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# the Socialist

Formerly **Militant**

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# WE CAN WIN THE FIGHT FOR THE NHS

**Helen Pattison**  
East London Socialist Party

**Whenever my Socialist Party branch campaigns in Ilford, east London, to save King George A&E, we meet students from the local college saying, "I was born there, we have to save the hospital".**

People tell us stories that could have had an unhappy ending if there hadn't been an A&E nearby.

People tell us about the happy and sad times at their local hospital. They mention the amazing dedication of the staff - overworked, underpaid and undervalued.

It must be the same on every high street. Because up and down the country hospitals are being starved of the funds they really need through cuts and privatisation. And ordinary people know their local hospital, ward, or service could face the axe next.

It was this knowledge that brought thousands of people out on to the streets on 3 February to protest for the NHS on the Health

Campaigns Together and People's Assembly-organised day of action.

A recent poll found that two thirds of people would support a 1p increase in income tax to fund the NHS, such is the huge support to save our health service. But an extra charge for working class people is totally unnecessary.

## Privatisation

Last year contracts worth £3.1 billion were won by private companies. One company, Serco, expects to make around £65 million profit in one year.

It's easy to see how money for the NHS is being put straight into private companies'

back pockets. These are the same companies who pay poverty wages to hard working staff.

But the situation isn't all doom and gloom. Movements can be, and are being, built around the country to save hospitals. Campaigners in Leicester led the way showing it is possible to push back when they saved Glenfield Children's heart unit. Now there's been a victory for Chatsworth ward in Mansfield too (see page 2).

Coalitions like Health Campaigns Together can help prepare the ground for a national campaign against NHS austerity. And the trade unions can call national action, for better pay and against the dangerous conditions that push hospitals to the brink.

# STOP PRESS: VICTORY! Campaign saves NHS rehab ward



photo Elaine Evans

The campaign to save the Chatsworth rehab ward in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, has won. Last summer, bosses announced the specialist facility for neurological conditions would close.

Chatsworth nurse and Socialist Party member Tom Hunt helped lead the successful campaign to save it. This latest victory follows

the successful campaign to save Glenfield Children's heart centre in Leicester, where the Socialist Party also played a leading role.

Tom told the Socialist: "Victory for staff as decision to close Chatsworth ward overturned. Staff send message of gratitude to Socialist Party. More news to follow."  
**#WeAreAllChatsworth.**



■ Labour MP Chuka Umunna cuddling up to Tory MP Anna Soubry over the European Union.

The pair found plenty to agree on when it comes to neoliberal free-trade zones like the EU single market. They told the Andrew Marr Show on 11 February that Tory and Blairite MPs could combine to rescue big business.

Pro-capitalist politicians will turn any Brexit, 'soft' or 'hard',

against the working class. But they are desperate to salvage single market rules which let them shunt capital and labour around to maximise profits without any say from organised workers.

Kick out the Tories - Remainers and Leavers. Kick out the Blairites too. For an anti-austerity government, a workers' Brexit, and an appeal to the peoples of Europe to join a new, socialist collaboration.

# Tamil youth march for justice: sack the 'cut-throat' brigadier



Tamils and supporters marching on 9 February photo Nadesan

**Isai Priya**  
National chair, Tamil Solidarity

Brigadier Priyankara Fernando's cut-throat threat to peaceful protesters outside the Sri Lankan High Commission on 4 February caused massive outrage. It has increased the determination of Tamil youth to bring the war criminals to account.

Leading Tamil Nadu news outlet News7 had over 100,000 views and 4,000 shares of the footage - on the day of the protest alone! Tamil Solidarity's online petitions of complaint to the foreign ministries in Sri Lanka and Britain have reached over 1,500 signatures.

This mass action won a temporary victory on 6 February when the Sri Lankan foreign ministry suspended Brigadier Fernando. However, within a day, the Sri Lankan president, after talks with army chiefs, got involved to remove his suspension -

causing more outrage.

Tamil Solidarity appealed to other groups and organised a joint protest 9 February. Over two thousand mainly young Tamils and their supporters took part in another mass demonstration.

The Sri Lankan military's alleged crimes include summary execution of Tamils by throat slitting. Brigadier Fernando himself was reportedly involved in an alleged shelling of a hospital.

We demanded the immediate dismissal of Brigadier Fernando for drawing his finger across his throat in a deliberate threat against peaceful Tamil protesters.

The demo gathered outside the Sri Lankan High Commission with banners, placards and chants calling for immediate action. We then marched to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with drums and chants.

Solidarity messages and speeches were given outside Foreign Office,

including from Brian Debus of Hackney trade union council, and Helen Pattison of London Socialist Party.

Tamil Solidarity placards demanding an end to the land grab, release of political prisoners, information on the disappeared, and the right to self-determination, stood out. Our leaflets and petition got a great response.

We were the only Tamil organisation doing this, with leaflets in Tamil and English, discussing what needs to be done next and how to take the movement forward. Ten Socialist Party members took part in the protest and we sold 85 copies of the Socialist.

The vast majority of young people there were open to our ideas and understood the need to build a united struggle with other oppressed communities, students and the working class, who are all our natural allies - people who will stand with us. Fighting together we can win our rights.

# McDonnell says Labour would put services 'irreversibly' in workers' hands

**Ted Mooney**  
Liverpool Socialist Party

"The next Labour government will put democratically owned and managed public services irreversibly - irreversibly - into the hands of those workers and those who rely upon their work."

This was John McDonnell, the shadow chancellor, addressing Labour's 'Alternative models of ownership' conference. We welcome John's remarks. This approach has been part of the programme of the Socialist Party - and its predecessor, Militant - from the start.

Quite correctly, John says "we will do this not only because it's right, not only because it's the most efficient way of running them, but also because the most important protection of our public services for the long term is for everyone to have and feel ownership of them."

"We aren't going to take back control of these industries in order to put them into the hands of a remote bureaucracy, but to put them into the hands of all of you - so that they can never again be taken away."

## Cost

John suggests it could be done at zero cost - without preparing for a battle. This does resort to some of what the financiers call 'creative accounting'. You put forward the idea that nationalisation would be cost neutral, because it would bring an asset into public ownership which would also have an income.

But the Richard Bransons and other profiteers will object. At the very least they will demand compensation for the loss of their assets. We say: no compensation to the fat cats - compensation only on the basis of proven need.

From day one, the heads of the civil service will be in the forefront of the objectors. Appeals will be made in the courts, and even if you win - which is unlikely given the

capitalist class runs them - the process will take years.

And some of the first objectors will be found in the parliamentary Labour Party. Many Blairite MPs will vote with the Tories to thwart your plans. These people have to be challenged now, and democratically replaced by socialist fighters willing to support your programme.

This is not to argue that such a programme is not possible. It is.

However, it would require the closest collaboration with organised workers at shopfloor level. Plans should be made now for union reps to form democratic committees in their workplaces, industries and communities, in order to mobilise mass action, including strikes, to defend it.

The capitalist class will use the unelected structures of the state against any serious programme of reforms which threatens its profit system. Only a mass movement to replace the existing state bureaucracy with genuine democratic working class control and management can overcome this.

## The Socialist Party says:

- Bring all public services, the banking system, and the top 150 corporations into full public ownership
- For democratic workers' control from below, with elected workforce oversight of the job
- For democratic working class management from above, by elected committees of workers and service users, subject to recall, as part of a socialist plan of production
- Pay compensation to shareholders only on the basis of proven need - not a penny to the big profiteers
- For democratic rights including mandatory reselection in the Labour Party - kick out the Blairites, readmit the socialists
- Mobilise the workers' movement behind a socialist programme to push the Tories out and defend against capitalist sabotage

■ Only mass mobilisation can prevent capitalist sabotage and guarantee workers' democracy



photo Paul Mattsson

# Rent doubles in a decade: cap rents, build council homes!

**Sam Gleaden**  
Lambeth and South West London Socialist Party

A stunning new report reveals the total rent paid in the UK has doubled to £51 billion since 2007.

These figures, from estate agent Countrywide, are symptomatic of a housing system driven by profit, at the expense of the working and middle class. We are forced into ever more expensive, smaller, and worse maintained housing.

