

SUPER-RICH GET RICHER

WHILE WE CAN'T MAKE ENDS MEET

JOIN THE FIGHTBACK

HEATHER RAWLING
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

The bosses of the UK's biggest companies will have big ugly smiles on their greedy faces.

The FTSE100 chief executives made more money by breakfast time on Friday 7 January than the average UK worker will earn in the entire year. The richest 1% of households were getting richer even before the pandemic, taking their average wealth to £3.66 million. The wealth gap has widened further since.

Yet who kept the country going during the lockdowns? Key workers in health, social care and public services looked after our friends and relatives. Transport workers risked their lives getting people to work. Lorry drivers brought food and other essential supplies to shops where shop workers filled the shelves and served us on the checkouts.

Our pay packets are under attack. Food prices are rising and Universal Credit has been cut. Gas and electricity prices are due to rise by around 50%. Rents are rising at the fastest rate for 13 years. We work hard, often juggling more than one job, to put food on the table and shoes on the feet of our children.

Unless there is a concerted, coordinated fightback by the unions and other organisations, more people will have to choose between heating and food.

Rich get richer

The big business bosses won't be worrying about their bills. The pandemic has been good news for them.

The total wealth of billionaires worldwide rose by \$5 trillion to \$13 trillion in 12 months to April 2021 - the most dramatic surge ever registered on the Forbes magazine rich list.

The Tory government has awarded thousands of Covid contracts to private companies, spending billions of pounds of our hard-earned money. Johnson's cronies have done very well out of the crisis.

And it hasn't exactly been good value. One private testing lab issued 43,000 false negative PCR tests before tests were stopped, just one example on a long list of failed private PPE and test and trace.

Every government move shows it has one overwhelming priority: to protect big business profits. That means hitting working-class households with price rises and tax increases.

The trade union-led fightback has started, with workers' strikes winning pay rises. But it has only just begun and would be strengthened by a new mass party of the working class to fight in our interests.

Fight for:

- Above inflation pay rises
- Decent pensions and benefits, rising with the cost of living
- A £15-an-hour minimum wage with no youth exemptions
- Make big business pay. Take energy, housing, supermarkets and privatised health and care into public ownership under democratic workers' control to be run for people's needs, not profit
- A new mass workers' party to fight in our interests

the Socialist formerly Militant

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Send us reports of your workplace and community campaigns, short letters on working-class issues, or ideas for other articles.

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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." Karl Marx

Blow to establishment as jury backs Colston Four

TOM BALDWIN SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTH WEST REGIONAL SECRETARY

There were jubilant scenes outside Bristol Crown Court as four people were cleared for their role in the toppling of the statue of slave-trader Edward Colston. The statue was pulled down and subsequently dumped into Bristol harbour during a Black Lives Matter demonstration in June 2020.

Of the thousands of people demonstrating and the hundreds that helped pull down and dispose of the statue, four were taken to trial, accused of criminal damage. While admitting their actions, the defendants claimed they were lawful as they prevented the greater crime of public indecency.

The defence argued that, due to Colston's role in the horrors of the slave trade, the presence of his statue was deeply offensive, particularly to black Bristolians. The jury agreed, acquitting them by a majority decision. In weighing up whether the statue constituted a crime they will ultimately have voted on conscience.

Bristol's Labour mayor Marvin Rees said he had "no reaction" to the verdict but claimed it had "very little to do with the drive to tackle race and class inequality". However, the verdict reflects changing attitudes on racism and Britain's role in the slave trade, partly driven by the Black Lives Matter movement itself. A poll by the Bristol Post taken at the time showed 61% of Bristolians supported the toppling of the statue with just 20% opposed.

Rees was Europe's first directly elected black mayor and has spoken on racism. His comments on the trial are an attempt to deflect criticism that his administration, like all those before it, have done nothing to remove the statue, despite repeated demands from Bristol citizens. Even efforts to add a plaque referring to Colston's role as a slave trader had been thwarted.

Boris Johnson has said protesters shouldn't "retrospectively change our history". But for 125 years the statue had stood above a plaque declaring Colston one of Bristol's "most virtuous and wise sons". Only after its toppling does it lie, still on its side, in a museum, with the real history explained.

Predictably, the not guilty verdict for the Colston Four has attracted criticism, including from Tory politicians. Transport secretary Grant Shapps has said: "We're not in a country where destroying public property can ever be acceptable."

These comments contradict those of senior Conservative Bristol councillor, Richard Eddy. Speaking in 2018 about a possible plaque explaining Colston's real history, he said: "I cannot condemn anyone who damages or removes it." For the Tories,



The toppled Colston statue PHOTO: BRISTOL SP

The bigger a movement and the greater the public support - the harder a prosecution becomes

the validity of damaging property is clearly a question of intentions. Tory MP and former cabinet minister Robert Jenrick has said the verdict undermines the rule of law. However, the right to trial by a jury of your peers is an important part of the British judicial system. It provides ordinary people with a fighting chance in a system that is heavily stacked against them. The Colston Four were acquitted despite political pressure. The Home Secretary contacted both the prosecution and police about the case, a breach of the normal constitutional conventions.

Police and crime bill This case has implications for the Tories' Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which is currently going through parliament. This draconian law attempts to clamp down on the right to protest. It includes ten years imprisonment for damaging statues. It is being brought forward now as the Tories and the bosses fear bigger movements against them in the near future. The bill must continue to be opposed. However, the ability to pass such laws and to implement them are two different things. Juries could

also refuse to condemn those whose only 'crime' is peaceful protest. The bigger a movement and the greater the public support - the harder a prosecution becomes. The Colston Four is not the only example of juries acquitting activists charged with criminal damage, despite participants admitting their involvement. Others include environmental and anti-war protesters. The Prison Officers' Association has avoided punishment for protests declared to be illegal strike action. Unite the Union removed the words 'within the law' from its rules relating to disputes and under previous leader Len McCluskey refused to repudiate unofficial strikes. Ultimately, implementing authoritarian laws depends on the balance of class forces. Struggles by the working class have the ability to alter this. The verdict of the Colston Four is the correct one. But the Black Lives Matter movement was never just about the symbolism of statues or the crimes of the past, it is about opposing systemic racism today. In fighting against all the injustices in capitalist society we must be willing to defy unjust laws to get results.



PHOTO: TORANGE_BIZ CC

Energy price crisis: nationalise energy giants to save us from £600 hit

JAMES COLLETT GLOUCESTERSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

The energy price cap, set to be announced on 7 February and come into effect from April, is expected to increase by over 50%. This would mean a further £600 a year to be paid by the average UK household, at a time when many are already at breaking point due to inflation and low wages.

Financial expert Martin Lewis tweeted that he was left "shaking and tearful" after witnessing the cruel reality of the energy crisis, "to be unable to help a single mum who lost her partner in Covid afford her energy bills leaves me feeling impotent". No amount of clever switching of suppliers will save us from this price hit.

Meanwhile, as the energy cost crisis deepened, oil company Shell replaced AstraZeneca at the top of the FTSE100 index, reaching a market capitalisation of £133 billion. The same revolting pattern of inequality is to be seen everywhere: the super-rich minority at the top rake in more and more profits while their system delivers nothing but misery for the rest of us.

Divisions in parliament and the cabinet show that the ruling class can already feel the hot breath of the working class on their necks. Even right-winger Jacob Rees-Mogg reportedly argued against the National Insurance rise in a cabinet meeting, fearful of the anger which is palpably growing in society.

At the moment, a limited £140 one-off discount on energy bills as part of

the 'Warm Homes Discount Scheme' is available, but only for those who meet specific criteria for being on a low income.

As it stands, households pay 5% VAT on energy bills. Britain's 27.8 million households paying an extra £600 each would generate an extra £834 million for the Treasury - straight out of ordinary people's pockets. No doubt chancellor Rishi Sunak has pound signs in his eyes. And no wonder the Tories are at this stage rejecting calling to scrap this tax on energy.

Ordinary households are being asked to pay the bill for a failure of the market

Investment in better insulation for homes could, according to research, save £500 a year on average household energy bills, a necessary investment for fuel bills and the environment. But predictably, the Tory government's most recent home insulation initiative, the Green Homes Grant, was scrapped after just six months.

Labour has called for a one-off 'windfall tax' on oil and gas company profits. But this doesn't go far enough. It is necessary to fight for all measures to defend households from the energy price hit. This includes

opposing flat-rate taxes that hit the poor hardest like VAT, ensuring that benefits and other subsidies are at a level where all can afford to live in well-heated homes, and measures to make sure the big profiteering and polluting companies pay.

But none of this tackles the real issue. The energy price cap is being raised to save privatised energy companies. Ordinary households are being asked to pay the bill for a failure of the market.

Under capitalism, the energy industry is run for profit and consequently can never meet the needs of consumers, workers, or the environment.

The only way to ensure affordable energy prices, and the only way to transition swiftly to green energy, is to take these companies into public ownership as part of a democratic socialist plan of production. The big investors, who are currently rubbing their hands together at the prospect of even higher energy prices, should be treated like the parasites they are: they contribute nothing to society and should receive nothing in the way of compensation.

Chancellor Rishi 'super-rich' Sunak says he "understands people's anxiety... about rising prices" - but there is only one language that he and the rest of the capitalist class will understand: the language of struggle. A determined working-class movement, given a firm lead by the trade unions, is what's needed - not only to push back this weak and divided government, but to demand the full nationalisation of the fossil fuel and energy companies.

