political awakening of a new, radical generation.

This is tending to fuse with the reactivation of older layers of the left who were discouraged by the previous move towards the right within the labour movement.

Social democracy

It represents a rejection of sell-out Blairite 'social democracy' and is potentially a powerful agent for socialist change. However, programmatically it has not yet reached the same political awareness, consciousness, as the 1980s Bennite left within the Labour Party - which Militant, now the Socialist Party, critically supported - with its demand for the nationalisation of 25 monopolies.

If implemented, Benn's programme from that time would make serious inroads into the power of big business but would not completely eliminate it. It would provoke the capitalists to mobilise to bring down a left Labour government, similar to the events in Chile with the Allende government in the 1970s.

We therefore proposed the nationalisation, with minimum compensation on the basis of proven need, of the top 200 monopolies and the implementation of a democratic socialist plan of production.

But Corbyn's programme does not even go as far as Benn's proposals. Unless economic and political power is taken out of the hands of the capitalists, they will use this to sabotage any threat to their system.

Is this not the lesson to be drawn today from the experience of Greece, where the Tsipras government raised expectations with the clarion call that "hope is

coming"? Instead, all the hopes of the Greek working class were dashed on the rock of the Troika (IMF, European Commission and European Central Bank) and its demands for a further round of savage austerity - cuts in wages and pensions, mass privatisation - which the Tsipras government is presently implementing. This retreat is comparable to the infamous betrayal of the German social democrats with their support for their own ruling class and the bloody World War One.

The Syriza government had a clear choice. They could bend the knee to capital or break the hold of big business and move towards a democratic socialist Greece; at the same time appealing to the Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and European working class to join them in a great socialist confederation of the region, linked to socialism in Europe as a whole.

This same dilemma could be posed before a Corbyn government, maybe as soon as this year, 2018. An immediate collapse of the government seems to have been averted through the recent negotiations on Brexit.

There were congratulations on all sides of the Tory party when May returned from Brussels with the latest deal consisting of 'studied ambiguity' on key issues like the border between Northern and Southern Ireland and the single market. This represents a colossal fudge.

May has stolen some of the clothes from Jeremy Corbyn, who on all the fundamental issues relating to the EU - the single market, migration, etc. - appeals to both those opposed to the EU and those who wish to remain.

The Socialist Party believes that it would still be possible to appeal to both with a class and socialist approach. This would involve clear opposition to the neoliberal aims of the EU by emphasising trade union rights, and opposing to policies like the posted workers directive, which furthers the process of a capitalist race

to push into office this year. Moreover the radicalisation which we have witnessed internationally will be fuelled further by the underlying continuing crisis of capitalism - more like a series of crises, rather than a sudden collapse, although a repetition of the 2007-08 crisis cannot be completely ruled out.

2017 represented an important stage for the labour movement, for the working class and for the Socialist Party. We had the largest rally at Socialism last year in our history. We continue to draw some of the best fighters for socialism and the working class into our ranks, particularly of young people and workers.

This has allowed us to forge ahead in all fields, in the trade unions and the daily battles of working class people. 2018 promises to be an equally successful period for the struggle for socialism in Britain and worldwide.

Iran

The wave of mass demonstrations against the 'clerical dictatorship' in Iran indicates a period of upheaval with new revolutionary possibilities in the Middle East and the neo-colonial world as a whole.

Confronted by big price rises and a further deterioration of living standards - 25% unemployment among young people - the Iranian masses are overcoming their fear of the hated regime.

This is a movement which appears to be opposed both to the 'liberal' Rouhani, the president, and the 'hard-line' Khamenei, the 'Supreme Leader'.

towards the bottom for all workers in all countries.

We stand for a socialist united states of Europe as the only lasting solution to the problems facing working people.

The strategists of capital - such as Lord Heseltine - were seriously considering support for Labour and Corbyn, despite his programme, as an electoral alternative to May and the Tory party, which seemed wedded to a 'hard Brexit'.