Particularly vulnerable are Millennials, the generation born between

the early 1980s and late 90s. We bear £30 billion of this renting cost alone - triple what the same age group did a decade ago.

The last English Housing Survey found 46% of 25 to 34-year-olds live in private rented homes. This has soared from 27% in 2007.

This matches my own experience of the private rental sector. Over half my wage now goes on rent for a tiny two-bedroom flat in London, while my landlord cares little for the upkeep of the property.

It was therefore no surprise to me to read that Shelter has found four in ten private renters live in homes so

poorly maintained or crowded that they are dangerous.

Added to this is the predatory nature of many landlords. A government report found gangs of landlords club together to extract housing benefit in exchange for tiny 'microflats'.

## Greedy

The taxpayer subsidises greedy landlords and poverty-wage employers £24 billion a year in housing benefit.

Labour's announcement that it will force land owners to sell at the nominal pre-planning price is

welcome. So are Jeremy Corbyn's proposals for more social housing.

But Labour councils, controlled by the anti-Corbyn wing, are part of the problem. They continue to gut council housing stock in favour of pricey luxury flats.

But more than half of London's top-end luxury apartments have failed to sell, according to property researchers Molior London. And many of the rest are unused land investments.

A good start to solving the housing crisis would Corbyn calling for nationalisation of the land and big construction firms, with compensa-

tion paid only on the basis of proven need.

That would allow an anti-austerity government to build masses of council homes, with genuine regeneration to actually improve homes and communities, not gentrify them.

While this is happening, private renters need caps on our rents so living is affordable for us.

To fund these ambition properly, a Corbyn government should also nationalise the banks and top corporations. For a democratic socialist society that guarantees quality, genuinely affordable housing for all, not the profits of the super-rich.



Haiti 2010 RIBI Image Library/CC

# OXFAM SCANDAL: WE NEED DEMOCRATIC AID AND WORKING CLASS SOLIDARITY

**Sarah Sachs-Eldridge**  
Socialist Party national organiser

In January 2010 when the earthquake struck we wrote: “The humanitarian catastrophe that has befallen Haiti beggars belief.” Hundreds of thousands were killed and millions left homeless, injured, denied medicine and starving.

The country had just two fire stations and no ‘quake-proof’ housing. Even before the earthquake 80% lived below the poverty line and three-quarters were out of work.

Haitians were therefore extremely vulnerable. Our headline read, “a disaster compounded by capitalism”.

Now we see that the suffering of desperate Haitians was being compounded even further. The revelations that Oxfam senior managers paid for sex in Haiti shows that these vulnerable people also faced gross exploitation at the hands of those who claimed to be there to help. The Guardian says that it is alleged some of those involved may have been underage.

But sadly this is not new news - in 2015 a document by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services said that hundreds of women in Haiti were forced by hunger and poverty to sell sex. Some papers report that there are concerns that paedophiles and other sexual abusers are actively targeting jobs in the aid sector. UK charities recorded at least 120 incidents of sexual abuse and harassment involving their staff between 2016 and 2017.

A lot of the discussion has focused on the cover-up aspect. It appears that a senior manager was one of those accused of paying for sex in Africa and was still sent to Haiti afterwards.

Oxfam did not report them to the police or fully disclose what had been discovered. Some of the men involved were allowed to resign discreetly at the time. Oxfam denies a cover-up but that is what this is - and a cover-up that meant abuse of women and girls took place.

Penny Lawrence has resigned as deputy chief executive of Oxfam. But how can those who have suffered at the hands of Oxfam staff get justice? For one thing there should

be an amnesty for women in Haiti and Chad to come forward to give evidence against the accused without the threat of themselves facing criminal charges.

Sexism and the oppression of women are inherent to capitalism and class society generally and are manifested wherever there are unequal power relations. Those who have come forward as part of the #MeToo campaign have exposed how widely sexism and sexual abuse reaches into situations where men have power to sack, employ and promote.

How much more is this the case when they have the power to provide food, medicine and shelter in a disaster area? To end abuse such as what took place in Haiti means ending the inequality between those administering the aid and the recipients.

Those who generously donate to charities, overwhelmingly the working class and poorer sections of society, do not want to see money and power in the hands of such people, nor being spent on advertising, bloated wages and administration.

The Socialist Party calls for

democratic control over all aid and emergency assistance - from the immediate rescue, relief and rehabilitation of the affected people to reconstruction programmes. This should be done through elected committees of workers, land labourers and poor people in every area.

That was the model the United Socialist Party, CWI in Sri Lanka, pursued in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. This must be linked to the struggle to build trade unions and a political voice of the working class and poor, with socialist policies.

The Tories have jumped on the revelations. The ultra-right-wing Jacob Rees-Mogg launched his “charity begins at home” petition to demand that the government slash the foreign aid bill last week.

He would like to undermine the solidarity people feel for those suffering in other parts of the world. But this is only another version of Cameron’s attempt to divide so-called skivers from strivers.

Foreign policy is only domestic policy abroad and he is in favour of austerity here and internationally. Meanwhile he votes for tax cuts for the corporations, who evade and

avoid taxes starving public services here but also smuggling vast amounts of money - an estimated \$13 trillion since 1980 - illegally out of poor countries to stash in tax havens. Much of this is in the form of debt repayments that dwarf the initial amount borrowed.

The Tories and the pro-capitalist press were particularly ready to attack Oxfam because it has drawn attention to the gross inequality in society. For example it has pointed out that globally eight people own more wealth than the poorest half of the population and that in Britain five families own more wealth than the poorest 12 million people.

The Socialist Party doesn’t just point out the rottenness of the capitalist system. We stand for working class solidarity and support for the people in war-torn disaster areas to democratically plan and organise the rebuilding of their lives - free from interference from charities and culture-like corporations.

We stand for a working class led struggle against sexual oppression, against exploitation and poverty and for a socialist transformation of society with real equality.



photo James Ivens



photo Ian Pattison

## Newham: teachers strike again as anti-academy pressure mounts

**James Ivens**  
East London Socialist Party

Teachers hit back at management’s privatisation drive with another solid strike at Cumberland School in east London on 8 February.

Around 40 strikers and supporting parents picketed the Newham secondary’s front gate.

Teachers told us they felt positive about the campaign against becoming a quasi-privatised ‘academy’. Parents led chants of “Whose school? Our school!” while passing traffic honked in support.

This latest stoppage took place ahead of a combined march against academisation by the borough’s three striking schools.

The night before, parents and teachers in the neighbouring borough of Redbridge also lobbied Highland Primary governors to oppose academisation.

A workforce-led campaign of industrial action beat academisation in Lewisham, south London, with the Socialist Party playing a leading role. East London Socialist Party is hosting an open meeting to discuss how teachers, parents and students

can do the same again.

Speakers include Louise Cuffaro, the new National Education Union branch secretary. Louise, a primary teacher and Socialist Party member, helped launch the borough’s campaign with strike action at Avenue School.

Louise also addressed the Cumberland picket line, explaining academisation only serves “big business interests.”

Councillors in Labour-run Newham continue to feel the pressure of community anger on this issue. It has forced all three right-wing Labour candidates in Avenue School’s Manor Park ward to come out against academisation.

But where Labour councillors stay silent - in particular if they have connections to academy trusts - parents and community campaigners will feel justified in standing candidates against them.

Socialist Party members spoke to express solidarity with the struggle. Five pickets bought copies of the Socialist.

■ **How do we defeat academies in Newham? Thursday 1 March at 7.30pm. Sylvia’s Corner, 97 Aldworth Road, Stratford E15 4DN**



photo Sludge G/CC

## Sadiq Khan’s bus drivers’ London licence doesn’t go far enough

**Mo**  
London bus driver

London bus drivers held strikes across London three years ago demanding a single pay structure across various bus companies. There were - and still are - many different rates both between and within private operating companies. We demanded one London-wide pay structure. After two days of strikes, the action was suspended.

Labour’s Sadiq Khan spoke to London bus workers when he stood for London mayor and promised - if elected - to deliver strikers’ demands through negotiations. He also promised a ‘Passport for London’ where bus drivers would no longer have to go back to a starter

rate if changing companies.