Socialist Party

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) which organises across the world. 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.

WORK AND INCOME

- Trade union struggle for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to £15 an hour without exemptions. 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. Scrap Universal Credit. 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 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

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, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominates 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!

Do you agree? Join the fightback! JOIN THE SOCIALISTS Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call 020 8988 8777 or text your name and postcode to 07761 818 206 to find out more today! Help fund the fightback! DONATE TODAY socialistparty.org.uk/donate



Shameless Johnson partied through lockdown

The proverb 'do as I say, not as I do' could have been written by Tory PM Boris Johnson during the course of the Covid pandemic.

His latest disgrace concerns the drinks soiree in the garden of 10 Downing Street during the most severe lockdown restrictions on gatherings in May 2020. He was pictured enjoying a glass of wine surrounded by his partner and party apparatus. But Johnson steadfastly denies flouting the then social-distancing rules which prohibited mixing with multiple households.

However, it now transpires that a close aide to Johnson, Martin Reynolds, issued an invite to 100 staff to "make the most of the lovely weather" with "some socially distanced drinks". In the event, some 40 turned out for the picnic and booze-up.

At the time hundreds of people every day were dying from Covid infections. This motley crew of 'rulers' has no shame.

Energy bosses: 'Jump, cuddle and eat porridge while we raise prices'

Struggling to pay your energy bills? The obvious solutions; a pay rise, decent pensions and benefits, bringing energy back into public ownership...

No. Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) advised its customers to cuddle their pets, do a few star jumps and eat porridge. SSE owner Ovo Energy has apologised. Good, now for nationalisation under democratic workers' control to be run for need, not profit.

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Coventry bin workers' pay strike

COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Socialist Party members have joined the picket lines of striking bin workers in Coventry fighting for better pay. On the first day of the strike, 5 January, there was a fantastic turnout of dozens of bin workers and supporters and morale is high.

The Socialist Party's third strike bulletin was well received, especially because at the same time the Labour council has put out yet another insulting attack on the strikers, falsely accusing them of refusing to negotiate and of delaying tactics!

There was outrage over the council's latest statement which dismisses the union's statements on, among other things, the drivers' rate of pay. The council arrogantly says: "Not one of the bin lorry drivers earn 'as little as £22,183 a year'. We pay them. We know."

But as one striker said: "And I know what my payslip says!"

Already this year bin workers in Plymouth have won a 12% pay rise - that's the sixth bin worker victory in under a year!

Several lorry drivers on the picket line are bluntly saying they won't vote Labour again after this betrayal.



Bin workers discuss on the picket line, 11 Jan 2022 COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

It's clear that Labour in Coventry isn't on the side of workers.

We had some great discussions with the drivers about our bulletin, the bin worker victories across the country, and the atrocious attacks and slander by this Labour council against these workers.

Socialist Party members were thanked for their support and we sold copies of the Socialist, which featured an article about the strike.

The council hasn't backed down, but with six bin worker victories in the last year the striking drivers should be confident they can win!

We say:

- Mass meetings of bin workers and all other council department workers should be called to discuss the dispute and build support
- Unite and the other council unions should prepare a mass campaign for further action across the council workforce against further attacks by the Labour council - especially with the budget to be announced soon
- Unite members should discuss supporting and standing as anti-cuts and candidates in the May elections

Covid, stress and cutbacks fuel school staff shortages



PHOTO: USDOZ/CC

an icy, draughty hall where humans are packed in like sardines will lead to germs and viruses being bounced around like a Mexican wave.

As for bringing back retired teachers... Many will have retired early due to the pressures and strain of the job - deciding it just wasn't worth the impact on their own health and families. Others, due to age or medical background, will be more susceptible to the virus and therefore at greater risk of harm or becoming ill.

Safety measures

Socialist Party members working in education have fought in our unions since the beginning of the pandemic to raise what is needed, and for the unions nationally to back up school union groups taking action over unsafe workplaces.

We have raised the need for: 'Nightingale' schools and classrooms to ensure adequate space and social distancing; CO2 monitors and ventilation units for every classroom, with union-agreed policies of when classes need to be moved; adequate heating and ventilation in every room; testing and isolation procedures to be followed; buffer periods after holidays and rotas that include staggered learning if transmission rates get too high.

And, of course, action to tackle stress and high workloads. We need smaller classes, less paperwork, less monitoring from school leaders and Ofsted or Estyn.

All of these things need to be fought for to win a safe and healthy education system that students and staff deserve.

already existing teacher shortage and cuts to support staff. All aspects of school life are being hit: teaching in classes, site safety, lunches, play duties and support for pupils with Special Educational Needs.

The workload piled onto existing staff to cover for colleagues is increasing the burden on already snowed-under staff, leading to stress and burnout. What happens next? Further staff absences - but for longer. And growing statistics of education workers leaving their jobs because of the strain.

The Department for Education

and the government were on to it straight away, releasing 'helpful' guidance during the Christmas break, suggesting classes be combined in halls with one teacher and 100s of students, and re-recruiting armies of retired teachers to cover! Both suggestions are so far from reality, it'd be laughable if it wasn't so serious.

100 students and one member of staff teaching not only means that pupils aren't properly taught, or those with additional needs are ignored, but the health and safety ramifications are clear. Little ventilation in



PHOTO: PAUL MATTSOON

Housing news in brief

Homelessness crisis

More than 274,000 people in England are homeless, according to housing charity Shelter. And those shocking figures are likely to be an underestimation, not counting those who have not registered as homeless with authorities.

Every winter brings stories of homeless people freezing and dying on the streets. Meanwhile rents continue to rise, and the divide between rich and poor grows wider. Last winter, the government's 'Everyone in' scheme, the eviction ban, and an extra £20-a-week Universal Credit suppressed levels of homelessness. Now those measures have been scrapped.

The region with the worst levels of homelessness is London where one in 53 people are homeless. In the poorest boroughs this is even worse. In Newham, its one in 22.

A programme to build masses of council homes could end the chronic shortage of affordable housing. Councils have the ability to initiate such a programme, and demand the funding from government. Ultimately the super-rich should be made to pay, including those getting richer from rip-off rents.

Unsafe unhealthy homes

For those who rent, squalid housing conditions are a threat to health. 13% of rentals are classed as being a 'health threat' according to the

National Audit Office. Treating the effects of poor health from unsafe homes costs the NHS £340 million a year. Privately rented homes are more likely to be classed as "non-decent" than social housing.

As things stand, landlords are largely unaccountable. A local council willing to challenge landlords could institute a register of private landlords, restricting their ability to let property that is unsafe, force repairs and maintenance, and set rent caps. Of course, an ample supply of high-quality council housing would also undermine landlord's ability to rip off tenants for low-quality accommodation.

Impossible student rents

Students are charged impossible rents too. The average annual rent for a bed in halls of residence is £7,347 a year, more than the £6,900 a year maintenance loan meant to cover rent and other living expenses. A number of groups of students took part in rent strikes last year, some winning part-refunds for time spent unable to occupy their halls. But prices this year are 4.4% and 16% higher than before the pandemic.

Student rents need capping too. Private halls of residence, which charge on average 24% more than university-owned accommodation, should be brought into public ownership. No-one should be expected to live off just £6,900 a year. That's why the Socialist Party calls for a living-wage of £15 an hour, and decent benefits for those who need it.

Tories concede under cladding pressure but don't go far enough

NICK AUVACHE
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Tory Housing Minister Michael Gove's recent announcement that he will make the property developers pay for unsafe cladding is in part a response to the scandal that has engulfed the industry post-Grenfell. Previously leaseholders living in buildings less than 18 metres high were told that they would have to pay towards the costs of removing cladding to make their buildings safe. Gove's announcement is an attempt to shift the blame away from the government.

People living in unsafe properties have been landed with bills of up to £200,000. Many blocks have combustible cladding, but also problems with defective fire doors, flammable balconies and missing firebreaks because of non-compliant building works.

The government's much-trumpeted cladding loan scheme to 'help' residents pay for remediation has been scrapped. This marks yet another Tory U-turn and is a partial victory for campaigners.

However, while his announcement may reveal that the government is on the back foot, the plans do not go any way near as far as they should. The £4 billion does nothing to address cladding safety for buildings less than 11 metres, and falls well short of a select-committee estimate that £15

billion is needed to make buildings safe.

Gove has so far failed to rule out sourcing some of the £4 billion from social housing budgets, and local authorities who have already carried out works remain out of pocket. Residents who have already paid to make their homes safe won't receive a penny.



This marks yet another Tory U-turn and is a partial victory for campaigners

Not surprisingly, the government is leaving the building industry to dictate their own terms. Gove has given them until March to come up with a plan. But it is likely to be a long wait before leaseholders see any money. Meanwhile the industry continues to build using unsafe cladding.

Incredibly, Taylor Wimpey, one of the building companies implicated in the scandal, issued a statement saying: "We trust that we will not be penalised for our early action to do the right thing." There should be no rewards for dodgy builders who, having put residents' lives at risk, now

seek accolades for agreeing to put that right.