They were prepared to consider this despite their fears that a Corbyn government, once in power, could be propelled under the pressure of a politically aroused working class to go much further than the mild social democratic programme on which he successfully fought the election.

Tory splits

These issues have not been solved by kicking the can down the road, which is what the latest agreement amounts to. They could return once more and May could yet flounder, with splits within the Tory party widening and breaking out, resulting in a general election being forced. Labour is ahead in the polls and could be pushed into office this year.

Moreover the radicalisation which we have witnessed internationally will be fuelled further by the underlying continuing crisis of capitalism - more like a series of crises, rather than a sudden collapse, although a repetition of the 2007-08 crisis cannot be completely ruled out.

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Photo Paul Mattsson



Photo Gage Skidmore/CC



The Socialist Inbox

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Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon
photo Middle East Children's Alliance/CC

so no doubt they can say they are paying the rent, and the service charge - with all the money you have left - can be paid by you, the claimant.

Mike
Southampton

■ Tory tears

A Tory MP, Heidi Allen, breaks down in tears in the House of Commons following Frank Field's account of the sufferings of some of his Birkenhead constituents. Does she not realise that there are literally hundreds of such cases throughout the country?

People in vulnerable circumstances continue to suffer from benefit cuts, low pay, rising costs for basics, and poor and expensive housing, while the minority rich exploit the taxation system and the housing market.

A young homeless man froze to death on the streets of Birmingham recently. He won't be the last.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found that since 2012-13, almost 400,000 more children and 300,000 more pensioners are living in poverty.

And the government plans to stop women who are fleeing abusive relationships from using housing benefit to pay for their stay in refuges. Nearly 60% of the income for refuges comes from housing benefit.

Heidi Allen should take a hard look at her own government's brutal policies.

Ian Hunter
Ilkeston, Derbyshire

■ Quiet Resistance

Alice Merrill's 'Quiet Resistance' is a book to bring home to readers life as a disabled person in a Palestinian refugee camp.

It gives a vivid picture of an everyday life which will be familiar to the British reader and then it brings the reader up short with passages like this:

"We pass a children's playground where families are enjoying the feeling of freedom out in the open space. It is a landscaped area on a slope with swings and roundabouts for the children and grassy banks and flat terraces to play football or sit and have a barbecue. "There are so few open spaces like this so it can get crowded and it is not always as peaceful as it is today as the soldiers have been known to tear gas it."

The almost casual cruelty of the occupation is portrayed in these pages as a part of everyday life. Any reader who is not burning with indignation and determined to help the Palestinian people after reading this has not been paying attention!

Yet, as the author says, "the world governments turn a blind eye. In what other country would this happen without condemnation?"

The story of survival in these conditions is a story of quiet heroism. Doubly so for someone with a disability.

In places this first-class book is not an easy read, but it is a weapon in the battle for Palestinian rights. It is a weapon of quiet resistance.

Derek McMillan
Worthing, Sussex

The only solution for this is to take pensions away from these private companies who are using this to line their own pockets, and to take the wealth off the billionaires who now collectively own \$6 trillion.

Aaron Bailey
Huddersfield

■ Benefits burglary

Two years ago at a demo outside Southampton Jobcentre I said benefits will be worth £50 a week before long. How right I was.

£70 a week is now taxable. You are also liable for council tax. If you work a short contract and have to work a week in hand, most of that will be snatched from you - plus the first week's claim is not paid in benefit.

Is that enough? No: after three hours' phoning around I learn the rent support is to be separated from the service charge,

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.



photo WorldSkills UK/CC

TORY PRESCRIPTION FOR MENTAL ILLNESS: STRESS AND BUREAUCRACY

A disability benefits claimant

As an individual with mental health issues, it has been my misfortune to experience directly just how capitalist society, Britain 2017, treats such people. I can't imagine that my experience is particularly unique.

I was due to have my 'work capability assessment' for disability benefits in November. I was lucky enough to have the valued support of a comrade to accompany me. This cannot be understated. It is vital, wherever possible, that claimants enduring this process find someone to accompany them.