A majority of Unite the Union reps decided to support him because of his promises. Although, some of us wanted to rely on industrial strength rather than politicians promises.

After Khan was elected he announced in December 2016 the minimum starter rate of £23,000 a year for all new London drivers. Bus workers pointed out that some companies were already paying that because they could not attract workers for less!

He announced a ‘License for London’ which should start “no later than April 2017”. He said: “From now on drivers can start at a new company at a pay grade equivalent to their level of service and experience.”

Drivers understood this to be a temporary step until a London-wide structure could be implemented.

In reality, the License for London didn’t start until January 2018. It did not guarantee a driver to be accepted at their new chosen company and has complicated eligibility requirements with an application process.

Meanwhile, London bus drivers have not heard about the London-wide pay structure.

The concessions we’ve won are a direct result of our industrial action. Unite intends to consult the drivers to resume our industrial action if Khan does not fulfil his promises.

The Socialist Party demands that London’s buses and all public transport be run under democratic public control and ownership.

## Woolwich Crossrail walkouts to demand promised bonuses

**Paul Callanan**  
Greenwich and Bexley Socialist Party

76 electricians on the Crossrail construction site have been taking part in industrial action. The construction company Balfour Beatty has ceased paying workers a finishing bonus. This payment is standard across the industry and is to be made in the event of redundancy.

The bonus is vital as all of the electricians on the site come from outside of London. They have all had to arrange temporary accommodation while working on the project. Without the bonus they all risk getting

into financial difficulties when they give notice to their landlords.

Having already taken three days of strike action, workers will be coming out again on 14 and 21 February.

Workers on the Crossrail project have faced one attack after another. Last year workers at the Tottenham Court Road site took action after their bonuses were stopped. The project is also well known for its victimisation of trade union activists.

Balfour Beatty was found to be knee deep in the Blacklisting scandal. They were one of eight companies forced to collectively pay an estimated £75 million in compensation to workers excluded from construction projects because of their trade union activity.

Crossrail is the biggest taxpayer-funded construction project in Western Europe. Yet for contractors like Balfour Beatty that isn’t enough. They are also intent on taking from the people carrying out the work as well.

The Socialist Party calls for the whole trade union movement to build solidarity and support for the Crossrail workers and their struggle. A victory against these vicious anti-union, anti-worker bosses would give confidence to workers across the whole industry and beyond that it’s possible to fight to defend and improve conditions and win.

# Carlisle debate - socialism or social democracy?

Robert Charlesworth  
Carlisle Socialist Party

At a well-attended public debate speakers from the Socialist Party and Labour discussed: ‘The way forward: socialism or social democracy?’ Members of the Socialist Party, Momentum, the Green Party and others were present on 7 February.

Robert Rynn, political education officer of Carlisle Labour Party (personal capacity), claimed that bringing about socialism would require “violent revolution”, and that the best system is a “mixed economy” with the state controlling basic services such as energy and the railways, while private industry was left to “innovate” in other areas.

Brent Kennedy, Carlisle Socialist Party, recalled the Mitterrand government in France in 1981 which lasted only 100 days before being forced to retreat by big business sabotaging the economy.

It subsequently abandoned significant reforms for the working class, and Brent argued that only a programme of nationalising the banks and top monopolies would allow a Corbyn-led Labour government to carry through improvements for the working class.

## Retreat

The only other option would be to retreat under capitalist pressure, which would result in the party going the same way as the French Socialist Party, the German Social Democratic Party, Syriza in Greece, and all the other centre-left parties whose vote has fallen or collapsed in recent years.

We explained why Labour’s James Callaghan and Denis Healey declared in 1976 that “Keynesianism

is dead”, and that the post-war boom period to which so many people fondly look back - with almost full employment, high levels of investment and higher wages - was something that can’t be repeated.

Since then capitalism has abandoned industrial growth, productivity and wages for financial speculation and plundering the state through privatisation.



**We challenged members of the Labour Party to put our ideas to the test under the next Labour government by demanding workers’ control**

We answered criticisms of the centrally-planned economies of the Soviet Union and other Stalinist countries by explaining what could be achieved in the production of consumer goods with workers’ control and management instead of bureaucratic dictatorship.

We challenged members of the Labour Party to put these ideas to the test under the next Labour government by demanding workers’ control in nationalised sectors of the economy.

Our ideas were well received, and we contributed substantially to the political education of all those present. The debate closed with an appeal to Labour Party members to support our calls to readmit all socialists expelled during 1980s and 1990s.



## STAINES FIRE SERVICES SAVED

Paul Couchman  
Secretary, Save our Services in Surrey

After a prolonged battle with Surrey council, the campaign to protect fire services in Staines has won an important retreat.

After successfully fighting to save the fire station, the attempt to reduce the service from two engines

to one has been defeated.

Surrey Fire Brigades Union announced: “For how long we do not know, as Surrey County Council has only guaranteed the costs of the second fire engine for 12 months... But it’s a step in the right direction. Thank you to the hard work of Spelt-horne firefighters and their families, our colleagues around the county, Fire Brigades Union representatives and Save Our Services in Surrey.”

This victory should give confidence to all those facing a new round of cuts to council services, that if we stand together we can win.

We have to step up our campaign in the face of a growing financial crisis at Surrey council. We will stand shoulder to shoulder with all those fighting cuts and demand central government fully funds local services.

# THREAT OF ACTION DEFEATS PAY CUT AT SURREY COUNCIL

Socialist Party members in Surrey council Unison

A week before Christmas, Surrey County Council told over 300 adult social workers they weren’t entitled to the incremental rise that had been agreed and they’d received from 1 July. This amounted to an average of a £1,500 a year pay cut.

The council Unison branch went into dispute and after a successful campaign the ballot result was a 66% turnout, with 85% voting in favour of action. At the final appeal stage, in a direct presentation to the councillors, lead negotiator and Socialist Party member Paul Couchman presented the unions case.

## Victory

After four days the councillors decided there would be no change in pay and an ‘exception’ would be made. This is an important victory for Unison members working as social workers and occupational therapists in Surrey. Suffice to say organising works, we won and all members have received their full increments backdated to 1 July.

We now have to make sure there is a fair pay rise for all staff across the board in 2018.



photo Paul Mattsson

# Haringey protests HDV - but Labour fails to kill it off completely

Hundreds of Haringey residents marched to protest outside a council meeting on 7 February called to discuss the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) - a Blairite £2 billion privatisation of social housing, which would lead to the demolition and ‘regeneration’ of housing estates.

Speakers at the demonstration included Socialist Party members Nancy Taaffe, on the campaign to stop a similar project by neighbouring Labour council Waltham Forest, and Paul Kershaw, secretary of the Unite 1111 housing branch.

## Postponed

The council meeting had been triggered by the Lib Dems, who had cynically moved a resolution calling for the cancellation of HDV, trying to make electoral gains from the crimes of the Blairites.

Unfortunately, despite a campaign by the left leading to Labour selecting a majority of anti-HDV candidates to contest May’s elections, the Labour group agreed a ‘compromise’ resolution in a vain

attempt to try and keep a façade of unity with council leader Clare Kober and the rest of the Blairites. This means that a resolution was passed postponing any decision on HDV until after May’s local elections. HDV is therefore on the critical list but not quite yet dead!

Meanwhile Claire Kober has launched a frenzied attack on the opponents of HDV and the left Labour leadership.

It is clearly not possible to compromise with her and her ilk - they are pro-capitalist, pro-privatisation politicians who are fundamentally opposed to any moves towards Haringey becoming an anti-austerity, socialist council. On the demonstration outside the council meeting Socialist Party members were declaring ‘now for a no-cuts council’. This demand got a very enthusiastic response. Scrapping HDV is a vital first step but it is necessary to go further and refuse to implement any more Tory cuts.

Further comments from Socialist Party and Labour Party members can be found at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)



photo Paula Mitchell

# Enjoyable and successful Cardiff Refugee Rights gig

Lawanya Chandra  
Refugee Rights campaign

Refugee Rights members attended a fundraising gig organised by Cardiff Young Socialists on 10 February.

I was deeply moved by the huge support that we received. Everyone welcomed us and was very friendly in supporting us. Everyone wanted to talk to us and ask about the campaign.