But can we really trust the same spivs who created the problem in the first place to now find a solution? The building industry has been one of the Tory party's major funders for a number of years and its reward has been to scrap red tape, allowing developers to cut corners and compromise safety.

Taylor Wimpey went on to state that the problem of unsafe buildings is, "an industry-wide issue and therefore needs an industry-wide solution." It certainly does. An industry-wide solution is to nationalise the building industry to remove private profit from the equation. The seven biggest housebuilders have made £16 billion in profits over the last three years.

A publicly owned building industry could begin to address the issue of decent, affordable housing for all, as well as guaranteeing the safety of the design and materials involved. A mass programme of council house building could generate thousands of well-paid union-organised jobs.

If this was conducted as part of a socialist plan then those needs could be met, there would be democratic accountability. We must continue the fight to make our homes safe, but to guarantee this we must also fight for a system that prioritises social need and not private profit.



The Grenfell tower tragedy tragically revealed developers' use of unsafe cladding PHOTO: MARY FINCH

Carmarthenshire gritters take action as Plaid-led council reneges on agreement

Pickets were out for a second day on 6 January at Carmarthenshire County council depots Nantglas, Crosshands, Cillefwr, Carmarthen and Llandovery, in a dispute by gritting crews. Gritters are taking 12 days of strike action after the council failed to adhere to an agreement on standing down workers after being on call.

Mark Evans, secretary of Carmarthenshire County Unison, explained what the dispute is about: "All three recognised trade unions GMB, Unison and Unite are taking industrial action as part of an overtime ban on winter gritting due to what the unions believe has been a regular breaking of the winter gritting agreement signed by the Plaid-led council.

"Unison and the other unions believe the council has flouted the

agreement that they signed two years ago following industrial action then. We feel we have been compelled to act due to the intransigence of the council who have refused to even acknowledge they have not adhered to the agreement.

"Adhering to the agreement would have cost the council nothing, except perhaps a loss of face. But the council are prepared to pay significant extra sums of money to keep a winter gritting service going when they tell us that the environment department must make further savings - in reality cuts.

"The council claims that some of its values are 'listening to improve', 'working as one team', and 'acting with Integrity'. In not adhering to an agreement they signed they would appear to be flouting the values

of the council. If they were listening to improve, they would listen to what our members and what the trade unions are saying and act on this. If the council had integrity, they would not have flouted the agreement in the first place.

"We are picketing the depots and calling on the public to support our action that we have been forced to take, and we have further action planned later in the month. The council should get its priorities right. Why plan to spend a lot of extra taxpayer's money to maintain a winter gritting service using inexperienced staff/contractors when skilled and experienced winter gritting council employees are available to carry out the work, if only the council can be trusted to stick to an agreement they have signed."



Jobcentre Coronavirus outbreak leads to reps meeting call

CRAIG WORSWICK
PCS DWP MANCHESTER BRANCH SECRETARY
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Just before Christmas a number of staff at the Mosley Street Jobcentre in Manchester contracted Coronavirus. In view of the outbreak among staff, and although these affected colleagues were no longer at work, the remaining fifty or so workers had concerns about working in what might be an unsafe office, and contacted their PCS union rep for advice.

The union branch called a members' meeting outside the office which agreed that members would collectively submit Section 44 notices to their employer - a statement

that they considered the office unsafe and were not prepared to work there. The meeting also agreed a number of safety demands.

Discussions with management led to an agreement which members accepted as a basis for continuing to work within the office. However, although the immediate concerns in Mosley Street were resolved, the situation brought to the surface dissatisfaction with the PCS DWP Group's union leadership - or lack of it.

Management's disregard for staff safety, work pressures and staffing - with thousands on fixed-term contracts required in the opinion of the PCS DWP Manchester branch - a Group-wide (national) campaign

to put pressure on management is needed. There has been no campaign. The union leadership says only that they will support any branch or groups of members that want to fight.

Faced with this 'leadership from behind' approach, the Manchester branch has sent out an open invitation to reps and members in DWP to a meeting on 19 January (on Zoom). On the agenda will be the urgent questions that face DWP workers and what steps need to be taken to make management prioritise the safety of staff and the public, ease the massive work pressures and give job security to all the thousands of temporary staff employed by the DWP.

South Yorkshire bus strikes spreading and getting stronger



Stagecoach strikers hold copies of the Socialist ALAISTAIR TICE



Stagecoach strikers could be joined by Sheffield First drivers ALEX EVERITT/CC

ALAISTAIR TICE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY

After two one-week strikes before Christmas, and now indefinite strike action since the New Year, the South Yorkshire Stagecoach busworkers' strikes are getting stronger. At all four depots in Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield, more drivers have joined the strike and the Unite union, in pursuit of an above-inflation pay rise. Management have fooled no one by repackaging their offers that they never actually offered, and having failed to break the strike they have now asked the arbitration service Acas in to conciliate.

Meanwhile, Sheffield First bus drivers have rejected a third management proposal to cut terms and conditions by 306 votes to 26 and will now proceed to an industrial action ballot for a no-strings-attached pay rise.

Former bus driver and Sheffield Trades Council secretary Martin Mayer said in a press release:

"Bus drivers should be on at least £15 an hour. Pay and conditions for bus workers have been on a steady decline ever since privatisation and deregulation of our buses started in 1986. Drivers have seen their rates of pay eroded, sick pay cut back, hours lengthened, non-driving time cut and pensions wrecked.

"The private companies have sought to make profit by putting up fares and cutting their labour costs, while at the same time reducing the quality and frequency of our bus services. It's time to bring the buses back under public ownership and control, put drivers on proper and decent terms and conditions, and get back to providing a quality service for the benefit of the public, not private shareholders."

NewVic continues strike against privatisation
Striking National Education Union members at NewVic College in east London are continuing strike action on 11-13 January against academisation. Following a solid picket line the strikers held a rally on 11 January. Louise Cuffaro, secretary of Newham NEU and Socialist Party member, said: "We are going to fight to keep this a community college. If you don't fight, you can't win." Read more at socialistparty.org.uk



Weetabix workers defeat 'fire and rehire' and ballot on improved pay offer

KATIE SIMPSON
NORTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

The end of 2021 saw a ramping up of strike action by the Weetabix workers at Corby and Kettering factories. A combination of solidarity among the workers and support from the wider community led to the company offering more and more concessions over time.

Eventually the bosses were forced to back down on their fire-and-rehire tactics. Workers who were set to lose legacy payments from 2017 equating to an additional £5,000 a year were

offered a £9,000 lump sum or a continuation of £4,000 a year.

Plans for an unpaid on-call system for engineers to make up for staffing shortfall were scrapped, and bosses forced to reassess their staffing issues. Unite union officials also caught the company ignoring three of the eight bank holidays in the year when calculating leave and pay for workers.

The workers have been strengthened by their victories and although the strikes on fire and rehire have ended, the struggle is not over as balloting for pay is set to end on 13 January.



HEATHER RAWLING

Invergordon Royal Mail mutiny wins

Communication Workers' Union (CWU) members in the Royal Mail delivery office in Invergordon, north of Inverness are back in work after walking out in support of a temporary worker who had his contract terminated, outside of the agreed industrial relations framework. The worker has now been reinstated on a proper contract.

The CWU nationally flagged up the possibility of a flashpoint over this issue just before Christmas, forcing Royal Mail management back on a UK-wide basis. However, the local bosses have continued the attack, forcing the posties' action. This action shows that posties will continue to fight to defend their agreements and that strike action wins.

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10,000 tube workers vote to strike over jobs, terms and pension cuts



London Underground workers on the tube have voted for strike action after bosses refused to give assurances on jobs, pensions and working conditions.

The transport union RMT has confirmed that members voted 'yes' for strike action and action short of a strike in a ballot of over ten thousand members across all grades of London Underground staff. 94% of members voted to strike.

The ballot took place after workers were refused assurances on jobs, pensions and working conditions in

the middle of the ongoing funding crisis on London Underground and the threat of cuts by both London Mayor Sadiq Khan and the Tories.

London Underground night-tube workers have already been taking strike action over detrimental changes to their working hours, and have escalated that action this year, striking every weekend until June.

One tube worker told the Socialist last year: "The tube network has been hit financially, but management are using that as an excuse to attack us, even though they sat at home when we kept the tube running during the

pandemic, risking our health. On pensions alone, it means after 30 years of shift work a tube worker can expect to retire on less than half their salary."

The RMT says: "The ballot has now closed and the union is considering the result and what action to put on. It must never be forgotten that these are the same transport staff praised as heroes for carrying London through Covid for nearly two years, often at serious personal risk, who now have no option but to rise up and defend their livelihoods."

East Mids rail conductors force concessions, train managers' dispute continues



CLARE WILKINS
NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY

The long-running senior conductors' dispute on East Midlands Railway (EMR) Intercity is over. RMT members voted to accept management's offer in a ballot on the pay and contract dispute, and on 'multiple working'. The vote was more than two to one to accept. The terms will be implemented on 13 February, and reps will be working hard to get this done. Implementation should safeguard the grade for the future.

In the longer-running train managers' dispute over pay cuts and detrimental contracts for new staff, and reduced staffing on trains, members voted to reject EMR's proposals about 'multiple working'.

Talks took place with EMR at the end of October and agreement seemed to have been reached, but management would not provide an

agreement in writing. Pressure was put on EMR including threats of further strike action on Sundays. A clear form of words was received from management just before Christmas when the union called strike action for New Year's Eve.