My first assessment was cancelled due to the correct healthcare professional being unable to see me. This is due to my having an eye condition that requires I be seen by a specific specialist.

Whether or not that is an option is irrelevant. This is solely for purposes of liability. It has nothing to do with diagnostic knowledge; it's just that the Department for Work and Pensions doesn't want to be sued.

So, very apologetically of course, I am sent home, along with my companion. That's it. All the waiting is for nothing. All the stress is ignored. You are reduced to a clerical error with no thought for the consequences.

Once again I was able to call on the much-valued support of the same comrade. Unfortunately the second appointment got me no closer to an assessment.

Despite their having my contact details, I learned upon arrival that the appointment had been cancelled. This was because they were or are - who knows - going to offer me a home appointment instead.

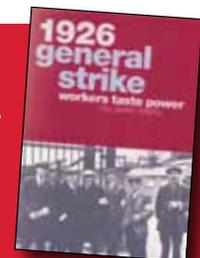
So this will be at least three times of being put through the anxiety of anticipating an experience necessary for my continued financial security, where the consequences of failing are devastating.

There are thousands of people, many a lot worse off than I, having to endure this system. It will only get worse with Universal Credit - as if it hasn't already. For the sake of our society we must stop this government.



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EQUAL SICK PAY RIGHTS SECURED FOR ALL STAFF AT CHARLTON PARK ACADEMY

Negotiating committee statement

After months of action including six days of strikes at Charlton Park Academy in south east London, members of general union GMB and the National Education Union (NEU) have gained a well-deserved victory. 'Burgundy and Green Book' conditions have been won for all staff beginning on 1 December 2017.

Since Charlton Park Academy (CPA) became an academy in 2012, new staff were no longer protected by national terms and conditions (Burgundy and Green Book). These staff employed on the new academy contract saw serious reductions in their sick pay entitlements.

Sick pay

Staff became aware of the situation when one teacher who had experienced an industrial injury and was off work discovered she was only entitled to four weeks sick pay and had to pay her rent using a credit card.

Strikes began in July 2017 which involved both NEU and GMB members with over 90 staff at the school taking part. Pickets have been vibrant and determined and have excellent support from the local community.

On 29 November, after three weeks of talks at conciliation service Acas, agreement was



reached between all parties to secure Burgundy and Green Book rights for all staff with the proviso of a trial period to monitor its implementation.

We are immensely proud of the unity and dedication of GMB and NEU members and what we have achieved together. We have protected the dignity and rights of all staff at CPA and reminded every education worker that when we stand together we can win. We hope we inspire others to do the same when their conditions are under threat.

We would also like to thank all the NEU branches that sent cheques and donations to sustain support staff during the strike. This vital financial support was key to the

victory of this dispute.

Thanks again to all of you who stood with us!



photo Bart Everson/CC

Housing victory for Sussex students

Andy Barber
Brighton Socialist Party

Success has been achieved with regard to the Sussex university student accommodation dispute at high rent Kings Road Hall near Brighton seafront.

Tired of dilapidated, rodent-infested flats with ovens and toilets not functioning, an absence of hot water, scaffolding blocking fire exits, and concerns not being addressed, over a third of the 110 residents staged an indefinite rent strike which was supported by the Brighton Acorn renters' union. All this in the context of the revelation that former vice-chancellor Michael Farthing was given a £230,000 leaving bonus.

However, a mere four days of

action saw the university capitulate. Proposals were outlined to offer each student £515 in compensation, to pledge to complete all repairs at the site before the start of the spring term in January, and to devise an improved accommodation complaints procedure in future. The union said all its demands were met in negotiations.

One Kings Road resident told the Brighton & Hove Independent: "It's a huge victory. I can't believe we've won so fast! The residents of Kings Road are thrilled that our demands have been met in full."

Acorn organiser Duncan Michie was quoted: "This deal is an impressive victory for the union. We're proud to have been able to protect our members' interests and prove that real power comes from organising and taking action."