I really enjoyed the music and there were also some books, painting and some gifts for the raffle ticket winners. We raised more than £350 overall.

I was really happy and impressed with the Young Socialists members - it’s delightful to see young people interested in politics and wanting to help refugees. They organised it really well.

We were given the opportunity to say a few words and give out our draft trade union motion. After the speech we were also interviewed by some of the local media.

I want to thank the Young Socialists members for organising a very successful gig and an enjoyable evening.

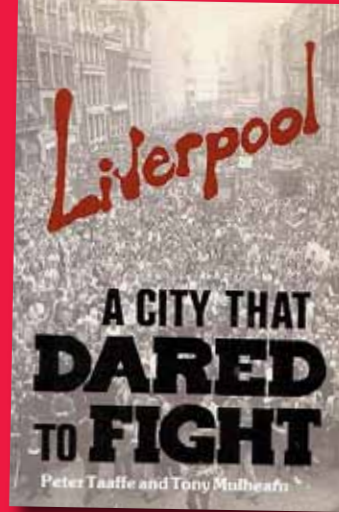
Facebook group: Refugee Rights Campaign  
[refugeerightscampaign.org](http://refugeerightscampaign.org)  
admin@refugeerightscampaign.org

**Read more online at [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk)**  
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	£ received	£ target	January-March 2018					Deadline: 30 March 2018
Northern	379	750						51%
North West	1,016	2,100						48%
South West	765	1,800						43%
East Midlands	739	1,850						40%
Yorkshire	1,235	3,300						37%
West Midlands	863	2,600						33%
London	1,566	6,100						26%
Southern	402	1,600						25%
Eastern	249	1,200						21%
Wales	225	2,300						10%
South East	56	750						8%
Other	772	5,650						14%
TOTAL	8,271	30,000						28%

**TUSC AGAINST CUTS** On 10 January 100 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) supporters attended the electoral alliance's 2018 national conference. Here we report on the two sessions.

# BUILDING SUPPORT FOR CORBYN'S ANTI-CUTS POLICIES IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS

James Ivens

If there is no fight, it means extinction for indispensable services and jobs. The Tories' planned cuts exceed three-quarters of councils' core funding.

But Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity June manifesto inspired 3.5 million more votes for Labour. Many of those new voters are now pondering how to pursue that cause in the local elections.

This double dawning - of council bankruptcy and debate on resistance - makes the case for an anti-austerity electoral challenge. Speaking for the Socialist Party, Hannah Sell told the TUSC conference: "If we agree to contest these elections, they will be the most important TUSC has ever contested."

Hannah argued that while TUSC should stand with care, only where our candidature helps the battle against the pro-austerity, pro-capitalist wing of Labour, it is essential we stand.

The problems are acute, as TUSC national chair Dave Nellist pointed out. England's secondary schools have cut 15,000 teachers in a year; the School Cuts union campaign has found. 11,000 firefighters' jobs have gone since 2010 reports the Fire Brigades Union.

In the same time, over half a million council workers have lost their jobs, according to public service union Unison. Corbyn is right to call council austerity "no less than the dismantling of the civilised society."

## Tories

This government's lifespan is unpredictable. It could collapse at any point or, theoretically at least, last till 2022 - although, Hannah says, "that seems very unlikely."

But if it does, the Local Government Association calculates councils will lose 77% of their 'revenue support grant' by 2020. This takes central funding back to "pre-Poplar levels" - back to 1920.

And what do the Tories propose to replace it? Outsourcing to corner-cutters, as preparation for service charges - the "EasyJet council."

But outsourcing doesn't work. Tory-run Northamptonshire County

Council exemplifies the model. In 2015 it privatised its workforce en bloc. In-house numbers went from 4,000 to just 150.

This month Northamptonshire issued a 'section 114' notice, banning all non-statutory spending. The EasyJet council is bust.

Meanwhile Labour is still two parties in one. And the pro-capitalist, pro-austerity, Blairite party is stuck on the same course.

Hannah pointed out that of the top ten councils to have overspent, only two are Labour-run. The Blairites have proven themselves enthusiastic axe-wielders.

Sean Hoyle, speaking for transport union RMT, calls for political representatives who oppose 'driver-only operation' (DOO) - removing the safety-critical role of train guards. He asked Labour's Liverpool region mayoral candidate, Steve Rotherham, for his stance.

Sean ended up "chasing Steve Rotherham around the room" in a vain attempt to get an answer. Meanwhile, TUSC candidate Roger Banister stood on clear opposition to DOO.

The Socialist Party's motion to the conference argued that "to allow the Blairites to go unchallenged generally is to allow them to build their authority." They will use this against Corbyn's leadership if he forms an anti-austerity government.

It would be best if the working class thrust Corbyn into power on the back of a mass struggle. A mobilised workers' movement could defend against Blairite sabotage and push him to be bold.

All workers would benefit from co-ordinated action with the approach of militant unions like the RMT. Sean's message to fellow union leaders was "let's get off our arses and lead a fight!"

But even without this, the fractured, minority Tory government could collapse - under the weight of Brexit negotiations, scandal, or renewed economic crisis. Corbyn could face a clash with big business, and consequent fight with the Blairites in government, within months.

Should TUSC let the right prepare without continuing to build the genuine anti-austerity forces needed to confront it?



Speakers in the election session from l-r Hannah Sell (Socialist Party) Roger Charles (TUSC independent member) Dave Nellist (TUSC chair) and Sean Hoyle (RMT president). Inset Nicola Jackson, prospective candidate in Kirklees, Yorkshire photos Paul Mattsson

In the meantime, Hannah said, big sections of the working class are "still thinking all politicians are the same." And "the tendency on the left of the Labour Party to disguise that there's a fight going on" will undermine Corbyn's chances of winning a general election.

"It's important we get a Jeremy Corbyn-led government," said Roger Charles, speaking for TUSC's individual members. "But we can't do that if we've got Jeremy at the top... and councils undermining what he's trying to do."

## Candidates

Many teaching assistants in Durham, striking against malicious pay cuts by a right-wing Labour council, felt their only recourse was voting Tory, Lib Dem, Green or not at all. Should TUSC allow cuts-making parties the space to grow unchallenged?

Southampton councillor Keith Morrell will be standing for re-election as a principled anti-cuts representative.

This is in spite of an unfortunate

Momentum-backed Labour challenge to him, a socialist incumbent.

Cancer survivor Nicola Jackson is part of the campaign to save beds and emergency care at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary. "I'm fairly new to socialism," she said, "but I'm intending to stand in the local elections."

"I support 100% Jeremy and John," said Sean. TUSC has been careful to stand candidates against Labour only where it strengthens the battle against the Blairites and austerity policies.

But a mere one in eight of the Labour councillors TUSC has so far surveyed could be described as Corbynistas. Even this is "with the most generous definition possible," said Hannah.

Haringey is an exception. The community campaign against mass privatisation has deselected most Labour councillors who backed the hated 'Haringey Development Vehicle' (HDV). "These land wars are springing up all across London," said Nancy Taaffe.

And Haringey Labour's subsequent

manifesto conference, dominated by the left, discussed many of TUSC's anti-austerity policies. However, as yet there is no commitment to a no-cuts budget.

Labour members around the country are discussing different models of resistance. Momentum leaders point to Bristol mayor Marvin Rees, who mobilised a big anti-cuts march - but continues with cuts. Others look to Preston, which has attracted a modicum of business investors - on top of cuts. Nor do council taxes rises offer a means to avoid cuts.

## Enter the fray

However, now the discussion is not about whether to resist - but how. This is very positive. "There is a fray," said Paula Mitchell, "which we must enter." Standing gets TUSC that entry to these debates.

Setting no-cuts budgets, using reserves and borrowing powers, will not defeat austerity alone. But what if "there was even one council prepared to 'do a Liverpool,'" asked Hannah. Linking a no-cuts budget to building

a campaign to win the needed funds "would transform the situation."

There are fewer legal barriers to this approach than when Liverpool fought in the 1980s. We argue for a legal no-cuts fightback. But if it becomes necessary, unjust laws should still be broken.