Both disputes were intimately linked to on-train staffing and passenger safety.

On-train staff take many formal and informal measures to keep passengers safe, sometimes at personal risk. Hearing these stories on the picket line, and seeing the commitment of the conductors and train managers to their passengers' safety, showed the importance of supporting the RMT union and rail workers.

Over Christmas and New Year, RMT members were on strike on Cross Country Trains, to keep the guard on the train. This is the latest in a series of disputes over staffing and

safety on the railways. The attacks are coming from many rail operators.

EMR is owned by Abellio, which is owned by the Dutch state. A company owned by the German state has another franchise in Britain. The European Union has instructed member states to privatise their railways. This will make matters worse.

Despite the Department for Transport taking nominal control of the railways last year, a meeting with franchise operators in October suggested that the operating companies would continue to run services.

Rail prices have just gone up by 3.1%, well below inflation (currently 7.1%). Every year passengers pay more for as deteriorating rail infrastructure, rolling stock and service.

We need to nationalise the railways under democratic workers' and passengers' control and management to ensure a safe and proper service.

KAZAKHSTAN: WORKING-CLASS REVOLT ONLY SUPPRESSED BY MASSIVE MOBILISATION OF TROOPS

CLARE DOYLE
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL (CWI)

One week after an unprecedented struggle by the country's oppressed exploded onto the streets of Kazakhstan, an uneasy quiet has fallen in the commercial capital Almaty, where Kazakh state forces, backed by Russian paratroops, enforce their military grip. At least 8,000 have been arrested and detained, hundreds killed, and unknown numbers badly injured.

It was the doubling of fuel prices on the first day of 2022 which sparked the uprising that spread like wildfire.

Protests, including strike action, started in the heroic south-western city of Zhanaozen - scene of the massacre of striking oil workers ten years ago. Strikes and mass demonstrations then spread across the vast country which borders China in the East and Russia in the North.

A terrified government, that has acted for decades on behalf of national and international oligarchs and bankers, quickly reversed the fuel price rise. But the floodgates were open!

There was a mass 'coming out' onto the central squares of towns and cities throughout Kazakhstan with fierce battles, including armed combat, erupting in the country's largest city and former capital, Almaty. The picture is unclear but it appears various armed groups represented conflicting factions of the ruling regime.

Workers and young people were united in their demand for an end to rule by kleptocrats and thieves, for a decent standard of living and for the 'old man' - former president Nursultan Nazarbayev who continues to 'pull the strings' of government - to go.

The country's current president,

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev - appointed by Nazarbayev in 2019 - proceeded to dismiss his own prime minister and the whole government, made up of stooges of the 'Father of the Nation', Nazarbayev.

Nazarbayev had ruled Kazakhstan with an iron hand even before 'independence' from the former Soviet Union (USSR) three decades ago. Now it remains unclear whether he himself is even still in the country or has fled to a luxurious retreat in Abu Dhabi.

Much of the detail of the events of the first week of January in Kazakhstan remain mired in accusation and counter-accusation.

Tokayev's claims are clearly false that "20,000 bandits" from abroad and "speaking foreign languages" - sparked off the deadly clashes in Almaty. But he used this as an excuse to send heavily armed forces into the centre of the city, resulting in dozens of deaths as well as arrests and serious injuries.



Workers and young people were united in their demand for an end to rule by kleptocrats and thieves...

A state of emergency was declared and curfews imposed. But the movement did not disperse!

As it strengthened, the president called on 5 January for help from the so-called Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). This is a body

set up soon after the USSR disintegrated 30 years ago, but never before mobilised.

The CSTO nations are Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus and Tajikistan as well as Russia. The entry into the country overnight from thousands of foreign, mostly Russian, troops with lorries and tanks sent shockwaves through the country. Hundreds more people were killed and injured.

Splits at the top of society and a kind of palace coup were indicated not only by Tokayev's early removal of Nazarbayev as head of the country's Security Council but also by his sacking, in the middle of a 'security' crisis, of the actual commander of the security services - Karim Masimov. Two senior officers in the army are now said to have committed suicide.

It is not clear how far the ruling clique of oligarchs wants to go and whether, fearing for their own futures, they want to 'use the razor or the brush'. Applying more repression could lead to new explosions of anger; making concessions could increase the appetite for a movement to end the whole rotten system. But the state brutality already meted out can also stun the movement, which would take time to recover.

Putin's fears

Putin does not want to see a popular revolt successful in his 'backyard'. He does not want to see a Russia-friendly regime fall, just as he is trying to show his strength to the West and Nato on the borders of Ukraine.

He certainly doesn't want Kazakhstan's mass movement against dictatorship being emulated in Russia, where workers face many of the same problems.

How to proceed now is a predicament not only of Tokayev. It too is shared by Putin. He openly said before an online meeting on 10 January of the CSTO that his troops are in Kazakhstan to prevent revolution. The heads of the other governments participating are also understandably wary of uprisings against their own far from democratic regimes. (Two of Kyrgyzstan's presidents have been toppled by revolts in the past 15 years.)

Discontent is growing within Russia over low incomes and deteriorating services. Support for Putin, who himself acts as a dictator, is waning. Injured or dead soldiers returning from either Ukraine or Kazakhstan would only lead to a further erosion of his popularity.

Predictably, China's head of state, Xi Jinping, has expressed his full support for the suppression of the movement in Kazakhstan. China has big economic and political interests in the country. Its massive 'Belt-and-Road' initiative was launched there in 2013. But many of the viciously oppressed Uighur population in China have sought refuge in Kazakhstan and could be 'infected' by the recent events.



(Above) Protesters clash with armed police and troops in Almaty



Russian paratroops arrive in Kazakhstan

A full-blown 'colour revolution' - supposed attempts by the west to bring about 'regime change' - seems unlikely in Kazakhstan following the dramatic events, in spite of some wealthy capitalists and western governments favouring a safer environment to carry on their international relations and lucrative investments in this mineral-rich central Asian country.

Apart from coal and oil, Kazakhstan has 40% of the world's uranium and is the major producer of the world's precious metals.

For now, it appears that in the face of an overwhelming clampdown, the massive protest movement in Kazakhstan is in abeyance or retreat.

The gang of Kazakhstan kleptocrats, with Nazarbayev at their head, has acquired good friends abroad, especially in the UK (see article opposite).

There seems little or no support for figures like the exiled oligarch, Mukhtar Ablyazov, inside the country if he decides to further his own interests. As a convicted fraudster, he can hardly pose as a champion of 'clean capitalism'. There is no such thing!

The Augean stables full of state thieves and autocrats can be cleansed only by mass, organised movements of workers. This is undoubtedly the conclusion to be drawn from the as yet unresolved heroic struggle against the Lukashenko regime in Belarus.

Kazakh socialist speaks to the CWI on the tense situation now prevailing in the country

According to Kazakhstan's ambassador in London, replying to protest letters on 8 January, 'peaceful demonstrations were continuing across the country'. But a worker-socialist in the city of Astana exclaimed over the phone (when connections were at least temporarily re-established): "They're bluffing! There's still a state of emergency in the country and shoot-to-kill orders are still in force. How can peaceful demonstrations be continuing?"

"But we will do our best now to ensure discussions are speeded up on building a workers' alternative - trade unions independent of the state and a workers' party fighting for genuine socialism", he continued.

"We have seen a people's 'bundt' (gathering). We were not able to build and link up elected struggle committees in time.

"Now we have to demand an end to the emergency and the democratic rights - to meet, discuss, and organise... These events are just the beginning. Nothing has been resolved. We must work out the next steps to be taken in building the struggle for a socialist alternative."

Many of today's young fighters - in the workplaces and on the streets - know nothing of the period when

A handful of oligarchs in Kazakhstan (162 people!) own the bulk of the country's wealth while the majority of the country's population lives in poverty. It has been seen that increases in basic costs of living such as the price of fuel can provoke a massive movement. Organising opposition at local, regional and national level is now vital.

At the height of the protest movement, democratically elected committees of workers, youth, and poor people at local, regional and national level were vitally needed to pursue the struggle now begun.

Revolutionary assembly

An assembly of democratically elected representatives was needed to make thoroughly democratic decisions on the form of government to replace today's dictatorship with a workers' government.

Appeals to soldiers and other forces of the state was necessary - Kazakh as well as foreign - for them to come over to the side of the workers. During the recent events, there were reports that police and soldiers went over to the side of the workers. They need encouragement to build their own unions and structures of control, and appeal to their former partners in crime to come over to the side of the revolution.

Stalin and his successors ruled over the vast Soviet Union. It was called socialist but it was nothing of the sort. Attempts anywhere to establish genuine workers' democracy were crushed.

30 years ago what was called the 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' was dissolved. Today, socialists can only welcome a new era of revolutionary struggle opening up in Central Asia. Workers have flexed their muscles and felt their power to strike panic into the hearts of the rulers.

Regroup and plan

The task now is to draw up a balance sheet of the last weeks and to explain what genuine socialism is and how it can be won. New mass struggle will inevitably be back on the agenda in Kazakhstan, and eventually a fight to the finish - to overthrow dictatorship and capitalism and establish socialism across this vast country.