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) conference

Saturday 10 February

■ Main session: 'Building support for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-cuts policies in the 2018 local elections - should socialist anti-austerity

candidates stand in May?'
Student Central, Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HY, 11am-4:30pm (registration from 10am)
See tusc.org.uk/events

Bradford protest against children's service cuts

Iain Dalton
Socialist Party West Yorkshire organiser

Demonstrators gathered ahead of Bradford council's monthly meeting to protest proposals in the consultation of an 'early help service', part of the children's services directorate of the council.

The plans propose a £13 million cut mostly by making up to 480 staff redundant. The council also wants to downgrade children's centres across the district, currently used by 22,000 young children, 60% of all under-fives.

Trade unionists in the council, users of the service and their supporters distributed leaflets produced by the local Unite the Union branch.

David Ward, former Liberal Democrat MP and now an independent councillor spoke to demonstrators opposing the proposals and mentioned the Green Party group on the council was challenging the proposals too.

Unfortunately, the response from the local Labour leadership is to double down on pushing these cut-backs through. Val Slater, the executive member covering the service, told the local press: "Naturally people have a right to protest but until government starts to address our major concerns regarding funding for children's social care, then we have to manage with the limited funding we have." As if the government is going to change its position without huge pressure being exerted on them to do so.

If Labour councillors want to

follow through on Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies then they ought to be leading the fight to force the money out of the government to fund vital local services, such as this or the library service, which faces a further near £1 million worth of cuts in the forthcoming budget proposals.

Anything less than doing so is a dereliction of duty for those who want to fight the cuts. It should include putting forward a no-cuts budget for 2018-19.

In the meantime, campaigners are planning for a second, larger demonstration to take place outside the council budget setting meeting in February. Socialist Party members will be arguing that this should be opened out to all those fighting against the various raft of cuts being made by the council.

More news and reports online

Newham: school strike solid as bosses barge through on academy status

Avenue School was in near-total shutdown on 14 December, its second strike day in opposition to becoming a quasi-privatised academy.

Dozens of teachers, learning support assistants, parents and children filled the pavement outside the east London primary. The energy of strikers and campaigners shows no sign of flagging.

Leeds: community opposition wins temporary reprieve for playing fields

Community opposition, mobilised through the Save Fearnville Fields campaign, has forced a reprieve. The council has suspended the seeking of permission to build a new free school academy on the King

George V playing fields.

■ For full reports and more go to socialistparty.org.uk

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■ The final fighting fund results for October-December will be in the next edition of the Socialist

Catalan elections: PP humiliated

Movement mobilises once more for the Catalan republic



Student union members demonstrating in support of a yes referendum vote in October 2017 photo Rob MacDonald

Extracts from statement by Esquerra Revolucionària/Izquierda Revolucionaria (CWI in the Spanish state)

The Catalan election on 21 December was a massive defeat for the Spanish nationalist 'bloc of article 155' - the imposition of direct rule in Catalonia - and an even bigger blow to this bloc's main force, the right-wing People's Party (PP) of prime minister Mariano Rajoy.

The capitalist media try to minimise the magnitude of this defeat by talking about the 'victory' of Ciudadanos (right-wing Spanish nationalist party) but the reality is different. Even if we take only the votes of Junts per Catalunya (JuntsxCat, the list led by self-exiled Catalan president Carles Puigdemont) and ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia) together, they won over 800,000 votes more than Ciudadanos.

This result is even more important given the fact that the electoral campaign was full of irregularities, threats and desperate attempts by the Spanish and Catalan ruling classes to prevent mass support for

a Catalan republic being expressed.

After calling the elections, the PP government tried to demobilise the vote in favour of a Catalan republic by stating that even if these parties won and tried to fulfil the mandate of the people, the only result would be the maintenance of article 155 and more repression.

The government has opened up new judicial proceedings against leaders who participated in the 1 October independence referendum, like Marta Rovira, Artur Mas, Ana Gabriel and others.