Plus weak Theresa May is "not the Iron Lady." And anti-cuts Corbyn heads Labour, not proto-Blairite Neil Kinnock.

While many new Labour voters are looking for an electoral challenge to Blairism, many others will see a Labour vote as the best way to support Corbyn. Standing is an opportunity to engage with them too, and discuss how to win the fight in Labour.

The Socialist Party's motion to stand selected candidates against the enemies of Corbyn's anti-austerity agenda received unanimous endorsement from the conference.

As Sean said: "if we do nothing, the bigger danger is we damage Jeremy." We must act, said Dave, or "the glue that holds society together" will be gone.

# WHAT POSITION SHOULD SOCIALISTS TAKE ON BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS?

Scott Jones

With press coverage of Brexit and of the Tories' shambolic attempts to find agreement with the EU at fever pitch, the afternoon session of TUSC's 2018 conference was dedicated to the approach of socialists to the negotiations.

Speakers reminded the conference of TUSC's "history of principled intervention into the EU debate," as chair Dave Nellist described it.

TUSC followed on from the 'No 2 EU' electoral alliance between the Socialist Party, transport union RMT and others. No 2 EU offered a working class, left, anti-EU choice in the 2009 European Parliament elections.

And during the EU referendum, TUSC fought to stop recognition - and the funding that went with it - being given to Ukip and the Tories as the official Leave campaign by the Electoral Commission.

Speakers in the session to discuss TUSC's post-Brexit position included Claire Laker-Mansfield.

Socialist Party executive committee member, and RMT president Sean Hoyle.

Claire pointed out: "We're not interested in taking the side of one wing of big business, or one side of the ruling class, or the more 'progressive' elements of capitalism. We're interested in fighting to overthrow capitalism and putting forward an independent, working class approach to the question of Brexit."

We should not forget that the EU referendum result was a working class revolt which saw the immediate end of David Cameron as prime minister and has left the Tories weak and in crisis ever since.

Sean Hoyle posed the question of whether a 'Tory Brexit' was more likely than a socialist one. The RMT's opposition to the EU stems from the EU's drive for privatisation and barriers to state aid and public ownership. Also, its driving down of pay, terms and conditions, which Sean railed against.

He said: "We must fight to

organise, defend and fight for migrant workers to be on the same terms and conditions and wages." Sean told the conference about maritime workers from the Ukraine earning as little £2.45 an hour in the UK - perfectly legal under EU rules.

A socialist exit would mean breaking with the Single Market, which is nothing more than a series of treaties by capitalist governments that mean a race to the bottom and an obstacle to socialist policies. Claire reminded us that it was Margaret Thatcher who signed Britain up to the Single Market. Jeremy Corbyn at the time correctly campaigned against it.

Socialists start from the position of opposing rules that allow this exploitation and pro-capitalist treaties. We oppose any Brexit that would allow this to continue.

Claire said: "Jeremy Corbyn is strengthened since the general election. Now is the time for a socialist exit - against austerity and for nationalisation."

These points were supported by others during the discussion. Mark Best said: "Corbyn should stand on the movement of working class people and youth who pushed him into leadership" to stand up the Tories and those in his own party who want to stand in the way of a socialist Brexit.

Paul Callanan talked about the 20-city TUSC tour that put forward these arguments during the referendum. The referendum didn't take place against the backdrop we would have liked but then and now we need to fight to use the opportunity that exists to carve out a different approach to the Brexit negotiations and fight for a socialist alternative.

Such an approach would be popular not just in Britain, but across Europe, and could be a first step towards real European solidarity and internationalism - a socialist confederation of the continent as a whole.

■ Read more on TUSC's EU referendum campaign as well as submissions from the groups that make up TUSC at [tusc.org.uk/txt/410.pdf](http://tusc.org.uk/txt/410.pdf)



# Cape Town drought NO TO PROFITEERING FROM WATER CRISIS!

**Rose Lichtenstein**

Workers and Socialist Party (WASP,  
CWI in South Africa) Cape Town

Cape Town is facing its worst drought in almost 100 years. Rain-fall was at a 100 year low two years in a row, and the dams that supply 98% of Cape Town's drinkable water are currently only 26% full. The biggest, Theewaterskloof Dam, is only at 13%. Once a dam is below 10%, it becomes very difficult to extract water.

The City of Cape Town (run by the Democratic Alliance - DA - the main capitalist opposition to the ANC national government) has pushed the narrative that 'Day Zero' - when the taps run dry - will happen, and the only way to avoid it, is to reduce individual water usage.

Four million Capetonians will have to collect a 25 litre daily allocation of water from less than 200 water collection points. Schools, hospitals, and the CBD (major business centre) will not have their water turned off.

What is missing from the news is that the city administration reported water loss at a rate of 106 million litres a day due to infrastructure failures for 2017 - 20 million litres a day more than that of 2015 and 2016. That amounts to 19.3% of the current demand of about 550 million litres a

day. When this and agricultural use is taken into account, residential usage amounts to only 63 litres per person a day.

Despite this evidence of significant savings from residents, the government continues to scaremonger about Day Zero, unjustly scolding the people for not doing their share to save water.

Blackmail tactics are being used to install water management devices, with false promises to fix leaks and write-off inflated water bills, limiting households to 200 litres of water a day.

When leaks are not fixed, this allocation runs out within hours before automatic shut-off engages. This leaves the household with nothing until 4am the next day.

## Warning

As far back as the 1990s scientists have warned that a decline in rainfall and increase in population would lead to a water supply shortage. At the root of this crisis lies a lack of planning for alternative water supply and storage options, as well as negligence in maintaining existing municipal infrastructure that makes up the water supply system.

This ultimately indicates a failure by all levels of government but city, provincial, and national governments are too busy playing politics to engage in meaningful

public consultation to explore rational, affordable, and sustainable solutions.

The one unifying factor amid the petty squabbling of the career politicians is the beckoning of a lucrative desalination public-private partnership. The only role of the public in these partnerships is to ensure the private sector can profit from the resources that constitutionally and ethically belong to the people.



**The one unifying factor amid the petty squabbling of the career politicians is the beckoning of a lucrative desalination public-private partnership**

With projections from the city that one large-scale desalination plant will cost an unaffordable R14.9 billion (£898.3 million) to implement and R1.2 billion (£72.2 million) a year to run. The only question seems to be, which party gets to award this lucrative tender?

Regardless of the environmental



photo Axxtter99/CC

impact, massive energy requirement, and unaffordability, these plants take two to three years to build.

Immediate interventions - such as removing water-guzzling vegetation from the areas surrounding supply dams and their catchment areas; fixing all leaks on public and private property; updating and maintenance of infrastructure; extracting groundwater sustainably with artificial recharge; recycling wastewater; and harvesting the water of the Camissa springs - currently flowing underneath the CBD through sewers and storm water drains into the ocean - have the potential to not only increase our water supply in a matter of weeks, but provide many jobs and training opportunities for residents.

## Organise

WASP has joined more than 70 organisations from various backgrounds in forming the Water Crisis Coalition (WCC). The main aim of the WCC is to reject the privatisation of our water and the scaremongering of Day Zero, and explore sustainable and rational water management options.



In less than a month WCC has grown to include several community committees. The coalition has successfully pressured AB InBev multinational to open to the public 24/7 the spring they claim 'heritage rights' to, increase the access points of the spring, and provide paid security during the night. Currently the WCC is pushing for distribution of the spring water to communities that cannot access it.

On 28 January the WCC organised a protest against the mismanagement of our water by all tiers of government.

Hundreds of concerned citizens participated in handing over the WCC memorandum to the minister of water and sanitation. The Western Cape premier and Cape Town mayor chose to ignore the invitations extended to them by the coalition.

Efforts to meet with all tiers of government have proven a waste of time, with ministry officials for the National Department of Water and Sanitation indicating that "harmonising relations" between the DA-led city and province and the ANC-led national government must happen before a public consultation process can occur.

While government officials sit in boardrooms shifting blame and negotiating their slices of the desalination pie, it is clear that the WCC's energy is better spent in continuing to organise communities, schools, and workplaces, and build a true mass movement against the rush to privatise our resource.