Then, the task would be to spread the struggle to neighbouring countries, establish a confederation of Central Asian states and spread the socialist revolution to Russia, China and beyond.

● **Kazakhstan embassy protest report and trade union model protest letter - see page 10**

Kazakhstan's elite and the British establishment



Tony Blair and long time Kazakhstan dictator Nazarbayev

PHOTOS CHATHAM HOUSE/CC AND KREMLIN.RU/CC

Back in 2011, former Labour PM Tony Blair (recently knighted) was paid \$13 million by Kazakhstan's then dictator, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to act as a 'consultant', ie to whitewash the regime, following the massacre by armed forces of up to 100 (officially 14) striking oil workers in the town of Zhanaozen.

Well before this massacre, the Socialist Party and the Committee for a Workers' International were instrumental in establishing Campaign Kazakhstan, to support Kazakhstan workers' struggles internationally.

Another British establishment figure profiting from Kazakhstan's rotten dictatorship was Prince Andrew, a former UK government trade envoy, who is facing a civil trial on sexual abuse charges in the US.

In 2007, Kazakh energy tycoon Timur Kulibayev, the son-in-law of Nazarbayev, paid Prince Andrew £15 million for his marital home of Sunninghill Park, some £3 million more than the asking price. Around the same time, the Duke of York's office tried to secure a Crown Estate property near Kensington Palace for Kulibayev.

Former Tory minister Jonathan Aitken, convicted of perjury in 1999, wrote two grovelling books about Nazarbayev, omitting any reference to the dictator's repressive policies.

Aitken travelled around the country on a plane belonging to Sir Richard Evans, the former head of BAE Systems, who in 2006 was appointed chair of the board of Samruk, a Kazakhstan state holding company.

Aitken has denied any money was exchanged, but leaked documents in the Pandora Papers suggest he was paid £166,000.

The City of London, with its light-touch financial regulations, is notorious for attracting the dodgy wealth of oligarchs from former Soviet republics, including Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's ruling class owns at least £530 million of luxury property in London and the southeast, according to a recent report by think tank Chatham House. Some £330 million of that property portfolio is owned by the extended Nazarbayev family.

This includes £80 million of property in London owned by Nurali Aliyev, the grandson of Nazarbayev, and Dariga Nazarbayeva, the eldest daughter of Nazarbayev and a Kazakhstan parliamentarian.

In 2020, the UK National Crime Agency lost an attempt in the High Court to impose an Unexplained Wealth Order on them.



Russia's president Putin greets Kazakhstan's premier Tokayev

PHOTO KREMLIN.RU/CC

Communities fight back against Rio Tinto mine



Protesting outside the Serbian embassy MIRA GLAVARDANOV

MIRA GLAVARDANOV NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

It is becoming a tradition that the Serbian diaspora meets at the London HQ of Rio Tinto mining company, to coincide with protests in Serbia against opening a lithium mine there.

The proposed mine would be in the middle of the picturesque countryside, fertile agricultural land, dotted with villages and farming communities. The mine would obliterate the environment, pollute land and water, and displace people living there.

However, the farming communities have mobilised, and are strongly opposing the development. Unusually, there are a lot of young people living in the villages.

People want to defend their land. They link it to their great grandparents' struggle against occupation in both world wars.

These sentiments are very strong, not just in the countryside, but towns and cities too. This is why hundreds

of thousands of people have joined the protests.

This is not just an environmental issue, but a matter of neocolonialism and imperialism too. Serbia is overrun with foreign companies exploiting its natural resources and cheap labour. The Serbian government is riddled with corruption, and sells resources and workers on the global capitalist market.

The protests are expected to increase after the holiday season. The Serbian government is showing cracks and fear.

It is likely to give promises in the run up to the April elections. Serbian people must take them with a pinch of salt.

The solidarity protests in London will continue. Another is already organised for Saturday 15 January at 12pm. Everybody is welcome to attend - 6 St James' Square, SW1Y 4AD.

The ultimate victory against all exploitation by foreign capital will have to take the socialist path.

Protests against BBC transphobia

SARAH SACHS-ELDRIDGE WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

On 8 January, over 150 people assembled outside the BBC to protest the corporation's treatment of trans people in its reporting.

Last November, the Guardian reported that Tim Davie - a former Tory council candidate and current Director General of the BBC - said the treatment of trans people in society was an impartiality topic in the eyes of the BBC, unlike others such as gay rights or the climate crisis.

This approach contributes to the situation where trans people face discrimination, bullying and harassment. Attacks on LGBTQ+ people are rising, with hate crimes committed against trans people rising at the fastest rate. The 2021 trans lives survey

found that 63% of respondents reported experiencing transphobia while seeking employment.

The Socialist Party participated in the protest and called for a united fight to end LGBTQ+phobia. We stand and fight for the right of trans and non-binary people to self-identify, and for the rights and resources needed to live decent lives.

It was campaigning and organising that forced the BBC - and society - to recognise gay rights and climate crisis - and that protesting is important. Our forebears in the struggles of the 1980s, like Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, showed the potential power of solidarity in struggle.

Davie is not the only Tory in a prominent position in the BBC. This is a factor in its unbalanced

reporting, not only on trans issues, but on all issues. Under Keir Starmer, Labour Party spokespeople provide no alternative to the Tory pro-capitalist approach.

Other voices, especially working-class and socialist voices, and those from the trade unions are largely denied the chance to speak, contributing to an incredible lack of genuine debate. Part of this struggle is to build a new mass workers' party.

We demand that trans voices get heard, that trade unionists and the working class get heard, that socialists get heard, and that there's genuine discussion about how a world free from discrimination, homophobia and transphobia, poverty, exploitation and inequality can be achieved. That should be a key role of a public broadcaster.



Socialist Party members at the protest LONDON SP

Solidarity with workers protesting in Kazakhstan



It's clear that the Kazakhstan government is feeling the heat following international coverage of the protests and repression there. While the internet has repeatedly been turned off, it hasn't stop news getting out.

London Socialist Party members headed down to the Kazakhstan embassy to show our solidarity with the growing movement (above). We posted a letter to the embassy from

the Socialist Party in solidarity with the protests and, interestingly, it provoked a response. The embassy's reply repeats many of the arguments made by the Kazakh government about the makeup of the protests (see pages 8 and 9) but also acknowledges the retreats on gas prices are because of the protests.

HELEN PATTISON LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY

Trade unionists in Britain condemn repression in Kazakhstan

The following emergency motion on Kazakhstan, moved by Socialist Party member Katrine Williams, was passed at the PCS Broad Left Network conference. Activists should consider moving similar motions in their trade unions.

Motion

This conference agrees to support workers in Kazakhstan protesting against the government and oppose the harsh repression and response by:

- sending international solidarity to the workers protesting in Kazakhstan
- sending a protest message to the Kazakh ambassador from PCS Broad Left Network
- to circulate information to activists in PCS to encourage them to raise the issue in their branches, regions/nations and groups and to send protest messages to the Kazakh ambassador

Model letter

Protest letters of international solidarity can help make these regimes consider more carefully about how they respond. This is

a model letter that can of course be adapted. Please send to the Kazakh Ambassador at london@kazembassy.org.uk

Dear Ambassador Idrisov I/We am a member/are members of the Public and Commercial Services Union, which is the largest trade union representing government and allied workers and those on government contracts in the UK

I/We am/are writing to you to protest at the brutal repression of demonstrators throughout Kazakhstan and the state of emergency in Almaty and Mangistau. It is a basic human right to be able to demonstrate. Kazakhstan is once again revealing itself as an old-fashioned dictatorship rather than a modern democracy.

I/We reject the "official" view of the demonstrations as being led by "extremists terrorists and radicals" which is put forward on your website. The demonstrators are ordinary working-class people, men, women and young people who have seen their standards of living cut, while the privileged elite and oligarchs at the top of Kazakh society enjoy a lavish

lifestyle. They recognise that for the last thirty years, Nazarbayev and his family and friends have corruptly run the country at the expense of the workers. Tokayev is nothing but a puppet of Nazarbayev, that is why many of the demonstrators have been shouting "Down with the old Man".

The use of tear gas and other methods of repression must stop immediately. As trade unionists, I/We will be taking these issues up with UK companies that invest and work in Kazakhstan.

We urge you to end the repression now. This needs to be accompanied by a commitment to allow freedom of association and the recognition of genuinely free and independent political parties including those that challenge the ruling elite in Kazakhstan.

Yours

Send to Kazakhstan embassy The Ambassador 125 Pall Mall, St. James's, London SW1Y 5EA Email london@kazembassy.org.uk

Leeds People's Budget We beat council cuts before, we will again

IAIN DALTON LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Leeds Labour council is preparing to pass on another round of Tory austerity. The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) held its People's Budget meeting to discuss how trade unionists and community campaigners could fight this and other attacks. The meeting included local campaigners, and a rep delegated from their branch of civil service union PCS.

Socialist Party member Tanis Belsham-Wray, chair of the local Unite branch in the 'not for profit' sector, introduced the meeting. TUSC is a coalition, involving transport union RMT, the Socialist Party and others, to give workers the option of standing together on a common anti-austerity and socialist platform in elections.

Cindy Readman, chair of the residents association for Sugar Hill Close and Wordsworth Drive, and a leader of the Save Our Homes LS26 campaign, spoke of their four-year-long fight.