The campaign of fear promoted by the Spanish and Catalan capitalists since 1 and 3 October (with the withdrawal of companies from Catalonia, threats of economic collapse, and apocalyptic talk of civil war) continued and intensified in the days prior to the election. JuntsxCat and ERC have also been obliged to run their campaigns without their leading candidates (in prison or exile).

Far from representing a shift to the right, these results represent a new impressive mobilisation of the same masses who confronted police batons and rubber bullets on 1 October.

More than two million people have again shouted loud and clear

to all those willing to listen, who have not been silenced by fear or by parliamentary cretinism, that they want to break with the repressive regime of 1978 (post-Franco constitution) and will not allow their struggle for a Catalan republic which guarantees real social improvement and change to be shut down.

Biggest loser

The biggest election loser was the PP - the most corrupt party in Europe, inheritors of Francoism, champions of repression and censorship. It lost almost half its votes since 2015, and went from eleven to three seats, not even able to form a parliamentary group.

Ciudadanos won 300,000 new votes but these are votes mostly taken from their rivals, including traditional Socialist Party (PSC) voters. These voters preferred Ciudadanos (who they had still not seen in government) to the promises of "regeneration" from the PSC which is more and more discredited. 165,000 PP voters also switched to Ciudadanos.

Ciudadanos' campaign was based on the absence of any concrete programme (its programme is that of big business, the same as the PP). Inés Arrimadas, its leader, made constant demagogic declarations,

calling for attention to be paid to social problems rather than the independence process and using the flight of companies and capital to present a nightmare scenario if independence was declared. This was all mixed up with lies

designed to play on the feelings of wide sections of the Catalan population with origins in the rest of the Spanish state.

This demagogic campaign allowed Ciudadanos to also win a layer of workers from industrial

Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

Dec/January issue includes:

- European upheaval Political shocks and crises are spreading through Europe, writes Tony Saunois
- The nuclear threat Hannah Sell on the increasingly dangerous multipolar world



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Exiled bourgeois Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont photo Sandra Lazaro/CC



Right-wing prime minister Mariano Rajoy photo European People's Party/CC

neighbourhoods in the 'red belt' of Barcelona and Tarragona, who have been hit by the crisis and demobilised by the collaborationist policies of the major trade union (CCOO and UGT) leaders, and disappointed by the lack of a strong left alternative.

Mistakes

Incredibly, the leaders of Catalunya en Comu (Catalan electoral list supported by left party Podemos and United Left - IU - whose main component is the Communist Party) and Unidos Podemos (Spanish Left electoral list) refused to put the fight against the reactionary monarchist bloc and article 155 at the centre of their campaign. They didn't link the defence of the result of the 1 October referendum with a mobilisation for social demands.

They even refused to clearly denounce the existence of political prisoners or demand their freedom.

The rhetoric of the Unidos Podemos and Catalunya en Comu leaders repeated the false arguments of Ciudadanos, saying that the referendum was illegitimate or that the struggle for a republic was to blame for the threat of fascism. This all served to strengthen reaction and facilitate Ciudadanos capturing the votes of a layer of workers who were demoralised and affected by the campaign of fear.

The leaders of Unidos Podemos and Catalunya en Comu have behaved like old-fashioned social-democratic politicians, appealing to "love" and "cordiality" to "reconnect" society, at a time when the PP is ruling Catalonia with the police baton, and despite the PP having only three MPs in the Catalan parliament.

United front

One of the results which will have surprised many left activists is that JuntsxCat won more votes than ERC within the independence camp, and that the CUP (Popular Unity Candidacy - a left-wing Catalan independence party) lost votes and seats.

However, it would be mistaken to identify votes for JuntsxCat as political support for the right-wing Pde-Cat party (led by Puigdemont).

Hundreds of thousands of young

people, middle class and even layers of workers who have fought against PdeCat voted for JuntsxCat because they see Puigdemont as someone who has fought against the state and who is denouncing repression and organising a struggle from exile.