■ See also [socialistworld.net](http://socialistworld.net) for updates on Jacob Zuma's presidency and the ANC

## Socialist Books publications

**Trotsky in 1917** - (new translations) - £12.50

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by Peter Taaffe - £15 (ebook £10)

**Lessons of October** (with new introduction)

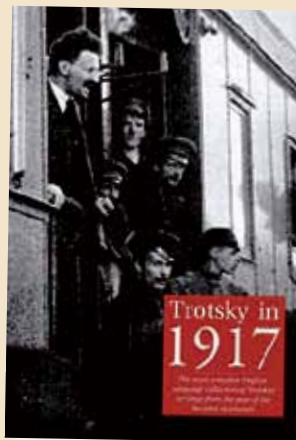
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From Militant to the Socialist Party





photo Scott Jones

# I'm now a 'manager' and I can barely manage!

**Adam Viteos**  
South West Socialist Party

I work in a well-known high street chain and I was promoted a little while ago and thought to myself "finally, things might get a bit easier!" How foolish I was!

First of all, although I've been given a pay rise from £7.55 to £7.85 an hour and more contracted hours my pay has gone down!

The reason for this: while I was previously on a four-hour contract, any hours I worked after that would be at an overtime rate of an extra 12.5%. Therefore, if I worked 24 hours, as I often would as a sales assistant, I would earn approximately £200 a week.

Now, because I'm contracted at 24 hours, I earn £188 a week at my new rate. But because I'm now more expensive to employ for overtime - only marginally I'll add - I rarely get more than my contracted hours outside of peak periods as a supervisor.

This means I'm regularly earning less than the staff I manage!

To compound the issues, as part of the "management team" I'm now expected to take on lots more responsibility with no monetary compensation.

If somebody sets our store alarm off while the shop is closed I have to attend - without payment. If there is work to be done and not enough hours to give to the staff, the "management team" is expected to pick up the shortfall, working extra hours without pay.

I have to constantly pay attention to my store's WhatsApp group, even when I'm off or on holiday, in case I miss an important development. I'm also expected to do electronic learning to stay on top of product knowledge, which there often isn't time to do at work, so - yep, you guessed it - I have to do that in my own time as well.

All this for nothing more than the 'prestige' of calling myself a manager as well as an effective pay cut!

As a means of striking back I've used my new "authority" to encourage my staff to unionise. It's been a huge success, with 50% of my staff now in Usdaw, the retail and distribution union.

However, upper management have gotten wind of my unionisation drive. I'm now on a final warning for everyday errors. Other members of management also make these errors, yet I have been the only one disciplined to this extent.

I feel like I am being witch-hunted by the rest of management. And yet my staff hugely appreciate me for encouraging them to take breaks which, by law, they're entitled to; encouraging them to demand to do training during working hours; and trying to maintain their conditions.

It's going to take a little time, but I am confident that my staff will soon have the confidence to start demanding more than their current awful conditions. Through collective organisation we can fight for better conditions and it's not as if my company is short of a few bob.

Over the busy Christmas periods our store can often make more in a day than I would make in a year - and yet the super-exploitation continues. Just like the rest of the Socialist Party, I'll continue to fight for:

- A £10-an-hour minimum wage now without exemptions
- An end to zero and low-hour contracts
- Decent breaks - expecting workers to work six hours straight without a rest or at least a food break is not good enough!
- The right to unionise without persecution



photo Joshua Rappenecker/CC

## Royal wedding homeless clearance

# In Windsor none of us want to see homeless people on the street

**A Labour Party member and activist**  
Windsor

In Windsor none of us want to see homeless people on the street.

Homelessness is on the increase, and particularly so since 2010. Neighbouring towns like Slough suffered more, but social problems became more the norm in Windsor too.

In 2009 a man died on the steps of Holy Trinity Church near the centre of town, frozen to death. He was hungry, he was homeless.

### Lack of funds

The Windsor Homeless Project was formed and granted the use of the local Baptist church. To date it opens three days a week with a small number of staff including volunteers. Lack of funds prevents them doing more.

The Tory leader of the council, Simon Dudley, decided the police needed to get rid of them using the Vagrancy Act of 1824. He attacked "aggressive begging" by those he said had made a "commercial life choice."

Many people are compassionate and give time, money, food and gifts to homeless people. It's true people can sometimes feel threatened and anxious around some beggars. That is how many homeless people feel too.

Dudley wants the homeless off the streets before the royal wedding in May. He plans to fine them £100. There's a protest planned on the day of the wedding, including sleeping out on the castle grounds.

In Windsor none of us want to see homeless people on the street.

Dudley comfortably survived a vote of no confidence after thousands signed a petition against. A

group of six independent councillors brought the motion to an open, emergency council meeting on 29 January. Three councillors had resigned from the Tory group, calling themselves 'Independent Conservatives'.

A protest of 20 or more gathered outside with placards, mainly from the local Labour Party. As is their habit, the Tories slid in a back way to avoid any potential interaction or confrontation.

Did Dudley then realise what a nasty man he was and how harshly he had treated the homeless?

Let's say he withdrew all his comments and resigned in shame, apologising to the council and local community.

The Tories promised to build a shelter in Windsor, open all year round to anyone in need. Not just the one Dudley had referred to so often in the media - situated in Maidenhead, with eight places, men only, and full.

Services would be coordinated by properly trained and paid workers, including those with direct knowledge and experience like the Windsor Homeless Project, on secure contracts.

Dudley would resign his position as a director for the Homes and Communities Agency, a government body with responsibility for homelessness.

... But then I woke up from the dream.

Windsor and Maidenhead Council voted 43 to nine against the no-confidence motion. All Dudley's little Tory clique applauded noisily as their leader won his day. And with breathtaking arrogance, he walked off with his mates to their expensive cars to celebrate.

In Windsor none of us want to see homeless people on the street.

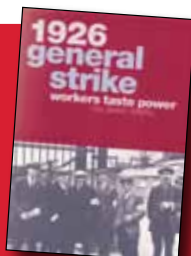


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# BRAZIL: LULA CONVICTION CONFIRMED

- Unity in struggle against Temer's attacks
- Build a new left socialist alternative

**Liberdade, Socialismo e Revolução (LSR - CWI in Brazil)**

On 24 January 2018 the conviction of ex-president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ('Lula'), linked to the 'Lava Jato' (car wash) corruption case, was upheld by a federal tribunal, thereby barring him from the upcoming presidential election.

Lava Jato centres on the state oil company Petrobras and alleged corruption by Lula and his Workers' Party (PT) and politicians of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), the party of current right-wing president Michael Temer.

The objective of this second conviction of Lula - frontrunner in all opinion polls - is to eliminate him from the 2018 presidential elections.

The political nature of this case is even clearer when considering that Temer, despite reportedly trying to bribe a politician imprisoned over the car wash scandal, is not facing any investigation.

While maintaining our political differences and criticisms of Lula's policies, we also unwaveringly explain that the actions of the capitalist justice system in Lula's case opens up a dangerous precedent for the left, social movements and the democratic rights of Brazilian people.

It is part of a wave of attacks which only benefits a handful of capitalists and their political servants. On top of the neoliberal counter-reforms implemented by the government, attacks on democratic rights are multiplying, especially on the poorest.

The imprisonment of Rafael Braga has become a symbol of this situation. 27 year-old Rafael is the only person convicted in connection with the mass protests against transport fares hikes in 2013 which preceded the staging of the football world cup in Brazil.

Another dramatic example was the criminalisation of 18 youths from Sao Paolo - victims of an agent provocateur - who were persecuted for protesting against Temer.

New repressive legislation which comes from the previous government of Workers' Party president Dilma Rousseff, such as the anti-terrorist law, is now being used against protesters.

## Lula no alternative

Lula is not a conscious factor in the radicalisation of the struggle or even a consistent opponent of the current political and economic order.

Lula's presidency was characterised by class conciliation (whereby supposedly everyone would win,

CWI banner on an anti-Temer protest in 2016



billionaires and the poor) and conciliation between political forces. Suffice to remember that billionaire neoliberal Michel Temer was Lula's chosen vice-presidential candidate.