A private developer bought their ex-coal-board properties to evict them to make way for more profitable 'luxury' housing. Cindy's family and six others have received eviction notices. More families are set to receive the same treatment in January.

The council, after lots of pressure from trade unionists and other activists, is trying to organise for a housing association to purchase the estate. However, residents have been told this can only happen if the estate is unoccupied.

Tenants want guarantees they can move back into new properties at affordable rents. The council has £73 million in capital reserves, so residents are arguing that the council should compulsory purchase the properties.

Paul Drinkwater, independent socialist councillor for Killingbeck and Seacroft, also spoke. Paul has been a firefighter and activist in the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) for 25 years.

Paul stood for the council under Jeremy Corbyn's Labour. He was disgusted with many Labour councillors seeking out extra money on

top of their basic allowance through 'additional responsibilities'. He left Labour last year, feeling he could do as much, if not more, from outside Labour to represent workers.

When I spoke from the Socialist Party, I pointed to successful campaigns which have forced the council back, including Fearnville Fields and special educational needs (Send) transport for 16 to 18-year olds. Taxi drivers and disability rights groups are trying to stop the taxi rank at Leeds train station being moved.

TUSC has an alternative strategy to stop cuts: using reserves and borrowing powers to balance a no-cuts budget, while building a mass campaign to fight for the funding our city needs from central government.

It's important to link community campaigns and trade unions with elected representatives prepared to be a tribune for their struggles, rather than taking their lead from what big business wants them to do.

Everyone involved should consider standing as an anti-austerity candidate in the council elections in May.



"It's important to link community campaigns and trade unions with elected representatives prepared to be a tribune for their struggles" LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

TUSC LOCAL ELECTIONS CONFERENCE

11am Sunday 6 February on Zoom

- TUSC 2022 local elections conference to discuss local council policies and electoral strategy
- The conference has been convened under the heading, 'Vote for a socialist recovery from the Covid crisis', starting at 11am to conclude by 1-15pm
- Platform speakers from the constituent components of the TUSC steering committee - the RMT transport workers' union, the Socialist Party, Resist, and the Individual Members' representatives - will introduce the single plenary session

Visit tusc.org.uk to see TUSC's draft platform, core policies, how to stand as a candidate and for Zoom details for the conference

Southampton student vote for online exams must be accepted

EVA ELIADOU PAPADOPOULOU SOUTHAMPTON SOCIALIST PARTY

Covid cases are surging across university campuses. I've never known this many people who have tested positive.

We expected the university to move the in-person January exams to online assessments. The university has not organised any in-person exams since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020. But there has been no such announcement. This is shocking.

Consequently, angry students organised a petition for online assessments through the student union,

and a subsequent all-student vote. Covid cases would spread if a large number of students sat exams in an enclosed space.

Many students live in crowded halls, or have work responsibilities that cannot be avoided for financial reasons. So avoiding exposure to Covid in the lead-up to exams is impossible.

The turnout for the vote has been impressive. Now, we're waiting for a meeting with the student union and university management for our voices to be heard and action to be taken that aligns with what students democratically voted for.

North London NHS - "It's going to be us who saves it"



PAUL MATTSOON

JOHN DOLAN NORTH LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

The newly formed branch of Unite the Union for Migrant, Food, Retail and Services workers, and Day-Mer, a Turkish and Kurdish community organisation in north London, held a rally outside North Middlesex Hospital on 8 January, with the demand: 'Fund the NHS and keep it public'. Over 40 people attended.

Unite national officer Onay Kasab introduced speakers. He said: "We have to see change. Something different has to happen.

"We can't just have demonstration after demonstration, and march after march. We have to do something different to save our NHS. And it's going to be us who do it.

"It's not going to be the Labour Party. It's not going to be Lord or Sir Tony Blair, whatever he is. Because they were responsible for bringing in the market that started the privatisation of the NHS.

"So its not gonna be them. Its gonna be us. And it means change.

"It means the unions acting differently as well. And that's why Unite will be bringing together every Unite representative across the UK who works in the NHS to start planning for a national campaign to defend our NHS."

Other speakers included Socialist Party member Bea Gardner from the University and College Union (UCU), Socialist Party member Paul Kershaw from Unite housing workers branch, the British Medical Association (BMA), Haringey Trades Union Council, and a representative from both of the rally organisers.

Speakers pointed out that Keir Starmer's Labour Party supports more private contractors in the NHS, and that independent action by workers is needed both industrially and politically - so that future rallies will be victory rallies.

Some of the attendees were also interested in coming to the 'People's Budget for Enfield' meeting organised by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) on 26 January.



Film: 'Don't Look Up'

An entertaining satire on corporate power and the US establishment

REVIEWED BY NIALL MULHOLLAND

The movie satire, 'Don't Look Up', became a major hit over the Christmas holiday season. The dark comedy, written and directed by Adam McKay, concerns a desperate attempt by scientists to alert the US establishment about a huge meteorite set to hit the Earth, with catastrophic consequences.

As well as sending up the Trump-like political establishment and its anti-scientific views, the movie also attacks the billionaire-owned media and big corporations.

The film has struck a chord with millions of people who fear the consequences of climate change. It also resonates with many people who rightly consider the woeful Covid policies of many governments as culpable in the deaths of millions.

Yet 'Don't Look Up' has divided opinion, including on the left. Some pan it as too heavy-handed and preaching (which it can be, on occasions). Others admire the movie assailing the political establishment's obedience to short-term corporate profit-making, that means scientists' warnings about global warming are ignored or played down.

When the film's two main

characters, the scientists Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence) and Dr Randall Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio), warn US President Janie Orlean (Meryl Streep) that the comet will hit Earth in just over six months and destroy life, they are blithely told: "We'll sit tight and assess".

Frantic to let the world know of the impending disaster, and ignored by serious media, Dibiasky and Mindy appear on the banal *The Daily Rip*, whose hosts, Brie Evantee (Cate Blanchett) and Jack Bremmer (Tyler Perry), belittle the danger.

At the same time, a menacing figure, Peter Isherwell (brilliantly played by Mark Rylance), the billionaire head of the BASH corporation, convinces President Orlean that instead of deploying nuclear arms to destroy the meteorite, BASH mining the comet for its minerals takes priority.

While Mindy is temporarily seduced by the BASH plan and his celebrity status, Dibiasky manages to let the world know that the White House puts profits before planet. The masses are polarised between those who believe the scientific warnings and those who follow the White House advice to ignore doomsayers. "Don't look up!" is the rallying cry of the demented right at mass rallies,



Saving the world means taking on capitalism!

even as the comet can be seen hurtling towards Earth.

'Don't Look Up' is an entertaining movie with an urgent message, a fine acting cast and has some very strong scenes. Its main strength is highlighting impending environmental disaster and how big business and the main American political parties are part of the problem not the solution.

While a fictional movie about environmental catastrophe is not obliged to provide a worked-out programmatic solution, the main weakness with *Don't Look Up* lies in the representation of the masses as too fatalistic and easily manipulated by right-wing demagogues. Surely the clock ticking down towards Earth's oblivion would provoke uprisings

and revolutions, as the masses sought to find a way to remove incompetent, profit-driven administrations and to save humanity and the planet?

Notwithstanding its flaws, *Don't Look Up* speaks to a young radicalised generation who fear what the future holds when governed by a degenerate ruling class and politicians who put profit above all else.

TV series: 'La Casa de Papel' or Money Heist

A Robin Hood tale set in modern-day capitalism

JOHN BEID

This is a must-watch Spanish drama over five series, and now available to watch in its entirety on Netflix.

Its main theme is resistance. It focuses on a gang of thieves who carry out two huge heists against the Spanish state. It poses the question, 'who are the real outlaws and thieves, the gang or the state?' It is an allegory in the same tradition as Robin Hood.

The anti-fascist partisan song 'Bella Ciao' runs through the series. One of the main characters, 'the Professor', explains that his grandfather who fought the fascists taught him the song.

The characters in this drama are very strong men and women. It has you laughing, crying, and feeling



The resistance on Netflix. To join the real resistance, see pages 10-11

solidarity with the gang members. It is joyous, uplifting, exciting and sexy. The plot is unpredictable and has more twists and turns than the mighty Thames.

It exposes the corruption, duplicity and violence of the state. It highlights the fragility of the financial system and the casino nature of the stock exchange. It declares that the state has given to the rich and robbed the poor.

The series says that the state has declared a 'filthy war and we have decided to stand up against it'.

The gang dress in Salvador Dali masks - the Dadaist/Surrealist school were anti-capitalist (although Dali moved away from this). The masses are shown on the sidelines but the statement is made: "Join the resistance then it is war".

The series ends with the caption: "Our legacy continues thanks to all of you the real resistance".

It is our task as socialists to build international resistance to capitalism and to build human solidarity and a socialist movement.

TV drama: 'Anne'

Hillsborough and the fight for justice

REVIEWED BY NEILL DUNNE
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Kevin Sampson's short series on the crusade for justice of one of the 1989 Hillsborough football stadium disaster's victims, 15-year-old Kevin Williams, fought for by his family, and quite agonisingly by his mother Anne Williams, is heartbreakingly portrayed by an outstanding Maxine Peake. It is a hellish journey that explains the campaign for justice.