The JuntsxCat list campaign was also clearer in its rejection of repression than that of the ERC leaders, who said they would accept article 155 and the constitution.

The results for the CUP also show how it is not enough to merely state that the republic must have a social content in electoral rallies.

The CUP played a key role in guaranteeing the referendum on 1 October and in fighting to respect its result through the Committees in Defence of the Republic.

However, the CUP is paying for its leaders' mistake, in deciding to prop up the PdeCat in government, vote in favour of its budgets and generally tail-end the other pro-independence parties.

Consequences

What will happen now? The PP has sunk in Catalonia and Ciudadanos has swallowed its electoral base. This fact has deep political consequences for the whole Spanish state. It is a serious threat to Rajoy, because the surge of Ciudadanos could be consolidated.

For this reason, it is even more improbable that the government of Rajoy and the state will meaningfully negotiate with the Catalan independence movement, or even agree to a constitutional reform.

If they do something like that, they know they will leave the way open for Ciudadanos to undermine them further. The PP will continue polarising politics around the Catalan national question, and will not hold back.

The judicial processes and the repression will not subside, quite the contrary.

The failure of Unidos Podemos in Catalonia also has great consequences. Without understanding the role of national oppression in

the struggle to transform society, Podemos has intervened in Catalonia with a position full of inconsistencies and concessions to Spanish nationalism. The refusal of Podemos's leader Pablo Iglesias to lead the fight for a Catalan republic, his turn to the right in recent months, and the failure of his objective of removing Rajoy through parliamentary pacts with Psoe, are a guarantee for new disasters.

The ruling class have not been able to end the revolutionary crisis which was opened up by the victory of the masses against repression on 1 and 3 October. The political and social crisis in Catalonia will continue and sharpen, and the legitimate aspirations of the Catalan people will not be satisfied by this reactionary state.

In the current conjuncture, it is key that the social movements and parties of the left who have carried the weight of the struggle for a Catalan republic and the right to decide, resume mobilisation on the streets.

This whole process, and recent events, have also demonstrated the need to build a consistent alternative that is not subordinated to Pde-Cat or to bourgeois and petit-bourgeois politicians who have shown their inability to take the struggle for self-determination to the end, and do not want to break with the logic of capitalism (which is the cause of national and social oppression).

■ More articles on Catalonia, see socialistworld.net



What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people. The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

PUBLIC SERVICES

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

RIGHTS

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

WORK AND INCOME

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

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

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

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Theo Sharieff
Socialist Students national chair

In the new year honours, five 'fat cat' current and former vice-chancellors were rewarded for their 'services to education'.

The national outrage that was sparked before Christmas over the levels of VC pay led to the resignation of Bath university vice-chancellor Glynis Breakwell. So the

vast majority of students and staff on campuses will be perplexed and angered over why our university executives continue to be rewarded and praised by the political establishment.

One recent article in the Sunday Times reported on the comparatively 'low pay' of Harper Adams University's vice-chancellor, which currently stands at £182,000 a year - higher than the prime minister's salary.

And while this may be on the

lower end of the scale as compared to other fat cat VCs, it is eye-wateringly high in the eyes of the vast majority of students and workers who have to put up with low-paid, precarious work on campuses and elsewhere.

What's more, these grotesque rates of pay continue at a time when it was reported by the Financial Times that millennials face a pension squeeze, with the government admitting openly that around 12

million workers are currently under-saving for their retirement.

As the furore over vice-chancellor pay has continued, student support for the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party has continued to grow, peaking in December at a staggering 68%. This support reflects his popular policy of abolishing tuition fees and bringing back maintenance grants.

Jeremy Corbyn should capitalise on the protests started by Bath university students and workers last

term by harnessing this record level of support and calling for national demonstrations against rip-off executive pay and the marketisation of our universities.

Mass demonstrations, coordinated by the National Union of Students and supported by the Labour leadership, and linked to demands for greater accountability, workers' rights on campuses and free education, could see the end to this rotten Tory government.