This did not change following the parliamentary coup (impeachment) which removed Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff, from the presidency in August 2016. PMDB politicians were recorded plotting to force Rousseff out in order to head off corruption investigations they themselves were implicated in.

With the impeachment manoeuvre in 2016 the ruling class wanted to rearrange the political landscape in order to be able to make a qualitative step forward in their attacks on the working class in the context of the Brazilian and international capitalist crisis.

The big capitalists wanted more than the PT government could give. They wanted to impose a drastic defeat on the working class.

The corrupt, unpopular, coup plotters' government of Temer served this purpose, guaranteeing counter-reforms on workers' rights, the freezing of public spending, privatisations and handover of public wealth to foreign capital.

For them, it is fundamental that in the 2018 elections there is no risk or threat to the continuity of these attacks from any future government.

Despite the conciliatory tone from

Lula, he cannot (even if he wanted to) defend a deepening of these policies. This is why, as favourite for the elections, he has to be removed from the equation from the capitalists' perspective.

## Unity in struggle

LSR never supported the governments of Lula or the PT. As part of the broader PSOL (Party of Socialism and Liberty) and of the struggle for the rebuilding of a mass socialist left in Brazil, we were a left opposition to the PT governments and were on the side of the struggles of workers for rights and demands denied by these governments.

In the electoral process this year, we support the unanimously adopted position of PSOL, to have its own presidential candidate and therefore not to support Lula or the PT.

We understand that the Lula model of class collaboration does not serve the interests of the working class and majority. These policies disarmed the working class, demobilised the social movements and created the conditions for the coup of 2016 and the defeats we have suffered.

With the catastrophe of the Temer government, illusions in a supposed return to the 'good times' of Lula represent a serious obstacle to the struggle of workers.

Therefore, our alternative is a

united front of the socialist left and social movements in an anti-capitalist, socialist alternative for Brazil. This would be at the service of the struggles of the working class, but would also need an independent electoral expression this year.

In the struggle to build this front, its forces must fight against all attacks, including attacks on democratic rights. Denouncing Lula's removal, without defending the positions of Lula or the PT, is part of this struggle.

During the resistance to the attacks of the Temer government, LSR has defended the maximum unity in action.

The struggles at the beginning of 2017, especially the general strike on 28 April, were a show of strength by the working class and a demonstration of the potential for struggle that exists when there is unity between different movements and sectors.

A democratic movement must be organised from below, which deepens the level of mobilisation beyond what we saw in 2017. A movement which defeats the pensions attacks, cancels the counter-reforms imposed by the corrupt parliament, and at the same time fights for guaranteed rights for all.

■ Read article in full on [socialistworld.net](#)



**The Lula model of class collaboration does not serve the interests of the working class and majority**

# BIG POLITICAL STRIKE AGAINST FINNISH GOVERNMENT'S ATTACK ON UNEMPLOYED

**Edmund Schluessel**  
Sosialistinen Vaihtoehto (CWI, Finland)

Helsinki was at a standstill on Friday 2 February when a strike by the transport union AKT quickly escalated into national action against the so-called 'active model' of unemployment.

Under the active model, unemployed people are required to prove they have worked in casual, often underpaid jobs or taken hard-to-access training courses in order to continue to receive social security benefits.

A march from AKT's headquarters in Kali fed into a mass demonstration where 15,000 people filled Senate Square, despite the closure of almost all public transport in Helsinki and heavy snowfall.

Across the country, not only transport workers but construction and manufacturing unions were on strike, with a tenth of Finland's workers - 200,000 - downing tools.

Sosialistinen Vaihtoehto saw that the mood for a political strike in Finland was increasing months ago, with loud demands for one resonating with participants in September's Kommunizma demonstration against the right-wing government.

The strike took place at a time when political tension has increased further: negotiations between national unions and employers on the 2018 pay agreement are grinding on with difficulty.

Unions are rediscovering their

voice, proclaiming the active model to be in violation of the competitiveness pact signed between unions and the government two years ago.

Union members need to seize this moment and push, from the ground up, for their unions to escalate action: now is the time for a general strike against the active model, against austerity, and against all the government's attacks on workers, the poor and the oppressed.

Certainly the active model is the right target: hated by a majority of the population, it is explicitly being used to force unemployed workers to take low-paying, precarious jobs and then go through a maze of bureaucracy just to receive enough money for food.

As unemployment rates in Finland have scarcely changed from 9% since 2011, while bread lines continue to grow, the government clearly does not have any more interest in getting people to work than its two predecessors did.

## Resistance

Who, then, can lead this resistance? Left Alliance leader, Li Anderson, received enthusiastic cheers from the crowd in utter contrast to her party's second-from-last showing in the presidential election.

Recent polls say Anderson is hugely popular among left-wing voters and the general public. Anderson's popularity however, like that of New Zealand's Labour prime minister Jacaranda Arden, is largely based on public image rather than a record of action.



Public transport was halted in Helsinki by a union strike

The re-election of Sauli Niinistö as president at the end of last month was a sign of the weakness of the Social Democratic party and the Left Alliance.

If the Left Alliance, which has ties to the most active unions in Finland, can seize on the mood and mobilise workers, students and the unemployed into a mass movement against austerity, they will certainly send a shock wave across Finnish politics that will sweep aside both the government and the soft layers

of the opposition and open up space for even more radical voices.

However, if the Left Alliance refuses to present a clear socialist programme - full funding for unemployment benefits, a programme of job creation and a sliding scale of wages to ensure people's jobs and pay do not depend on the casino games of the market - they condemn Finland's workers to further austerity.

Sosialistinen Vaihtoehto says:  
■ Escalate the fight against the

Active Model: build for a general strike!

■ Stop all attacks on government benefits and public services. No job cuts, no benefit cuts, no privatisation!  
■ For a mass workers' party on a clear socialist programme - unite workers, students and the unemployed for a mass movement against austerity!

■ Read article in full on [socialistworld.net](#)

# France: Rallies in support of oppressed Kurdish people



photo Terry Adams

**Terry Adams**  
France

Over 100 people turned out on 10 February in the centre of Albi, south west France, to demonstrate against the bombardment of Afrin by the regime of Turkey's autocratic president Recep Erdogan. Most of the demonstrators were of Kurdish origin, including refugees from Afrin.

Erdogan is intent on smashing the aspirations of the Kurdish people for a homeland.

He has justified this latest military invasion by claiming the YPG Kurdish militia in northern Syria (which has been backed by the US administration as a proxy force against Isis) is linked to "terrorist" PKK Kurdish separatists in south east Turkey, an area where the Turkish military has imposed virtual martial law.

The town of Afrin has been a refuge for Syrians seeking to escape the horrors of the Syrian regime and the devastating war. From a population of 172,000 in 2004, the town houses more than 1 million today.

Afrin is an important symbol for Kurdish people, with a reportedly democratic and inclusive administration.

Afrin's refugees and Kurdish people denounced the lack of worldwide condemnation of Turkey's attack: "Using napalm and weapons that are banned by the UN. The silence of European Union, United States and the allies make them complicit with Turkey".

Protesters made it clear that the attack on Afrin is an act of genocide, and Erdogan a war criminal.

A similar demonstration took place in Toulouse on 27 January, with over 250 demonstrators.



Czechoslovakia 1968

# 'PRAGUE SPRING' CHALLENGES STALINISM

**Robin Clapp**  
Socialist Party national committee

The year 1968 was tumultuous with workers' accumulated frustrations igniting rebellion against capitalism and non-capitalist Stalinist regimes alike.

Brewing discontent in France spilled over into outright social revolution. Meanwhile in the US, growing outrage at both the futility of the unwinnable war in Vietnam and heightened repression against the rapidly developing civil rights movement created a tinder box atmosphere which haunted successive administrations.

The Stalinist states in eastern Europe were infected by the mood of revolt. In particular Czechoslovakia - today the two countries of the Czech Republic and Slovakia - which lay firmly in the orbit of the Soviet Union, as a result of the post-1945 carve-up of Europe into capitalist western and non-capitalist eastern spheres.