The survivors, victims' families, and an entire city, have all had to campaign to clear their police, and media-assigned status as "hooligans", "angry", "tanked-up mobs", "arriving late", who "killed their own" and were a "self-pitying city", and so on.

Sampson has done an excellent job of highlighting the events after the football stadium disaster in Sheffield that the rest of the country would not have known - including the boycott of *The Sun* newspaper (people still find it hard to utter the name).

He has also pointed the spotlight onto where it has been missing by the mainstream media for years, namely Tory prime minister Thatcher's cabinet, South Yorkshire Police (responsible for the tragedy and subsequent cover up), and the often overlooked West Midlands Police - tasked with the job of investigating by Thatcher and the Home Office who had the reputation of being the most corrupt police force in the country at the time.

Cover-ups

'Anne' tells the story of how the mechanisms for 'justice' in this country attempted, and to an extent succeeded, in a cover-up of the real cause of the tragedy, then shifted the blame onto the fans.

The result of this was that those responsible were allowed to continue serving in the police service and in the justice system. Ironically, this helped to create a campaign that embodied the strong community spirit of Liverpool and Merseyside.

Several fans tragically took their own lives, and another succumbed to injuries received on that fateful day in the decades that followed. All the while, Anne toiled to get justice served, a Herculean effort that sadly eventually took its toll.

The initial inquiry, Lord Justice Taylor's report into the events of that fateful day in 1989, was more transparent than most that followed but was still not delivering the justice expected in a 'democracy'.

For example, Chief Coroner Dr Stefan Popper implemented a 3.15pm cut-off time on the events, ignoring injured fans alive at that time, but who died later as a result of delays in the arrival of ambulances and other medical support.

'Anne' shows the viewers the fallacies of this cut-off time in the very



Maxine Peake portrays Hillsborough justice campaigner Anne Williams in the ITV drama

first episode when special constable Martin said she had heard Kevin Williams speak after 3.15pm, and an off-duty policeman who had tried to get him CPR on the pitch, also acknowledging that Kevin could possibly have been saved.



The barefaced arrogance of the establishment allowed an entire city to be tarnished with stereotypes just to divide public opinion...

The Hillsborough Independent Panel reporting in September 2012 concluded that 41 of the 97 deceased could potentially have been saved, but it was police failure of crowd control, and their lies of fans fighting in the ground, which kept ambulances queued up on the road outside, and that fans had forced open an exit gate to gain entry.

Chief Inspector Peter Wright, part of the cover up, was forced to deny this in the days that followed, but the mud had stuck. 'Anne' explains

this through an actor playing the part of Liverpool fan Stephen Hart who played an incredible role in trying his utmost to carry the injured to emergency services, with many other fans doing the same while the police looked on.

The TV drama also shone a light on the close friendship Stephen and Anne had in the decades-long battle, revisiting Hillsborough, which has been a symbol of torment for so many Liverpool fans since.

All this preceded the 2016 inquest, the most expensive inquest in British legal history. While the original 1991 inquest decided against delivering justice (declaring the deaths 'accidental'), decades later inquests declared that the 97 victims were unlawfully killed and that fan behaviour played no part in the events they were blamed for.

Sadly, the Football Association, told by the police match commander David Duckenfield that the fans were at fault, went on to tell media outlets this lie, and the myth was spread, even before the last of the injured were being stretched to the medical teams.

Tory Prime Minister Thatcher, who had previously covered up other injustices like the events at Orgreave during the Miners' Strike, and the tainted blood scandal, also in the 1980s, helped in the cover-up

of Hillsborough.

Having been fed myths by the police forces and her cabinet members, Bernard Ingham, Thatcher's press secretary regurgitated the myth that drunken fans had turned up late and piled in.

Victims

There have been hundreds of innocent families seeking justice, and individuals like Liverpool Socialist Party member Becky Shah, who had to suffer the most painful of tragedies of seeing her mother, Inger Shah, unlawfully killed at Hillsborough on the Leppings Lane terrace, then seeing her mother's death painted publicly in the most negative of lights.

Becky and her brother, who was there on the day, where taken into care after the disaster. Their lives, like so many others, have since been affected so detrimentally.

The barefaced arrogance of the establishment allowed an entire city to be tarnished with stereotypes just to divide public opinion into those that hated Liverpool as a combative city/football team, and therefore used it as a stick to beat the city and its people with, and those who believed the families and survivors, and supported and helped the justice campaign.

The Hillsborough Justice Campaign (HJC) won over many people in the country after producing much

evidence, with expert opinion, all of which exposed the top layers of the Thatcher government, the Blair government, and the police forces involved. HJC demonstrated that this cover up and whitewashing of a tragedy was part of the gross negligent attitude towards the working class.

The TV drama doesn't hold the justice system to account as much as is hoped, especially the police. However, it was aired on prime-time television over four evenings, and 'Anne' does capture the agony, the solitude, the fury and the isolation of the families, the survivors and a city, which refused to give up.

It indicates what may be needed in the ongoing fights and crusades to get justice for Orgreave (also involving the South Yorkshire Police), the Grenfell Tower fire, and other miscarriages of justice.

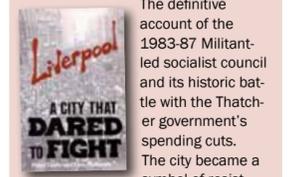
The legacy of Tory and Labour governments since 1989 is the failure to address injustice and allowing the 'powers that be' to influence the outcome of their own investigations.

The crusade that consumed Anne Williams, and all the survivors and families, shows how a mother's love can outstrip corruption. And that when a community is united in holding the corrupt to account, and engages in a determined, organised, fighting campaign, it can find out the truth in the end.

Sampson's drama shows that Liverpool will never forget the efforts and sacrifices that have been made in the constant fight against an establishment which will not deliver the one thing that could have brought closure to so many people - justice.

'Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight'

By Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn



The definitive account of the 1983-87 Militant-led socialist council and its historic battle with the Thatcher government's spending cuts. The city became a symbol of resistance

to the Tories and the capitalist establishment.

£14, including postage

See also

'The Rise of Militant'

(with reportage of Hillsborough)

By Peter Taaffe

£14 including postage

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Obituary - Pauline Wall

From Liverpool youth leader to facing down press barons in Bradford

KEITH DICKINSON
WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

It is with great sadness we heard of the death of Pauline Wall, after a lengthy struggle against cancer. Despite her pain, she retained her outward ebullience, and confidence in Marxist ideas, and was always helpful and cheerful to the end.

Pauline was one of the longest standing supporters of the Socialist Party, joining our then 'Socialist Fight' group in 1959. She was active in Kirkdale Labour Party in Liverpool.

She had contact with our ideas before this as she was related to Beryl Deane, who was our political education organiser in the Walton Labour youth section. Beryl was part of the key Trotskyist Deane family. Pauline attended these meetings as it was the only regular youth meeting in Merseyside.

Rally

Pauline soon came onto the editorial board of the youth section's monthly magazine Rally, playing an important role in its production and writing reports.

She never feared taking on and arguing the political case against Tories, the Labour right wing and even left MPs, always armed with the facts.

Pauline Knight married Pat Wall. He was the best known Marxist in Liverpool. He had been the youngest Labour Party constituency secretary in the country earlier in the 1950s, until he had to do his army National Service.

Pauline and Pat's home became like a drop-in centre for local labour movement activists. They were responsible for consolidating the support of many who became key figures

in our party.

Among them was Liverpool Socialist Party member Ted Mooney, then part of the 1960 engineering apprentices' strike. I also remember Socialist Party political secretary Peter Taaffe coming over from Birkenhead to his first branch meeting there.

Pauline and Pat had to move due to Pat's job. First to Market Harborough, then to Yorkshire.

Supporters of Militant, now the Socialist Party, successfully got Pat elected as president of Bradford Trades Union Council, then in 1982 selected as the Bradford North Labour Party candidate for the next general election.

Witch-hunt

The Labour Party right wing encouraged the media to conduct a vile campaign, which Pauline bore the brunt of in their home and at the school gates. Press hounds were banging on the door, looking through the letterbox, walking around the house looking through the windows.

This was at the height of the witch-hunt of Militant. Peter Taaffe explains in 'The Rise Of Militant': "Pauline was forced at her own home to stick up the National Union of Journalists 'Code of Professional Conduct' in an unsuccessful attempt to prick the consciences of the Fleet Street hounds who persecuted her, Pat and the family". Pauline heroically came through all this.

Although the Tories won the seat in 1983, thanks to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) taking votes from Labour, Pat was victorious in the 1987 general election.

Pauline then faced a period nursing Pat when he became ill, undoubtedly contributed to by the stress put



Pauline and Pat's home became a drop-in centre for local labour movement activists



Pauline (right) with her granddaughter, Socialist Party member Charlotte Spencer

upon them. Pat died in 1990. Even two days after his funeral, two right-wing Labour councillors entered his committee room and told his election agent and secretary to get out with their belongings.

Although she was ill, Pauline was

finding old photographs for my memoir until a month ago.

She and Pat leave a legacy of a fighting tradition for the working-class movement, and some family members supporting these ideas and the Socialist Party. We send our

sincere condolences to all their family, comrades and friends.

● There will be more in future issues of the Socialist on the role Pauline played in building the labour movement in Liverpool.