Though resting on a nationalised economy, the Czechoslovak regime

was not modelled on the principles of workers' control and management established in the days after the 1917 Russian revolution led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

Instead it was a clone of the totalitarian state created by Stalin, representing a bureaucratic caste, resting and gorging upon the planned economy - while fearful of the working class and traditions of 1917 in whose name the bureaucracy nominally ruled.

## Economy

By the mid-1960s the Czech economy was barely growing under the monolithic bureaucracy that penetrated every layer of official society.

There had been an attempt by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) leadership to experiment with a less centralised form of rule in 1965. But tentative steps in that direction had whetted the appetites of the intelligentsia and working class alike for a loosening of the dead hand of political repression, so the regime hastily retreated.

These regimes were incapable of reforming themselves. The ruling elites were unwilling to relinquish

their power and privileges, no matter how often they sought to resolve the riddle of why economic growth was slowing.

Commandism from above could not develop the productivity of labour in a relatively developed economy like Czechoslovakia when the task was not conscripting vast armies of industrial workers into building giant factories and dams. The economy needed to move towards refinement of productive methods, increasing consumer goods and involving the working class at every level of producing, planning and distributing commodities.

By 1968 the lack of integration between the industrial and agricultural sectors was huge. Meanwhile consumer goods, as elsewhere in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, were in chronically short supply.

It was this growing impasse, with the attendant dangers of a rising restiveness among Czechoslovak workers and youth, that led a section of the bureaucracy around KSC central committee member Alexander Dubcek to orchestrate the removal

of his colleague, the hardline Stalinist president Antonín Novotný, on 5 January 1968.

Dubcek's main consideration was to avert political revolution from below through partial decentralisation and introducing elements of a tightly controlled market economy in certain light industrial spheres.

Dubcek acknowledged the yearning for reform. He announced the party would henceforth be less heavy-handed and seek to build "an advanced socialist society on sound economic foundations."

This was followed by an 'Action Programme': easing press restrictions, permitting freedom of speech and movement - and hinting at the possibility of an end to one-party, totalitarian rule.

Reform was to be unveiled - under the KSC's direction. But these announcements led to the opening of the floodgates. The 'Prague Spring', as these few months became known, saw an explosion

of ferment.

Intellectuals rushed to produce independent publications, which caused disquiet and then outrage in satellite Stalinist states grouped in the 'Warsaw Pact' countries and taking their orders from Russian party leader Leonid Brezhnev.

Despite hopes that this was a break with Stalinist methods that might offer an alternative to both Stalinism and capitalism, Dubcek's



"socialism with a human face" was not about creating genuine workers' democracy.

There were to be no free and democratic elections with the right of recall, no removal of the dizzying wage differential between party officials and ordinary workers, and no replacement of bureaucratic rule by democratic workers' control and management based on workers' councils.

All these safeguards against creeping bureaucracy had been included in the 1919 programme of the Bolshevik party as necessities in even the first stage of a workers' government. But to Dubcek and those around him, such measures would threaten extinction.

The Prague Spring was shattered when on 20-21 August Eastern Bloc armies from Russia, Bulgaria, Poland and Hungary invaded Czechoslovakia with the intent of reimposing hardline Stalinist rule. Czechoslovak forces were confined to barracks, while Dubcek urged no resistance.

## Military invasion

Justification for the military incursion was provided by the 'Brezhnev Doctrine', which stated the Soviet Union had to intervene whenever an Eastern Bloc country was in danger of moving back towards capitalism.

This fraudulent claim had been used, too, against the incipient political revolution of the heroic Hungarian workers. Twelve years before they had twice faced a Moscow-ordered invasion as they struggled to overthrow the Stalinist regime (see socialistparty.org.uk - 'Hungary 1956': when workers rose in their millions').

In Czechoslovakia, workers were not clear about the necessity of carrying through a political revolution and maintaining - but democratising - the state-owned, planned economy. Nevertheless, the reality was that Moscow and other Stalinist rulers feared Dubcek would lose control of the situation and an anti-bureaucratic revolution unfold.

They had their own 'domino theory' - that an anti-totalitarian movement could spread to their

## Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

### February issue includes:

#### ■ Corbynism

The prospects for Corbyn and building the anti-austerity fightback by Hannah Sell

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Inspired by events in Russia 1917-1918, Finnish workers push for power by Per Olsson



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own countries. The May events that had shaken France a few months before the invasion meant the idea of revolution was in Europe's air.

Once order was restored - and not without sympathetic reverberations among sections of the invading forces, which had had to be hastily removed for fear of fraternization - Dubcek was hauled to Moscow, stripped of his post, expelled from the KSC and sent in disgrace to live out his days as a forestry official.

Into his place the Soviet Union inserted Stalinist hardliner Gustáv Husák, whose mission was to restore "normalisation."

Western imperialism hypocritically condemned the invasion, drawing a veil over its long and bloody history of military incursions and conquests.

In 1968 the Czechoslovak workers were unprepared and lacking a leadership to defeat the invasion. Nevertheless its echoes were to be heard again.

The later Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev unveiled a last desperate attempt to reboot the sclerotic Russian economy in 1987, through the introduction of 'Glasnost' (openness) and 'Perestroika' (economic 'restructuring' and decentralisation).

He was asked what the difference was between Dubcek's policies and his desperate throw of the dice. His spokesperson replied: "19 years."

By 1987 the crisis of Stalinism was much deeper. And while

protest movements did develop under Gorbachev, they did not crystallise into a movement with an anti-bureaucratic and anti-capitalist programme.

This created a space for capitalists and would-be capitalists to seize the opportunity to begin the restoration of capitalism in those countries.

The eventual implosion of these regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s was greeted with triumph by world capitalism. Meanwhile many former bureaucrats effortlessly converted themselves into capitalists, ruthlessly pillaging the coffers of the deformed workers' states.

Trotsky wrote in his critique of Stalinism, 'The Revolution Betrayed', that "socialism could not be justified by the abolition of exploitation alone; it must guarantee to society a higher economy of time than is guaranteed by capitalism."

The restoration of capitalism, in its turn, has caused misery for the masses in the former Stalinist states. In two years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the crash in production far outstripped that which occurred in the United States during the Great Depression of 1929 to 1933.

In 2014, 28% of Czechs said they were better off under 'Communism', while only 23% felt life is better now, according to the Czech polling agency SC&C.

The task of implementing the socialist revolution there and everywhere remains the most pressing struggle of the world working class.



## 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.

#### 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!

Join the fightback!  
Join the Socialists!

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## UCU uni strike

# COORDINATE PUBLIC SECTOR FIGHTBACK



photo Dave Reid

## Strike for decent pay and pensions

**Sam Morecroft**  
Sheffield UCU anti-casualisation officer (personal capacity)

**T**he Socialist Party gives its full backing to University and College Union (UCU) members in 61 universities taking up to 14 days of strike action in February and March against plans to completely scrap the defined benefit pensions scheme.

Despite all the hurdles of the

anti-union laws, 88% of members voted for action on a turnout of 58%. That's the largest turnout UCU has ever recorded in a national ballot, and it's a testament to the hard work of branch activists at local level to secure what we needed to meet the thresholds introduced by the draconian Trade Union Act.

The turnout also represents the anger and disbelief at the scale of the attack on our pensions. Scrapping defined benefit will mean the average lecturer will be around £200,000 worse off in retirement.

Most university workers will lose 50% or more of their pension.

Despite the clear rejection of the proposals that our ballot represents, the employers' association Universities UK has refused to budge. The pensions regulator says our pension fund is in deficit, but research commissioned by UCU shows the pension fund is in fact in surplus and the employers refuse to consider increasing their contributions!

This attack is so huge that we have no other choice but to take sustained action to push back the

employers and we are building for this action right now. We ask for the full support of students and the labour movement.

However it is not just UCU members who are under attack - in the public sector millions of workers are still suffering pay cuts as a result of the government's pay cap. The civil service union PCS has won a consultative ballot for strike action against the pay cap and Unison members in local government are currently being balloted on their pay offer, with the union calling on

them to reject and vote for action.

Socialist Party members in the public sector unions are calling for the unions to get together to coordinate action. The TUC demonstration on 12 May should be used as a call to arms for us all to fight, and fight together, not just to stop the attacks on pensions and pay but to get rid of the Tory government once and for all.

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