Obituary - Ethan Bradley 1993-2021

We need more Ethans to lead fight against gig economy exploitation

IAIN DALTON
SOCIALIST PARTY YORKSHIRE SECRETARY

At just 28, the loss of Ethan Bradley, the chair of the couriers and logistics branch for the IWGB union, is tragic.

Ethan joined the Socialist Party when he was a college student. Under the impact of the election of the Tory-Lib Dem coalition, many people were looking for a way to fight back. He featured on the cover of York Press, marching at the head of an anti-austerity demonstration in 2011.

Ethan was only a Socialist Party member for a brief period. But, when

he later became involved in organising couriers, we came into contact with Ethan once again.

York Socialist Party joined the IWGB boycott against burger chain Five Guys. Ethan and other IWGB activists spoke at a York Socialist Party meeting about the campaign.

Ethan wrote in the Socialist about the IWGB's still-ongoing campaign for York City Council to grant full city centre access for couriers. The IWGB Deliveroo strike in York and other cities coincided with the company's launch on the stock market.

York Socialist Party and York Young Socialists mobilised young people radicalised by the movement



Deliveroo couriers on strike in Manchester in 2019 PHOTO SOCIALIST PARTY

against the anti-protest bill to join the Deliveroo strike demonstration, helping swell the rally to 60 people.

Afterwards, we leafleted fast food chains about the issue. I remember Ethan's delight as he told people how much the strike had knocked off Deliveroo's share value.

It's a fitting tribute to Ethan's work that Sheffield couriers are continuing this battle - now opposing pay cuts by Stuart Delivery - and are currently engaged in the longest-running strike of gig economy workers. More Ethans will need to step forward to lead the struggle to end exploitation

in the gig economy, and for a society that can meet the needs of all.

● Read the article Ethan wrote for the Socialist 'York couriers call on council for protection from fear of dismissal' and his obituary in full at socialistparty.org.uk

Bullying weighing room culture at the races



Bryony Frost CARINE06/CC

JOHN MERRELL
LEICESTER SOCIALIST PARTY

Horse racing, known as 'the sport of kings', has a long history. And for most of that time the jockeys were male, until the 1970s, in particular 1979, when women were allowed to become professional jockeys.

Horse racing is one of the few sports where men and women compete on level terms, and in the last 12 months Rachel Blackmore and Hollie Doyle have reached the peak of their professions, not only in their many race successes, but also winning the most sought-after Grade 1 races, over the jumps (hurdles and fences) and on the flat. Achievements "that have struck a chord with the wider public" (The Times 10/12/21).

However, behind these happy scenes a darker picture has been revealed at a disciplinary hearing and, as we have witnessed at Yorkshire County Cricket Club, divisive attitudes prevalent and promoted under capitalism have been condoned for far too long in a professional sport.

Bryony Frost, a highly successful jumps jockey, has been vindicated in her claims of "bullying and

harassment" against a senior jockey Robert Dunne. The latter has been banned from racing for up to 18 months.

Regrettably, the Professional Jockeys Association's immediate response to the hearing outcome was to give support to Dunne. However, unlike at Yorkshire Cricket Club where, management have been in the forefront of accusations of racism, in this example of misogyny, the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) has deliberately limited it to a jockey v jockey issue, without any acknowledged consideration of its wider implications.

In the past 40 years, sexism has been expressed in inequality of pay and conditions, sexual assaults, and domestic abuse. Bryony would not have been the first victim, and the "rancid" weighing room culture (as described by the BHA lawyer) would have been known throughout the industry. And yet it took a very brave whistleblower to expose it. Apart from Dunne's punishment, the only other commitment to action by the BHA is to draw up a new code of conduct for the jockeys. As we know elsewhere, 'self-regulation' poses no threat to the divisive ideology of capitalism.

War criminal Tony Blair knighted

PAUL HERON
HALDANE SOCIETY OF SOCIALIST LAWYERS
AND HACKNEY SOCIALIST PARTY

On New Year's Eve, Buckingham Palace announced that former Labour prime minister Tony Blair would be rewarded with the Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter by the Queen. Should we be appalled? Or do we in fact see it as appropriate? After all, the British Empire itself is dripping in the blood of millions of people it had conquered. Maybe it is a perfect match.

Tony Blair will be remembered as the prime minister who, alongside the United States, sanctioned the invasion of Iraq. In the months building up to the invasion millions of people in the UK and internationally protested against the prospect of war. This was ignored.

In March 2003 the US, with support from the UK and others, invaded Iraq. The invasion was based on a multitude of lies. However, the foundation of this deceit was the incredible claim that Iraq - that had been subject to sanctions for decades - was

able to launch 'weapons of mass destruction'. This falsehood was built by British 'intelligence' but at the behest of Blair and his cohorts.

On the 1 May 2003 - barely six weeks after the invasion - US president George W Bush declared the Iraq War over, and that, in his view, the mission was accomplished. How wrong could he or Western imperialism be?

Middle East destabilised

Iraq, and indeed the whole of the Middle East, was destabilised as a result. This was partly triggered when the 'Coalition Provisional Authority' launched its catastrophic 'De-Ba'athification' programme - which left those in government jobs without work, and the country falling into chaos, with an insurgency following.

The website Iraq Body Count places the number of confirmed civilian deaths as a result of the invasion at over 200,000, with the Lancet reporting about 600,000 civilian deaths. However, both estimates are likely to be a massive underestimate.

The Chilcott Inquiry into the Iraq

War was damning of Blair and the security services. It found that Blair had committed himself to joining with the US come what may, and potentially peaceful options were ignored. Blair did not tell the truth about the weapons of mass destruction or, as Chilcott himself explained, the threat of the weapons was "presented with a certainty which was not justified."

At the end of World War Two the leading Nazi's were tried and convicted for crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of the aggression of war. The reality is that Tony Blair, George W Bush, Jack Straw, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld should have faced the same. It is said that history is written by the victors; it is also the case that law is for the victors too.

I cannot face to read about Blair or hear him when he pops up on the TV to give his opinion. He should not be indulged. He is a war criminal. I have to agree with Frankie Boyle when he said: "Personally I don't see anything wrong with Tony Blair giving his opinions on Iraq, it's just that he should be doing them at the Hague."



George Bush and Tony Blair US NATIONAL ARCHIVES/CC

Free prescriptions? Maybe when you're older

DEREK MCMILLAN
WORTHING, WEST SUSSEX

The government has a proposal on the table to raise the qualifying age for free medical prescriptions from 60 to 66. Of course, once they have raised it to 66, it will be 67, 68... the sky's the limit.

Prescriptions already cost the best part of £10. This is not for the prescription but for each item on the prescription. This is financially crippling for those with multiple health conditions.

It is most likely that people will

pick and choose which items to buy, and they may decide they cannot afford any of them. The impact on the NHS could be catastrophic.

The government thinks old people deserve the right to die and they will give it to us whether we like it or not.

This government has made U-turns before, they can be shamed and forced into making another.

A bit of support from the Labour Party would be nice... in your dreams perhaps.

Support candidates like the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition who are not afraid to fight for our rights.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?



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the Socialist

Issue 1162

13-19 January 2022

formerly **Militant**

Low pay, stress and Covid drive

NHS STAFF CRISIS

Fight for 15% pay rise

End privatisation

For a fully funded NHS

MATT
NHS NURSE

Over 20 NHS trusts have declared critical incidents amidst staff shortages. NHS worker absences are at around 120,000, around half of those self-isolating. Numerous trusts have cancelled 'non-emergency surgery', and once again there's been mass redeployment of staff in an attempt to cover both staff sickness and increased demand. NHS staff are again being pushed to breaking point.

Staff shortages are nothing new to the NHS; prior to the pandemic there were already 50,000 unfilled nurse and 10,000 doctor

vacancies. The NHS has been systematically underfunded and attacked for decades by consecutive governments and the results are clear to see. In my trust, ICU nurses have been forced to look after up to six patients rather than the recommended one-to-one care. On wards across the hospital, two nurses for 30 patients is now commonplace.

With staff already struggling pre-pandemic, the last two years have caused huge stress and fatigue. Health workers responded to the pandemic with a fighting spirit and a sense of solidarity we can all be proud of. But we're humans not machines. For nearly two years we've been expected to work flat out, in new and unfamiliar workplaces - going above and

beyond in the name of care. NHS workers don't have much left to give.

Throughout the pandemic, support from the public has been inspiring. But the Tories don't share those feelings. After a decade of below-inflation and 1% pay rises, the best they could offer NHS staff was a pitiful 3%, well below the 15% we called for.

Staff are leaving. NHS workers face a deadly cocktail of squeezed wages, fatigue and stress from the pandemic. However, if our health unions took the lead and campaigned clearly for 15%, that fatigue and stress could be turned into anger and action.

We've seen the priorities of the Tories and the capitalist bosses throughout the

pandemic, it's all about profits for big business. The health and care bill further increases the influence of private companies in our health service. Unfortunately, the opposition of Sir Keir and the Labour Party is hardly opposition. Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting has stated that he'd happily use private providers in the NHS.

In order to defend the NHS we need bold socialist policies and an end to privatisation. We need a party that backs up our fight for a 15% pay rise, and that stands for the nationalisation of privatised health and social care. Join us to help build a new mass workers' party that fights for the bold socialist policies needed to save our NHS.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p3

